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**Continuities of Tradition within Hitchiti-Creek Ceremonial Ritual**

Thesis Defense Proposal

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The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate evidence of a continual relationship of ritual symbolism and meaning within the context of ritualized ceremonies and religious activities between the present day Hitchiti-Creek and that of their ancestral heritage. Within my thesis, I suggest that many of the rituals currently practiced are cultural crossovers. These crossovers are from the processes of multiple generations of aural traditions and teachings. It is well documented within professional journals and books that these cultural continuums are evident in the nineteenth, eighteenth, and seventeenth century. I also hypothesize that some, if not many, of these traditions practiced today can be traced through the means of iconographic and archaeological research into pre-contact and pre-Columbian times.

My research has demonstrated that questions once asked may yield information resulting in the outcome of this thesis. To what extent have these processes survived or perished is a question I will investigate. Are contemporary native communities conservatively clinging on to an ancient self-image that reflects a continuum of their traditional values, experiences, and ceremonies? Are communities reinventing an “imagined” tradition by merely going through the ceremonial motions modeled on their traditional past as interpreted by ethnographic literature? If so, the question must be asked, are these same communities reapplying sacred meaning to symbolic objects? Do gaps in traditional rituals represent a completely lost cultural construct? If so, then if a culture relearns a traditional ritual is it revitalization or is the practice of the ritual an imagined invention? The modern researcher must ask, where is the line drawn between a living tradition and a culture in the process of revitalizing its once lost traditions?

The methods I will employ within this challenging study derive from constituent theories from various branches within the discipline of anthropology. This multidisciplinary approach will enable me to compromise a full engaging, multivariate focus towards my thesis research. I plan to use theoretical perspectives from symbolic/semiotic anthropology, archaeology, iconographic methodology from and the San Marcos School four-field approach. I also plan on using personal ethnographies from participant observation, interviews from field research, and vast sources from the ethnographic literature.

Introduction-

1. Native American Research
   1. Introduce Hitchiti-Creeks and Nature of Research Project
2. Introduce Hypothesis and Thesis Organization

Methods

1. Multivariate Approach
   1. Cultural Theory
   2. Definitions
      1. Ritual
      2. Shaman
      3. Maker of Medicine
   3. Archaeological Methodology
   4. San Marcos Four Field Approach

The Hitchiti Creeks

1. Brief History of Tribe
   1. Pre-removal in Georgia
      1. Towns- Hitchiti, Sawokli, Okmulgee, Oconee, Apalachicola, (maybe) Chiaha
      2. Post Yamasee War of 1715- Amalgamation of Yuchi, Overheel Cherokee, Natchez, Seminole, and Hitchitis
      3. Move to Northwestern Florida
      4. Today in Blountstown, Florida

The Ethnographic Literature

1. Seventeenth Century
   1. Spanish Accounts
      1. De Soto
      2. Coosa, etc…
2. Eighteenth Century
   1. James Adair
   2. Benjamin Hawkins
   3. William Bartram
3. Nineteenth Century
4. Twentieth Century
   1. John Swanton
   2. Frank Speck
   3. James Howard
   4. Lewis Jackson

Iconography in the Archaeological Record

1. Etowah
   1. Burial Patterns
   2. Iconography
2. Lake Jackson and Fort Walton
   1. Burial Patterns
   2. Iconography
3. Spiro and Cahokia
   1. Iconography

Muskogee Religion and Cosmology

1. Basic cosmological overview
2. Rituals and objects of power
3. Creation myth
4. Social and religious organization

Ethnographic Research Today

1. Ceremonial Cycle
   1. Green Corn Ceremony
   2. Harvest Ceremony
2. Medicine
3. Iconography
4. Hitchiti Myth and aural Traditions

Conclusions

1. Hypothesis Testing
2. Further research