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AFRICAN RELIGIOUS INTEGRATION IN FLORIDA DURING THE FIRST SPANISH PERIOD

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the unique conditions for African-descended slaves in St. Augustine, Florida, during the First Spanish Period. St. Augustine was an important garrison at a remote point in the Spanish Empire at the edge of a hostile frontier. As such, economics were less a priority than defense. Slaves, therefore, received different treatment here than in English colonies or even other Spanish colonies. Due to the threat of Protestantism, religious adherence was more important as a test of loyalty than ethnicity and slaves and freed-people were able to integrate better than in other Spanish holdings.

In order to explore this integration, the meticulous records of the St. Augustine clergy are used. Infant baptism rates are used to show the influence of Spanish culture as well as at least a semblance of adherence on the part of African-descended people. The baptism of adults, meanwhile, and the role of the godparent are examined to show integration and the complex nature of this unique religious phenomenon.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

February 1st, 1736 was a confusing day for little Rosalia. The young girl, at six years old, watched with large brown eyes while a strange man in black waved pale hands over her mother's prostrate form. Rosalia stood to the side a bit, alongside the governor of St. Augustine, who watched the proceeding with interest. Somewhere in the house, an infant wailed: it was Rosalia's new sister, Maria. The birth had not gone well. The grave holy man sprinkled water onto Mariana's already-moist face. He said an oath and a prayer, his voice mingling with the governor's, and then he anointed Mariana's head with oil. Perhaps when this was done, the Spaniards breathed a sigh of relief. Rosalia hoped it meant her mother would be well.

It is uncertain if Mariana lived to see her daughters grow up. The story of that day in 1736 unfolds in the baptismal records of St. Augustine, a mere dozen lines starkly detailing what must have been for this family a terrible ordeal. The words, simple and straightforward, explain how Mariana was baptized in necessity on February 1st because her life was in danger. Her daughter, Maria, was born the same day. It might seem odd to some that Mariana had not received this basic Catholic rite until she was old enough to have her own children, but it was not. Mariana was a slave, either born in Africa or descended from those that were. The Governor, Don Francisco del Moral, was Mariana's master. What's more, she was a slave that had fled the English in Carolina to serve the Spaniards in St. Augustine. She had traded one form of bondage for another. She may even have chanced the risky flight over the waves or through the wilderness with little Rosalia in tow.

Mariana was just one of many that fled the English colonies to try their luck in La Florida. Obviously, slavery in St. Augustine was different from slavery in the Carolinas. As one

looks closer, however, it becomes apparent that slavery in St. Augustine was not simply different from English colonies, it was also different from slavery in other Spanish possessions.

In a more perfect world, slavery would not have existed. Given a choice between freedom and slavery, it is obvious what most people would pick. The world of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries was far from perfect, however. African slaves and their descendants were acutely aware of this. The seemingly simple choice between freedom and bondage was not always so simple. For those who sought complete autonomy, freedom in the New World often meant trying to survive in an unforgiving alien wilderness far from home while simultaneously dodging re-enslavement.

It is important to bear this in mind when studying slavery in the First Spanish Period of Florida. It goes without saying that slavery is and was wrong. It is naïve though, and, above all, damaging to scholarship, not to recognize that bondage came in degrees. Africans and their descendants in the New World were certainly aware of this fact and more than willing to exploit it.

This thesis, on a most basic level, examines one of the many layers of slavery. Lest the reader forget, slaves in St. Augustine were quite aware of their bondage. St. Augustine has the dubious honor of being one of the earliest European colonies in North America that had to chase and retrieve runaway slaves.¹ Obviously, not all slaves were happy there. For some reason, however, many slaves preferred bondage in Spanish Florida over bondage in English colonies to the north. Eventually, the Spanish began to offer more than just a preferable form of bondage. After some legal wrangling, freedom was offered to refugees from English colonies, thereby

¹ This is actually the first recorded instance in the continental United States. For more information, see Susan Richbourg Parker's "1603—Slaves Flee St. Augustine," in *El Escrivano*, Vol. 41, 2004.

reconciling this exodus with modern sensibilities. Prior to this, however, it is undeniable that slaves fled Carolina slavery for Florida slavery.

The focus of this thesis, therefore, is on some of La Florida's (specifically St. Augustine's) unique qualities that somehow enticed slaves to consider relocation. It is obvious that the slaves were playing the European powers off of one another. If a slave fled to an Indian village, the escape might end with a raid on the village and re-enslavement. If a slave fled behind the stout walls of the Castillo de San Marcos, however, the English would have a harder time retrieving them. This understanding is implicit in the study. It is difficult, however, to gauge the motivations, feelings, and thoughts of the slaves. This thesis, therefore, will not go too far in looking at motives. The goal is instead to analyze the integration of slaves and freed-people into Spanish Florida society. This integration, I will argue, was largely due to the Catholic Church and its treatment of Africans and their descendants. As such, this study is an analysis of the process of integration through Church records and seeks to understand the relationship between the Church and its black parishioners. It is implicit that slaves would prefer integration and religious recognition in St. Augustine over slavery in the Carolinas. Carolina fugitives were not the only people of African descent in St. Augustine, however. The refugee slaves from English holdings instead represent evidence that bondage and life in St. Augustine was different from bondage and life elsewhere.

This thesis is not a social history. The term 'integration' is central to my treatment of the relationships studied. Africans and their descendants definitely had an influence in how St. Augustine developed. This thesis, however, does not exclusively study that influence. It is an examination of the assimilation process through the Church. In some ways, it will appear similar to creolization scholarship. This thesis, though, is not a racial or an ethnic history. As someone

who has studied religion, I feel I can best contribute to the field by examining colonial religion. There is a wealth of information available (much of it from other parts of the Spanish Empire) for the analysis of racial structures. This thesis will certainly deal with these issues, in that it's goals are closely related to topics of race and slavery. The focus, however, is on the Catholic Church and its treatment of African-descended peoples, which often defied standard racial concepts of the period. It is vital to remember, however, that this thesis was only possible because Church records noted race and ethnicity and therefore gave credence to their importance. The Catholic Church in St. Augustine was by no means a monument to racial equality.

This thesis has essentially three parts. The first portion is a review of several different literatures. Obviously, the literature of Spanish Florida was consulted. This alone, however, would not have warranted an entire chapter. Other fields are important to the discussion and need to be included in order to flesh out the background. It would not have been feasible to write a complete analysis of African religious primary sources, so I have looked into the considerable amount of scholarship available and attempted to find certain trends or patterns. Similarly, I have also looked at the literature concerning the continuation of African religion in the New World. Originally, I wanted to examine African religion among slaves in St. Augustine. Records are incomplete, however, so it would be hard to ascertain what it was like. What's more, the slaves were not in the isolated rural conditions found in the rest of the Caribbean. They mostly lived in a small town, surrounded by Spaniards that took an active interest in their religious lives. Consequently, it is doubtful that the slaves in St. Augustine had a very robust African religion. It is probable that slaves in such a close knit environment would participate in the Church like any other member of the colony. This small, urban environment would have allowed priests direct access to the slaves, a practice that would not have been encouraged or

even feasible in the massive plantations of Cuba. African religious beliefs, however, must have exerted some influence over the slaves even if they no longer practiced them. For this reason, African religion will be discussed, largely to explain why the transition into Catholicism might not have been so extreme. It is important to note that this thesis is *not* an attempt to treat African religion as a forerunner that served only to prepare Africans for Catholicism.

The second portion of the thesis deals with the background of St. Augustine and Florida. This background shaped the city and the way in which her inhabitants would deal with each other. Although religion is the focus, this thesis will touch on other factors that exerted their influence as well, especially St. Augustine's role as a remote military garrison on a hostile frontier. This chapter is my contribution to a long and vibrant historiography going back to Herbert Eugene Bolton. The importance of St. Augustine's status as a garrison on a hostile religious and military border has a long history in scholarship. It is also important to place St. Augustine and its treatment of slaves in the wider diplomatic-military struggle between the various European powers in the New World.

The last part of this thesis consists of two chapters that will look at the parish records of St. Augustine. These records contain a beautiful story that spans over a century and gives us a glimpse into the lives of thousands of people of every race and class in the city. For my purposes, they run unbroken from a little after the founding in 1564 to the surrender of 1763 (Catholic priests would remain active in St. Augustine following the exodus, so the records actually flow into the modern era). The baptismal records are an excellent way to follow the story of St. Augustine's African-descended citizens. For this purpose, they begin in 1606, with the baptism of baby Agustin, quite likely the continental United States' first black boy that was baptized Catholic. The priests of this parish kept meticulous notes that included the race and

status of the child, parents, and sponsors. Unfortunately, the earliest priests kept rather abbreviated records, but as the texts move into the eighteenth century, fascinating facts such as age, nation of origin, and other statistics are recorded, offering a detailed look at the racial mixture of the colony. Burial and marriage records do not extend as far back and do not offer as much detail, but are valuable nonetheless, appearing in the 1700s as the colony reached its population zenith.

The third chapter is a mostly quantitative analysis of infant baptism rates. To my knowledge, no other scholar has performed an analysis of this data. There has been, however, extensive use of the baptismal records to estimate population figures. In many ways, therefore, the third chapter of this thesis follows the footsteps of John Dunkle, who used these records to calculate the size and, to an extent, racial makeup of St. Augustine.

The fourth chapter is perhaps the most important. It is a qualitative analysis of baptismal records that show relationships between those of African and European descent. As such, it is not narrowed to simply black, white, adult, or infant baptisms, but looks across the spectrum in an attempt to reconstruct something of a dialogue between St. Augustine's religious participants. As such, it is most similar to Jane Landers' work on Africans in Spanish Florida. Landers, however, spent a great deal of time analyzing baptisms in the Second Spanish Period, whereas my work is entirely from the First Spanish Period. The dialogue between African and Spaniard in St. Augustine, due to the nature of the sources, would definitely appear to be rather one-sided. As one looks deeper into the source material, however, it is possible to see the presence of active participants of African descent in St. Augustine's religious life.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORIOGRAPHY OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS INTERACTION IN FLORIDA

The religious dialogue between Africans and Spaniards in Florida has not received much attention from scholars. There have been several attempts to look at slaves in Florida, but most of these attempts included only a chapter or a short reference to the religious interaction of the period. This does not mean religion has been neglected in the study of wider Spanish Florida, however. Quite the opposite is true. The Spanish-Indian religious discussion has received much attention from scholars, although at least one scholar also studied the internal debates of Spanish Catholicism. This scholarship creates a background for the issues involved as well as demonstrates a pattern in Spanish colonialism and religious practices in Florida.

The study of Spanish Florida and its religious systems has a long and broad historiography. This is partly because the missionization efforts of the Spanish can be seen in a political as well as a socio-religious context. Because of this, analysis of the religious systems in colonial Florida has rightly been seen as vital to understanding the development of society in Spanish Florida.

Some of the earliest analyses of religious interaction during the Spanish period in Florida was faith-driven scholarship. John Gilmary Shea wrote his *Catholic Missions Among the Indian Tribes of the United States* in 1855, dedicating it to Pope Pius IX. He wrote it largely to balance out earlier works concerning Spanish settlement, which he said “ignored or vilified”² the role of Catholics. The religious tone of his work is plain in his narrative: “The discovery of America,

² John Gilmary Shea, *Catholic Missions Among the Indian Tribes of the United States*, New York: Arno Press, 1969: 15.

like every other event in the history of the world, had, in the designs of God, the great object of the salvation of mankind”³ he informed his readers.

His style of history, like the period he hailed from, mostly relied on analysis of decisions made by important men. He considered Pedro Melendez de Aviles to be vital to the colonization of Florida, and considered his death, which prevented his command of the Spanish Armada against the British, a singularly horrible blow to colonization and evangelical efforts in Florida and elsewhere.⁴ Although this was Shea’s primary mode of scholarship, his work also appears rather forward-thinking at times.

He often detailed cultural tensions between the Spanish and Indians. He was able to describe the influence of culture on history in addition to the traditional analysis of important figures. Unfortunately, Shea was more concerned with the missionization process as it was aimed at natives rather than Africans in Florida. Along the cultural thread, he points out one of the key difficulties that would develop between the missionaries and their converts: polygamy. He also suggests that the failure of the earliest missions at Guale was due to the semi-nomadic lifestyles of the Indians in this area, which, like the discussion of culture clashes, would be repeated by Twentieth Century historians. The eventual success of Spanish colonization, he argued, would come about because of Franciscan missions that won over the hostile natives, paving the way for Spanish colonization.⁵

In many ways, Shea anticipated the Hispanophilic sentiments that would develop later, namely in Herbert Eugene Bolton and Michael Gannon, both of whom would write in the 1900s. Shea considered the Spanish colonization process to be much kinder than the English. To

³ Ibid., 19.

⁴ Ibid., 66.

⁵ Ibid., 59, 64, 67-70, 72.

cement his argument, he pointed out that at the time he was writing, none of the original indigenous peoples were still around where the English had settled, whereas many ethnicities that had existed upon the arrival of the Spanish or French were still there.⁶

Bolton was more guarded in his enthusiasm for Spain, but he nonetheless gave attention to the ‘ignored and vilified’ missionaries. Writing in 1921, Bolton was a counterweight to Frederick Jackson’s Frontier Thesis. He emphasized the Spanish influence in America, and, in so doing, discussed the role of Catholic missions in colonial development. Bolton was largely writing in response to Frederick Jackson Turner’s Frontier Thesis and its inherent argument for Anglo-American exceptionalism. Like many other historians of his era, Bolton focused on events and famous people to make his arguments concerning history. He discussed in detail Philip II, as well as Phillip’s father, Charles V, who wanted “a world all Spanish and all Catholic.” Protestantism, Bolton argued, was a personal affront to Charles V, who had been Holy Roman Emperor and thus nominally ruler over the territories where Martin Luther was active. Bolton was far more concerned with the personalities of important figures and diplomatic implications than cultural considerations. He discussed the destruction of Fort Caroline and her Huguenots in a purely military fashion, and describes how the Spanish monarchy had a hand to play in the St. Bartholomew Day massacre of the Huguenots in France. He does not, however, thoroughly discuss the religious tensions or motivations behind the Protestant-Catholic wars. He also does not discuss the Indian-Spanish conflict at the Guale mission in cultural terms, but instead lays the blame for the violence on Spanish dependence on Indian foodstuffs.⁷

⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁷ Herbert Eugene Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* Historians of the Frontier and American West, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1996: 128, 137, 159.

According to Bolton, activities in the Americas were mostly influenced by European events, particularly old hatreds between the European powers. He saw in the colonization of Florida an attempt by the Spanish to secure the routes of their treasure galleons against English and French pirates. The role of religion, therefore, was largely military: “Conversion of the natives,” Bolton informed his audience, “was an essential part of Menéndez’s scheme to pacify and hold the country.”⁸ Bolton identified a theme that would be repeated later, and for good reason: Spanish Catholicism was at once a religious system and a tool for imperial aspirations.

Writing some forty years later, Michael Gannon focused only on Florida (or what the Spanish deemed Florida at the time, which would go as far north as the Chesapeake and as far west as Texas). Gannon, however, seemed to write in Bolton’s shadow. In many ways, he was less constrained about praising the Spanish than Bolton, making him sound almost like Shea:

...there is enough information...to support the judgment that the Spanish mission system in Florida was the most heroic and successful humanitarian effort for the amelioration and spiritual development of backward peoples that the American nation has experienced.⁹

Gannon uplifted the Spanish to give them an important place in history while he simultaneously embraced the stereotypes of Indians employed by earlier historians. His tone was not like an author from 1967 when he discussed the Indians of Florida. Instead, his descriptions could have been from historians a generation or more earlier. He was, however, somewhat more aware of cultural and religious tensions than Bolton. Like Shea, he noted that the problem of polygamy was at the root of the violence at Guale, but describes this culture clash as a conflict

⁸ Ibid., 128-30, 134, 137-150, 153.

⁹ Michael Gannon, *The Cross in the Sand: The Early Catholic Church in Florida, 1513-1870*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1967: 37.

“between the savage and the Christian way of life.” He also made note of the failure of missions due to the semi-nomadic lifestyle of the Apalachees, calling it “the migratory nature of these primitive peoples.”¹⁰

Other than these few cultural notes, Gannon’s history relies on the actions of important figures, starting, of course, with Ponce de Leon. These men, in Gannon’s view, shaped the colonization of Florida. His optimism of their progress is palpable, describing the mission period in Chapter Four as a “golden age.”

Writing just before Gannon was William Sturtevant, who wrote a somewhat fairer account of Spanish-Indian relations. Sturtevant’s work, unlike Gannon, better reflects the new trends that had developed in the period he was writing. As with other ethnohistorians, Sturtevant was influenced by anthropology, easily seen in his work’s reliance on archaeological and linguistic evidence.¹¹ He sought, on some level, to give a voice to the Indians who had lacked any historical representation before this. This was not, however, his foremost goal. Sturtevant was analyzing the Spanish as well as the Indian side of the relationship. His work, therefore, was not a true ethnohistory. It was not written from the point of view of the indigenous peoples. This is perhaps partly because these sources are so scant. He did, however, focus on cultural and social changes instead of the actions of political or military figures.

His article discussed in particular the way in which Spanish influence altered the lifestyle of the various Indian groups. Like Shea and Gannon, he placed the blame for the conflict at Guale on theological or cultural discrepancies rather than economic. He also described how

¹⁰ Ibid., 40, 33.

¹¹ William Sturtevant, “Spanish-Indian Relations in Southeastern North America,” from *Ethnohistory*, Volume 9, Number 1 (Winter, 1962): for archaeological influence, see pg. 62 especially, for linguistics, see 50 & 53-4.

Spanish influence led to the alteration of Indian town planning, namely through centralization for easy access by Spanish religious authorities.¹²

Sturtevant, however, is something of an anomaly in the early historiography of Spanish Florida. Michael Scardaville, writing in 1985, bemoaned the general tack that this history had taken. He applauded the new direction of Borderlands scholars (though one should question if something written in 1921 was new!) and believed they had played an important foil to Turner:

Over the years, influenced by Bolton's missionary zeal, Borderlands historians have diligently attempted to offer a balanced view of Spain's contribution to the exploration settlement of the continent.

He tempered this praise with an indictment, however, that the writers of this history were generally behind the times:

I question whether emphasis on great men and events has given us a better understanding of the nature and evolution of the Hispanic American society in the United States.¹³

Spanish Florida history would not move forward, as Scardaville wanted, until the 1990s. In the study of Indian culture and agency, several works stand out: *The Apalachee Indians and Mission San Luis* and *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida*, both of which were published in 1998, and an earlier book called *The Spanish Missions of La Florida*, which had an important chapter entitled "St. Augustine and the Mission Frontier." These works analyze culture in Florida during the Spanish period, often detailing the Indian side of things and

¹² Ibid., 57, 64.

¹³ Michael Scardaville, "Approaches to the Study of Southeastern Borderlands," from *Spanish Borderlands Sources: The Idea of Spanish Borderlands*, edited by David Weber, New York: Garland Publishing, 1991: 352 & 357.

therefore demonstrating the conversion process in its entirety, giving the natives some degree of power.

The first written would be “St. Augustine and the Mission Frontier,” by Kathleen Deagan, who, working in the field of archaeology, tended to be ahead of historians in arguing that natives in Florida had a role in missionization. Published in 1993, Deagan’s work argued that Florida was different from other Spanish territories in that the Franciscans adapted to the Indian way of doing things rather than resorting to violence. She goes on to argue that it was of vital importance to look at the Indian side of the story:

It is thus relevant to our understanding of the mutuality of Spanish and Indian participation in colonial life in general to consider the nature and effects of the Indians’ active participation in both the organization of mission life and the evolution of frontier society in *La Florida*.¹⁴

This idea of native agency in the conversion process would be picked up by *The Apalachee Indians and Mission San Luis* and *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida*. The first, written by John Hann and Bonnie McEwan, dealt with the Apalachee and describes not only Apalachee religion and culture, but their transition into Spanish Christianity. The authors argue that the Apalachees converted only when it became obvious that the Spanish were going to stay (it should be remembered that it was Apalachees that revolted violently during early mission attempts). Hann and McEwan argue that epidemics led to a widespread belief that the traditional religion had failed and that it was time to move on. More importantly, the chiefs of the Apalachee had always legitimized their power through religion. It was the chiefs, therefore, that

¹⁴ Kathleen Deagan, “St. Augustine and the Mission Frontier,” from *The Spanish Missions of La Florida*, edited by Bonnie McEwan, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993: 88-9.

led the way for conversion when they decided that Christianity was better. In order to keep their place in their communities, the chiefs would need to tie themselves to the new religion in much the same way they had the old.¹⁵

The authors of *The Apalachee Indians and Mission San Luis* were largely writing an ethnohistory. Some might not consider it a ‘true’ ethnohistory. They used Spanish sources, but they also used archaeological evidence. A good example is their discussion of the Apalachee’s habit of burying material offerings with the dead. This habit continued after their conversion to the new Catholic faith, much as it had gone on before.¹⁶ This was also used to show that the Apalachees did not just accept the new religion, but blended it with their own.

