

From La Florida to La California

*Franciscan Evangelization in the
Spanish Borderlands*

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Essays from a Conference Hosted by Flagler College,
St. Augustine, Florida

The Academy of American Franciscan History
Berkeley, California
2013



Pueblo Revolt was all about forced conversions and Native resistance to the missions, the presidios, and the towns of the colonial Southwest. The friars became the focus of the violence because the conflict was aimed at driving the Spanish away forever.

The Guale Revolt was an internecine struggle between embattled paramount chiefs locked in bloody traditional warfare with one another. The friars were caught in the middle because the conflict centered on retaining and enhancing favored-nation status within the Franciscan mission system.

Dozens of Franciscans were martyred in the Pueblo and Guale uprisings, but they perished for very different reasons.

CHAPTER 9

Catalysts of Assimilation: The Role of Franciscan Missionaries in the Colonial System of Spanish Florida

John E. Worth

As a remote garrison colony on the northern margins of the Spanish colonial empire from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, Florida stands out as an instructive case study for understanding the important role that Franciscan missionaries played in the context of Spanish colonialism in the New World. First discovered during Juan Ponce de León's 1513 voyage of exploration, Florida witnessed repeated failures of Spanish colonial attempts until the 1565 establishment of St. Augustine as a permanent hub for colonial expansion, along with its sister city Santa Elena in 1566. Nevertheless, even with two colonial bases along the Atlantic coast, rapid and extensive Spanish military expansion during Florida's first years as a colony were followed by a similarly rapid collapse of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés's short-lived system of frontier forts by 1570, leaving Spain with little more than a coastal presence for several decades to come. In 1587, however, just as Santa Elena was abandoned in favor of St. Augustine as the colonial capital of Spanish Florida, a small number of Franciscan friars were distributed as resident missionaries among nearby Native American groups. Although not the first Spanish missionaries in Florida, these Franciscans heralded the beginning of a new and successful phase of colonial expansion that would eventually result in the incorporation of tens of thousands of Southeastern Indians into the emerging colonial system of Spanish Florida over the course of the next half century. This unprecedented multiethnic colonial society would ultimately spread across the Florida peninsula all the way to the Gulf of Mexico, encompassing dozens of indigenous chiefdoms across thousands of square miles. Far from being only peripheral players in an otherwise military conquest, Franciscan missionaries actually

played a pivotal role in the success of this new model of Spanish colonialism, which emphasized voluntary assimilation instead of involuntary subjugation.

In broad perspective, Spanish colonialism in the New World was characterized by an overarching approach that fundamentally differed from many of its later rivals.¹ Unlike the English, for example, whose colonial push into North America generally revolved around the acquisition of uninhabited tracts of land and concurrent long-distance trade with indigenous groups in the frontier, Spain's early colonial strategy focused on the assimilation of functioning indigenous societies within Spanish administrative jurisdiction, and the extraction of resources using native labor. Spanish colonialism thus centered on people more than land, and utilized a variety of strategies designed to facilitate the assimilation of diverse indigenous groups into new, multiethnic colonial societies within the broader Spanish empire. The rewards of successful sixteenth-century conquests in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica were most commonly towns and villages granted as *encomiendas* to expedition participants, within which indigenous peoples still continued to live and work while providing tributary surplus to Spanish *encomenderos*.² Even though the *encomienda* system was ultimately replaced in favor of other mechanisms for colonial assimilation, the local colonial economies that ultimately enriched the Spanish Crown were still initially dominated by indigenous populations across the New World.³ Despite the fact that rampant population decline combined with the effects of intermarriage with immigrant Europeans and Africans ultimately transformed the demographic profile of most regions, the Spanish model of assimilative colonialism was nonetheless dominant in Spanish colonial endeavors across the New World, contrasting sharply with that employed by other European powers, for whom assimilation was never a primary colonial strategy. In Spanish Florida, assimilation formed the template for colonial expansion

¹ Useful comparative studies of Spanish and English colonialism can be found in Matthew Lange, James Mahoney, and Matthias vom Hau, "Colonialism and Development: A Comparative Analysis of Spanish and British Colonies," *American Journal of Sociology* 111, no. 5 (2006), 1412–62; and James Lang, *Conquest and Commerce: Spain and England in the Americas* (New York: Academic Press, 1975).

