

**Yamassee Origins and the Development of the Carolina-Florida Frontier**

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The Yamassee Indians have long figured prominently in historical accounts of the early history of the Southern colonies. Their short-lived tenure in the late 17th-century missions of Spanish Florida, and along the southern frontier of early 18th-century Carolina, ensured them a notable place in Southern history alongside other contemporaneous groups such as the Creek and Cherokee, despite their eventual exile and virtual extinction before the time of the American Revolution. In 1715, however, the Yamassee took center stage as they sparked a widespread and violent revolt that left hundreds of South Carolina settlers and traders dead, and that ultimately reconfigured the entire social landscape of the southeastern borderlands. Nevertheless, despite their relatively prominent historical visibility, the Yamassee have always remained something of an enigma for historians, anthropologists, and others searching for clues as to their origins.

In recent years, substantial advances have been made in the archaeology and early colonial ethnohistory of the Southeastern Indians, and particularly regarding the many groups that inhabited the broad region that has been called the Spanish Borderlands, generally positioned between Spanish Florida and the southernmost English colonies of Carolina and Georgia. As a result of these advances, many of which are still ongoing, present-day scholars are now able to draw upon a far more complete and detailed database of archaeological and particularly documentary data than has ever been available before. In this context, the question of Yamassee origins can now be addressed with a greater degree of specificity and accuracy than was previously possible.

Who were the Yamassee? They have been variously called a tribe or confederacy, and have commonly been placed on comprehensive ethnic and linguistic maps of the original Southeastern Indians, generally positioned somewhere in the southern Georgia interior, or along the Georgia and South Carolina coast. In John Swanton's monumental 1922 treatise on the *Early*

*History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors*, a volume which still dominates the field as a seminal and exhaustive treatment on the subject, the author asserted that the Yamasee must have been an indigenous tribe originally connected to the coastal Guale, but were somehow obscured until late in the historical record:

It has been thought by recent investigators that the people of Guale and the Yamasee were identical, but facts contained in the Spanish archives show that this is incorrect. They make it plain that the Yamasee were an independent tribe from very early times, belonging, as Barcia states, to the province of Guale, or perhaps rather to its outskirts, but not originally a dominant tribe of the province ... They are not mentioned frequently until late, and it is only by piecing together bits of information from various quarters that we can get any idea of their history.

Swanton subsequently postulated early references to the Yamasee under distinct names, including Francisco de Chicora's 16th-century "Yamiscaron," Hernando de Soto's "Altamaha," and even the 17th-century "Amacano," now thought to have been located along Florida's Gulf coast.

The reason for the clear absence of the name Yamasee from any of the earliest Spanish or French accounts of the Southeast is of course quite simple; the group eventually known as Yamasee did not even exist in the 16th century. The names of most or all of its constituent towns, however, apparently *did* exist before European contact, either as independent chiefdoms or subordinate towns and villages within other chiefdoms. As will be explored in greater depth below, it is now evident that the Yamasee represented a social group forged from the remnants of many other groups during the colonial era. Not only is it now possible to identify the precise

origins of many of the later Yamassee towns, but it is also possible to clarify the chronological framework within which the Yamassee confederacy formed.

I use the term confederacy intentionally, primarily in order to distinguish it from the chiefdom, which had been the predominant social formation among Southeastern Indians for centuries prior to the European colonial era, and which indeed remained largely in effect during the mission period. The defining characteristic of a chiefdom is hereditary leadership over a multi-community political unit with centralized administration. While it seems likely that most or all of the Yamassee chiefs were indeed descendants of chiefly matrilineages from the prehistoric period, and that the individual towns they each ruled represented the human remnants of depopulated chiefdoms, the administration of the multi-community unit known as Yamassee appears to have been neither centralized nor hereditary. Indeed, the Yamassee confederacy was both variable in its composition and ephemeral in its duration, lasting only half a century before their 1716 assimilation into the multi-ethnic refugee communities around St. Augustine. Consequently, I would argue that the Yamassee confederacy represented a purely contingent social formation that united refugee towns from a number of collapsed chiefdoms into a social entity that eventually became a *de facto* ethnic group.

