

## FONTANEDA REVISITED: FIVE DESCRIPTIONS OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FLORIDA

by JOHN E. WORTH

**T**he well-known relation of Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, the Spanish sailor shipwrecked on the Florida coast in the mid sixteenth century, has correctly been described by David O. True as a document that “should share the top rank of Florida source records.”<sup>1</sup> It constitutes one of the earliest descriptions of the Indians of Florida and is rich in ethnographic detail. Although the text of the body of Fontaneda’s account (the Memoir) and a separate fragment associated with it (the Memoranda) have been published by True in both transcribed and translated form, this published version came from Buckingham Smith’s transcription of an earlier transcription by Juan Bautista Muñoz and a more recent but incomplete transcription by Jeannette Thurber Connor.<sup>2</sup> As a consequence, True’s edition is not a direct examination of the original documents but instead relies upon the work of earlier researchers.

During a 1991 examination of the original Fontaneda materials in the Archivo General de Indias in Sevilla, a third document appended to the Memoranda but not included in earlier

---

John E. Worth is the anthropologist at Fernbank Museum of Natural History, Atlanta, Georgia.

1. Although the correct abbreviation for this surname would be Escalante, or Escalante Fontaneda, the unfortunate but common practice of using the secondary Spanish family name (as though it were an English-style surname) has become entrenched in the literature. Thus Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda will be referred to as Fontaneda for this article. David O. True, ed., *Memoir of Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda respecting Florida* (Miami, 1944), 23.
2. True, *Memoir*. The published version of Fontaneda’s account was based on the translation by Buckingham Smith, *Letter of Hernando de Soto, and Memoir of Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda* (Washington, 1854). Smith worked this translation from a transcription made by Juan Bautista Muñoz in the late eighteenth century contained in the Rich Collection of the New York Public Library. The only other known transcription was by Jeanette Thurber Connor, but this version excludes the other fragment by Fontaneda (termed Memoranda by Smith), probably because it was filed separately from the Memoir itself by the time of Connor’s examination (see note 3).

transcripts came to light.<sup>3</sup> Entitled "Memorial of the Caciques of Florida," the document is in the same hand as both of the other Fontaneda documents and appears to have been written by Fontaneda himself to accompany his relation. This document has never been published in its original form, probably because Muñoz was interested in transcribing only the textual portion of Fontaneda's report. Thus a valuable portion of Fontaneda's information has remained unknown to modern researchers.<sup>4</sup>

Based on the distinctive character of Fontaneda's handwriting in the Memoir, Memoranda, and Memorial, two other documents were recognized during a subsequent trip to Seville to be a product of Fontaneda's hand.<sup>5</sup> Like the Memoranda, these documents represent fragments of text that were not included in the main body of Fontaneda's Memoir. A paraph at the bottom of the second fragment is almost certainly that of Fontaneda, since it compares exactly with his signature at the end of the Memoir. Translations of the Woodbury Lowery transcripts of these documents have been published by John R. Swanton and John H. Hann, but they attributed them to the cosmographer Juan López de Velasco, who in fact only made marginal notes on the original Fontaneda documents.<sup>6</sup>

At present Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda is known to have written five separate documents, including a long relation occupy-

---

3. The body of Fontaneda's Memoir appears in Patronato 18, numero 5, while the Memoranda is filed separately under Patronato 19, ramo 32 (see Appendix 1). The two seem to have originally been joined, since the Muñoz transcription introduces the Memoranda thusly, "Together with the preceding relation on a loose paper which serves as its cover is the following." The separation of this fragment from the main text of the Memoir is not an isolated occurrence, as will be seen below.

4. Although Woodbury Lowery transcribed the list and John Swanton subsequently used it, its author was only guessed to be Fontaneda at that time. See John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors*, Bureau of American Ethnology, bulletin no. 73 (Washington, 1922), 331-33.

5. These fragments are not filed in the Patronato Real section of the archivo, but instead within Indiferente General 1529, a collection of assorted "Descriptions, Populations, and *Derroteros* of Journeys" from throughout the Indies. The documents appear together in a single folder under the heading "Two brief memorials about the customs of the Indians of Florida."

6. The folder in which these documents appear states that the "two brief memorials . . . possess notes and annotations by the cosmographer López de Velasco," and Fontaneda's text is supplemented by a number of notes in a markedly different hand than that of Fontaneda. Indeed, all five of the Fontaneda documents possess these marginal notes, which seem to have been made by the same individual (presumably Velasco). Swanton, *Early History*, 374, 389; and John H. Hann, *Missions to the Calusa* (Gainesville, 1991), 315-19.

ing eight folios of text, three textual fragments of one folio each, and a list of caciques. Translations of all textual material have been published previously, but since the Memorial of caciques has never appeared in its entirety, a translation is provided here, along with a brief overview of its contents and significance.