² James Lockhart, "Encomienda and Hacienda: The Evolution of the Great Estate in the Spanish Indies," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 49, no. 3 (1969), 411–29; Robert G. Keith, "Encomienda, Hacienda and Corregimiento in Spanish America: A Structural Analysis," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 51, no. 3 (1971), 431–46.

³ Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492–1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); and John Francis Bannon, *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513–1821* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974).

during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, although strategies for its implementation went through several unsuccessful iterations before arriving at the successful Franciscan model.⁴

The foundations of what became the Florida colony were laid with the 1565 establishment of St. Augustine, but not only was this the most recent in a series of unsuccessful prior attempts, but it also marked the beginning of a short-lived experiment that would become yet another failed strategy for colonial expansion in southeastern North America. The first attempts to establish Spanish colonies in Florida had been carried out during the 1520s under Juan Ponce de León and Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón along the Gulf and Atlantic coastlines, respectively, and neither lasted more than a few weeks, after which surviving colonists abandoned their attempts and fled back to the Caribbean.⁵ The unintended 1528 arrival of Pánfilo de Narváez's colonizing ships along Florida's Gulf coast was followed by the death of all but a handful of survivors attempting to flee west toward New Spain, marking yet another tragic end to a settlement that was originally intended for Texas (although it would have had jurisdiction over Florida).⁶ A decade later, yet another expedition, this time primarily military in character, was launched into the interior Southeast by Hernando de Soto, whose 600-man army also met with ruin during their 1539–1543 peregrinations, leaving only half of the expedition alive by the time they escaped to New Spain.⁷ All these colonial attempts, royally authorized but privately financed, failed to provide Spain with even a foothold in Florida more than a generation after its 1513 discovery. And after the Soto expedition demonstrated clearly that southeastern North America possessed no wealthy,

⁴ John E. Worth, "Inventing Florida: Constructing a Colonial Society in an Indigenous Landscape," in *Native and Imperial Transformations: Sixteenth-Century Entradas in the American Southwest and Southeast*, ed. Clay Mathers, Jeffrey M. Mitchem, and Charles M. Haecker (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, in press); Jerald T. Milanich, *Laboring in the Fields of the Lord: Spanish Missions and Southeastern Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 55–103; and Paul E. Hoffman, *Florida's Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 20–72.

⁵ Edward W. Lawson, *The Discovery of Florida and Its Discoverer Juan Ponce de León* (St. Augustine, FL: Edward W. Lawson, 1946); Paul E. Hoffman, *A New Andalusia and a Way to the Orient: The American Southeast during the Sixteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); and Hoffman, "Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón," in *Columbus and the Land of Ayllon: The Exploration and Settlement of the Southeast*, ed. Jeannine Cook (Darien, GA: Lower Altamaha Historical Society, 1992), 27–49.

⁶ Paul E. Hoffman, "Narváez and Cabeza de Vaca in Florida," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521–1704*, ed. Charles M. Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 50–73.

⁷ Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997).

densely populated native societies on the scale of the Aztec or Inca, or any other immediate path to riches, Florida was effectively confirmed as peripheral to Spain's primary colonial ambitions.

