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CLAN AFFILIATION AND LEADERSHIP AMONG THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FLORIDA INDIANS

by R. T. KING*

AS LATE AS THE 1950s, the Florida Seminoles were among the least acculturated of North American Indians. Three nineteenth-century wars with the United States had ended in defeat for the Seminoles, shattering their political structure and forcing the removal of the great majority of their people to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi. The remnant bands had dispersed into the uninhabited reaches of South Florida, where, largely left to their own devices, they continued to lead a life based on hunting, gathering, and swidden (cut and burn) agriculture. They were not able to resume their rather sophisticated pre-war political structure, but their culture did provide foci of leadership in the personages of the keepers of the medicine bundles.

A majority of the Seminoles moved on to reservations set up by the government in the 1920s and 1930s. This was followed by their organization into two formal political bodies in the 1950s and 1960s. This organization was directed and shaped both by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and by representatives of the Baptist church. Medicine keepers had no place in the governmental structures which developed; they and their councils of elders gave way to elected chairmen, presidents, and reservation representatives. Under this theoretically democratic system, a single clan has provided most of the presidents and chairmen. Comprised of only about one-fifth of the Seminole population, this clan is smaller than the one which provides the medicine keepers.

Before the wars of the last century destroyed the Indian system of civil government, clan affiliation had been the major

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determining factor in filling leadership positions. After 1857, Seminole cultural integrity was maintained through isolation; the Bureau of Indian Affairs remained relatively inattentive to the internal affairs of the tribe. Then, in mid-twentieth century, the Seminoles were encouraged to adopt a system of government for which they were culturally unprepared. Yet it appears that the traditional way of doing things may not have been entirely legislated out of existence. The clan which is presently providing the major tribal officers is numerically the strongest of the moiety which had supplied civil leadership in earlier decades.

Included among those Florida Indians known to the white community as Seminoles are two groups: the Hitchiti-speaking Miccosukees and the Muskogee-speaking Cow Creek Seminoles. The Creek word, "Seminolie," meaning "wild people" or run-aways, was first applied to Florida Indians in 1771 by the British Indian Agent John Stuart, in reference to several bands of Creek Indians who had located in the northern part of the peninsula.¹ Although many modern Florida Indians resent the appellation, feeling that "runaway" is a less than accurate description of their character, they are descendants of eighteenth-century Creeks who split away from the Creek center and migrated into Florida. Seminoles they were called then, and Seminoles they remain today, often with no distinction being made between the two language groups.

Initially, ties with their Creek brothers remained strong for the separatists. At least as late as 1783, they still considered themselves associated with the Creek Confederacy of Georgia and Alabama.² In 1818, however, all political affiliations were severed when 2,000 Lower Creek warriors marched into Florida with Andrew Jackson's troops in a punitive action against the Seminoles.³ Thereafter, the histories of the Creeks and Seminoles became mutually exclusive. From 1818 through the 1850s the Sem-

1. John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842* (Gainesville, 1967), 7.

2. Charles H. Fairbanks, "Ethnohistorical Report of the Florida Indians," presentation before the Indian Claims Commission, Dockets 73, 151, p. 181. Copy in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville. This report has been reproduced as Charles H. Fairbanks, *Ethnohistorical Report on the Florida Indians* (New York, 1974).

3. *Ibid.*, 271; Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 25.

inoles were involved in three wars and numerous lesser conflicts, both with the United States Army and with armed Floridians. During that period, their numbers were severely depleted by acts of violence and through forced removals to Indian Territory in Oklahoma. There were only 208 Seminoles left in Florida by 1880, these living in twenty-two scattered camps between Catfish Lake, north of Lake Okeechobee, and the Miami River.⁴

By the 1970s, the Florida Indian population numbered about 2,000. They continue to live throughout the southern part of the state, but the majority are concentrated on four reservations: Hollywood, Big Cypress, Brighton, and the Tamiami Trail.⁵ These Indians are represented by two separate and distinct governmental bodies. Headquarters for the Seminole Tribe of Florida is in Hollywood, Florida. Indians living on the Hollywood, Brighton, and Big Cypress reservations compose the membership of this polity. Although it is becoming increasingly difficult to draw distinctions, due to intermarriage between the two language groups, the majority of the constituency are Miccosukee-speakers, and the remainder are Muskogee-speaking Seminoles. The 1975 census of the Seminole Tribe of Florida shows a total enrollment of 1,232.⁶

The Miccosukee Tribe of Florida is located at Forty Mile Bend on the Tamiami Trail, and it is made up entirely of Miccosukee Indians.⁷ This group differs from the Seminole Tribe primarily in being more traditionalist and in being less affected by the Baptist missionary movement. Approximately 300 Indians are represented by the Miccosukee Tribe.