John Worth makes a similar argument concerning the Timucuan. The Timucuan, according to Worth, made a conscious decision to convert. The chiefs did so to ally with Spain and thereby increase their own power. The Spanish gave them gifts for joining. Some, such as iron tools, had intrinsic value, while others, such as clothing, were a conspicuous way to show one’s alliance with Spain. The neighboring chiefdoms who had not allied themselves, meanwhile, watched their people emigrate to areas that had grown prosperous from Spain’s trade. This led even reluctant chiefs to become baptized and join with Spain, if only to compete with their enemies. Worth argued, then, that it was not the geographical closeness of an indigenous nation to Spain that determined if it joined, but rather the “regional politics” of the individual groups. Just as Hann and McEwan argued that Apalachee chiefs converted for power,

¹⁵ John Hann and Bonnie McEwan, *The Apalachee Indians and Mission San Luis*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998: 21, 23, 119-20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

Worth suggested that Timucuan chiefs wanted a friar in their village in order to give the appearance that the chief had direct access to Spain.¹⁷

The Franciscans that converted the Indians, therefore, used the Timucuan governmental mores to their advantage: “ultimately, regional aboriginal chiefdoms became Franciscan administrative districts known as mission provinces, largely paralleling native linguistic, social, and political division.” The conversion experience, as told by Worth, was not one of important battles with the French or the British, or martyred priests, but a give-and-take relationship between the Spanish and their Indian clients.

In his discussion of this conversion, Worth categorized what he (and other scholars of the twentieth century) called ‘missionization.’ This process had two steps. The first involved a chief or a close family member going to St. Augustine to give a “Rendering of Obedience” to the Spanish crown. This was a pledge from the chief to the governor, followed by gifts given from the governor on behalf of the king in Spain. The chief was then baptized. The second stage of missionization was the actual establishment of missions, which, as mentioned above, were built in important Timucuan villages and relied on the “preexisting political structure of local and regional chiefdoms.”¹⁸

Through the works of these scholars, a pattern emerges. In the Spanish missions and wider Spanish theology, there was a give-and-take nature to missionary efforts. This is not to say that these scholars are calling Spanish Catholic missionization a bastion of ecumenical understanding. Rather, trends in anthropology and history now seem to suggest that the process of Christianization was not a one-sided affair but a blending of cultural and religious practice. It

¹⁷ John Worth, *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida*, Vol. I, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998: 36-8, 42-3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

is important to recall this pattern when dealing with the African-Spanish religious dialogue that would develop in St. Augustine.

Borderlands history would similarly step forward in 1998 with an article by Patricia Wickman called “The Spanish Colonial Floridas.” While Hann, McEwan, and Worth dealt with the Timucuan and Apalachee in a way more consistent with ethnohistory from a decade or so earlier, Wickman called for Florida history to move beyond these things. She criticized the lack of gender analysis for the native cultures and made frequent use of DNA and archaeology in her argument.¹⁹

In her analysis of Spanish and Indian cultural interaction, she built on numerous trends from the preceding years. When discussing the Creeks, she referred to them as “Maskókî-speaking peoples of the Southeast” rather than the name the British gave them. She pointed out that from their cultural perspective, they had always lived in the Southeast United States, as seen in their creation myth, which explains why they were loath to give up their homeland (she does not, however, explain why a people whose creation myth had them born somewhere else would want to give up *their* land, adopted or no). This cultural analysis ended up agreeing with Shea and more recent historians in the topic of the Guale problems: Wickman agrees that polygamy was the point of contention.²⁰

When dealing with the Spanish, she briefly attempted social history, that is, by looking at the influence of regular people. She used as an example a tailor named Alonso de Olmos, and how a Spanish citizen in St. Augustine challenged a governor. The use of this one person, however, rather than the push of many people made this parallel the 1960s social history, where,

¹⁹ Patricia Wickman, “The Spanish Colonial Floridas,” from *New Views of Borderlands History*, edited by Robert Jackson, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998: 199.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 196-203, 214.

instead of looking at national leaders, local leaders were viewed. Similarly, Wickman, instead of analyzing the influence of laborers and craftsmen as a group, chose to analyze a man who, despite his status as a craftsman, wielded a certain degree of power over and above his fellow craftsmen.²¹

The scholars discussed above loom heavily in Wickman's work, though. She discussed Florida's status as a buffer zone against the French and British, though, unlike those before her, she did not credit any single monarch or general or admiral for this. To contrast the more optimistic Spanish Florida historians, she put quotation marks around "golden age" whenever she referred to the height of mission activity. She also chose to put 'territory' in quotation marks whenever she discussed the Spanish, implying that she did not believe the Spanish owned Florida. This, perhaps, reflects the new approach to Borderlands history: the Spanish Borderlands were more than a buffer to the French or English, they were a Borderlands with the natives, who had their own degree of power.

While much attention was paid to the Timucuan and Apalachee, less attention has been paid to the black population of Spanish Florida—slave or free. In 1995, Robert Hall's article "African Religious Retentions in Florida" was published in *The African American Heritage of Florida*. Hall's analysis is cultural rather than empowering, and does not necessarily argue that the retention of culture was somehow an act of defiance. Instead, he took a straightforward look at various ways in which African folk traditions survived in the New World. He discussed how certain dances and songs were a continuation of African traditions, transposed into Christianity. For evidence of African cultural survival, he pointed out that during the British period, many of the names chosen by slaves bore similarities to names in Africa. The survival of African culture,

²¹ Ibid., 210-1.

however, could in his opinion be traced to religious influence, as religion was “the matrix of nineteenth-century African American life and the centerpiece of African cultural influences in Florida.”²²

Jane Landers, writing in 1999, would pick up the discussion of black life in Florida and focus on the Spanish period. Her work, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, was in step with wider trends of the 1990s. She focused on African influence and black culture, but also found the time to devote a chapter to black women and their role in the colony.

Perhaps because of the dearth of sources, though, Landers focused on the role of Catholicism in black life. She acknowledged that in other areas, such as Cuba, fraternal organizations, called *cabildos de nacion*, often fostered the survival of African cultural practices, given that they were organized by ethnicity (or, in the terms of the period, by *nacion*). St. Augustine, however, lacked cabildos, so Landers only suggested that there may have been similar existing systems that were more informal.

As with most writers of the Spanish period, Landers spent some time discussing the rivalry between Protestants and Catholics. It was a competition with “both territories and souls at stake,” emphasizing how religion was as much a political as a theological device. Unlike other writers, she applied this important facet to the everyday lives of black slaves and how the Spanish treated them. The Spanish, Landers argued, saw conversion to Catholicism (and a removal of African tendencies) as a way to reinforce the status quo and thereby reduce any chance of revolt. When Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, or Fort Mose, was founded, the locals built a chapel and had a Franciscan present for their spiritual needs. This is interesting,

²² Robert Hall, “African Religious Retentions in Florida,” from *The African American Heritage of Florida*, edited by David R. Colburn and Jane L. Landers, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995: 43.

given that secular clergy were used in St. Augustine. Landers suggested that slaves were being converted into Catholicism and Spanish culture in much the same way that the Indians were. In the Carolinas, Protestantism ruled, and many Carolinian slaves made their way to St. Augustine. The Spanish crown actually made it policy that escaped slaves should be taken in and given religious instruction. It was at the same time, however, that some locals worried that the fugitives might infect the Spanish blacks with heretical impulses.²³

Landers also studied baptisms during the Second Spanish period. Just as the Indian scholars mentioned earlier argued that the conversion of indigenous people had political consequences, she suggests that the conversion of slaves might have, too. Following the British occupation, there were a number of English-speaking, Protestant citizens in Florida. More adult blacks were baptized than adult whites, however. According to Landers, this must have signified that escaped slaves were more willing to embrace Catholicism in an effort to become more like the Spanish and cement their place in Florida society.²⁴

In 2001, the common Spanish folk in Florida would be looked at, to a degree, by Robert Kapitzke. Kapitzke was writing from a religious studies background,²⁵ so his emphasis was naturally on the role religion played in colonial life. He argued that Catholicism was part of everyday life in St. Augustine. The religion of the Spaniards, therefore, was a controlling force in the continued survival of St. Augustine society. In looking at the importance of religion,

²³ Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999: 107-8, 110-1, 113.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁵ Amy Bushnell, "Borderland or Border-Sea? Placing Early Florida," from *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 3, (July 2003).

Kapitzke analyzed the parish priests of St. Augustine, who wielded an inordinate amount of power for their station, given the fact that their bishop was in distant Cuba and seldom visited.²⁶

As with Wickman, though, Kapitzke falls short of social history or a true break from the older paradigm of looking at influential men. While he avoided analyzing the governor of St. Augustine or the Bishop in Cuba, he nonetheless analyzed individual influential people. Instead of major figures, he looked at the parish priests, particularly one named Fr. Alonso de Leturiondo, who, like Wickman's tailor, had to confront the governor on occasion.²⁷

The historiography of Spanish Florida and religion has come a long way. Unfortunately, it has not always been a direct progression. Bolton was responding to Anglo-centered history in his discussion of the Spanish, but did not necessarily break from the pattern of traditional history's emphasis on political and diplomatic decisions. Gannon, meanwhile, was a step backward. Although he carried on Bolton's emphasis on the importance of non-Anglo cultures in the Americas, he nonetheless replaced Anglo with Spaniard and discussed the native cultures in a way not far removed from how the original conquerors described them. It was not really until the 1990s that Florida historiography truly started to analyze the cultural and religious currents in the colonial period in a meaningful way. Only then were the actual social implications looked at, rather than Spanish royal policy, concerning not only Spanish friars, but also the Indians and blacks they preached to, as well as the common Spanish and the parish priests of St. Augustine.

²⁶ Robert Kapitzke, *Religions, Power, and Politics in Colonial St. Augustine*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001: 4, 28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 85-97.

Scholarship on African Religion

The slaves who came to St. Augustine did not arrive from a religious vacuum. They brought with them ideas, philosophies, and religious convictions that had existed for centuries before their enslavement. The slave trade being what it was, an African very often came to the New World with no possessions but his religion. In approaching the dialogue that would begin between master and slave, Spaniard and African, one cannot only study the splendid pomp of European Catholicism. Vital to the study of slave religion, and, indeed, to the wider field of New World theology, African traditional religion must be analyzed and considered on the same footing as its European equivalent.

In order to understand a place, it is vital to understand its religious history. The religious history of Africa, of course, is a multifaceted one. There are numerous cultures, languages, and peoples in Africa, often displaying extreme differences in manner, society, and customs. Religion is no different, except for one extraordinary practice: throughout Africa, the ancestors are honored. This may be one of the few unifying themes in African culture. Its study has engaged scholars for years and fueled interesting debates concerning the construction of cosmologies and their interpretation by Western-influenced scholars.

Despite the broad differences in culture, these and other trends have led some scholars to attempt to find a general theme in African traditional religion. This is a daunting challenge to say the least. Several scholars have done an excellent job of creating what one might call a 'trans-African religious paradigm.' What is most important about this paradigm is that it can often be applied to areas that are considered for the most part Christian or Muslim and is therefore a construct that represents all of Africa. The actual success of these paradigms is of course questionable, given the size and brilliant diversity present on that continent. This

paradigm, however, offers to lay out a possible worldview held by the slaves brought to Florida. This worldview, as suggested by the paradigm, was hierarchical, not unlike Catholicism.

There is a looming difficulty in developing the paradigm, however. African traditional religion, even when studied sympathetically or at least objectively, was profoundly impacted by Judeo-Christian religious thought. This has created a number of problems when studying indigenous theology in Africa. The most important is the question of Christian-influenced thought in the analysis of African religion. Many scholars see in African traditional religion a sort of hierarchy that made Catholicism palatable to the African's religious tastes. The question remains, however, if the hierarchy truly existed before Christianity's arrival or if it was a result of Africans' exposure and scholars' preconceptions. This is largely due, no doubt, to the tendency of Western scholars to understand and even prefer monotheistic thought.

The tendency to prefer monotheistic thought has very often restricted religious analysis of Africa to a look at the dichotomy between Islam and Christianity. Little attention is paid to the traditions that existed before the arrival of these religions. Lamin Sanneh, while writing about Christianity, acknowledged this problem, explaining that there exists a "competitive" relationship between Christianity and Islam. The nature of this attitude has often led scholars to "ignore or belittle" the impact of African traditional religion.²⁸ This trend could do nothing but hurt the scholarship. Even in areas where they are no longer practiced, the traditional religions exert their influence.

With this in mind, it becomes obvious that any discussion of religion in Africa is going to be controversial. The methods and philosophies used by a scholar become rather important to the results of his work. J.E. Wiredu wrote an essay on the matter called "How Not to Compare

²⁸ Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*, Maryknoll, NY, 1983: 210.

African Traditional Thought with Western Thought.²⁹” He saw a fundamental problem with Western analysis of African thought. Anthropologists and theologians had, he argued, been comparing two completely different forms of philosophy.

Wiredu made the point that in any society there are two forms of thought. The first form of thought is folk lore. The second is scientific or philosophical. Wiredu reminded his readers that Europe has its own tradition of folk lore that is quite different from its history of philosophical pondering. Most importantly, he argued, one would not seek out a self-styled ‘witch’ in London to hold a discourse on Western philosophy. In this manner, he condemned any attempt to derive an African philosophy from speaking with leaders of the traditional religion. It is important to note that Wiredu had a larger goal in his discussion: the development of a uniquely African philosophical tradition.

Interestingly, several scholars disputed Wiredu. S. Iniobong Udoidem responded directly to this idea. He was upset by any perception that traditional African religion was not legitimate philosophy.³⁰ He reminded his readers that “His [Wiredu’s] heritage is the logical-empiricist tradition for which he was groomed in Britain.³¹” Udoidem attacked any belief that “criticalness” and “analyticability” are a monopoly of one culture or another. He stated the belief that traditional African thought may offer ways to seek wisdom just as ably as outside thought.

Misunderstandings concerning traditional religion are not new: the first Portuguese traders in Africa believed the Africans lacked religion, as they did not see written texts or

²⁹ J.E. Wiredu, “How Not to Compare Traditional African Thought with Western Thought,” *Transition*, No. 75/76 (Anniversary Edition): 320-327.

³⁰ S. Iniobong Udoidem, “Wiredu on How Not to Compare African Thought with Western Thought: A Commentary,” *African Studies Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (March 1987): 101-104.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 102.

elaborate temples.³² For scholars that have a strong Christian background, there can be a tendency to see Christianity's arrival in Africa as not only good, but inevitable. African traditional religion, therefore, becomes a mere precursor to modern Christianity. Kofi Asare Opoku termed this sort of scholarship "*praeparatio evangelica*" and cautioned strongly against it.³³ In a darker vein, ancestor veneration has often been associated with the Judeo-Christian concepts of evil and the Devil. ABT Byaruhanga-Akiiki pointed out that Christian missionaries frequently saw ancestor veneration as devil-worship while Lamin Sanneh mentioned that Muslims in Africa often believed they could see the workings of Satan in African traditional religion.³⁴ Even among objective scholars, the effect of having been raised and exposed for decades to Judeo-Christian thought can influence their ability to understand African worldviews. Geoffrey Parrinder asked if perhaps this background in Europe has hindered scholars by making them think too rigidly in terms of religion, making them blind to the possibility of blurred lines or cosmologies that do not match the Christian worldview.³⁵ If one accepts what Parrinder says, many of the problems in the study of African traditional religion are more a result of European philosophical and religious biases than African inconsistencies.

David Westerlund analyzed the bias of Western civilization in this field and categorized the approaches. The approach he seemed to prefer is what he calls phenomenological or comparative research. The basis of this scholarship is to analyze religion accurately and sympathetically, without "...value judgments...which can hinder full understanding." Scholars

³² Newell S. Booth, "An Approach to African Religion," from *African Religions: A Symposium*, edited by Newell S. Booth, NOK Publishers, New York, 1977: pg. 1.

³³ Kofi Asare Opoku, "African Traditional Religion: An Enduring Heritage," from *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honor of John S. Mbiti*, edited by Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang, Mouton de Gruyter, New York, 1993: 69.

³⁴ ABT Byaruhanga-Akiiki, "Africa and Christianity," from *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honor of John S. Mbiti*, edited by Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang, Mouton de Gruyter, New York, 1993: 190. Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*, Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York, 1983: 227.

³⁵ Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, Green Wood Press: Westport Connecticut, 1976, pg. 66.

in this vein of thought despise the use of Western “secular theories” when dealing with African religion. Their ultimate goal, therefore, is “...description and understanding, not theoretical explanation.” The other goal of these scholars is to focus on religion rather than culture.³⁶ Religion, they argue, warrants separate study from the rest of the culture. Newell S. Booth, however, would point out the difficulty of this method, given that African traditional religion is “pervasive” in everyday life. His article indicated he would agree with Westerlund’s preference for sympathetic scholarship, particularly given that he believed the work of anthropologists is vital to any historian studying African traditional religion (anthropologists tend to view cultures sympathetically when studying them).³⁷ Among the scholars that Westerlund describes as phenomenological is Geoffrey Parrinder, one of a group of scholars that focus on the hierarchical nature of African traditional religion.

Parrinder demonstrated that the ancestors obviously have a role to play beyond just being a dead portion of the family. He argued, though, that they are not gods. Rather, African cosmology is made up of different levels of beings. Closest to the human level are the ancestors, who form a bridge between their mortal descendants and the higher powers. Parrinder referred to this as a “hierarchy of power,” and seemed to draw strongly on the works of the eminent scholar John Mbiti.³⁸

Parrinder indicated that some African cultures see the afterlife as being in the sky, sharing some common ideas with Western ideas of Heaven. Others, however, see the departed as residing underground, in an Underworld not unlike Greco-Roman visions of Hades. The

³⁶ David Westerlund, “The Study of African Religions in Retrospect from ‘Westernization’ to ‘Africanization’?” from *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honor of John S. Mbiti*, edited by Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang, Mouton de Gruyter, New York, 1993: 44.

³⁷ Booth, 1.

³⁸ Parrinder, 102.

overarching theme that Parrinder identified, however, is that of a hierarchy. In some cultures, social stratification carries into the afterlife. This, Parrinder argued, is the explanation for human sacrifice in African traditional religions (where it occurs). The sacrificial victim would be the attendant of a deceased king or important person after death. In addition to the fact that the ancestor spirits themselves can have a hierarchy, Parrinder saw them in a wider hierarchy that includes greater entities in this other-world. He saw a correlation with the differing levels of entities found in Catholicism.³⁹

John Mbiti offered the most detailed explanation of this hierarchy. Spirits reside between God and Man. In most cultures, the spirits (including the living-dead or ancestors) have the ability to assume any form they desire. They may appear as a human or as an animal, and may switch in the middle of a conversation. Among the spirits, however, there are categories and classifications. There are two over-categories of spirit. The first are nature spirits and the second are human spirits.⁴⁰ Mbiti offered several explanations concerning the nature spirits. The first, in his work *African Religion and Philosophy*, is that they were created by God or a supreme being, as nature spirits, having never existed as anything else.⁴¹ Some societies, he stated in another work, view nature spirits as the souls of humans “long past,” and as such, are not recognizably human. They are used to explain natural events, or “the mysteries of nature.”

Human spirits are further classified into subgroups. In myths and legend, the heroic fallen from long ago are remembered, and are regarded as a group of spirits that are very close to God. Other, more anonymous, spirits have been dead for so long they are not connected to any family and are therefore “ghosts.” Ghosts, as mentioned above, receive more fear than respect,

³⁹ Parrinder, 58, 66.

⁴⁰ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, Heinemann Educational Books, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1991: 70, on powers of spirits, 100.

⁴¹ John Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1969: 79.

being somewhat alien to mortal ways. The long-dead are often associated with certain diseases in some cultures, reflecting their malevolent intents toward the living. Although spirits may be above humans, they are still beneath God, so many cultures, according to Mbiti, will invoke a supreme being to get rid of bad spirits.⁴²

The final category is the living-dead, or those recently deceased ancestors that show an interest in their mortal descendants. He described the ancestors as “intermediaries” who “speak both the language of the invisible world and the language of human beings.” The living-dead, for the most part, are remembered by their families for four or five generations, so that there is usually some connection between the ancestor being venerated and the living relative making the offering. The familiar nature of a somewhat recently dead ancestor makes them more approachable. In addition, their nearness to the human world allows them to understand human problems. Mbiti argued that “...on a whole...” they are “benevolent.”⁴³ Mbiti declined to describe the area they inhabit, instead referring to their nearness to mortals. He did suggest that as more distance is put between them and the living, the living-dead gradually travel into an Underworld or invisible spirit world, further from human affairs. For this reason, the living-dead are generally recognized by Mbiti as being those ancestors of a family going back four or five generations. This, he suggested, is how long they are remembered. Whether it is simple distance or a lack of veneration that leads to their departure, Mbiti did not speculate on. The result, however, is that the long-dead, or ghosts, are a category that all living-dead will eventually enter, with the only exception being heroes or kings that will warrant attention and remembrance for a long period after their death.⁴⁴

⁴² Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 71-7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 69, 78.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

There are several scholars that, using different methods, come to similar conclusions as Mbiti. Christopher Ehret saw language as the best way to study religion in a preliterate society.⁴⁵ Tracing the origin and meaning of words, he argues, is the best way to trace the development of religious thought. As an example, he used the Akie people and their terms for God or Sky-God. The term for their ancestor spirits is identical to their word which would mean Sky-God. For the Sky-God, however, they do not use a word from their own language, but instead a term they borrowed from the Maasai. This could mean that their religion developed from centering on the Sky-God into something else. The Sky-God could have become unapproachable, so that the living-dead become intermediaries. The use of a foreign word for their God is telling, while the original term for their God was deflected to mean ancestors, who are closer to humans.⁴⁶

Although the thrust of his argument concerns studying African religion, Ehret also identified how Christianity has influenced perceptions of African thought. Some scholars were confused or irritated by African description of their religious beliefs, which they described as vague or muddled. Ehret argued that African traditional thought has a very solid foundation, but that “the European had become used to articulating belief in specially developed language put down on paper.⁴⁷” Europe’s long tradition of certain theological terms and processes became a hindrance to understanding African thought.