In the aftermath of these repeated failures to establish any Spanish presence in Florida, the Spanish Crown actually provided funding for a bold new colonial experiment under the leadership of Dominican friar Luís Cáncer, who had proposed a purely religious expedition comprised of six missionaries and a single lay colonist. Nevertheless, the 1549 Cáncer expedition was also an unmitigated failure, in large part due to the fact that the missionaries landed along Florida's peninsular Gulf coast, where recent memories of Soto and Narváez predisposed local groups to murder three of the seven expedition members. Lacking any military backing, the survivors withdrew from Florida like all their predecessors.⁸

By the middle of the sixteenth century, Florida's marginal colonial status began to be eclipsed by its increasing strategic importance with respect to the operational geography of the broader Spanish empire in the New World. Specifically, Florida was precisely positioned alongside the Bahama Channel, the gateway for all the returning treasure fleets that departed Havana for Spain. As such, an unoccupied Florida could provide a convenient staging ground for foreign ships and pirates to prey upon passing Spanish ships with little or no warning. Moreover, in light of the frequency of shipwrecks along Florida's southeastern coastline, the southern Florida peninsula was already known to be home to hostile Indian groups with a long history of imprisoning and murdering shipwreck survivors and plundering wrecked vessels. Both these threats gave Florida a renewed significance for Spanish authorities, making it imperative to establish a foothold there before any other European power.

A decade after the failed Cáncer expedition, increasingly urgent concerns about the possible French colonization of Florida led the Spanish Crown to provide substantial funding for a truly massive new colonial expedition launched from New Spain, this time under Tristán de Luna y Arellano. Boasting eleven ships and 1,500 colonists, including some 500 soldiers and a handful of Dominican missionaries, the Luna expedition was designed to extend Spanish dominion overland from the northern Gulf coast to the lower Atlantic coast. Despite extensive planning and considerable expense, however,

⁸ Woodbury Lowery, *The Spanish Settlements within the Present Limits of the United States, 1513-1561* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), 411-27; Robert S. Weddle, *Spanish Sea: The Gulf of Mexico in North American Discovery, 1500-1685* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985), 234-46.

a hurricane devastated the colony and its food stores just five weeks after its arrival in Pensacola Bay, leaving the colonists in a struggle just to survive. The last remnants of the expedition were withdrawn just two years later.⁹

Hard on the heels of the Luna expedition failure, two successive French colonial expeditions to the lower Atlantic coast underscored Spain's increasing urgency to fulfill its long-awaited goal of colonizing Florida. Although reports of the French establishment of Charlesfort in 1562 and Fort Caroline in 1564 were slow to reach Spanish authorities, a new public-private partnership was launched in 1565 under Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, declared the Adelantado of Florida for a colonizing expedition roughly comparable in size to that of Luna, but this time launched directly from Spain through Cuba.¹⁰ By 1566, Menéndez had eliminated the French presence, established not one but two fortified Spanish colonial towns along the Atlantic coast at St. Augustine and Santa Elena, and was busily making plans to extend his domain both to the north and south. By the beginning of 1568, Menéndez had placed garrisons of soldiers at the principal towns of Native American chiefdoms stretching south from St. Augustine and around the tip of the Florida peninsula to Tampa Bay on the Gulf coast, and inland north of Santa Elena stretching across central South Carolina, western North Carolina, and eastern Tennessee.¹¹ Although a handful of Jesuit priests and secular clergymen were dispersed as missionaries in these regions, the principal Spanish presence at the thirteen frontier garrisons was military. And by the summer of 1569, nearly all these garrisons had been slaughtered or withdrawn in the face of widespread resistance from host communities. Interference in local affairs, appropriation of food and other resources, and involvement with native women were all noted as contributing factors in the fall of Menéndez's string of forts. Following the withdrawal of

⁹ Herbert Ingram Priestly, *The Luna Papers: Documents Relating to the Expedition of Don Tristán de Luna y Arellano for the Conquest of La Florida in 1559-1561* (DeLand: Florida State Historical Society, 1928); and Charles Hudson, Marvin T. Smith, Chester B. DePratter, and Emilia Kelly, "The Tristán de Luna Expedition, 1559-1561," *Southeastern Archaeology* 8, no. 1 (1989): 31-45.

¹⁰ Eugene Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida: Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the Spanish Conquest of 1565-1568* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1976).