Scattered along the Tamiami Trail, and in the area between Lake Okeechobee and Fort Pierce, are several bands of non-affiliated Indians who have chosen not to relocate onto any of

4. Clay MacCauley, "Seminole Indians of Florida," *Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1883-84* (Washington, 1887), 477.

5. The Hollywood Reservation is an urban reservation located within the confines of Hollywood, Florida; Brighton Reservation is in Glades County, several miles northwest of Lakeport; Big Cypress Reservation is in the Big Cypress Swamp east of Immokalee.

6. Lois Carey, secretary of the Seminole Tribe, provided information concerning the total enrolled population of the tribe, and the breakdown of that number by clan. This information was derived from the 1975 tribal census, a document to which non-Indians are denied access.

7. Forty Mile Bend is forty miles west of Miami on U.S. 41, the Tamiami Trail.

the reservations. Their participation in the political life of the reservation is minimal, although they are eligible for membership in a formal tribal organization.⁸ From the end of the Seminole Wars until the creation of the Seminole Tribe of Florida in 1957, the Indians of Florida had no formal tribal organization. No one Indian could claim to exercise authority over any other. The only "chiefs" were those men who had been accorded the title by an ignorant white populace, or who had designated themselves as such in order to bring more business to their various tourist-oriented enterprises. This is not to say that there were no men who were recognized as leaders, but rather that there were no positions from which individuals could make decisions binding on the lives of the people. Deference was accorded to medicine keepers, to the aged, and to those who were considered to be heads of clans, but such respect did not carry with it any arbitrary power.

As descendants of various bands of the Creek Confederacy, the Florida Seminoles are heir to general Muskogean cultural patterns. Although greatly modified by the exigencies of forty years of armed combat with white Americans, and the subsequent necessity to take refuge in some of the most inhospitable terrain on the continent, many of these cultural patterns were still clearly identifiable well into the twentieth century. The elaborate political structure of the Creeks and early Seminoles was based on a loose alliance of townships, each with its principle leader.⁹ There is no evidence that it survived the Seminole wars intact; however, it is apparent that certain of its characteristics did.

Among the Creeks the principle civil leader was always from a particular clan— that clan being the most important one of the township. He was chosen by a general council of elders representing the various clans of the township, and he presided over that council which made civil decisions for the town. Headmen were always chosen from among the White moiety of clans, which included the Wind, Snake, and Bird clans of the Creeks, and from which the modern Seminole clans of those names were derived.¹⁰

8. Amended Constitution and Bylaws of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Article II. Copy in Center for the Study of Southeastern Indians, University of Florida, Gainesville.

9. Harold Driver, *Indians of North America* (Chicago, 1961), 345.

10. J. N. B. [John Napoleon Brinton] Hewitt, "Notes on the Creek Indians," ed. John R. Swanton, *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 123*, Smith-

In 1913, the Seminoles had been without towns for almost three-quarters of a century, but Lucien Spencer, Bureau of Indian Affairs agent to the Florida Seminoles, was able to report that the “business of the tribe is transacted by a Council composed of the Head Men of the various clans. The Florida Seminoles have no chief, but the oldest man of each clan is Patriarch or Head Man of that clan, and these Head Men form a Council which is [*sic*] absolute control of all affairs of the tribe.”¹¹

