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The Role of Cattle Ranching in the 1656 Timucuan Rebellion: A Struggle for Land, Labor, and Chiefly Power

by Justin B. Blanton

Late in the spring of 1656, the principle *cacique* of Timucua, Lúcas Menéndez, led a group of twenty Indians on an attack of the La Chua cattle ranch of north Florida.¹ The raiding Indians murdered a Spanish soldier and two African slaves in addition to slaughtering all the cattle. Lúcas Menéndez spared the surprised ranch owner, Juan Menéndez Márquez, but ordered him to abandon the ranch and leave Florida for Spain.² These events, together with four other murders in the Western Timucua mission province, are known as the Timucuan rebellion.

La Chua was located on the northern rim of Payne's Prairie in the Potano region of north-central Florida and spanned approximately eighty-seven square miles. The ranch was less than fifty miles southeast of San Martín de Ayacuto, the village of

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- 1 John H. Hann, "Leadership Nomenclature among Spanish Florida Natives and its Linguistic and Associational Implications," *Perspectives on the Southeast: Linguistics, Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, ed. Patricia B. Kwachka (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 94. *Cacique* was an Arawak term for chief used by Spaniards to refer to the hereditary leaders of the native populations of north Florida. The Arawaks were the native peoples of the Caribbean encountered by the Spanish on the earliest voyages to the Americas.
- 2 John E. Worth, *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida*, Volume II: *Resistance and Destruction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 63-73.

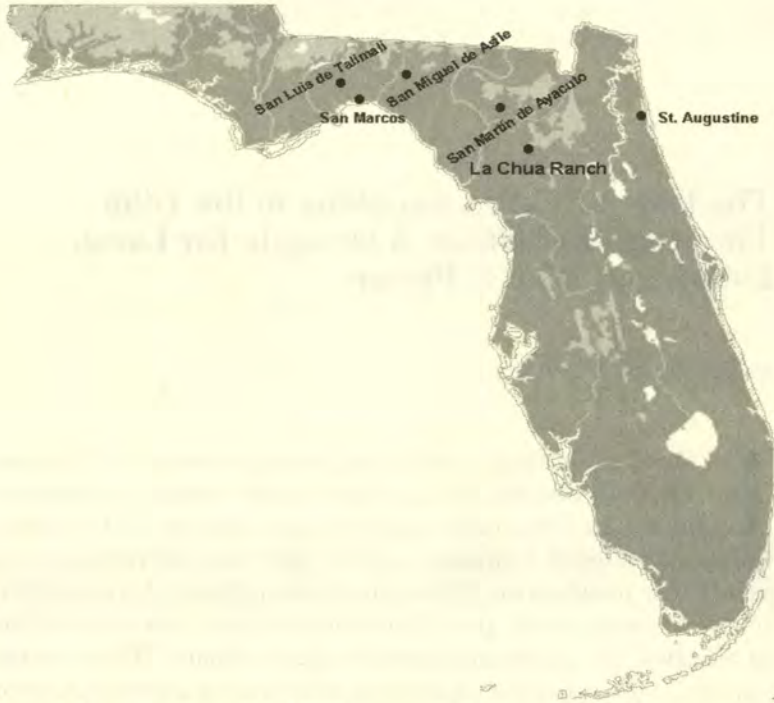


Figure 1. Important Sites of the 1656 Timucuan Rebellion. Map used by permission of author.

cacique Lúcas Menéndez. Though the relationship between the two families was historically positive, La Chua's proximity to the *cacique*'s village sparked competition over Indian laborers and territorial boundaries.³ Land and labor were the basis of Timucua political power and competition for either one presented a significant threat to *cacique* Lúcas Menéndez's chiefly authority.⁴

Lúcas Menéndez did not intend for the attack of La Chua to be a surprise. Several weeks earlier, he had dispatched a letter to Menéndez Márquez in St. Augustine, warning him to stay away from the ranch. Although Menéndez Márquez had received the letter, he did not heed the warning since he was unable to read the message

3 Jerald Milanich, *Laboring in the Fields of the Lord: Spanish Missions and Southeastern Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 154-155.

4 Robin A. Beck, Jr., "Consolidation and Hierarchy: Chiefdom Variability in the Mississippi Southeast," *American Antiquity*, 68, no. 4 (2003): 644.

because it was written in Timucuan.⁵ The cacique's desire to warn Menéndez Márquez was the result of an ongoing relationship with the ranch owner's family. Menéndez Márquez could not have operated his ranch successfully without the permission of the *cacique*, who controlled the land and access to labor where the ranch was located. Juan Menéndez Márquez's father, Francisco, served as *cacique* Lúcas Menéndez's godfather at his baptism and gave the *cacique* his surname. When *caciques* and *cacicas* accepted Christianity and were baptized, governors and other important Spanish officials often took on the role of godfather and bestowed baptismal gifts upon the converts.⁶ Due to this relationship, Lúcas Menéndez allowed Francisco to operate La Chua on his land in exchange for gifts and surplus agricultural products.⁷

