SEMINOLE IN MEXICO, 1850-1861

*By Kenneth W. Porter**

In 1849-1850 several hundred discontented Seminole from the Indian Territory, under the command of the Indian chief Coacoochee (Wild Cat) and the Negro chief John Horse (Gopher John), crossed Texas to Coahuila, Mexico, and were settled near the border as military colonists; as such they did good service against wild Indians and Texas filibusters. After Wild Cat's death early in 1857 the Indians began to drift back to the Territory, the last party returning in the summer of 1861. The Negroes had been removed early in 1859 to the Laguna de Parras, in southwestern Coahuila.

The records of the Municipality of Muquiz,[1] in which the Seminole, or part of them, were settled during 1852-1861, have been used elsewhere as the basis of an article[2] dealing in a general way with the activities of these Indian and Negro settlers, but the character of the article and the necessary space limitations did not permit dealing in any detail with some of the individual Seminole whom these records mention by name. The purpose of this article is to preserve and present this personal material.

---

* Kenneth W. Porter is Research Associate of the Business History Foundation, 1358 Humble Building, Houston, Texas. His contributions to the history of the band of Seminole who immigrated to Mexico include "Wild Cat's Death and Burial," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXI, No. 1 (March, 1943); "Davy Crocket and John Horse," *American Literature*, Vol. XV, No. 1 (March, 1943); and "The Seminole in Mexico, 1850-1861," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. XXXI, No. 1 (February, 1951), edited at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, Managing Editor Charles C. Griffin, and published by the Duke University Press, College Station, Durham, North Carolina. The Business History Foundation, Inc., is a non-profit organization, incorporated under the laws of the State of New York, whose major interest is to promote research in the field of business history and the publication of the results. This Foundation is now engaged in writing the history of the Standard Oil Company (N.J.) and some of its affiliates, among which is the Humble Oil & Refining Company. As Senior Associate and Special Director of Research on the Business History Foundation, Mr. Porter is in charge of writing a history of the Humble Company.—Ed.

[1] This article is based principally on the Records of the Municipality of Muzquiz and General Alberto Guajardo's Notes for a History of Coahuila, both in the private collection of Mr. Edward Eberstadt, to whose courtesy I owe the opportunity of utilizing them. The Notes are largely based on the Records, but include some information from other sources. Specific references to the letters and other documents in these records would occupy more space than the text, and are therefore dispensed with.

[2] Kenneth W. Porter, "The Seminole in Mexico, 1850-1861," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. XXXI (February, 1951), pp. 1-36. This article is completely documented.

The Indians

Coacoochee (Wild Cat)

Wild Cat, who was the head chief of the Mexican Seminole from the beginning until his death early in 1857, was the favorite son of King Philip (Emathla), who was chief of the St. John's River Seminole in Florida and was married to a sister of Seminole head chief Mikonopi. Although a comparatively young man, born about 1810, he had been one of the most active and daring leaders in the war of 1835-1842 with the United States and after removal to the Territory he bitterly resented being forced to live in the midst of, and subject to, the powerful Creek tribe. As early as 1846 he was planning an alliance between the Seminole and some of the Texas tribes, both the wild and the sedentary, but when Mikonopi died early in 1849 he was disappointed in his ambition to succeed him as head chief and decided to transfer his headquarters to Mexico. In the autumn of 1849 he gathered together a hundred or so Indians and as many Negroes and made his way to the Mexican border, where he and his followers were welcomed as allies against the Apache and Comanche Indians.

He was commissioned a colonel in the Mexican army and for six years was recognized as a daring, intelligent, and highly successful commander. He never succeeded, however, in his plan of uniting the Texas Indians under his leadership, except for a couple of bands of Kickapoo who temporarily acknowledged him as chief but soon deserted him. The Mexican authorities recognized his ability, but also considered him to be haughty and insubordinate. They supported him, however, when, in the last year of his life, his chieftaincy was challenged. An Indian chief named Coyote and a group of followers seem to have set themselves up as independent of Wild Cat and the Negroes were reported as being unwilling to obey anyone except their own chiefs and the Mexican authorities. The governor of Nuevo Leon y Coahuila, however, ordered that, while Coyote's followers and the Negroes should be obedient to their own chiefs, they should also be subordinate to Wild Cat as head chief. Wild Cat was not in good health at the time, possibly as a result of his excessive addiction to intoxicants, and this may have weakened his leadership.

Wild Cat's death from smallpox early in 1857 was, however, greatly regretted. In 1930 an old Negro woman, who was a child at the time the Seminole crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico, still had vivid recollections of Wild Cat and his death. "We wus all crying fur we done lost him," she said. "He was so good."[3]

[3] Laurence Foster, *Indian-Negro Relationships in the Southeast* (Philadelphia, 1935), pp. 42-43. Wild Cat's career, in Mexico, because of his importance, is treated in still greater detail, and with complete references to manuscript and other primary sources, in Porter, *op. cit.*

Nokosimala (Bear Leader)

Nokosimala[4] was undoubtedly Wild Cat's "cousin and lieutenant, the Crazy Bear," mentioned by Mrs. Cazneau,[5] who, according to her, was made "sheriff" of the municipality set up for the benefit of the Seminole. He was portrayed in a colored lithograph in Emory's *Boundary Survey* under the name of Noko-shimat-tastanaki, translated Grizzly Bear,[6] but which actually means Bear Leader Warrior.

