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## THE FLORENCIA INVESTIGATION OF SPANISH TIMUCUA

By FRED. LAMAR PEARSON, JR.\*

**I**n 1565 Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founded St. Augustine on the Florida peninsula. Spanish activity pushed Spain's northern frontier up as far as Chesapeake Bay, but effective control extended only to Port Royal, South Carolina. Menéndez, and subsequent Florida governors, established missions and presidios along the Atlantic seacoast and in the interior areas to give added protection to Florida.

The military settlement at St. Augustine sought to affirm powerfully Spain's dominion over Florida and also to protect the strategic Bahama Channel, to provide a haven for ships when inclement weather threatened, and to co-ordinate mission and presidio activity. Province outposts, in turn, gave advanced warning of enemy activity and furnished food and troops in the event of an invasion. On numerous occasions fathers and their Indian neophytes fled from the provinces to secure protection at St. Augustine.

The principal provinces upon which Florida depended for defensive purposes were Guale, Apalachee, and Timucua. Guale outposts defended the seacoast up to Santa Elena, South Carolina; Apalachee province protected against attack from the Gulf and western Georgia, and Timucua, which extended from St. Augustine west to mission San Miguel de Asile, guarded the vast interior.

Timucua province, which centered around the present day Gainesville area, served the Spaniards well.<sup>1</sup> Franciscan friars

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1. David I. Bushnell, Jr., *Native Villages and Village Sites East of the Mississippi* (Washington, 1919), 15, 89, locates the Timucuan Indians in an area extending from St. Augustine up to Cumberland Island on the Atlantic coast, from St. Augustine west to the Aucilla River, and on the gulf coast to Tampa. See also John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* (Washington, 1922), 320-30. Governor Pablo de Hita Salazar to the Crown, 24 de Agosto de 1675, Archivo General de Indias (hereinafter referred to as AGI) 58-1-26/38;

began pastoral duties in the Indian villages soon after their arrival in Florida in 1573. Bishop Juan de la Cabezas de Altamirano visited Florida in 1606 and confirmed 2074 Indians. By the end of the following year there were an additional 1,000 converts. Rapidly the mission work went forward and by 1633 had spread to the adjoining province of Apalachee.<sup>2</sup> Juan Diez de la Calle enumerated seven Timucuan missions in 1655, and Gabriel Díaz Vara Calderón, bishop of Cuba, listed nine missions in his pastoral visit to Florida, 1674-1675.<sup>3</sup>

The Timucuan missions probably had reached their zenith by 1675. English-inspired and directed raids from Carolina after 1670 destroyed some of the pueblos and frequently caused other villages to relocate. Chief Altamaha attacked the pueblo Santa Catalina de Afuica in 1685 and completely destroyed it, and the following year, Governor Juan Márquez Cabrera, in reprisal, leveled Lord Cardross' Scots colony at Port Royal.<sup>4</sup> In spite of enemy incursions the Timucuan held firm in their allegiance to Spain and did not defect to the English as had the Yamassee Indians.

Soon after becoming governor in 1693 Laureano Torres y Ayala ordered a general inspection of Timucua. The visit, conducted between December 13, 1694, and January 2, 1695, revealed a sizable number of Indian settlements living in peace with their neighbors and firm in their loyalty to the king. Governor Torres had intended inspecting the Timucua province personally, but official duties detained him in St. Augustine, and he selected Captain Joaquín de Florencia, interim-treasurer

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Stetson Collection, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville. This document describes Guala province extending from St. Catherine's Island down to the St. Johns River. Accordingly, the Salazar document places San Felipe (Cumberland) in Guala, rather than Timucua and corrects the assessment of Bushnell and Swanton.

