

Late Spanish Military Expeditions in the Interior Southeast, 1597–1628



The century following Spain's first major penetration of the interior of La Florida with the 1539–43 expedition of Hernando de Soto witnessed a remarkable transformation of what is now the Southeastern United States. During this time Spain mounted a colonization effort that was to ensure a foothold on the mainland for nearly three hundred years. While these early years were marked by dreams of ultimate domination of all of La Florida, the grip that Spain held on the mainland was in actuality limited primarily to the coastlines, and more particularly the area around St. Augustine. Although the interior beckoned many Spaniards, military exploration of this region was never pursued in a systematic or consistent manner.

After the abortive expeditions of Tristán de Luna (1559–61) and Juan Pardo (1566–68), Spanish penetration of the interior seems to have been largely relegated to the ambitious Franciscan missionaries. By the middle of the seventeenth century, these friars had pushed Spanish influence far to the north of St. Augustine and even farther to the west. At the same time, however, several small-scale military expeditions pushed deep into the interior between 1597 and 1628. These expeditions represented the last of the military exploratory ventures in the interior and as such mark a transitional period in the colonization of La Florida. Exploration and reconnaissance of the deep frontier by well-armed military expeditions was to be replaced by the less costly endeavors of isolated missionaries, whose persistent overtures to the Indians of the interior gradually pushed Spanish influence farther and farther into the interior. An examination of these last expeditions reveals much regarding Spain's changing military posture in La Florida, and at the same time provides a final glimpse of the Indian

societies of the interior before the penetration of the English traders from the north.¹

Three major exploratory ventures were launched into the interior Southeast during the sixteenth century. The first and most famous is the Hernando de Soto expedition, which set out in 1539. While the details of this adventure are treated elsewhere, it is sufficient to note that the members of the de Soto expedition were the first and last Europeans to witness the vast and powerful paramount chiefdoms of the Indians of the interior Southeast in a largely pristine state, and accounts of this entrada provide a remarkable portrait of living societies that would be irrevocably transformed over the next centuries.²

Between 1559 and 1568, the Luna and Pardo expeditions provided a final glimpse of the Indian societies of the interior before their ultimate political collapse in the face of massive demographic decline.³ This period also marked the establishment of the colonial settlements of St. Augustine and Santa Elena on the Atlantic coast of La Florida. The Pardo expedition was the last major military exploratory venture launched by Spain into the interior Southeast, and it was only with the rapid spread of English traders and colonists after the 1670 foundation of Charles Towne that the window of historical documentation opens once again on a somewhat altered social landscape. Consequently, the processes that transformed these Indian societies remained largely unrecorded by European colonists. While archaeology has been able to make significant contributions toward filling this gap,⁴ there were at least seven Spanish expeditions into the interior during this time, and documentation relating to these journeys, though scant, includes valuable information regarding those societies that remained in the deep frontier until the coming of the Carolinians.

Almost thirty years passed after the return of Juan Pardo's expedition before Spaniards once again penetrated the northern interior. This period witnessed many changes in the character of the Spanish presence on the Atlantic coast, including the brief appearance of Jesuit missionaries among the coastal Indians, the abandonment of Santa Elena after Francis Drake's 1586 assault on St. Augustine, and the establishment of the first Franciscan mission province among the Guale Indians of coastal Georgia in 1595. This last event set the stage for more than a century of Franciscan efforts among the Indians of La Florida and presaged the eventual domination of the regular clergy in all subsequent Spanish exploration of the interior.

Military exploration was by no means replaced during these first years of missionization, for only two years passed before newly installed Governor Méndez de Canço ordered Gaspar de Salas, a soldier with long experience in La Florida, to accompany two friars on an exploratory journey into the interior. While the scale of this expedition was in no way comparable to that of de Soto, Luna, or Pardo, the very fact that Salas accompanied the friars reveals a military interest in the exploration of the interior.⁵

The 1597 entrada is perhaps the best-documented and certainly the most well known of the four examined in this paper.⁶ For this reason, the details of the journey will not be treated in full here. Fray Pedro de Chozas, accompanied by fellow missionary Francisco de Verascola, set out with Salas (as military escort and interpreter) from Tolomato, on the mainland in the Guale mission province opposite Sapelo Island. The expedition included thirty Indians, Christian and pagan, from Tolomato, led by its *cacique*, Don Juan, and loaded with an assortment of trade goods.⁷ The party marched for eight days, seven of which were through a *despoblado*, an unoccupied region. (See Figure 1.)⁸ The group found no good land until they arrived at the town of Tama, where Salas notes an abundance of food. In addition, Salas and the friars discovered evidence of what they believed was silver and projected that these would be "very rich mines."⁹

Chozas's usual practice was to have the Indian king (*rey*) emerge from the council house (*bohio*), carrying the cross and plant it in the middle of the plaza.¹⁰ At Tama, Chozas entered the council house and displayed the cross before taking the king's seat with his companions at his side. Salas informed the Indians of their intentions, and the Indians promised to return with more people the next day. After sleeping in the king's house, Chozas preached the following day. According to Chozas, the appearance of rain, which soaked the Indian fields, brought on their conversion, and he and his companions were given many gifts.¹¹ Another day's journey brought the Spaniards to the town of Ocute, where the *cacique* warned them to turn back: "And wanting to pass forward, the *cacique* of the said town of Ocute obstructed them with much fervor and crying with them, saying that if they went forward the Indians would have to kill them, because many seasons before, it is understood, when de Soto passed carrying many people who went on horseback, they killed them, and that they would kill them easier, since they were few. Because of this, they did not pass forward and returned from there."¹² Chozas only notes the hostile intentions in this other land, but relates an incident which suggests that the *cacique* of Tama may have been under external pressure to reject the Spanish overtures.

On their way back, Chozas's party stopped for the night at Tama, and there he would have been scalped had Salas not fired his arquebus. Chozas relates that "the king was moved to such an atrocious crime through having as great prowess in his district to remove [from] the Spaniard the hair that covers his head, through there being an ancient rite in the West to give [the scalp] to he who ran with more quickness, in order to wear as a garter usually, because he won the jewel [from] his opponent."¹³ The chief of Tama had arranged a contest between himself and another chief, with Chozas's scalp as the intended prize.¹⁴ The next day Chozas was unable to calm the angry chief, who refused the friar's request for burden-bearers, since Chozas related of his own party that "my people have hidden themselves in the desert."¹⁵ This incident perhaps serves to illustrate the tenuous nature of such conversions, particularly in the deep interior.

