

CONSTRUCTING THE SPACES OF CONTACT: NATIVE CAPTIVES AND COMMONERS
IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY *LA FLORIDA*

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ABSTRACT

Aubrey Lauersdorf: Constructing the Spaces of Contact: Native Captives and Commoners in
Sixteenth-Century *La Florida*
(Under the direction of Kathleen DuVal)

Although scholars have examined the interactions between the Hernando de Soto expedition and the Native elite who governed the hierarchical chiefdoms of *La Florida*, oft-overlooked Native commoners were foundational to this early Spanish imperial effort. Native commoners often constructed the spaces of contact between the expedition and local peoples. As guides to an army fully unfamiliar with the region, Native commoners determined the social spaces in which the Spaniards existed, influencing where the expedition traveled, with whom it interacted, and how this interaction transpired. Aware of Spanish reliance on Native knowledge of the region, other Native commoners described space in the abstract as a means to manipulate the expedition. Because the de Soto expedition generally acted as a destabilizing presence, Native commoners also possessed the capacity to uphold the security of their own province and undermine the security of adversarial provinces through these efforts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: UCITA.....	9
CHAPTER 2: PARACOXI, CALE, AND POTANO.....	19
CHAPTER 3: CALIQUEN AND APALACHE.....	25
CONCLUSION.....	34
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	40

INTRODUCTION

Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto and his army christened him Pedro, but they referred to him as Perico, a diminutive that hinted at his youth. Perico had been among the nearly two hundred men captured near the settlement of Napetuca, where a Native army had staged an attack to recoup their leader, or mico, Caliquen, whom the Spaniards had taken prisoner.¹ While most of the men at Napetuca had been put to death, Perico and a few others were permitted to live, under the assumption that they would make fitting servants because of their youth. Taken from Caliquen's province to the province of Apalache, Perico wintered with the Spaniards near the shore of the Gulf of Mexico. Repeated attacks from the people of Apalache during that winter might have inspired fear in Perico—would he find himself an unwitting victim of these people? Or, perhaps Perico desperately hoped that his Spanish captors would be subjected to the same fate that they had inflicted upon his comrades at Napetuca.²

As the winter of 1539 turned to spring, the Spaniards remained undecided about the future of their travels across the continent. It was then that Perico came forward with an offer

¹ In this paper, the members of the Hernando de Soto expedition will be referred to as Spaniards. While the majority of these men were from Spain, de Soto's army also included men from Portugal, France, and Italy. Many possessed "powerful bonds of locality and kinship," as they originated from the same region or had familial connections to a number of other men who participated in the expedition. The expedition participants would have identified closely with these more local origins. See: Charles M. Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 48-9.

² Elvas (Gentleman from), "The Account by a Gentleman from Elvas." In *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539–1543*, vol. 1, eds. Lawrence A. Clayton, Vernon James Knight Jr., and Edward C. Moore (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 74; Rodrigo Ranjel, "Account of the Northern Conquest and Discovery of Hernando de Soto," in *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539–1543*, vol. 1, eds. Lawrence A. Clayton, Vernon James Knight Jr., and Edward C. Moore (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 267-8.

that the gold-hungry de Soto could hardly refuse. Likely with the assistance of Juan Ortiz, a former Spanish castaway who had spent over a decade among the Timucuan-speaking peoples of Ucita and Mocoço before joining de Soto's expedition, Perico informed the Spaniards that he was not of Napetuca like the other captives. He described himself as a traveler of the continent, a visitor from a far-away chiefdom called Cofitachequi. He wove tales of his homeland, which was ruled by a woman who lived in a large, wealthy settlement. She acquired tribute from the many chiefdoms subordinate to her. This tribute included a wealth of gold, Perico was careful to emphasize, which the people of Cofitachequi would mine, melt, and refine for their chieftainess. Perico's story must have sounded almost too good to be true—a youth, who had been among their ranks for months, suddenly becomes willing to share knowledge of a distant land which possessed in abundance exactly what the Spaniards were searching for. Could the Spaniards believe him? They eventually decided in the affirmative, reasoning that Perico's story was too detailed to be based on lies. De Soto's desire to obtain gold, a metal which had been abundant in his previous expeditions but which had thus far eluded him in *La Florida*, added to his willingness to believe Perico's story. De Soto made his decision, and the army started off for the interior of the continent, led by the young Perico.³

Although convincing to Hernando de Soto's army in 1540, Perico's story should raise questions for the modern reader. Why, exactly, would Perico lead the army of Spaniards, whom he had seen devastate the people of Napetuca, to his homeland? Was this instead an elaborate ruse, meant to ensnare the Spaniards with promises of riches while placing Perico in a position of relative privilege within their ranks? Perico's motivations likely aligned much more closely with the latter. However, despite indications to the contrary, scholars of the de Soto expedition have

³ Elvas, 74; Ranjel, 267-9.

failed to interrogate Perico's motivations, just as Hernando de Soto did. This failure reflects a more general dearth in the scholarship on the Native peoples of the region that Spain called La Florida, which encompassed not only the modern-day state of Florida but also most of the modern-day southeastern United States, in the years following European contact. Much of the existing work on the Hernando de Soto expedition focuses on reconstructing the expedition's route rather than offering insights into the social and political organization of the indigenous people of the region. Scholarship that places greater focus on the indigenous people with whom the expedition interacted still presupposes Spanish conquistadors and Native elite as the primary actors. Such scholarship does not consider the significance of Native commoners both in expeditions and to the region more generally.⁴ The hierarchical nature of both Native and Spanish society, coupled with a sparse archaeological and historical record, explains this trend. The Spanish men who penned the records of early cross-cultural interactions interpreted La Florida through their own hierarchical worldview, and they were more inclined to recognize the significance of Native elite.

This scholarly focus on Native elite also derives from La Florida's hierarchical social organization. From approximately 750 to 950 CE, the population of the Southeast increased significantly, intensifying reliance on agricultural production (which in turn allowed for further population increases) and promoting a shift away from smaller-scale social organization in favor of centralization.⁵ Although not universal, the resulting centralized chiefdoms, characteristic of what archaeologists have labeled the Mississippian cultural tradition, spread across the

⁴ For an example of the former trend, see: Charles M. Hudson's *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms*. For an example of the latter trend, see: Kathleen DuVal's *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

⁵ Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 14; Vincas P. Steponaitis, *Ceramics, Chronology, and Community Patterns* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 170-1.

Southeast.⁶ Mississippian chiefdoms bordered the somewhat less expansive Timucuan chiefdoms of the Florida peninsula, the centralization of which was limited by the presence of less arable land.⁷ Southeastern chiefdoms were hierarchical, rank-based societies that were regional in nature. A chiefdom included elite, commoners, and slaves. A chief, or mico, might rule his own town as well as a number of other towns that were subordinate to him, usually those falling within a day's travel of the chiefdom's geographic center.⁸ A mico obtained power through descent from a ruling lineage, and certain individuals connected to the mico through this lineage held noble political offices within the chiefdom.⁹

That micos performed high profile activities within their chiefdoms also helps explain the scholarly focus on Native elite. Descended from elite lineages, micos claimed their power in part

⁶ Robbie Franklin Ethridge, "Introduction: Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*, eds. Robbie Franklin Ethridge and Sheri Shuck Hall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 3; Hudson, 27-8; John Worth, *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida: Assimilation* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998), 6-8.

⁷ To archaeologists, Timucuan chiefdoms are considered "variations on a broader Southeastern theme," as they possess the social organization of rank-ordered chiefdoms but generally lack the elaborate mound tradition and extensive ritual material culture associated with Mississippian sites. John Worth suggests that Timucuan chiefdoms likely lacked the temporal stability or close-knit structure of Mississippian chiefdoms. Instead, these chiefdoms constituted small-scale chiefdoms. See: Worth 1998, 13, 17-8. However, the boundary between the Timucuan and Mississippian categorizations remains an issue of continued debate. See: John H. Hann, *A History of Timucua Indians and Missions* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), 28.

⁸ The Native societies of the Southeast at the outset of contact have been described as: "rank societies, meaning that social status and political power are determined by genealogical nearness to a single noble family lineage from which the heirs to the principal chief's office are always drawn." Generally, this lineage would have been determined through the mother, given the matrilineal nature of these societies. See: Worth 1998, 5. See also: Jon Muller, *Mississippian Political Economy* (New York: Springer, 1997), 156-7; Steponaitis, 1. Most Mississippian chiefdoms had a radius of approximately 25 miles at maximum. These societies are characterized as complex chiefdoms, and they incorporated a number of subordinate simple chiefdoms. Paramount chiefdoms also existed. Paramount chiefdoms generally connected complex chiefdoms through a tribute system, which was most likely quite temporary. See: Worth 1998, 10.