2. John Tate Lanning, *The Spanish Missions of Georgia* (Chapel Hill, 1935), 159, 160.
3. Juan Diez de la Calle, "Nota de las Misiones de la provincia de la Florida," in Miguel Serrano y Sanz, *Documentos Históricos de la Florida y la Luisiana, Siglos XVI al XVIII* (Madrid, 1912), 132; Lucy L. Wenholt, transl. "A 17th Century Letter of Gabriel Díaz Vara Calderón, Bishop of Cuba, Describing the Indians and Indian Missions of Florida," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, XCV, no. 16 (Washington, 1936), 8.
4. Herbert Eugene Bolton and Mary Ross, *The Debatable Land* (Berkeley, 1925), 40.

of St. Augustine and commissioned judge of the Castillo de San Marcos, to serve as inspector general in his place. The official commission which Florencia received November 5, 1694, ordered him to visit the principal villages of the province, investigate native welfare, inquire about the causes for the relocation of towns, redress grievances, punish individuals guilty of misconduct, and to ascertain if the Timucua continued loyal to the governor and the king. The governor invested Florencia with complete power over the political, judicial, and military affairs of the province while conducting the "visita (inspection)".<sup>5</sup>

Captain Florencia departed to San Diego de Salamototo, a pueblo on the St. Johns River, upon receipt of his commission.<sup>6</sup> There he nominated Ensign Antonio Ponce de León to serve as his official notary,<sup>7</sup> and León swore to fulfill faithfully his duties. November 7, 1694, Florencia promulgated an auto general or general decree which stated the intent and purpose of the visita.

The document ordered the caciques<sup>8</sup> (chiefs), hinijas<sup>9</sup> (second chiefs), and herederos<sup>10</sup> (heirs) of the province to gather in the council house of the various villages when Flor-

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5. "Visita General que hizo de las Provincias de Apalache, Guale y Timucua el Capitán Joaquín de Florencia, tesorero en interim del Presidio de San Agustín de la Florida, juez comisario y visitador general de ellas, por título y nombramiento del Señor Don Laureano de Torres y Ayala, caballero de Orden de Santiago, gobernador y Capitán general de dicho presidio y provincias por Su Magestad," St. Augustine, November 5, 1694, 307 folios, Comisión, Torres a Florencia, 5 de noviembre de 1694, Stetson Collection, AGI, Escribanía de Cámara (hereinafter referred to as SC, AGI, EC), *legajo* 157.
  6. San Diego de Salamototo is ten leagues from St. Augustine. Wenhold, "A 17th Century Letter of Gabriel Díaz Vara Calderón," 8.
  7. Nombramiento de Alférez Antonio Ponce de León como escribano de la visita, San Diego de Salamototo, 7 de noviembre de 1694; Aceptación y Juramento de Ponce de León, 7 de noviembre de 1694, SC, AGI, EC, *legajo* 157.
  8. The cacique or chief presided over council meetings in the pueblo and directed all governmental activities. Benjamin Hawkins, "A Sketch of the Creek Country in the Years 1789 and 1799," *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, III (Savannah, 1840-1916), 69.
  9. The "hinija, next in rank to the cacique, directed construction of village houses and temples, supervised cultivation of the fields, and presided over the "black drink" ceremony. *Ibid.*
  10. The heredero or heir of the cacique was usually a nephew in the female line since the members of the Creek Nation practiced matrilineal succession. *Ibid.*

encia arrived. His decree suspended the lieutenant of Timucua from office during the investigation. Florencia felt this was a necessary action to assure the Timucuaans of his intent to protect them from reprisals and to redress their grievances.<sup>11</sup> The auto instructed the Indians to report actions which violated the laws of the church and crown in Timucua, and it warned them against concealing evidence. Florencia's decree prohibited lewd or obscene tribal dances, ball games,<sup>12</sup> and abortions,<sup>13</sup> but it allowed the Indians to retain and practice other ceremonial dances. They were encouraged to practice agriculture to insure an adequate food supply, honor the Franciscan padres, plant the mission fields, and help the fathers when they needed assistance.<sup>14</sup>

Florencia's decree required Timucuan warriors to maintain a minimum of fifty arrows in their possession for defensive purposes. The caciques had to account for married Indians who had been away from their families for an extended time, so that the inspector could determine if any of the families suffered deprivation. The auto stipulated that husbands would be compelled to return to their families which had lacked the necessities of life during their absence. The auto directed the Timucuaans to erect crosses inside their houses and at the entrances, and it encouraged neophytes to practice their faith daily by saying "Ave Marias" and engaging in other religious activities. Tribal caciques were to order their subjects to attend mass regularly, to provide for the pueblo children's instruction in the catechism, and to punish them if they neglected their religious duties and obligations.<sup>15</sup> With the auto general drawn up, Florencia departed from San Diego de Salamototo to begin his official investigation.

