The Yamasee War, the Bearded Chief, and the Founding of Fort Rosalie

by James F. Barnett, Jr.

In 2016 Natchez will observe the tricentennial of the founding of Fort Rosalie, the French colonial fort completed on August 3, 1716. Named for the wife of the minister of the French navy,[1] the bluff-top fort gave French Louisiana a colonial foothold deep in the interior Lower Mississippi Valley. As part of the larger European competition for empire in North America, the outpost filled a strategic need to confront English encroachment into the region.[2] Natchez tradition links the construction of Fort Rosalie with the city's beginning, thereby claiming chronological precedence over New Orleans, which was founded in 1718.[3]

The Natchez fort was part of King Louis XIV's plan to expand his country's colonial presence in Louisiana. The strategy also called for

[1] Dunbar Rowland, ed., and Albert G. Sanders, trans., *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1704-1743, French Dominion, Vol. III* (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1932), 185n. Jérome Phélypeaux de Maurepas, Count de Pontchartrain was minister of the French navy during the early planning for a fort at the Natchez location. By the time of the fort's construction, the newly formed Council of the Navy had taken over Pontchartrain's direction of colonial activities. Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana, Vol. II: Years of Transition*, trans. Brian Pearce (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993). Jack D. Elliott, Jr., has noted that Pontchartrain also had a daughter named Rosalie and that the Natchez fort may have been named for her. Personal communication, August 2, 2010.

[2] Chavagne de Richebourg in John R. Swanton, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico*, Bulletin 43 (1911; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1998), 204; Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 205; Giraud, *Vol. II.*, 155; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 207.

[3] *Natchez Est. 1716: It's What You Love about the South* (Natchez Visitor's Guide, July 2010).

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a fort near the junction of the Ohio and Wabash rivers, to be called Fort St. Jerome after the minister of the French navy. Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, second-in-command of the Louisiana colony, received the order to establish the two forts. Initially, Bienville placed a higher priority on Fort St. Jerome, but his plans changed in late 1715 when Natchez Indians killed four French voyageurs on the Mississippi River.[4] To quell the uprising and make the river safe for French traffic between the Illinois country and Louisiana, Bienville led a small force of soldiers from the French post at Mobile Bay to the Natchez area in the spring of 1716. Wary of exposing himself and his men to attack, Bienville used the calumet peace ceremony as a pretense to lure eight Natchez chiefs to his camp on an island in the Mississippi River.[5] By trapping the chiefs and holding them hostage, Bienville forced the Natchez to pledge allegiance to the French and condone the execution of five warriors and two war chiefs who were involved in the attacks. As part of the peace settlement, the chiefs agreed to the establishment of Fort Rosalie and provided assistance with its construction.[6] The history lacks but one important element—why did the Natchez suddenly start killing Frenchmen in the winter of 1715?

On this point the French colonial sources are in disagreement. Bienville's version, which has been accepted as truth and uncritically repeated by several historians (this writer included), places the blame on the man who was governor of Louisiana at the time, Antoine Laumet de La Mothe de Cadillac. In reports to his superiors in France, Bienville accused La Mothe of refusing to smoke the calumet with the Natchez chiefs during the governor's journey upriver in 1715 to inspect mining locations in the Illinois country. According to Bienville, the Natchez interpreted this diplomatic insult as a declaration of war and duly

[4] Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana, Vol. I: The Reign of Louis XIV, 1698-1715*, trans. Joseph C. Lambert (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 350; Dunbar Rowland, ed., and Albert G. Sanders, trans., *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1701-1729, French Dominion, Vol. II* (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1929), 257, 257n; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III*, 185, 192, 198.

[5] The eight Natchez chiefs are tentatively identified as The Great Sun, Tattooed Serpent, Little Sun, The Bearded, Old Flour Chief, Old Hair, Yakstalchil, and Alahofléchia. James F. Barnett, Jr., *The Natchez Indians: A History to 1735* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 68.

[6] De Richebourg, a captain in Bienville's expeditionary force, kept a journal of the 1716 campaign, most of which is translated in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 196-204.

attacked the next Frenchmen who came along. In the eyes of French officials, Bienville's success in putting an end to Natchez hostilities and establishing the fort lent credence to his calumet story.

Defending himself against Bienville's accusation, La Mothe told the Council of the Navy, the bureaucratic body that oversaw Louisiana's colonial affairs, a completely different story. The governor said the Natchez attacked the Frenchmen for superstitious reasons after one of the tribe's temples burned down. The Council flatly refused to accept this explanation, and La Mothe's colonial career ended ignominiously.[7]

On the face of it, neither Bienville nor La Mothe were in a position to report the facts, since both men were at Mobile when the incident occurred and news of the hostility did not arrive there until January 1716. However, another French colonial source, André Pénicaut, was with the Natchez Indians in late 1715. At the time Pénicaut was part of a small group of Frenchmen at the trading post the French established among the Natchez in 1714.[8] In his narrative about the events of 1715, Pénicaut notes the visit by La Mothe and his party on their return trip downriver from the Illinois country; however, the governor's Natchez stop was apparently without incident. Pénicaut says nothing about the calumet or a burned temple, either of which would surely have captured his attention and merited some mention in his narrative. Instead, he attributes the attack on the Frenchmen to the less dramatic motive of thievery. If the Natchez had in fact decided to go to war against the French for diplomatic or superstitious reasons, Pénicaut and his countrymen at the trading post would have been obvious targets for

[7] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians: A History to 1735*, 61-62; Jack D. Elliott, Jr., *The Fort of Natchez and the Colonial Origins of Mississippi* (Eastern National, National Park Service 1990), 8; Giraud, *Vol. II*, 35-37, 78; Proceedings of the Council of the Navy, August 29, 1716, Archives de la Marine, Series B1 9, pages 278-278v, 279-279v; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. II,* 219n; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III*, 194; Swanton *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 193.

