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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Revisiting The Freducci Map: A Description of Juan Ponce DeLeon's 1513 Florida Voyage?

by JERALD T. MILANICH AND NARA B. MILANICH

For more than a century scholars have been aware of the Conte Ottomanno Freducci map believed to have been drafted in 1514-1515. Centered on the Atlantic Ocean with the west coasts of Europe and Africa shown, the map shows those parts of the Americas known to Europe by ca. 1514-1515, including coastal Newfoundland, the Bahamas and the Caribbean Islands, and the Caribbean and Atlantic coasts of South America from present-day Gulf of Venezuela east and southeast to northeastern Brazil (the latter not very accurately). The map also seemingly accurately renders portions of the Atlantic and lower Gulf coasts of Florida. Both the portion of Florida shown and the place names affixed there appear to correlate with the 1513 voyage of Juan Ponce de Leon as reported in Herrera's account of that expedition first published in 1601.¹

Geographer David O. True wrote about the Freducci map in 1944, also mentioning it in a second article he published in 1955 in which he characterized it as "probably one of the ten most important maps of Florida."² In both of these articles True pointed out the relevance of the map for tracing Juan Ponce de Leon's initial voyage to Florida. Yet in the ensuing half century since True first

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1. Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, *Historia General de los Hechos & los Castellanos, en las Islas y Tierra-Firme el Mar Océano* Vol. 2 (Buenos Aires, 1944), 207-2121; also see Frederick T. Davis, "Juan Ponce de Leon's Voyage to Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 14 (1935), 5-70.
2. David O. True, "The Freducci Map of 1514-1515, What it Discloses of Early Florida History," *Tequesta* 4 (November 1944), 50-55; idem, "Some Early Maps Relating to Florida," *Imago Mundi* XI (1955), 79-80. In the earlier article (p. 50) True notes that the map was reproduced in Italian, German, and French sources as early as 1892. It also was the subject of an article by Louis D. Scisco, "The Track of Ponce de Léon in 1513," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* XLV (1913), 721-735. We have not seen the Scisco article.

wrote about it, the Freducci map has escaped the attention of scholars tracing that voyage. Our intent in writing this article is to make the existence of the map known to scholars working in the early colonial period in Florida and to offer additional possible interpretations of the Florida portion of the map.

The entire Freducci map recently was reproduced in color in an elephant folio-sized volume entitled (in English) "Columbian Atlas of the Great Discovery," published in 1992 by the Italian Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Affairs' National Committee for the Celebration of the Quincentenary of the Discovery of America. The atlas, assembled and annotated by Osvaldo Baldacci, reproduces and provides background information on a number of maps that show the Americas and which are curated in Italian archives and libraries.³

The text accompanying the map notes it was drawn by the Count of Ottomanno Freducci, a cartographer active from 1497-1539. Freducci was one of a family of mapmakers who were producing maps in the 15th and 16th centuries in Ancona.