⁴⁵ Christopher Ehret, “Language Evidence and Religious History,” *The Historical Study of African Religion*, ed. by T.O. Ranger and I.N. Kimambo, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1972: 45-50.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 46.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 47.

The difference between a higher God and ancestors is also addressed by Mutumba Mainga, who studied Lozi religion native to parts of Zambia and Angola.⁴⁸ Mainga identified three different levels or ‘denominations’ to the Lozi religion. At the highest level is Nyambe or Mulimu, a Supreme Being and Creator who has His own rituals. Next come the *balimu* or ancestor spirits, who can be contacted and worshiped as well. Finally, the Lozi have a brand of witchcraft or sorcery that is also used, which draws from neither of the above two parts. Thus, if a Lozi person wanted rain, he might do one offering to Nyambe, one to his *balimu*, and also attempt a spell in an attempt to control his own fate.⁴⁹

The worship of the ancestors, according to Mainga, is “distinct from Nyambe.” Ancestors, especially deceased kings, receive offerings. Kings choose their area of burial and receive offerings from those that live near his shrine. In this way, the king is able to influence major events and reveals that he is more powerful in death than in life. The regular *balimu* behave in a similar fashion over their individual families. Neglected ancestor spirits may cause harm, while honored ones will watch over their worshipers.⁵⁰

The primary criticism of Mbiti’s hierarchy interpretation of an African worldview comes from David Westerlund.⁵¹ Westerlund identified in Africanist religious scholarship a “mediumistic” approach. He described the mediumistic approach in a manner that includes Mbiti’s paradigm. The mediumistic approach, he argued, is an idea that treats spirits as acting the part of intermediary between Man and God. He saw this as being heavily influenced by

⁴⁸ Mutumba Mainga, “A History of Lozi Religion to the end of the Nineteenth Century,” *The Historical Study of African Religion*, ed. by T.O. Ranger and I.N. Kimambo, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1972: 95-109.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 98.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 96 & 97.

⁵¹ It should be noted that Westerlund does not specifically name Mbiti in the description of this phenomenon. When one recalls the title of the work (*Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honor of John S. Mbiti*), however, it is obvious that Mbiti’s ideas could never be far from the reader’s thoughts.

Christianity. He went so far as to suggest that this is an attempt to ‘Christianize’ Africa; to make it more palatable to those with a modern Western mindset.⁵² The suggestion stands that in some parts of Africa, prior to Christianity, the spirits were independent entities from any supreme God, which would deflate any theory of hierarchical relationships in African cosmology.

Westerlund is not alone in his criticism of Mbiti. Robin Horton, an anthropologist, took issue with Mbiti’s ideas in several of his essays. Horton believed that any understanding of African thought, including the one made by Mbiti, is probably influenced by Christian theological thought.⁵³ He identified a problem with seeing ancestor-spirits as intermediaries. Many people who practice the traditional religion in Africa, although not Christian themselves, have been exposed to Christianity. Christian thought, he argued, has caused any who have encountered it to emphasize the Supreme Being in African myth, relegating all other entities to the status of intermediaries.⁵⁴ S.N. Ubah, an African historian that Horton draws from, evidently found and interviewed Africans who had never encountered Christian thought. Unlike practitioners of traditional religion that had been exposed to Christian theology, those who had never encountered Christianity did not think that their ancestors were part of this hierarchy. Ancestor spirits were free agents, acting independently of a higher God.⁵⁵

Horton thought that Mbiti was guilty of this error as well. Mbiti identified all African traditional religious thought as being fundamentally monotheistic.⁵⁶ Mbiti’s interpretation of an African God is essentially positive, masculine, and seen as a single Creator. Horton counters this with images that conflict with Mbiti’s paradigm. He recounts African beliefs where God is both

⁵² Westerlund, 46.

⁵³ Robin Horton, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West*, Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1993.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 166.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 171.

⁵⁶ Mbiti: 1-15.

evil and good as well as belief-systems where the Creator is female.⁵⁷ He also brought up several religions where there is not one Creator, but two.⁵⁸ Horton thus identified the pervasive influence of Christianity. Even professed traditionalists of the modern era tend to formulate their religion in Christian terms.

This stated, Horton's construction of some African religion shares some aspects inherent to earlier mentioned scholars. Horton studied the Kalahari peoples and their religion. Obviously, he did not identify the ancestor spirits as intermediaries. He did, however, describe them as being closest to mankind. His cosmological description includes multiple spiritual entity types. The first and closest to humankind is, as mentioned, the ancestors. Another group is the heroes, who did not truly die and never left graves or descendants (they appear in legend, do a good deed, and vanish rather than die). The final group is the water-spirits, who influence rivers, lakes, and rain. The ancestor spirits are tied to specific people and thus have influence over specific families. In contrast, the other two groups watch over a region or water respectively.⁵⁹

Despite the disagreements, a picture emerges concerning traditional African thought. Among the numerous cultures, there is always a higher God present, though, as Horton points out, this may be female or even a group rather than a single Creator. Above humans but below God(s) are the spirits. Most common among spirits are the living-dead or ancestor spirits. Ancestor veneration is extremely common throughout Africa. Despite the rise of Christianity and Islam, ancestor veneration remains an important part of life there and a tie to the past. The role of ancestors is entirely in dispute. They may be intermediaries to the higher God(s) or they may in fact be free agents that behave on their own and receive worship only for themselves.

⁵⁷ Horton: 169.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: 172.

⁵⁹ Ibid.: 218.

The important aspect of this is that most African religions had a complex cosmology. This cosmology was not just God and Man, but had a myriad host of supernatural beings, so that the equally well-populated cosmology of Spanish Catholicism would not have seemed very alien.

In addition to any metaphysical similarities, the nature of Christianity and Islam, Toyin Falola pointed out, are such that they are adept at absorbing religions into themselves. It is no different in Africa. Falola was careful to point out the use of African heroes and the strong tie between traditional religion and nationalism. More importantly, the face of Christianity and Islam changed when they came to Africa. Although nominally Christian or Muslim, Africans in many areas still engage in many of the behaviors that were typical of pre-conversion.

This blending of religions is well-known to anthropologists, who describe it as syncretism. In Africa, this syncretism means that Christianity takes on many of the features of traditional thought. Falola stated that this is a sign that “indigenous religions have manifested the ability to modernize.”⁶⁰ These include the presence of drums, trance states, holy objects, and divination. Holy objects in particular offer an example of how there was a transference of religious feeling from traditional to Christianity. Whereas before charms would be used based on other beliefs, now Christianity influences people to use holy water, crucifixes, or other religious icons in place of traditional symbols but for many of the same purposes.

The arrival of Christianity and Islam meant the arrival of a belief in Heaven for many Africans. This belief in no way diminished the role of ancestors in the daily lives of Africans.⁶¹ Falola showed that in the practice of burial, outside and indigenous religions blend strongly rather than compete with each other. He stated that some scholars take this further and suggest

⁶⁰ Toyin Falola, *The Power of African Cultures*, Rochester, NY, University of Rochester Press, 2003: 214.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 210 & 212.

that some modern believers form different systems than Christianity. Christianity, some would argue, forms a basis for a new, different belief system.⁶²

Scholarship on Developments in the New World

Of the several African ethnicities reported to have lived in St. Augustine, one that stands out is the Lucumí, or, in modern parlance, the Yoruba. Both Yoruba religion and its transformation in the New World have been well documented. It was brought to Cuba and transformed gradually into the modern day religion of Santería. The story of Santería is interesting because it offers a look at another religious dialogue, this one carried on in Cuba. In many ways, the Florida dialogue can be viewed as a piece of this larger discussion, given that many slaves in Florida were brought from Cuba. After the British gained control of the province, most of the Africans and African-descended colonists evacuated to Matanzas Bay in Cuba. It should be remembered, however, that Cuba was an island with large scale plantations and a massive slave population, while St. Augustine was a garrison town where the slaves lived in a more urban setting. The most valuable piece of information that Santería provides for Florida scholarship is how Spanish Catholicism could be appealing to the Lucumí people.

The Yoruba at the time of the slave trade did not have a pantheon of gods. There was a single omnipotent deity, variously called Olodumare, Olorun, or Olofin. This supreme deity was remote from mankind, so powerful as to be incomprehensible. He did not possess a cult or priesthood.⁶³ Human beings, therefore, were more concerned with the intermediary entities, the

⁶² Ibid.: 210.

⁶³ Rosa Valdes-Cruz, "The Black Man's Contribution to Cuban Culture," *The Americas*, vol. 34, no. 2 (Oct 1977), 248.

orishas, who were “guardians and explicators of human destiny.”⁶⁴ The orishas were perfect parallels to the saints, who were quickly associated with them.⁶⁵ Robert Voeks saw Catholicism as being much more conducive to Santería’s development. Protestantism, by comparison, is relatively simple. The rituals and practices of the Catholic Church were elaborate, having more in common with the religion which the slaves brought with them.⁶⁶

Some scholars, however, do not necessarily depend on the form of Catholicism for an explanation, but its enforcement. George Brandon wrote that Spain was after a “cultural hegemony,” and, in so doing, was creating a “guided syncretism,” which looked for acceptance of Church doctrine and the saints, however it could be gained. In Cuba, this played out in the Cabildo de nación of each group, which were encouraged by the Spanish government.⁶⁷ Although the cabildos were nominally meant to adjust the newcomer to life in the colony and encourage Catholicism, other scholars see them as having the opposite effect. Margarite Fernández and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert argued that the cabildos offered a “façade:” they gave a legitimate look to orishas through the saints.⁶⁸ The Spanish, meanwhile, as that allowing the slaves to keep their culture may have been a way to keep morale high and avoid work slowdowns or rebellion.⁶⁹ The clergy, who were mostly Spanish-born, often owned slaves

⁶⁴ George Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 14.

⁶⁵ Harry Lefever, “When the Saints Go Riding in: Santería in Cuba and the United States,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 35, no. 3 (September 1996), 319.

⁶⁶ Robert Voeks, “African Medicine and Magic in the Americas,” *Geographical Review*, vol. 83, no. 1 (January 1993), 67.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁶⁸ Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 29.

⁶⁹ Christine Ayorinde, *Afro-Cuban Religiosity, Revolution, and National Identity*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004), 9.

themselves and were driven by economic concerns, often being against active conversion themselves.⁷⁰

In the countryside, the enforcement may have been even more lax. The clergy, for the most part, lived in the urban centers. The plantation owners did not want to spend the money to support rural priests, so Catholicism's presence in the countryside was weak at best, even rural whites did not regularly attend church.⁷¹ Put frankly, the slave owners were more concerned with economic expediency than missionary work.⁷²

If they had decided differently, it still would be difficult to police slaves in the country. Any hill, field, or grove could become a shrine to an orisha. Libation offerings could be made discreetly.⁷³ Slave barracks could be converted into temples.⁷⁴ Beyond the plantation, of course, the Church had no power at all. The Cimarrone settlements, or palenques (they were named for the wooden palisades that generally surrounded them, built by runaways anxious to avoid re-enslavement) could continue the religion in the mountains, playing a role in its continued survival.⁷⁵ The palenques can, in many ways, be compared to Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, which, although a Spanish client, had a certain degree of autonomy.

The influx of fresh émigrés to Cuba was also important. The first group of African slaves to arrive en masse to Cuba came in 1513.⁷⁶ The slave trade was not stopped until the 1870s. There was, spanning those years, an almost continual influx of Africans to Cuba, who, in turn,

⁷⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁷¹ Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, 25.

⁷² Ayorinde, *Afro-Cuban Religiosity, Revolution, and National Identity*, 9.

⁷³ Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories*, 74.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 74, also Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, 24.

⁷⁵ Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, 24.

⁷⁶ Eugenio Matibag, *Afro-Cuban Religious Experience*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 20.

would remind the Lucumí of their Yoruba roots.⁷⁷ Most importantly, many of the prisoners captured in Yorubaland were from the priestly class, being steeped in the religious history of their homeland.⁷⁸

Many scholars like to see the religion which survived as being more than an accident of fate or economics. They see in Santería's persistence an act of defiance against the masters.⁷⁹ In keeping their religion, especially in secret, the slaves were rebelling against the society which had swallowed them, refusing to assimilate or play by the rules of their masters. Religion, as an act of defiance, could in turn become tied to actual revolts. William Suttles, Jr. examines the Haitian Revolution as well as the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy in South Carolina, both of which had strongly religious leaders with ties to Africa and traditional religion.⁸⁰

Conclusion

These three fields paint a picture of what the dialogue in Spanish Florida between Africans and their colonial masters might have looked like. The Africans did not arrive from a vacuum. The many religions of Africa, though quite different, have a few things in common, among them an order to supernatural entities. These beliefs in cosmological hierarchies were similar to the Spanish Catholic worldview. This is not to say that this hierarchal view was a *praeparatio evangelica* (as Opoku cautions against). These beliefs should not be viewed as a precursor to Christianity. Instead, the similarities in cosmology would have made Spanish Catholicism seem more familiar to Africans than English Protestantism. This is not only demonstrated in the scholarship of African theology, it can be seen in the transformation and

⁷⁷ Christine Ayorinde, *Afro-Cuban Religiosity, Revolution, and National Identity*, 9.

⁷⁸ Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, 31.

⁷⁹ Matibag, *Afro-Cuban Religious Experience*, 17.

⁸⁰ Williams Suttles, Jr., "African Religious Survivals as Factors in American Slave Revolts," *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 56, no. 2 (April 1971), 98-100.

survival of Yoruba folkways in the Caribbean, as seen in Santería. The Spanish in Florida, meanwhile, were somewhat flexible in their missionary efforts there, as seen in the survival of Timucuan and Apalachee burial and cultural practices after their conversion, demonstrating a tendency towards the ‘guided syncretism’ that George Brandon described in other Spanish colonies.

This thesis is an attempt to build on this wide field of scholarship and thereby analyze the religious dialogue between the Spanish in La Florida and their African-descended slaves and freed-people. It relies on baptismal and other ecclesiastical evidence to form a picture of the conversion of African slaves as well as African-descended fugitives from Carolina into this rather unique Spanish settlement at the fringes of an empire. Although conversion is undoubtedly an action on the part of the Spanish, it was not undertaken by the authorities alone. This thesis will look at the goals and methods of the Spanish colonial masters as well as the participation and roles that Africans and African-descended people played in St. Augustine’s religious life. The Spanish colony of La Florida proves, when viewed in this manner, to be a rather unique presidio that did not follow the standard paradigms of other Spanish possessions or nearby English colonies. La Florida, in having a different attitude towards its African-descended vassals, has proven an interesting example of the complex nature of bondage and the dynamic form of New World colonies.

CHAPTER THREE: BACKGROUND: ST. AUGUSTINE'S HISTORY AND TREATMENT OF SLAVES

The religious dialogue in St. Augustine was one scene in a larger play. The situation in Spanish Florida was a unique one. Spanish slaves there were treated much differently from their counterparts in other holdings. In order to understand the dialogue that would take place, other issues must be examined, issues that had a bearing on the treatment of St. Augustine's slaves and freedpeople. These issues form a diverse background that combines geographic, cultural, political, and military concerns of the Spanish Empire in general and La Florida in particular.

Irene A. Wright, in the 1924 *Journal of Negro History*, said: "While the Latin nobleman looked upon the Negro as his social and political inferior, he did not on that account doubt the courage, reliability, and spiritual possibilities of the African."⁸¹ The 'spiritual possibilities' of Africans and their descendants were tied to the wider drama unfolding between Catholicism and Protestantism (leavened with the involvement of indigenous people and their religions). This ideological borderland created an atmosphere where slaves needed to be Catholic as well as Spanish. This was more than just a religiously conflicted region. The slaves and freedmen of St. Augustine would have a chance to prove their 'reliability' as laborers and colonists in a settlement where manpower was always scarce. Finally, Wright's reference to 'courage' is fitting: in St. Augustine and wider Florida, Spanish authorities would arm their freedmen and slaves with muskets and steel. They would even commission black officers. Wright's statement neatly sums up the background to the religious dialogue between Spaniard and African in Florida. As an ideological marchland, slaves and freedpeople needed to be loyal Catholics.

⁸¹ Irene A. Wright, "Dispatches of the Spanish Officials Bearing on the Free Negro Settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, Florida," from *The Journal of Negro History*, Volume 9, Number 2, (April 1924), pg. 144.

What's more, the scarcity of labor and the pressing military concerns converged to form an atmosphere where Africans and their descendents were valued higher than on plantations. Simply put, there was an urgent need for slaves and freedpeople, as Catholics, as laborers, and as soldiers.

Spanish Florida as Borderland: Colony in Conflict

Spanish Florida has been variously described as a frontier, a borderland, and a maritime periphery.⁸² Whatever terms that past historians have used, Spanish Florida was obviously a land in conflict. This conflict was first and foremost a military one. From the beginning, battles with rival European powers and the indigenous people led Spain to colonize Florida with a martial eye. Pedro Menendez de Aviles brought hundreds of pikemen and arquebusiers for the initial settlement of St. Augustine. Forts of wood and later, stone, were built. This brutal atmosphere shaped how Florida was viewed and run by the Spanish authorities. This view was not just political. The Spanish saw Florida as more than just a marchland: it was the edge of Christendom. This attitude profoundly shaped the way in which their colonies were formed and how Africans and their descendants would be treated there.

Attempts to discuss Spanish political and religious policy separately in the early modern era are always in vain. To the Spanish crown, the two policies were closely linked. This should be no surprise, given Spain's turbulent religious history. The conquest of the New World has long been seen by historians as an extension of the Iberian Reconquista. What's more, the Spanish crown had a potent influence over its own bishops and a close relationship with the Vatican. These factors guaranteed a system where regal and sacred power mingled. This

⁸² For exact usage of these terms, see Amy Turner Bushnell's "Borderland or Border-sea? Placing Early Florida," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, v. 60, July 2003.

mingling of religious and secular power did not stay in Iberia, it followed the fleet of galleons to the New World and continued to thrive there. From the outset, this was apparent in Florida. Menendez de Aviles, for example, deputized priests so they could attend an officer's meeting to discuss battle plans against Fort Caroline.⁸³

The entire nature of the Spanish presence in the New World was suffused with religious overtones. The earliest explorers of Florida brought priests with them and it was the plan of Spain to convert Florida's people from the start. As discussed in Chapter One, the religious dialogue between the Spanish and natives has been thoroughly examined by scholars. Before there was the threat of Protestantism, there was the need to convert the Indians. As the first Protestant ships dropped anchor off the Florida coast, the militant aspect of Spanish Catholicism began to rear its head and what before was purely a missionary effort quickly became a crusade.

The first threat came in 1562-4, as French Huguenots landed on Spanish-claimed Florida and began to form a colony. The Spanish were outraged by the flagrant incursion into their territory. The Spanish were further inflamed by the fact this colony was Protestant. The presence of a renegade sect in the pristine New World was an affront to their role as messengers of the Catholic Faith. Pedro Menendez de Aviles reported in a letter to the crown that he believed the French and English *Luteranos* would get along well with the Indians there, since the European heretics and the local people had "about the same laws." Later, after the Protestants had been removed, Menendez de Aviles was horrified to find that they had been spreading their

⁸³ Father Francisco Lopez de Mendoza Grajales, "Memoire of the Happy Result and Prosperous Voyage of the Fleet Commanded by the Adelantado Pedro Menendez de Aviles," trans. & reprinted in *Laudonniere & Fort Caroline: History and Documents*, by Charles E. Bennett, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2001: 155-6.

“hateful doctrine” to “the poor savage people.” Menendez came to see his time in Florida as part of a larger mission to save souls and spread the true Gospel.⁸⁴

It is hard to define where the religious and the secular goals separated. In his role as Adelantado, or military and political leader of the future colony, Menendez stated that he wished to do the “service of God and Your Majesty’s,” which meant the “salvation of so many souls and the aggrandizement of your kingdoms and your royal estates.”⁸⁵ Economic interests and the very order of the Spanish Caribbean seemed to be at stake. Spanish treasure fleets passed Florida en route to Spain, so a French base could easily threaten shipping. Besides this, there were also more insidious threats in such a close Protestant base.