[8] Giraud, *Vol. I*, 305; Richebourg G. McWilliams, ed. and trans., *Fleur de Lys and Calumet: Being the Pénicaut Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1953), 158; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. II*, 162; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 192; Samuel Wilson, Jr., "French Fortification at Fort Rosalie, Natchez" in *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, ed. Patricia K. Galloway (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1982), 195. Pénicaut's narrative dates the establishment of the Natchez trading post to 1713; however, other sources indicate that an early 1714 date is more accurate. While Pénicaut's observations are largely dependable, his chronology is sometimes off by as much as a year. Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 3-4, 193n.

assassination, yet they remained unharmed.[9]

Although Pénicaut would appear to be the most reliable reporter by virtue of being on the scene, he did not complete his manuscript about his Louisiana adventures until 1723, two years after he had returned to France for medical reasons and eight years after the events in question.[10] In contrast, Bienville and La Mothe communicated their versions of the incident to French authorities within months of the killings. In evaluating the accuracy of these sources, we must take into account, as ethnohistorian Patricia Galloway has cautioned, European biases and personal agendas that skewed the writers' perspectives.[11] However, if we use these sources carefully, I believe that we can glean the Natchez Indians' own side of the story from the colonial narratives and shed light on the tribe's behavior in 1715. In that year, the Yamasee War with the Carolina English and the ensuing collapse of the Indian slave trade had a much more profound effect on the Natchez than diplomatic blunders and conjectural superstitions. Played out against the backdrop of the Indian slave trade, the story behind the founding of Fort Rosalie becomes a more complex tale of colonial piracy, jealousy, and deceit that obscured the way in which the Natchez Indians endeavored to cope with a rapidly changing world. While it is impossible for anyone today to know with certainty the circumstances surrounding the deaths of those hapless voyageurs, I can suggest a compelling new explanation for the violence that led to the establishment of Fort Rosalie and the founding of the European settlement at Natchez.

Evaluating Bienville's Story

The calumet story first appeared in Bienville's January 20, 1716, letter to Canadian official Antoine-Denis Raudot.[12] The letter was one in a series of reports Bienville sent to French authorities complaining at length about La Mothe's activities as governor of Louisiana. Although some of

[9] McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, 158-59, 164, 167. Pénicaut's narrative dates the Natchez attack on the voyageurs in 1714; however, other elements in his narrative and other sources confirm that this event happened in late 1715.

[10] McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, xxiii, xxxi.

[11] Patricia Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis: 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 13-14.

[12] Giraud, *Vol. II*, 15; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III,* 198.

his charges against La Mothe were undoubtedly legitimate, Bienville had strong personal reasons to present the governor in a bad light. Before discussing the likelihood that La Mothe's alleged refusal to smoke the calumet with the Natchez might have touched off the hostilities, it is useful to examine Bienville's relationship with his superior officer.

La Mothe's appointment to the post of governor of Louisiana came at the end of the decade-long European conflict known as Queen Anne's War (also known as the War of Spanish Succession). The war depleted France's treasury and created a time of extreme hardship for the fledgling Louisiana colony. Bienville, as de facto governor of Louisiana after the death of his brother, Pierre le Moyne d'Iberville, had managed to sustain the French outpost at Mobile during these difficult times.[13] Instead of being rewarded for his efforts, another man came brandishing the title of governor, and Bienville was demoted to the rank of king's lieutenant. This happened in part because Louis XIV granted the Louisiana monopoly to his counselor and financial secretary, Antoine Crozat. For his role in persuading Crozat to embark on this venture, La Mothe received the appointment of colonial governor. Unwilling to yield gracefully, Bienville opposed La Mothe from the moment the latter arrived at Mobile in the summer of 1713.[14]

Beyond superficial sparring over turf, Bienville held a much more powerful motive for enmity toward La Mothe. Bienville and his brothers Iberville, Joseph Le Moyne de Sérigny and Antoine Le Moyne de Chateaugué, had used Queen Anne's War as a cover for profiteering at the king's expense. Iberville, Chateaugué, and Sérigny were especially active, roving like pirates between Veracruz, Saint-Domingue, Havana, and France, sailing the king's ships, selling the king's merchandise, and trafficking in illicit contraband, including more than 1,300 captured slaves. As historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall noted, the Le Moyne brothers kept the Louisiana colony alive during the war because "they knew how to make the colonization of Louisiana worthwhile, at least for themselves and their followers."[15] The most serious charges stemmed

[13] Iberville died in 1706 at Havana, possibly from malaria. Tennant S. McWilliams, "Introduction: Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville and the Competition for Empire" in Richebourg G. McWilliams, ed. and trans., *Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, Iberville's Gulf Journals* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 1-16.

[14] Giraud, *Vol. I*, 14, 249-51; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. II*, 162.

[15] Giraud, *Vol. I*, 112-26; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana

from Iberville's wartime looting of the island of Nevis in the West Indies. The commander, along with the captains and crew of his squadron of French naval vessels, profited handily from the sale of the commandeered merchandise and slaves in Martinique and Saint-Domingue. A special investigative commission appointed by the king himself found Iberville and his extended family of brothers and in-laws at the heart of the conspiracy, providing even more reason for the king to withhold the colonial governorship from Bienville.[16]

After Iberville's death, Bienville bore the brunt of the investigation into the Le Moyne brothers' activities; however, Louisiana's distance from the royal court, plus a bit of luck, helped the erstwhile governor stave off his opposition. Nicolas Daneaux de Muy, sent by the king to assume Louisiana's governorship and press the Le Moyne investigation, died at Havana while en route to Mobile in January 1708. Jean-Baptiste Martin d'Artaguette, traveling with De Muy, followed through with the inquiry into the activities of Bienville and his brothers, although his findings were inconclusive owing to conflicting testimony from the Le Moynes' allies and enemies.[17] For his part, Bienville denied all charges.[18]

D'Artaguette left Louisiana in 1711 to return to France.[19] If Bienville thought his troubles had ended, he soon learned that the king's inquiry, now prosecuted by the Council of the Navy, would continue to dog him and his family. La Mothe came to Louisiana with instructions to reopen the Le Moyne investigation in order to determine how much money Bienville and his brothers owed the regency. More than simply a rival, the new governor posed a serious threat to Bienville's financial well being.[20] Hamstrung by having to implement Crozat's unpopular new trade policies in the impoverished colony, La Mothe quarreled repeatedly with Bienville and his tight-knit group of supporters, which included the brothers Sérigny and Chateaugué, his nephew Jacques Le Moyne de St. Hélène, and his cousin Pierre Dugué de Boisbriant, along with

State University Press, 1992), 12-13; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. II,* 190-91; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III,* 11, 46-48, 54-55, 61-67, 69-71, 75-110, 201-03.

