2016

Elusive Truths: Baltasar del Castillo, Royal Subsidies, and the 1576 Residencia of Florida

Katherine Godfry

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Elusive Truths:
Baltasar del Castillo, Royal Subsidies, and the 1576 Residencia of Florida

by

Katherine Godfrey

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Liberal Arts Department of Florida Studies College of Arts and Sciences University of South Florida St. Petersburg

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Date of Approval: July 15, 2016

Keywords: Santa Elena, colonization, Spanish Empire, Florida, situado, visita, residencia

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Acknowledgments

I am indebted to many persons for the guidance, compassion, and support that they have given me throughout my time as a student, and especially since the start of my graduate career at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg. My primary advisor, Dr. J. Michael Francis, welcomed me into his Spanish Paleography course five years ago and has since become a mentor and friend of the highest quality. His dedication to this project and to my professional development has been unmatched and, in the future, I hope to positively impact someone’s life like the way he has mine. My committee members, Dr. Thomas Hallock and Dr. Erica Heinsen-Roach, gave me valuable insight and suggestions as well as their camaraderie during the writing of this thesis. I will never forget the indispensable wisdom they imparted on me. William and Hazel Hough’s dedication to providing research opportunities for students has also been instrumental in the shaping of this thesis. With their generosity, I was able to spend two summers researching sixteenth-century Florida at the Archive of the Indies in Seville, Spain. Moreover, the brilliance and kindness of faculty and staff at USFSP has made my experience here all the more exceptional. Special thanks is due to Dr. Raymond Arsenault, Dr. Christopher Meindl, Veronica Matthews, Sudsy Tschiderer, and the staff at Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, as they are not only outstanding at what they do, but they go above and beyond to lend students their assistance. The friends I have made here at the USFSP, especially Rachel Sanderson, Ayla Hatadis, Trevor Bryant,
Pieter Craig, Clinton Hough, Jackie Inman, and Maria Wilhelmy, have made the past three years so enjoyable. Meeting and working with all of you has made me both a better scholar and a better person. Thank you.

Last but certainly not least, I had an overwhelming amount of love and support from my friends and family back home as well as in other parts of the country and around the world. Your encouragement, understanding, and good spirits have pushed me through some of my most difficult times as a graduate student, but have also made the good times that much more special. I extend my deepest gratitude to my parents for always supporting me in whatever I chose to do with my life. I love you all and thank you for sticking by my side. This thesis could not have been written without you.
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Abstract

The year 1576 was tumultuous for the settlement of Santa Elena. Ten years had passed since the town’s founding, and not all of its residents were content with the colony’s state of affairs. In the fall of 1576, the Crown’s appointed investigator, Baltasar del Castillo y Ahedo, began a lengthy investigation of the tenures of Santa Elena’s royal officials. The timing and significance of these reviews was crucial as they were performed shortly after Santa Elena’s temporary abandonment in June of 1576. Castillo, a former accountant in Pedro Menéndez de Avilés’s royal armada, revealed how Santa Elena’s officials systematically abused Florida’s royal subsidy for personal gain. Florida was a region notorious for financial ruin yet it still held immense symbolic importance. After fifty years of failed colonization attempts, the Crown relied on the private entrepreneurship of Pedro Menéndez and his comuño, or kinship network, to colonize Florida. Castillo’s investigation, however, reveals that despite lucrative incentives, private entrepreneurship did not work to expand Spain’s empire into North America. Instead, royal officials remained on the coast where they could safely profit from guaranteed royal subsidies.
Chapter One: Introduction

In December of 1575, the Spanish Crown appointed Baltasar del Castillo y Ahedo, a former accountant of the Royal Armada, to conduct an investigation of Santa Elena’s highest-ranking officials. The persons under Castillo’s scrutiny were Florida’s adelantado Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the colony’s royal officials, collectively referred to as the comuño, or kin, of Pedro Menéndez. Before Castillo could reach his destination, however, Santa Elena’s residents abandoned the small, peripheral settlement, located on what is today Parris Island, South Carolina. The evacuation of Santa Elena made Castillo’s investigation all the more pressing, as abandoning a royal colony jeopardized Spanish hegemony. When Castillo finally arrived in Florida in November of 1576, he questioned previous residents as to what transpired in Santa Elena. Each witness recounted that an Indian siege descended upon the settlement, forcing the colonists to flee. Though Castillo was interested in learning more about the event, he was more so

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1 Historian Eugene Lyon defines adelantado as, “A Spanish or Spanish colonial official, appointed to represent the King’s interest in frontier areas in return for grants of authority and certain revenues and exemptions, as stipulated in the contract or articles of appointment.” By extension, the district that an adelantado controlled was referred to as their adelantamiento. See Eugene Lyon, The Enterprise of Florida: Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the Spanish Conquest of 1565-1568 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1976), 229.

2 I will speak about the comuño at length in coming pages.

3 By 1576, Santa Elena had a settlement population of approximately three hundred residents, soldiers and colonists included. The residents of Santa Elena fled the area in June of 1576 due to an Indian siege that descended upon the town and garrison. Evacuees found sanctuary in places like St. Augustine, Havana, and even New Spain. See J. Michael Francis and Kathleen M. Kole, Murder and Martyrdom in Spanish Florida: Don Juan and the Guale Uprising of 1597 (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 2011), 23-5.

4 Colonists evacuated in June of 1576.
concerned with how royal officials governed Santa Elena before its temporary dissolution. Irritated by increasing reports of poverty, hardship, and royal malfeasance, the Spanish Crown sent Castillo to uncover exactly what was happening in the distant colony.

Figure 1.1 Sixteenth-century Santa Elena and St. Augustine

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For two years, Castillo questioned witnesses and collected evidence, which helped him judge the tenures of Santa Elena’s royal officials. Castillo’s forty-four-question *visita*, or interrogatory, helped to guide witnesses’ grievances. His queries touched upon ecclesiastical and secular matters, however it is evident that Castillo, and by extension the Spanish Crown, was most interested in the colony’s fiscal management. Conducting the investigation from St. Augustine and Havana, Santa Elena’s closest, neighboring settlements, Castillo listened as disgruntled settlers and soldiers recounted royal officials’ treatment of them, their families, the management of local affairs and, in particular, the direction of the local economy. Castillo compiled, copied, weighed judgment, and ultimately forwarded his report to the Council of the Indies. In over 3,100 pages of witness testimonies, defense pleas, *autos* (decrees), supply inventories, property lists, and criminal charges, the results of Castillo’s *residencia* indeed fulfilled the Crown’s desire to expose and punish fiscal malfeasance.

Few scholars have used the contents of Castillo’s investigation to inform their perceptions of sixteenth-century Florida; even fewer have pointedly considered the consequences of his monumental review. Most recently, historians J. Michael Francis and Kathleen M. Kole have employed Castillo’s review in *Murder and Martyrdom in Spanish Florida: Don Juan and the Guale Uprising of 1597* to inform their discussion of Spanish and Indian relations at the close of the sixteenth-century. In her Ph.D. dissertation, “To Settle is to Conquer: Spaniards, Indians, and the Sixteenth-Century Colonization of Santa Elena,” historian Karen Paar culls extensively from Castillo’s investigation to discuss the experiences of Spaniards and Indians throughout Santa Elena’s cumulative, twenty-one year existence (1566-87). Further highlighting the multifaceted nature of the document,
Paar also uses Castillo’s review to explore notions of honor as well as the roles of Indigenous and European women in the settlement. Historian Paul Hoffman briefly cites Castillo’s visit in *Florida’s Frontiers*, however he does not analyze its significance.

To date, historians Eugene Lyon and Amy Bushnell have given the most attention to Castillo’s investigation. In her study of Spanish Florida’s royal treasury, Bushnell notes the 1576 arrival of Castillo in Florida and the reason for his royal visitation: “…to visit the forts in Florida, inspect the artillery and report on the governors and officials.” Bushnell suggests that Florida’s confusing treasury practices as well as the controversy that Castillo stepped into over the deceased adelantado’s estate left the investigator bewildered.

Reinforcing this portrayal, Bushnell includes a brief moment of reflection from Castillo in regards to his time spent investigating Santa Elena’s royal officials: “In Florida I did not find, nor was there ever, an account which was clear.” Bushnell concludes her treatment of Castillo’s investigation by arguing the consequences of his report: that the Crown instated regular administration, as opposed to the comunío’s patrimonial administration, of Florida’s accounts, which entailed yearly audits of the royal coffers from 1577 forward.

Including Castillo’s remark, however, disputes Bushnell’s observation made only one page prior. Before Castillo’s landing in Florida, Bushnell recounts how Castillo had previously served as an accountant for the Royal Armada, then under the command of Adelantado Pedro Menéndez de Avilés. She states that Castillo’s “services were cheap,

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9 Pedro Menéndez died in September of 1574.
10 Bushnell, *The King’s Coffer*, 123.
11 Ibid.
for the reason that he, too, was under sentence of perpetual exile and loss of office, for trafficking as an armada official.”\textsuperscript{12}

Castillo’s supposed confusion over Menéndez’s affairs and his previous appointment as accountant of the Armada contradict one another. The affairs of the Florida Enterprise and the Indies Fleet were tightly intertwined under Menéndez’s direction. Under the \textit{adelantado’s} orders, ships in the fleet catered to Florida. Castillo expressed the lack of clarity in Florida’s accounts, but evidence explicitly shows that he knew more. Castillo’s knowledge of Menéndez and the \textit{comuño’s} affairs are obvious throughout his \textit{visita} questions. In some cases, the evidence is stark, as Castillo practically guides witnesses in queries concerning commercial shipping and treasury practices. For example, question thirty-nine asks,

“What do you know about the purchases made by royal officials both in the provinces and outside of them of provisions, weapons, and ammunition or any other things that may have been fraudulently charged against the royal treasury of Your Majesty, whether they were placed at excessive prices or bartered for merchandise that allowed them to profit in the form of treasury withdrawals?”\textsuperscript{13}

Additionally, the list of criminal charges drawn by Castillo highlights his familiarity with the \textit{comuño’s} operations. For example, charges against the \textit{adelantado} and \textit{comuño} members included details about illicit trafficking, especially of Florida’s \textit{situado}, or royal subsidy, throughout the Caribbean as well as using trade surrogates to sell provisions in Florida at inflated prices, in some instances at a 200% increase.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 122.
\textsuperscript{13} AGI Escribanía 154A, “Visita que Baltasar Castillo tomo al adelantado Menéndez y a sus tenientes officiales,” 1576-77, fol. 120v.
Historian Eugene Lyon elucidates the operations of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the *comuño.* In his chapter titled, “The Visita of 1576 and the Change of Government in Spanish Florida,” Lyon provides an overarching narrative of the conquest of Florida, the struggles it continually faced, and ultimately what the Crown’s aims were when it dispatched Castillo to investigate. At the close of Castillo’s appointment, the Crown gained much needed insight into the operations of Menéndez and the *comuño,* as well as the evidence necessary to tighten royal authority in the province. Castillo’s report revealed to the Crown that the private entrepreneurship of Menendez and the *comuño* did not succeed in expanding Spain’s empire into Florida. Instead, they directed their energies towards profiting from Crown subsidies, which hindered expansion into North America’s vast interior.

In regards to Castillo himself, Lyon provides a slightly different portrayal of the man as compared to Bushnell. Lyon states that, “the visitor of 1576 possessed the personal force, technical knowledge, and even the guile to perform his task well.” Castillo charged royal officials of Santa Elena for the crimes they committed because of his prior knowledge of their affairs. Only one person, however, was seriously condemned, the *adelantado*’s son-in-law and interim governor of Santa Elena, don Diego de Velasco. Though unnerved by the actions of its royal officials in Florida, the Crown

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14 See also Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida;* “Santa Elena: A Brief History of the Colony,” “Neglected Aspect,” *Spanish Borderland Sourcebook,* “Richer Than we Thought,”
16 Ibid, 572.
17 Velasco was not forced to sit through the entirety of his three-year exile sentence, and in fact was later promoted to several other high-ranking positions across the Indies, including two governorships: one in New Biscay and the other in the Yucatan. See John Frederick Schwaller, “Nobility, Family, and Service: Menéndez and His Men” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* Vol. 66, No. 3 (Jan., 1988), 305-06.
understood that a fine line existed between their punishments and the colony’s very survival.

Only Lyon and Bushnell considered how Castillo’s background influenced Florida’s 1576 residencia. What this treatment of Castillo’s investigation seeks to do, therefore, is assert Castillo as an influential force, whose experiences not only informed the residencia but also what the residencia revealed about Menéndez and the Florida Enterprise ten years after its start. Displayed in Pedro Menéndez’s 1565 royal contract to conquer Florida, the Crown depended on private entrepreneurship to expand the Spanish Empire into North America. As shown throughout Castillo’s investigation, however, this approach received negligible success, for colonization did not extend beyond Florida’s coast. The introduction of Florida’s royal subsidy in 1570 further arrested territorial expansion. Pedro Menéndez and the comuño’s entrepreneurial pursuits shifted focus towards the easy exploitation of guaranteed, Crown subsidies, which left not only the Crown, but also Santa Elena’s residents, increasingly disillusioned.

As the sixteenth century progressed, the Crown became ever more aware of Florida’s plights. Pedro Menéndez successfully colonized Florida but the colony itself remained vulnerable. The Crown granted Florida its own, royal subsidy, yet after five years the colony’s situation remained tenuous. Further, the expansion of Menéndez’s enterprise stagnated. Therefore, the timing and reasoning behind Castillo’s investigation merits treatment as it speaks to the Crown’s growing dissatisfaction towards the Florida enterprise and, in particular, the behavior of the comuño. Tracing the evolution of Menéndez’s Florida enterprise explains the reasoning for the Crown’s dissatisfaction and ultimately, the reason behind Castillo’s extensive investigation.
Hailing from the Spanish province of Asturias, and specifically, the coastal town of Avilés, the adelantado and comuño members all had extensive sea faring, wartime, and/or commercial shipping experience. In order to attract and harness Pedro Menéndez and the comuño’s military skills, sailing prowess, and personal funds, the Crown granted extraordinary incentives and exemptions to entice the family to undertake Florida’s colonization. With these royal incentives, the conquest of Florida became a colonial enterprise dependent on private entrepreneurship to not only keep the colony afloat, but also to make the endeavor profitable.

Table 1.1 Sample of comuño members as royal officials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Relationship to adelantado</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Diego de Velasco</td>
<td>Interim-governor</td>
<td>Son-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hernando de Miranda</td>
<td>Governor and adelantado</td>
<td>Son-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro Menéndez de Avilés II</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro Menéndez Marquéz</td>
<td>Lieutenant-governor</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan de la Bandera</td>
<td>Munitions Keeper</td>
<td>Possible Nephew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gutierrez de Miranda</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Hernando de Miranda’s brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan de Junco</td>
<td>Munitions Keeper</td>
<td>Friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order for Menéndez to enjoy any royal incentives, however, he had to fulfill several Crown-mandated requirements. The Crown ordered that Menéndez support the five hundred men during the first year of Florida’s colonization. One hundred of these men were to be farmers in order to encourage agricultural production in the colony. The Crown then ordered that another one hundred men be sailors. The balance was to be filled with skilled soldiers for the colony’s defense. For the Crown, “support” entailed the provisioning of these five hundred men, which included the importation of hundreds of head of livestock. Soldiers and colonists, therefore, could migrate to Florida and colonize the land with some assurance that they would not starve. Menéndez had a window of
three years to bring an additional five hundred settlers to Florida, which included the transport of missionaries, and in particular Jesuits, to the colony. With a colonizing presence of various skill sets, it would, in theory, be easier for Menéndez to “establish two or three fortified towns”—another stipulated requirement in his contract with the Crown.18

If Menéndez successfully colonized Florida, the Crown was prepared to handsomely reward he and the comuño. In exchange for pouring his services as well as his personal and familial resources into the Florida Enterprise, the Crown granted Menéndez the right to the titles of adelantado and marquis in perpetuity, the title of governor and captain general for two lives, a governor’s salary of two thousand ducados (to be acquired from profits), five hundred slave licenses free of duties, twenty five square leagues of land on which Menéndez could build his estate, and the proprietorship of two fisheries, one of fish and the other of pearls. For the resources that Menéndez could harness and exploit in Florida, the Crown required that the adelantado only forward ten percent of profits during the first ten years of Florida’s colonization; this was in contrast to the regular quinto, or one-fifteenth, that the Crown enjoyed from other colonies. Acknowledging the extensive, seafaring experience of Menéndez and the comuño, the Crown granted over a dozen ship licenses of varying tonnages to the adelantado in order to supply and aid the initial stages of Florida’s colonization. Additionally, ships under the command of Menéndez were granted out-of-fleet privileges. Those sailing out of fleet were not required to pay the accustomed avería—a Crown-imposed fee that merchants and ship owners paid to support Armada ships accompanying and defending their cargoes. The Crown further detailed that Menéndez did not have to

18 Lyon, Enterprise of Florida, 220.
pay *almojarifazgo* duties, or import and export taxes, on shipped cargoes during the first three years of Florida’s colonization. To attract settlers, residents of Florida enjoyed a ten-year exemption from the *almojarifazgo*.

