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Black-Indian Interaction in Spanish Florida

JANE LANDERS

The popular image of encounters between Europeans and peoples of the New World is of Whites meeting aborigines. The Catholic monarchs who first undertook to build an empire in the western hemisphere felt a special obligation to evangelize and convert the Indians, as they mistakenly called the native peoples. Indeed, Pope Alexander VI validated Spain's imperial claims on the basis of their promise to gather "new Christians." From the earliest days of contact, a small but dedicated group of priests worked to expand the spiritual as well as the territorial sway of Spain. At the same time, Spanish conquerors, who were an urban people, sought to promote public order and righteous living by establishing towns and missions throughout their new empire. Viewing the Indians as their wards, they developed a colonization model based upon two republics, that of the Spaniards and a new and separate republic of Indians. They instituted protective legislation for their charges and a theoretical segregation from Europeans.[1]

Africans were not at first considered in this schema, although they had been present in Spain from at least the Moslem period (711-1492) and had achieved rights and even access to freedom through a legal system based on Roman law and customary practice. In fact, they played significant roles in Spain's exploration and settlement of the Americas. First introduced into Española, Blacks also took part in later expeditions to Puerto Rico (1508), Jamaica (1509), Cuba (1511), and Florida (1513). Almost as soon as they landed, however, Africans began running away from their captors, and many found refuge in

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[1] Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 74, 153-81.

Cortés greets Mexicans with his African page, Juan Garrido, at his side, from *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, by Padre Fray Diego Durán. Courtesy of Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville.
Firme, by Padre Fray Diego Durán. Courtesy of Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville.

Zambo chieftains of Esmeraldas (Ecuador), 1599, by Adrián Sánchez Galque, from Museo de las Américas, Madrid. Courtesy of Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville. Esmeraldas was a region settled by shipwrecked African slaves in northern Ecuador in the late sixteenth century. They intermarried with the Indian population and enjoyed autonomy for decades. Galque, an Indian artist, painted these representatives of Esmeraldas as they appeared before the Audiencia de Quito.

Indian villages. As early as 1503, officials of Española were complaining that the runaways, known as *cimarrones*, were teaching the Indians "bad customs," a theme that would be reiterated many times in other areas of Hispanic conquest.[2]

The Spaniards understood the danger of any alliance of the non-White groups and sought to separate them. Special legislation forbade Blacks from living in Indian villages or trading with them. The frequency with which such legislation appears, however, is testimony to its failure.[3] The encounters, then, were actually among three races, not two, and the non-White races often found common ground in the face of European exploitation. This essay will address the changing relations formed by Blacks and Native Americans in the Spanish Southeast, and will focus on the cooperation forged between Africans and Yamassee in the eighteenth century.

Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans had extensive contact in the Southeast for over three centuries. This contact meant the rapid decimation of the native populations, the destruction of many of their traditional ways of life, the enslavement and exploitation of both Indians and Blacks, and chronic warfare engendered by European territorial and commercial rivalry. Although Europeans of one nationality or another were eventually the victors, the non-White groups pursued their own advantage when possible, and because they could either be sorely needed allies or dangerous foes, they enjoyed a certain leverage. Embroiled in the struggles of the European superpowers of their day, Indians and Blacks became adroit and pragmatic diplomats. And when diplomacy did not serve, they often took up arms.

European intrusions in the Southeast began in 1513 when Ponce de León "discovered" Florida. The first Spanish contact with the natives of Florida was hostile, but Spain thereafter claimed exclusive sovereignty over an area stretching from the Florida Keys to Newfoundland and west to Mexico, a claim disputed by both the French and the English who viewed effective occupation as the true measure of sovereignty. Eight years later Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón took Guale slaves from the South Carolina coast and in 1526 returned to attempt

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[2] Carlos Esteban Deive, *La esclavitud del negro en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Museo del Hombre Dominicano, 1980), 429-64.

[3] Edgar F. Love, "Legal Restrictions on Afro-Indian Relations in Colonial Mexico," *Journal of Negro History* 55 (1970):131-39.

a settlement at a place he called San Miguel de Gualdape. The colony consisted of five hundred Spanish men and women, and the first known contingent of African slaves to be brought to the present-day United States. Disease, starvation, and mutiny undermined the enterprise, and as winter bore down, the slaves set fires and joined a Guale rebellion which completed the destruction of that outpost. The African rebels disappeared from history and presumably blended into the Indian population.[4]

Subsequent conquistadors were no more successful than Ayllón in establishing a foothold in Florida. Chronicles of their explorations are replete with episodes of violence toward and by the Indians, who resisted Spanish labor and tribute demands as well as the efforts of friars to convert them and change their social practices.[5] The first permanent settlement in the Southeast was not achieved until 1565 when Pedro Menéndez de Avilés established San Agustín in the lands of the Timucuan Indians. White manpower was in short supply, as it was in other areas of the Caribbean, and the Spaniards considered Florida's Indians too weak, lazy, and transient to be a dependable labor force. Moreover, the native populations were extremely vulnerable to the European diseases which had already ravaged their counterparts in the Antilles.