[16] Giraud, *Vol. I*, 108-09, 112-26; T. McWilliams, "Introduction: Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville," 1-16.

[17] Giraud, *Vol. I*, 126-28, 225-31; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III*, 47, 78-110, 111.

[18] Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III,* 111, 117-19, 168.

[19] Martin d'Artaguiette's younger brother, Bernard Diron d'Artaguiette, who also came to Louisiana in 1708, remained in the colony and became a prominent administrator and trader. Giraud, *Vol. I*, 126, 158.

[20] Giraud, *Vol. I* , 309-10; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III,* 143, 144, 147.

Jean-Baptiste Duclos (the colony's commissary general), Sieur Raujon (director of Crozat's company), and Captain Chavagne de Richebourg (Bienville's immediate subordinate).[21] La Mothe embraced the feuding, forming his own clique and writing his own letters criticizing Bienville and the rest of the Le Moyne faction. In large part, the dysfunctional Louisiana command was the inevitable result of the French regency's administrative policies, which encouraged spying and tattling among the colonial personnel.[22]

Clearly, Bienville's hostility toward the governor casts doubt on his objectivity in judging La Mothe's relations with the Indians on the Mississippi River. Furthermore, La Mothe could hardly be charged with inexperience in dealing with American Indians. Bienville's senior by twenty-three years—in 1713, La Mothe was fifty-six years old and Bienville was thirty-three—La Mothe had served in North America since before Bienville was born. Migrating from France to Nova Scotia as a teenager, La Mothe entered the French military in New France and rose through the ranks to command at Fort Michilimackinac. In 1701, he established Fort Pontchartrain at Detroit and commanded there until he accepted the governorship of Louisiana. While rumors indicate that La Mothe was unpopular among his troops at Detroit, he came to Louisiana with considerable frontier experience, including plenty of interaction with the Indian tribes of the Great Lakes area. In light of his many years of service in that region, he would have been quite familiar with the calumet and its role in Indian diplomacy.[23]

The calumet was an ornate smoking pipe used ceremonially as a formal way for two groups to meet and interact without fear of aggression. Patricia Galloway suggests that the calumet ceremony created a "fictive kinship" between participants. According to archaeologist Ian Brown, the calumet ceremony probably developed at the northern end of the Mississippi River Valley in late prehistoric times. Early French explor-

[21] Giraud, *Vol. I*, 251, 304-07, 305n, 309; Giraud, *Vol. II*, 75-76; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. II*, 74n, 75, 77, 84-94, 168, 197-99, 201-03, 295, 209-10; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III,* 30n, 188, 199, 212, 280.

[22] Giraud, *Vol. II*, 6, 73-77; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. II*, 168-69, 170, 174-75, 182-84, 188-92, 195, 198, 199, 202, 209-10, 215, 217; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III*, 176, 177, 178-80.

[23] Giraud, *Vol. I*, 30; Giraud, *Vol. II*, 74; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. I*, 193n; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. II*, 91, 91n, 162n. La Mothe's association with Detroit won him undying fame when, in the twentieth century, a classic American automobile bearing his name took the road.

ers readily adopted the ritual in order to move safely among the local tribes. Brown suggests that the French later helped to spread the calumet ceremony to the tribes of the Southeast. Pipes typically comprised a stone or clay bowl and a long wooden stem, decorated with feathers and paint. The calumet ceremony could be quite elaborate among the native groups in the Mississippi region, with singing, speech-making, dancing, exchange of presents, and feasting accompanying the smoking of the pipe. For example, in 1699 the Houma Indians treated Iberville to a calumet ceremony that lasted from morning until midnight. Le Page du Pratz, who lived in the French colony at Natchez in the 1720s, noted two kinds of calumets, one for peace and one for war. The peace calumet, which the Natchez presented to other groups in anticipation of friendship, had decorations of white eagle feathers and skin from the neck of a duck. The war calumet, used in council meetings when contemplating an attack against an enemy, sported red-dyed flamingo feathers with vulture skin and plumage. Employed extensively in the early exploration of the Lower Mississippi Valley by La Salle, Iberville, and others, the ceremony declined in importance with sustained European presence in the region.[24]

Beyond the lack of corroboration by Pénicaut, two other observations make Bienville's calumet story seem unlikely. His account of an American Indian group's unilateral aggression following a refusal by Europeans to smoke the calumet is suspect, since no colonial documentation exists to support such behavior.[25] In fact, violence in connection with the calumet ceremony was rare and usually occurred only when one side used the ritual as a ruse to catch the other side off guard (as Bienville did when he captured the Natchez chiefs).[26]

[24] Ian W. Brown, "The Calumet Ceremony in the Southeast and Its Archaeological Manifestations," *American Antiquity* 54, no. 2 (1989): 311-31; Patricia Galloway, "The Currency of Language: The Mobilian Lingua Franca in Colonial Louisiana" in *Practicing Ethnohistory: Mining Archives, Hearing Testimony, Constructing Narrative*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 225-44; Richebourg G. McWilliams, ed. and trans., *Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville: Iberville's Gulf Journals* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 67-90; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 128-29.

[25] For example, La Salle declined to smoke the calumet with the chiefs of one of the Quapaw villages in 1682 without incident. William C. Foster, ed., "The Nicolas de La Salle Journal" in *The La Salle Expedition on the Mississippi River: A Lost Manuscript of Nicolas de La Salle, 1682,* ed. William C. Foster (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 103.

[26] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 199, 225.