Nokosimala served as second-in-command of the Seminole Indians until Governor Santiago Vidaurri of Nuevo Leon y Coahuila on April 25, 1856, recognized Coyote as second chief.

When both Wild Cat and Coyote died early in 1857, Nokosimala was passed over for the chiefaincy, allegedly because he was a better hunter than a war-chief, and a young man named Leon or Lion was elected to the office.

Nokosimala, however, proved much more zealous and active than the titular head chief, who seems, indeed, to have been quite inactive. He went on a successful expedition late in December, 1857, at the head of 30 Seminole and in company with 17 Mexicans, to attack the Lipan and Tonkawa *rancherias* in the Cañon de Nataje and when early in 1859 many of the Seminole Indians in Mexico, including the head-chief and three other principal chiefs, left for the United States, Nokosimala at long last was recognized as head chief of those who remained.

Early in April, 1859, he marched with nine warriors as escort to a caravan proceeding to the towns of Chihuahua and on this expedition his party is said to have assisted in the destruction of a Comanche camp near San José de las Piedras and the capture of more than a hundred horses.[7] Other expeditions during the summer seem to have been unsuccessful.

Nokosimala's chieftaincy was impeached the following year by a trouble-making tribesman, but the Seminole declared that they fully and gladly recognized him as chief, Wild Cat's young son not wishing to assume any authority until he should have gained more experience.

Nokosimala and the other Seminole finally became disillusioned with Mexico and in 1861 returned to the Indian Territory.

---

[4] Mexican forms: Nacocimala, Nakasimal, Nicosimala, etc. "No-co-se-mathlar (the Bear King)" had been a companion of Billy Bowlegs in Florida in August, 1843 (John T. Sprague, *The Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War* (New York, 1848), p. 485, but Seminole nomeclature is so unimaginative that this identity of names does not necessarily signify an identity of persons.

[5] Mrs. William Leslie Cazneau (Cora Montgomery), *Eagle Pass, or, Life on the Border* (New York, 1852), pp. 74, 143.

[6] William H. Emory, *Report on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey*, vol. i (34th cong., 1st sess., Sen. ex. doc. 108), p. 52.

[7] Capt. George F. Price, *Across the Continent with the Fifth Cavalry* (New York, 1883), p. 78.

Coyote

Coyote is never mentioned except under his Mexican name, but his Seminole name almost certainly began with the word Yaha (wolf). "Yah-hah Fixico" (Heartless Wolf) signed the treaty of 1845, giving the Seminole greater autonomy, which resulted from a visit by Wild Cat to Washington the previous year.[8]

Coyote does not appear in Mexican sources until the spring of 1854, but was very active thereafter as commander, or co-commander with Wild Cat, of expeditions against Indians and filibusters. A part of the Seminole had apparently always obeyed him rather than Wild Cat, which, since Wild Cat was the son of a St. John's River chief and probably a nephew of the Alachua chief Mikonopi, suggests that Coyote may have belonged to another division of the Seminole—Mikasuki, Tallahassee, or possibly Creek. On April 25, 1856, the governor of Nuevo Leon y Coahuila recognized Coyote as commander of "the part of the Indians who have always obeyed him" and as second chief of the Mexican Seminole in general, but only as a subaltern to Wild Cat except during the latter's absence.

Perhaps put on his mettle by this honor, Coyote particularly distinguished himself during the remainder of the year. At the head of ten Seminole he went out in search of stolen cattle and located a Tonkawa camp of twenty-five or thirty warriors, which he attacked, killing four and capturing eleven horses, but was forced to withdraw when his ammunition ran out. Shortly after this he went in pursuit of a party of thirteen Comanche raiders, attacked them by surprise with only six men, killed seven, badly wounded three, and captured eight horses and two mules.

Coyote died in January, 1857, in a smallpox epidemic which took the lives of twenty-eight women and twenty-five men of the tribe, including the head chief Wild Cat.

Lion

Lion, known only by his Mexican name of Leon, was elected as Wild Cat's successor to the head chieftaincy, in preference to Nokosimala, Wild Cat's kinsman and sometime second-in-command. Although Lion is described as "an honorable, brave, and active young man," he was never mentioned prior to his election to the chieftaincy and was not particularly active thereafter, being far exceeded in that respect by the sub-chiefs Susano, Felipe, and Juan Flores, as well as by Nokosimala himself.

