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ARTICLES

Hispano-indigenous Alliances and Cacical Political Authority in La Florida, 1565–97

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Many scholars of La Florida argue that indigenous societies welcomed missionaries only in the seventeenth century, once they had no choice but to align with the Spanish Empire or risk geopolitical isolation and effacement. This argument fits into the problematic general narrative that Spanish missionaries enslaved native peoples and forcibly converted them to Catholicism—problematic because it leaves indigenous rulers out of the story. In this article, I use the brief missions to the Calusa, Tequesta, Tocobaga, and Guale peoples of the present-day southeastern United States to show that indigenous rulers in La Florida encouraged missionary activity well before the seventeenth century, and not as a last resort but as a way to further their expansionist ambitions. The indigenous rulers' encouragement of missionaries and gains from the Spanish presence show how sharply the interests of the indigenous political classes diverged from those of indigenous commoners. I argue that in light of the reality of political privilege in La Florida's native societies, historians must view historical indigenous societies as they do more familiar societies—as broad groupings riven by political interests rather than as social collectivities—and jettison the thematic lens of colonialism to achieve a faithful history of the transformation of the Americas.

Before the midsixties, historians lauded Catholic missions to La Florida (a large area encompassing much of the present-day southeastern United States) as a triumph over Indian "idolatry and ignorance" (Gannon 1965, 18; see also Hoffman 2013). Later work decried them as instruments of Spanish colonialism and Indian subjugation but continued the eerie tradition of locating power mostly in the Spanish. Jerald T. Milanich (1999, xiii, 3) writes that "missions were colonialism" and that "the Spaniards made the

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Indians of La Florida believe that loyalty to the colonial system was in their best interest. That is why they did not flee . . . or rebel, or refuse." Since the nineties, scholars have increasingly acknowledged the role of indigenous people—particularly indigenous rulers—in the establishment, function, and survival of the early La Florida mission system. Many scholars now agree that indigenous rulers were instrumental in allowing missions to take root. John H. Hann (1996, 80) has made the important point that "missionaries began their work . . . at the invitation of . . . native leaders rather than by thrusting themselves uninvited upon . . . indigenous societies." John E. Worth (1998, 40) writes that "the request for or acceptance of resident missionaries were strictly voluntary acts. . . . Conversion and establishment of missions were not prerequisites for formal political subordination." Robert C. Galgano (2005, 41) concurs, stating that native leaders "voluntarily accepted the missionaries in their towns" and actually requested more friars than the Franciscan order could readily provide between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

But despite this recognition of indigenous influence and autonomy in seventeenth-century La Florida, scholars in practice still consider Spanish conquest an inevitable end point. They consistently detect a shift toward welcoming missionaries in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and read this change in political strategy as proof of Spanish ascendancy and the beginning of the end of indigenous power (Hann 1996, 80; Worth 1998, 40, 50; Milanich 1999, 107–8, 111; Hall 2012, 53; see also Hann and McEwan 1998). Worth (1998, 37) states that "as soon as one or more aboriginal chiefdoms had aligned themselves with the Spaniards, neighboring provinces were effectively obligated to follow suit" or they risked "political and military isolation."[1]

In this article, I argue that the indigenous rulers' decisions to welcome missionaries were not unique to the seventeenth century but rather were a continuation of their established political strategy of forging alliances to strengthen internal and external political power. To prove this, I examine the motives of the sixteenth-century Calusa, Tequesta, Tocobaga, and Guale caciques (indigenous rulers) of what is now Florida and Georgia in allying with the Spanish crown and in allowing missions to be established in their territories.[2]

1 To his credit, Worth (1998, 37) does add that non-Spanish-aligned caciques also faced the specter of mass emigration, which would have impoverished and weakened them by "reducing both tribute and desirable labor."

2 *Cacique* is a Taíno Arawakan word adopted by Spanish officials to refer to indigenous rulers throughout the Caribbean, so it is not tribally specific in this context. Though the peoples of La Florida all had different names for their rulers, I opt to use more general terms for clarity and because I am writing across polities and cultures.

My analysis relies on Gonzalo Solís de Merás's eyewitness account (partially published in 1722; full text in 1893) of the 1566–69 voyages to La Florida made by his brother-in-law, Spanish explorer and St. Augustine founder Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (Solís de Merás 2017; also excerpted in Worth 2014, 242–66). This account sheds light on sixteenth-century formal missionary activity by religious orders and impromptu missionization by soldiers, and details how Spanish officials established diplomatic relations with various La Florida caciques. I also incorporate Jesuit correspondence written during the brief missions to the Calusas, Tequestas, and Tocobagas in the late 1560s; secular correspondence from the 1570s and 1580s; and documents related to Franciscan proselytization among the Guale and to the 1597 Guale revolt. I occasionally refer to documents related to pre-1565 missionization and colonization attempts to help shed light on the subsequent events that are the focus of this article.

I show that caciques' acceptance of missionaries was contingent on the Spanish Empire's usefulness as an ally and that the determining factor of an alliance's utility was Spanish officials' potential to further caciques' geopolitical aims and to bolster the internal status quo. For caciques, welcoming missions could not only strengthen beneficial alliances with the Spanish crown but also increase the yield from those direct political ties; namely, valuable goods that reinforced their status within their societies and military backing against rival polities. Caciques welcomed missionaries only as long as they did not threaten the political integrity of the *cacicazgo* (chiefdom) or otherwise work against the caciques' goals. In the sixteenth century, missionaries to La Florida were usually killed or expelled as soon as they threatened cacical rule.

New Readings of Indigenous History

Illuminating caciques' goals is crucial to a full understanding of the political circumstances of sixteenth-century La Florida because cacicazgos were rigidly stratified polities. It is commonly claimed that caciques ruled by consensus rather than coercion, the proof being that people could and would flee if they didn't approve of the cacique (Bushnell 1996, 63; Milanich 1999, 40–41; Francis and Kole 2011, 27–28; DeCoster 2013, 378). But this interpretation of cacical rule is a naïve apology for unfreedom and coercion, for fleeing is an openly defensive mechanism.

The fact is that the people of La Florida were split into two legal classes, noble and commoner—those who could control or enjoy others' property and those who did not have this right. La Florida caciques inherited their status matrilineally (except for Calusa caciques, who inherited it patrilineally) and had many special privileges. Caciques were traditionally entitled to the labor of their people, who "worked to construct communal buildings, and . . . tended agricultural fields whose produce was controlled by their chiefs" (Milanich 1999, 3–4 [quote], 44; see also Hann 1992, 195; Bushnell 1996,

63; Worth 2002, 45–46; Francis and Kole 2011, 28). Caciques were exempt from some labors and had the right to collect goods as tribute (that is, taxes), but lesser caciques themselves had to pay tribute to the principal cacique (Ehrmann 1940, 182–83; Hann 1992, 195–96; Francis and Kole 2011, 28; DeCoster 2013, 378). They controlled the distribution of goods and were entitled to the most valuable goods and the best foods to the exclusion of commoners (Milanich 1999, 44; Francis and Kole 2011, 28–29; Boucher 2018, 147–48). Caciques also had the exclusive right to take multiple wives (Ehrmann 1940, 185; Francis and Kole 2011, 27; Wade 2011, 55–58). To consolidate power, caciques married the leading women of allied cacicazgos, and the Calusas in particular also practiced sibling marriage to this end (Hann 1992, 193). Cacicazgos' broader division into the noble and commoner classes suggests that those who were connected to the cacique benefited from the wealth that flowed to him, especially due to his power to redistribute property as he saw fit. The reality of cacical privilege suggests that the interests of nobles and commoners often diverged.