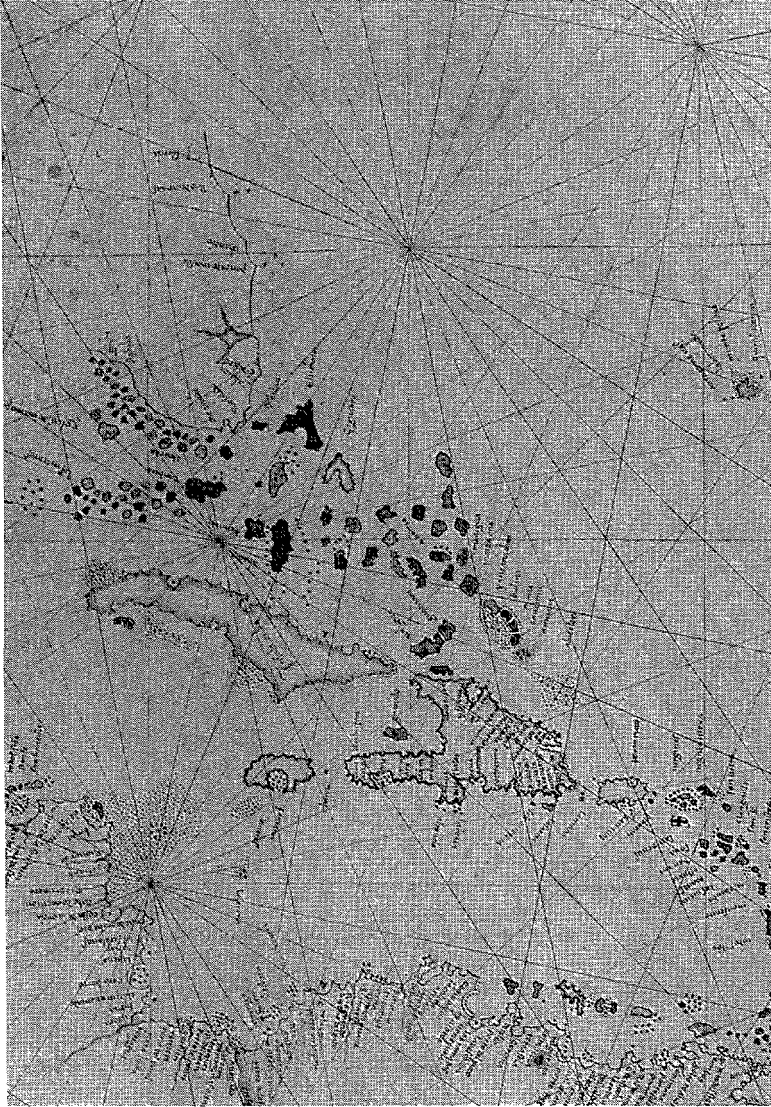
Made of two pieces of parchment glued together and measuring 1.04 by 1.20 meters, the Freducci map is in the Portolan style. Such maps were typically sea charts known for accurate portrayal of coastal configurations but notorious for inaccurate latitudes.⁴ As on most Portolan maps, the Freducci map features loxodromes or rhumb lines, straight lines that indicate wind directions. These lines often intersect in elaborate compass roses.

In 1891 the Freducci map was transferred from the Pio Institute of Bardi to the State Archives in Florence, Italy. Archives in the Pio Institute are associated with one of Florence's famous noble families who, Baldacci speculates, may have commissioned the map because of the family's interest in the geography of trade markets that were beginning to open in the Americas.

Baldacci dates the map to 1514-1515, reasoning that its depiction of Florida derives from information gathered during Juan Ponce's explorations in March to September of 1513, information rapidly remitted to Europe. Moreover, he argues, it could not have been drawn much later than 1514 or 1515, since it does not depict

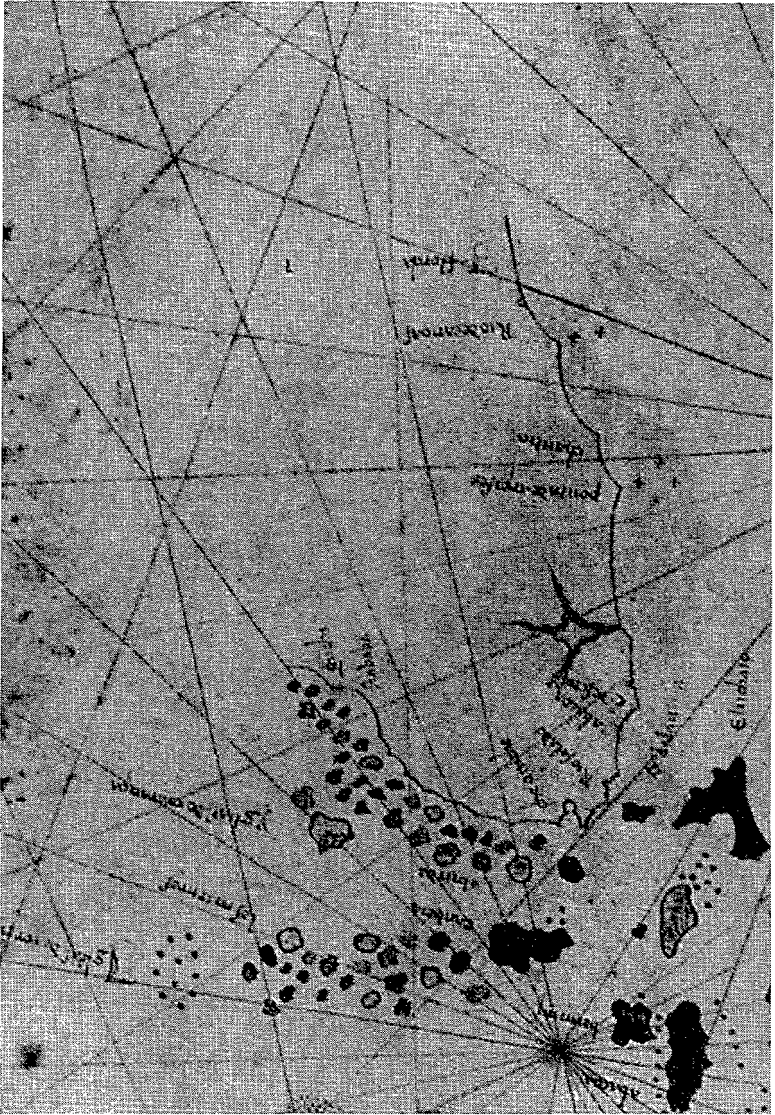
3. Osvaldo Baldacci, *Atlante Colombiano della Grande Scoperta* (Rome, 1992), 123-126.