This said, the task remains to explore the origins of this enigmatic group. In this connection, it is impossible to examine Yamassee origins and sort out their early history without simultaneously exploring the place of their origin and eventual downfall: the Escamaçu province of lower coastal South Carolina. Due in large part to its unique position along the margins of Spanish influence during the early English slave-raiding years, and precisely along the developing Carolina-Florida frontier after 1670, the Escamaçu province served as a sort of magnet for this refugee confederacy, bearing witness not only to its initial formation during the

early 1660s, but also serving as a haven during the 1680s, after nearly two decades with the Spanish. While there now appears to have been little direct connection between the indigenous Escamaçu and the immigrant Yamasee, their fortunes were linked by proximity, and so must be examined side by side.

### The Escamaçu Province

On several levels, the late 17th-century birthplace of the Yamasee confederacy may be argued to have been the Escamaçu province, referring broadly to the populated coastal and inland region immediately north of the Guale mission province. A century earlier, in the late 16th century, this same region was inhabited by a number of aboriginal towns under the principal leadership of the chief of Orista, including an important town called Escamaçu probably located on the northern end of Port Royal Island. Not far to the south, on the southern end of Parris Island, were established the short-lived colonies of French Charlesfort and Spanish Santa Elena, together spanning only the quarter-century between 1562 and 1587.

Although documentary accounts are not entirely clear as to the precise nature of Orista's regional leadership, he was one of only two chiefs addressed with the title *mico mayor* following the 1576 rebellion of the coastal Indians around Santa Elena, and since the only other such chief--Tolomato--is thought to have been the hereditary leader of the entire Guale chiefdom just to the south, I would venture to categorize Orista as a chiefdom as well. Based on early French and Spanish accounts from the 1560s, the original town of Orista appears to have been located relatively close to Santa Elena and Port Royal Sound, and in any case certainly within only a half-day's canoe travel from Escamaçu's nearest inland neighbor Ahoya. We have only fragmentary information on the names and locations of Orista's tributaries and local allies, but

apart from Escamaçu and Ahoya they apparently included the coastal towns of Toupa, Mayon, and Stalame (as recorded by French colonists), the interior towns of Ahoyabe and Coçao, and other towns called Coçapoy, Yetencumbe, and Guando. Of these towns, only the Coçao are clearly recognizable as the Coosa of South Carolina, whose inland location at the headwaters of the coastal rivers evidently did not change during the century between the 1560s and the 1670s.

In the aftermath of the destruction wrought by the Spanish during the years following the 1576 rebellion, and the final evacuation of the Santa Elena colony in 1587, the town of Orista appears to have moved north to the vicinity of the present-day Edisto Island and River, leaving the previously-subordinate town of Escamaçu as the new local administrative center. By 1609, the name Orista had already been attached to Edisto Island, and was said to be some 6 leagues (about 16 miles) north of Santa Elena. Orista there became one of three principal chiefs along the lower South Carolina coastline, including Santa Elena-Escamaçu, Orista, and Kiawa.

Curiously, although the provincial name Escamaçu survived for nearly a century, the town name itself seems to have vanished, having been replaced by the town called Santa Elena, apparently located on the same island as the abandoned Spanish city (Parris Island). This likely reflects simply a relocation of the Escamaçu town from the inland end of the Port Royal-Parris Island land mass to the seaward end after the Spanish left. This new town served as the administrative center of the province known subsequently as either the Escamaçu province or simply the province of Santa Elena. Unfortunately, little is known about the town or province of Santa Elena for much of the 17th century. While it is abundantly clear that its inhabitants grew sufficient surplus corn to make them occasional partners in the Florida corn trade throughout the century, there is effectively no data regarding either the overall population of the Escamaçu province or its internal composition. Historians are provided their first detailed glimpse of

Escamaçu-Santa Elena only during the 1660s and 1670s, precisely during the period that this region suddenly became an English-Spanish borderland. Until the region gained strategic military importance to both England and Spain, it remained lost in historical obscurity.