The Memorial was written on both sides of a single page, and it lists the names of seventy-seven caciques in geographical groupings, apparently ordered from west to east, skirting the coast of peninsular Florida. The list includes the general regions of Abalachi (eleven caciques), Carlos (thirty-eight caciques), Los Martires (nine caciques), Ays (ten caciques), and San Agustin (seven caciques), along with two interior caciques with pearls. Although the Memorial is only a listing, a comparison with the caciques mentioned in the text of Fontaneda's Memoir and Memoranda reveals that the unpublished Memorial contains thirty-six caciques not mentioned elsewhere by Fontaneda (Appendix 2). These previously unlisted caciques augment the forty-nine caciques in Fontaneda's Memoir (eight of which are not included in the Memorial) to create a final list of eighty-five caciques in Florida (and coastal Georgia), nearly doubling the previously known number.

The fact that the Memorial is much more comprehensive in its coverage of the caciques of Florida suggests that it was composed after the writing of the text of Fontaneda's Memoir. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the names of two towns in the province of Carlos, which Fontaneda stated that he could not remember while writing the text, appear in the Memorial and were later added in the margin of the completed Memoir (see Appendix 2). Fontaneda seems to have designed the memorial as a complete overview of all the caciques of Florida, including many individuals not deemed necessary (or initially not remembered) for the textual relation in the Memoir. Consequently, the list of names in the Memorial lacks the more detailed contextual information associated with the caciques mentioned in the relation.

The Memorial alone provides a comprehensive overview of aboriginal names present in mid sixteenth-century Florida, many of which persisted into later years. What makes this list even more useful is the fact that the caciques are recorded according to geographical area, and although there is no text to accompany their names, a general location and probable cultural affiliation may be

surmised. The translated Memorial appears below, with Indian names preserved precisely as written.<sup>7</sup>

=====

Memorial of the caciques of Florida.

In the land of Abalachi

The first cacique which is most near Mexico is / Olagale /  
and next / Abalachi / next Onagatano / next / Mogoso /  
next Tocobaga / next Cañogacola / next / Pebe / and  
next / Esquega / and next / Osigbede / and next / Piyaya  
/ and next / Tanpacaste

In the land of Carlos

Next / Tanpa / and Yagua / and Estantapaca / and Quey-  
hcha / and Juestocobaga / and Sinapa / and Tomo / and  
Cayuca / and Ñeguitun / and Avir / and Cutespa / and  
Çononoguary / and Esquete / and Tonçobe / and Chipi /  
and Taguagemue<sup>8</sup> / and Namuguya / and Caragara / and  
Henhenquepa / and Opacataga / and Janar / and Escuru  
/ and Metamapo / and Estame / and Çacaspada / and Sat-  
ucuava / and Juchi / and Soco / and Vuebe<sup>9</sup> / and Teyo /  
and Muspa and Casitua / and Cotevo / and Coyovia / and  
Tequemapo and Jutan / and Custevuiya / and these are  
those who are subject to Carlos—

In the land of the Martires

And in the Martires there are also settlements of Indians,  
and the first cacique is Guarungube / next Cuchyaga /  
next Tatesta /—  
Next, farther on, is Tegesta / and Tavuaçio / and Janar /  
and Cavista / and Custegiyo and Jeaga and many Indians  
whose names I do not know / —

7. Slash marks seem to have been placed to separate names from one another, although not in all cases. This was not an uncommon practice in Spanish documents of the era.

8. The manuscript reads "Tguagemue" with an "a" written above and between the "T" and "g," probably resulting from Fontaneda's proofing of the list.

9. The "u" was added above the name "Vebe."



In the land of Ays – [near St. Augustine]<sup>10</sup>

Ays, firstly / and Vuacata / and Tunsá / and Mayjuaca and  
Maycoya / and Mayaca / and Çilili / and Potano / and  
Moloa / and Utina / —

And in St. Augustine is Sotoriba / and Moloa the brave /  
and Alimacany / and Palica and many other Indian towns  
whose names I do not know /—

And Tacatucuru / and Gualé / and Parca [Paica?] /—

And the cacique who has the pearls are two caciques, and  
one of them is named Aquera / and the other / Ostaga—

=====

Based on the current understanding of the late sixteenth-century social geography of Spanish Florida, Fontaneda's Memorial of Florida caciques is perhaps the most complete single overview available for the period.<sup>11</sup> Important names that were not included in the more familiar Memoir, such as the northern provinces of Potano, Tacatucuru, Aquera, and Ostaga, appear with a multitude of other lesser-known names in the Memorial, and in overall geographic order. The Memorial thus represents a remarkable benchmark against which other documentary information, both earlier and later, can be compared. This is particularly true when the names of caciques provided by Fontaneda in both his Memorial and Memoir are combined into a master list (Appendix 2).