Micos were usually men. However, if a ruling matrilineage did not have a male heir, a mico's niece inherited the position (such as in Cofitachequi). To reflect this trend, this paper will use the male pronoun when discussing a hypothetical mico. See: Worth 1998, 9.

⁹ Vernon Knight, "Social Organization and the Evolution of Hierarchy in Southeastern Chiefdoms," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 46, 1 (1990): 18-19.

through their inherent connections to the sacred.¹⁰ Within many southeastern chiefdoms, micos situated their lodgings atop manmade mounds, literally positioning themselves closer to the sun, the spiritual force from which their authority was said to derive, and physically above their subordinates¹¹ Consequently, a mico's ability to control his surroundings, whether human or environmental, both reinforced and was reinforced by sacred connections.¹² These performances of authority were also central to maintaining control of resources and subordinates. Subordinates within a settlement would provide their mico a portion of their agricultural products and prestige goods, and the mico would then provide his superior a portion of this tribute. The receiving mico could control the disbursement of these goods. While a mico might redistribute provisions to his subjects, the mico also might use these resources to maintain or establish diplomatic relationships. Similarly, micos could directly control the labor of their subordinates, such as using laborers to create the elaborate mounds characteristic of Mississippian cultures.¹³ The capacity to control and distribute resources and labor was also foundational to success in the endemic warfare that characterized the Southeast, as a mico needed to obtain control of and provide for enough subjects to pose a military threat.¹⁴ However, the purpose of this warfare was less to gain more territory than to exert control over more subjects and resources either directly or by establishing access to new trade routes, thus extending the reach of a mico's authority.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ethridge, "Introduction," 4; Snyder, 16, 22.

¹¹ Matthew H. Jennings, "Violence in a Shattered World," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*, eds. Robbie Franklin Ethridge and Sheri Shuck Hall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 273; Snyder, 2-3.

¹² Snyder, 2-3.

¹³ Snyder, 24.

¹⁴ Archaeological evidence, such as a tendency for palisaded towns to exist on the outskirts of chiefdoms, suggests that warfare was endemic among the chiefdoms in this region. See: Ethridge, "Introduction," 6.

¹⁵ Jennings, 275; Snyder, 30.

Since the 1960s, historians have recognized the importance of writing histories from the bottom up, or writing histories that demonstrate the significance of groups that previous scholars considered powerless. Analyses of these seemingly powerless groups have revealed that these groups often had some power, and thus such scholarship has challenged existing interpretations of societies.¹⁶ A bottom-up approach is similarly useful for understanding the Native societies of La Florida. While exogamous marriage practices meant that certain commoners could be incorporated into noble lineages through marriage, commoners still comprised the demographic majorities of southeastern chiefdoms, meaning that polities consisted of the rule of the many by the few.¹⁷ Thus, power within chiefdoms was coercive, as the capacity to coerce subordinates was foundational to the maintenance or enhancement of micos' authority.¹⁸ Yet this recognition has not yet been adequately translated into an examination of interactions with coercive power—those over whom power was exercised were capable of negotiating or even subverting these power dynamics.

The Hernando de Soto expedition offers an ideal lens through which to pursue an inquiry of Native commoners in La Florida, defined here as the modern-day states of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina (or, in terminology more appropriate for the chronology of this paper, but less familiar to a contemporary readership, the region bounded by the chiefdom of Ucita to the South, Apalache to the west, and Cofitachequi to the northeast), as it constituted the most invasive Spanish presence in the region prior to permanent settlement in 1565.¹⁹ Using accounts

¹⁶ Some of the first scholars to write history from the bottom up include: E.P. Thompson, Jesse L. Lemisch, Staughton Lynd, and Howard Zinn. This work is indebted to scholars who have demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach in the context of Spanish colonialism, including Cynthia Radding, Karen Spaulding, and Steve Stern, among others.

¹⁷ Worth 1998, 9.

¹⁸ Ethridge, "Introduction," 6-7, Jennings, 273.

¹⁹ See: Appendix for a map of the expedition's likely route.

from participants in the de Soto expedition, this paper traces the route of the expedition through La Florida, focusing on the often-fleeting personal encounters between Native commoners and the Spaniards.²⁰ These encounters offer a momentary window into how Native commoners made sense of Spanish incursion. Because Native commoners' worldviews informed their reactions to Spanish presence, these encounters also can reveal the internal dynamics of Native societies in a manner otherwise inaccessible.²¹

Taken captive and integrated into the expedition as guides, emissaries, or servants, Native commoners served as intermediaries between the Spaniards and the chiefdoms of the region. Hernando de Soto hoped to "conquer, pacify, and populate" La Florida, a power granted to him by the Spanish Crown.²² Yet he was fully unfamiliar with the region, and his efforts to translate his power in the abstract into a meaningful imperial presence required him to rely heavily upon Native knowledge.²³ Thus, Native commoners generally served as the means through which the

²⁰ There are three main accounts of the De Soto expedition, and they serve as the primary source base for this analysis. Rodrigo Ranjel acted as De Soto's personal secretary, and his account is preserved in fragments in Spanish historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés' *Historia general y natural de las Indias*. Luys Hernández de Biedma served as *factor* to the expedition, overseeing and administering Crown property. His position also likely required that he maintain an official account of the expedition's movements, which served as a foundation for his published account, *Relación de la Isla de La Florida*. The third account was written by an anonymous man from Elvas, Portugal, who participated in the expedition. For debates on the utility of these accounts, see: Patricia Galloway, "The Incestuous Soto Narratives" in *The Hernando De Soto Expedition History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast*; Charles Hudson, "Afterward"; Ida Altman, "An Official's Report: The Hernandez de Biedma Account," in *The Hernando De Soto Expedition History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

²¹ For discussions of the usefulness of a more microhistorical approach in elucidating macrohistorical processes, see: Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It," *Critical Inquiry* 20,1 (1993); Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (College Park: Penn State University Press, 2001); Matti Peltonen, "Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research," *History and Theory* 40 (2001); István Szijáró, "Four Arguments for Microhistory," *Rethinking History* 6,2 (2002).

²² Buckingham Smith, "Selected Items from Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto in the Conquest of Florida," in *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539–1543*, vol. 1, eds. Lawrence A. Clayton, Vernon James Knight Jr., and Edward C. Moore (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 360.

²³ Like De Soto's imperial efforts, empire more generally is constructed through local experience. See: Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600–1850* (New York: Random House, 2010); Joshua Piker, "Lying Together: The Imperial Implications of Cross-Cultural Untruths," *American Historical Review* 116,4 (2011);

Spaniards gained access to settlements and fields, spaces that provided them the resources necessary for their continued survival in La Florida. Because de Soto aspired not only to survive but also to establish a permanent presence, access to these spaces, and the physical and human resources within them, could also serve as a means for De Soto to gain a foundation of power in the region.

However, Native commoners did not simply acquiesce to Spanish demands. As guides, emissaries, and advisers to the expedition, commoners often subverted Spanish interests, using Spanish ignorance to their own advantage.²⁴ Frequently, Native commoners undermined Spanish access both to physical spaces and to the knowledge of spaces. For example, as guides, Native commoners could exploit the Spaniards' unfamiliarity with the region to misdirect them, working to deny the Spaniards access to the spaces they desired and to the resources within those spaces. Commoners also subverted the expedition's goals by manipulating the Spaniards' access to knowledge of the region. For example, Native commoners might use their descriptions of spaces in the abstract to manipulate the Spaniards' travels, as Perico did when describing Cofitachequi to de Soto. Rather than acting to the benefit of the Spaniards, Native commoners worked to further their own interests.

Native commoners also had unprecedented opportunities to either challenge or augment the power of their leaders through their interactions with the de Soto expedition. De Soto desired to gain power in the region at the expense of micos, which he demonstrated through his tendency

Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire, and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

²⁴ The current generation of scholarship on Indian history has come to recognize that, despite European imperial presence, Native people dominated much of the continent into the nineteenth century, particularly in regions labeled imperial borderlands. See: Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Kathleen DuVal, *Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Jon Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534-1701* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press).

to raid and dismantle settlements, capture nobles, forcibly extract resources, and engage in slave raiding. Although Native spaces were constantly changing, shaped by dynamic cultures and environments, the de Soto expedition could prove particularly destabilizing to Native spaces and the resources housed within them. By destabilizing spaces, the expedition could challenge the foundations of a mico's power. Commoners, who often served as the means through which the expedition accessed Native spaces, consequently influenced the stability of their leaders' power through their interactions with the Spaniards.