The Seminole word *kotza* (panther) is translated either as lion or as tiger and Lion's Seminole name presumably stemmed from that word. A Seminole named Cotza Tustenuggee (Panther War-

[8] Charles J. Kappler, compiler and editor, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. ii (Washington, D.C., 1904), p. 552.

rior), described as a nephew of Alligator and a son of King Philip, signed the Capitulation of Fort Dade, March 6, 1837, as one of Alligator's representatives.[9] A man of that name also was one of those who accompanied Alligator from the Indian Territory to Florida in October, 1841, on a peace mission to their friends and relatives who remained hostile.[10] Very likely they were the same. If Alligator's representative and companion was actually a son of King Philip, he would have been Wild Cat's brother or half-brother and would thus have been a likely person to have accompanied him to Mexico. And if Lion was Wild Cat's brother, this relationship might account for his succession to the chieftaincy, according to the old Seminole principle that a chief's brother or nephew was his logical successor. That Lion was Wild Cat's brother is, however, merely a possibility.

Lion was one of the fifty-one Seminole Indians who on February 17, 1859, left the Seminole settlement of Nacimiento for the Indian Territory, although for some reason he left his wife behind, and promised to return within ten months with as many more as he could bring. He did not, however, do so.

Sub-Chiefs

Mention of Seminole Indians in Mexico has thus far been confined to head chiefs and second chiefs. To the former category belonged Wild Cat and Lion, to the latter, Coyote, while Nokosimala belonged to both. There were also a number of recognized sub-chiefs, who were never formally recognized as occupying the position of second chief. The sub-chief who probably occupied the highest rank short of second position, and who was certainly an important figure among the Seminole Indians in Mexico over the longest period of time, was Pasoca.

Pasoca

Pasoca[11] was probably the same as "Passackee" or "Pas Soc Sa" who in 1844 accompanied Wild Cat on a delegation to Washington.[12] He was probably also "Pass-ack-ee, an old Seminole chief. . . . quite advanced in life,"[13] who in 1846 gave evidence in behalf of the freedom of a Negro woman.

---

[9] *Niles Register*, vol. ii (Mar. 25, 1937), p. 49, quoting from the *National Intelligencer. Army and Navy Chronicle*, vol. iv (1837), p. 215. *Charleston* (S. C.) *Courier*, Mar. 23, 1837. 25th cong., 3d sess., H. of R., War Dep't, Doc. 225, p. 53.

[10] Sprague, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

[11] The Mexican form of the name is Pasaqui.

[12] National Archives, Dep't of the Interior, Indian Office, Seminole File 1844, J1454-1467, Letter: Seaborn Hill, Creek Agency, Apr. 16, 1844, to Thomas L. Judge, Washington; *ibid.*, M1941, Protest against the Wild Cat-Alligator-Crazy Tiger-Passakee Delegation.

[13] Nat'l Archives, War Dep't, QMGO, Consolidated Files, "Fort Gibson," Letter: Lieut. R. W. Kirkham, Fort Gibson, Cherokee Nation, Aug. 26, 1846, to Gen. T. Jesup, QMG, USA, Washington, D.C.

Pasoca, it is probable, was also the Pasoca Yahola who in 1846 was a member of the Seminole executive council at a time when Wild Cat was head chief Mikonopi's "counsellor and organ."[14] Pasoca Yahola in 1849 joined with Wild Cat in opposing the Creek demand that Negroes living among the Seminole be deprived of their guns.[15]

Pasoca Yahola went on a delegation to Billy Bowlegs in Florida late in 1849,[16] very probably as an emissary of Wild Cat. A chief named "Parsacke" had been with Billy Bowlegs, Hospitaka, and others in the Great Cypress in 1841;[17] possibly he was Pasoca Yahola and his former association with Billy Bowlegs caused him to be selected for the Florida delegation. If the Mexican Pasoca was also the Pasoca Yahola of the Florida delegation, as the latter's connection with Wild Cat and friendliness toward the Negroes makes more than likely, he could not have gone with Wild Cat on the first trip to Mexico in 1849-1850 and must have been among the few who accompanied him on his second trip from the Territory to Mexico, in 1850-1851.[18]

Pasoca commanded the Seminole Indians who accompanied Colonel Emilio Langberg on an expedition into the Laguna de Jaco early in 1852, while Wild Cat went on a mission to Mexico City, but he does not seem to have been very active thereafter, probably because of his age. He was, however, a member of the party of Seminole Indians who went back to the Territory in the fall of 1858 and then returned to Mexico early the following year. He was accompanied on his return by his son, known to the Mexicans as "Pasaqui chico" (Little Pasoca), who had been residing in Arkansas. Pasoca was one of the chiefs who on February 17, 1859, left Nacimiento for the United States.

Tiger

A sub-chief who does not seem to have been particularly important prior to the movement of 1858-1859 for returning to the

---

[14] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for* 1846. Grant Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes* (Norman, Okla., 1934), pp. 243-246.

[15] 33d Cong., 2d sess., H. of R., ex. doc. 15, p. 28.

[16] Foreman, *op. cit.*, pp. 248, 261.

[17] Sprague, *op. cit.*, pp. 271, 295, 319.

