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Porter: Billy Bowlegs (Holata Micco) in the Seminole Wars (Part I)



BILLY BOWLEGS (HOLATA MICCO)
IN THE SEMINOLE WARS

(Part I)

by KENNETH W. PORTER

A STUDY IN RELATIONSHIPS AND IDENTITIES

IF A GROUP OF informed Americans were asked to name a Seminole chief, it is likely that most of them would reply "Osceola." If asked to recall a second Florida Indian, at least a majority of those responding would name "Billy Bowlegs." The second choice would be more accurate, for Osceola was a Seminole only by adoption - being by birth a Red Stick Creek from Georgia or Alabama who came to Florida at about the age of ten. He was not a chief by hereditary right,¹ whereas Billy Bowlegs, to use his common white-man's nickname, was what an army surgeon described as "a *'bona fide* Seminole, of old King Payne's tribe."² He even belonged to the Seminole "royal family," and was a member of the so-called "Cowkeeper Dynasty," after the Oconee chief who is known as "Founder of the Seminole Nation."³ Osceola, active and aggressive in the events leading up to the Second Seminole War, was captured in 1837, while the war was still in its second year, and died a prisoner a few months later. Billy Bowlegs, on the other hand, was still triumphantly at large when the war ended in 1842, and he was the recognized chief of those Seminoles still living in Florida. He was also the leader in the Third-and last-Seminole War of 1855-1858, and after his final transfer to the Indian Territory, he fought in the Civil War, this time, however, on the winning side. Two recent historians are accurate,

1. Mark F. Boyd, "Asi-Yoholo or Osceola," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXXIII (January-April 1955), 252, 255-56.
2. "Letters of Samuel Forry, Surgeon, U. S. Army, 1837-1838," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, VI (January 1928), 137.
3. Kenneth W. Porter, "The Cowkeeper Dynasty of the Seminole Nation," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXX (April 1952), 348-49, and Kenneth W. Porter, "The Founder of the Seminole Nation," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXVII (April 1949), 364-65, 381-84.

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although exceptional in their statement, when they note that Billy Bowlegs was "as able and no less shrewd" than Osceola.⁴

While Billy Bowlegs' name is familiar, nothing definite is known about him prior to 1839. He was then either in his late twenties or early thirties. He has been widely confused with three other prominent Seminoles of this general period, and even the date of his death is controversial. Some authorities assert that the Billy Bowlegs of the Civil War period was not the same as the chief who was a leader in the Florida wars. That Billy Bowlegs, it is claimed, died in 1859. To disentangle these identities is a principal objective of this article.⁵

Billy Bowlegs was born some time between 1808 and 1812. An army officer described him as being thirty-three in 1845; a New Orleans newspaper gave his age as "about forty" in 1849; and a magazine article in 1858 claimed that he was "about fifty."⁶ He belonged to the same generation of young warriors as

4. Porter, "Cowkeeper Dynasty," 348; Alfred J. and Kathryn A. Hanna, *Lake Okeechobee: Wellspring of the Everglades* (Indianapolis, 1948), 53.
5. A common confusion of Bowlegs' identity, and the one most easily cleared up, is with his kinsman—perhaps uncle—King Bowlegs, Seminole headchief (1813-1818), and from whom Billy probably derived his white-man's name. Main source of this is Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1933-1934), which, in the writer's opinion, has been more responsible than other works for originating and disseminating historical and biographical errors in regard to American Indians. In Volume II, 8-16, "Halpatter Micco, or Billy Bowlegs," is described as the son of "Secoffer," who is often mistakenly identified with the Cowkeeper (see Porter, "Founder of the Seminole Nation," 364-65, 381-84). This is really a description of King Bowlegs, usually referred to as Cowkeeper's son, although the Seminole matrilineal system makes it more probable that he was Cowkeeper's nephew. The sketch of Billy Bowlegs and the accompanying portrait are apparently modeled after the article, "Billy Bowlegs in New Orleans" in *Harper's Weekly*, II (June 12, 1858), 376-78. For examples of similar confusion, see Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic*, 2 vols. (New York, 1950), I, 449-50, and Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XXXIII (Winter 1955-1956), 512-15.
6. John T. Sprague, *The Origin, Progress and Conclusion of the Florida War* (New York, 1848), 512. See also facsimile reproduction with an introduction by John K. Mahon (Gainesville, 1964); "Billy Bowlegs in New Orleans," 376-78; *New York Journal of Commerce*, October 8, 1849, quoting *New Orleans Delta*, dated Fort Brooke (Tampa Bay), Florida, September 21, 1849, and cited in C. T. Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," 520-21. The article by Carolyn Foreman consists of a number of paragraphs on various Indians and Negroes named Bowlegs, without organization or evaluation. Its principal value is quotes from various manuscripts, copies of manuscripts, and

Osceola (b. 1804-1808) and Coacoochee or Wild Cat (b. ca. 1810).

Billy Bowlegs' parentage is even more uncertain than his approximate age. Seminole society was then matrilineal, and inheritance was normally by the son of a maternal sister, or a brother by the same mother, rather than by a son. Some white observers, however, influenced by European patrilineal tradition, frequently assumed that a recognized heir must, *ipso facto*, be the son of the man from whom chieftaincy or property was inherited. Nonetheless, Brigadier General W. J. Worth was probably writing out of a knowledge of the Seminole system when, in 1843, he stated that Billy Bowlegs was the "nephew of Micanopy" - Seminole head-chief, 1818-1849. Also, two years later, Captain John T. Sprague called him "the nephew of Micanopy, Old Bowlegs, and King Payne."⁷ Since Micanopy was generally acknowledged as the nephew of King Payne (*regnat* 1785-1813) and Payne's brother and successor, King Bowlegs (*regnat* 1813-1818), Billy Bowlegs obviously could not have been the nephew *both* of Micanopy and of the latter's uncles, although he could have been Micanopy's nephew and a grand-nephew of Payne and Bowlegs. One Indian scholar claimed to have documentary evidence that Billy Bowlegs' mother was the Buckra Woman, sister of King Payne,⁸ whose town in 1821 was "near Long Swamp, east of Big Hammock."⁹ If so, then Billy Bowlegs, as son of the Buckra Woman, was a nephew of both King Payne and King Bowlegs and a cousin of Micanopy.

Billy Bowlegs' white-man's nickname suggests-since it is

obscure or hard-to-come-by publications in the Grant Foreman Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Norman, Oklahoma.