The decisions that Native commoners made when the de Soto expedition intersected with their lives were deeply rooted in the Native world that was La Florida. Each commoner was informed by his or her own position within their society, such as rank or gender. For example, a woman might draw on the authority she possessed within a matrilineal social system to entreat others to assist her in preventing the de Soto expedition from reaching a province. Or a man who had been taken captive by an enemy province might assist the expedition in undermining the power of the leader to whom he was now enslaved. Simultaneously, commoners' decisions were informed by their understandings of relationships among provinces. For example, a commoner might describe an adversarial province as abounding with provisions and gold as a means to convince the expedition to travel there. Hardly powerless, Native commoners could both reinforce and challenge intra- and inter-societal dynamics.

CHAPTER 1: Ucita

The four Native men had been taken from their homes near the gulf coast and forced onto a ship by strangers who spoke an unintelligible language.²⁵ As the men traveled south into open waters, the gravity of their predicament must have weighed on them. Would they ever return to their homes? Or would they always remain captives in another's land? Before their capture, the men might have been tasked with spying on the small group of Spaniards whose ships had appeared off the coast. Or they might have been members of a war party that had been bested in a skirmish with the Spaniards after the visitors made landfall to reconnoiter the area around the port. In the days after the Native men's disappearance, the specter of transitory foreign presence must have haunted *La Florida's* coastal people. In a month, the ships reappeared off the coast, this time with an entire entrada in tow, prepared for a more extended tenure on the continent.

These captive men were the first of many Native people living near La Florida's gulf coast to encounter the de Soto expedition. Here, local people attempted to undermine the expedition during its first days on the continent. Individuals taken captive and tasked with guiding the expedition through unfamiliar territory repeatedly misdirected the Spaniards, exploiting Spanish reliance on indigenous knowledge. As a result, these captives denied the Spaniards access to the settlements and resources they desired. Even captives given freely by

²⁵Juan de Añasco led an abbreviated expedition to reconnoiter a port the month prior to the arrival of the full expedition. See: Ranjel, 254. Ranjel says four men were captured, while Elvas says two were captured. Given the number of captives discussed later in the narratives, Ranjel's number appears most accurate. See: Ranjel, 254; Elvas, 56.

their mico, who hoped to ingratiate himself with Hernando de Soto to increase his regional power, refused to cooperate with the Spaniards. Their actions demonstrate that Native commoners were willing to act in their own personal interest, even if they undermined the interests of their leader.

Both recent and more distant memories of Spanish interaction informed local interpretations of the return of these ships. The recent disappearance of the four young men made the Spanish ships a greater cause for alarm. However, locals also might have harbored some hope that their disappeared kin would return with the ships.²⁶ More recent negative interactions aside, that Spaniards had previously proven a difficult and even dangerous presence in the region would have shaped responses to Spanish return. Hardly more than a decade prior, the ill-fated Pánfilo de Narváez expedition made landfall near this location.²⁷ The Narváez expedition had taken captives and exploited resources from the region. The expedition had also undermined the local people's spiritual practices, burning the remains of a Spanish shipwreck that locals had respectfully interred. Rather than risk further conflict with the Narváez expedition, the local Native people had distracted the Spaniards with promises of wealth in a far-off province, successfully removing this source of instability from their homeland.²⁸

Given these histories, the sight of the ships was sufficient to initiate a chain of inter-settlement communication that would prime the local people for impending Spanish arrival and

²⁶ Elvas, 57; Ranjel, 254.

²⁷ While the actual site of the Narváez expedition's landfall has not been definitively determined, evidence suggests that it was most likely Sarasota Bay. For more information, see: Andrés Resendez, *A Land So Strange: The Epic Journey of Cabeza de Vaca* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), note 26 of Ch. 3. De Soto also landed in nearby south Tampa Bay. See: Hudson.

²⁸ Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, "The 1542 *Relación* of Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca," in *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: Volume 1*, eds. Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 37-9. See also: Resendez, Ch. 3.

ideally provide them time to strategically plan their responses.²⁹ When the ships came within sight of land, the locals initiated a chain of smoke signals that were then reproduced along the coast.³⁰ Á lvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's account of the Narváez expedition's landfall near this area include no mention of such far-reaching smoke signaling, suggesting that coastal smoke signaling might have been an adaptive response by these people in light of the new dangers of Spanish presence.³¹ These smoke signals were likely supplemented by scouting parties and runners, such as the men taken captive during the de Soto expedition's initial reconnaissance mission. Prior warning provided the people of Ucita, the settlement nearest to the port, sufficient time to prepare for Spanish arrival. When a party of Spaniards inadvertently discovered the settlement while scouting near the coast, Ucita's residents had already uprooted themselves and abandoned their settlement.³² The residents, whether at the behest of their mico or on their own accord, had made the measured decision that the risk of occupation or destruction of their village was an appealing alternative to an encounter with the visitors. Such abandonment was hardly a novel practice for the people of this region, but instead a response rooted in longstanding

²⁹ For a mico to successfully exert authority within the boundaries of his territory and to be aware of the goings-on in other territories, he needed to possess efficient networks through which to obtain information. Because these networks were often invisible to European observers, they can be difficult to reconstruct with available documentary sources. Yet Europeans often found themselves contending with, and sometimes disadvantaged by, the information that these networks could distribute. However, as Alejandra Dubcovsky has argued, attempting to elucidate the functioning of these networks, instead of merely assuming their existence, is central to understanding power relations within a region. See: Alejandra Dubcovsky, "One Hundred Sixty-One Knots, Two Plates, and One Emperor: Creek Information Networks in the Era of the Yamasee War" *Ethnohistory* 59, 3 (2012); Worth 1998, 12-3.

³⁰ While there is no direct evidence of similar communication methods in response to the earlier reconnaissance mission, it is not unlikely that local people would have responded similarly to this initial evidence of Spanish presence. See: Elvas, 257.

³¹ Cabeza de Vaca does not include any reference to inter-settlement smoke signaling in response to Spanish arrival. See: Cabeza de Vaca, 35-9.

³² Elvas, 57; Ranjel, 254.

practices. When the Narváez expedition first made landfall ten years prior, local people similarly abandoned their settlements in preparation for Spanish arrival.³³

While the people of Ucita were ensuring that the Spaniards did not access any human resources from their settlement, the four men who had been captured a month prior were intent on denying the expedition further access to Ucita. When a second Spanish contingent disembarked to join the first contingent at Ucita, the four Native captives were among them. Once again in their homeland but under the most undesirable of circumstance, they were unwillingly employed as guides. Able to communicate with one another in a language no Spaniard understood, the men acted thoroughly confused by the numerous roads that crossed the forest, seemingly unsure of which to take despite having been captured very near this location only a month prior. Because they deferred to the guides' presumed knowledge of the region, the Spaniards were quite at the whim of their guides within this unfamiliar space. Eventually, however, the Native guides' performed incompetence convinced the Spaniards to place their own men in command of guiding the contingent. This reaction made irrelevant Native knowledge of the area, forcing the Spaniards to make sense of fully unfamiliar territory. Yet removing even the most resistant guides seemed to further slow the progress of the Spaniards. The four captives surely watched with satisfaction as the Spaniards struggled through a landscape fraught with swamps, exhausting their horses and temporarily weakening the members of the contingent.³⁴

However, the contingent eventually reached Ucita, and if the guides were residents of that settlement, they might have been dismayed at the extent to which the Spaniards had decided to make themselves at home there. De Soto and other high-ranking men within the expedition had housed themselves in many of the elite homes, which were situated atop a mound at one side

³³ Cabeza de Vaca, 35.

³⁴ Ranjel, 254.

of the village, and they stored the provisions that they had removed from their ships in the remaining elite structures.³⁵ These actions must have appeared a striking upheaval of the social order, even if the mico of Ucita did not possess the power or regional dominance of his northern counterparts. The guides also might have watched as the Spaniards took to dismantling the more modest wooden buildings in which the commoners of the settlement lived, using the components to rebuild structures more in line with Spanish sensibilities. Among the buildings the Spaniards tore down was the settlement's temple, a large structure that was positioned atop a mound across from the mico's houses—a spatial parallel that reinforced the sacred origins of the mico's authority.³⁶ To the guides, the physical dismantling of the temple, coupled with Hernando de Soto's occupation of the elite residences, must have seemed a challenge not only to the mico's dominance within his settlement, but also to the sacred connections his lineage was supposed to possess.

Now that their captors had settled on the continent, the four captive men soon exploited Spanish unfamiliarity with the region as a means to secure their freedom and to further deny the Spaniards access to any local knowledge they might possess. One captive man was directed to invite neighboring micos to meet with Hernando de Soto at Ucita-cum-Spanish camp.³⁷ Considering the guides had pretended themselves fully confused in their previous efforts, this

³⁵ Within southeastern chiefdoms, space often reinforced and reproduced social hierarchy in a manner that maintained elite authority, such as an elite lineage raising platform mounds each time a new mico came to power, or an elite lineage ensuring that elite homes and temples were physically higher than the homes of subordinates. The construction of platform mounds within these chiefdoms “served to reinforce and affirm the traditional social ranking (and associated inequalities) associated with Mississippian chiefdoms,” acting as “physical symbols of social rank, providing through their height a visual reminder not only of distinction in status but also the generational time-depth of noble matrilineages and the hereditary succession of the chiefly office.” The capacity of the mounds to reinforce the depth of a lineage's ruling power existed because, in the succession from one chief to another, the structures atop the mounds were burned and rebuilt on an added layer of earth to emphasize the continuation of the lineage's rule. See: Worth 1998, 12.