In response to the rebellion, Florida's Governor Don Diego de Rebolledo dispatched Sergeant-Major Adrián de Cañizares y Osorio along with sixty infantrymen into Timucua territory. Rebolledo ordered Cañizares to apprehend the instigators and urge the other rebellious Indians to return peacefully to their villages. The Spaniards quickly subdued the insurgents and executed eleven leaders of the revolt, including *cacique* Lúcas Menéndez, to provide an example for other potential subversives. Governor Rebolledo also stationed a lieutenant and twelve garrison soldiers at the mission of San Luis de Talimali in the neighboring province of Apalachee in the Panhandle as a measure to guard against future uprisings. Furthermore, the governor permanently altered the structure of Florida's mission interior by resettling more than a dozen local Timucuan missions along the primary corridor between St. Augustine and the Florida Panhandle known as the *Camino Real*.

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- 5 Jerald T. Milanich and William C. Sturtevant, *Francisco Pareja's 1613 Confessionario: A Documentary Source for Timucuan Ethnography*, trans. Emilio F. Moran (Tallahassee, FL: Division of Archives, History, and Records Management, 1973). The Franciscan Friar Francisco Pareja arrived in Florida in 1595 and wrote a Timucuan grammar which was used by missionaries throughout the Spanish colonial period.
 - 6 Amy Turner Bushnell, "Spain's Conquest by Contract: Pacification and the Mission System in Eastern North America," in *The World Turned Upside-Down: The State of Eighteenth-Century American Studies at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Michael V. Kennedy and William G. Shade (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2001), 306-307.
 - 7 Milanich, *Laboring in the Fields of the Lord*, 154-155. The Potanos were considered part of the Timucuan mission province. It is likely that *cacique* Lúcas Menéndez had seized the land where La Chua was located from the local Potano Indians through attempts at regional consolidation.

In order to contextualize broader Indian-Spanish relations in colonial Florida and obtain a more complete understanding of the motivations behind the Timucuan rebellion, it is important to take a closer look at Spanish cattle ranching and the ways in which it challenged chiefly control over land and labor. As the most important of all the seventeenth century Spanish Florida cattle ranches, La Chua represents a salient example of a colonial economic system dependent upon Indian land and labor. The ranch exacerbated the effects of the existing labor and land appropriation employed by the Spanish colonial government and contributed to the power struggle between the so-called republic of Indians and the republic of Spaniards.⁸ There were many small acts of armed resistance by the Indians of Spanish Florida throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the complex motives behind these revolts often pitted common Indians against Spanish settlers as well as their own *caciques*.⁹ The decision of *cacique* Lúcas Menéndez to raid and destroy the economically powerful La Chua cattle ranch was an attempt to withstand the ranch's infringement upon his political power and to resist being absorbed into the expanding colonial system.

Scholars have looked at either the rebellion or the ranches in isolation, but there has been no research emphasizing the relationship between the two. Anthropologist John E. Worth has written the only book-length study of the rebellion to date.¹⁰ In his excellent two volume series on the Timucua chiefdoms, he places the blame for the rebellion on Governor Diego de Rebolledo. Worth argues that the rebellion erupted when Rebolledo, fearing an English attack on St. Augustine, ordered the elite Indians of the provincial militias to come to assist in the city's defense.¹¹ Rebolledo was unprepared for an impending attack on St. Augustine, because

8 Bushnell, "Republic of Spaniards, Republic of Indians," in *The New History of Florida*, ed. Michael Gannon (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 62.

9 Fred Lamar Pearson, Jr. "Spanish Indian Relations in Florida: A Study of Two Visitas, 1657-1678" (PhD diss., University of Alabama, 1968), 67-68. Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 161.

10 Although Worth is the leading scholar of the Timucuan rebellion, John H. Hann and Jerald T. Milanich have also made significant contributions to the historiography of the event. Both Hann and Milanich support Worth's argument but do not consider the relationship between Spanish cattle ranching and the rebellion.

11 Worth, *The Timucuan Chiefdoms*, Vol. II, 50-51.

the city lacked soldiers and provisions, and, thus, needed support from the indigenous population.¹²

Although it was common for Spanish administrators to request Indian military assistance, Rebolledo made the unprecedented stipulation that Indian elites had to carry enough food to sustain themselves on their journey to St. Augustine and a month long stay in the city. The *caciques* of Western Timucua were angered, not by the activation of the Indian militia, but by the governor's order that elites carry their own food. In Timucuan society, elites were exempted from manual labor and requiring them to bear burdens essentially stripped them of their status. Rebolledo's insistence that each Indian carry provisions created a serious problem because it ignored the sharp social distinctions within Timucuan culture between the elite and commoners. According to Worth, the insult implicit in Rebolledo's orders incited the revolt.¹³