Although it is difficult to estimate the original 16th-century population of the region occupied by the Orista chiefdom, there seems little doubt that due to the combined effect of settlement relocation and epidemic population loss, the late 17th-century population of the Escamaçu province was considerably smaller than a century before. Of the long list of towns noted above, only a few seem to have survived until the 1660s and 1670s. Apart from Santa Elena itself, Spanish records reveal the existence of only two other towns in the Escamaçu or Santa Elena province. One of these towns was transcribed as "Abaya" or "Abaja" by an 18th-century notary from an original gubernatorial order dating to 1667, and is almost certainly one and the same as Escamaçu's nearest neighbor Ahoya from the 1560s. The other town was recorded by Spanish notaries in 1672 as either Yspo or Ospo, and was apparently located somewhat north of the town of Santa Elena on the way to Charles Town. While I have argued elsewhere based on the latter spelling that this town might have been a fugitive branch of the Guale town of Ospo, and thus a possible ancestor of the Yamassee town of Huspah, the recent discovery of a document rendering this same name as Yspo suggests otherwise.

During the same winter that the Spanish town of Yspo or Ospo first appears in Spanish documentation, Carolina settler and explorer Maurice Matthews listed the neighboring Indians from south to north along the coast as follows: "St. Helena ye southermost; Ishpow, Wimbee, Edista, Stono, Keyawah, where we now live." The correspondence between the Spanish Yspo and English Ishpow is obvious, and Matthews located Ishpow just north of St. Helena, precisely as implied by Spanish documents. Ishpow is elsewhere rendered as "Asha-po," and is clearly

identical with the town known as Ashepoo, which lent its name to the river on which the group was originally situated just north of Port Royal.

Based purely on their physical location between Yspo-Ashepoo and Santa Elena, the communities of Wimbee and Combahee recorded in early English records might also have been considered part of the Escamaçu province during this period, although this cannot be demonstrated conclusively. In any case, these few surviving coastal towns would soon feel the effect of the Southeastern firearms revolution, presaged by the arrival of armed Indian slave-raiders from Virginia in the deep Georgia interior after 1659. Nevertheless, it was the abandoned mainland portion of old Escamaçu that soon drew a growing flood of refugees from the interior, providing the indigenous coastal towns with a brief period protection from the menace of slave raiding. Within the space of only a few years, these mainland refugees came to be known as the Yamassee, a name that would shape their collective identity for decades to come.

### Birth of the Yamassee Confederacy

The Yamassee confederacy may have been born in Escamaçu, but it was conceived in the deep interior, when the surviving chiefdoms of Georgia's upper Coastal Plain and lower Piedmont regions were suddenly ravaged by an immigrant band of northern Indians known variously as the Chichimeco to the Spanish, and later as the Westo to the Carolinians. While the story of their origins is beyond the scope of this paper, it suffices to say that the Chichimeco-Westos were a marauding band of slave-raiders operating on behalf of Virginia traders, and that their warriors, probably several hundred strong, were armed with flintlock muskets, providing instantaneous military superiority over any and all Indian groups in the interior Southeast. Although the details of their existence along the Spanish frontier are all but lost to posterity,



based on all available documentary accounts, I would venture the following reconstruction of events: sometime during the early fall of 1659, the Chichimeco-Westo made their first appearance along the deep frontier of Spanish Florida, possibly descending the middle Chattahoochee River to strike against the northern fringes of the Apalachicola chiefdom of western Georgia. While much of their initial activity was apparently directed against the Apalachicola and the Chacato of the western Florida panhandle, later evidence suggests that their base of operations was somewhere in middle Georgia, and that they also struck at the remnants of many chiefdoms, including the Oconee River chiefdoms of Altamaha and Ocute, and perhaps the Ichisi/Uchise along the Ocmulgee River.