³⁶ Elvas, 57-8.

³⁷ Ranjel, 255.

man must have either convinced the Spaniards that he was familiar with this space and would be able to help them locate local leaders, or the Spaniards, unsure of what lay outside Ucita, were in a desperate enough situation that they were willing to rely on anyone who might have some knowledge of the land. Indeed, one Spanish chronicler wrote that, “there were some roads, but no one knew or guessed which they should take in order to find the natives of the land.” The records make no more mention of the emissary, suggesting that he was never heard from again. He would have possessed little motivation to return to his captors, who could hardly find their way through the forest and were unlikely to track him down.³⁸ Soon after, two of the remaining captives also escaped the camp, probably no difficult task given that the Spaniards lacked shackles with which to bind them.³⁹ The one guide who remained would not stay at Ucita much longer, for he was tasked with accompanying one of two Spanish contingents that went in search of local leaders, a result of the failure of the first Native emissary to return to his captors. As before, the Native guide pretended himself confused, again denying the Spaniards access to any potentially useful knowledge he possessed of this space.⁴⁰

The guide’s power to exploit Spanish ignorance of the region was soon made irrelevant when diplomats representing the mico Mocoço, a neighbor and enemy of Ucita, appeared to welcome the Spanish visitors. Although this encounter in the forest proved a surprise for both groups, as the Mocoço contingent was traveling on orders to make overtures to the Spaniards at their camp at Ucita, the potential for a skirmish was quickly averted when a member of the Mocoço contingent revealed himself to be of Spanish origin.⁴¹ The captive guide had likely

³⁸ Ranjel, 255.

³⁹ Elvas 58, Ranjel, 255.

⁴⁰ Ranjel, 255.

⁴¹ Biedma, Luys Hernández de, “Relation of the Island of Florida,” in *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539–1543*, vol. 1, eds. Lawrence A. Clayton, Vernon James Knight Jr., and

heard of or even met this Spaniard, Juan Ortiz, a castaway from the Narváez expedition who had been captured and enslaved by the people of Ucita and later lived as a subordinate to the mico Mocoço, spending over a decade on the continent.⁴² The guide might have been dismayed at the arrival of Juan Ortiz, a willing translator who might undermine his extended ruse, which was possible in part because of the inability of the parties to communicate effectively. Furthermore, although the captive man was surely aware that Mocoço and his subordinates knew of Spanish presence from the networks of communication that were initiated as soon as the Spaniards came within sight of the coastline, he might have been concerned that Mocoço had made an immediate effort to seek out the Spaniards. The captive would have realized that Mocoço sent Juan Ortiz as an offering, accompanied by a number of diplomats to convey the mico's goodwill toward the visitors.⁴³ Such an act, besides ingratiating Mocoço with the Spaniards by offering them an individual who possessed the communication skills to broach the language gap, was likely also an affront to the mico of Ucita. The guide must have realized that Mocoço would have delighted at learning that Ucita was uprooted from the spatial center of his chiefdom, as Mocoço had burned Ucita's previous residence only a few years prior.⁴⁴ Indeed, by offering a person in his possession to the Spaniards, the mico Mocoço had successfully gained leverage with the expedition, which he later used to emphasize to the Spaniards the evils of his four enemies in the

Edward C. Moore (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 225; Elvas, 59; Ranjel, 255. Because Ucita and Mocoço do not appear in later Spanish records, it is difficult to determine whether these people of what archaeologists have labeled the Safety Harbor cultural tradition spoke a Timucuan language. However, John Hann has suggested that the people of Mocoço did speak Timucuan. See: John H. Hann, *Indians of Central and South Florida 1513-1763* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003).

⁴² Ranjel, 255; Elvas, 59-62; Biedma, 225.

⁴³ Ranjel, 255-6; Elvas, 62-3.

⁴⁴ In his account of his experiences as a captive, Ortiz recalls a situation in which Mocoço burned Ucita's town, forcing the mico to relocate. See: Elvas, 61.

region, including Ucita.⁴⁵ The captive might have become even more displeased when Mocoço later visited the Spanish camp at Ucita.⁴⁶ Although the Spaniards' attempts to keep micos at their camp often amounted to kidnapping, Mocoço was more than willing to physically situate himself at the former power center of Ucita. The Spaniards' upheaval of the settlement had aided Mocoço's intentions to gain greater authority in the region at the expense of his adversary. Ucita had become a Spanish space, and through Mocoço's positive relationship with the Spaniards, it reflected the breadth of his own regional authority by extension and his hope that Ucita and perhaps even the Spaniards would become his subordinates.

The captive guide lost any future utility to the expedition when Mocoço offered his own subordinates as guides, in an effort to enhance his burgeoning alliance with the Spaniards and in the interest of undermining his enemies in the region. Without Mocoço's assistance, the Spaniards would have remained thoroughly lost in their surroundings, as Juan Ortiz been effectively enslaved and was thus quite unfamiliar with the settlement patterns of the area.⁴⁷ Power over knowledge of the region, then, transferred not to Ortiz but to the subordinates of Mocoço who guided the expedition around the region, and the Spanish contingents thus remained very much at the whim of the Native guides tasked with leading them.

Because Mocoço wanted to increase his power in the region, he considered it in his interest to assist the Spaniards, but this interest did not necessarily translate to the guides he provided to the Spaniards. One guide claimed that the people of Ucita were holding a gathering at a nearby settlement, and the Spaniards, believing him and hoping to take captives to send as slaves to Cuba, allowed him to lead a contingent there. However, the settlement was abandoned,

⁴⁵ Ranjel recalls that these enemy micos were Orriyguá, Neguarete, Çapaloey, and Ucita. See: Ranjel, 256.

⁴⁶ Ranjel, 256; Elvas, 62-3.

⁴⁷ Elvas, 62; Biedma, 226.

and the bustling space that the guide had constructed for Spanish imaginations did not comport with reality. The guide watched as the Spaniards, angered that this space did not meet their expectations, burned the abandoned settlement, perhaps as an act of retaliation against the people of Ucita for failing to provide them with the means to slave raid.⁴⁸ While Spanish confusion about guides' motivations can make it difficult to recreate them, the guide might have possessed two distinct reasons for this misdirection. First, he might have had a rapport with the people of Ucita and misdirected the Spaniards to preserve the people of Ucita from Spanish violence and slave raiding, acting against the interests of both the Spaniards and Mocoço. Or, the guide might have wanted to lead the Spaniards to an empty settlement, which would undermine the Spaniards' efforts. Yet because his actions provided the Spaniards access to an Ucitan space, and resulted in the physical destruction of the settlement, the guide also challenged a spatial foundation of the mico of Ucita's power. Whatever the guide's motivations, the Spaniards sensed that he had intentionally misdirected them in their attempt to locate a population of Indians for capture, and they set their dogs on the guide. The Spanish response not only demonstrates the brutality of expedition justice, but also the significance of what the Spaniards recognized as the guide's desire to subvert their goals.⁴⁹ While the guide never would have known this fact, one Spanish captain, who participated in the expedition for the purpose of slaving, soon left the continent and returned to Havana, frustrated at his inability to capture sufficient Indians to sell as slaves.⁵⁰

As the guide was misdirecting the Spaniards in their forays through the province of Ucita, another Native man had left Ucita as an emissary to Paracoxi, the superior mico to both Mocoço

⁴⁸ Ranjel, 257; Biedma, 226.

⁴⁹ Ranjel, 257.

⁵⁰ Ranjel, 257-8; Elvas, 63-4.

and Ucita, whom the Spaniards sought after Juan Ortiz told them stories of Paracoxi's wealth in comparison to the coastal settlements.⁵¹ This emissary was tasked with making diplomatic overtures to Paracoxi, and he was to travel without Spanish accompaniment as an intermediary between the two societies. Before he left, however, a Native woman who was with the expedition intercepted the emissary, convincing him to flee instead of assisting the Spaniards in their request. That she was able to convince the emissary, who seemingly had intended to carry out his task, suggests the capacity of women to employ the status of their gender to their advantage. Timucuan people were matrilineal, and given the centrality of women in matrilineal societies, this woman might have been able to draw upon the authority she possessed within her social system and perhaps also as a progenitor of a lineage intimately connected to that of the emissary.⁵² Considering the Spaniards had twice captured groups of local woman, she might have joined the expedition as a captive rather than through any affiliations with Mocoço, a fact that might have furthered her interest in undermining the Spanish diplomatic project. At the very least, both she and the guide had witnessed the violence the Spaniards were inclined to commit, and she might have had an interest in preventing or at least delaying Spanish access to Paracoxi. Indeed, heeding the woman's advice, the emissary took full advantage of his newfound independence and simply failed to return to the Spaniards, either remaining at Paracoxi or going somewhere else altogether. The Spaniards soon learned of this woman's role in undermining their attempt to send an emissary —perhaps she was not terribly quiet about her distaste for the expedition. Angered that she had subverted their communication effort, the Spaniards set their dogs on the woman, killing her as they had killed the previous uncooperative guide.⁵³

⁵¹ Elvas, 62.