7. Sprague, *Florida War*, 507, 512.
8. Howard Sharp to Kenneth W. Porter, July 8, 1944, in possession of the author; "Billy Bowlegs . . . complained to Agent [John C.] Casey that although his mother got a judgment in the St. Johns County Court for some cattle sold and execution was issued, the execution writ was ineffective." *Buckra Woman v. Philip R. Yonge*, 1827, Inventory of Miscellaneous File of Court Papers, St. Johns County, Florida, 2 vols., Florida Historical Records Survey, Jacksonville, Florida, 1940, No. 199.
9. John R. Swanton, *The Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Washington, 1922), 407. "Buckra" - sometimes corrupted to "Bucker" - is a West African word meaning "superior." "Buckra Woman" was probably a title conferred on King Payne's sister by her Negro dependents or "slaves." Swanton suggested that "Bucker Woman's Town" was occupied by her Negroes.

known that it had nothing to do with a malformation of his lower limbs—that he had a close connection with King Bowlegs.¹⁰ His sister *may* have been Harriet Bowlegs, whose name is frequently mentioned along with Billy's in connection with claims to Negroes.¹¹ According to John C. Casey, acting Seminole Agent in 1838, Harriet was the "daughter of old King Bowlegs, and grand-daughter of old Cowkeeper." Sprague, who knew Billy Bowlegs well, referred in 1854 to the "many Indian Negroes once owned by himself *and his father*. . . ." ¹² If Billy Bowlegs was King Bowlegs' son he would have been King Payne's nephew, as well as Micanopy's cousin. That Harriet Bowlegs was Billy's sister is only a possibility; she may have been any other close female relative—mother, aunt, or cousin. Harriet Bowlegs had at least one sister, "Sanathaih-Kee," who died in 1837. There is also the possibility that King Bowlegs was Harriet's uncle, rather than her father.

Another set of relationships also attaches Billy Bowlegs to members of the Seminole "royal family." In 1850, "Eliza or Kith-lai-tsee," who laid claim to property belonging both to Holatoochee, who has been variously described as Micanopy's nephew and as his brother,¹³ and o "William Bowlegs," described herself as the former's niece and the latter's cousin.¹⁴ If Eliza was Holatoochee's niece and Billy Bowlegs' cousin, this would seem to make Billy also in some fashion Holatoochee's nephew. If Holatoochee was Micanopy's brother, Billy Bowlegs would be the latter's nephew and a grand-nephew of King Payne and King Bowlegs. If Holatoochee was Micanopy's nephew, Billy would be the latter's grand-nephew and more remotely the nephew of Payne and Bowlegs. In

10. "Billy Bowlegs in New Orleans," 376-78; Oliver O. Howard, *Famous Indian Chiefs I Have Known* (New York, 1908), 19, 24-25. Howard says that Billy Bowlegs was nicknamed "Piernas Corvas, meaning bow legs," because he rode big horses at such an early age as to make his legs crooked. Despite the volume's title, Howard apparently never met Billy Bowlegs; his account seems to be based more on imagination than information. See also *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard*, 2 vols. (New York, 1907), I, 73-79, and Howard's *My Life and Experiences Among Hostile Indians* (Hartford, 1907), 73-95.
11. Grant Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes* (Norman, 1934), 254, 258; C. T. Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," 520.
12. J. C. Casey, Acting Seminole Agent, to Major Isaac Clark, July 11, 1838, *House Documents* 25th Cong., 3rd Sess., War Dept., No. 225, pp. 119-21; Foreman, *Five Civilized Tribes*, 254.
13. Porter, "Cowkeeper Dynasty," 346 fn. 21.
14. Letters Received, War Dept., August 15, 1850 (A135), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

any case, this would support the idea that he was in some manner closely related to Payne, Bowlegs, Micanopy, Holatoochee, and Old Cowkeeper, and thus a member of the "royal family."¹⁵ His nickname supports the view that he bore some relationship to King Bowlegs, perhaps as an heir - son, grandson, nephew, or grand-nephew.

Whatever Billy Bowlegs' exact parentage, it is generally conceded that he was born on the Alachua savannah, where the towns of King Payne and King Bowlegs were located until their destruction in 1813 by United States troops and Tennessee and Georgia militia. Probably he moved with his parents and most of the rest of the tribe west to the Suwannee River, where King Bowlegs established a chain of villages which became the Seminole "capital" until they were destroyed in 1818 by American militiamen and Creeks. There is also a possibility that he was part of Chief Payne's family who, after the destruction of the Alachua towns, retired to the vicinity of Cape Florida, where, in 1823, there was a small village consisting of twenty Indians and three Negroes.¹⁶ After 1818 most of the Alachua Indians supposedly settled about 120 miles south of their former location. Their principal town was Okinamki, just west of Lake Harris. But it is also claimed that "the Negroes of Sahwanne fled with the Indians of Bowleg's town toward Chuckachatte." This was an Indian town north of Tampa Bay and some sixty or seventy miles southeast of the Suwannee towns. And it must be remembered that the town of the Buckra Woman, who, according to one account, was Billy Bow-

15. Even the most uninformed accounts of Billy Bowlegs usually agree on his membership in the Seminole "royal family." Howard, in *Indian Chiefs I Have Known*, 24-25, 30, gives his birth-year as 1823 in one place and 1800 in another, but calls him Micanopy's grandson and, again, his nephew, which at least puts him in the proper family group. Since the father is less important than the mother in Seminole tradition, there is little to note from the account in Xavier Eyma, *La Vie dans le Nouveau Monde* (Paris, 1862), 212-15, 245-46, as quoted by C. T. Foreman in her article, "Billy Bowlegs," which says that his father was a fugitive slave who took refuge among the Indians and married there. Probably this tale is an echo of the story that the more famous Osceola had a wife who was the daughter of a runaway slave woman and an Indian chief. In fact, Osceola himself is sometimes said to have been the offspring of such a marriage. See Kenneth W. Porter "The Episode of Osceola's Wife: Fact or Fiction?" *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXVI (July 1947), 93, fn. 5.
16. Mark F. Boyd (ed.), "Horatio S. Dexter and Events leading to the Treaty of Moultrie Creek with the Seminole Indians," *Florida Anthropologist*, XII (September 1958), 65-95.

legs' mother, was described in 1821 as "near Long Swamp, east of Big Hammock."¹⁷ As a boy, Billy Bowlegs may have lived in any of these towns.