The response to these attacks in the interior must have been almost immediate; some groups probably fled westward to the more populous and well-defended regions such as the Apalachicola, Tallapoosa, or Abihka chiefdoms of western Georgia and northeastern Alabama. Other groups, however, fled toward the coastlines, which at that time were dominated by Spanish missions as far north as Guale. This initial wave of refugees apparently settled in the uninhabited mainland portion of the old Escamaçu province, probably hoping to remain close enough to the Spaniards for protection, but far enough away to avoid unnecessary entanglements.

The abandonment of central Georgia may well predate the summer of 1661, since at that time the Chichimeco-Westo mounted their first assault against a Spanish mission from a base in central Georgia. On June 20, 1661, a truly massive force in canoes descended the Altamaha River to attack the southernmost Guale mission of Santo Domingo de Talaje. The mission was destroyed, and although the attackers were frustrated in their attempts to push on to the island missions, they were said to have returned to the interior provinces of Tama and Catufa, apparently referring to the areas previously inhabited by the surviving Oconee River chiefdoms

of Altamaha and Ocute, which in the 16th-century included tributary chiefs named Cofaqui, and Patofa. Given subsequent information regarding the identities of the refugee towns that fled Escamaçu at that time, I would surmise that these interior regions had been wholly depopulated by that time, perhaps prompting the Chichimeco-Westo to raid as far as the Guale coast in search of slaves. In 1662, Florida governor Alonso de Aranguiz y Cotes made note of this largely undocumented destruction in the interior, indicating they would have done the same to Guale had he not managed to repulse them: "if I had not rushed to resist their design, they would have devastated [Guale], as has happened in other [provinces] according to news from pagan Indians who came fleeing from them."

The term Yamassee first appeared in Spanish records just two years after the destruction of mission Talaje. At that time, it was used by the Guale friars in reference to a group of at least six Indian towns located "across the mainland" within the Escamaçu province, extending "from Colon to what they call Uyache Eslaçu". While the location of the town called Colon is uncertain, late in 1662 Huyache was a town located some five leagues from Guale (probably from its northern border at mission Satuache near the mouth of the Ogeechee River), and thus perhaps somewhat inland along the Savannah River.

The Yamassee towns were said to be located at points described as being two, three, four, six, eight, and more days by road from "these provinces" (presumably Guale), suggesting at minimum that they were somewhat widely dispersed. Furthermore, since these mainland Escamaçu towns were said to have been positioned roughly between the new base of the Chichimecos (evidently along the Savannah River at the Fall Line) and Guale, they were probably situated inland along the lower Savannah drainage and somewhat eastward into present-day South Carolina.

Based on the wording of the friars' accounts, it seems clear that these Yamassee Indians were recent arrivals in the Escamaçu region, almost certainly having settled as refugees from the initial waves of Chichimeco assaults between 1659 and 1661. Within a very short time the refugees were subjected to further depredations, however, for in the fall of 1662, the town called Huyache was destroyed by the raiders, and "as many people as they could find were put to the knife." This raid may indeed have signalled the relocation of the Chichimeco base to Augusta, just upriver along the Savannah, where they would remain for nearly two decades. With the establishment of that Savannah River base, the Yamassee seem to have been once again exposed to Chichimeco attack, soon prompting these refugee towns to relocate southward to the island missions of Guale and Mocama. Although none of the Yamassee relocated before the spring of 1663, the move was certainly underway by the beginning of 1666, when Yamassee caciques were specifically noted to be residing within Guale, and after which date the Yamassees contributed increasingly to the yearly *repartimiento* labor draft in Guale. Although details on these towns are not available until 1675, by the early 1670s Yamassee communities had certainly sprung up on Amelia Island in Mocama and on St. Simons Island along the newly-established Guale-Mocama border.

