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Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty

STAKES

JESSICA R. CATTELINO

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For my many teachers

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Seminole Gaming in the Sunshine State

At 5 p.m. on December 14, 1979, the Seminole Tribe of Florida opened Hollywood Seminole Bingo on the Hollywood reservation, which is located just a few sprawling suburban miles west of Interstate 95 between Miami and Fort Lauderdale (figure 1). The modest operation was the first tribally operated high-stakes gaming venture in North America. Hollywood Seminole Bingo launched a gaming revolution that spread throughout Indian Country,¹ building American Indian tribes' political and economic power even as it exposed them to new scrutiny in American law, politics, and popular culture. Tribal gaming merits analysis on its own terms, as a large-scale economic and political process that has changed the lives of both American Indians and other Americans, and as the issue that dominates contemporary public perceptions of Indian life. But tribal gaming also offers insight into more general questions about the natures of money and sovereignty in the everyday lives of individuals, families, and peoples.

This book tells the story of Seminole gaming. It asks: What does it mean that Florida Seminoles, often considered by themselves and outside observers to be among the most "traditional" American Indians, were the first to start tribal gaming and to experience its dramatic economic effects?² What can this tell us about how economic action relates to cultural and political dis-



FIGURE 1. Hollywood Seminole Bingo, soon after opening. Courtesy of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

tinctiveness, for indigenous peoples and others? The spectacular financial success of their casinos (numbering seven in 2006) has altered the lives of the approximately 3,300 Seminoles who live on or near six reservations scattered across the swamps and the suburbs of South Florida. Besides altering household economies, gaming has enabled Seminoles to reproduce valued forms of cultural and political distinctiveness, and in turn to reinforce their tribal sovereignty. They do so by exploiting the fungibility of money—its substitutability and exchangeability for itself—to selectively convert casino revenues into other forms of value. Even so, Seminoles in the casino era face difficult dilemmas as they strive to sustain social ties and intergenerational obligation under radically altered material conditions. While analyzing these processes through ethnographic and archival research, I aim neither to defend nor to criticize tribal gaming as a social fact or an economic form, since its effects and lived experiences have varied dramatically across Indian Country.³

With this book I hope to accomplish three goals. First, *High Stakes* tells the story of Seminole gaming ethnographically.⁴ By focusing less on federal law and policy or on aggregate statistics than on how tribal gaming affects and emerges from the lives of American Indian people, I attend to the everyday significance of gaming, and I thereby offer ethnographic

specificity to popular and scholarly understandings of this important and widespread phenomenon. This book complements the growing scholarship on tribal gaming law and policy.⁵ Second, I analyze Seminoles' uses and discourses of casino money to make the broader argument that popular and scholarly theories of money's abstracting and deculturalizing force blind us to the ways that people undertake political acts of valuation in the course of exploiting money's fungibility. By *valuation*, I mean the ways that people determine, enact, represent, and evaluate that which matters to them.⁶ I aim to reorient social scientific theories of money's social force and nature by taking seriously the distinctive ways that Seminoles revalue casino money in the service of social reproduction. Put another way, this book accounts for the currency of culture in the casino era. Beyond attending to money as a form, I also show how indigeneity—which I take to be the conditions, theories, and values of being indigenous—is conditioned by economic relations in contemporary settler societies like the United States. My third goal is to contribute to policies and theories of sovereignty, both indigenous sovereignty and other forms, by considering the enactment of sovereignty in tribal administration and in Seminoles' relationships of interdependency with other peoples and polities. Throughout, I explore the materiality of sovereignty and the politics of money, as exemplified at their historical juncture in Seminole gaming and at their theoretical intersection in questions of autonomy and interdependency. An ethnographic approach shows the high stakes of tribal gaming to be measured not only by financial risks and benefits but also in ongoing efforts by American Indians to control the conditions of their indigeneity.