The council to which Spencer referred was not an important factor in the everyday life of the Seminoles. Convening only during the annual Green Corn Dance, its function was primarily a judicial one. It was presided over by a keeper of the medicine bundle, a personage who was always drawn from the Panther clan.¹² The medicine keeper’s power was supposed to be entirely spiritual in nature, but apparently, with the disintegration of civil government, the Seminoles came to rely to a significant degree on his secular judgement.¹³ Numerous informants, both Indian and white, have confirmed this, and Robert Mitchell, a white man who has enjoyed long and intensive contact with the Florida Indians, has suggested that the medicine keepers exercised some influence in the choice of council members.¹⁴

sonian Institution, Anthropological Papers, No. 10 (Washington, 1939), 132-34. Hewitt’s field work was done among Oglahoma Creek Indians in the 1880s. He used informants who had reached maturity before the breakdown of the Creek political system began. While serving as an ethnologist and custodian of manuscripts for the Bureau of American Ethnology in the 1920s, Hewitt began getting his notes on the Creeks into manuscript form; John R. Swanton completed the job in 1939. Swanton, perhaps the most eminent authority on the Southeastern Indians, felt that Hewitt’s work had not only corroborated his own, but had perhaps brought fresh insight into the workings of Creek society.

11. Lucien Spencer’s (agent to Florida Seminoles) “Annual Report” to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1913, p. 13. Copy in Center for the Study of Southeastern Indians.
12. Interview with Louis Capron, West Palm Beach, August 28, 31, 1971, tape (SEM 30ABC) and transcript in University of Florida Oral History Archives, Florida State Museum, Gainesville; Alexander Spoehr, “Camp, Clan and Kin among the Cow Creek Seminole of Florida,” *Field Museum of Natural History Anthropological Series*, volume 33, number 1 (August 2, 1941), 16; Marianne Algrande Schweitzer, “Ethnography of the Modern Mikasuki Indians of Southern Florida” (M.A. thesis, Yale University, 1945), 54.
13. Interview with Rex Quinn, Fort Pierce, December 13, 1973, tape (SEM 99AB) and transcript in U F Oral History Archives. Other informants substantiate this.
14. Interview with Robert Mitchell, Orlando, July 15, 1971, tape (SEM 10AB) and transcript in U F Oral History Archives.

A different interpretation was given by Alexander Spoehr, writing in 1941. He confirmed that the medicine keepers were always of the Panther clan, and that among the Cow Creek Seminoles, "The old hierarchy of town king and subordinate officers has disappeared, but in its stead is a small council of elderly medicine-men, among whom the chief medicine-man is acknowledged leader."¹⁵ In the last twenty-five years, the civil influence of the medicine keepers, and hence the Panther clan, has declined. There are several reasons for this, but most significant seems to be the activity of the Baptist missionaries.

Representatives of various Christian sects had been active among the Florida Indians since the late nineteenth century, but met with little success until the 1940s. Suddenly, perhaps due to the charismatic personality of Stanley Smith, an Oklahoma Creek Baptist, there were numerous conversions to the Christian faith at Brighton, the Big Cypress, and Hollywood. Smith was thirty-three when he arrived to take over the ministry of the First Seminole Indian Baptist Church in Dania, August 15, 1943. He had been sent by the Creek, Seminole, Wichita Baptist Association. In January 1944, his appointment to the Florida Seminoles was made official by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.¹⁶ At first, Smith met with little success, being rejected as an outsider by most of the Seminoles. His persuasive powers were extraordinary, however, and he soon began to make conversions. His most important convert was Josie Billie, medicine keeper of the Big Cypress Indians and a member of the Panther clan.¹⁷ In 1937, Billy Motlow died, and his medicine bundle passed to Josie, who retained it until 1944.¹⁸ Details of Josie's loss of the medicine bundle are somewhat clouded by the passage of time, by the reluctance of his peers to talk about it, and by the controversy surrounding his personality. In 1928, Josie Billie had killed a woman of his own clan, and apparently he was not punished.¹⁹ According to various Indian informants, he continued to lead a stormy life, punctuated by drunkenness, increas-

15. Spoehr, "Camp, Clan and Kin," 10.

16. James O. Buswell, III, "Florida Seminole Religious Ritual: Resistance and Change" (Ph.D. dissertation, Saint Louis University, 1972), 274-75.

17. *Ibid.*, 278.

18. William C. Sturtevant, "The Mikasuki Seminole: Medical Beliefs and Practices" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1954), 40.

