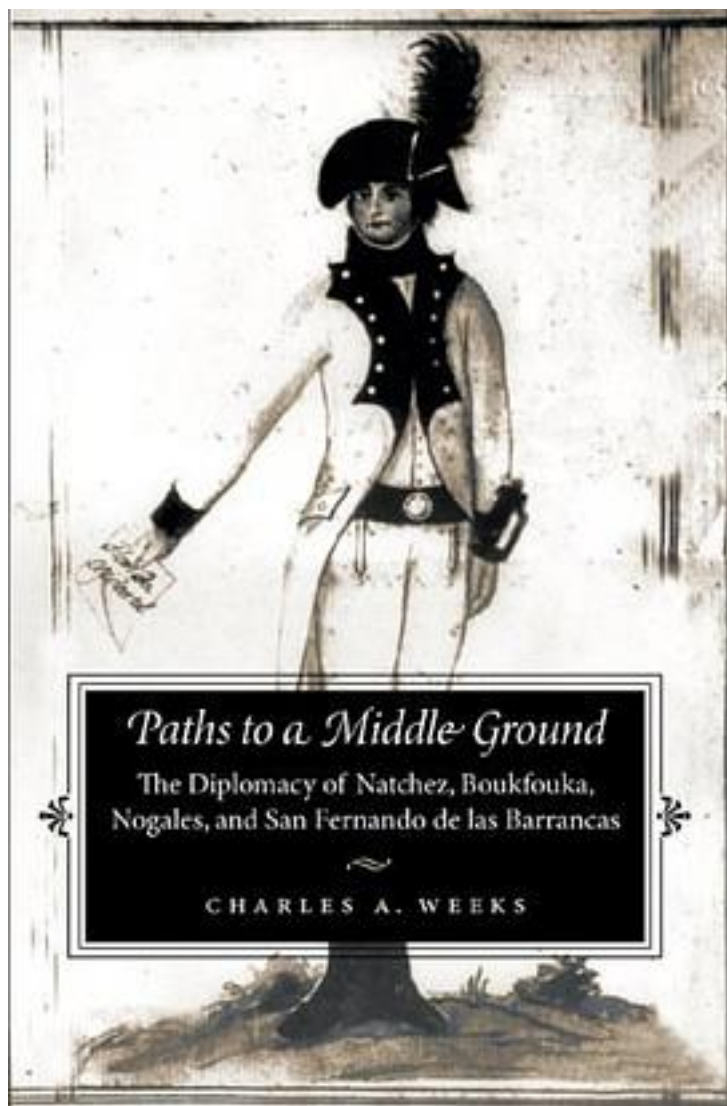


# Paths to a Middle Ground



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Spanish imperial attempts to form strong Indian alliances to thwart American expansion in the Mississippi Valley. Charles Weeks explores the diplomacy of Spanish colonial officials in New Orleans and Natchez in order to establish posts on the Mississippi River and Tombigbee rivers in the early 1790s. Another purpose of this diplomacy, urged by Indian leaders and embraced by Spanish officials, was the formation of a regional Indian confederation that would deter American expansion into Indian lands. Weeks shows how diplomatic relations were established and maintained in the Gulf South between Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Cherokee chiefs and their Spanish counterparts aided by traders who had become integrated into Indian societies. He explains that despite the absence of a European state system, Indian groups had diplomatic skills that Europeans could understand: full-scale councils or congresses accompanied by elaborate protocol, interpreters, and eloquent metaphorical language. "Paths to a Middle Ground" is both a narrative and primary documents. Key documents from Spanish archival sources serve as a basis for the examination of the political culture and imperial rivalry playing out in North America in the waning years of the 18th century.

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