Pedro Menendez de Aviles argued that French heretics in Florida, if left unchecked, would try to foment chaos in the nearby island-colonies of Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Menendez stated that upon these islands there were numerous Africans and African-descended people of “bad disposition.” Furthermore, the ratio of “Negro” to “Christian” was alarming: thirty Africans or African-descended person to every European or European-descended person. Menendez saw the potential for a devastating rebellion. He drew on the memory of a 1553 raid by Jacques de Soria, of France. Soria freed the Spanish’s African slaves and let them loose on their former masters, devastating several islands and even attacking the major ports of Cartagena and Havana. Menendez predicted nothing short of an end to trade in the “Indias” if the French were not kept out of Florida.⁸⁶

Menendez, in comparing the numbers of “Christians” and “Negroes” shows an interesting development in the Caribbean. Many of the plantation slaves at this time and later on were

⁸⁴ Letters to the King from Pedro Menendez de Aviles, September 6 and October 15, 1565, from *Laudonniere & Fort Caroline*: pgs. 129, 132-4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 128-9.

African-born. These un-aculturated slaves had little loyalty to Spain, as Menendez put it, they had a “bad disposition.” Their feelings were apparent in the 1553 raid. It is especially telling that Menendez does not say ‘whites’ when describing the Spanish-descended people of the islands, but instead calls them “Christians.” The implication is that they are trustworthy not simply because they have light skin, but because they are Catholic. His opinion of Protestants seems to indicate he placed an emphasis on Catholicism as a factor in determining behavior and loyalty. Menendez warned that the *Luteranos* will get along with the indigenous folk because they have similar customs, despite the fact that the Protestants, like Menendez, came from Europe. In Menendez’s worldview, Catholicism is synonymous with civilization.

Once in Florida, Menendez, even by his own admission, was brutal with the heretics. This brutality was not a product of the French-Spanish rivalry; rather it was an extension of the vicious religious struggle that was still underway in Europe. The Spanish chronicler Barcia recounts the statement of Menendez’s brother-in-law, Dr. Solís de las Merás, who was present at the attack on Fort Caroline and the massacre of the Protestants. According to Dr. Solís, Menendez made a statement to his victims that laid bare his intent:

He [Menendez] would do favors for Catholics and friends...but inasmuch as they were of the New Sect, he held them to be enemies and would wage war upon them with fire and blood; he would prosecute this war with ruthlessness upon those he found on this sea and land...he was determined to implant the Holy Gospel in this land, so that the Indians might be enlightened and arrive at an understanding of the Holy Catholic Faith...⁸⁷

Menendez spared the women and any children under the age of fifteen. He also spared some valuable artisans and any French Catholics that were present, as reported both in his own

⁸⁷ Andrés González de Barcia Carballido y Zúñiga, *Barcia’s Chronological History of the Continent of Florida*, (trans. by Anthony Kerrigan), Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970: 92.2-93.1

account and the account of Father Grajales. Even the Protestant women and children made him uneasy, however: “It causes me great sorrow to see them among my people on account of their horrid religious sect, and I fear our Lord would punish me should I use cruelty on them.” The adult male Protestants, however, were viciously slaughtered after their surrender.⁸⁸

Father Grajales, in his account, believed that the Holy Spirit was guiding the Adelantado. After the fortress was taken and renamed, the religious objects of the *Luteranos* were immediately burned, which included prayer books, playing cards, and what the chaplain described as the tools of a Lutheran “necromancer” and former friar. Grajales agrees with Menendez and Solís’ assertion that any Catholics among the French forces were spared.⁸⁹

The worries over Protestantism in Florida did not subside after the massacre of the Huguenots. The Spanish did not acknowledge a difference between the Huguenots and other sects of Protestantism, applying the term *Luterano* to them all in the above sources. In Menendez’s calculation of developments in the New World, he frequently talks about French Protestants and the English together. In one statement, the Adelantado reports that he heard “the English had gone out with a fleet to the coast of Florida to settle and to await the vessels from the Indias,” meaning they were going to form a base in Florida from which to harry the treasure galleons. Similarly, in his discussions of the Protestants getting along with the Indians, Menendez includes the English.⁹⁰

The English would remain a threat to Spanish interests in the region throughout the First Spanish Period (which notably ended in Britain’s acquisition of Florida). Attitudes toward the English and their religion remained hostile. Opinion on Protestantism in general was similarly

⁸⁸ Menendez in *Laudonniere & Fort Caroline*, 132.

⁸⁹ Grajales, in *Laudonniere & Fort Caroline*, 158-9, 163.

⁹⁰ Menendez, in *Laudonniere & Fort Caroline*, 128-9.

antagonistic, as demonstrated by Barcia's historical narrative. Andrés de González de Barcia Carballido y Zúñiga was writing just over a hundred and fifty years after Menendez's conflict in Florida. His work offers a perspective on how the Spanish in the 1700s viewed their history and place in the world. He recounts the above actions of Menendez in a manner that reveals his own biases against what he called a "damnable sect."⁹¹

Barcia felt the need to respond to French and even some Spanish histories that condemned the Adelantado. Many argued that prior to the massacre Menendez offered to spare the lives of those that surrendered. Barcia countered that Menendez was a good Catholic and was very straightforward about his intentions. The chronicler mentioned that en route to Florida, the leader of the expedition "ordered that the Christian doctrine be repeated and the Litanies and other prayers be said, asking God for victory over the heretics." Once in Florida, according to Barcia, Menendez met a French ship and was rather blunt about his intentions; he was there "to hang and behead all Lutherans whom I [Menendez] may find here," but would spare any Catholics. This was driven, Barcia said, by a deep fear that the *Luteranos* would stop the Spanish from their plan to "implant the Holy Gospel in these regions and so they [the Huguenots] can spread their own abominable and disastrous sect among the Indians."⁹²

The Eighteenth Century historian was careful to point out that Menendez's heroic efforts were aimed at destroying French heretics because they were heretics, not French. In discussing France, Barcia stated that "Huguenots...thoroughly troubled that most Christian Kingdom." The fort and colony in Florida was not a French challenge to Spanish power, but was instead a Protestant challenge to Catholicism. He argued that the King of France did not engineer the plot.

⁹¹ Barcia, 45.2.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 90.2-91.1, 60.2-61.1, 75.1, 81.1, and 83.1.

It was the French admiral Gaspard de Coligny, who with his followers, the Huguenots in 1564 “...grew ever more animated by ambition and desire to subjugate Florida and to extend their malicious new sect to the innocent New World.” In Barcia’s opinion, the French monarchy would never betray the Catholic religion in such a manner. Instead, it was Gaspard de Coligny who orchestrated this encroachment on Spain’s rightful territory.⁹³

Labor and Population Issues

In many ways, St. Augustine and the Pensacola forts can be viewed as little more than a series of garrisons defending Spain’s border with France and Britain. At times, St. Augustine must have had more of an atmosphere of a bivouac than a town. The interests of Spain in Florida, as Amy Turner Bushnell put it, were “strategic rather than economic.” As such, St. Augustine was not like other Caribbean colonies. It was not a thriving commercial center run by wealthy planters. It was instead a hardened garrison run by men under constant threat of invasion. Obviously, as part of this struggle, there were day-to-day needs in addition to martial ones. Spanish Florida, however, was not ever blessed with an overabundance of people. St. Augustine faced what Bushnell describes as a “chronic deficit of manual labor.”⁹⁴

From early on, the attitudes towards slaves in St. Augustine would be different from those held in other Spanish colonies. Prior to the actual settlement it was actually on the same course as many other Caribbean possessions. In 1565, Pedro Menendez de Aviles was given permission to settle Florida with over five hundred Spanish colonists and five hundred slaves, plus a sizeable contingent of soldiers. In 1565, the threat in America was not just political:

⁹³ Barcia, 47.1-48.1, 75.1.

⁹⁴ Amy Turner Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994: pgs. 211 & 118.

French Huguenots had settled at Fort Caroline, threatening to spread their “evil teaching”⁹⁵ to the New World.

One of the foremost concerns of the Menendez expedition, therefore, was not simply military conquest, but colonization. As such, Menendez de Aviles was to bring, of the five hundred Spanish colonists, one hundred married couples. Along with these married Spaniards, a third of the five hundred slaves had to be female. The thinking behind this caveat is obvious: the Adelantado was not just there to expel the enemy but also to create a self-sustaining population. Philip II and Menendez de Aviles planned to set down deep roots in Florida and keep it by breeding good Spanish subjects. Only by populating Florida with loyal Catholics could the Huguenots be truly defeated. According to Barcia, the slaves were going along to “build, populate, and cultivate Florida the more easily and to plant cane and construct sugar mills.” There was obviously the intent to recreate the plantation system that was already in existence in other parts of the Caribbean.

The mention of the slaves indicated something else as well. Slaves in Menendez’s charter were not just an economic commodity. They were not listed along with the goats, cattle, and chickens. Instead, they were discussed separately and their significance is listed as more than just sugar cultivation: they were going to help “populate” Florida. In the battle against Protestantism, slaves were more than just workers, they were Catholics.

Regardless of these possibilities, however, the slaves would not join them on this voyage. Florida, despite the original plan, did not develop along a similar path as other Spanish colonies. The plantation model was not in St. Augustine’s future. Menendez de Aviles had no trouble

⁹⁵ As described by the *other* Pedro Menendez, found in the “Petition of Pedro Menendez Marques, June 15, 1578” in *Colonial Records of Spanish Florida* by Jeanette Thurber Connor, Deland: Florida State Historical Society, 1925: pp.75-9.

recruiting Spaniards. His muster rolls swelled so much that the slaves became superfluous and he did not bring them. This decision to take only Spaniards is interesting. If Menendez de Aviles had planned on founding a purely cash-crop colony, slaves would have been vital. Instead he was concerned with the battles he knew he would fight with the Protestants, so he brought “the leading gentlemen of Asturias, Galicia, and Biscay, whom a thousand Frenchmen would dare not meet.” From the beginning, strategic concerns trumped economic desires. There seems every indication that this flowed directly from the crown and that the future Adelantado of Florida would have approved.

The reasons behind this decision are not difficult to discern. It seems likely that Pedro Menendez de Aviles had built his reputation and by extension his place at court on his martial skills. His military exploits were such that the Eighteenth Century chronicler Barcia saw fit to describe Menendez de Aviles’ life history in his *Chronological History of Florida*, despite the fact that much of it occurred in Europe, not La Florida. Barcia spends a full eleven pages recounting Menendez de Aviles’ various European adventures against Spain’s enemies in Europe.⁹⁶ The viciousness of Menendez de Aviles’ treatment of the *Luteranos* he encountered would seem to indicate that he took his role as crusader rather seriously, enough so perhaps to trump any economic interests.

His Majesty probably knew that Menendez de Aviles was a man of action unafraid to employ violent means when necessary. One episode in particular stands out. Barcia reported that in the late 1550s, Menendez de Aviles was leading a fleet in the English Channel when a storm threatened to strike. At that time, the English were nominally allies to the Spanish, so Menendez de Aviles sought refuge for his flotilla in Dartmouth. The harbor chain, however, was

⁹⁶ Barcia: pp. 59.2-70.

spread over the entrance so that the ships could not find shelter from the storm. Menendez de Aviles asked for the chain to be removed and when he did not receive a response, he landed on the shore and attacked his English allies in order to save his fleet. Although his action was probably justified (those ships that did not get into the harbor were lost with almost all hands), this incident serves to demonstrate Menendez de Aviles' rather headstrong personality.⁹⁷

The King, therefore, was undoubtedly using Menendez de Aviles as a blunt instrument to quash any foreign attempts at settling in La Florida. In a royal decree issued in August of 1565, Philip II does not mention colonists, he mentions only "1,400 men" who were to join the Armada bound for Florida and that each man be paid immediately "on the day he enlists." Similarly, a September letter to Menendez de Aviles from the King tells the loyal soldier "We have arranged for and ordered 1,500 infantrymen to join you," and that the British and French had sent a "great number of soldiers and sailors, with the intent of going to that Province." The Spanish monarchy was clear about the need for soldiers: "You may do everything to defend yourselves and capture the Forts they have built and thrust them from the land, that you may hold it in peace."⁹⁸ Madrid was primarily concerned with the removal of rival powers from around its growing empire. The dual English and French threats had to be dealt with forcefully.

All of this serves to show that populating the colony and making sure it had enough labor could largely be seen as part of a war effort, a mentality that probably insured that La Florida would never entirely be given attention as a possible economic resource. The irony, of course, is that although Menendez de Aviles may have brought more Spanish fighting men than he had anticipated, he failed to bring enough women. When the Adelantado's fleet weighed anchor,

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 64.2-65.2.

⁹⁸ "Royal Decree, the King," and "Letter to Gen. Pedro Menendez de Aviles, Knight of the Order of Santiago and our Governor of the Province of Florida," from *Laudonniere & Fort Caroline: History and Documents*, by Charles E. Bennett, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001: pp. 125-6.

they had only twenty-six married couples with them. Even before its inception, St. Augustine was on its way to a having a near-constant dearth of able bodies, despite the long muster rolls.⁹⁹

The issue became apparent some years later, in June of 1578 when the city fathers of St. Augustine wrote a letter to Madrid requesting a special cedula be sent to Havana. The cedula would demand that the Governor of Havana “send the married men of Florida whom he has there.” Mendez de Márquez, Governor of Florida at this time, seemed concerned about getting not only the men but their wives as well. It is telling that the charter that Menendez de Aviles was given told him to bring one hundred married Spanish couples and over one hundred slave women. The Spanish authorities were intent on populating Florida for the long term, as seen in their desire to bring women (particularly married women) to the colony.¹⁰⁰

It became obvious that the colony was in need of labor early on. In March of 1580, the authorities in St. Augustine reference an earlier request that the Crown send slaves up from Havana to work on the fort. The slaves, they said, would be “of great use in sawing timber and for other purposes touching your royal service, which generally causes an expense for those who do it, and for making lime and brick which can be done.” The Consejo de Indias granted their request. These were not going to be regular slaves owned by citizens, but slaves owned by the King, with much the same status as Spanish criminals (*forzados*) condemned to slavery. The city fathers would “treat them [the slaves] well,” and see to it that they lived off the land (as it seems many in Florida were forced to do), so that they would not further burden the Royal Treasury.

The main purpose of this request was to keep the garrison soldiers fresh. According to the letter, the soldiers were constantly fatigued from the building process. The implication, of

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp.70-3.

¹⁰⁰ “Petition of Pedro Menendez Márques,” June 15(?), 1578, *Colonial Records of Spanish Florida* by Jeanette Thurber Connor, Deland: Florida State Historical Society, 1925: pp. 75-9.

course, is that this fatigue would prove a dangerous hindrance should any enemies attack. The role of the slaves, therefore, would perhaps have been less than glorious but important nonetheless: keep the garrison fresh and ready for an assault.¹⁰¹

The fort-building process did not end in the 1500s. Although the wooden fortress served its purpose, the Spanish authorities still felt it was not enough. In the late 1600s, it was decided that the timber palisades of the Castillo de San Marcos would be upgraded to tougher stone walls. This took years to complete and a great deal of labor, not ending until 1696. Again, slaves were a welcome addition to the labor force, as evidenced by the immediate addition of ten runaways that came from the Carolinas in 1689. These escapees were immediately enslaved and put to work on the fortress.¹⁰²

The military importance of laborers was not isolated to St. Augustine. On the west coast of Florida near modern day Pensacola, the constant battles with the French in 1719 at Santa Maria de Galve and Masacra led to a cycle of destruction and rebuilding. The Spanish there, while rebuilding several ruined forts, captured cimaroons and black French soldiers, putting them to work alongside their own soldiers in the rebuilding process.¹⁰³

Besides fortifying their settlements, the Spanish had other rather intensive labor needs in Florida. Agriculture was always a problem. The Spanish had adopted a system that drew foodstuffs from native labor,¹⁰⁴ but it would not always answer the needs of the garrisons (especially after the natives began to depend on the Spanish), as seen in the famine that Barcia

¹⁰¹ "Royal Officials to the King," March 6, 1580, and "Opinion of the Council of the Indies advising that Thirty Slaves be sent from Havana to Florida," in *Colonial Records of Spanish Florida*: pp. 314-317.

¹⁰² March 8, 1689 letter from the Royal Officials, from "Dispatches of Spanish Officials on the Free Negro Settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (April 1924), pp. 145 & 151.

¹⁰³ Barcia, 387.1.

¹⁰⁴ Bushnell, 111-2.

reports hit St. Augustine in 1712.¹⁰⁵ What's more, there were still other projects from time to time, like an effort to rescue St. Augustine's coastal buildings from erosion in 1690.¹⁰⁶

Given these factors, a slave in St. Augustine was far more valuable to the community than a slave in Havana. A Cuban slave was a source of income to his owner and was valuable as property. In St. Augustine though, a slave's value was derived from his general addition to the labor pool and his role as a Catholic. If a slave in St. Augustine purchased or earned his freedom, he was still valuable to the garrison in that, even if paid, he was still offering labor that was in short supply. What's more, a freedman in St. Augustine might very well settle down and have children who would be raised as loyal Catholics that in turn add to the population needed to fend off the English or French.

Military Concerns

In their vying for land in North America, labor was not the only scarcity facing the Spanish. In this far-flung periphery, manpower was an issue in warfare as well. The Spanish may not have always considered Africans and their descendants to be as good as Spaniards, but they definitely respected them as fighting men. In early conflicts with the French, blacks were just as likely to be on either side. In a battle between several small vessels in a bay north of St. Augustine, the Spanish defeated the French after a bloody melee on the rolling decks of the ships. The Spanish report of the incident discusses the enemy combatants' bravery, including "two Negroes" that perished in the battle, one of whom impressed the Spanish with his fighting ability.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Barcia, 356.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 326.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from St. Augustine written sometime after August, 1580, in *Colonial Records of Spanish Florida* by Jeanette Thurber Connor, Deland: Florida State Historical Society, 1925: pgs 322-3.

The Spanish, from very early on in Florida's settlement, recognized the martial potential of their black vassals. This has not escaped historians. Jane Landers in particular has discussed the role of black soldiers in the Spanish empire. Her work *Black Society in Spanish Florida* included a chapter entitled 'Black Military Service,' in which she argues that "free blacks had a vested interest in maintaining Spanish sovereignty in Florida, and formed into an urban militia company, they proved a valuable addition to Florida's military structure." Later, Landers published an article that dealt exclusively with black militias in the Spanish empire. The Spanish, Landers argued, were driven by "the need to defend a vast and contested empire" to enlist Africans and their descendants. With the creation of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, the Spanish also created a company of black soldiers. As the Governor of Florida reported on the new settlement's blossoming fortress and agriculture in 1756, he mentioned the formation of a military unit, including the officers. Many of the soldiers had been born in Africa, as evidenced by the mention of their African nation on the muster roles in 1764. Most interestingly, the company's officers were black as well.¹⁰⁸

The fact that bozales and criollos could become officers is telling. Unlike, say the United States in World War II, the Spanish in Florida were willing to believe that Africans and their descendants were capable of military leadership and the inherent responsibilities therein. Not only did the Spanish trust blacks with such a position, but they seemed to value them almost as much as European-descended officers. This can be seen in an incident involving captured officers during a conflict between the Spanish and French in 1719 described in Barcia's history.

¹⁰⁸ Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, pg. 202; "Transforming Bondsmen into Vassals" Arming Slaves in Colonial Spanish America," from *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, edited by Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006; April 7, 1756 Letter from Governor Alonso Fernandez de Heredia to Arriago, (86-7-21 Doc. No. 73) "Dispatches of Spanish Officials on the Free Negro Settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (April 1924), pp. 149 & 193.

The Spanish and French were at war again and the French surprised the Spanish with a naval attack on several holdings around the Gulf of Mexico. The French leader, the Count de Chamelin, captured Santa Rosa island, and, worried about a Spanish retaliation, destroyed the fortress at Point Sigüeza. The French took all officers prisoner. Barcia states that Count Chamelin treated the Spanish officers “as well as his own” during their time in his power. Arrangements were made to ransom the prisoners, and Spain sent a letter of credit for them in the spring of 1720. Among the ransomed were “four Negro captains from Havana.” This incident is telling because, in addition to the fact that the Spanish had commissioned black officers, they were treated more or less like any other officer, by the French as well as the Spanish.¹⁰⁹ Barcia was writing only a few years after this incident, about 1723, so it illustrates not only the martial attitude of the time but also the author’s. Barcia expressed no surprise at the ransom of the black officers, listing them alongside the various noblemen and nameless ensigns that were returned.

Conclusion

The colony of St. Augustine and wider Florida in the first Spanish period was a colony under constant threat of invasion. It was founded in blood. The first act of what would become America’s oldest permanent city was an act of destruction against a Protestant sect. This is an appropriate way for the colony to be founded, since it would become a garrison against rival nations and religions. This role as a garrison would profoundly shape how Spanish Florida would treat its slaves.