The fact of competing interests within indigenous societies would seem to be an obvious point, but it has been obscured by scholars' insistence on studying indigenous peoples as social collectivities. It's crucial for scholars to acknowledge the legal privileges that stratified historical indigenous societies just as we draw attention to the legal privileges at work in contemporary societies. I say legal rather than social because ultimately it is legal privilege, and people's compliance with it, that has the power to oppress. Social privilege is much less potent without the backing of political authority—in other words, of legal violence. Caciques' political authority and the way they used it must be underscored if the whole story of the transformation of the Americas is to be told. This article is an attempt to tell part of that story: how in the sixteenth century, caciques welcomed Spanish missionaries to further their political aims and expelled them when cacical authority was challenged.

La Florida, 1513–65: Imperial Hopes Dashed

The Spanish crown was drawn to La Florida—and indeed to the entirety of the Americas—as a possible source of untapped wealth (Milanich 1999, 56; Worth 2013, 192–93). The crown hoped to fill its ever-leaking coffers with precious metals and other treasures by stealing non-Christian peoples' land. The crown bribed explorers with fame and fortune to thoroughly explore the New World. It offered them parcels of land, noble titles, political offices, and "rights" to indigenous labor and other loot that it had no right to take, let alone give away, if they "discovered" and claimed on behalf of Spain territories that contained natural resources (Galgano 2005, 39). These bribes took the form of royal contracts such as those of Juan Ponce de León, the first explorer to visit La Florida.

Juan Ponce de León's 1512 contract (Worth 2014, 73–77) granted him the exclusive right to search for and explore the island of Bimini (site of the fountain of youth according to Taíno legend and today part of the Bahamas) for three years by prohibiting others from journeying there and promising Ponce de León all the rewards if someone else accidentally discovered the place before him. In return for discovering the land, claiming it, building settlements and fortifications on it (everything but the fortifications at his expense), and reporting on his findings, Ponce de León would receive the title of adelantado (military governor) of the area (75–76); the right to "the tithe of all the rents and benefits that pertain to us" for twelve years (75); and control of "the government and judiciary for all the days of [his] life, and . . . full power, and civil and criminal jurisdiction, with all its incidences and dependencies, annexes and connections" (74). He would also be entitled to a portion of the local Indians, who were to be "distributed among the people that there might be" under the brutal encomienda system[3] (75), and would have the right to "benefit from [read: take] the gold and other metals and things of value that might be on the stated island" at very reduced tax rates for ten years. Ponce de León's 1514 contract (Worth 2014, 79–82) added "the island of Florida" to the lands he could search for and explore but required him to make "caciques and Indians" understand that they were to "come to the understanding of our holy Catholic faith, and obey and serve as they are obligated" (80). The new contract also gave Ponce de León permission to "make war against . . . and imprison . . . and bring . . . as slaves" Indians who resisted conquest and exploitation (80). Royal contracts such as these were "standard practice for early Spanish voyages of discovery and conquest," as Worth (2014, 69) notes, and they created very strong incentives to conquer by any means necessary. So explorers gladly sank their fortunes into occupying the Americas.

3 Encomiendas (from the verb *encomendar*, "to entrust") were grants from the Spanish crown to officials, conquistadors, religious orders, privileged colonists, and other politically connected people that indefinitely entitled the holder to Indian tribute in kind, labor, or gold. Encomenderos, as the holders of encomiendas were called, were also required to provide protection and Catholic education to the Indians who had been "entrusted" to them. See *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "encomienda," last modified September 5, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/topic/encomienda; Deagan (1985, 292).

Indian labor was also acquired through repartimientos (from the verb *repartir*, "to distribute"), royal grants that gave the holder the right to Indian labor with the caveats that the term of service be no more than two weeks (except for mine labor, where the term could be as long as five weeks), that the repartimiento be used no more than three or four times per year, and that the laborers be paid. These terms, of course, were often violated. Beginning in the seventeenth century, laborers were allowed to negotiate the terms, though they were still forced to endure temporary enslavement. See *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "repartimiento," last modified January 25, 2016, https://www.britannica.com/topic/repartimiento; *World History Encyclopedia*, s.v. "repartimiento," by Mark Cartwright, August 24, 2022, https://www.worldhistory.org/Repartimiento/; Deagan (1985, 292).

In the end, the encomienda system was never used in La Florida because, as Deagan (1985, 294) explains, there were "no economic activities (such as mines or plantations) that required large-scale, intensive labor efforts. . . . The needs of the garrison at St. Augustine could be met through the annual repartimiento allotment." Instead, La Florida caciques paid the repartimiento in goods until the late sixteenth century, when they began to do so in labor (293–94). Under the latter arrangement, Timucua, Apalachee, and Guale caciques sent commoners to Saint Augustine every year to "build the fortifications, till the fields, and provide miscellaneous services to the Spaniards" (294).

But to their dismay, early explorers soon discovered that nothing comparable to the treasures of the Aztec and Inca Empires (overthrown by the conquistadors in 1521 and 1533) farther south existed in La Florida (Worth 2013, 192–93). The Calusas had some gold and silver in their possession, but they had gleaned it from shipwrecked Spanish vessels (Solís de Merás 2017, 91). As shipwreck survivor Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, who was a captive of the Calusas from 1549 to 1566, noted in his 1575 captivity narrative (Worth 2014, 191–217), the Ais were "rich from the sea, and not from the land" (207). Throughout the period of exploration, La Florida was described as a poor, sterile land and its people as living a difficult life (Hoffman 2014). Escalante Fontaneda wrote that the Indians "live in a very difficult and swampy land. They have nothing from the mines or anything else . . . in this world" (Worth 2014, 201). For this reason, La Florida became an area of largely strategic value for the Spanish Empire (Worth 2002, 54; 2013, 193).

Imperial officials persisted in attempting to establish permanent garrisons in La Florida because they wanted to control what is today known as the Old Bahama Channel (located between present-day Cuba and the Bahamas). This would allow the empire to protect the treasure fleets, which rendezvoused in Havana (founded 1515) and sailed through the channel on their way back to Spain, laden with gold, silver, and other colonial goods. The fleet was vulnerable to capture by pirates as well as by French and English privateers, whose governments authorized them to plunder the ships of enemy governments and their subjects. Spanish authorities were concerned that privateers would establish a headquarters on the Florida peninsula if it was left unguarded (Bushnell 1996, 62–63; Francis and Kole 2011, 18). Shipwrecks were another danger for the fleet because the channel was difficult to navigate. The crown wanted to position itself to salvage its spoils and to rescue the shipwrecked passengers, who were often captured by Indians and typically not able to be ransomed (Deagan 1985, 286; Francis and Kole 2011, 18).