4. See R.V. Tooley, *Maps and MapMakers*, 7th edition (New York, 1987), 15.



A portion of the Freducci map showing the northern coast of South America; Cuba, Hispaniola and other Caribbean islands; the Bahamas; and, at the top, Florida.

the Pacific Ocean, which was reached by Vasco de Balboa in September 1513.



Enlargement of the Florida portion of the Freducci map. The Atlantic coast place names (upside down) from top to bottom are: *i. florida*, *Rio de canoas*, *chantio*, *ponta de arçifes*, *c. de setos*, *abacoa*, *Rio salada*, and *chequiche*. On the Gulf coast are *stababa* and *guchi* (or *juchi*).

Unfortunately the section of the map with its date of creation has been cut off. However, the other portions of the Americas shown on the map are consistent with the 1514-1515 date. Portions of the map are said by Baldacci to be based on older maps from the Ancona school. Some of those features are inaccurate, such as the depiction of an imaginary, crescent-shaped island called *brasil*, located in the North Atlantic off Ireland.

On the Freducci map the northernmost place name on the Atlantic coast of Florida is I. [*Insula*] *flor[i]da*, or "Island of Florida," the name which Juan Ponce de Leon gave to the land.⁵ The location of that name presumably marks Juan Ponce's initial landfall and is consistent with his belief that Florida was an island. True notes that the position of that place name falls between Matanzas Inlet and Mosquito Inlet, suggesting the landfall was in that same general section of the coast.⁶ This is consistent with most interpretations of the Herrera account of Juan Ponce's voyage.⁷

Moving southward, the next place name is *Rio de canoas*, "River of Canoes," which apparently is the name given to a river emptying into the Atlantic north of Cape Canaveral. Both True and Scisco suggest this marks the Indian River. Further south is an unlabeled cape, possibly Cape Canaveral, which the 1601 Herrera account calls *Cabo de Corrientes*.⁸

Further south on the Freducci map are two more capes. The northern one, labeled *chantio*, is certainly the *cautio* of Herrera, who claims it was the name the Lucayan Indians, the native inhabitants of the Bahamas, gave to Florida.⁹ The second cape is *ponta de arcifes*, "Point of Reefs," which Herrera calls the *Punta de Arracifes*. We suggest that these two capes, both noticeable to the members of the expedition as they sailed southward, could have been Sewalls Point just north of St. Lucie Inlet and the point of land at modern North Palm Beach.

5. We are grateful to Bruce S. Chappell, archivist at the University of Florida's P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, for helping to decipher these place names.

6. True, "Some Early Maps," 79.

7. Davis, "Juan Ponce de Leon's Voyages;" Edward W. Lawson, *The Discovery of Florida and its Discoverer Juan Ponce de Leon* (St. Augustine, 1946); Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America, the Southern Voyages* (New York, 1974), 502-516; Robert S. Weddle, *Spanish Sea, the Gulf of Mexico in North American Discovery, 1500-1685* (College Station, Texas, 1985), 38-54.

8. Davis, "Juan Ponce de Leon's Voyages," 18.

9. *Ibid.*, 22.

