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THE CHICORA LEGEND  
AND FRANCO-SPANISH RIVALRY IN  
LA FLORIDA

by PAUL E. HOFFMAN

**W**ITH the first light of Monday, June 24, 1521, Pedro de Quexo and Francisco Gordillo discovered a new land which they named the Land of St. John the Baptist in honor of the saint whose feast day it was. Entering a river, later called the Jordan for the same reason, they established contact with a village or native group called "Chicora."<sup>1</sup> Thus began the Chicora Legend, a legend that ultimately described the land of Chicora as a new Andalusia, a land abounding in timber, vines, native olive trees, Indians, pearls, and, at a distance inland, perhaps gold and silver. Flowing through this land was a great river, so wide and deep that it could be described as a "gulf" reaching deep into the land. This vision of Chicora and its river moved Spaniards and Frenchmen during the next sixty years to explore and attempt to settle along the coast of the present-day Carolinas.

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1. The name seems to have been given in 1525 during the second voyage. It first appears on the Vespucci map of 1526. See Juan Vespucci, World Map, manuscript at the Hispanic Society of America, New York, color reproduction in William P. Cumming, R. A. Skelton, and David B. Quinn, *The Discovery of North America* (London, 1971), 86-87, reproduced in black and white in William P. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps* (Princeton, 1958), plate 2. Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, *História general de los hechos de los Castellanos en las islas y tierra firme del Mar Oceano*, 17 vols. (Madrid, 1934-1957), VII, 310, states that the river was named for a member of the crew, but this is an error. John Gilmary Shea, who repeats Herrera, goes on to make a further error by placing the Jordan at or near Cape Fear (following Villafañe) and incorrectly interpreting the Spanish text he was following to the effect that the river found in 1521 was called the "San Juan Baptista." See John G. Shea, "Ancient Florida," in Justin Winsor, ed., *Narrative and Critical History of America*, 8 vols. (New York and Boston, 1884-1889), II, 239. Diego Luis Molinari seems to have been the first modern author to straighten the matter out by noting that the Jordan River was identified with St. John the Baptist. See Diego Luis Molinari, *El Nacimiento del Nuevo Mundo, 1492-1534* (Buenos Aires, 1941), 124-26.

This study seeks to explain why Spaniards and Frenchmen tried to found colonies on the east coast by showing how the Chicora Legend changed with time and motivated these groups. A basic assumption made throughout is that place designations in some of the Spanish sources cannot be reconciled with each other and that that fact is itself an important but heretofore overlooked clue to the history of the legend and its effects on those who knew of it.<sup>2</sup> A second assumption is related to the first: that sources remote in date from the events in question are less likely to be accurate than those close to the event. Previous students of this topic have not made these assumptions and have, in consequence, further muddled our understanding of the events in question.

Quexo and Gordillo initially entered what is now the Santee River, but within a few days had moved their ships to Winyah Bay just to the north. It was that estuary that Peter Martyr later described as a "gulf reaching into the land." At some point on its eastern shore Quexo took a solar latitude reading and recorded that he was 33½° North.<sup>3</sup>

After spending twenty-two days trading with the Indians, exploring in the immediate area, and arguing about whether and how to capture the Indians so that they could be taken to Española to become slaves (slaving was the purpose of both expeditions before they joined in the Bahamas), the captains induced some sixty natives to board the ships. They then raised their anchors and dropped down an outgoing tide to the sea

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2. My position on this matter is thus the reverse of Shea's who concluded that "conjecture is idle" in view of the apparent divergence of latitudes given by the documents for the Ayllon voyage, quoted with approval in Woodbury Lowery, *The Spanish Settlements Within the Present Limits of the United States*, 2 vols. (New York, 1901-1905), I, 155, note 2. Lowery's discussion of Chicora is found in *ibid.*, I, 153-68, II, 34-35. Other scholars who have dealt with this topic are Carl O. Sauer, *Sixteenth Century North America: The Land and the People as Seen by the Europeans* (Berkeley, 1971), 69-76, 197, and Paul Quattlebaum, *The Land Called Chicora: The Carolinas Under Spanish Rule with French Intrusions, 1520-1670* (Gainesville, 1956), 46-48, *passim*; see also Johann G. Kohl, *A History of the Discovery of the East Coast of North America*, Vol. 1 of Maine Historical Society, *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, 24 vols. (Portland, Maine, 1869-1916), 427.
  3. Pietro Martiere d'Anghiera, *Décadas del Nuevo Mundo*, estudio y apéndices por Edmundo O'Gorman, 2 vols. (Mexico, 1964-1965), II, 596; Archivo General de Indias, Seville (hereinafter AGI), Justicia 3, No. 3, fols. 55-55vto.

while the sails were shaken out amidst the cries of the Indians aboard and ashore.<sup>4</sup>

Upon the return of the two captains to Santo Domingo, their backers, the Licenciados Juan Ortiz de Matienzo (Quexo's backer through Matienzo's kinsman Sancho Ortiz de Urrutía), and Lucas Vázquez de Ayllon (Gordillo's backer) and Ayllon's partner, Diego Cavallero, the secretary of the Audiencia, petitioned the *real acuerdo* for an exclusive right to explore and exploit the new land.<sup>5</sup> In the petition they said it was at "around 34°."<sup>6</sup>

This obfuscation of the true location of the river was to be continued. Within a year, Ayllon had been sent to Spain to represent the Audiencia in its disputes with Licenciado Rodrigo de Figueroa and Governor Diego Colón.<sup>7</sup> While in Spain, Ayllon petitioned the crown on behalf of himself, Matienzo, and Cavallero for a contract to settle the new territory. He also entertained one of his hosts, Peter Martyr, with tales of the new land and of the wonders in it, which had once included men with tails. Martyr made some notes, talked to Francisco Chicorano, an Indian from the new land who had become a domestic servant of the Licenciado, and then filed his notes in his desk.<sup>8</sup> Ayllon duly obtained his license (his partners were excluded), but it specified that the area he was to settle lay between latitudes 35° and 37° North.<sup>9</sup> In less than two years, the land of Chicora

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4. The best source for the voyage of 1521 is the testimony of Pedro de Quexo (not Quejos nor Quijos as it is sometimes rendered) found in AGI, Justicia 3, No. 3, fols. 39-43vto; Peter Martyr also provides a narrative written in Spain from secondhand accounts in 1523, Martiere d'Anghiera, *Décadas*, II, 594-95.