Spain also remained interested in settling La Florida because of its poor relations with France, which was its primary enemy by the 1550s due to religious tensions and territorial rivalry between the royal dynasties (Mercado 2002, 29; Francis and Kole 2011, 18; Worth 2013, 193–94). Threatened by the French Empire's establishment of Fort Caroline (present-day Jacksonville, Florida) in 1564 and fearing the rise of a hostile Franco-Timucuan bloc, the Spanish Empire quickly founded Saint Augustine (present-day Florida) in 1565 and Santa Elena (present-day Parris Island, South Carolina) in 1566 (Lyon 1984, 1; Mercado 2002, 22; DeCoster 2013, 390; Starr 2016, 68).

Imperial Plans for Indians: Vassalage and Conversion

From the beginning, the crown intended to turn the people of La Florida into Spanish vassals and convert them to Catholicism (since it was carrying out its conquest in the name of the Catholic Church and the pope), but attempts between 1513 and 1564 to establish a beachhead failed. By the time the conquest finally began in earnest, caciques had more leeway to benefit from the Spanish imperial presence due to the imposition of legal restrictions on how the conquest of indigenous peoples could be carried out.

When Spanish explorers made contact with indigenous peoples, they read them the Requerimiento (requirement), drafted in 1510 by jurist Juan López de Palacios Rubios, a member of the Royal Council of Castile (Weiler, n.d., 67).[4] The Requerimiento was a warning declaration that imperial officials hoped would allow the crown to take possession of the Americas without violating Catholic law (i.e., without murdering and enslaving indigenous peoples, as had already occurred with Christopher Columbus's late fifteenth-century expeditions), which would earn them the church's reproof (Weiler, n.d., 67–68). The Requerimiento (ECDA, n.d.; translations mine) implored Indians to accept the church as the "Lady and Superior of the universe"; the pope "in her name"; and the king and queen of Castile "in her place as Superiors and Lords and Kings" (by virtue of Pope Alexander VI's "donation of these Islands and terra firma . . . to the said King and Queen and their successors in these kingdoms, with all that is in them").[5] It asked them to "consent and give room to these religious parents to declare and preach to" (i.e., rule over and "educate") them. Those who complied would be "received with complete love and charity," their "women and children and haciendas" would remain free and at their disposal, and they would not be "compelled to become Christians." But those who insisted on their sovereignty the monarchs would make war against "in all the places and manners they could" and would "subject to the yoke and obedience of the Church and its Majesties." As if that were not enough, the Spanish crown swore that it would take rebels' "persons and those of [their] women and children"; make them "slaves"; "sell and dispose of them as their Majesties command[ed]"; seize all their estates; and visit on them "all the misfortunes and damage" possible, as happens to "vassals that do not obey nor want to receive their lord and resist

4 For information on the Requerimiento's origins in Islamic jihad rituals, see Seed (1995, 69–99). For its history as a legal instrument in medieval Castile, see Israeli (2022).

5 By virtue of the Catholic Church's alleged supreme rule of the universe through divine right and of the pope's global authority as God's representative on earth, Pope Alexander VI gave the (Catholic) Spanish monarchy the right to enslave so-called infidels and conquer their lands in the New World via the 1493 *Inter caetera* papal bull and set a boundary with the sphere of the Portuguese crown (also Catholic), which had the same rights in Africa and Asia. In 1494, the two kingdoms modified the division of the lands through the Treaty of Tordesillas. This was done at the insistence of the king of Portugal, who felt that Portugal had received the short end of the stick. Pope Julius II finally ratified this treaty in 1506. See Sebastian Modrow and Melissa Smith, "Inter caetera," Doctrine of Discovery, Indigenous Values Initiative, last modified June 13, 2022, https://doctrineofdiscovery.org/inter-caetera/; *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Treaty of Tordesillas," last modified May 31, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Tordesillas. Needless to say, this "donation" from the church was a blatant violation of indigenous private property rights, though in some cases it merely substituted one baseless claim (by an indigenous ruler) with another (by a Catholic ruler).

and contradict him." Foreseeing bloodshed, the crown added that "the deaths and damages that would follow this" would not be the empire's fault but the Indians'.

The war-making and pillaging power that the Spanish crown continued to grant explorers via its contracts and the Requerimiento of course continued to result in crimes against humanity, so over the course of the sixteenth century the crown modified its policies in a new effort to restrict Spanish explorers' authority and use of force. In 1542, the New Laws of the Indies gave the colonial audiencias (tribunals) vague instructions to "inform themselves of the maltreatment of Indians" and punish the perpetrators regardless of their status; to liberate Indian slaves "if the possessors [could] not show title" to them; to decide legal suits involving Indians "summarily" (rather than through "ordinary processes"), in consideration of their customs, and "without being clearly unjust"; and where that was not possible to be "especially careful" not to charge Indians such that their "life health and conservation" would be endangered (Charles I 1543, 5v, 6r; translations mine). The legislation also prohibited the granting of new encomiendas (7v). However, it did not nullify existing encomiendas, which would have freed Indians of their tribute burdens. Instead, it transferred most encomiendas to the crown—in practice, to its colonial legal officials (6v–7v), who were asked to treat the seized Indians well and to instruct them in "our holy Catholic faith" (7v). Neither did the legislation end the repartimiento system, which would have liberated Indians from their intermittent slavery. It merely ordered that the number of repartimientos be reduced (because there were allegedly an "excessive" number of them) and even granted repartimientos to the earliest conquistadors because they had not received them when they should have (7r). The New Laws also required aspiring explorers to obtain a license to make discoveries and to trade, and prohibited them from taking any Indians ("except up to three or four persons for languages") or any of their things (except in trade in sight of a supervisor chosen by the audiencia) (8r). In short, the conquest was to proceed, only more gently and with more imperial control.

Another important change came in 1573 with the Ordinances Concerning Discovery, New Settlements, and Pacification. This legislation reiterated the ban on making new discoveries without a license as well as other provisions of the New Laws of the Indies but also ordered that each exploration vessel carry "some merchandise of little value such as scissors combs knives hatchets hooks colored bonnets mirrors bells glass beads and other things of this quality" in order to "contract and trade" with Indians (Philip II 1973, § 11; translations mine). Furthermore, the ordinance expressly prohibited explorers from helping indigenous rulers wage war against other indigenous peoples, from "getting involved in war or conquest," and from otherwise harming or stealing from Indians (§ 20). Though the legislation prohibited any further voyages of discovery from being undertaken at the crown's expense (§ 25), it

did offer to license missionaries wishing to spread the Gospel to undertake discoveries and to "provide them everything necessary for so holy and good a deed" (§ 26). The discoveries were not to be called conquests, so that the name would not "give occasion . . . to use force against nor aggrieve the Indians," and needed to be "carried out with so much peace and charity" (§ 29). Once again, the conquest, an inherently violent act of dispossession, was to proceed, only gently and in an orderly manner—an impossibility.

