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These savages are called the Natchez: violence as exchange and expression in Natchez-French relations

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THESE SAVAGES ARE CALLED THE NATCHEZ: VIOLENCE AS EXCHANGE AND EXPRESSION IN NATCHEZ-FRENCH RELATIONS

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For my family-
who believe in me when I cannot

And for Suzannah-
for tradition

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ABSTRACT

Culture contact in colonial North America sometimes led to violent interactions. The continent during colonization contained two very different populations. Native Americans and Europeans occupied the same space and necessarily developed unique relationships. Each had to maneuver around the other to forge careful and productive bonds. When they could not, conflict arose; sometimes as war, sometimes as stealing or raiding. During their brief relationship, the Natchez Indians and French colonists in Louisiana engaged in several wars. Those wars revealed various elements of each culture. In 1716 Natchez warriors responded to a French diplomatic insult by killing French fur traders travelling upriver thus sparking the first war. In 1722-23, the French and Natchez fought again; this time over unpaid debts. Finally, in 1729, the Natchez executed a viciously well-planned attack on the French Fort Rosalie, which stood in their territory.

Each war, while complicating their relationship, became a form of expression and exchange for the Natchez and the French. The Indians and Europeans clarified their outlooks and ideas with violence. The three wars escalated, growing increasingly more violent for both parties as their contact became considerably more intense and crowded. By the end of the third war the Natchez no longer existed as a cohesive nation. The French had brutally expressed their anger toward and fear of the Natchez; the Europeans all but decimated the Indians. Their chiefdom beaten, the remaining Natchez scattered throughout the southeast, some making it as north as the Carolinas. The French continued to maintain their presence in Louisiana for several more decades.

INTRODUCTION

An ocean away from European traditions and culture, the Americas and Native Americans could not have differed more from what European colonists and explorers knew and accepted or expected. The New World housed people who worshipped strange gods, ate novel foods, and reversed what Europeans considered traditional gender roles. Native Americans, too, saw the beginning of strange days when the Spanish and others sailed their ships within view of the shoreline. Men who spoke unfamiliar languages, used unusual weapons, and promoted their own God came ashore and proceeded to change the cultural landscape.

Colonial participants such as Spaniards and Frenchmen landed in an unfamiliar world and attempted to navigate through it with assorted tactics. Sometimes they used soft words, gifts, and trade, sometimes a heavy hand. For their part, Native Americans tried to adjust to the changes taking place around them by relying on traditions of exchange. Survival for both groups depended on exchange of natural resources, knowledge, and trust. The most common forms of exchange were trade and gift-giving, both of which provided economic opportunities to create foundations for valuable relationships. When the basis for these relationships was violated, the Natchez responded with violence. Events leading up to the Natchez War of 1729 emphasize a history of complex interactions between two cultures knowledgeable in violence and the consequences of using it.

The majority of this project deals with violent conflicts between the Natchez and the French. Their three wars can be read to uncover cultural exchange and expression. The first war, in 1716, began as a result of Governor Cadillac's lack of respect for Indian ceremonies. The second war, which had two phases between 1722 and 1723, was caused by misunderstandings by both parties of "exchange" in the sense of trade or commerce. The final

war in 1729 erupted after an abrupt demand by the French that the Natchez evacuate their land. That is, the French demanded an immensely disproportionate exchange, one in which the Natchez gained almost nothing while "giving" their most sacred possession—land. As each war erupted, the two peoples faced important decisions about how to react to each other's violence.

Since the 1910s modern studies of the Natchez have included books and articles by such notable anthropologists and historians as John R. Swanton, Charles Hudson, Patricia Dillon Woods, and most recently James Barnett's 2007 book *The Natchez Indians: A History to 1735*.[1] These works are descriptive of Natchez culture and history and, to varying degrees, compare the Natchez with other Southeastern Native American groups and/or are informed by what has been learned about those Mississippi period and Contact period groups. This thesis is similarly descriptive of certain incidents in Natchez-French history and is informed by this author's understanding of the post-Mississippian world of the Southeast. However, none of the studies to be reviewed below undertakes the analysis of the meanings of the Natchez' use of violence in their relationship with the French, which is at the heart of this thesis. Though some analysis of the French uses of violence appears throughout the paper, this thesis is primarily concerned with those of the Natchez.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, anthropologists studied the historic Gulf Coast Native Americans. In 1911 John R. Swanton produced a foundational work regarding them, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico*. Initially published as a Bureau of Ethnology report, Swanton's book condenses many of the major primary European sources about the Natchez, Muskhogean, Tunican, Chitimacha, and Atakapa groups (all tribes located in French Louisiana), and provides valuable insight into the

[1] Bibliographic records for each will appear in the following pages with full note citations.

"ethnological facts" of the tribes.[2] He later wrote the encyclopedic *Indians of the Southeastern United States*. Even more comprehensive than his earlier work, in *Indians of the Southeastern United States* Swanton provides a description of most, if not all, of the Southeastern tribes; the work also serves as a guide to primary source material that existed when he published it in 1946. In this later monograph, Swanton develops more complex theories about the Southeastern Indians.[3] Of particular interest is his association of the Natchez with the Quigualtam, who were described in the Soto chronicles, and with Muskogean war clans, which will be discussed later in this paper.

Charles Hudson's classic work on Southeastern tribes, *The Southeastern Indians*, serves as a comprehensive reference book and reinforces and updates Swanton's works.[4] Hudson describes a generalized Southeastern Indian culture based on themes that have become familiar in Native American studies: social, political, and religious practices and material culture. Like other early works about Native Americans, Hudson's book does not endeavor to propose unusual or provocative theories, or challenge existing historical literature. Not until the fundamental trends of the American Indians historical narratives were set could anyone challenge them or begin to piece together new interpretations.

Patricia Dillon Woods's 1980 book *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier: 1699-1762* examines the relationships between the French and the three major Indian tribes in

[2] John R. Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 1.

[3] John R. Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States* (1946; New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1969).

[4] Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976).

Louisiana territory.[5] The Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Natchez Indians required different treatment by the French. She labels them as enemies, friends, and enigmas, respectively, to the French. The Chickasaw and the Natchez are described as powerful antagonists while the Choctaw are the reliable friends of the French colonists and officials. Woods' work really seeks to understand how the French interacted with the individual tribes on basic socio-political levels.

James Barnett has produced the most complete and recent book on the Natchez with his *The Natchez Indians: a History to 1735*.[6] His book details the short life span of the post-contact era tribe. Barnett offers comprehensive interpretations of the Natchez lifestyle. He documents their existence, the way they interacted with the colonists, and how they changed over time. Barnett's account differs from others because his is the only book that makes the Natchez its primary topic.[7] He combed available materials for any information on the tribe itself instead of the tribe in relation or comparison to others.

The lack of written firsthand accounts by the natives forces scholars to rely on contemporary European narratives. Unfortunately, however, colonists did not necessarily produce accurate interpretations of Native American experiences. Unable to fully understand native practices, European accounts reveal prejudices and voices projected onto the Indians. Writing for a European audience, authors sometimes shaped their accounts to make them more acceptable or understandable or to appeal to the population. Missionaries portrayed heathens in need of Christianity; soldiers saw savages with peculiar customs. An example of the European voice is found in how authors described the funerary rites of the Natchez royal class.

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[5] Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor: UMI Michigan Research Press, 1980).

[6] James Barnett, *The Natchez Indians: A History to 1735* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007).

[7] In the past, only articles have done so.

Descriptions of attendants and members of the ruling lineage allowing themselves to be strangled appear in several European accounts of Natchez funerary practices and consistently are conveyed with a sense of disgust and confusion.[8]

Scholars must pay special attention to removing biases in order to create more accurate representations when using European records of Native American societies. They must acknowledge, for instance, the impediments that arose when colonists' descriptions were translated from one language to another. The introduction to Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz's *The History of Louisiana* mentions that "the British editors [who translated *The History*] were determined to correct more than Le Page's nomenclature, and the translation represents in fact a total reordering of the work's content and plan of reorganization." Editors even injected passages from Louis Francois Dumont de Montigny, a critic of du Pratz's and another historian of Louisiana, into *The History*.[9] Thus, not only did the authors themselves promote their own motivations but editors changed the words to suit their needs and to appeal to particular national audiences. These practices result in the consistent, if unconscious, corruption of important information.

The problem of primary sources has led historians to expand their research using multidisciplinary methodology. Native American studies seem perfect for a new research style which embraces several disciplines, integrating social and natural sciences. Understanding Native American and colonial history involves understanding prehistory and the movements of

[8] Many primary and secondary sources discuss the funerary practices of the Natchez Indians. John R. Swanton's two major works on Indians of the Southeast and Mississippi Valley address the practices. In *Indians of the Southeastern United States* see pp 718-730. *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley,* 147-159, quotes in translation Dumont de Montigny's *Memoires Historiques sur La Louisiane*, ed. by Le Mascrier, 2 vols (Paris, 1753). See also Antoine SimonLe Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana: or of The Western Parts of Virginia and Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 314; and Mathurin Le Petit *The Natchez Massacre*, trans. by Richard H. Hart, (New Orleans: Poor Rich Press, 1950), 4-7, for contemporary accounts of the funerary rites and sacrifices.

[9] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, xxviii.

peoples and societies across large spaces, whether the Great Plains or the Atlantic Ocean. While colonial historians can call on a number of written resources, historians of native America, researching the pre-, proto-, and colonial periods, need a different set of sources. Archaeology, cultural anthropology and ethnohistory, among other disciplines, offer different kinds of information which can help to reconstruct lifestyles for which little written evidence exists. Even geographical and geological evidence aids researchers.

Similarities between their social and religious structures led many anthropologists and archaeologists to believe that some Gulf Coasts tribes descended from the pre- and proto-historic tribes of Central and South America. Whether they migrated through the southwest to the Mississippi Valley or across the Gulf of Mexico, tribes in both locations showed similar traits. William Christie MacLeod posited that because of the "stupefication of mortuary victims," blackening of the teeth, use of tobacco, and the presence and purpose of attendants, the Natchez traced their ancestry to "the cultures of Central America. Tentatively at least, it may be presumed that the linkage has been through Florida by way of the Antilles."[10] Rituals and rites in particular provided MacLeod with evidence of movement and gave context to social structures in Gulf Coast tribes. Though the link now is considered tenuous, in the 1930s and 1940s archaeologists and anthropologists saw a symbiotic relationship between the two regions.

Archaeologists uncovered the material components of life in Native American spaces as anthropologists uncovered some intangible aspects of their culture. Sites along the Mississippi River and inland both to the east and the west, once excavated, showed the structures and remains of several different types of societies. Beginning in the 1930s, archaeologists dug at the Grand Village of the Natchez, known as the Fatherland site. The primary village of some six to

[10] William Christie MacLeod, "On Natchez Cultural Origins," in *American Anthropologist, New Series*, vol. 28, no. 2 (April, 1926): 409.

nine small tribal villages, the Grand Village housed the seat of the Great Sun, the ruler of the Natchez and now provides evidence of a mound-building culture with a significant ceremonial center. A royal complex in a central location which held the graves of the tribe's rulers, combined with other artifacts of their material culture, led archaeologists to agree that the Natchez were one of the last surviving Mississippian cultures. This implies that, despite dislocation and population loss, the Natchez may have maintained certain important social and ceremonial themes which will be discussed in the body of this paper.

Using new evidence from anthropology and archaeology, historians have continued to move the story of the Natchez forward. The 1729 Natchez war against the French dispersed the recognized Natchez nation and much interest surrounds it. For such a violent war to occur, there had to be far more than simple culture clashes between the Europeans and natives. Indeed, both cultures must have experienced extreme pressures to take such extreme measures. By the time of the Natchez attack many high-ranking colonial officials feared an overwhelming conspiracy, a mass uprising of Indians and their own slaves. In order to keep such an event from occurring, they used the Natchez as an example, showing no mercy to the natives. This downward spiral, curious and fascinating, occurred rapidly. The Natchez's inability to coexist with colonists placed them amongst other tribes who also lost their spaces to colonists. Although the Natchez fought different people for different reasons, their violence expressed their collective refusal to totally accept the European endeavor to conquer the New World. Such an endeavor required exchanges on both large and small scales.

Understanding violent incidents in colonial Louisiana, especially between the Natchez and French, necessitates the study of exchange between the two. One cannot, however, restrict exchange to a solely economic venture. When trading one object for another, societies also

barter their cultural components, the concepts that define who and what they are. Historian Neal Salisbury defines exchange as:

> not only the trading of material goods but also exchanges across community lines of marriage partners, resources, labor, ideas, techniques, and religious practices. Long distance exchanges frequently crossed cultural and linguistic boundaries as well and ranged from casual encounters to widespread alliances and networks that were economic, political, and religious. For both individuals and communities, exchanges sealed social and political relationships.[11]

Thus as different cultures meet and interact, they necessarily change each other, giving something of themselves and taking something of the other. Far more than an economic engagement, exchange allows for the evolution of societies.

Three distinct forms of exchange appear throughout this paper: gifting, trade or barter, and finally, violence. The three types are very different and each contributed to the complicated relationship between the French and the Natchez. Especially the use of gifting and trade/barter allowed the giver power over the other, outlining and establishing boundaries between the two. When the societies met and interacted violently, the conflict became a form of cultural exchange. Violence, no less than other forms of exchange, expresses the participant cultures' beliefs, social standards, and expectations. War amplified violence and thus clarified exchange.

The relationship between French colonials and the Natchez Indians illustrates violence as a form of cultural contact and exchange. The Natchez, descended from the powerful Quigualtam chiefdom, had a heritage of violence.[12] The survival of their culture had long depended on protecting what they had established: their space, their customs, their social structure. The

[11] Neal Salisbury, "The Indians' Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans" *in American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500-1850,* eds. Peter C. Mancall and James H. Merrell (New York: Routledge, 2000), 5.

[12] Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 159. Swanton asserts that "As the location of [the Quigualtam] corresponds very closer to the later country of the Natchez, who also appear in history as a dominating people, the two were probably identical." His assumption is broadly accepted by anthropologists and historians though he provides little evidence outside of the similarities between the two cultures who appear in the historical and archaeological records nearly 150 years apart.

entrance of the Spanish, French, and British colonists and traders into the Indians' space changed the latter's approaches to surviving but to no avail. Three decades after the beginning of sustained contact between the Natchez and the French, the tribe vanished in the wake of violent conflicts that exposed and also explained different aspects of Natchez, as well as French, culture. The chiefdom's surviving inhabitants dispersed among other native tribes like the Chickasaw and Cherokee or ended their days as slaves in Saint Domingue. Many of the rest were killed during the war.

Very few civilizations exist completely devoid of violence. Because conflict helps to shape culture and culture to shape conflict, one can begin to designate societies by the types of violence they experience and produce. Societies divide into those that participate primarily in external conflict and those that participate primarily in internal conflict. Of course no society falls strictly into one category or the other. "It seems more useful to think about when and how internal and external violence are related," states anthropologist Marc Howard Ross, "and under what conditions the two forms of violence occur independently."[13] Internal conflict often causes enough strife to keep the village focused inward, the inhabitants wary of each other. External conflict unites a village in the face of an outside enemy. Although they seem opposite, the two categories of conflict enhance each other when exhibited by the same group of people. An external threat has the power to override internal problems while internal violence reinforces the fighting strategies which natives hone over their lifetimes and use on external threats. The Natchez combined internal and external violence and the interplay between the two formed villagers into even more formidable enemies for the French.[14]

[13] Marc Howard Ross, *The Culture of Conflict: Interpretations and Interests in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 113.

[14] Ibid., 114-117.

Anthropologist David Riches approaches the notion of recording violent behavior or conflicts in his essay, "The Phenomenon of Violence." He suggests "that 'violence' is very much a word of those who witness, or who are victims of certain acts, rather than those who perform them."[15] The Europeans in North America were the witnesses to Native American violence committed against colonists. They were witnesses to their own violence against Native Americans as well. The French fell victim to, and victimized, the Natchez and acted as witnesses for both societies. In the case of the Natchez, historians and anthropologists use the accounts of the witnesses and participants because they do not have the accounts of the Natchez. Conflict between societies acted as a means to any number of ends.[16] By reading what the French recorded of Natchez violence, one gains insight into the French mindset regarding the Indians. By probing further into the accounts, one can potentially glimpse the same from the Natchez.

Violence infiltrated the colonization process at every level. It stood in as a form of exchange, a lens through which different cultures could view and understand each other. Having to maneuver around each other in the absence of common languages, violence and exchange became important tools of communication. Enhancing more traditional trade for food or other material goods, conflict clarified expressions of culture, providing a window into the social structures, traditions, and cultures of tribes or nations. The material evidence of violence – weapons, war spoils, paints, healed wounds on bones – tell the story of the type of violence used by a society and the ways in which it changed over time.

Violence, in the form of war, allowed the societies to engage in intense, physical interactions—cultural conversations. Violence became the universal language when the

[15] David Riches, *The Anthropology of Violence* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), 3.

[16] Ibid., 5.

Europeans and Indians could not understand each other. War spoke volumes when either society had something vitally important to say. Conflicts stated, when words could not, what each people thought of the other. Conflict paved the path the Natchez and French took from colonization to elimination.

Chapter one attempts to locate the Natchez, physically, politically, and socially on their territory. Tracking Natchez development through the early contact period, the chapter looks at the social and political structures as they existed when the French first encountered the Natchez and began to settle near Natchez territory. It also offers a glimpse at the Quigualtam, the assumed predecessors of the Natchez. The Quigualtam engaged Hernando de Soto's southeastern expedition in a fierce river battle near the end of the Spaniards' long journey.

Chapter two relates the first war between the Natchez and the French. Beginning in 1716, the war introduced the two to each other in terms of fighting styles and war techniques. The war allowed both sides to show the way in which their societies worked. The Natchez incorporated violence into their lives by hunting and by training for war. Their side to the war warned the French that they must honor Indian ceremonies if they wanted to co-exist peacefully and build colonies in the region. The Natchez used violence to contextualize the importance of tradition, ceremony, and precedent in their world. Even though that world rapidly changed after the entrance of the Europeans, the natives still tried to maintain a place in it; if that place necessarily involved violence, the Natchez would use it. For their part, the French effectively demonstrated that their desire for control would lead them to manipulate Native Americans through their chiefs. They used the threat of violence to assure the Natchez that the French presence was permanent. Their response to Natchez violence stated that the French would take seriously any threat made by the Indians.

Chapter three examines the second war between the two societies. For the purposes of this paper, the wars in 1722 and 1723, closely related, have been combined into one war with two distinct phases. The second of the three wars showed escalating violence as the French and Natchez became increasingly wary of each other. The complexities of Natchez society, including the loss of chiefly power in the royalty as well as the infighting experienced by the tribe, affected their affairs with Europeans. The economy is also included because of the part it played in the third war and in colonial life. In this conflict, violence expressed the mutually growing unease between the Natchez and the French. The force of the French army, retaliating against the Natchez, illustrates the colonists' mindset by the third decade of colonization.

The fourth chapter deals with the final war of the Natchez and the French. The massacre at Fort Rosalie in November of 1729 rather clearly stated that the Natchez would not suffer the French in their community any longer. Because of the potential of the revolt to grow into something much larger and much more terrifying for the colonists, the French made a concerted effort to destroy the Indians. This last war expressed the depth of their mutual distaste. It also revealed how much cultural exchange had taken place. The French, afraid for their colonies and economy, reacted in a way that spoke volumes. They would no longer tolerate the Natchez. The tribe's power, though diminished when compared to their earlier status, could still influence surrounding tribes. That knowledge worried the French so that they actively sought to remove the Natchez from a position of power and, indeed, from a continued existence.

In sum this paper seeks to uncover the process of cultural expression and exchange between the Natchez and French through their violent interactions. Both groups suffered serious setbacks, difficult situations, and potentially deadly interactions during the colonial period. Acts of violence physically translated ideas from one group to another. Goals, intentions, and cultural

information changed hands when the French and Natchez fought. Bullets communicated -- when one examines the reasons behind firing the gun.