5. A meeting of all the royal officials based at Santo Domingo, the *Real Acuerdo*, included the governor, Diego Colón, son of Christopher Columbus; the judges of the Audiencia, licenciados Marcel de Villafobos and Cristóbal Lebrón; and the treasury officials, treasurer Miguel de Pasamonte, accountant Gil Gonzalez de Ávila, factor Juan Martinez de Ampies, and inspector Andrés de Tapía. Matienzo and Ayllon would normally have sat on the *acuerdo* as well, but were apparently excluded because they were petitioners.

6. AGI, Justicia 3, No. 3, fol. 88.

7. Herrera, *História de las Indias*, VII, 29-31.

8. Martiere d'Anghiera, *Décadas*, II, 593-96.

9. Contract, June 12, 1523, AGI, Indiferente General 415 (hereinafter IG), bk 1, fols. 32-37, copies in AGI, Justicia 3, fols. 9vto-17, and Joaquín P. Pacheco, Francisco de Cárdenas, and Luis Torres de Mendoza, eds., *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía, sacados de los archivos del reino y muy especialmente del de Indias*

had moved at least one and one-half degrees of latitude to the north.

The explanation for the migration of Chicora from the vicinity of Winyah Bay to the area of the outer banks of North Carolina and the entrance to Chesapeake Bay is found in Martyr's remark that Ayllon said that the land was "situated at the height of the same degrees and identical parallels as Vandalian Spain, vulgarly called Andalusia."<sup>10</sup> Andalusia is centered around latitude 37° North. Further, in describing the resources of the area (Decade 7, Book 4), Martyr notes that evergreen oaks, pines, cypress trees, hazelnut trees, almond trees, black and white grapes, figs, different kinds of olives ("which once grafted become domesticated, as happens among us"), vegetables, and many fruits, some unknown to Europeans, grew there in great profusion.<sup>11</sup> All of the plants specifically named are characteristic of the Andalusian countryside. In Ayllon's dreams, Chicora was a new Andalusia.

In addition to describing Chicora as a new Andalusia, Ayllon and his servant told Martyr that a nearby province called "Xapida" offered pearls and "other terrestrial gems." The river became a "gulf."<sup>12</sup> The first statement is correct, for freshwater pearls were common in the rivers inland from the Carolina coast. The second elaboration on the truth was to help convince later explorers that Chicora lay on one of the major bays or sounds to the south of its true location.

Ayllon's deliberate grab for land he had not had explored is understandable given the crude geographic theory of the time which said that climate and mineral resources were the same as those in Europe at a given latitude anywhere in the world, and given his need to make a strong case that might interest the king and investors in the venture. Such speculation had few consequences for him because in 1525, as part of his contractual obligations, he sent out an expedition (under Quexo) which explored that part of the coast and apparently

(hereinafter *DII*), 42 vols. (Madrid, 1864-1884), XIV, 504-15, and XXII, 79-93

10. The Spanish text is "*afirmase que estan situadas bajo la altitud de los mismos grados e identicos paralelos que la España Vandalia, vulgarmente llamada Andalucia.*" Martiere d'Anghiera, *Décadas*, II, 595-96.

31. *Ibid.*, 605.

12. *Ibid.*, 597, 596.

reported that it offered little. Accordingly, his first attempt at colonization was at the Jordan River, from which he went south and west along the coast to a site on the Gualdape River.<sup>13</sup> Prior to this move, at least one of his ship captains visited the estuary now known as Port Royal Sound, naming it and a nearby “point” (Hilton Head Island), for Santa Elena, the saint on whose feast day, August 18, they were discovered.

The year after Ayllon left Spain for the Indies, Camilo Gilino, a secretary to Francisco Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan, and then serving as Sforza’s emissary to Charles I, persuaded Martyr to write out for Sforza’s amusement the latest and most interesting tale from the New World. Martyr chose the notes he had made on his conversations with Ayllon.<sup>14</sup> That report became books two and three and part of book four in Martyr’s seventh decade. They were published in Latin with the other decades at Alcalá de Henares in 1530, four years after Martyr’s death.<sup>15</sup> Chicora thereby entered the pool of geographic knowledge available to the rest of Europe, although its exact location was not clear from Martyr’s account since no latitude was given. Ayllon’s deceptions about resources and location had begun their public career as the Chicora Legend.

Although not named Chicora, the land Ayllon had caused to be explored was already on the maps by 1530, and was known all over Europe by 1540. By a process still undocumented, Juan Vespucci, nephew of Amerigo and examiner of pilots for the Casa de la Contratación, obtained a crude map or *derrotero* of the exploration of 1525 and incorporated it into his world map, dated 1526.<sup>16</sup> Vespucci’s map, or the same data with numerous name changes, was incorporated into the *Padrón General* of the

13. For the 1525 voyages see AGI, Justicia 3, No. 3, fol. 7; for the 1526 voyages see Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *Historia General de Indias*, 4 vols. (Madrid, 1851-1855), III, 626-29. The Gualdape River is Sapelo Sound. Sauer and others favor the Savanna River, but Oviedo’s directions indicate it was south of there, Sauer, *Sixteenth Century North America*, 73.

14. Martiere d’Anghiera, *Décadas*, II, 587, 594.

15. Pedro Martir de Angleria, *De orbe Nouo Petri Martyris ab Angleria Mediolanensis protonotarij, Cesaris senatoris Decades cum privilegio Imperiali*. Compluti apud Michael[e]m d’Equia, Anno M.D. XXX. (Alcalá de Henares, 1530).

16. Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, 7-8; Ayllon sent a report on the voyage of 1525 which included details on locations, soundings, and similar matters necessary for the construction of a chart, AGI, Justicia 3, No. 3, fol. 7; King to Ayllon, December 1, 1525. AGI, IG 420, bk 10, fol. 190.