[18] Another chief in whose name Pasoca is an element must be distinguished from Wild Cat's associate. This is "Par sac Micco," who protested against the 1844 delegation of which Wild Cat's friend Pasoca was a member. This "Par sac Micco" is probably the same as "Passac-Micco," who escaped from Fort Jupiter early in 1838 when over 600 Indians and Negroes were seized (Sprague, *op. cit.*, p. 195), and the "Pasac-Mico" or "Pasuc Mico" who "came in" under the persuasion of Alligator and signed an appeal of Nov. 15, 1841, urging Billy Bowlegs and Waxey Hajo to surrender (Sprague, *op. cit.*, p. 353). Pessac, Passac Mico, Passacce, Pas-sac-e-mico, Parsackemicco, Passac-Mico, and Passac are names applied to a guide or guides serving the troops in Florida late in 1841 and early in 1842; probably all these names refer to the same man—the signer of the Nov. 15, 1841, appeal (Sprague, *op. cit.*, pp. 357, 362, 368, 374).

Indian Territory was Tiger, or Tigre as the Mexicans called him. He was undoubtedly the "Kotza-fexico-chopko, or Long Tiger" (more properly Long Heartless Panther), who, with "Parsakee" and "young Coacoochee, or Wild Cat," went to the Territory in the fall of 1858 and returned with "an order from the chief of the Seminoles to bring the remnant of the tribe back to Arkansas."[19]

He was in all probability Wild Cat's ally in the Territory, Crazy Tiger or Crazy Tiger Cat, who, along with Alligator and Pasoca, accompanied him on his mission to Washington in the spring of 1844.

He also may very well have been the Mikasuki chief "Cotzar-fixico-chopco (Mad Tiger)" who was one of the most savage hostiles in Florida in the final stage of the Seminole War.[20]

Tiger, with Pasoca, Lion, and Juan Flores, headed the party who left for the Territory in February, 1859.

Young Coacoochee

Under Seminole custom, a chief was ordinarily succeeded by a brother or a sister's son rather than by a son of his own, although there were exceptions to this general rule. Wild Cat, when he died early in 1857, left behind him a young son, known only as "young Coacoochee, or Wild Cat," or, as the Mexicans called him, "Gato chiquito"—The Little Cat. He was not, however, considered for the chieftaincy, which fell to Lion.

Young Wild Cat was probably a very young man indeed. The Negroes of Brackettville, Texas, and Nacimiento, Coahuila, whose ancestors came from the Territory to Mexico with John Horse and Wild Cat, preserve traditions of a son of Wild Cat named Billy, probably the same as "young Coacoochee," who accompanied the tribe on the Hejira of 1849-1850 at a time when he was so young as to require a "nurse," a little Negro girl of perhaps ten or twelve named Kitty Johnson.[21] Presumably her young charge was even younger. In 1857, therefore, he must have been in his middle 'teens.

Young Coacoochee accompanied Tiger and Pasoca on a visit to the Indian Territory in the fall of 1858 and returned with them to Mexico early the next year. He was, however, among those who remained behind when Lion, Tiger, Pasoca, Juan Flores, and their families and friends left for the Territory.

---

[19] National Archives, Dep't of the Interior, Indian Office, Texas File T359.

[20] Sprague, *op. cit.*, pp. 272, 331, 395, 434. This chief is also referred to as a Creek.

[21] Interviews with Molly Perryman (*ca.* 1863-), Brackettville, 1941, 1942, 1943; Penny Factor (*ca.* 1874-), Brackettville, 1943; Julia Payne (*ca.* 1862-1946), Nacimiento, 1932 (courtesy of Mrs. D. S. McKellar), 1944; Rosa Fay (*ca.* 1860-), Brackettville, 1942. Molly Perryman, Penny Factor, and Julia Payne were daughters of Kitty Johnson; Rosa Fay's mother Clara used to play with Billy.

A Seminole trouble-maker apparently felt, or claimed to feel, that this time Wild Cat's son should succeed to the chieftaincy, instead of Nokosimala, and complained to the governor that the latter had not been properly elected. The other Seminole, however, asserted that young Wild Cat did not wish to assume any authority until he should have increased in experience. By this time he must have been in his late 'teens, perhaps twenty years old at the most.

Young Wild Cat presumably returned to the Territory with the hundred Seminole Indians—the last in Mexico—who were *en route* to the Red River in October 1861.[22]

Juan Flores, Susano, Felipe, and Manuel Flores

Several Seminole sub-chiefs are known only by their Mexican names and are thus particularly difficult, probably even impossible, to identify further. Probably they were Seminole who submitted to Catholic baptism and were in consequence given Christian names. They emerge for the most part after Wild Cat's death.

One of the most conspicuous of these was Juan Flores, who seems, indeed, to have been the principal war chief during Lion's head chieftaincy. Early in 1857 he commanded a party of Seminole Indians who, in company with a band of Negroes under Juan Caballo (John Horse), went out to pursue a party of hostile Indians who had attacked five travellers in the Jarilla de San José and had mortally wounded one of them. They had no success except the capture of five horses by the Negro captain and two mares by Juan Flores.