Although both the 1542 and 1573 laws were quite permissive, they shielded La Florida Indians from the full force of an open war. For example, Adelantado Menéndez de Avilés's 1573 and 1574 requests for permission to enslave the Indians of La Florida for breaking the peace and killing and enslaving Spaniards (Connor 1925) were both rejected by the Royal Council of the Indies as illegal (76). These sixteenth-century provisions gave La Florida caciques the opportunity to play politics with the crown and to benefit from the Spanish imperial presence.

Moreover, especially with the passage of the 1573 ordinances, missionaries and gift giving became central to the quest to raise the Spanish and Catholic banners over the Americas. Under the new policy, Amy Turner Bushnell (1996, 62) observes, the military's role became to "defend the advancing missionary" rather than to advance the frontier through force (see also Chang-Rodríguez and Vogeley 2017, 34). This is important because the interests of missionaries and secular officials differed and often clashed.

In 1522, Pope Adrian VI granted religious orders autonomy and independence from governing structures around the world through the *Exponi nobis fecisti*, or *Omnímoda*, papal bull. Although the Spanish crown partially overruled this in 1568, putting the religious orders in Spain "under the jurisdiction of local bishops" and thereby giving secular officials more control over them (Starr 2016, 70), missionaries retained papal authority (which Spain largely acknowledged) to carry out their special agenda in the New World independently of the empire. Missionaries' goal was to bring Catholicism to native peoples and thereby to effect cultural changes within their societies. But though they wanted to see major changes in indigenous lifeways, missionaries were often opposed to using force.

An excerpt from Dominican friar Luis Cáncer de Barbastro's diary (Worth 2014, 172–86), which was completed by friar Gregorio de Beteta and covers the events of the 1549 mission/expedition to the Tocobagas (present-day Tampa Bay), provides a good example of missionaries' divergent hopes and the decisions that sprang from them. After hearing from Juan Muñoz, a Spaniard who had escaped to the expedition's ship after eleven years of enslavement to the Tocobagas, that a friar and a layman who had recently gone ashore had been killed, Cáncer de Barbastro determined that he could not report back to his order with such news, since Spanish officials would "conclude (and badly conclude) that all these pagans were worthy of death

and deserved to have war made upon them and their lands taken." Before he went ashore in the vain hope of making inroads with the Tocobagas and was himself killed in sight of the ship, Cáncer de Barbastro recorded in his diary an earlier conversation with the viceroy of New Spain, who had told him that if the mission failed, Cáncer de Barbastro "would be doing the worst thing that had been done in the Indies" because the Indians would have to be killed (Worth 2014, 179). Cáncer de Barbastro allegedly responded that "if they should kill us all immediately . . . they did so by their rights" and that "his Grace could not make war on them as a Catholic Christian" (179–80).

Such differences of opinion between secular officials and missionaries kept Spanish residents of La Florida in a state of perpetual vulnerability (Matter 1975, 19–20, 37). Sixteenth-century Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries consistently rejected military defense in La Florida as unchristian, a policy that left them open to attack (Matter 1975, 19–20, 37; Hann 1996, 80; Milanich 1999, 96). Though the failed Jesuit missions to the Calusas (present-day Fort Myers), Tequestas (present-day Miami), and Tocobagas (present-day Tampa Bay) in 1566–69, discussed below, were accompanied by soldiers, the Jesuit missions to the Oristas (present-day Savannah to Charleston) in 1568 and the Powhatans (present-day eastern Chesapeake Bay) in 1570 did not have a military escort (Matter 1975, 19; Gradie 1993, 164–65; Hann 1996, 81; Gray 2014, 65). According to Jesuit historian Francisco Sacchini's 1622 *Borgia, the Third Part of the History of the Society of Jesus* (Lewis and Loomie 1953, 220–21), the Jesuits considered the abuses of soldiers to have been the cause of their failure among the La Florida Indians (see also Matter 1975, 19; Deagan 1985, 298). Believing that the Powhatans had been pacified and would be easy to convert, the friars chose to go it alone, resisting Menéndez de Avilés's efforts to keep them near Spanish forts (Matter 1975, 19; Gradie 1993, 163). The mission to the Powhatans ended in murder after the young cacique Don Luis, who had been taken from his land as a boy and inculcated with Christian doctrine, turned on the friars a few days after his return home, which led to the Jesuit order's withdrawal from La Florida in 1572. Charlotte M. Gradie (1993, 155, 160–61, 171) believes that the lack of military force, combined with the crown's failure to cultivate alliances with regional leaders, left the Jesuits entirely dependent on Luis. His betrayal spelled their doom and foreclosed hopes of a Spanish colony on the Chesapeake Bay.

Indians' political strategies were predicated on far more than fear. The rift between Spanish officials and missionaries presented an opportunity for La Florida caciques to use Spanish encroachment to their advantage.

Cacical Plans for the Crown: Profiting from the Imperial System

Caciques' need to maintain their internal authority was their primary reason for seeking alliances with the Spanish crown (Worth 2002, 57–58; Francis and Kole 2011, 29–30; Thomas 2011, 11). In La Florida, caciques maintained

power by acquiring, displaying, and making gifts of exclusive items such as painted deerskins, shells, feathers, and precious stones (Worth 2002, 57; 2013, 198; Francis and Kole 2011, 29–30; Thomas 2011, 11). Archeological sites exhibit "a pattern of differential access" to these goods, evidence of the special cacical right to them (Deagan 1985, 300). Reinforced with the passage of the 1573 Ordinances Concerning Discovery, New Settlements, and Pacification, Spanish political agents' custom of sealing agreements with gifts of European goods—goods that were rare, exotic, and therefore valuable in the New World—drew caciques into alliances with the Spanish Empire as a source of material wealth and social influence. European goods such as iron axes, hoes, knives, hats, doublets, fabrics (e.g., linen, silk, and colorful cloth), and glass beads became new symbols of the La Florida cacicazgo (Hann 1996, 83, 86; Milanich 1999, 107–8; Francis and Kole 2011, 29; Worth 2013, 197–98). And as Joseph M. Hall Jr. (2012, 5) explains, "Both Natives and newcomers were familiar with the political and economic calculations behind exchange, whether giving generously, buying cheaply, or selling dearly."

By allying with the Spanish crown, caciques also vastly broadened their trade networks. Plugging into the growing Spanish colonial and global markets allowed the caciques of agricultural societies (such as the Apalachees and the Timucuas) to exchange their agricultural surpluses for all sorts of rare goods that were more desirable forms of wealth to them. With their new alliances, caciques received what they considered to be tribute from the Spanish crown in addition to what they already received from their subjects, and they further enriched themselves by redeeming their people's harvests for even more of the rare goods they desired (Thomas 2011, 10–11).

