

Silver tablet pendant. HistoryMiami, A92.29.07.1.

Appropriation or Acculturation? Spanish Influence on Calusa Culture

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In 1565, Pedro Menendez de Aviles set sail from the port of Cadiz, Spain, carrying with him the vision of his arrival in Florida. As governor, he would serve as the bearer of civilization through the enforcement of Spanish hegemony and tradition. In 1566, he arrived in southwest Florida and made contact with the Calusa Indians. Befriending the Calusa cacique (or head chief) Escampaba, Menendez believed he had opened the door not only to Spanish political influence, but cultural influence as well. The following year, he arranged for a band of missionaries from the Jesuit order to proselytize the Calusa. Menendez envisioned droves of Indians, starving for civilization, shedding their barbaric ways and eagerly absorbing Christian teachings as truth. Yet this grandiose vision would remain unfulfilled. Rather than encountering an appeasable band of natives, missionaries found a centuries-old chiefdom, rich in traditions that the Indians held onto as vehemently as the Spaniards held onto theirs.

Spanish efforts at colonization and conversion among the Calusa manifested themselves primarily through the missions that took place in 1567, 1697 and 1743. All three missions ultimately failed. While the missionaries' priority was to convert Indians to Catholicism, religious conversion, was not the only goal. These missions also attempted to carry out a large-scale cultural revolution, as Spanish missionaries attempted to bring Spanish values as well as Christianity to the Calusa. Part of the missionaries' efforts to convert the Indians entailed deterring them from practices that Spaniards, in general, found deplorable, such as polygamy, sodomy, and human sacrifice. Furthermore, the little amount of clothing that the Indians wore also deeply disturbed the missionaries, since

Spanish beliefs dictated that nudity was obscene. The Calusa had no qualms about exposing their bodies: Calusa women did not cover their breasts and wore little more than skirts woven from plant fibers; men wandered about in loincloths, the only exception being their ritual body paint for ceremonies.

Practices such as idol worship, polygamy, sodomy and human sacrifice contrasted with Spanish standards of morality and civilization. When Father Juan Rogel, leader of the 1567 mission, discussed his trouble in convincing the cacique Felipe to convert, the friar described repeatedly how he tried to persuade the head chief to give up these practices. The head chief said that he would “forsake and burn his idols and all the witchcraft that he has practiced until now; that he would totally remove the sodomites; that they would not kill children even when his sons or he himself die ... Neither will he stain himself black on his face or on his body ... And he will cut his hair.”¹ That Felipe mentioned these practices attested to Rogel’s persistence in urging the cacique to abandon them, thus demonstrating that conversion, as the missionaries perceived it, encompassed more than religious change. What missionaries and Spaniards wanted, in general, was a complete cultural transformation.

As the cacique’s promises turned out to be no more than a ploy to circumvent conversion, Rogel’s attempts to convert the chief met the same fate as those of future missionaries during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the Calusa shunned not only Christianity, but also Spanish notions about what constituted civilized and moral behavior. Yet while the Calusa refused to capitulate to the missionaries’ requests to change their religion in particular and their culture in general, some aspects of Spanish culture did find their way into the Calusas’ way of life. It is important, however, not to interpret hastily the Calusas’ adoption of these cultural elements as a concession to missionaries’ demands, or even a willingness to embrace Spanish culture. While they did incorporate certain elements of Spanish cultural elements into their own practices, their intent was not to succumb to the pressure to accept a new way of life, but rather to appropriate certain aspects of Spanish culture in order to complement their own.

Many Amerindian groups incorporated elements of Catholicism into their own native cultures. Polytheistic natives were generally willing to add Christian deities into their pantheons, while not forsaking their own. Furthermore, a degree of syncretism often emerged, such as in the

case of the sixteenth century Maya, who in order to escape punishment for idolatry at the hands of the Jesuits during the sixteenth-century, attributed the characteristics of their native deities to Catholic Saints, in order to feign conversion.² Native groups thus adopted elements of other cultures without abandoning their own and were able to integrate European items into their material culture without compromising the integrity of their own.

Archaeological as well as documentary evidence indicates that Florida Indians did adopt the use of Spanish tools, weapons, clothing and ornaments, often acquired through gift exchange. Yet the exchange of gifts between Europeans and natives was only one of the settings in which native groups acquired European goods. Indians also received European items from missionaries, who believed that gifts in the form of food and trinkets would lure them towards learning the Christian doctrine. Finally, raiding shipwrecks provided a bounty of European goods, especially in light of the large number of ships that crashed onto Florida's coast.