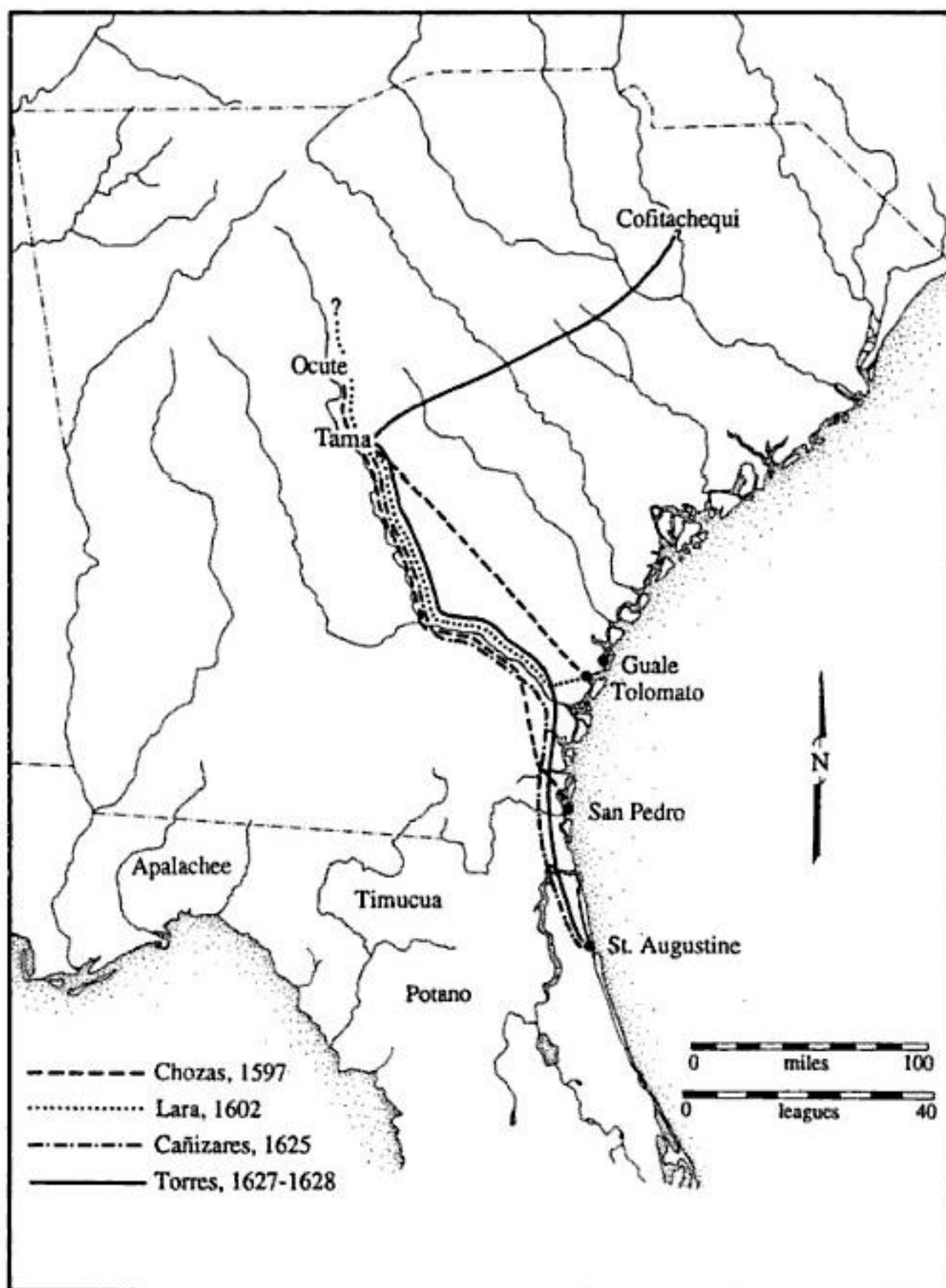


FIGURE I
Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century
Spanish expeditions in the Southeast

While the party penetrated no deeper into the interior than Ocute, Salas makes note of another region even farther:

And likewise they heard the Indians of that town [Ocute] say, and the Salchiches, that across a *sierra* that there was four days journey from there, very high, shining when the sun set like a fire, on the other side of it there were people who wear short hair, and that the pines were found cut with axes, and that it seemed that similar signs could not be but from Spanish people, and the said land seems and is very sufficient for producing whichever kind of grain, even if it be wheat, and many plains and *cabañas*¹⁶ for cattle and rivers of sweet water at stretches, and it seems that if there were someone who knew how to pan gold, it would be gathered in those rivers.¹⁷

Although Salas's conclusion that these people were Spaniards is almost certainly in error, his description suggests the presence of another Indian province four days from Ocute. Based on the distance and the references to mountains and gold panning, it seems reasonable to locate this province in present-day north Georgia. Chozas and his companions explored no further, however, and the return journey was by a different road (see Figure 1), which traversed a more populous region, eventually bringing the party to the mission of San Pedro on Cumberland Island.¹⁸

The precise location of the towns of Tama and Ocute are the subject of considerable debate. While it is probable that the towns of the same name were located on the Oconee River within or near the Piedmont physiological province of northern Georgia when Hernando de Soto visited them in 1540, some scholars place their 1597 location to the south in the forks of the Altamaha, deep within the Coastal Plain.¹⁹ Nevertheless, on the basis of evidence relating to the Chozas expedition and others (discussed below), the northern location seems more probable, with Tama perhaps still located at the Shinholser mound site.²⁰ Regardless of the specific location of these towns, however, it is clear that Salas and the two friars penetrated deep into the interior. While the ultimate impact of their visit on the Indian inhabitants of these interior provinces is unknown, the intelligence gathered by these explorers had a definite and lasting effect on the Spanish perception of the interior.

Late the following year the Crown requested information regarding Tama in hopes of establishing a settlement, and Governor Méndez's report, dated February 6, 1600, constitutes a major documentary source for the expedition.²¹ Within the month, Méndez outlined the needs for a second expedition into the interior, this time with the ambitious goal of ultimately reaching New Mexico. The expedition would have dwarfed that of Juan Pardo, for Méndez requested three hundred foot soldiers along with equipment, weapons, horses, and large quantities of trade goods for the Indians.²² There is no evidence that this proposed expedition ever went beyond the planning stages, however. The recent English colony at Roanoke may have been a factor in the Crown's decision not to pursue this venture, for in

the same letter, Méndez asked for one thousand extra men to comprise an assault force that might oust the English, perhaps reducing a major military exploratory venture to secondary importance. Nevertheless, Governor Méndez's interest in Tama and the interior remained strong.