¹¹ The northern chain of forts was established during the Juan Pardo expeditions, while the southernmost forts were established as a result of Menéndez's own maritime voyages during 1566 and 1567. Charles Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions: Exploration of the Carolinas and Tennessee, 1566-1568* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990); John H. Hann, *Missions to the Calusa* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1991), 217-321; John E. Worth, "Pineland during the Spanish Period," in *The Archaeology of Pineland: A Coastal Southwest Florida Village Complex, A.D. 50-1700*, ed. Karen J. Walker and William H. Marquardt, Monograph Number 4 (Gainesville, FL: Institute of Archaeology and Paleoecological Studies, in press).

the garrisons, Florida's remaining Jesuit missionaries eventually decided to venture far to the north and away from all Spanish military influence, but their short-lived 1570–1571 mission to the Chesapeake Bay region ended just like Fray Cancer's, in martyrdom.¹²

The colonial model implemented by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés during the first six years of his colonial effort in Florida proved only that direct military annexation of indigenous provinces was both costly and untenable. If anything, however, the need for those indigenous provinces became even more pivotal after the failure of Menéndez's strategy. As a result of its very specific role and position within the broader Spanish colonial empire, the Florida colony ultimately became strongly dependent on its ability to assimilate neighboring indigenous societies into its expanding local colonial system, harnessing the productive power of Native American labor to provide a buffer against privation.¹³ First and foremost, Florida was a garrison colony, funded and maintained by the Spanish Crown for strategic purposes, namely to protect the returning Spanish fleets by maintaining a military presence on the Florida peninsula. Lacking the human or material resource base to spur rapid economic development, and situated in a remote location isolated from the rest of the Spanish empire, Florida did not attract significant numbers of colonists beyond the garrison families, and was therefore never able to develop a productive economy to balance out the Crown's annual expenditure in maintaining it. Beginning in 1571, the Florida colony was allocated an annual stipend, or *situado*, eventually amounting to more than 65,000 pesos, and this would become the backbone of the local economy throughout Florida's Spanish colonial rule, providing funds for salaries, food, equipment, and supplies.¹⁴

Substantially dependent on this external support, Florida's remote garrison was unfortunately subject to all the perennial delays and interruptions in payments and shipping that would be expected within a dynamic global empire, and the documentary record is replete with regular complaints of privation, occasionally extreme. As a result of irregular and sometimes unreliable external

¹² Clifford M. Lewis and Albert J. Loomie, *The Spanish Jesuit Mission in Virginia, 1570–1572* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953).

¹³ Amy Turner Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana: Spain's Support System for the Mission Provinces of Florida*, Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History 74 (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1994); John E. Worth, *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida*, 2 vols. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); Milanich, *Laboring*.

¹⁴ Engel Sluiter, *The Florida Situado: Quantifying the First Eighty Years, 1571–1651* (Research Publications of the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, no. 1 (Gainesville: University of Florida, Gainesville, 1985); Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana*, 43–48.

supply lines, the St. Augustine garrison ultimately came to depend on local resources, particularly staple foods, to make up for sporadic shortfalls. Nevertheless, two factors hindered the development of local food production: the lack of a substantial nonmilitary Spanish settler population to provide the agricultural labor to produce staple foods, and the location of St. Augustine in a region of northeastern Florida that had comparatively poor agricultural soils, and which was increasingly depopulated of its native populations as a result of sustained contact with Europeans and European epidemic diseases since the 1560s.¹⁵ As a result, St. Augustine had neither the labor nor the arable soils to provide a sufficient and reliable source of staple foods to supplement its unreliable external supply lines. The city needed access both to the fertile soils of the far western interior and the larger barrier islands to the north, and to the tens of thousands of Native Americans who had been producing agricultural surpluses in these regions for generations. It would also need to develop the infrastructure to produce or transfer large quantities of surplus staple foods to St. Augustine, as well as the political and economic relationships needed to create a sustainable colonial system based on voluntary cooperation among all parties.

