Review of Books

Shattering Together, Merging Apart:
Colonialism, Violence, and the Remaking
of the Native South

Denise Ileana Bossy, University of North Florida


Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South. Edited by Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 536 pages. $35.00 (paper).


In 1987 James Axtell dared to imagine what early America would have looked like without Indians. By demonstrating “the sheer indispensability of the Indians” to America’s past, Axtell sought to impress upon historians how Indian labor, knowledge, and culture had shaped not just colonial “agriculture, transport, and economic life” but also “the identity
of a new people and the nation they founded.”¹ Crucial to this new proto-American identity was Indian violence, both real and imagined. Though colonists borrowed Indian language, objects, and cultural practices (including guerilla warfare), it was the fear of descending into savagery and of being destroyed by savages that most helped disparate British colonists to find commonalities with one another and to develop an identity that transcended their considerable differences, a subject explored at greater length more recently by Peter Silver.² In early America, violence, or even the threat of violence, had an impressive procreative ability.

This tension between the destructive and creative potential of violence has been at the heart of Southern Indian studies for a number of decades. Since the 1970s scholars have wrestled with how to adequately evaluate the devastating effects of European colonization while also taking stock of how Indians survived colonial shock waves by responding in resourceful ways to what was, purportedly, a new world for all. In common with other scholars of the Atlantic world, those of the Native South focus particularly on the impacts of capitalism and the rise of European nation-states on Indians. They also especially examine Indians’ responses, the creation of new communities through ethogenesis and creolization.³ Just as Indian violence, whether real or imagined, was at the heart of American identity formation, scholars of the Native South understand that the violence of European colonization was both destructive and transformative for Southern Indians.

Over the past thirteen years these questions have received a great deal of attention from scholars of the Native South, in part because of the rise of Indian slavery studies.⁴ As scholars have become more aware of the scope and mechanics of Indian enslavement—particularly the geopolitical and economic importance of the commercial trade to the growth of

² Peter Silver, Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America (New York, 2008).
³ This tension lies at the heart of Charles Hudson’s magisterial examination of Southeastern Indians from precontact through the twentieth century. A crucially important book that gave birth to the field of Southeastern Indian studies, in this work Hudson argues that the Southeastern Indians gradually became “a conquered people” over the course of three hundred years. Yet he also considers Southeastern Indian cultural resiliency at great length, concluding with an assessment of how many twenty-century Southeastern Indians living in either Oklahoma or the South retained their ancestral cultural systems and languages. Charles Hudson, The Southeastern Indians (Knoxville, Tenn., 1976). For a relatively recent assessment of the field that considers this tension at length, see April Lee Hatfield, “Colonial Southeastern Indian History,” Journal of Southern History 73, no. 3 (August 2007): 567–78. See also Claudio Saunt, “The Native South: An Account of Recent Historiography,” Native South 1 (2008): 45–60.
South Carolina, and the Creeks, Chickasaws, and Yamasees—they have developed new interpretive models with which to analyze the changes wrought by European colonization and Indians’ responses to it. Many scholars have turned to the framework of the shatter zone, which emphasizes the shattering effects of European epidemics, Indian slave raids, and capitalism. These scholars argue—quite rightly—that hundreds of Native towns were destroyed and tens of thousands of Indians lost their lives or freedom during the early colonial period.

Other scholars focus on Indian regeneration. Although they do not dispute the traumas inflicted by European colonization, they emphasize how Indians drew upon or adapted older practices to create new sovereign communities that had deep cultural and often geopolitical ties to the region. Indian survivors built new communities that were able to respond to and even shape European colonization by employing diplomatic and cultural practices that predated colonization while also using new trading and political opportunities to their advantage. The descendants of the most successful of these new communities—the Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles—survive today.

The result of this dialogue over the destructive and regenerative aspects of colonial-era violence has been an outpouring of scholarship.
on the pre-removal Native South by ethnohistorians, archaeologists, and anthropologists who often arrive at very different conclusions. The five books under review here suggest the richness of this work, contributing valuable insights to debates over violence and identity formation that have been equally crucial to scholars of the Atlantic world and early modern America.⁵

At the forefront of the shatter zone construct is anthropologist Robbie Ethridge, who first introduced the idea in a series of conference panels in 2002, 2003, and 2005 and an essay published in 2006 that situated the Indian slave trade at the center of the shatter zone.⁶ Ethridge’s construct draws deeply on Richard White’s examination of the seventeenth-century effects of Iroquois wars on the pays d’en haut (or Great Lakes region) and Eric Wolf’s analysis of the impact of commercial slave raids on western Africa.⁷ In Ethridge’s articulation, the shatter zone was “a large region of instability” (Ethridge and Shuck-Hall, 2) that progressively swept across much of eastern North America from the Atlantic coastline to the Mississippi River from 1540 to 1730. While the factors that created this region of instability were many, including Eurasian diseases and the inherent instability of Mississippian sociopolitical structures, Ethridge focuses largely on two major catalysts: the introduction of a European capitalistic system through the commercial trade in Indian slaves and animal skins, and the intensification and expansion of violence and warfare across the region by militaristic Native slaving societies engaged in commercial trade with European colonizers.⁸

⁸ Her contention that Indians became militarized slave raiders is derived from R. Brian Ferguson and Neil Whitehead’s comparative study of escalating indigenous warfare and tribalization as a response to colonial state expansion. R. Brian Ferguson and Neil L. Whitehead, “The Violent Edge of Empire,” in War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States
In 2009 Ethridge and coeditor Sheri M. Shuck-Hall published an important collection of fifteen essays by archaeologists, anthropologists, and ethnohistorians—most of whom had taken part in the earlier conference panels—that sought to map the Mississippian shatter zone “spatially, temporally, and conceptually” (Ethridge and Shuck-Hall, 2). As they explain, even in an anthology explicitly framed by the concept of shatter zones, several contributors challenge the construct, suggesting the diversity of interpretations presented by archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians of the Native South.