FROM BINGO TO BILLIONS

Tribal gaming, defined as gaming operated by American Indian tribal governments on Indian lands, is big business. According to the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA), a national tribal gaming advocacy group, approximately 65 percent of tribes in the lower forty-eight states operated gaming facilities in 2004 (National Indian Gaming Association 2004: 6).⁷ The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC), which is the federal agency responsible for regulating tribal gaming, reported that tribal gaming revenues grew rapidly at the turn of the century, more than quadrupling from 1995 levels to \$22.6 billion a decade later (figure 2).⁸ Not

Indian Gaming Revenues, 1995–2005

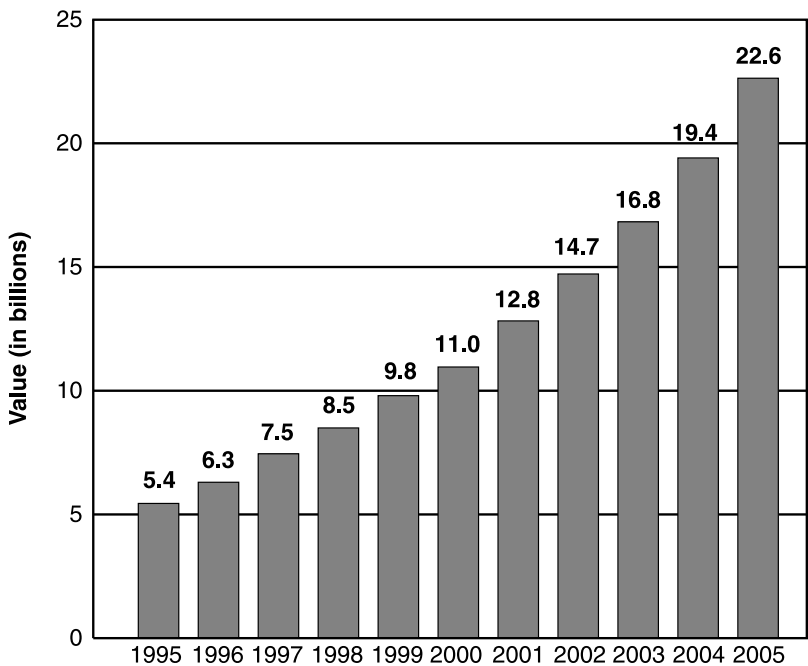


FIGURE 2. Indian gaming revenues. Adapted from the National Indian Gaming Commission “Growth in Indian Gaming” chart at www.nigc.gov (accessed July 12, 2006).

since the massive dispossession and transfer of Indian lands to settlers had any economic activity in Indian Country made such a dramatic impact on the lives of indigenous peoples and on regional economies, politics, and public perceptions.

The scale and economic impact of tribal casinos vary dramatically, ranging from some of the world’s largest casinos, located near population centers—most famously Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun in Connecticut—to one-room operations in tents on the edges of far-flung rural Indian reservations. Gaming revenues in 2005 were unevenly distributed among tribes: the top twenty-one tribal gaming operations (5 percent of 391) earned 43 percent of revenues, while the bottom eighty-seven casinos (22 percent) grossed only 0.4 percent of revenues (National Indian Gaming Commission 2006). The most lucrative and high-profile casinos are located near urban areas, mainly among low-population tribes on the East and West Coasts. This economic and geographical fact has combined with a distort-



FIGURE 3. Seminole Hard Rock, Hollywood, 2004. Photo by Robert Kippenberger.

ing media focus on tribal gaming in Connecticut and California to fuel a geographical redistribution of economic and political power within Indian Country.

