

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06018-9 - The History of the American Indians: Particularly those Nations Adjoining to the Mississippi, East and West Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia

James Adair

Frontmatter

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The History of the American Indians

A trader who lived and worked for four decades among Native Americans and became a keen observer of their languages, customs and politics, James Adair (*fl.* 1735–75) studied the Catawba, Cherokee, Muscogee, Chickasaw and Choctaw, compiling extensive ethnographic information. Upon publication in 1775, this work was unique in its treatment of these peoples as well as their interaction with white traders and colonists. The book also propounds a theory, popular at the time, that the ancestors of Native Americans were the lost tribes of Israel; as such it remains a valuable source for the history of this idea. In part autobiographical, the work reflects Adair's involvement in trading, local politics and warfare with the British and French. His observations remain of great interest to scholars of American history and ethnography.

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*Particularly Those Nations Adjoining
to the Mississippi, East and West Florida,
Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia*

JAMES ADAIR



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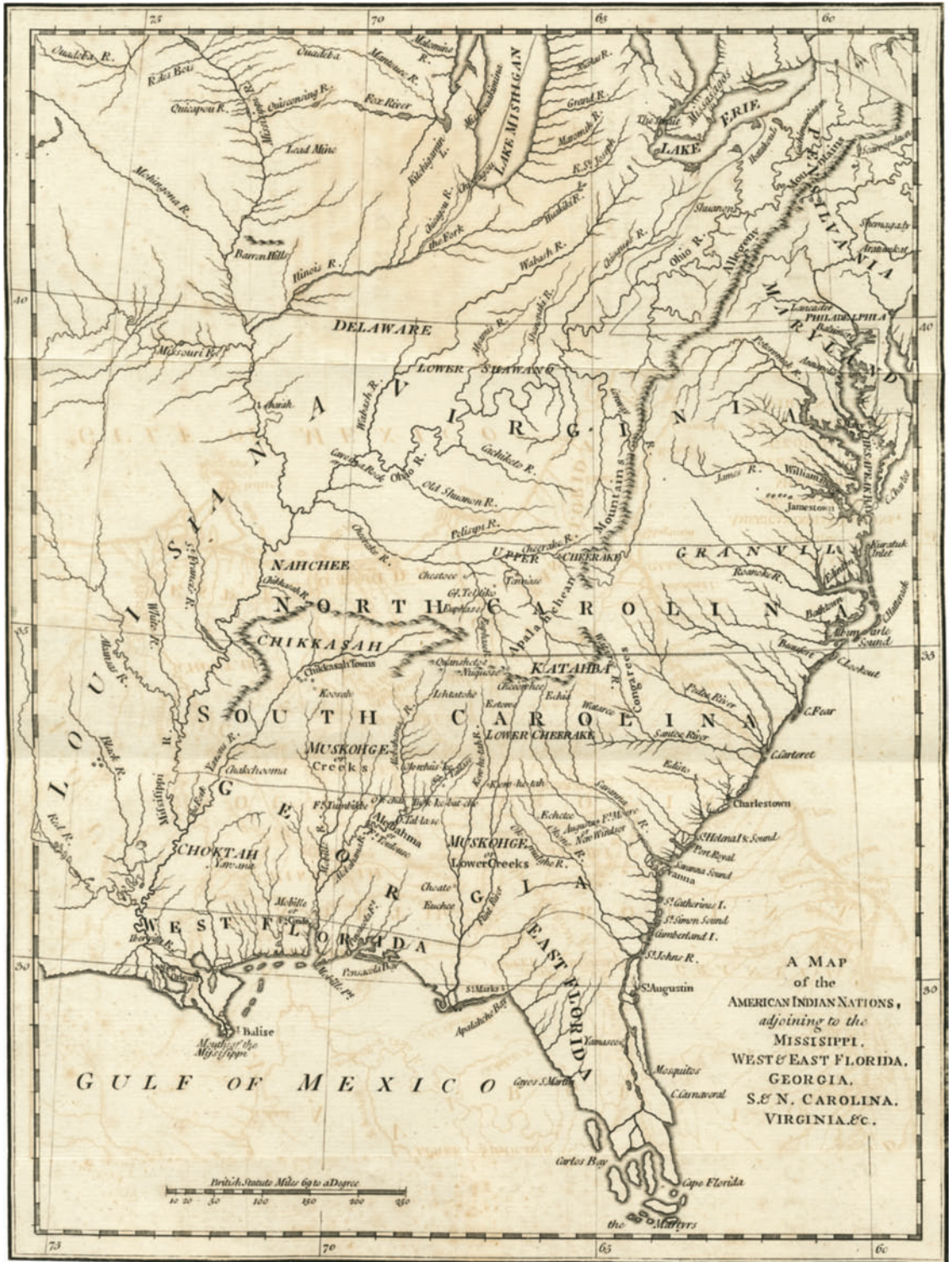
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THE
H I S T O R Y
OF THE
A M E R I C A N I N D I A N S ;
P A R T I C U L A R L Y