Attempts to locate Billy Bowlegs geographically at this time are rather futile. We do not have any record of his existence, at least under the nickname or name by which he is best known, until the Seminole War was well along, and we have no definite knowledge of the name which he bore as a young warrior. During and after 1839 he is often referred to as Holata Micco (chief governor), a title probably conferred on him when he attained chieftaincy. The only hint as to a possible early Indian name is in a publication which appeared when he was about fifty years old: "Billy Bowlegs - his Indian name is *Halpatter Micco*" - Alligator King, or Governor.¹⁸ If this statement is to be taken seriously, Billy Bowlegs was a member of the Alligator clan, or sib, and his name as a warrior would probably have been Halpata (alligator) plus some indication of his rank - *hajo* (mad, or recklessly brave), *fixico* (heartless), and so on, up to Tustenuggee (warrior of the first class), and, when he attained the rank of chief, *emathla* (leader), and perhaps eventually, *micco* (king or governor). But it is very likely that someone with at least a slight knowledge of one of the Seminole languages confused the title *holata* (chief) with the sib-name *halpata* (alligator), although the authenticity of the name Halpata Micco is given at least some slight support by the fact that, according to William C. Sturtevant, "all Seminole know that traditionally chiefs were chosen from the Snake sib," which "among the Florida Seminole was linked" to the Alligator sib.¹⁹ Even if there was positive evidence that his clan or sib

17. Kenneth W. Porter, "Negroes and the Seminole War, 1817-1818," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXVI (July 1951), 277-78; Swanton, *Creek Indians*, 407.

18. In August 1842, we have a reference to "Holoeta Emathlachee [Bowlegs] . . . representing the Southern Indians" in Clarence E. Carter (ed.), *The Territorial Papers of the United States, The Territory of Florida, 1839-1845*, (Washington, 1959-1962), XXVI, 524. "Emathlachee" means "little leader," a title inferior to the supreme one of micco. Possibly this was a title which Bowlegs bore prior to his attainment in 1842 of his rank of head chief of the Florida Seminoles. Whites frequently referred to Seminoles by earlier titles, and yet in writing historically referred to them by later titles. See also, "Billy Bowlegs in New Orleans," 376-78.

19. William C. Sturtevant "Notes on Modern Seminole Traditions of Osceola," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXXIII (January-April 1955), 206-16.

name was *halpata*, it would not help much in identifying him as a young warrior because of the frequent usage of this name. At the time of the Second Seminole War there were at least two chiefs named *halpata* - Micanopy's war-chief and a Creek or possibly Mikasuki operating in Middle Florida²⁰ - neither of whom can possibly be identified with Billy Bowlegs. No *halpata* in the accounts of the Seminole War prior to 1839 who can even be considered as possibly identical with Billy Bowlegs has been found.²¹

Although Billy Bowlegs, perhaps under some other name, probably participated as a young warrior in the early operations of the Seminole War, he does not emerge as an individual before the summer of 1839, when he burst violently into Seminole history-born, it might almost seem, out of the blood and fire of the Caloosahatchee massacre. He was referred to at this time and usually thereafter as "Holatter-Micco or Billy Bowlegs."²² Likely he assumed, or had conferred on him, the title of Holata Micco (chief governor) sometime after his uncle, or other close kinsman, Micanopy, surrendered in 1837. Early the following year, when Micanopy left for the Indian Territory, he in effect abdicated his chieftaincy in Florida. This is when Billy Bowlegs or Holata Micco, under these or any other names, began to attain importance.

The background of the event which projected Billy Bowlegs into history is as follows: a series of captures, "talks," treaties-sometimes followed and assisted by large-scale seizures-surrenders, and captures again had, by the spring of 1838, removed from the field the principal chiefs of the nation, including head-chief Micanopy, his "heir apparent" Holatoochee, his war-chief Alligator, his principal counselor and brother-in-law Jumper, the Negro Abraham, his brother-in-law King Philip (Emathla), who was second chief in the nation, and the latter's second-in-command, Coi Hajo.

There were several chiefs, however, particularly of the recal-

20. Sprague, *Florida War*, 172, 178, *et passim*, and 396, 444, 470.

21. One of "Philip's People" who escaped from Fort Marion in November 1837, was "Halpatah Hajo." Kenneth W. Porter, "Seminole Flight from Fort Marion," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXII (January 1944), 132.

22. Sprague, *Florida War*, 233, 316-17, 319. See also Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, XXVI, 524.

citrant Mikasuki and the refugee Creeks from Georgia, and including some of the younger chiefs of other groups, who had refused to surrender. They followed two general programs. Some, such as the young Mikasuki chief Halleck Tustenuggee and the young St. Johns River chief Coacoochee (Wild Cat), King Philip's favorite son, stayed close to the settlements and carried on aggressive guerrilla warfare. Others withdrew to the South, as far from white settlements as possible, into such fastnesses as the Big Cypress Swamp, which lay between the Everglades and the Gulf and about thirty miles south of the Caloosahatchee. There they stubbornly endeavored to carry on their old life of hunting, fishing, coonti collecting, and agriculture as best they could.

Among the chiefs who retreated into this region were the aged Mikasuki chief Sam Jones (Apiaca); his close associate Otulke Thlocko (the Big Wind), or the Prophet, who was a refugee Creek; another elderly Mikasuki named Assinawa; and the young Seminole chief Billy Bowlegs, who had refused to join his kinsmen Micanopy and Holatoochee in surrender. But in moving into the area of the Caloosahatchee River and Big Cypress Swamp, these refugees penetrated the territory of the "Spanish Indians"-Seminole who had been influenced by Spanish fishermen operating out of Charlotte Harbor - under Cheika, and of the aged chief Hospitaka, who was married to a "Spanish" (Spanish Indian?) woman. Also, by drawing after them the pursuing troops, they brought these Indian bands for the first time into the war.

The first and most serious clash was the result of a well-meaning attempt by Major General Alexander Macomb, then commanding in Florida, to end the war by an arrangement with the Indians, which would have assigned "them a portion of land, *temporarily*, far south," below Pease Creek. On May 18, 1839, he announced that he had negotiated such an agreement with Chitto Tustenuggee (Snake Warrior), one of Sam Jones's sub-chiefs, who, for the purposes of the treaty, was styled "principal chief of the Seminoles, and successor to Arpeika, commonly called Sam Jones." No one acquainted with the Florida Indians, however, should have supposed that a peace negotiated by a subchief of one band would necessarily be recognized, either by his own band or by those of other chiefs. On the morning of July 22, a party under Lieutenant Colonel W. S. Harney, while enroute to Charlotte Harbor to establish one of the trading posts provided for in

the agreement, was encamped on the bank of the Caloosahatchee when it was attacked by a large band, principally of "Spanish Indians," under Chekika, Hospitaka, and Billy Bowlegs (Holata Micco), and a dozen or so men were killed.²³

Then, after erupting into history as one of the leaders of the Caloosahatchee massacre, Billy Bowlegs proceeded, although without complete success, to manifest himself as a force for humanity and moderation. Sampson, a Negro interpreter who was taken prisoner, testified that Billy Bowlegs saved him from death by torture inflicted on two other captives, and he was also able to protect a captive sergeant for some three months. The council of the Big Cypress Indians, which was dominated by the fierce old Mikasuki chief Sam Jones (Apiaca) and his savage associate Otulke Thlocko, the Phophet, decreed, however, that the sergeant should be put to death. Billy Bowlegs, deriving his influence mainly from his hereditary position and with followers who were few in comparison with the Mikasuki, Creeks, and the "Spanish Indians," did not dare or care to resist this order.