The most striking rejection of the economic argument underpinning Ethridge’s shatter zone construct is made by Patricia Galloway, who maintains that the Choctaws did not adopt capitalism from 1760 to 1765. Ethridge contends that Indians were incorporated into an emerging global capitalism that transformed their societies as they became both capitalistic and dependent on European trade. Galloway instead adapts Paul Bohannan’s “spheres of exchange” (Ethridge and Shuck-Hall, 343) (developed in his study of the Tiv of Nigeria) to create a Choctaw-centered theory of exchange and to explain how they managed their interactions with French and English traders within those spheres of exchange. Galloway concludes that Choctaw exchange practices were change very little by the French, English, or the commercial trades in animal skins or slaves largely because the Choctaws were on the periphery of the shatter zone. As a result, Europeans and their objects were fit into a decidedly Choctaw exchange economy and captivity practices. Though not the focus of her study, Galloway suggests that Chickasaws, Westos, and other Indians who were more directly engaged with the commodification of Indian slaves may have experienced a far more radical change in their captivity practices and their exchange economy. Galloway’s interpretive model should prove critically important to scholarly debates over the impact of European capitalist systems on indigenous people across regions, particularly by demonstrating how to reconstruct indigenous economic systems.

---


Her study suggests that there are limits to the explanatory capabilities of the shatter zone construct and that scholars need to be wary of assuming that Indians simply adopted European economic ideology or practice.

Still, most of the contributors to *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone* closely adhere to Ethridge’s main arguments about the destructive effects of slavery and disease on Indian communities. Considerable attention is given to the Westos—who fled Iroquoian raids on their homelands near the shores of Lake Erie and migrated in the mid-seventeenth century to Virginia (and later the Savannah River Valley), becoming one of the first commercial slave raiding groups in the South through their alliances with English traders. Eric E. Bowne contends that the Westos “played an inordinately large role in transforming the Southern Indians” (Etheridge and Shuck-Hall, 104), beginning a cycle where survivors of their slave raids banded together and became slave raiders themselves. John E. Worth reconstructs the “reign of terror” (Ethridge and Shuck-Hall, 295) that descended on Indians living in Spanish Florida from 1659 to 1715 as Yamasee, Creek, and other Indian slave raiders destroyed the chain of Franciscan missions to the north of Saint Augustine and then pushed into southern peninsular Florida and the Keys in pursuit of slaves to sell to the British. In a crucially important piece, Paul Kelton complicates previous assumptions that epidemics swept across the South beginning in the sixteenth century, reasserting the main arguments of his book *Epidemics and Enslavement*: namely, that the first region-wide epidemic to strike the entire South did not begin until 1696 when the Indian slave trade created the conditions necessary for such an event. The Great Southeastern Smallpox Epidemic of 1696 to 1700 and subsequent epidemics were the product of the Indian slave trade and Indian slave raids, when the “volume of human traffic” from both the trade itself and the escalation of refugee populations was high enough to produce epidemics that swept across the region. As Kelton demonstrates, the Indian slave trade had additional, unintended consequences. Many Indians responded to the combination of epidemics and slave raids by creating new communities. Equally significant, the spread of epidemics along trade routes also led to the collapse of the Indian slave trade and to the Yamasee War (1715–17).

The major theme that emerges from the collection is that the shatter zone sparked the coalescence of Indian communities across much of the South. While ethnohistorians used to employ the term *confederation* to describe the creative joining of the remnants of two or more Southern

---


13 Ibid., 102.
chiefdoms (or of other types of refugee populations), *coalescence* has
become the predominant term for describing such ethnogenesis in the
Native South. Matthew H. Jennings uses the lens of violence to inter-
pret the impact of colonization in an illuminating synthesis of classic
archaeological and historical scholarship. He posits that violence not
only wrecked Indian communities but also lay at the heart of the regen-
eration of many other Indian communities.14 Maureen Meyers’s careful
study of Westo experiences in Virginia suggests that, rather than making
a dramatic break with their past, the Westos followed an older travel
path well known to northern Indians when they fled Iroquoian raids and
moved near the James River. Once in Virginia the Westos established an
alliance with several influential Virginian traders, including Theodorick
Bland and William Byrd I. Meyers suggests that the name “Westo” may
be a derivative of Bland’s Westover plantation (later Byrd’s plantation
when he purchased it in 1688) (Ethridge and Shuck-Hall, 93).15 When
alliances between Virginia traders and the Westos were destroyed by
Bacon’s Rebellion, the Westos sought out new trade partnerships with
Carolinians. In an essay on the ethnogenesis of the Catawbas, Mary
Elizabeth Fitts and Charles L. Heath attribute the formation of this com-

dunity in the late seventeenth century to their new participation in trade
with South Carolina and their role as “ethnic soldiers” (Ethridge and
Shuck-Hall, 148) who protected the Carolina colony from the external
threat of Iroquois and Cherokee raids and from internal African slave
insurrections.