While Rebolledo's mandate undoubtedly infringed upon established cultural institutions within Timucuan society, it was only one dimension of a more complex story.¹⁴ Worth provides invaluable insights regarding important motives surrounding the rebellion, but his study does not focus much attention on the raid of the La Chua cattle ranch, which was the only incident of the rebellion in which *cacique* Lúcas Menéndez, the supposed ringleader, personally participated. In dialogue with Worth's

12 *Audiencia de Santo Domingo* 229 [hereafter cited as AGI/SD]. Composed of more than 2,500 documents covering the years 1512 to 1858, the *Audiencia de Santo Domingo* collection includes ecclesiastical reports, records of royal subsidies, and official correspondence between colonial administrators and the Council of Indies, the supreme court of justice for colonial Spanish America. A 1658 document recording the amount of *diezmos* or church tithes collected in St. Augustine from 1648 to 1657 reveals that there was a significant decline in the total number of *diezmos* in the presidio in the years 1655 and 1656. This document gives an indication of the poor state of the *presidio* when the British attacked Jamaica.

13 *Ibid.*, 46-50.

14 *Ibid.*, 49. *Escribanía de Cámara* 155b [hereafter cited as AGI/EC]. The *Escribanía de Cámara* collection is largely comprised of civil and criminal lawsuits from the years 1575 to 1760. The documented topics of litigation range widely. Rebolledo carried out a general inspection of Apalachee and Timucua in 1657 in order to prove that the Timucuan rebels rebelled because of mistreatment by the friars living in the region. Both the friars and Rebolledo wrote a series of letters immediately after the visitation blaming each other for the revolt. See Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 78. Many scholars, including Calloway, have blamed the Timucuan rebellion on the Franciscan friars.

important research, this article will examine additional motivations behind the 1656 Timucuan rebellion and discuss the attack on the La Chua ranch in particular to show the connection between the rebellion and the significant threat that Spanish cattle ranching posed to Timucuan chiefly power.

By the end of the seventeenth century, there were twenty-five permanent ranches and twenty-three missions in Timucua-speaking territory.¹⁵ While most scholars of Spanish Florida have focused on the missions, ranches also played a pivotal role in the social and geopolitical dynamics of the Florida mission provinces. According to historian Charles Arnade, there were three primary ranching regions in Florida. Two were located in Timucua, both in the Timucuan sub-region of Potano in present-day Alachua County, and along the St. Johns River near the current city of Palatka. The third was in Apalachee near present-day Tallahassee. Prospective ranchers often acquired land through royal grants distributed by the presiding governor.¹⁶ Ranches established during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries procured labor through the *repartimiento*, an involuntary paid labor draft imposed upon the mission Indians. As population levels declined during the middle of the seventeenth century due to outmigration and epidemic disease, however, ranch owners had to procure labor through other means that often put them at odds with local *caciques*.¹⁷ Some Indians began to work as contract day laborers on ranches while

15 Charles Arnade, "Cattle Raising in Spanish Florida, 1513-1763." *Agricultural History*, 35 (July 1961): 116-124.

16 AGI/SD 233. Governor Rebolledo reported to the king about Indian labor on wheat and cattle farms established in Timucua and Apalachee under the governorship of his predecessor, Benito Ruiz de Salazar Vallecilla. Rebolledo claimed that Salazar established the ranches with his own funding in order to supply the struggling *presidio* of St. Augustine with food.

17 AGI/SD 235. Friar Juan Moreno Ponce de León complained of a pestilence in Apalachee and Timucua that killed many Indians and friars in 1649 and 1650. See John H. Hann and Bonnie G. McEwan, *The Apalachee Indians and Mission San Luis* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 32; and Marvin T. Smith, "Aboriginal Population Movements in the Postcontact Southeast," in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, ed. Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 4, 7, 19. According to Smith, although European epidemic diseases played a significant role in the demographic contraction of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they have been given undue weight and were only one of several factors affecting population levels. It is likely that disease sparked population movements in the early historic Southeast. Disease may have led to power imbalances that stimulated warfare, which led to migrations to take over enemy territory.



Figure 2. 17th Century Cattle Ranching Areas Ranked by Probable Production. Map used by permission of author.

others became ranch hands by settling within the boundaries of a ranch and taking on the protection of the ranch owner against neighboring hostile native populations. The owner, for his part, took advantage of this access to seasonal laborers in addition to full-time ranch hands who were usually a combination of contract workers and black slaves.¹⁸ The ability of ranch owners to procure consistent Indian labor depended, in large part, on negotiations with *caciques* who effectively leased the access to laborers under their control in return for some form of tributary remuneration.¹⁹

18 Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana: Spain's Support System for the Presidio and Mission Provinces of Florida* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1994), 141. In 1664, Father Gabriel de Cubas complained that many Florida landholders held neglected and underpaid Indians laborers far from their missions. Bushnell, *The King's Coffin: Proprietors of the Spanish Florida Treasury 1565-1702* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1981), 13. As native village structure broke down under demographic contraction, Indians began leaving their families and missions to work as contract laborers on ranches.