Further south there appears what could be a large inlet emptying into the Atlantic and fed by three streams. According to True, geographer Louis Scisco interpreted this to be Jupiter Inlet, the only coastal inlet with "three branching streams at its head."¹⁰ True, however, interprets the feature to be Lake Okeechobee, knowledge of which was presumably conveyed to Juan Ponce by Florida native people.

South of that feature is still another cape, *c[abo] de setos*. In medieval Spanish *setos* may be translated as "poles, fence, or enclosure," suggesting Cabo de Setos may be "Cape of Fish Weirs." Immediately to the south of that cape is *abacoa*, the native village Herrera calls *Abaioa*, near where the expedition anchored in the lee of the cape. According to True, Scisco suggests that town was near Fort Worth inlet.¹¹

Southward down the coast the map shows *Rio salado* and *chequiche*. The former, literally Salt River, is said by Scisco to be the New River.¹² Chequiche is, of course, Tequesta, the native village at the mouth of the Miami River known from the Pedro Menéndez de Avilés era. Calling it *Chequescha*, Herrera says the expedition reached that town on its return voyage from the southwest Florida coast.

The efforts by True and Scisco to correlate the Freducci map's Florida place names with locations on a modern map of the Florida Atlantic coast should not be accepted unquestioned, nor should Frederick Davis's interpretation of the Herrera account. The Freducci map, and certainly the latitudes given in the Herrera account, are not exact enough for us to correlate definitely 16th century place names with modern maps. We can just as easily offer an alternative interpretation of that same portion of the Freducci map, one that is no more certain than those of True and Davis.

According to our alternative interpretation, Juan Ponce's initial landfall could have been north of the St. Johns River on one of the barrier islands of southeast Georgia or northeast Florida. The River of Canoes, whose mouth is shown on the Freducci map, could have been the St. Johns River. If correct, then the unlabeled cape just south of the river mouth would probably be on Anastasia Island.

10. True, "Freducci Map," 51.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

The two capes farther south (near the words Chantio and punta de Arcifes) could be: (1) the cape just north of Cape Canaveral, named False Cape on various Florida maps; and, (2) Cape Canaveral itself. Rather than being the name of the first of these two capes, Chantio could be the name of a native village near that cape, perhaps the village at Turtle mound. Turtle mound is a very tall shell mound (called Surruque in later Spanish accounts), which served early Spanish sailors as a navigation marker. The second cape, the punta de Arcifes, would be Cape Canaveral.

The large inlet thought by Scisco to be Jupiter Inlet could instead represent both St. Lucie Inlet and Lake Okeechobee. The latter may have been accessible by native dugout canoe from that inlet. Farther south on the map is Cabo de Setos, in our interpretation the name given modern Miami Beach, below which is Biscayne Bay. Abacoa could be a native village on Key Biscayne, a village represented by one of the large shell middens that still were present on that key in the early 20th century.

The Rio Salado could have been the Miami River itself or the inland waterway that lies between the mainland and the beach islands of northern Dade County. Chequiche was the native town Tequesta, known to have been at the mouth of the Miami River where extensive shell middens also were once present. The Spanish geographer Juan López de Velasco described that setting in his 1575 *Geographía y Descripción Universal de las Indias*:

At the very point [of land] of Tequesta there enters into the sea a freshwater river, which comes from the interior, and to all appearances runs from west to east. There are many fish and eels in it. Alongside it on the north side is the Indian settlement that is called Tequesta, from which the point takes its name.¹³

The identification of Chequiche (Tequesta) with the mouth of the Miami River seems firm. Placement of all the more northerly names on the Freducci map remain uncertain, although some of the names do seem to be placed north, perhaps well north, of Cape Canaveral.

13. John H. Hann, *Missions to the Calusa* (Gainesville, 1991) 314.

The Herrera account records that after sailing south along the Atlantic coast of Florida, the Juan Ponce expedition sailed south and westerly along the Florida Keys. Those islands are labeled *los matires* and shown on the Freducci map in their proper location. Here is a second firm geographical correlation with a modern location.