Robin A. Beck Jr., on the other hand, contends that the people who
would become the Catawbas, and other Mississippian peoples, had a long
history of recovering from chiefdom decline and population movements.
What was ultimately new was not coalescence or even the shattering of
peoples but rather the new political economy of slaving that completely
reshaped the South and prevented splintered communities from reform-
ulating themselves into chiefdoms.16 Joining him in making this link
between Mississippian and colonial-era geopolitical practices are Ned
J. Jenkins and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall. Jenkins offers a *longue durée* inter-
pretation of Creek formation, arguing that the process began in 1600
in response to Spanish *entradas*, far earlier than previous scholars have
suggested. Jenkins understands coalescence as the application of the

---

14 This is a distillation of the argument Matthew Jennings makes in Jennings, *New Worlds of Violence: Cultures and Conquests in the Early American Southeast* (Knoxville, Tenn., 2011).

15 Meyers credits Ann Jeter with the suggestion that “Westo” may derive from “Westover”; see Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall, *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (Lincoln, Neb., 2009), 100.

Mississippian era practices of fission, fusion, and the budding of new towns to colonial era exigencies. Shuck-Hall sees the emergence of the Alabamas and Coushattas near present-day Montgomery, Alabama, as a continuation of Mississippian practices but also as a response to the new kind of diaspora created by chiefdom collapses, diseases, and slave raids. It is likely that the ancestors of the Muskogee-speaking Alabamas and Coushattas were both derived from the Shiloh chiefdom of western Tennessee Valley (which budded from about 1050 to 1100). Therefore when the Alabamas and Coushattas began to coalesce in the seventeenth century, in order to escape Chickasaw and Westo slave raids, they also connected communities that had long been separated but that had a distant, common past. Having joined forces and repositioned themselves, the Alabamas and Coushattas allied with the Upper Creeks and then became slave raiders attacking Apalachee towns in order to rebuild and preserve their new network of alliances and their new geopolitical control over central Alabama. Shuck-Hall’s approach to the sources is a real highlight of the anthology. Mining linguistics and oral traditions as well as archaeological and documentary evidence, she posits that kinship systems from the Mississippian period were at the heart of Alabama and Coushatta survival from 1500 to 1700 and that these kinship systems remain intact to this day. Though she characterizes the Alabamas and Coushattas as dependent on European trade goods, she also provides a more complex understanding of commercial slave raiders by suggesting that the Alabamas and Coushattas did not sell all of their captives to Europeans but integrated some captives into their communities.17

Joining with Galloway, the authors of several essays in Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone complicate or even reject the applicability of the shatter zone construct for understanding the experiences and responses of particular Indian communities. Galloway and Marvin D. Jeter both examine Indian communities that were on the periphery of the region most affected by colonial violence. Jeter focuses on Indians of the Lower Mississippi Valley from the sixteenth to the late seventeenth century, a period in which he contends slave raids and European colonization had relatively little effect in the region, only tangentially influencing the migrations of Dhegiha Siouans.18 William A. Fox argues that, if the Iroquois created a shatter zone in the pays d’en haut, they did not play the same role in the South. In a much-needed history of the origins of the Westos, Fox argues that there is no evidence that the Eries, (from

17 Also see Sheri M. Shuck-Hall’s book-length study of the Alabama and Coushatta Indians, Shuck-Hall, Journey to the West: The Alabama and Coushatta Indians (Norman, Okla., 2008).

18 Jeter also offers a useful overview of archaeologists’ application of a shatter zone construct to analyze the impact of lithic tool dispersals on indigenous communities long before contact with Europeans.
whom the Westos derived) or the Iroquois (whose raids the Westos fled when migrating into the South) ever engaged in commercial slave trading. They adhered instead to traditional captive-taking practices. Fox suggests, moreover, that some of the Westos who survived the 1680 war, waged by the Savannah (Shawnee) Indians and instigated by the South Carolinians, returned north, where they joined the Iroquois in 1682.

George Edward Milne argues that even the Natchez, who were more directly affected by the violence of European colonization at their borders, were able to “stave off collapse for three decades” (Ethridge and Shuck-Hall, 412) from the late seventeenth century to the 1720s by drawing on longstanding Mississippian diplomatic and social practices. Milne’s essay is the most directly engaged with Indian constructions of gender; it reveals the role of Natchez elite women in integrating and controlling French men and minimizing the shock waves of colonialism for a time. In their sophisticated study of the Shawnees, Stephen Warren and Randolph Noe incorporate Shawnee oral history to consider how the Shawnees survived by creating a flexible identity not rooted in place but in culture: “language, ritual, cosmogonic myth, and the kin groups that are unique to the Shawnee people (Ethridge and Shuck-Hall, 167).” While others have stressed migration and coalescence as a response to the destabilization of the colonial era, Warren and Noe argue that the Shawnees used movement as a tool to protect their sovereignty and avoided coalescence in the process. While it is often difficult to distinguish between such intentional migration and involuntary displacement, their essay suggests that there are pitfalls to assuming that most Indian movements during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were reactions to the splintering effects of colonization or resulted in coalescence.