For all those reasons, and because there were no mines or plantations requiring intensive labor, the abusive system of *encomienda* which allocated Indian labor or tribute to Spaniards was never instituted, although the practice sometimes occurred illegally. In recognition of the shortage of European and native laborers, a royal charter granted Menéndez permission to import five hundred slaves, but evidence suggests that fewer than one hundred may have accompanied the first settlers. Some of these ran to join the fierce Ais nation to the south, but those who remained cleared the land, planted the fields, and

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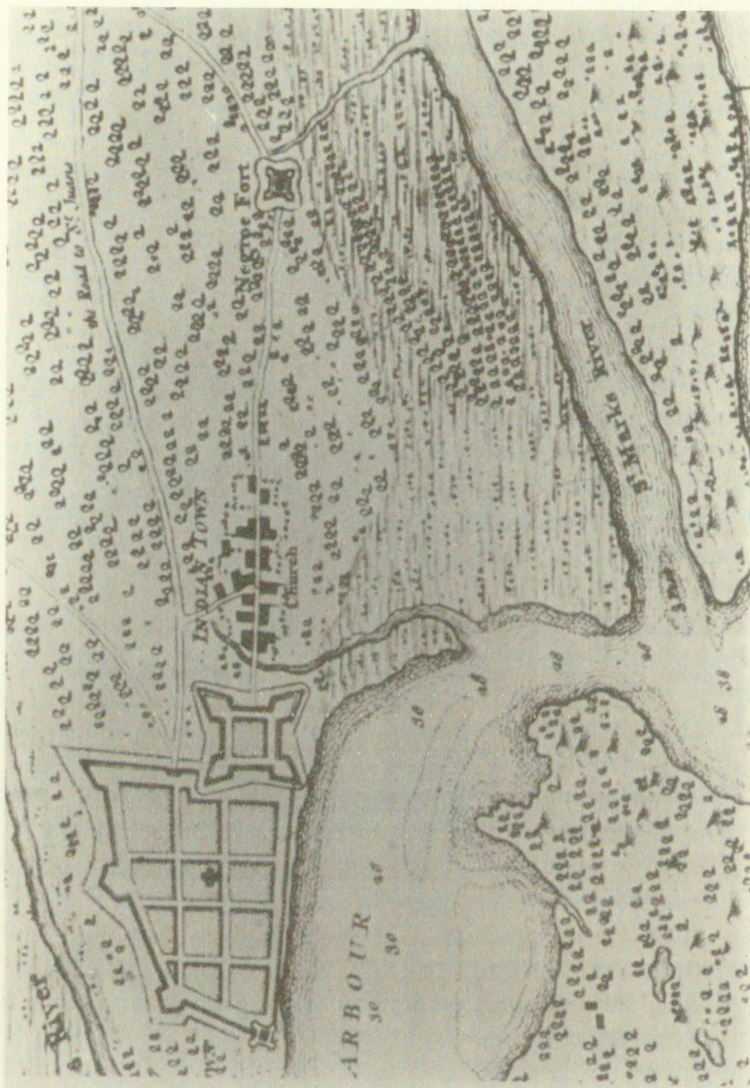
[4] Jane Landers, "Africans in the Land of Ayllón: The Exploration and Settlement of the Southeast," *Columbus and the Land of Ayllón*, ed. Jeannine Cook (Darien, GA: The Lower Altamana Historical Society, 1992), 105-23. For more on the Ayllón effort see Paul E. Hoffman, *A New Andalucia and a Way to the Orient: The American Southeast During the Sixteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

[5] Jerald T. Milanich and Susan Milbrath, eds., *First Encounters: Spanish Explorations in the Caribbean and the United States, 1492-1570* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1989), 77-182.



A 1762 drawing of the town and harbor of San Agustín showing Indian villages and Negro fort on the periphery, by Thomas Jeffreys, from *A Description of the Spanish Islands and Settlements on the Coast of the West Indies* (London, 1792), plate 6. Courtesy of P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville.

built the new structures at San Agustín.[6] Skilled Blacks were later sent to build fortifications at Spain's northernmost settlement at Santa Elena (present-day Parris Island) where they also came into contact with the Guale Indians.[7]

The Guale resisted Spanish control through most of the sixteenth century, but epidemic disease and warfare were their undoing. A major revolt erupted in 1576 and was ended only in 1580 when the Spaniards killed many Indians and put nineteen towns and many granaries and fields to the torch. The Black labor force which arrived from San Agustín in 1583 to rebuild the Spanish settlement witnessed the aftermath of that tragedy. After another serious revolt was brutally suppressed in 1597, the Guale coastal settlements went into a long period of decline, and survivors were gradually relocated to the barrier islands. In an all too common scenario, the remnants of many different villages were "reduced" to mission sites where they could more readily supply the Spaniards with food and labor.[8]

In 1670 English planters from Barbados challenged Spain's claim to exclusive sovereignty in the Southeast by establishing a colony at Charles Town in South Carolina, "but ten days journey" from San Agustín. This event dramatically altered the geopolitics of the Southeast as well as the inter-ethnic relations of the frontier. An undermanned Spanish garrison made a feeble attempt to eject the usurpers but failed, and almost a century of conflict ensued over the so-called debatable lands.[9] Each side used Indian surrogates to do much of their fighting, and both the English and the Spaniards recognized that Africans were

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[6] Eugene Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida: Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the Spanish Conquest of 1565-1568* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1965), 149.

[7] Verne E. Chatelain, *The Defenses of Spanish Florida, 1565-1763* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute, 1941), 138.

[8] Grant D. Jones, "The Ethnohistory of the Guale Coast through 1684," in David Hurst Thomas et al., *The Anthropology of St. Catherine's Island: 1. Natural and Cultural History*, Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. 55, part 2 (New York, 1978), 178-79. See also David Hurst Thomas, ed. *Columbian Consequences*, vol. 2: *Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands East* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 357-526.