Casa, a map then kept up to date by Diego de Ribero, among others. From this source copies soon spread in manuscript and, in 1534, in the woodcut map bound into some copies of the Venice edition of Martyr's first three decades, which was published with the history of the Indies by Oviedo.<sup>17</sup> By the mid-1530s the Ribero-type map was known to the French cartographers at Dieppe, who combined its information with that from Verazzano's exploration of 1524 to produce a series of manuscript maps with a uniquely French interpretation of North American geography.<sup>18</sup> Alonso de Chaves's revision of the *Padrón General*, made in 1536, also seems to have become known outside of Spain within a few years of its creation.<sup>19</sup> It did not change the names or general outline of the "Ayllon Coast" as derived from the Ribero map. In sum, the Spanish cartographic tradition, as known to the rest of Europe during the late 1520s and afterwards into at least the 1550s, remained consistent in its depiction of the location and general geography of Ayllon's discoveries. On these maps, Ayllon's coast was located in the high thirties, north latitude.

The maps and Martyr's published account only told half of the story of Ayllon's attempt to find a new Andalusia in North America. The other half of the story remained unknown except for the cryptic reference to Ayllon's failure in Oviedo's short *Sumario de la História de las Indias*, published in 1535 and again in 1547.<sup>20</sup> What had actually transpired in 1526 was known

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17. A draft without the names used by Ribero, but clearly in his style and dated 1527 is known as the "Weimar Ribero." See Henry Harrisse, *The Discovery of North America* (London and Paris, 1892; reprint ed., Amsterdam, 1961), 572, Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, 26, note 27, and reproduced in I. N. P. Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909*, 6 vols. (1915-1928; reprint ed., New York, 1964), II, plate 9; better known, and incorporating the coastal names of the Ayllon discoveries are the Weimar Map of 1529 and the more detailed Vatican Map of 1529, see Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island*, II, plate 10, and Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, 67; the woodcut map of 1534 is reproduced and described in Cumming, Skelton, and Quinn, *Discovery of North America*, 71, plate 71.
  18. In chronological order these maps are reproduced as plates 152, 162, and 139 in Cumming, Skelton, and Quinn, *Discovery of North America*, 138-39, 150-51, and 125, respectively.
  19. For a discussion of the Chaves revision and its appearance on later maps, see Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island*, II, 22-29, and his plates 18 and 19.
  20. Oviedo, *História General de las Indias*, bk IV, chap. V, I, 11-12; the editions of the *Sumario* are: Goncalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *La história general de las Indias* (Seville, 1535). and *Crónica de las*

only to the survivors of that expedition, whose tales entertained their friends and were collected by Oviedo and recorded in a manuscript of additions he planned to include in his history in later editions. Those same stories reached the men who, a decade after Ayllon, were preparing the De Soto expedition.<sup>21</sup>

From these reports, it must have been clear to the Spanish that the coast offered little either in trade with the Indians, pearls and gems, or agriculture. However, Xapida's pearls and "other terrestrial gems" still beckoned.

Given a contract that allowed him to explore the areas previously assigned to Pánfilo de Narváez and Ayllon, as well as the rest of North America, and then select 200 leagues of coastline for an area of settlement, Hernando de Soto determined not to leave a district unexplored before he made his choice.<sup>22</sup> Aware of the Chicora Legend and Xapida, he put that knowledge together with Indian reports obtained around Tallahassee, Florida, during the winter of 1539-1540, and headed for Cofitachequi and its queen, who was said to have possessed many pearls. At that town, thought to be near modern Camden, South Carolina, the Spanish found axes, glass trade beads, and a rosary of olive-wood beads, evidence which confirmed for them that they were on the upper reaches of the river on which Ayllon had attempted to settle.<sup>23</sup> But the reality of this pearl kingdom was not very tempting to De Soto. He pressed on, turning his soldiers and herds of pigs northwest toward the mountains and the hearts of Cherokee and Creek civilization.

Following De Soto's exploration of the interior of the Carolinas, Spanish interest turned away from Chicora. On the coast and inland the legend that Ayllon and his servant had built on

*Indias: La historia general de las Indias agora nuevamente impresa, corregida y emendada* (Salamanca, 1547).

21. Luis Hernández de Viedma, "Relación," *DII*, III, 442, shows considerable knowledge of the fact that Ayllon had not gone inland and of the history of his colony and why it failed. Oviedo records the same knowledge in the form of the Rodrigo Renjel narrative of the expedition, supposedly a diary kept by the adelantado's secretary, see Oviedo, *Historia General de las Indias*, I, 544-77.
22. AGI, IG, 415, bk 1, fols. 38-41. This fact about his right to explore before settlement is usually overlooked in discussions of De Soto's expedition.
23. Oviedo, *Historia General de las Indias*, I, 558-62. Biedma, "Relación," *DII*, III, 422. They seem to have been on the Wateree River in South Carolina, a tributary of the Santee River, which was Ayllon's Jordan, not his Gualdape.

the basis of a little knowledge had proven to be more glorious and golden than the reality that explorers had found.

And yet the legend did not die, even among the Spanish. In 1544 Julian de Samano, brother of Juan de Samano, the emperor's secretary for Indies affairs, and Pedro de Ahumada sought a trade permit for the area of Ayllon's discoveries.<sup>24</sup> Although that was denied, it indicates continued interest in the legendary possibilities of the coast.

In 1551, Francisco López de Gómara, chaplain and confidant of Hernán Cortes during his last years in Mexico, recorded the legend once again in his *História General de las Indias*, published in Spanish at Zaragoza in 1552, again at Medina del Campo in 1553, and at Zaragoza and Amsterdam in 1554. Italian translations were issued at Rome in 1556, and at Venice in 1560.<sup>25</sup> Using Martyr and possibly some other sources, López de Gómara clearly identified Chicora with the Jordan River, but compressed the three voyages of Vázquez de Ayllon into two, changed the dates to 1520 and 1524 (for the first and third voyages), and seemed to place Chicora and Gualdape at 32° North, saying they were "a land" (emphasis added) "now called Cape Santa Elena and the Jordan River."<sup>26</sup> Elaborating on Martyr, Gómara said that the first expedition explored inland and everywhere received food and "little gifts of mother-of-pearl, mishappened pearls, and silver."<sup>27</sup> In other respects his report of the kidnapping of the Indians and the customs and religious rituals of the natives is similar to Martyr's, although the men with tails do not appear.