19 *Ibid.*, 20.

The ranches and their growing demand for Indian labor competed with *caciques* who were struggling to maintain population levels and political power in the midst of demographic contraction and their negotiations with ranch owners often turned sour.²⁰

Despite suffering demographic collapse and armed aggression brought on by prolonged European contact, the hereditary *caciques* of the missionized Apalachee and Timucua provinces continued to exercise significant political power well into the seventeenth century.²¹ The Spanish colonial government viewed missionized *caciques* as seigniorial. They retained rights to inherited titles, controlled land, ruled vassals, and held considerable authority over the economic, political, and ritual domains of their societies.²² Moreover, while other Southeastern Indian chiefdoms, particularly those located in the interior, were devolving from chiefdoms to towns and reorganizing into confederacies, Florida chiefdoms remained relatively intact.²³

Not all of the mission *caciques'* power and influence was attributable to heredity or Spanish recognition. Timucuan *caciques* also claimed supernatural sanction for their eminence.²⁴ Through the manipulation and control of esoteric cosmological knowledge, *caciques* legitimized their political authority. They connected themselves with the cosmos as a means to establish their status as unassailable.²⁵ While chiefly power was substantiated under this

20 Kathleen A. Deagan, "Accommodation and Resistance: The Process and Impact of Spanish Colonization in the Southeast," in *Columbian Consequences Volume II: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands East*, ed. David Hurst Thomas (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 305-306.

21 Vernon James Knight, Jr. "Social Organization and the Evolution of Hierarchy in Southeastern Chiefdoms," *Journal of Anthropological Research* I, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 2.

22 Bushnell, "Ruling 'The Republic of Indians' in Seventeenth Century Florida," in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood and Tom Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 200.

23 Worth, "Spanish Missions and the Persistence of Chiefly Power," in *The Transformations of the Southeastern Indians 1570-1760*, ed. Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 43.

24 Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 17.

25 Mary W. Helms, "Political Lords and Political Ideology in Southeastern Chiefdoms: Comments and Observations," in *Lords of the Southeast: Social Inequality and the Native Elites of Southeastern North America*, ed. Alex W. Barker and Timothy R. Pauketat (Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association, 1992), 185-187.

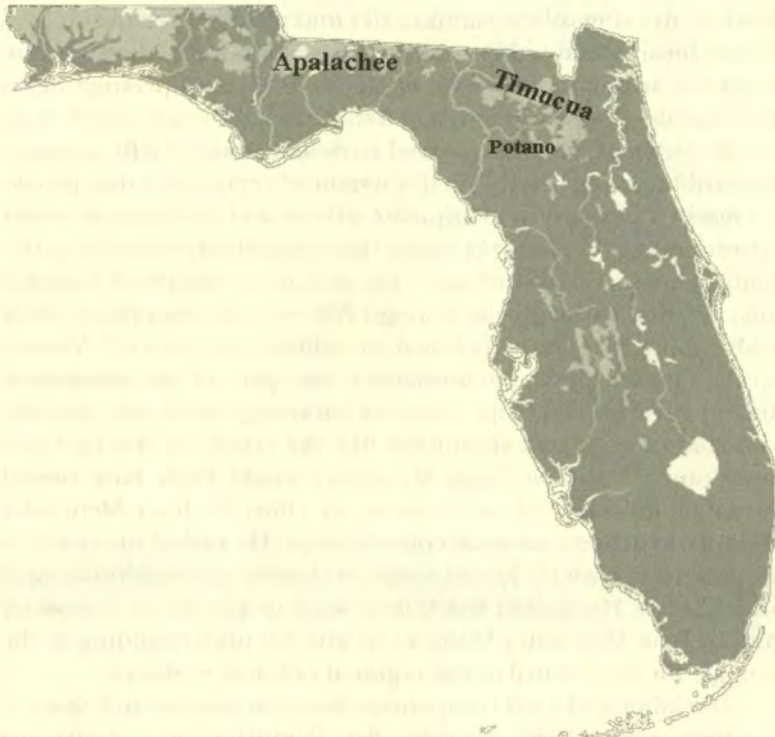


Figure 3. Mission Provinces of 17th Century Florida. Map used by permission of author.

political-ideological context, it was maintained through material factors. The acquisition and control of land and labor was at the heart of stable chiefly authority. The process of the regional consolidation of land use was tied to the operation of political economies based upon agricultural finance in which surplus production supported chiefly power. *Caciques* seeking to build and keep power had to increase their access to agricultural surplus by attracting enough vassals to procure the human labor necessary for agricultural production.²⁶

The importance of land and labor to chiefly power often sparked competition and conflict between *caciques* attempting to control the local political economy. *Caciques* that successfully consolidated a region increased their access to agricultural surplus and sumptuary

²⁶ Beck, Jr., 643-645.