Into this scenario stepped the missionaries of the Franciscan Order, whose arrival during the 1570s and 1580s eventually provided a successful model for colonial expansion in Spanish Florida during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, resulting in the structural assimilation of literally dozens of indigenous chiefdoms surrounding St. Augustine, providing access to both arable soils and experienced native farmers through the mechanism of the missions. For as long as the mission populations could be sustained, the Florida garrison had its buffer against privation. The Franciscan approach thus represented a new model of colonialism for Spanish Florida, in which Franciscan friars spearheaded the colonial assimilation of native societies with the logistical and defensive support of nonresident soldiers. Working together in an often tenuous alliance of convenience, the Franciscans and the military were able to achieve what neither would have been capable of independently.

This new strategy rejected both prior approaches to colonial assimilation in Spanish Florida: the emplacement of resident soldiers with supplementary missionaries, as well as the insertion of missionaries in remote provinces without any military backing. The Franciscan model, which began to be implemented in 1587, hinged on two important features: voluntary acceptance of resident missionaries by native political leaders, and the presence of nearby but nonres-

¹⁵ John E. Worth, *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida*, vol. 1, *Assimilation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 126–34, 144–61.

ident military forces. More broadly, the Franciscan approach in Florida seems to have included the following strategic principles:

- Initiate voluntary missionization within existing indigenous sociopolitical structures, starting with the provincial chiefs.
- Leave secular government to the chiefs.
- Minimize the presence and influence of the military, while simultaneously keeping them close enough to provide logistical and defensive support.
- Serve as technical advisors, cultural brokers, and advocates for the "Republic of Indians" within the context of the broader Spanish colonial system.
- Disseminate the Christian faith through lived experience, catechesis, and sacramental administration.

Within the context of this strategy, the Franciscan missionaries were far more than simply heralds of religious conversion; their role in the emerging colonial system of Spanish Florida might best be characterized as a sort of colonial-era version of the modern U.S. Peace Corps, seeking and gaining voluntary admittance in Native American societies with the express purpose of disseminating, teaching, and exemplifying what they offered as a better way of life within the context of the new colonial world.¹⁶ In practice, the Florida Franciscans seem to have been just as concerned with the temporal well-being of their charges as they were with their spiritual well-being, not only facilitating access to the Spanish colonial system and fomenting local economic development through intensified agricultural production (among many other activities), but also acting as a check and balance on governing military authorities, serving as principal advocates for the mission Indians in some of the most contentious issues of the day relating to various abuses and exploitation within the colonial system. Indeed, these nonreligious functions may well have proved to be a strong incentive for indigenous chiefs not simply to acquiesce to the pres-

¹⁶ The September 22, 1961 founding legislation for the Peace Corps seems remarkably similar to what was, in effect, the operating goal of Florida's Franciscan friars (substituting Spain for the United States), creating "a Peace Corps, which shall make available to interested countries and areas men and women of the United States qualified for service abroad and willing to serve, under conditions of hardship if necessary, to help the peoples of such countries and areas in meeting their needs for trained manpower, and to help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served." United States House of Representatives, United States Code, Title 22, Chapter 34, available at <http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/22C34.txt>, accessed December 19, 2011.

ence of resident Franciscan missionaries, but even to request them explicitly, as is well-documented throughout colonial Florida. Franciscan friars routinely clashed with soldiers and officers in Florida's military government over Indian affairs, and because each had independent channels of communication to the Spanish Crown, both sides had the capability to cause trouble for the other, up to and including the removal of governors or other high-ranking officials in response to Franciscan complaints, or the relocation or removal of Franciscan missionaries based on charges leveled by military officers and soldiers. Florida's mission chiefs clearly were not unaware of the nuances of this relationship, and in fact frequently seem to have made use of it to further their own ends.

