

Osceola and the second seminoles war essay sample

War



What was the role and guerrilla warfare tactics that were applied by Osceola during the second Seminole war? During his time many Native Americans had several names and Osceola was no exception. This name was the distorted version of his Indian name by the whites. His original name was Asiyahola. This man was born in United States of America in 1803 and passed on in January 1838. He was a Creek warrior during his time and emerged the winner during the Seminole war II. His character came to be widely known during the 2nd Seminole war. My main focus on this paper will be to discuss the role Osceola played and the guerrilla warfare tactics that he used in order to win this fight.

The Seminole wars both first and the second and the third were often referred to as the Florida wars. These were as a result of the conflicts that occurred in Florida in the 19th century between different American native groups which were referred by one name as Seminoles. The first war started from 1817 and ended in 1818 while the second war lasted from 1835 up to 1858. The third war erupted from 1855 to 1858. Osceola's took part in the second Seminole conflict which was known as the Seminole war. This war had its origin in the treaty of Payne's landing of 1832 that was signed by the Seminole chiefs. This took place in Florida where these chiefs agreed to be resettled in other territories. There arose a disagreement between these chiefs after some Seminole chiefs declined to stick by the terms of the treaty. They insisted on staying in Florida something that provoked a sharp reaction to the whites.

They embarked on a campaign of levelling and directing their harassment to these adamant chiefs. They pointed out that the U. S government had a role of making sure that the treaty was not violated. These chiefs who refused to be resettled in the West of Mississippi River were led by Osceola who was an Indian Chief at that time. This was in 1832 after the whites started relocating the Native Americans. It did not take long before the second Seminole war erupted in 1835. Osceola came to be recognised widely because of his mastery in applying guerrilla tactics. He came to be respected by the army officers who were sent to capture him but they could not manage to capture and conquer him due to his ability to employ deceptive tactic. He was from Alabama and was an original upper Creek. He refused to have any connection with white blood. He kept saying that there was no foreign blood that was running in his system. (Mark C. C., 1996; 45)

In 1813-1814 the Creek war broke out. It was a civil war fought between the whites and the Red Sticks but U. S joined on the side of the White sticks against the Red Sticks who objected to the idea of the whites grabbing the Creeks land and polarising their culture. When the war reached Osceola's village they went into hiding but in 1814 the war was brought to a grinding halt by the General Jackson who slaughtered Indians in thousands. Osceola and his mother who feared for their safety migrated to Florida which was under Spanish authority. The area was swampy but it became a home to the Seminoles. This movement was spearheaded by Peter McQueen who was Osceola's great uncle and tribal leader of the creeks.

Soon after they settled in their new territory the 1st Seminole war erupted due to aggression by the whites on the Georgia-Florida border in 1819. This prompted Neamathla who was the Seminole chief to resist any intrusion by the whites. In reaction to this, the United States army set on fire the village of Neamathla. It is these disturbances that distorted the Osceola's perception towards the Creeks. He came to hate them as well as their counterparts, the whites. After the war was over; they went to join McQueen who by then stayed at Tampa Bay. Osceola who was in his teen age loved hunting, athletics and also practised warriorship skills. During the Green Dance that was held once in a year that Osceola acquired his other name Asi Yaloto' or simply the Black Drink Singer, his role during these ceremonies was to serve the black drink. (Kenneth C. D., 2003; 56-78)

In 1819 the Spanish government sold Florida the United States of America which immediately started thinking to concentrate all the Seminoles who were in Florida in one area. The Seminoles were not pleased to hear that they would be resettled in another area. They remained undecided on what to do such that they even refused to plant crops for they never knew when they would be forced to migrate. Finally this came to be after Moultrie's Creek treaty was signed in 1823 and was supposed to remain in force for the next 20 years. In this treaty it was agreed that the Seminoles would be moved from their territory to the south, an area was not favourable to them in any way. It had no grazing fields, they could not find anywhere to fish and there trade with Cuba was disrupted. This time Osceola who was 19 years old was present during the signing of the treaty as warriors were allowed to join. After the treaty he assisted the surveyors who were marking the

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reservations boundary. He came to be known by the Whites and other Seminoles. Finding it hard to survive in the new land, Seminoles led by Osceola returned back to the swampy region that was very productive in 1825.

Later he met Che-Cho-ter whom he married. In 1832 he led the Seminoles in resisting the whites and this earned him the titled of the war chief (Tustenuggee). As it was the tradition of the Seminoles, anybody could become a leader if he managed to attract a big following because of his particular character traits such as being a warrior or extra ordinary hunting skills. It is in this respect that Osceola came to be the war chief. (Kenneth, 1973; 29) It is during their time that Payne landing treaty was signed. This was a declaration that the Seminoles would be relocated to Arkansas so as they would be united with other creeks. Those creeks that had fled Florida the likes of Osceola had no intention of uniting with other creeks that fought them during the Creek war and were determined to oppose this decision (Weigly R. F., 1967; 245). A year later, another treaty was passed to enforce that of 1832 though it had not yet expired. This was referred to as the treaty of Fort Gibson. When Seminoles made up their minds to resist the planned migration, Osceola as their war chief became very instrumental in laying the war strategies and in taking care as well as arranging for ammunition stores. He was a brave ruler who was even prepared to put his life along the line especially when he drew his hunting knife and tore the document that was supposed to be signed between him and Thompson.