For over a year, the Big Cypress Indians enjoyed immunity from retaliation. Then, in December 1840, Lieutenant Colonel Harney, who had himself narrowly escaped death on the Caloosahatchee, located and attacked Chekika's settlement. The chief was killed and six of his followers were hanged. This misfortune apparently produced such discouragement in the Big Cypress that in April 1841, a council of chiefs, "consisting of Holatter Micco (Billy Bowlegs), Arpeika (or Sam Jones), Otulke-Thlocko (the Prophet), Hospetarke, Fuse Hadjo, Parsacke, and many other less important personages, . . . agreed that the bearer of any message from the whites should be put to death." Nevertheless, messengers did penetrate the Big Cypress settlements and were able to get away, carrying with them discontented fugitives. These included a younger brother of Wild Cat. The latter had recently been seized, and had dispatched his younger brother to communicate with Otulke, still another brother who was believed to be in the Big Cypress. Wild Cat's brothers enticed the old chief Hospitaka to come in for a conference in August 1841, when he and his followers were seized. This further weakened the Big Cypress group.

23. Sprague, *Florida War*, 228-38, 315-19; William C. Sturtevant, "Chakaika and the 'Spanish Indians,'" *Tequesta*, XIII (1953), 35-74; Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, 1932), 370-73.

The next step in the campaign against the Big Cypress was an expedition to the Caloosahatchee and the Swamp commanded by Brevet Major W. L. Belknap. It got under way in November 1841. A captured Indian reported that while the Spanish Indians, Sam Jones and Billy Bowlegs' bands, and Hospitaka's remnants were well-supplied with rice, pumpkins, and corn, some wanted to surrender. "The opinion of Sam Jones and the Prophet, for war, prevailed," however. Holatoochee and Alligator had been brought from the West in a further effort to win over the hostiles, and Holatoochee accompanied the Belknap expedition. He carried a "talk" from Alligator and other chiefs to "Holatter-Micco (Billy Bowlegs) and the sub-chief Waxey-Hadjo." Since Billy Bowlegs was certainly related to Holatoochee, and perhaps to Alligator as well, such a "talk" should have been influential. It was not delivered, however, for the expedition saw no Indians, even though it lost two men shot from ambush. The expedition did flush the Indians from their Big Cypress fastness and force them to take refuge in the Everglades, Halpatiokee or Alligator Swamp, west of Lake Okeechobee, and other less attractive locations. Two captured sub-chiefs claimed that the Prophet and Bowlegs were "secreted in the Everglades." According to another captive Indian, they, with a following of thirty-seven-including thirteen warriors - "All Creeks but two," were "supposed to be in the direction of the Mangrove Lake, south near Key Biscayne." If the latter report was correct, the heir of Cowkeeper, King Payne, and King Bowlegs was now almost entirely without a personal following.

Billy Bowlegs' personal fortunes-along with those of the South Florida Indians-were about to improve however. Hitherto, "Holatter Micco (Billy Bowlegs), . . . Parsacke, Assinawar, Fuse Hadjo, all brave and intelligent chiefs," had followed the Prophet "with fear and apprehension, admitting him at the same time to be a coward." Then early in 1842, disillusioned by his failure to prevent the break-up of their Big Cypress villages, the hostiles "had broken the spell of the Prophet . . . , and had renounced the influence and authority of Arpeika (Sam Jones)." Then, "Billy Bowlegs, had been proclaimed chief and Fuse-Hadjo elected his sense-bearer or lawyer." Perhaps it was at this time, rather than earlier, that Billy Bowlegs officially assumed his title of Holata Micco.

Colonel W. J. Worth, commanding in Florida, found that the southern Indians were widely scattered about in small parties and were "perfectly quiet." On February 14, 1842, he announced a plan for the termination of the war, which was based on the frank recognition by the army that it would be impossible to round up the few remaining Indians. Nearly half of the 301 Florida Indians still at large belonged to the bands of Sam Jones, the Prophet, Billy Bowlegs, Assinawar, and Chitto Tustenuggee. They were living far to the south, remote from settlement, and were causing no trouble. There were others, however, who were operating in the more settled areas, still killing, plundering, and burning. General Worth proposed that attention be concentrated on protecting the settlements, that Indians who remained quiet should not be disturbed, and that all Indians unwilling to emigrate should be offered the alternative of being "*temporarily* assigned . . . planting and hunting grounds" below Pease Creek. Essentially this was the same offer which the Caloosahatchee massacre had halted earlier. With the Prophet's loss of influence, with Arpeika's becoming childish, and with Billy Bowlegs having been appointed chief, the forces of moderation were in control. Bowlegs was employed by the Southern Florida Indians to act for them, and accompanied by Fuse Hadjo (Crazy Bird) and Nokosi Emathla (Bear Leader), he arrived at Fort Brooke, Tampa Bay, on August 5, 1842. The end of hostilities with the Florida Indians was proclaimed August 14. Three days later, it was reported that, "The few Seminoles and Mickasukies, under Holatter-Micco or Bowlegs were already within their limits, dispatching messages to others without the line to hasten their movements. . . ." The Second Seminole War was over. In part, this was because of Billy Bowlegs' "hereditary rights as a chief, and his known intelligence" which he exercised in the interest of moderation and peace, after he had achieved his objective to remain in Florida.

A year after the end of hostilities, General Worth reported that ninety-five warriors were still in 'Florida, including forty-two Seminoles, thirty-three Mikasukis, ten Creeks, and ten Tallahasseees. When women and children were added, the total was 300. The general further noted, "Holatter Micco (Billy Bowlegs), nephew of Micanopy, is the acknowledged chief; Assinwar, Otulke-Thlocko (the Prophet), sub-chiefs."

Three years later Captain J. T. Sprague, in charge of Florida Indian Affairs, glowingly reported the results of the peace policy and extolled Billy Bowlegs' leadership. According to his estimates there were 360 Indians in Florida, including 120 warriors. Sprague lists four Uchees and four Choctaws which were not on Worth's tally. The Prophet had died in the meantime, and Arpeika (Sam Jones) had become so feeble and childish that he had lost his influence, even though he was still recognized as honorary subchief. Sprague further noted, "Holatter Micco, or Billy Bowlegs, is thirty-three years of age. He speaks English fluently, and exercises supreme control. He being the nephew of Micanopy, Old Bowlegs, and King Paine, his royal blood is regarded, thus enabling him to exert his authority . . . to govern the reckless and wayward spirits around him. By judicious laws and periodical councils he has instituted a system of government salutary and efficient . . . Assinwar, another sub-chief, is a smart active man. He gives cordial support to the chief in his exertion to introduce wholesome laws, and to continue upon amicable terms with the inhabitants. . . . The Indian villages are located upon the Caloosahatchee [*sic*] river, extending from Charlotte's Harbor to Lake Oke-chobee Game of all kinds abound. . . . Oysters and fish are to be obtained in any quantities, at all seasons. They have horses, cattle, hogs, and some poultry. By planting a small lot of ground, they are enabled to raise corn and vegetables sufficient for consumption. . . . If unmolested, they will be harmless. . . . Any steps to the contrary will again make it [Florida] the battle-ground for the lion and the wolf."²⁴ This idyllic situation was to endure for several years.