As implemented in Florida, the Franciscan model led to the gradual assimilation of one neighboring society after another, always beginning with the administrative center of each regional polity before distributing additional resident missionaries to subordinate local polities.¹⁷ Missionization progressed only slowly across the landscape and into the western interior, attempting never to overreach beyond the capability of the Spanish military to protect the advances of the Franciscan friars, who were keenly aware of the potential threat. Beginning with the establishment of missions in the coastal Mocama province north of St. Augustine and along the middle St. Johns River in 1587, additional missions were established in 1595 to the north and south in the provinces of Guale and Agua Dulce, pushing westward to Potano in 1606, Timucua in 1608, Yustaga in 1623, and finally Apalachee in 1633, where a port on the Gulf of Mexico was established by 1637.¹⁸ The Franciscans had spent half a century covering less than a third of the more than 600-mile travel distance from St. Augustine that Pedro Menéndez de Avilés had attempted to fortify and hold during a two-and-a-half year period, and yet the mission provinces they established lasted more than a century in several cases, and only fell with the annihilation of the very provinces themselves during the slave-raiding years between 1659 and 1706.¹⁹ While a handful of other missions would be founded in even more distant provinces during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the fundamental structure and extent of Spanish Florida had been established by the 1630s, forming the basis for a new colonial society that lasted literally for generations.

¹⁷ Worth, *Assimilation*, 35–43.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 44–76, 158–61.

¹⁹ John E. Worth, "Razing Florida: The Indian Slave Trade and the Devastation of Spanish Florida, 1659–1715," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South*, ed. Robbie Ethridge and Sheri Shuck-Hall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press., 2009), 295–311.

While the formal process of “rendering obedience” to the Spanish Crown normally involved a visit by each chief to Florida’s military governor in St. Augustine, where diplomatic gifts and provisions were provided to chiefs and their retainers, the only Spaniard to take up residence in missionized chiefdoms was normally a single Franciscan missionary, and even then only in the village where the chief resided. Although a mission compound consisting of a church and nearby friary and kitchen would be constructed alongside the village plaza and near other public structures such as the council house and chief’s residence, mission villages remained far more Indian than Spanish in most respects. Friars maintained jurisdiction over the spiritual affairs of their congregants, but hereditary chiefs governed day-to-day civic affairs, though also within the context of the overarching Spanish legal system for the “Republic of Indians.”²⁰

Throughout most of the mission period in Florida, an important facet of chiefly subordination to the Spanish Crown was manifested in the form of the annual *repartimiento* labor draft, which obligated chiefs to select a predetermined number of unmarried young men to travel to St. Augustine for the winter and spring growing season, where they would work together as wage laborers to produce a harvest of corn and other staples in the immediate environs of the city.²¹ For this purpose, Spanish officers and soldiers were dispatched each year to assist with transporting the laborers. In addition, these officers and soldiers were also routinely sent to purchase surplus food directly from the missions, sometimes transported by burden bearers over land, or on Spanish vessels by sea or river. These small military expeditions were often simultaneously used to transport supplies to the Franciscan friars living in the missions. For most of the early mission period, such trips were virtually the only time soldiers visited the missions. The formal establishment of any resident military presence in the Franciscan mission provinces would only begin in the mid-1640s, when a provincial lieutenant was stationed as a customs officer in the populous Apalachee province, later augmented by additional resident lieutenants in other provinces following uprisings in Apalachee in 1647 and Timucua in 1656.²² Beginning in 1659, however, the arrival of Westo Indian slave raiders from the interior prompted the Franciscan missionaries in Apalachee to acquiesce to the posting of a thirty-man garrison there as a defensive measure, and a temporary

²⁰ Worth, *Assimilation*, 103–15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 187–97; Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana*, 121–123; Milanich, *Laboring*, 149–53.

²² Worth, *Assimilation*, 120–25; John E. Worth, *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida*, vol. 2, *Resistance and Destruction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 112–14; John H. Hann, *Apalachee: Land Between the Rivers* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1988), 196–200.

garrison was placed in Guale following a Westo assault there in 1661. By the 1670s, permanent defensive garrisons had been placed in Apalachee, Guale, and Timucua, marking a numerically small but nonetheless significant shift from the original Franciscan template for missionization, in which friars were normally the only resident Spaniards in the mission provinces.²³ By this time, at least two generations of Florida Indians had been born under the mission bell, and the era of provincial assimilation was largely over. The fact that the late seventeenth-century provincial garrisons were so well received in comparison to their precursors under Menéndez a century earlier is perhaps a testament to the success of the Franciscan model of colonization.