19. Buswell, "Florida Seminole Religious Ritual," 308.

ing contact with white society, and occasional abuse of his magical powers. It has been reported that some believed that Josie Billie had killed a man through sorcery in 1942 or 1943.²⁰

By the time Stanley Smith arrived on the Big Cypress Reservation in 1943, Josie Billie had already begun to respond to the proselytizing activities of Smith's predecessor, Willie King.²¹ Smith brought King's work to fruition, convincing Josie Billie and a council of elders that he was a prophesied brother returned from the West with "beautiful stories to tell." His activities thus having been given the cachet of legitimacy through correspondence with tradition, and through acceptance by some of the most influential members of the tribe, Smith moved rapidly to establish his faith formally among the Seminoles. On January 21, 1945, Josie Billie and twenty-one other Indians were baptized at the Big Cypress schoolhouse.²² One Seminole, who later became a minister, stated that Josie had directed his fellow converts to accept the faith.²³

There are conflicting accounts among the Seminoles concerning Josie Billie's loss of his medicine bundle in 1944, some saying that due to general misconduct and his apparently growing acculturation he was asked to surrender it; others claim that he voluntarily relinquished it when he began having doubts of its efficacy in comparison to Christianity. Whatever the cause, the fact remained that a medicine keeper and renowned herb doctor, a man who had been an influential member of the most traditionalist group of Florida Indians, had embraced the white man's faith and persuaded twenty-one others to join him. In the process, he had not only opened the gate to Christianity, but had seriously eroded the influential position of the medicine keeper, and hence of the Panther clan, among the Big Cypress Indians.

One writer has suggested that perhaps conversions on Big Cypress came earlier than elsewhere for reasons not entirely spiritual in nature: "In 1937 many of the Trail . . . [Micosukees] had gone to the Big Cypress Reservation because they did not belong to clans which could inherit official positions or status. . . .

20. Sturtevant, "Mikasuki Seminole," 54.

21. Buswell, "Florida Seminole Religious Ritual," 279.

22. *Ibid.*, 280-81.

23. Interview with Billy Osceola, Brighton Reservation, February 27, 1973, tape (SEM 89) and transcript in U F Oral History Archives; conversations in 1973 with Billy Osceola.

The acceptance of Christianity gave these Seminoles prestige. Church positions became goals for the ambitious."²⁴

On Brighton Reservation, the home of most of the Cow Creek Seminoles, the Baptists were also making an impact. By 1948, five Seminoles had been recruited to attend the Florida Bible College in Lakeland, and by the early 1950s there were established churches on all three reservations. Billy Osceola was the minister at the Brighton church, Bill Osceola ministered to the Big Cypress Baptists, and the two shared duties at the Hollywood Reservation. The Tamiami Trail Miccosukees, who had yet to form a reservation, continued vigorously to resist Christian encroachment.

While the church was enjoying some success on the three reservations, Christians continued to constitute a distinct minority among the Seminoles. In fact, at the Brighton Reservation, opposition was so stiff that they were not allowed to build their church on reservation land. The Lykes Brothers Corporation donated a small plot of land immediately adjacent to the reservation, and a church was erected there.²⁵

It is no accident that shortly after the Baptist presence began to be felt among the reservation Indians a movement grew to create a formal governmental organization—the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Rex Quinn, former superintendent of the Seminole agency, who was instrumental in drawing up a tribal constitution, believes that the Baptist Church had a strong role not only in the establishment of the organization, but in the development of the leaders of the tribe.²⁶ Traditionally, the Seminoles are passive in their dealings with one another; they do not like being told what to do, and it is antipathetic to their cultural norm to presume to tell others what to do. Decisions affecting large groups of people have always been arrived at by consensus, with much discussion among spokesmen whose judgement was valued. Ac-

24. Ethel Cutler Freeman, "Cultural Stability and Change Among the Seminoles of Florida," in International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, 5th, Philadelphia, 1956, *Men and Cultures; Selected Papers*, edited under the chairmanship of Anthony F. C. Wallace (Philadelphia, 1960), 251.

25. Interview with Billy Osceola, Brighton Reservation, February 27, 1973. Rykes Brothers, Inc. is a diversified Tampa-based corporation which owns large tracts of ranch land in the vicinity of the Brighton reservation.