As noted earlier, it is now apparent that Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda's Memoir, along with the Memoranda and the attached Memorial translated above, were not the only texts he produced. Two other fragments have been recognized as products of his hand, and although these have been translated previously, they will be presented below in order to sort out that text which Fontaneda himself wrote from the marginal notes by Juan López de Velasco (which are presented in endnotes and Appendix 3).

10. This last passage, "cerca de Sanct Agustin," was added later, perhaps by Juan López de Velasco.

11. See, for example, Swanton, *Early History*; Jerald T. Milanich and Samuel Proctor, eds., *Tacachale: Essays on the Indians of Florida and Southeastern Georgia during the Historic Period* (Gainesville, 1978); Hann, *Missions*; John H. Hann, "The Mayaca and Jororo and Missions to Them," *Florida Anthropologist* 44 (June-December 1991), 164-75; and Jerald T. Milanich and Charles Hudson, *Hernando de Soto and the Indians of Florida* (Gainesville, 1993).

=====

Fragment #1

Of what happens in Florida among Indians of the same land. Those of Carlos firstly have as custom [that] each time a child of the cacique dies, each resident sacrifices his sons or daughters who go in company of the death of the child of the cacique./ The second sacrifice is that when the cacique himself dies, or the cacica, they kill his or her own servants, and this is the second sacrifice./ The third sacrifice is that they kill each year a Christian captive in order to feed their idol which they adore, and which they say eats the eyes of the human male and eats the head. They dance each year, which they have for custom./ And the fourth sacrifice is that after the summer come some sorcerers in the shape of the devil with some horns on their heads, and they come howling like wolves and many other different idols which yell like animals of the woods, and these idols stay four months, in which they never rest night or day, running so much with great fury. What a thing to relate the great bestiality which they do! [see Appendix 3]

=====

Fragment #2

Memorial of the Indians and ceremonies of the Indians of Tocobaga. When one of the principal cacique dies they cut him into pieces and boil him in some large jars, and they boil him two days until the meat separates from the bones, and they take the bones and join one bone with another until they put the man together as he was and put him in a house which they have for a temple. While they finish putting him together they fast four days. At the end of the four days, all the Indian town comes together and comes forth with him to the procession and enclose him, making much reverence, and then they say that all those who go to the procession gain indulgences.

The Indians of Tegesta, which is another province from Los Martires up to Cañaveral.

When a cacique or principal dies they disjoint him and remove the major bones from the body, and the minor bones they inter with the body / and in the house of the cacique they place a large box, and in this box they enclose the large bones, and all the town comes to adore these bones, which they have for their gods./ And

in the winter all the canoes come forth to the sea. Among all these Indians one Indian is sent forth who carries three stakes in his belt, and he throws the lasso around the neck, and while the whale is diving he inserts a stake through one nostril, and thus as it is tied he does not lose it, because he goes on it, and in killing it as he kills it they pull it until it runs aground in the sand, and the first that they do is open the head and remove two bones which it has in its head, and these two bones they put in this chest in which they place the dead, and they adore this.

[paraph]<sup>12</sup>

=====

The text translated above provides an intriguing supplement to Fontaneda's Memoir with its attached Memoranda, particularly due to its ethnographic detail regarding some of the more gruesome customs of the Florida Indians. Indeed, it may have been this fact that prompted Fontaneda not to include it in his final submission to the king. Nevertheless, it represents yet another indication of Fontaneda's apparently vast knowledge of native inhabitants of the Florida peninsula and, as such, deserves a place alongside his other accounts.

The three documents translated above, together with the two transcribed and translated by David True in 1944 (the Memoir and Memoranda), represent the five currently known works of Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda. Of these five, only one seems to represent a finished document (the Memoir), the rest being fragments of information not included in the final draft. Even the Memoir contains some marginal corrections made by Fontaneda. What has been found to date suggests that Fontaneda authored at

12. The paraph at the bottom of this text is similar enough to Fontaneda's signature to provide further evidence that these fragments are a product of his hand. On the reverse side of Fontaneda's folio is the filing note "Caciques and customs of the Indians of Florida, 69," which was written in a different script from that of Fontaneda. The number may refer to 1569. In the same dark ink as Fontaneda's text appear two multiplications, one above the other, which are as follows:

22	20
17	17
<u>154</u>	<u>140</u>
22	20
<u>374</u>	<u>340</u>

The significance of these figures is unknown.

least five and probably more documentary texts, most of which represent assorted notes and text fragments comprising preliminary drafts of a projected final account (probably the Memoir).