News of Spaniards in the interior provided the impetus for another exploratory expedition into the interior. In July 1602, Governor Méndez ordered Juan de Lara, a soldier of thirty-four years' experience in La Florida, to investigate these rumors.²³ While Méndez's description of this journey is brief, he does review Spanish contact with these interior Indians, noting:

I have had very great desires to make an entrada to Tama and Ocute from where I have had news. There are samples of mines and stones from Gaspar de Salas, who entered it with Father Chozas and Father Verascola to the said Tama and Ocute, which are more than fifty leagues from the coast on the mainland. The past days I sent to the said Tama Juan de Lara, a soldier of this presidio, to find out if the news that the Indians of the interior brought me was true, that certain Spaniards had arrived at the said Tama, and they brought horses, and understanding that there might be some scattered people of those that journeyed [?] from New Mexico. [Lara's expedition] was [carried out] with great security and accompanied by the Indians of the province of Guale where the said missionaries were killed. He found the said news not to be true.²⁴

This short account is fortunately supplemented by testimony taken in St. Augustine from Lara himself on September 7 of the same year:

It will have been about two months ago that by order of Governor Gonzalo Méndez de Canço he went to reconnoiter some news that had come through the Indians saying that in the interior there were a quantity of Spaniards, and that he should go from this presidio to the *lengua*²⁵ and province of Guale and town of Tulafina, and from there he entered the interior carrying with him Indians of the language of Guale. He continued walking about nine days from sunrise to sunset, and it seemed to the witness that he walked up to sixty or seventy leagues. He arrived among Indians that had not seen [the rumored] Spaniards, and they gave him many gifts. He arrived at a *sierra* and at a town which is called Olatama, and from there, which is the capital of the province, he passed twenty leagues to the north.²⁶ He saw that the land is fertile for whatever cultivation or breeding of cattle, and that there are many large chestnuts like those of Spain and other fruits and many grapes and plums [and] persimmons [of] great quantity. He encountered a river, copious and large, and from there the Indians of the town which is called Olatama [said] that he should not pass from there so that they might not kill him. He turned back and brought some stones so that they might be seen. He gave them to [?] in order to [see] if they were from mines or some metals. He saw that the Indians wore neither gold nor silver nor pearls and that the men walked in hides and the women shawls [*tapadas*] with linen of hemp.²⁷

The details of this expedition are remarkably similar to those of Chozas only five years before, and it seems likely that Lara followed nearly the

same route as the previous expedition (see Figure 1). In fact, his estimate of the distance to Tama (at the Fall Line of the Oconee River) from Guale is more accurate than that of Salas.²⁸ Lara also notes that the town of Tama was the political center of a province of the same name, and that the Indians deeper in the interior remained hostile to Spanish entradas.

The contemporary relations of two Franciscan missionaries indicate that the Lara visit only served to confirm Spanish expectations regarding the riches of the interior. Suggesting that the presidio of St. Augustine be moved north into the province of Guale (and nearer to Tama), Fray Francisco de Pareja noted, "I am certain of the entradas of the interior, the one of Fray Fernandez de Chozas and another now this year of 1602. They have found the land to be of better disposition and more population and fertile, and have brought samples of mines and *guitamo real*."²⁹ Fray Baltasar López further related the information he had acquired from Indians living on the mainland, "having knowledge and news of the interior through being in the same vicinity and road from the *sierras* of Tama where it is known there are mines of gold and silver, and in one of the journeys that I made into the interior I saw some Indians that made use of *chaguales*³⁰ and beads of gold had from hand to hand from the towns that border with this *sierra*."³¹ These accounts indicate that by 1602 the interior, and Tama in particular, was generally perceived to be a well-populated region with an abundance of land and natural resources, including the "mines" Salas described. While Governor Méndez was never able to realize his plans for this region, his successor soon found himself immersed in the legends of the interior.

Within three months of his arrival in St. Augustine as Governor, Pedro de Ybarra wrote to the Crown of his interest in the interior:

The old soldiers of this presidio have told me of the many riches that there are in the interior, some from having seen it, and that 200 leagues from here are people rich and so civilized that they have their houses of stone. They offered to show it to me and teach the road through where one is able to pass with security. Your Majesty giving me license for it and sending me one hundred arquebusiers that I ask for above and as many again *escupiles*³² and pikes, I will go to make an entrada with them in order to see what there is, for Your Majesty did not send me here in order that the columns should remain where they are, but rather in order to go forward. But in case I have difficulty [in] what I ask for in this, Your Majesty will be served to give permission so that at least I may send a person of satisfaction to the people in order to make the said entrada for the first time.³³

While the Crown granted Ybarra permission to explore the interior in November of the same year, a year later the Governor was still waiting for more soldiers to arrive before the expedition could begin.³⁴

Though Ybarra met the *cacique* of Tama in person on his visitation of the Guale province in late November 1604, as late as 1607 Governor Ybarra was still waiting for soldiers to pursue his own entrada into the interior.³⁵

This year, however, witnessed an event which would shape Spanish policy in La Florida for years to come. The foundation of a permanent English colony at Jamestown marked the first real challenge to Spain's domination of mainland North America since Fort Caroline in 1565, and when news of this town reached the Spanish Crown and St. Augustine, concerns seem to have shifted toward defense.

Before this period, even the continued existence of the Spanish colony at St. Augustine was in some doubt, for despite the wishes of both Governor Ybarra and missionaries in La Florida, King Philip III planned a reduction in military personnel.³⁶ However, once the decision had been made to maintain the colony, Ybarra's concerns focused on acquiring more soldiers.³⁷ The proposed minimum of three hundred soldiers could not be met, leaving St. Augustine in a questionable defensive stance. A Royal *Cédula* dated March 15, 1609, reveals the extent of the Crown's concern and established a policy that was to have a significant effect on the role of the military in the exploration of the interior.³⁸ After this time, soldiers were forbidden to accompany the friars on their entradas into the interior. While the stated concern is the deleterious effect of military force in religious conversions, it seems an unlikely coincidence that such a concern would arise precisely when soldiers were at a premium in the planned defense of St. Augustine from the north.

