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American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

The Black Seminole Legacy and North American Politics, 1693-1845. By Bruce Edward Twyman.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/794684fb>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 26(2)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

2002-03-01

DOI

10.17953

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remains and some attempt to link these remains with other cultures elsewhere might further detail these faceless, mute peoples a bit more. This certainly is the direction that further studies along these lines should take.

Hugh Fox

The Black Seminole Legacy and North American Politics, 1693–1845. By Bruce Edward Twyman. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1999. 173 pages. \$21.95 paper.

Bruce Edward Twyman's account of the political history of the Black Seminoles in Florida joins a cadre of recently published and forthcoming works on the subject. Along with Kevin Mulroy's *Freedom on the Border* (1993), Kenneth Porter's *The Black Seminoles* (edited by Alcione Amos and Thomas Senter and published posthumously, 1996), and the forthcoming monograph by Seminole scholar Melinda Micco, *A Nation Divided: Black Seminoles in Oklahoma*, Bruce Twyman takes up a topic that is both historically important and timely. His book, *The Black Seminole Legacy*, holds particular relevance for contemporary debates about the citizenship rights of Black Seminoles within the Seminole Nation.

A political scientist by training, Twyman contributes a unique version of the Black Seminole past to an area of study dominated by historical, cultural, and identity-oriented analyses. His patient elucidation of Spanish, British, American, Seminole, and Black Seminole diplomatic and military activities in Florida reveal previously obscured aspects of the historical relationship between Seminoles and Black Seminoles and the role of Black Seminoles in the international struggle for land and power in the New World.

In Twyman's view, the political history of the Black Seminoles begins in 1693 when the king of Spain offered freedom and protection to runaway slaves from the British colonies of Virginia and Carolina. Black runaways, alternately termed *maroons* and *rebels* by Twyman, took advantage of the competition between Spain and Britain that motivated this edict and escaped to Florida by the thousands. Meanwhile, members of southeastern tribes who were also fleeing British enslavement ran south as well. These disparate groups would later be joined by a large contingent of runaways from the Creek nation, and together they would form the confederacy that would later be recognized by the United States as the Seminole Nation of Florida. In offering this multiracial account of Seminole ethnogenesis, Twyman favors the view shared by historian William Loren Katz that the Seminole nation developed out of the amalgamation of various Native peoples and Black runaways who were already present in Florida (William Loren Katz, "Justice and African Seminoles," *The Black World Today*, March 15, 2001). As Twyman notes, his theory of Seminole evolution is rejected by some scholars of Native American history who argue instead that the Seminole nation was formed in the main by Creek migrants to Florida who later accepted Black runaways into their community. The distinction here is an important one, for if the Black maroon community in Florida predates the Seminole confederacy, the his-

torical balance of power between Black Seminoles and Seminoles shifts. Rather than arguing that an already-constituted Seminole tribe allowed Blacks onto their lands, Twyman asserts that together Blacks, Creeks, Apalachees, and other Native peoples became the Seminole tribe.

It is this perspective that allows Twyman to make one of the more important insights in the book concerning Seminole slavery. In histories of the Five Civilized Tribes of the Southeast and Oklahoma, the nature of Black slave ownership is a major point of interest and debate. Most scholars argue, as does Twyman, that the Seminole system of possessing African slaves differed markedly from systems that developed in the Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw nations. While those nations developed slave codes in the 1830s and '40s that limited Black mobility, forbade intermarriage with Blacks, and legally recognized Black people as a separate and subjugated class, the Seminoles of Florida did not. Instead, the Seminole tribe maintained a system of bondage that allowed Black slaves and the runaways who joined them to live in their own towns, farm their own lands, and travel at their leisure. In fact, historian Kenneth Porter has argued that the only concrete marker of the Africans' enslavement to the Seminoles was the annual tribute in crops they were required to pay Seminole leaders. Since Porter first began his research on the Black Seminoles in the 1940s, scholars have consistently reiterated this point, describing Seminole slavery as uniquely flexible and agreeing with Porter's impulse to rename the institution "primitive democratic feudalism" (*The Black Seminoles* [Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 1996], 6).

The exceptionalism of Seminole slavery has been much remarked upon, but the reason for this departure from the norm has been undertheorized despite Daniel F. Littlefield's provocative questions in his early work, *Africans and Seminoles from Removal to Emancipation* (1977). Besides the common-sense argument that the Seminole Indians' history of being runaways themselves contributed to a more open and egalitarian attitude toward African runaways, little has been offered in the way of Seminole motivation. Bruce Twyman's work adds another dimension to this discussion. He posits that Seminoles may not have been atypical slaveowners because they were kinder or more empathetic than other southeastern tribes, but rather because they had little choice. The presence of Black rebels in Florida from the seventeenth century on, coupled with their long history of guerrilla warfare against their former owners, meant that the group that would become known as the Black Seminoles were themselves a formidable military force. Thus the bulk of Black runaways entered into relationship with Seminoles as political allies rather than as property or wards. Twyman asserts: "Although it is possible that some Africans were subjected to enslavement by the Seminoles, I take the position that it was not possible for native Seminoles to physically enslave the masses of rebels of Florida" (pp. 18–19).

Taking this point even further, Twyman suggests that the "enslavement" of Blacks among the Seminoles may not even have been a Seminole idea. Instead he poses the question: "Did Black Seminoles seek the status of

slaves [among the Seminoles] for legal and diplomatic protection?" (p. 140) In answer, Twyman argues that runaway Blacks likely proposed such an arrangement, knowing that as the property of Seminole Indians they would have some protection from British and later American slave traders and owners, just as they had gained protection from the Spanish in a previous period. In making this point, Twyman is complicating an argument that has emerged in studies of the role of Blacks in antebellum Native communities. While historians such as William Hart have convincingly reasoned that Native people positioned their Black slaves, associates and relatives as go-betweens with Euro-America, Twyman suggests the opposite: In the case of the Seminoles, it was Black people who positioned their Native allies, associates, and relatives as a buffer between an Afro-Native American world and a Euro-American one (William Hart, "Black 'Go-Betweens' and the Mutability of 'Race,' Status, and Identity on New York's Pre-Revolutionary Frontier," in Andrew Cayton and Fredrika Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750–1830* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998]).

This position leads Twyman to argue that the Second Seminole War waged between the Seminole Nation and the United States between 1835 and 1842 was as much about maintaining the freedom of Seminole "slaves" as it was about securing Florida homelands. Twyman demonstrates that when the Seminoles refused to be removed to the western Indian Territory and proved the strength of their conviction by attacking US forces, they were fighting for their Black allies as well as themselves. Theirs was a position forged in consultation with fellow rebels, the Black Seminoles, who risked being returned to their former masters or to neighboring Creeks once the Seminoles were moved west. One Black Seminole in particular, the translator, diplomat, and military strategist called Abraham, was instrumental in influencing the Seminole position and pressing for protections for Blacks. When representatives of the Seminole Nation finally signed The Articles of Capitulation with Major General Thomas Jesup in 1837, it was Abraham who negotiated the terms.

From his observations about the strategic relationship between Africans and Seminoles and the critical position of Blacks in the Seminole Wars, Twyman draws the conclusion that runaway slaves did not play a bit part in the early history of Florida as many historical accounts would suggest, but instead were key actors in a political drama involving multiple principalities and levels of negotiation. Read alongside other accounts, Twyman's volume makes a valuable contribution to a composite picture of the historical, cultural, and political complexities of the Black Seminole past and present.

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