After fifty years of failed colonization attempts Philip II was eager to solve the Florida problem once and for all. The Crown’s stance on the matter is evident through the list of incentives it offered to Menéndez. The Crown hastened the operation further, however, when it learned that French forces landed in Florida and built a colony. Using the eastern seaboard of North America as a base of operations, imperial rivals could easily plunder Spanish treasure fleets returning to Spain. The French presence, therefore, needed to be immediately addressed and permanently eradicated. The Crown agreed to advance an additional 15,000 *ducados* towards the enterprise if Menéndez could ready his forces, supply his ships, and set sail for Florida before May 31, 1565. In September that year, Menéndez and his forces successfully expelled the French presence at Fort Caroline, however after their military triumph was when the real work began.

Immediately, Menéndez and his colonizing forces experienced a number of setbacks. Agriculturally speaking, the land incentives used by the Crown to entice Menéndez were, at first, practically worthless. Florida lacked large and concentrated indigenous populations that, as a result, made indigenous labor difficult to exploit. Mineral resources, such as extensive veins of gold and silver as previously found in New Spain and Peru, were notably absent from Florida. For the indigenous population that was

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19 Ibid, 220-23.
20 Throughout the sixteenth century, the French and Spanish Crowns quarreled over the sovereignty of North America. Adding insult to injury, the eastern coast of North America was the last stretch of land that treasure-laden ships passed before returning to Spain from the Americas.
21 For an extensive treatment of this episode, see chapter titled “Spanish Victory and First Foundation,” in Lyon, *Enterprise of Florida*. 
present, their reactions to the presence of Menéndez’s colonization efforts varied considerably, which allowed the enterprise to gain a tentative foothold in some parts of the Florida, yet in others, fail miserably.\textsuperscript{22}

Acknowledgment of the Crown’s royal incentives is critical as it forces one to reconsider the legality of royal officials’ actions while serving at Santa Elena. The Crown granted an overwhelming amount of freedom to Menéndez to pursue the proprietorship model that worked best for conditions in Florida. So long as Philip II’s requirements of conquest, colonization, expansion, and the forwarding of necessary duties were met, the Crown largely left Menéndez and the \textit{comuño} to their own devices. Incentives, however, did not underwrite Menéndez’s cost of conquest. Building a colonial enterprise, regardless of the Crown’s enticing offers, was a costly endeavor that required tangible resources in order for Menéndez and the \textit{comuño} to profit.

For the initially limited, economic opportunities that Florida yielded, it was critical that Menéndez and the \textit{comuño} find other resources from which to profit. When the Crown granted Florida its own \textit{situado} in November of 1570, it inadvertently ushered in a new era of private entrepreneurship in the Florida.\textsuperscript{23} In effect, what Castillo uncovered in 1576 was that royal officials at Santa Elena, through manipulation of the \textit{situado}, turned towards the Atlantic in order to profit, largely at the expense of persons

\textsuperscript{22} Tequesta, Calusa, and Tocobaga Indians in the southern portion of the Florida peninsula were predominantly hostile to Spaniards, whereas to the north, and specifically around Santa Elena, Guale and Orista Indians were much more amicable. As mentioned earlier, the vast region of La Florida had been at the center of imperial contests for over half a century. Menéndez’s colonization forces were not the first Europeans that Native Americas encountered in the region. Prior experiences with previous colonizing forces (such as the French) undoubtedly influenced how Native Americas perceived Menéndez’s colonizing presence. For further treatment on the experiences of Spanish \textit{entradas} into the interior, see Paul Hoffman and Charles Hudson, \textit{The Juan Pardo Expeditions: Exploration of the Carolinas and Tennessee, 1566-68} (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005).

\textsuperscript{23} Engel Sluiter, \textit{The Florida Situado: Quantifying the First Eighty Years, 1571-1651} (Gainesville: University of Florida Libraries, 1985), 1.
whom relied on the *situado* for provisioning and other supplies. Understanding Florida’s royal subsidy, therefore, will provide context as to how royal officials could profit from their newfound resource.

At Menéndez’s behest, the Crown sanctioned the *situado*, or royal subsidy, to aid military personnel, particularly soldiers, in the maintenance, defense, and continued growth of the Florida colony. The Crown ordered that *situado* funds be directed towards provisioning soldiers, rewarding them for exceptional service, and the upkeep of munitions and defense structures in the colony. As a result, the Crown correlated the successful defense of Florida with royal officials’ stewardship of the *situado*. Royal officials understood that they were to manage the *situado* and, by extension, the local treasury with integrity, however it did not take long for royal officials’ treasury practices to be tempted by the Crown’s investment in the colony. Colonization required patience, as did fiscal returns on the exploitation of Florida’s limited resources—something that royal officials did not have.

For Florida, the implementation of the *situado* was a turning point. In his book, *The Spanish Crown and the Defense of the Caribbean*, Paul Hoffman asserts that the permanence of the Florida settlements depended on the growth of its economy, which by 1571 was buttressed with a guaranteed, annual royal subsidy.24 When Menéndez signed his agreement with the Crown in March of 1565, he assumed responsibility for the first three years of Florida’s provisioning, however Menéndez quickly learned that these responsibilities represented a looming, financial burden, as Florida rarely yielded immediate returns on investments. If King Philip II provided an annual subsidy for what

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Menéndez saw as a lagging “Florida Enterprise,” such an action would allow the king to keep his empire extended in North America and keep the Carrera de Indias trade route secure. In return, a royal subsidy would alleviate the pressure felt by Menéndez to provision Florida’s soldiers. By granting Florida its own subsidy, numerous problems could be addressed and, in theory, fixed.

According to Hoffman, between 1570-1578 approximately 23,000 ducats were dispersed annually for Florida’s situado. Evident in the table below, however, is the level at which situado funds varied in the first six years. Also visible is the fact that situado funds were not subtracted from coffers in Madrid and sent to Florida. Instead, the Crown ordered wealthier treasuries in the Americas, such as those in Mexico City and Lima, to set aside the appropriate funding for situados. Military presidios, or garrisons towns, like Santa Elena and St. Augustine benefited from this transfer. Additionally, observations made by historian Engel Sluiter and Hoffman indicate that from 1571-1615, the Florida situado was paid annually and in one lump sum from several American treasuries. The royal treasury at Nombre de Dios covered the first three years of the Florida subsidy, followed by the treasury at Veracruz, which covered the remainder of the 1570s.

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25 According to Lyon, Menéndez’s agreement with the Crown to conquer La Florida was inherently a business enterprise. The phrase “Enterprise of Florida” thus classifies and encompasses Pedro Menéndez’s aims for personal success and family honor, both immediately and in perpetuity. See Enterprise of Florida.
27 A typical soldier’s plaza, or payroll position, amounted to roughly 115 ducados, or ducats, which served to cover the cost of his provisions.
29 Ibid, 2.
Table 1.2 *Situado* amounts (in *ducados*) dispersed for Florida

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tierra Firme Treasury (Nombre de Dios)</th>
<th>Veracruz Treasury</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1571</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1572</td>
<td>8,280</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1573</td>
<td>48,296</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1574</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>28,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1575</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>20,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1576</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>20,437</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to bring the benefits of the *situado* to Florida, it was the responsibility of a *situador*, i.e. a royal official, to retrieve the funds, purchase the necessary rations and supplies for the Florida garrisons and soldiers, and return to distribute the goods and provisions acquired. Theory and practice, however, are distinctly different. It was not unheard of for an official to appoint a substitute to collect *situado* funds; interim-governor of Santa Elena, don Diego de Velasco (1571-1576), claimed to have once sent a soldier and ship pilot by the name of Iñigo Ruiz to collect the *situado* in Tierra Firme—a year-long endeavor that, in the eyes of Velasco, merited a five-hundred *ducado* bonus, which he gave to Ruiz from *situado* funds. Hoffman discusses the issue of appointing a substitute *situador* by highlighting that Gutierre de Miranda, during his final rule as governor of Florida (1589-93), granted a monopoly to a merchant and then sent him to New Spain to collect the subsidy and coordinate supply purchases. Miranda’s profiteering schemes were a source of contention for Florida residents, which, as Hoffman notes, was one of the reasons for his overthrow as governor in 1593. Clearly, there was precedent

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31 Bushnell, *The King’s Coffer*, 34.
33 Hoffman, *Florida’s Frontiers*, 78.
for soldier and settler dissatisfaction towards such maneuverings of the *situado*, as evidenced in Florida in the 1570s, and specifically at Santa Elena.

Figure 1.2 Sites of *situado* retrieval and provisioning bases. Santa Elena, as indicated by the yellow marker, was Spain’s northernmost American settlement in early 1576. At the time of Castillo’s investigation later that year, however, it was in a state of temporary abandonment. The orange markers indicate other ports connected to Santa Elena through provision consumption, trade opportunities, and *situado* collection. This map also shows the vast distances that officials in charge of *situado* retrieval had to travel. Located south of Santa Elena was the site of St. Augustine, another military garrison and settlement of La Florida. Havana, a primary provisioning base for the Florida provinces and where most of Castillo’s witness questioning took place can be found farther south. Campeche, Veracruz, Nombre de Dios, and Cartagena were port towns where the *situado* was dispersed during its initial years and, as mentioned, sites that offered trade opportunities for Florida officials and their respective partners.

Though there is evidence of the *situado* being paid annually, complaints from Florida concerning unpaid salaries and supply shortages raise questions about its disbursement. It is true that the funds distributed from American treasuries filling Florida’s *situado* requirements were never the same as what reached the provinces. Out
of necessity, funds from the *situado* were set aside to transport freight, which in and of itself was a costly deduction. Historian Amy Bushnell provides an example of this reality, stating that in 1577 it cost roughly 2,000 ducats to bring a year’s worth of supplies from New Spain to La Florida—a deduction of approximately one-tenth of the *situado’s* overall funds.\(^{34}\) Additionally, storms in the Caribbean heightened the vulnerability of goods en route.\(^{35}\) It is also true, however, that royal officials and their associates operating both in and outside of Santa Elena intended to profit from the *situado*. Castillo’s investigation effectively uncovered this reality in the years following the implementation of Florida’s subsidy and, subsequently, the animosity felt by colonists in Santa Elena towards the disproportionate use of the *situado*.

The Crown wanted to know how its finances were being implemented. Sending an investigator to Florida was the surest way of examining both Santa Elena’s royal officials and the overall state of the colony. Though the Crown had grown increasingly suspect of Menéndez and the *comuño’s* operations in Florida, a newfound urgency brought the affairs of Florida to the forefront of the royal docket. In September of 1574, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, *adelantado* of Florida and captain general of the *Armada de la Carrera de Indias*, or Indies Fleet, passed away. Less than a year later, Indians killed three of Santa Elena’s core, treasury officials off the coast of Sapelo Island.\(^{36}\) News of these events put in motion Florida’s first ever *residencia*.

\(^{34}\) Bushnell explains that this expensive shipping cost (2,000 ducats was the same amount as Pedro Menéndez’s annual salary) can be attributed to whether the ships carrying the supplies were privately “chartered or presidio-owned” as well as the duration of the trip, which included re-outfitting stops at ports like Havana’s. Also see, Bushnell, *The King’s Coffer*, 70-71.


\(^{36}\) Sapelo Island was located roughly halfway between Florida’s two, remaining settlements of Santa Elena and St. Augustine. For further details on the event, see Francis and Kole, *Murder and Martyrdom*, 22-3.
Before contemplating the results of Castillo’s investigation, an exploration of the residencia and the related visita is necessary. What were these investigatory tools and what did they seek to uncover? How did they proceed? The Crown’s use of two, centuries-old institutions, the residencia and the visita, or judicial review and visitation, were the primary methods it used to understand the state of affairs in the Florida colony and primarily its royal officials’ stewardship of the local, royal treasury. Philip II ordered Castillo to “residenciar,” or conduct residencias, for each of Florida’s royal officials. In essence, a residencia was a review executed by a judge of an outgoing official’s conduct during his time in office.\footnote{José María de la Peña Cámara, A List of Spanish Residencias in the Archive of the Indies, 1516-1775: Reviews of Colonial Officials in the American Indies, Philippine and Canary Islands (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Reference Department, 1955), v.} The visita portion of Castillo’s investigation was much broader. He observed the conditions in the colony by performing inspections of storehouses and royal officials’ accounting books. Additionally, he posed to witnesses a variety of questions about the colony’s management and, in turn, let them speak of any particular grievances that they felt needed redress.

It was in Castillo’s best interest to treat his royal objective with honesty. As added insurance, the Crown required that convincing evidence be forwarded in order to substantiate criminal charges against any officials under investigation. Castillo’s authority, however, still granted him some freedom in that he had the ability to place, should he choose, more emphasis on certain issues, while giving less attention or none to others. The inherent discretion at the fingertips of a visitador, therefore, should be taken into consideration before reading any part of Castillo’s residencia.

Though meant to uncover the actual conditions in a colonial settlement, by their very nature the residencia and the visita were limited in their aims. For example, the
temperament of a royal inspector as well as the quality of relationship he held with an official under inspection influenced how or if an official was condemned. From the Crown’s perspective, who, then, qualified as both a tenable and effective investigator?

In the case of Florida, when the most capable candidate was found, he did not have to be the most exemplary individual. The subject of Chapter Three takes place outside Santa Elena and revolves around Baltasar del Castillo’s experiences in the Indies Fleet and royal courts in Spain. Before filling his role as visitador of Florida, Castillo was a contador, or royal accountant, for the Armada, then under the command of adelantado Pedro Menéndez de Avilés. Castillo’s office required oversight of Fleet records and providing detailed expense reports to the Crown if requested. During that time, Castillo became quite familiar with not only the affairs of Menéndez, but also with spending his time in court. In 1572, and again in 1573, the Casa de la Contratación and the Council of the Indies found Castillo guilty for having commandeered and sold for personal profit royal provisions, failing to record precious metals on board Fleet ships, and for not fully registering the property of passengers on board Fleet vessels. Ultimately, the Council of the Indies dismissed Castillo from his post as royal accountant of the Armada as well as perpetually exiled him from Seville and the Indies. Despite the gravity of his transgressions, however, the Crown acknowledged Castillo’s utility, and as such granted him the appointment as visitador of Florida a year after his original sentencing.

38 The two court cases that I am referring to are described in the Chapter Three.
40 Turning attention towards Castillo also allows further insight into how people, especially figures like Castillo who held lofty, royal titles, viewed and navigated Spain’s legal system during the Empire’s most expansive period. The system could hurt one’s career and public image, especially if the system was abused, however fortunes had the ability to change should one’s knowledge and skills benefit Crown interests. By examining Castillo, it is evident that the Crown punished or forgave its subjects depending on their perceived value in the maintenance, defense, and expansion of the Spanish Empire.
Castillo’s appointment merits treatment because, in spite of Castillo’s previous crimes, his knowledge of and relationship with the comuño rendered him the most able candidate to examine and judge comuño affairs. In addition to the tasks and authority imbued in the post of visitador, Castillo’s accounting and shipping experiences further influenced the shape and scope of the residencia that, as a result, focused on the financial affairs of Santa Elena and the comuño. The charges leveled against Santa Elena’s royal officials predominantly centered on fiscal issues, including provisioning, shipping, and general accounting. The visita questions posed to witnesses followed suit. Having gained several years of trafficking royal provisions under the direction of Menéndez, Castillo was able to effectively trace the consequences of these activities at a local level. In theory, Castillo would be able to cut through intricate webs of dubious, pecuniary dealings that seemed endemic to royal officials’ stewardship of Florida royal subsidies and, in return, portray an accurate rendering of their affairs.

Witness testimonies collected during residencias required the Crown’s careful deliberation. Through Castillo’s investigation, it appeared that the settlement was fraught with problems and, to make matters worse, was led by inept, royal officials, prompting one to wonder how the settlement survived its first ten years. A careful review of the results of Castillo’s residencia is thus the subject of Chapter Four. When reading the criminal charges of Castillo’s investigation, it is easy to dismiss Menéndez and comuño members solely as corrupt abusers of power. In tandem with understanding Menéndez and the comuño’s background, however, is important to consider the stipulations of the adelantado’s 1565 conquest-contract with the Crown. What was agreed upon, but failed to materialize during Florida’s colonization, undoubtedly influenced the criminal
behavior of Menéndez and the *comunío*. In other words, looking back at what was promised by the Crown, then comparing it to the realities of Florida, helps shed light on Castillo’s findings and what they reflected about private entrepreneurship in Florida: that it did not aid in the physical expansion of the Spanish Empire into the region.

Table 1.3 Royal officials’ fiscal-related indictments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (position)</th>
<th>Collecting funds from vacant soldier plazas</th>
<th>Mishandling provisions/goods of deceased</th>
<th>Profiteering/cheating soldiers</th>
<th>Bribery</th>
<th>Improper Accounting/incomplete books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (adelantado)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Diego de Velasco (governor)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro Menéndez de Avilés II (treasurer)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diego Londoño de Otálora (factor)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro Menéndez Márquez (governor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel Moreno (accountant)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Diego Enriquez (munitions keeper)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Juan de Junco (munitions keeper)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hernando de Miranda (governor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan de la Bander (munitions keeper)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Esteban de Las Alas (governor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gutierre de Miranda (governor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodrigo Alonso del Bustos (scribe)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alonso de Solís</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above serves as a basic outline for the fiscal-related, criminal charges that Castillo drew up against officials. I have chosen to simplify the charges into five, thematic categories. One “x” does not necessarily represent a single charge but instead serves as a marker to illustrate an official’s engagement in the activity once, or multiple times, over the course of his career in Florida. The full list of royal officials’ charges can be found in AGI Escribania 154A, fols. 1r-35v.