Just over a month later, Governor Ybarra requested that he be permitted to leave St. Augustine, and he was replaced as Governor in 1610.³⁹ His plans for the military exploration of the interior, like those of Governor Méndez before him, were never executed. Nearly twenty-five years would pass before Spanish soldiers once again penetrated the interior on an exploratory mission. During this period, however, Franciscan missionaries pushed farther and farther into the interior west of St. Augustine. The early forays of Fray Baltasar López into the Timucua province in 1597 were followed by the establishment of the mission province of Potano to the south in 1606 and in Timucua two years later. By 1616, there were several missions in these provinces, and while the military occasionally entered these established interior provinces, it was the friars who made the initial contacts with interior groups.

After the 1609 *Cédula*, then, exploration of the interior seems to have been relegated to the clergy. Their efforts, however, were apparently confined to the region west of St. Augustine, where the major mission road would later serve as the primary Spanish avenue into the interior. The northern interior, including the province of Tama and others to the north, remained a largely unexplored wilderness, and it is perhaps in part this fact that prompted a brief flurry of military activity in these unconverted provinces during the 1620s.

During this period, rumors of white horsemen in the interior of La Florida created considerable concern among Spanish officials, and five mili-

tary expeditions were sent into the interior between 1624 and 1628. Documentation regarding the first two of these expeditions is quite limited. On the basis of the report of newly arrived Governor Don Luis de Rojas y Borja, it is apparent that his predecessor, Governor Juan de Salinas, dispatched two small entradas to an undescribed location in the interior during 1624. After conducting a *residencia* of Salinas's term in office, Rojas noted:

Before I arrived at this government [there was] news through the native Indians that in the interior walked some people, never seen [by] them, on horseback and with some lances.⁴⁰ Governor Juan de Salinas, my predecessor, with this news, sent two soldiers [into] the interior to find out what people they were. [They] went and walked 150 leagues, according to what they say. They returned without having seen anything and without bringing more of the relation than was known to be said. They returned through having exhausted the supplies, of food and other kinds, which they carried in order to give to the Indians as barter, which is accustomed, and [for] good passage. Seeing this, the said Governor sent them a second time, and through some disorders of one soldier they returned without having done anything nor even arrived to where [they were] the first time.⁴¹

The identity of the soldiers making this expedition is unknown, and it is unclear whether any Indians accompanied the Spaniards. The location of their journey is not given, but based on the total distance traveled, they probably ventured some distance inland from the coastal Guale province. In any case, neither expedition was successful, and Salinas's successor, Governor Rojas, was forced to make further inquiries soon after his arrival.

Confronted with these persistent rumors, Governor Rojas immediately began making plans for a larger expedition. While awaiting approval and making preparations for this entrada, Rojas vowed, "Meanwhile I will not stop doing all possible measures and making this investigation in order to advise Your Majesty of the most certain thing."⁴² Apparently, Rojas soon dispatched another soldier on a reconnaissance journey, described by Ensign Adrián de Cañizares y Osorio in a later record of his military service:

[Governor Rojas] ordered that he should go to the discovery of some mines of lead⁴³ with traces of gold and silver to the province of Tama that is more than one hundred leagues distant from the said presidio. He did this with much care and diligence, bringing an account to the said Governor of what he had ordered, with much risk to his life by all that province of Indians being pagans and very bellicose warriors, and enduring many hardships by walking on foot out and back with weapons shouldered.⁴⁴

Rojas later mentioned this expedition in preface to his report of the subsequent Torres expedition, and noted that the party was forced to return due to lack of "food and sustenance," and was unable to provide a satisfactory report.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, Cañizares evidently penetrated farther into the interior than the two Salinas expeditions, and was the first to reach the province of Tama since Juan de Lara nearly a quarter century before.⁴⁶ His account above reveals several things. The legend of mines in the province of Tama was clearly a persistent one, though it is doubtful that Cañizares found any proof since his expedition has long since been forgotten.⁴⁷ In addition, Tama remained an unconverted province in 1625, and it is also possible that relations with the Spanish had deteriorated somewhat by this time.⁴⁸ Ultimately, the failure of the Cañizares expedition to complete a military reconnaissance of the interior soon prompted another venture even farther to the north.

In 1627, Governor Rojas mounted what was to be Spain's last military exploratory expedition of the interior Southeast. After the unproductive Cañizares expedition, Rojas was urged by the Crown to determine positively whether the English had penetrated the interior from the north.⁴⁹ Plans for this expedition dated to early 1625, when Rojas learned of the abortive Salinas expeditions in search of the rumored white horsemen:

Through the information and relation that the Indians make of these people and through their dress it is held for certain that they are English or Dutch of those that are in Jacan [Jamestown], and the Indians say that they are very white and blond. This and knowing that the English of Jacan continue entering the interior and marrying with Indian women, it is held for certain that they are them. Where these English go is traveling in the direction of New Spain and discovering this land, which gives me concern [that] they should go so near. . . . It is a very certain thing that the fort and population of Jacan continue growing greatly each day with a large number of people, in excess of two thousand men, and with the fortification of the place. The Indians say that these people that they have seen on horseback are about fifty men and in no place have they taken foot and to the appearance [their purpose] is to continue reconnoitering the land in order to enter it.⁵⁰

The Governor outlined his plans for a reconnaissance expedition composed of soldiers and Indians, and indicated that they were not to return until having achieved their mission.⁵¹ This letter was not seen until October 1626, and Rojas was finally given permission to undertake the entrada by Royal *Cédula* in May 1627.