26. Interview with Rex Quinn, Fort Pierce, December 13, 1973.

cording to Quinn, "Bill and Billy [Osceola, the two ministers who were most influential in organizing the tribe and who became the two highest officers in its first government] were not spokesmen in the traditional sense. They knew what the tribe wanted and what was best for it. They were independent. . . . While these two may not have been the best leaders in the Seminole Tribe, they were the most willing ones."²⁷ This tends to substantiate one thesis that Christianity provided a vehicle for legitimizing a behavior pattern—telling others what to do—which was objectionable in the traditional Seminole culture. Within "the Christian complex," the preacher could make recommendations without being known as a "Big Shot."²⁸

The Baptist church was not the only influence in preparing the Seminoles to accept some form of elected, representative government. In 1936, a herd of cattle had been brought to the Brighton Reservation by the Department of the Interior. These animals formed the nucleus of a Seminole cattle enterprise, and it was intended that the tribe would share the profits after the government had been repaid in kind for the initial investment. Fred Montsdeoca, the agent in charge of the project, was entrusted with the task of seeing that the Cow Creek Seminoles on Brighton elected a board of trustees. Assisted by Willie King, a Creek Baptist from Oklahoma, he explained how an election was conducted, and what its importance was. According to Montsdeoca, the election did not go smoothly. Apparently, the women cast ballots for everyone. Willy Gopher, a man who admittedly knew nothing about cattle, was elected to the board. When Charlie Micco was asked why so many people had voted for Gopher, he said it was because he had a horse. Perhaps the Indians realized that the whole production was not to be taken seriously, since, as Montsdeoca has admitted, the election was merely a legal formality—he directed the cattle program.²⁹

With the cattle project, the impact of the Baptist church, and Bureau of Indian Affairs administration, the reservation Indians

27. *Ibid.* Billy Osceola was elected chairman of the Seminole Tribe in 1957, and Frank Billie became president of the board of directors. Frank Billie was of the Wind clan of the traditional Creek White moiety. He resigned his office less than a year later and was replaced by Bill Osceola.

28. Buswell, "Florida Seminole Religious Ritual," 383-84.

29. Interview with Fred Montsdeoca, Lorita, Florida, December 4, 1972, tape (SEM 76A) and transcript in U F Oral History Archives.

experienced rapid cultural change in the 1940s and 1950s. In the early 1950s, after some prodding by government lawyers, they decided to file a claim with the Indian Claims Commission, asking recompense for land guaranteed them by several nineteenth-century treaties.³⁰ This seemingly innocuous move quickly led to a split with the Trail Miccosukees, and the eventual formation of both the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Florida.

Buffalo Tiger, who became chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida, served as interpreter for the general council of the Trail Miccosukees in 1954. According to Tiger, problems arose when "Some of the Indian people who called themselves chiefs or leaders . . . organized themselves and filed some papers for the settlement of claims."³¹ This organization and filing was done in the name of all of the Florida Indians, and without prior consultation with the sizable body of traditionalist Miccosukees living off the reservations.

If there were leaders among the Trail Miccosukees, they were to be found in the general council of the Green Corn Dance, presided over by Ingraham Billie, keeper of the medicine bundle. These traditionalists opposed being represented by the reservation Baptists, and they resisted any claims settlement that did not give them title to those lands which they inhabited. Buffalo Tiger, who was not part of the leadership, but who did speak English, arranged for Morton Silver, a Miami attorney, to represent the Miccosukees at the claims hearings in Washington.

Silver and several Miccosukees presented to a representative of President Eisenhower the "Buckskin Declaration," a document written on buckskin which stated that the Miccosukees did not seek monetary compensation for lands, and which expressed the Miccosukees' wish to continue living in the traditional manner.³² Apparently this was the first inkling the government had that the Florida Seminoles were not a homogeneous unit.