With little economic incentive to expand into Florida’s interior, it is understandable that royal officials concentrated their entrepreneurial pursuits along Florida’s coast and in its ports. Further influencing their decision to remain on the coast was the introduction of Florida’s situado. Though intended for the support of Florida’s military presence, the royal subsidy was seen by royal officials as a viable, economic opportunity to exploit. Every royal official at Santa Elena had experience in, or knowledge of, commercial shipping procedures, so for them, the choice was obvious.

The digressions of the comuño, however, did little to benefit the majority of Santa Elena’s population. Soldiers and colonists explained to Castillo that royal provisions purchased with situado funds never completely satisfied the settlement’s needs. The only persons that colonists had to blame were local, royal officials as they monopolized Santa Elena’s local economy through their control of situado imports and their overall proprietorship of the Florida colony. Additionally, the cost of basic supplies and luxury goods were exorbitant, in some cases at a 200% markup. It was expensive to import provisions to Florida, however one of the primary incentives that brought settlers Florida was a ten-year exemption from paying import and export taxes, known as the
Further igniting contention in Santa Elena was the payment of *situado* bonuses that were made by *comuño* members to themselves and to their associates. Several soldiers, for example, testified that those who received the highest bonus amounts never actually served in the guard company at Santa Elena. The *situado* disproportionately advantaged members of the *comuño* that, as a result, only further aggravated settlers and soldiers—the persons most critical to the colonization of Florida, and consequently whose satisfaction mattered most.

Karen Paar acknowledges that social conflict was present in Santa Elena, however she fails to identify one of the leading causes: the *situado*. Witness testimonies highlighted issues like corruption and profiteering, which serve to explain the *situado*’s local shortcomings. When examined at the local level, it is apparent that the *comuño* controlled the local economy, including what was imported with *situado* funds and at what prices they were sold. Price increases further agitated the settlement’s residents in light of the fact that their own enterprises, predominantly agricultural, remained stagnant.⁴¹ The *situado* helped provision Santa Elena, but it was never enough to satisfy those living in the settlement, nor could everyone agree on the direction of the subsidy’s funding. Curiosity as to who, then, benefitted the most from the *situado* comes to the forefront. Due to governmental framework put in place by the Crown and Menéndez in 1565, residents of Santa Elena not connected to or in collusion with the *comuño* were severely disadvantaged.

Through Castillo’s investigation, the Crown learned the consequences of loosely supervised, royal subsidies. Loose supervision directly affected the settlement of Santa Elena, as colonists not associated with the *comuño* were poorly heard. These persons first

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⁴¹ Bushnell, *The King’s Coffer*, 24-5.
felt dissatisfaction towards the settlement’s financial stewardship, as, by design of the 
comuño, colonists could not participate in the maintenance and direction of Crown funds.
Until Castillo’s arrival, ex-residents of Santa Elena had limited say in how they perceived 
and were affected by treasury and shipping-related activities. Taking advantage of the 
visitador’s presence was their only direct means of explaining to the Crown what had 
occurred in Santa Elena and why a number of previous residents were upset with the state 
of affairs in the colony.

Though Santa Elena was not the first Spanish settlement to be established in 
Florida, for Menéndez and the comuño, it was by far the most important. Santa Elena 
represented the flagship settlement of Spain’s imperial efforts in La Florida—a vast 
expansive of land that encompassed the majority of North America. Additionally, Santa 
Elena not only represented the physical presence of Spain in the region but also decades 
of imperial contest, primarily with the French, as to who would control the eastern 
seaboard of the continent as well as who would colonize North America. Effective 
control of Santa Elena meant effective control of a key, frontier point from which further 
imperial enterprises could expand.

Menéndez and the comuño expected handsome profits for what they undoubtedly 
viewed as a multi-generational effort to implant Spanish hegemony in Florida. From their 
perspective, Menéndez and the comuño’s personal funds and commercial experiences 
were not only vital to the establishment of Florida, but to the permanency and future of 
the colony. What Castillo’s investigation illustrates, however, is that in just over ten 
years, the promise of a large, commercial enterprise along with the royal incentives that 
came along with it, shrank to a fraction of what was originally envisioned. As evidenced
by the detailed, criminal charges that Castillo was able to draw up, royal officials supplemented their incomes by focusing on what they had the most experience in: commercial shipping. The introduction of the situado required that goods be imported into the colony. In response, royal officials exploited the colony’s royal financing, as it was the quickest and most secure way to both finance and profit what was left of the Florida Enterprise. For Menéndez and the comuño, their entrepreneurial activities in Santa Elena and in Spain’s broader, transatlantic empire meant keeping their operations on Florida’s coast. Consequently, the Spanish Crown would never see its empire expand into North America.
Chapter Two: Means of Investigation

The Crown was concerned over the financial situation in Florida. Only five years prior to Baltasar del Castillo’s appointment, the Crown granted a royal subsidy to Pedro Menéndez’s ailing, Florida Enterprise. The adelantado petitioned the Crown for royal aid, as he was unable to supply the three hundred soldiers stationed in the colony. Despite the presence of the situado, however, Florida still seemed to struggle. Soldiers appeared before royal courts in Spain requesting back pay and reports of fiscal malfeasance increased. Compounding these issues was the fact that Menéndez, the leading entrepreneur of the enterprise, recently died. Less than a year later, three more treasury officials perished. Though there were still other comuño members ruling in the adelantado’s stead back at Santa Elena, the Crown became increasingly suspect of their proprietorship. Even with the aid of the situado, colonial growth in Florida remained stagnant. From the Crown’s point of view, by 1575 Florida’s royal officials seemed content with overseeing Santa Elena and St. Augustine, the two, remaining settlements of Pedro Menéndez’s Florida enterprise. This decision was not conducive to the Empire’s

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42 AGI Indiferente 1383A, “Peticiones y memoriales,” sin fol. Representing thirty soldiers who served in Florida, Sebastian de Santander came before the Council of the Indies requesting that the remainder of their salaries be given to them, for they had “experienced great hunger, hardship, and danger” while serving in forts of Florida (todos son de los que para desçieron mas hanbres trabajos y peligros y asistieron en los Fuertes de las dichas provincias), January 31, 1573.

43 Here I am referring to the death of Menéndez in 1574 and the 1575 Sapelo Island conflict that lead to the deaths of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés The Younger, Diego Londoño de Otálora, and Miguel Moreno.
goal of territorial expansion. In order to understand the situation further as well as the actions of its royal officials, the Crown decided to dispatch an investigator.

The Crown ordered Baltasar del Castillo to conduct Florida’s first ever residencia. Along with an inspection of the colony, Castillo was responsible for judging the tenures of over twelve, royal officials from Santa Elena. The investigator’s primary goal was to judge the management of the treasury and, in particular, the use of subsidies, in the colony.\footnote{Lyon alludes to the purpose of the 1576 Florida visita, stating that “[King] Philip II had assiduously sought accountability for royal funds and supplies sent to Florida, but met continual frustration at the hands of the comuño—that association of Asturian families which controlled Spanish Florida...Even the treasury appointments, intended to safeguard Crown property and monies independent of other local officialdom, were lodged securely in comuño hands. See Lyon’s essay “The Visita of 1576 and the Change of Government in Spanish Florida” in Lyon, ed., Spanish Borderland Sourcebooks, 566.} Why, though, had it taken over ten years for the Crown to order a residencia?

The Crown’s seemingly belated response can be answered from several perspectives. From the beginning of Menéndez’s Florida enterprise in 1565, Philip II permitted a great deal of freedom and flexibility in how the colony was governed. As adelantado, Menéndez assumed complete responsibility for the establishment, maintenance, jurisdiction, and colonial expansion within his adelantamiento. In Florida, the only authoritative figure above him was the Crown. Not long after the colony’s founding, however, both Menéndez and the Crown became aware of Florida’s resource deficiency. Again, as adelantado it was up to Menéndez to figure out how to profit in spite of Florida’s shortcomings. The advantages that the Crown afforded to Florida’s governorship (mostly extensive shipping privileges and the absence of thorough, annual auditing) worked for a limited number of years, yet by 1575, the Crown looked to rescind these incentives.
The Crown’s relationship with Florida took a decisive turn when it granted Florida its own situado. By 1576, the enterprise had become dependent on the annual subsidy. Castillo became aware of this dependency as the investigation unfolded. As the Crown began investing annual, royal funds into the colony each year, proprietorship over the affairs of Florida began to change hands. The Crown’s funds, and not Menéndez’s, were what kept the colony afloat and supplied after 1571. It is not surprising, then, that the Crown began to seriously consider learning about how its funds were being implemented. Rumors of fiscal malfeasance in Florida, the continued stagnation of the local economy, and the recent deaths of Florida’s treasury officials convinced the Crown to launch a formal investigation.

For over seventy years, the Spanish Crown used residencias and visitas in the Indies, however their execution across the Spanish Empire was seldom uniform and not always successful, despite their aims being fairly straightforward. The expansion of the Spanish empire meant that the Crown needed judicial tools to gather information and to monitor royal officials. These inspections, however, could be rather complicated and time consuming. The size and complexity of a bureaucracy, the depth of inspection that the Crown desired, and the willingness of officials to cooperate all played a role in each investigation’s final outcome. With these factors in mind, it is clear that ordering either residencias and/or visitas was an extraordinary measure on the part of the Crown.45

The complex nature behind these institutions’ orchestration did not help matters, either. When authorities in Madrid deemed conditions unsatisfactory in an overseas kingdom or colony, discussion of a possible visita and/or residencias was brought to the

forefront. It should be stressed, however, that the visita in particular was an exceptional event and was usually the Crown and the Council of the Indies’s last resort due to the level of difficulty that the investigation posed. Not only was the Council of the Indies responsible for finding a suitable visitador to perform the task, but the Council usually had to entice someone with expertise and a measure of finesse to fulfill the position; this was usually done by promising a handsome salary to a potential visitador, often accompanied by a royal appointment in the Indies once the investigation was complete. Moreover, the visita would take approximately two years to complete, so desirable compensation for an investigator’s time spent navigating the affairs of a colonial administration and/or impenetrable, overseas bureaucracy was a necessary offer on the part of the Crown.

As compared to other colonial settlements in the New World—the majority of which by 1576 had transformed into satellite kingdoms with audiencias, or high courts, associated with them—Florida’s Spanish settlements were small. Roughly three hundred persons resided in Santa Elena before its abandonment. The limited size of the Florida colony, however, did not render its affairs unimportant. Florida commanded attention because of the strategic and symbolic importance it held. The colony’s coastline served to protect Spanish fleets while the colony, and Santa Elena in particular, served as gateways

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46 The level of difficulty towards orchestrating a visita did not necessarily sway the fortitude of King Philip II, who appointed Castillo to inspect Florida and its governorship in 1575. During Philip II’s forty-four year reign, he ordered nineteen visitas be taken throughout the Spanish empire (only 60-70 visitas were ordered during Spain’s entire colonial period). King Philip II was notorious for his obsession with information gathering and his attempts to micro-manage his quickly expanding empire; taking this into account, it is not surprising that the monarch ordered roughly one-third of the total number of visitas performed during Spain’s colonial period. For further discussion of Philip II’s meticulous, if not debilitating, style of governance, see Geoffrey Parker, *Imprudent King: A New Life of Philip II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). Also see ibid, 218.


48 For Castillo, his relatively small salary as visitador as well as the Crown’s suspension of his exile sentence would have to suffice. Examination of Castillo’s background and eventual appointment as visitador is the subject of the next chapter, where it will receive significantly more treatment.
into the vast, North American interior. Many stakeholders, including the Crown, buttressed Florida’s existence by keeping the colony provisioned and colonized. Florida affairs, especially shipping and trading enterprises, spanned across the Indies and the Atlantic, and involved accounts attached to numerous purses, including those of the Crown, the Indies Fleet, royal coffers in Santa Elena, St. Augustine, Veracruz, Cartagena de Indias, Nombre de Dios, and Havana, and finally purses of private individuals with a stake in the Florida enterprise. The expansiveness of the colony’s accounts meant that inspection would be both difficult to execute and time consuming. Additionally, not everyone would be willing to hand over accounts. The only factor that eased some of Castillo’s burden was that key officials under his scrutiny were dead. Unable to assert any resistance towards the investigator’s prying eye, Castillo’s visita and residencia could, in theory, proceed with relative ease.

How, though, was the visita received in the colonies? Historian John Leddy Phelan once likened the visita to “the sword of Damocles,” which could fall at any time “…to remind viceroys and oidores alike of the tenuous nature of their authority.” Like a sword falling, the visita was largely an unexpected occurrence, however authorities in Florida were aware of the Crown’s increasing desire to spar. That said, stewards of Florida’s treasury and their allies still experienced the temporary shock at the arrival of an investigator, yet it was probably because of who showed up to perform the inspection. The moment that Baltasar del Castillo, a previous friend to some and foe to others, arrived in Cuba and eventually Florida with his visitador appointment clutched in the palm of his hand, Florida officials knew that the sword had fallen.

49 Phelan, Kingdom of Quito, 307.
Though compliance with the King’s will was, in theory, a wise decision on the part of Philip II’s Florida officials, they could certainly make the tasks of a visitador difficult to execute, especially if they had something to hide. For officials, especially those engaging in illicit activities, the visita was an unwelcomed surprise. Additionally, the arrival of a visitador signaled that the functioning of a local bureaucracy, one that had probably become accustomed to a unique style of administration over the years, would be disrupted by intense, royal scrutiny. Undoubtedly, the visitador was going to find breaches in administration that did not wholly fulfill the Crown’s wishes; royal decrees sent to Spain’s colonies often were understood and tailored to fit a specific locale’s needs, thus yielding the “Obedezco pero no cumplo,” or “I obey but I do not comply,” style of colonial administration inextricably linked with the Spanish Hapsburgs. In addition to this divergence between royal wishes, local interests at times took precedence over the Crown’s desires.

For the Crown to order a visita, the decision was undoubtedly calculated and took time to reach. If rumors of heightened malfeasance among royal officials or severe mistreatment of colonists and/or Indians in a specific location reached the Crown, mandating a royal inspection was certainly a tempting, if not sensible, option. Ordering a visita could help, and perhaps rectify (if only temporarily), the specific woes of a colony or kingdom under a visitador’s inspection.

The Crown, however, had to weigh the visita’s benefits against its potential consequences. Though the Crown would be gathering information about its distant kingdoms and colonies, the pace at which a colonial administration operated would be invariably disrupted with a visitador present. The inspector had to comb through an

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administration’s records, which was always a time consuming process. Additionally, an inspector had to collect witness testimonies from both accusers of malfeasance and those accused of such acts to supplement his investigation.

Phelan notes how the *visita* also functioned as a “safety valve” that the Crown’s subjects, both elite and commoners (including indigenous vassals), could utilize to release tensions with colonial administrators. The discord exposed (if not inadvertently encouraged) by the presence of a *visitador* was, on the one hand, a potential disruption to the colonial order. However, it also served to reinforce the loyalty of the Crown’s distant subjects, for it gave them an opportunity to voice grievances directly to the king. Clearly, the Crown had many facets of the *visita* to take into account before ordering one to be performed, some of which were not always beneficial to the inspector or the inspected. Overall, however, they served to inform the Crown of and reassert its patrimony in the most distant of stretches of its royal domain.

The *residencia*—another method of Crown investigation into its royal officials’ behavior—differed slightly from the *visita* in both its aim and its execution. In essence, a *residencia* focused on one particular official’s actions and decisions while in office. The investigation was performed at the end of an official’s term in office, and carried out by his successor, a stark contrast from the *visita*, which was a far broader inquiry. Charles H. Cunningham notes that *residencias* could also be performed *before* the end of an official’s incumbency, especially if the official in question was suspected of serious malfeasance.\(^{51}\)

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Judicially speaking, there were two distinct parts of a residencia. First, the appointed juez de residencia, or reviewing judge, drew up a list of charges of which the official in question stood guilty. Second, the judge collected records kept during an official. He scrutinized them for both clarity and content. Should records have been missing or incomplete, the judge allowed the official in question to defend the reason for that being at the end of his investigatory work. As Cunningham notes, executing these two portions of the residencia took a considerable amount of time to complete and it was not uncommon for investigations to take several years. In the case of Florida, however, the Crown wanted the inquiry to be concluded as soon as possible.

In his study of the Kingdom of Quito’s early-seventeenth century bureaucracy, John Leddy Phelan discusses at length the possible shortcomings of the residencia. One of the residencia’s main sources of information that judges used for weighing the guilt or innocence of officials came from the collection of subjects’ grievances during the time that they lived under a specific administration. Phelan notes that periodic residencias gave colonial subjects an opportunity to voice grievances, alleged or real, against local officials in hopes of obtaining some measure of redress. For both current and previous residents of Florida, Castillo was the Crown’s representative, and the visitador arrived with the intent of hearing any persons who wished to come forward, in public or in private.

Once a residencia was completed, the Crown weighed the presence/severity of its officials’ infractions. Additionally, the Crown considered the judge’s sentences (innocent, guilty, or unable to prove), then proceeded to uphold the sentences or tailor them to suit

52 Ibid, 272.
53 Phelan, Kingdom of Quito, 215.
what the Crown deemed as appropriate punishment or reward for officials under inspection. Cunningham discusses this last point with added emphasis, and insists that the residencia was a flawed practice because its existence was not to prevent malfeasance, but rather to only castigate it. As long as an official had solid reasoning for the infraction and/or money and influence at the royal courts to rule in his favor, he had no reason to fear the residencia. The Council of the Indies was notorious for overturning or lessening sentences. Cunningham notes that the Crown appeared to be and, in fact, was largely merciful towards its officials with criminal charges. Light sentences and future appointments from the Crown, for example, reinforced that it was unnecessary to fear the residencia. Though perhaps moved to a different locale or promoted to a higher post, an official’s career was more than likely not over after his residencia was performed; for this last reason, the threat of and potential consequences of the visita were made all the more stronger.