Juan Flores apparently commanded the Seminole Indian contingent of twenty men who in March, 1858, in company with twenty Negro warriors, pursued Mescalero horse thieves to the bank of the Rio Grande and took from them over a hundred horses and mules and other spoils. They killed two of the enemy but the only casualty suffered by the Seminole Indians or the Negroes was a slight arrow wound to "the valiant Seminole Juan Flores." The Mexican authorities ordinarily used this adjective as if it were a part of his name, which adequately indicates their opinion of his merits.

The "valiant Juan Flores" was one of the chiefs commanding the Seminole Indians who left for the Indian Territory early in 1859.

During the summer of 1857 a Seminole Indian, known only as Felipe, was briefly prominent. He first came into public notice on July 20, when he complained of alleged abuses by the Seminole Negroes in the use of water for irrigation. On August 3, Felipe commanded ten Seminole who captured fifty animals from the

[22] University of Texas Archives, James Buckner Barry, CO, 1849-1914, Folder 2, 1860-1862, Wm. O. Yeas, Adjt., Camp Colorado, Tex., Oct. 10, 1861, to Capt. Jas. B. Barrry, Comdg., Camp Cooper. Buck Barry, *A Texas Ranger and Frontiersman*, James K. Greer, ed. (Dallas, 1932), p. 142.

Lipanes in the Potrero (pasture ground) de Doña Mariana. And this is the last we hear of Felipe.

Susano also enjoyed a briefer but even more spectacular season of glory. On August 8, 1857, he and two companions overtook five Comanche with stolen horses in the *derramadero* (drain) of Aguardiente and gave battle, wounding one and taking sixteen mules, three horses, a mare, and four saddles. Susano immediately undertook another expedition, using these animals. On the 21st, out deer-hunting with six companions, Susano encountered some Lipanes near the Cañon de Nataje and discovered that they had stolen horses hidden nearby. The Lipanes offered to share the horses with the Seminole, but the latter refused and Susano shot the chief. The others fled and the Seminole captured fifty horses.

Susano remained in Mexico until the last of the Seminole Indians departed, but apparently did not distinguish himself further.

Manuel Flores, who may have been a brother of the "valiant Juan Flores," seems to have been one of the few Seminole who, during their decade in Mexico, learned enough Spanish to serve as interpreter. He is mentioned in this role as early as October, 1855, and in August, 1858, appeared before the governor of Nuevo Leon y Coahuila at Monterrey with "Capitan Leon" and "Nakasimal" to complain that the Negroes used too much water and request that they be subject to Chief Lion as formerly to Wild Cat.

We hear nothing further of the Seminole interpreter Manuel Flores.

Other Seminole Indians: Guëro, Tomecae, Utalke, Chiquinai, and Konip

The majority of the Seminole Indians in Mexico, of course, occupied no official position and are not even mentioned in the official records. The few who are referred to by name deserve comment corresponding to the available information.

An Indian named Guëro is mentioned in March, 1856, but his name is obviously Spanish, being an Americanism signifying blond, presumably because he was lighter in complexion than most Seminole Indians.

In February, 1859, an Indian named Tomecae is mentioned. An examination of the index to Swanton[23] will reveal a number of Creek and Seminole names, particularly tribal designations, such as Tommakees and Tumaque, of one of which the above name could easily be a Spanish corruption. King Philip, Wild Cat's father, had a subordinate known as Tomoka John.[24]

---

[23] John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Washington, D.C., 1922), pp. 487-489.

[24] *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, vol. vii, pp. 849-850.

Utalke, mentioned in February, 1859, as one of the Indians who was remaining in Mexico, bears a name unmistakably of Indian origin, which identifies him as a member of the powerful and aristocratic Wind clan. Wild Cat had a brother named Otulke[25] who may very well have accompanied him to Mexico, although this identity is merely a possibility.

Of the Seminole in Mexico below the rank of sub-chief, we are best informed about the one whose character was probably least attractive. Konip[26]—whose name, perhaps appropriately, signifies Skunk—first distinguished himself early in 1859 by accusing three fellow tribesmen of planning an uprising against the Mexican authorities, but presented no satisfactory evidence. In October, 1860, Konip appeared before the governor at Monterrey, charging that Chief Nokosimala had not been properly elected and that ten quadroons were encroaching on the Seminole land, taking their water and killing their hogs. The other Seminole, however, denied these charges, asserting that they gladly and fully recognized Nokosimala as chief and that the quadroon settlers lived at Nacimiento by their full consent. Konip, they added, was a drunkard and a liar, who was a fugitive from tribal justice for having nearly killed a fellow tribesman in a brawl. We hear no more of Konip.