"Happy is the nation which has no history." According to this principle the first seven years after the Second Seminole War must have been a halcyon period for Billy Bowlegs' "Kingdom." But by 1849 white settlement had moved so far south that, despite Billy Bowlegs' best efforts, clashes began between settlers and reckless young Indians. In July 1849, a man was reported murdered on Indian River and two others on Pease Creek. Major General David E. Twiggs, commanding the Western District, was ordered to establish Fort Myers as a post on the lower Caloosahat-

24. Sprague, *Florida War*, 254, 270-71, 295, 299-303, 348-50, 352-53, 435, 444, 450-51, 482, 485-86, 494, 507, 512-13. See also Carter, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, XXVI, 517-20, 524.

chee, and the effort to move the Indians out of Florida began again. The experienced Captain John C. Casey-with considerable difficulty since the available interpreters and guides were unable or unwilling to enter the Indian country-succeeded in locating Billy Bowlegs and summoning him to a conference at Charlotte Harbor, and a delegation was organized in the Indian Territory to urge the advantages of removal. General Twiggs went to Charlotte Harbor on the steamer *Colonel Clay*, and on September 17, while still aboard the steamer, he held a "talk" with "head chief Billy Bowlegs" and "the acting chief of the Micasookies." Billy Bowlegs declared that the Indians were totally opposed to war and that the depredations had been committed by five young men, whose leader had been outlawed and condemned to suicide. As soon as he had learned of their activities, he ordered their arrest, but they had already been captured by Chitto Hajo (Crazy Snake) and were in his custody on the Kissimmee. They would be given up, Billy Bowlegs promised, as soon as they could be brought in, which, since "the whole country was covered with water, . . . could not be done sooner than thirty days. . . ."

In the first detailed description of the chief on record, he is described as "a fine looking warrior, about forty years old, with an open, intelligent . . . countenance . . . above the ordinary height, and well proportioned, and evidencing much self possession." He was dressed in the full ceremonial finery of a Seminole chief which included a decorated hunting shirt with a "broad, showy bead belt passing over his breast," and suspended under his left arm, "a beautifully beaded rifle pouch." He wore "red leggings, with brass buttons," which, "where they covered the upper part of the moccasins," were "thickly embroidered with beads." Finally, there was a turban wound from a red shawl "surmounted with white feathers, encircled with a silver band." Suspended from his neck were silver crescents, "to which was appended a large silver medal, with . . . a likeness of President Van Buren . . . ; his throat was thickly covered with strands of large blue beads, and he also wore bracelets of silver over the sleeves of his decorated hunting shirt."

The delegation from the Indian Territory to Florida experienced considerable difficulty in organization. Wild Cat and Gopher John (John Cavallo), who were wanted to head the delegation

and serve as chief interpreters, had secret plans of their own for a *hejira* of disgruntled Seminole Indians and Negroes to Mexico. The delegation was organized finally with the young Mikasuki chief Halleck Tustenuggee - one of the last to surrender - as head. Other members included Holatoochee, Billy Bowlegs' kinsman, Nokosi Yahola, and Pasoca Yahola. Jim Bowlegs, an intelligent Negro who was one of the chief's "slaves," was appointed chief interpreter, and he was sent ahead of the main body. Wild Cat suggested to Marcellus DuVal, the Seminole sub-agent, that he seek permission from the President for the Seminoles to go to Mexico; Billy Bowlegs would never, he asserted, come to the Territory to be settled among the Creeks. Secretly, Wild Cat urged certain of his allies on the delegation to advise Billy to hold out until he could get permission to take his people to Mexico, Wild Cat did not want to lose the opportunity of recruiting such a valuable ally for his projected Seminole colony in Mexico. The main delegation left North Fork Town on October 16, 1849.

A second conference between General Twiggs and Billy Bowlegs was held at Tampa Bay on November 17, 1849. At that time three of the guilty young men and the severed hand of a fourth was turned over to the white man's justice; the fifth was still being sought. Billy Bowlegs delivered a dignified but impassioned plea for permission to remain in his native country. "I have brought here many young men and boys," he declared, indicating the fifty or sixty tribesmen who accompanied him, "to see the terrible consequences of breaking our peace laws. I brought them here that they might see their comrades delivered up to be killed. . . . I now pledge you my word that, if you will cease this talk of leaving the country, no other outrage shall ever be committed by my people; or, if ever hereafter the worst among my people shall cross the boundary and do any mischief to your people, you need not look for runners or appoint councils to talk. I will make up my pack and shoulder it, and my people will do the same. We will all walk down to the seashore, and we will ask but one question: Where is the boat to carry us to Arkansas?"

General Twiggs, however, was under orders to persuade the chief to emigrate, and was authorized to offer compensation totalling \$215,000 if the Indians would move West. The general was at first unwilling to make the offer, since he feared it would

exasperate the Indians into war, but, under the direct command of Secretary of War George W. Crawford, he brought up the subject, and by January 22, 1850, was able to report that Bowlegs was willing personally to emigrate. He also promised to meet Captain Casey within seventeen to twenty days to report on his success in persuading his people to emigrate also. Chief Bowlegs disappeared into the Indian country and nothing was heard from him for months, although by February 28, 1850, eighty-five Indians under Capitchuche and Cacha Fixico had come in and had boarded the schooner *Fashion* for New Orleans. On March 11, 1850, Seminole Sub-Agent DuVal wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that he had been with Halleck Tustenuggee and Jim Factor as far inland as Fort Clinch and had met Captain Britten of the Seventh Infantry "who had been a considerable distance beyond without seeing or hearing anything of the Indians," although he had seen places which had been deserted only a short time. He suggested that perhaps the Indians had gone south to be nearer Billy Bowlegs and come in with him. But when the steamer *Colonel Clay* returned from the Caloosahatchee without any information concerning the illusive chief, DuVal and the Arkansas delegation boarded the *Fashion* and left for New Orleans. They arrived there on March 13. On April 15, 1850, after negotiations lasting over half a year, Bowlegs and his followers definitely refused to leave Florida.²⁵

Pressure for removal continued, however. In August 1850, a white boy was murdered, supposedly by Indians, near Fort Brooke. At first Chief Bowlegs denied the guilt, but later he sent in three Indians who had confessed the crime to Captain Casey. Shortly afterwards they hanged themselves in jail. "No outrages have been committed," Captain Casey reported later, "nor are any likely to be so long as we leave them alone." But when were whites ever able to "leave Indians alone," particularly those who occupied land which either were, or in the remote future might conceivably be, of interest to white exploiters?