Soon thereafter, the Governor dispatched Ensign Pedro de Torres in command of ten Spanish soldiers and sixty Indians under the trusted *cacique* Don Pedro de Ybarra.⁵² The party was sent into the interior twice, for the first attempt, which apparently lasted some three to four months, failed to provide the necessary information.⁵³ A brief, if somewhat fanciful, description of this initial journey has been discovered in the 1678 service record of one of its participants:

The said Governor [Don Luis de Rojas y Borja], with news that he had that there were three hills of diamonds in the Province of Cofatachiqui, 200

leagues from this presidio, dispatched a group of infantry to its discovery, and among them the said Ensign [Juan Bautista Terrazas], and having traveled and been lost during the course of three months through the woods without a guide or a road or sustenance, he obligated the rest of his companions to cast lots in order to eat one of them in order not to die of hunger, and it fell upon the said Ensign, and being [prepared] to kill him, they left off doing it by having found people who guided them to the said province, who came forth from it with news [of the Spaniards] that one of the guides that they took, who fled, gave to them; and because of wars that they were having with other nations they did not let them enter.⁵⁴

Although the above account was penned more than half a century after the Torres expedition, and not by Ensign Terrazas himself, it provides some intriguing bits of information regarding the deep interior in 1627. First, the description of near-starvation during the journey to Cofitachequi forms a remarkable parallel to the progress of the Hernando de Soto expedition across the infamous "Desert of Ocute," suggesting that Torres may have followed a similar route, once again crossing the depopulated region between Tama (visited by Cañizares only two years earlier) and Cofitachequi. Furthermore, the fact that the party was prohibited from entering the province because of wars between Cofitachequi and neighboring provinces might serve as evidence for continuing hostility between the provinces on either side of this persistent buffer zone.

Fortunately, the second journey succeeded in actually entering the province of Cofitachequi, and it is this expedition that provides the basis for Governor Rojas's formal account, the relevant portion of which follows:

The Ensign [Pedro de Torres] with all of the people that he led, having penetrated the interior more than 200 leagues and through detours which the road made more than 300, arrived at a place called Cofitachiqui, which is the farthest where reached Hernando de Soto, he who discovered and conquered these provinces. In that place he was very regaled by the *cacique*, who is very respected by all the remaining *caciques*, and all obey him and recognize vassalage. There were 82 years [since] Hernando de Soto was there, and until this occasion Spaniards have not arrived and they remain sheltered.⁵⁵ All that the Indians said of the horsemen that they had seen was not true and was a lie. The telling of [lies] is ordinary among the Indians because they talk each day with the Devil and there are many sorcerers and enchanters. Between the *fiestas* that this principal *cacique*⁵⁶ made for the Ensign and the rest of the Spaniards, he showed them some lakes from which come forth rivers where there is a great quantity of pearls.⁵⁷ The *cacique* and Indians of that land fish for them and gather them in their shells and wear them strung around the neck and on the arms, although [they are] very poorly treated, for they burn the shells in order to roast what they have within in order to eat. They gather large and small. The Ensign made some Indians of those that he carried with him enter the lakes and rivers and dive so that they might gather from the shells as [the Indians] did, although [they gathered] few through the weather being very cold and the divers not being able to remain in the water nor do

what they wished. From the shells that they gathered there was one pearl and two and three in each shell, and although those that he brought here as specimens are minute but very fine, so say the persons who understand it that the Indians say and assure that there are those as thick as garbanzos.⁵⁸

The Torres expedition was the first to visit Cofitachequi since Juan Pardo more than sixty years earlier.⁵⁹ Although Torres's account is brief, his description of the *cacique* as preeminent over all other *caciques* in the region suggests that even in 1628 Cofitachequi retained a second tier of chiefly leadership, reminiscent of the paramount chiefdoms witnessed by the early explorers of the Southeast. In addition, the ethnographic details regarding the use of freshwater pearls by the Indians is informative.

The Ensign's report prompted Governor Rojas to request permission from the Crown to send Torres again, this time accompanied by divers and fifty or sixty Spaniards and two hundred Indians to acquire more of these pearls.⁶⁰ In August of the following year, Torres presented his report, along with a sample of pearls, in person in Madrid, and was given permission to return to the "fishery of pearls."⁶¹ This venture was apparently never pursued, perhaps due in part to the end of Governor Rojas's term the following year. The Torres expedition was the last to visit Cofitachequi, and it was more than forty years before Carolinians would once again establish European contact with this province.

After the Torres expedition of 1628, Spanish exploratory ventures were left in the hands of the Franciscans, and only five years passed before the foundation of the Apalachee mission province far to the west of St. Augustine. This province would serve as the western terminus of the important mission road, providing St. Augustine with much-needed supplies and Indian labor. The interior of modern north Florida was successfully penetrated, but not by military exploration. The general pattern seems to have been one of clerical exploration and contact with interior Indians, followed by the establishment of permanent missions and mission provinces, and finally followed by the military garrisons placed to defend the Spanish holdings in the interior.

The ultimate task of the military seems to have been the defense of territorial acquisitions, initiated by the friars in the interior, and not the actual exploration itself. This pattern marks an important departure from the early years of Spanish exploration of La Florida, when clergy were brought on massive military ventures only as minor functionaries. The establishment of a permanent Spanish colony on the coast of La Florida does not seem to have been pivotal in this transformation, for the Pardo expedition was one of the first ventures of the newly emplaced Spaniards, and even as late as 1607 there were plans for major military exploration of the interior. What, then, initiated a shift away from such expensive ventures and toward the low-level, low-risk, and far less costly activities of Franciscan missionaries?

The key may be in the establishment of a permanent English colony, Jamestown, on the northern coastline of La Florida. No longer was Spain the only European power on the mainland, and this event was followed almost immediately by a subtle but significant change in perspective. Spanish officials shifted from a more exploratory stance to one increasingly dominated by concerns of defense. The lack of soldiers and supplies took on new importance, increasing the stakes in the already risky venture of dedicating limited military forces to exploratory expeditions that could last for months on end, leaving St. Augustine open to attack. In the end, the maintenance and defense of St. Augustine and the established mission provinces won out over new conquests in the interior. The ambitious plans of Governors Méndez and Ybarra never came to fruition, and the small-scale expeditions of the 1620s consisted of very small contingents of Spanish soldiers in charge of larger forces of Indian allies. These groups were dispatched for reconnaissance only, and even the discovery of freshwater pearls in the north remained unexploited.

Although the southern interior provinces of Potano, Timucua, and Apalachee were brought under Spanish control by Apalachee missionaries, the northern interior remained largely unexplored after 1628. Indeed, it seems no coincidence that this open territory was to be the very region where Carolina traders began their enterprises in the deerskin trade and the Indian slave trade during the 1670s, a venture that would ultimately lead to the downfall of Spanish domination of La Florida. While it is improbable that a concerted effort on the part of the Spanish would have won a lasting control of the interior, the apparent lack of Spanish commitment to the exploration of the northern interior left a vacuum far more easily filled by the English, and perhaps hastened the spread of the English trade network.