This paper examines documents produced by missionaries during the Calusa missions, as well as memoirs by explorers who encountered not only the Calusa, but other native groups throughout Florida in order to examine the dynamics of cultural exchange between European explorers and Indian leaders. Archaeological remains of the European articles that Florida Indians acquired have been excavated in various sites throughout Florida. The Calusas' shell and burial mounds, excavated as early as the nineteenth century have proven a rich resource in understanding the evolution of Calusa society and the effects of European contact on the culture of the Calusa.³ Invaluable archaeological research on Mound Key, believed to be the political center of Calusa society, has focused on the social and political structure of the Calusa.⁴ More recently, the archaeological findings have examined the effects of environmental and cultural evolution among the Calusa.⁵ Archaeological evidence provides a crucial source for understanding Calusa society and culture. Since the Calusa did not have a written language, much of what we know about them exists in the form of letters, biographies, and memorials written by missionaries, explorers, and political officials who encountered them. Archaeological findings, therefore, provide the only insight into the Calusas' past not presented through Spanish eyes.

A close analysis of the context in which European elements were incorporated into native culture demonstrates that Indians appropriated

them for convenience, necessity, or to enhance their own material culture. Jonathan Dickinson, a Quaker merchant whose ship wrecked near Jupiter Inlet on the east coast of Florida in 1696, described his interaction with native groups such as the Ais and the Jeaga. He recounted seeing among the Indians "several tools and knives, and more particularly a razor," and noted that "some of these things looked as though they had been several years among them, some but a few."⁶ Dickinson also noticed that the Indians were carrying "large Spanish knives."⁷

Indian groups who had steadier, more prolonged contact with Europeans assimilated more European cultural elements than other groups such as the Calusa, whose encounters with Spaniards were more unsteady and sporadic. The sedentary tribes of Northern Florida (such as the Appalachee and Timucua), where Spanish settlement and missionary efforts proved more successful than in Southern Florida, experienced more constant contact with Spaniards and practiced agriculture. They were thus easier to envelop within the Spanish colonial enterprise, since as sedentary groups, they were less prone to escape, and were a better match for the Spanish colonial vision of having native agricultural laborers supply missions and colonial settlements with provisions. Finally, since their political systems were more centralized than those of the South Florida groups, Spanish officials were able to install themselves more easily within the upper levels of Indian government, thus rendering it easier for them to control larger populations.⁸

The Calusas' lack of agriculture and their refusal to accept it as a mode for subsistence also meant that a particular facet of Spanish material culture and subsistence techniques did not permeate into their culture, as opposed to the tribes of Northern Florida, who incorporated Spanish farming tools and methods into their agricultural technique. It led, furthermore, to a change in the dietary habits of the North Florida Indians as they sowed and harvested a whole range of Spanish crops such as watermelons, peaches, figs, hazelnuts, oranges, and garbanzos; European greens and herbs, peas, sugarcane, garlic, melons, pomegranates, cucumbers, grapes, cabbage, lettuce, and sweet potato also made their way into the Indians' diet. The new crops introduced to native populations also affected their material culture, since introduced foods, along with new forms of preparation, required Indians to produce ceramics shaped like cookware, either for themselves or for Spaniards living within the mission community.⁹

The Spanish items that missionaries and explorers introduced to indigenous groups would, due to their novelty, be deemed high-status goods within native societies.

Anthropologists have acknowledged that all societies have materials which they designate as elite goods. These items are typically rare and, in the case of aboriginal societies, often included precious metals or other materials used for adornment, such as feathers and fur. These materials were a means of storable wealth and instilled those who had access to them with power and prestige. In the case of the Calusa, they were considered to be imbued with supernatural powers. Since such goods enhanced the status of those who had control over these items, access to elite resources could, therefore, lead to the development of a complex society by reinforcing the creation of an elite class.¹⁰ These materials would have included those trinkets, ornaments, and tools that explorers and missionaries presented to the Indians, as well as those found in the cargo of shipwrecks. Natives appropriated these materials not only for the indication of status among the elite, but also for the purposes of gift exchange.