Seminole casinos span the range from modest to massive. The small casino on the rural Brighton Reservation draws Seminole and non-Seminole locals to gamble and eat at the buffet, which is the only restaurant within miles. Cowboy hats prevail, and pickup trucks fill the parking lot. The dazzling Hollywood Hard Rock resort attracts global jet-setters, local retirees, and South Florida hipsters alike to its five-hundred-room hotel, 130,000-square-foot casino, outdoor mall named Seminole Paradise, live music venues, spa, and restaurants (figure 3). This casino gained unexpected exposure in 2007, when tabloid newspaper favorite Anna Nicole Smith died in her Hard Rock Hotel room. The Tampa Hard Rock resort has a smaller hotel, but it is still enormous by tribal gaming standards, drawing 20,000 patrons each weekend day by 2004 (Hoag and Berrios 2004; figure 4). The other three long-term Seminole casinos (at suburban Coconut Creek, in the agricultural town of Immokalee, and in a smaller Hollywood venue) generally attract local clientele.⁹ In 2006, the Seminole Tribe of Florida stunned the business community by winning a bid to acquire Hard Rock International and all of its cafés, hotels, and casinos. The unprecedented \$965 million deal gave Seminoles a presence in forty-four countries around the world. Overall, Seminole casinos are unusually lucrative, benefiting



FIGURE 4. Seminole Hard Rock, Tampa, 2005. Photo by author.

both from a large consumer base in booming Florida and from the region's massive global tourism industry. By contrast, not all American Indian people benefit directly from tribal gaming, and many casino operations have closed or downsized. At a time when gaming dominates media coverage of Indian affairs, Indian social services advocates struggle to convey the urgent needs of most Indian people, who remain among the poorest groups in the United States.¹⁰

The birth and growth of Indian gaming is one important chapter in a larger story about the late-twentieth-century expansion of gambling in the United States. Studying tribal gaming therefore illuminates some of the ways that money, value(s), and cultural politics intersect in late capitalist America. Indeed, this book can be read as an argument for the centrality of American Indian cultural politics and economy to America, and to the anthropology thereof.¹¹ Gross revenues from all gaming in the United States grew from \$39.8 billion in 1994 to \$78.6 billion in 2004, nearly doubling in a mere decade (American Gaming Association 2006). Gaming is a huge business: Americans spend more each year on gambling than on movie tickets, recorded music, spectator sports, theme parks, and video games combined (National Gambling Impact Study Commission 1999). Tribal gaming accounted for approximately one quarter of all U.S. gaming revenues in 2004.¹²

Tribal gaming is distinct from commercial gaming in that the former is owned by a government, not private individuals or corporations. In this sense tribal casinos are more akin to state lotteries, which proliferated across the nation after New Hampshire legalized its lottery in 1963, than they are to Las Vegas or Atlantic City casinos. In South Florida, gaming has consistently blurred distinctions between commercial and governmental activity, and also between capitalism and crime. Periodic battles over the legality and morality of commercial gaming have pitted locals against the state government, law enforcement against organized crime, and tourism promoters against churches. In the early 2000s, Seminole casinos fared well against competition from coastal jai alai, oceangoing casino cruise boats, and racetracks. Seminoles have been implicated in South Florida gaming, if only by name, since around 1900, when a white settler opened the first gambling hall in Miami and named it the Seminole Club. A painting of the Seminole warrior Osceola “looked down on dark green tables on which pools of yellow light were centered, while men and women titillated over a game of *chemin de fer* or roulette” (Muir 2000: 72). As government-run gaming grows across the United States, tribal nations and state governments alike face questions about the methods and ethics of running gaming operations to fund governance, and in both domains the lines between the market and government are redrawn.

The significance of Indian casinos for American public culture is not only monetary but also cultural and political. As Jackson Lears wrote in his history of luck in America, “Debate about gambling is never just about gambling: it is about different ways of being in the world” (Lears 2003: 6). Indian gaming is reshaping popular images of the indigenous peoples of this continent. For example, a biting and disturbing 2003 *South Park* television episode (“Red Man’s Greed”) found humor in casino-rich Indians’ schemes to destroy non-Natives’ homes for the purpose of building a casino-access superhighway.¹³ As evident in this and other animated and print cartoons that derive their humor from the seeming contradiction of Indians wearing suits, gaming has spawned new racist stereotypes of wealthy Indians.¹⁴ In a settler society like the United States (or Australia or Canada), images of indigenous peoples long have been central to how settlers imagine and play out their nationalized politics and cultures.¹⁵ The dramatic shift in public portrayals of Indian people that has accompanied gaming reflects deeper realignments in the ways that many Americans