[9] Herbert E. Bolton and Mary Ross, *The Debatable Land: A Sketch of the Anglo-Spanish Contest for the Georgia Country* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968). See also Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981).

also critical to the political equation in the Southeast. The linguistic abilities and cultural awareness of Blacks, as well as their knowledge of the frontier and military skills, made them significant actors in trade, diplomacy, and intelligence gathering.[10]

To defend Florida the Spaniards launched the construction of the massive stone fort at San Agustín, the Castillo de San Marcos. This project increased the labor and food demands on nearby Indians whose numbers had been "thinned" by recurring epidemics of typhus, yellow fever, smallpox, measles, and unidentified "pests and contagions."[11] Indians from the western Florida province of Apalachee were recruited to finish the fort and additional slaves, some of them expert stonecutters, were imported from Havana. Thus, Africans and Indians labored together and lived in close proximity in San Agustín although efforts were still made to keep Blacks from staying longer than three days in any Indian village.[12]

The new balance of power in the Southeast required a flexible response, and despite prohibitions against arming Indians and Blacks, the Spaniards in Florida armed both groups and demanded their military service. A Black militia was formed by at least 1683 and in 1686 a combined force of Spaniards, Blacks, and Indians attacked Carolina. The attack was retaliation against the Yamassee Indians who with British encouragment conducted slave raids against the villages of Spain's Timucuan allies. The polyglot Spanish forces burned plantations, killed some of the settlers, and carried off slaves and other portable booty.[13] The Carolinians, in turn, instigated more raids against the Spanish Indians and encouraged inter-tribal warfare among interior tribes to supply their growing trade in slaves. The Spaniards

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[10] Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 35-62.

[11] The most controversial estimates of Florida's pre-contact populations and their subsequent decline are those of Henry Dobyns, who argues Florida was once home to 200,000 Indians. Henry Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 51, 291-95.

[12] John H. Hann, "Florencia Visitation of Timucua," *Florida Archaeology* (forthcoming).

[13] Roster of the Free Pardo and Moreno Militia of San Agustín, September 20, 1683, Santo Domingo 226 (hereinafter cited as Santo Domingo), Archivo General de Indias (hereinafter cited as AGI) and Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 31-33.

were unable to defend the island missions and tried to relocate their inhabitants southward, but many revolted, among them the Yamassee, and fled instead to the interior and the English. When the Spaniards complained about Yamassee raids, Carolina's governor disclaimed responsibility, noting that the Yamassee were "a people who live within our bounds after their own manner taking no notice of our Government."[14]

The final blow to the Spanish mission system came with the outbreak of Queen Anne's War (the War of the Spanish Succession) in 1700. In 1702 and 1704 Governor James Moore led Carolina forces, augmented by Yamassee allies and Black cattle-hunters, in repeated raids on the Spanish mission sites. They slaughtered thousands of mission Indians and carried many more thousands into slavery. The Black and Indian militias fought bravely to defend San Agustín, but the inability of the Spaniards to protect even the missions outside their walls led many of their once loyal allies to defect to the English. After 1704 only a pitiful group of refugee Indian camps bordered San Agustín.[15]

The repeated cross-currents of raids and migrations across the Southeast acquainted many Blacks and Indians with the routes to San Agustín, and in 1687 the Spanish governor reported the arrival of the first fugitive slaves from Carolina—eight men, two women, and a nursing child, who had escaped to San Agustín in a boat. Despite early uncertainty about their legal status, the Spaniards welcomed the labor and the military services the runaways offered. Although the English demanded their return, Spanish officials sheltered them, instructed them in Catholic doctrine, and put them to work. The men became ironsmiths and laborers on the Castillo and were paid one peso a day, the wage paid to Indian laborers. The women were employed as domestics and were paid half as much. The runaways claimed to be seeking religious conversion, and after lengthy deliberations, the Spanish king decided in 1693 to free them, "granting liberty to all...the men as well

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[14] Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 33.

[15] Charles W. Arnade, *The Siege of St. Augustine in 1702* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1959), 35. The Spanish force defending San Agustín in 1702 consisted of 174 army men, forty-four White militiamen, 123 Indians from the Apalachee, Guale, and Timucuan *doctrinas*, and fifty-seven Blacks. See also John J. TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida, 1700-1763* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964), 110-13, 196-97.

as the women...so that by their example and by my liberality...others will do the same."[16]

In the next decades more slaves sought asylum in Florida and they were frequently aided in their escapes by Indians. Although the Carolinians set up a patrol system and placed scout boats along water routes to San Agustín, they were unable to completely stop the flow of runaways. The planters complained bitterly of the provocation inherent in this sanctuary policy, for not only did each runaway represent an economic loss and a threat to the plantation economy, but also by the beginning of the eighteenth century African-Americans outnumbered Whites in the English colony. Chronic fears of slave uprisings were not baseless. Carolina experienced slave revolts in 1711 and 1714, and in the following year many slaves joined the Yamassee War against the English.

Peter Wood asserts that "in simple proportional terms, Negroes may never have played such a major role in any earlier or later American conflict as they did in the Yamassee war of 1715." The dangerously outnumbered Carolinians incorporated four hundred Blacks and about one hundred free Indians into their militias. Despite these measures, the Yamassee and their Creek allies struck with such force that only reinforcements from Virginia and North Carolina, and a last-minute alliance with the Cherokee, saved the English from extermination.[17]

A minister of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts saw the war as a visitation from God and claimed that it was caused by "the gross neglect of the poor slaves among us," "the poverty of the Indians and the wealth of the English," "the extortion and knavery of the (Indian) traders," and the "vast debts" of the

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[16] "William Dunlop's Mission to St. Augustine in 1688," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 34 (1933):1-30; Diego de Quiroga to the king, February 2, 1688, cited in Irene Wright, "Dispatches of Spanish Officials Bearing on the Free Negro Settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose," *Journal of Negro History* 9 (1924):151-52; royal edict, November 7, 1693, AGI, Santo Domingo 58-1-26 in the John B. Stetson Collection (hereinafter cited as Stetson Collection), P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereinafter cited as Yonge Library).