The Negroes

The Seminole Negroes in Mexico, whom the Mexicans called "Mascogos," probably because many of them spoke the Muskogee or Creek language, were probably as numerous as the Indians, or more so. In some respects we know more about them than about the Indians, because the latter were in Mexico at the most from 1850 to 1861 and then returned to the Indian Territory, whereas many of the descendants of the Negroes are still living at Nacimiento, Coahuila, or just across the Texas border at Brackettville and Del Rio. The names of the Negro military colonists and their children consequently appear on Mexican and United States census lists and those who, after the Civil War, served as scouts in the United States army on the border, are mentioned in enlistment records and on muster rolls. When it comes to their actual experiences in Mexico, however, the Muzquiz Records are less informative. The history of the Seminole Negroes in Mexico, particularly after the departure of the Indians, is indeed a story in itself and in this immediate connection I shall confine myself to the comparatively few Negroes mentioned in official Mexican documents during the period of 1850-

[25] Sprague, *op. cit.*, pp. 296, 297, 298, 328.
[26] Mexican forms are Conepé and Compé.

1861, with whatever further information on their background and later history is available.[27]

John Horse (Gopher John)

The principal chief of the Seminole Negroes in Mexico was John Horse, better known, particularly among United States army officers, by his nickname of Gopher John. The Mexicans called him Capitán Juan Caballo and, beginning in 1856, he is often referred to as Capitán Juan de Dios Vidaurri (alias) Caballo, probably as a result of submitting to Catholic baptism.

John Horse was a tall, fine-looking brown man, reputedly of mixed Indian, Negro, and Spanish ancestry, who was noted for his great coolness and courage, his deadly accuracy with a rifle, and his flair for diplomacy.

He had been born in Florida about 1812, a so-called "slave" to an Indian, but during the Seminole War he rose to the rank of sub-chief and served as representative both of the war-chief Alligator and head-chief Mikonopi. After the surrender of the chiefs with whom he was most closely associated, he served with distinction as guide and interpreter to United States troops in Florida and was of great assistance in bringing about the surrender of other chiefs, including Wild Cat with whom he had become acquainted when both were hostages at Tampa Bay in 1837.

In the Indian Territory he became the principal figure among the Negro element in the Seminole tribe and was closely associated with the Seminole faction hostile to Creek domination, of which Wild Cat was the recognized leader. He was a close collaborator with Wild Cat in the latter's plans for a removal to Mexico.

During the Seminole Negroes' residence near the Texas-Mexican border, 1850-1859, John Horse was recognized by the Mexican authorities as their chief, although regarded as subject to Wild Cat. In 1856, however, as noted in the earlier sketch of Wild Cat, the Negroes, under John Horse's leadership declined, for reasons which can only be surmised, to recognize Wild Cat's authority.

Although John Horse is remembered as a brave and intelligent commander and as a generous and kindly "father of his people,"

---

[27] Apart from the Muzquiz Records, information in regard to individual Seminole Negroes is drawn from the following sources: National Archives, War Dep't, Adjutant General's Office, Seminole Negro-Indians Scouts, enlistment records and monthly reports, 1870-1881. U. S. Census, 1880, Texas, Kinney Co. "Memoranda relative to Seminole Negro Indians," Military Div. of the Missouri, War Dep't, *loc. cit.* Mexican Archives, Mexico, D.F., Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, num. 94(1891), 44-12-60, "Lista de los negros de la tribu Mascogo agraciada per el Gobierno General con terrenos de la Colonia del Nacimiento." Interviews with various Seminole Negroes, 1941-1943, at Brackettville and Del Rio, Texas, and Nacimiento, Coahuila. Information of particular importance or from other sources will be separately indicated.

his most important service was probably his steadfast insistence that the Negroes should not become involved in the civil wars of the time but should preserve amity with all Mexicans. In consequence, the Negroes would fight only against the wild Indians and the Texas filibusters. This policy of neutrality was probably the salvation of the little Negro colony, which, after nearly a century, is still in existence.

John Horse outlived Wild Cat by a quarter of a century, dying in Mexico City in August, 1882, while on a mission to the President on behalf of his people.[28]

John Kibbitts

John Kibbitts,[29] who usually led the Negroes in Mexico when John Horse was not personally in command, was a tall, black man, born in Florida about 1810, who bore the busk-name of "Sit-tee-tas-to-nachy" (Snake Warrior). He had probably been one of Mikonopi's Negroes.[30]

Kibbitts commanded the body of about one hundred Negroes who returned to Nacimiento from the Laguna de Parras about 1865, and was active in obtaining recognition from the Mexican government of the Negroes' right to the *hacienda.* In 1870 he led his band over to Fort Duncan, at Eagle Pass, Texas, and was recognized as headman and first sergeant of the first detachment enlisted in the Seminole Negro-Indian Scouts. He died in 1878 and is buried in the Seminole Cemetery at Old Fort Clark, near Brackettville, Texas.[31]

---

[28] The sources for the above sketch are so numerous that it would be impossible to list them. They are principally documents in the National Archives, Washington, D.C., or in various Mexican archives, and the files of a number of newspapers. Some of the sources for his life prior to his settlement in Mexico are mentioned in Porter, *loc. cit.*, which also gives a somewhat detailed account of his activities in Mexico, 1850-1859. The author is engaged on his biography, under the tentative title of *Freedom Over Me.*

[29] Other forms: Kibbetts, Kibbets, Kibbett, etc., and even Kiveth and Cubit. Mexican forms also include Jhon Kibbet and Juan Quibit.