Bits and pieces of Fontaneda's writings seem to have been scattered across much of the Archive of the Indies, and perhaps even further afield. The reasons for this are not clear. It is entirely possible that the author of the marginal notes common to all of Fontaneda's documents was responsible for separating what might once have been a single bundle of unedited texts and notes compiled by Fontaneda after his arrival in Spain in the late 1560s. This individual may well have been the cosmographer Juan López de Velasco, who seems to have mined Fontaneda's writings for information to include in his 1575 volume *Geografía y Descripción Universal de las Indias*.<sup>13</sup> The two were contemporaries and might have met each other in Spain. As a consequence, part of what López wrote may derive directly from lost fragments of Fontaneda's writings, some of which could remain among the personal papers of the cosmographer.

The key to understanding the historical context of these five documents (and to finding any others) lies in the biography of Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, who has remained something of a mystery to modern researchers. Although details about his early years in Cartagena and, in particular, the circumstances and date of his shipwreck on the Florida coast are still debated, the period of his life after his rescue by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés in 1566 is perhaps most important.<sup>14</sup> Successfully tracing Fontaneda's footsteps after his eventual arrival in Spain will be a daunting task, but if other texts by him are eventually discovered, historians and anthropologists will have yet another glimpse into the still poorly understood era of first contact among the Indian societies of Florida and the Southeast.

---

13. For English translations of selected portions of López's volume, see Hann, *Missions to the Calusa*, 308-15.

14. In this regard, my own investigations have been aided by the comments of Eugene Lyon and Ignacio Avellaneda, to whom I express my gratitude.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

## Known Documents by Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda

## Memoir

Location: AGI Patronato Real 18, Numero 5

Title: Memoria de las cosas y costa y indios de la florida.

Length: 8 folios

Description: In depth description of the social geography of sixteenth-century Florida, including detailed ethnographic information relating to Indian cultures.

Published Translations: True, *Memoir*, 25-36.

## Memoranda

Location: AGI Patronato Real 19, Ramo 32

Title: none

Length: 1 folio

Description: Brief description of the channels and passages of the lower Atlantic coast of Florida, with some disconnected notes regarding the Apalachee Indians.

Published Translations: True, *Memoir*, 37-8.

## Memorial

Location: AGI Patronato Real 19, Ramo 32

Title: Memoria de los caciques de la florida.

Length: 1 folio

Description: A list of seventy-seven caciques of Florida by geographical groupings.

Published Translations: Names transcribed by Woodbury Lowery used by Swanton, *Early History*, as an anonymous source.

## Fragment #1

Location: AGI Indiferente General 1529

Title: Memoria de lo que en la florida pasa de los yndios de la misma tierra.

Length: 1 folio

Description: Brief description of four "sacrifices" performed by the Indians of Carlos. Numerous marginal notes regarding the early years of Menéndez's colonial effort may be the work of Juan López de Velasco.

Published Translations: Swanton, *Early History*, 389, and Hann, *Missions*, 316-18. Both authors attribute the account to Juan López de Velasco.

Fragment #2

Location: AGI Indiferente General 1529

Title: none

Length: 1 folio

Description: A brief description of the practices surrounding the death of a principal cacique in Tocobaga and Tegesta and an account of whale-hunting among the Tegesta.

Published Translations: Swanton, *Early History*, 374, 389, and Hann, *Missions*, 318-19. Both authors attribute the account to Juan López de Velasco.

APPENDIX 2

Caciques Mentioned by Fontaneda

Memorial	Memoir <sup>15</sup>
[Abalachi]	
Olagale .....	Olagale
Abalachi .....	Abalachi
Onagatano .....	Onagatano
Mogoso.....	Mocoso, Mogoso
Tocobaga .....	Tocobaga, Tcovaga
Cañagacola.....	Cañogacola
Pebe	
Esquega	
Osigbede .....	Osiguebede
Piyaya	
Tanpacaste	
[Carlos]	
Carlos .....	Carlos
Tanpa .....	Tanpa
Yagua.....	Yagua
Estantapaca	
Queyhcha	
Juestocobaga	
Sinapa .....	Sinapa

15. The names and spellings in this list are drawn from the original manuscript and occasionally differ from printed versions.