Perhaps the most important element in the treatment of slaves was St. Augustine’s role as a religious marchland. Loyalty to the Crown also meant loyalty to the Faith. While Cuba and

¹⁰⁹ Barcia, pp. 393.2 & 394.2.

other Caribbean societies were driven by economic motives, Florida was a strategic frontier both religiously and militarily. Challenged to survive in the face of tireless foe, for the Spaniards, money-making became secondary. As a religious outpost facing hostile Protestant colonies, St. Augustine needed loyal Catholics. This need probably would have altered the religious treatment of slaves, who, given the Spanish fear of a Protestant-engineered uprising, needed the slaves to be as staunchly loyal to the Faith as their masters.

The fight against Protestantism and rival powers could not only be carried on with baptisms and a spirited singing of *Te Deum Laudamus*. In addition to spiritual needs, St. Augustine had very earthly ones. Manpower would always be an issue in St. Augustine. Manpower was needed in two different but interconnected ways: workers and soldiers.

The need for workers was also a need for people in general. St. Augustine was constantly in need of hands, so women and couples were prized. This emphasis on population expansion did not just mean Spaniards. It is quite clear that the colonial planners and later, the city fathers, were desirous of slaves to make up for any deficit of free Spanish people. The need for labor was also an issue, since labor shortages often had to be made up by utilizing soldiers. With such a scarcity of labor, there was a strong possibility that Africans and their descendents would have been valued more in St. Augustine than in other Spanish holdings. St. Augustine was on a tight budget and there were no slave ships arriving regularly to refresh their labor pool. Every able body would have been important to the effort.

Nowhere would this have proven more true than in the military. The first slaves brought to work on the fort helped alleviate the toll on the garrison's soldiers. Slave labor would have been important to keep Florida's warriors prepared to repel an enemy assault, but blacks in Spanish Florida would contribute more than just work. The need not only for laborers but also

soldiers also shaped the colony's treatment of slaves and freed-people. The authorities in Florida were keenly aware of their shortage of uniformed soldiery. They were more than willing to use their loyal subjects of African heritage to make up for this. What's more, once in uniform, Africans and African-descended men were, at least officially, treated as well as any other soldiers. They could ascend the ranks and become officers, and, once there, would be ransomed like any other captured officer if caught by enemies.

The experience of slaves and former slaves in St. Augustine would have been profoundly different from their counterparts in other parts of the Caribbean. Florida was a military and a religious border with a constant shortage of labor. These circumstances created an environment where Africans and their descendants took an active part in the Church and were capable of attaining status in the military. Even common laborers may have been treated better, since the death of a slave would mean a vacant position that would not be filled immediately.

The culmination of these factors can be seen in the founding of the fortified pueblo and free black settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose. Gracia Real's purpose was outlined clearly by the then-governor, D. Manuel Montiano. Montiano was inspired by a 1733 cedula that offered runaway English slaves their freedom. The governor planned to build a settlement with these blacks just north of St. Augustine. The Council of the Indias as well as the fiscal both offered their agreement, which appeared not only on the original letter but also in a response written on March 3, 1739.¹¹⁰

Montiano's proposal answered all the issues that were raised above. The thirty-eight men and their wives would create an outpost between St. Augustine and the English holdings. This

¹¹⁰ "Dispatches of the Spanish Officials Bearing on the Free Negro Settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, Florida," pgs 147, 176-8.

outpost would have a military aspect, as seen in its later fortification and the organization of the men into a fighting unit in 1756. The pueblo, Montiano assured his superiors, would be self-sufficient. Pueblo Mose was to grow its own foodstuffs, with only some borrowing before the first harvest. What's more, it was planned from the outset that the inhabitants of Gracia Real would be schooled in the Catholic faith. Governor Montiano proposed in a February 16, 1739 letter that one Dr. Joseph de Leon be sent to instruct the freedpeople on "doctrine and good customs." It is indicative of Spanish attitudes toward religion that in several documents concerning military matters, religion enters the picture as well. While the settlement was being organized into a military unit in 1756, the then-governor, Alonso Fernandez de Heredia saw fit to send a Franciscan along with the four cannon that the pueblo needed. This assignment was not mere window-dressing. Years later, the Bishop of Cuba showed an interest in how the residents of Gracia Real were faring spiritually, inquiring about them in a series of letters in late 1757.¹¹¹

What the Bishop must have found was a group of people who were, at least officially, participating in the Catholic faith. What he might also have been interested to see was that it was not just the parish priest or the Franciscan friar that led the slaves and freedpeople of the pueblo Mose and St. Augustine to the Church. The blacks themselves were agents in the conversion, very often playing a role in the religious lives of their fellow slaves or freedpeople.

Previous scholarship has emphasized Florida's role in the wider conflicts in the Americas going back to the original Borderlands scholarship as conceived by Bolton. Although I do not necessarily classify Florida in the same way that the older Spanish Borderlands theorists have, I nevertheless acknowledge the pivotal influence of this near-constant strategic and diplomatic feuding. In this manner, I have used the earlier scholarship of the area's military importance to

¹¹¹ Ibid., pgs 149, 193-5.

Spain in order to find the general mindset of St. Augustine's inhabitants as well as other factors that might have accounted for the integration of African-descended peoples.

CHAPTER FOUR: INFANT BAPTISM: AN ANALYSIS OF INTEGRATION AND POPULATION

Baptism and Religion

As Chapter Two demonstrated, there were any number of factors that influenced the lives and treatment of Africans and their descendants in Florida during the First Spanish Period. Perhaps the strongest evidence by far that slaves and freed-people were treated somewhat better than in English colonies (and in all likelihood, other Spanish colonies) is the influx of refugee slaves from Georgia and the Carolinas. One early baptism of such a man was Pablo, a slave of His Majesty, who was baptized in 1692 after his arrival in St. Augustine “to seek the Catholic Faith.”¹¹² Although Pablo may have had other reasons, his official purpose was to find what the priests of St. Augustine described as the “true faith.” Catholicism, therefore, had a major role in slaves’ and freed-people’s lives, whether or not they chose to believe in it.

The exact nature of this role is hard to determine. A purely pragmatic view would be that the slaves were using Catholicism as a means to barter for a better life. The request of baptism would certainly have appealed to the Spanish image of themselves as crusaders and missionaries. Such a view, though perhaps a bit cynical, would mean that Africans and their descendants were shrewd brokers of their own fate. This would demonstrate a grasp not only the Spanish attitude, but also of the wider geopolitical situation, namely the antagonism between the Englishmen and Spaniards on the North American frontier. Given the colonies’ militant nature, it seems likely that slaves would be quite cognizant of this: there probably would have been daily reminders.

¹¹² *Cathedral Parish Records, Baptisms: 1691-1722.*

This could have led to a very human response: maybe the grass *was* greener on the other side. Constant talk by their English masters about the Spanish to the south might have driven slaves to wonder what the enemy was like. A few might even have considered flight as a way not only to change their own lives but to punish their masters as well.

A more idealistic view would be that slaves were attracted not just by the possibility of a better life but because Catholicism appealed to their religious sensibilities. Some would undoubtedly consider this viewpoint a romanticizing of Spanish Catholicism or an idealization of the African-Spanish relationship in Florida. There is, however, a great deal of circumstantial evidence that would suggest religious ideas might have been as strong a pull as any other factor.

Perhaps the strongest argument for this would be the Church's treatment of slaves in St. Augustine. A single word, found in most baptisms, might sum up this concept: "legitimate." Church records¹¹³ would usually indicate that a slave child was the legitimate child of two slaves, or, quite often, a slave and a freed-person. This concept of legitimacy reveals what must have been an appealing aspect of Spanish Catholicism: the Church recognized the existence of slaves as human beings. Whatever the average Spaniard's opinion, the baptismal records treated slaves just about like any other Catholic. In fact, slave baptisms were recorded in the same book as their white masters up until 1736. Slaves married, slaves had children that were baptized, and slaves were interred with Catholic ceremony. For some, marriage would have been a strong draw. The Spanish quite obviously gave official recognition to slave marriages, given that late in

¹¹³ Unless otherwise noted, all of the church data herein comes from *Cathedral Parish Records, Baptisms: 1594-1649*, *Cathedral Parish Records, Baptisms: 1650-1690*, *Cathedral Parish Records, Baptisms: 1691-1722*, *Cathedral Parish Records, Baptisms: 1723-1745*, *Cathedral Parish Records, Baptisms: 1746-1763*, and *Cathedral Parish Records, Baptisms, Marriages, Interments: Pardos, Morenos, Indianos, Etc. 1736-1763*, all of which are found at the St. Augustine Historical Society Research Library. Prior to 1736, blacks and Indians were included in the regular rolls but after, with a few exceptions, they were put in a separate list, the record marked *Pardos, Morenos, Indianos, Etc.*

the First Spanish Period there are marriage records of such unions and in the earlier period baptized children were often described as 'legitimate' as opposed to 'natural.'¹¹⁴

Another important facet of religion in St. Augustine would have been its accessibility. In other colonies (including many Spanish holdings, such as Cuba), slaves were often on mega-plantations distant from any city or church. In Florida, slaves were most often urban dwellers in St. Augustine. Slaves in Cuba were often deliberately kept away from priests, which was easy in the deep countryside. Scholars have come to the conclusion that they were essentially left alone in matters of religion, lest their association with Catholicism lead to ideas of equality.¹¹⁵ Spanish Florida slaves, however, probably served as cooks, gardeners, and valets with a variety of chores around the city, since they usually served government bureaucrats and soldiers rather than planters. This would have been a far different treatment than life as a field hand. Since the slaves were in the city of St. Augustine, Mass would have been easy to attend. Although in the Caribbean, masters might have discouraged their slaves' religious interest, such a thing must have been difficult in St. Augustine, given the close proximity of the priests. The bare numbers of population reveal that priests must have been fairly accessible and that like in any small town, it probably would have been common knowledge what was going on in most households.

It is also important to recall the African worldview. While the worldview of the Protestant English was starkly monotheistic, the Spanish worldview was a vibrant hierarchy, thickly populated with saints, martyrs, and angels. The concept of a tiered cosmos with layers of entities between Man and God would have appealed to an African, at least more so than rigid

¹¹⁴ See *Cathedral Parish Records: Baptisms, Marriages, Interment: Pardos, Morenos, Indianos, Etc.: 1736-1763* for examples of slave marriages and any of the earlier baptismal records for the legitimate children of what must have been formally recognized marriages.

¹¹⁵ Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 24; Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories*, 74.

Protestantism. Even if one accepts the assertions of some Africanists that the original African worldview was not actually hierarchal in nature, the fact remains that African religions tended (and tend) to have a plethora of supernatural beings to contend with. Both the African and Spanish worldviews allowed for multiple supernatural entities, which indicates that they had some common ground. This idea has been thoroughly examined in the literature regarding Santería, in particular the changes and roles of the Yoruba *orishas* as they traveled to Cuba and became *santos*.¹¹⁶ Without a doubt, the “Lucumi” (Yoruba) who came to Cuba blended their religion with Spanish Catholicism. The success of this blend into the modern era suggests that the two faiths had common ground that was fertile enough for the growing of Santería.

Another aspect of Spanish Catholicism that would have encouraged Africans was its ceremonial nature. Toyin Falola discussed the ability of African cultures to modernize in his work *The Power of African Cultures*. Modernization was not simply the re-writing of an older religion, but also the ability to adapt one’s belief system to a new religion. The use of sacred objects in African religion both for religion and magic was often retained even after conversion to Christianity. Africans who had converted would simply use holy water, crucifixes, or other Christian paraphernalia in much the same way they had used sacred items of their traditional religion prior to conversion.¹¹⁷ The plethora of sacred items in Catholic culture would have been more familiar to Africans used to having physical objects and charms in their religious lives.

The physical artifacts of both religions would not have been the only outward sign of similarity. Although St. Augustine was a rather small parish, it still managed the requisite festivals, plays, and other pomp that were a regular part of church life for Spaniards of the time.

¹¹⁶ Brandon, 76; Harry G. Lefever, “When the Saints Go Riding In: Santería in Cuba and the United States,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 35, no. 3 (September 1996): 320; Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, 33.

¹¹⁷ Toyin Falola, *The Power of African Cultures*, Rochester, NY, University of Rochester Press, 2003: 210 & 212.

The public and ceremonial nature of these displays might have seemed familiar to Africans. In Africa, many groups had (and continue to have) well-documented public ceremonies with religious overtones, such as the Egungun Society, in which the members paraded in special masks to remind people of their ancestors. In St. Augustine, Africans and their descendants would watch the Spanish engage in the *autos sacramentales*, in which parishioners would act out biblical scenes just outside the church for certain feast days.¹¹⁸

How much Africans and their descendants accepted Catholicism is a question that can probably never be answered. What can be certain, however, is that Catholicism acted both as a draw for English slaves and an integrating mechanism for slaves and freed-people, whether born in Florida, the English colonies, or Africa. The level of integration is difficult to discern, given the sparse primary source documentation of everyday life in Spanish Florida. Religious documents, however, offer a glimpse at how, at least on the surface, Africans and their descendants were attempting to integrate into Spanish society. Through these documents, one begins to see a pattern of assimilation, as adults become baptized, have their marriages legitimized, and in turn baptize their children.

Baptisms are one of several ways to gauge the relative integration of Africans and their descendants into Spanish culture. Baptisms carried a great deal of meaning, particularly for adults, who were schooled and tested before they could receive the holy waters. Even the baptisms of children are telling, however, since they might also represent an attempt by the parents to accept Catholicism. For the purposes of this chapter, the baptisms of infants will be looked at in a quantitative manner (with some observations beyond the numbers). Later, adult baptisms will be analyzed qualitatively. In addition to offering a look at integration, the

¹¹⁸ Brandon, 14-15. For Spanish Catholicism as manifested in St. Augustine, see Kapitze, 16-7.

baptisms also offer a glimpse at the growth of the slave and later, free population of St. Augustine. These population changes highlight the way in which life must have been altered for those of African descent as the colony matured.

Before any discussion of numbers can take place, some explanation is needed. Adult baptism, which will be studied later, is something of a misnomer. The Spanish very often considered the baptism of a ten year old to be an ‘adult’ baptism. This is because children older than infants had to attend classes and receive religious instruction before they could be baptized.¹¹⁹ For this reason, ‘adult baptism,’ for the purposes of this paper actually indicates a non-infant baptism.

Another important term that requires background explanation is race. Concepts of race in this period tended to be fluid. The Spanish had any number of terms for their African-descended slaves and freed-people. They did not simply call anyone with African blood ‘black,’ any more than they called anyone with Spanish blood ‘white.’ There were different terms for people of different racial mixes. They also paid attention to variations in skin tone. These color designations, such as ‘negro,’ ‘moreno,’ and ‘pardo’ did not have anything to do with ethnicity or background. Instead, they were simply a statement of the person’s outward appearance, like describing hair color. This can be seen in the fact that several slaves were designated moreno or pardo and were from Africa, while others with these designations were described as natives of the province and were the result of mixed marriages. Since skin color is a rather subjective thing, these terms were by no means concrete, leaving much to the eye of the beholder. They were not even consistent when used by a single person. Several times, a certain priest would

¹¹⁹ In many adult baptisms have a note that says “Having been examined in the Christian doctrine...” in it, such as the baptism of Joseph, a slave of Don Juan Joseph Elixio de la Puente in 1758 from *Cathedral Parish Records: Baptisms, Marriages, Interment: Pardos, Morenos, Indianos, Etc.: 1736-1763*.

describe a person as 'moreno' only to call the same person 'negro' later. This shows that the concept of skin color was probably dependent on the person's attitude or perception that recorded it, or perhaps even on the lighting of the room where it was recorded!

When dealing with race, the Spanish had rather specific terms for people of mixed ancestry. The most commonly heard terms today are mulatto (Spanish *mulato* or *mulata*, which will be used from here on) and 'mestizo.' Black and white parents and white and Indian parents were not the only people to have children. When someone of African descent had a child with an Indian, the Spanish referred to the child as a 'chino,' which should not be confused with the other, more modern term 'Chino,' which denotes someone of Chinese descent. Obviously, the Spanish did not use Mandarin slaves to build their Florida colonies in the 1600s.

Since this study deals with concepts of religious and cultural integration, it should not be surprising that the descendants of Africans mingled with people of other cultures. Some of the people in this study may not have considered themselves African in the least. This is nearly impossible to determine, however. For simplicity, and to find a larger pattern, this study includes anyone who was recorded as being of African descent. Sometimes, this would mean a person with only one African grandparent. Much of the time, however, a person was either from Africa or was descended directly from people who were themselves from Africa. Another common pattern was the marriage of two mulatos, so that the children, though removed by a generation from their African heritage, would have been exposed to it from both sides of their family.

Another rather nebulous concept to deal with is slavery. Although it may seem clear-cut to modern people now, slavery came in degrees. Often, both parents of a child were slaves. This was not always the case, however. There is an interesting number of babies born in this period

that have the father listed as ‘unknown’ yet have a white soldier for a godfather, indicating that there may have been an informal relationship between the mother and the godfather. Other times, one parent might be free while the other was a slave. For the purposes of this study, if either of the parents was a slave, the baptism was listed under the slave baptisms, unless the record specifically identified the child as free. The child of a slave raised in the household of a master would probably have been under similar influences as a slave child in regards to religion as well as other factors. To complicate matters further, many of the refugees from the English colonies were taken in and identified as ‘servants,’ and were therefore nominally ‘free,’ being assigned to various households for “religious instruction.” A 1752 letter discussing this issue indicates that this was controversial: it was well known that in other colonies, citizens had distributed natives for “religious instruction” in order to make them de facto slaves, despite the Crown’s desire that these same natives remain free. In the issue of fugitives from English colonies, the Spanish monarch made it clear that the runaways were to be free men and women. Because they were nominally free, in the lists of baptisms, the servants have been included under the freed-people, even though their existence may have been anything but. This emphasizes, however, the need to look at trends in St. Augustine holistically, rather than by social status. For freedmen and ‘servants,’ life might not have been that different from the slaves. Although attention has been paid to the difference between slave and free, for much of this study, the descendants of Africans are analyzed together, in bondage and liberty.

The history of black baptisms essentially starts in 1606 with a baby of African descent, christened Agustin.¹²⁰ It was a fitting name for one the first boys born in San Agustin. Though the fortress-colony had already been in existence for over forty years, children must have seemed

¹²⁰ *Cathedral Parish Records: Baptisms, 1594-1649.*

precious, given the high number of soldiers and the low number of married couples. Indeed, women in general were scarce in the colony, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Baby Agustin represents the beginning of an era. This thesis will divide the First Spanish Period into several smaller, more manageable eras or phases. The first era is perhaps the easiest to delineate. Obviously, it begins with Agustin in 1606, because this is the first black baptism. It ends in 1655, when a plague struck Florida and quite possibly decimated the slave population.¹²¹ Given that the garrison's slave population (as well as, in most likelihood, the rest of their population) had to recover after the plague, one can almost treat later periods as starting from scratch. The next two areas are some what arbitrary. The second phase will be 1656-1700, a stretch of years with less documentation about slaves. The final era will be 1701-1763. It has slightly better documentation, covering from the beginning of the century until St. Augustine was surrendered peacefully to the English, thus ending the First Spanish Period.

Population Trends and Infant Baptism

Within the first phase, 1606-1655, it is difficult to get a precise number in relation to the presidio's population. Sources are few and far between, often relating to the number of soldiers rather than overall denizens. This is to be expected, given St. Augustine's martial purpose. Despite this, a picture does emerge in relation to population. The scholar John Dunkle used baptismal records¹²² in combination with muster rolls and other documents to form an educated guess as to how many people lived in St. Augustine at various periods.

¹²¹ John R. Dunkle, "Population Change As An Element In the Historical Geography of St. Augustine," in *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Volume 37, July 1958, 5.

¹²² It should be noted that he used the same parish records that are used in this study. It should be remembered that the Spanish priests were meticulous record-keepers and that these are the best surviving documents relating to

Dunkle posited that in 1607 there were between three and five hundred souls. This number did not seem to change much over the next few decades, since the *dotacion* in 1638 listed three hundred. Dunkle mentions a 1647 source that puts the number of “residents” at around three hundred as well, but Dunkle considered this to be a bit low. If one accepts Dunkle’s theories, then St. Augustine’s population between 1606 and 1655 hovered somewhere between three and five hundred persons. Interestingly, the number of slaves is easier to calculate, given that they were often owned by the King and therefore entered on property lists. In 1604, the number of “negroes” was put at thirty, but as mentioned in previous chapters, there were a series of requests for more slaves to work on the fort. Over a decade later, in 1619, the number of blacks had only increased to thirty-six, which is not surprising since many of the slaves mentioned in 1604 were getting on in years and the new slaves were meant to replace them.¹²³

This early phase’s religious dialogue is easy to imagine. The garrison was in a constant state of construction with a limited presence of slaves to aid in the work. At any given time, there was probably only about thirty slaves, so they were a small group. They would baptize their children at mostly the same rate as the Spanish, but overall baptisms per person would be higher. This is due to the fact that many adult slaves had not yet been baptized and would seek baptism eventually. The close proximity of the priest would mean that there could be an active interest in the religious life of the slaves, who were, after all, ten percent of his flock.

Life in this early colony was probably not comfortable for either slave or Spaniard. Florida was a humid wilderness far from any other colony. There was a lot of work to be done:

population in St. Augustine. Dunkle did, however, draw on other documents as well, some of which I did not have access to.