The seven expeditions examined in this paper left little in the form of documentary accounts. Their descriptions of the Indian societies of the interior Southeast between 1597 and 1628 offer brief but tantalizing glimpses of cultures experiencing a process of transformation largely beyond the realm of historical scrutiny. Ultimately, these entradas were to be the final contact between Spanish explorers and the Indians of the interior, and as such reflect the end of an era for both parties involved.

NOTES

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1. An examination of documentary sources from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries reveals that several small expeditions did successfully penetrate the interior after Pardo. While the Chozas expedition of 1597 has already been examined in some detail, two more (Lara in 1602 and Torres in 1628) have been mentioned only in passing in the literature (and accounts from these have never been published, either in transcribed or translated form), and three others (two sent by Salinas in 1624 and Cañizares in 1625) have remained almost completely unknown.

2. See Hudson, "The Hernando de Soto Expedition, 1539–1543," this volume, and Part 3 of this volume.

3. See the introduction, this volume, by Hudson and Tesser; M. T. Smith, *Aboriginal Culture Change*, and also Dobyns, *Their Number*.

4. See M. T. Smith, *Aboriginal Culture Change*.

5. This expedition is known from two primary sources. The first comprises testimony from Gaspar de Salas as related by Governor Méndez de Canço to the King, Feb. 4–6, 1600, Archivo General de Indias, Santo Domingo (hereafter AGI SD) 224, Stetson Collection, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville. This account is transcribed by Serrano y Sanz, *Documentos históricos*. A later and partially incomplete copy of this testimony is translated by Reding, "Letter of Gonzalo Méndez de Canço." The second source is based on the report of Father Chozas and is included in Fray Alonso de Escobedo's poem "La Florida," the relevant portion of which is transcribed by López, *Relación Histórica*. An imprecise and sometimes inaccurate translation is provided by Covington, *Pirates, Indians, and Spaniards*.

6. This expedition has been noted by several authors, with the most extensive treatment by Geiger, *Franciscan Conquest*. The expedition is mentioned in the introduction to Bolton, *Arredondo's Historical Proof*. In addition, the details of this expedition figure prominently in Lawson, "La Tama." See also Hudson, *Juan Pardo Expeditions*, 184–86.

7. Escobedo, "La Florida," 27. Chozas "loaded them with Castillian blankets, with knives, fish-hooks, and scissors, and with very fine [*muy galanos*] beads of glass, with sickles and with axes [and] chisels" (Escobedo, "La Florida," 27–28). Some of these items undoubtedly reached the interior and may have entered the archaeological record. On August 2 of that year, Don Juan arrived in St. Augustine with three Indians, and during their ten-day stay the *cacique* was rewarded with a shirt and hat "for having gone in the company of the father Fray Pedro de Chozas to Tama, and having returned in his company" (Alvarez de Castrillón, Sept. 14, 1597, AGI SD 231). Another Indian had arrived earlier, on July 19, saying that "father Fray Pedro Fernández de Chozas sent him from Tama, to where he had gone with order of the said General [Méndez] to find out about the disposition of that land, and if they would willingly receive the Spaniards, and if they wanted to be instructed in the [Christian] faith" (Mugado, July 27, 1597, AGI SD 231). This Indian was given a blanket by the Governor for his services. These documents incidentally provide a rough date for the expedition, which seems to have occurred during the summer months.

8. Méndez de Canço, Feb. 4–6, 1600. While Geiger, *Franciscan Conquest*, 83, assumes that Escobedo's description of Chozas's journey (Escobedo, "La Florida," 28) relates to the march inland to Tama, the account undoubtedly refers instead to

the march from St. Augustine to Guale, for Escobedo relates marching to the north northeast for 40 leagues with the sea on their right, crossing marshes on the way.

9. Méndez de Canço, Feb. 4–6, 1600. This report, along with the samples brought back by Salas, formed the basis for a persistent legend about mines at Tama.

10. While the phrase *casa común* could indicate “common house” or “ordinary house,” Chozas was more likely referring to a public structure of the town, probably the well-known council house often described by Spaniards. *Bohio* typically translates simply as “hut.” This structure is later referred to as the “house frequented by everyone.”

11. Escobedo, “La Florida,” 29–31.

12. Méndez de Canço, Feb. 4–6, 1600. Chozas apparently uses the name Quaque and lists it as the one kingdom [*reino*] he did not convert. He locates Quaque “farther off from Tama.” The *cacique*’s statement that the Indians deeper into the interior killed de Soto’s men is clearly erroneous, although it is tempting to suggest that this refers to the tragic surprise attack by the Indians at the town of Mabila in Alabama, which may have involved Indians from as far away as the chiefdom of Coosa, a province that lay directly inland along the path Chozas and his companions had followed from Guale. See Hudson, DePratter, and Smith, “Victims of the King Site Massacre.” The chief of Coosa was, after all, the leader behind the planned ambush of Juan Pardo’s men only thirty years earlier.

13. Escobedo, “La Florida,” 31.

14. While the Spanish text reads *carrera*, or “race,” it is possible that the contest was actually a game of chunky, a traditional game between males, and one that apparently involved a great deal of running and physical activity. See Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 423.

15. Escobedo, “La Florida,” 32. Many of this group were pagan and may have chosen to remain in the interior. One Indian, who evidently arrived in St. Augustine before Chozas’s own return to St. Augustine, might have been one of this group who deserted the expedition (see note 7).

16. While this term can denote “cabins,” here it most likely refers to a landscape suitable for domestic animals.

17. Méndez de Canço, Feb. 4–6, 1600.

18. The exact dates of the Chozas expedition are unknown, but the friar had definitely reached Tama by mid-July 1597, from where one of the Indians in his party returned to St. Augustine by July 19 (Mugado, July 27, 1597). His return was prior to August 2, when Don Juan of Tolomato arrived in St. Augustine after the journey (Alvarez de Castellón, September 14, 1597).

19. See Mark Williams, “Growth and Decline of the Oconee Province,” this volume. The more southerly location is proposed by Bolton, *Arredondo’s Historical Proof*, 16, and Lawson, “La Tama,” develops a well-reasoned case for the region of the forks of the Altamaha River.