Gómara thus helped to revive interest in the coast of North America, even as his contemporary, the royal cosmographer Alonso de Santa Cruz, was writing in his manuscript *Islario*

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24. Francisco López de Gómara, *História General de las Indias*, 2 vols. (Zaragoza, 1552; reprint ed., Barcelona, 1954), I, 72; Andrés Gonzalez de Barcia Carballido y Zúñiga, *Chronological History of the Continent of Florida*, trans. Antony Kerrigan (Gainesville, 1951), 25.

25. López de Gómara, *História General de las Indias*; editions under the same title appeared at Medina del Campo, 1553; Zaragoza, 1554; and four separate editions at Anvers, 1554; Italian translation by Augustino de Carvaliz appeared as *La Historia generale delle Indie Occidentali* at Roma, 1556, and Venetia, 1560; the first French translation was *Histoire generale des indes occidentales et terres neuves . . .* trans. Mart[in] Fumee at Paris, 1569.

26. López de Gómara, *História General de las Indias*, II, 66-67.

27. *Ibid.*, 66.

General that "beyond this river [Rio de los Gamos, probably the modern Hudson River] and islands, to the west, along the coast [going] towards Florida are found many islands, all deserts and of little use which were seen and discovered also by the Licenciado Ayllon, who was from the Chancery of Santo Domingo, when he went to populate the continent, where he and many men he took with him died and his fleet was lost."<sup>28</sup> Santa Cruz thus recorded the truth, a truth that Ayllon and De Soto had discovered to their cost. Gómara, on the other hand, recorded not only the fact of the fate of Ayllon but also the legend that had fed his hopes and that was to feed those of a new generation of explorers, who could now find Chicora, thanks to Gómara's giving a latitude for the Point of Santa Elena and the Jordan River.

The publication of Gómara's book was followed four years later, in 1556, by the publication of the third volume of Gian Battista Ramusio's *Navigazioni et Viaggi* at Venice. This work contained the narrative of Giovanni da Verrazzano's voyage of 1524 in which he claimed to have made a landfall at 34° North and described the land in that vicinity in terms remarkably like those of Martyr, that is, as a land flowing in agricultural and forest wealth and friendly Indians.<sup>29</sup> Also contained in Ramusio was the anonymous "Discourse of a Great French Sea Captain," which noted Verrazzano's voyage and went on to describe explorations supposedly made in 1539 (actually in 1529) which apparently involved the North American coast from latitudes 40° to 46° North but may have included a visit to the area of Ayllon's River of Santa Elena.<sup>30</sup> Between them, these accounts gave the French a claim to the coast from at least 34° to 46° North, a claim which could be extended south to peninsular

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28. Alonso de Santa Cruz, *Islario General de todas las islas del mundo*. . . , 2 vols. (Madrid, 1918), I, 441-42; identification of the Rio de los Gamos is from Sauer, *Sixteenth Century North America*, 68.

29. Giovanni da Verrazzano, "Al Christianissimo Re Di Francia Francesco Primo, Relatione di Giouanni da Venazzano Fiorentino della terra per lui scoperta in nome di sua Maesta' scritta in Dieppa, adi 8. Lugilo M. D. XIII," in Gian Battista Ramusio, *Navigazioni et Viaggi*, 3 vols. (Venice, 1552-1556; reprint ed., Amsterdam, 1967), III, fol. 350vto.

30. "Discurso de un Gran Capitan. . .," in Ramusio, *Navigazioni et Viaggi*, III, fols. 352-69, and introduction, fol. 438; for a translation see Bernard G. Hoffman, "Account of a Voyage Conducted in 1529 to the New World, Africa, Madagascar, and Sumatra, translated from the Italian, with Notes and Comments," *Ethnohistory*, X (Winter 1963), 1-79.

Florida if Verrazzano's narrative were taken at face value. In short, Ramusio's publication gave the French title by right of discovery to the same coast where Gómara said Ayllon's settlement had been. Equally important, Verrazzano confirmed Gómara, and Martyr, in describing the area of the mid-thirties north latitude as one rich in agricultural and forest potential.

Coincident with the publication of Ramusio's volume, the French began to take a more direct interest in North America. Andre Thevet, the great cosmographer whose works were published in the 1570s, tells us that in 1556 the ship on which he was a passenger homebound from Brazil coasted the shore of North America.<sup>31</sup> That same year, the Spanish learned that one Julian de Solórzano, a renegade from Peru where he had been a follower of Gonzalo Pizarro in the rebellion of 1544-1547, was at the French court, where he spent several hours closeted with the king discussing various maps and a project to seize a base near where the ships passed on their way to the Indies.<sup>32</sup> A later report had it that the French were sending a fleet to seize a base near the Cape of Three Points, although this may be a garbled version of the French colony at Rio de Janiero.<sup>33</sup> Nothing further seems to have come of whatever the French were planning in 1556.

On the basis of available evidence it is not possible to decide whether the French had an active interest in the Point of Santa Elena at this time. Yet somehow during the course of 1556 or early 1557, the Spanish became aroused to a possible danger of a French intrusion on their claim over the Point of Santa Elena. Solórzano, in particular, may have aroused their suspicions because he was reported to have had maps of the Indies with him. Whether there was some other, presently unknown, and more direct evidence of a French design on North America cannot be stated. But it is certain that the combination of cir-

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31. Andre Thevet, *Les singularitez de la France Antartique, autrement nomme Amerique* (Antwerp, 1558; reprint ed., Paris, 1878), fols. 143, 145, 158, and Andre Thevet, *La Cosmographie Universelle*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1575), II, fo's. 1008-1009; Kohl, *Discovery of the East Coast*, 416. Thevet seems to have touched only the New England coast.
  32. Copy of paragraph, Ambassador to King, Paris (?), August 17, 1556, Archivo General de Simancas, Guerra Antigua 62, documents 55-57 (hereinafter AGS); Francisco Mexia to King, Seville, March 17, 1555, AGI, IG 1561, giving background on Solórzano.
  33. Ambassador to King, Paris (?), September 14, 1556, copy as AGS, Guerra Antigua 62, doc. 12-14.

cumstances, beginning with the publication of the Ramusio volume, seems to have finally persuaded Philip II's regency government it should approve a Mexican scheme for a new colony in southeastern North America.