At the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, M. M. Tozier, Department of the Interior information officer, was sent to Florida to investigate the situation. He conducted meetings on all

30. Interview with Roy Struble, Miami, August 18, 1972, tape (SEM 71A) and transcript in U F Oral History Archives.

31. Interview with Buffalo Tiger, Miami, May 16, 1973, tape (SEM 90A) and transcript in U F Oral History Archives.

32. M. M. Tozier, "Report on the Florida Seminoles," December 1954, typescript, p. 2. Copy in Center for the Study of Southeastern Indians.

of the reservations and at three camps along the Tamiami Trail to determine the true sentiments of those concerned. The vitality of the traditionalist movement was evidenced by the fact that the Indian turnout at Jimmie Tiger's camp, where Ingraham Billie and the Miccosukee Council were assembled, was greater than at all five of the other meetings.³³ The council reiterated its position that the reservation Seminoles should not be considered spokesmen for all of the Florida Indians. Tozier's subsequent report proved instrumental in the Trail Miccosukees eventually being recognized as an entity separate and distinct from the reservation Seminoles.

By 1957, Billy Osceola and other of the acculturated Seminoles on the reservation felt that they had enough support to organize a tribal government. They were encouraged to take this action by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and by the Baptist church. Such a government would be useful both for administrative purposes and for bringing the Seminoles more quickly and easily into the white cultural mainstream. Accordingly, the Bureau dispatched Rex Quinn to Florida to help formulate a charter and a constitution for the corporate and civil bodies of the nascent Seminole Tribe of Florida. In the same year, 1957, the constitution and charter were passed by a referendum in which fifty-five per cent of the eligible voters participated. Billy Osceola and Frank Billie were elected chairman of the council and president of the corporation, respectively. Frank Billie resigned his post in favor of Bill Osceola less than a year later. Bill and Billy Osceola were Baptist ministers; each was a member of the Bird clan.³⁴

Meanwhile, on the Tamiami Trail, Buffalo Tiger had been relieved of his position as interpreter for the Council.³⁵ It was discovered that in his role as interpreter he had been making personal statements of an inflammatory nature while attributing

33. *Ibid.*, 14.

34. During the winter of 1975-1976, Lois Carey, secretary of the Seminole Tribe, helped determine the succession of the elected leadership of the tribe by consulting handwritten minutes of council and corporate meetings. She found that Frank Billie had been the first president of the board of directors, although all informants—both Indian and white—had believed Bill Osceola to have been the first president. Bill Osceola is always spoken of as having been the co-founder, with Billy Osceola, of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

35. The exact date of this action could not be determined through interviewing, but it seems to have been 1957 or 1958.

them to Ingraham Billie. He was shortly back in his position, however, for as the Miccoskees continued to have dealings with the government, they found that Tiger's command of the English language made him indispensable.

By 1961, the Trail Miccosukees, after much deliberation, realized that if they hoped to protect their interests it would be necessary to organize along lines similar to those of the Seminoles. They received assistance in writing a constitution from Rex Quinn. There was no referendum; the clan leaders gathered at Jimmie Tiger's camp and consulted with one another until there was unanimity on all points. Even some of the minor decisions took two or three days.³⁶

Buffalo Tiger, as the man thought most capable of dealing with white society, was elected chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida in 1962. Initially, even as chairman, he remained little more than a spokesman for Ingraham Billie and the clan elders. However, as tribal affairs became ever more complex, he began to assume real authority. Today (1976) Ingraham Billie lives on the Big Cypress reservation. Buffalo Tiger continues as tribal chairman, assisted by several non-Indians. Buffalo Tiger is a member of the Bird clan.

The constitution of the Seminole Tribe of Florida provides for two separate governmental bodies: a corporation to administer economic affairs, and a tribal council to supervise civil business. From 1957 through 1962, the elected representatives to the tribal council and corporate board of directors chose from among their members the chairman, vice-chairman, president, and vice-president. A constitutional amendment in 1963 provided for direct election of the chairman and president by the general electorate. Since then, the elected heads of the council and corporation have served not only as executives of their own branches, but also as immediate subordinates to one another (i.e., the chairman of the council is also vice-president of the board of directors, and the president of the board is vice-chairman of the tribal council). They are assisted and advised by representatives from each of the three reservations.

Since the formation of the Seminole Tribe in 1957, there have been seven elections to fill the positions of chairman, vice-chair-

36. Interview with Rex Quinn, Fort Pierce, December 13, 1973.

man, president, and vice-president. They have resulted in clans of the traditional Creek White moiety being represented in twenty-five of the available offices.³⁷ The Bird clan, numerically the most important in the White moiety, has been represented in eighteen of the twenty-eight offices.