The cacicazgos of La Florida were territorial, so caciques also sought out alliances in the hope of securing support for their military operations. For the bellicose sixteenth-century Calusa cacicazgo and Powhatan paramount chiefdom, the delicately balanced regional politics in which they were embedded made the prospect of military aid an important factor in forging alliances with the Spanish Empire (Gradie 1993, 1–20). Early seventeenth-century Utinas (a Timucuan-speaking group in present-day northeastern Florida) also valued allies for their potential usefulness on the battlefield. John H. Hann (1996, 83) notes that the Spanish Empire's successful attacks against the French (at Fort Caroline, renamed San Mateo by the Spanish victors) and their Timucuan ally Tacatacuru in 1565 and 1568–69 "enhanced . . . [its] image as [an ally] worth cultivating." Although John E. Worth (2002, 57), J. Michael Francis and Kathleen M. Cole (2011, 29–30), and David Hurst Thomas (2011, 11) posit that access to luxury goods was the central concern for La Florida caciques, they nevertheless agree that military aid was a factor in their political calculations.

In the seventeenth century, allowing a mission to be established in his cacicazgo provided a cacique equal if not greater benefits than forming a direct political alliance with the Spanish crown, as well as more leeway to protect his internal authority due to the missions' stance against using military force. Missions provided caciques steady access to exotic goods, and not just the cheap goods that the 1573 Ordinances Concerning Discovery, New Settlements, and Pacification required expeditions to carry for trade and to give as diplomatic gifts. Worth (2002, 58) observes that under the mission system caciques were "regaled with a range of specialized gifts, including ornate cloth . . . and were additionally provided luxury foods such as wheat, wine, and cheese during visits." Francis and Kole (2011, 29) note that some caciques received jewelry and even horses as gifts. Another advantage of missions was that, in spite of missionaries' concerns about and opposition to a nearby military presence, they often were shadowed by military garrisons. Although these garrisons could of course threaten and harm the cacicazgo, a cacique who was a good political strategist could potentially use them to shield his territory against enemies. Mission buildings also signaled a polity's favored position with the new power in the area, which could keep enemies at bay.

Best of all, within the mission system, caciques retained their privileged status and continued to rule their people with considerable secular autonomy. They became part of a kind of Spanish paramount chiefdom. Caciques decided which of their subjects would essentially become slaves to Spanish colonists, missions, and officials under the repartimiento system of temporary slavery. Caciques determined who would receive the "wage goods" that their commoners were paid (pay was the empire's way of dissimulating the moral and legal crime of slavery, for the work could not be refused). Caciques also managed the production and sale of foodstuffs to the Spanish Empire, an extension of their traditional power over their people's labor. Friars' authority was limited to religious matters (Hann 1996, 86; Worth 2002, 57; 2013, 196–97; Thomas 2011, 10–11).

Often cacicazgos were absorbed by the colonial system rather than conquered and dissolved outright (Worth 2002, 52). Unable to compel vassalage single-handedly, the Spanish crown tried to buy local caciques in order to project authority through them. Within the richly layered imperial ruling structure, compliant caciques—who retained their power, wealth, and security—essentially aided the empire in extracting labor from Indian commoners, in converting them to Catholicism, and in generally "pacifying" them (Deagan 1985, 299, 302–4; Bushnell 1996, 63; Galgano 2005, 55; Thomas 2011, 9–10). In "rendering obedience" to the crown, then, caciques became power brokers, facilitating the Spanish conquest and subjugation of their people (Worth 1998, 37, 43; Galgano 2005, 54).

Cacical Imperatives and the Failed Missions to the Calusas, Tequestas, and Tocobagas, 1565–69

The earliest missionization attempts in La Florida, such as those of the two priests who accompanied Juan Ponce de León on his 1521 expedition and of Cáncer de Barbastro in 1549, ended in failure (and execution in the latter case). Hispano-Indian encounters were brief—a mix of trade, abduction, and battle (Deagan 1985, 286; Worth 2013, 197–201; 2014, 154). Caciques may have been uninterested in alliances due to negative early experiences with Spanish explorers and a lack of familiarity with the newcomers and their potential usefulness. La Florida caciques' isolationism thus successfully posed an impediment to missionization from 1513 to 1564. It is unclear what changed in the 1560s. Caciques may have become more amenable to alliance due to the impressive Spanish victory over the French at Fort Caroline, as Hann (1996, 83) posits, or due to their polities' weakness from widespread illness in the wake of Spanish contact (Deagan 1985, 290–91; Worth 2002, 47). Whatever the case may be, La Florida's caciques showed ample interest in establishing alliances when Adelantado Menéndez de Avilés paid them diplomatic visits in 1566. Menéndez de Avilés forged alliances with the caciques of the Calusas, Tequestas, and Tocobagas in the southern Florida peninsula. These caciques were all competing for control of the area, and Menéndez de Avilés tried to broker a peace between them for the crown's benefit.

Menéndez de Avilés came to the Calusa cacicazgo in early fall 1566 "in search of some [Christian] men and women who . . . had been captured twenty years ago and were being held captive" by Cacique Carlos (possibly named Calus, and for whom the Spanish explorers named his people). According to Solís de Merás (2017, 87), Carlos sacrificed some of the captives every year. Menéndez de Avilés and Carlos had a tense first encounter. Carlos received "a shirt and breeches of taffeta, a doublet, and a hat," as well as gifts for his wives, and gave the adelantado a silver bar in return. Carlos was allegedly "driven by greed"—clearly a desire for exotic goods—onto the Spaniards' ship, where Menéndez de Avilés strong-armed him into releasing the captives. Soon after this incident, Carlos visited the adelantado desiring to form an alliance, and he offered Menéndez de Avilés his elder sister in marriage, an offer the adelantado had no real choice but to accept (91–99).

Having held Christian captives and interacted with explorers in the past, the cacique seems to have been aware of the importance to the Spanish crown of conversion. Without prompting, Carlos told the adelantado that he would go to Christian lands and "become a Christian with all his men" after his sister had gone and reported back to him (Solís de Merás 2017, 91). Later, when the adelantado hesitated to consummate the marriage on the grounds that Carlos's sister was not a Christian, Carlos replied that since the Spanish and the Calusas had become allies, "he and his sister and his people were already

Christians" (95). Menéndez de Avilés could not overtly refuse Carlos's sister, which would have broken the peace, since the Calusas "would [have been] . . . outraged." So, after spending the night with her (but not consummating the marriage), he ordered a naval officer to take Doña Antonia, as she'd been christened after baptism, to Havana with her servant woman and a small retinue of Calusa nobles. There the group was placed in the care of the royal treasurer, who was to see that they were treated well and indoctrinated in Catholicism (98–100). Sometime later, Menéndez de Avilés returned Antonia and her servant to Calusa, though the nobles who had accompanied them died of illness and never made it back (chap. 16).