Father Andrés de Olmos, a Franciscan friar long active in the Pánuco region of northeastern Mexico, had been advocating such a colony since 1544. His propaganda got into high gear in 1555-1556 when he and a number of Mexican authorities wrote to the crown advocating missions and colonies on the three rivers of the northern Gulf coast—Rio de Palmas, Rio Bravo, and Rio de Ochuse. Endorsed by Rodrigo Rengel, former secretary to Hernando de Soto, by the archbishop of Mexico, by the viceroy, D. Luis de Velasco, and by Dr. Pedro de Santander, inspector of the royal treasury in Vera Cruz, the proposal had not been approved at first, but in an order dated December 29, 1557, the regency government reversed its previous position and ordered an expedition to the Gulf coast and to the Point of Santa Elena.<sup>34</sup> Santa Elena had not been part of Olmos's proposal.

On the basis of this order, the expedition of Tristán de Luna was fitted out in Vera Cruz and eventually sent to what is now Pensacola on the Gulf coast, where the first major settlement was to be made. Santa Elena had a low, second priority for the officials preparing the expedition.

Additional evidence supporting Philip's suspicions about the French was soon available in public form. Thevet's account of the Brazilian colony and of his North American visit was published in Paris in 1557, and at Antwerp in 1558.<sup>35</sup> Thevet's book was followed by Jean Alfonse's *Adventerous Voyages* published in 1559.<sup>36</sup> Alfonse's work showed additional evidence

34. Princess and Council of Indies to Velasco, Valladolid, December 29, 1557, cited in Audiencia to Luna, Mexico, March 30, 1559, in Herbert I. Priestley, ed., *The Luna Papers: Documents Relating to the Expedition of don Tristán de Luna y Arellano for the Conquest of La Florida in 1559-1561*, 2 vols. (DeLand, 1928), I, 46-47; Paul E. Hoffman, "Legend, Religious Idealism and Politics: The Point of Santa Elena in History 1552-1566," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LXXXIV (April 1983), 59-71.

35. Thevet, *Singularitez de la France Antartique*, fols. 143, 145, 158, 161, citation from Kohl, *Discovery of the East Coast*, 416-19.

36. Jean Alfonse, *Le Voyages aventureux du capitaine Ian Alfonse, Sainctongeois* (Potiers, 1559, but probably published in two earlier, undated editions), fol. 29, does not mention any specific voyages along the coast, although he does describe it in general terms; compare Kohl's statement in *Discovery of the East Coast*, 419.

of French visits to the North American coast. In just three years (1556-1559) the French had staked a public, printed claim based on prior discovery and current voyaging. What other reports of voyages remained in manuscript, but known to the Spanish, is not known.

The stage was set for a showdown over rival France-Spanish claims to southeastern North America. That showdown began with the peace negotiations of 1559 and was to end only with the destruction of the French colony at Fort Caroline on the St. Johns River in September 1565. Echoes would continue to sound for a generation after that in the form of occasional French raids and trading voyages to the coast of *La Florida*.

The details of the negotiations of 1559 are not important for present purposes except for the failure of the negotiators to agree on the terms under which the French might enjoy some limited access to parts of the New World unoccupied by the Spanish. That failure, datable to the discussions of March 13, led to further negotiations over the summer in which the Spanish attempted to so define the "Indies" as to exclude the French from any destination near the Caribbean.<sup>37</sup> The Spanish proposed to do this by using a longitude and a latitude to define their area. The content of the negotiations suggests that they planned to divide North America, leaving the French the extreme north, while prohibiting them from sailing anywhere south of a line which would probably have been in the 40s, north latitude. When these additional discussions came up empty, Philip again acted to make his paper claims good by occupation.<sup>38</sup>

On December 18, 1559, Philip sent peremptory orders to the viceroy of New Spain and to Tristán de Luna to break off the colony on the Florida Gulf coast and to move without further

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37. Paul E. Hoffman, "Diplomacy and the Papal Donation," *The Americas*, XXX (October 1973), 166-69; Plentipotentiaries to the King, Cambrai, March 13, 1559, AGS, Estado 518, doc. 88.

38. An alternative and more traditional reading of the Spanish proposals is that they would have prohibited French voyages west of a given longitude and south of a given latitude, thereby excluding the French from all of the New World. My inference of a proposed division of North America is based on the explorers named by the Council of the Indies when it advised the king on the basis for his claim, see Consulta of Council of Indies, June 18, 1565, AGS, Estado K1504, No. 19b; for a discussion of the diplomacy of this question, see Hoffman, "Diplomacy and the Papal Donation," 174.

delay to occupy the area of the Point of Santa Elena. Other orders issued at the same time cautioned governors in the Caribbean not to allow French traders to try to make use of the 1559 treaty's vague general language permitting trade with Spain as a pretext for trade in the Caribbean.<sup>39</sup> Tough measures to defend Spanish claims were now the order of the day.