Those NATIONS adjoining to the MISSISSIPPI, EAST AND
WEST FLORIDA, GEORGIA, SOUTH AND
NORTH CAROLINA, AND VIRGINIA:

CONTAINING

AN ACCOUNT of their ORIGIN, LANGUAGE, MANNERS, RELIGIOUS and
CIVIL CUSTOMS, LAWS, FORM of GOVERNMENT, PUNISHMENTS, CONDUCT in
WAR and DOMESTIC LIFE, their HABITS, DIET, AGRICULTURE, MANU-
FACTURES, DISEASES and METHOD of CURE, and other Particulars, suffi-
cient to render it

A

COMPLETE INDIAN SYSTEM.

WITH

OBSERVATIONS on former HISTORIANS, the Conduct of our Colony
GOVERNORS, SUPERINTENDENTS, MISSIONARIES, &c.

ALSO

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

A Description of the FLORIDAS, and the MISSISSIPPI LANDS, with their PRODUC-
TIONS—The Benefits of colonizing GEORGIANA, and civilizing the INDIANS—
And the way to make all the Colonies more valuable to the Mother Country.

With a new MAP of the Country referred to in the History.

By JAMES ADAIR, Esquire,
A TRADER with the INDIANS, and Resident in their Country for Forty Years.

L O N D O N :

Printed for EDWARD and CHARLES DILLY, in the Poultry.

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T O

The Hon. Colonel GEORGE CRAGHAN,
George Galphin, *and* Lachlan M'Gilwray,
E S Q U I R E S.*

GENTLEMEN,

TO you, with the greatest propriety the following sheets are addressed. Your distinguished abilities—your thorough acquaintance with the North American Indians language, rites, and customs—your long application and services in the dangerous sphere of an Indian life, and your successful management of the savage natives, are well known over all the continent of America.

You often complained how the public had been imposed upon, either by fictitious and fabulous, or very superficial and conjectural accounts of the Indian na-

* The late Sir Wm. Johnson, Baronet, was another of the Author's friends, and stood at the head of the MS. Dedication.

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tions

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D E D I C A T I O N.

tions—and as often wished me to devote my leisure hours to the drawing up an Indian system. You can witness, that what I now send into the world, was composed more from a regard to your request, than any forward desire of my own, The prospect of your patronage inspired me to write, and it is no small pleasure and honour to me, that such competent judges of the several particulars now presented to public view, expressed themselves with so much approbation of the contents.

You well know the uprightness of my intentions as to the information here given, and that truth hath been my grand standard. I may have erred in the application of the rites and customs of the Indians to their origin and descent—and may have drawn some conclusions, exceeding the given evidence—but candor will excuse the language of integrity: and when the genuine principles, customs, &c. of the Indians are known, it will be easier afterwards for persons of solid learning, and free from secular cares, to trace their origin, clear up the remaining difficulties, and produce a more perfect history.