CHAPTER 1

BEFORE THE WARS, NATIVE PREHISTORY TO EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

In 1544, Alonso de Santa Cruz drew a map of the *Golfo y costa de la Nueva España*, the "Gulf and coast of New Spain." On it he noted major landmarks and points of interest recorded by the men of Hernando de Soto's expedition during their peregrination through southeastern North America. The map showed Spain's claim on the Gulf Coast, negating the presence of the Indian tribes already inhabiting the land (also represented on the map). Naming the region, calling it New Spain, foreshadowed the dominance of European culture and the disintegration of native cultures.[17]

Long before European cartographers, *conquistadores*, or colonists set foot in North America, groups of nomadic people had moved onto the continent from Asia.[18] Not until the late fifteenth century did Europeans venture a different crossing to reach North America. Pursuing various riches, they made their way across the Atlantic Ocean in order to lay claim to the potential material and spiritual wealth of the New World.[19] There they encountered dozens of indigenous peoples, including a distinct and powerful tribe successively called the Quigualtam, the Theloel, and the Natchez.

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[17] Alfred E. Lemmon, John T. Magill, Jason R. Weiss, eds., *Charting Louisiana: Five Hundred Years of Maps* (New Orleans: Historic New Orleans Collection, 2003), 24.

[18] Throughout this project, the term "Europeans" is used as a companion term to "Native Americans," "Indians," and other descriptive names. In the late fifteenth century, when colonization began in full, most inhabitants of the European continent identified themselves as Christians. The idea that they could form separate geographic identities did not develop until a later date when they then called themselves Spanish, French, English, etc.

[19] For the purposes of this paper I deal only with Western Europeans even though Nordic explorers, and possibly others, probably reached the northeastern coast of North America long before Western European explorers discovered it.

The most immediate ancestors of the Gulf Coast native tribes emerged in the Mississippi Valley around ACE 800.[20] These powerful tribes, purveyors of the Mississippian tradition, maintained their societies through the mid sixteenth century, some even into the seventeenth.

Located along the Mississippi River, several nations emerged as sedentary communities. The chiefdoms situated on the river banks (as opposed to the Gulf of Mexico) participated in agricultural production. The adoption of farming for sustenance, the most radical shift in Native American evolution, proved to be one of the more important shifts; it stabilized and localized societies.[21] Tribes cultivated maize, beans, squash, and other foods while taking advantage of the natural resources provided by the river. They profited from trade and travel routes that used the channels and tributaries of the river.

The Mississippi River Valley and Gulf Coast ecosystems promoted permanent settlement. A valuable resource, the river provided several sources of nourishment as well as freshwater. Its overflows continuously fed the rich soil, allowing the farming of multiple crops like "maize, squash, sunflower, marsh elder, and gourd," which were the primary early Mississippian crops.[22] The woodlands also contained ample materials for building various structures. The river environment could sustain a large population with ease. In the coastal zone, however, farming was rejected until late in prehistory. Instead, Native Americans relied on saltwater resources. They dug for oysters and clams and used nets and weirs to trap fish. Hunting terrestrial species provided only a minor part of their diet. They could barter shells and other sea products as trade goods with other tribes and later with Europeans.

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[20] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 77.

[21] Wendell H. Oswalt, *This Land Was Theirs: A Study of Native Americans* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 13-14.

[22] Judith A Bense, *Archaeology of the Southeastern United States: Paleoindian to World War I* (New York: Academic Press, 1994), 186.

Across tribes, the Mississippians shared several important structural and belief motifs. Most significantly, they were fundamentally mound-building societies that maintained the Woodland tradition of erecting symbolic structures. They created large, earthen pyramids used during rituals and to define central spaces for governmental, religious and social uses. The mounds also served as platforms for religious structures and for the houses of the elite. The mound sites as functioned as ceremonial centers and were often surrounded by large, open spaces that emphasized their socio-political importance.[23]

Mississippian societies shared other cultural components as well. Tribes developed traditions and distinctions of power that relied on the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, the Mississippian belief system. Within chiefdoms, individuals' dress, personal decoration, their tattoos, and other markings had social and political meanings that reflected social or political rank and status.[24] Chiefs were largely symbolic figures, and though they had the power of life and death over commoners, tribal matters, for instance, whether or not to go to war, were determined largely by consensus. Politics and culture interwove tightly in Mississippian chiefdoms and because the chief overtly led political action, he could ostensibly control the culture.[25] In some cases, chiefs did have legitimate ruling status – power that went beyond symbolism and into reality. In Natchez society, the Sun lineage was symbolically and realistically powerful, though sometimes the lesser Suns showed more real power than the Great Sun himself.

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[23] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 77-18.

[24] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 51-57.

[25] Timothy R. Pauketat, "The Reign and Ruin of the Lords of Cahokia: A Dialectic of Dominance," in *Lords of the Southeast: Social Inequality and the Natice Elites of Southeastern North America*, eds. Alex W. Barker and Timothy R. Pauketat (Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association Number 3), 34.

Tribes took precautionary measures to protect themselves from each other, demonstrating continued trends of territorial defense which began in the Archaic period and continued through the Woodland.[26] Specific construction trends in their villages reveal that Mississippian societies also remained aware of dangerous enemies. Archaeological sites show signs of large defensive structures fortifying ceremonial centers. Inhabitants had erected walls to keep others from penetrating their most symbolically important locations.[27] Their structural defenses, however, could not protect them from the appearance of the Europeans.

Western European colonization in the Americas began with Spain's forays into the Caribbean islands and Central America. Once Spainiards began to colonize in the region, they moved inexorably to the west and north. In 1513 Ponce de Leon landed on the coast of Florida.[28] Spanish expeditions moved further along the Gulf Coast as early as the 1519. Their public motivations involved spreading Christianity throughout the world as well as finding passages to India to develop trade. When Columbus reached the Americas in the late fifteenth century he thought he had accomplished the latter. This would have allowed Spain to claim a new and ostensibly lucrative trade route. Just as powerful as religious motives, economic reasons encouraged all the European nations. Hoping to uncover a multitude of riches, Spanish men moved cautiously onto the southeastern coast, remaining close to the shoreline. When rumors of abundant riches reached authorities, in Spain or her colonial holdings, they sent more expeditions, exploiting their tenuous hold on the western hemisphere.[29] In their haste to conquer,

[26] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 51.

[27] Ibid., 80.

[28] Mancall and Merrell, *American Encounters*, xiii.

[29] With the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, Spanish and Portuguese authorities split the newly discovered western hemisphere into two halves of control. They never, however, agreed on the physical line of demarcation, each claiming more than the original and subsequent treaties stated. After word of Spain's "New World" spread

the Spaniards alternated between benevolent and harsh treatment of the natives. They could destroy a tribe as quickly as they could Christianize it.[30]

Spanish expeditions collected a great deal of information about the region and produced some of the first maps of the coastal region. Members of *entradas* recorded the tribes they encountered and the positions of the native villages along the rivers. The people inhabiting the area appeared on the maps around 1544, providing a crude list of the chiefdoms that Hernando de Soto visited.[31]

Europeans encountered vibrant, adaptable nations, not static groups of unchanging people. The flexibility of these societies allowed many of them a wide range of movement and their development over time proved their resiliency. Once they settled into different regions the constant flux of social and political power promoted the rise and fall of chiefdoms over time and space, while environmental and cultural factors helped determine the pattern of change. David G. Anderson refers to the continuous shifting of power as "cycling" and asserts that Native Americans experienced these cycles for various reasons, including the forceful exchange of power between chiefs.[32]

What the Spanish noted as they moved inland, the French discovered for themselves more than a century later: a native population fit and ready for war. They found individual chiefdoms stocked with warriors and hunters who could as easily mount a raid on neighboring

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through Europe, other nations began to gear up for exploration of the oceans and other continents. Once they understood the potential economic gain in North America, France, Great Britain and other major powers would move to set up their own colonial holdings.

[30] Robert S. Weddle, *Spanish Sea: The Gulf of Mexico in North American Discovery 1500-1685* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985), 13-34.

[31] "Louisiana: European explorations and the Louisiana Purchase- A Special Presentation from the Geography and Map Division of Congress," The Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/maps /lapurchase/essay1.html (accessed 9 April 2008).

[32] David G. Anderson, *The Savannah River Chiefdoms: Political Change in the Late Prehistoric Southeast* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1994), 1-3.

tribes – they had done so for centuries – as a war against the explorers. The Europeans noticed that the Indians did not fight by the same rules and with the same courtesies as they themselves did. Each culture brought different fighting styles to their battles.[33]

Military power created an advantage through reputation. Throughout various accounts of European expeditions through the New World, recorders noted rumors of different chiefdoms from their host tribes. From village to village *conquistadores*, *voyageurs*, and *couriers du bois* heard stories of other chiefs and other tribes, of their relative power, their lifestyles, and the style and amount of violence or goodwill they could expend toward outsiders. Such stories alternately encouraged and discouraged Europeans but never stopped their movement across the southeast. Indeed, native stories prepared them for their journey just as native food, clothing, and customs did when donated to, or actively taken by, the Europeans. They made judgments about their companies' futures using the information passed to them, changing their approaches to both their routes and the people accordingly.[34]

Natives actively manipulated Europeans by sharing information with them. Aware of their potential impact on the choices the explorers made, Indians exploited their positions as knowledgeable guides. As colonial quests for land and power became more frequent, Indians

[33] For an example of Native American versus European war tactics, see Wayne E. Lee's articles "Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500- 1800," (in the Journal of Military History 71 (July 2007): 710-741) and "Fortify, Fight, or Flee: Tuscarora and Cherokee Defenseive Warfare and Military Culture Adaptation," (in The Journal of Military History 68 (July 2004):713-770). In particular, he notes the difference between the treatment of women by each culture. Native Americans took them as captives or slaves but would never rape women whereas European soldiers frowned upon taking women as slaves but considered raping women part of their war spoils.

[34] For more on native storytelling about neighboring chiefdoms, begin with Charles Hudson's *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997). Hudson notes that various members of chiefdoms told Hernando de Soto and his men about the other tribes in the area throughout their journey throughout the Southeast. Pierre le Moyne d'Iberville also experienced this, as noted in his *Iberville's Gulf Coast Journals* trans. Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams (University: University of Alabama Press, 1981). Bienville, Périer, and other figures of authority in Louisiana reported on the conversations they had with Indians throughout the *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Dunbar Rowland and Albert Godfrey Sanders eds., (Jackson: Press of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1929), hereafter referred to as *MPA*.

challenged the Europeans' courses depending on how well or poorly Europeans treated them. Reputation was a tool that all tribes could use. Actively yet underhandedly directing expeditions demonstrated native agency; it proved Indians' willingness to deceive the Europeans in order to achieve their own ends.[35]

Hernando de Soto's expedition brought a party of military men, missionaries, and government figures across southeastern North America. They produced some of the lengthiest accounts of early post-contact Indians in which they described native rumors and reputations. Their trek began in Florida in 1539 and continued well past Soto's death in 1542. Eventually the survivors made their way to Mexico. The men went in search of property and other riches, combing the land for wealth and in the process interacting with powerful tribes. The expedition ran into Indians willing to deceive them, sometimes with violent results. When Soto's men met the Anilco Indians, for example, misunderstandings and threats led to an intense interaction between the two and ended in an attempt to massacre the natives. The same happened nearly a century later when the British fought the Pequot and burned their village to the ground.[36] Such occurrences became gradually more standard for the Europeans and genocide more commonplace.

After two luckless years of roaming through the region, the Soto expedition began to hear stories of the Quigualtam, a powerful and threatening chiefdom that dominated the Yazoo Basin

[35] Native American agency in their relationships with European concerns many historians. Most notably, Richard White deals with the subject in his *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). White describes native societies who forced Europeans to accept and adhere to some of their traditional practices. Kathleen Duval's *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) gives Native Americans even more agency, arguing that they manipulated European colonists for their own ends. See also *Lords of the Southeast* for information on Indian agency during the Mississippian tradition.

[36] Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun*, 346-349.

in the lower Mississippi Valley.[37] The tribe proved every bit as threatening as their neighbors described them. Soto demanded to see the chief, hoping to capture him and through him control the tribe. The Quigualtam, however, quickly defied the Spaniard's expectations and plans. The chief told Soto to prove himself and his royalty, a rare response.[38] Soto's attempt to meet with the chief, which involved lying about Soto's familial line in order to make himself into a demigod, failed and "when he received the response from the chief of the province of Quigualtam, Soto was sufficiently intimidated to carefully avoid any direct confrontation with this apparently powerful Indian nation."[39]

The Quigualtam kept Soto's men at bay while the Spanish camped at Guachoya but the natives did not remain passive. The Indians eventually met the expedition with a volley of arrows and a capable armed force.[40] They set an important precedent for the relationships between the Natchez and European settlers. Significantly, the Natchez later inspired similar feelings in French colonists by using similar tactics against them. Even such strong people, however, could not completely resist the many factors at work in their environment after Europeans moved into it.

The Spanish kept their interest in the Gulf Coast long enough for exploration purposes but not long enough to set up major colonial strongholds very far outside of present-day Florida.

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[37] Ibid., 345.

[38] Ibid., 341.

[39] Karl G. Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," in *Indians of the Greater Southeast: Historical Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, ed. Bonnie G. McEwan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 145.

[40] Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun*, 391-394.

Their presence, while not initially permanent, still impacted the people and the land of North America.[41]

In the long period between the Soto expedition and colonization efforts by the French, radical demographic and geographic shifts occurred in the native population along the Mississippi River and in surrounding areas. Once-dominant villages dissolved, hastening the disappearance of the traditional Mississippian cultures. By the time French explorers began scouting the region to establish permanent settlements, the native population had deflated and reorganized so drastically that ancestral societies, like the Quigualtam chiefdom, had disappeared.

Following Spain, France tried to extend her colonial holdings. From Canada, French *voyageurs* followed the Mississippi River to its southernmost point without knowing exactly where they went or with whom they interacted when they met Indians.[42] French traders, explorers, and missionaries were the first Europeans to encounter Gulf Coast natives after the Spanish had left the area and their accounts, as well as their maps, reveal significant changes in the social landscape of the region.[43] The tribes had transformed a great deal in the century between the two nations' initial forays into the Mississippi Valley.[44] Indians found that they needed to change to survive. Few native polities remained precisely the same. Their locations, sizes, political and social orientations had changed in the wake of the first European journeys. In particular, the Quigualtam had disappeared as a named entity in the wake of the Spaniards,

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[41] Paul E. Hoffman, *Florida's Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

[42] Robert S. Weddle, *The French Thorn: Rival Explorers in the Spanish Sea 1682-1762* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 3.

[43] *Charting Louisiana*, 27-40.

[44] Over a century passed between Hernando de Soto's *entrada* reached the Mississippi River, around 1540, and when La Salle reached the lower Mississippi Valley, in the 1680s.

though Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet were warned by the Arkansas Indians of a powerful and intimidating tribe to the south, near where the Quigualtam may have resided.[45] Eventually the Quigualtam and the rumored tribe the Arkansas spoke of mutated into the tribe Réné-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, called the Natché.

In 1682, La Salle led a French expedition south from Canada. Eventually he reached the Gulf Coast, a curious place with, he reported, "some grass floating on the water from 27° [latitude] on."[46] Though La Salle would wrongly place Columbus as having landed close to the mouth of the Mississippi River, he nevertheless communicated the striking physical qualities of the region and claimed the entire region for France, ignoring any previous Spanish rights to it.

As they scouted the land, La Salle and other Frenchmen met the Natchez and recorded some of the first accounts of cross-cultural contact. The Natchez, according to the French, seemed friendly. The chief of the tribe, called the Great Sun, appeared at a large gathering of tribal leaders who spoke with La Salle and his men. He extended good will and a temporary truce in order to give the French easy passage through the territory, even inviting La Salle to rest in his village.[47] Though they only interacted briefly, La Salle and his men left with the impression of a ritualistic society composed of attentive women and "tall men, well built."[48] La Salle noted the tribes he met, but his trip did not make the cultivation of diplomatic relationships

[45] Though they did not interact with the Indians that the Arkansas warned them away from, Jolliet and Marquette possibly provide the earliest account of the Natchez Indians, through hearsay, by the French. For more on the Jolliet-Marquette expedition see Francis Borgia Steck, The Jolliet-Marquette Expedition, 1673 (Glendale: The Aruchur H. Clark Company, 1928); Steck, Essays Relating to the Jolliet-Marquette Expedition, 1673 (Quincy, 1953).

[46] Robert S. Weddle, Mary Christine Morkovsky and Patricia Galloway, eds., *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf: Three Primary Documents* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1987), 85.

[47] Weddle, *LaSalle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf*, 51-52.

[48] Ibid., 60. The Quigualtam set a precedence of power and violence but, as James Barnett states, the Natchez also had a "tradition of providing living space to those who would come and settle near them- elements of the Koroa, Tiou, Grigra, and Chitimacha tribes have been documented so far- and there is no reason to think that the Natchez viewed the French any differently," at least at the beginning of their relationship.

its primary objective. He and his men left behind relatively peaceful relations with the tribes along the river.[49]

Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville's journals of early trips to the Gulf Coast reveal that over a decade after LaSalle (Iberville's first Gulf expedition was in 1699) he, too, found most tribes welcoming and willing to nurture relationships. His first experience meeting with a gathering of several tribes exposed him to the ceremonial calumet and gift exchange, both significant symbols and forms of communication. Generally associated with peace, the singing or smoking of the calumet welcomed the strangers into a new land. The French appreciated the "predictability" of the calumet ceremony; it offered a recognizable symbol in an often-confusing world.[50] Giving the Frenchmen muskrat blankets as gifts immediately established an economic relationship between the cultures. Participating in an exchange helped the natives gauge the strangers and their intentions because "the gifts defined the givers."[51] Combining the calumet with the gifts, the tribal representatives used their ceremonies to make Iberville "the ally of four nations west of the Myssyssypy… and east of the river, of the Bylocchy, Moctoby, the Ouma, Pascoboula, Thecloel, Bayacchytho, Amylcou."[52] The Natchez, however, proved difficult to gauge, "even

[49] Patricia Galloway, *LaSalle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley* (Jackson, University of Mississippi Press, 1982), x.

[50] Ian W. Brown, "The Calumet Ceremony as in the Southeast as Observed Archaeologically" in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. Gregory Waselkof (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 371-417.

[51] Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 15.

[52] Iberville, *Gulf Coast Journals*, 47-48. In his journal Iberville initially identifies the Natchez as the Thecloel, a name that means "the People of the Sun." This name reinforces Natchez ideas about their ancestors being descendants of the sun.

from the initial meeting, the French sensed that the tribe was different from other natives of Louisiana."[53]

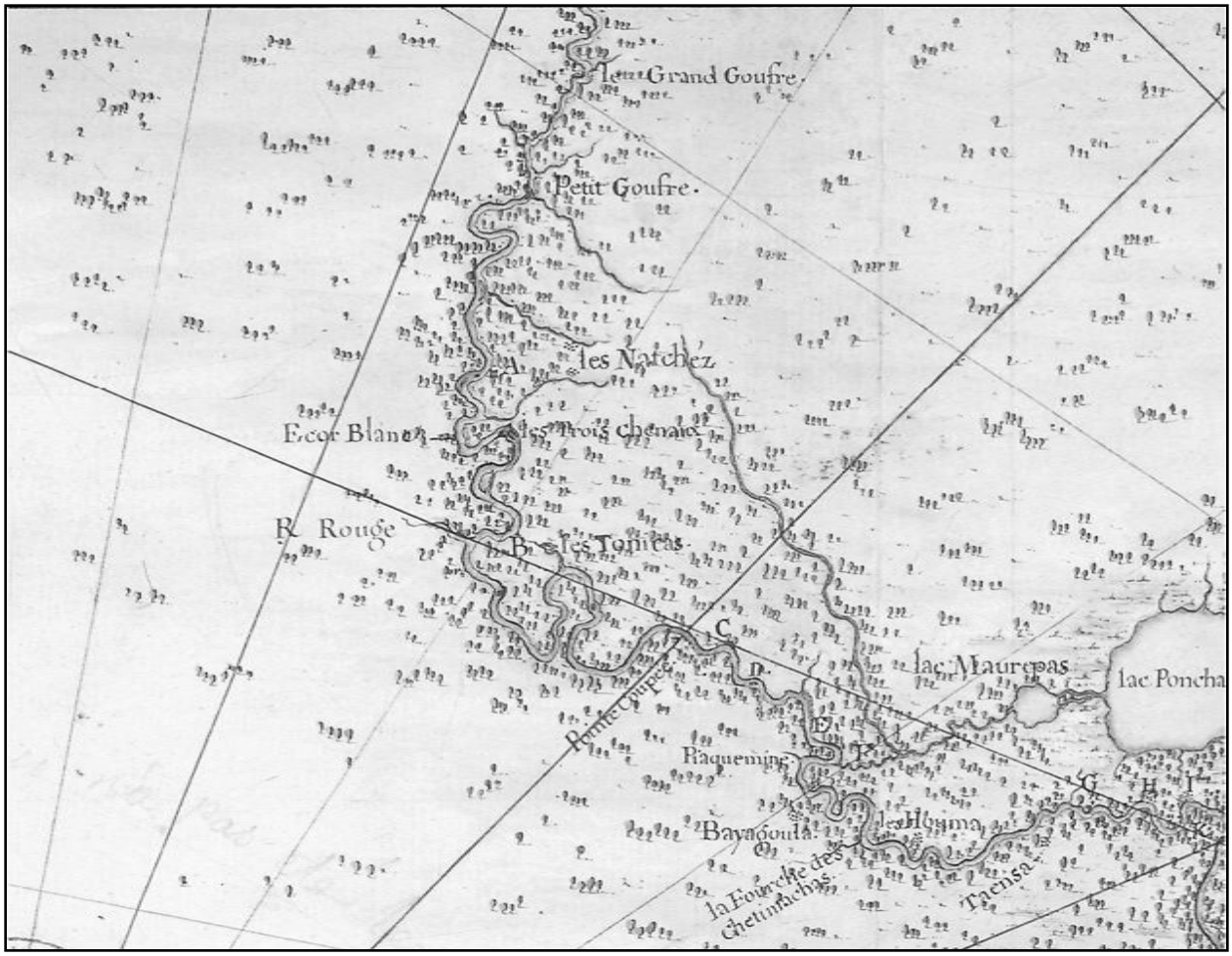

Figure 1Location of the Natchez villages along the Mississippi River. Detail from Valentin Devin's 1720 map of the Gulf of Mexico. Chickasaw and Choctaw territories were located outside the boundaries of this map.