The king's order resulted in the voyage of Angel de Villafañe to a river which he labeled the "River of Santa Elena" at about 33° North, and to another he called the "Jordan River." In both cases Villafañe was in the wrong place, for the Edisto is not the River of Santa Elena nor is the Cape Fear River the Jordan. The consequences of Villafañe's errors were considerable, not only in his own time but even more for modern writers who have tried to use his data to understand the Ayllon voyages.<sup>40</sup>

After losing three of his four ships in storms, Villafañe turned back to the Antilles. There, at Monte Cristi, Española, on July 9, 1561, he had his notary pen a report on what he had done and seen.<sup>41</sup> The gist of this report was picked up by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, then the captain-general of the New Spain convoy, who relayed it to the king with the opinion that "it is not convenient to settle the coast of that land of Florida nor supply it from New Spain and that on the Point of Santa Elena [note the shift from Villafañe's River of Santa Elena] there is nothing to help with the settlement because it is not a port but a river of little water and even if there were a good port, because of the currents which are there, it would be difficult to sail in and out."<sup>42</sup> To confirm this opinion, Philip sent an order to the viceroy of New Spain to convoke a meeting of Villafañe, his pilots, and surviving captains and get their opinions. They agreed with the substance of Menéndez's pessimistic report.<sup>43</sup>

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39. Priestley, *Luna Papers*, I, xlvi, and II, 16; Hoffman, "Diplomacy and the Papal Donation," 169.

40. Paulino Castañeda Delgado, *Alonso de Chaves y el libro IV de Su Espejo de Navegantes* (Madrid, 1977), 124, can be used to correct these errors.

41. "Relación," Monte Cristi, July 9, 1561, AGI, Patronato 19, R. 11.

42. King to Viceroy of Mexico, Madrid, September 23, 1561, AGI, Patronato 19, R. 12.

43. Report of a meeting, Mexico City, March 3, 1562, AGI, Patronato 19, R. 12. This conclusion and report probably explain why Philip decided that future colonies in Florida should be paid for by private contractors rather than the crown. See Eugene Lyon, *The Enterprize of Florida: Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the Spanish Conquest of 1565-1568* (Gainesville, 1976), 22.

The river and Point of Santa Elena must have seemed safe from French intrusion.

The next development was the arrival from Paris in early 1562 of the news that the French were planning a colony somewhere between the Cape of Florida and Norembega (an Indian town on the Penobscot River in Maine) at a site supposedly discovered in 1539 by Vicente Tiran and Grangean Bucier, sailing in the ship, *Dauphin*.<sup>44</sup> This voyage is otherwise unrecorded, but may be a confusion of various voyages, especially that of the "Great Captain" of 1539, as published by Ramusio. In any case, the plans in 1562 were for the first voyage of Jean Ribault.

Ribault's voyage carried him along the coast of North America from just south of the mouth of the St. Johns River to somewhere above modern Santa Helena Sound. Exploring each estuary, he finally arrived at modern Port Royal Sound. Impressed by its size and apparent richness, and perhaps by the fact that it was at about the latitude of the Point of Santa Elena given by Gómara, he concluded that he had found the Jordan River.<sup>45</sup> Upon his return to Europe, Ribault was captured by the English and had to publish his report in London. In the published version he states (concerning Port Royal) "this is the river Jordayne in myne oppynion, wherof so muche hathe byn spoken, which is verry faire, and the cuntrye good and of grete consequence, both for their eassy habitation and also for many other things which shuld be to long to wrytt."<sup>46</sup> As if this is not confirmation enough of his knowledge of the Chicora Legend and the value he placed on finding the Jordan River, the manuscript version of the report tells us that he had inquired after "Chicore" while still at the St. Marys River, well to the south.<sup>47</sup> The Jordan and Chicora were clearly objectives of his voyage.

When and how the Chicora Legend became known to Jean Ribault and his backers cannot be determined with precision,

44. Ambassador to King, Paris, December 15, 1561, AGS, Estado 1495, No. 99; for further detail of what the Spanish learned in Paris, see Hoffman, "Diplomacy and the Papal Donation," 170-71.

45. René Goulaine de Laudonnière, *L'histoire Notable de la Florida*. . . . (London, 1586; facsimile ed., Lyon, 1946), fols. 16-17.

46. Jean Ribault, *The Whole and True Discouerye of Terra Florida. A Facsimile Reprint of the London Edition of 1563 together with a Transcript of the English Version in the British Museum* (DeLand, 1927), 94.

47. *Ibid.*, 86.

although the evidence points to Gómara as his principal source. Martyr's, Oviedo's, and Gómara's works could have reached France within a few years of their publications in 1530, 1535, and 1552, respectively. Further, the cartographic record of the explorations sponsored by Ayllon had been incorporated into the maps of the Dieppe School by the late 1530s. Thus, at least as early as the late 1530s, the French could have been aware of Chicora and of the Jordan River, but not necessarily that the former was located on the latter, for neither Martyr nor the maps indicate this fact. Oviedo's reference to Ayllon mentioned neither Chicora nor the Jordan. Thus, for the French to have learned the location of Chicora before the publication of Gómara's work would mean that they had an oral or manuscript source. No manuscript sources are known. The one possible oral contract in the late 1520s produced no result.<sup>48</sup> In short, there seems to be no pre-Gómara source for French knowledge of the full Chicora Legend.

Whatever the source of Ribault's knowledge of Chicora and the Jordan, it is appropriate that he should have sought them. Historians have generally agreed that one of Admiral Gaspard de Coligny's objectives in sending out Ribault and René de Laudonnière was to found colonies of settlement and refuge for the Huguenots, then persecuted in France and shortly to begin the civil wars which lasted until the publication of the Edict of Nantes in 1598. The land of milk and honey described in the Chicora Legend, as per Martyr and Gómara, would have made an ideal location for a colony. Ribault's interest in this place, whose location was not known with certainty, his trumpeting of his apparent finding of it in his report, and his decision to leave a colony there (motivated by other factors as well) attest to his estimation of the site for purposes of settlement. These facts ought to be used to discount the testimony of the boy, Guilliam Rouffi, who told his Spanish captors in 1564, or so they said, that the settlement at Charlesfort had as its sole purpose the creation of a base for raiding Spanish shipping in

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48. The contact was with Antonio de Montesinos, OFM, who had been on the expedition of 1526. In 1528 he visited with the Constable of Castile at Verlanga, where the French princes and their courts were being held under the terms of the Treaty of Madrid of 1525, AGS, Estado K 1643, No. 91.

the Caribbean.<sup>49</sup> That may have been a subsidiary purpose, but Ribault could have chosen several other harbors much closer to the Caribbean, if that was his primary purpose. Instead, he went steadily northward until he found what he believed was Ayllon's Jordan and the rich land of Chicora. Settlement, not plunder, was his primary objective; for that, Chicora was the place to seek. The legend had claimed another victim.