In September of 1576, flanked by two royal aides, Castillo landed in Havana. His arrival sparked both interest and commotion in the bustling port town. Castillo’s presence would have a similar effect when he landed in St. Augustine several months later to continue the investigation he had started in Cuba. Castillo posted notice of Florida’s officials’ residencias, probably not far from the doors of the cathedral (for it was one of the most visited sites in the settlement), which stated that any witness could come forward with accusations against Menéndez and his administrative cohort of común members.\(^4\) Though Castillo already had an idea as to what the criminal charges against each official would face (seeing as he was indeed a former royal accountant for the

\(^4\) Charles H. Cunningham, "The Residencia in the Spanish Colonies," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (1918), 274.
armada, under Pedro Menéndez’s command), the stipulations of his office required him to take witnesses’ testimonies into account.

Castillo was responsible for more than just executing residencias, though. His appointment required that he inspect the colony and provide a thorough outline of Florida’s royal officials’ treasury management practices and any proof of criminal activity to the Crown. He was to offer recommendations for punishments, but never pass sentence, for the Crown reserved that authority for this specific inspection. With the evidence collected, the Crown either agreed to Castillo’s suggested punishments or it lessened them. The Crown reduced an official’s sentencing for a number of reasons, which included insufficient evidence, the overall value of an official towards the maintenance and defense of the empire, and/or the political connections that an official had at court.

For the visita portion of Castillo’s investigation, the visitador continued to question individuals about their experiences under Florida’s administration. In addition, Castillo inspected the records of royal officials, combed through extant treasury records, inventoried garrison storehouses, and catalogued ecclesiastical supplies. This part of the inquiry took place primarily in St. Augustine, but Castillo also scrutinized accounts in Havana.

The visitador’s inspection undoubtedly added friction to an already contentious environment in Florida and in Cuba. Castillo’s presence in the two colonies, after all, only served to expose the activities of royal officials—posts previously held and currently occupied by comunio members. Elites within both colonies likely possessed knowledge of the deceased adelantado’s economic activities. Should persons have had any grievances
towards the adelantado and the comuño’s practices, including both commoners and the elite, Castillo’s arrival was a propitious opportunity to share their grievances. For this reason, Christoph Rosenmüller highlights that most scholars view the results of visitas and residencias with skepticism because though these types of investigations often revealed flippancy and even disregard towards colonial law and order, “…their efficacy depended on the political ties of the visitador.”

In other words, the relationship between inspector, accuser, and accused were often influenced by the personal ties each party had in the royal courts and/or bribery.

Rosenmüller acknowledges that the threat of investigation may have at least partially reined in the Crown’s overseas bureaucracy. Officials recognized the need for upstanding character and administration otherwise they faced potential consequences. The Crown’s punishments included demotion, suspension, fines, and even exile. Had officials committed malfeasance, it would have been portrayed in the investigation’s evidence and thus forwarded to the high courts, or in Florida’s case, straight to the Council of the Indies in Spain.

It is reasonable to situate Baltasar del Castillo’s investigation of Florida’s governorship towards the former of these two portrayals of the visitas and residencias. Though “the cleansing character of the procedure” did in fact shed light on issues extant in the Florida colony, the years leading up to a possible royal inspection did not necessarily persuade officials to put an end to widespread fiscal malfeasance. Perhaps

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56 Investigations were not always requested by the Crown and could have been ordered by a judge(s) in one of the colonial courts at their own discretion or at the behest of other officials with surmountable evidence against the malfeasance of a particular official. Additionally, though the Audiencia of Santo Domingo was the closest audiencia in proximity to Florida, it is important to note that during 1576, Florida matters were under the jurisdiction of the Crown.
they felt confident that the Crown would be lenient in sentencing and punishments towards their transgressions.57

The private, entrepreneurial nature of Florida’s conquest and colonization dissuaded the Crown from premature use of these institutions. Much of this decision was rooted in the fact that Florida was, at last, a permanent Spanish colony after over fifty years of failed attempts. Even if the colony’s early years of treasur[y administration aggravated the Crown, officials in Florida managed to keep the region occupied and defended, if barely. Royal approval of Florida’s situado in 1570 aided the colonial venture in regards to provisioning soldiers, however by 1575 royal inspection of its use was deemed necessary. Evidence of royal subsidies enriching officials more so than Florida’s defenses was a direct threat to Spain’s colonial foothold in the region.

Royal leniency towards Florida’s royal officials during its early, chaotic days and, by extension, its haphazard treasury management, could only be permitted for so long. Thus for the Crown, the task at hand was one of how to curb illicit practices and keep its officials loyal without inadvertently dismantling or dissuading officials from abandoning the colony. The Crown hoped that the threat of investigations would be enough to keep its officials in check, but occasionally King Philip II and the Council of the Indies had to carry threats into action. The visita and residencias Castillo began in the summer of 1576 thus serve as evidence for the Crown’s desire to understand Florida’s financial situation, yet also its increasing dissatisfaction towards Menéndez’s Florida Enterprise as the years progressed.58

58 Residencias and visitas had their roots much earlier in history, illustrating the Crown’s reliance on already established methods of information gathering to assert control over its lower levels of administration. Cunningham notes that the institution of residencia was inherited from Roman law, which
In *The King’s Coffers: Proprietors of the Spanish Florida Treasury, 1565-1702*, Bushnell discusses early attempts that the Crown used to rein in and reinforce accountability in Florida, especially in regards to the colony’s bookkeeping procedures. She notes that by 1570, most treasuries in the Caribbean were subjected to regular audits, however Florida stood as a distinct outlier.\(^59\) After the colony’s founding in 1565, most, if not all of its accounts, were intertwined with the *adelantado’s* personal accounts or with those of the fleet, making audits of solely-Florida records practically impossible to discern. The sanctioning of royal subsidies, first for the fleet and then for Florida and Cuba in 1570 complicated auditing efforts even further; this difficulty was due to the fact that royal funds were expended in multiple ports across the Caribbean and goods purchased with credit (to be later cleared with *situado* funds) were concluded usually the year *after* an audit would have been performed. Lastly, the *comuño* inhibited the Crown from inspecting their records. Thus, the Crown was unable to gain a clear picture of Florida’s fiscal situation.\(^60\) Only through experience did the Crown learn how to overcome these obstacles.

Bushnell asserts that efficient and upright treasury administration was a “chimera” for Florida.\(^61\) In other words, the Crown may have hoped for transparent, treasury practices by Florida’s royal officials, but such a situation was largely idyllic. Compounding the problem further was officials’ use of funds from the annual *situado*, or

\(^{59}\) Bushnell, *The King’s Coffers*, 120.

\(^{60}\) Ibid, 121.

\(^{61}\) Ibid, 139.
royal subsidy, to provision the colony and at the same time, profit by it. The only way the Crown could achieve this was by enforcing transparency through regular auditing, which it did not implement until after Castillo’s investigation. Even before Florida’s _situado_ passed, the Crown was aware of the colony’s difficulty (and perhaps obstinacy) in practicing efficient management of the royal treasury.

Florida’s administrators had brief encounters with inspections in the past, however the investigations never approached the scale of Castillo’s inquiry. In 1569, a treasurer from the Indies Fleet named Andrés de Eguino began an audit of the records of several officials with responsibilities towards the Florida’s expenses, including Juan de Junco, a core member of the _comuño_ and Florida’s first _factor_. According to Bushnell, members of the _comuño_ were hardly docile towards the Eguino’s audit, and in fact barred the treasurer from sailing to Florida from Cuba to prevent him from speaking with local residents and examining treasury records. Four years later, in 1573, Dr. Alonso Cáceres de Ovando, a member of the _Audiencia_ of Santo Domingo was appointed to investigate the tenure of Cuba’s lieutenant governor, Pedro Menéndez Márquez. Márquez was serving in his uncle’s place while the _adelantado_ was away on fleet duty. Not long after Cáceres arrived in Havana, however, his efforts to fulfill his appointment were once again impeded. Lyon attributes Cáceres’s inability to travel to Florida to the peril posed by hurricanes as well as Cáceres’s fear of Florida’s indigenous populations. Bushnell

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid, 121.
64 The _Audiencia_ of Santo Domingo was located on present-day Haiti/Dominican Republic.
65 In 1573, the colonies of Cuba and Florida were institutionally linked as well as through family. Menéndez was appointed governor of Cuba in 1567, and for almost ten years members of the _comuño_ served in official capacities in either colony. The fluidity of the _comuño_’s movements, administration practices, and shipping enterprises between Cuba and Florida were consistent, making the job of _visitador_ of Florida an even more complicated task as records and witnesses could potentially be found in either locale.
suggests a slightly different explanation, arguing that the *comuño* played a role in keeping Florida affairs sealed from the Crown. Pedro Menéndez Márquez and Esteban de Las Alas (another member of the *comuño* and captain in the Indies Fleet) may have threatened Cáceres’s life by suggesting that they drop him off on the shores of Tequesta territory—Indians known to have been hostile towards the Spanish. Needless to say, Cáceres never fulfilled his duties.⁶⁶

These early investigation efforts influenced the Crown’s decision to employ Castillo to conduct the 1576 inquiry. As highlighted, a window of opportunity was found when several Florida officials died between 1574-75 (including the *adelantado*) and a review of each person’s administrative performance was due, i.e. the *residencia*. When Castillo began his appointment, accounting issues proved to be his primary concern.

Though the Crown did find its window of opportunity, it also recognized that it needed to proceed with caution. Yes, superiors in Spain detested Florida officials’ profiteering and general maladministration of the colony. It was deemed necessary, however, to balance the financial woes of Florida with the fact that the region was, at last, a landed, Spanish colony.⁶⁷ Bushnell describes the Crown’s attitude towards Florida as perhaps “capricious neglect,” arguing that such an approach, though not ideal, might have been the best option available for keeping the colony in Spain’s empire.⁶⁸ If the Crown and the Council of the Indies actually pursued a model of capricious neglect, they certainly realized that upon hearing word of its royal officials’ deaths and later of Santa Elena’s abandonment, “capricious neglect” towards Florida’s administration was no

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⁶⁶ Bushnell, *The King’s Coffers*, 121-2.
⁶⁷ Ibid, 140.
⁶⁸ Ibid, 139.
longer a tenable, nor wise, option. The Crown deemed efficient treasury administration, or at the very least working towards that goal, as necessary.

During Florida’s initial years of colonization, the Crown recognized that only through offering incentives would a post to the colony seem attractive. Certain incentives enticed colonists, such as the promise of new land for agricultural enterprises and not having to pay *almojarifazgo* duties for their first ten years of residency. The *adelantado*, and by extension *comuño* members, would enjoy the benefits of generous shipping exemptions, slave licenses to promote the building of the colony, and control of land and fisheries to promote personal wealth. For the Crown, incentives such as these would, in theory, keep officials and colonists both tied to the region and eager to exploit its unknown wealth. Therefore, how Florida’s officials and its colonists reaped wealth was a prerogative largely left up to their discretion. In other words, however Pedro Menéndez and his officials chose to manage the colony’s finances had the Crown’s tacit approval.69

The freedoms that the Crown afforded to Florida’s royal officials perhaps worked for a number of years. However by 1575, the Crown felt that these freedoms needed rescinding, and the proprietary venture of *adelantado* Pedro Menéndez de Avilés—revoked. It was unwise for the Crown to begin this process of transformation, though,

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69 A fascinating discussion into the idea of “A Royal Official as Entrepreneur” is presented by historian Ethelia Ruíz Medrano in *Reshaping New Spain: Government and Private Interests in the Colonial Bureaucracy, 1531-1550*. Ruiz challenges the idea of “simple corruption” in the decades following the Conquest of Mexico by shifting focus away from breaches in upright, royal administration and instead focuses on how persons (and in the chapter’s case, *oider*, or judge, Lorenzo de Tejada) fulfilling high offices were perhaps seeking out ways to diversify a local market through using their royal appointments. Though *encomiendas* were incredibly lucrative, not everyone could have one. Spanish colonists of lower rank needed to find and be satisfied with the existence of other forms of wealth. The royal official as entrepreneur could use his post to his advantage, and instead of his actions being seen as merely corruption, perhaps his wayward methods in wealth extraction further laid the groundwork for profitable colonization, and for more than just officials, to take place. If this same frame of reference is used to study the market situation in Florida, it becomes painfully clear, especially through Castillo’s investigation that Florida’s market failed to adequately diversify, leaving many colonists feeling both cheated and unhappy. See Ethelia Ruiz Medrano, *Reshaping New Spain: Government and Private Interests in the Colonial Bureaucracy, 1531-1550*, (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2006), 151-235.
without first understanding local conditions. The visita and the residencia sought to address this issue, providing the information necessary for the Crown to implement an appropriate response. Florida’s era of “capricious neglect” was, in fact, coming to an end.

It is important to understand the visita and residencia as doing so not only helps contextualize Castillo’s findings that were forwarded to the Crown, but also what the Crown wished to uncover with them in the first place. As Phelan argued, at its core the visita was the instrument used to inform the king and the Council of the Indies as to the actual conditions of its vast empire.\(^{70}\) For Florida, the Crown wanted insight into how its royal subsidies were being implemented. In a similar capacity, residencias reasserted Crown authority through the threat, and sometimes execution, of royal punishment against its officials. Thus, the institutions of residencia and visita forced colonial officials to be sensitive to the wishes of its distant monarch.

Though a visita was usually an unwelcomed surprise for a colonial administration, Florida officials were not completely shocked by the arrival of a Crown inspector in 1576. If they were shocked, it was undoubtedly because of the investigator’s identity, for Castillo was a former colleague of the comunío, and, by extension, participant in Menéndez’s Florida Enterprise. Further, the deaths of Florida’s treasury officials would have brought a juez de residencia to the shores of Florida at some point. But even before their untimely deaths, Florida officials knew they were under increasing royal scrutiny.\(^{71}\)

It was necessary, though, for the Crown to proceed with a degree of caution when investigating Florida affairs, as the cult of the adelantado, the comunío, was a critical component of Spanish colonization efforts of the North American southeast. To have

\(^{70}\) Phelan, *Kingdom of Quito*, 305.

\(^{71}\) Bushnell, *The King’s Coffers*, 121-22.
carried out punishment against the *adelantado* before his death stood the chance of interfering with shipping and defense. Harsh reprimanding of the *comuño* threatened those who finally “conquered” Florida Provinces after five decades of failed attempts. As much as the Crown yearned for information regarding its colonies, threatening Pedro Menéndez de Avilés’s colonial foothold in North America with a full-scale inspection was initially viewed as unnecessary. Additionally, rushing into *residencias* and a full scale *visita* during Florida’s nascent years would have yielded what the Crown already knew was the case: first, chaos within the treasury, and second, all of the issues associated with colonizing new lands, such as food and labor acquisition as well as possible tumult with establishing Spanish and Indian relations. The colony needed to mature and the Crown needed to wait for an opportunity.

As a result of his efforts, Castillo’s investigation into officials and associates operating both in and outside of Florida brought the Crown a fairly detailed rendering of Florida officials’ shipping and trading enterprises. *Visita* questions predominantly addressed fiscal matters within the colony and the Florida officials’ maneuverings with royal subsidies; criminal charges made against officials shared a similar theme. Rosenmüller observes that the Spanish Crown “…usually nominated experienced lawyers and clergy for the post of *visitador*” but in the case of Florida, King Philip II and the Council of the Indies understood that they needed someone with a different background, especially if their brief experience with Dr. Alonso Cáceres and Florida’s local bureaucracy taught them anything.\(^2\) Though charged with the same general tasks as previous *visitadores* in Spain’s other American colonies, Castillo’s adept skills in accounting and familiarity with Menéndez’s trading operations in the Indies made him an

\(^2\) Ibid.
attractive candidate.
Chapter Three: Investigating the Investigator

While overlooking the construction of one of Spain’s most imposing palaces in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, King Philip II signed official orders for Baltasar del Castillo y Ahedo to travel to the distant Florida provinces, a quarter of a world away, with a very specific mission to fulfill.\footnote{Here I am referring to the palace of San Lorenzo de Escorial. Construction of the building began in the spring of 1563 and was completed in 1584.} The king’s instructions were clear: Castillo was to conduct a full \textit{residencia}, or judicial review, of the governorship of Florida’s recently deceased \textit{adelantado}, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, and investigate the tenures of each one of Florida’s royal officials.\footnote{AGI Indiferente 738, N.144, “Sobre que Baltasar del Castillo vaya a visitar la florida,” December 31, 1575.} Extending Castillo’s authority further, Philip approved orders for the appointed \textit{visitador} to examine the accounts of those individuals in order to gain a deeper understanding of how the Florida colony was being managed. Castillo’s examination included taking inventory of artillery and ensuring that local justice was being administered. Moral and ecclesiastical matters, such as the colony’s adherence to Christian doctrine and Castilian law, were also under the jurisdiction of the investigator. The Crown also granted the \textit{visitador} permission to imprison wrongdoers as he saw fit.\footnote{Lyon, ed., \textit{Spanish Borderland Sourcebooks}, 568.}

When King Philip II signed Castillo’s orders in December of 1575, it had been roughly two years since Castillo’s last visit to the Indies. His absence from the New World was due to the fact that he was serving an exile sentence in Spain for illegally...
trafficking Crown provisions aboard the Indies Fleet. In addition to these infractions, the
Crown found Castillo guilty of not properly recording highly valued shipments aboard
the fleet’s galleons. Castillo and his treasurer counterpart, Florencio de Esquivel, had
also failed to provide accurate accounting of averias for merchant vessels. For these
actions, Castillo was exiled from the Indies and Seville in perpetuity and was stripped of
his title as contador of the Fleet system (then commanded by Adelantado Pedro
Menéndez de Avilés). In addition, Castillo was ordered to pay fines in excess of 50,000
maravedies for his transgressions—approximately one quarter of his annual contador
salary. In response to the court’s sentencing, Castillo implored the Crown to reverse the
sentencing. He found success only several years later, however, when the Crown
appointed the ex-fleet accountant as the judge of Florida’s first ever residencia.