Should my performance be in the least degree instrumental to promote an accurate investigation and knowledge of
of

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of the American Indians — their civilization — and the happy settlement of the fertile lands around them, I shall rejoice; and the public will be greatly obliged to you, as your request incited to it; and to you I am also indebted for many interesting particulars, and valuable observations.

I embrace this opportunity, of paying a public testimony of my gratitude, for your many favours to me. Permit me also to celebrate your public spirit — your zealous and faithful service of your country — your social and domestic virtues, &c. which have endeared you to all your acquaintance, and to all who have heard your names, and make you more illustrious, than can any high founding titles. All who know you, will readily acquit me of servility and flattery, in this address. Dedications founded on these motives, are the disgrace of literature, and an insult to common sense. There are too many instances of this prostitution in Great Britain, for it to be suffered in America. Numbers of high seated patrons are praised for their divine wisdom and godlike virtues, and yet the whole empire is discontented, and America in strong convulsions.

May you long enjoy your usual calm and prosperity!
that so the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger may

A 2

always

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D E D I C A T I O N.

always joyfully return (as in past years) from your hospitable houses—while this Dedication stands as a small proof of that sincere attachment with which I am,

G E N T L E M E N,

Your most obedient,

Humble Servant,

JAMES ADAIR.

P R E-

P R E F A C E.

THE following history, and observations, are the production of one who hath been chiefly engaged in an Indian life ever since the year 1735: and most of the pages were written among our old friendly Chikkafah, with whom I first traded in the year 1744. The subjects are interesting, as well as amusing; but never was a literary work begun and carried on with more disadvantages. The author was separated by his situation, from the conversation of the learned, and from any libraries — Frequently interrupted also by business, and obliged to conceal his papers, through the natural jealousy of the natives; the traders letters of correspondence always excited their suspicions, and often gave offence.—Another difficulty I had to encounter, was the secrecy and closeness of the Indians as to their own affairs, and their prying disposition into those of others—so that there is no possibility of retirement among them.

A view of the disadvantages of my situation, made me reluctant to comply with the earnest and repeated solicitations of many worthy friends, to give the public an account of the Indian nations with whom I had long resided, was so intimately connected, and of whom scarcely any thing had yet been published but romance, and a mass of fiction. My friends at last prevailed, and on perusing the sheets, they were pleased to approve the contents, as conveying true information, and general entertainment. Having no ambition to appear in the world as an author, and knowing that my history differed essentially from all former publications of the kind, I first resolved to suppress my name; but my friends advised me to own the work, and thus it is tendered to the public in the present form.

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The performance, hath doubtless imperfections, *humanum est errare*. Some readers may think, there is too much of what relates to myself, and of the adventures of small parties among the Indians and traders. But minute circumstances are often of great consequence, especially in discovering the descent and genius of a people—describing their manners and customs—and giving proper information to rulers at a distance. I thought it better to be esteemed prolix, than to omit any thing that might be useful on these points. Some repetitions, which occur, were necessary—The history of the several Indian nations being so much intermixed with each other, and their customs so nearly alike.

One great advantage my readers will here have ; I sat down to draw the Indians on the spot—had them many years standing before me,—and lived with them as a friend and brother. My intentions were pure when I wrote, truth hath been my standard, and I have no sinister or mercenary views in publishing. With inexpressible concern I read the several imperfect and fabulous accounts of the Indians, already given to the world—Fiction and conjecture have no place in the following pages. The public may depend on the fidelity of the author, and that his descriptions are genuine, though perhaps not so polished and romantic as other Indian histories and accounts, they may have seen.

My grand objects, were to give the Literati proper and good materials for tracing the origin of the American Indians—and to incite the higher powers zealously to promote the best interests of the British colonies, and of the mother country. For whose greatness and happiness, I have the most ardent desires.

The whole of the work is respectfully submitted to the candor and judgment of the impartial Public.

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