The Swamp Lands Act of 1850, which turned over swamp

25. *Senate Documents*, 31st Cong., 1st Sess., Executive Document No. 49; Foreman, *Five Civilized Tribes*, 248-52, 261; C. T. Foreman "Billy Bowlegs," 520-22; Marjorie S. Douglas, *The Everglades: River of Grass* (New York, 1947), 246-58; 255-58; Edwin C. McReynolds, *The Seminoles* (Norman, 1957), 264-67.

lands to the states for purposes of reclamation, increased the pressure on the Florida Indians. The old question of runaway slaves taking refuge with the Indians cropped up again, and, as in earlier years, the Indians were uncooperative about returning them.²⁶

The next and most ambitious attempt at removal took place in 1852. The previous year, on April 15, 1851, the "Seminole question" was transferred from the War Department to the Interior Department in the hope that a change of management would bring better results, and Luther Blake, described as a "removal specialist" because of his success with the Cherokee, replaced Captain John C. Casey as Seminole agent. He was to be allowed five dollars per day, plus \$800 for each warrior and \$450 for each woman or child whom he succeeded in moving West. He also received a \$10,000 expense account, Blake proceeded first to the Indian Territory to organize another Florida "emigration delegation," which included head-chief John Jumper and the old Negro interpreter Abraham. Then he went to Florida, where by June 15, 1852, he had succeeded in bringing in only fifteen Indians. Finally, however, he persuaded the chief to go on an "all expenses paid" tour to Washington and New York, in the hope that conferences with government officials and a view of the numbers and power of the whites would have a positive effect. This delegation left Fort Myers August 31, 1851, and utilizing a variety of conveyances - horses, hacks, stagecoaches, steamboats, and trains - traveled by way of Tampa, Palatka, Orange City, and Savannah to Washington and New York. The chief was always registered as "Mr. William B. Legs" when they stopped in hotels en route. In Washington the Indians met with President Fillmore and then proceeded to New York where they arrived on September 11. They stopped at the American Hotel. The several group photographs that were taken reveal that the delegation included, in addition to Billy Bowlegs, John Jumper, and Abraham, "Sarparker Yohola," "Fasatche Emathla," "Chocote Tustenuggee," "Nocose Emanthla," and "Pasackecathla." Billy Bowlegs also visited Major J. T. Sprague, then stationed at Governors Island, New York. Sprague later reported that the chief "assured me in the

26. Douglas, *The Everglades*, 246-49, 258-59; Foreman, *Five Civilized Tribes*, 253.

most positive and angry manner of his determination not to leave Florida. . . ." ²⁷

En route South, the party again stopped in Washington where, on September 20, the Indians met again with Fillmore. General Luther Blake, the Florida agent, Secretary of War Charles M. Conrad, Secretary of Navy William A. Graham, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs were also present at this meeting. Billy Bowlegs renewed his plea to remain in Florida, and pointed out that "he loved his home very much; yes, if it were only a little place with a pine stump upon it, he would wish to stay there. He would do anything at all so as to stay." The officials remained adamant, however, and finally he and his associates signed the agreement to remove.

The following appeared in the Jacksonville *News* on October 2, 1852: "King Billy and cabinet . . . are gone home to the court of the Everglades. They passed up on the Matamoros . . . Billy held his levee in the cabin of the steamboat and received his visitors with royal dignity. We learn from General Blake that Billy has entered into a solemn agreement to emigrate next March with all the Indians he can induce to go, which he thinks will be all in the country. We feel disposed to believe that at last we may succeed in getting rid of our unwelcome neighbors, but shall not feel *certain* till *they are gone*." In 1852 the Commissioner of Indian Affairs reported sanguinely that "a general emigration may reasonably be expected at an early date." But the Florida newspaper was writing out of a better knowledge of the situation. Again, Chief Bowlegs was "unable" to persuade his people to remove. ²⁸

27. Foreman, *Five Civilized Tribes*, 254. Major Sprague, several years later, referred to this interview as having taken place in 1854, but this was probably a slip of memory.
28. *House Documents*, 32nd Cong., 2nd Sess., Executive Document No. 19; T. S. Jesup to Luke Lea, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 5, 1852, Seminole File 1852-J121, Indian Office, Department of the Interior, National Archives; Elizabeth V. Long (comp.), "Florida Indians, 1836-1865: Collection of Clippings from Contemporary Newspapers," clipping, 1852, from unidentified newspaper, and clipping, September 12, 1852, from unidentified New York City newspaper, Jacksonville Public Library; *New York Daily Tribune*, September 17, 1852, quoting from *Savannah Georgian*, September 25, 1852; "Billy Bowlegs and Suite," *Illustrated London News*, May 21, 1853, 395-96 [illustration reproduced in Kenneth W. Porter, "The Negro Abraham," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXV (July 1946)]; "Billy Bowlegs and His Retinue," in Nathan S. Jarvis, "An

By February 1854, after three years' exertion, General Blake had managed to send West only thirty-six Indians, including twelve warriors, at a cost of \$48,025, plus \$5,000 transportation charges. Blake was dismissed and the able and conscientious Captain Casey re-instated. Another delegation from the Indian Territory arrived at Tampa Bay January 5, 1854, but it also accomplished nothing and departed again on April 10.²⁹

But the sands were running out for Chief Bowlegs and his people. The State of Florida was pushing its surveys closer and closer to the Indian country in what seemed a deliberately provocative fashion. The war department, in order to prevent trouble, took over the business of surveying and mapping the Everglades. It is rather ironical that members of the topographical engineers, entrusted with the survey to avoid provocation, should have been responsible for the act - trivial in itself - which sparked the Third Seminole War - the last Indian war east of the Mississippi.

In December 1855, a squad of eleven men under Lieutenant George L. Hartsuff, U. S. Engineers, had pushed a survey into the Big Cypress to within two miles of Billy Bowlegs' principal garden, which boasted in season not only corn, beans, and pumpkins, but also an unusually fine grove of banana trees. The soldiers, according to a member of the party, deliberately destroyed his prized banana grove before their departure, for no other reason than to see "how Old Billy would cut up." Then, when the enraged chief called at the camp and demanded satisfaction, he got neither compensation, explanation, nor apologies.