The Crown felt overwhelmingly ignorant in regards to Florida’s affairs. Ten years
had passed since Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and accompanying militiamen ousted French
colonists in La Florida, claiming the lands for Spain. Yet a full-scale investigation into
the colony as well as its royal officials had yet to take place. Attempts had been made to
inspect the accounts of certain comunio members, but these small-scale investigations
were usually hindered in some way. These officials, who were now under the scrutiny

76 Doctor Gómez de Santillán and Licenciado Castro of the Council of the Indies executed a Crown-ordered
visita, or audit, of all of the Armada officials. See AGI Justicia 1184, N.2, R.3, December 23, 1572.
77 Historian Paul Hoffman succinctly defines the averia as “A levy, figured as a percentage of value,
collected from members of a group or class of persons or goods to pay a common expense—in this case the
expense of outfitting warships to escort merchantmen in areas of danger from corsairs…it was not a tax,
but rather an insurance premium.” Hoffman adds that the averia’s function changed during the seventeenth
century “when it was divorced from calculations of the value of goods shipped in the Indies commerce.”
78 AGI Justicia 1184, N.2, R.3, sin folio.
79 Pedro Menéndez Marquéz, nephew of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, was charged and proven guilty after
the Alonso de Cáceres visita in 1573, however the Council never carried out his sentence, as exile and
suspension from office was feared to be potentially destabilizing to the Fleet System in the Indies.
According to Cáceres, all of the officials in Cuba were kinsmen of the adelantado and did whatever they
of Castillo, “were the interpreters of local rights and the king’s law,” and were responsible for maintaining and promoting the health of the local treasury. Castillo’s appointment sought to uncover if Florida’s royal administration had achieved these goals.

Shortly after Castillo landed in St. Augustine to initiate the residencia and visita, witnesses were encouraged to come forward with their observations, grievances, and impressions as to how Florida’s settlements had been governed for the previous ten years. Castillo and his assistants carefully recorded the testimonies, judged the content, and then compiled the paperwork for the Crown to review. On the matter of such information gathering, Italian historian of the Americas Duccio Sacchi states that, “In their final reconstruction the judges must take into account both the need to confirm royal authority by punishing behavior outside of the norm, but also the need to respect local customs and political balance in order to maintain a stable and functional administration of the territory.” Castillo tread this fine line judiciously, as both the governorship of the provinces and the livelihood of its residents were in a precarious position when the visitador arrived. In June 1576, Florida’s northernmost settlement of Santa Elena had been abandoned and all of Florida’s core, treasury officials were dead. The way in which Castillo navigated Florida’s predicaments, however, was not only influenced by what his appointment entailed, but also the five previous years’ experience Castillo gained working with Menéndez, the comuño, and the Indies Fleet.

Delving into Castillo’s past is essential in order to understand the nature of his investigation, the manner in which it proceeded, and ultimately what it revealed to the

could to benefit their personal and familial wellbeing. Governorship of Florida and Cuba from that point forward was separated. See Bushnell, The King’s Coffers, 122.
Crown. The punishment he received from the Crown for mismanagement of royal revenues and subsidies (whereas Menéndez as captain general, for example, did not receive punishment) as well as his extensive knowledge of Menéndez’s trading operations made Castillo an attractive candidate for rooting out malfeasance in Florida. Understandably so, Castillo was upset by his dismissal from office and exile from both the Indies and Seville; yet from the Crown’s point of view, the hardships inflicted upon Castillo and, by extension, the condemning mark on his career, could perhaps transform him into an effective inspector. Essentially, Castillo was shown mercy with Philip II’s royal appointment; however, it was necessary for the former fleet accountant to earn his merit and in turn, reassert his status.

Surprisingly little has been written about Castillo’s life and career, despite the implications that his background had on investigations into Florida’s governorship. Historian Karen Paar’s study of sixteenth-century Santa Elena, based heavily upon the documentary evidence produced by Castillo’s efforts, fails to give any treatment to the investigator’s identity and its possible implications. Where, for example, did Castillo’s sympathies lay? He was an active participant in the residencia who wielded enormous influence over the types of questions asked, how they were asked, and what type of information he wished to gain. Castillo’s relationship with the accused, be it positive, negative, or somewhere in between, determined the laxity or severity of the criminal charges he placed against officials. Gaining a fuller understanding of Castillo, therefore, is essential to understanding how his rendering and presentation of Florida’s officials, and specifically those at Santa Elena, appeared before for the Crown. Philip II and the Council of the Indies expected a thorough investigation, one that was even more
incriminating than it would have been had someone else been appointed as visitador; for this to be achieved, the Crown fully acknowledged the personal histories of potential investigators, but ultimately appointed Castillo for the promise that his experiences demonstrated.

Castillo’s relationship with those he was ordered to investigate was influenced by his experiences under the command of adelantado Pedro Menéndez de Avilés. Exploration of this facet of Castillo’s background provides the necessary context to understand the Crown’s desire for appointing Castillo to conduct the Florida residencia and visita. Additionally, the credibility of Castillo’s judiciary examination amidst numerous scandals and unrest in Florida comes to the forefront in light of his previous history with the very officials he was ordered to examine.
To date, historians Amy Turner Bushnell and Eugene Lyon have provided the most in-depth examinations of Castillo, roughly a paragraph in each of their respective

AGI Contratación 5225B, N.29 “ Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a indias de Baltasar del Castillo y Ahedo, como visitador del gobernador y oficiales de Florida,” December 31, 1575, fol. 1r. The Casa de la Contratación in Seville granted the license the following year on April 9, 1576.
books.\textsuperscript{83} Though Bushnell and Lyon’s treatment of Castillo’s background is a mere sketch, their observations offer a tantalizing window into an exploration of Castillo’s life before the investigations occurred. When the visitador’s previously gained experience is scrutinized, not only does the 1576 inspection of the Florida colony and its officials receive the contextualization it merits, but also the thought process of the Spanish Crown is exposed. In order to gain both accurate and valuable information of its colonial administrations, occasionally the Crown had to rely on individuals who were not the most upright subjects. In these instances, the Crown recognized and appointed these individuals for their knowledge, not for their honor.

Through the Crown’s choice of Castillo as visitador, Philip II and the Council of the Indies sought enlightenment in regards to the Menéndez’s Florida enterprise, and specifically, the treasury and accounting side of it. Almost four years had passed since the Crown’s decision to sanction Florida’s annual royal subsidy—an allotment of funds with which Castillo was quite familiar since he served as accountant in the Indies Fleet. Undoubtedly, the Crown wished to learn more about how its royal funds and provisions were being used and abused in Florida, hence naming Castillo as visitador.

The Crown granted the title of contador of the Armada to Castillo in 1568, with a handsome annual salary of 200,000 maravedies. With the king’s signature “Yo el Rey” affixed to the end of the document, the Crown ordered Castillo to travel to Florida in order to take up his office. In what would be the first of many encounters and future trade dealings with armada officials, the Crown ordered Castillo to present his assignment to

\textsuperscript{83} See Bushnell, \textit{The King’s Coffer} and Lyon, \textit{Spanish Borderlands Sourcebooks: Pedro Menéndez de Avilés}. 
officers of the Indies Fleet, who would be awaiting his arrival in Seville’s port on the Guadalquivir River—the city’s transatlantic shipping artery to the New World.

Castillo was to keep an account book of expenses, oversee the office of the treasurer, take charge of the royal coffers, and monitor annual expenditures. As part of his appointment, Castillo was also charged with keeping a record of tribute paid by local Indians and ensuring that the tesorero Florencio de Esquivel took account of and paid almojarifazgo\textsuperscript{84} duties. Castillo’s assignment was clear.\textsuperscript{85} It was in Castillo’s best interest to execute each of these tasks with rigor and transparency, however with the sheer volume of trafficked goods as well as the number of ships that participated in the Fleet each year, Castillo was undoubtedly tempted to at least delegate some of his responsibilities, and by necessity give some tasks precedence over others.\textsuperscript{86} Castillo could choose to flout some of his responsibilities, and even exploit the powers that had been granted to him.\textsuperscript{87} He was not the only official on board the Fleet, however, to be presented this set of administrative choices. Castillo worked alongside other high-ranking

\textsuperscript{84} The term almojarifazgo refers to the tax levied on commodities and trade stuffs being imported and exported from the nucleus of the Spanish Empire—in this case, Seville. See Lyon, The Enterprise of Florida, 229.

\textsuperscript{85} In his study of the Spanish Empire’s colonial bureaucracy, Mark Hanson discusses the Crown’s use of vagueness when it assigned responsibilities to royal officials. Hanson describes the Crown’s reasoning for doing this in that vague responsibilities served as a “self-correcting” and “checks and balances” strategy. By leaving responsibilities vague and even overlapping them, the Crown recognized that its officials would largely hold each other accountable, as they would be quick to place blame on one another for what may have been perceived as maladministration. See Mark Hanson, “Organizational Bureaucracy in Latin America and the Legacy of Spanish Colonialism,” Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs 16, no. 2 (1974), 205.

\textsuperscript{86} In 1570, the twelve galleons under the command of adelantado Pedro Menéndez were the Santiago el menor, San matheo, San juan, San thadeo, Santiago el mayor, San andres, Sant simon, San bartolome, San felipe, San matheo, San pedro, and San Thomas. AGI Contaduria 448 “Cuentas de Esquivel, de gastos para el apresto de 9 galeones,” 1570-6, s.f.

\textsuperscript{87} AGI Contratación 5787, N.1, L.1, “Nombramiento de Baltasar del Castillo como contador de La Florida.” August 17, 1568, fols. 100r-6v.
officials, including Menéndez and comuño members, who constantly made decisions as to how the fleet should be managed.  

Castillo’s previous relationship with Florida’s royal officials (and, by extension, knowledge pertaining to the colony’s condition) is confirmed when attention is given to the affairs of the Fleet. In 1571, Florida’s adelantado drafted a petition to officials from the Casa de la Contratación, or House of Trade, requesting additional aid to help supply Florida’s 150 soldiers and officials with clothing and other provisions. Presented to the Casa by Fleet officials Castillo and Esquivel in March of 1571, Casa officials responded to the petition with scorn, reminding Esquivel that a mere month earlier, four thousand ducats had been granted at his insistence for extra provisioning. After hearing how the Casa in Seville received his officials, Menéndez turned to officials in San Lucar de Barrameda, the second most important port in the Iberian Peninsula during the late sixteenth century, to take matters into his own hands. There he was able to arrange the outfitting of a one hundred-ton ship, filled mostly with clothing, provisions, and munitions that would sail to Florida.  

As per their office descriptions, Castillo and Esquivel were wholly responsible for the cargo’s safe shipment across the Atlantic. Menéndez further dictated that, in particular, the clothing loaded onto the vessel was to be divided among Hernando de Miranda, Menéndez’s son-in-law, and the Fleet’s accountant, Baltasar del Castillo. By ordering that the clothing be “divided,” several meanings can be inferred; perhaps the division of the clothing among officials helped delegate the responsibility of the

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88 These men included captains and lieutenants like Diego Flores de Valdés, Esteban de Las Alas, Pedro Menéndez Marquez, and Pedro Menéndez de Avilés the Younger, whom all were related to the adelantado.  
89 AGI Escribanía 154A, “Traslado de un mandimiento y mandado del muy illustre señor Pedro Menéndez de Avilés,” fols. 703r-4r.
clothing’s safe passage across the Atlantic. A more likely explanation is that Menéndez ordered the clothing be divided so that it could be sold on the officials’ behalf once it reached the two Florida garrisons. There is precedent for the latter possibility, seeing as Menéndez often permitted his men to embark on their own trading ventures.90

The issue on this specific occasion, however, was that the Casa had actively been subverted in order for Menéndez and a fleet of ships to leave for Florida. In the port of San Lucar de Barrameda, after having received news that Menéndez planned to leave regardless of the Casa’s blessing, the Casa temporarily withheld the ships’ departure. Casa officials insisted that three additional *chalupas* accompany the ships bound for Florida; they would follow the Florida-bound ships until they reached the port of Havana.91 Menéndez obliged, but not without tailoring the Casa’s plans. Out of the three *chalupas*, one left the port fully provisioned, but without proper licensing. Consequently, the Casa’s records would be incomplete and/or incorrect, for the supply ship’s provisions left without having been fully accounted.92

Fleet and Casa officials were in frequent contact, as the Casa orchestrated the shipment and receipt of both goods and people to and from the Indies. As a consequence of the Casa’s importance to the maintenance of the Spanish empire, proper and accurate documentation were required by the Casa in order for it to properly function. Should officials from the Casa be dissatisfied with accounting procedures, especially those of

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91 A *chalupa* was a small, oared sailing vessel, often used to transport cargo and people from larger seafaring ships, such as multiple-ton galleons. Masts and sails could be attached to the *chalupa*, thus transforming it into a vessel fit for transatlantic voyages.
92 AGI Escribania 154A fols. 716v-724v.
officials who operated its most vital artery, the Indies Fleet, it was not unheard of for the Casa to order its own investigations and legal suits.

Though the fleet was the legal responsibility of Menéndez and the Crown, Casa officials did not cease their efforts to investigate. In late 1572, Baltasar del Castillo and Florencio de Esquivel, the Fleet’s accountant and treasurer, were involved in legal suit with the Casa. The story of their initial apprehension unfolds rather dramatically, beginning with the dispatch of alguacil, or constable, Marcos Bravo from the Casa in Seville. Bravo was charged with locating, arresting, and escorting Baltasar and Florencio back to the Casa’s prison, where the two men were to be detained until their sentencing. Unfortunately for Bravo, the task at hand was not simple and in the end proved rather humiliating. Bravo testified that initially he could not locate the officials, however with some guidance from a local resident, the alguacil made his way towards the Puerta de Jerez, located on the southeastern portion of Seville’s city walls. Bravo eventually found both Baltasar and Florencio. He informed the two men that by order of the Casa, he was charged to make their arrest and transport them to the Casa’s jail. The royal accountant and treasurer simply laughed in Bravo’s face.

According to Bravo’s version of the events, Florencio allegedly told the alguacil that the men would make their own way to the Casa in half an hour. Unsatisfied with their response and under the pressure of his duty, Bravo protested. The alguacil’s servant, Andrés Pizzaro, added additional details about the incident, testifying that when Florencio refused Bravo’s demands, Bravo seized the official’s horses’ reins. In response, Florencio threateningly grabbed the hilt of his sword before spurring his horse into

93 The Puerta de Jerez, or “door” of Jerez, was the point of entry in Seville’s defensive walls where people traveling to and from Jerez de la Frontera entered and exited.
According to Bravo, Castillo and Esquivel proceeded to hurl insults at the fifty-year-old constable before riding away on horseback. With his servants at his side, Bravo pursued the fleeing armada officials, only to be met with Florencio’s call that he would go to the Casa, but not with Bravo. Castillo was far ahead of Florencio in what each person likely perceived as an absurd chase. Clearly, the fleet’s accountant was unwilling to submit to the orders of a Casa representative, and left humiliated, Bravo was unable to fulfill his objective.95

One of the most telling aspects of the arrest ordeal was that Castillo and Esquivel insisted that the Casa had no right to arrest them in the first place. Their crimes, if in fact they had committed any, were to be judged by the fleet’s captain general, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, not by Casa officials. After all, Menéndez was the only person Castillo and Esquivel were ordered to answer to, aside from the king himself.96 In his testimony, the corredor de caballos, or horse broker, Luís de Córdova attested to Castillo and Esquivel’s proclamations, explaining that on the day of their attempted arrest, Córdova had entered Esquivel’s dwelling, where he found another alguacil from the Casa, Agustín de la Cabex, in the process of informing Esquivel and Castillo of their impending arrests. According to Córdova, even after seeing the Casa’s arrest orders, the men insisted, “we do not have to go nor answer to the judges of the Casa because Pedro Menéndez de Avilés is our judge and the only person knowledgeable of our affairs.” Unlike Bravo, the alguacil Agustín de la Cabex did not put up a fight, and proceeded to leave the residence empty-handed.97

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94 AGI Justicia 918, N. 1, “Testimony of Andrés Pizzaro,” fols. 29r-31r.
95 AGI Justicia 918, N. 1, “Testimony of Marcos Bravo,” fols. 17v-19v.
96 Lyon, Enterprise of Florida, 2-3.
97 AGI Justicia 918, N.1“Testimony of Luís de Córdova,” fols. 31v-32v.
Before long, Esquivel finally ceded to the Casa’s demands that he turn himself in to the authorities, though it was a decision he later came to regret. The Fleet’s treasurer, and eventually Castillo himself, made their way to Seville, hoping to resolve the conflict at the Casa once and for all. Menéndez was present to assist and defend his officials’ positions, however the degree to which he assisted is questionable, seeing as the defendants were arrested in spite of “their judge” being present at the court proceedings. During the trial, Casa officials sought to learn the truth about Castillo and Esquivel’s accounting negligence, probing the officials as to why two armada galleons, for example, avoided checking in at the ports of Havana and San Lucar de Barrameda on their return journey across the Atlantic.\footnote{Ibid, “Defense provided by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés,” fol. 46r.} In addition, casa officials charged Castillo and Esquivel for alleged shortcomings in the logging and maintenance of bienes de difuntos, or properties of the deceased, records.