reckon the relationships among cultural difference, economic power, and political rights. Indian casinos now figure prominently in local, state, and even national politics, for example when Arnold Schwarzenegger assailed his opponent in the 2003 California gubernatorial recall election for accepting campaign contributions from wealthy gaming tribes, or when the 2005–6 casino-linked scandals surrounding the crimes of Washington insider Jack Abramoff raised cries for lobbying reform in Washington, D.C.¹⁶ Meanwhile, with state budgets running deficits, many states and municipalities turned to tribal gaming compacts as a source of revenue, realigning regional relations of dependence.

Casinos bring into relief the double binds that characterize the politics of indigeneity in the United States and other settler states. Casino rights are based in tribal sovereignty, as discussed below, but once tribal nations exercise their political autonomy in order to gain economic self-reliance, they immediately must fend off attacks on their sovereignty. That is, so long as American Indians are economically dependent, their political independence largely goes unchallenged, but any economic independence in turn threatens their political autonomy. Similar double binds arise in the cultural context. Indigenous peoples in liberal democratic settler states must perform their cultural difference in order to maintain political recognition, as Elizabeth Povinelli (2002) has shown in the case of Australia, but often by exercising their political rights and powers indigenous peoples face new accusations that they are not culturally different enough.¹⁷ These double binds illuminate more general American anxieties, not limited to indigenous affairs, about the effects of economic power upon cultural difference and the role of differential political status in a democratic multicultural nation. By understanding tribal gaming, then, we learn more about America.

More locally, on Seminole reservations, the direct economic impact of gaming has been staggering. Before 1979, when Hollywood Bingo opened, the Seminole Tribe of Florida administered a budget of less than \$2 million, almost all from federal grants. Poverty was widespread. Although Seminole gaming dates to the late 1970s, it was only in the early 1990s that the installation of electronic games (such as video bingo) enabled the Tribe to earn profits sufficient to generate significant household wealth and dramatically expand tribal programs.¹⁸ By 2006, thanks to the new

Hard Rock casino-resorts, tribal net income from gaming surpassed \$600 million, and gaming operations added thousands of employees.¹⁹ Tribal economic success has translated into very real benefits for Seminole individuals and families. Every tribal member who seeks and can sustain employment is able to work for the tribal government, and entrepreneurs can obtain small business loans. All Seminole citizens enjoy free lifelong educational access and universal health insurance. Services for elders are comprehensive, including hot meal provision, grocery bill payment, recreation and educational travel, and other services provided by the Department of Elders' Affairs.²⁰ Direct bimonthly cash distributions to all tribal citizens augment household incomes. Infrastructure is being (re)built on all of the reservations, from sewers and roads to housing, schools, and administrative buildings.

Gaming's economic impact cannot be measured by financial indicators alone.²¹ This single-generation shift from grinding poverty to relative economic security has enabled—and also forced—Seminoles to consider what kind of people and government they want to be. I understand this as a process of valuation, in which Seminoles have both evaluated what it means to be Seminole and debated the value of money in community life. Studying processes of valuation demanded an ethnographic method that took seriously Seminole knowledge and theories, hopes and fears, and everyday practices of living. As an anthropologist, I am disposed to find significance, unruly connections, and theoretical complexity in mundane and seemingly disconnected facets of day-to-day living. But approaching tribal gaming ethnographically is much more than a disciplinary stance: instead, I found that it was only through attention to everyday life in Seminole Country that I could explain the history and meanings of Seminole gaming and could build from Seminole theories and practices to rethink money and sovereignty.

