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Rosalyn Howard. *Black Seminoles in the Bahamas.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002. 160 pp. $59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-2559-9; $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8130-2743-2.

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Anthropologizing History: Black Seminoles and Bahamian Ethnogenesis

In recent decades, the disciplines of history and anthropology have benefited from cross-fertilization. Ethnohistorians draw extensively on anthropological theory, while cultural anthropologists historicize their subjects. Fitting squarely within this tradition is anthropologist Rosalyn Howard's first monograph on a previously neglected topic–Black Seminoles in the Bahamas. The author places her ethnographical account of the descendants of Black Seminoles in the Red Bays community of Andros Island in a historical context that traces their ancestors' origins in Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida, and eventual migration to the Bahamas. Howard examines strategies of survival and adaptation from the Seminole Wars through the contemporary challenges of globalization and mass media. In chapter 2, she lays out her theoretical approach to understanding this cultural transformation: ethnogenesis, a concept she distinguishes from creolization and transculturation, "describes an internal group process wherein a new ethnic identity is created in response to conflict, domination, and resistance." Howard goes on to assert that Black Seminoles' "self-redefinition and cultural adaptation was a consequence of forces such as demographic collapse, forced relocation, enslavement, ethnocide, and genocide" (p. 10).

Black Seminoles is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on Africans in the Americas while the second chapter covers the origins and history of Black Seminoles through the Third Seminole War. Here she draws largely upon secondary sources to provide background information intended for a general readership. The ethnographic study presented in the remaining six chapters represents the core of the work. Chapter 3 is historical in subject, tracing the arrival of Black Seminoles on Andros Island, but ethnographic in approach in that it draws upon interviews with current-day residents of Red Bays. Howard affirms the importance of oral tradition to understanding histories of the subaltern. Faced with a dearth of written sources, historians forsake a topic. As an anthropologist less constrained by rigors of written evidence, Howard validates the historical memory of the Black Seminoles' descendants, whose stories "emphasize the fundamental courage and tenacity" their ancestors displayed to find "freedom" in "the promised island" (pp. 34, 48, and 30). She supplements interviews with a handful of primary sources, newspapers, and British government documents, but uses no notarial or other local records. Although the author never addresses the issue, the relative isolation of Red Bays until the mid-twentieth century presumably means that no such records exist. Chapter 4 similarly draws on written sources and interviews to chronicle the establishment of British colonial rule and black participation in post-Independence Bahamian politics.

Material life and daily cultural practices provide the focus for chapter 5. Black Seminoles survived devastating hurricanes in 1866 and 1899 to develop a largely subsistent local economy. Men hunted wild hogs and flamingos, crabbed, and fished, while women grew corn, potatoes, and vegetables. Paid labor and barter provided minor supplemental income as men found work in sponging and women wove baskets. Despite Howard's reasonable assertion that "forces of globalization and modernization ... have been the catalysts for tremendous sociocultural change in Red Bays" (p.116), the modern-day local economy she describes seems remarkably unchanged when compared to transformations engendered by capitalist penetration in other parts of the Americas (e.g., central Mexico, southern Brazil, and the Peruvian highlands). Even today, few men work as wage laborers. Fishing and crabbing continue as principal means of survival. The limited economic potential of sponging, versus the mining and export agriculture that enriches multinational corporations elsewhere, doubtless accounts for the Red Bays community's continued reliance on subsistence strategies. The remainder of chapter 5 examines

kinship networks, religion, folklore, and gender inequality on modern-day Andros Island.

Perhaps the most interesting part of Howard's study is her focus on cultural transformation and identity (chapters 6 through 8). She demonstrates that while Bahamians view Red Bays residents as "Indian" and cruelly refer to them as "wild hogs," community members do not identify themselves as indigenous (pp. 109 and 108). They express great pride at their ancestors' valor in the Seminole Wars and their struggle to reach freedom on Andros Island, but see themselves as Bahamian rather than African, black, or Seminole. Howard describes Caribbeans' denial of Africanness as an "ethos" engendered by racist notions of African inferiority (p. 106). Racism certainly afflicts the Bahamas as it does elsewhere, but race is culturally bound, varying in meaning and effect from one place to another. U.S. categories may not fit Bahamians, despite a shared history of English colonialism. Other questions the author might consider are: When and how did nation emerge as a fundamental source of identification for the Bahamians of Red Bays? Did the movement for independence and subsequent political struggles, discussed in chapter 4, help forge a common Bahamian identity? More importantly, Howard's interesting distinction between ethogenesis, transculturation, and creoloization raised in chapter 2 is not developed throughout the book. Indeed, "Creolisation" provides a later subject heading (p. 107). The reader is left wondering how the author reconciles these concepts.

Black Seminoles fills a significant lacuna in the literature. Historians familiar with the historiography on Florida's Black Seminoles will certainly welcome Howard's attention to the Bahamian community. The study reveals connections between Florida and the Bahamas by demonstrating the group's evolution and survival. Families, such as the Bowlegs, left descendants on both shores. Readers accustomed to the evidentiary demands of the history profession may find shortcomings in documentation, but it's worth remembering that disciplines differ in their criteria for establishing narrative authority. An ethnographic approach elucidates a historical past commonly beyond the reach of historians. *Black Seminoles* highlights the importance of oral tradition in recalling the past and points to important questions concerning cultural adaptation and identity. Rosalyn Howard has made an important contribution to an overlooked field.

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