#### Escamaçu under Seige

The decline of old Escamaçu was only accelerated with the arrival of the Chichimeco-Westco slave-raiders on the middle Savannah River about 1662. While their depredations initially focused on the immigrant Yamassee, their subsequent relocation south into the coastal missions left the indigenous Escamaçu along the coast exposed to the full brunt of Chichimeco raiding. Nevertheless, even as the Yamassees fled southward during the mid-1660s, the indigenous

residents of coastal Escamaçu remained firmly entrenched along Port Royal Sound. Just a few months after the earliest Yamassee settlements on the mainland were noted by the Guale friars, the Barbadian ship *Adventure* dropped anchor in Port Royal, establishing first contact between English explorers and the Escamaçu capital of Santa Elena, called "St. Ellens" by the English visitors. Though brief, this 1663 expedition under Captain William Hilton establishes unequivocally the continued presence of indigenous Escamaçu Indians at or near the site of the 16th-century Spanish town. Based on their conversations with the Englishmen, it is clear that these Indians had been trading and interacting with the Spanish for many years, and were undoubtedly the Escamaçu of earlier 17th-century accounts. In 1663 their town was evidently situated within walking distance of the ruins of Fort San Marcos, abandoned by the Spanish in 1587, and still visible even as late as 1923.

Three years later, in the summer of 1666, yet another English ship anchored off Santa Elena, this time led by Captain Robert Sandford. During this expedition there was more extensive contact between Santa Elena and the English visitors, and surgeon Dr. Henry Woodward was left as a guest of the elderly chief of Santa Elena. His stay was brief, but pivotal for affairs along the later Carolina-Florida frontier, for not only did he learn the Indian language, but he also established contacts that he would draw on years later.

Less than a year later, the Chichimeco-Westo made a devastating raid against coastal Escamaçu, attacking both Santa Elena and Abaya/Ahoya towns. The inhabitants fled south to Guale, petitioning the Spanish governor for permission to settle there under Spanish protection. This request was granted, and Dr. Woodward was apparently turned over to the Spanish, but neither he nor the inhabitants of Santa Elena stayed long among the Spaniards. Woodward was freed in 1668 during the notorious Searles raid against St. Augustine, and only two years later the

town of Santa Elena appears to have been re-established in response to the arrival of English settlers just to the north. When the first English ship arrived along the Carolina coast in March of 1670 on its way to establish Charles Town, the colonists heard reports of the destruction of St. Helena and the southern coast by the Westo, and when they dropped anchor at Port Royal, the few Indians still living there expressed hopes that the English would protect them from the raids. This hope was almost certainly communicated to the expatriated Escamaçu in Guale, and by the early fall of that year, the residents of "St. Helens" warned the English about an approaching Spanish force with designs on Charles Town, indicating that not only had the town been repopulated, but it was also providing intelligence to the English. Interestingly, the Yamassee remained in the missions even after the arrival of the English.

This flurry of activity among the Escamaçu, otherwise known as the Chiluque during this period, was almost certainly related to the region's unique location at the newly-formed nexus of three competing and antagonistic powers: Spanish Florida and its missions to the southwest, English Carolina to the northeast, and the Chichimeco-Westos to the northwest. Both Spaniards and Englishmen claimed the Santa Elena Indians as allies, but neither trusted them completely, as was amply justified in historical retrospect. The coastal Indians jockeyed for position and power between two European colonial powers, while simultaneously cowering under the protection of both from the feared raiders just upriver along the Savannah. And at this same time, the Yamassee confederacy that formed in Escamaçu remained safely harbored in the Spanish missions of Guale and Mocama.