Osceola organised his people properly in dealing with the formidable U. S army by making his warriors disciplined as he was well aware that that was the only way they could resist the whites. The resistance went on passively for sometime. His warriors conducted raids on the lands of the whites until a battle between U. S army and his warriors broke out after his men descended on a train that was used by the government in transporting supplies to other areas. The government sought to punish him but this proved itself to be too difficult as he became so elusive by playing hide and seek game in the swamps of Florida.

Though he was not the duly elected Indian chief, he was able to command his warriors who were about 4, 000. His men terrorised the U. S army which comprised of more than forty thousand for over ten years since the war broke out. Osceola and his men attacked Thompson at Fort King, in fighting the Americans; Osceola used the principle of hit and run. He decided to take this course after he realised that the whites forced his delegates into signing such agreements. That is when declined to sign a treaty in 1835 and instead drew a sword from his pocket and pierced the paper claiming that to him it was the only way of signing that treaty. In fact, the whites were sing force to make them sign those documents but Osceola showed them that he was not the type to be commanded by Colonel Clinch. (Dockstader F. J., 1977; 198-201)

After Osceola refused to sign the proposal in front of these powerful characters, he became a hero to most of the Seminoles. These chiefs were threatened by Jackson that they would be stripped off their powers should

they fail to sign the document. Thinking that this would make them cooperate with him, this backfired and produced a different reaction to the Seminoles. It became their motivating force to stand and fought for their rights. The relationship that was somehow enjoyed by the Seminoles and the whites in the past turned sour though Jackson was determined to have them moved elsewhere despite the fact that they strongly resisted. Jackson organised his military ready to start the operation. They surrounded these villages and forced the Seminoles to get sell their properties and livestock to the government personnel's. Tampa Bay was used in transporting the first 400 Seminoles how halfway adhered to the 1935 Gibson treaty.

Neither Osceola nor Jackson was ready to change his mind and both pursued different goals that were of interest to them. Osceola made sure that all the Seminole chiefs had enough stock of fighting weapons such as hampering the governments plan of migrating the Indians he planned how chief Emathla would be killed this was one of the rebel chiefs who agreed to sign the Gibson's treaty thus betraying the rest of Seminoles. He urged Indians not to agree selling their livestock as well as other properties to the agents of the government. The killing of Emathla reflected to the government how well Osceola and his men were organised and determined to resist any move designed to suppress them. He removed his people from areas that were not safe those that were safe and impregnable such as the swampy regions. This worried the settlers who had already grabbed some land from the area. They fled from their land and converged on some forts that had been constructed by the government.

The government led by Jackson descended on Indians whom they concentrated on certain designated camps as they awaited to be ferried to Arizona and to the west of Mississippi River. Those Seminoles who managed to escape definitely joined the Osceola camp. The royalty that these Indians shown to their leader made Thompson to be worried. He wrote a letter to the U. S government urging them to reconsider its decision but his plea was turned down. This shown hour determined the government was in moving the Indians to another area.

In preventing further development of hostilities in Florida, the war department appointed General Clinch to be the commander in chief of all military operations in Florida. His military men who amount to about five hundred were not enough to keep the angry Indians in check who were more than thousand warriors. Clinch strategically positioned his army barracks in some designated areas that were in dire need of security. Osceola was very sharp at learning the weaknesses of the government. He noted that the government had concentrated its army at the Western Peninsula and thus decided to conduct his raid on the Eastern side near the St. John's River. (Wickman P. R., 1996; 98)

In a company of two fifty warriors, Osceola attacked white farms and destroyed the properties that were there mercilessly. This prompted the government to recruit more officers however they could not subdue the Indian forces. Osceola led his warriors in raiding the whites' sugar plantations something that propelled all the whites to flee the area in search of a safer place. They vacated the whole of North and Central Florida.

Osceola and his army came out of their hideouts when they were least expected to attack. He led his warriors in attacking the forts and that had been constructed somewhere between military road.

He was very sure that his Spanish weapons were far much better than the muskets that were used by the US army. Osceola stage managed the offensive attacks to kill Thompson who was based at Fort King. While waiting to attack the fort, the warriors first surveyed the area long before they could launch their attacks. (Viele J., 1996; 98) They reached to the scene long before and each took his position. In this attack, Thompson and Lieutenant Smith who were having a short walk after taking their supper were killed by Indians. Osceola also organised how the two infantry companies that belonged to major Dade would be attacked.