Carlos, for his part, allowed a cross to be set up in his town, and he and his military leader promised to worship it daily, though Carlos stressed that he could not give up his idols so soon (Solís de Merás 2017, 99). He also accepted what I call soldier-missionaries, lay Christian soldiers who in addition to furthering the Spanish crown's "pacification" of La Florida cacicazgos with their forts and physical presence were to instruct the natives in Christianity by example (Gradie 1993, 158; Worth 2014, 220). On October 15, 1566, after his return to Saint Augustine, Menéndez de Avilés issued a formal order for the establishment of Fort San Antón in Carlos's land (Worth 2014, 267–68). The adelantado sent Captain Francisco de Reinoso and fifty soldier-missionaries to Carlos, having ordered them to "worship the cross with great devotion morning and evening, reciting the catechism, so the Indians would do the same, and . . . to instruct [the Calusas] as best they could," according to Solís de Merás's (2017, 170–71) account. Reinoso and his soldier-missionaries were accompanied by Carlos's cousin and heir, Don Pedro, who had lived among the Spanish, was baptized, and was reportedly interested in marrying Antonia and Christianizing the Calusas, and his servant (170).

Everything seemed fine when Reinoso left for Havana, where he was to leave Antonia and another small group of nobles (a measure to protect the garrison from a sudden betrayal), as Menéndez de Avilés had instructed, and procure supplies for the garrison before returning to the Calusas. But as Solís de Merás reported, Reinoso later sent word to Menéndez de Avilés in Havana that Carlos had tried two or three times to have him and his men executed, and that the cacique was anxious for his sister and the other Calusas to return home. Reinoso also reported that Carlos was "bloodthirsty to kill Christians," noting that the Christian captives that Menéndez de Avilés had redeemed claimed that in the last twenty years Carlos and his father had killed "more than 200 Christians, sacrificing them to the devil, and performing their festivals and dances with them" (Worth 2014, 258). So in spring 1567 Menéndez de Avilés began his return voyage to the Calusas from Havana with 150 men; Jesuit friars Juan Rogel and Francisco de Villarreal; Antonia; and some Tequesta nobles (259). The expedition unexpectedly entered the Tequesta port, however, where they found Cacique Tequesta, for whom the

Spanish explorers named the people of present-day southeast Florida, ready to "take [Menéndez de Avilés] for his elder brother [liege and ally]" (Worth 2014, 259 [quote], 273; Solís de Merás 2017, chap. 20).

Tequesta was one of many caciques that were subordinate to Carlos, but the two rulers were in the middle of "a great war." Tequesta claimed that Carlos had tried to force him to surrender the Christians in his midst so that Carlos could execute them for treason, according to a March 28, 1568, letter by Pedro Menéndez Márquez (Worth 2014, 270–71), lieutenant governor of Cuba and nephew of Menéndez de Avilés, as well as Solís de Merás's account (259). When the Tequesta cacique had refused, Carlos had ordered his assassination for having "friendship" with the Spanish crown, but Tequesta had repulsed the Calusas, killing two of Carlos's men (259, 270–71). As the region's most powerful ruler, Carlos desired an exclusive alliance with the crown that would give his cacicazgo a military advantage over other polities in the area. But Tequesta, an unwilling vassal, also stood to benefit from an alliance with the crown because it could restore his power, perhaps even putting him on equal footing with Carlos.

Knowing that the crown simply wanted to impose itself over all these polities with as little effort and controversy as possible, Menéndez de Avilés decided to negotiate a Calusa-Tequesta peace. On his second visit to Carlos with Antonia, he brought along some Tequesta representatives (Worth 2014, 259). But Carlos had his own plans. Testing the depth of the alliance, he asked Menéndez de Avilés to back him in an assault against the Tocobagas, neighboring enemies whom the Spaniards had also named for one of their caciques (260). Menéndez de Avilés responded with the usual refrain about making peace and agreed to accompany the Calusas to Tocobaga to negotiate (260). After seemingly brokering a peace between Carlos and Tequesta, Menéndez de Avilés proceeded north with the Tequesta representatives, Carlos, and twenty Calusa nobles (261). Just as they arrived, Carlos again tried to convince Menéndez de Avilés to help him ambush the Tocobagas. The request was denied, and Carlos was furious, but he put on a good face for the negotiation (261).

Cacique Tocobaga was very wary of the visitors, having heard that the Christians would "kill him and his people and burn their idols and towns," as he told Menéndez de Avilés (Worth 2014, 262). Tocobaga had even warned neighboring allied caciques to "give [the Christians] corn . . . [or] they would kill them," but the Christians had killed many people who had failed to heed Tocobaga's warning (262). These Christians, the French at Fort Caroline, were later killed by another group of Christians, the Spanish, whom "the chiefs and Indians loved . . . greatly" (262). Tocobaga asked which group the visitors belonged to (262). Menéndez de Avilés identified himself as part of the latter group, who had defeated the French in 1565, and managed to convince Tocobaga that the crown meant him no harm, so

Tocobaga, twenty-nine other caciques, and one hundred nobles met with the delegation and agreed to "take [Menéndez de Avilés] for their elder brother and become Christians, and . . . make peace with Carlos" on the condition that the crown would aid them if Carlos broke the pact (263–64). Carlos agreed on the same terms (264). Knowing that Carlos had soldier-missionaries in his land, Tocobaga pointedly requested Christians as well, so that they could "defend him against his enemies" (263). Menéndez de Avilés left thirty soldier-missionaries with Tocobaga before departing (264).

Carlos and Antonia were both openly displeased with what had transpired, but Menéndez de Avilés returned them to the Calusa capital without incident, leaving fifty soldier-missionaries and Friar Rogel with the Calusas (Worth 2014, 264–65). He then dropped the Tequesta dignitaries off and left thirty soldier-missionaries and Friar Villarreal with the Tequestas (265–66).

The Tequesta and Tocobaga caciques' alliances with the Spanish crown disrupted the power balance of the region in their favor. By protecting them from the dominant Calusa cacicazgo and perhaps even voiding their tribute obligations to Carlos, the alliances bolstered these weaker polities' positions and created an opening for the Tequesta and Tocobaga ruling classes to absorb a lot of power and enrich themselves. For Carlos, the peace treaty had exposed the Spanish alliance not only as useless to his expansionist ambitions but, far worse, as a mortal threat to the Calusa cacicazgo's long-standing dominance and to the Calusa ruling class's wealth, which was siphoned from weaker cacicazgos.