goods by drawing other communities into tributary relationships.²⁷ Hierarchical social differentiation was supported through the receipt of tributary payments of staple foods and prestige items from vassals. *Caciques* redistributed these items among vassals in an overtly visible manner that served to demonstrate chiefly prestige. Redistribution also established a system of reciprocity that placed *caciques* in a position to manipulate tribute and exchange in order to foster networks of indebtedness that created asymmetrical socio-political power relationships.²⁸ *Caciques* often achieved regional consolidation by acquiring enough followers to undermine their rivals' ability to mount political or military resistance.²⁹ Violent conflict under these circumstances was part of an ideological strategy used in the competition for attracting vassals and typically consisted of raids and skirmishes like the attack on the La Chua cattle ranch.³⁰ *Cacique* Lucas Menéndez would likely have viewed the labor demands of La Chua as an effort by Juan Menéndez Márquez to achieve regional consolidation. He raided the ranch in an attempt to curb his loss of vassals and avoid the undermining of his authority. His violent reaction to what he perceived as a power grab by Juan Menéndez Márquez fit into his understanding of the struggle for the control of the regional political economy.

The labor and land competition between *caciques* and Spanish ranchers particularly affected the Timucua and Apalachee provinces, where the majority of the Spanish ranches were located.

27 Ibid., 644.

28 Charles R. Cobb, "Mississippian Chiefdoms: How Complex?" *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 32 (2003): 76-77. Cameron B. Wesson, "Prestige Goods, Symbolic Capital, and Social Power in the Protohistoric Southeast," in *Between Contacts and Colonies: Archaeological Perspectives on the Protohistoric Southeast*, ed. Cameron B. Wesson and Mark A. Rees (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 114-115. Wesson argues that the political power of Southeastern chiefdoms was advanced through the acquisition and control of surplus and sumptuary goods. See Randolph J. Widmer, "The Structure of Southeastern Chiefdoms," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in The American South, 1521-1704*, ed. Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 137. According to Widmer, disruptions in subsistence yields, due to "crop failure caused by drought, disease, spoilage or pillaging of stored food" could be mitigated through the chiefly distribution of collected resources.

29 Beck, Jr., 651.

30 A.W. Johnson and T.K. Earle, *The Evolution of Human Societies: From Foraging Group to Agrarian State* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 219. Karl T. Steine, "Ambushes, Raids, and Palisades: Mississippian Warfare in the Interior Southeast," *Southeastern Archaeology* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 132-139.

A late seventeenth-century visitation record reveals that numerous Indians from Apalachee were working as contract laborers on ranches in Timucua.³¹ The rise of migratory labor was due to a shift from the *repartimiento* system of seasonal obligatory labor at mandated low wages to voluntary contract labor at higher wages, as employers attempted to address the problem of a dwindling labor force.³² Moreover, many of the ranches were established on appropriated Indian lands and abandoned village sites, which created a long history of hostility between ranch owners and *caciques*, dating back to cattle introduced by the founder of *La Florida*, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, in the 1560s.³³

The emergence of a cattle industry in the seventeenth century was perhaps the most auspicious of the enterprises developed by entrepreneurial Spanish colonists to relieve Florida's economic struggles.³⁴ The economic well-being of Spanish Florida depended upon the arrival of the *situado*, an annual subsidy provided by the viceroyalty of New Spain located in modern-day Mexico. The meager amount of the *situado* and the thoroughly documented long delays between the subsidy's arrivals, made it an inadequate means of support for the colony, and left local administrators scrambling to find ways to achieve some measure of self-sufficiency.³⁵

Though cattle was first introduced to Florida in the 1560s, active attempts to create a profitable cattle industry did not occur until Governor Juan de Salinas imported enough cattle to establish viable herds after 1618.³⁶ Spanish Florida cattle ranching began in earnest in the 1630s and the first flurry of land grants that led to cattle ranches may have occurred between 1633 and 1638 under the governorship of Luis Horruytiner.³⁷ Horruytiner owned a number of cattle ranches along the St. Johns River, and encouraged Florida-born Spanish families to move from St. Augustine into the interior

31 AGI/EC 157A. This information was recorded in a 1694 general inspection of Apalachee and Timucua made by interim Treasurer Joaquín de Florencia.

32 Hann "Demographic Patterns and Changes in Mid-Seventeenth Century Timucua and Apalachee," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 64, no. 4 (April 1986): 379-380.

33 Hann, *A History of the Timucua Indians and Missions*, 192.

34 Robert Allen Matter, "Economic Basis of the Seventeenth Century Florida Missions," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 52, no. 1 (July 1973): 38.

35 Michael V. Gannon, *The Cross in the Sand: The Early Catholic Church in Florida 1513-1870* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1983), 56.