A powerful and enigmatic tribe, the Natchez challenged French conceptions of "the savage" from the outset of their relationship. The French describe the tribe as fierce and strong as well as organized and complex. Iberville called them the "strongest of all the nations that areon the bank of the river" and François Louis de Merveilleux described them as "robust and

[53] Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 23.

the bravest of Louisiana, of [the] Mississippi" (see figure 1).[54] Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz, a colonist and historian who lived among them, wrote that the tribe was "one of the most estimable in the colony…." Andre Penicaut, another French inhabitant of the Natchez village, noted that "of all the savages they are the most civilized nation."[55]

The French viewed the Natchez as "a cult with definite rules," a lifestyle which, early in their relations, earned them respect from the Europeans.[56] The Natchez obeyed a higher power and a moral code of behavior, signifying to the French that their civilization had developed beyond those of other indigenous tribes. They practiced a highly ceremonial religion, worshipping the sun as their main deity, although they believed many gods ruled the natural world. Their religion interwove tightly with their social structure. They had a complicated social hierarchy beginning with the Great Sun, chief and eldest son of the Sun Woman, the matriarch of the royal bloodline. Theirs was a matrilineal society controlled by men. The Great Sun ruled all of the Natchez villages but did not exert the same degree of influence on each of them. The Noble and Honored classes also had the distinction of nobility but ranked below the Suns. Finally the commoners, or Stinkards, fell into the lowest caste group. Social status decided the major daily activities: the Nobles and Honored men "formed the military hierarchy… all religious functions were vested in the Suns; and economically all subsistence activities were

[54] Iberville, *Gulf Coast Journals*, 114; Francois Louis de Merveilleux, *Massacre at Natchez in 1729: the Rheims Manuscript*, trans. Winston De Ville (Ville Platte: Provincial Press, 2003), 18; Valentin Devin, "Carte de la coste de la Louisiane depuis la baye de St Loüis, ou de St Bernard, jusqu'à celle de St Joseph," from University of North Carolina Research Laboratory of Archaeology, http://rla.unc.edu/Natchez/index.html#sec_a (accessed 30 March 2009), hereafter referred to as UNC-RLA.

[55] Le Page du Pratz, The *History of Louisiana*, 35; Andre Penicaut, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet: Being the Penicaut Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana*, trans. Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 28.

[56] Le Petit, *The Natchez Massacre*, 2.

relegated to the Stinkards." The order applied to each of the Natchez villages.[57] The stratified social system points to a Mississippian background, especially when taken with the mortuary practices of the Natchez which dictated self-immolation upon the death of the Great Sun.[58]

Such an elaborate organizational system required guidelines regarding various social relationships in the village. The most complex set of rules applied to marriage. The Natchez generally took only one wife, though they had no moral qualms about promiscuity before a marriage or polygamy during. "Jealousy has so little entry into their hearts, many are accustomed to make no difficulty about lending their wives to friends."[59] More importantly, except for Suns, who married each other (even brother and sister), the tribe practiced class exogamy. The nobles had to marry outside of their class lines but only took partners from below, elevating the spouse from the lower class into the upper for as long as the marriage lasted. If the noble spouse expired or some other circumstance interrupted the marriage, the lower spouse returned to his or her class.

The Natchez, like other tribes, adopted new peoples into their chiefdom and integrated the newcomers, initially as stinkards, into their social hierarchy. The adoption of outsiders may have post-dated European contact , and may have served to maintain an adequate population size in the face of depopulation due to disease and social stresses.[60] If it was an altered social construction, however, the Natchez's willingness to change showed a deep commitment to survival: "in the process of adopting [other tribes], the Natchez had to modify considerably their sociopolitical organization. The Natchez, therefore, revealed some resilience in their reaction to

[57] Jeffrey P. Brain, "The Natchez 'Paradox'," *Ethnology* 10, no. 2 (April 1971): 215-216.

[58] Bense, *Archaeology of the Southeastern United States*, 207.

[59] Le Petit, *The Natchez Massacre*, 9.

[60] Brain, "The Natchez 'Paradox'," 216-217.

changing conditions."[61] With extreme tribal reorganization taking place, the Natchez needed a way to stabilize their population size and maintain the upper classes (who were probably more vulnerable to disease because they were the ones in contact with Europeans). Upward integration simultaneously created space for new people to enter the tribe and supported the population of the nobility with the children from official unions. Members of different tribes seeking shelter with the Natchez immediately became Stinkards and re-stocked the marriage-eligible population. In sum, using adoption and class exogamy allowed the Natchez to adjust their culture without compromising it.

Like their Mississippian ancestors, the Natchez upheld certain aspects of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. The three major motifs for the complex included fertility, ancestor worship, and war.[62] The Natchez believed, most importantly in terms of their relationship with the French, in their ancestral line and the importance of warfare in society. The Natchez respected their past and embraced their heritage, as will be shown in chapter four.

Early French colonials treated the Natchez as they would any other tribe: they practiced gift-giving, learned their language, and tried to engage the natives in positive exchanges socially, politically, and economically. The French formed trade relations with the Natchez similar to those that they had with other tribes without understanding the demographic shift which had begun before their arrival.

The changing demographics made the tribe eager to focus on the reorganization of its culture and would later factor into the tension between the French and the Natchez. The tribe was already split between six major villages clustered around the ceremonial center of the Grand

[61] Ian W Brown, *Natchez Indian Archaeology: Culture Change and Stability in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, Archaeological Report no. 15 (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1985), 2.

[62] Bense, *Archaeology of the Southeastern United States*, 195.

Village, which was not an unusual practice for major chiefdoms. But factionalism between the villages after European colonization began, among other facets of Natchez organization, would prove destructive for future relations with the French.

During the initial stages of colonization, with settlements confined to coastal areas and the majority of native contact restricted to the same region, most Frenchmen worried little about the inland Natchez. Iberville, however, became more critical of the indigenous Americans only a year after the various tribes welcomed him. As early as 1700, Iberville wrote that the French "would be satisfied with showing them [the native tribes] that we are not men that are to be given an affront."[63] His intolerance came in response to the murder, earlier that year, of a colonist by the Natchez. Wanting to solidify their claim to the land and bolster trade there, Iberville wrote that he "thought it important, at the beginning of a settlement, not to permit the Indians to kill any Frenchmen without making a show of preparation to avenge his death, in order to avoid making ourselves contemptible to every nation in the area," especially those who committed the acts of violence against the French. After having more time to observe the native and European interactions, Iberville wanted to "make safe all Frenchmen who may come and go in small groups from one nation to another, wherever we shall need to send them."[64]

As French colonists extended permanent settlements further into Louisiana, their impressions of, and relations with, the natives continued to change. On September 14, 1706, Bienville, then governor of Louisiana, wrote to Minister of the Marine Jerome Phelypeaux, Comte de Pontchartrain, that "all the Indians of these countries are thoroughly treacherous. They have already committed many assassinations. There is reason to apprehend that they may

[63] Iberville, *Gulf Coast Journals*, 114.

[64] Ibid., 114.

commit more…."[65] Diplomatic and military expeditions spread out and the French began to note the differences among tribes and to develop unique methods for handling each. Iberville had quickly recognized what Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville later echoed, that white settlers must worry about getting caught in the middle of tribal wars as well as facing direct attacks from the native population.

The Europeans and natives had some cultural aspects in common from the beginning of their tempestuous relationships.[66] Importantly, the two peoples shared a common emphasis on the power of violent behavior. The threat of it hung in the air from the beginning of European exploration.[67] "The first colonists saw in America an opportunity to regenerate their fortunes, their spirits, and the power of their church and nation;" writes Richard Slotkin of British colonists, "but the means to that regeneration ultimately became the means of violence, and the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience."[68] Slotkin's explanation of British violence against Native Americans also applies to the French.

The complex relationships between each village gave the explorers pause, especially in light of the Indians' capability for violence. Diplomacy with the natives required a delicate touch but was as often met with a forceful one. The Natchez and the French engaged in three wars between 1716 and 1729 and by the early 1730s the French had all but exterminated the Indian tribe. In the course of fighting each war, the two forces expressed and exchanged the

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[65] Bienville to Pontchartrain, 14 September 1706, *MPA* 3:37.

[66] James Axtell, *The Indians' New South: Cultural Change in the Colonial Southeast* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 4-6.

[67] Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 12.

[68] Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 5.

cultural features which helped define their separate societies. In the Natchez, the French met a new kind of violence, a new warrior. The Natchez scalped, tortured, and beheaded their enemies; they made use of the bow and arrow with uncanny skill and strength.[69] They celebrated death as exuberantly as they did life, and they seemed unafraid of the consequences of combat. In addition to the disquieting skill and number of able-bodied warriors, colonists quickly realized that the Natchez were a somewhat unpredictable collection of villages.

Violence in post-contact North America took two distinct forms – that of the native inhabitants and that of the colonists. Native American war (as violence) differed significantly from that of colonial Europeans. European forces, no less lethal than native, had a more organized style of fighting and used different weapons.[70] Most significantly, Europeans waged deliberate battles for specific purposes like territorial gain whereas Indians had goals such as revenge or status – more personal purposes. Casualties in Native American conflicts were relatively low, on the order of three or five, while European warfare resulted in huge loss of life.

According to historian Wayne E. Lee, war had three purposes for Indian societies: to administer political "lessons," to act as blood revenge (this concept will be discussed at length in the following chapters), and to achieve personal status.[71] Though the lessons that they taught other tribes are vague and sometimes difficult to identify, village leaders with a significant amount of real power, like Powhatan who combined the Peace and War chief titles into his own

[69] Some scholars have argued that Native Americans learned the scalping tactic from the French themselves but it has become nearly synonymous with American Indian warfare.

[70] Early Spanish explorers introduced the southeastern Indian population to several of the factors that led to depopulation and reorganization of the tribes. The Spanish brought new weapons with which they could fight the natives. War was an old phenomenon but European methods of waging it, such as domesticated war dogs let loose by Soto, and his men on horseback, were not.

[71] Wayne E. Lee, "Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge," 713.

higher chiefly title, could use war and warriors to send messages to other tribes and later to European powers.[72]

Natchez warriors managed to send many messages, on their own, to the French or other native tribes through warfare, testifying to their individual power and the collective power of their particular communities. War and violence, as will be explored in this paper, were symbolically significant on both the individual and group levels for Native Americans. This paper is particularly concerned with the significance of violence in Natchez society as the Indians used it to represent themselves to the French. Though deliberate force can sometimes be read easier than apparently random acts of violence, both formed the base of Natchez violence and Frenchmen's responses to it.

Blood revenge and warriors' desire to boost their status within their tribe played important roles in native warfare. Blood revenge in particular could lead to excessive amounts of violence – a never-ending cycle of revenge and retribution – which could drag on between two peoples without an apparent end.[73] Often the need for blood revenge had to be forgiven by one tribe or family to end the small but effective bouts of violence between two groups, which became more difficult when each tribe had warriors willing and wanting to prove themselves. They had the ability to continue fighting and extended blood revenge into status. Because powerful violence could be on such a small scale, when Native Americans' engaged more than just a few people in violent action, they participated in serious and legitimate warfare.

Native American violence, in the form of war, ranged from subtle attacks on individuals to larger assaults on villages. Garlicaso de la Vega, the Inca, one of the chroniclers of the Soto

[72] Ibid., 705-706.

[73] Ibid., 378.

expedition, provided his audience with a succinct description of southeastern Native American's at war, illustrating how differently they fought:

> The warfare that [Native Americans] waged consisted of ambushes and strategems, making surprise attacks on the fisheries, hunting grounds, cultivated fields, and roads, wherever they could find their adversaries off guard. Those whom they captured in such assaults were held as slaves, some in perpetual captivity… and others as prisoners for ransom, to be exchanged for others.[74]

Native Americans especially excelled in cutting off segments of their enemies from the rest of the enemy tribe. This allowed natives to weaken the other tribes' defenses by culling their population.[75] The differences between native and European fighting styles and violence led to each culture adapting to the other to "the best of their abilities."[76]

In the following chapters, Natchez violence takes the central role in French and Natchez relations. The way in which the Indians used violence forced the French to confront the Indians and engage them in both diplomacy and subsequent violence. The violent actions themselves were both small and large, both organized and unplanned, and both clear and confusing in their intent.

[74] Lawrence A. Clayton, Vernon James Knight, Jr., and Edward C. Moore, eds, *The De Soto Chronicles: The expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1593-1543* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1993), 439.

[75] Wayne E. Lee, "Fortify, Fight, or Flee," 719-720.

[76] Though Lee's "Fortify, Fight, or Flee" takes a predominantly native perspective of the ways in which warfare changed Indian and European cultures, both societies experienced some adaptation.

CHAPTER 2

1716, THE FIRST WAR

Andre Penicaut titled the sixteenth chapter of *Fleur de Lys et Calumet*, the history of his adventures through French Louisiana, "The Year 1714." He described the contents as "M. Rogeon, a director, arrives in Louisiana- Treachery of the Natchez, who murder five Frenchmen- The author's daring undertaking- The French are avenged upon the Natchez- Fort built in their village and named Rosalie."[77] Though he incorrectly recalled the year of the events – which was 1716 – Penicaut accurately and succinctly summarized (aside from his "daring undertaking") the relationship between the French and Natchez from a colonial perspective. The "treacherous" natives committed a horrible act against the French. The French found a way to punish the offenders. Finally, the French took something from the natives, extending their control over native chiefdoms. The events of 1716, the first war between the Natchez and French, revealed the French and Natchez's mutual mistrust and set the terms of their relationship regarding violent behavior and exchange.

The first of the Natchez wars with the French occurred in the wake of the diplomatic nonchalance of Governor Antoine de la Mothe, Sieur de Cadillac, when visiting the Natchez villages. Instead of taking time to participate in ceremonial greetings with the Great Sun, Cadillac rushed through the tribal lands in his haste to uncover potential silver mines in the north. Adding to the offense, he stopped only briefly in Natchez territory to resupply his expedition on its return journey south, neglecting the ceremonial calumet. Unaware that he had offended the Indians, Cadillac had no reason to anticipate the death, because of it, of several

[77] Penicaut, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 166. Penicaut describes the events as taking place in 1714 but Bienville describes nearly the same events in 1716. Bienville's records typically display more accuracy in regards to specific dates than Penicaut's.

Canadian fur traders travelling to Illinois territory.[78] However, as Le Page du Pratz wrote, "revenge is the predominant passion of the people in America."[79] To some of the Natchez, this small diplomatic insult provided an excellent excuse to make war on the French colonists to try to drive them from Natchez territory.

After Cadillac ignored their ceremonies, the Natchez killed four fur traders making their way north to Illinois territory which constituted a war. The Natchez had already gained a reputation among some Frenchmen for acting "polygamous, thievish, and Very depraved."[80] The killings seemed to prove the French opinion correct. Penicaut recalls that "these four Frenchmen [the traders] hired four Natchez savages to help them take their boat as high as the Illinois… they went together as high as Le Petit Gouffre. Here in the night the Natchez caught the four Frenchmen asleep, murdered them, and after stripping them threw them into the river."[81] After they killed the traders, the warriors took their newly-pillaged goods and the traders' boat back to their village, White Apple, where they divided their spoils. Recently established colonists noticed the stolen goods and the French called for their government to take action. They wanted to feel protected and the seemingly unprovoked deaths of the traders threatened French safety.

Unfortunately for the few dissidents who decided to attack the French traders, they lacked the full support of their fellow tribesmen, which made it easier for the French army to move against them. Once notified of the murders, Governor Cadillac ordered Jean-Baptiste le Moyne

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[78] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 56-60.

[79] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 37.

[80] "Relation or Journal of the voyage of Father Gravier, of the Society of Jesus, in 1700, from the Country of the Illinois to the Mouth of the Mississippi River," in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Publishers, 1900), vol 65: 135. Hereafter referred to as *Jesuit Relations*.

[81] Penicaut, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 167.

de Bienville, then royal lieutenant in command of the colony's soldiers, to find the natives responsible and hold them accountable. He did not, however, send enough resources to the lieutenant, who then had to create a piecemeal approach to engaging the Indians.

As the French forces gathered and then posted notifications of war throughout the region, the White Apple warriors murdered another trader, bringing the death toll to five Europeans. Bienville learned of this next death in a letter written by Father Antoine Davion, missionary at the Tunicas. The letter indicated that "after taking his merchandise, they had brought him to their village, where they cut off his feet and his hands and then threw him in a mudhole."[82] The Natchez had not just killed the man but mutilated him and left him to die. Penicaut believed that this act finally put real fear in the hearts of the French.

Facing a vicious, albeit small, native force, the French turned to the Tunica, neighbors of the Natchez, for help. Father Gravier, another French missionary, once described the Tunica as "very docile," as people who lived quietly, gently; in the missionary's opinion, rather differently than the Natchez.[83] The Natchez also looked to their neighbors for support, trying to convince the Tunica to attack Bienville's force upon its arrival. Instead, the Tunica sheltered the French, offering to house them in their village for the duration of their campaign against the Natchez.[84] Instead of staying with the Tunica, however, the French army encamped on an island in order to better protect itself in the case of an attack.[85]

Bienville set in motion a plan which forced the Natchez to confront their "treachery." Demanding a meeting with tribal leaders, Bienville awaited the arrival of the Suns. As the ruling

[82] Ibid., 176.

[83] "Relation or Journal of the voyage of Father Gravier," *Jesuit Relations,* 65:129-130.

[84] Woods, *French-Indian Relations,* 57.

[85] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians,* 67.

class, the Suns had the power to declare peace on behalf of their nation. They could turn over the men who had committed the murders to the French authorities. Once the Suns appeared with their entourage, Bienville and his men took advantage of their island location, which served as an excellent prison, and held them hostage. He "told [his hostages] in a powerful voice that it was not their calumet of peace he wanted but satisfaction for the five Frenchmen they had killed."[86] He wanted the main chief, the Great Sun, to turn over the warriors and allow the French to punish them without retribution from the Natchez. Later, when the Great Sun arrived with Tattooed Serpent, his brother and the war chief, and the Little Sun, another lesser chief, Bienville once again acted quickly to take them hostage.

The Europeans tried to demonstrate their sophistication and advanced civilization, ironically, through physical domination. Hernando de Soto and his men had often held chiefs for ransom and questioned them. They demanded information or alliances from the chiefs even while they planned on fighting or fleeing depending on the strength of the tribe.[87] They kept chiefs from their subjects to gain advantage over them. By dictating to the leaders of a tribe, Soto ultimately dictated to the rest of the tribe. Similarly, holding the chiefs allowed Bienville and others to create new relationships which tipped the balance in favor of the Europeans. That is, Bienville expertly used ransom as a means to an end, easily controlling the actions of the rest of the Natchez nobility through the captured Suns.[88] With the royalty thus ensnared, Bienville made his demands of the Natchez, expecting that the tribe would meet them quickly.