⁵² Worth 1998, 87.

⁵³ Ranjel, 257-9.

CHAPTER 2: Paracoxi, Cale, and Potano

Despite the failure of the emissary to fulfill his task, the people of Paracoxi were surely already aware of the unusual party to the south of their chiefdom. They either saw the smoke signals that appeared across the coast as soon as Spanish ships became visible over the horizon, or they learned of more recent events through runners who made their way from Mocoço's province north to Paracoxi. The people of Paracoxi, as well as those in the neighboring chiefdoms of Cale and Potano, used this preexisting knowledge of the expedition to their advantage. In both Paracoxi and Cale, Native commoners who were detained or captured by the expedition drew on their awareness with the expedition's goals to successfully manipulate the Spaniards' movement through the region. In Potano, a commoner pretended to be the province's mico, manipulating the Spaniards' unfamiliarity with the province's politics to recover residents who had been taken captive. In all three cases, by either convincing the Spaniards to leave their province or undermining the Spaniards' captive taking, Native commoners manipulated the Spaniards' reliance on their knowledge to reinforce the power of their micos. Simultaneously, and perhaps more importantly, they protected their kin from the violence and destabilization that Spanish presence might bring.

When a Spanish contingent did reach Paracoxi, the residents attempted to deny the Spaniards access to their settlement. Their mico did not respond to Spanish efforts to contact him, and a number of the mico's subordinates, whether at his behest or on their own accord, arrived at the Spanish camp rather than allowing the Spaniards to enter their settlement. They

informed the Spaniards that their mico was not at home, but that they would kindly pass a message to him to ensure that he visited the Spaniards as soon as he returned, again emphasizing that they preferred to meet in Spanish space rather than allow the Spaniards to enter theirs. The people of Paracoxi also claimed to desire the establishment of an alliance between the two parties. The following day, however, the people of Paracoxi arrived at the Spanish encampment again, now informing the Spaniards that their mico was ill and could not visit the Spaniards. The visitors from Paracoxi might have sensed that the leader of the Spanish contingent was wary of their tale, believing that the residents of Paracoxi were merely providing their mico an opportunity to evade the expedition.⁵⁴ In this regard, the Spanish leader was quite likely correct. As subordinates to the superior to both Ucita and Mocoço, the people of Paracoxi were surely aware of the Spanish proclivity for seemingly unprovoked violence and destruction, as well as the relationship that the Spaniards had established with Mocoço, whose interest in increasing his regional power might have been a cause for concern within Paracoxi. By attempting to deny the Spaniards access to their mico and their settlement, the people of Paracoxi were protecting the status of their mico in the region and, through this, the status they gained through affiliation with him. As Spanish chroniclers of the expedition reveal in their descriptions of provinces to which the Spaniards had more prolonged access, Native commoners sometimes possessed a strong sense of pride and personal authority derived from the regional power that their chiefdom possessed.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ranjel, 259; Elvas, 63-4.

⁵⁵ To Spaniards, the people from the province of Apalache appeared offended at any suggestion that they might be from another province. "Not one of them denied being from Apalache for fear of death. And upon taking one, when they asked him where he was from, he responded with pride: 'Where am I from? ... I am an Indian of Apalache,' like one who gave to understand that he took offense from whoever might think that he was of another people but Apalache." Ranjel, 267.

The people of Paracoxi managed to prevent the Spaniards from ever entering their settlement, and they simultaneously used their access to the Spaniards to manipulate the expedition's route. The Spanish contingent asked the representatives from Paracoxi if they knew of any gold in the region. The people of Paracoxi informed the Spaniards that the province of Cale, which was situated almost due north of their settlement, possessed gold in abundance. They emphasized that Cale was a hostile province, suggesting a motivation for undermining Cale by sending the Spaniards there. The residents of Paracoxi used their own knowledge of regional power and geography to shape Spanish understandings of the space in ways that advantaged them and disadvantaged their enemies. Although the leader of the Spanish contingent was quite skeptical of their tale—so much so that he kidnapped and shackled the representatives from Paracoxi—de Soto and others within the expedition were enthusiastic about the suggestion to travel to Cale.⁵⁶

By motivating the expedition to travel to another province, the people of Paracoxi effected real benefits to their province. In the interest of hastening their arrival in Cale, the Spaniards passed through Paracoxi without causing much of a disturbance. The remaining settlements subordinate to Paracoxi also helped ensure that the Spaniards left the province quickly, trailing the Spanish contingent as it headed toward Cale and even staging a surprise attack.⁵⁷ At the final settlement before the river that separated Paracoxi from Cale, the residents had abandoned their settlement prior to Spanish arrival, as the people of Ucita had before them.

⁵⁶ Elvas, 63-4; Biedma, 226.

⁵⁷ However, it was not only intentional efforts that made the space of Paracoxi increasingly dangerous to Spanish presence, but also how the Spaniards interpreted this space. To the Spaniards, the province's topography was fraught. The region was relatively poor in provisions, or at least appeared so to the Spaniards, and they were forced to survive on greens and un-ripened corn that they managed to scavenge from the local people. Simultaneously, the expedition came to understand that Native-made roads reflected regional power dynamic. The sheer size of the roads that led to Cale implied increased traffic in that province. The Spaniards realized that increased regional power likely meant a greater foundation of resources, which made the Spaniards all the more resolved to leave Paracoxi for the presumed wealth of Cale. See: Ranjel, 260.

Yet unlike the residents of Ucita, these people hid themselves in a shallow lake not far from their settlement. As soon as the Spaniards came upon their location, the people of this unnamed town revealed themselves and immediately made diplomatic overtures, offering a guide to the Spaniards for their passage into Cale. As Spanish accounts include no mention of any difficulties on the remainder of the trip into Cale, this guide was likely quite cooperative in helping the Spaniards remove themselves from the province of Paracoxi.⁵⁸ That Native people were generally capable of concealing themselves from an expedition fully unfamiliar with the territory, and that their settlement was located on the divide between two adversarial provinces, suggests its residents might not have intended to completely avoid Spanish interaction. Perhaps they hoped to appear not as a threat to the Spaniards, but as a vulnerable people willing to provide assistance in exchange for their wellbeing.

Initially, the people of Cale were quite successful at concealing themselves from the Spaniards, suggesting that they had no interest in extending a diplomatic welcome to the expedition as Mocoço had. As in previous provinces, the residents were aware of Spanish arrival well in advance, most people decided to abandon their settlement and conceal themselves from the Spaniards. Indeed, the only residents of these first settlements who had any interaction with the expedition were those who inadvertently ventured too close while spying on the visitors.⁵⁹ Abandonment was a useful method for Timucuan people to preserve themselves from the risk of loss of life to the Spaniards, although this could sometimes come at expense of the structures and

⁵⁸ Elvas, 64-5; Ranjel, 259-60.