For over thirteen years Billy Bowlegs had striven for peace, since he knew that only through peaceful means could he and his people hope to retain their homes in Florida. He had employed oratory, pathos, delay, dissimulation, and cooperation with the whites even to turning over his own tribesmen - perhaps even innocent people - for punishment. Now he realized that peaceful

Army Surgeon's Notes on Frontier Service, 1833-1848," *Journal of the Military Service Institution*, XXXIX (July-August 1906), 272; W. C. Sturtevant, "Billy Bowlegs, Not Marcy's Scout Bushman," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XXXIII (Winter 1955-1956), 547-48, gives references to other portraits of Billy Bowlegs; C. T. Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," 517; Wilfred T. Neill, *Florida's Seminole Indians* (Silver Springs, 1952), 12-13; A. J. and K. A. Hanna, *Lake Okeechobee*; 59-60.

29. Foreman, *Five Civilized Tribes*, 253-54.

means could only postpone the inevitable and was determined to die fighting, or at any rate not to leave his home without a last fight. Whatever his reasons, he gathered his warriors and on the morning of December 20, 1855, opened fire on the offending camp. The lieutenant in charge was seriously wounded, and several of his men were killed or wounded. The Third Seminole War had begun.

The Third Seminole War was almost entirely lacking in the drama of the Second or even the First. No episodes comparable to the so-called Dade Massacre, the battles of the Withlacoochee and Wahoo Swamp, the Battle of Okeechobee, or even the Caloosahatchee massacre, distinguished it. Chief Bowlegs' warriors ten years earlier had been estimated at only 120, and enough had emigrated during the decade to reduce their number to less than a hundred. The only type of warfare which could be at all effective was that which the Seminole, including Billy Bowlegs himself, had employed during the last four years of the Second Seminole War - hit-and-run tactics by small groups of Indians firing from ambush and fading away into the underbrush, never permitting themselves to be trapped into making a stand. "The Indians," it is said, "struck like a snake and retreated to the swamps before they could be engaged. They were here, there, everywhere, lurking in the dark, skulking through the brush, ready with gun, knife, or iron-tipped arrow. They cut down stragglers, hunters, soldiers, trappers; burned farmhouses, destroyed bridges, stores, crops." Militia and regulars marched about, with Indians firing on them from ambush, killing three, four, or five. The whites found and destroyed Indian villages with their fields of pumpkins, beans, and corn, and were fired on again as they withdrew from their work of destruction. The soldiers and militia, in turn, occasionally killed warriors or captured women and children, although, despite Secretary of War Jefferson Davis' offer of \$180 for each Seminole captured alive, the Florida frontiersmen allegedly shot down Indians without regard to age or sex, and took few prisoners.

Billy Bowlegs' old enemy, W. S. Harney, now a general, was in charge of operations at first. Then, Colonel Gustavus Loomis, a humanitarian-minded officer, who bent his energies toward capturing Seminoles or inducing them to surrender, rather than killing them, was put in charge. But Colonel Loomis, with the best

will in the world, found it almost impossible even to communicate with Bowlegs. He sent O. O. Howard, later known as "the Christian General," into the Indian country with two companies of soldiers, an Indian woman named Minnie, and a Negro-Indian named Natto Joe who served as interpreter, but Howard never succeeded in locating the elusive chief.

"In the summer of 1857 . . .," wrote the First Artillery Regiment historian, "the Seminole War . . . was still staggering along to its conclusion. . . . Occasionally, . . . three or five companies of troops would go lumbering through the pine woods, or painfully wade the saw-grass swamps, stirring up the alligators, and notifying Billy Bowlegs and Gopher John [*sic*] that the pale-face was still hanging revengefully upon his track."³⁰ In January 1858, however, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis admitted that the Seminole "had baffled the energetic efforts of our army to effect their subjugation and removal."³¹

30. Douglas, *The Everglades*, 264-66; Neill, *Florida's Seminole Indians*, 14; A. J. and K. A. Hanna, *Lake Okeechobee*, 62-65, 67-70; C. T. Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," 524-26; Howard, *Autobiography*, I, 73-89; Howard, *My Life and Experiences Among Hostile Indians*, 73-95; William L. Haskin, *The History of the First Regiment of Artillery* (Portland, Maine, 1879), 351. Haskin's reference to "Gopher John" arouses speculation. The historical "Gopher John" - the Seminole Negro, also known as John Cowaya, or Cavallo - was, of course, not in Florida but at Wild Cat's Indian-Negro colony of Nacimiento, Coahuila, Mexico. The name is evidently used here to signify Seminole Negroes in general. Brevet Major General Alexander S. Webb. "Campaigning in Florida in 1855," *Journal of the Military Service Institution*, XLV (November-December 1909), 401, described Bowlegs' band as "a treacherous, troublesome set of Seminoles and escaped negro slaves." According to General Rufus Saxton, later a commander of Negro troops in the Civil War, "in the [Third Seminole] war between the United States troops and the Florida Seminoles . . . the negroes would often stand fire when the Indians would run away." See Thomas W. Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays* (Boston, 1900), 25. Also Howard Sharp reported: "Negroes were accepted into the [Billy Bowlegs] tribe. One of Billy Bowlegs' wives was a Negress. . . . Most of his followers were of negro blood." (Sharp to Porter, July 8, November 6, 1944, in the possession of the author). Bowlegs' band included at least one Negro - "Ben Bruno, the interpreter, adviser, confidant, and special favorite of King Billy, . . . a fine, intelligent-looking negro. . . , and exercises almost unbounded influence over his master." Quoted in "Billy Bowlegs in New Orleans," 376-78. Billy Bowlegs had evidently preserved the old Seminole institution of the "chief Negro." Ben Bruno - and the surname in the form of Bruner was common among the Seminole Negroes of the Indian Territory and the Texas-Mexican border - thus was in the line of King Bowlegs' Nero, Micanopy's Abraham, and King Philip's John Caesar.
31. Douglas, *The Everglades*, 266; Neill, *Florida's Seminole Indians*, 14.