[17] Wood, *Black Majority*, 124-30.

Indians.[18] The Yamassee later confirmed that view when they told the Spaniards that English traders had charged them exorbitant prices for arms, munitions, and other goods, and that when they were unable to pay their debts, the traders killed their chief and seized their wives and children and sold them as slaves.[19]

In 1715 four Yamassee chiefs representing one hundred and sixty-one villages pledged their allegiance to the Spaniards whom they had once terrorized. The Yamassee were sheltered at new mission villages, under Franciscan tutelage, and subsidized by the Spanish government. Spanish censuses indicate that the new villages were actually composed of many Indian nations including the Yamassee, Guale, Timucuan, Apalachee, Casapuya, Ibaja, Mocama, Ocute, and Jororo, but the related Yamassee, Guale, and Ibaja groups predominated. Apparently the governor blended the inhabitants of existing refugee camps with the new influx of Yamassee, making at least an attempt to keep related language groups together. The villages were placed at a considerable distance from San Agustín, and two of them had forts at which Spanish garrisons were posted. It seems clear that Spaniards intended these villages of new converts to help them hold the frontier.[20]

Although the worst fighting of the Yamassee War was over by 1716, hostilities continued through the 1720s. In these long years Yamassee and Africans gained military experience, increased geographic awareness, and made many new contacts among the Indians and other Blacks. The turmoil of the war gave slaves added opportunities for escape. Some probably fled to remote woods and swamps to form fugitive slave communities. Others joined the Yamassee, and some followed them to Florida.

In 1724 a group of ten Blacks accompanied the Yamassee chief Jorge to seek religious sanctuary in San Agustín. They had escaped from plantations in Carolina and fought for three years alongside Jorge and his warriors against their mutual enemy, the English. After their

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[18] Frank J. Klingberg, "The Mystery of the Lost Yamassee Prince," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 63 (1962):25.

[19] Report of Governor Francisco de Corcoles, July 5, 1715, Stetson Collection, 58-1-30, bundle 4776, Yonge Library.

[20] John H. Hann, "St. Augustine's Fallout from the Yamassee War," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (1989):180-200.

war went badly, the group headed for the Spanish settlement. There the Africans were betrayed and sold into slavery by another Yamassee war captain, Yfallaquisca, also known as Perro Bravo, or Mad Dog.

Francisco Menéndez, the acknowledged leader of the Blacks, was a member of the Mandinga nation, a Muslim-influenced group from the west coast of Africa renowned for its literacy and equestrian skills. He took the name of his new Spanish owner, Francisco Menéndez, when he was baptized. For years Menéndez led a determined struggle to gain the freedom promised by the Spanish king for himself and his followers. He filed repeated petitions with the governors and with the auxiliary bishop of Cuba who toured Florida. Chief Jorge also filed a petition in support of Menéndez, and denounced the Spaniards for buying the unfortunate men and women who had been his loyal allies. But Spanish officials claimed that since the fugitive slaves arrived during a time of truce with the English, they were not eligible for sanctuary.[21]

Although the governor refused to free Menéndez, he nevertheless recognized his military skill and leadership qualities by appointing him to the captaincy of the slave militia. This militia served with distinction when Colonel John Palmer of Carolina attacked San Agustín in 1728. Palmer's forces concentrated the attack against the Yamassee mission village of Nombre de Dios where they killed thirty Yamassee, wounded many more, and took fifteen prisoners, including the wife and children of the chief, Francisco Iospogue. The Spaniards refused to engage Palmer's forces and remained within the castle walls. The Yamassee were sorely disappointed in the Spaniards, but they no doubt appreciated the bravery of their Black defenders.[22]

Finally in 1738, a new governor, Manuel de Montiano, reviewed the case of the re-enslaved Blacks and decided to free them, over the heated protests of their Spanish owners. Shortly thereafter, the governor granted the freed men and women land to homestead and they were established in a town of their own two miles north of San Agustín. In gratitude the Blacks swore to be "the most cruel enemies