Clearly irritated with the proceedings against his officials, the adelantado reminded the judges that the men on trial were under his command, not the Casa, and therefore, Casa officials did not have jurisdiction over them.\footnote{Ibid, “Yo soy el juez privativo de toda la gente de la dicha armada y he de conocer de qualesquier caussas civiles y creminales que hizieron e no otro juez alguno” fols. 43r-v.} Menéndez insisted that on one particular occasion, while several ships were being outfitted for Florida, all payments (predominantly avería payments) had been made in full compliance with the king’s law. Sharpening his defense of the accused officials, Menéndez testified that the Crown wished for a speedy departure, which fleet officers were attempting to give to him but were being inhibited from doing.\footnote{Ibid, fol. 44r}
With the *adelantado* present, Castillo and Esquivel each probably sighed with relief, however the scandal that brought the armada officials to court in the first place was troublesome enough that the Casa judges questioned Castillo and Esquivel’s careers on board the Indies Fleet. The *contador* and *tesorero* failed to register a significant quantity of gold, silver, and pearls that were being transported from the Indies back to Spain. Additionally, “many people” went unregistered, which also meant that their personal belongings went unaccounted for by Castillo and Esquivel. For example, one passenger named Damacio de Sauzedo transported 20,000 unregistered, silver pesos on board one of the fleet’s ships.\(^{101}\) Needless to say, Castillo and Esquivel’s inability to produce accurate, fleet registries angered the Casa. In their final judgments, Casa officials fined both men, suspended them from their offices, and exiled them from Seville for a year—a punishment that the Council of the Indies augmented and enforced less than a year later, with much more rigor.\(^{102}\)

Considering the case’s outcome, it seems likely that Menéndez’s defense of Castillo and Esquivel was rooted in pragmatism, not out of genuine concern for their wellbeing.\(^{103}\) Referring back to Castillo’s original appointment as the Fleet’s *contador* in 1568, it is crucial to recognize that both he and Esquivel were outside appointments (in that they were not related to Menéndez) made by the Crown to fill prominent positions within the Indies Fleet. It was common and often encouraged by the Crown for royal

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\(^{101}\) Ibid, fols. 1r-13v.

\(^{102}\) AGI Justicia 1184, N.2, R.3, “Los oficiales que fueron de la armada…contra el fiscal de su magestad sobre la condenacion que se les hizo en la visita que se les tomo,” July 23, 1573, fols. 573v-74r.

\(^{103}\) Ibid, December 9, 1573, fol. 1r.
posts to be occupied by close relatives of influential men like Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, yet the Crown imposed limitations to this practice, though not expressly stated.\textsuperscript{104}

Beginning around the same time as Castillo’s legal problems with the Casa, the Council of the Indies ordered an audit of captain general Pedro Menéndez and other Fleet’s officials’ records.\textsuperscript{105} Doctor Gómez de Santillán, a member of the Council, conducted the audit. For the time sensitive schedule of the Fleet, the Crown needed to execute the audit with rigor and accuracy.\textsuperscript{106} It did not take long for Santillán to discover several officials’ blatant disregard toward shipping procedures, which included the Fleet’s accountant and treasurer, Baltasar del Castillo and Florencio de Esquivel. Upon royal inspection of the records that Castillo and others were charged to keep, Santillán uncovered fraudulent activities such as not recording all of the gold and silver on ships, and the illegal trade of royal provisions, among other crimes.\textsuperscript{107}

Unfortunately for Castillo and Esquivel, Santillán condemned both men, and neither joined the Fleet’s next journey across the Atlantic. Castillo and Esquivel’s legal representative, Sebastian de Santander, attempted to spare his accused clients, reminding the Council of the Indies of their dedicated services. Santander explained that since 1564,

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\item \textsuperscript{105} AGI Indiferente 1956, L.1 “Carta del Consejo a Gómez de Santillán,” April 2, 1573, fol. 68v.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Recognized by mariners and merchants on both sides of the Atlantic, this well-established schedule had been in effect for almost a century. For further discussion on the evolution of the Fleet sailing schedule and both its local and broader impact in the Caribbean and the wider Atlantic, consult the chapter “The Fleets and the Service Economy” in Alejandro de la Fuente’s Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008). As for the audit itself, the Council praised Santillán for his speedy execution of the Fleet’s inspection. In following the aftermath of Santillán’s rendering of criminal sentences, however, the king ordered that sentences against several of the Fleet’s officials be temporarily suspended so that they could sail with the Fleet on its next voyage. Unfortunately, the extant documentation does not list who these officials were, except that they were “six, useful ship masters and captains.” The Crown ordered their sentences be lifted for four months, at which time their return to Seville presumably reinstated their sentences. See ibid; AGI Indiferente 1956, L.1, “Salida de presos con fianzas” June 15, 1573, fol. 121r.
\item \textsuperscript{107} AGI Justicia 1184 N.2, R.3, “Los oficiales que fueron de la armada…contra el fiscal de su magestad sobre la condenacion que se les hizo en la visita que se les tomo”
\end{itemize}
Castillo served in fleets operating in both the Mediterranean and the Indies. During each appointment, he always kept honest and thorough accounts. By including such details, surely Castillo’s services to the Crown would have helped counter the charges leveled against him. The evidence, however, was stacked against the contador. Castillo was removed from office and exiled from both the Indies and Seville in perpetuity. Furthermore, the Council of the Indies denied hearing any further defense on the matter, stating that neither Castillo nor Esquivel were permitted to appeal to the Crown.108

Undoubtedly fuming with anger as the Council handed down his sentence, Castillo pondered his unfortunate situation. Several of his former colleagues and overseers, including Menéndez, managed to evade punishment, however Castillo did not. The Adelantado Pedro Menéndez de Avilés was not stripped of his grand titles or his salary, nor were other family members and close friends of Menéndez. Simply put, Menéndez was too valuable for the Crown to dismiss, but someone had to be punished for not executing the tasks of their royal appointments. Considering Sacchi’s explanation that judges were responsible for finding a delicate balance between asserting the Crown’s dominance yet not wholly disrupting the political structures that undergirded a specific locality, it is clear that the same logic applied to the Indies Fleet. Found guilty by the Council of the Indies for overstepping the boundaries of his office, Castillo’s actions and relationship with Menéndez deemed him worthy of punishment.

For Menéndez, it was necessary to direct his energies towards the Florida enterprise. Court cases, such as those of Castillo and Esquivel, interrupted the adelantado’s operations. Menéndez was not related to them either; in the sixteenth century, maintenance of familial name and honor required significant energy, so perhaps

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108 Ibid, fol. 1r.
Menéndez’s defense of Castillo and Esquivel’s actions may not have been as strong due to that fact.\textsuperscript{109} The \textit{adelantado} reserved his energy and loyalty to the preservation of his kin and \textit{comuño} members. In recognition of this, Castillo undoubtedly took the same approach during the \textit{residencia}: he, not being related to Menéndez or the \textit{comuño}, could execute his royal orders without regard for the preservation of their honor.

Only a few years would pass before Castillo’s fortune changed. Despite his tarnished history with the Casa and the Council of the Indies, the Crown still recognized Castillo as a valuable asset to the Empire. Clearly adept in accounting and bookkeeping, the Crown appointed Castillo to conduct the \textit{residencias} of Florida’s royal officials and a \textit{visita} of the colony’s affairs. At first, the Crown’s logic appears flawed, if not counterintuitive. Just two years earlier, Castillo had been removed from office and exiled for stealing from the royal purse. To make matters worse, the Crown had appointed Castillo and Esquivel as outside officials to help curb such activity (in their case, aboard the Indies Fleet). As Lyon states, “The king appointed royal financial officials to assume Crown revenues would be accounted for and forwarded to Spain.”\textsuperscript{110} The king’s coffers could not afford the behavior of men like Castillo and Esquivel. Their transgressions, however, did not render them useless.

Florida’s \textit{visitador} needed to be someone with ample experience in commercial shipping, accounting and, if possible, familiarity with illicit trading.\textsuperscript{111} Castillo’s appointment is understandable when considering the climate of fiscal abuse on board the

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\textsuperscript{109} For discussions on the importance of maintaining and perpetuating honor in the colonial Latin American context, refer to Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, eds., \textit{The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).
\textsuperscript{110} Lyon, \textit{Enterprise of Florida}, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{111} AGI Contratacion 5225B, N.29 “Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a indias de Baltasar del Castillo y Ahedo, como visitador del gobernador y oficiales de Florida,” December 31, 1575.
\end{flushright}
Fleet and in the Indies towards the use of royal subsidies. Castillo was familiar with the handling of Crown’s funds and royal provisions, so in theory his abilities could be directed towards the examination of Santa Elena’s treasury practices. He would be able to trace the use of royal subsidies with considerably more ease compared to someone with less experience. Who better to examine Florida’s officials than someone who already knew those on trial and possessed intimate knowledge of their affairs? In addition, it is probable that Castillo held several years of contempt towards at least several of Florida’s officials, a fact that the Crown took into account when considering who to appoint as visitador. For example, it seems highly likely that Castillo did not care for don Diego de Velasco. Castillo levied the greatest number of criminal charges against the interim governor of Santa Elena—twenty-nine in total—as compared to the adelantado, who only received eighteen.

For the first time since the founding of St. Augustine in 1565, a formal investigation into the tenure of each official’s post would be executed, providing the Crown with a clearer picture of Florida and its inhabitants. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (though deceased by the time of Castillo’s appointment), along with his family members and close friends, were at the mercy of the visitador.

In an exercise of pragmatism, the Crown negotiated Castillo’s sentence, effectively overturned his exile, and ordered him to return to the Indies. By the 1570s, Philip II was deeply concerned over Florida’s affairs, and in particular, how the colony’s royal subsidy was being used. The comuño was notorious for keeping its affairs encapsulated; therefore the Crown needed someone with prior knowledge of their operations to conduct the investigation. Though previously condemned, Castillo was
worth more to the Crown as an investigator than he was as a dismissed and exiled accountant. The Crown was confident in Castillo’s abilities and that he could navigate the investigation with relative ease.

Castillo’s background, therefore, influenced the outcome of Florida’s investigation. His unquestionable experience with commercial shipping while under the command of Florida’s adelantado informed the types of questions he asked witnesses and, ultimately, the nature of royal officials’ indictments. His reports were incredibly detailed about Santa Elena’s finances as well as how comuño members managed the local economy. Well versed in accounting and knowledgeable about the trafficking of royal provisions, Castillo’s investigation revealed to the Crown that comuño members, who were still very much participants in the Florida enterprise, found the situado to be the most reliable resource to exploit. With the ample evidence that Castillo forwarded to the Crown, Philip II and the Council of the Indies wrested from the comuño, or at least attempted to, the entrepreneurial freedoms they had enjoyed for over ten years. It was evident that Santa Elena’s royal officials had no intention of expanding the Empire into North America, so the Crown took control over the enterprise. Castillo’s background, therefore, directly influenced the Crown’s decision to separate civil from proprietary government in Florida.
In February of 1576, roughly ten years after Santa Elena’s founding, disgruntled settlers and soldiers of the settlement drafted a letter to the Crown. In the presence of Florida’s governor, the Adelantado Hernando de Miranda, the letter’s authors informed King Philip II of the severe hardships they faced in Santa Elena. Together, the settlers and soldiers claimed that they were struggling and that their agricultural pursuits failed to yield the profits they had envisioned. In addition, they explained that they had not received any assistance to correct the matter, “save our own arms.” According to the letter’s authors, the recently-deceased Adelantado Pedro Menéndez de Avilés had not fulfilled the promises of a royal ordinance. Issued in Spain, the ordinance stated that settlers would be given twelve head of cattle and a bull, would be established on good soil, and would be given allotments of land in order for them to start their lives over in a new, colonial settlement in Florida. These persons were predominantly farmers who had risked their lives and their fortunes to settle at Santa Elena. The men expected financial success largely through agricultural enterprises, yet they were unable to realize their ambitions because, according to them, the adelantado had failed to distribute promised lands and livestock.

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113 Ibid, 516.
114 Ibid.
As if the letter’s authors had not suffered enough, those who expressed their desire to depart from Santa Elena additionally voiced concern over the “ill treatment” and insults they received from local royal officials. In the sixteenth century, preserving and perpetuating personal and familial honor was crucial to Spaniards’ reputation in a small, peripheral settlement like Santa Elena. Voiced by over a dozen residents of varying socioeconomic statuses, the problems outlined in the letter merited the Crown’s attention, for colonists wished to leave Santa Elena in order to find better economic opportunities elsewhere in the Empire. From the Crown’s perspective, their proposal was unacceptable. Santa Elena, the Crown’s northernmost, colonial settlement, needed to stay colonized in order for Spanish hegemony to remain in the region.

The letter serves to highlight the factional nature of the colony, which had been brewing for quite some time, especially between settlers and the *comuño*. At least a dozen people expressed their desire to leave Santa Elena. If royal ordinances were not met or fulfilled, and there was enough backing and momentum from persons in influential positions, the entire colonial venture could be dismantled. Unbeknownst to the letter’s authors, however, they would have their opportunity to express their grievances directly to the Crown when the royal investigator Baltasar del Castillo y Ahedo arrived in Florida later that year.

Even though the Spanish Crown provided an annual subsidy for the maintenance of the Florida garrisons, the funds did little to stabilize the colony’s economy, nor did it benefit Santa Elena’s residents in the same way that it benefitted Florida’s royal officials.

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115 For further discussion on the importance of honor and its preservation, again reference Lyman Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, eds., *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America*. 116 Members of the local *cabildo*, or town council, voiced their grievances, as did prominent members of society, known as “first settlers,” in addition to soldiers and a couple of women.
In reality, it was not meant to serve everyone, as the Crown implemented it to support Florida’s military presence. With control of the subsidy lodged in *comuño* hands, however, it became clear that they, and not soldiers, would be benefitting most from its presence.117

Though implementation of the *situado* proved to be problematic in its early years, its introduction was nevertheless a turning point for the Florida colony. The financial livelihood of 150 soldiers effectively transferred over to the Crown, permanently and in perpetuity. If Menéndez could no longer afford them, the Crown certainly could, as keeping Florida under Spanish control was the whole point of the Florida Enterprise. In addition to subsidizing Florida’s soldiers, the Crown changed another critical component of the colony’s economy by rewriting the descriptions of Florida’s royal treasury offices; the treasurer, accountant, and factor-overseer now held their titles for life.118 Perhaps stability could finally be achieved for Florida. Unfortunately, this was not the case in Santa Elena.

Royal assistance was vital in the colony’s early days, however it became a permanent, profitable venture for royal officials with the Crown’s approval of the annual *situado*. The subsidy became the primary, economic engine for the colony. As a result, it held the potential for both profit and investment. Only *comuño* members and their trading associates, however, could participate in these entrepreneurial pursuits. What was originally the Crown’s means to provide for Florida’s defense quickly turned into a profiting scheme for Florida’s royal officials.

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118 Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana*, 43.
In *Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century*, historian Alejandro de la Fuente claims that Florida’s market became the second most significant market for Havana, only behind that of New Spain. De la Fuente’s argument is valid, seeing as the introduction of the Florida *situado* along with Menéndez’s governorship of Cuba (granted by the Crown in 1567) created a strong, provisioning link between the two colonies. Even before the formal existence of the Florida subsidy, though, de la Fuente observes that between 1566-1570, the export trade of Havana’s market goods to Florida was worth roughly half a million *reales* (roughly one-third of the approximate 23,000-*ducado* subsidy). The exports purchased for Florida were predominantly foodstuffs, which included livestock, cured meat, and agricultural products such as corn, olive oil, and wine. Also acquired were textiles and clothing.¹¹⁹ It is apparent that the commercial, as well as governmental, link between Florida and Cuba enabled Florida’s residents, officials, and economy to survive, and seemingly with a degree of stability. Given the nature and amount of these exports, however, it seems as though Florida officials, and by extension their military dependents, became almost entirely dependent on the *situado* for provisions and trading opportunities; de la Fuente asserts that *situado* funds were, after all, Florida’s main source of income.

As the previous chapter outlined, Castillo’s extensive background in accounting influenced the scope and focus of the *residencia*, which predominantly targeted royal officials’ financial maneuverings. With a judicious examination of the indictments charged by Baltasar del Castillo to several Florida officials, it will become clear that the *situado* was used in ways that upset the settlement’s social fabric. Examination of local

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grievances concerning how the *situado* was implemented will shed light on the friction that developed between colonists and royal officials.

Baltasar del Castillo began his *residencia* by investigating Florida’s acting governor, Gutierre de Miranda. Castillo’s indictment of Miranda was light when compared to the number of charges leveled against other senior officials, namely the late-*adelantado* and interim-governor don Diego de Velasco. The investigator only placed three charges against Miranda, yet despite the brevity of the list, fiscal irregularities were present. During Miranda’s tenure as governor, he kept a Frenchman by the name of Guillermo in his service. Miranda used the Frenchman’s presence to collect an extra soldier’s *plaza*.\(^\text{120}\) Miranda’s brief list of criminal charges can be attributed to a number of factors. Miranda had only been acting-governor for several months when Castillo arrived in St. Augustine to begin his royal investigation in November of 1576. Miranda was temporarily filling the position of governor in light of the fact that his brother, Hernando de Miranda, had fled his post at Santa Elena in the wake of the settlement’s abandonment roughly five months earlier.