⁵⁹ Elvas, 65; Ranjel, 261.

resources in the settlements, which the Spaniards were as inclined to raid in Cale as in other provinces.⁶⁰

At the town of Acuera within the province of Cale, the residents watched as Spaniards began raiding their fields, which, as the people of Paracoxi had suggested, were more abundant, reflective of the increasingly arable land in the northern parts of the peninsula. Residents saw the Spaniards strip their fields of all the ripe corn, which suggested that the Spaniards intended to winter nearby. If the people of Cale had previously risked the structural integrity of their settlements and more modest stores of provisions to avoid interaction with the expedition, that the Spaniards had subverted a space so vital to Native sustenance became too much to tolerate. Perhaps these onlookers worried that Spanish raiding would undermine their capacity to survive the winter, a fact that seemed to outweigh the danger that conflict with the Spaniards could bring. Likely at the behest of their mico, the people of Cale twice formed war parties to attack the Spaniards as they tried to harvest even more corn from the fields surrounding Acuera.⁶¹

Ultimately, though, it was not the mico's war parties that saved the people of Cale from the threat of more prolonged Spanish presence, but the actions of one unlucky warrior who was captured during an attack on the Spaniards. The warrior used his newfound access to the Spaniards to shape Spanish knowledge of the region, attempting to direct the Spaniards out of his own province, as the people of Paracoxi had done before him. He informed the Spaniards that if they traveled seven days, they would reach the province of Apalache, which had a massive population and was not lacking in corn to sustain an army. The Apalache that the captive from Cale constructed for Spanish imaginations was a place of plenty, and he described it with such

⁶⁰ Ethridge suggests that this pattern of abandonment was similarly common among the Mississippian peoples in the heart of the continent. Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁶¹ Ranjel, 261; Elvas, 65.

high regard that his own province must have seemed impoverished in comparison. The captured warrior managed to convince the Spaniards with his tale. Suggestions of Apalache's abundance were sufficient to motivate the Spaniards to travel there, and the Spaniards now reasoned that Apalache would be a superior space to set up camp for the winter. Consequently, the people of Cale were left in peace, albeit without a sizeable portion of their corn harvest.⁶²

As the warrior from Cale had exploited the Spaniards' reliance on Native knowledge to benefit his province, a resident of the neighboring province of Potano similarly used Spanish unfamiliarity with the region in an effort to undermine the expedition and obtain benefits for himself and his people. This man pretended himself to be the mico as a means to instigate a ruse against the Spaniards. After asking for the return of twenty-eight people that the Spaniards had captured, the pretend mico promised the Spaniards that he would establish peaceful relations, provide them with provisions, and give them a guide in return. The pretend mico convincingly constructed an idealized space for the Spaniards, which must have seemed a significant contrast to the distrust they had encountered in former provinces. By remaining outside his settlement, the pretend mico also situated himself at a location where his actual motives and the physical indications of his subordinate status might be more easily concealed. Indeed, he must have been pleased when the Spaniards seemed convinced by his ruse, as the Spaniards freed the captives, although they forced the pretend mico to remain at the Spanish camp that night to ensure they received the benefits they were promised.⁶³

After the pretend mico secured the release of his comrades, he again attempted to exploit Spanish unfamiliarity with regional power dynamics to secure freedom for himself. The following morning, when the pretend mico was still held captive, a number of armed men

⁶² Ranjel, 261; Elvas, 65.

⁶³ Elvas, 66; Ranjel, 262-3.

appeared among the trees outside the Spanish camp. The pretend mico assured the Spaniards that these armed men would heed his requests, and he asked to be taken to them. When he arrived near his people, he turned and immediately attacked the Spaniards. Unfortunately for the pretend mico, he was apprehended, although the other armed men successfully escaped. Despite the unintentional personal sacrifice that came of this act, by falsely positioning himself in a position of power, the pretend mico managed to secure the freedom of his comrades through exploiting the Spaniards' desperation to survive, which had proven quite difficult in spaces squarely under Native control.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3: Caliquen and Apalache

While commoners in Paracoxi, Cale, and Potano overwhelmingly reinforced the power of their micos and protected their provinces, commoners in Caliquen demonstrated the serious implications of using access to the expedition to undermine a mico. In Caliquen, two captives of the expedition assisted the Spaniards in accessing hidden food stores and concealed residents, which effectively subverted their mico's control over both his provisions and his subjects. A third captive revealed a plot by seven allied micos to attack the expedition. By revealing the micos' plans, this captive allowed the Spaniards to preempt the attack, and as a result the Spaniards bested the Native forces. Taken together, the actions of the captives in Caliquen reveal both the opportunities that the expedition provided for Native commoners to act on their personal interests, and the extent to which micos relied upon the compliance of their subjects to avoid destabilization or devastation from Spanish presence.

In the neighboring province of Caliquen, commoners who encountered the expedition demonstrated a similar capacity to influence the Spaniards as the captured warrior at Cale, yet they did so in a manner that disadvantaged, rather than protected, the leaders of that province. Like the people of Cale, the people of Caliquen initially avoided contact with the Spaniards. The people of the first town surely spied on the expedition as the Spaniards waited for a week at the abandoned settlement. The Spaniards were unsure of where to travel and without access to anyone able (or perhaps willing) to guide them. The concealed residents worked to avoid the Spaniards who searched the area for locals to capture as guides. A man and woman attempted to

sneak past the Spaniards to gather corn, but their effort to avoid the expedition failed, and the Spaniards captured them. At the request of the Spaniards, the woman revealed the location of some of the settlement's corn stores, thus providing the Spaniards access to provisions that otherwise would have sustained Caliquen's residents. By assisting the Spaniards in locating food stores, the woman subverted the mico's ability to control the provisions that he would normally disburse to his subordinates. The man, in turn, led the Spaniards to a location where a number of local women were hidden, including one of the mico's daughters, whom the Spaniards took captive. By facilitating in the capture of the women, the captive man was undermining the productive capacities of the settlement, effectively removing the mico of control of numerous people responsible for both labor and the reproduction of social members. While the matrilineal descent practices of Timucuan chiefdoms suggest that the mico's daughter would have technically been a non-noble, for the man to facilitate in the capture of a woman so directly connected to his leader must have been a direct insult to that mico's authority.⁶⁵ That these captives undermined the mico of Caliquen at the request of the Spaniards rather than put up a resistance suggests that the man and woman might have already been captives of the province, perhaps enslaved in Caliquen and thus lacking any connections to the people there. Or, they might have simply been acting in self-interest, drawing on internal fissures within their town that preexisted contact with the de Soto expedition.⁶⁶

Even if these first two captives undermined the mico of Caliquen through their interaction with the Spaniards, later captives from Caliquen worked to remove the Spaniards from their province as a means to protect it from further incursion. Rather than convince the

⁶⁵ Generally, individuals within southeastern chiefdoms inherited nobility through the matriline. However, sons of nobles could inherit noble political offices agnatically, thus conferring noble status. Such a mechanism did not exist for the daughters of nobles. See: Knight 1990.

⁶⁶ Biedma, 226; Elvas, 66-7; Ranjel, 263.

Spaniards to leave Caliquen for an enemy province, these captives attempted to deter the Spaniards from journeying to the province of Apalache. These residents informed the Spaniards that a prior Spanish expedition, which the Spaniards would have recognized as the Narváez expedition, had traveled to Apalache, and its participants had been forced to build rafts because they could find no more land on which to travel, as Apalache was surrounded on three sides by water.⁶⁷ By combining geography and prior Spanish experience, these captives emphasized that Apalache would prove a treacherous space for the Spaniards if they dared travel there. However, the speakers raised the stakes even further, suggesting that the Spaniards would be unable to survive if they decided to turn back from Apalache, as food was scarce and the locals would surely seize all available provisions. Thus, the Spaniards ought to leave the continent altogether, returning in the direction they had already traveled. Perhaps these speakers had a relationship with Apalache. Or, they simply might have been aware of the prior destruction that the Spaniards had wrought on the food supplies of their neighbors and were inclined to steer the Spaniards to a destination that would take them away from rather than through their province. The speakers might have known that a contingent of Spaniards remained in Cale behind this initial group, and the prospect of further Spanish presence in Caliquen might have seemed a substantial risk. Given Spanish reliance on Native foodstuffs, that the Spaniards might be convinced to return through land they already raided for supplies would also undermine the Spaniards' capacity to provide for themselves, especially given that winter was coming and fields were being cleared. Simultaneously, directing the Spaniards to turn around would expose Caliquen's southern

⁶⁷ For more information about the Narváez expedition's tenure at Apalache, see: Jerald T. Milanich, *Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998), 115-25; Resendez, Ch. 4 and 5.

neighbors to the dangers of Spanish presence. The Spaniards were not convinced, however, and they remained intent on wintering at Apalache.⁶⁸

For the second time in Caliquen, a captive of the expedition undermined the mico, working to the advantage of the Spaniards in the process. After learning his daughter had been taken captive, the mico of Caliquen arrived at the expedition's camp. The captive watched as the Spaniards forced the mico to remain there as a means to ensure they extracted the necessary guide for travel to Apalache. The captive soon realized that the mico of Caliquen was furtively plotting an attack against the Spaniards. Perhaps capturing the mico's progeny represented such a challenge to his status that the mico was inspired to rebel against the expedition rather than simply secure his daughter's return and direct the Spaniards to another province. For three days, the captive and the expedition traveled toward Apalache, guided by a member of Caliquen's elite entourage, who spoke positively of what the Spaniards would find in Apalache. The captive likely realized that the guide did not intend to help the Spaniards, but to lead them to a location where allied micos would send warriors to stage an attack. When the expedition neared Napetuca, the location of the planned attack, the captive watched as a messenger arrived, representing Uzachile, the mico to whom Caliquen was subordinate. The captive listened as the messenger offered Uzachile's support for de Soto, claiming that Uzachile desired an alliance with the Spaniards against Apalache.⁶⁹ Likely a native of another province with an aversion for Caliquen, Uzachile, and their allies, the captive realized his access to knowledge could work to his personal advantage. The micos had clearly been remiss to assume that all of the Native people within the expedition would support them against the Spaniards, perhaps underestimating the extent to which Native commoners acted on their personal interests. Because the captive

⁶⁸ Elvas, 65, 67; Ranjel, 262.