A second problem with Bienville's story is its assumption that the Natchez Indians would have acted as a single political unit. As I have discussed elsewhere, the Natchez Indians were a loose confederation of five and possibly more autonomous settlement districts. During the 1720s the French routinely mentioned five settlement communities: Flour, Tiou, Grigra, White Apple (sometimes called White Earth), and Jenzenaque (sometimes called Walnuts or Hickories). The Tious and Grigras were Tunican-speaking groups attached to the Natchez confederacy. Some early colonial narratives include the Grand Village as one of the settlements, but later narratives and archaeological investigations confirm that the Grand Village was a ceremonial mound center where just a few tribal officials lived, including the chiefly figurehead, the Great Sun, and his younger brother, Tattooed Serpent.[27]

When they saw the Great Sun presiding over ceremonies at the Grand Village, the French assumed that this chief held political power over the dispersed confederacy. However, the Great Sun's role was largely ceremonial; he had no control over the settlement district chiefs, who were free to pursue their own interests with the French and English. None of the French colonists who produced narratives on the Natchez ventured into the countryside to record ceremonies and councils in the Natchez settlement districts. If they had, perhaps they would have been aware of the power held by the district chiefs. As the subsequent history of the French colony at Natchez shows, the tribe's settlement districts remained divided in their loyalty to the French and English until the late 1720s. By that time, hundreds of French colonists (with enslaved Africans) had intruded on the Natchez Indians' lands. In response to a series of confrontations with this crowd of new neighbors, the settlement district chiefs finally united in allegiance to the English and attacked the French colony at Natchez in November 1729.[28]

In his narrative about the activities of the Natchez Indians in late 1715, Pénicaut exposed the fragmented nature of the Natchez confederacy, even though he, too, believed that the tribe stood united under the

[27] Ian W. Brown, *Natchez Indian Archaeology: Culture Change and Stability in the Lower Mississippi Valley,* Archaeological Report No. 15 (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1985), 4-5; Antoine Simone Le Page Du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana or of the Western Parts of Virginia and Carolina* (1774; repr., Baton Rouge, LA: Claitor's Publishing Division, 1972), 74, 298, 320, 338, 339; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 149, 150.

[28] See Barnett, *The Natchez Indians: A History to 1735*, xv, xvi, 40-45, 63-131.

Great Sun's leadership. When they left the Natchez villages to venture upriver through the area where the four voyageurs met their death, Pénicaut and his comrades received warnings from at least three Natchez Indians, including a "petty chief" and the Great Sun himself, about dangerous men lying in wait for them. One of the informants identified the menace as a Natchez chief named The Bearded (Le Barbu) who led a band of one hundred fifty armed men. Clearly, the Natchez were not unified against the French if the Great Sun was issuing warnings about a powerful faction of the tribe. In his narrative, Pénicaut charged the Great Sun with feigning loyalty to the French by giving the warning. However, if we view the Natchez Indians as a fractured confederacy, it is easy to see how the chief's words of caution were probably sincere.[29]

Captain De Richebourg's journal of Bienville's 1716 punitive expedition against the Natchez also documents the Great Sun's inability to control the settlement district chiefs and exposes the discord within the confederacy. De Richebourg wrote that Bienville and his small company of men left Mobile in late January and reached the Tunica villages at the place on the Mississippi River known as the "Portage of the Cross" (near present-day Fort Adams, Mississippi) on April 23. There, the expedition learned that the Natchez had recently killed and robbed another French voyageur, a man named Richard. While Tunica messengers informed the Natchez that Bienville wished to smoke the calumet, the little French army set up camp on an island not far from the Tunica villages. Four days later, emissaries from the Natchez chiefs came to the island to present Bienville with their calumets; however, the French commander declined to smoke, demanding an audience with the chiefs themselves. On May 8, eight Natchez chiefs arrived at Bienville's camp along with a small group of warriors.[30] De Richebourg tells what happened when the chiefs asked for peace:

> [Bienville] pushed back their calumets with contempt and told them that he wished to understand their harangues and know their thought before smoking. This disconcerted the chiefs, who went out of the tent and presented the calumets to the sun. One of them, high priest of the temple, spoke into the air, his eyes fixed on the sun, in order to invoke it. His arms extended above his head, and then they reentered and presented the calumets anew. M. de Bienville repeated to them in a tone wearied with their ceremonies that they must tell him what satisfaction they would give for the five Frenchmen they had murdered. This speech stunned them. They lowered their heads without replying. Then M. de Bienville gave the sign to seize them and conduct them all into the prison which he had prepared for them.[31]

[29] McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, 166-75; also see Barnett, *The Natchez Indians: A History to 1735*, 63-65. None of the colonial writers who saw The Bearded left a description of this chief. His name (applied by the French and probably not the chief's real name) may indicate that he sported a beard, although the name more likely refers to his facial tattoos, which were unique to individual Natchez warriors and chiefs. Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 200.

[30] McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, 176; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III,* 199; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 197-99.

The hostages remained in the makeshift island jail for three weeks. De Richebourg noted in his journal that Bienville spoke extensively with three of his hostages, the Great Sun, Tattooed Serpent, and their brother known as Little Sun, during this time. The Sun chiefs confided that three of the settlement district chiefs, The Bearded of the Jenzenaque settlement, Oylape (also known as "The Arrow") of the White Apple settlement, and Alahofléchia of the Grigra settlement, had welcomed Englishmen into their villages and ordered the attacks on the voyageurs. Two of these pro-English chiefs, The Bearded and Alahofléchia, were among the captives in Bienville's jail. To complicate matters, the Sun chiefs also revealed to Bienville that The Bearded was their maternal uncle, which according to the matrilineal kinship that governed Natchez descent, placed the Jenzenaque chief in the ranking Sun lineage.[32]

The journal's record of Bienville's conversations with the chiefs mentions nothing about the calumet and La Mothe. Duclos, one of Bienville's allies, later made an awkward attempt to explain this omission in a letter to officials in France, saying that De Richebourg had purposefully

[31] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 199.

[32] Bienville's expedition included an interpreter who was fluent in the Natchez language, and Bienville had a reputation for being good with languages, so De Richebourg's report of the chiefs' statements is probably accurate. All but the first two pages of De Richebourg's journal is transcribed in Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 196-204. In Pénicaut's account of the expedition, the Great Sun was not one of Bienville's captives. McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, 175-81. Among the Natchez, as with several other southeastern groups, matrilineal kinship (reckoning descent through the female line) determined one's membership in a lineage or extended family. In this case, the Sun chiefs were the children of The Bearded's sister. For a thorough discussion of Natchez kinship, see Patricia Galloway and Jason Baird Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups" in *Volume 14: Southeast*, ed. Raymond D. Fogelson of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2004), 603-04.

omitted from his journal those very statements by the Natchez chiefs. In explaining the absence of the chiefs' remarks about the calumet story, Duclos said, "[De Richebourg] did not wish to mention in [the journal] a thing that could not fail to displease Mr. de Lamothe extremely."[33] This effort to spare the governor's feelings rings disingenuous, given the three-year running feud between La Mothe and the Le Moyne faction.