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11. Auto general de visita, 7 de noviembre de 1694, SC, AGI, EC, *legajo* 157.
  12. The auto prohibited ball games because they were so rough. Frequently enemy tribes substituted a ball game for war with about the same results, Mark Van Doren, ed., *Travels of William Bartram* (New York, 1940), 395; Madelaine Kneberg and T. M. N. Lewis, *Tribes That Slumber* (Knoxville, 1960).
  13. The Timucuaans probably used an extract from the plant yaupon to abort the fetus. Interview with Dr. William Haag, Moundville, Alabama, December 1964.
  14. Auto general de visita, 7 de noviembre de 1694, SC, AGI, EC, *legajo* 157.
  15. *Ibid.*

In San Francisco de Potano,<sup>16</sup> Captain Florencia nominated Bartolomé Pérez, a Timucuan Indian, to serve as the official interpreter for the visita.<sup>17</sup> During the remainder of November, Ponce de León, the official notary, notified the Timucuan chiefs of the impending visit to their village. Florencia began his inspection in San Miguel de Asile, December 13, 1694, and concluded it in San Diego de Salamototo on January 2, 1695.<sup>18</sup> In all he visited eight Indian settlements. Checking political, economic, social, and religious conditions in three towns, San Miguel de Asile, San Matheo (de Tolopotafi),<sup>19</sup> and San Pedro de Potohiriba,<sup>20</sup> Florencia discovered political problems. The principal men in San Miguel asked him to confer on Golasto Lozano, the heredero, the rank of cacique, so that he could rule jointly with his chieftain brother, Ventura.<sup>21</sup> Apparently this was an example of a pueblo power struggle, for Ventura seemingly suffered from no illness. Florencia, however, to placate the faction which opposed Chief Ventura, granted Golasto the title of cacique.<sup>22</sup>

When Florencia arrived at the council house in San Matheo (de Tolopotafi), he found the chief very ill. The heredero, Julian, governed the pueblo but had not assumed the title of cacique, apparently out of respect for his uncle. Although impressed by this deference, Florencia invested Julian with the rank of cacique.<sup>23</sup> The health of the cacique of San Pedro de Potohiriba also presented a problem. Anxious to maintain a stable and orderly government in the village Florencia urged the principal men to select a new chief. When the principal

16. San Francisco de Potano was approximately thirty-three leagues west of St. Augustine. Wenhold, "A 17th Century Letter of Gabriel Diaz Vara Calderón," 8.

17. Nombramiento de Bartolomé Pérez coma interprete de la lengua de Timucua, 10 de noviembre de 1694. Notificación, aceptación y Juramento de Bartolomé Pérez, 10 de noviembre de 1694, SC, AGI, EC, *legajo* 157.

18. San Miguel de Asile was approximately seventy-five leagues from St. Augustine. Wenhold, "A 17th Century Letter of Gabriel Díaz Vara Calderón," 8.

19. San Matheo (de Tolopotafi) was approximately seventy-three leagues west of St. Augustine. *Ibid.*

20. San Pedro de Potohiriba was approximately sixty-seven leagues west of St. Augustine. *Ibid.*

21. Visita del lunar de San Miguel de Asile, 14 de diciembre de 1694, SC, AGI, EC, *legajo* 157.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Visita de lugar de San Matheo (de Tolopotafi), 16 de diciembre de 1694, *ibid.*

men proposed, however, to govern the town themselves until the heredero came of age, Florencia agreed to the collective regency.<sup>24</sup>