	<i>Office</i>		<i>Clan</i>
1957	President	Frank Billie	Wind
	Vice-president	Bill Osceola	Bird
	Chairman	Billy Osceola	Bird
	Vice-chairman	Bettie Mae Jumper	Snake
(In 1958, Frank Billie resigned his office, and switched places with Bill Osceola.)			
1959	President	Bill Osceola	Bird
	Vice-president	Frank Billie	Wind
	Chairman	Billy Osceola	Bird
	Vice-chairman	Howard Tiger	Snake
1961	President	Howard Tiger	Snake
	Vice-president	Jimmie Cypress	Panther
	Chairman	Billy Osceola	Bird
	Vice-chairman	Mike Osceola	Bird
1963	President	Bill Osceola	Bird
	Vice-president	Billy Osceola	Bird
	Chairman	Billy Osceola	Bird
	Vice-chairman	Bill Osceola	Bird
1967	President	Joe Dan Osceola	Panther
	Vice-president	Bettie Mae Jumper	Snake
	Chairman	Bettie Mae Jumper	Snake
	Vice-chairman	Joe Dan Osceola	Panther
1971	President	Fred Smith	Bird
	Vice-president	Howard Tommie	Bird
	Chairman	Howard Tommie	Bird
	Vice-chairman	Fred Smith	Bird
1975	President	Bill Osceola	Bird
	Vice-president	Howard Tommie	Bird
	Chairman	Howard Tommie	Bird
	Vice-chairman	Bill Osceola	Bird

In 1967, members of the Snake and Pather clans were elected to the top positions. This particular election was marked by

37. Lois Carey provided information concerning elections. Clan membership comes from the 1975 census of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and from various Indian informants.

Bureau of Indian Affairs interference in tribal politics, and resulted in much bitterness and acrimony among the Indians involved and between the Indians and the bureau.³⁸ Joe Dan Osceola, the successful candidate for president that year, believes that Rex Quinn, superintendent of the Seminole agency, actively campaigned for his opponent. On the other hand, two former superintendents have stated that other officers of the agency gave their public support to Osceola and Bettie Mae Jumper, but Joe Dan denies that this happened. Whatever the truth, it appears that the agency was involved, contrary to BIA policy, in the electoral process. The result was a political ferment which was still remembered in 1976. Within six months of his election, Osceola had been recalled from office with a petition signed by twenty per cent of the electorate. However, he was returned to the same position as president of the board of directors in the subsequent election to fill the vacancy. In January 1971, with nine months of his term left, Joe Dan Osceola resigned from office. Bettie Mae Jumper assumed the responsibilities of the president-until the next election.

The anomalous 1967 election notwithstanding, it would appear that clan membership may be a determining factor in tribal leadership among modern Seminoles. It is certain that Birds are not being returned to office because of any majority that they may enjoy in the tribe as a whole. The 1975 breakdown by clan of the enrolled membership of the tribe shows the following:

CLAN	MEMBERS
Panther	573
Bird	249
Otter	173
Wind	68
Snake	50
Bear	27
Deer	13
No Clan	79

Although data on clan membership for the Miccosukee Tribe on the Tamiami Trail could not be obtained, several Miccosukee

38. Interview with Eugene Barrett, Plantation, Florida, September 29, 1971, tape (SEM 34AB) and transcript in U F Oral History Archives.

speakers who are members of the Seminole Tribe claim that the relative strength of the clans is approximately the same for both groups.

There are factors other than clan affiliation operating in what was set up as a democratic process: Baptist, English-speaking cattle owners have dominated the political hierarchy since the 1957 formation of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. But it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that perhaps the civil leadership structure of the Creeks and early Seminoles may still be exercising some influence. It has been determined that the civil headman of a Creek town was always from a particular clan, that clan being of the White moiety. Military leaders and medicine men were of the Red moiety. From all accounts, what leadership there was, from the final disintegration of the Seminole tribe in the nineteenth century until the establishment of the present organization in 1957, was provided by the medicine keepers—men of the Panther clan from the Red moiety. As soon as a new civil organization was established, the Birds, largest and most important clan of the White moiety, became ascendant. This development cannot easily be dismissed as coincidence.