On June 23, 1716, Bienville wrote to Cadillac to inform him of the terms offered to the Natchez. Most importantly he wanted "that they shall kill at one time or another the chief of the

[86] Penicaut, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 177-178.

[87] Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," 145.

[88] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 72.

White Earth and his four other warriors who had taken part with him in the murder of the first four Frenchmen who died." He also asked that the Natchez return or compensate for the stolen French goods; that they allow the French to build a fort on Natchez lands; that if they, in the future, killed any livestock, the natives must pay for them in "slaves or their equivalent."[89]

In the peace terms one finds the goals for and fears about colonization. Bienville communicated both in ranked importance. Control over their circumstances and the natives as well as the growing colonial economy most concerned the French. Accordingly, Bienville sent the Little Sun back to collect the warriors. The younger chief returned with the heads of three men, two murderers and the third a substitute, a stand-in for the chief Bienville wanted dead. That chief's men had committed the crimes.[90] Eventually the Great Sun gave up the White Apple chief.

The incident and negotiations revealed several important issues to the French: first that the Natchez would reject French bids for power if it meant sacrificing their traditions; secondly that they would form a vicious army if they could unite; and finally that the Natchez had the very dangerous potential to sway other tribes to their cause. A representative of the tribe told the French that "all the Natchez savages would unite and with [the Tunica] later on to make war on the French…."[91] Though this proved untrue, the Natchez certainly had the power and influence to sway other tribes to their causes.

To understand the violent incident, one must begin with Cadillac's violation of a traditional Indian ceremony in his haste to reach northern territory and then to return south.

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[89] Bienville to Cadillac, 23 June 1716, *MPA* 3:213-214. This and later peace treaties place an interesting emphasis on the value of livestock. In the treaties for both this war and the following, negotiators ranked animals in the same laboring class as human slaves.

[90] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 58.

[91] Penicaut, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 174.

Singing or dancing the calumet carried particular significance for many tribes. Natives navigated between war and peace using a pipe, "the stalk of which is about four feet and a half long, and is covered all over with the skin of a duck's neck, the feathers of which are glossy and of various colors."[92] La Salle, Iberville, and others had an idea of its symbolic power and practical meaning. They used the calumet as a symbol to show they harbored no ill intentions toward local tribes. For example, in his journal from February 3, 1699, Iberville noted that he had made "pictures on trees, of a man shown carrying a calumet of peace and having three ships, just as I had come there."[93] Wanting the natives to understand that he came in peace, the drawings showed his willingness to participate in native traditions.

The pipe's decoration determined its use. The duck feathers that Le Page du Pratz described in reference to the Natchez signaled the peaceful manifestation of the pipe. Participating in the peace calumet, however, only implied a temporary truce or peace unless otherwise specified by either party taking part in the ceremony. If the Natchez removed the duck skin and feathers and replaced them with flamingo feathers and buzzard skin, they transformed the peace calumet into a war pipe. The buzzard skin served as a reminder to their allies and enemies of scalping, the practice of removing a victim's hair at the scalp as a trophy.[94]

By ignoring the ceremonial calumet, Cadillac breached an implied agreement between the French and the Natchez. Though they established residences and a trading post beside the Indian villages, the French, unsure of the rules by which the Natchez lived, sometimes disregarded or broke them. While the Natchez could have ignored the slight, it would have

[92] Ibid., 371-372.

[93] Iberville, *Gulf Coast Journals*, 39.

[94] Ian Brown, "The Calumet Ceremony in the Southeast," in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. by Gregory Waselkof (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 374.

meant surrendering their right to expect equality in their relationship with the Europeans. Their unwillingness to do so illustrates the importance of independence, even though they had to give some of it up by allowing the French to control the negotiations.

Using the neglected tradition as an excuse to kill and torture, the Indians forced the Europeans to confront the fact that the rules of native America remained as important as those of the Europeans. Colonists needed to acknowledge the power of tradition in the native world that they interrupted. The French also used the war to proclaim their own resolve. By mounting an offensive against tribesmen who had killed just four men, Bienville declared that he would not ignore any rebellion, regardless of its size.

The French did not just learn the importance of respecting native ceremonies from the incidents in 1716. The violence allowed the French a view of the Natchez' ability, honed after centuries of tradition, to effectively wage war on any enemy. When reading the violence carefully, one notes that Native America trained its participants for survival, which necessitated violence. From an early age Indians learned and embraced the value of the physical manifestations of violence. Beginning with their hunting routines, the Natchez understood that violence composed an important part of their daily practices.

In order to provide food for oneself and one's tribe, men learned to take the lives of animals using several tactics, introducing them to multiple forms of violence. Traditionally Native Americans used bows and arrows with a deadly accuracy that they would eventually turn against the Europeans. Charles Hudson noted that their hunting style, when stalking and using archery against their quarry, "was not so much concerned with skillfully hitting the animal from a distance as it was in getting so close to the animal that they could not miss"-- a strategy they

would employ against their human enemies.[95] When Indian men hunted alone they often used passive or reactive strategies such as tracking or laying in wait. Le Page du Pratz described the hunt as an act of reading and understanding an animal's signs and reactions. A hunter would follow his prey until they reached a space in which the animal was most vulnerable.[96] Then the hunter closed in and practically guaranteed a kill. Occasionally Indians changed their method of hunting, taking a more active role in the process. Instead of following animals and quietly gaining ground, natives chose to either burn the animals out of the woods or they surrounded their game, backing it into a corner. The group pursuit of quarry had a powerful ceremonial component, using the collective strength of a tribe to corral animals and then kill them.

Training for the hunt began early in most tribes with young men contributing to subsistence practices as soon as they could. Hunting occupied a significant amount of time though native men did have other duties to which they attended.[97] In addition to the physical task of hunting, male duties included fashioning farming and hunting equipment. They learned what tools they needed and "on days when they [could not] go abroad they amuse themselves with making, after their fashion, pick-axes, oars, paddles, and other instruments, which once made last a long while."[98] Men were also responsible for teaching their sons and nephews the same skills, hunting, killing, and producing tools, in the hopes of defending and perpetuating their group. Once Indian boys reached twelve years of age, they accepted bows and arrows built specifically for them, "and in order to exercise them they tie some hay, about twice as large as the fist, to the end of a pole about ten feet high. He who brings down the hay [by arrow] receives

[95] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 272-273.

[96] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 70.

[97] Robert F. Spencer, Jesse D. Jennings, et al., *The Native Americans: Ethnology and Backgrounds of the North American Indians* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 416.

[98] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 325.

the prize from an old man who is always present." Le Page du Pratz then went on to describe the reward system passed down from one generation to the next: "the best shooter is called the young warrior, the next best is called the apprentice warrior, and so on of the others, who are prompted to excel more by sentiments of honour than by blows."[99] The hierarchy of skills in hunting later appeared as the social hierarchy of warriors and their honors. From childhood the Natchez learned that physical prowess and skills in weaponry led to rewards.

Violence and hunting had special significance outside of protection and subsistence. Economy, ceremony, and social structure tightly were wrapped together in American Indian culture. The three concepts united under the guise of the hunt. It tied villages together. In prehistoric periods the entire village accompanied men on their hunt, becoming a large, social, and mobile unit collecting goods for sustenance and trade.[100] Both war and hunting provided a link between village castes; since most men had to hunt, each caste had to participate (with the possible exception of the chief because the village provided food for him). They came together and instead of dividing themselves according to social standing, they hunted according to the hierarchy of experience. War influenced class in the same way. The restrictions of social rank all but disappeared when a warrior earned honors in battle.

Not an insignificant duty, hunting held spiritual value among some native tribes, especially before the Europeans introduced mechanized weapons. The Cherokee, for example, prayed and sang before their hunts like many of the other southeastern tribes. They invoked the elements of the natural and supernatural worlds to guide them and help them achieve success in

[99] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 324.

[100] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 56.

their endeavor just as they would during war preparations.[101] Their prayers reached out to deities and thus hunting became a spiritual process through which one connected with universal powers; the violence of taking human life did the same.

Preparation for war involved several rituals besides ceremonial prayer, none observed in haste. Before they started a war, the elders of a tribe usually convened for a war council during which they discussed if they should go to war in the first place. As the enemy armies grew and weapons were mechanized, this discussion took on new dimensions for it determined whether or not Native Americans could risk potentially devastating loss of life. The choice, an enormous one, fell to the chiefs and war chiefs though no warrior was commanded to follow. Each individual in the chiefdom had a choice.

If tribal leaders decided to fight they took precautions in the form of ritual preparation. Mathurin Le Petit, a missionary in French Louisiana, recorded their traditions for his superiors. He noted the signal for war: two "troughs, well reddened from top to bottom, and decorated with arrows, red feathers, and red tomahawks."[102] The color red meant war.[103] According to Le Petit, the Natchez's enemy lay in the direction in which the sharpened troughs, or sticks, pointed.[104]

Le Petit also noted that the Indians had to wait until they had a sufficient force before the ceremony (and, ostensibly, the war) commenced. Once it did, the natives gathered to perform tasks that proved their bravery or willingness to fight, cleanliness, and allegiance. "Those who wish to join the [war] party are decorated," he states,

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[101] Ibid., 273-274.

[102] Le Petit, *The Natchez Massacre*, 10.

[103] Interestingly, Native Americans became "red" when given a color coding for their skin and ethnicity, still associated with violence and savagery.

[104] Le Petit, *The Natchez Massacre*, 10.

> and smeared with different colors and make a speech to the war chief. This speech is repeated by each warrior, and consists in a thousand protestations of service, to assure him that they do not ask better than to die with him, they are enchanted to learn from such an expert warrior the art of lifting scalps, and they fear neither hunger nor the fatigues to which they will be exposed.[105]

Their speech, a prayer of sorts, initiated the ceremony which lasted for the rest of the day. The warriors, by drinking an emetic, abstaining from sexual activities, and singing their own death chants ritually cleansed their minds, bodies, and souls for the impending battle. A fearsome event to behold, Indians used the ceremonies as a weapon. The outward projection of violence coupled with the warriors regaling their audience with their triumphs in battles proclaimed that they fought with intensity and singular purpose.

Their preparations complete, the warriors set off wielding physical weapons in addition to the spiritual protection their ceremonies brought them. Charlevoix recorded his impressions of deceptively simple Indian weapons in his *Journal of a Voyage to North America*, written to accompany his history of Louisiana territory. "Formerly the arms of the Indians," he wrote, "were the bow and arrow, and a kind of javelin, both pointed with a kind of bone worked in different manners; and lastly, the hatchet or break-head."[106] Charlevoix described weapons that also had uses in domestic activities, revealing some important cultural implications. The everyday doubled as the wartime; the two were connected in native society as the line between "routine" and "special" was blurred. The Natchez used the bow and arrow for general game hunting, even large game hunting. Indians close to large bodies of water could use the javelin to spear fish instead of hooking or netting them. The hatchet, like the other tools men fashioned, served several purposes around the village. They used axes to cut wood to repair or build

[105] Ibid., 10.

[106] Pierre de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America* (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), I :337.

structures, to shave animal skins or to dismember game.[107] What Charlevoix saw as weapons Native Americans saw as everyday tools that stood in, when needed, as weapons to protect their everyday lives especially when changed by the war rituals.

The connections between, and importance of, war, hunting, and culture became uncomfortably apparent when James Adair, writing about the North American Indians referred to human enemies as "prey." Describing a group of Indian men who stalked their enemies, Adair wrote that "runners were sent from the town to their neighbors, to come silently and assist them to secure the prey,…They came like silent ghosts."[108] The natives' lives allowed them to move comfortably through the natural world. Adair noted Native American's seamless disappearance into their surroundings; he wrote that they "can exactly imitate the voice and sound of every quadruped and wild fowl through the American woods."[109]

Even Native American's clothing and footwear allowed ease of movement and their constant interaction with the natural world gave them the ability to blend into the landscape. They accepted violence without thinking of it; death from hunting or from war existed as part of the natural world. Their lifestyle lent itself to subtle conflict; the quicker and more quietly the natives moved about their surroundings, the more effectively they waged war against the Europeans.

Native Americans did physical work continuously, building their strength and agility over their lifetimes. None of the Europeans who recorded their impressions of natives' physiques referred to them as small, insignificant, or weak. Hudson's examination of Hernando de Soto's

[107] Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States*, 541-548; 564-588.

[108] James Adair, *The History of the American Indians,* ed. Samuel Cole Williams (Johnson City, TN: The Watauga Press, 1930), 412.

[109] Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 413.

expedition, in fact, revealed that "there is ample evidence in the documents… that Southeastern Indian archers were large in stature, well built and in superb physical condition."[110] They wielded their weapons with such force that Europeans on horseback, even behind shields and armor, feared them.[111] Even from the shores of the Mississippi River the Indians intimidated the newcomers. Tonti, another member of LaSalle's expedition, described the Natchez who stood waiting on the riverbank as "savages, bow and arrow in hand."[112]

Tribal war occurred for any number of reasons and followed unusual rules. Sometimes tribes allied with each other against a common enemy, sometimes they fought against each other. War could even follow seasonal patterns, with Native Americans fighting in the late spring through the early fall because they had more time to do so when they were not hunting animals or harvesting crops.[113] When wars erupted between Indians and Europeans, the Europeans had to alter their fighting to engage their opponents, as did the Indians. The French and the Natchez, for example, followed the seasonal pattern in 1716, resolving their conflict in the early summer. Their later campaigns did not follow such seasonality, suggesting the increased importance of later wars as well as native adjustment to European war styles.

Native American wars took on the guise of retribution and revenge, illustrating curious human drives. Indians honored the right to punish those who wronged the tribe or an individual within it. Forgiveness did not necessarily have equal value in their social or political structures and one could not expect sympathy from an enemy tribe. If someone committed an unworthy act against the tribe, they received what the tribe considered fair punishment. The idea of warfare as

[110] Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun*, 17.

[111] Ibid., 18-19.

[112] Tonti in Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 23.

[113] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 239-240.

a means of expansion, a common motivation for Europeans, seemed strange to Native Americans. The Natchez, however, understood territorialism and though they did not expand their territory, they fought to maintain their place in it.[114]

In 1716, the Natchez showed their penchant for retribution with an added touch of ultraviolent behavior. With what Dumont de Montigny, another chronicler of French Louisiana, described as a "very vindictive" nature, they killed the fur traders because their death eliminated the insult of the ignored calumet ceremony.[115] A technically equivalent act for what Cadillac did to the Indians would have entailed the Natchez warriors purposefully disregarding a significant French tradition. The few who attacked did not wait long enough for that type of opportunity to arise so instead the warriors satisfied their want of revenge with the death of the traders. The fur traders represented the problem of the Frenchmen gaining more influence throughout the territory. Their misfortune, pausing within Natchez territory, cost them their lives because the Indians felt compelled to punish the French.

The fifth trader to die gave Bienville an idea of just how violently the tribe could punish men. By most descriptions the first four traders died quickly. By throwing them into the river, Natchez warriors easily hid the murders until they wanted to make their act known. Bienville must have assumed torture when he read that the trader's hands and feet had been removed, especially as the letter did not specify when exactly the man died. His torture, however, did not fit the traditional Natchez form.[116] Le Page du Pratz recalled the usual procedure in *The History*

[114] Ibid., 240.

[115] Dumont in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 126.

[116] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 257. Hudson notes that Natchez torture differed from the torture practices of other tribes. Theirs, far more complex, subjugated their captive more than other tribes who usually strung their prisoners to a pole by fifteen feet of rope. This allowed the prisoners to attack their captors at will, even to defend themselves. Captives also received some freedom of movement; they could sit, stand, or move around as they wanted.

of Louisiana. Once warriors returned with a prisoner, they deposited him within village boundaries and set off to find three large poles, ideally ten feet in length. Upon finding suitable stakes, the warriors set up their device, sinking two poles upright into the ground and using the third, which they cut in half, to connect them at the top and bottom, forming a rectangle. The captors then tied their captive, recently scalped, to the square with his hands and feet at the corners, creating a large X with his body. "The young men in the mean time having prepared several bundles of canes," Le Page du Pratz wrote, "set fire to them; and several of the warriors taking those flaming canes, burn the prisoner in different parts of his body, while others burn him in other parts with their tobacco-pipes."[117] The warriors pierced the captive's feet with burning nails; they exacted various revenges on the man; and after nearly three days and nights of torture they finally killed him, all the while singing their death-songs. Swanton, quoting a long passage from Le Page du Pratz, noted that the captive, too, sang death songs "which, when closely examined is found to consist of grievous cries, tears, and groans."[118] The evocative imagery of prolonged, painful death fascinated colonials.

While they tortured their captives on the square, the Natchez expected a show of strength and resistance. The accounts of the process imply that the longer the captive resisted death, the more clearly he illustrated his ability to withstand near unbearable pain, the more worthy he proved himself. While this did not mean that his captors killed him mercifully, it did mean that they respected him and that his death made his captor a more powerful warrior. The captive's death became more honorable as well, as the torture ostensibly allowed him atonement for his crimes against the tribe. The accounts make the act of torture seem both a noble way to die and to kill. Torture by the Natchez involved the village collective. Placing the torture square in a

[117] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 374.

[118] Le Page du Pratz in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 132.

public spot and leaving the captive there to suffer caused the act to become ritualized and shared. The Natchez made no attempt to hide what they did, instead making it a celebration of victory and power.

Torture even called for the participation of women. Women had the power to decide whether or not to save a captive man; they could even contribute to the actual torture, wielding sticks and "firebrands made of cane."[119] If one found the torture victim worthy, a woman (usually one who had lost her husband in battle) could choose to adopt him into her family as a substitute for her lost loved-one or as a slave. She had the potential to save his life and even give him a new one in her home.[120]

When the Natchez executed the final fur trader by a different form of torture, they made a statement about what they really felt for the French and their customs and presence. Instead of putting the trader on the rack and allowing him dignity- if extreme pain- in his death the Natchez merely severed his limbs and threw him in a pit to die. His base, vulgar death signified a weak passing especially because the man did not know the songs he should have sung to ease his death or the rituals his captors could have performed to honor it. The Natchez did not find the trader worthy enough to die a warrior's death. Even though his death brought them notoriety, and his killers would later have his life to claim during their war chants, they disgraced his life by taking it without ceremony.

The warriors could have killed the man where they found him, like the others, a perfectly acceptable war action. The natives did not necessarily need the glory of torturing a man in front of a crowd to justify their violent activity. "Among them," Le Page du Pratz writes, "flight is no ways shameful; their bravery lies often in their legs; and to kill a man asleep or unawares, is

[119] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 256.

[120] Le Page du Pratz in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 132.

quite as honourable among them, as to gain a [single] victory after a stout battle."[121] Thus, the deaths of the first four adhered to the Natchez idea of war honor. They died without fanfare, a simple set of deaths meant to indicate to the French that they had wronged the Indians and that the insult had been revenged.

Bienville received news of the last trader's death before he reached the Tunica village. Ostensibly, the final murder occurred after the Tunica chief denied the Natchez his tribe's help fighting Bienville's forces. The unusual killing potentially served to warn the Tunica that they had made the wrong choice in helping the French army. The logic seems to have been that since the Tunica would not side with the Natchez, the Natchez would not follow traditional war procedures, a threat to the other tribe. They tortured the trader to terrorize both the French and the Tunica who, in the minds of the Natchez, had become closely linked in their betrayals.[122] Hoping that the Tunica would eventually realize their mistake, the Natchez still took steps to influence them. Years later, the Natchez punished the Tunica's perceived treachery by slaughtering some of them in their sleep.

The French met aggression with aggression to ensure their own safety. The appearance of a large army implied offensive maneuvers even if it did not engage in any until it began taking the royalty hostage. If the French could subjugate the ruling class, and through them the warriors, it lessened the chance of the Natchez gathering more troops. Because Cadillac only provided a small force to Bienville, the lieutenant needed to make his army's presence known and take some action before the Natchez warriors outnumbered the French. Bienville expressed anger and impatience toward the Governor who he felt knowingly risked the lives of the

[121] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 375.