### The Mission Yamassee

Although the Yamassee appear to have moved into the Guale and Mocama mission provinces by the late 1660s, Spanish documentation provides few details regarding their identities or locations prior to 1675. In that year, Guale lieutenant Pedro de Arcos provided the earliest detailed listing of Yamassee towns known to exist. He listed six towns in total. On St. Simons Island were located the towns of Ocotonico and San Simón, the latter of which was later revealed to be inhabited by Indians from the town of Colon. Amelia Island hosted four towns, including Ocotoque, La Tama, Santa María, and an unnamed town. Another list from the same year also revealed a recently-established Yamassee mission called Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria de La Tama, possibly a splinter group from the unconverted Tama community that had been on Amelia Island for several years. Although additional Yamassee mission communities were later established on the upper St. Johns River in central Florida, these and the Apalachee Tama mission appear to have been derivatives of the Yamassees on St. Simons and Amelia Islands.

During these years in the mission provinces, the immigrant Yamassees paid tribute to the Mocama and Guale chiefs on whose lands they were living, and contributed regularly and substantially to the yearly Spanish labor draft. Nevertheless, in large part they were not missionized or converted to Christianity, evidently preferring instead to remain physically separated from the mission communities. Only the Colon town called San Simón, and the later missions in Apalachee and on the St. Johns River, appear to have been true missions with resident or itinerant friars. The remaining Yamassee communities were pagan, and thus clearly distinguished from their Guale and Mocama neighbors. It was perhaps this very fact that eventually permitted them to separate so easily from the missions and relocate northward once again.

### The Westo Alliance

The status quo along the Carolina-Florida frontier did not alter significantly through the 1670s, particularly as regarded the Indians of Santa Elena. The local trade between Escamaçu and Guale continued at least through 1678, but in 1679 a remarkable alliance was forged between three former enemies. In 1674, Henry Woodward had finally established direct contact with the Westos on the Savannah River, effectively redirecting the Indian slave trade from Virginia to Carolina, and simultaneously establishing a nominal peace between the Westo and all English-allied Indians. Just five years later, the Westo were reported by Spanish authorities to have allied themselves with both the Chiluques (known as the St. Helena Indians by the English) and the Uchises, possibly representing a fragment of the original Ichisi chiefdom of middle Georgia that had not attached itself previously to the Yamasee. Given Woodward's year-long stay with the Escamaçu in Santa Elena, it is not a great stretch of the imagination to see his handiwork in crafting this alliance, and in its aftermath, the three groups united in April of 1680 to mount an ambitious two-pronged assault against Guale itself. The first assault was against the Colon town of San Simón, consisting of Yamassees, and attackers tarried long enough to draw Spanish forces before moving on to what was obviously their primary target, the Guale capital of Santa Catalina. A battle ensued, but the mission was captured and destroyed, its terrified inhabitants fleeing south to Sapelo Island.

Curiously, negotiations between Carolina colonists and the aggressive Westo broke down that very same month of April, ultimately leading to what was known as the Westo War, in which the Westo were largely destroyed with the help of immigrant Savano Indians, who soon replaced them as the principal slavers in the interior after 1681. But the power of the Westo was

broken, opening the door to contact and trade with the deep interior. The frontier dynamic had changed, effectively removing the threat from the interior. In 1682, the chiefs and leaders of all coastal Carolina Indians, including Santa Elena and Ashepoo, signed a land cession with Carolina colonist Maurice Matthews, ceding massive tracts of lands to the English. Nevertheless, Escamaçu remained populated, if only with about 160 Indian residents in and around Santa Elena by English estimates.

### Return of the Yamassee

The 1681 census of Florida's missions counted a grand total of 322 pagan Yamassee Indians living in Guale and Mocama, and 205 residents in the Apalachee mission of Tama, of which 184 were Christian. Two years later, in the aftermath of a devastating pirate raid along the Atlantic coast and ongoing disputes with the Florida governor, chief Altamaha led the mission Yamassees out of Spanish territory *en masse*. Only the Apalachee Yamassee remained in June of 1683, leaving the Guale and Mocama towns totally abandoned. Although some of these Yamassees unquestionably dispersed among the Apalachicola/Coweta in the deep interior, some apparently moved north to Escamaçu, apparently settling in or near Santa Elena itself. A 1683 Spanish map shows a single "town of pagans" on an island in this location, and a 1685 English letter specifically refers to Yamassees in St. Helena "formerly settled there having come from above St. Augustine."