Once more the system of bringing a Seminole delegation to Florida was employed, and this time it was effective. Elias Rector, superintendent of Indian affairs for the southern superintendency, and Samuel Rutherford, agent for the western Seminole, organized a delegation of forty Seminoles and six Creeks, headed by Chief John Jumper, which went to Florida. There "Polly," a niece of Billy Bowlegs, was added to the group. Contact was made with Bowlegs, and he agreed to a meeting at a point some thirty-five miles from Fort Myers. At the meeting held on March 15, 1858, the superintendent offered attractive terms - a *douceur* of \$6,500 to the chief himself, \$1,000 to each of four sub-chiefs, \$500 apiece to the warriors, and \$100 for each woman and child. Billy Bowlegs for the first time seemed amenable to persuasion. He had been fighting for over two years, and in 1856 the Seminoles had been granted their independence from the Creeks. Although Wild Cat (Coacoochee) had warned in 1849 that Billy Bowlegs would never consent to come West to be settled among the people from whom his great predecessor the Cowkeeper had separated a century before. He now agreed to surrender and also agreed to use his influence with other chiefs. On May 4, Billy Bowlegs and a party of 125, including sub-chiefs "Assunwha, Nocose Emathla, Foos Hadjo, Nocus Hadjo, and Fuchutechee Emathla," left Fort Myers on the steamer *Grey Cloud* and at Fort Dade, on Egmont Key at the entrance of Tampa Bay, picked up forty Indians who had been captured by the Florida Volunteers. The entire party consisted of thirty-nine warriors and 126 women and children.³²

Billy Bowlegs and his entourage spent a week in New Orleans, en route to the Territory, which gave a representative of *Harper's Weekly* the opportunity to observe him and to make photographic portraits of himself, his "young wife," his two brothers-in-law-"No-kush-adjo, his Inspector General," and "Long Jack," his "Lieutenant"-as well as his "chief Negro," Ben Bruno, his "interpreter, adviser, confidant, and special favorite." The article described Billy Bowlegs as "a rather good-looking Indian of about fifty years. He has a fine forehead, a keen black eye, is somewhat above the

32. Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 384-85; Foreman, *Five Civilized Tribes*, 271-74; McReynolds, *The Seminoles*, 286-87; Douglas, *The Everglades*, 266; Neill, *Florida's Seminole Indians*, 14-15; C. T. Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," 526-27.

medium height, and weighs about 160 pounds. . . . He has two wives, one son, five daughters, fifty slaves, and a hundred thousand dollars in hard cash." His costume in the New Orleans portrait is essentially the same as that which he was described as wearing at Tampa Bay in 1849 and in which he was photographed in 1852 in New York. In the newest portrait he was wearing a medal representing President Fillmore which he doubtless received in 1852.³³

A sensational account of "life in the New World" by a French writer described Billy Bowlegs as spending his time in New Orleans in one prolonged drunken orgie. This author also claimed that the chief's father was a runaway slave and that he was colossal in height and of Herculean strength.³⁴ Bowlegs was doubtless not averse to liquor and on occasion and given the opportunity probably over-indulged, but the side remark in the *Harper's* article - "When he is sober, which, I am sorry to say, is by no means his normal state, his legs are as straight as yours or mine" - sounds as if it were as much inspired by the desire to utter a witticism as based upon careful observation. There is no evidence of Billy Bowlegs' intemperance such as exists in such unhappy profusion for his kinsman Wild Cat.

From New Orleans the Bowlegs' party proceeded on the steamer *Quapaw* up the Mississippi and the Arkansas rivers, arriving at Fort Smith on May 28, 1858. The rest of the journey to Little River in the Seminole Nation was overland by wagon and through continual rain. Before the Indians reached the agency on June 16, four members of their party had died. Others sickened and died not long after, probably from typhoid fever.³⁵

The governments of the United States and Florida, however, would not be content while any Indians remained in Florida, and Billy Bowlegs had hardly arrived in the Indian Territory before Superintendent Rector was after him to head another emigration delegation to Florida. Bowlegs refused this task, however, until

33. Billy Bowlegs' full-length photograph is reproduced in C. T. Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," 517, and in John C. Gifford, *Billy Bowlegs* (Coconut Grove, 1925), who also reproduces the entire set along with the Bowlegs article from *Harper's Weekly*, June 12, 1858.

34. C. T. Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," 527-28.

35. Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 385; Foreman, *Five Civilized Tribes*, 274-75; C. T. Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," 528; McReynolds, *The Seminoles*, 287.

he was offered a *douceur* of \$200. In December 1858, Colonel Rector and his party of eight Seminoles, headed by Chief Bowlegs, were back in Florida, where with Bowlegs' assistance the party was able to persuade seventy-five more Seminoles to leave for the West. They took passage for New Orleans on February 15, 1859, and were back in the Indian Territory early in March.³⁶

Billy Bowlegs' presence in the Indian Territory was joyfully welcomed by many of the Seminoles, who looked on him as the legitimate heir of Cowkeeper, Payne, Bowlegs, and Micanopy, and admired him for his long resistance to removal; it was hardly a matter of unmixed satisfaction even to some of those who had striven most assiduously to bring him to the West, notably Chief John Jumper and Superintendent Rector. Although circumstances had forced him to cooperate with the whites, Billy Bowlegs was no "friend of the white man," such as was John Jumper, nor did he have the slightest intention of following the example of Jumper in accepting the white-man's religion. This attitude did nothing to endear him to such a Baptist missionary as the Reverend J. S. Murrow, who wrote: "Billy Bowlegs and his party are still in the Creek country and he acts and speaks very independently. He has written . . . to the Creek chief that he is not ready to move and does not intend to move until he does get ready. Billy is very popular among his own people, who speak very strongly of turning their present chief, John Jumper, out of office and making Billy chief. . . ."

This attitude could not be expected to meet with the approval of either a zealous Christian missionary, an Indian superintendent who had found the present Seminole chief always cooperative, or the chief himself. It was, therefore, politely but without any expression of regret that on April 2, 1859, the Reverend Mr. Murrow wrote: "Billy Bowlegs, well known Seminole warrior of Florida notoriety, is dead. He died a few days since while on a visit to the 'New Country' for the purpose of selecting a place to settle. A few of his followers were with him and buried him in the true old Seminole style; viz. with everything he had with him." And Superintendent Rector, who probably got his information from the same source, was obviously relieved when on September

36. McReynolds, *The Seminoles*, 287; C. T. Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," 529; Foreman, *Five Civilized Tribes*, 275.

20, 1859, he wrote from Fort Smith: "Bowlegs, fortunately for his people, is dead; but others survive who are inclined to create difficulties, and may need a salutary lesson."³⁷

As it turned out, the minister and the superintendent, despite the circumstantiality of the former's account, probably were writing out of wish-fulfillment rather than on the basis of sound information, for these obituaries are contradicted by numerous other pieces of evidence against which the second-hand testimony of Murrow and Rector can hardly stand up. Billy's death, it should be noted, supposedly occurred in the Seminole country, while the minister at the time was in the Creek Nation and the superintendent was at Fort Smith, Arkansas.³⁸

37. C. T. Foreman, "Billy Bowlegs," 529-30; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1859* (Washington, 1859), 161.

38. Billy Bowlegs was not the only Seminole chief whose death was prematurely reported. Wild Cat was reported as killed by the Comanche in 1850, although he later turned up safe in Mexico. Wild Cat's aide - the Seminole Negro chief John Horse or Gopher John - was similarly reported in 1854 as murdered by his own men, but he survived until 1882. See *Fort Smith Herald*, March 21, 1851; *House Documents*, 33rd Cong., 2nd Sess., Executive Document No. 15, pp. 6-7.