In 2010 Ethridge analyzed the complete restructuring of the Native South from the Mississippian era through the Yamasee War at greater length in From Chicaza to Chickasaw. Though the coalescence of the Chickasaws and their participation in the commercial trade in Indian slaves is at the heart of the study, her vantage point is broad and encompasses much of the South. As a result, the Chickasaws feature a bit less in the course of the book than its title suggests. Attributing the complete collapse of the Mississippian world to the combined effects of European disease, capitalism, the violence of the Indian slave trade, and the inability of Indian chiefdoms and other polities to survive, Ethridge largely reiterates her previously published definitions of the shatter zone. However, an additional point is worth noting. Ethridge ascribes the origins of the shatter zone to the meeting of “two asymmetrical worlds,” as Mississippians encountered a European world that was “more formidable,

more complex, more extractive of natural resources, more able to accumulate knowledge through literacy, and had more advanced weaponry” (Ethridge, 4).

Therein lies an inherent tension in Ethridge’s study: although much of her book attempts to reconstruct Indian histories, she often places them at the “edge of an expanding and conflict-ridden European world” (Ethridge, 2). Being on that “edge” is precisely what, according to Galloway and Jeter, allowed the Chickasaws and Lower Mississippi Valley Indians to resist European colonial hegemony and violence. But Ethridge does not argue that Indians were protected by virtue of being on the edge of empire. Rather, she understands Indians as increasingly shattered by and marginalized in an expanding European world that would swallow their communities. While Galloway, Milne, Warren, and Noe focus on the persistence and creative adaptability of Indian practices, Ethridge largely emphasizes the destruction of those practices. The degree of this destruction and the level of continuity found in Native responses to it mark a critical point of divergence among scholars of the colonial South.

Yet Ethridge also takes stock of the Indians’ old world, and her study begins with an engaging overview of the Mississippian world and the chiefdom of Chicaza, focusing on the political and cultural practices of Southern Indians from 900 to 1600. A highly readable synthesis of recent archaeological scholarship, many readers will find this to be one of the strongest pieces of the book. Indeed, Ethridge is presently at work on what is sure to become the standard overview of the Mississippian world. Particularly strong is her description of the different types of chiefdoms across the Mississippian world (from simple to paramount), her explanation of the rise and fall of chiefdoms (cycling), and her analysis of chiefly sources of power, especially those that rested on exchange including local tribute systems and long-distance trading in prestige goods, salt, and hoes.

Ethridge reconstructs the Mississippian world of the Chicazas in order to better interpret their disastrous battle with Hernando de Soto in 1541 and impact of Soto’s expedition on other chiefdoms along his path. Drawing on well-known arguments in the field, especially the role of Soto’s expedition in the fall of the paramount chiefdom of Coosa and archaeological studies of northerly Chicaza migrations from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, Ethridge suggests that the Chicaza, like many other chiefdoms, probably decentralized and migrated in the wake of Soto’s entrada, like many other chiefdoms. But the biggest shock wave was to come in the form of English colonization and the creation of a commercial trade in Indian slaves and animal skins.

Arguing that “war, not peace, may have been the accepted prevailing state of affairs” (Ethridge, 93) in Mississippian society, Ethridge reconstructs the rise and spread of Indian slave raiding in the South from 1650 to 1715. The entwining of indigenous practices of warfare, captiv-
ity, and violence with the Atlantic market demand for slaves resulted, according to Ethridge, in the rise of “organized militaristic slavers” (Ethridge, 93). The first of these militaristic slaving societies were the Virginia-based Occaneechis and Westos, whose slaving targeted Indians from Virginia to Florida during the mid-seventeenth century. According to Ethridge, the Iroquois, too, played a pivotal role in splintering Indian communities and prompting ethnogenesis across much of the South, including the consolidation of the Chickasaws. Having moved from the Tombigbee River to present-day Tupelo, Mississippi, between 1541 and 1650, the Chickasaws first lived in dispersed settlements and seem to have been largely protected from early slave raids. However, Ethridge contends, by the 1680s Iroquois raids had forced the Chickasaws to centralize their towns. As the shock waves moved from the east toward the Mississippi River, the Chickasaws responded by becoming the preeminent slave raiders in the region through their involvement with English traders from South Carolina, particularly Thomas Welch and Anthony Dodsworth. Chickasaws, Yamasees, Creeks, and other slaving societies largely controlled the Indian slave trade until 1702 when the War of Spanish Succession became a colonial concern and the British began to direct slave raids at Indians allied with their Spanish and French enemies. While this part of the narrative has been the subject of other studies—most notably Alan Gallay’s seminal research on South Carolina—Ethridge fills out the French, Chickasaw, and Choctaw dimensions. Particularly insightful is her attention to Chickasaw factionalism during this period. Not all Chickasaws allied with the English. Rather, pro-French and pro-English groups split along traditional lines leading to a new, more competitive era in Chickasaw politics marked by the breakdown of longstanding divisions between peace leaders and war leaders.