[122] Jeffrey P. Brain, *Tunica Archaeology* (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1988), 300.

colonists, missionaries, and traders in the vicinity of the Natchez village. "You know, Sir, that I have here only thirty-four soldiers from the forty that I ought to have in accordance with his Majesty's intention," wrote Bienville to Cadillac, showing his disapproval and revealing the relative strength of the Natchez to the French.[123] Bienville required more soldiers to make an imposing stand against the Indian forces. Had the Natchez warriors convinced more of their people to go against the French, they could have mounted a major, destructive campaign. Fully aware of the natives' potential for continued violence, Bienville and others acted to contain both them and it.

Killing the fur traders represented more than the loosening of the rules for a war of retribution. By killing the last trader without regard to the war rules, the Natchez effectively denied the French standing as their equals. The French did not deserve the same treatment as other, more worthy opponents. Symbolically, the Natchez warriors who declared war on the French essentially declared the Europeans impotent, both during offensive and defensive maneuvers.

Instead of deciphering the insult, however, the French focused on the violence. With the fifth death Bienville "realized that the matter was more serious than he had believed."[124] A force of just a few native men stalking the woods on the eastern side of the river could do a great deal of damage. Only four men incited a war and caused a royal lieutenant to bring a force of over thirty (albeit most suffered from poor health) soldiers to face the problem. The extreme hostility the Natchez warriors felt and acted on apparently necessitated almost ten times the number of French soldiers to counteract. French reaction also hearkened back to Iberville's declaration that the French must not show mercy to any Indian who killed a European.

[123] Bienville to Cadillac, 23 June 1716, *MPA* 3:214-215.

[124] Penicaut, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 176.

There was more to this war than the death of the traders reveals at first glance, especially when one reads the violence through the economy. The warriors' behavior, especially the brutality of their final kill, hints at the complexity of their motivations. By harassing traders in small companies, or colonists if necessary, the Natchez could quickly and efficiently disrupt the trade routes running through the region while creating an atmosphere laden with fear. Striking at French interests in moving goods, the Natchez vindicated themselves by attacking the low-level French economy. Interrupting the exchange process caused problems for the traders and authorities in North America and Europe. The economy thrived when traders and authorities provided dependable services. Interrupting the flow of trade goods threatened stability; by doing so the natives threatened the network of colonies that ran the length of the river. They endangered the colonists' livelihoods. In doing so they attempted to stall French settlement. The more lucrative the trading post on Natchez land became, the more appealing the site looked for permanent European settlement. Since many French settlers, leaders, and writers who described the region agreed in their opinion that the Natchez land was the best along the river, it seemed unavoidable that Europeans would continue to pursue permanent settlements there and thus needed to settle their differences with the Indian inhabitants. "It was decided that," Penicaut explains, "inasmuch as the Natchez are established on the bank of the Missicipy, we needed to make peace with this nation."[125]

Beyond the economic factors at work during the war, one can view the attack on the *couriers du bois* as originating with inadvertently offensive French actions. French colonies had steadily moved up the river, drawing closer and closer to the Natchez villages. In 1714, Jerome Phelypeaux, Comte de Pontchartrain, Minister of Marine and Colonies, made clear to Bienville that he wanted a permanent post or fort on Natchez territory to exploit their trade relations and to

[125] Ibid., 179.

develop a more pronounced military presence in the region. The villages of the Natchez provided an ideal space for a successful post, especially because of their placement along the riverbank. Natchez territory, some 80 leagues upriver from New Orleans, provided a practical stopping point for traders and travelers. Even Charlevoix noted that "if ever Louisiana becomes a flourishing colony, as it may very well happen, it is my opinion there cannot be a better situation for a capital than this [Natchez territory]."[126]

Already dividing their land between several different villages – the Grand Village, Flour, Tioux, Grigra, Jenzenaque, and White Apple – the Natchez became increasingly concerned by the French settlements developing in the same area.[127] While their presence in the region had once been amongst the most powerful, the Natchez found their influence and reputation threatened in the wake of European colonization. By the end of the incident of 1716, the Natchez had come to their own conclusions. They would not halt the flow of Europeans into their land. French desire for land and wealth overwhelmed the Natchez's ability to protect their own of each. Even aware of this, however, the Indians still tried to gain power over their European neighbors using strength and violence to protect their culture.

As part of the peace terms after the 1716 war, the French demanded land for a fort in Natchez territory. It would become the site of later violence. But initially the French hoped to protect the villages they had already established, the Saint Catherine concession and Terre Blanche ("White Earth"). The settlements housed French colonists who, after their leaders resolved the war, lived in relative peace with the Indians. The government still desired the protection of a fort for their citizens and their goods. They raised it, Fort Rosalie, without native

[126] Charlevoix, *Voyage to North America*, II:253.

[127] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 55-56.

harassment. Indeed, the Great Sun offered his people's aide for construction in an attempt to steady their shaky relationship with the French.

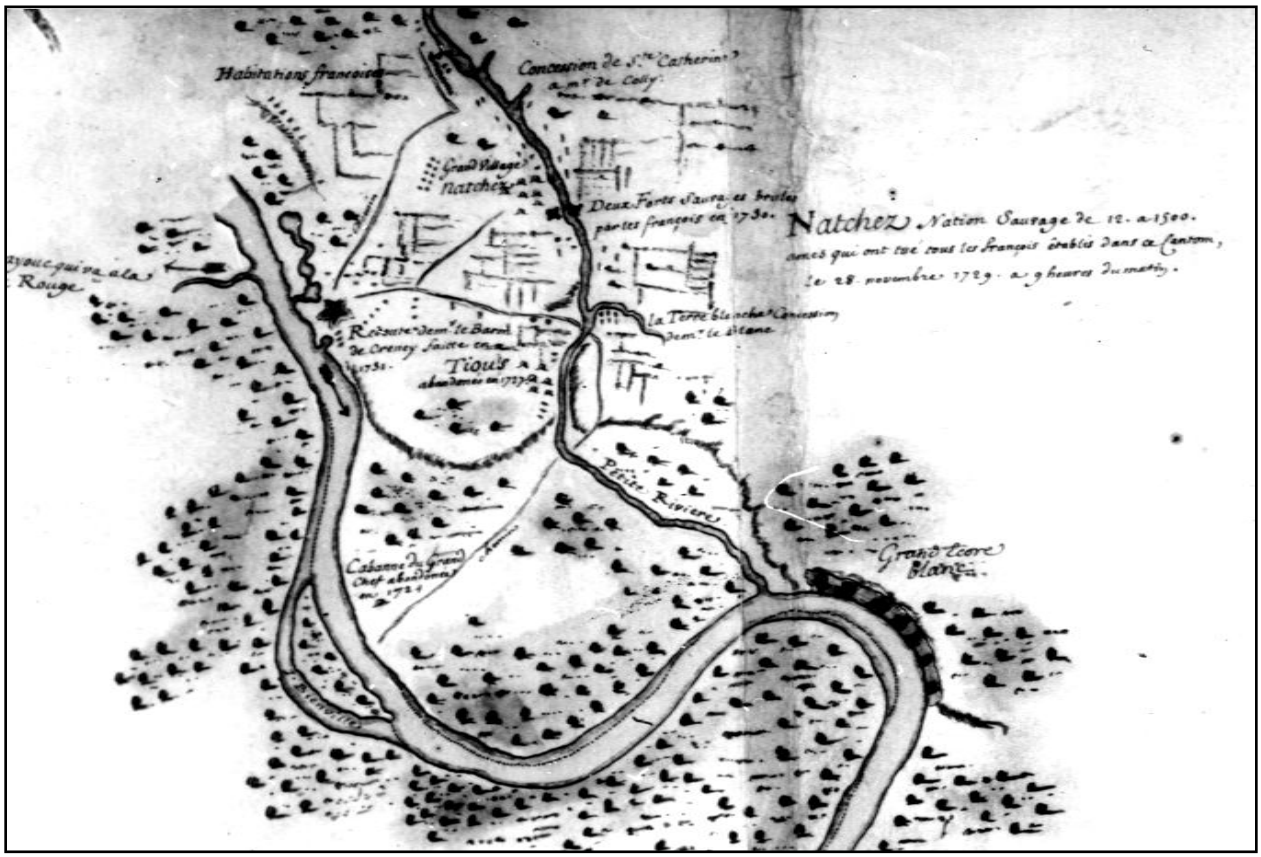

Figure 2 Location of French settlements around the Natchez villages. Detail from Ignace-François Broutin's 1731 map of the course of the Mississippi River from St. Louis to the Gulf Coast of Louisiana.

By the fall of 1722, over 100 white settlers lived and worked in Fort Rosalie, Terre Blanche, and Saint Catherine (see figure 2).[128] The fort and villages represented vastly different ideas to the Natchez and the French. For the Indians, the settlements confirmed their fear that they could do little to stop the disintegration of their culture and community. For the French, the three settlements showed their ability to successfully colonize Louisiana territory. Regardless of how each felt about the other, they had managed to avoid further large-scale violence for several years. The cultures had built tentative, small-scale trade associations that allowed controlled

[128] Ignace-Francois Broutin, "Carte particulère du cours du fleuve Mississipi ou St Louis à la Lousiane, depuis la Nouvelle Orléans jusqu'aux Natchez, " from UNC-RLA, http://rla.unc.edu/Natchez/index.html#sec_a (accessed 30 March 2009).

exchange. The settlers' presence seemed permanent and the Natchez tried to accept and take advantage of it.[129] And until 1722 they did.

[129] Ibid., 73.

CHAPTER 3

1722-1723, THE SECOND WAR

"In [1722], towards the end of summer, we had the first war with the Natchez."[130] Le Page du Pratz named the second of the three wars as the first, overlooking the engagement in 1716 because he had yet to settle in Natchez territory. "This first attempt," he continued, "I justly imagined was to be followed by another."[131] His predictions were accurate. The first wave of the war, the smaller wave, died out after only a short while and a few deaths. When the second wave broke, however, mass destruction followed in its wake. The origins of and meanings behind the violence, as well as it's escalation, reveal two cultures fighting to control each other and the changing socio-economic landscape.

The first phase of the war began over a native's debt owed to a French soldier. The entrance of the French into Natchez territory, two decades before, had immediately signaled the development of trade. As their economic relationships grew, the personal relationships between the two peoples necessarily evolved. Instead of Indians and Europeans, savages and civilized, the villages now housed creditors and debtors. When a young soldier at the newly constructed Fort Rosalie extended a line of credit to an old Natchez warrior, he expected the Indian to honor his repayment requests. "The warrior," Le Page du Pratz noted, "was to give him some corn."[132] When the soldier wanted to collect his payment, however, the elderly Indian resisted, requesting more time to raise his balance. According to du Pratz, the man made excuses, "that the corn was not yet dry enough to shake out the grain; that besides his wife had been ill, and that he would

[130] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 35.

[131] Ibid., 37.

[132] Ibid., 36.

pay [soldier] as soon as possible."[133] The soldier rejected what the Indian said, threatened to bludgeon him, and ultimately had the warrior shot as the old man left Saint Catherine concession. The soldier had the misfortune of killing an old Natchez warrior from White Apple, a village which had been at the center of the previous war.[134] The White Apple villagers again readied for a war with the French at the settlements.

The commandant of the fort soon learned of the situation, having heard accounts of the incident from both Frenchmen and Indians. The Natchez called for appropriate and equal punishment of the French soldier. Aware of the possible repercussions of the man's actions, the commandant sent for Bienville in New Orleans. Meanwhile, during the course of a week, the White Apple warriors killed nearly a dozen Frenchmen. Their first casualty was a man returning to his home at Saint Catherine; the second a man asleep in his bed.[135] Natchez warriors then slew more colonists and several slaves while they worked in the fields and also butchered French livestock.[136] The settlers themselves did not retaliate, expecting the French army to strike back against the native forces. Instead of taking direct or immediate military action, however, the French authorities at Natchez sought out Tattooed Serpent to negotiate a peace. As the Natchez war chief, Tattooed Serpent agreed to act as a go-between for the French and the Natchez leaders at White Apple.

When Bienville decided not to go to Natchez, Tattooed Serpent set out to meet the commandant general in New Orleans. Upon their arrival, Bienville alternately calmed the natives with gifts and threatened them into passivity when he delivered a shrewd speech to the

[133] Ibid., 36.

[134] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 74.

[135] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 37.

[136] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 74.

Natchez representatives. On November 6, 1722, Bienville stated that if he learned "that at [Natchez] arrival at the village, instead of bringing it to tranquility and peace thou dost continue to speak evil I shall take such good measures to make thee repent…."[137]

Bienville warned the natives that the French would not allow any more attacks from the Natchez, that they would meet violence with violence. He did not, however, give an order to penalize the French soldier. "Both justice and prudence demanded to make an exemplary punishment of the soldier," Le Page du Pratz explained, "but he got off with a reprimand… so that we ought not to be surprised, if the death of this old warrior raised his whole village against the French."[138]

One must examine the changing concept of trade or exchange in colonial Louisiana in order to understand the violent incident of 1722. Simple trade shaped the pre-colonial economy. Before the colonists arrived, Indians employed a system of reciprocity. One person or group would give an object of value, such as food, pottery, or tools, to another. While the two would not immediately agree upon repayment, the giver expected the receiver to return a good of equal value. Based on a system of trust, exchange often lacked urgency, though it was not entirely devoid of it.[139] When trade partners met each other's expectations, their relationship continued seamlessly. Their economy promoted trust between partners, villages, and tribes if executed properly and respectfully. They had no other forms of currency. This apparently simple economic system still existed when the European explorers entered the continent.

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[137] "Presents Given to the Natchez and Speech Made to Them by Order of Bienville," 6 November 1722, *MPA* 3:328-329.

[138] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 36-37.

[139] Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 310.

The entrance of Europeans changed the functions and goals of native exchanges. Once initiated, the participants in Native-French exchanges had to maneuver around each other in order to maintain the upper hand. Historian Alan Gallay notes that "relationships had to be continually renewed, with presents exchanged to secure renewal and as evocations of sincerity and goodwill…. [theirs was an] unstable world of ephemeral friendships and hostilities, where one's kin in another village could become an enemy overnight or where one's fellow villagers could turn on you…."[140] Into that world the Europeans entered without special bonds of kinship or village connections.

The practice of gift-giving established and maintained early colonial relationships when Europeans lacked any previous relationships. Europeans had to learn about the practice to enter into the native system of exchange. Native Americans had their own motivations for welcoming the Europeans with offerings. Tribal representatives donated gifts to explorers or settlers in order to gauge them. More than merely an act of goodwill meant to aide their journey, gift-giving temporarily introduced the French to native ways until they could more comprehensively understand native societies.[141] By receiving Indian gifts, they agreed to engage in a relationship in which Native Americans retained their power. The gift bound the European power to its native counterpart in the New World. After colonists accepted the gifts, Indians expected them to return the gesture, a continuation of reciprocity.[142] In sum, in its early stages, the colonial economy rested on native socio-economic structures.

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[140] Allan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 110.

[141] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 310.

[142] Wilson, *The Earth Shall Weep*, 39.

The French sensed hesitancy among the Natchez to commit to an exclusive economic, or any other, relationship. Without understanding basic tribal structure or the changes taking place within the tribe, colonists wrongly assumed that the tribe unanimously played a role in their troubled relationship. "All the Indians," Bienville stated in a letter to Pontchartrain about the nature of multi-nation power Louisiana, "like the French much better than they do the English, and if we could give them the same prices as the latter when we pay them for the skins that they offer in trade, we should attract them all."[143] The French lamented the fact that they could not exert greater influence over the Natchez but also recognized it had something to do with the British in the region.

By the late seventeenth century, English traders had entered the Mississippi Valley from the east where they had begun their own colonization. Their presence challenged the French colonies just beginning to appear while the French claim on Louisiana territory challenged the British trade there. The dual presence of the British and the French caused problems within and between tribes. Both European societies brought their own benefits and drawbacks and each offered different guarantees to the Indians. "Generally friendly with the French were the Grand Village, Tioux, and Flour village populations, while the White Apple, Jenzenaque, and Grigra villages were, seemingly, always aligned with the English."[144]

What influence the French did have came from gifting or sheer force since they could not halt the infiltration of British traders into the region. Bienville later wrote to Pontchartrain that he "shall inevitably be obliged to give presents to all these nations in order to constrain them to attach themselves to us and to reject the English," suggesting the lengths to which the French

[143] Abstract of Letters from Bienville to Pontchartrain, 28 July 1706, *MPA* 2:23.

[144] Brown, *Natchez Indian Archaeology*, 6.

would go in order to secure the patronage of the natives.[145] If the French did not pay special attention to each group, Commissary General Marc Antoine Hubert noted in 1717, "that alienates [the natives] and takes from them all good will when they see that all the promises that have been made them have no effect."[146] The French may have offered similar goods but the English set better prices.

The French adopted and adapted the native gift economy into one that would benefit them. To appease or mollify a native tribe or chiefdom colonists and military or government figures had to engage in gift-giving, sometimes without the hope of getting anything in return except for peace. The practice became part of the expected treatment toward tribes. In fact, many of the accumulated European goods in villages came as a result of gifting, as opposed to trading.[147]

A traditionally Native American economic system eventually showed signs that Europeans effectively reconfigured it to fit their society. The dual purposes of gift-giving – reward and preemptive peace-making – allowed the French to use it for multiple reasons with multiple outcomes. For example Bienville gave the Natchez gifts following the initial attacks on Saint Catherine, evidently in the hope that the goods would equal the value of the dead man and thus cause the Indians to stop their attacks.

The consequences of the changing exchange system had an effect on the actions of the young French soldier and the Natchez warrior. The Europeans promoted more, and continuous, economic exchange that placed burdens and expectations on both parties. Natives who had not usually recognized the accumulation of goods as a sign of wealth now began to see the necessity

[145] Bienville to Pontchartrain, 14 September 1706, *MPA* 3:31.

[146] Hubert to the Council, 26 October 1717, *MPA* 2: 250.

[147] Brain, *Tunica Archaeology*, 299.

in doing so.[148] As the Europeans introduced them to this form of business the Indians realized they needed an excess stock of goods on hand as well as more specialized skills to participate in the new economy. That is, Native Americans had to restructure their economic values in order to engage the Europeans, who required unique jobs to manufacture specific goods. As they produced the items the Europeans needed, American Indians evolved socially and economically. The new trade system altered the very idea of expectations toward an economic partner, especially as that system grew into a larger, continental network. Now trade participants put (re)payment on a timetable and shifted the economic dynamic from trust to suspicion. Both sides began to feel the effects of those changing expectations, which led to confrontations such as that between the French soldier and the old Natchez warrior. Trade had enormous social ramifications; it irrevocably altered the cultures involved.

Both sides of the economy, native and foreign, exploited the other in an attempt to gain economic control. During the initial stages of colonization both Indians and Europeans felt they could set the standards of trade. In a conversation between James Adair and a Chickasaw man, "Chikkasah Loáche," revealed "that both the red and white people were commonly too partial to themselves," so that each tried to gain more from an economic encounter.[149] The Europeans came bearing goods that were novel, goods that fascinated the natives who willingly bartered their valuable foodstuffs and furs to obtain those novelties. The Natchez, according to Le Page du Pratz, had grown complacent in their trade relations with the French. Attractive and

[148] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 311.

[149] James Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 97. Much later in his narrative, Adair laments the change to Native American society brought by the colonists. He writes that "this is the true situation of our Indian affairs… that pernicious practice of general licenses, by which crowds of disorderly people infest the Indian countries, corrupt their morals, and put their civilization out of the power of common means: the worst and meanest may readily get nominal security to intitle them to a trading license; and ill uses are made of them with impunity" (444). He feels that traders consistently lost the honor of their employment to greed and want. James Axtell also reflects upon this degradation of native society by unsavory traders in his *The Indians New South*, implying that they occasionally forced both violence and exchange.

interesting, European goods such as "fusils, gunpowder, lead, brandy, linen, cloths, and other like things," satisfied the Natchez so that they "came to be more and more attached to the French."[150]

When the old Natchez warrior could not pay back his debt to the young French soldier, he violated the new code of barter and exchange. Instead of having stock or goods specifically set aside to repay his creditor, or even gathering some soon after striking the deal, the Natchez man let what the soldier viewed as too much time pass and collected too few goods to repay his debt. The soldier expected equal payment on demand and the warrior expected leniency based on trust. Both men's expectations failed. Each clung to his own culture's trade rules, neither wanted to defer to the other. Their mutual unwillingness to compromise incited the ultimate exchange: violence.