⁶⁹ Biedma, 226; Ranjel, 263; Elvas, 67-8.

spoke the same Timucuan dialect as Spanish interpreter Juan Ortiz, he approached the Spaniard, warning Ortiz that the micos' performance of peaceful intentions was merely a ruse. Although the captive was surely acting in his own interest, his actions greatly benefitted the Spaniards. Because the Spaniards knew of the impending attack, they successfully overpowered the allied Native forces, revealing the extent to which an act of subversion by one individual commoner could undermine a plot that had emerged of extensive communication, coordination, and mobilization by seven micos.⁷⁰

Perhaps the captive watched from a distance as the Native warriors ended the battle by retreating to two lakes, hoping to use their knowledge of the environment to subvert the Spaniards' access to them.⁷¹ The first lake was fully inaccessible to the Spaniards, and the warriors within it managed to avoid capture, allowing them to maintain their freedom despite military defeat. Spanish soldiers surrounded the second lake, initiating a standoff that lasted through the night, until Juan Ortiz was finally able to persuade the Native warriors within the lake to surrender. The common warriors decided to surrender long before the micos did, although the Spaniards eventually convinced all but one of the micos to leave the lake. Eventually, the warriors from Uzachile entered the lake to physically remove the last remaining mico, Uriutina, ending the standoff. That the commoners were willing to surrender first, and that they physically overpowered a mico to force his surrender, reflects the precariousness of the coercive power that micos possessed over their subordinates. Indeed, the commoners who removed Uriutina from the lake listened as Uriutina recited a message to Juan Ortiz, which he desired to be passed to his subordinates. The warriors heard Uriutina describe his valor and emphasize that he had only fled to the lake to inspire the others within not to surrender. Uriutina further stated that he had only

⁷⁰ Elvas, 67-8; Biedma, 226; Ranjel, 264-5.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

relinquished his freedom out of respect for his allies. The final moments of this mico's freedom, then, reveal the centrality of his people's opinions of him to the maintenance of his authority. Because his power was not individual, but was socially embedded in his lineage, he likely possessed an interest in convincing his people to uphold the status of not just himself but his kin, even when he was forced to renounce his personal autonomy.⁷²

After surrendering to the Spaniards, the common warriors needed to decide how to contend with the dominance the Spaniards now exerted over them. The warriors found themselves physically bound, while the micos were left untied. That the Spaniards took this risk reflects that they hoped to flatter the micos' elite status, while also demonstrating that they were sufficiently in control of the environment and were not afraid of unbound captives. Perhaps because the warriors had abandoned their micos in the lake, the micos seemed to have a particular interest in continuing to resist the Spaniards' physical control over them, and one mico exploited his mobility to strike Hernando de Soto across the face, drawing blood. To the captive warriors who watched this interaction take place, the mico's exertion of physical power over de Soto's body must have been inspiring. The captive warriors rallied behind their micos, grabbing anything that could be used as a weapon to overthrow their Spanish captors.⁷³ To both the micos and warriors, this resistance might have seemed a final opportunity to retain their status, for within southeastern chiefdoms, captives were treated more as objects than as social beings.⁷⁴ While the warriors and micos were unsuccessful at freeing themselves, their resistance did bring an end to their captivity. The majority of the captives, including all of the micos, were killed for this act of defiance, losing their lives but never becoming slaves to the Spaniards. Only a few

⁷² Ranjel, 265; Elvas, 68.

⁷³ Elvas, 68-9; Ranjel, 265-6.

⁷⁴ Snyder, 26.

adolescent boys were instead bound in chains and given to Spanish masters. That only the youngest members of the Native force were permitted to live emphasizes the significance of the captive men's physical resistance in undermining the Spaniards' sense of control of their own camp—only those with the least physical strength were deemed safe enough, a striking contrast to *micos* walking about unchained in the camp.⁷⁵

After the death of so many warriors and *micos*, nearby towns were forced to contend with newfound instability, and although they worked to protect themselves from Spanish incursion, they were generally less successful than previous towns. The massive battle might have interrupted existing communication networks between settlements, resulting in populations that could not as effectively mobilize regional knowledge to protect themselves and subvert Spanish interests. At one settlement, residents were completely unaware of impending Spanish arrival, scattering haphazardly when the Spaniards appeared nearby. At another town, the residents abandoned their homes, but left an unusual abundance of food, which might have suggested that they acted with haste to secure themselves before Spanish arrival. At a third town, the Spaniards captured one-hundred people, mostly women, an unsurprising gender imbalance given the recent death of so many warriors at Napetuca.⁷⁶

Like previous women forced to interact with the expedition, these captives used their position as women to undermine the Spaniards. One woman, who was apprehended in the forest outside her town, was given to a Spanish soldier. While male captives expected to become guides or slaves, female captives had the added risk of sexual servitude, a common practice in

⁷⁵ Elvas, 68-70; Ranjel, 265-6; Biedma, 226-7.

⁷⁶ John Worth suggests the alternate interpretation that the failure of Uzachile to warn the settlement of Asile suggests that the latter “may not have been within the provincial domain of Uzachile.” See: Worth 1998, 31.

the all-male de Soto expedition.⁷⁷ Resisting the Spaniard's attempt to dominate her body, the woman grabbed her captor by the genitals with enough force to kill him. Her captor screamed, severely in pain, which drew the attention of his comrades. Unfortunately for the captive, the soldiers that came running to their comrade's aid thwarted her attempt at escape.⁷⁸

The people of the neighboring province of Apalache, who were not involved in the battle at Napetuca, appear to have received adequate warning of impending Spanish arrival, which allowed residents to undertake efforts to undermine the expedition's entry into their province. Residents of the first settlement within Apalache stationed themselves directly across the river that the Spaniards needed to cross to enter the province. The warriors from this town greeted the expedition with a hail of arrows, hardly intending to slaughter the Spaniards but instead warning them of the dangers they would experience if they dared enter Apalache. When the warriors of that town realized that the Spaniards would continue to cross the river despite their efforts, they retreated to their settlement and set it ablaze as soon as the Spaniards came within view, ensuring that the Spaniards saw the destruction. Given that this settlement was literally the first line of defense for Apalache, burning the town was likely not a novel response to enemy incursion. Yet, by destroying their settlement, the residents emphasized that the people of Apalache would be committed to denying the Spaniards access to the spaces and resources they needed to survive.⁷⁹

In Apalache, the residents continued their efforts to undermine the Spaniards. Apalache's aversion to Spanish presence was at least partially informed by negative memories of the Narváez expedition ten years prior. The expedition had begun its tenure in Apalache by taking a

⁷⁷ Ralph H. Vigil, "The Expedition and the Struggle for Justice," in *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and 'Discovery' in the Southeast*, ed. Patricia Galloway (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997). 343-4.

⁷⁸ Ranjel, 266-7; Elvas, 69-70.

⁷⁹ Biedma, 227; Elvas, 70-1; Ranjel, 267.

number of women and children captive, which inspired a series of attacks by the warriors of the province. That the Narváez expedition often raided fields and towns for supplies only added to the distaste for Spaniards that developed in Apalache.⁸⁰ Thus, without an alliance, the de Soto expedition was forced to rely on uncooperative captive guides who sought to sabotage the Spaniards. An elderly man who was tasked with guiding the Spaniards wandered about the province, acting completely lost in what must have been familiar surroundings. A female guide soon replaced him, and she led the Spaniards to a town that had already been abandoned. By acting confused, the man, like previous guides, delayed Spanish arrival at this town, providing its residents more time to prepare themselves for Spanish incursion.⁸¹ After the Spaniards set up camp for the winter, the residents of Apalache continued to ensure that the expedition's tenure in the province was as unhappy as possible, as they had for the Narváez expedition. Twice Native people sneaked past Spanish guards to set fire to the settlement where the Spaniards had set up camp for the winter. Repeatedly, small contingents of warriors ambushed Spaniards who dared leave their encampment. Once, as Spaniards were traveling down a road with provisions that they had raided from Native fields, a group of warriors attacked them, forcing the Spaniards to abandon their loads and returning the provisions to Apalache control.⁸²

⁸⁰ Cabeza de Vaca, 55-67.

⁸¹ Ranjel, 267.

⁸² Elvas, 72-3; Ranjel, 267.