By late February 1563 the details of the settlement Ribault had left at the Point of Santa Elena were known in Madrid. Its location was said to be north of 30° North. Pillars had been left at 29° and 30° North.<sup>50</sup> This news formed the basis for two related actions by the Spanish. Philip sent a letter to the governor of Cuba instructing him to send an armed scouting party to seek out, and, if possible, remove the pillars and the French colony. At the same time, the crown applied pressure to the contractor who had agreed earlier to take a Spanish expedition to settle the area. This man was Lucas Vázquez de Ayllon, the Younger, son of the first Lucas. He had signed his contract on February 28, 1562.<sup>51</sup>

Hernando Manrique de Rojas duly sailed from Cuba to Santa Helena Sound and recovered Rouffi and one of the columns (at Port Royal Sound), and destroyed the abandoned French post.<sup>52</sup> Vázquez de Ayllon, the Younger, sailed for Florida after experiencing difficulties clearing his followers through the red tape of getting immigration licenses from the Casa de Contratación. But he got no further than Santo Domingo, where the expedition broke up in recriminations and lawsuits as the expeditioners tried to recover money they had given their leader for passage and food.<sup>53</sup> Ayllon died shortly afterwards.

Because of Manrique de Rojas's success and French difficulties

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49. Lucy L. Wenhold, trans., "Manrique de Rojas' Report on French Settlement in Florida, 1564," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXVIII (July 1959), 57-60; for an example of the overemphasis on Rouffi's testimony, see Lowery, *Spanish Settlements*, II, 29-31.

50. Ambassador to King, Paris, January 25, 1563, AGS, Estado K 1500, No. 29 and No. 30.

51. Wenhold, "Manrique de Rojas' Report," 45. The original of this cedula is not copied into the Manrique de Rojas report, nor has it been found in the Archives of the Indies; contract in AGI, Contratación 3307, Bk. of Florida, fols. 143-49.

52. Wenhold, "Manrique de Rojas' Report," 45-62.

53. King to Casa, June 27, 1563, AGI, Contratación 5220; testimony in AGI, Justicia 879, No. 3, pieza 2, fols. 6vto, 10vto, 12, 15; see Lyon, *Enterprise of Florida*, 36.

at Port Royal, Santa Elena was again safe. Indeed the problems experienced by the men who had remained at Charlesfort directly influenced the decision made by Laudonnière in 1564 to settle on the St. Johns River (River of May).<sup>54</sup>

Laudonnière's settlement and its troubles prepared the way for the Spanish counter attack which was delivered from St. Augustine by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés in 1565. Deserters from Fort Caroline raided in the Antilles, were caught, confessed their story and the location of the fort, and so gave the Spanish the information they needed. Menéndez's contract for settlement—motivated by hope of personal gain and a desire to try to find his son—was swiftly amended once this news was known in Madrid. The crown was brought into the contract as a partner in conquest and settlement, at least until the French should be expelled.<sup>55</sup>

When Menéndez was negotiating his contract, he made it clear that an area he hoped to explore and settle lay around St. Mary's Bay, probably the modern Chesapeake Bay. He continued to hold to that aim into the early months of 1566, and finally managed to get an exploring party off towards the bay in the fall of that year.<sup>56</sup> However, by then he was already bound to maintaining St. Augustine and the new settlement at Port Royal Sound, grandiloquently but temporarily named the City of the Holy Savior (San Salvador) of the Point of Santa Elena. The City of the Holy Savior, or as it was soon more commonly called, Santa Elena, was forced upon him by the king's concern to hold that tantalizing, legendary place. Financial necessity, brought on in large part by the loss of his ship, *San Pelayo*, and some of the equipment he had obtained on credit for the expedition, compelled him to show that he had complied with his contract to the extent of setting up two towns, putting some population

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54. Laudonnière, *Histoire Notable de la Florida*, fols. 43-44.

55. Lyon, *Enterprise of Florida*, 38-76, and later chapters, is the most recent account, while Lowery, *Spanish Settlements*, II, 42-207, is the older standard account now superceded in many details by Lyon's work.

56. Compare "Memorial" of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, [1565], in Eugenio Ruidiáz y Caraviá, comp., *La Florida: su conquista y colonización por Pedro Menéndez de Avilés*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1893), II, 320-26, and his letters to the king from Havana, December 28, 1565, and January 30, 1566, in AGI, Santo Domingo 231 (hereinafter SD); for the expedition in the fall see Louis Andre Vignerat, "A Spanish Discovery of North Carolina in 1566," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XLVI (October 1969), 398-414.

ashore, and generally trying to carry out its terms before it expired in 1568. Apparently making the best of his situation, which was not what he had hoped for when he negotiated the contract, he began to work out from under his obligations as adelantado by foisting off on the crown part of the cost of maintaining the settlements created in 1565 and early 1566.<sup>57</sup> Faced in 1567 with having Santa Elena and St. Augustine abandoned if he did not pay some of the bills, Philip II renewed the contract in 1568 and provided money to pay a 150-man garrison in Florida. In addition, there were possibilities for personal gain for Menéndez from various illegal, semi-legal, and legal activities connected with the new Indies fleet, built by him in 1567 under royal orders for the purpose of sweeping the Caribbean of the French corsairs who had begun to appear there coincident with Laudonnière's colony.<sup>58</sup>

Menéndez never abandoned his interest in the Chesapeake, but the best that he could do was to try to build up Santa Elena during the early 1570s while sending a Jesuit mission to Jacán to prepare the way for an eventual Spanish colony.<sup>59</sup> The evi-