¹²³ Ibid., 5.

buildings, fortifications, and agriculture would have to be thrown up at a near-frantic pace.

Although the colony was several decades old by the 1600s, the fort would be built and rebuilt to meet changing needs. Ironically enough, the history of a colony that would become the home of so many fugitive English slaves began with its own slaves fleeing: in December of 1603, a number of the presidio's bondsmen decamped into the Florida wilderness.¹²⁴

In a 1604 discussion of slaves, there were a total of thirty, of which "seven were men too old to work and nine were women." This is probably similar to the makeup of the larger population in the colony, although it is possible that there was a slightly better ratio of women to men among the African population. Given the military nature, men would always outnumber women there.

If the total population between 1606 and 1655 is put between three and five hundred and the slaves numbered a little over thirty, then the slaves accounted for ten percent or less of the population. In this first era, there were one thousand and eighty-four total baptisms. Of these, there were one hundred and sixty baptisms of people of African descent. This accounts for well over ten percent. To determine if African-descended families were living like Spanish-descended families, however, infant baptisms must be examined, not adult. Obviously, no Spanish adults were baptized at St. Augustine. In this period, forty-nine of the baptisms were adult. Remove these, and the figure of regular black baptisms now falls to one hundred and ten, which is close to ten percent of one thousand and thirty-five.

Given that the number of slaves was only around thirty and the total population was between three and five hundred, then it would seem to indicate that the black population actually

¹²⁴Susan Richbourg Parker, "1603—Slaves Flee St. Augustine," from *El Escribano*, Vol. 41, St. Augustine Florida: the St. Augustine Historical Society, 2004: pp. 1-8.

had a *higher* rate of baptism than the wider population! Given Spanish sensibilities, it is unlikely that slaves baptized their infants more often. Any Spanish infant born in this period would receive baptism, so one can assume that every infant baptism in this period is a one-to-one ratio for births. This would seem to indicate that there may have been a disproportionately high number of African-descended women of child-bearing age. This is not surprising, given the difficulty that the Adelantado and later, the city fathers, had in bringing over Spanish women. Slave women had very little say in where they ended up, so the authorities would have found it easier to bring in slave women and use them in their attempt to swell the population. Dunkle's sources of the period indicate that in 1604, there were between five and nine women among the royal slaves. Given that black infants accounted for a slightly higher proportion of the overall baptisms than matched the slave population, it would seem that there was either a slightly better women-to-man ratio among the slaves or else a higher rate of births among slaves.

Whatever the reason, the records seem to indicate that the slaves had their children baptized, which indicates a certain level of integration, either by choice or force. Given the numbers, it seems probable that slaves had the same tendency to baptize as their European masters, so that one can assume a one-to-one baptism-to-birth ratio. It is hard to ascertain what exactly this meant. There would have been a lot of pressure on black parents to baptize their infant, whether they wanted to or not. On the other hand, optimistic parents might have seen the rite of baptism as a way to put a black infant on par with a Spanish infant. A baptized baby of African-descent would be raised as a Catholic, attending Mass just like any other resident and becoming, from the beginning, a member of the parish and community, perhaps guaranteeing some level of respect, even if they held the status of slave socially.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember when considering the numbers in this first phase of slave baptism is how small the slave population was. By the accounts that Dunkle used, there were only about nine slave women at any given time. Although this may have possibly meant a higher ratio of women to men than the European colonists, it was still small: men still outnumbered women by at least two to one. The baptisms of this time were sparse, both for the Europeans and the Africans.

The highest total infant baptisms in a year during this period was thirty-one, which occurred twice: in 1630 and 1647. The lowest number of infant baptisms was nine a year, which again had a tie between two years: 1616 and 1643. The average number of total infant baptisms a year was just over twenty. The slave population, meanwhile, stayed at about ten percent. Several years did not see a single black infant baptism (1616, 1624-5, 1632, 1642, and 1650), while the highest number of baptisms in a year was six, occurring in 1621. The average for this phase of the First Spanish Period was only a little over two black baptisms a year. Again, if one assumes a one-to-one baptism-to-birth ratio, then the population of St. Augustine had little or no growth in this period, especially when one considers the high infant mortality rate of the time. This would explain the letters from the authorities in St. Augustine requesting more slaves as well as colonists: the trickle of infant births could not possibly make up for the punishing attrition on the adult population.

It should also be noted that in this early phase, free black infants were exceedingly rare. Most of the population (as seen in Dunkle's figures) that were black were also slaves. The St. Augustine community, especially given its small slave population, had not yet had time to develop a population of ambiguous race that would be found later. In spite of the fact that in the future, St. Augustine would have a somewhat healthy community of freed-people, at this

juncture most of the people of African descent were still in bondage. It is difficult to determine if any of the baptisms were of free infants. There were only five possible for the entire period of 1606-1655. Several of the infants were described as ‘pardo,’ ‘parda,’ ‘morena,’ or ‘mulata’ rather than as slaves. Because every other ‘negro,’ ‘pardo,’ or ‘moreno’ baptism of the period describes the recipient as a slave and is careful to mention a master, it is probable that these five were born free.

The period following the plague outbreak is rather murky. It can be viewed as 1656-1700, and is difficult to draw conclusions about. In the 1700s, documentation becomes clearer and better conclusions may be drawn. In addition, the first runaways from the Carolinas would begin to get baptized in the 1690s, heralding a new era in St. Augustine. Cimaroons from their English neighbors would swell their ranks and change the religious dialogue by adding a new voice. There are some documents for this shadowy period before 1700, but none so clear as the period following 1700. Dunkle posits that there were probably six hundred permanent residents in St. Augustine during 1679, based on the *dotacion*, which often included payments to widows and non-soldiers. Slaves were not discussed. What is certain is that St. Augustine’s population was growing. In 1685 the English attacked again and an eye witness reported that some fourteen hundred souls found refuge within the fort, which included women and children.¹²⁵

During this transitional period, there were around sixteen hundred and thirteen baptisms. Of these, two hundred and fourteen were slave or freed-people of African descent. As before, a good number were adult baptisms: fifty-eight. Remove the adult baptisms and the number of infants baptized is around one hundred and fifty: a little less than ten percent. Because the number of slaves in this period is unavailable, it is hard to discern what this might mean.

¹²⁵ Dunkle, 6-7.

Perhaps the number dipped below ten percent during the plague. What is clear is that the epidemic of 1655 struck the surrounding Indians rather hard and affected the town as well, but it is difficult to tell if this meant a complete annihilation of the slave population or if it simply meant the population as a whole was damaged equally. Whatever the result, the city fathers of St. Augustine continued to request more slaves in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Towards the end of the century, runaways from the English colonies began to appear on the baptismal rolls in small numbers, a prelude to the population boost that was to come.

The decline in population can be seen in the baptisms immediately following 1655. In 1656, there were only seven baptisms, of which two were black. The next year, there were only five baptisms, only one of which was a slave. The next year, the number of infants increased substantially, however, showing that the population was beginning to rebound. 1658 had twenty-eight infant baptisms, of which three were slaves. As mentioned earlier, Dunkle's sources did not include a discussion of the slave population between 1656 and 1700. It is hard to tell how quickly the slave population was able to rebound. Going off of the baptismal rolls, it is obvious that the slave population was not replenished through births but an influx of adult slaves. Black infant baptisms did not change much during this period, matching the total population's slight increase. The overall population's average infant baptism rate increased to nearly thirty-five a year, while the black infant baptism rate raised to a little over three a year.

The plague of 1655 apparently had a negative effect on population, given the decline of 1656 and 1657. After a time, however, it did not drastically change the population increases or the religious dialogue that would continue in the latter part of the century.

Given that the rate of infant baptisms stayed more or less the same, it seems likely that the dialogue continued more or less the same as the earlier period and that the slave population

probably stayed about ten percent of the wider community. If this was the case, it would mean that the St. Augustine slave population of this period was probably between sixty and one-hundred and sixty, but this is purely speculative, given that there are no records concerning the slave or freed population of this time. This assumes that because the baptism rates continue similarly to the earlier phase, the slave population remained a similar percentage of the overall population.

It would be important to note that during this phase one sees the beginning of a free black population. Whereas the 1606-1655 period had only six possible free baptisms, of which five were infant, the 1656-1700 period would see thirty-seven possibly free black baptisms. As with the earlier period, it is unclear how many of these were truly free. This is not only because the concept of freedom is tricky, given the power of the Spanish colonial masters, but also because the priests were not always clear about the social status of a baptismal recipient. In this era, a number of the recipients of baptism were identified concretely as free, such as baby Luisa, who was identified as a “free morena” during her baptism in 1672, or little Maria Manuela, a “free parda” baptized in 1687. In 1688, there were sixteen baptisms that were not identified as either slave or free. It is possible they were slaves and the priests neglected to identify them as such, just as it is also possible that they were freed-people. What is certain is that the free population was beginning to increase, because even if one removes the sixteen ambiguous persons, that would be an increase from six free baptisms in the fifty years between 1606-1655 to twenty-one in the forty-five years between 1656 and 1700.

Beginning in the late 1600s, the religious dialogue and social structure of St. Augustine began to change radically. St. Augustine had always been a rather cosmopolitan place: in 1607, the musters reported the presence of “twenty-eight Portuguese, six Germans, twenty Frenchmen,

and two Flemish.”¹²⁶ Starting in the late 1600s, former English slaves entered the mix. Although the Spanish were leery of any remaining Protestant taint, on a whole, they probably did not mind assimilating yet another group of foreigners into their town, given the presence of so many different nationalities. It was also around 1700 that they began to allow white English Catholics to settle in St. Augustine.¹²⁷ In 1692 and after, there were many people identified as having left English colonies to come to St. Augustine for baptism. It is likely, however, that refugee slaves had already been in St. Augustine by the 1680s, given the high number of slaves that had “of the English nation” in their baptismal description in 1681 and after.

The final era of the First Spanish Period in Florida began, interestingly, with several decades of stagnation. Dunkle’s research seemed to indicate that in 1690, St. Augustine’s population had hit a peak of about 1,175, but that this number declined to eight hundred by 1710. Despite this slow beginning, the next fifty years were marked by a tripling of the population. In 1702, a raid by the English, though unfortunate for the inhabitants, proved a boon for historians. Commentary at the time gives a figure as to how many people sought refuge in the Castillo: over one thousand. Similarly, another unfortunate event gives an excellent tally: Florida’s loss to the English after the 1763 Treaty of Paris. This led to the evacuation of St. Augustine and a thorough description of the presidio’s population.

The stagnation of the colony and the pressures of war were obvious in the baptismal records: in 1703 the priest only baptized seventeen infants that year. The black population was no different: only one black infant was baptized in 1703. Many of the baptisms in early 1703 were performed inside the Castillo de San Marcos, where the presidio’s denizens had to seek

¹²⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 6.

shelter during a prolonged English assault. The hardships of 1702-3 probably meant a high mortality rate of adults. With several hundred residents and all of their beasts in a small confined space, disease was probably rampant. The proximity of so many people and animals, combined with the constant threat of death, may have discouraged other human habits that influence birthrate as well.

The evacuation of 1763, meanwhile, offers evidence concerning population numbers as well as a strong reminder that St. Augustine was an ethnically-mixed community: twenty-four Germans and two hundred and forty-six Canary Islanders were among those to leave, in addition to the expected African-descended peoples and, of course, Catholic Indians (who had been preyed on by native allies of the English and less-than enthused to remain under British rule). Dunkle quotes two different sources. One put the population at 3,104 while another had it at 3,005. Most important to this study, the number of slaves and freed-people were also tallied. The Pueblo Mose counted eighty-seven free blacks, while the city of St. Augustine still had three hundred and three slaves of African descent. As with earlier periods, it would seem that the slave and freed-person population hovered just above ten percent. It should be noted that the inhabitants of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose are included in the presidio's overall population, both in the original documents and in this thesis. This is logical because they often fled to St. Augustine during attacks, they had strong social ties there, and, most importantly, they often came there for religious purposes.¹²⁸

The evacuation's effect on baptisms was obvious. There were only seventy-nine infant baptisms in 1763. This was the first time that the number of infant baptisms dipped below one

¹²⁸ Ibid., 7; Also in the baptismal records, several recipients of baptism are described as a "resident of Mose," such as Joseph, a moreno freedman who received baptism in 1756, found in *Cathedral Parish Records: Baptisms, Marriages, Interment: Pardos, Morenos, Indianos, Etc.: 1736-1763*.

hundred in a year since 1755. There were only three black infant baptisms. In contrast, the adult baptisms boomed: there were forty-six slave or freed baptisms in 1763; this was probably a precautionary measure to save souls before the long and dangerous journey ahead.

The most significant aspect of this phase is the massive increase in the number of adult baptisms. This is due almost entirely to the burgeoning flow of refugees from the English colonies to the north. As mentioned previously, this unique part of the dialogue will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter Four. There were four hundred and sixty-five adult baptisms of slave or freedmen in the 1701-1763 period, which must be removed before the infant baptisms can be looked at. Without these adult baptisms, the total infant baptisms for the period is 4,173. Among African-descended people, there were five hundred and sixty-four infant baptisms. The number of black infants born in this final period rose to thirteen and a half percent of the total infant baptisms.

In the phase between the plague outbreak and the turn of the century, the average number of infant baptisms was thirty-five. In the final phase of St. Augustine's First Spanish Period, which here is treated as 1701-1763, the average infant baptism rate (and thus probably the birthrate) shot up to sixty-six a year. The birthrate of African-descended infants, meanwhile, rose to around nine a year, an impressive increase from the three a year that was average in the 1656-1700 period.

Overall, the Spanish authorities seemed to take a greater interest in populating St. Augustine in the mid 1700s. The Spanish began to bring in Canary Islanders by the 1740s. This new policy, combined with the obvious demographic increase since 1710 would seem to indicate that the city-fathers of the Eighteenth Century finally got what the original founders had desired: women, and, by extension, children. It seems likely that the wider population began to have

more women of appropriate age and was therefore having more children. Of the final figure leaving St. Augustine, five hundred and fifty-one people were military. There were also five hundred and eighty-two women that were listed as members of military families. These probably included not only wives, but grown daughters, widows, and other dependents that were somehow tied to the military. These numbers may mean that St. Augustine was finally on its way to becoming a self-sustaining population when it was dissolved.¹²⁹

At least part of this success was due to the new Spanish enthusiasm for black vassals. The policy of welcoming refugees from the English colonies brought not only more men to work or even fight for the Spanish, but also more women. Quite often, these women had children once they arrived in St. Augustine, but a few even braved the flight from Carolina with children in tow! There are at least three cases of a family bringing their children along during their escape to freedom: the parents of Joseph Geronimo, a five year old, the parents of Maria Margarita, a two and a half year old, and the parents of Juan Joseph, a one and a half year old! Numerous other baptisms list both parents as being from the “English Nation” or Carolina.¹³⁰

It is important to note that the Pueblo Mose was founded north of St. Augustine in this era. Jane Landers has suggested that Gracia Real would have offered a way for Spain to use the refugee slaves as a buffer against the English while simultaneously keeping them out of the regular population. There may have been worries that the slaves’ time among the Protestant English could have tainted them. Rather than allow this taint to spread, Landers’ work suggests that they set up a colony that was close enough to monitor but not close enough to be a

¹²⁹ Ibid., 7-8.

¹³⁰ Juan Joseph was baptized November 5, 1747, Maria Margarita January 1, 1748, and Joseph Geronimo on March 1, 1762, all can be located in *Cathedral Parish Records: Baptisms, Marriages, Interment: Pardos, Morenos, Indianos, Etc.: 1736-1763*.

danger.¹³¹ There seems to be, however, every indication that the residents of the Pueblo Mose continued to follow Catholicism. They had their own resident curate, Don Agustin Geronimo, as evidenced by his appearance in the baptismal rolls. This proves especially ironic, because Don Agustin Geronimo, while ministering to freed-people in what has been called a ‘Black Fortress of Freedom,’ owned a slave.¹³²

While refugees from Carolina offered an addition to the population, the Spanish were also busy swelling their numbers with African slaves. It seems that there were probably several shipments of slaves to St. Augustine in the decades leading up to 1763. In 1760, there were a number of adult slave baptisms. Twelve of these were listed as being from the ‘nation of Mandinga.’ The high number of ‘Mandingas’ in that year seems to suggest that at some point in the previous years, there was probably a group of slaves brought to St. Augustine and sold to the citizenry. Whereas in the earlier parts of St. Augustine’s history, most of the residents only had a few slaves baptized at a time, the 1750s and ‘60s saw a number of ‘mass baptisms’ that seem to indicate several citizens were acquiring numerous slaves at a time. The governor of Florida in the early 1750s, Don Fulgencio Garcia Soliz, had ten slaves baptized in 1753-4. Don Juan Joseph Elixio de La Puente, meanwhile, had twenty-two slaves baptized between 1750 and the evacuation in 1763. This would explain how the slave population reached over three hundred by the colony’s end in 1763.

¹³¹ Jane Landers, “Social Control on Spain’s Contested Florida Frontier,” from *Choice, Persuasion, and Coercion: Social Control On Spain’s North American Frontiers*, edited by Jesús F. de la Teja and Ross Frank, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005: 31-4.

¹³² Her name was Rafael Maria de Santa Theresa de Jesus and she was baptized in late 1762. Kathleen Deagan and Darcie MacMahon coauthored *Fort Mose: Colonial America’s Black Fortress of Freedom*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995).

'In Necessity' Infant Baptisms

Another interesting demonstration of culture in St. Augustine was the baptism *in necessity*. An 'in necessity' baptism was performed when the life of the person was believed in danger. Because of this, it was often given in the home of the recipient rather than at a church and was often performed by a layman rather than a priest. The baptismal rolls are filled with the names of those who gave in necessity baptisms. Physicians sometimes gave the baptism, such as Doctor Don Juan Francisco, who gave an emergency baptism to a baby named Francisca in 1728.¹³³ More often, however, the midwife or the man who would become the child's godfather did.

Through the records, it is possible to see who the midwives of St. Augustine were in a given period. These midwives also tended the needs of the slaves and so played a role in the lives of African descended people and infants. An example of this can be seen in Ana Tobal¹³⁴ (possibly Toval), a midwife who was active between 1735 and 1756 in the records. Ana Tobal baptized over half a dozen infants, both African and European descended when she feared their lives were in jeopardy. This seems to indicate that the midwives of St. Augustine, in addition to being active participants in Catholicism, also served the needs of both master and slave.

Midwives were not the ones concerned with the salvation of infants. A number of officers can be found in the baptismal rolls as well. This should come as no surprise, given the presidio's militant nature and the omnipresence of soldiers in the colony. In 1680, a black infant named Juan Francisco was baptized by Captain Alonso de Arguelles.¹³⁵

¹³³ *Cathedral Parish Records: Baptisms, 1723-1745.*

¹³⁴ *Cathedral Parish Records: Baptisms, 1723-1745: September 11, 1735; Cathedral Parish Records: Baptisms, 1746-1763: 1750-6; Cathedral Parish Records: Baptisms, Marriages, Interment: Pardos, Morenos, Indianos, Etc.: 1736-1763: 1750-1.*

¹³⁵ *Cathedral Parish Records: Baptisms, 1650-1690.*

The presence of soldiers, midwives, and doctors of European descent in the baptismal records seems to demonstrate the active role that whites around the slave or freed-person played. The Africans and African descendants in St. Augustine were literally immersed in Spanish culture, surrounded by Catholics who would exert pressure for them to conform. These Catholics, as seen above, would have considered it their duty to baptize frail infants (and, as seen later in Chapter Four, frail adults). This sense of duty might not have stopped at birth: quite often, Spaniards and floridanos acted as sponsors for African infants, which nominally meant they would continue to watch over their religious instruction. The weight of the in necessity baptism can be seen in the fact that many of the people who performed an in necessity baptism for an infant became the infant's godfather. These were quite often people who were not the slave's master, but played a role in their lives nonetheless.

In the first period of our study, 1606-1655, there were only four in necessity black baptisms, all of them performed on adults. There were also three in necessity baptisms for European-descended infants. It seems unlikely that none of the African infants born in this period were sickly, so it is probable that there were 'in necessity' that the priest neglected to record. The 1656-1700 phase had fifteen in necessity baptisms of African-descended infants, while the number in the 1700s shot up to over eighty. Clearly, the Spanish culture's perception of baptism's importance extended to their African slaves and freed-people.

Conclusions

The overall infant baptism figures seem to agree with earlier theories and documents concerning the slave and freed population in St. Augustine. Before 1700, the black population

was around ten percent. Following 1700, St. Augustine saw an increase in the total population which also corresponded with an increase in the percentage of slaves and freed-people.