High Stakes is fundamentally a story of Seminole complex, sometimes futile, but often extraordinarily successful efforts to maintain politically and culturally distinct values under new economic conditions. These efforts rely on knowledge and activities that sometimes lie beyond the view of an outsider anthropologist like me, for example taking place in Seminole-only medicine ceremonies, in the intimacy of homes, and in Mikasuki or Creek/Muskogee, the Seminole languages that generally are not taught to

non-Seminoles (and which I do not speak). Yet they also are materialized in moments of public display and intercultural contact, in market economics, tribal fairs and festivals, charitable giving, and overt politico-legal struggle. Indeed, gaming has become a key point of articulation between Indian and non-Indian communities, and understanding Seminole gaming helps us to see South Florida in new ways. In this land of Gold Coast and tourist wealth alongside urban and rural poverty, racial diversity, pitched development and environmental controversies, and famously murky politics, Seminoles have regained their position as key economic, political, and cultural players.

This is also a book about history. Tribal gaming cannot be understood without accounting for two historical relationships: between indigenous economy and culture, on the one hand, and between settler colonial domination and indigenous governance, on the other hand. Before gaming, the Seminole Tribe and individual Seminoles had pursued myriad twentieth-century economic development projects, often with federal Bureau of Indian Affairs assistance and oversight (see chapter 1). Despite cultural tourism and commercial craft production, light manufacturing and wage labor, poverty persisted. It was only after Seminoles opened smoke shops in the 1970s, and even more dramatically after they launched tribal gaming, that their economic fortunes turned. With gaming, Seminoles began to wrest control of tribal administration from the federal government and to debate anew the relationship between their economic status and their cultural distinctiveness. Why and how this has occurred, and what it means for both Seminoles and a broader indigenous and American public, are the guiding questions of this study.

ECONOMY, INDIGENEITY, AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF MONEY

Tribal gaming brings to the fore unanswered questions about the nature of money and economy in American popular culture and social theory. Gaming has newly disarticulated and challenged a neocolonial association of indigeneity with poverty that has long structured federal Indian law and policy, U.S. interracial politics, and the day-to-day rhythms of life on Indian reservations. More specifically, casino success flies in the face of dominant American images of Indians as poor, antimaterialist, out of

the space and time of modernity, and as a result “traditional.” I often heard Seminoles lament that no one bothered them so long as they were poor and selling trinkets to tourists, but once they started making money they came under harsh public scrutiny and were subject to new stereotypes and resentments from non-Indians.

Tribal gaming has reorganized economies of race and difference. In Florida this has taken place during a historical period in which Cubans’ large-scale migrations and growing business power have partially shifted wealth and political clout from white American elites to others. Despite its newness, tribal gaming also reveals ways that “economy” and “money” were already racialized in U.S. settler society. Gaming-based indigenous wealth and its sometimes fantastic imaginaries mark a new chapter in the wider settler logics that tie indigeneity to particular economic forms and actions. Scholars in and of the anglophone settler states (e.g., Australia, Canada, New Zealand), where indigenous peoples live as small minorities within white-majority democracies, increasingly have theorized the conditions of indigeneity in relation to settler modernity and settler colonialism (Coombes 2006b; Gelder and Jacobs 1998; Povinelli 2002a; Wolfe 1999, 2001). Such work helpfully calls attention to the characteristic forms taken by rights debates and the politics of indigeneity in settler liberal democracies. I build on this emergent conversation to consider some of the ways that economic forms and relations, in particular, shape indigeneity in the United States and other settler societies. Seminoles and other American Indians engage with casino capitalism in historically and culturally specific ways, and by doing so they unsettle the logics of indigenous-settler relations.

Indian gaming also affords new insight into the nature of money, as I discuss in chapters 2 and 3. It is not only indigenous wealth that disrupts the settler expectation of an economically dependent indigeneity, but also Indians’ use of money: this is a matter both of economic scale and of economic form. Gambling, which is a seemingly nonproductive and highly monetized mode of exchange, is often understood to be animated by the “fantasy” of “accruing wealth from nothing,” of yielding “wealth without production,” as Jean and John Comaroff wrote when describing “millennial capitalism” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 313–14). They and others have suggested that the rapid growth of casinos and, more generally, of specula-

tive “casino capitalism” (Strange 1986) exposes the structuring conditions of postmodernity. Gambling also brought into relief the risks and morality of nineteenth-century speculative capitalism (Fabian 1990), and it has been a key activity and specter through which Americans have reckoned the relationship between human action and uncontrollable forces, often called “luck” (Lears 2003). Indian casinos are a new twist on old questions about money, governance, and the morality of gaming in the United States.