20. The evidence for the location of the towns or provinces of Tama and Ocute falls into two areas: geography and distances. First, the several descriptions of Tama and Ocute during this period strongly suggest that these provinces were situated at or within the Piedmont. This becomes evident when one considers the fact that the Spanish experience of La Florida was largely restricted to the comparatively level Coastal Plain, in large part characterized by sandy soils and pine barrens. Salas notes that “roundabout the said town and its confines is very good dun colored

land, which when it rains sticks to the feet like clay. It has in places many bare hills where kinds of metallic rock have been seen" (Méndez de Canço, Feb. 4–6, 1600). The land around the town most likely refers to floodplain deposits, which increase in clay content significantly within or just below the Piedmont. The bare hills may very well refer to open farmland in the Piedmont uplands, a phenomenon that archaeologists now recognize to have peaked in the Piedmont region of the Oconee watershed during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Kowalewski and Hatch, "The 16th Century Expansion"). Salas further relates, "Likewise this witness and the said missionaries have gathered some stones on the said hills and next to copious rivers, in the manner of unrefined [?] crystal, and others of delicate crystal." These crystals almost certainly refer to the numerous outcrops of quartz, often in crystalline form, in the Piedmont.

Furthermore, later descriptions of this region leave little doubt as to their Piedmont association. Governor Méndez (Sept. 22, 1602, AGI SD 224, Lowery Collection, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History) writes relative to Tama and Ocute that "the said mines are on *tierra firme* where there are hills and high land," and Father Pareja (Sept. 14, 1602, AGI SD 235) refers to a "road from the *sierras* [mountain-ranges] of Tama, where it is known there are mines of gold and silver." Juan de Lara also reports arriving in 1602 at a *sierra* where he found the town of Tama (see below), strongly suggesting its location at the foot of the hilly Piedmont region. M. T. Smith, *Aboriginal Culture Change*, 15–17, reaches a similar conclusion based on the Chozas expedition.

The other line of evidence involves distances. Although Salas and Méndez believed Tama to be located only 50 leagues from St. Augustine, the imperfection of Spanish estimates of distance in La Florida is well known. Better evidence is revealed from the journey that resulted in this estimate. The distance from St. Catherines Island to the forks of the Altamaha river is just over 80 miles, and thus Salas would only have been traveling 10 miles (or under 4 leagues) each day for the journey to last eight days. Furthermore, seven days of this voyage were through an unoccupied region, and it seems doubtful that this entire stretch of the Altamaha was completely abandoned.

The distance to the Shinholser mound site, known to have been occupied at this time, is just over 150 miles, and it seems more likely that this small party traversed this greater distance. Indeed, the 1602 expedition of Juan de Lara places the distance between Guale and Tama at 60 to 70 leagues, closely matching the actual distance of 59 leagues (see note 28). Also, the 1625 Cañizares expedition places Tama some 100 leagues from St. Augustine, a figure that corresponds more closely with this northerly location (see below). In addition, the town of Ocute was only a day's journey farther inland from Tama, and this relationship corresponds with the accounts from de Soto's expedition. Moreover, the route proposed in this paper accounts for currently known archaeological evidence of the distribution of seventeenth-century aboriginal occupation. The *despoblado* through which the party traveled was the interriverine uplands, and the return trip was along the river bottom, where the party would have begun to encounter Indian occupation only a couple of days south of Tama at the Fall Line of the Oconee River (see Figure 1). Hudson (*Pardo Expeditions*, 185) reaches a similar conclusion.

On the basis of this reconstruction, it is suggested that the early seventeenth-century Bell Phase (J. Mark Williams, *Joe Bell Site*) defined by archaeologists for

the upper Oconee River corresponds to the provinces of Tama and Ocute, while the Square Ground Lamar region at the forks of the Altamaha (Frankie Snow, "Pine Barrens Lamar") constitutes a portion of the "more populous" region traversed by the Chozas expedition on their return trip.

21. Royal Cedula, Nov. 9, 1598, AGI SD 2528. The skewed Spanish perception of distances during this period in Florida is revealed by the Crown's estimate of the distance between Tama and New Mexico at only 200 leagues!

22. Gonzalo Méndez de Canço, Feb. 28, 1600, AGI SD 224, Microfilm Collection, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History. The list of items to be brought from Spain to be traded to the Indians includes "400 axes and four hundred hoes, one hundred sets[?] of butcher knives from Flanders, fifteen hundred *Reales* of large blue beads of glass and two hundred ordinary mirrors, one hundred pairs of scissors. All of this in order to give away to the *caciques* and Indians where they might pass and to serve as gifts for food, because they give it with much pleasure." While these items never reached the interior, they probably reflect a typical assemblage of European items traded to the Indians during this period.

23. The details of this expedition are reviewed by Arnade, *Florida on Trial*, 42; Lawson, "La Tama," 3, makes note of the Lara visit. Hudson, *Juan Pardo Expeditions*, 185, however, finds inconsistencies in Lara's account.

24. Governor Gonzalo Méndez de Canço to the King, Sept. 22, 1602, AGI SD 224. This letter was transcribed by Woodbury Lowery (on microfilm at the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History) and is now missing from the cited *legajo*. The reference to a journey from New Mexico is not explained.

25. A spit or strip of land, occasionally used in this period in reference to the barrier island chain of the Guale province.

26. The name "Olatama" (Tama) appears to be related to the name Altamaha recorded by the de Soto chroniclers for the same town. Indeed the frequent appearance of *latama* in Spanish accounts may not derive from the Spanish article *la* in front of the name Tama, but may instead reflect the actual pronunciation of the name as Latama. Lara's Olatama appears to support this conclusion, as does the phonetic similarity to the persistent name Altamaha.

27. Excerpt from the testimony of Juan de Lara in "Información de orden de Su Majestad sobre el estado general de las provincias de la Florida y si conviene o no dismantelar el fuerte de San Agustín," Sept. 3-9, 1602, AGI SD 2533. A detailed examination of all the testimony contained in this massive document is provided by Arnade, *Florida on Trial*.

28. The straight-line distance of 59 leagues (156 miles) compares well with Lara's travel distance of 60 to 70 leagues.

29. Francisco de Pareja to the King, Sept. 14, 1602, AGI SD 235. *Guitamo real* was noted by Salas as "an herb [or grass] that the Indians much esteem for medicines with which they cure themselves, and for wounds, that they call *guitamo real*" (Méndez de Canço, Feb. 4-6, 1600). Lawson, "La Tama," 12, suggests that this herb was "button snakeroot" (*Eryngium yuccafolium*).