The numbers of infant baptism demonstrate a tendency towards integration into Spanish culture among slaves and freed-people while they were living in St. Augustine. Given the continuation of baptisms after the founding of Gracia Real, it seems likely that this trend extended to the new pueblo. This integration was no doubt fueled by the close proximity of their Spanish masters and patrons, whose sense of duty towards their vassals' religious lives can be seen in the frequent use of in necessity baptisms on African infants. Simply put, the proximity of the clergy in St. Augustine, plus the type of slavery and the militant nature of the presidio created an environment that encouraged cultural and religious integration. This is seen in the rate of infant baptisms. Previous scholarship has not usually analyzed baptism as an integration tool. What little Spanish Florida slave historiography has focused what slave culture was like, the life of slaves, and the importance of the Gracia Real settlement. Chapter Three has established that at least on paper, Africans and their descendents in Spanish Florida were getting baptized and participating at least minimally in the religion of the Spanish.

Now, to determine how appealing Spanish Catholicism was to the slaves is difficult. The pressure to baptize infants would have been particularly strong, culturally and socially. In addition, it is also possible that Spanish authorities intimidated their vassals into baptism. Although there is no evidence of it occurring in St. Augustine, in Mexico, the Spanish authorities had been known to seize the children of people who refused to convert in order to insure the child's spiritual welfare. This tradition went all the way back to the 7th Century in Spain, when it

was employed against Jewish families.¹³⁶ Perhaps the best way to gauge how slaves and freed-people felt about Catholicism is through the rite of baptism: this time, as adults rather than infants, when some measure of participation was needed by the person seeking baptism.

¹³⁶ Pardo, Osvaldo F., *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism: Nahua Rituals and Christian Sacraments in Sixteenth-Century Mexico*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007: 28-9.

CHAPTER FIVE: BAPTISMS, CONFIRMATIONS, AND SPONSORSHIP: THE PARTICIPATION OF AFRICAN-DESCENDED PEOPLE

On March 31, 1761, a small group of men gathered in an informal manner for an important ceremony. They may have met at the church or they may have met at the house of Don Juan Eligio de la Puente, a wealthy St. Augustine resident. They may even have met at the docks. Wherever they assembled, the reason was clear: an African slave called Domingo was leaving St. Augustine. The waters around Florida had always been infested by pirate bands and thrashed by hurricanes. Travel in this period was somewhat dangerous, to say the least. Someone involved, knowing the hazards that Domingo would face, sought baptism to ease his mind during the long voyage.

It is impossible to know, of course, if Domingo desired baptism, or if he did so grudgingly. He is, prior to 1763, somewhat unique in the baptismal rolls. Many adults received quick baptisms when it appeared they might expire from illness. Domingo, however, received his baptism “solemnly, without ceremony” because he was “embarking” rather than because he was on his deathbed. The priest, Father Joseph Solana, did not record why Domingo was leaving St. Augustine, so it is uncertain if he was sold or if perhaps he was being sent to serve on a ship. His master, Don Juan Eligio de la Puente, had many slaves baptized over the years leading up to the evacuation.

Domingo’s departure and the attending baptism were to be repeated many times in St. Augustine. Two years later, when Florida was surrendered to the British, there was a flurry of baptisms for evacuees on their way to Cuba. In the last year of the First Spanish Period, 1763, forty-six adults received baptism. In comparison, 1762 had only ten adult baptisms. It would

seem that someone in St. Augustine was concerned about the fate of the many slaves and freed-people that were embarking that year. None of these recipients of baptism were identified as ‘in necessity,’ but in many ways, they were. Fearing that they might die in transit, the priests and perhaps the recipients wished to ensure that they would at least have the succor of baptism. Along these same lines there were two slaves that received baptism in 1741, Salvador and Getrudes, who were baptized “in necessity and in danger of the enemies,” presumably during one of the many periods of fighting around St. Augustine. As with Domingo, it is impossible to determine how these people felt toward their adopted religion. What is certain is that the Spanish clergy and quite possibly the Spanish authorities thought it was important that they be baptized.

Domingo and the 1763 evacuees are indicative of the complex nature of religion. It is obvious that in these cases, baptism was not just an integration tool. It was viewed as something positive, even vital, to the welfare of the individual receiving baptism.

Despite the fact that baptism was considered important for other reasons, it is important to remember that other purposes did not necessarily exclude its use as an integration tool. The Spanish authorities in St. Augustine could very easily have looked at Catholicism in a militaristic fashion, as a unifier to keep the presidio cohesive in the face of physical danger. This probably would not detract, however, from their opinion that they were doing their African and Indian vassals a service by taking them into what they considered the ‘true faith.’

This need to unify the residents would have been important. St. Augustine was a remote presidio on a hostile frontier. It was also a small town with a small population. This population was a racial and cultural mix, with people from three different continents and dozens of countries. The baptismal rolls are full of examples of the many nationalities to be found in St.

Augustine. In 1744, for example, a French woman called Maria Vathalina had her Caravali slave Maria Antonia baptized by the local priest. The baptismal roll described Maria Vathalina as a “resident of this city,” even though she was French.¹³⁷ This cultural mix was typical of St. Augustine. As mentioned previously, a 1607 description of foreigners listed “twenty-eight Portuguese, six Germans, twenty Frenchmen, and two Flemish.”¹³⁸ Later baptisms would include Canary Islanders, Germans, Scots, Irishmen, and Englishmen in addition to Indians and Africans. Meanwhile, the slave population was no more homogenous. Due to the Spanish habit of identifying the “nation” of origin, it is possible through the baptismal rolls to see that the African population was just as varied as the European. The rolls list slaves as being ‘Arara,’ ‘Carabali,’ ‘Angola,’ ‘Congo,’ ‘Mina,’ and others. Although these terms were largely created by the Spanish, they do represent linguistic as well as cultural differences that existed among the African population. In addition to European and African ethnicities, there were also the local indigenous peoples to consider. Even among those who would be considered Spanish, there were distinctions. The *peninsulares* (those born on the Iberian Peninsula) were often identified by their native province, while the local-born people of Spanish descent were referred to as *floridanos*. In order for St. Augustine to function as a garrison and a community, there needed to be some sort of element to meld the varied peoples into a cohesive group. This element, without a doubt, was Roman Catholicism. As Kapitze stated, “foreignness there [St. Augustine] was measured by religious adherence rather than by nationality or race.”¹³⁹

¹³⁷ *Cathedral Parish Records, Baptisms, Marriages, Interments: Pardos, Morenos, Indianos, Etc. 1736-1763.*

¹³⁸ Dunkle, 5.

¹³⁹ Kapitze, 9.

Adult Baptism and Confirmation

The best way to analyze this is through active religious participation. It is the aim of this chapter to discuss the many instances and forms of active adult religious participation by African-descended peoples in St. Augustine as well as the role of Spanish ecclesiastical and secular authorities in that participation. Obviously, the earlier discussion of infant baptisms was, to an extent, a study of participation. There was probably a great deal of pressure, however, for a mother to baptize her infant. Adult baptisms required a certain amount of initiative. In order for an adult to receive a baptism, they had to satisfy certain requirements. This can be seen in the baptismal certificates of adults. Several of these certificates included a note by the priest mentioning the education received by the slave, such as this record in 1688:

April 25, 1688 in the Holy Church baptized and gave oil to Manuel (having examined and instructed him in the Holy Faith) a negro infidel native of Barbadas [sic], about 30 years of age, godfather Balthasar Arias, pardo slave of Captain Antonio de Arguelles. – [Fr] Don Joseph de La Motta

It is hard to say how rigorous this examination was in St. Augustine. Part of the sponsor's duty was to insure that the baptismal recipient's desire was genuine, but obviously some measure of Church doctrine had to be understood. This idea of vetting the candidate for baptism was taken serious by at least some of the priests in St. Augustine. The priests note in some baptisms that the recipient had received baptism "in his own land," often having been taught to pray in his own language. Since the priests of St. Augustine baptized these individuals again, it is safe to assume that they were not entirely convinced of the original baptism's legitimacy in Africa. The priests in St. Augustine, therefore, considered it important that the

recipient of baptism be able to pray in Spanish or perhaps Latin, but not in their native tongues, so conversion must have had certain linguistic as well as dogmatic components.¹⁴⁰

The opinion of the priests towards what they must have considered a rather dubious use of the sacrament seems to indicate that they had at least some kind of standard, which they hoped to find when they “examined” the candidate. It also shows that the baptism of adults must have had a strong cultural dimension in addition to the religious.

The act of receiving a baptism as an adult was not the only possible form of participation. There were other circumstances that reveal active participation on the part of slaves and freed-people, such as baptisms given in necessity (that is, by a layman rather than clergy when the recipient was in fear of death and there was no priest present). Actions such as this reveal a certain level of initiative and, quite likely, a belief in the basic tenets of Catholicism. Citizens of European descent certainly gave baptisms in necessity, believing it to be their duty as Catholics. In some ways, it should not be surprising that those of African-descent would as well.

There are obvious limits inherent to the use of adult baptisms to gauge integration. The documents available in St. Augustine deal with only the most important moments in a person’s religious life: baptism, marriage, and death. Quite often, these records do not exist for a person’s marriage or death: the baptismal rolls are the only major church documents that extend throughout the First Spanish Period. Although these records are certainly an exciting source, they have their limits. The precise role of the Church in the life of slaves is hard to gauge from these documents, as is, obviously, the attitudes and beliefs of those involved. It is important to remember that much of the following is rather speculative, given the evidence.

¹⁴⁰ This can be seen in the baptisms of Miguel (1746), Miguel Domingo (1748), and Manuel (1750), among others.

In studying participation, one finds a diverse and interesting cast of characters. Suddenly, African-descended midwives become important actors in the wider drama of Catholicism. Slaves would interact with Indians and even European-descended people as purveyors of their masters' religion. As new inhabitants arrived from Africa or the English colonies, they would find a community with African-descended Catholics that were often prepared to help their transition into the Church and, by extension, the wider community.

The rite of baptism was a direct action towards integration. As Kapitzke stated, Catholicism was the unifying element of St. Augustine society. This can be seen in groups beyond just Africans and their descendants. The baptism's ability to integrate can be seen in any of St. Augustine society's non-Spanish, non-Catholic population. The most obvious example is the native peoples, who received friars and were brought into the Church en masse. In St. Augustine, however, there is another, closer parallel: European foreign nationals who became subjects of the Spanish Empire. In studying the integration of African slaves, one cannot help but see similarities in the integration of foreign nationals. Not surprisingly, foreign-born Europeans in St. Augustine were not slaves, usually serving as soldiers in the fort. Despite the fact that they existed at a higher social level than slaves, their integration into the community of St. Augustine followed a similar trajectory.

It should always be remembered that the study of baptisms is about more than just the integration of the individual. All baptisms were a public ceremony that involved many people and engaged many levels of society. For younger people, especially infants, parents were recorded (as well as their nationalities and race). All people being baptized had at least one sponsor, sometimes two. The records at times detail the profession, nationality, or race of the sponsor in addition to the parents. Often, the sponsor was of higher social status than the

recipient of the baptism. This shows the rather complex nature of relationships in colonial St. Augustine: the most powerful members of the community often had connections to the lowest parts of society, especially slaves. What this would seem to indicate is that a sort of patron-client system was still in existence in St. Augustine, and that many of the highest-ranking people in the presidio took an interest in the religious and cultural integration of newcomers.

Numerous foreign-born people were baptized in St. Augustine during the First Spanish Period. This is not surprising, given the 1607 muster-roll and the mercenary nature of early modern warfare among Europeans. Many of these foreigners were probably Catholic. From time to time, however, non-Catholics decided, for whatever reason, to reside in the presidio. When they did, it is hard to tell what sort of reception they received. Obviously, given the nature of the Spanish system of control and the antagonism between Protestantism and Catholicism, a Protestant would need to be rather low key. There was a lot of pressure, legally and socially, for foreign Protestants to convert to Catholicism and thereby join the wider community. As mentioned previously, Catholicism was a rather important aspect of every Spaniard's life and would have been highly visible in St. Augustine. Those who did not participate in Catholic festivities and events might have felt like outsiders.

The integration of adults into the Church was well-established. Given the partly religious purpose of the Spanish presence in Florida, the conversion of any outsider was possible, be they European, African, or Native American. This can be seen in the wide integration of people from other countries. One of the earliest examples of integration was a man baptized as Pedro on November 21, 1622. Pedro was listed as a native of Hamburg, Germany. Though his age was not listed, it is safe to assume he was an adult, given the fact he was from Europe and because no parents were mentioned. His sponsor was the presidio's accountant, Francisco Ramires.

Pedro of Hamburg's baptism was no different from that of a slave woman's baptism that occurred seven years earlier. On February 28, 1615, the slave of governor Juan Trevino, a woman named Maria, was baptized. Unfortunately, the name of her sponsor is partially obliterated, so only his first name, Juan, is legible. Juan was described as a native of the presidio, so it is unlikely that it is the same Juan that was Maria's master. If he had been, the priest probably would have made note of this, as was done on many other records. Another reason it was unlikely is because governors were not natives of the presidio, usually being sent from Spain.

Maria was the first baptism in St. Augustine of an obviously adult slave and quite possibly the earliest baptism of an adult in St. Augustine's recorded history (occurring, as mentioned above, in 1615). The first black baptism, Agustin in 1606, was an infant. This raises several questions. The records begin in 1594. St. Augustine prior to the 1700s never had a very large slave population, but adults from Africa were definitely present. The earliest slaves, those prior to 1615, were either not baptized or else had completed the ceremony somewhere else before they came to St. Augustine, such as Cuba. It is also possible that the first colonists were not as concerned with religious niceties, though this seems unlikely, given the presence of clergy on every major campaign in early Florida. Records are scant from this period, so it is hard to determine what sort of dialogue was going on before 1615. After 1615, the baptism of adult Africans (and, for that matter, of adult Europeans) would continue regularly until the surrender of the presidio almost a hundred and fifty years later.

Maria was one of forty-nine such baptisms between 1606 and 1655. As mentioned in Chapter Three, there were a total of one thousand and eighty-four baptisms between 1606 and 1655. The vast majority of these baptisms were infants, usually of European birth since the

indigenous peoples received their religious indoctrination from the Franciscan order at missions outside of St. Augustine.¹⁴¹ Dunkle observed that there were about thirty blacks, most of them royal slaves, in 1604. This number increased to thirty-six in 1619.¹⁴² Given the high mortality for colonists (many of whom labored to build the various fortifications of this era), it is not unreasonable to expect there was a fairly high turnover. The exact number is difficult to guess, however, since there are not any interment records this early in the history. As seen in the March 6, 1580 letter from Royal Officials to the King, which requested slaves from Havana, many of the slaves who ended up in St. Augustine were from Cuba.¹⁴³ Many of these slaves had probably received baptism in Cuba, being already somewhat integrated as Catholics when they arrived in St. Augustine. Obviously, not all did. A number probably only lived in Cuba briefly before being sent on to Florida, and as mentioned, religious instruction in Cuba was, at least in later periods if not earlier, rather lax.

Many of the slaves arriving in St. Augustine were un-baptized. Those that had not yet been initiated in this manner were probably heavily pressured to do so, perhaps even by other Africans. The number of adult baptisms in this period, forty-nine, and the fact that the slave population was not very large, hovering around thirty or so for most of the era, seems to indicate that the Spanish in St. Augustine wanted to have their entire slave population converted and integrated religiously. Given the small numbers involved, it was not an unreasonable goal. As one looks forward through the baptismal records, it would seem that the standard policy

¹⁴¹ The very earliest religious overtures by the Spanish were through the Jesuits in 1566, but following the Gualle Revolt in 1572, the Jesuits withdrew from Spanish Florida. The Franciscans arrived in 1573 and remained active through the First Spanish Period.

¹⁴² Dunkle, 5.

¹⁴³ *Colonial Records of Spanish Florida, Volume II: 1577-1580*, pg. 314-5.

throughout the First Spanish Period was to totally baptize (and therefore integrate) their slaves and freed-people.

It seems likely that they reached this goal for the most part. Adult baptisms could be given gradually, as the adult learned of the Church and satisfied certain requirements made by the priest. Occasionally, however, the process was quicker and a baptism might be given early. This is because when a slave's life was believed to be in jeopardy, due to disease or injury, an emergency or 'in necessity' baptism was given, regardless of the slave's current knowledge of the Church. There were four such baptisms given in this period to adults, though the priests in St. Augustine in the 1600s were not as studious as later priests in recording when a baptism was given in necessity. It is possible, therefore, that more of the recorded baptisms might have been in necessity and the priest neglected to record this fact. In the latter half of the 1600s, the priests did not record any 'in necessity' baptisms. It is likely that there were such ceremonies, however, and the priest simply did not record them properly.

The goal of integration can also be seen in the rite of Confirmation. Confirmations in St. Augustine were rare because they required a bishop. During the First Spanish Period, the closest bishop resided in Cuba and was more than hesitant to visit the remote Florida presidio. On the occasions when he did, confirmations were given and recorded. One such event occurred in 1606, the same year that baby Agustin was born and the story of an African-Spanish dialogue begins in the baptismal records.

The 1606 confirmations include hundreds of people. Although many adults in St. Augustine had been Catholic their entire lives, the lack of a bishop meant they had not yet been confirmed. One finds the interesting phenomenon of fathers and sons or mothers and daughters receiving confirmation together.

Paralleling the baptismal records of the period, most of the recorded recipients of confirmation identified as 'negro' were slaves. There were actually a total of fifteen black confirmations between March 25th and August 27th. Dunkle, it should be remembered, put the number of black slaves at around thirty during this period. This would indicate that in 1606, around half of the slaves at the presidio were confirmed. Considering the fact that many slaves would receive baptism over the next few years, this should not be a surprise. A number of the slaves had probably already received baptism in Cuba or elsewhere and so were ready for confirmation. Adults who had not yet been baptized, however, would probably have to wait for baptism before they could be confirmed.¹⁴⁴

The confirmations seem to indicate that the slaves were not entirely forgotten after they received baptism. On this day, at least, they were again brought under the Church's influence. The fact that half of the slave population was confirmed at this time, plus the continued baptism of adults through the period shows that the Spanish in St. Augustine were trying to integrate their slaves (and later, their freed-people) religiously.

The decades between 1656 and 1700 had fewer records concerning population figures. The baptismal records, however, have survived intact. There were fifty-eight adult baptisms in this period. If the citizens of St. Augustine in this period kept the slave population at around ten percent, as they had in the previous period, then, with the total population being six hundred in 1679 and fourteen hundred in 1685,¹⁴⁵ then there were probably between sixty and one hundred slaves. The figure of fifty-eight adult baptisms, if one accounts for turnover and the fact that

¹⁴⁴ *Cathedral Parish Records: Confirmations, 1606*; Dunkle, 6.

¹⁴⁵ Dunkle, 6.

many slaves had probably received a baptism earlier, means that St. Augustine's priests probably managed to keep the slave population entirely baptized.

The final stretch of years, 1701-1763 are much better documented. A raid by the English in 1702 forced the population to seek shelter in the fort. The total population figure was put at around one thousand inhabitants, with no estimate available for slaves. Later, in 1746, the Bishop of Tricale put the number up to around one thousand and five hundred, of which four hundred and three were "free Negroes and slaves." During the evacuation in 1763, the number of freed-people and slaves was (counting residents of the Pueblo Mose) numbered at three hundred and ninety.¹⁴⁶ For the entire period of 1701-1763, there were four hundred and sixty-five adult baptisms. Since there are no clear population figures for those of African descent in the first few decades, it might be more helpful to look at just the last three. Between 1746 and 1763 it is certain there were around three hundred slaves and freed-people. During that same period, adult baptisms numbered at two hundred and ten.

In order to keep the adult population of African descent baptized, the priests and owners often baptized several slaves or freed-people at once. They also engaged in a series of "chain" baptisms as they worked to baptize groups of people over a period of days or weeks. Most of the "chain" baptisms can be seen in the 1700s, probably because during this time St. Augustine's population was really beginning to grow, especially due to black refugees from the north. At some point in 1744 or 1745, a number of Swiss children arrived in St. Augustine. As was customary, they were gradually baptized and brought into the Church. Some were listed as coming from 'Switzerland' while others were listed as coming from Berne. There were at least ten such children, with varying ages: the youngest were six years old while the oldest were

¹⁴⁶ Dunkle, 6-7.

twenty. They were baptized singly throughout 1745, starting in early January and lasting throughout the year.

The Swiss children, however, were not the first group of youths to be integrated in this manner. In a nearly identical situation, six black children from Carolina were all baptized during a period between November 30th and December 8th of 1738. Although they were listed as ‘adult baptisms,’ none of them were over the age of three, the youngest being six months old.

“Chain” baptisms of adult foreigners were also fairly common. The Spanish of St. Augustine obviously would have felt obligated to convert children. Adults were baptized in groups as well, though. Occasionally, people would be baptized in pairs, such as in the case of Francisco and Joseph, both adult morenos from Carolina baptized on December 8, 1736. They were also both slaves of the Illustrious Señor Don Father Francisco de San Buenaventura y Tereda, the Bishop of Tricale, who also acted as their sponsor. Similarly, two men on September 12, 1735 were baptized together, both with the sponsor of Juan Valero. One, Pedro, was an Arara, while the other, Joseph Francisco, was identified as Congo, and the two men had different masters. One of the largest chain baptisms occurred in 1725, between April 3rd and April 15th. All the baptisms were performed by Father Pedro Lorenzo de Azevedo. The priest started this twelve day marathon of baptisms with six people in a single day, ending with five on a single day. All total, Father de Azevedo baptized nineteen adult blacks with various masters, none of them identified by their ‘nation’ in Africa, merely being listed as ‘adult negro’ or ‘adult negress’ on the role. At times, multiple baptisms were because of blood relation: the Governor Don Francisco del Moral’s slave Mariana was baptized on February 1st, the day her daughter was born, probably because it was believed she would die. Nine days later, the daughter Maria was baptized as well Mariana’s other child Rosalia, who was five or six years old.