Castillo’s examination of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés’s governorship highlights the effects that royal subsidies, and eventually the *situado*, had on Santa Elena’s economy. In total, Castillo charged the deceased *adelantado* with eighteen crimes, the majority of which related to fiscal matters. The charges that concern the economic structure of Santa Elena and, more broadly, Florida and the Caribbean, were as follows:

\(^{121}\) AGI Escribanía 154A, fol. 1v.
\(^{121}\) Charge list in full can be found in ibid, fols. 24v-28r.
1. Sending one of the eighteen provision ships from the Sancho de Archiniega reinforcement fleet of 1566 (approximately a 150-200 ton vessel) to Campeche without having unloaded a single provision in order to sell and trade its contents.

2. Not ensuring the proper management and record keeping of deceased peoples’ property and assets.

3. Ordering Pedro Menéndez Marquez, his nephew and lieutenant, to captain a thirty-ton vessel filled with clothing, provisions, and other goods to be launched from St. Augustine in order to trade its contents elsewhere in the Indies.

4. In general, allowing himself and his lieutenants to sell provisions such as wine, oil, and other valuable goods in Havana and other places without keeping record of such frequent activities.

5. Permitting Sancho de Archiniega to sail back to Spain and sell a portion of the allotted provisions and goods prepared for Florida after the reinforcement fleet landed in 1566 (approximately two or three vessels of the eighteen ships in total).

6. Negligence in directing a supply ship from Spain to enter the St. Augustine harbor, thus after spending time lost in the Florida Straits, it sailed to Havana to engage in trade.

7. The deaths of settlers and soldiers caused by hunger that was directly caused by the redirection of this specific provisions ship.

8. Not having paid peoples’ salaries for four years.

9. Using his officials and personal servants as trade surrogates and permitting them to sell goods to settlers and soldiers at an inflated price of 200 percent.

10. Selling more than four thousand ducats-worth of provisions and other goods of His Majesty meant for the provisions of the people of Florida at inflated prices and ordering Diego Ruíz, his servant, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, treasurer, and Don Diego de Velasco, lieutenant, to withdraw this money from coffers in the form of libranzas.122

11. The profit from the goods that have been sold does not seem to have been sent to His Majesty except for only a small fraction.

12. Not collecting the deposits of his royal officials or provisions keepers and certain other people that, in effect, caused a great sum of the treasury to be missing for which the royal officials should be punished.

122 A libranza, or promissory note, is a withdrawal from an account or coffer and could also be used as legal tender. By law, the governor was to endorse a libranza for his royal officials in order for any of them to make withdrawals.
13. Selling clothing and provisions sent by order of His Majesty meant for the people of Florida at other ports in the Indies.

By examining the charges that Castillo leveled against Menéndez, it is evident that the late-adelantado was heavily involved in an elaborate network of trade. However, the level of detail provided in the charges is telling of Castillo’s personal knowledge of Menéndez’s activities. Whether directly or indirectly, it is highly likely that the investigator himself was an accomplice to the crimes committed. Castillo’s tenure as royal accountant of the Fleet began in 1568 and ended in 1573, fitting roughly within the timeframe of the charges outlined. A report is included within the breadth of the investigation’s papers that concerns Baltasar del Castillo and Florencio de Esquivel, whom previously held the royal offices of accountant and treasurer of the Indies Fleet, then under Menéndez’s command. In 1571, while preparing to depart from Cádiz, Castillo and Esquivel were ordered by the late-adelantado to deliver clothing, munitions, and provisions to the Indies without proper documentation or permission from the officials of the Casa de la Contratación. 123

It appears that Pedro Menéndez was concerned with building economic ties between Florida and other Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico port cities. After 1570, situado funds were used to further solidify these connections, as the subsidy was first collected from the royal coffers at Nombre de Dios and then from Veracruz’s coffers four years later. 124 These economic connections between Florida and different ports were predominantly made through the purchasing and selling of royal provisions for the Florida colony.

123 AGI Escribanía 154A, fols. 696r-709r.
Situated funds and the subsequent importation of supplies required the oversight of several people. To manage situado funds, the adelantado and royal officials like Pedro Menéndez de Avilés the Younger, Miguel Moreno, Diego Londoño de Otálora, and don Diego de Velasco coordinated situado retrievals, facilitated incoming shipments from the Caribbean purchased with situado funds (predominantly from Cuba), and ultimately oversaw the incorporation and distribution of supplies in Santa Elena from the local storehouse. Royal officials also enlisted the help of ship pilots and other merchant intermediaries operating both in and outside of Florida to secure supply lines.125

Comunío members established monopolies in order to increase profits on situado-purchased provisions and supplies. They were able to do this because they were proprietors of Menéndez’s Florida Enterprise. By limiting the number and type of provisions and supplies imported into Santa Elena to be sold to soldiers, as well as manipulation of supply costs, some profitable margin could be achieved.126 In Santa Elena: A Brief History of the Colony, 1566-1587, Eugene Lyon discusses the high probability that Menéndez and others in positions of power converted Florida supplies for private use.127 Florida supplies, for example, could be exchanged or sold for other goods, such as wine, olive oil, maize, and livestock. Moreover, since only food or drink could be loaded onto ships bound for Florida from Spain for six years beginning in 1565,

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125 Arriving in St. Augustine’s port in August of 1574, factor y veedor Diego Londoño de Otalora, accompanied by captain Juan Gonzalez, helped coordinate the unloading of munitions and provisions purchased in Havana. Aboard the ship Nuestra Señora de los Remedios were dozens of barrels of flour, wine, gunpowder, and lead secured by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés The Younger and Diego Londoño in Havana, financed with situado funds dispersed from Tierra Firme’s treasury. AGI Justicia 817,N.5, “Libro le hize copiar para verificación que se hizo de lo que envió Francisco de Avalos a las provincias de la florida” August 28, 1574, fols. 10v-11r.

126 The roughly 23,000-ducatdo allotments for the situado were technically enough to provision two hundred soldiers, fifty more than the 1570 subsidy outlined. Seeing as the Florida Enterprise needed to be profitable for the royal officials involved, how they used and invested additional funds was critical.

excess stores of consumable goods were likely sold or exchanged at different Caribbean ports for more lucrative merchandise such as clothing, textiles, and weaponry.

Fueling this profiteering system was the officials’ desire to supplement their salaries. In the case of Florida, supplemental wealth depended largely on the sea. Through Santa Elena’s port, royal officials exploited shipping, the aforementioned monopoly system, the control of market prices, and investments made with the *situado*. Florida officials had to be clever in order to make their time in the colony profitable. For example, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés’s salary was to be drawn from the riches discovered in Florida, such as gold, silver and precious stones. These riches, however, did not necessarily need to be extracted from the land, nor could they have been as Florida was largely mineral deficient. If royal officials were either related to or personally knew each other, riches were often collected through direct theft from the local coffers, price inflation, side ventures, and trading partnerships not reported to the Crown. Before Castillo’s arrival in Florida, its royal officials were all a part of the *comuño*, thus easily allowing Florida’s governing structure to commit theft and orchestrate dubious, trading deals.

Baltasar del Castillo was aware of the *comuño’s* economic activities. Thus, a common theme found throughout Castillo’s investigation is that of the *comuño’s* fiscal mismanagement of royal funds. For example, Esteban de Las Alas, who served as the first lieutenant governor at Santa Elena, found himself under Castillo’s scrutiny. The charges drawn against Las Alas included selling large quantities of royal provisions in places like public taverns at inflated prices and for his own profit, not recording or properly storing goods of the deceased, using business intermediaries to sell *situado*
provisions at high prices, and not providing proper necessities for settlers, such as quality food and clothing. Hernando de Miranda, who served as governor of La Florida from February to June of 1576, was also charged with fiscal irresponsibility. Miranda stood accused of not recording or properly handling goods of the deceased. Moreover, Miranda was charged for having accepted a bribe worth over seventy ducados from settler Rodrigo Menea so that Menea, his wife, and his family could leave the provinces before their contracts with the adelantado had expired. In addition, Castillo charged Miranda with stealing funds from royal coffers, to the detriment of Santa Elena’s settlers.

Don Diego de Velasco’s tenure stands out in Castillo’s investigation as he received the highest number of criminal charges of any official in the Florida residencia. Velasco was accused of twenty-nine crimes, eleven more than those leveled against the Adelantado Pedro Menéndez. The period of Velasco’s reign is important to consider as his tenure at Santa Elena lasted from 1571-1576, the initial years of the situado’s presence in Florida. Throughout Velasco’s list of charges and the witness testimonies collected in response to them, the lieutenant seems to have been notoriously crude in both his demeanor as well as his attitude towards accounting and bookkeeping. For example, Castillo charged Velasco with not accounting for any of the tribute paid by the indigenous population. Velasco was also charged with accepting bribes from Spanish settlers who wished to leave Florida before their contractual agreements expired, pocketing a few to several hundred ducados each time. Velasco, however, denied the

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128 AGI Escribania 154A, “Cargos a Esteban de Las Alas,” fols. 31v-32r.
129 It appears that Rodrigo either never left, or returned once again to Santa Elena, as he was one of the men included in the opening letter’s list of those who wished to depart from the settlement.
130 AGI Escribania 154A, “Cargos a Hernando de Miranda,” fols. 28r-31r.
131 Ibid,”Cargos a don Diego de Velasco,” fol. 5v.
practice, testifying that he did not allow people to leave because he did not want to depopulate the town. He instead accused Hernando de Miranda for accepting bribes. 132

Santa Elena’s remote location certainly helped its royal officials evade scrutiny. Far removed from main centers of commerce, illicit trading, as Paul Hoffman asserts, centered on the exchange of hides and locally derived products like sassafras for European goods. 133 When vessels entered into port, they, by law, needed to have prior registration and licensing. It was not uncommon for officials to waive these regulations, largely thanks to the distance separating Santa Elena from other Spanish ports. 134 The relatively small nature of the settlement as compared to other ports in the Indies also worked in Santa Elena’s favor as it received less traffic. As Bushnell points out in The King’s Coffer, officials and their trading partners sometimes sailed out to meet trading vessels in the open sea and conducted transactions there. Goods purchased with situado funds were undoubtedly used in such dealings. Bushnell explains that foreign vessels would occasionally display distress flags, sail into ports at either St. Augustine or Santa Elena, where they sold goods either openly or secretly. 135 Therefore, it is not surprising that officials often kept brief, or incomplete, records of fiscal management, as Castillo discovered during his inspections.

Juan López, a soldier who served as a guard in Santa Elena’s wooden fort, provided important insight into the garrison’s economy, one that he suggested was dominated by común members. In his investigation, Castillo asked the soldier:

132 Ibid, fol. 890r.
134 Viceroyal ports like Veracruz and the high court of the Audiencia de Santo Domingo, located in Hispaniola (present-day island of Haiti/Dominican Republic), required several weeks of sailing time to reach.
135 Bushnell, The King’s Coffer, 10.
Do you know of the abovementioned royal officials (Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and his lieutenants) or some of them having conducted and trafficked into these provinces merchandise, provisions, and many other things that had been personally stored in different accounts by intermediaries in order to sell them, and if the goods that had been sold on their behalf caused great harm to the people of the provinces because they were sold goods at excessively high prices?136

In response, López testified that the adelantado did in fact introduce a great quantity of provisions and other things into the Florida provinces; on one occasion, he brought approximately eight thousand ducados worth of goods, an amount totaling roughly one-third of the situado. He informed Castillo that once the goods were unloaded from the ships, they were taken to the fort’s storehouses, where Captain Alonso de Solís and storekeeper Bartolomé Martín sold them to the public. For soldiers, the prices of goods were charged against the soldiers’ salaries.137 Twenty questions later, López offered further insight into Santa Elena’s local pricing and payment arrangements. In response to question thirty-nine, López confirmed the investigator’s suspicion that there had been many crimes committed against the royal treasury, including what the soldier saw as unfair prices imposed on Santa Elena’s residents. López described such goods simply as “mercaderias,” or merchandise, implying anything from clothing and textiles to weaponry and other assorted goods.138

Another witness, a ship pilot and soldier named Antonio Martín de Carbajal, supported López’s claim that the adelantado had brought into the provinces an immense quantity of clothing. However, before their distribution, Menéndez first sold them to his lieutenants so that they could then be resold to Santa Elena’s residents. Reselling clothing

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136 AGI Escribanía 154A, fol. 114v.
137 Ibid, fols. 198v-200r.
138 For a detailed list of the types of goods that could be found in St. Augustine and, by extension, Santa Elena, see Lyon, “Richer Than We Thought: The Material Culture of Sixteenth-Century Saint Augustine” El Escribano: The St. Augustine Journal of History 29, 1992.
enabled each lieutenant to profit during the distribution of articles like trousers, hats, shirts, and coats. This shipment of clothing went to Menéndez’s nephew, the one-eyed treasurer Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, and to the contador, Miguel Moreno, Captain Alonso de Solís, and finally, to Bartolomé Martín, who at the time was munitions keeper of the fort’s storehouse. According to the pilot, these men later sold the goods at inflated prices. Martín also felt compelled to explain that lieutenant don Diego de Velasco was handing out *libranzas*, or promissory notes, which Pedro Menéndez The Younger had acquired in Havana so that they could in turn be given to Santa Elena's residents.\(^{139}\) In the eyes of Antonío Martín and the recipients of *libranzas*, promissory notes were seen as future, not immediate payments.

Castillo revisited the theme of problematic, fiscal stewardship once again in his list of *visita* questions. In question forty-one of the inquiry, Castillo asked his witnesses the following:

> If you know about the said royal officials having tried and been found in these provinces and out of them with the treasury of Your Majesty, having bought in New Spain and in La Havana and in other parts of the Indies merchandise, provisions, other goods, and having brought them to these (Florida) provinces and sold them at excessive prices, using intermediaries?\(^{140}\)

In response to this question, Santa Elena resident Juan Pérez de Vargas testified that, “it is public knowledge and a commonly known fact that the treasurer Pedro Menéndez de Avilés The Younger charged the *situado* of the Florida provinces in New Spain and in Havana for a large quantity of munitions and merchandise. He (Pedro Menéndez) sold some of these supplies in Havana, using Baltasar de Biera and other persons (as

\(^{139}\) AGI Escribanía 154A, fols. 132v-33v.

\(^{140}\) Ibid, fols. 121r-v.
intermediaries).” Pérez added that Menéndez The Younger had other accounts in Havana that he maintained. At one point, the treasurer sent his associate Francisco de Sántaren to Florida to sell goods on his behalf. Moreover, Vargas claimed to have witnessed the treasurer at one time send a large quantity of goods to Santa Elena, which were sold to the soldiers by Martín de Yztuesta, the Alférez Baltasar de Sigüenza, and Antonio Martín. These men, Pérez testified, sold a variety of merchandise at excessively high prices, though he does not specify the amount.141

Residents of Santa Elena demanded fair prices in exchange for quality goods, however they were seldom presented with this agreeable arrangement. Florida’s governing elite maintained a restrictive economy due to the presence of the situado. For a number of residents in Santa Elena, jealousy and a sense of entitlement to their fair share of the situado became all too familiar feelings. The distribution of soldier bonuses—1,500 ducados worth—was another source of tension. In practice, bonuses were a facet of the subsidy that only amplified the friction between Santa Elena’s residents and Florida’s royal officials.

For Santa Elena’s residents, the acquisition and distribution of libranzas, or promissory notes, was a complex matter that occasionally led to heated disagreements. A portion of the situado was a special fund of approximately 1,500 ducados that was to be used to award bonuses. These bonuses were distributed in the form of libranzas and were intended for soldiers who performed their duties with distinction. Originally a munitions keeper of Fort San Felipe in Santa Elena, Bartolomé Martín (at the time of his testimony he served as contador) described this specific bonus pool and its function to Castillo. Martín shed light on the friction that this special fund caused, stating that each year,

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141 Ibid, fol. 250r.
1,500 ducados (in libranzas) were to be dispersed to deserving individuals of the 150 officials and soldiers who provided services to the Crown. There were seventeen officials and soldiers that received these extra benefits, including the treasurer Pedro Menéndez the Younger, Alférez Miguel Moreno, Sergeant Pedro Luís, Francisco Criado, Diego Enriquez, Martín Hernandez, and Juan Méndez, to name a few. Martín then provided a breakdown of how much each recipient received and, not surprisingly, Menéndez the Younger was awarded a staggering six hundred ducados, approximately six times as much as a soldier’s annual salary. The amounts taper down to a mere several dozen reales for the common foot soldier, thus slightly augmenting their annual salary of 115 ducados. Therefore, it is clear how the distribution of bonuses could increase local tensions. The discretion of an official as to who was worthy of a bonus versus who was not served as a source of potential conflict.