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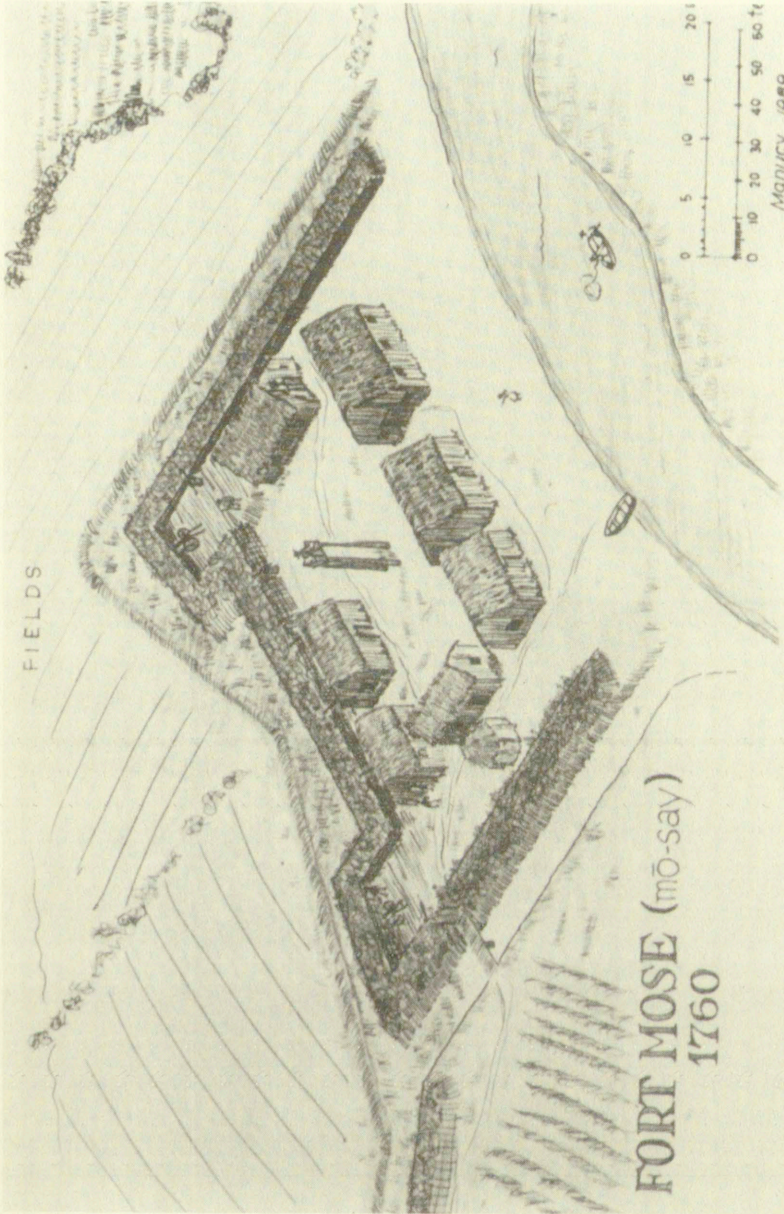
[21] Manuel de Montiano to the king, March 3, 1738, AGI, Santo Domingo 844, fols. 533-37, on microfilm reel 15, Yonge Library.

[22] TePaske, *Governorship of Spanish Florida*, 131, 209 and Memorial of Francisco Menéndez, included in Montiano to the king, March 3, 1738, AGI, Santo Domingo 844, fols. 566-75, on microfilm reel 15, Yonge Library.



Artist's rendering of second Fort Mose, 1752, showing sod walls topped by cactus and interior thatched roof structures, by Albert Manucy, San Agustín. Courtesy of Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville.

of the English" and to shed their "last drop of blood in defense of the Great Crown of Spain and the Holy Faith."[23] And who better to protect the frontiers than grateful ex-slaves carrying Spanish arms? The Africans were considered "new converts," and their town, Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, was modeled after the nominally Yamassee villages near San Agustín. Like those villages, it lay on the periphery of Spanish settlement, and was to serve as a defensive outpost and produce food for the Spaniards.

Indian and African villages seem to have followed the same design. They consisted of enclosed forts in which were the guard and storehouses, a church and sacristy. Even the houses at Mose, although built by Africans, were said to resemble those of the Indians. Franciscan priests were posted at the villages of both Africans and Indians to instruct the inhabitants in "good customs" and catechism, but the villagers were governed by their own leading men. The Spanish government provided the African village with the same items it furnished to the Indians and the cost of these supplies was deducted from an annual allotment of 6,000 pesos budgeted in the San Agustín treasury for "Indian gifts." Indians and Africans were expected to plant the fields the government assigned them, and they grew maize and vegetables. Faunal analysis indicates that they had much the same diet, relying heavily on estuarine resources and wild foods. In addition to net-caught fish and shellfish, they consumed deer, raccoon, opossum, and turtle to supplement the occasional government gifts of beef and corn.[24]

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[23] Memorial of the fugitives, 1724, AGI, Santo Domingo 844, fol. 530, on microfilm reel 15, Yonge Library; memorial of Chief Jorge, ibid., fols. 536-37; Manuel de Montiano to the king, February 16, 1739, AGI, Santo Domingo 845, fol. 700, on microfilm reel 16, Yonge Library; fugitive Negroes of the English plantations to the king, June 10, 1738, AGI, Santo Domingo 844, fols. 533-34, on microfilm reel 15, Yonge Library. On Mose see Jane Landers, "Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida," *American Historical Review* 95 (1990):9-30.

[24] Manuel de Montiano to the king, February 16, 1739, AGI, Santo Domingo 845, fol. 701, on microfilm reel 16, Yonge Library and September 16, 1740, AGI, Santo Domingo 2658. Descriptions of the Black and Indian villages can be found in Father Juan de Solana to Don Pedro Agustín Morel de Santa Cruz, April 22, 1759, AGI, Santo Domingo 516, on microfilm reel 28K, Yonge Library. Also see Elizabeth J. Reitz, "Zooarchaeological Analysis of a Free African American Community: Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose," *Historical Archaeology* (forthcoming).