The geographical realities of St. Augustine also made mass-confirmations necessary. As discussed earlier, the Bishop in Cuba visited St. Augustine in 1606 and confirmed many of the residents. The residents often came in groups, so that one sees fathers and sons or mothers and daughters. Those of African-descent were no different, often being recorded in pairs, such as Francisco and Manuel, both sponsored by Juan de Serrano and were recorded together on the same line for the August 27, 1606 confirmation list. The same day another pair were recorded together, Francisco and Maria, both of whom had the same sponsor as the Manuel and the other Francisco. It seems likely that they were related to the person they were paired with, since often the confirmation lists have children recorded on the same line as their parents. As it happened, August 27th was the day that most blacks in St. Augustine were confirmed. The previous days that recorded black confirmations, March 25th, April 5th, and June 4th, all had one or two confirmations each. August 27th had eleven slave confirmations, out of a total of one hundred and one confirmations (two of which were Indian, the rest being of European descent). The term ‘black’ is important: not all of those confirmed were identified as slaves, though it seems likely most were. All of them, however, were called ‘negro’ by the records with the exception of two: one was identified merely as a slave of Luis Dias, while another was described as a ‘mulato.’¹⁴⁷

Religious Sponsors and Sponsorship

Another valuable piece of information offered in the baptismal records is that of the sponsor. Every person being baptized would have at least a single sponsor, sometimes more. The sponsor was the godparent of the baptized, their spiritual mentor and guardian.

¹⁴⁷ *Cathedral Parish Records: Confirmations, 1606*

It is also apparent, through the participation of various military officers and, quite often, of masters, that the laymen of St. Augustine were at least nominally in favor of their slaves' entrance into the church, unlike the great planters of Cuba. It was common for slaves to act as religious sponsors for each other, but this was not a separate community within St. Augustine: it was also common to see ranking officers from the garrison as godfathers as well. This seems to reveal that the high-ranking members of the presidio played a role in the religious life of slaves and freed-people. On October 8, 1687, for instance, an African woman was baptized Mariana and her godfather was Captain Diego Dias Mexia. In addition to 'captain,' the titles 'ensign' and 'adjutant' appear regularly in the baptismal rolls among sponsors for babies of African descent. One also finds many men identified as regular soldiers, indicating that the rank and file of the Spanish military were just as active. Among the civilian elite, it was also common to take part in the baptisms of black infants: men who held the title of 'Don' frequently appear as sponsors, such as Don Alvaro Lopez, who sponsored the baptism of an Angola woman named Francisca Maria on April 8, 1721, possibly as Francisca Maria lay dying (her baptism was in necessity). Priests even acted as sponsors for slaves on occasion, such as Father Antonio Calbo, who sponsored a slave woman named Maria on September 22, 1642 as she lay ill or injured, as it was also an in necessity baptism.

There is always, of course, a more cynical possibility. The European overlords may have viewed religion as another way to control their vassals, and took an active interest for that reason. A letter on April 2, 1752 from the Governor to the Margues de Ensenda mentioned that some refugee blacks had been "distributed for religious instruction," which, in the words of Irene Wright, "aroused suspicion...[this] was the Spaniards' way (in Cuba, and elsewhere) of holding in slavery the aborigines despite every pronouncement the crown could make that they were his

majesty's free and respected vassals.”¹⁴⁸ The distribution of Carolina refugee slaves had already occurred before 1752. A ‘free negro’, one Francisco, received a baptism in 1729, at which time the priest described him as serving “at the house of Don Agustin Guillermo.” In that same year, a number of other ‘freedmen’ were baptized, all of them serving in someone’s house. In some ways, the fact that the baptismal rolls create a public record of the servant’s status might have created transparency, thereby keeping the ‘religious instructor’ from treating the servant like a slave. It is also possible however that it merely lent an air of legitimacy to what amounted to de facto bondage. On at least one occasion in 1729, one finds a ‘servant’ who served in the house of a man who sponsored him. The recipient was Pedro, who served Bartolome Rodriguez, also his sponsor.

The role of sponsor when it was a European or a European-descended person was complex. The baptismal rolls raise more questions in this area than they answer. Was the sponsor an outside patron, watching over the ward’s interests? Or were sponsors simply the master’s ally, aiding and abetting in the control of slave or servant? In Spanish culture, it was common to view the relationship between sponsor and baptismal recipient with *gravitas*. This bond, which was called *compadrazgo*, was described by Osvaldo F. Pardo as a “spiritual kinship” that melded families and created networks.¹⁴⁹

When slaves or freed-people acted as sponsors, meanwhile, one begins to see patterns emerge. Quite often, a single slave or freed-person would act as sponsor for several different people, perhaps acting as a catalyst for incoming slaves to integrate. This may have been extremely common but is difficult to determine, given the fact that many of the slaves were

¹⁴⁸ Wright, 148-9.

¹⁴⁹ Pardo, 25.

given the same name and were not always identified by master or surname. One example might have been a Juan, a slave of the King, identified as being from Angola, who acted as a sponsor for two slaves, both of whom took the name Sebastian, one on the tenth of September, 1617, and the other on October 31st of the same year. If it was indeed the same Juan acting in both capacities, it would show one of the earliest culture-brokers of St. Augustine. Here was a man who helped fellow Africans integrate by accepting the religion of their masters.

One of the initial approaches in the research for this thesis was to look closely at the ethnicity of sponsors and recipients of baptism. It would seem likely that sponsors would often share the same ethnicity as those they were sponsoring. In Cuba, the *cabildos de nacion* were help-organizations formed out of certain ethnic groups so that arriving slaves would be eased into the system alongside people of a similar linguistic and cultural disposition. It seemed likely, therefore, that in St. Augustine, slaves of like ethnicity would sponsor one another. This was not the case, however. There was no evidence to support this and it would seem unlikely that anything approaching the *cabildos* existed in St. Augustine. When ethnicity of the sponsor was mentioned, it was rarely the same ethnicity as the recipient. The slave and freed community for most of the First Spanish Period was too small to subdivide into *cabildos*. Most likely, the slave and freed community as a whole behaved as a single *cabildo*. It also seems likely, in view of the strategic and military situation in St. Augustine, that the Spanish would have wanted to play up *similarities* in their subjects rather than differences, meaning that the drive to integrate Africans and their descendants into the wider community would have been strong. In the last few decades of the First Spanish Period, those just prior to 1763, St. Augustine saw a leap in its slave and freed populations, but by then the trend of quasi-integration would have been well developed. Many of the slaves and freed-people in St. Augustine were refugees from the Carolinas. Their

'nation' or ethnicity was usually identified as English. Obviously, the Spanish would have wanted to integrate these foreign language speakers and purge them of any Protestant taint rapidly.

If anything, it was those already heavily invested in the colony that acted as sponsors. Quite often, African slaves were sponsored by soldiers from the fort or mulattos that were native to the presidio. In having Spanish or the children of mixed couples act as sponsors, Africans in Florida would not have been encouraged to keep their previous belief systems. Whereas the cabildos may have unofficially kept cultural tendencies alive in Cuba, it would be different in Florida, where the direct link between arriving Africans and Spanish or mulattos would have reinforced their entrance into Catholicism.

By far the most interesting development in St. Augustine was the possible role that African-descended people may have played in the lives of their European-descended masters and neighbors. For a brief period in the late 1600s, several black women were the sponsors of white children. This demonstrates that slaves and freed-people not only embraced Catholicism in St. Augustine, but may have eventually become active participants in their new community, playing a role in the lives not only of incoming slaves but also European children. It seems likely that in the religious atmosphere of St. Augustine slaves and freed-people were able to attain a certain level of respect for a while.

The string of white children with black sponsors began on August 20, 1675, with the baptism of Lorensa, the daughter of Captain Dionisio de los Rios and Maria de la Vera. The trend stops in 1699. The last positively identified European-descended child to be sponsored by an African-descended woman was Theresa Catharina, daughter of Juan de Andrada and Michaela de Salas de Antanilla, baptized February 2, 1699. There was, after Theresa Catharina,

one more baptism that had both a white sponsor and a black sponsor, but it is difficult to determine if the child was indeed of European descent. That child was Manuel Luis, the illegitimate son of Maria de Aguilar and father unknown. Given that the father was unknown and race was not mentioned, it is hard to tell what race the child was. In addition, there was another infant of indeterminate race that had a white sponsor and a black sponsor. This was Francisco Joseph, born of unknown parents, who was baptized in necessity by Anna Maria de Monzan, wife of Captain Don Phelipe Ponce de Leon on November 17, 1690. Discounting Manuel Luis and Francisco Joseph, there were eighteen baptisms of obviously European-descended infants that had a black sponsor in addition to their white sponsors.

Table I: White Children with Black Sponsors

Abbreviations used: 's.' for 'slave,' 'cpn' for 'captain,' 'adj' for 'adjutant.'

Date & Child	Parents	Sponsors	Notes
Lorenza [1675]	Dionisio de Los Rios Maria de la Vera	Cpn Antonio de Arguelles Antonia, his daughter Maria Luisa, s. of Maria Luisa de Florencia	
Maria Josepha [1677]	Diego Camunas Juana Maria	Domingo Duran Maria Rodriguez, s. of Adj. Juan Antonio	
Josepha [1682]	Guillermo Char [William Charr] Juana de la Concepcion	Joseph Valderrama Juana, slave of Account Don Antonio Menendez	Guillermo Char was an Englishman
Lorenza [1682]	Ensign Joseph de Huica Sebastiana Garcia	Deigo Jacinto Juana, slave of Account Don Antonio Menendez	
Marcos Joseph [1690]	Simon de los Reyes, soldier Antonia Hernandez	Cpn Antonio Phelipe de Bustos Margarita, parda slave of said cpn	
Francisco Joseph [1690]	Unknown	Juan del Pino, sailor Maria Candelaria, negress s. of Cpn Francisco de Fuentes	Baptized by Anna Maria de Monzon, wife of Captain Don Phelippe Ponce de Leon
Juan [1693]	Balthazar de Contreras Antonia de Oliva	Adj. Francisco Basurto Esperansa, negress slave of Cpn Martin Chagaray	Baptized by midwife Leonarda Morales
Joseph Patricio [1694]	Francisco Baurto Maria de la Cruz	Adj. Juan de Herrera Maria de la Encarnacion, parda slave of Don Pablo de Hita Salazar	Baptized in necessity
Alonso Joseph [1694]	Lazaro Francisco, soldier Juana de Gasca	Juan Dominguez, soldier Maria, parda slave of Cpn Antonio de Arguelles	Lazaro was born in Tenerife (Canary Islands)
Theresa	Alonso Bernardo de Fuentes, soldier Maria de Cerero	Diego Caraballo, soldier Maria Josepha, parda slave of Doña Manuela Horruytiner	
Augustina de la Concepcion [1696]	Lazaro Francisco, soldier Juana de la Gasca	Alonso Gasca, brother of Juana Maria, parda slave of Cpn Antonio de Arguelles	Baptized in necessity
Antonia [1697]	Juan de Andradas Michaela de Antanilla	Cpn Antonio Phelipe de Bustos Margarita, parda slave of said cpn	
Paula Catharina [1697]	Julian Jorge, soldier Juana de Escalona	Adj. Manuel Rodriguez Maria de la Encarnacion, parda slave of Sgt. Pablo de Hita Salazar	
Juana Catharina [1698]	Luis Maroto, soldier Maria de la Encarnacion, mestiza	Corporal Patricio de Monzon Maria de la Encarnacion, parda s. of heirs of Don Pablo de Hita Salazar, deceased	Baptized by de Monzon

Date & Child	Parents	Sponsors	Notes
Joseph Buenaventura [1698]	Corporal Nicolas Ramires Francisca Caraballo	Joseph de la Plata, frigate master Maria, negress slave of the heirs of Don Pablo de Hita Salazar	
Maria [1697]	Francisco Ruiz, soldier Petronila Ruiz	Joseph Giraldo, soldier Theodora, negress slave of Adj. Gaspar de los Reyes	
Lucia Catharina [1698]	Guillermo Char, artilleryman Juana Belen	Juan Mexia Catharina, parda slave of Capt. Antonio de Arguelles	Guillermo Char was an Englishman (William Carr)
Manuel Luis	Maria de Aguilar Father unknown	Rodrigo Zerrano Margarita, parda slave of Cpn Antonio Phelipe de Bustos	
Aguedo Maria [1699]	Lazaro Francisco, soldier Juana de la Gasca	Juan Dominguez, soldier Maria, parda slave of Cpn Antonio de Arguelles	
Francisco Joseph [1699]	Lazaro Francisco, soldier Juana de la Gasca	Sgt. Juan Dominguez Catharina, parda slave of Capt. Antonio Arguelles, daughter of Maria, slave of said captain	twin of the above
Theresa Catharina [1699]	Juan de Andrada Michaela de Antanilla	Cpn Antonio Phelipe de Bustos Margarita, parda slave of the said cpn	
Nicolasa Catharina	Maria Magdalena, Indian Father unknown	Catharina, negress slave of Cpn. Don Juan de Hita Salazar	

In the nearly twenty-five years that these black sponsorships occurred, there are a number of similarities that must have been factors which made them possible. The biggest similarity lay in the clergy, Father Sebastian Peres de la Cerda and Father Alonso de Leturiondo. These are the only two priests in the First Spanish Period of St. Augustine that presided over a baptism of a white infant with a black sponsor. It seems likely that their personalities and beliefs were a strong factor in this phenomenon. It is impossible to tell, of course, if Father Peres de la Cerda was an influence over Father Alonso de Leturiondo or if the two simply shared the same beliefs. Peres de la Cerda was the initial priest to perform these baptisms, but he died in 1683,¹⁵⁰ after which Father Leturiondo took over. A great deal is known about Father Leturiondo, who Kapitzke called a “parish priest...[who] carried out the duties of his office in a vibrant and professional manner.” Leturiondo had a strong personality, often sparring with the governor or other important figures in St. Augustine during his time there. This often meant taking a strong stand against royal control: at one point, Father Leturiondo helped shield a black slave from the governor’s justice, arguing that the slave was protected by the sacred right of sanctuary. It is important to note that Leturiondo was not a peninsulare: he was a local-born floridano.¹⁵¹ This may have influenced his opinion towards those of African-descent, given that he was born and raised in a racially and culturally mixed setting such as St. Augustine.

Another interesting factor is that many of names are repeated, not just in these baptisms, but in others. This possibly indicates that the parties involved were extremely religious, enough so that racial concerns took a backseat to sacred concerns. An example is Captain Antonio de

¹⁵⁰ Kapitzke, 39.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 67 & 86.

Arguelles, whose name appears in many of the baptisms and whose slave, Maria, was often a sponsor of both white and black infants. The baptismal records seem to indicate that Captain de Arguelles was a rather active Catholic and perhaps a devout man. When an infant was born in 1680 named Juan Francisco, the child's life was considered in peril. Without a clergyman present, Captain de Arguelles performed an in necessity baptism on the child the same day he was born. In addition, one of the infants in this group was baptized by Anna Maria de Monzon, a laywoman, while another was baptized by Patricio de Monzon, a layman and presumably her relative, showing that the de Monzon family during this period were likely quite devout. The slaves involved were at times related as well. Catharina, a 'parda' sponsor of a white baby, was identified as the daughter of Maria, a slave who was the sponsor of a European-descended infant five years earlier. Both Catharina and Maria were identified as the slaves of Captain Arguelles.

A third factor was that many of the parties involved were military, and by extension, would have known each other. It seems probable that the entirety of these baptisms happened within an extended network of friends and relatives in St. Augustine. Many of the godfathers and godmothers sponsored more than one infant on this list. This would suggest the presence of the concept of *compadrazgo* in St. Augustine and its attendant meanings.

The fourth factor involved was the health of the child. Three of the infants on this list were given an emergency baptism by someone other than a priest, while two more were identified as being 'in necessity.' It is possible that it was believed these infants needed more adults to watch over them, particularly given that all have them had at least two sponsors, sometimes more, whereas other infants frequently only had one.

This string of mixed-sponsor baptisms are a fascinating anomaly in St. Augustine's religious history. These baptisms raise a number of questions, foremost perhaps being: are they

really an anomaly? It seems possible that in St. Augustine households where slaves or freed-people lived and worked, those of African-descent probably had influence over children, including children of European descent. These baptisms, where the sponsorship of someone black was actually written down, may only have been an official recognition of an unofficial trend. Once knowledgeable of Catholicism, slaves and freed-people became active participants in the religious dialogue, which included the indoctrination of new members, even white children. Of course, one must also admit the possibility that in serving religious masters these slaves were forced to behave in a religious manner. If this is the case, however, it would still demonstrate that in the minds of the people involved in these baptisms, the slaves were considered participants in the community's religious dialogue.

Conclusion

The important traditions of Spanish Catholicism add a new dimension to studying cultural integration in St. Augustine. Although in many ways, the issue raises more questions than it answers, it does help to demonstrate how complex concepts of race and bondage were in Spanish Florida.

The rates of adult baptism in St. Augustine indicate several things. Quite obviously, St. Augustine's clergy were better able to involve themselves in the lives of African descended people than in Cuba. This interest and ability had a strong influence on the number of adult baptisms. The decision by English slaves to flee to St. Augustine and seek baptism raises the possibility that Africans and their descendants might have actively sought baptism on occasions. In addition to the obvious political reasons, it is also possible that Catholicism was attractive because the priests had some level of interesting the lives of slaves, even offering legitimacy to

slave marriages. It is also important to remember that the African worldview was more similar to the Spanish worldview than the Protestant, which meant Africans might have found Catholicism appealing for its cosmology as well.

Sponsorship was a complicated issue that is hard to discern from the records. On its face, the tradition of *compadrazgo* would seem to suggest that at least for some, a sponsor of European descent might act as a patron. It is also possible, however, that an outside white sponsor might be needed just to lend an appearance of slaves having an outside representative who looked out after their spiritual needs.

The role of black sponsorship raises just as many questions. Due to the small size of the St. Augustine slave and freed communities, there do not seem to have been any official cabildos. In many ways, however, the entirety of African-descended peoples in St. Augustine may have behaved like a cabildo. Whereas Cuban cabildos would have been formed along linguistic and ethnic, allowing the newcomer to keep many traditions, in St. Augustine, there would have been a strong drive to join Catholicism and embrace Spanish culture. The fact that many sponsors were mulato seems to indicate that sponsors were usually those who were already entrenched in St. Augustine's social system.

By far the most interesting piece of information found in this study, however, is the role of black sponsors for white infants. This would seem to be the strongest evidence that people of African descent joined the religious dialogue of St. Augustine. It is telling that one of the priests involved was born in St. Augustine. The religious and racial atmosphere in St. Augustine probably had a profound effect on people born and raised there, creating a different view of interpersonal relations than a traditional Spanish priest.

It is possible, of course, that the sponsors of African descent were merely included as extra people to pray for the child, but this seems unlikely. Given that the urban environment of St. Augustine and the nature of urban slavery, it is likely that these slaves played an important role in the lives of white children. These baptisms may just be official recognition of the fact that slaves in St. Augustine had not only become Catholic but also played a part in the instruction of the town's youth.

This interesting development, combined with black sponsors for newly arrived African slaves, shows that in St. Augustine, a limited but strong form of cultural integration was possible. It was undoubtedly encouraged by the authorities, given their precarious position at the edge of the empire and the fact that as military men, they were no doubt more concerned with strategic realities than economic or social mores in the rest of the empire. Given the presence of Carolina refugees, it would seem that it was also encouraged by those of African descent as well: the bondsmen and freed-people. In deliberately taking part in this religious integration, slaves and freed-people built a place for themselves in Spanish Florida's society. Although to many it was not an enviable place, it was considerably better than their position would have been in other colonies. The increasing population of freedmen combined with the legitimacy that the Catholic Church offered may have convinced slaves in St. Augustine that there was some hope for upward social mobility and possibly even respect.

The preference of African slaves for Spanish Florida has long been a topic in Spanish Florida historiography and has fascinated scholars for years. This thesis has built upon these earlier historians, who saw the interesting role that African slaves would play in Spanish Florida, particularly the refugees from the Carolinas and their settlement at Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose. This thesis, however, has attempted to look beyond Pueblo Mose in order to examine

the wider conditions and attitudes in Spanish Florida. The integration of Africans and their descendents in St. Augustine seems to indicate that the Spanish authorities were flexible in matters of race if it was expedient for the purposes of defending the empire. Africans and their descendants, meanwhile, were certainly integrating in St. Augustine, though of course it is impossible to determine how genuine this was. What is certain is that Africans both in St. Augustine and in the Carolinas must have seen Catholicism as a way to integrate and thereby improve their place in society.

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