On the southwest Florida coast in the general region of modern Fort Myers Beach, the Freducci map provides two place names. The southernmost is *stababa*, a location not mentioned in Herrera. *Stababa*, a native word, was probably the name for Estero Bay. Most modern archaeologists agree that the village called Calos, the capital town of the Calusa Indians who were encountered by Juan Ponce's expedition, was located on Mound Key, a small island in the bay. Today the large mounds and shell middens of Calos, once home to the Calusa Indians and their pre-columbian ancestors, can still be seen on Mound Key.

Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, who was shipwrecked in southern Florida in 1545 and lived there more than twenty years before writing a memorial about the south Florida native people, referred to what was apparently the same location, a place he called *Estanapaca*.¹⁴ In 1575 López de Velasco described this place, calling it *Escampaba*:

The Bay of Carlos, which is called Escampaba in the language of the Indians . . . appears to be the same one that is called, of Juan Ponce, because he landed in it. . . . It is at 26 1/2 plus degrees [latitude; it actually is at 26 degrees 24 minutes north latitude]. Its entrance [Big Carlos Pass] is very narrow and full of shoals, as a consequence of which only [small] boats are able to enter. Within it is spacious, about four or five leagues in circumference, although all subject to flooding. There is a little island [Mound Key] in the middle that has a circumference of about a half league, with other islets around it. On this (island) Cacique Carlos had his headquarters and presently his successors have it there (as well).¹⁵

14. John E. Worth, "Fontaneda Revisited: Five Descriptions of Sixteenth-Century Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 73 (January, 1995), 348.

15. Hann, *Missions*, 311-312.

Father Juan Rogel, a Jesuit missionary priest among the Calusa, wrote a letter in 1568 in which he used the same name, Escampaba, to refer to the Calusa Indian capital.¹⁶ This would appear to be a third Freducci place name which can be tied to a modern place.

The second place name is in southwest Florida on the Freducci map is *guchi* or *juchi*, another Calusa Indian town. That name is placed on the map just north of *stababa*, perhaps near Punta Rassa or in a nearby location. Neither the Caloosahatchee River or Charlotte Harbor are depicted on the map. If indeed the Freducci map depicts the extent of Juan Ponce's initial voyage, then he apparently did not reach either of those places, also suggested by their absence from the Herrera account.

Juchi is a Calusa Indian town that also appears in the writings of Fontaneda. It is mentioned in Fontaneda's well known *Memoir* and in a second document now shown by anthropologist John Worth to have been written by Fontaneda and originally attached to the *Memoir*.¹⁷ Like the majority of the other Freducci place names, its exact location is uncertain.

On the return voyage from the southwest Florida coast, Herrera records several other place names, names which also appear on the Freducci map. One is an island named by the Spaniards *Matanca* where a battle was fought with the Calusa Indians and where the Spaniards took on water. On the Freducci map *yslas de matanca* is located southwest of *stababa* and *juchi*. It could be any of the many islands along the coast.

Next, according to Herrera, the Spaniards sailed to *Las Tortugas*. Those islands, *yslas de tortugas*, are also depicted on the Freducci map in their correct location west of the western end of the Florida Keys.

Two islands at the eastern end of the keys are labeled on the Freducci map: *cambeia* (the southernmost) and *el nirda*. *Cambeia* is almost certainly the *Ahecambei* of Herrera's account.

Did Freducci base his cartographic depiction of Florida on recent accounts or maps derived from the 1513 Juan Ponce de Leon expedition? It seems likely that he did, although that source may

16. *Ibid.*, 237.

17. Worth, "Fontaneda Revisited," 349; David O. True, ed., *Memoir of D. d'Escalante Fontaneda respecting Florida, Written in Spain, about the Year 1575* (Coral Gables, Florida, 1945), 30. In the *Memoir* True renders this as *Tuchi*; Worth, having seen the original manuscript, notes that Juchi is correct; Worth, "Fontaneda Revisited," 349.

have been a different one from the source or sources Herrera used in writing his account.

If it is accepted that the Freducci map does indeed portray the geography of Juan Ponce's Florida voyage, it provides strong evidence that: (1) the expedition made landfall north of Cape Canaveral; and, (2) the expedition encountered the Calusa Indians in the general Fort Myers Beach-Estero Bay locality and did not explore farther north along the coast. As noted by True, the Freducci map may be the earliest known accurate European depiction of peninsula Florida. As such, it is worthy of more scholarly attention.