[30] Nat'l Archives, Quarter Master General's Office, Consolidated Files, "Fort Gibson," "Negroes who surrendered to General Taylor . . . . ," "Kivet, Micconopy." On the other hand, Kibbitts or Cubit is a name very similar to that of a Seminole called "Kub-bit-che," (Kappler, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 552), which is probably a corruption of Kapitca, meaning Lyewater, the name of a clan. The Mikasuki chief at the time of the Seminole War, 1817-1818, was named Kapitca Micco (Lyewater King). It is possible, therefore, that John Kibbitts had as master or patron a member of this clan, from whom he took his name.

[31] Departamento Agrario, Mexican Archives, Mexico, D.F., "El Nacimiento," Informe, pp. 55-71. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs . . . for . . .* 1870 (Washington, 1870), pp. 328-329. Interviews: Rosa Fay, 1942; Julia Payne, 1944 (courtesy of Mrs. D. S. McKellar). Rosa Fay was born about 1860 and Julia Payne, born a year or two later, was John Kibbitts' step-grand-daughter.

Cuffee

Although John Kibbitts seems usually to have been John Horse's second-in-command in Mexico, the Negroes declared in May, 1856, that in John Horse's absence they recognized Captain Cuffee[32] as their chief. Cuffee was not an uncommon name among Negroes, since among certain West African tribes it was conventionally given to boys born on Friday.[33] In the absence of a surname it is impossible to identify this Negro captain, but he may have been Cuffee Payne, who, 20 years later, in 1875, was a very old man living among the Seminole Negro-Indian Scouts at Fort Duncan.

Julian

A Negro named Julian was apparently of some importance in March, 1856, during Governor Santiago Vidaurri's campaign of extermination against the Lipanes, in which he used Seminole Indians and Negroes as well as Mexican troops. Possibly he was the same as Julian the interpreter, mentioned in May, 1855.

Julian was the Mexican name ordinarily conferred on Negroes whose Christian name in "American" was William, but no one of that name, old enough to have been prominent among the Seminole Negroes in Mexico at this time, appears on subsequent lists or is remembered today.

Santos

Two Negroes named Santos and Bibian became involved in the summer of 1855 in a controversy with members of the Shields family, who were free mulatto settlers from South Carolina. Santos was probably Santos Julio, the name the Mexicans gave to Sampson July, born at Tampa Bay about 1824, whose older sister Susan was the wife of Chief John Horse. Sampson July was subsequently a principal figure among the Seminole Negroes in Texas and Mexico and rose to the rank of sergeant in the Seminole scouts.

Nothing further is known to me about the Negro Bibian (Vivian).

Felipe Sanchez

Felipe Sanchez, apparently a Negro captain, was mentioned on November 7, 1858, in connection with a proposed campaign against the wild Indians. Sanchez is a surname used in Mexico by the Bowlegs, or Bully, family of Seminole Negroes and also by the Daniels family of Creek Negroes, but in this case doubtless refers to Fay Bowlegs,[34] who was probably the father of the Felipe Sanchez

[32] Mexican forms: Café; Cofé.

[33] Martha Warren Beckwith, *Black Roadways: A Study of Jamaican Folk Life* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1929), p. 59.

[34] Letter: John Jefferson, June 5, 1947, to author. In an earlier letter (May 11, 1946) Mr. Jefferson wrote that Felipe Sanchez was Fay Bruner, but the Bruners' Mexican surname is Bruno.

(Fay Bully), who in 1891 at the age of forty years was living at Nacimiento.

Felipe Alvarez

Felipe Alvarez commanded the first contingent of Seminole Negroes to leave Nacimiento for the Laguna de Parras in May, 1859. In 1891, at the age of seventy, he was still living in Parras, one of the very few Negroes who did not settle either in Texas or at Nacimiento during the late 1860's and early 1870's. His American name is not definitely known, but Alvarez is a surname used by the Fay family. Fay, indeed, is the Seminole Negro version of Felipe[35] (Philip), so perhaps he was the founder of the family and subsequent Fays took their surname from his Christian name.

Tomás

Both the Seminole Indians and the Negroes were occasionally accused of stealing horses or cattle from the Mexican inhabitants, in some cases probably unjustly, although in others the charge was probably only too true. In the summer of 1860, after most of the Negroes had been transferred to the Laguna de Parras, an "indio Mascogo" named Tomás and others of the same tribe, who presumably had refused to accompany the main body, were being pursued by a posse on the charge of robbery. The outcome of the affair is not known.