CONCLUSION

It was after this harsh winter at Apalache, during which the majority of Native people held captive by the Spaniards died, that the young Perico stepped forward from among the survivors with an offer to lead the expedition to his supposed homeland, Cofitachequi. He convinced the Spaniards that the province held an abundance of gold. The Spaniards were quick to believe him, and Perico soon gained relative authority as the primary guide for the expedition, tasked with leading the Spaniards out of Apalache and to the east.⁸³ Initially, Perico was quite successful, and he must have been pleased with the authority he received as the expedition's primary guide. Perico was able to assist the Spaniards as they traveled through the first provinces after Apalache, even leading the expedition to an island town in the province of Chisi, where the expedition successfully surprised the residents, allowing the Spaniards to procure an unusual wealth of provisions.⁸⁴

Yet Perico became increasingly nervous as the expedition moved closer to Cofitachequi, as it became apparent that the Spaniards placed incredible faith in his abilities. Perico and the expedition encountered a number of micos who considered the province of Cofitachequi their enemy. The micos offered their subordinates to assist the expedition, hoping that their kindness toward the Spaniards would translate to destabilization for Cofitachequi. Yet the micos also warned that the province was incredibly difficult to reach, surrounded by empty land without any

⁸³ Elvas, 72-3; Ranjel, 267.

⁸⁴ Ranjel, 270.

roads, although there were certain hidden pathways that armies used when the provinces were at war. Perico might have worried when the Spaniards were unmoved by these warnings, for they were still focused on the gold they expected to find in Cofitachequi and were confident that Perico could successfully guide them through the uninhabited land, given that he claimed to be a native of the province.⁸⁵ Before the expedition set out for the uninhabited region, Perico began to writhe and foam at the mouth, seemingly having fallen under a demonic possession so convincing that a priest who accompanied the expedition prayed over him to rid him of the malady.⁸⁶ Perico recovered, however, and was still expected to remain as the primary guide to Cofitachequi.

When the expedition set out across the uninhabited land, Perico claimed that the trip would take only three days. However, the journey continued for much longer, as Cofitachequi was more than 150 miles away. Perico must have realized that the Spaniards were becoming skeptical of his purported knowledge of the region. By the ninth day, skepticism had turned to rage, and de Soto personally threatened Perico, saying he would throw him to the dogs for misguiding the Spaniards on their journey. Yet despite de Soto's threats, Perico would have been somewhat comforted to know that his life was secure. Perico was the only Native member of the expedition who spoke a variety of dialects and could communicate with Juan Ortiz, meaning that even if the Spaniards no longer relied on Perico for his knowledge of the region, they still needed to employ him as a translator. It might have been this sense to security that motivated Perico to finally admit that he no longer knew where he was.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Biedma, 229; Elvas, 80.

⁸⁶ Ranjel, 273; Elvas, 80.

⁸⁷ Ranjel, 273-5; Biedma, 229-30; Elvas, 80-2.

After his admission, Perico likely waited at the Spanish camp as de Soto commanded four contingents to search for local people who could help the expedition access provisions or information about the primary settlement of Cofitachequi, where the Spaniards still expected to find gold. Luckily for Perico, the Spaniards managed to capture a few locals who spoke the language he shared with Juan Ortiz. Perico and Ortiz spoke with the captives together, and the captives agreed to share the location of a nearby town. Perico's ability and willingness to communicate with these captives restored some of the Spaniards' trust in him. As the other Spanish contingents returned with more captives, Perico must have waited anxiously, hoping that someone could lead the Spaniards to the location he had promised. The first contingent returned with captives who were committed to protecting their leader, as they refused to disclose any information to help the Spaniards in their travels. When the Spaniards put the captives to death for their insubordination, Perico must have worried that he would eventually face a similarly violent fate. Yet after another Spanish contingent returned with a woman who agreed to lead the Spaniards to Cofitachequi, Perico must have been thoroughly relieved.⁸⁸

Once in Cofitachequi, Perico worked to ensure that he could preserve his life despite his diminishing utility to the expedition. Perico asked to be baptized, and after he became a Christian the Spaniards unchained him, which allowed him to move about freely for the first time since his capture at Napetuca. While the mica of the province of Cofitachequi had welcomed the Spaniards and offered them pearls in the interest of establishing good relations, the unsatisfied Spaniards continued to pressure Perico to reveal the location of the gold of which he had spoken. In response, Perico informed the Spaniards that the town to which captive woman had led them was merely the first town of his province, and the Spaniards had not yet reached the wealthiest

⁸⁸ Ranjel, 273-5; Biedma, 229-30; Elvas, 80-2.

settlement. None of the residents of Cofitachequi claimed to know of such a place, although they surely would have had motive to conceal it. Instead, informants from Cofitachequi directed the expedition elsewhere, northwest to the province of Coste. Unsuccessful in their search for gold in the province, the Spaniards eventually became convinced that Perico had only heard stories of Cofitachequi secondhand. Perico had not spoken of his distant homeland, but he had instead constructed a false narrative of this space, elaborating on its wealth to encourage Spanish desires.⁸⁹

The Spaniards were quite likely correct—Perico had constructed a tale based on rumors rather than experience. Yet, in doing so, Perico had also situated himself in a position of relative privilege within the expedition. His reasoned responses to the increasingly tenuous realities of his condition, such as his possession and supposed interest in becoming a Christian, served as a means to secure his continued survival, even as his tale slowly began to unravel. Although Perico continued to work as a translator in Cofitachequi, when Juan Ortiz died soon after the Spaniards left the province, Perico was replaced with another guide more familiar with the region. After his replacement, Perico disappears from the sources, and the outcome of his extended ploy is uncertain. Because the Spaniards made no mention of Perico's death at the hands of the expedition, and because his recent conversion would complicate killing him, it is fully possible that Perico ultimately survived his lengthy captivity.⁹⁰

Although Perico is the only Native commoner named in the chronicles of the de Soto expedition, he was merely one of many who shaped the expedition's tenure on the continent. As intermediaries between Native societies and the new arrivals, Native commoners served as the

⁸⁹ Elvas, 83-6; Ranjel, 279.

⁹⁰ The De Soto expedition continued to make its way across the continent until De Soto died of fever on the banks of the Mississippi River in 1542. The 350 survivors of the expedition eventually found a route to Mexico, having failed to obtain riches or establish a settlement in the region. See: Hudson, "To Mexico."

means through which the Spaniards could gain access to and knowledge of Native spaces, and by extension the resources the Spaniards needed if they were to succeed in their imperial project and establish a lasting presence in the region. Because the de Soto expedition represented a challenge to micos' power, Native commoners could simultaneously subvert or augment their mico's authority through their interactions with the expedition. Hardly powerless, Native commoners in these hierarchical chiefdoms were integral to shaping, reproducing, and challenging both intra- and inter-societal power dynamics.

Native commoners' sensemaking of early contact also occurred in the context of individual and societal trauma. Scholarship has recognized the de Soto expedition as devastating to the Native societies of the North American Southeast.⁹¹ Native commoners experienced violence, became temporary captives or permanent slaves, and faced exposure to pathogens to which they lacked immunity. Contact, then, reshaped the world of Native commoners just as they shaped the world of contact.⁹² Indeed, in the following years, many chiefdoms gradually reformed into more egalitarian polities, the product of revolutionary transformations to sociopolitical systems made by individuals like those commoners who interacted with the de

⁹¹ For a discussion of older monocausal interpretations, which treated the De Soto expedition as singularly responsible for bringing devastation to the Southeast, see: Paul E. Hoffman, "Introduction: The De Soto Expedition, a Cultural Crossroads" in *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539–1543*, vol. 1, eds. Lawrence A. Clayton, Vernon James Knight Jr., and Edward C. Moore (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993). For recent examples of multicausal interpretations of political shifts, see chapters from: Robbie Ethridge and Sheri Shuck Hall, eds. *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009). Scholars have also recently recognized that devastation by the expedition was not universal across chiefdoms, with some comparatively benefitting from the expedition's presence. See: Ethridge, "Introduction," 9.

⁹² For discussions of the cultural coalescences of Native peoples in the Mississippian shatter zone after contact, see: Ethridge 2013; Robbie Ethridge and Sheri Shuck Hall, eds. *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); James Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact Through the Era of Removal* (Williamsburg: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1989); Patricia Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis: 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); Robin Beck, *Chiefdoms, Collapse, and Coalescence in the Early American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Soto expedition.⁹³ A transition to more egalitarian social organization from a hierarchy grounded in elite dominance over human, natural, and sacred resources was a process of remaking inevitably situated in the shifting beliefs of the commoners who constituted the demographic majority of these polities. Native commoners' sensemaking, then, was central to social reformations that were both a reaction to trauma and a reasoned remaking of a Native world.

⁹³ Ethridge 2009, 9-10; John Worth, "Razing Florida: The Indian Slave Trade and the Devastation of Spanish Florida, 1659-1715," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone*, eds. Robbie Franklin Ethridge and Sheri Shuck Hall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

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