At the end of her study Ethridge reflects on the considerable costs of the commercial trade in Indian slaves and the origins of the Yamasee War. Using Peter Wood’s classic demographic study of the South and Gallay’s estimates of Indian enslavement, Ethridge postulates that Indian slavery likely accounted for at least half of the 55 percent population decline experienced by Indians in the South from 1685 to 1715. Tens of thousands of Indians were enslaved during this period, and the costs were also considerable for the militarized slavers, who lost many men to the violence of slave raiding. Increasingly locked into a capitalistic trade system, and trapped there by debt and dependency, South Carolina’s

---

20 Gallay, *Indian Slave Trade*.
Indian trading partners suffered in the 1710s as British traders began to insert their own construction of slavery into the exchange, confiscating and selling the adopted kin of indebted Indian allies. The collapse of the Spanish mission system under the strains of the slave trade and the subsequent diminution of potential populations of slaves led many desperate Indian slavers to turn on their Indian allies and neighbors. As the slave trade threatened to engulf even the more powerful coalescent societies that engaged in militaristic slaving, Indians waged two wars against British colonists. First, the Tuscaroras attacked North Carolina (1711–12) and then Indians from Carolina to the Mississippi River fought South Carolinians in the Yamasee War (1715–17), a war that Ethridge sees as “born out of the Mississippian shatter zone” (Ethridge, 244).

Even as the shatter zone has become one way in which scholars have tried to understand the violent effects of European colonization on the Native South, many others have endeavored to illustrate the complex means by which Indians mitigated the chaos and violence of colonialism. Rather than understanding Indians as living on the edge of European empires, these studies have meaningfully reconstructed Indian systems of exchange and diplomacy and have analyzed the impact of European colonization from Indian points of view, as much as possible. Published five years before Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone, Joshua Piker’s seminal work on the Upper Creek town of Okfuskee uses the methods of community studies to analyze Creek efforts to negotiate the changes and upheaval of the eighteenth-century South. Much like their colonial counterparts, Okfuskees and other Creeks lived in a world that was more often than not intensely local. As Piker makes clear, the talwa (or town) stood at the center of Creek cultural, religious, and political identity. More than a collection of people rooted to a particular place, the Creek talwa, Piker explains, “consisted of people who shared a square ground and a fire, whether those people lived near each other or not” (9). The influence of Piker’s 2004 study is evident even in Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone. In their essay on the Shawnees, for example, Stephen Warren and Randolph Noe draw on Okfuskee to explain how the Shawnee town (hotewe) was the key to their survival in this period in large part because hotewes were “symbolic and portable” (Ethridge and Shuck-Hall, 169).

In the first half of Piker’s two-part study, “The Town and Its Neighbors,” he reconstructs and analyzes the relationship between the towns of Okfuskee and Charleston. Assuming that the talwa was equally important to the British, the Okfuskees used traditional diplomatic protocols and rhetorical symbols grounded in notions of kinship to establish and regulate their alliances with Charleston. Forged in the first decade of the eighteenth century when the Okfuskees, like many other Southern Indians, were experiencing the stress caused by slave raids,
rising epidemics, and dramatic geopolitical changes, the Okfuskees were able to keep much of the violence at the edge of their world by pursuing diplomacy and trade with the British of Charleston. But in the 1730s the importance of the Okfuskees to the British began to decline as South Carolinians increasingly prioritized their relationship with the Cherokees over the Okfuskees and as the Lower Creeks eclipsed Okfuskee and other Upper Creek towns in the trade with the newly established colony of Georgia. By the 1760s and 1770s the Okfuskees were forced to intensify efforts to reestablish their central role in the expanding colonial world. They tellingly tried to do so by reminding Charleston that their people were of one fire, and therefore linked by history and kinship.

In the second part of his study, “The Town and Its People,” Piker takes his readers deeper into the Okfuskee talwa and shifts from an analysis of Okfuskee diplomacy to a nuanced examination of how their participation in the expanding frontier exchange economy challenged traditional Creek culture. Focusing largely on how Okfuskees adapted to the introduction of European livestock, British traders, and new market forces, Piker traces the rise of severe internal stresses among Okfuskees. Gender and generation became the fault lines of community fissure as leaders and commoners, men and women, young men and old men, adapted to their changing roles and the new opportunities afforded by trade. Here we witness Okfuskees becoming increasingly market oriented and dependent on British trade and simultaneously progressively marginalized in that market economy by the British. But, as Piker carefully notes, “Through it all, the Okfuskees believed themselves to be, and were recognized by others as, Creeks” (47). The essential elements of the talwa—“kinship and friendship; dances and black drink; histories and legends; the Busk and town fire” (157)—remained relatively unchanged.

Inspired but not dictated by the methodologies of colonial town studies, Piker’s work rightly asks us to consider other vantage points from which to examine how Indian communities survived what Robbie Ethridge calls the shatter zone or the cumulative effects of European colonization. While Ethridge’s construct is a big picture device most useful in understanding the cumulative and destructive effects of colonialism across large spaces, Piker’s town study model is more able to consider how families and communities thought about and creatively responded to these broader events.22