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57. The evidence on this point is indirect and dates from after the renewal of the contract. One device was to mix the king's goods with Menéndez de Avilés's personal trade, Hernán Perez to Crown, November 28, 1567, AGI, SD 71, bk. 1, fols. 367-367vto. On the other hand, Menéndez claimed that he spent much of his own wealth on behalf of the king's soldiers and eventually sued for collection from them, AGI, Justicia 901, No. 2. Further, in the final accounting between himself and the king for the period of the first contract Menéndez made it clear that the king was responsible for most of the expenses, AGI, Justicia 1001, No. 4, R. 2, fols. 37-37vto. The king accepted that claim to some degree because it proved impossible to disentangle the records kept in Florida. That some of Menéndez's claims were probably fraudulent is suggested by the testimony of Diego de Valle, notary of Florida, who refused to go along with at least one demand for falsified receipts (Confession, of Diego de Valle, Madrid, May 17, 1572, AGI, Justicia 1160; No. 13, fols. 5-11). In short, there is considerable evidence that Menéndez and his associates conspired to make the crown pay as much of the bill for Florida as possible, and that they succeeded to some degree.
58. There is no detailed history of the renewal of the contract nor of the king's reasons for doing so. The order creating the subsidy was dated July 15, 1568, and is noted in AGI, Contaduría 548, No. 8, R. 5, fol. 2; see also Lyon, *Enterprise of Florida*, 207; for example of the illegal trade in hides by the Indies Fleet, see suits in AGI, Justicia 892, No. 4, Justicia 896, No. 2, and Justicia 904, No. 1. This aspect of Menéndez de Avilés's career awaits further study.
59. Part of the buildup was to send Menéndez's wife, María de Solís, to Santa Elena. Fragmentary information about her trip to and residence there is found in "Will of María de Solís," Oviedo, October 19, 1570. Archivo de Protocolos, Oviedo, Legajo 57, cuaderno 1 (Alonso de Heredia,

dence is mixed, but it appears that his heart was no longer in Florida, whatever his pious, and since oft-repeated sentiments in the days just before his death at Santander in September 1574.<sup>60</sup> Forced to maintain an establishment at Santa Elena, which he knew was not the golden Eden of the Chicora Legend, he could not realize his dream of empire.

In the years between Menéndez's death and the final abandonment of Santa Elena in 1587, the northern post was a kind of holding operation, a visible symbol of Philip's claim. Only a few of its residents thought it had much potential for development.<sup>61</sup> The force of the Chicora Legend was dead so far as the Spanish were concerned. Its subsequent career among them was literary, not one of inspiring men to action. Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas retold the story in 1601 of Ayllon's colony, with some additions which further confused the story. A long silence followed until the eighteenth century when Arredondo and Barcía retold the story of the early Spanish settlements in an attempt to bolster Spanish claims to Georgia.<sup>62</sup> By then, however, the legend enshrined by Martyr could hardly be detected among the details of the narrative.

Among the French the legend seems to have died out somewhat later than among the Spanish. Frenchmen still visited the coast around Spanish Santa Elena to trade with the Indians, raid the Spanish, and perhaps seek the fabled Jordan River.<sup>63</sup> Little

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notary); AGI, Justicia 817, No. 5, pieza 3, fols. 19-20; Ruidiaz, *La Florida*, II, 519; Jeannette T. Connor, ed. and trans., *Colonial Records of Spanish Florida; Letters and Reports of Governors and Secular Persons*. . . ., 2 vols. (DeLand, 1925-1930), I, 131. It is not known when she returned to Asturias. The Jacán mission is covered in detail in C. M. Lewis and A. J. Loomie, *The Spanish Jesuit Mission in Virginia, 1570-1572* (Chapel Hill, 1953).

60. Menéndez de Avilés to Menéndez Marques, Santander, September 8, 1574, Ruidiaz, *La Florida*, II, 288; see also Lowery, *Spanish Settlement*, II, 383.

61. Declarations of Gutierre de Miranda, Santa Elena, August 16, 1587, AGI, SD 231, No. 64, fols. 24-29vto.

62. Andrés Gonzales de Barcía Carballido y Zúñiga, *Ensayo cronológico para la Historia general de la Florida* (Madrid, 1723), see note 24 for the English translation; Antonio de Arredondo, *Arredondo's Historical Proof of Spain's Title to Georgia*, ed. Herbert E. Bolton (Berkeley, 1925). Arredondo's work was completed in 1742.

63. Examples are a ship the Spanish called *El Principe*, which coasted as far as Santa Elena before being wrecked in 1577, Menéndez Marques to King, Santa Elena, October 21, 1577, and St. Augustine, June 15, 1578, in Connor, *Colonial Records of Spanish Florida*, I, 264, 268, and II, 88-89; and various parties of French (and English) corsairs on the Georgia-South Carolina coast in 1580, *Relación*, n.d., in *ibid.*, II, 322.

is known about the motives of these voyages, although one can be reasonably sure that the French did not believe that Port Royal was the Jordan River, at least not if they had had any contact with René de Laudonnière, who had concluded that Ribault was mistaken. Laudonnière's and Le Moyne's accounts of the French colonies in Florida were the last important sixteenth-century French reference to the Chicora Legend. Published in 1587 at the request of Richard Hakluyt, the Younger, Laudonnière's *Histoire Notable de la Floride* contained a discussion of Ribault's mistake in 1562, and of the riches the legend associated with the Jordan River.<sup>64</sup> But Laudonnière's account also suggests that the French in the 1564 Florida colony had not lost interest in the Jordan. Rather, they seem to have had other priorities, especially finding a place where they stood a better chance of living through the winter on Indian grain stores than had been the experience of the men at Charlesfort. Le Moyne's chief contribution to the story of the legend was his map, which places Chicora on the Jordan River, and the Jordan well to the north of Port Royal Sound.<sup>65</sup> Between them, Laudonnière and Le Moyne had clarified Gómara's cryptic reference to the Point of Santa Elena and the Jordan River forming "a land," but they left Chicora on the map where, like Norembega further to the north, it remained, a chimera embodying men's hopes and will to believe that there was unlimited abundance in the New World.

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64. Laudonnière, *Histoire Notable de la Florida*.

65. Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, *Brevis narratio eorum quae in Florida Americae* (Frankfurt, 1591); a modern translation with full illustrations is Stefan Lorant, ed., *The New World: The First Pictures of America* (New York, 1946), the map is 34-35.