Martín was not the only soldier who complained about the bonuses. Alonso del Olmos voiced his grievances with how the funds were allocated. The disgruntled settler complained how he had never seen Iñigo Ruíz, a ship pilot, trade intermediary, and bonus recipient, ever serve in the guard company at Santa Elena. Velasco did not reward Iñigo for serving in the guard company, however, and instead rewarded Ruíz for his shipping services between Florida’s ports and those of the Caribbean. Olmos added that don Diego de Velasco was known for distributing funds to persons not in the service to the Crown. Rodrigo de Bustos was another beneficiary of situado bonuses whom Olmos felt was not worthy of the additional funds. Understandably so, seeing as he was the officially

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143 Velasco insisted that Iñigo Ruiz received 500 bonus ducados because he was a very good soldier, especially for having retrieved the situado from Tierra Firme, which took an entire year to execute. See AGI Escribanía 154A, fols. 909r-v.
appointed scribe for Santa Elena and not a soldier on the garrison’s muster roll. Another soldier testified that Rodrigo de Bustos only received a bonus because of his service in shipping and bringing extra merchandise to be sold in Santa Elena—not for exceptional service in defending the settlement, as the bonus requirements outlined.

It was not uncommon for soldiers to receive insignificant bonuses. To make matters worse, soldiers witnessed *comuño* members award each other and/or their merchant intermediaries with hundreds of extra *ducados*. Soldier Juan López testified that in September 1575, Governor Velasco issued bonuses to a number of undeserving individuals, all of whom were either cooperative under his rule or were complicit in his trading ventures. As mentioned, this included *comuño* members like Pedro Menéndez de Avilés the Younger. Bartolomé Flores, an Indian servant of Velasco, also received additional funds that López considered unwarranted. López continued his accusations of unworthy persons, stating that Alonso del Olmos’s sons, soldiers included on the payroll, were in reality too young to have been effective in the guard company—an interesting observation, considering that the senior Olmos was so vocal about his dissatisfaction with the bonus distributions. Whether or not Flores actually received these bonuses will probably remain unknown. It should be noted that the use of Indians to fill soldier *plazas* might have been a reality at Santa Elena. In addition to presence and supposed payment of Bartolome Flores, Velasco testified that there had only been one other Indian male serving in the guard company at Fort San Felipe. Velasco’s statement was in response to Baltasar del Castillo’s charge where the investigator charged Velasco for having known and permitted upwards of twenty to twenty-five Indians laborers to fill soldier *plazas*. Witness Francisco de Ecija attested to this practice, providing Castillo with an account of how a number of captains conscripted Indians to, at surface value, serve in the guard at Santa Elena, but in reality were merely personal servants. It is likely that both officials and captains capitalized on this scheme, collecting soldier rations and wages for services instead performed by Indians so as to augment their financial wealth. In hoping to legitimize the boy’s presence in Santa Elena’s fort, Velasco included in his deposition that Juan de Junco, who resided primarily in St. Augustine, also employed the help of an Indian youth for fort maintenance. This boy not only collected sticks and helped make repairs to the fort, but he also served as a translator—a vital addition to any colonial settlement nestled amongst indigenous populations. See Paar, “To Settle is to Conquer,” 160; AGI Escribania 154A, charge #24 against Velasco, fol. 8r; Velasco’s defense to charge, fols. 899r-900r.

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145 Ibid, fols. 425v-27r.
as he thought their services merited, especially in light of the fact that the senior Olmos almost lost one of his sons during a Jesuit mission effort to the Indian territory of Jacán in September of 1570. For the senior Olmos, the boy’s survival during the hostile mission undoubtedly merited reward and praise for both the survivor and the survivor’s family. Lack of praise, however, probably helped influence Olmos’s negative point of view and feelings towards the *comuño*. There were other factors, however, that also led to Olmos’s dissatisfaction with the local power structure.

Alonso del Olmos was a popular figure in the settlement. He was considered a “first settler” in Santa Elena—a title indicative of both Olmos and his family’s initial colonization efforts in Santa Elena. Accompanying the title of “first settler” carried a high degree of honor and respect that Olmos and his family rightfully merited in their colonization services to the Crown. The Olmos family’s economic activities at Santa Elena included farming, loaning money, running a tailor shop, artisan work, and managing an inn and tavern. Olmos, along with Francisco Ruíz, were heads of the settler faction and represented the interests of individuals who were not included on the royal payroll. In time, settlers like Olmos and Ruíz hoped to grow wealthy as Florida colonists, as their livelihoods depended largely upon their agricultural enterprises. Proving their dissatisfaction of their experience at Santa Elena, however, is the fact that their names appear in the opening letter’s list of those who wished to depart from the settlement to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Though he was not a soldier, Olmos undoubtedly depended upon his sons’ salaries to acquire goods that aided his ventures. With the uneven distribution of funds

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146 Paar, “To Settle is to Conquer,” 80-1.
147 Ibid.
like soldier bonuses, though, it is easy to see how Olmos was affected by the decisions of men like don Diego de Velasco, who were directly responsible for how bonuses and provisions were distributed in Santa Elena. Therefore, it is not surprising that tension between Velasco and the senior Olmos transformed into verbal, personal assaults on each other’s honor and families.\footnote{Velasco was charged with verbal assault on both Olmos and other members of the settler’s kin and extended family. See “Cargos a don Diego de Velasco,” AGI Escribania 154A, fol. 3r-3v.} For a small settlement like Santa Elena, disputes over honor and public shaming were acutely embarrassing. Castillo made a point to incorporate the quarrels between Velasco and Olmos into the pages of the investigation for they revealed, in particularly sharp relief, the divide between comuño members and settlers.

As with all residencias, part of Castillo’s investigation permitted officials to defend their actions and decisions during their tenures. In defense of the fiscal mismanagement charges against him, don Diego de Velasco insisted that goods distributed to settlers and soldiers were marked at fair prices and that fraud was never a reality during his tenure as Santa Elena’s governor. As for those who claimed to have not been paid, he argued that such persons were lying and, in reality, each person scheduled to receive payments was given their allotted amount of goods, in the presence of a scribe and other witnesses. Each person was given what was owed, which, as Velasco highlighted, took the form of costly rations such as meat, bread, wine, oils, and clothing.\footnote{Ibid, fols. 898r-890v.} In response to the charge leveled against Velasco concerning his commission of Rodrigo de Bustos, royal scribe for Florida, and his “servant” Iñigo Ruiz to bring outside goods into the Florida provinces worth approximately six thousand ducados, Velasco claimed that he was without fault. The former governor testified that, “had I not
done this, the people of these provinces would have starved.” To the baffled Velasco, this charge was unwarranted, as this commission was necessary for Florida’s very survival.\textsuperscript{150} In an effort to spare himself from royal punishment, Velasco vehemently denied every charge brought against him.

The interim-governor exaggerated his claims. There had not been catastrophic levels of hunger during Velasco’s tenure as governor of Santa Elena, seeing as imported food items and locally produced crop yields were regularly consumed in the settlement.\textsuperscript{151} Though it was tiny, Santa Elena did have an export market for consumables like maize and even suckling pigs.\textsuperscript{152} These exports were not significant enough, however, to be the sole source of income for the settlement—further indication of Santa Elena’s reliance on the situado to supplement its local market.

By studying Velasco’s financial pursuits, the commercial nature of Santa Elena is further exposed. For example, Velasco and Rodrigo de Bustos were known to have participated in a joint-trading venture. They were not the only officials to have done so, either.\textsuperscript{153} On one occasion, royal officials Hernando de Miranda and Pedro Menéndez The Younger acquired a ship with situado funds and stocked it with a variety of provisions purchased with situado funds. The goods were then sold to residents of Santa Elena that, according to several witnesses, included exorbitant price hikes. The two associates then charged the Crown for freight costs for transporting the supplies to

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid, fols. 894v-896r.  
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid, fol. 894v.
Florida. Diego de Velasco too shared a partnership with Pedro Menéndez The Younger. Their mutual desire for increased profits materialized into a joint venture where the two men used situado funds to invest in goods that were later sold to the soldiers and settlers in Florida, in some cases at a two hundred percent markup.

Price inflations undoubtedly placed fiscal strain upon the residents of Santa Elena, as they were forced to pay higher prices for both basic and luxury goods. This included items such as clothing and weaponry. For those who filled a soldier plaza, the price of these goods would have been charged against their salary. This purchasing arrangement was not an uncommon practice and in fact was the conclusive agreement drawn between Menéndez and soldiers during Florida’s conquest. As prices for basic goods increased during the 1570s, however, both shipping costs and profitable surcharges attached to provisions indebted residents to the treasury and thus to royal officials. Debt, however, was not necessarily objected to, so long as people received both necessary and desired provisions and were equally satisfied with the condition of those supplies. Debts were also a way to keep those collecting soldier wages anchored in Santa Elena. The negative side of this arrangement, however, was that spending power for residents was gradually weakened as royal provisions sold by the comunio increased in price in order for their Florida venture to be profitable.

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154 Ibid, fols. 109r-224v.
155 Ibid, fols.165r-66v.
156 Lyon, Santa Elena: A Brief History of the Colony, 7.
157 AGI Escribania 154A, fols. 640r-44v.
158 Profits could entail reselling goods purchased with situado funds at inflated prices to the soldiers and settlers of La Florida (discussed later in the chapter), using imports like maize and livestock to support and enhance personal, agricultural enterprises, and building ships, for example, with nails and canvas purchased with the situado that could then be used for personal shipping use in the future. For examples of imported items, see “Libro…de lo que envió Francisco de Avalos a las provincias de la florida” August 28, 1574, AGI Justicia 817,N.5 fols. 16r-16v.
Baltasar del Castillo’s investigation into the tenures of Florida’s governing elite offers a glimpse into the impact of the *situado* on the settlement of Santa Elena. Castillo’s *residencia*, predominantly focused on the fiscal stewardship of the settlement, suggests that the *situado* was seen as an opportunity for financial gain for those who were members of or were associated with the *comuño*. These men, after all, were in charge of the subsidy’s collection and its local distribution. For Florida’s royal officials, the *situado* acted as an allowance that for roughly five years went unchecked—that is, until Castillo’s arrival in Florida in 1576.\(^{159}\)

Officials’ depositions and witness testimonies reveal both the positive and negative effects of the *situado* on the local and regional economy, as well as its ability to cause social tension within the settlement. Through the *situado*, Santa Elena became linked to a number of port cities, including Veracruz, Havana, Campeche, Nombre de Dios, and Cartagena de Indias, all of which provided goods to the distant settlement. The dependency that residents and officials demonstrated towards the *situado*, in addition to its unequal distribution, however, sparked local conflicts that, over a few short years, proved destabilizing to colonial efforts in Florida.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The Crown was eager to learn how its specie was used in Florida. Despite receiving financial aid, the struggles of Florida seemingly continued. The Crown deliberated as to who would make the most effective investigator for the type of information they wished to receive; in this case, a detailed rendering of Santa Elena’s fiscal operations. An investigator’s prior knowledge of, experiences with, and familiarity to the official(s) under inspection was crucial to consider. With a sentenced, ex-armada accountant at their disposal, the Crown called upon Castillo to perform Florida’s residencia.

In regards to how Castillo approached the residencia and ultimately what he uncovered, Jeanette Thurber Connor states that, “The visitador [Castillo] seems to have been harsh in his judgments, but undoubtedly he uncovered much that was unsavory, especially in matters pertaining to the royal exchequer.”160 Though having published her manuscript almost one hundred years ago, Thurber was, and still is, absolutely correct. It was Castillo’s job to be critical of each royal official’s tenure. Given Castillo’s previous history with the armada as well as shipping and handling of royal provisions under the adelantado’s direction, the visitador was able to uncover how the situado affected the market of Santa Elena, the satisfaction of its residents, and, most significantly, the

effectiveness of the Crown’s 1565 conquest contract with Menéndez to expand the Florida Enterprise.

Through Castillo’s investigatory efforts, the Crown recognized and admitted to two, discernable facts. Closer supervision of Florida’s treasury practices and subsidy transactions were necessary if the Crown no longer wished to be cheated out of funds. For approximately ten years, royal officials at Santa Elena exploited almost every economic opportunity that they could get their hands on. Their actions are not surprising, seeing as the Crown permitted them to act as private entrepreneurs in the conquest and colonization of the Florida colony. With the sanctioning of the situado, however, their profitable ambitions centered in on a new and predominantly guaranteed source of income. By the time Castillo arrived in Florida, comuño members had, for five years, systematically exploited the situado in order to better their financial standing. The actions of the comuño caused considerable unrest in the colony. Soldiers and colonists expressed their dissatisfaction with the situado’s use, for they, and especially the soldiers, were dependent on the situado for their provisioning and livelihood. This is not to say that they starved, as Santa Elena’s farmers and neighboring indigenous populations saw to the colony’s sustenance. Instead, what angered persons on the military’s payroll was the unequal distribution of the situado’s benefits. Witnessing royal officials handsomely profit off of a subsidy that was intended for them undoubtedly soured their experiences in Santa Elena.

The comuño’s actions were a byproduct of Pedro Menéndez’s 1565 Florida enterprise. Menéndez and the comuño held high expectations for Florida. The contract Menéndez signed with King Philip II to conquer, colonize, and pacify Florida granted
extraordinary incentives to the family. They stood to gain royal titles held in perpetuity, slaves licenses free of duties, shipping exemptions, land, and a greater share on mineral resources should any be found. Substantial risk was involved in Menéndez’s endeavor, so the Crown had to make its offer as attractive as possible. Fifty years of failed, colonization attempts ending in death and/or financial ruin on Florida’s shores were a powerful deterrent. Menéndez, in agreement with comuño members and other creditors, however, took the risk.

Heightening the urgency of Menéndez’s operations was the landed presence of a French colony at Fort Caroline. On top of the gracious incentives that Philip II granted the adelantado, the Crown agreed to advance an additional 15,000 ducados to Menéndez to hasten the outfitting of his ships and his forces. Ousting the French was crucial, as was discouragement of future imperial rivals who wished to challenge Spain’s hegemony over Florida. Menéndez needed to arrive and plant colonies as soon as possible, for the strategic as well as symbolic importance of Florida required it.

For the resources that they poured into the undertaking, as well as the dangers they faced, Menéndez and the comuño expected to not only recuperate their losses, but also to reap tremendous profits. If Menéndez could exploit every incentive the Crown offered him in his contract, he stood to become one of the richest and most powerful royal subjects in the Spanish Empire. Of course, this success went beyond the confines of the adelantado. His successes in Florida would benefit his family both immediately and in perpetuity and would have enabled the Spanish Crown to extend its hegemony into the expansive North American interior.
Unfortunately, Florida’s assumed riches remained out of reach. For the most part, reality was cruel towards the vision of the enterprise. *Entradas*, or exploratory missions, attempted to discover what lay hidden beyond Florida’s shores, yet these missions usually ended in disappointment and/or death. Large, concentrated settlements of Native Americans as encountered in New Spain (Mexico) were notably absent from the region. If there were extensive veins of gold and silver, neither Spanish colonists nor royal officials ever saw them.

Frustrated over the lack of easily exploitable, economic opportunities in Florida, Menéndez informed the Crown that the enterprise needed assistance. Specifically, Menéndez petitioned the Crown to grant Florida its own *situado* to support its military presence. For Menéndez, provisioning three hundred soldiers was a costly endeavor. The initial five years of Florida’s colonization did not live up to the expectations of either the *adelantado* or the *comuño*. As a result, their entrepreneurial skills were put to the test. With the lack of incentives from the region’s interior, royal officials at Santa Elena elected to remain on the coast, close to the economic opportunities provided by the settlement’s deepwater port. For the *comuño*, circumstances dictated that private entrepreneurship no longer meant expansion of the Spanish Empire into North America—instead, their efforts were directed toward the sea. The sanctioning of Florida’s royal subsidy crystallized their decision.

The *situado* was a turning point for Florida. Its presence was felt almost immediately in both the settlements of Florida and the wider Caribbean. Crown funding for rations and trade goods helped supply the Florida settlements, but it also supported the economies of other ports where royal officials purchased commodities and traded
with situado funds. Royal officials’ dubious management of the situado, however, was not what the Crown envisioned, nor was it sanctioned to give insular, preferential treatment to Menéndez, the comuño, and their associates. As the 1570s progressed, royal officials and soldiers still could not adequately secure, defend, or expand the limits of Florida’s frontier, despite being granted assistance from the Crown.

The way that royal officials’ chose to implement situado funds held implications for Santa Elena and the satisfaction of its residents. When Baltasar del Castillo began his inspection of Florida, he found evidence that Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the comuño supplied the vulnerable, Florida settlements with necessities as well as granted bonuses to persons they deemed as worthy receivers. In other words, the comuño used the situado just how the Crown ordered. The issue was, however, the quantity and regularity of shipments, the content of shipments, and the price that goods were set at for consumption. Additionally, who received bonuses and why served as a significant source of discord for Santa Elena’s residents. In particular, physically demonstrating that the situado was benefitting soldiers, for example, was crucial for officials to maintain. If adequate rations, trade goods, and other valuables did not find their way into the colony, or they did but were marked at increasingly high prices, the effectiveness of the royal subsidy then became suspect, as did persons who were in charge of the situado’s collection and distribution.

In response to the sanctioning of Florida’s situado, royal officials, soldiers, and colonists, living and operating both in Florida and outside of the colony, all experienced varying levels of benefit and/or dissatisfaction towards the subsidy’s management. In action, the funds were never enough to promote the profitable ambitions of Florida’s
governing elite, to adequately provision the soldiery, and to diversify Florida’s market at a reasonable cost for persons on the military payroll. Though the funds were set aside by the Crown to support Florida’s military presence, it became clear that not every piece of specie was put towards the cause. If there is one, concrete truth that can be drawn from Castillo’s investigation, it is that Santa Elena’s financial affairs caused a considerable amount of discord and, that under the direction of Menéndez and the *comuño*, the Spanish Empire would never expand into the North American interior.
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