Inadequate food supplies in several pueblos had created a problem which required immediate attention. The visita revealed that three villages, San Pedro de Potohiriba, San Francisco de Potano, and San Diego de Salamototo, were suffering from food shortages. According to the San Pedro de Potohiriba chief, a band of fugitive Indians had stolen food in his area, and Florencia ordered a watch established.<sup>25</sup> In San Francisco de Potano, the chief complained about the poor soil in the fields. There was a mission a short distance away which had fertile soil, and the cacique asked permission to relocate his village. Florencia, anxious to alleviate the food shortage, granted this request.<sup>26</sup> In San Diego de Salamototo, Florencia discovered that inhabitants were suffering from a severe shortage because cattle and other livestock from Captain Juan de Pueyo's hacienda, located near the village, had been grazing in the fields before the crops could be harvested. The Indians had attempted to gather food in the forest of the neighboring haciendas, but the overseers had stopped them. Captain Florencia promised to do what he could to alleviate the situation.<sup>27</sup>

The Timucuan pueblos were also plagued with a number of social problems. Florencia discovered that Adrián of San Miguel de Asile, Santiago of (Santa Elena) de Machava, and Francisco of San Pedro de Potohiriba, had deserted their wives, and that their families had no one to support them.<sup>28</sup> The caciques in each of the villages indicated their belief that the deserting husbands were somewhere in the province and requested Florencia to order their return. In each case Florencia made a notation of the situation and promised to bring the husbands back to their families.<sup>29</sup> While inspecting the hacienda

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24. Visita del lugar de San Pedro de Potohiriba, 18 de diciembre de 1694, *ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. Visita de San Matheo (de Tolopatafi), December 30, 1694, *ibid.*

27. Visita del pueblo de San Diego de Salamototo, 30 de diciembre de 1694, *ibid.*

28. Santa Elena de Machava was sixty-nine leagues west of St. Augustine. Wenhold, "A 17th Century Letter of Gabriel Díaz Vara Calderón," 8.

29. Visita del lugar de San Miguel de Asile, 14 de diciembre de 1694; Visita del pueblo de Santa Elena de Machava, 15 de diciembre de 1694; Visita

of Captain Juan Hita Salazar at San Francisco de Potano, Florencia learned that two married Apalachino (Apalachee) Indians, Alonso and Juan, worker for the captain. Salazar insisted that he would pay the Indians for their services and return them to their homes as soon as they had fulfilled their contracts. Florencia reviewed the situation, ordered Salazar not to employ married male Indians again on his hacienda, and promised a twenty ducat fine if he violated the order.<sup>30</sup>

While at San Pedro de Potohiriba, Florencia sought the opinion of the chiefs as to the best means of restoring the town, San Juan de Guacára,<sup>31</sup> which had been destroyed by an English raid.<sup>32</sup> The caciques wanted the village rebuilt and they also asked for a garrison to protect them against another invasion. They recommended that the Timucuans who went to reestablish the pueblo carry provisions so as not to depend entirely on food which they hoped to produce. Captain Florencia agreed with their suggestions.<sup>33</sup>

Religious matters consumed a good deal of Captain Florencia's attention during the visita. His inspection revealed that in San Matheo (de Tolopotafi) a married woman had aborted several babies by taking herbs, which grew in the area.<sup>34</sup> Abortion, a serious offense against Catholic dogma, alarmed Florencia, and he ordered the woman to appear before him in the council house. There, in full view of the village inhabitants, he warned her that if she committed the offense again her hair would be cut and she would receive fifty lashes.<sup>35</sup>

In San Francisco de Potano, where the cacique had received permission to relocate his town, Florencia stipulated that the Indians had to provide for the village poor in exchange for

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del lugar de San Pedro de Potohiriba, 18 de diciembre de 1694, SC, AGI, EC, *legajo* 157.