36 Paul E. Hoffman, *Florida's Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 117.

37 Arnade, 118-119.

provinces of Timucua and Apalachee to take advantage of Indian settlements for labor and grazing land. The governor also opened trade between the newly-established port of San Marcos de Apalachee, located on the Gulf of Mexico south of present day Tallahassee, and Havana. As native populations declined, the Spanish began to appropriate abandoned land to use for agricultural purposes. The Spanish initially established these early ranches to supply meat to the St. Augustine garrison, but they began to earn significant profits by shipping products from the Gulf port to the Caribbean.³⁸ The growing success of cattle ranches led to surplus agricultural goods including cowhides, tallow, and dried meat. Ranchers and Apalachee merchants shipped their goods through San Marcos to markets in Havana and other Caribbean cities because they offered better prices than St. Augustine and the voyage was shorter.³⁹ To make this burgeoning trade beneficial to St. Augustine and to secure agricultural goods like Apalachee maize, Governor Damian de Vega Castro y Pardo stationed a customs house at San Marcos and opened a sea route between the port and the *presidio*.⁴⁰

Many of Florida's governors attempted to exploit the financial potential of cattle ranches to benefit St. Augustine and to meet their own ends. In 1645, a decade before the Timucuan rebellion, Benito Ruiz de Salazar y Vallecilla secured the governorship of Florida by contracting to build a galleon for the royal armada using the personal income he planned to earn in various Florida business ventures as collateral. Although he lacked the finances to purchase the governorship outright, as was the traditional method, Salazar drew indemnity from the revenue he expected to earn from cattle ranches and wheat farms he had established across the mission provinces. The most notable of these was located at San Miguel de Asile in western Timucua on the Apalachee border.⁴¹

During a personal visitation tour of the Timucua province, Salazar negotiated with Asile's *cacique* Manuel for the use of six leagues of inhabited land to raise wheat and livestock. He discovered the agricultural wealth of the area during the first year

38 Bushnell, "The Menéndez Márquez Cattle Barony at La Chua and the Determinants of Economic Expansion in Seventeenth Century Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 56, no. 4 (April 1978): 408-417.

39 Bonnie G. McEwan, "Hispanic Life on the Seventeenth Century Florida Frontier," in *The Spanish Missions of La Florida*, ed. Bonnie G. McEwan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 296-297.

40 Bushnell, "The Menéndez Márquez Cattle Barony," 417.

41 Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana*, 126.

of his governorship and decided to establish ranches there in order to provide food for St. Augustine and to make up for a *situado* diminished by enemy attack and shipwrecks.⁴² Salazar extorted the stewardship of this land by using his position as governor and claiming that the establishment of the ranch at Asile was needed for the service of the Crown.⁴³ He also stationed a lieutenant governor in neighboring Apalachee to control the region militarily and to oversee the province's trade with Havana. *Cacique* Manuel conceded the use of the land and agreed to organize Indian labor to clear ground under the condition that he would receive annual payments of axes, hoes and clothing.⁴⁴ However, Salazar proved untrustworthy as he failed to provide *Cacique* Manuel with remuneration for his concessions and upon the governor's death in 1651, his son and heir sold the ranch and all of its livestock to the interim governor, Nicolás Ponce de León.⁴⁵

In a letter of protest written by Manuel and translated by Friar Alonso Escudero, the *cacique* complained that the few remaining Indians of his community were laboring on the ranch without pay and he insisted that in his negotiations with Salazar, he had arranged to lease the land rather than give it away. He also made it clear that Salazar's son sold land that did not belong to him. For native societies of the Southeast, the ownership and use of land was corporate and controlled by a group of hereditary leaders. Thus, the land used for the Asile ranch was not owned solely by *cacique* Manuel.⁴⁶ Moreover, in what may have been an attempt to strengthen his own position vis-à-vis a Spanish administration that placed a heavy importance on Catholic evangelization, Manuel claimed that because of the prolonged unrecompensed labor, many of the unconverted Indians obstinately refused to become Christians. In order to understand the long and historically significant conflict between cattle ranching and

42 AGI/SD 233, B.

43 Hann, *A History of the Timucua Indians and Missions*, 196.

44 Hoffman, 119.

45 Bushnell, "The Menéndez Márquez Cattle Barony," 418. In 1646, Governor Benito Ruiz de Salazar Vallecilla was deposed by Francisco Menéndez Márquez and Pedro Benedit Horruytiner for not completing the galleon he was contracted to build for the Crown. However, Salazar was reinstated in 1648 after offering to build the Crown a second galleon. Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana*, 126-127. After the death of interim governor Nicolás Ponce de León, Pedro Benedit Horruytiner was elected interim governor. An itemized list of the Asile's assets can be found in AGI/EC 155B.