Unfortunately for Menéndez de Avilés, the soldier-missionaries and the Jesuit friars soon became more trouble than they were worth even to the caciques who at that point stood to gain the most from aligning with the crown. Soldier-missionaries killed a Tequesta elder who had been a cacique. In a March 5, 1570, letter to his superior Francisco Borgia (Worth 2014, 272–74), written after the Spanish withdrawal from South Florida in June 1569, Villarreal stated that they had killed this high-ranking person "on account of an affront . . . [he] made to a soldier" (273). War broke out, of course, and the missionaries who were not killed were driven from the land in early 1568. They had been in the Tequesta cacicazgo for ten months when they found themselves forced to retreat to Fort San Antón, where the soldier-missionaries to the Calusa were stationed. According to Villarreal, early on the people told the missionaries that "they knew the doctrine, so [Villarreal and the soldier-missionaries] should go away from their land" (273). Though the records that I have consulted do not explicitly mention it, the soldier-missionaries' lingering presence likely soured relations. The Tequestas may have felt obligated to roll out the red carpet for their guests, feeding them well and lavishing them with other hospitality. But the missionaries had no intention of leaving and seemingly had no problem draining the Tequestas' food stores and goodwill. To say that the latter may have become exasperated

is an understatement—the livelihood and the very survival of a society that relied on fishing, hunting, and gathering was threatened by this tremendous and unforeseen drain on its resources. The missionaries' total lack of consideration for their new allies may even have shown the Tequesta political class that something was amiss with their so-called elder brothers. And the missionaries were not getting the message. It would not have taken much for such tension to explode into conflict, but the murder of a politically connected person was far more than a catalyst—it was a grave offense, the kind that to this day is often met with a declaration of war. The crown had misrepresented its agenda of vassalage and conversion as a commitment with no downside. Once caciques saw what allegiance to the Spanish crown meant in practice, they had to recalculate the value of alliance. For the Tequesta ruling class, soldier-missionaries' aggression and the burden they placed on resources far outweighed their benefits, which, in any case, had yet to materialize. Once the recalculation was complete, fear did little to keep the Tequesta caciques from expelling the missionaries.

The Tocobaga ruling class seems to have come to the same calculation. In his March 28, 1568, letter, Menéndez Márquez reported that he had found two soldier-missionaries dead on the beach near Tocobaga in early January 1568 (Worth 2014, 270). In his March 5, 1570, letter to Borgia, Villarreal reported that the Tocobagas had torn down the Spanish fort near them and killed all the soldier-missionaries who had been left with them (273). Menéndez Márquez finished destroying Hispano-Tocobaga relations by burning Tocobaga down in retaliation (270). Although neither Villarreal nor Menéndez Márquez explained what brought on the conflict, it's probable that the soldier-missionaries committed offenses similar to those experienced by the Tequestas or that word about their transgressions against other peoples reached the Tocobaga authorities, who then carried out a preemptive strike.

The situation with the Calusas was more complex. The missionaries asked far more of the Calusas and so threatened their sociopolitical order more seriously. Hispano-Calusa relations were likely strained by the soldier-missionaries' drain on resources just as Hispano-Tequesta and Hispano-Tocobaga relations likely were, but the tension with the Calusas was greatly exacerbated by the soldier-missionaries' encroachment on a special kind of "resource": local women. Calusa men were threatened by the soldier-missionaries' interest in Calusa women, since the women "loved them greatly" (Worth 2014, 259). This had been an ongoing issue since the first soldier-missionaries had been left with the Calusas, so much so that the soldiers feared execution even though Antonia was away and could be killed in retribution (260).

Friar Rogel made matters worse with his aggressive conversion strategy. In his 1607–11 report on the Florida missions (Hann 1991), he stated that he had preached against Calusa religion after witnessing the "wretches" worship their

"temple of idols . . . which were some very ugly masks" (287). "Because he had revealed their secrets and profaned their religion," Rogel said, "its authors conceived a great hate against him" (287). These "authors" were likely Calusa clerics, who saw their positions threatened by the advent of a new religion. Indeed, Milanich (1999, 95) asserts that many Calusa clerics were "openly hostile toward the Jesuits, viewing them as threats to the power of the native elites." The religious conflict soon escalated, with Calusas trying to force their way into the fort with the masks on. Rogel reported that a soldier allegedly hit one of these people, almost initiating a battle (Hann 1991, 287–88).

Carlos was quickly losing patience. The alliance that he'd put so much effort and wealth into forging was proving useless in his goal of subduing the Tequestas and the Tocobagas for good. In his March 28, 1568, letter, Menéndez Márquez claimed that Carlos had had a Tequesta cacique and two presumably high-ranking Tequestas assassinated, a clear violation of the peace pact (Worth 2014, 270–71). Nevertheless, Carlos continued to try to use the alliance to his benefit. He asked Menéndez Márquez to collect tribute from the Tequestas on his behalf, which Menéndez Márquez seems to have done (270).

In the end, what doomed the mission to the Calusas was an internal conflict between Carlos and one of his kinsmen, later christened Don Felipe, who was a lesser cacique and one of Carlos's rivals. In his report, Rogel wrote that there was bad blood between the two because Carlos had married Antonia off to Menéndez de Avilés, even though Felipe was already married to her and another of Carlos's sisters according to Solís de Merás (Hann 1991, 289; Worth 2014, 252). The Spanish soldier-missionaries killed Carlos "at the urging of" Felipe (Hann 1991, 289). According to Villarreal's March 5, 1570, letter to Borgia, the soldiers claimed that Carlos "wished to kill them" (Worth 2014, 273). It seems probable that Carlos's next move would have been to execute or expel the soldiers, given how costly the alliance was to maintain and how little fruit it had borne. However, the schism between Carlos and Felipe seems to have been the deciding factor in Carlos's execution. Mariah F. Wade (2011, 55) writes that Carlos "steered a neutral course[,] . . . minimiz[ing] change while profiting from the elements of the Spanish-Calusa alliance that enhanced his prestige." But although Carlos tended to put on a good face when he was thwarted, aiming to play the long game, it had become evident that there was little to gain from a Spanish alliance—for him, at least. For Felipe, alignment with the Spanish was an opportunity to effect a coup d'état, which is why he'd shown himself more open to conversion than Carlos, readily promising to convert upon the adelantado's return from Spain (Worth 2014, 273). Conversant in Spanish, Felipe may have been aware of the soldier-missionaries' suspicion of Carlos and may have leveraged it to get the soldiers to deal the blow that put him in power.

On becoming cacique in 1568, Felipe adopted Carlos's strategy. When Rogel tried to prevent him from marrying his sister, he resisted, saying that "it was a custom of the caciques to marry their sisters; that when he became a Christian, he would leave her" (Hann 1991, 290). By putting Catholicism off rather than explicitly rejecting it, Felipe was able to benefit from the goods and protection that his alliance with the crown provided while retaining the practices of polygamy and sororal marriage that were the mark of the Calusa cacicazgo. As Wade (2011, 55, 58) aptly puts it, the Calusa chief well understood that "to accept Europeans without Christianity was feasible, [but] to accept both was cultural suicide." Felipe soon decided to expel the Spanish, likely due to continuing religious pressure and its affront to cacical authority. According to Friar Villarreal, Felipe had burned his idols after Menéndez de Avilés asked him to, and though he had allegedly appeared to do it voluntarily, he later revealed that he had done it under duress (Worth 2014, 273–74). For Felipe, the alliance had outlived its immediate usefulness to become not just a nuisance but a threat to his authority. He had taken revenge on Carlos and installed himself as cacique, and he had likely realized that the Spanish would not be furnishing military aid either. It was time for them to leave. Unfortunately for Felipe, his gains were short-lived: in early 1569, the soldier-missionaries killed him, along with several nobles, for trying to kill the Christians.