---

22 Joshua Piker’s newest study, reviewed in the William and Mary Quarterly in 2014, considers how storytelling, lying, and violence were powerful tools deployed by Indians and British colonists in the attempt to control meaning and shape events in the eighteenth-century South; see Piker, The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler: Telling Stories in Colonial America (Cambridge, Mass., 2013); David J. Silverman, review of The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler: Telling Stories in Colonial America, by Joshua Piker, W MQ 71, no. 1 (January 2014): 138–41.
Published five years after Piker’s study, Joseph M. Hall Jr.’s *Zamumo’s Gifts* functions in part as a prequel to *Okfuskee*. Hall also examines the importance of talwas, exchange, and diplomacy to Southeastern Indian societies. However, he begins his study earlier, examining Mississippian practices that predated European colonization, and he casts his net wider, taking into account much of the Southeast. Driving Hall’s analysis is an innovative argument that Indians did not succumb to European economic imperialism. Rather, from the sixteenth century through the 1760s, “Indians continued to insist on practices that were both older than and distinct from European logics of the market” (5). Exchange was central to the survival and coalescence of the Creeks and Yamasees who drew on Mississippian exchange practices to mitigate the severe stresses and rising violence of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Published the same year as Patricia Galloway’s essay on Choctaw constructions of exchange, Hall’s work also emphasizes Indian logics of exchange. But he does so by drawing on Marcel Mauss’s study of gift exchange and the notion of “diaphanous spiderwebs connecting individual places and people” developed by Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney. Like Galloway, Hall reveals a world in which Indians used goods to build and manage political networks in a period of great instability. Not only this but, as Hall argues, Indians shaped the contours of European imperialism: “As Indians helped construct the webs of empire, they induced Spaniards to abandon dreams of military conquest, the French to become negotiators and gift givers, and the British to build and then reform a colony dependent on trade” (9). For both Piker and Hall, then, Indians are central to understanding the history of European colonies in the South and Muskogee-speaking Indians stand at the center of their studies.

While Ethridge and Hall cover some of the same ground and agree on the violence wrought by slave raiding, they nonetheless interpret the effects of this violence in starkly different ways. For instance, both begin with vignettes of Hernando de Soto’s expedition to illustrate their main points. While Ethridge focuses on the violent battle between Chicaza and Soto, Hall combines recent archeological research on the Mississippian era with a fresh analysis of Spanish documentary evidence to reconstruct the surprisingly peaceful exchange between Zamumo, the chief of Altamaha, and Soto in 1540. Though Soto would quickly earn a lasting reputation for ferocious violence, Zamumo managed to effect a peaceful diplomatic exchange with the conquistador. Following suit, other Altamahas would continue to navigate seventeenth-century Spanish and English colonization by using

traditional ceremonial gift giving to create, confirm, and extend their political networks. Though under the thumb of a larger chiefdom in 1540, by the 1680s the Altamahas had completely repositioned themselves to become the primary town in the coalescing Yamasee confederacy. As Hall shows, for Mississippian chiefs and their descendants prestige goods were tangible symbols of their network of alliances, and the value of such prestige goods (and perhaps captives) was political and spiritual rather than economic. Soto and other Spaniards were clearly aware of Indian practices, and they increasingly recognized that “feathers and lace accomplished much more than fire and steel” (53). Soto gave Zamumo a silver feather and other Spaniards followed suit. Franciscan missionaries, recognizing that “gifts can break rocks,” gained access to Indian communities through gift giving, for which purpose the Spanish Crown in 1593 established a fund that governors could draw upon when chiefs came to Saint Augustine.24

In an important section of his book, Hall considers the rise of trade in the early seventeenth century between the Apalachees of central Florida (present-day Tallahassee), the Apalachicolas to the north (along the Chattahoochee River), and Spanish traders from Florida, a subject that has received some attention from historian Amy Bushnell but has been largely overlooked in the broader scholarship.25 Through participation in the exchange of corn and deerskins for Spanish goods, Apalachees were able to renegotiate the terms of exchange and to bypass their own chiefs and Spanish missionaries. This led to broader participation of nonelite Indians in exchange.26 Apalachees simultaneously created a vast network of exchange that included the Apalachicolas and other Indians to the north and west by applying Spanish goods to the expansion of their political networks.

Hall shows how Indians used exchange and migration to adjust to the new challenges presented by the rise and fall of the Indian slave trade (1670–1715), the Yamasee War (1715–17), and British attempts to

24 David Beers Quinn, ed., New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612, 5 vols. (New York, 1979), 2: 192 (quotation). Here Hall also draws on an argument made by John Worth that Indian chiefdoms that became part of the Spanish missions system were able to preserve their lineages for generations, even as chiefdoms that were far more remote from the Spanish were decentralizing, because the Spanish supported chiefly power. John E. Worth, “Spanish Missions and the Persistence of Chiefly Power,” in The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540–1760, ed. Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson, Miss., 2002), 39–64.


26 Cameron B. Wesson explores this notion at greater length in the Creek context and from an archaeological perspective in Wesson, Households and Hegemony: Early Creek Prestige Goods, Symbolic Capital, and Social Power (Lincoln, Neb., 2008).
control trade in the 1720s and 1730s. Most scholars have argued that the Yamasees and Apalachicolas moved closer to the new English colony of South Carolina in the late seventeenth century because of European push and pull factors. When the English opened trade with the Apalachicolas in 1685, the Spanish objected, demanding that the Apalachicolas break all ties with the English. Spanish verbal objections turned to violence when four northern Apalachicola towns refused. The Spanish burned those towns in 1686 and constructed a fort on the Chattahoochee River in 1689 to block further trade with the English. As a result, so the traditional narrative goes, the Apalachicolas fled the Chattahoochee River in 1690 and 1691 and settled along the Ochese Creek (the present-day Ocmulgee River) in order to trade with the English.\footnote{For an example of this traditional narrative see Steven J. Oatis, \textit{A Colonial Complex: South Carolina's Frontiers in the Era of the Yamasee War, 1680–1730} (Lincoln, Neb., 2004), 30–33.}