30. Visita de la hacienda del Capitán Don Juan Antonio de Hita Salazar, 23 de diciembre de 1694, *ibid.*
31. San Juan de Guacára was approximately fifty-seven leagues from St. Augustine. Wenhold, "A 17th Century Letter of Gabriel Díaz Vara Calderón," 8.
32. San Juan de Guacára had been destroyed in the term of Governor Juan Márquez Cabrera prior to 1690. Mark F. Boyd, Hale G. Smith, and John W. Griffin, *Here They Once Stood: The Tragic End of the Apalachee Missions* (Gainesville, 1951), 11.
33. Junta general, 18 de diciembre de 1694, SC, AGI, EC, *legajo* 157.
34. Yaupon.
35. Visita del lugar de San Matheo (de Tolopotafi), 16 de diciembre de 1694, SC, AGI, EC, *legajo* 157.

the privilege of moving. They also had to look after the welfare of the widows and orphans.<sup>36</sup> Finding the pueblo Ivitanayo uninhabited on December 29, Florencia sent Chief Miguel of San Francisco to search for the recently converted Indians and to relocate them in San Francisco de Potano or San Diego de Salamototo.<sup>37</sup> Humanely, Florencia chose not to punish the Indians.<sup>38</sup> In all of the villages, Florencia urged the Timucua to worship and to see that the children received instruction in the catechism. Before returning to St. Augustine, he issued a series of orders for the caciques and the province lieutenants to put into effect. They related primarily to economic, political, religious, and social conditions within the various pueblos.

During the visita, Florencia had paid special attention to the economy; accordingly he designed a number of orders to correct economic grievances. He halted the practice of requiring the Timucua to grind grain for the province lieutenant.<sup>39</sup> To end Indian destruction of hacienda livestock, he decreed the remanding of captured criminals to four month's labor on the St. Johns ferry boats.<sup>40</sup> Florencia encouraged the Timucua to raise birds and livestock as dietary supplements, but he cautioned the Indians not to permit the animals to damage the crops. Florencia strictly forbade any alteration of food prices when the Indians sold maize and beans, and he decreed a punishment of fifty lashes for violators. Additionally, he ordered a fine of twenty ducats levied against a chief or lieutenant who knowingly tolerated such a practice.<sup>41</sup> To protect the tribal hunting grounds, Florencia restricted hunting in a forest area adjacent to a town to the inhabitants of that particular village.<sup>42</sup>

36. Visita del lugar de San Francisco de Potano, 23 de diciembre de 1694, *ibid.*

37. Entrada al pueblo de Ivitanayo, 29 de diciembre de 1694, *ibid.*

38. Orden al Cacique Miguel de San Francisco de Potano, 30 de diciembre de 1694, *ibid.*

39. Ordenes que se han de guardar, cumplir y observar en estas Provincias de Timucua, etc., 24 de diciembre de 1694; Ordenes que se han de guardar en el paso y lugar de Salamototo, etc., 2 de enero de 1695, *ibid.*

40. Ordenes que se han de guardar en el paso y lugar de Salamototo, etc., 2 de enero de 1695, *ibid.*

41. Ordenes que se han de guardar, cumplir y observar en estas Provincias de Timucua, etc., 24 de diciembre de 1694, *ibid.*

42. Ordenes que se han de guardar en el paso y lugar de Salamototo, etc., 2 de enero de 1695, *ibid.*

Politically Florencia wanted to relinquish as much control to the pueblo as possible; the caciques were to exercise a predominant role in the villages. Perhaps in an effort to protect the dignity and status of the cacicazgo, he directed the province lieutenant not to punish caciques but to remit their cases to the governor for his decision.<sup>43</sup>

Several of Florencia's directives related to religious life. He sought to encourage the lieutenant, chiefs, and village inhabitants to attend mass on feast days and to erect crosses both inside and outside of their homes. Florencia proscribed dancing during Lent and absolutely forbade lewd dances.<sup>44</sup> The visitor directed the province lieutenant to return all non-Timucuan to their homes before Lent each year; however, he permitted unmarried Indians to return to Timucua after Lent.<sup>45</sup> One order provided that if an Indian died with no heirs half of his estate would be used to pay for masses for his soul. In the event there were heirs, one-fifth of the estate would be spent for masses.<sup>46</sup>