La Mothe's Burned Temple Story

When confronted by the Council of the Navy during the investigation of the Natchez uprising, La Mothe apparently gave no evidence in defense of his story about the temple fire. As with Bienville's calumet story, other colonial documentation does not support the suggestion that a temple fire would induce the Natchez to attack the French. Considering the wood-and-thatch construction of Indian structures and the close proximity to hearths, the danger of fire was always present, but burning temples are rare in the colonial narratives. Perhaps the best-known example is the destruction of the Taensa Indians' temple, which burned in 1700 after a lightning strike. It is worth noting that the Taensas and Natchez were closely related culturally and probably shared the same language.[34] The missionary François Joliet de Montigny was in residence with the Taensas at the time of the fire, and Iberville and a party of voyageurs happened to be there, too. The Taensas' reaction to the fire does not support La Mothe's story, but the Indians' behavior shocked the Frenchmen nonetheless. Iberville reported the incident in his journal:

> The night of the 16th to the 17th [March 1700] a thunderbolt fell on the temple of the Taensas and set fire to it, which burned it entirely. These savages, to appease the Spirit, who they said was angry, threw five little children in swaddling clothes into the fire of the temple. They would have thrown many others had not three Frenchmen run thither and prevented them.[35]

Ethnohistorian John R. Swanton noted that later French writers sometimes mistakenly attributed the account of the Taensa temple

[33] Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III*, 209.
[34] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 22, 189, 266-68.
[35] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 266.

fire to the Natchez Indians.[36] This being the case, La Mothe may have heard the garbled version, although it is still difficult to imagine how he arrived at the story he told the Council of the Navy. No evidence of a burned temple turned up in the archaeological excavation of the temple mound (Mound C) at the Grand Village of the Natchez. Archaeologists did find postholes, hearths, and other remains representing the last structure to stand on the temple mound, and these features correspond to the Natchez temple building documented in numerous colonial narratives, including descriptions of the structure after La Mothe's time. If a Natchez temple burned in 1715, it wasn't this one.[37] Aside from the main temple at the Grand Village, temple buildings stood at some of the outlying settlement districts, although none of these structures have been identified archaeologically. Again, Pénicaut was present and makes no mention of such a fire.[38]

The Yamasee War and the Bearded Chief

Having examined the stories told by Bienville, La Mothe, and Pénicaut, we can consider what I suspect to be the real reason behind the Natchez hostilities in 1715–16. In fact, the forces troubling the native people of the Lower Mississippi Valley that year were much greater than Bienville and La Mothe seem to have grasped. Even Pénicaut, who was close to the scene of the crime, was apparently oblivious to the pressures that motivated some Natchez people to try to kill him while others endeavored to save his life. An important clue to the issues behind this behavior emerged as early as 1704, when the missionary Henri Roulleaux La Vente, writing about the Natchez Indians, said, "the English give [presents] to them and excite them to make war in order to obtain slaves by it."[39] La Vente's rather detached observation belies the mayhem, fear, and disease that haunted native people all across the Southeast at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Generating this atmosphere of chaos was the terrible business of the English-driven

[36] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley,* 269.
[37] Robert S. Neitzel, *Archaeology of the Fatherland Site: The Grand Village of the Natchez*, Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. 51, part 1 (New York, NY: American Museum of Natural History, 1965), 38.
[38] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 211-13.
[39] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 39.

Indian slave trade.[40]

That some of the Natchez Indians were selling slaves at this early date indicates the extraordinary reach of the Atlantic market economy, first introduced to the Indians of North America's eastern seaboard by European colonizers in the seventeenth century. Through this trans-Atlantic chain of exchange, Natchez people gained access to merchandise the Indians desired but could not produce for themselves, such as European clothing, blankets, iron weapons and utensils, and guns, powder, and bullets. To purchase these items, the Indians of eastern North America learned that the market valued two types of currency within their reach: animal skins and human slaves. Although there was active trade in both of these commodities, while the Indian slave trade flourished, human laborers were consistently more valuable than skins. The new game of supply and demand gave rise to what ethnohistorian Robbie Ethridge calls "militaristic slaving societies," which terrorized their weaker neighbors for captives to sell. Slave-taking was not new to the native people of the Southeast; however, this European kind of slavery was unprecedented. Instead of captives being taken to an enemy village, the victims of the Indian slave trade disappeared forever, herded far away by heavily armed men to ports like Charleston, where ships carried these unfortunates to sugar cane plantations in the West Indies and mining operations in South America.[41]

The slaving business that eventually involved the Natchez stemmed from the English partnership with the Westos, part of the Erie confederacy, who settled on the James River in 1656. The Westos initially captured Indian slaves for the English in Virginia before moving farther south to the Savannah River in 1660s, where they raided numerous small tribes in the region for the English slave merchants of South Carolina.[42] As European diseases and slave raids depleted the pool of potential

[40] See Allan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

[41] Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 89-93, 236.

[42] Eric E. Bowne, "'Caryinge awaye their Corne and Children': The Effects of Westo Slave Raids on the Indians of the Lower South" in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South*, eds. Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 104-14; Maureen Meyers, "From Refugees to Slave Traders: The Transformation of the Westo Indians," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*, 90, 96.

victims close to South Carolina, the slave catchers ranged farther west, into what would later become the Creek confederacy. Several tribes in the Alabama region responded to the slave raids by becoming slavers themselves, such as the Abihkas, Alabamas, Tallapoosas, Apalachicolas, and Hitchitis. Like cascading dominos, these slave catchers in turn ravaged *their* neighbors to the west. Some of these groups almost certainly targeted the Chickasaws until they, too, became slave catchers. By the 1690s, English slave traders such as Thomas Welch and Anthony Dodsworth were among the Chickasaws inciting them to attack the tribes to the west and south.[43] Probably by the beginning of the eighteenth century, elements of the Natchez confederacy had succumbed to the lure of the slave trade, not long before Father Le Vente found them in league with the Carolina English.