Africans and Indians performed similar economic functions for the Spanish community, which used their skills to best advantage. They tracked predators and prisoners in the wilderness, rounded up wild cattle and horses, and worked on cattle ranches. They also performed skilled and hard labor on public construction projects such as the church and fortifications. In addition, they scouted, piloted boats, delivered the mails, operated ferries across waterways, and caught, collected, and trapped food and pelts for trade in the city.[25]

One of the most important community roles shared by Africans and Indians, however, was military. The Spanish garrison at San Agustín was almost always under strength. Theoretically the plaza was to be manned by a complement of three hundred and fifty men, but a force of less than two hundred was the norm. The ranks of active troops were depleted by illness, desertion, old age, and the Spanish practice of putting widows, orphans, and slaves on the payroll in vacant positions. This continual shortage of adequate regular troops in a period of almost constant conflict meant that the Spanish governors had to rely heavily on Indians and Africans to supplement their force. Both groups formed their own militias, which, commanded by their leading men, exercised considerable autonomy on the frontier. These were cavalry units which served in reconnaissance and guerrilla operations, and their role in the defense of the Spanish colony has not yet been fully appreciated.[26]

As noted earlier, the British launched major expeditions against Spanish Florida in 1702, 1704, and 1728 which succeeded in destroying the mission system and seriously reducing Spain's effective control of the province. Indians supplied by the English continued to raid forts and villages on the periphery of San Agustín through the 1730s, and Spanish attempts at negotiation with General James Oglethorpe of Georgia were largely ineffective in controlling the violence. Moreover, the Carolinians continued to encourage Indian raids on Florida. The Spaniards began to prepare their defenses for yet another expected attack which came in 1740 when General Oglethorpe

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[25] Michael C. Scardaville and Jesús María Belmonte, "Florida in the Late First Spanish Period: the Griñan Report," *El Escribano* 16 (1979):10.

[26] Ibid. The role of the Black and Indian militias in Florida is discussed in Landers, "Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose;" Arnade, *The Siege of St. Augustine*; and in TePaske, *Governorship of Spanish Florida*.

commanded a combined force of Carolinians, Georgians, and Indians, in conjunction with a naval assault on San Agustín. Lacking sufficient trade goods or money to buy alliances, the Spaniards used their only available tool—diplomacy—to try to persuade the Lower Creeks to assist them, or at least not to aid the English.[27] Loyal Indians were essential in these diplomatic efforts, and Governor Manuel de Montiano depended heavily on their assistance. Trusted Indians were his eyes and ears and could go where neither Spaniards nor Africans could. They ranged throughout the Southeast on Spanish missions and even went back and forth to Cuba to make reports. The Spanish records of the activities of one important Indian ally are illustrative.

Juan Ygnacio de los Reyes was an Ibaja Indian who lived at the village of Pocotalaca. Described as "perspicacious," he accompanied a Spanish expedition into the Lower Creek country in 1737 to seek alliances and trade. The following July a group of Uchise Indians attacked the Spanish fort at Pupo, and Montiano sent Juan Ygnacio and twenty-two of his Indian militia to reconnoiter and bring back intelligence. In August Montiano wrote his superiors, "Juan Ygnacio has not returned and I am very anxious about him, as I fear he may have fallen into the hands of those who came to Pupo; if he has escaped them, I trust he will bring me very sure news."

Juan Ygnacio did escape, and the same month Montiano sent him to Saint Simons as he had previously planned, "to try, using his native wit, to slip in...and discover as much as he could of the plans of the English, and of their condition." Juan Ygnacio pretended to be an escaped murderer chased by the Spaniards and was interviewed at Saint Simons by Lieutenant Colonel Cochran. Cochran claimed to have enlisted between five thousand and six thousand Indians to the English cause and bragged that all of Florida would soon be English—all of which Juan Ygnacio reported upon his return to San Agustín.

When the next ship sailed for Cuba, Montiano asked Juan Ygnacio to go deliver his report to the captain general in Havana. But "(Juan Ygnacio) having declared to me that he had made a certain promise or vow, in case of happy issue, to our Lady of Cobre, I was unwilling to put him aboard with violence, and I let him go at his own

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[27] TePaske, *Governorship of Spanish Florida*, 193-226.

free will to present himself to Your Excellency."[28] Although embedded in a military report, this is a particularly interesting bit of cultural information, for Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre was the Black patron saint of Cuba and the syncretic symbol for Ochun, the Yoruba goddess of pleasure and fertility.[29] Juan Ygnacio clearly understood the saint's function (to ensure happy issue) as well as the Spanish respect for religious vows. It is less sure if he was truly converted to the Catholic religion or whether it was a convenient way to postpone the trip to Cuba. But Montiano, who trusted him and thought well of him, obviously believed Juan Ygnacio's show of faith. It is also interesting to speculate how much Juan Ygnacio's contact with Africans in Florida and Cuba may have influenced his choice of a patron.

Juan Ygnacio was not the only Indian of importance to the Spaniards. Others appearing frequently in the records of these years and in similar roles are his companions, Gerónimo, Juan Savina, and the *cacique*, Chislala. African scouts and cavalry troops performed many of the same important functions as the Indians during the Oglethorpe invasion. Governor Montiano maintained patrol boats on the waterways which were manned by Blacks, and he sent Black cavalry groups out on joint patrols with the Indians. Although the village of Mose had to be evacuated and was occupied by the invaders, its militia fought bravely in the only real Spanish victory of the war—the surprise attack and recapture of their own fort. This event appears in English records as "Bloody Mose" or "Fatal Mose," and it is generally acknowledged to have demoralized the English forces and to have been a significant factor in Oglethorpe's withdrawal.[30]

Mose's African captain, Menéndez, later petitioned the crown for remuneration for his military services, and although the governor wrote a supporting letter detailing the many dangerous missions

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[28] "Letters of Montiano, Siege of St. Augustine," *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah, 1909), 20-43. *An Impartial Account of the Late Expedition Against St. Augustine Under General Oglethorpe*, facsimile of 1742 edition, introduction and indexes by Aileen Moore Topping (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1978), xv-xvi.