30. Evidently a type of gorget.

31. Baltasar López to the King, Sept. 14, 1602, AGI SD 235.

32. A type of padded armor.

33. Pedro de Ybarra to the King, Jan. 8, 1604, AGI SD 224. The old soldiers referred to were undoubtedly veterans of the Pardo expedition. The mention of

"houses of stone," while clearly inaccurate, may derive from the legend of the fabulous city of *La Gran Copala* (see Hudson, *Juan Pardo Expeditions*, 194).

34. Royal Cedula, Nov. 4, 1604, AGI Mexico (hereafter MEX) 1065, Stetson Collection; Pedro de Ybarra to the King, Dec. 26, 1605, AGI SD 224.

35. Serrano y Sanz, *Documentos históricos*, 184; Pedro de Ybarra to the King, May 16, 1607, AGI SD 224.

36. Geiger, *Franciscan Conquest*, 208–9.

37. See, for example, Royal Cédula, Aug. 16, 1608, AGI MEX 1065; Lucas de Soto to the King, Dec. 24, 1608, AGI SD 130; Pedro de Ybarra to the King, Jan. 8, 1609, AGI SD 232; and Ybarra to the King, Jan. 16, 1609, AGI SD 224.

38. Royal Cédula, March 15, 1609, AGI MEX 1065. This *Cédula* was drafted in response to an earlier letter from Governor Ybarra to the King (Aug. 22, 1608, AGI SD 224), reporting the dispatch of soldiers to Guale and the need for more in defense of the Potano province. This prompted the placement of restrictions on the use of soldiers in the interior.

39. Pedro de Ybarra, April 31, 1609, AGI SD 224.

40. *lancillas*, the diminutive of *lanzas*.

41. Governor Luis de Rojas y Borja to the King, Jan. 20, 1625, AGI SD 225, Mary L. Ross Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta. Ross's typed transcription of this document is the only surviving copy; the original is no longer in the cited *legajo* in microform at the P. K. Yonge library of Florida History and may have been lost or stolen in the intervening years. Bolton, *Arredondo's Historical Proof*, 24–25, cites the same letter but only briefly mentions Salinas's expeditions.

42. Rojas y Borja, Jan. 20, 1625.

43. Lead is not mentioned in other documents describing the "mines" at Tama.

44. Adrián de Cañizares y Osorio to the King, Sept. 28, 1635, AGI SD 233. This soldier would later serve as the leader of the military detachment that captured the leaders of the 1656 Timucuan rebellion.

45. Governor Luis de Rojas y Borja to the King, June 30, 1628, AGI SD 225.

46. Presuming the figure of 150 leagues refers to the total distance marched (that is, round trip) by Salinas's men.

47. Such legends may also have been influenced by the stories of *Las Diamantes*, a mountain of gems rumored to exist since the Pardo expedition. See Hudson, *Juan Pardo Expeditions*, 191–97.

48. There is a clear tone of Indian hostility in the Cañizares account, and Rojas's note that the expedition was forced to return due to lack of food suggests that the soldiers were unable to obtain food from the pagan Indians. It is also possible that Cañizares's inability to obtain food was a result of depopulation owing to the effects of epidemic disease sweeping across the interior, though there is no further evidence to support this possibility. Despite this, the later Torres expeditions may well have passed through Tama again on their subsequent journey to Cofitachequi.

49. Royal Cédula, May 3, 1627, AGI SD 225. This document, mentioned by Governor Rojas y Borja and cited by Bolton, is also missing from SD 225. Its general contents may be surmised from the Governor's letter of June 30, 1628.

50. Rojas y Borja, Jan. 20, 1625. While ultimately these rumors were dismissed as lies, the detail of Rojas's information suggests a possible basis in fact. In determining the veracity of the reports, the Spaniards expended much energy over the

course of four years and five reconnaissance expeditions, and one cannot help but wonder whether isolated traders from Virginia did indeed penetrate some distance to the south during the 1620s.

51. Although Bushnell, *The King's Coffer*, 92, suggests that the Torres expedition was specifically sent to locate the pearls noted by the de Soto chroniclers, evidence in Governor Rojas's letters of Jan. 20, 1625, and June 30, 1628, indicates that the pearl fishery was an unanticipated discovery and that Torres was originally sent only to reconnoiter the interior for white horsemen.

52. Rojas y Borja, June 30, 1628. Evidently, this was the only one of the seven expeditions described in this paper to include more than one or two Spanish soldiers. These may have been included to effectively manage the large complement of Indians.

53. This first expedition was evidently dispatched during the late spring or early summer of 1627. The date of their return is fixed by an incident that occurred on the return journey, in which their passage was barred at the coastal mission of San Juan del Puerto, prompting Governor Rojas to send a military detachment to apprehend its rebellious *cacica* in mid-August (Certification by Antonio de Argüelles, Francisco González de Villa García, Francisco García de la Vera, Nicolás Esteves de Carmenatis, Salvador de Cigarroa, Francisco de la Rocha, Juan Sánchez de Urisa, Oct. 20, 1678, AGI SD 234; Order of Don Luis de Rojas y Borja to Alonso de Pastrana, Aug. 17, 1627, AGI SD 232).

54. Argüelles et al., Oct. 20, 1678.

55. This statement is incorrect, since the Pardo expedition passed through Cofitachequi more than sixty years earlier.

56. *cacique mayor*, suggesting a leader among *caciques*.

57. *unas lagunas que dellas salen rios adonde hay grande cantidad de perlas*. Both de Soto and Pardo make note of pearls at Cofitachequi.

58. Rojas y Borja, June 30, 1628.

59. Neither Torres nor Governor Luis de Rojas y Borja made mention of the Pardo expedition, suggesting that documentary accounts were unavailable and recognizing additionally that most, if not all, veterans of the voyage were dead by 1628. Torres noted only that Cofitachequi was the "farthest where Hernando de Soto reached," which may refer to de Soto's progress up the Atlantic seaboard, since the objective of the Torres expedition was to reconnoiter the interior between the English colony and St. Augustine. For a discussion of the important chiefdom of Cofitachequi, see Chester B. DePratter, "The Chiefdom of Cofitachequi," this volume.

60. Rojas y Borja, June 30, 1628.

61. Pedro de Torres to the King, Aug. 1, 1629, AGI SD 225. The Governor was to supply him with "three or four soldiers and two Indians" for his new entrada. The last available record regarding Pedro de Torres places him in Madrid on September 26, awaiting passage to Florida and requesting permission to take one servant (Pedro de Torres to the King, Sept. 26, 1629, AGI SD 27).