In contrast to the English, the French in Louisiana adopted the pattern of Indian slavery that existed in the Lower Mississippi Valley upon their arrival, in which the slaves remained in the region, often not terribly far from their own tribal group. For example, Taensa Indians sold two Koroa children as slaves to members of La Salle's 1682 expedition; at the time, both tribes lived on the Mississippi River within sixty miles of each other. As the Louisiana colony developed, Frenchmen (and transplanted Canadians) routinely bought Indian slaves for domestic labor and for use as concubines, much to the chagrin of Catholic missionaries presiding over these parishes.[44]

Aside from the incentive of material gain, the English slave trade offered young American Indian men the adventure of a warrior's lifestyle and a means for advancing one's personal status. A boy's attainment of a war name and adult standing by killing an enemy is well documented among the Choctaws later in the eighteenth century. The Natchez had a similar system of advancement, which according to Du Pratz consisted of three classes or ranks: true warriors "who have always given proofs of their courage," common warriors, and apprentice warriors.[45] Since the

[43] Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 166-68.

[44] Carl A. Brasseaux, "The Moral Climate of French Colonial Louisiana, 1699-1763" in *The French Experience in Louisiana*, vol. I of *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History*, ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 526-28; Foster, "The Nicolas de La Salle Journal," 102, 107; Grady W. Kilman, "Slavery and Agriculture in Louisiana: 1699-1731" in *The French Experience in Louisiana,* 203-04.

[45] Du Pratz, *History of Louisiana*, 352.

slave trade valued women and children, raiding villages and fighting with the target community's adult males provided plenty of opportunities for would-be warriors to earn their war names.[46]

For a few highly competitive warriors endowed with superior combat skills and leadership abilities, the slave raids also became a pathway to war chief status.[47] In recent years, ethnohistorians have debated the intricacies of the dual leadership system among some of the Indian groups of the Southeast, which was manifest in the offices of "peace chief" and "war chief." Among the Choctaws and Chickasaws, peace chiefs either inherited their status or earned it by demonstrating their ability to negotiate a peaceful solution to a potentially volatile situation. On the other hand, war chiefs earned their status through aggressive behavior, bravery, and charisma. Choctaw peace chiefs traditionally ranked higher in authority than their war chief counterparts and, as Galloway has noted, the dual system provided a balance in leadership between caution on the part of the peace chief and hotheadedness on the part of the war chief. However, the extraordinary violence of the eighteenth century, first with the slave trade and later with the relentless client warfare for the French and English, created an environment in which war chiefs prospered. In fact, the enticement of the slave trade economy caused distinctions to blur and peace chiefs occasionally behaved like war chiefs.[48]

Natchez chiefs and warriors had been selling slaves to the English for several years when Carolina Indian agent Thomas Nairne visited the Chickasaws and Choctaws in 1708. Thomas Welch, traveling with Nairne, journeyed on to the Mississippi River to meet with the Natchez, Yazoos, and Taensas. According to Nairne, one of Welch's objectives was

[46] Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 236; Greg O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age, 1750-1830* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 27-29; Swanton, *Source Material*, 167.

[47] O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age*, 28, 31.

[48] James R. Atkinson, *Splendid Land, Splendid People: The Chickasaw Indians to Removal* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 4-5, 26-28; Patricia Galloway, "Choctaw Names and Choctaw Roles: Another Method for Evaluating Sociopolitical Structure" in *Practicing Ethnohistory,* 216-17; Patricia Galloway, "Four Ages of Alibamon Mingo" in *Practicing Ethnohistory*, 341, 354; author, "Dual Organization Reconsidered: Eighteenth-Century Choctaw Chiefs and the Exploration of Social Design Space" in *Practicing Ethnohistory*, 370; Thomas Nairne, *Nairne's Muskhogean Journals: The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River,* ed. Alexander Moore (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 38-39; O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age*, 31-32.

to convince these tribes to move to the Tennessee River region, ostensibly to facilitate slave commerce and, perhaps more importantly, to distance them from the influence of the French.[49] Indeed, the Indian slave trade played a central role in England's strategy for colonial expansion. Nairne put it succinctly:

> Our friend the Talapoosies [Tallapoosas, part of the Creek confederacy] and Chicasas [Chickasaws] Imploy themselves in making Slaves of such Indians about the Lower parts of the Mississippi as are now Subject to the french. The good prices the English Traders give them for slaves Encourages them to this trade Extremly and some men think that it both serves to Lessen their numbers before the french can arm them.[50]

If the Mississippi River tribes gave Welch's offer any serious consideration, none of them chose to make the move. Two years earlier, the main body of the Taensas had already migrated southward to escape the slave raids, first to a village site on the Lower Mississippi River and later to Mobile Bay, where they placed themselves under the protection of the French.[51]

The Natchez, at least certain elements of the group, pursued the English slave trade throughout the first decade of the eighteenth century. This was during Queen Anne's War, a period when the Natchez had little contact with the struggling French colony at Mobile and the Natchez confederacy welcomed the opportunity to trade both slaves and deerskins with the English.[52] The Natchez Indians continued to deal with English traders even after Crozat's employees established a trading post near the Grand Village in early 1714. Pénicaut happened to catch the Natchez selling slaves to the English when he came to the trading post in early 1715:

> Among the Natchez I found some slaves who were of the Chaoüchas nation. They had been captured by a strong party of Chicachas, Yasoux, and Natchez, who had been in the Chaoüchas' village under the pretext of singing their calumet of peace; but these treacherous men had, on the contrary, gone

[49] Alexander Moore, "Introduction" to *Muskhogean Journals*, 15; Nairne, *Muskhogean Journals,* 74, 79n 3.

[50] Nairne, *Muskhogean Journals*, 75-76.

[51] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 270-71.

[52] James F. Barnett, Jr., *Mississippi's American Indians* (Jackson: Mississippi Historical Society and University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 56-57.