He was a person who took his time before he could make a move. He only did so when he was sure that he was safe. He took many days planning how he would attack these companies. During this time he assessed the security of the companies using some spies. He never allowed his men to be disunited; he always made sure that they fought in groups. He positioned his army to bar all the possible escape routes. After they surrounded the region, they attacked the fort from three sides. Dade and a significant number of his forces perished in that unexpected attack. This is one of the guerrilla warfare tactics that Osceola was using. In guerrilla warfare you should monitor the moves of your opponent and descend on him when you are least expected. You should only engage yourself in offensive attacks only when your opponent is exhausted.

During this incidence, the army retaliated by directing their guns at the Seminoles who were hiding. After their ammunitions ran out, the Indians came out of their hiding places and killed many of these soldiers. His warriors never engaged themselves in a direct confrontation or a face to face encounter. They made sure that they kept their plans as dark as night. They carried out quick raids and then escaped before the army could retaliate.

Osceola was favoured by his terrain which he was very familiar of. He knew where he could hide in case they were attacked. The government did all that it could to make sure that all the Indians were removed from the swamps where they used to hide. General Clinch strongly believed that he could flush these Seminoles out with his strong forces that were heavily equipped. He believed that if he combined all his six infantry companies that were under his jurisdiction he would launch an offensive attack against the Indians. He had also recruited about 500 militia men though they lacked the necessary training and more so they were undisciplined unlike those of Osceola's.

Using his well equipped army Clinch would severally close the Withlaccochee River at give the Indians surprise attacks but his army many a times made him fail to achieve his objectives. His men were not disciplined and kept on breaching the rules for example in December 1835 his army left the Fort Drane at night so that they could attack the Seminole warriors at dawn.

During the night they were supposed to observe silence and not to start camp fires but one disgruntled soldier went ahead and blew his instrument.

This alerted the Seminoles that the army were on their way to attack them who quickly organised themselves and patiently waited for them. (Weisman, B. R., 1999; 85)

The U. S army had to close a swollen river using a canoe so as to reach the other side. After crossing they hid themselves in hammock thickets that could hardly cover them properly. In fact the area was an open ground. This worked to the advantage of the Indians who from nowhere attacked this army wiping out not less than a third of it then they ran away when Colonel Alexander launched three quick counteractive attacks. After a period of three days both sides had incurred heavy life losses but on the clinch's side it was terribly bad. No matter how the U. S government wanted to get rid of the Indians from Florida they could not successfully do so because Osceola's army seemed to be impregnable. It even made Clinch to give up driving out Seminoles out of the region.

He sent all those who had volunteered and survived back home. According to Osceola, this meant that the government was unable to deal with him and thus he was solely responsible for the region. He continued launching his attacks to specific forts which were full of whites who were escaping from the wrath of Osceola. His warriors destroyed these plantations as well their plantations. Osceola's victory was not in vain in fact, he had clearly observed all the moves of his enemies. He last knew how strong they were, their weaknesses and that is what he capitalised on. Another thing is that their leader was very familiar with the terrain of his region unlike the whites who were new to the region.

Clinch's army was undisciplined thus lacking the code of ethics this somehow worked against their wishes in that when they were told to be quiet throughout the night, they went ahead and made noise. This alerted their

enemies who patiently waited for them. These armies also were not familiar with the Florida terrain especially they did not know what kind of an environment they would find after crossing the swollen river. (Misall J. and Mary L. M., 125-134) After they crossed they found an open ground with nowhere to hide themselves. This made the warriors to attack them without straining a lot. Their general had not taken time to learn about the geography, the terrain and the climate of the region. That is why he risked crossing the swollen river using a canoe knowing very well that if they were attacked they would not be able to cross the river quickly. Also Clinch's moves were uncalculated and untimely. Why did he choose to conduct his attack during the torrential rains? He could have waited for the rains to subside.

Osceola was able to keep his army united and he knew when it was safe to conduct his raid. He was able to divide the attention of his opponents. For example the raid he organised at the vicinity of St. Augustine made some army men to be dispatched to the area leaving a small number of them in the targeted fort. He also knew how to plan for the raids to happen simultaneously. Osceola was also well aware that befriending his enemies so that he could use them as his spies was of great importance in guerrilla tactics. It is only by use of these spies that you can know what kind of a force that you are dealing with. For this reason, he was able to convince the blacks to help him fight the U. S military. This is why Pacheco a black man was used in giving the details and the time picture of Fort King. (Covington J. W., 1993; 102)

Osceola was arrested on 21st October 1837 after he was tricked by General Jesup to go for a peace council under false impression that he would not be arrested. He was jailed in a fort at St. Augustine where he succumbed to fever and malaria in 30th January 1838.

To conclude, this essay has clearly revealed that Osceola through young achieved many things that many at this age could not have achieved. Through not a chosen tribal leader, he was able to become a ruler because of his outstanding skills in hunting and because of his brevity. He volunteered himself to protect his community from the external aggression that was directed to his people. He sacrificed himself to fight the Americans whom he knew very well were more than his warriors.

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