In both American popular culture and classic Western social theory, money and capitalism are often identified with an essentialized modernity, and as such are understood to erode or dissolve cultural and individual distinctiveness. Karl Marx ([1844] 1978: 104), for example, was concerned that money was an “agent of divorce” that also made “brothers of impossibilities”: that is, money has the power to bring things into equivalence (for example, different objects with distinct use values, or different characters of people) that are essentially different, while it also separates things (for example, a person’s labor from that which it produces) that are one. Money turns qualitative differences into quantitative ones, reordering everything and everybody along a single scale of value. Georg Simmel ([1907] 1990: 168) offered a more positive analysis of money as a social form, yet he similarly contended that money “strives to dissolve substance into free-floating processes” and renders human relations abstract. Indeed, a long line of social and popular accounts has taken money to be an abstracting and de-racinating force in social life.

Does money erase differences (both among objects and among those who exchange them), for better or worse, and therefore erode those values and practices that people call “culture” and “tradition”? Does culture have a currency, and how can its value be represented? Such questions are not neutral for indigenous people who aim to pursue economic gain with money while also remaining distinctively indigenous. My purpose is two-fold: first, to analyze how Seminoles exploit the fungibility of money—seemingly its most abstracting feature—to transform value in ways that reinforce their social and cultural distinctiveness; and, second, to suggest how this empirical observation compels a rethinking of social theories of fungibility and money more generally.

By far the most common question posed when I describe my research to non-Indians is whether casinos are causing Indians to lose their culture.

But this is not solely an outsider concern. As discussed in chapter 3, many Seminole grandparents worry about how to convince their grandchildren to sew patchwork clothing (the striking and complicated style for which they are known) or to speak a Seminole language now that youth can afford Nintendos and cars. Yet, contrary to expectations that money would erode cultural distinctiveness, gaming has also subsidized and catalyzed Seminole cultural production. As I listened to Seminoles worry about whether their children were “losing our culture,” I realized that the trope of indigenous “cultural loss” is not simply a neocolonial conceit reliant on overly static and bounded conceptions of culture, although more often than not it is precisely that. It is also a historically informed indigenous discourse about social reproduction, as Seminoles attempt to identify for one another what is valued and what must, in speakers’ understandings, be reproduced in order for the community and tribal nation to endure. The discourse of cultural loss, then, can be a mechanism for articulating and regulating the values that hold indigenous and other human worlds together. By analyzing Seminole cultural production in the casino era (chapter 2), I both highlight the centrality of cultural distinctiveness to Seminole life and examine the political and economic currency of culture.

TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY IN THE CASINO ERA

The second major theme of this book is sovereignty. American Indian tribal gaming is built upon the foundation of tribal sovereignty, and it raises basic questions about sovereignty’s nature and limits. Because tribal governments are sovereigns, they have the authority to legislate and regulate gaming operations. As tribal governments defend gaming rights and decide how to allocate casino revenues, indigenous people consider both what tribal governance is and what it does. I explore the practices, ideologies, and values of political distinctiveness that guide Seminoles’ efforts to defend tribal sovereignty, enact governance that is true to indigenous political theories, and navigate U.S. legal and political systems. In the casino era, Seminoles have vastly expanded the tribal bureaucracy and wrested governmental control from federal agencies (see chapter 4), contemplated constitutional reform, and worked to hold elected officials accountable for spending. They have participated at high rates in tribal elections and taken jobs with the tribal government. Ethnographic study of Seminole gaming

offers new insight into tribal sovereignty, and it enables reconsideration of political theoretical and anthropological theories of sovereignty.²²