> there to make war, and the very first thing they did was kill the Grand Chief and several members of his family. They took eleven persons prisoner, among them the Grand Chief's wife, whom they brought to the Natchez. I did what I could to rescue them, but I was never able to accomplish anything with the captors. I was surprised to find three Englishmen there who had come to buy these slaves.[53]

One of the "Englishmen" Pénicaut found purchasing slaves from the Natchez was the Welsh trader Price Hughes, who was mixing slave buying with reconnaissance for establishing a Welsh colony among the Natchez. The colony never materialized because Hughes died a few weeks later, a casualty of the Yamasee War.[54] Although the Yamasee War occurred far away in South Carolina, Indian settlements all across the Southeast felt the conflict's repercussions. The Yamasees were a coalition of small tribes in South Carolina's coastal region, most of whom were refugees from slave raids. By the 1680s, they had become slavers themselves and from their villages in the Port Royal area they served the English by checking Spanish encroachment from the south. The historian Verner Crane noted that the Yamasee uprising was part of a much wider conspiracy that originated in the Creek confederacy and spread among the many tribes doing business with the Carolina slave traders. Scholars have not had to look far in search of causes behind the widespread discontent. Despite South Carolina's attempts to regulate the Indian slave trade, unscrupulous traders used rum to put their Indian partners at a disadvantage and manipulated transactions to bury the Indians under insurmountable debts. Oblivious to the stresses weighing on their Indian partners, the traders continued to press for more captives, even though decades of slave raids and diseases left few potential victims. By 1715, the Yamasees and other Indian slave catchers no longer trusted the traders and many even feared that their allies might soon target them for capture. The terrifying business had

[53] McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, 159. Once again, Pénicaut gives the wrong date for this incident, saying the confrontation with the Englishmen at the Natchez settlement took place in 1713; other sources date the event to 1715. Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III,* 182. The Chaoüchas (Chawasha) were a small tribe located on the Mississippi River, not far below present-day New Orleans. John R. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America* (1952; repr., Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), 201.

[54] Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier: 1670-1732* (1929; repr., Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 101-02; McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, 163. Pénicaut refers to Hughes as "Lord Mestriou."

ceased to be viable, and its end created a singular moment in North American history. As Robbie Ethridge has observed, the Yamasee War was the "first and only time the Indians of the American South acted in unison to defy the European and later American invasions into their lands." The inevitable eruption came on Good Friday, April 15, 1715, when Yamasee warriors suddenly attacked the English slave traders among them with pent-up fury. Thomas Nairne, who tried to negotiate a truce, was captured and burned at the stake. The news spread quickly along the trading paths, and Indians from the Savannah River to the Mississippi River attacked and killed the English traders in their villages. One of the casualties was Bienville's nephew St. Hélène, who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and died with the English traders at the Chickasaw villages.[55]

The Yamasee War abruptly altered the lives of hundreds of chiefs and warriors across the Southeast who had become accustomed to the violent and profitable business of slave catching. By looking at how the Natchez Indians coped with the loss of the Indian slave trade, we can, I believe, find the answer to the question raised at the beginning of this essay. First of all, it is no coincidence that the attacks on the French voyageurs began just months after the Yamasee War; the two events are closely connected. Pénicaut's narrative about his time with the Natchez in 1714–15 and De Richebourg's journal from Bienville's April–June 1716 campaign reveal tension within the confederacy as a direct result of the Yamasee War and its aftermath.[56] As mentioned above, the Natchez confederacy's European trade relationships became complicated with the establishment of the French trading post at the Natchez settlements. After that, the Natchez traded openly with both the French and the English until the sudden loss of the English trade radically altered the diplomatic landscape for the Natchez chiefs. The Sun chiefs argued for strengthening the confederacy's alliance with the French in order to prevent the loss of the new trading post. But at least one Natchez chief, The Bearded, shunned that option and redirected his slave raiding band toward the French voyageurs and the merchandise they carried in their canoes on the Mississippi River. (If we accept De

[55] Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 25-26, 30, 162-68, 164n; Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*, 232-33, 235, 237-39, 242-44; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III*, 188.

[56] McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, 167-69; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 199-204.

Richebourg's account of Bienville's conversations with the Sun chiefs, Alahofléchia and Oylape also favored raiding French travelers.) For the rest of the Natchez confederacy, The Bearded's banditry created a serious problem. Alienating the French when the opportunity for English trade had disappeared threatened the confederacy's access to European merchandise. Such a prospect was untenable.[57]

Pénicaut's narrative tells us that The Bearded and his men ambushed their victims at a spot on the Mississippi River known as the Petit Gulf (close to present-day Port Gibson). This location appears on French colonial maps of the region in the early 1720s marking a place about thirty miles north of present-day Natchez where the river's dynamics created a swirling current. (Grand Gulf, a similar hydrological feature noted by the French, is about fifteen river miles north of Petit Gulf.) Judging from the advice Pénicaut received from the Great Sun, The Bearded and his men apparently waylaid their victims by coaxing them to stop and come ashore.[58] Thanks to the warnings from the Great Sun and other Natchez Indians, Pénicaut and his party managed to avoid ambush; however, the Frenchman named Richard was not so fortunate. As mentioned previously, he was robbed and killed while traveling downstream through the Natchez country in early 1716.[59] Then, at about the same time as Bienville's punitive expedition arrived at the Tunica villages, The Bearded captured a group of six Canadians transporting skins, smoked meats, and bear oil down the Mississippi River. The Canadians later told Bienville that they remained under guard at their captor's village (probably the Jenzenaque settlement) while a gathering of Natchez chiefs confronted The Bearded about his reckless behavior. After a marathon three-day council meeting, The Bearded conceded, gave the Canadians back their possessions, and allowed them to continue downriver to Bienville's island camp.[60]

While they faced each other around the Jenzenaque council fire, the chiefs of the Natchez confederacy were aware of Bienville's presence downriver. The chiefs' emissaries had already carried calumets to the French commander and had been rebuffed. Having reached an accord at the Jenzenaque council, the Natchez chiefs resolved to go and meet with Bienville on his island and repair the diplomatic damage. Believing in the power of the calumet, The Bearded and Alahofléchia accompanied the diplomatic party to ask Bienville for peace. Perhaps as a show of defiance, the third chief named as a friend of the English, Oylape of the White Apple settlement, did not go with the retinue of chiefs and warriors to Bienville's island camp. For The Bearded and Alahofléchia, trusting Bienville and the calumet was a fatal mistake. These two captured chiefs received death sentences.[61] De Richebourg's journal documents The Bearded's defiance when Bienville's men led the two war chiefs away to their execution:

> The Bearded ceased for a moment singing his death song and sang that of war. He related his great deeds against different nations and the number of scalps he had carried away. He named the five Frenchmen whom he had caused to die, and said that he died with regret at not having killed more.[62]

According to Bienville's conditions for peace, the freed chiefs instructed their warriors to help with the construction of the fort. During June 1716, Natchez Indians delivered around 2,500 "acacia" poles (probably black locust [*Robinia pseudoacacia*]) and 3,000 pieces of cypress bark to a location on the bluff selected by Jacques Barbazan de Pailloux, one of Bienville's officers. Pallioux's design for the fort called for a square floor plan with walls about 95 feet in length, protected by corner bastions. French soldiers and Natchez warriors labored together during July and finally completed the palisade, guardhouse, barracks, and storage sheds that comprised Fort Rosalie on August 3.[63] On August 25, members of the Yazoo and Ofogoula tribes joined several hundred Natchez men and women at Fort Rosalie to dance and sing the calumet to Bienville.[64] For the French commander, it was one of the high points in a colonial career that lasted more than four decades.[65] In fact, Bien-

[57] Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III*, 186-87; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 198, 202, 204.