[29] On the syncretic traditions of Africans in the Americas see Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984).

[30] Phinizy Spalding, *Oglethorpe in America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 110-26.

Menéndez and his men had undertaken, there is no evidence the crown responded.[31] Still, it is evident from his reports that Montiano respected and valued the Africans in his service as he did the Indians. In fact he used both groups in his retaliatory attack on Georgia which followed and failed in 1743.[32] For the remainder of the Spanish tenure, African and Indian militias conducted joint operations in defense of the Spanish frontier.[33]

Africans and Indians allied to the Spanish in San Agustín were in frequent contact and in some cases also married, as reflected in the Catholic parish registers. Francisco Garzía, a Black, and Ana, an Indian of unstated nation, fled together from Carolina in the 1720s and were among the first homesteaders at the Black village of Mose.[34] Other interracial couples resided in Indian villages. María Luisa Balthazar, an Indian from the village of Palica, married Juan Chrisostomo, a slave of the Carabalí nation, living in San Agustín. Juan later gained his freedom and joined the Mose militia. One of the couple's daughters, María Magdalena, married a free mulatto from Venezuela. The other, Josepha Candelaria, married an Indian from the village of Punta and made her home there.[35]

The last decades of Spanish rule in Florida were marked by declining levels of metropolitan support, poverty, and attacks by cor-

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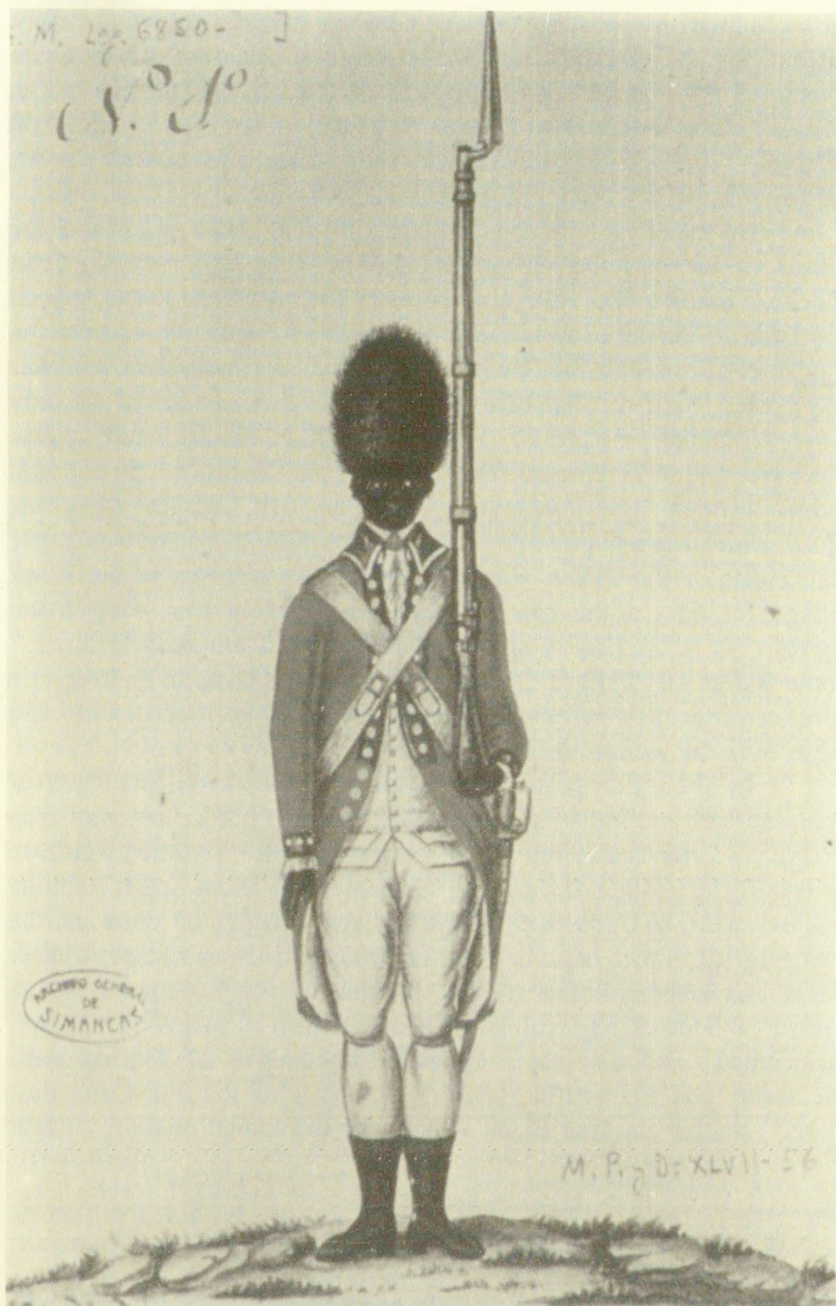
[31] On Black militia activities see "Letters of Montiano," 20-64. See also Montiano to the king, January 17, 1740 and January 31, 1740, AGI, Santo Domingo 2658. For Montiano's account of Oglethorpe's siege and the Spanish victory at Mose see Montiano to the king, August 9, 1740, AGI, Santo Domingo 845, fols. 11-26, on microfilm reel 16, Yonge Library. Memorials of Francisco Menéndez, November 21, 1740 and December 12, 1740, AGI, Santo Domingo 2658.