Hall recasts these migrations in Indian terms, demonstrating how the Apalachicolas responded to the potential destruction of their communities through migration, ethnogenesis, and exchange.\footnote{So, too, does Steven C. Hahn in \textit{The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670–1765} (Lincoln, Neb., 2004), 40–47. Hahn analyzes these events from a Creek perspective and places less importance on the Yamasee-Apalachicola relationship and the politics of exchange than Hall does. However, the two works largely complement one another.} The Yamasees and Ochese Creeks did not simply fall under the spell of the English market economy but positioned themselves at key locations on the Savannah River and the trading path to the west. As a result the English were now dependent on the Yamasees and Ocheses, who controlled colonists’ access to the interior and functioned as the first guard against invasions from the west and south. Moreover, as Hall explains, it was the relationship between the Yamasees and Ocheses that led to and shaped this migration. The English were only able to first establish trade ties with the Apalachicolas in the 1680s through the Yamasees, and the Apalachicolas decided to relocate to the Ocmulgee River only because the Yamasees were close-by in Port Royal. Hall also reinterprets Yamasee and Ochese participation in the English market economy, particularly their involvement in the Indian slave trade. Rather than focusing only on the violence of slave raiding, Hall reminds readers that Indian slave raiders—including the Westos, Yamasees, and Ocheses—had to expend a great deal of time and effort on peaceful exchange and diplomacy. By becoming slave raiders the Ocheses and Yamasees were able to protect and empower themselves: through the goods of war and trade they constructed paths of peace.

By the 1710s, rising debt, violence, and enslavement threatened the Ocheses (who were coalescing into the Lower Creeks) and Yamasees. The Ocheses first tried to reestablish an older form of exchange with
the British more akin to the Apalachee trade. When this failed, the Ocheses, Yamasees, and other southeastern Indians turned to violence to protect their local autonomy. In the aftermath of this Yamasee War, the British increasingly tried to restrict and dictate the terms of the Indian trade, but Southeastern Indians continued to engage in multilateral exchange and diplomacy, using a strategy that scholars have long called the “playoff system” but that in Hall’s analysis is clearly grounded in Mississippian systems of exchange.29

Hall’s work explains Indian engagement with European market economies as grounded in indigenous constructions of exchange. It also demonstrates the limits of the shatter zone model that has increasingly driven scholarly attempts to understand the factors behind the transformation of the Native South from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Hall certainly appreciates the extent to which epidemic diseases, slave raids, violence, and geopolitical instability afflicted Indians during this period. Yet he also argues that “not all lives disintegrated” (76), and he counters the notion that Indians involved in the slave trade adopted capitalist notions of trade. In Hall’s analysis, Southeastern Indians were able to strike a balance between destruction and creation, and between violent slave raiding and peaceful exchange. For Piker and Hall, the Okfuskees and Ocheses remained Creeks because they used both historical practices and cultural innovation.

As the commercial Indian slave trade came to a fairly rapid halt with the Yamasee War, Indians and their colonial trading partners decisively turned to the deerskin trade, and this is the subject of Robert Paulett’s An Empire of Small Places. In his analysis of the Anglo-Creek-Chickasaw trade from 1732 to 1774, Paulett focuses particularly on the paths and riverways along which trade occurred. Whereas Hall uses concepts of “diaphanous spiderwebs” in his study of exchange, Paulett employs D. W. Meinig’s concept of “transect[s]” to reconstruct the spaces that linked the disparate locales and peoples of the deerskin trade.30 Paulett

29 For an analysis of how the Choctaws developed their playoff system in response to French and English economic and geopolitical competition and expansion in the eighteenth century, see Richard White, The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos (Lincoln, Neb., 1983), 34–68. Like the “shatter zone,” “middle ground,” and other such constructs, the “playoff system” is often used as a convenient (and often abstract) shorthand, in this case to denote Indians’ pursuit of simultaneous alliances with different European powers to preserve their autonomy. While White pays close attention to how Choctaw factionalism developed out of older practices, this is not always the case, and many historians treat the playoff system as largely an innovative response to European colonialism deracinated from previous Indian practices.

also attempts a more thoroughly cross-cultural analysis of exchange than any of the other authors discussed here, perhaps most meaningfully by incorporating Africans into his study. However, his engagement with Southeastern Indians is spotty, and he largely analyzes British appropriations of Creek and Chickasaw culture, missing a key opportunity to reconsider how Southeastern Indians understood and responded to the market economy in this period.

Paulett opens with a promising attempt to analyze how Indians and Europeans thought about space in this era. Particularly significant is his contention that many of the maps scholars have come to rely upon were, in fact, produced for British imperial planners and reveal little about how either Indians or traders experienced and understood the South. Rather these maps represent efforts by imperialists to impose their version of order onto the South, a practice that historians of cartography widely term “cartographic imperialism” (21). One exception is Thomas Nairne’s 1708 map, which Paulett deftly analyzes in conjunction with Indian maps to reveal the “processional geography” largely shared by traders and Indians. Paths and riverways were experienced as lines that connected the traveler to towns and people in a set order and hence reflected relationships as much as space. While imperial officials and colonial elites tried to minimize, neutralize, or erase Indians, local traders and merchants lived in a world where Indian cultures of travel, exchange, and diplomacy fit alongside their own.

Moving from paths to waterways, Paulett considers the cross-cultural meaning of rivers to the Indians, colonists, and Africans who traveled the Savannah River. By the late 1750s most of the trading boats along the Savannah River were manned and run by enslaved Africans. Paulett suggests that these boatmen likely played a central role in creating a network of communication among slaves and perhaps even in creating opportunities for runaways to reach Saint Augustine, Florida, where the Spanish followed a crown policy of liberating and protecting runaway slaves from South Carolina.