Regardless, in the fall of 1684, new Scottish settlers established Stuart's Town very near them on Port Royal Sound, and within weeks a flood of other Yamassees formerly living among the Apalachicola/Coweta towns relocated to the coast. At just about the same time, a final pirate raid along the Georgia coast resulted in the destruction and abandonment of all remaining Guale



and Mocama missions north of Amelia Island. A number of former mission residents, including Guale Indians from the former towns of Sapala, Asajo, Tupiqui, and probably Ospo (still present as a subordinate lineage even at that late date), took the opportunity to flee the missions as well, settling among the Yamassees at Stuart's Town. Under chief Altamaha's overall leadership, they soon became slave raiders for the Scots, carrying out a devastating first raid against the Timucuan missions in early 1685. In 1686, however, two successive Spanish reprisals destroyed first the Scottish colony and second the remaining Yamassees settlements along the coast, including new out-settlements on freshly-abandoned St. Catherines and Sapelo Islands. In the aftermath, the Yamassees towns made yet another relocation, this time returning to the mainland portion of the old Escamaçu province, roughly in the same region where the confederacy had been born a quarter-century earlier. Altamaha town was initially located along the upper reaches of the Ashepoo River, even as the indigenous Ashepoo Indians themselves still resided at the mouth of the river. Eventually, however, these and other Yamassees towns divided into Upper and Lower Divisions, extending south into the vicinity of Port Royal.

Anyone familiar with the English documentary record for the early 18th century Yamassees towns of coastal Carolina will note that there are significant differences between the town names of the mission Yamassees and those of the later period. Some of these differences may be explained by the arrival of a number of new towns and groups during the winter of 1684-1685, following the destruction of the Guale mission chain. Most if not all of the Yamassees towns with Guale derivation probably arrived at this time, including Sapala and presumably Huspah, both of which were noted at that time to have been recent fugitives from the Spanish. The Uchise, or Chachise, may have joined the flood of Yamassees from the deep interior at this time. Still other towns arrived later, including the Euhaw in 1703, the Tomatley, the Chehaw,

and the Tuskegee, the latter two of which did not ultimately remain with the Yamassee, but rather relocated farther back into the interior.

Clearly, the Yamassee were not a static confederacy throughout their brief history. Their formation during the early 1660s brought many groups together as refugees, centering on the remnants of the old Altamaha and Ocute chiefdoms from the Georgia Fall Line region, the former of which seems to have retained relative political supremacy over the rest of the Yamassee for several decades. After their short-lived migration into the missions, their number was once again augmented substantially by other fugitives and refugees after 1684. This process only continued during their stay in Carolina. What is perhaps most intriguing of all is the fact that the Yamassees ultimately returned to their birthplace in old Escamaçu along the Carolina-Florida frontier, where their formation and growth continued for several decades more. In this sense, the Yamassee truly were a sort of borderlands confederacy, thriving and growing precisely in the context of the colonial frontier between competing European powers. Escamaçu's geographic location provided fertile ground during the late 17th century for a diversity of refugees and splinter groups to aggregate, forming the first in a long line of new Southeastern societies that emerged from the ruins of the old chiefly order. The Yamassee may therefore be viewed as a product of the early colonial era. Their ancestral towns and chiefdoms, destabilized by the effects of disease and forced into flight by the firearms revolution, banded together not once but twice in old Escamaçu along the colonial frontier, where they attempted to strike an uneasy balance between competing colonial powers in one of the most hostile zones of the Spanish borderlands. While they were ultimately consumed and defeated by these same forces, the rise and fall of the Yamassee represents an important case-study of ethnogenesis in the early colonial Southeast, and as such deserves considerable attention and study.