But even though the Calusas lost two of their caciques, as well as some *cacicas*, whom the missionaries abducted and took to Havana, the Jesuits and soldier-missionaries were forced to withdraw from what had become hostile territory (Worth 2014, 274). The Calusas had fled the cacicazgo, leaving the missionizers without food or students and the crown without subjects. Only a stable peace would bring the people back. Jesuits and soldier-missionaries had overplayed their hand: missionaries would not return to present-day South Florida for more than two hundred years (Francis and Kole 2011, 21).

Two Readings of the 1597 Guale Revolt against the Franciscans

Like the Calusa, Tequesta, and Tocobaga caciques, the Guale and Orista micos[6] aimed to dominate their geopolitical arena by allying with the Spanish newcomers. According to Solís de Merás, when Menéndez de Avilés arrived in Guale (present-day mid-Georgia coast to Savannah) in 1566, the seemingly more powerful Mico Guale, for whom his subjects were named, was initially "troubled by the Adelantado's friendship" with the neighboring Oristas (present-day Savannah to Charleston) and "by the fact that those chieftains had taken him for their elder brother." He wanted Menéndez de Avilés to "leave him people to live in his land, since he had done that for Orista" (Solís

6 *Mico* is a Guale Muskogean word for chief, but Spanish officials seem to have used it loosely, if the documentary record is any indication.

de Merás 2017, 126). Despite some violent encounters in 1574 and 1576, relations with these micos had been largely peaceful (Francis and Kole 2011, 22).

The Jesuits had briefly attempted to proselytize the mutually hostile Guale (a Muskogean-speaking group) and Orista (a Timucuan-speaking group) chiefdoms in 1568, after their caciques requested missionaries (Hann 1991, 290; Hudson 2005, 80–81, 155–56, 182; Solís de Merás 2017, 115, 122, 124, 160). However, the Jesuits abandoned their plans for La Florida in 1572, and Franciscan missionaries took their place. In 1595, Governor Domingo Martínez de Avendaño approved the establishment of five Franciscan missions in Guale territory. There was peace at first, but this was not to last. David Hurst Thomas (2011, 5) provides a brief summary of what transpired: "In the late fall of 1597, Guale Indians murdered five Franciscan friars . . . and razed their missions to the ground. . . . According to most versions of the story, . . . [the] resident friar [of Tolomato, the seat of the Guale chiefdom, near present-day Darien, Georgia] publicly reprimanded [Mico] Juanillo for practicing polygamy. In his anger, Juanillo . . . launched a series of violent assaults on all five of Guale territory's Franciscan missions."

J. Michael Francis and Kathleen M. Kole (2011) dispute this narrative. In his introduction to Francis and Kole's book, David Hurst Thomas (2011, 11) notes that their research yielded additional documents on the 1597 uprising that show that the revolt "largely reflected the tensions between indigenous chiefdoms" rather than hostility toward the missionaries, especially given the many benefits of the Hispano-Guale alliance. "To maintain hegemony," he explains, "the paramount Guale chief [*mico mayor*] depended on alliances and tribute relationships with both lesser Guale chiefdoms and the Spanish government." Indeed, when the Franciscan missions were founded, neither Spanish officials nor the Franciscans had safety concerns (Francis and Kole 2011, 26). In fact, the Franciscans lived peacefully among the Guales for two years without a garrison (26). In 1597, they became casualties of Guale micos' struggle for power, but they were not direct targets, as shown by the fact that in some of the mission towns both the cacical residence and the mission buildings were burned down (68). The revolt was orchestrated by Mico Don Domingo, who was a rival of Mico Mayor Don Juan (a.k.a. Juanillo) and sought to become mico mayor (145).

Considering these conflicting tellings of the 1597 Guale revolt allows us to discern the considerable power that indigenous rulers had in their relations with Spanish officials and missionaries. In the first version, Juanillo enjoyed the fruits of allying with the crown and accepting missionaries. He received valuable foreign goods and military strength via his ties to the missionaries. But once the friars began to interfere with polygamy, a traditional source of cacical power, Juanillo murdered several of them, reasserting his authority. In the second version, the friars had nothing to do with the uprising. They died

almost at random, perhaps killed as a way to incite the crown against Juanillo. Either way, the Franciscans' deaths and the reports of the friars' interference with polygamy sealed Juanillo's fate. His subsequent execution by the Spanish allowed Domingo to become mico mayor, breaking the line of succession (Francis and Kole 2011, 145). The new mico mayor "made regular trips to St. Augustine, taking Indian laborers [Guale commoners] with him to perform public works in the Spanish garrison. In exchange . . . [he] received Spanish luxury goods and continued favor" (145). In both narratives, the missionaries had limited influence over cacical affairs. They and the Spanish crown were means for a Guale mico to achieve political ends. In the first reading, Juanillo used the missionaries to gain prestige before the common population and killed them when his authority was threatened; in the second, he collaborated with them to gain an advantage over political rivals, who themselves used the missionaries to remove him from power.

Conclusion

Both the failed attempts to establish missions among the Tequestas, Tocobagas, and Calusas and the Guale revolt demonstrate that caciques' continual efforts to protect and amplify their power could not be ignored if a Spanish imperial foothold was to come to fruition in La Florida. Sixteenth-century caciques only allowed their subjects to be proselytized as long as an alliance with the crown furthered their political aims. Well into the seventeenth century, the price of caciques' cooperation in the conquest of the region would remain gifts of valuable European goods that reinforced their internal authority, military aid against their enemies, and the condition that missionaries remain subordinate to cacical authority.

Historians still have not understood the import of the indigenous agency they have finally begun to acknowledge. The fact of agency matters because the decisions that people make in the hope of fulfilling their ambitions create ripples in sequences of events. These ripples can be wider and stronger when individuals are vested with political authority—with the unnatural and fundamentally unjust power of coercion. Considered alongside Spanish imperial policy and Spanish explorers' incentives in coming to the Americas, La Florida caciques' distinct sociopolitical interests suggest that the atrocities and injustices of colonialism are the product of politics, of the vulnerability created by legalized violence, rather than of prejudices or capitalism. This insight in turn suggests that the full story of the Americas—and, indeed, of colonialism through the ages and across the globe—will never be told unless historians make a thematic shift and transcend the superficial, reductionist dichotomy of natives and colonizers to acknowledge the various political interests within all polities.

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