Beyond the economic implications that started the war, the first phase of the war began as an act of revenge by the Natchez. Slightly different from retribution, revenge reflected the immediacy of an insult and called for swift action.[151] One of their people died at the hand of a Frenchman, therefore the French owed the Natchez a life. American Indians participated in this unforgiving but straightforward ritual when someone in their village was killed or otherwise maimed by natives or Europeans. Individuals had worth, they had value and importance in society, a death deserved recompense for the family and village. The compensation process required the sacrifice of either the guilty party or someone of equal value from the offending tribe. Once paid, death covered the debt of lost life; the exchanged was completed.[152]

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[150] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 35.

[151] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 240.

[152] Patricia Galloway, "The Barthelemy Murders: Bienville's Establishment of the Lex Talionis as a Principle of Indian Diplomacy," in *Practicing Ethnohistory: Mining Archives, Hearing Testimony, Constructing Narrative*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

Natchez attacks on the outpost reasserted their dominance over white settlers even as the French set about replacing "certain Indian institutions by others, French controlled but morphologically similar."[153] As in other spheres of culture, the French actively tried to change the system of retribution long used by the Native Americans. Instead of the traditional familial obligations to punish a criminal (or turn him or her over to the injured party) the French under Bienville's guidance subtly shifted the system to a more official one. In her examination of Lex Talionis, Patricia Galloway argues that Bienville took the initiative to use equality of punishment as decided by a legislative body as a substitution for Native American blood revenge.[154]

The economy of death within native communities caused them to uphold blood revenge even after colonists introduced them to a new justice system. Indians believed in the justice of retribution. Even in earlier conflicts, the Great Sun allowed the French to punish his people for their roles in the deaths of Frenchmen.[155] Because the French apparently refused to satisfy native calls for punishment in 1722, the Natchez exacted their revenge not on one man but on the entire French "village." Their warfare escalated, reflecting their growing anger toward the French. They fought not the soldier but the changing world that he represented.

The conflict expressed the ideas, about economy, debt, and trade, of each side with respect to the other. The French understood a type of trade that infringed on the traditional trade ideas of the Natchez. The death of the Natchez warrior resulted in a war because the French would not concede to the demands of the natives. Had French authorities punished or killed their soldier, the Natchez might have taken it as a sign of good will that the French had participated in

[153] Ibid., 246.

[154] Ibid., 246-247.

[155] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 69.

a straight trade: one life for another. But they did not and the Natchez refused to let them succeed in denying native cultural rituals.

Once the initial violence ended, the French and native residents at the Natchez returned to their usual practices, hoping that peace would last. The colonial government, however, worried that it would not. During the August 6, 1723, meeting of the Superior Council of Louisiana, Monsieur Fleuriau, attorney general of Louisiana, advised that the French government "must punish the massacres that [the Natchez] commits on the French when it finds any and the pillagings that it practices on them."[156] Fleuriau set harsh standards for treatment of the Natchez who had attacked French colonists at Saint Catherine. "The promises that the chiefs of this nation made at that time," he continued, "to restrain [White Apple] village and to prevent it in the future from doing any wrong or offering any insult to the French seemed to assure of great tranquility."[157] The tranquility did not last.

By early fall, 1723, Saint Catherine again came under attack from the Natchez. Natchez Indians targeted roaming farm animals from the colonial settlement in the second wave of their second war.[158] Natchez men began killing any French animal they found on their land. For this offense, Bienville descended on the Natchez with a force composed of native and European fighters. Le Page du Pratz participated in the combined French and Indian army. He put the number of soldiers around seven hundred, probably an exaggeration but a number that reinforced his story of how much damage they wrought.[159] To the Natchez, who felt the force of the slash and burn tactics that Bienville employed, it very well could have seemed as though seven

[156] "Minutes of the Superior Council of Louisiana," 6 August 1723, *MPA* 3:365.

[157] Ibid., 3 August 1723, *MPA* 3:360.

[158] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 90.

[159] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 41.

hundred angry Frenchmen swarmed through their land. Certainly, the French government hoped that an unprecedented amount of violence would force the Natchez to reconsider any further violence. In October of 1723 Special Commissary of the King, Sieur de la Chaise, however, lamented that Bienville could not get to the Natchez sooner. He worried that the commandant general had waited too long to retaliate so that any message the French sent with such violence would be lost, writing that he "hope[d] that with the aid of the Tunicas [Bienville] may be able to destroy the Natchez Indians, but he has gone there rather late for that."[160]

When Bienville reached the White Apple village he lashed out, murdering Natchez men, taking some of the women hostage and killing others, and burning the structures he came across. Once they finished razing the White Apple village, Bienville and his men moved to the villages of the Grigra and Jenzenaque. They destroyed everything and everyone in their path; even the elderly suffered under the Frenchmen's heavy hands.[161] Inhabitants of the targeted villages who did survive had to retreat to "difficult country" so the French army could not follow.[162] These tactics ended the military action.

When the hostilities ended Bienville once again assumed the duty of preparing a treaty dictating the rules for Natchez contact with the white settlers and other tribes. French leaders decided they needed peace to successfully protect their settlements at the Natchez. At the "fort of the Natchez on the twenty third of November, one thousand seven hundred and twenty three"[163] Bienville set the terms of peace, repeating French concerns over control and economy. He demanded the return of any slave taken from the French or hiding with the Natchez;

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[160] De la Chaise to the Directors of the Company of the Indies, 18 October 1723, *MPA* 2:374.

[161] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 90-91.

[162] "Minutes of the Council of War," 7 January 1724, *MPA* 3:386.

[163] Ibid., *MPA* 3:387.

recompense for any damage done to French livestock or crops and the future prohibition on attacking the animals; the peaceful coexistence amongst tribes, especially those friendly to the French; and finally "if the French were so imprudent to offer them any insult in spite of the prohibitions against doing so that have been given to them, [the Natchez] shall not seek to obtain their satisfaction for it themselves, relying upon the commandant who will do them justice according to the requirements of the cases."[164] That is, Bienville took away the power of the Suns to make independent diplomatic decisions. Under the new treaty, the Suns now had to include French authorities in their war or retribution decisions. Although the peace terms effectively drained the Natchez of their standing as an independent tribe, the Great Sun and Tattooed Serpent supported them just as they had supported those set in 1716.

Much as they did after the first war, the peace terms give insight into what concerned the French most about this second war. Once again fears for their economic networks motivated their reactions. But so too did confusion about inner-tribal warfare.

European colonists dealt with a constantly reorganizing Natchez tribe, "a coalescent population, comparable to the Upper Creeks, Lower Creeks, Choctaws, Catawbas, and other contemporary societies, rather than a chiefly survival."[165] Though repeatedly described as a prominent and coherent tribe of southeastern Native Americans, the Natchez suffered from the internal strain of incorporation and the ensuing fracturing of their society into political and military factions. The consequences of the process escaped the Europeans as they claimed space for themselves in North America. The tribe, in the post-contact era, had begun to rupture with its villages slowly separating into two distinct camps, the pro-French and pro-British with the White Apple strictly aligned with the British.

[164] Ibid., *MPA* 3:385-387.

[165] Smith, "Aboriginal Populations," 18.

Internal strife made it increasingly difficult for the Natchez to sustain entirely harmonious relations within and outside of the tribe. While adjusting to the new presence of the French, they had adopted "remnant groups from the north" like the Tioux and the Grigra, who shifted intertribal politics to an even greater degree.[166] That is, additional population further stressed the Natchez social system. Infighting increased as chiefs disagreed with each other on what to do about the Europeans while trying to integrate the recent tribal additions who brought their own traditions and opinions. The conflict between villages was manifested as power problems occurring in the native royalty as lesser chiefs began to make decisions for their individual villages that went against the Great Sun's own decisions. Tension spread throughout the tribe, filtering down through the village hierarchy. Then tension spread outside of the tribe, affecting their relationships with the French and other Indians. Internally and externally the Natchez were at war.

The Great Sun lost control of his lesser chiefs and they, in turn, were able to control their individual villages to a greater degree. Tribal power decentralized, especially when the chief's ability to control access to trade goods declined.[167] When the Natchez attacked the fur traders in 1716, Bienville called for their leader's head because the Old Hair had allowed his warriors to start a war, against the wishes of Tattooed Serpent and the Great Sun. Loss of control signaled weakness to the French, but also instability and a growing potential for future eruption of violence.

The village arrangements further strained their internal problems and encouraged such violence. "The Natchez did not live in nucleated villages. The Grand Village, the home of the

[166] Ian Brown, *Natchez Indian Archaeology: Culture Change and Stability in the Lower Mississippi Valley* (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Archaeological Report No. 15, 1985), 2.

[167] Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 314.

Great Sun, served as the sociopolitical nucleus for the Natchez as a whole, but it was largely a vacant ceremonial center. The rest of society was scattered across the landscape in districts which came under the jurisdiction of the secondary members of the Sun class."[168] Without having constant contact with all of his people, the Great Sun's authority suffered at the hands of his lower chiefs who split according to their European sympathies. He could not act preemptively to quell White Apple hostilities. He could only react to the little revolts taking place daily and try to stop them before they started something larger, like a revolution. Having his hands full with his people left the Great Sun with less time to soothe the French and strengthen the Natchez's relationship with them.

The French heightened the tension between themselves and the Indians by once again angering the White Apple faction of the Natchez. The villagers' dislike of the French had only grown over time since Bienville's 1716 demand that the Old Hair be punished for his part in the death of the French fur traders. Then the young French soldier killed a White Apple warrior over debt, and was never punished. The French disregarded the White Apple's need for repayment and left the villagers to simmer in anger while making peace with the Great Sun.

Stealing and slaughtering animals marked the beginning of the second phase of the war, whose actual causes are less clear than those of the first phase. The attacks on Saint Catherine materialized suddenly and inexplicably. The Natchez focused on animals as victims, projecting their anger toward the French on domesticated livestock, mocking and disrupting French practices.[169] Even though archaeologists have uncovered the remains of some domesticated

[168] Lorenz, "The Natchez of Southwest Mississippi," 161-162.

[169] Jill Lepore's 1998 book, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books) examines the implications of northeastern Indians slaughtering the Puritan's livestock. She comes to the conclusion that their aggression represented their distaste with the practice of raising domesticated animals. The Natchez may have felt the same distaste toward the French because the Indians were primarily engaged in agriculture for food production. James Taylor Carson, however, points out that the Choctaw eventually

animals at the Grand Village, such as cows or horses, nothing suggests that the Natchez actually raised them.[170]

One must return to the French efforts to shift Natchez socio-economic systems when examining the reasons for the conflict. Before the French could establish permanent residences where they could raise their own animals, they relied on their native neighbors for everyday supplies, causing Indians to restructure their societies for different types of production. Southeastern Native Americans changed their rituals to include their new lifestyles, focusing on life and death of animals as an extension of their owners.[171]

Rapidly growing, French settlements in the area may have violated boundary agreements between the Europeans and Natchez by allowing their animals to graze on native land.[172] If so, the Natchez of the White Apple village would not have hesitated to seek their revenge on the colonists. After a decade of increasingly tense relations, White Apple warriors needed little prompting to lash out at the French by killing roaming livestock.

Feeding on land outside the settlement lines, the animals technically grazed on Natchez resources therefore depriving the Indians of potential farmland and real crops. Since the Natchez engaged in agricultural production as a primary activity, they may have felt their livelihood violated when the French allowed their animals to roam loose. The Indians also needed to keep

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embraced cattle herding as an activity, proving that the southeastern Indians did accept the presence of domesticated animals in his "Native Americans, The Market Revolution, and Culture Change: The Choctaw Cattle Economy, 1690-1830," *Agricultural History*, vol 71, no 1 (Winter 1997). The Choctaw and Natchez were rather different tribes, though, and the Natchez may have had feelings closer to those of the Pequot for the British.

[170] Robert Neitzel, *The Grand Village of the Natchez Revisited: Excavations at the Fatherland Site, Adams County, Mississippi, 1972* (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Archaeological Report No. 12: 1983), 158-159.

[171] Carson, "Native Americans, the Market Revolution, and Culture Change," 12.

[172] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 90.

their land ready for growing and harvesting tobacco, one of their major trade goods.[173] With horses and cattle damaging the farm land, tobacco production may have suffered. Allowing their animals to invade Natchez land did not signal an overtly offensive act by the French, but still it deprived the Indians of their space, reinforcing European sprawl into Natchez territory. The Natchez could have easily decided to take their anger out on the French through their animals, illustrating their feelings through actions.

French settlers did not try to stop their animals from getting loose onto Natchez land. They took no compensatory action to make up for their animals' impact on the tribal environment, an act which may have calmed the Natchez and potentially prevented the events of 1723. With no measure of goodwill to assuage Indian anger, the French denied the Indians fair exchange and indirectly committed another offense against a tribe still angry over the lack of blood revenge for their warrior.

In order to fully understand the actions of the Natchez, one must consider that when the Indians attacked French livestock, by extension they attacked the French settlers' safety and wellbeing, signaling another instance of the Indians seeking to destroy economic potential and thus slow colonization. Not merely an important segment of a European economy, livestock helped organize and ease the stress of the daily lives of early colonists. Once they started herding their own animals and did not have to rely as much on Indians for meat, settlers earned more independence for themselves. Because they took different forms of sustenance from animals, amongst other uses for their various parts, colonists and Indians alike placed great value on them.

Both the Natchez and the French depended on their animals. Stipulations about animals appeared in the peace terms for both the 1716 and 1722-23 wars. For the French, livestock

[173] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 27-28.

ranked with slaves in value.[174] Bienville indicated, with a sweeping raid, that all attacks on animals must stop because the French could not afford to lose such valuable property. While livestock clearly signaled a link between economic and political success in the colonies, its importance still cannot explain the brutality with which Bienville set about destroying the villages of the Natchez.

Blazing a path through Natchez territory, Bienville's action made it abundantly clear that the French would no longer tolerate any major or minor offense from the tribe. When he asked for the right to grant rewards to any native ally who brought back the scalp of a Natchez warrior, Bienville effectively allowed enemies of the Natchez to declare war on them for no reason other than monetary gain.[175] His offer, originally used against the Chickasaw, promoted fighting between tribes, distressing their already volatile relationships.

Significantly, Bienville targeted the villages allied with the British during his raid at the Natchez. His forces razed the villages of the White Apple, Grigra, and Jenzenaque – punishment for their decision to pursue economic relationships with the British. The French were aware of the British attempts to lure Mississippi Valley Indian tribes to them through trade. Despite their diplomatic maneuvers, the French could not solidify their hold on the natives.[176] Thus Bienville's campaign against the pro-British villages served a cautionary purpose. He showed the other Natchez villages and surrounding tribes what could happen to them if they switched

[174] For the terms of the 1716 peace treaty see previous chapter, or, Bienville to Cadillac, 23 June 1716, *MPA* 3:213-214.

[175] Bienville to the Council, 26 September, 1723, "Minutes of the Superior Council of Louisiana," *MPA* 3:375-376; "Extract from the Register of the Minutes of the Council of February 8, 1721," and "Extract from the Letter of the Commissaries with the date of August 27, 1721," *MPA* 3:375. In 1721 the colonial French government established rules which allowed the army to offer monetary rewards for the scalps of enemy natives. When Bienville took his army against the Natchez, he offered the same rewards for scalps of Natchez warriors.

[176] Repeatedly in reports to the Superior Council of Louisiana, Bienville, De La Chaise, and others note the complications of building diplomatic relationships between themselves and major tribes such as the Chickasaw, Natchez, and Alabamas. Most often they cite tension between these tribes and others as well as their ties to British traders establishing posts in the region. See *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, volumes 2 and 3 for more.

their allegiances. Such threats would not have helped assuage the tension within the Natchez tribe, only subdue it while the pro-British Indians disappeared into the woods to gather their strength. His violence disrupted the immediate conflict but only added to the list of grievances the White Apple had against the French.

In 1716 Bienville's army had little to do besides guard the captive chiefs. Less than a decade later the French burned their way through Natchez lands, slaughtering the natives as the natives had French animals. The amount of violence Bienville let loose on the Natchez hints at the French state of mind by the early 1720s. The colony had evolved and so had the French way of thinking about and reacting to Indians. What began as a conflict between two individuals escalated into "shock and awe" as the French tried to assert their dominance over dissenting villages. The number of soldiers Bienville brought spoke of his intentions to dominate the Indians. The French had truly begun to fear the native forces in the region, especially the Natchez and Chickasaw tribes.[177] Each of the major tribes had enough power to raise pan-tribal armies, a fact which would haunt the French well into their final war against the Natchez.

Once again a war started largely due to the miscommunication between white men and their native counterparts, but with a very different outcome. When the French government did nothing to discipline the soldier that killed the Natchez man in 1722, the Natchez understood their demotion from the most civilized of the savage nations to mere savages. Besides an act of vengeance for the warrior, the raid on Saint Catherine Concession and Terre Blanche represented the White Apple villagers' rejection of such a demotion. The warriors wanted revenge for the death of their man.

[177] The three tribes composed the major native powers in the region. Often they were at odds with each other for various reasons but the French believed that if the natives could overcome their differences, they would be nearly unstoppable. Soon after the war with the Natchez ended, the French launched a campaign against the Chickasaw.

Natchez action during the first phase of the war, meant to negate French assumptions about native civilizations, caused the French to fortify their opinions that the Natchez were unpredictable savages. Instead of acting like a civilized chiefdom and meeting a French misstep with calm diplomacy, the Natchez relied on conflict for diplomatic communication. Their villages, already breaking apart, separated further as they descended into war and distrust. When Bienville stipulated in his peace terms, after the end of the second phase of the war, that the tribe could no longer make diplomatic decisions without the input of the French, he completed their demotion to a dependent tribe. His treaty cemented their loss of status.

Both cultures participated in an escalation in violence, the French army's more disproportionate than the Natchez warriors'. Tension between the French and Natchez continued to mount while they continuously adjusted to each other's presence. For the next seven years the Natchez and French upheld their treaty agreements of 1722, coexisting on the same land with little trouble. The colonists and the Natchez both seemed to tolerate each other's presence. The colonists flourished on the rich land while the Natchez continued to adjust their ways of life and society in an attempt to accommodate the changing world. The Great Sun again rebuilt trade relations with the settlers while the chief of White Apple remained on relatively peaceful terms with them. Each group went about its daily life relying on the truce to sustain harmony. But on November 28, 1729, the Natchez exploded into such violent action that no amount of negotiation could return them to a favorable position with the French. "The fatal moment was at last come."[178]

[178] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 90.

CHAPTER 4

1729, THE THIRD WAR

In the days preceding the 1729 Natchez assault on the French at Fort Rosalie, tribal elders gathered for a war council at the request of the Great Sun. Leaders of the tribe, long divided amongst themselves, now needed to respond to the French command that they abandon their land. One of the elders expressed a deep sadness over the degradation of his people and their lifestyle: "Before the French came amongst us, we were men, content with what we had, and that was sufficient: we walked with boldness every road, because we were then our own masters: but now we go groping, afraid of meeting thorns, we walk like slaves…."[179] The Natchez society had diminished, the boldness he spoke of was now gone. Control over their lives slipped away from the Natchez. They had lost their land, their independence and power, and their cohesion as a tribe.

Shortly before the council gathered, the commandant at Fort Rosalie, Sieur de Chépart, went to meet with Natchez village leaders. The commandant went with the expectation that the chief of the White Apple village would surrender his land to Chépart. In his account of the events leading up to the war Le Page du Pratz explained Chépart's expectations of the meeting. Chépart wanted to make French Natchez a prominent settlement. To do so he wanted to expand Saint Catherine concession, Terre Blanche, and Fort Rosalie. "For this purpose he examined all the grounds unoccupied by the French, but could not find any thing that came up to the grandeur of his views. Nothing but the village of the White Apple… could give him satisfaction."[180] He not only demanded that land, but also the land on which the Grand Village stood. Chépart engaged the Great and White Apple Suns in negotiations for the land with what, he must have

[179] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 83.

[180] Ibid., 79.

imagined, some success while, amongst themselves, the native leaders discussed their options at the war council and decided to fight the French.