Why did the Franciscans succeed in Florida, when so many had failed before? Part of the answer undoubtedly lies in the fact that they began their mission effort more than two decades after the establishment of the city of St. Augustine, during a period when the military might of the Spanish garrison there was an accepted fact on the landscape of Florida, providing a certain measure of protection for Franciscan friars. Despite several direct native challenges to the Spanish presence over the course of those years, including the violent overthrow of virtually all of Menéndez’s frontier forts during the winter and spring of 1567–1568, and the burning of Santa Elena itself during a widespread coastal uprising among the Guale and Orista in 1576, the Spanish garrison at St. Augustine still remained strong, inflicting terrible reprisals along the coast during the winter of 1579–1580, and against the interior Potano in 1584 in response to an earlier ambush.²⁴ St. Augustine was a formidable force to be reckoned with, and chiefs who failed to ally themselves with the Spanish might easily find themselves in jeopardy from existing enemies who did. This alone provided strong motivation to reach out for Spanish alliance during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And the Franciscans progressed only slowly and deliberately away from St. Augustine itself, while always maintaining vital links with its military infrastructure.

But perhaps even more significantly than the threat of force, the Franciscans offered native chiefs a form of direct access to the world of those very same Spaniards, both in the material and spiritual realms. Franciscan missionaries actually evangelized from *within* the Native American societies, effectively becoming functional members of those societies without significantly

²³ Worth, *Resistance and Destruction*, 112–14; John E. Worth, *The Struggle for the Georgia Coast* (1995; reprint, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 18–19, 24.

²⁴ Hoffman, *A New Andalusia*, 269–74; Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana*, 60–62; Worth, *Assimilation*, 27–28.

threatening chiefly power on a local level. Their "Peace Corps" approach to conversion in Florida was fundamentally based on providing substantive material aid to their native communities, and their role as technical advisors, cultural brokers, and advocates was probably just as meaningful to the chiefs and other mission residents as their role as priests and spiritual guides. After decades of repeated failure to establish a functioning colony in southeastern North America, and even after the total collapse of Menéndez's initial strategy for military occupation of St. Augustine's hinterland, it was Franciscan missionaries who were the primary catalysts for the assimilation of a multiplicity of Native American chiefdoms across a broad region into a newly formed colonial society known as Florida.

CHAPTER 10

Grafting onto the Native Landscape: The Franciscan Mission System in Northeastern Florida

Keith Ashley

It has been twenty years since *The Missions of Spanish La Florida* was first published as a special issue of *The Florida Anthropologist*.¹ Looking back on this landmark volume, I am somewhat surprised by the lack of attention given to Spanish missions among the Mocama Indians of the lower Atlantic coast. In one respect this is unexpected given that two of the earliest Catholic missions established by the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans) in La Florida were San Juan del Puerto and San Pedro de Mocama, each emplaced within an existing Mocama village. In fact, aside from Nombre de Dios, founded at the garrison community of St. Augustine, San Juan del Puerto was the longest occupied frontier mission in La Florida, existing in the same place for some 115 years. In another respect, however, the absence of any substantive discussion on the Mocama missions is completely understandable given the lack of active mission research in the region at the time of the volume's publication. But things have changed over the past two decades as more archival documents have been translated and more archaeological sites have been investigated.

When crosses were first raised by Franciscan missionaries at San Juan and San Pedro in 1587, the two mission centers (*doctrinas*) were flanked by a series of native villages situated on barrier islands and along the mainland coast. A friar living at each mission was responsible for traveling and ministering to the outlying native settlements (*visitas*) as the need arose. By 1630, if not earlier,

¹ Originally published as "The Missions of Spanish Florida," in Bonnie G. McEwan, Special Issue of *The Florida Anthropologist* 44 (1991) and later as Bonnie McEwan, ed., *The Spanish Missions of La Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994).