[32] Montiano specified that he would take Africans of all nations, including the English-speaking group from Carolina, so that they could spread through the countryside fomenting rebellion and gathering slave recruits. Manuel de Montiano to the captain general of Cuba, Juan Francisco de Guemes y Horcasitas, March 13, 1742, AGI, Santo Domingo 2593.

[33] In 1759 *Cacique* Bernardo Lachiche commanded a unit of twenty-eight men by election of the other *caciques*, and Francisco Menéndez retained his command of the thirty-five member militia of Mose. Report of Don Lucas de Palacios on the Spanish Indian and free Black militias, April 30, 1759, AGI, Santo Domingo 2604.

[34] Memorial of the fugitives, 1724, AGI, Santo Domingo 844, fols. 593-94, on microfilm reel 15, Yonge Library.

[35] Black marriages, cathedral parish records, Diocese of St. Augustine Catholic Center, Jacksonville, on microfilm reel 284C, Yonge Library.



Free Black militia, Havana, 1795, from Archivo General de Simancas. Courtesy of Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville.

sairs and English-sponsored Indians. Life was hard for all, but probably hardest for the colony's non-White peoples, most of whom were consigned to the dangerous frontiers. In 1752 a census listed five Indian villages, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Tolomato, with a population of twenty-six people; Pocotalaca, with thirty-three; Costas, with eleven; Palica, with twenty-nine; and Punta, with fifty-nine.[36]

By 1759 yet another consolidation had taken place and the census of the outlying villages showed a Yamassee *cacique*, Juan Sánchez, heading the village of Nuestra Señora de la Leche, which consisted of fifty-nine individuals. Thirty-three of these belonged to the Yamassee nation and the rest were Timucuans, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Costas. Bernardo Espiolea was the Yamassee *cacique* of the only other remaining village of Tolomato, which incorporated twelve Yamassee and eighteen other individuals of the Chickasaw, Creek, and Uchise nations. The indomitable Menéndez still led the village of Mose, which had a population of sixty-seven individuals and was larger than either of the Indian villages. Males predominated at the Black village, for many of the men had slave wives and children living in San Agustín. At the Indian villages, however, there were many widows.[37] Some Blacks and Indians linked to these villages lived in San Agustín with the governor's permission and had property and occupations, but these were the exception.

In 1763 European conflicts once again altered the lives of Spain's Black and Indian allies in a dramatic and unforeseen way. The Treaty of Paris ended the Seven Years War and required Spain to deliver Florida to her archenemy, England. The entire Spanish colony was evacuated to Cuba, including the Black villagers of Mose and the Yamassee and other nations from the villages of Nuestra Señora de la Leche and Tolomato. The exodus was the sad conclusion to a violent period in Southeastern colonial history. After centuries of warfare, dislocations, and disease, the native populations of Florida were decimated and the pitiful mission Indians who left for Cuba died there.[38] Neither the free Black village nor the Indian mission villages

[36] Franciscan censuses, 1752, AGI, Santo Domingo 2604.

[37] Ibid., February 10-12, 1759.

[38] Evacuation reports of Juan Joseph Eligio de la Puente, January 22, 1764, AGI, Santo Domingo 2595. See also Robert L. Gold, *Borderland Empires in Transition: The Triple Nation Transfer of Florida* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press,

were reestablished when, by another European treaty, Spain regained Florida.

But the history of African-Indian alliance in Florida did not end in 1763. Although the indigenous nations were extinct, Lower Creek groups known as Seminoles had moved into the vacuum in Florida and established flourishing villages in the interior savannas. There they grew plentiful crops of corn and vegetables and raised large herds of cattle. Runaway slaves from the English colonies found refuge among the Seminoles and became the vassals of powerful chiefs such as Payne, Micanopy, and Bowlegs, providing yearly portions of their crops and their military services in exchange for their freedom. These Blacks intermarried with the Seminoles and became their trusted interpreters and advisors in war councils.[39] Other escaped slaves went to San Agustín and until 1790 could still claim the religious sanctuary promised by the Spanish crown a century before. Following earlier precedents, the freedmen organized militias commanded by their own leaders which the Spaniards posted on the frontiers and among the Seminoles.

During its second and last tenure in Florida, the sovereignty of the weak Spanish government was under almost constant attack from land-hungry Georgians, assorted plotters such as William Augustus Bowles, and so-called patriots covertly supported by the United States government. The Spaniards stood to lose their colony, the Blacks their freedom, and the Seminoles their rich lands. This convergence of interests meant that Blacks and Indians once again became formidable allies of the Spaniards, and guerrilla forces of Black militias, Seminoles, and "village negroes," as English sources referred to them, helped Spain stave off the inevitable until 1821. The United States territorial government which took Florida instituted chattel slavery and waged a long and bloody war against the Seminoles and the so-called Black Seminoles which ended when most were shipped westward.[40]

1969), 66-76.

[39] Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *The Negro on the American Frontier* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 155-203. See also George Klos, "Blacks and the Seminole Indian Removal Debate, 1821-1835," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (1989):55-78.

[40] Klos, "Blacks and the Seminole Indian Removal Debate," 55-78. For more on Black-Indian alliance in the second Spanish period in Florida, see Jane Landers, "Black Society in Spanish St. Augustine, 1784-1821" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, Gainesville, 1988).

It has accurately been noted that those who write history, shape it. It is our obligation to do a better job of incorporating in our histories the lives of the non-White peoples so long neglected and unappreciated. The meticulous records kept by Spanish bureaucrats, while not without bias, are an important source for the cultural history of these groups. Used judiciously, they can offer new perspectives on the tri-racial nature of frontier society, and help us to reshape the history of Native Americans and Africans in the Southeast.