On the designated morning of the attack, about thirty native warriors set in motion the plan that village elders developed at the war council.[181] Natchez men entered Fort Rosalie under the guise of trading goods for French weapons – "guns, powder, and balls" that they would use for hunting.[182] The Great Sun accompanied his men in order to keep the fort's commandant, Sieur de Chépart, distracted while the warriors spread out house to house, distributing themselves at least two or three to a structure. The chief brought the peace calumet to smoke with the commandant. With Chépart thus occupied and the Natchez executing everyday exchanges, the French had no reason to worry over the Indians crowding several skilled warriors into each home. As the warriors subtly moved into position, they awaited a signal from the Great Sun. Once they received it, the warriors launched an assault which involved turning the weapons they had just borrowed back on their owners.

While dancing the calumet with the commandant, the Great Sun and his attendants captured Chépart's weapons. The first shots to ring out, when the chief and his men turned their guns on the commandant, signaled the beginning of the attack. Using the guns traded to them earlier in the day, the Natchez attacked with such rage that after slaughtering the men "they slashed open the abdomens of all pregnant women, and they slew nearly all those who were nursing infants, because they were annoyed by their screams and tears."[183] Yet even then the violence did not end. They tortured the surviving white women and children with the idea that "the French had been treated in the same manner at all the other posts, and that the country was

[181] Périer to Maurepas, 28 November 1730, *MPA* 1:62.

[182] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 225.

[183] Le Petit, *The Natchez Massacre*, 18.

now entirely freed from them."[184] By the end of the day, the Natchez warriors had killed 250 French colonists and held Fort Rosalie and a French galley that was anchored at the foot of the bluffs.

Both the governor of Louisiana and the commandant at Mobile had lamented Fort Rosalie's lack of a significant defensive army.[185] According to Merveilleux, the fort "was defended by twenty-five soldiers and 280 black slaves who were led by three officers," a paltry force compared to the "500 [Natchez] men accustomed to bearing arms."[186] The Natchez brutally exposed that weakness when they raided the fort "so it cost the Natchez only twelve men to destroy two hundred and fifty [French]."[187] They had not experienced such a vicious, mass killing as the attack on Rosalie. The only other incident that came close was a confrontation with French settlers by the Yazoo tribe after the Natchez started their war.[188] The Yazoo killed less than twenty settlers but, immediately following the Natchez attack, the French feared a spreading epidemic of violence and a wide-ranging native conspiracy.[189]

Following the initial raid on Fort Rosalie, the two societies took different approaches to recovery. The Natchez returned to their villages with the scalps of their enemies, the bounty from their enemies' homes and a new population of enslaved settlers and captured African slaves. They went about their daily business unphased by the eruption of violence. They even

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[184] Ibid., 19.

[185] Périer to Maurepas, 5 December 1729, *MPA* 1:54-56.

[186] Merveilleux, *Massacre at Natchez*, 9-10. Le Petit added an index of victims onto his account of the massacre at Fort Rosalie, see pp 40-42.

[187] Périer to Maurepas, 28 November 1730, *MPA* 1:62.

[188] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 101.

[189] On several occasions, Périer noted the significant impact that fear of a native conspiracy had on the French colonists and army. He also used the fear to justify extreme actions taken against smaller tribes. See Périer to Maruepas, 28 November 1730, *MPA* 1:61-70; Périer to Maurepas, 18 March 1730, *MPA* 1:71-76; Périer to Ory, 18 December 1730, *MPA* 4:39-45.

celebrated the massacre with songs, dancing, and feasts.[190] The French, on the other hand, fled or hid to avoid a second attack.

The few French survivors brought news of the attack to New Orleans, reaching the port city by early December.[191] Military leaders scrambled to gather a force in response to the massacre while trying to protect their other settlements. After learning details of the slaughter the French knew they had to react and make an example of the Natchez lest other tribes be tempted to take similar action. Commandant General Etienne Périer reached out to the Choctaw to help him launch a series of counterattacks even though he feared they could be a part of the conspiracy. Once it became clear that the Choctaw would provide a several-hundred-warrior force, the French felt comfortable enough to begin to move against the Indians.[192] This forced the majority of the Natchez population to retreat to a series of forts along the Mississippi River.

Though they had apparently placed themselves at a disadvantage by immediately taking a defensive position, the Natchez manipulated their supplies and surroundings expertly.[193] Their early retreat allowed the Natchez to utilize the positions at Fort de La Farine and Fort Valeur to their fullest potential. Though they sang songs of death and defeat as they evacuated into the forts, the Natchez demonstrated their confidence in an eventual triumph when they left behind a few men and women to plant the corn crop for the following season.[194] Taking cannon and cannonballs from the now ghostly Fort Rosalie, the warriors prepared for the arrival of the Choctaw and French. Meanwhile the opposing French and Indian army, upon reaching Natchez

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[190] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 106.

[191] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 96-97. The French were particularly concerned with protecting their settlement at New Orleans.

[192] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 109.

[193] Ibid., 111.

[194] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 98.

territory, camped there, everyday moving closer to the forts. Fighting between the two forces went on for days.[195] Mathurin Le Petit reported that the French tried negotiating for a "peace-offer to the savages, to be able under this pretext to learn their strength and position."[196] Still, the Natchez held the forts against their enemies into February.

Even when those occupying Fort de la Farine hoisted the white flag against the French, they managed to organize an escape.[197] After a vicious speech given by Alibamon Mingo of the Choctaw, the Great Sun sent representatives with gifts and apologies to the French. Ostensibly reacting to threats of bombardment and a supplies blockade, the Natchez negotiated their departure to the west bank of the Mississippi in exchange for the release of white women and children and the slaves they had stolen from the French. Then, while the French moved their cannon closer and repositioned themselves outside the forts' walls, the Natchez fled "having found the secret of deceiving the French."[198] Their secret involved sacrificing some of their own people. When a group of Natchez warriors surrendered into French custody, they kept French attention focused on them. Meanwhile the other members of the tribe stole out another exit.

The Natchez began to disperse after their flight from the forts, splitting into smaller groups and scattering to make French attacks on them more difficult, successfully drawing out the war. Some retreated further to the west, continuing to actively fight, retreat, and retaliate. Others hid from the French either in small, mobile units or with the Chickasaw or other allied tribes. They lived off the land, avoiding a French army that could not seem to bring the war to a

[195] Ibid., 98-99.

[196] Le Petit, *The Natchez Massacre*, 27.

[197] Diron d'Artaguette to Maurepas, 20 March 1730, *MPA* 1:76-81.

[198] Ibid., *MPA* 1:80.

close. A full year after the attack on Fort Rosalie, Périer still wondered how to best defeat the Natchez.[199]

Further exacerbating French fears about them, the Natchez executed a viscous yet savvy attack on the Tunica. Instead of following through on their threat to unite with the Tunica, made over a decade before, the Natchez targeted the tribe. "After having spent the night in celebration and in dancing the calumet," Diron d'Artaguette, the commissary general, recorded, "which is a sign of peace and alliance among them, they took the sleeping Tunica by surprise at daybreak and murdered them all in their cabins, together with several Frenchmen settled in their village."[200] As they had during the attack on Fort Rosalie, the warriors blended trust and deception to fool their enemies. The attack on the Tunica only added to the brutality of the war. It communicated that Natchez rage extended to those who allied with the French, that they retained enough force to remain a legitimate enemy.

The war dragged on. In December of 1730 Périer wrote to Philibert Ory, the comptroller general, that the Natchez still had up to 300 warriors ready to fight, according to reports from scouts and other tribes. "If I had received," he stated, "the assistance that I was led to expect, I would already have set out to complete the destruction of the Natchez, which is absolutely necessary in order to serve as an example to the other nations."[201] Military action stretched over two years; even King Louis XV, an ocean away, noted the persistence of the Natchez. Referring to the previous war against the tribe he wrote to Bienville in 1732 that "we had flattered ourselves that the last one had reduced these Indians to such a condition that they could no longer cause any uneasiness, but what has happened since has shown only too clearly that their

[199] Périer to Ory, 15 November 1730, *MPA* 4:52-56.

[200] Diron d'Artaguette to Maurepas, 24 June 1731, *MPA* 4:76.

[201] Périer to Ory, 18 December 1730, *MPA* 4:41.

defeat was not so general as had been believed." He grasped the ongoing danger that the Natchez represented.

As the war continued the French became irritated, increasingly more suspicious of the natives, and impatient to end the fighting. The French hoped the surviving Natchez would finally surrender. A large faction had sought refuge on an island on Silver Creek, a tributary of the Black River, avoiding detection for some time.[202] Once located by the French, again facing starvation and bombardment, some of the Natchez surrendered. But enough remained throughout the region to continue to worry the French.

It seemed that every time the French thought they could declare the war over and the Natchez no longer a threat, the Indians would reappear, causing Périer to acknowledge the necessity "of making our colonists accustomed to war…."[203] Not only did he want to intimidate the natives by proving that the French would and could fight, Périer wanted the colonists to accept war as a part of life. He prepared them for the harsh reality of living with the natives. Colonists had to be prepared if the Indian tribes decided to form an alliance and continue to attack the French.

Only after the French army captured the major members of the Sun lineage did the war finally come to a close. Charlevoix chronicled the end of the war, writing that "the same day all the prisoners were bound; the Sun, his brother, brother-in-law, Saint Cosme and all of that family were put on board the *Saint Louis*… the whole army embarked on the 27th [of January], and on the 5th of February reached New Orleans."[204] Le Page du Pratz finished the narrative,

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[202] The island on which some of the Natchez army took shelter is described in Le Page du Pratz as one "up the Red River, then the Black River, and from thence up the Silver Creek" (*The History of Louisiana*, 94).

[203] Périer to Ory, 18 December 1730, *MPA* 4:40.

[204] Charlevoix in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 247.

elaborating on their status once captured and what happened to the Natchez captives when they reached New Orleans. "The French army re-embarked," he wrote, "and carried the Natchez as slaves to New Orleans, where they were put in prison... Some time after, these slaves were embarked for St. Domingo," where they would live as slaves.[205] The Natchez who remained in hiding had few options. They scattered about the region, hiding or assimilating into the surrounding tribes that would accept them. Their two most powerful allies, the Chickasaw and the Cherokee, incorporated Natchez into their tribes. French officials, now referring to the Natchez as "slaves," tortured, burned, and eventually killed the Indians they could not send to the Caribbean islands. Bienville only declared the Natchez no longer a threat in August of 1742, over a decade after the initial attacks.[206]

The aftermath of the war in 1729 must have confirmed early Natchez suspicions that their position in the colony had declined significantly; the French had demoted them to slaves. Southeastern Indians had long recognized the benefits of slavery as punishment for war captives. After colonization began, European powers, and particularly the British, encouraged slaving by pitting native tribes against their traditional enemies. The slave trade built economic bonds between the Indians and Europeans but also caused Native Americans to reexamine their own socio-political relationships. Beginning in the late seventeenth century Europeans contacted coastal chiefdoms and through them made their way to the inland tribes.[207] "[The slave trade] forced every group that lived in the South," writes historian Alan Gallay, "to make decisions

[205] Louboey to Maruepas, 23 June 1740, *MPA* 4:168-171. Merveilleux refers to this island as *Isle de la Pomme*, possibly naming it after one of the Natchez chiefs hiding there (the French word *pomme* translates to apple, associated with the chief of the White Apple village).

[206] Bienville to Maurepas, 5 August 1742, *MPA* 4:72.

[207] Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 17.

about themselves and their relations with their neighbors. It led southern peoples to reassess their individual and group identities."[208]

The Natchez decided early in the colonial era that they would not allow themselves to become slaves, having enough power to withstand many of the surrounding tribes. The Natchez instead became the catchers. They dealt in other Indians, selling them to either French or British traders.[209] Catching slaves provided another outlet for the Natchez to take their revenge on tribes who had offended them.[210] It also kept their own villages safe from raids; slave traders were less likely to victimize them if the Natchez could already provide slaves. Yet over time the Natchez saw themselves reduced to mere slaves; even their Great Sun suffered such a fate. "For the least fault of our young people," an old Natchez warrior grieved, "[the French] will tie them to a post, and whip them as they do their black slaves."[211] Not only did the French degrade the nation with punishments but by the form of punishment. Without dignity, the Natchez seemed to lose hope in their ability to withstand the onslaught of French customs. They had never before occupied such a low standing in society as to receive the same beatings as slaves. The Natchez could unite to fight against their enslavement. That was, after all, an underlying effort in each of their wars: to throw off the increasingly heavy yoke of the French.

The success of the initial attack on Fort Rosalie could not have happened before 1729 because the Natchez could never fully unite against the French, regardless of the magnitude of European insults or offenses. They managed to overcome their factionalism, however, for several reasons. First, Tattooed Serpent and the Great Sun died within three years of each other,

[208] Ibid., 9.

[209] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 31.

[210] Ibid., 30-31.

[211] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 83.

followed soon thereafter by the Flour chief. Thus the French lost their two greatest allies in the war chief and the Sun, and another friend in the old Flour chief by 1728.[212] For the duration of the two previous wars, the chief and his brother voiced their support for the French and disassociated themselves from the pro-British villages. The death of Tattooed Serpent had signaled the end of an era of acquiescence, devastating French attempts at diplomacy. As the war chief, Tattooed Serpent ranked just under the Great Sun in the hierarchy of power. His opposition to the earlier wars spoke volumes about how he gauged the French as enemies and allies. He found allying with them more logical; they had the larger presence in the region, theirs was the more immediate threat when compared to the British.

The elder Great Sun tried to maintain some stability but his chiefdom's growing factions made this task rather difficult. Constantly trying to ease friction between villages, the Great Sun could not always manage the external issues of French settlement. Over time he began to lose control over internal issues of his chiefdom. Perhaps growing weary of the constant tensions in his villages, and the leaders of the White Apple village repeatedly inciting violent exchanges, the Great Sun surrendered several lesser chiefs to the French following both wars. Bienville's details of the final peace agreements of 1716 in a letter to Cadillac included news about the chiefs. In it, he revealed that "all these nations and these Natchez also regard it as a great satisfaction that they have delivered to us [White Apple's] great war chief and two of his warriors as the author… who had constantly urged his nation to make war on the others that are neighbors of ours."[213] In purging the tribe of contentious lesser chiefs in 1716, the Great Sun alleviated some tribal strain and temporarily prevented the French from mounting elaborate attacks against his people like those exacted by Bienville in 1723. The chief tried to protect his

[212] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 100.

[213] Bienville to Cadillac, 7 July 1716, *MPA* 3:214.

tribe from itself and from outsiders, recognizing the blend of internal and external conflict. The Great Sun's death sounded the death knell of civil Natchez relations with the French.

A young and impressionable son of the White Woman took the title Great Sun after the death of his predecessor.[214] The new chief surrounded himself with the elder members of the tribe, seeking advice from more experienced leaders.[215] Le Page du Pratz guessed the age of the prior Great Sun at around ninety.[216] If correct, he had experience enough to understand the dynamics of colonization and culture contact and know that his people needed a strong, singular leader even if they did not recognize it. Unfortunately for the French, when the new Sun asked for advice, the chief of the White Apple gained his confidence quickest. The French now contended with the White Apple chief dictating to the tribe through the youthful chief; the chief turned the European trick of holding Indian chiefs hostage on its ear when he began to rule through his leader.

Once the White Apple chief had the greatest influence over the new Great Sun, he gained power over the tribe, finally bringing the villages together against the French. Aware of the ramifications of starting a war with the colonists, the chief nevertheless believed that the combined power of all the villages and their warriors could overwhelm the French. Over a decade had passed since Bienville demanded the death of Old Hair, the White Apple chief; over a decade since the warriors of White Apple initiated the first war against the French. The call for blood revenge for Old Hair in 1716, the old warrior in 1722, and the villagers killed in Bienville's 1723 campaign, still sounded. Tattooed Serpent may have found it safer to assuage

[214] The White Woman , also called the Sun Woman, was the matrilineal head of the tribe. Her bloodline determined the royal Sun lineage.

[215] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*, 100-103.

[216] Le Page du Pratz in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 112.

the Frenchmen's feelings and side with them but the White Apple chief thought that the safest, easiest option for regaining control of Natchez lives and reasserting their power in the region involved simply destroying the Europeans. Diplomacy would not work, as experience showed. The Natchez would not fight with the French if the French were not there. He managed to convince the Great Sun of the advantage in uniting against the French but not without help from the French themselves.

Described by his contemporaries as "a drunkard and a thoughtless man" the commandant of Fort Rosalie "is the cause of the destruction of this post because he used violence upon the Apple Chief whose land and cabins he took in order to make himself a farm there."[217] His demand that the Natchez evacuate their territory, a move that even French officers described as "an unjust tribute" and other native leaders called "harsh treatment," triggered the rapid mutation of Natchez tension into violent action.[218] Chépart even knew of the attack beforehand. Settlers had warned him that "the Natchez were going to destroy [them] on the next morning."[219] Instead of heeding such warnings, Chépart had the men who delivered them put in chains. Thinking either that the French could easily defend themselves against such savages or that he had the confidence of the Natchez and they would not attack, he ignored the danger.

Chépart's disregard of Natchez traditions had a devastating effect on the colonists and Indians, especially when his scouting of the land interrupted a major Natchez celebration, the Great Corn Moon. One of their most important gatherings, the entire tribe came together in the fall to celebrate the corn harvest and, ideally, a full granary.[220] Le Page du Pratz recorded a

[217] Broutin to the Company, 7 August 1730, *MPA* 1:128.

[218] "Journal of Regis du Roullet," *MPA* 1:170-192, 176.

[219] Bienville to Maurepas, 28 January 1733, *MPA* 3:581.

[220] Charlevoix in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 118.

Great Corn feast: "On the feast-day the whole nation set out from their village at sun-rising, leaving behind only the aged and infirm that are not able to travel…."[221] The tribe had to put aside their differences to celebrate the tradition; a symbolic unification. During the celebration they recognized the symbolic power of the Great Sun. Warriors presented him on a litter which they carried from his abode to the pre-prepared space in the Grand Village. The tribe then feasted on freshly harvested corn. They sang and danced for the duration of the day. The youth participated in war games that allowed them to challenge each other's exploits and detail what they hoped to accomplish for themselves in the future. On the following day the warriors participated in mock fights so that the villagers could judge their prowess. Most importantly in 1729, they all witnessed the French commandant surveying their land.[222] They collectively noted a man more interested in building plantations than relationships, which helped the tribe finally and totally unite.

As previously noted, the Natchez found offense in the violation of native ceremonies or traditions. Not only did Chépart neglect native traditions with his lack of respect for the Great Corn Moon, he also directly challenged the power of the Great Sun. Ceremonial duties revolved around understanding various manifestations of power. The ceremony showed that the natural world had the power to provide sustenance; the Great Sun, theoretically, had power over his nation invested in him by the Sun god itself; warriors had power over each other and their enemies. The Natchez welcomed French inhabitants of the surrounding settlements to join their celebration provided the colonists respected native traditions. "The Frenchmen were themselves admitted to come and strike the post," Dumont wrote. He then went on to note that though the French outwardly appeared to respect the Indians, they "said in French to the savages all the

[221] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 339.

[222] Ibid., 338-340.

injurious things possible, as some among them did who on addressing themselves to them said to them, 'Is it not true that you are all rogues?' etc."[223] Those insults, spoken in French, may have been disrespectful to the Natchez but they did not disrupt the ceremony; the Natchez tolerated the slights because, according to Dumont, they could not understand them.

Chépart went far beyond simple slurs. His demand that the Natchez evacuate their territory placed him above the Great Sun, especially after the Sun appeared to acquiesce to Chépart's claim.[224] Once again a French authority figure stole power from the Natchez ruling class. Instead of participating in the proper ceremonies, engaging in gift-giving, and showing an appropriate amount of respect for Natchez royalty, Chépart abused his welcome and demeaned the Great Sun. When the Sun negotiated a payment for the land and then called for a war council, he signaled to his people that a large conflict loomed in the future.

It is necessary to know the Natchez foundational myth in order to fully understand how deeply Chépart's demand affected the Indians and why they reacted to it with such an explosive conflict. Myth told that a man descended from the sun appeared amongst the tribe and set a series of rules for them to obey. They "must never kill any one but in defense of [their] own lives;…[they] must never take any thing that belongs to another;…[they] must not be avaricious, but must give liberally, and with joy, part of what we have to others who are in want…."[225] While the entire tribe had broken these rules at one time or another, especially in the context of its relationships with the settlers, it had kept the most important rule intact. The success and longevity of their tribe, and the sun god's ruling over it, depended on its location. Describing their move to the Natchez territory to Le Page du Pratz, the chief guardian of the sacred temple at

[223] Dumont in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 120.

[224] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 95.