Building on the idea of trade routes as linking peoples, Paulett focuses on the personal relationships at the heart of the deerskin trade. He notes that Augusta, Georgia, first established as a trading town in 1735, “was not entirely a traditional English town” (93) but rather a colonial town that shared elements of the Creek talwa. Most notably, kinship ties, deep partnerships, and a common ideology linked the merchants and traders who established the town. The centrality of the deerskin trade to Augusta was further reflected in its layout. Rather than the grid that the Georgia Trustees had intended, Augusta’s merchants intentionally positioned themselves along the waterway for better access to trade. Imperial efforts to exert British norms were also frustrated along the
trading paths. Paulett contends that these paths were “the crucial connection between Indian and European towns” (116). These paths could also prove to be a source of real danger, and traders relied on Indian knowledge and technology to navigate pathways and rivers, learning how to read Indian identity through dress and to communicate through Indian signs and languages. Once in Indian towns, traders continued to rely on interpersonal relationships often forged through marriage with Indian women. Yet there were also major points of cultural miscommunication between traders and Indians. For instance, discords emerged around horses and traders’ storehouses, revealing the very real differences between Indian and colonial constructions of gender, property, and animals. Goods and animals were often the targets of theft or violence under the strains of the trade. Paulett concludes by analyzing the impact of the American Revolution, which did not lessen the importance of personal relationships within the Indian trade but did relocate the transects as Creeks increasingly turned their interests away from Augusta and toward Pensacola while Georgians increasingly looked upon Indians as incompatible with their vision of state.

While Paulett does not directly engage with the shatter zone construct, he attempts nonetheless to emphasize the importance of the small or local places and peoples who made up the eighteenth-century deerskin trade and the extent to which colonial traders had to concede to Indian practices. His work most clearly elucidates the tensions between British imperial expectations and colonial reactive adaptations to Indians in the context of trade. In order for traders to travel paths and waterways into Indian communities, they had to understand and adopt aspects of Indian cultural geography, technology, and practices. In the process, they also reformulated their own towns and social networks. In this sense, Paulett’s work responds to Axtell’s 1987 call for historians to appreciate the centrality of Indians to colonial societies. However, he falls far short of meaningfully reconstructing Indian perspectives and does not, as Daniel K. Richter puts it, face east.31

When the Westos moved into interior Georgia in the mid-seventeenth century they developed, according to most scholars, a fundamentally new approach to captivity and slavery. This approach would so alter the cultural and political landscape of the region that many scholars now identify Westo migration as the catalyst that turned much of the South into what Ethridge terms a shatter zone. Eager to protect

---

and empower themselves, the Westos seized on new trading opportunities with first Virginian and then South Carolinian colonists, and they exchanged war captives for guns and other goods. Westos and English colonists thus instigated an era of unprecedented violence and death for Southern Indians. Yet many of their victims used longstanding practices of migration, exchange, and diplomacy to forge new alliances and to create new communities able to survive the destructive effects of colonial slave raiding and disease. Looking back on his experiences, one Yamasee described the decade during which his community had been forced to flee slave raids, abandon their ancient homelands, and create a new community as the “good life” (Hall, 76).32

There are a number of ways in which scholars might interpret what this Yamasee man meant by the “good life.” Perhaps—even years later—he was unable to accept the magnitude of the chaos or change that he was forced to endure. Perhaps he was in shatter zone denial. Or, perhaps he had enjoyed those changes. Perhaps the chaos itself had proven exciting or rewarding or had offered new opportunities that he relished.

Perhaps we should listen to him. As the shatter zone construct seems likely to enjoy continued popularity in the field of Southern Indian studies, scholars need to balance analyses of the destructive aspects of colonization and the Indian slave trade with careful reconstruction of Indians’ resiliency. There are many questions still left to answer. Studies of exchange are assuming a more prominent role in the field and the most vibrant debate that emerges here is whether or not European capitalism became the determinant force in the Indian trade. Scholars need to do a great deal more in terms of genuine economic analysis of exchange. As Patricia Galloway and Joseph M. Hall make clear, scholars have to move beyond the facile assumption that Indians succumbed to the forces of European market capitalism. Instead, future work should more closely track changes in the ideologies and practices of exchange, which will require delving seriously into Indian and European constructions of the market economy. Now that scholars have a better sense of both the mechanics of Indian coalescence and the Indian slave trade, micro-studies of Indian slavery are needed, studies more along the lines of Joshua Piker’s Okfuskee. Instead of assuming that all Westos, Yamasees, and Creeks became militaristic slavers, scholars ought to consider which components of these coalescent societies did or did not participate in slavery and commercial exchange. Perhaps different towns or clans within these new communities made different choices. Perhaps women and men made different choices. Scholars also need to incorporate more seriously Africans, African slavery, and the transatlantic slave trade into

studies of the Native South and of Indian trade. Robert Paulett makes a good effort in this regard, and Robbie Ethridge is acutely aware of this relative lacuna in the literature. And there is an irony here worth thinking about: while the very model of the shatter zone is inspired by the work of Africanists who have considered the impact of slavery on African societies, Africans are largely overlooked by both advocates and critics of this model in the South.