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Tribal sovereignty has become a catchphrase of American Indian rights movements since the 1960s and 1970s Red Power struggles, and it is the legal framework for most American Indian rights claims. Tribal sovereignty is most often understood to mean the political authority of American Indian tribes over their citizens and territories, and it forms the basis for government-to-government relations among the tribes and between each of them and the U.S. federal government (Wilkins and Lomawaima 2001).²³ Generally, tribal sovereignty is derived from two types of claims. First, and all too often overlooked outside of indigenous communities and Native American studies, it is grounded in indigenous peoples' claims to inherent political authority, which is based on both a precolonial order and ongoing lived experiences, irrespective of recognition by settler state governments. Second, tribal sovereignty is traced to processes of recognition during and since the time of conquest. Colonial powers and the early American republic established government-to-government relations with Indian tribes by entering into treaties and other diplomatic agreements. The U.S. Constitution codified the governmental distinctiveness of Indian tribes, both in the Commerce Clause, which authorizes Congress to regulate commerce with "foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes," and in the Apportionment Clause, which excludes "Indians not taxed" from state populations used to allocate Congressional representation (Deloria and Wilkins 1999: chapter 3). Tellingly for this discussion, both clauses regulate monetary exchange.²⁴ Constitutional references to Indian tribes have been interpreted to mean, among other things, that unless otherwise specified by the U.S. Congress, the fifty states do not hold sovereignty over Indian tribes within reservation borders. As governments, American Indian tribes are free from state taxation and business regulation. As a result, they enjoy competitive advantage in sectors including high-stakes gaming and the sale of highly taxed and regulated commodities, such as tobacco, alcohol, gasoline, and fireworks.²⁵ Native individuals, however, pay federal taxes just the same as other U.S. citizens.²⁶ Gaming rights, then, are not "special rights" granted on the basis of race or economic disadvantage. Rather, they are governmental rights exercised by sovereigns (Light and Rand 2005; Rand and Light 2006).²⁷

Ethnographically, I understand sovereignty to be Seminoles' collective assertions, everyday enactments, and lived experiences of political distinctiveness (see also Warrior 1994: 87; Womack 1999: 51). Seminoles and other tribal nations defend their sovereign rights within the U.S. legal system while also maintaining what Audra Simpson has called the "lived experiences of nationhood" (Simpson 2000). Definitions and origins of indigenous sovereignty, as Joanne Barker has shown, are numerous and sometimes confusing, and the significance of sovereignty is "embedded within the specific social relations in which it is invoked and given meaning" (Barker 2005a: 21).

Seminoles have been at the forefront of sovereignty struggles over gaming rights. Howard Tommie (Bird), tribal chairman from 1971 to 1979, laid the groundwork for Seminole casinos, but it was only after he left office to join a casino development partnership that the young and charismatic incoming chairman James E. Billie (Bird) shepherded a casino ordinance through the Tribal Council. Hollywood Bingo's opening drew the attention of Broward County sheriff (and later Florida attorney general) Bob Butterworth, who sought an injunction to close it on the grounds that it violated state gambling laws. The Tribe became entangled in a series of gaming-related legal and political disputes. Ultimately, in the case *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Butterworth* (658 F.2d 310 [5th Cir. 1981]), a federal appellate court held that Seminole tribal sovereignty protected tribal gaming from state taxation and regulation. This ruling opened the tribal gaming floodgates across Indian Country.

Responding to pressure from state governments and commercial gaming interests, Congress in 1988 passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), the key federal legislation that regulated tribal gaming.²⁸ This law established levels of regulation that correspond to different classes of casino games: traditional games (class I) are wholly regulated by tribes; many card games, bingo, and games similar to it (class II) can be operated and regulated by tribes, but only if they are legal in the surrounding state (even in dissimilar contexts such as charity bingo); and slot machines, blackjack, and other "Las Vegas style" games (class III) are restricted by the rules for class II plus the requirement that tribes and states negotiate a gaming compact in good faith. Seminoles had only class II games as of 2007, since they had not been able to negotiate a gaming compact with the