Florencia issued orders designed to improve social conditions. He decreed that there be at least six Indians to operate the ferry system at San Diego de Salamototo on the St. Johns River at all times and that the Indians receive one real per trip as salary. Soldiers, however, would receive free transportation.<sup>47</sup> He terminated the medical practice of the medicine men and threatened severe punishment for those who continued to administer drugs.<sup>48</sup> He ordered the lieutenants to see that no Spanish Negro or mulatto slept outside of the council house or remained in an Indian pueblo longer than ten days.<sup>49</sup> Lieutenants who failed to enforce this directive were to receive

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43. Ordenes que se han de guardar, cumplir y observar en estas Provincias de Timucua, etc., 24 de diciembre de 1694; Ordenes que se han de guardar en el paso y lugar de Salamototo, etc., 2 de enero de 1695, *ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

45. Ordenes que se han de guardar, cumplir y observar en estas Provincias de Timucua, etc., 24 de diciembre de 1694, *ibid.*

46. Ordenes que se han de guardar en el paso y lugar de Salamototo, etc., 2 de enero de 1695, *ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. Ordenes que se han de guardar, cumplir y observar en estas Provincias de Timucua, etc., 24 de diciembre de 1694; Ordenes que se han de guardar en el paso y lugar de Salamototo, etc., 2 de enero de 1695, *ibid.*

ten ducat fines and the Negroes or mulattoes five lashes.<sup>50</sup> In the event that a Timucuan died without heirs, Florencia ordered that half of his estate be divided among the village inhabitants.<sup>51</sup>

Florencia, concluding his inspection January 2, 1695, in San Diego de Salamototo, traveled to St. Augustine and presented his report to the governor. Governor Torres, completely satisfied with Captain Florencia's conduct of the visita, decreed, February 3, 1695, the observation and execution of the visitador's orders in their entirety.<sup>52</sup>

Florencia's visita general involved inspection of eight villages on Florida's northern frontier. The visita provides a significant insight into the economic, political, social, and religious structure of Timucuan society. Florencia inspection revealed that the Indians based their economy primarily on agriculture with maize and beans as their basic staples. They cultivated other foods such as squash and gathered acorns and other nuts when the yield from the field was poor. They supplemented their food supply by hunting and fishing. Some Spaniards had developed haciendas in the province, and a cattle industry existed. Cattle sometimes grazed in the fertile village fields, and when the chiefs complained of their depredations, Captain Florencia issued orders to the overseers to fence in the livestock.

Florencia found that the cacique, heredero, and hinija maintained control over village government. Actual authority resided in the cacique but sometimes as was the case in San Miguel de Asile, he shared his duties with the heredero. The chief probably consulted with the lieutenant stationed in the province before he made any military decision. The thirty-four orders which Florencia commanded the lieutenant to put into operation provide the most important and interesting facet of the visita. Most applied to the entire province, but a few, principally those relating to water transportation, pertained only to San Diego de Salamototo. The regulations when view-

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50. *Ibid.*

51. Ordenes que se han de guardar, cumplir y observar en estas Provincias de Timucua, etc., 24 de diciembre de 1694, *ibid.*

52. Auto, Gobernador Torres, 3 de febrero de 1695, para aprobar papeles de la visita, *ibid.*

ed collectively, reveal a remarkable degree of concern for the welfare of the Timucua. They protected the right of the Indians to gather food in the hacienda wooded areas when they experienced food shortages, encouraged them to raise birds and livestock, and prohibited married males from other provinces from working in Timucua. They prohibited medicine men from plying their arts, put an end to ball games and lewd dances, and provided harsh punishments for abortion. The activities of Negroes and mulattoes were regulated. The pueblo cacique could be punished only by the governor. Spaniards could not force Indians to grind grain for them, and the Indians in turn could not alter prices when they sold food. The visita general of 1694, in perspective, revealed a strong pueblo system. Although the number of towns and missions had probably declined from the maximum strength of 1675, there still flourished a significant number that maintained loyalty to the Spanish king and the Catholic church.