[58] Anonymous, [ca. 1720] *Carte du cours de la rivière du Mississipi depuis les Illinois jusqu'à son embouchure*, HMC Karpinski series F 05-1-2, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Cartes et Plans, Ge DD 2987, 8819 B; McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, 167, 169.

[59] McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, 176.

[60] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 198-99.

[61] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 198, 199, 202, 203-04.

[62] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 203-04.

[63] Ignace-François Broutin, [map] *Carte des environs du fort Rosalie aux Natchez 1723,* Bibliothéque Nationale de France, http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/Visualiseur?Destination=Gallica&O=IFN-6700314; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 202-04.

[64] Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 204.

[65] Dunbar Rowland, ed., and Albert G. Sanders, trans., *Mississippi Provincial Archives,*

ville's success against the Natchez that summer was only part of the victory he savored. His enemy La Mothe returned in disgrace to France, where he endured further humiliation as a temporary prisoner in the Bastille for making seditious remarks about Louisiana. The French regency ended his confinement after four months; however, the Regent Duke d'Orleans refused La Mothe's request to resume his old command at Detroit. Bienville's former nemesis never returned to North America and died in France in 1730.[66]

For the Natchez confederacy, the period following the Yamasee War witnessed a traumatic shuffling of power and alliances. While the slave trade flourished, The Bearded, Alahofléchia, and Oylape controlled the flow of English trade goods into the confederacy. Although they may have stopped short of slave catching, the Great Sun, Tattooed Serpent, and Little Sun tacitly approved the commerce with the English. When the Yamasee War shut off the English trade, the Sun chiefs advocated an alliance with the French; however, The Bearded, with possible collusion from Alahofléchia and Oylape, kept his slave-raiding band together and targeted French voyagers moving merchandise on the Mississippi River. Because of The Bearded's actions, the Natchez peace settlement with the French cost the confederacy two of the three chiefs who had opposed the Sun brothers, temporarily shifting the leadership balance in favor of the Sun chiefs. This worked to the advantage of the French over the next few years as the colony at Natchez took shape; however, the pro-French faction dwindled and disappeared with the deaths of the Tattooed Serpent in 1725 and the Great Sun in 1728.[67] At the same time, French atrocities made it easy for the English to gain the alliance of the Natchez chiefs. The Natchez never followed through on Bienville's orders to kill Oylape, and French officials later pardoned the White Apple chief.

1729-1740, French Dominion, Vol. I (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1927), 193n.

[66] Giraud, *Vol. II,* 82-84; McWilliams, *Pénicaut Narrative*, 143n; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. II*, 163n. Despite his triumphs over the Natchez Indians and La Mothe, Bienville found that the governorship of Louisiana still eluded him. In La Mothe's place, Crozat appointed Sieur de Lépinay to the governor's post, with Bienville's status relegated to provisional governor until Lépinay's arrival. As it turned out, this proved to be only a minor setback. When the Company of the West assumed Crozat's monopoly in 1717, the Council of the Navy recalled Lépinay, clearing the way for Bienville's appointment as the official governor of Louisiana. Giraud, *Vol. II,* 82-84, 91-93; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. I*, 193n; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. II*, 194; Rowland and Sanders, *Vol. III*, 190, 215, 224-25.

[67] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians: A History*, 100.

As I have discussed elsewhere, this chief, who despised the French, was probably a leader in the Natchez Rebellion of 1729.[68]

During their war with the French, the Natchez burned the original Fort Rosalie. Following their defeat of the Natchez, the French rebuilt the fort on the same location, this time as a five-cornered enclosure. Over the next six decades, a succession of national flags fluttered over the palisade walls, reflecting the turbulent colonial history of the American South. Until the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Fort Rosalie was a lonely French outpost surrounded by the ruins of the short-lived Natchez colony. An English garrison occupied the fort in 1766, changing its name to Fort Panmure. During the American Revolution, Spanish troops took control of the Natchez fort in a campaign that also captured English installations along the Gulf Coast and at Baton Rouge. With the departure of the Spanish in 1798, the fort came under the jurisdiction of the United States.[69] During Mississippi's transition from territory to state, what remained of the old fort lay abandoned, its breastworks becoming difficult to distinguish from the surrounding topography of the Natchez bluff.

Had the Natchez Indians remained peaceful in the winter of 1715, it is likely that the French would have eventually followed through on the plan to establish Fort Rosalie, perhaps in 1718 in support of the Company of the West's colonial adventure. Instead, the historic fort was born out of the Natchez Indians' response to repercussions from the Yamasee War and the subsequent collapse of the Indian slave trade. We can absolve La Mothe of Bienville's petty calumet charges and view The Bearded's 1715–16 attacks as part of a much wider web of colonial violence. Now, with the Fort Rosalie tricentennial looming, the National Park Service is preparing the site for public interpretation. Working on the inconspicuous knoll high above the broad sweep of the Mississippi River, archaeologists from the Southeast Archaeological Center at Tallahassee, Florida, are uncovering the beginnings of the City of Natchez and evidence of the wrenching transition from an American Indian homeland to a European colony.

[68] Barnett, *The Natchez Indians: A History*, 81, 94, 100, 156n; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 202.

[69] Elliott, *The Fort of Natchez and the Colonial Origins of Mississippi*, 16, 18-19, 28, 33-34. Jack Elliott has noted that the fort's new name can be traced to William Maule, First Earl of Panmure of Forth, commander of the Royal Scots Fusiliers and the Scots Greys. Ibid, 19-21.