[225] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 331.

the Grand Village told the settler that the god dictated "that we would go and inhabit another country, better than that in which we were, which he would shew us."[226] If they followed the rules the god set, in the land where he brought them, they could protect their culture. Even though the Sun of the White Apple explained their beliefs and traditions to Chépart, the commandant still commanded the Natchez to violate this most important rule. The following conflict showed the French the importance of that most significant rule.

The Natchez's violent explosion related the depth of their distaste of French social and diplomatic behavior. The French settlers had violated enough native traditions and ceremonies and had tried to change Natchez society too much. The Natchez fought back against the violations and change with violent action once they found they could no longer negotiate with French leaders. Without a diplomatic avenue to try and patch their problems with the French, the Natchez had to take extreme action.

Buying his tribe time to vote yes to war and gather enough warriors, the Great Sun set into motion exactly what the French feared the most. He united the tribe and unleashed on the settlers the full power of a people trained to fight. And he threatened to bring other native nations to the fight. Le Petit expressed such fear on behalf of the inhabitants of New Orleans when he wrote "that the Choctaws might decide to fall upon the city, or that, to free themselves from slavery, the negroes might join with them, just as some had joined the Natchez…."[227] They worried that the angry force of the now-united Natchez would draw in slaves and Indians alike.

For their part, French officials and colonists suffered from the nearly paranoid idea that most of the Native American nations in their region would join together in a vast conspiracy. This notion had some basis in fact, but mostly reveals how precarious the French felt. Acting on

[226] Ibid., 331.

[227] Le Petit, *The Natchez Massacre*, 26.

this apprehension Périer pursued genocide as a diplomatic and military strategy against the Natchez. The violent force of fear drove the French to pay excessively close attention to all Indian nations, indicating the power the tribes had in controlling the Europeans. The French even considered that the Choctaw, who had generally kept good relations with the French, played a role in the conspiracy. In an account that Périer sent to Maurepas about French actions from December 2, 1729 through March 11, 1730, the governor's scribe noted that

> It seems that the suspicion that [Périer] had had that the Choctaws were going to betray the French was not without foundation for during the siege the Natchez reproached the former with it, relating publicly the circumstances of the general conspiracy and even threatening that the English and the Chickasaws were coming to cause the siege to be raised, during which there were fifteen men killed.[228]

Périer continued that French forces needed to attack smaller tribes because they too posed a threat. His words revealed the power of the larger tribes in controlling their native and French neighbors.[229] His actions confirmed the fact that he, if not everyone in the colony, felt increasingly uncomfortable around some of the surrounding native population. By the early summer of 1730 Périer had sent the Tunica against the Yazoo and Koroa even while he sent a small French force against the Chaouachas for the same reason: intimidation. The Chaouachas were a small tribe outside of New Orleans, made up of around thirty households.[230] They posed no great threat to the French but because of their small size and location, the Chaouachas made a perfect target for Périer. He could easily defeat them and then present their deaths as a victory over native forces. The extinction of the Chaouachas comforted the colonists, giving them and the army a boost in their confidence.

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[228] Périer to Maurepas, 18 March 1730, *MPA* 1:73.

[229] Ibid., *MPA* 1:71.

[230] Woods, *French-Indian Relations*, 97.

To comprehend the meaning of French violence in reaction to the Natchez, one has to recognize their desire to maintain control in Louisiana. The French authorities in the territory had long upheld the policy of punishing any native wrongdoing to keep control in the colony. The very real worry that they felt over the conspiracy, added to the carnage at Fort Rosalie, intensified that policy. Their systematic, if drawn out, destruction of the tribe proved their determination to put down any rebellion from any tribe and their willingness to use any means to do so. Aside from communicating the level of stress that native relations caused the French, the attempt to erase the Natchez also sent a message to the English that the French would fight to maintain their hold on the Mississippi Valley and its Indian inhabitants.

James Adair, writing some years after the end of the war, suggested that the conspiracy, far more wide-ranging than the French thought, originated with the English. He wrote that English traders convinced the Chickasaw, "who never had any good-will to the French," to go to the Natchez and propose "to cut off the French, as they were resolved to inslave [sic] them in their own beloved land."[231] The Chickasaw had long allied with British traders, causing problems for the French. On April 10, 1730, Périer betrayed the amount of distress the British traders, added to the supposed native conspiracy, caused the French when he wrote that "this last war shows that we were doubly wrong in not destroying the Natchez when we could do so, as well as the Chickasaw."[232] When the French went to war with the Natchez, and then followed that war with one against the Chickasaw, they effectively sent a message to British traders. The French would maintain dominance in the region even if it meant subjugating or destroying the tribes allied with the British.

[231] Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 379.

[232] Périer to Maurepas, 10 April 1730, *MPA* 1:118.

The violent exchanges between French and Natchez during the war exposed the power struggle occurring in the Louisiana territory. The valuable resources of the region, including the Mississippi River itself, caused the French, Indians, and British to clash over who would control them. Périer wanted to intimidate natives and Europeans and assert unquestionable French dominance in the region in response to growing concern over the British presence. In order for him to do that, the war on the Natchez needed to be total and it needed to end with a French victory. Périer made an example of the Natchez especially toward the end of the war as French forces readied for another campaign against the Chickasaw. The French used the conflict to both express and assuage their fears of losing control after such a loss resulted in mass death at Fort Rosalie. They needed to reassert their strength with a show of force.

Eventually reports of brutality against the native population of colonial Louisiana, those shows of force, reached France. French officials' distance allowed them a somewhat less biased examination of the actions and the incidents. In the thirty years since French settlements had sprung up and had to defend themselves against various enemies, officials in France had not sent the reinforcements their colonial authorities requested.

Comptroller General Philibert Ory criticized Périer's campaign against the Natchez and other tribes after the massacre. He called the threat of a conspiracy a "suspicion lightly conceived" and reproached the commandant general. "What do you think that the Indians will think when they see entire nations destroyed which have not offended you at all?" he remarked after the French attacked the Chaouachas, "What confidence will they be able to have in you? Is it not on the contrary to force them to regard the French as barbarians whom they must drive out and massacre?"[233] By engaging in the murderous destruction of not only the Natchez, but of smaller tribes as well, the French managed to move beyond violence as exchange. They became,

[233] Ory to Périer, 1 November 1730, *MPA* 4:48.

through violence, what they considered Indians to be: savages. Ory worried that the natives would have to retaliate by massacring the French in Louisiana. The French were indeed in danger of native unrest resulting in more attacks on their settlements, he implied. But such attacks would come as a result of the French dedication to killing the Indians, not from some wide-ranging conspiracy.

The full significance of the violence at Fort Rosalie and the following war comes when considering the blending of French and native cultures during both. The introduction of European weaponry had changed Native American warfare, making Indians even more dangerous. In the minds of the French, the feasibility of a large, multi-tribe attack must have increased after they witnessed the slaughter at Fort Rosalie followed by the Yazoo attack on another French outpost. The Natchez made French suspicion of native nations even worse by reminding the French that they had introduced more sophisticated weapons. In one day the Natchez executed over 250 settlers, soldiers, and slaves using European weapons.[234]

Throughout French colonization, as the Natchez adopted European weapons, they adapted to the colonists' presence and sought to correct their unfamiliarity with European technology. They used guns, cannon, and other weapons to their advantage. Charlevoix regarded the adoption of such small items as iron hatchets as provoking major changes to the type and degree of violence in warfare. "Since the Indians have substituted iron hatchets to their old wooden ones," he wrote, "their battles have become more bloody."[235] New weapons promoted an increased efficiency in killing, and "when they can have fire arms, powder and shot, they abandon their bows, and are excellent marksmen."[236]

[234] Périer to Maurepas, 18 March 1730, *MPA* 1:62.

[235] Charlevoix, *Voyage to North America*, 1:360.

Perhaps the Natchez's self-assuredness with European weapons encouraged their boldness at Fort Rosalie, allowing them to execute what Périer described as an unprecedented attack. Made in "broad daylight, the conduct of the action and the capture of the galley, together with the preservation of the negroes is not at all characteristic of the Indians; there is not even an example of it…."[237] Though Périer proceeded to blame British influence for the type and degree of violence, the Natchez lived more closely with the French for three decades than the English. Consequently they had learned French war techniques, and the use of French weaponry.[238]

Archaeological evidence from the Fatherland site, what once was the Grand Village, suggests that the Natchez accepted and used French weapons. Archaeologists recovered iron knives and pieces of scabbards, gun flints, and lead bullets.[239] While archaeology alone cannot definitively state the degree to which natives utilized the weaponry, it does show that weapons, of native and European origins, played some role in village life.[240] Their presence suggests that the Natchez at least owned some European weapons. Accounts from colonists, military forces, and other travelers confirm that the tribe did indeed incorporate them into its daily and wartime routines. Charlevoix referenced the use of metal hatchets instead of traditional wooden ones. They began using metal knives, even fighting with European swords. Charlevoix again took

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[236] Ibid., 1:338.

[237] Périer to Maurepas, 5 December 1729, *MPA* 1:54.

[238] Andrew C. Albrecht, "Indian-French Relations at Natchez," *American Anthropologist* New Series 48, no. 3 (July-Sept. 1946): 352. Albrecht sites Natchez refusal to consume alcohol as an example of their discriminate acceptance of French society and culture.

[239] Robert S. Neitzel, *Archaeology of the Fatherland Site: The Grand Village of the Natchez* (New York: Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1965), 50-51.

[240] Neitzel, *The Grand Village of the Natchez Revisited*, 111-117. Neitzel does suggest here that many of the weapons could have belonged to French soldiers who raided the village. There is no written record, however, to confirm this.

note of the way in which the Natchez took the European piece and made it their own when he wrote that "when they use our swords, which is very rare, they handle them like our half pike."[241]

On the morning of the massacre, the Indians literally traded goods for guns to kill the French, applying French exchange to their acts of violence. The colonists had no idea of the warriors' intentions; the few settlers who tried to warn Chépart of impending danger found themselves in chains. The accumulation of French goods, while initially signaling success in the new economy, eventually saddened the Natchez for it meant that the French had managed to deeply penetrate their culture. The Indians turned the exchange around.

Living alongside the French, constantly interacting with the colonists, the Natchez learned to do what their neighbors did. The Natchez proved that they could use French weapons just as well as the French. The warriors had an ironic advantage over the colonists at Fort Rosalie. They used the very process the French introduced to them over the previous three decades, combining it with their own traditions. The weapons the Natchez used represented a physical manifestation of violence and exchange. The Natchez made direct exchanges with the settlers at Fort Rosalie: guns so they could hunt in exchange for chickens, corn and other food items so the French could eat. Each traded something so that they could survive.

Their attack on Fort Rosalie exemplified the combination of Natchez culture with French. Every step they took to infiltrate, calm, and then destroy the village showed a blend of the two cultures. The Natchez brought the peace calumet to smoke, traditionally associated with the suspension of hostility, because the French would recognize and welcome it without suspicion. They traded for French weapons because they had done so before. Le Page du Pratz noted that the villagers had grown accustomed to giving the Indians their arms so that the natives could hunt. Besides that, the Natchez warriors could not very well enter the fort laden with weapons

[241] Charlevoix, *Voyage to North America*, 1:338.

because they did not want to raise an alarm. They then massacred nearly everyone there, women and children included, because their laws of war allowed such actions. They had not adopted the European style of engagement at Fort Rosalie, choosing to keep their own.

Their two earlier wars showed consistent escalation in violence, showing each society's increasing unwillingness to share its space or culture. The French fought hard to exterminate the tribe, continuing the trend. They wanted to eliminate the Natchez regardless of the means. But the Natchez would no longer abide the force of the French cultural thrust. The elements of their changing society had spiraled out of their control to an unbearable degree.

Beginning with the Spanish expeditions in the early sixteenth century, the Natchez did what they could to adapt in an attempt to keep their tribe intact. They changed their social structure, they forged economic and diplomatic relations with the incoming population, and they turned inward, focusing on their culture. The desire for self-preservation motivated every step they took in restructuring their society. At the war council called before the massacre at Fort Rosalie the tribal elder who spoke of the great changes undergone by the Natchez also reminded his tribe of their way of life, in danger of disappearing. The time had come to remind the French as well. "Let us set ourselves at liberty," he said, "and show we are really men, who can be satisfied with what we have."[242] The Natchez fought their war in 1729 for the sake of prolonging their civilization and ending that of the French in their midst. They massacred the French settlers in a desperate attempt to protect the society that they (the Natchez) had continuously mutated out of necessity.

[242] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 83.

CONCLUSION

Only a few years before the attack on Fort Rosalie, Le Page du Pratz and Tattooed Serpent discussed violence and exchange; they spoke of the common traits of each society following the war in 1723, foreshadowing the intensity and difficulties to come. "M. de Biainville [sic] being our War-chief," the Frenchman explained, "we are bound to obey him; in the like manner as you, though a Sun, are obliged to kill, or cause to be killed, whomsoever your brother, the Great Sun, orders to be put to death."[243] Duty, responsibility, and obligation to leaders existed cross-culturally, Le Page du Pratz clarified. His was a more peaceful way of viewing the problem of multiple powers in the same region than Périer's. If the French and Natchez could recognize their similarities, they could co-exist harmoniously. They did not need to use violence as exchange, communication, or information even though both societies knew they could, and had, successfully.

But Tattooed Serpent disagreed. "In what respect… had we occasion for [the French]," he replied, "was it for their guns? The bows and arrows which we used, were sufficient enough to made us live well. Was it for their white, blue, and red blankets? We can do well enough with buffalo skins, which are warmer…."[244] Tattooed Serpent eloquently stated that the Natchez had reached their limit of accepting French culture. He had, after all, just witnessed three of his villages razed by a force of hundreds. He rejected the similarities of which Le Page du Pratz spoke. The time had come to reject what the Natchez saw as the destruction of their lives. Doing so required they attack the French; they had to make a stand.

Interacting violently with one another gave Native Americans and Europeans the chance to explore each other's vivid, striking, culture components, brought out and clarified by conflict.

[243] Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana*, 43.

[244] Ibid., 44.

When European nations began colonizing the American Southeast, they inevitably interacted with native populations. The primary colonizers in the Mississippi Valley in the early eighteenth century, the French constantly dealt with a vast number of native chiefdoms, both large and small. They had to maneuver through a novel world populated with novel people; sometimes French and native interactions turned violent. Each culture bled into the other and waged destructive campaigns to gain the upper hand. Violence became an outlet for their expressions, a way of exchanging beliefs, practices, and information. Their doubts, fears, and ideas came out during a conflict and in the aftermath. Violence, conflict, and war introduced new aspects of each culture to the other. They expressed themselves through aggressive actions. Both took what they wanted from the other, what they thought would most help them in the colonization process, and incorporated it into their own societies.

Through the complicated Natchez-French relationship one can see different phases of European colonialism at work. The Europeans moved into the continent with specific goals. In attempting to achieve those goals, they necessarily interacted with Native Americans. Their relationships grew over time, either peacefully or painfully, with each society contributing something to the other.

Though spanning only three decades, from Iberville's initial expeditions to the Natchez's desperate assault on Fort Rosalie, Natchez interactions with the French caused them to initiate three wars. Their tempestuous relationship caused the French to reorganize their strategies, as varied as they were, for dealing with the natives. The lengths to which the French went to punish or control the Natchez matched what they felt the Natchez did to them. The Natchez Indians survived, as part of other tribes, well into the twentieth century despite French desire to eradicate

them. They could not, however, continue as their own unified tribe. Their society broke into pieces.

Each of the three wars fought between the French and the Natchez revealed important aspects of their cultures to. Both desired control. The Natchez wanted it over their lives, space, and future. The French wanted it over their lives, space, and future, *and* those of the Indians. After European exploration began, Native Americans found themselves in a violently changing world. Neal Salisbury wrote that "an old world, rooted in indigenous exchange, was giving way to one in which Native Americans had no certain place."[245] In fighting, engaging in violent interaction, the Natchez actively sought to maintain their place in an increasingly crowded space. Violence expressed their hope to retain their power in the changing social system. Village elders and royalty voiced a desire to remain strong, natural people. They also wanted to return to the life they once led; one which allowed them to be their own people and the controllers of their own destinies rather than depended consumers.

Economic exchange also connected the two cultures. Whether they participated in a gift exchange, trade, or barter economy, the inhabitants of North America came to expect certain behavior from their colonial partners. Each society developed its own goals for these exchanges and each could aid the other in reaching them. With potential for gain, their expectations grew. The conflicts arose when one society failed or insulted the other in some form of exchange. Governor Cadillac's insult evidently prompted warriors from the White Apple village to declare war in 1716. The calumet ceremony he dismissed acted as an exchange of information, intention, and respect. The second war, in 1722-23, initially broke out as a result of the French government's unwillingness to participate in an exchange involving life. They denied the Natchez satisfaction for the death of one of their own, a White Apple warrior. The final war

[245] Salisbury, "The Indians' Old World," 21.

erupted in the face of potential land sales and ceremonial violations. Chépart's disastrous attempt to negotiate a land exchange between the French and Natchez at the time of the Great Corn Moon gave the Indians a transgression around which they could rally.

Exacerbating the problems of the Natchez and the French, the British presence in the region caused stress between tribes and between villages of the same tribe. The added European component opened up Native American trade options which complicated the relationships they had formed with each other as well as with the French. The French seemed to understand native forms of exchange, such as gifting, better than the British. But the British offered their own set of benefits.[246] British trade prices, according to the French, tempted natives in the Gulf region. In the case of the three major tribes in the southern Mississippi River Valley, the Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Natchez, the British managed to gain the Chickasaw as allies while they worked on drawing the Natchez into a stronger relationship. This attempt on the part of the British helped to widen the rift between the different factions of the Natchez, which only complicated the violent engagements between the Indians and the French.

Exchange promoted violence and violence expressed exchange. Violence expressed, as little else could, the depth of fear, confusion, and doubt that accompanied culture contact and exchange. Colonization had an enormous impact on all of its participants. In the wake of disease, warfare, the rise and fall of chiefdoms, the population landscape changed drastically between the time the Europeans arrived in the Mississippi Valley and the time the Natchez lost their final war.

[246] For more on the differences between the European powers on the continent, in relation to their trade practices with the natives, again regard Richard White's *The Middle Ground*. While White deals primarily with northern tribes, his work explains a great deal about the various trade relationships between natives and Europeans, focusing on how each European nation handled their native counterparts.

Daniel K. Richter approaches the Iroquois war experience by examining the link between war and grief. Every loss of life or corruption of lifestyle prompted grief which eventually gave way to violent emotion; war had a complex connection to grief.[247] Natives could not forgive the upheaval in their world, they could only try to adapt or maintain their societies. Perhaps the force of their violence communicated the grief and desperation the Natchez felt at the changing world. In the Gulf South, the Natchez expressed a degree of regret, if not grief, at their fortunes. The outcome of war and colonization was humiliation, dispersion, and death. Violence against the French was a way to express this deep grief.

The French exhibited a dedication to wiping out the Natchez that revealed their own fears. Their reaction to these Indians in particular, taking pains to destroy the tribe after 1729, exposed the fear they felt as they tried to promote colonization. Letters between government officials and family members fixate on the Natchez.[248] The Indians' ability to declare and execute a destructive war, combined with their knowledge of the surrounding area, led the French to believe in a conspiracy. Even the language they used reflected their concern over natives. Le Page du Pratz was one of the few chroniclers to consistently call them "natives." Nearly everyone else referred to the Indians as "savages," calling forth wild, terrifying images.

On 12 July, 1730, Mathurin le Petit wrote to his Reverend Father, communicating the great misfortune that had befallen the French fort at the Natchez, Fort Rosalie. "You cannot be unaware," he began, "of the sad event which has desolated this part of the French colony established along the Natchez…."[249] Petit went on to describe a strong, vivid, society that

[247] Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience" in *American Encounters*, 289.

[248] Jean Charles de Pradel and Family Papers, Mss. 2866, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.

[249] Le Petit, *The Natchez Massacre*, 1.

struggled to maintain its place as a powerful nation of the Mississippi Valley: the "perfidious savages called the Natchez."[250] The "savages" that so many of the French colonists feared had fought three wars, evolved in their relationship with the French, and finally scattered, defeated.

Both the Natchez and the French used many forms of communication and exchange to try and alternately reinforce a stable relationship or to control each other. The most physical form of communication eventually became the most powerful. Violence shaped exchange of goods, information, and cultural components.

[250] Ibid., 1.

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