State of Florida. IGRA restricts the uses toward which tribes can allocate casino revenues to funding tribal operations or programs to provide for the general welfare of the tribe and its members, promoting economic development, donating to charitable organizations, and helping to fund operations of local extratribal government agencies (Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, 25 U.S.C. § 2701). Seminoles' choices about how to spend casino revenues, however, are not simply reactions to these external legal constraints: to the contrary, Seminoles had already opened their casinos and developed revenue spending patterns well before this law took effect, and even within the law's limits Seminoles subsequently made fiscal and policy choices. Therefore, analyzing casino-based spending can tell us something about the values that Seminoles hold and the role of economy and governance in supporting, undermining, or altering those values.

Sovereignty and self-determination had been nearly absent from most Americans' conceptions of indigenous peoples and their rights until casino politics and disputes over hunting and fishing rights (especially in the Pacific Northwest and the upper Midwest) introduced sovereignty into regional vocabularies during the late 1900s.²⁹ These political struggles produced backlashes in the form of antisovereignty political organizations.³⁰ It is perhaps surprising that tribal sovereignty would be unfamiliar or threatening in the United States, a federalist nation-state in which tribal governments are one among multiple governments. After all, most American children learn in civics class that the country's distinct levels of government are not simply nested within each other, but rather share and divide power. Tribal gaming not only calls attention to the place of American Indian tribes within the federalist system, but, as discussed in chapter 5, it also has reshaped states' rights and federalism more generally. In South Florida, Seminoles assert their place in the governmental landscape when they enter into mutual aid agreements with the rural town of Clewiston to share policing services, when they negotiate the terms of the Everglades Restoration Plan and administer their own water monitoring, when Seminole Police Department officers ticket drivers who exceed twenty-five miles per hour in populated areas of the Big Cypress Reservation, or when sovereign immunity protects the Tampa Hard Rock from slip-and-fall liability lawsuits. In these and other ways, casinos raise unresolved questions about the legitimate basis for differential political statuses and rights in and beyond American democracy.

Most theorists of sovereignty, both of indigenous sovereignty and of other forms, inextricably link it to autonomy, contrasting sovereignty to dependency. Scholars have suggested that a feature of globalization is the recent erosion of autonomous state sovereignty (see, e.g., Hardt and Negri 2000; Sassen 1996). With the exception of Iris Marion Young (2001), few have questioned the link between sovereignty and autonomy. Seminoles, however, enact sovereignty in part through relations of *interdependence*, for example through economic exchange and political and legal negotiations with other sovereigns. This observation compels a more general reconsideration of whether sovereignty should be conceptualized primarily in relation to autonomy. Therefore, I balance an analysis of sovereignty as autonomy from neocolonial interference (chapter 4) with a relational account of sovereignty as forged through relations of interdependency, obligation, and reciprocity among sovereigns and peoples (chapter 5). As in monetary exchanges, sovereign relations do not begin with autonomous agents that must be made commensurable. Rather, this book shows how money and sovereignty bring people and peoples into interdependent relations through which they forge distinctiveness.

AN INDIAN, AMERICAN, AND FLORIDIAN HISTORY

Understanding Seminole gaming requires attention to the remarkable historical events that so clearly shape Seminoles' present-day approaches to economic and political practices. Many Native and non-Native Americans know Seminoles to have a distinctive community with a history of independence, and as a result Seminoles have not been subject to intense gaming-related attacks on their cultural legitimacy. Nor have they disagreed internally about gaming to the same degree as many indigenous groups. In what follows I make no attempt to present a comprehensive Florida Seminole "history and setting"; rather, I offer a few orienting points for fellow non-Seminole readers in order to show how Seminole politics, economy, and culture have intersected over time.³¹

Most of the approximately 3,300 citizens of the Seminole Tribe of Florida live on or near six South Florida reservations (map 1).³² This is the largest number of reservations administered by any American Indian tribal government, but governing them has been made easier by the casino-era Aviation Department, which flies officials between reservations in its helicopter fleet. The oldest and highest-population reservations—Big Cypress