46 James J. Miller, *An Environmental History of Northeast Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 91.

chiefly authority it is important to note that Friar Alonso Escudero also wrote a letter to Governor Diego de Rebolledo immediately before the rebellion in an attempt to convince Rebolledo to suspend his unpopular order.⁴⁷

Salazar's ranches were an unprecedented incursion into the Indians' world.⁴⁸ The ranches intensified geopolitical competition in the interior and served to create tensions between Indians and the expanding colonial government. Writing on behalf of the Apalachee *caciques* in 1651, Friar Juan de Medina insisted that the governor dismantle Asile and pay the *caciques* for their losses of land and labor.⁴⁹ Friar Medina also cautioned that the Apalachee Indians had rebelled in 1647 with far less provocation and that if the colonial government failed to meet the demands of the *caciques*, there was likely to be another revolt.⁵⁰ Facing mounting pressure from local *caciques* and Franciscan friars, Horrutyner dismantled the Asile ranch and sold off its assets. Lúcas Menéndez's decision to destroy the much larger La Chua ranch five years later proved Friar Medina's warnings to be prescient.

Caciques controlled both the land around their villages and the fields of abandoned village sites. Franciscans acted as intermediaries for marketing the agricultural goods produced by Indians in the mission provinces and attempted to prevent Spanish business endeavors in the interior. The friars, who were struggling to gain converts, defended the Indians' rights to these lands and opposed new settlements near missions and villages. As evidenced by the letters written by Escudero and Medina, Franciscans often launched protests against Spanish abuses such as those posed by cattle ranching. The labor demands of ranches threatened missionary efforts by diminishing the number of Christian Indians living within the mission system. Facing a common threat, *caciques* and missionaries

47 AGI/EC 155B. Alonso Escudero was the resident friar of San Pedro de Potohiriba who wrote a letter to Governor Diego de Rebolledo immediately before the rebellion. Escudero wrote this letter in an attempt to convince Rebolledo to suspend his unpopular order that *caciques* and *principales* be required to carry their own provisions to St. Augustine.

48 Hoffman, 120.

49 AGI/SD 229. Friar Medina speaks on the behalf of the *caciques* of Apalachee who complained of their vassals having to tend to cattle and to sow and reap wheat at the Asile ranch without receiving payment. Medina claimed that the land for the ranches was taken from the *caciques* and he asked that the officials of the *Real Hacienda* provide the *caciques* with restitution for their lands and unpaid labor. He also warned that if the ranch was not removed that there could be an uprising ("*Se puede dar con esto motivo a algún levantamiento.*").

50 AGI/SD 229.

entered into a de facto alliance against the cattle raising industry.⁵¹ This situation often brought friars into direct conflict with the colonial government.⁵² In spite of Franciscan objections, there were Spanish governmental provisions in place for the use of Indian lands for ranching. Colonial administration permitted settlers to request grazing rights to circular pieces of land approximately eight leagues across but these so-called *estancias* were prohibited from being closer than three leagues from any Indian settlement.⁵³ Nevertheless, many governors violated this rule by regularly granting abandoned and unfarmed land close to villages in order to encourage ranching.⁵⁴

Lúcas Menéndez's destruction of the La Chua cattle ranch was not unique or unprecedented. Many *caciques* vehemently opposed the Spanish use of their lands for ranching before and after the 1656 revolt and Timucuas often killed cattle to prevent them from ruining their crops. There are reports given by Franciscan missionaries dating back to 1612 of Indians killing Spanish cattle and destroying agricultural fields.⁵⁵ In 1694, the interim-treasurer of Florida, Captain Joaquin de Florencia, conducted an investigation of the Timucua province and discovered that the Indians of San Diego de Salamototo, a mission and ferry near the St. Johns River, were suffering from a severe food shortage because livestock from Captain Juan de Pueyo's ranch destroyed the village's crops before they could be harvested.⁵⁶

51 David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 130. Friars competed with settlers, soldiers, and governmental officials for Indian labor. Each group insisted that their own claims for labor were in the best interest of the Indians.

52 Bushnell, "The Noble and Loyal City, 1565-1668," in *The Oldest City: St. Augustine Saga of Survival*, ed. Jean Parker Waterbury (St. Augustine, FL: The St. Augustine Historical Society, 1983), 48.

53 *Ibid.*, 410.

54 Hoffman, 136.

55 Bushnell, "The Menéndez Marquez Cattle Barony at La Chua," 410.

56 AGI/EC, 157A, *Visita del Pueblo de San Diego de Salamototo*, 30 de Diciembre de 1694; and William H. Dusenberry, *The Mexican Mesta: The Administration of Ranching in Colonial Mexico* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), 105-106. The destruction of cattle ranches by Indians was a common occurrence in Spanish colonies with prominent cattle industries outside of Florida. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Indians living in Oaxaca, Mexico, often resorted to killing Spanish livestock and setting fire to ranches in response to Spanish labor abuses. See Lolita Gutiérrez Brockington, *The Leverage of Labor: Managing the Cortéz Haciendas in Tehuantepec, 1588-1688* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), 101-102. In her work on seventeenth century cattle ranches of Tehuantepec, Mexico, Lolita Gutiérrez Brockington cites numerous instances of Indians slaughtering Spanish livestock and squatting on ranching lands they considered their own.