Thomas was by no means a common name among the Negroes. In fact, the only Seminole Negro of that name who is known to have been in Mexico at the time was Thomas Factor, a man of about thirty-six, who was an uncle of John Horse's wife. Thomas Factor is reported in Seminole Negro tradition to have been shot and mortally wounded by a Mexican for whom he had been working when he "asked for his time."[36] It is at least possible that the "indio Mascogo" Tomás was Thomas Factor and that the accusation of robbery developed out of a controversy over wages.

The Seminole Negroes were by no means the only members of that race in Northern Mexico. In the 1850's, in fact, the number of runaway slaves from Texas in that region was estimated at about 3,000,[37] to which could be added an indefinite number of free settlers. A number of Negroes, mentioned in the Muzquiz Records, probably therefore did not belong to the Seminole tribe, either by birth or adoption, though some of them were doubtless more or less closely associated with the Seminole.

---

[35] Letter: John Jefferson, May 11, 1946, to author.

[36] Interview: Nellie Valdez (Mrs. Adam Fay), grand-daughter of Thomas Factor and his wife Rose Kelley, Nacimiento, 1943.

[37] *The Texas State Times* (Austin), Oct. 6, 1855. University of Texas Library, John S. (Rip) Ford, Memoirs, vol. iv, p. 628.

Pedro Saens or Sains, early in 1856, was appointed armorer to the Seminole, but was murdered shortly after by an American employee named John, not otherwise identified. Another Negro of the same name, presumably his son, and a Negro named Hilario Potosi, accompanied the Seminole on a successful expedition against the Mescaleros early in 1858. Later in the year they complained that they had not received their share of the booty.

The Shields brothers, Benjamin, Archibald R., William, Michael, and Francis, who have already been mentioned in another connection, were an unusual family. They were free mulatto settlers from South Carolina and seem to have been literate. At least two of them, Benjamin and Archibald R., intermarried with the Seminole Negroes, and their descendants became identified with the group.[38]

A young Negro named Albert Williams, a runaway from San Antonio, to which he had been brought from Arkansas, was among those who accompanied the Seminole Negroes or "Mascogos" to the Laguna de Parras late in the spring of 1859.

Two Negroes named "Aram" and "Boobe" (*sic*) were threatened with condign punishment early in 1859 for having stolen two horses; they are not identified as Seminole.

A bare mention of a Negro named Roberto Gallos, late in 1859, completes the list of Negroes appearing in the Muzquiz Records.

Thus, in the single municipality of Muzquiz, could be found during the 1850's a varied group of Negro settlers: a large band of Seminole Negroes, whose culture was essentially Indian and who, as such, were particularly well-equipped to fight the wild Apache and Comanche; skilled craftsmen, such as the Seminole armorer; runaway slaves from Texas; two or three suspected horse and cattle thieves; and a family of well-educated mulattoes. The most interesting and unusual of the lot, however, in the opinion of most people, then and now, were probably the Indian-raised Negroes under Captain John Horse.

The Seminole migration to and sojourn in Mexico is in a sense a part of Oklahoma history. It was from the Indian Territory, now a part of Oklahoma, that Wild Cat's Indians and Negroes left for Mexico, and it was to the Indian Territory that the surviving Indians returned. The descendants of the Negro immigrants are for the most part living today in the border regions of Texas and Mexico,

[38] Archibald Shields married Roselle Kibbitts, daughter of John Kibbitts. Julia Payne, one of my principal informants, was the daughter of Benjamin Shields and Kitty Johnson, John Kibbitt's step-daughter.

but some of them, too, are in Oklahoma, for in 1883 Sergeant David Bowlegs, of the Seminole scouts, anxious for a better life for his children than was possible on the Texas-Mexican frontier, led a party of about thirty-seven Seminole Negroes, mostly belonging to the Bowlegs, Bruner, and Wilson families, back to what is now Seminole County, where they were "well received." Their descendants still maintain visiting relations with the Negroes of Brackettville and Nacimiento.[39]

Possibly descendants of the members of Wild Cat's band, mentioned above, will read this article and find it of interest; some of them may even be led by it to communicate to this publication, or to the author, additional information, perhaps of a traditional character, on this interesting but comparatively little known episode in Seminole history.

[39] National Archives, Adjutant General's Office, 1870-M488, No. 2, Letters: Lieut. John L. Bullis, Ft. Clark, June 14, 1880, to Ass't Adjt. Gen., Dep't of Texas; Col. D. S. Stanley, Ft. Clark, May 19, June 19, 1882, to Adjt. Gen., Dep't of Texas; *ibid.*, Dep't of the Interior, Indian Office, Seminole Files, 1882-10736, Letter: Brig. Gen. C. C. Augur, Ft. Clark, May 19, 1882, to Adjt. Gen., Dep't of Texas; 1885-12308, Statement: Brig. Gen. D. S. Stanley, Headquarters, Dep't of Texas, San Antonio, May 16, 1885. Interviews with Molly Perryman, 1942, 1943; Rebecca Wilson (*ca.* 1880), Brackettville, 1943; George Noble (1862-?), Nobletown, near Wewoka, Seminole Co., Okla.