Tomo .....	Tomo
Cayuca	
Ñeguitun	
Avir	
Cutespa .....	Cutespa
Çononogua	
Esquete	
Tonçobe .....	Tonsobe
Chipi	
Taguagemue.....	Tavagemue
Namuguya	
Caragara	
Henhenquepa	
Opacataga	
Janar	
Escuru	
Metamapo .....	Metamapo
Estame.....	Estame
Çacaspada .....	Sacaspada
Satucuava	
Juchi.....	Juchi
Soco .....	Soco
Vuebe	
Teyo	
Muspa.....	Muspa
Casitua .....	Casitua
Cotevo	
Coyovia.....	Coyobea
Tequemapo .....	Tequemapo
Jutan.....	Jutun
Custevuiya .....	Custevia, Custebiya <sup>16</sup>
	Ño
	Sinaesta
	Calaobe
	Guava
	Guebu
	Comachicaquiseyobe
	Enenpa

16. This town was one of two under the domain of Carlos, which Fontaneda indicated in the text of his relation that he could not remember, but which appear in the margin of the original document as a later addition (not transcribed previously). The word Custebiya was crossed out and replaced with Custevia.

## [Los Martires]

Guarungube.....	Guarungube, Guarugunbe
Cuchyaga.....	Cuchiyaga, Cuchiaga
Tatesta.....	Tatesta [Carlos]
Tegesta.....	Tequesta, Tegesta
Tavuação.....	Tavuasía [Carlos] <sup>17</sup>

Janar

Cavista

Custegiyo

Jeaga.....Jeaga

## [Ays]

Ays.....Ais, Ays

Vuacata.....Guacata

Tunsa

Mayjuaca.....Mayajuaca

Maycoya

Mayaca.....Mayaca

Çilili

Potano

Molóa.....Molóa

Utina.....Utina

Saravai, Sarabai

## [San Agustin]

Sotoriba.....Sotoriba

Molóa el bravo

Alimacany.....Alimacani

Palica

Tacatucuru

Guale.....Guale

Parca (Paica?)

## [Caciques with Pearls]

Aquera

Ostaga

77

49

Total number of distinct Caciques  
mentioned by Fontaneda: 85

17. This town was one of two not mentioned in Fontaneda's text.



## APPENDIX 3

Marginal notes by Juan López de Velasco begin at the bottom of this folio, carrying over to the other side. On the attached folio (which Fontaneda left blank) are more notes by López. A separate page contains the second Fontaneda text fragment. The unedited notes inserted by López are as follows:

=====

[folio 1]

Caciques<sup>18</sup> / Guarugumbe 2U on the point of Los Martires. His subjects are Cuchiaga farther on 40 on the very head. Tatesta farther on 80. From Los Martires to St. Augustine / Tequesta / Gega / Ais, Saturiba, St. Augustine / and to San Mateo by the coast. By the interior Utina / Potano / M[aya?]ca / Maygueya / Moloa.

Carlos 20U

Tocobaa 6U

Mocoço U

Abalachi 20U

[unreadable passage]

[folio 1, vuelto]

In that of Carlos Captain Reynoso with 40.

In St. Augustine Estevano de las Alas and Bartolomé Meléndez with 200.

San Mateo is disappeared, [closed]. They passed it to Tacatacoru, where the artillery was placed. Vasco Cavah is there with 200 men.

In Santa Elena Pedro Meléndez Márquez with 500 / with 48 married.

[folio 2]

Pedro Menéndez

Captain Reynoso, Governor of the provinces of Carlos and fort of San Antonio, which passes fifty leagues farther on from San Mateo.

Captain Aguirre

---

18. This list of caciques is accompanied by numbers, presumably referring to the number of thousands ("U") in the population of each province.

Florencio de Esquinas  
Captain Juan Pardo  
Hernando de Miranda  
Salzedo, native of Madrid.  
Don Antonio, who was page of the Archbishop.  
Captain Antonio del Prado  
Escalante<sup>19</sup> /

These are there:

- Estevan de las Alas, Lieutenant General
- Captain Pedro Menéndez Márquez, discoverer of the coast and Governor and Alcalde of Santa Elena.
- Bartolomé Menéndez, Alcalde and Governor of St. Augustine.
- Vasco Caval, Captain and Governor of Catacoru.
- Diego García de Sierra, Governor of Guale.

And there are Alcaldes and Regidores in all five governorships, rather in the two, which are Santa Elena and St. Augustine.

---

19. Here, López de Velasco mentioned the name of the author of the text fragment upon which he was writing.