Ranches also represented an imposing and widening financial competition for the *caciques* of Apalachee and Timucua. While scholars are aware that the Indians of the wealthier and more densely populated province of Apalachee utilized cattle, less is known about Timucua participation in cattle raising. Archaeologist Elizabeth J. Reitz believes that there may have been differences in the use and consumption of cattle and other domesticated livestock in the north Florida mission provinces. Excavated faunal remains at the Apalachee mission site of San Luis de Talimali and the Timucua mission site of San Martín de Ayacuto suggest that the Indians of Apalachee may have had greater access to livestock than their Timucuan neighbors.⁵⁷ It is likely that the Timucua were attracted to cattle ranching but the high prices of cattle during the first half of the seventeenth century and the stiff competition for land and labor posed by La Chua would have made it difficult for them to seize the economic opportunity.⁵⁸

Francisco Menéndez Márquez began the La Chua cattle ranch in 1646 while serving as co-interim governor after deposing Governor Salazar for failing to finish the galleon he was contracted to build.⁵⁹ Márquez chose to establish La Chua in the western Timucua-speaking region of Potano because the Indian practice of burning off underbrush for agriculture and hunting had created open savannahs in the region, which were ideal for large-scale ranching. In addition, settlers enjoyed greater access to Potano because the region had recently been pacified through demographic contraction, evangelization, and warfare. Potano Indians had endured three generations of armed conflict with the Spanish before they came to peaceful terms in 1600. Soon thereafter, the Franciscans began organizing missions along the *Camino Real*. The constant harassment of the Potano missions by unconverted Indian populations outside of Timucua led Governor

57 Elizabeth J. Reitz, "Evidence for Animal Use at the Missions of Spanish Florida," in *The Spanish Missions of Florida*, ed. Bonnie G. McEwan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 376, 385, 393. According to Reitz, beef and pork were part of the diet of the indigenous groups of Western Timucua but European animals never replaced wild game as the primary subsistence strategy of that region.

58 Hann, *A History of the Timucua Indians and Missions*, 195.

59 Bushnell, "The Menéndez Márquez Cattle Barony at La Chua," 418.

Juan Fernández de Olivera to station the first soldiers in the Florida interior in 1610. Epidemic disease hit the region in 1614 killing nearly half of the Christian mission population and by the 1630s, there were only 3,000 Indians living in Potano. This population was large enough to maintain the *Camino Real* but not large enough to compete for the valuable grazing lands needed for ranching. By the mid-seventeenth century, the conditions were conducive for the Spanish to establish a productive cattle industry in north-central Florida.⁶⁰

The La Chua cattle ranch was valued at 8,000 pesos and earning an annual profit of 700 pesos in 1649, just seven years before the Timucuan rebellion. When Juan Menéndez Márquez took over the ranch after his father's death in 1651, it had become the most profitable cattle ranch in Spanish Florida. Much like other cattle ranches located in the mission provinces, it was committing many long-standing abuses against the Indians. La Chua was free-range with no fences to prevent cattle from destroying the agricultural fields of *cacique* Lúcas Menéndez and nearby villages.⁶¹ The high volume of goods produced on the ranch were shipped out of San Marcos, stifling the meager competition from *caciques* and mission Indians in both Apalachee and Timucua who also used this port to ship corn, wheat, pelts, and cowhides to the Caribbean.⁶² More significantly, *caciques* struggling to maintain vassals, the basis of their political power, in the midst of severe population decline, competed with La Chua, whose growing labor demands drew large numbers of Indian laborers from as far away as Apalachee.⁶³ The mounting success of Spanish cattle ranches, such as La Chua, forced *caciques* out of any tenuous social or economic leadership roles they once held. Given these threats, it is apparent why *cacique* Lúcas Menéndez felt compelled to eliminate the most successful cattle ranch in the region.

Current research on the Timucuan rebellion makes many compelling assessments, but it has not taken into account the infringement of Spanish ranching on Timucuan chiefly power. While Rebolledo's mandate that elite Indians carry their own cargo

60 Ibid., 410-411.

61 Bushnell, "The Menéndez Márquez Cattle Barony," 423; Matter, "Economic Basis of the Seventeenth Century Florida Missions," 29.

62 Bushnell, *The King's Coffin*, 82.

63 Ibid., 430. Apalachee Indians were still complaining about cattle damaging their fields and villages as late as 1699.

provided one motive for the rebellion, the abuses and competition for cattle ranching were important contributing factors that historians must also consider. The Governor's unpopular order merely compounded the preexisting power struggle between *caciques* and Spanish ranch owners, who competed with Indian leaders for land, labor, and economic viability. The destruction of the La Chua cattle ranch, the most prominent incident of the Timucuan rebellion, was an attempt by *cacique* Lúcas Menéndez to control the geopolitics of his region by eliminating what he perceived as an intolerable incursion on his chiefly authority.