Gift exchange was a means through which native groups forged alliances and political relations. The exchange of goods was often one of the initial bases for communication between Europeans and Indians. European explorers often presented Indians with gifts to communicate that they did not come in the spirit of hostility, and to gain acceptance among the Indians. Gift giving was intended to preclude an Indian attack in response to Spanish incursion into their territory. Native groups eventually incorporated these items into their material culture as elite, high status goods. When missionary groups arrived among Indians, the gifts that they presented were intended to endear the Indians, not only to the missionaries in particular, but also to Christianity in general. Europeans often used gifts to make inroads among native groups in order to facilitate conquest. Yet if these items that Europeans presented to native groups reinforced the power and status of the elite, then Europeans provided native leaders with the means to reinforce their authority even as they attempted to undermine native power structures.

The exchange of gifts with Europeans functioned for Florida Indians as another facet of far-reaching pre-contact trade and tribute networks that existed among the Indians of Florida, the Caribbean, and possibly those of Central and South America. Anthropologists agree that the

native groups that Spanish explorers encountered during the late fifteenth century had already been in contact for centuries.¹¹ Traveling by canoe would have enabled contact between the Indians of Florida and Central and South America; canoe travel through the Gulf of Mexico and the Florida Straits to Cuba and the Bahamas had been occurring since prehistoric times.¹² Ponce de Leon's encounter with an Indian who understood Spanish in 1513, the first recorded instance of contact between Spaniards and Florida Indians, supports this assertion.¹³ Archaeological findings in Florida have revealed artifacts of South American origins, including earrings, beads, pendants, shields, zoomorphic effigies and other figurines. While documentary evidence exists to support the argument that the Indians of Florida accessed these items through shipwrecks—D'Escalante Fontaneda alluded to "articles of jewelry made by the hands of Mexican Indians" as salvaged from shipwrecks—it may also be possible that Florida groups such as the Calusa gained access to these items through tributary or trade networks.¹⁴ If native groups like the Calusa incorporated these items into their inventory of *sacra*, it would have predisposed them to incorporate artifacts of European origin.

The first recorded interaction between the Calusa and Spaniards occurred during the 1513 expedition of Juan Ponce de Leon.¹⁵ Like many other explorers who would follow, Ponce de Leon probably initiated his exchanges with the Calusa by trading and gift giving. Explorers who later arrived in Florida during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Panfilo de Narvaez (1528) and Hernando de Soto (1539), used gift exchange in order to forge political relations with native leaders and to obtain food supplies, which often ran short during Spanish expeditions. At times, political officials used gift exchange to establish friendly relations with Indian tribes. For example, when Florida governor Gonzalo Menendez de Canzo encountered the Ais Indians of southeastern Florida on his way to St. Augustine in 1597, he exchanged gifts with the cacique, including some of his own clothing.¹⁶ Sometimes explorers presented native leaders with gifts in order to avoid a potential attack, as Jonathan Dickinson did in 1696 when he presented the Indians with "some tobacco and pipes," in order to placate them.¹⁷

The gifts that Spaniards presented to Indian groups also included gold and silver ornaments, bells, mirrors and implements such as knives and scissors, and beads made from silver, gold, glass and amber.¹⁸ They

often brought a supply of food to distribute among native populations in addition to supplies intended for their own use. Inventory records reveal that missionaries brought provisions such as corn, manioc, flour, vinegar, wine, oil, salted meat, wine, garlic, onions, and honey.¹⁹ Even when explorers traded and presented these gifts to other native groups in Florida, such items may eventually have found themselves in the hands of the Calusa cacique, as a result of the tribute networks that were in place throughout the peninsula. Since the head chief had so many tribes that were tributary to him, the trade network among Florida's tribes gave him access to a wide variety of European goods, which he then supplemented with salvaged items from Spanish shipwrecks. The unfamiliarity and novelty of these goods probably drove the Calusa to classify them as *sacra*, and to covet them as sacred and prestigious items.

When Pedro Menendez de Aviles came to Calusa territory in 1566, the extravagant display that characterized his arrival communicated his power to the Calusa, thereby implying that the items he presented were high-status goods. Strange and intriguing gifts of food and clothing, which he bestowed on the cacique Escampaba and his principal council members, conveyed the notion that these gifts, were indicative of Menendez's influence. Gonzalo Solis de Meras, Menendez de Aviles' brother-in-law, chronicled one of the initial exchanges between Escampaba and the *Adelantado*: "He [Menendez] dressed him [Escampaba] in a shirt, and taffeta shoes ... and a hat, and he gave him [the cacique] other presents for the women. The cacique gave the *Adelantado* a bar of silver weighing about 200 ducats, and he [the cacique] told him [Menendez] to give him more things to eat." When Menendez requested the hostages whom he had been seeking, the cacique presented a few of them. Menendez then gave the cacique more clothing, and the head chief promised that he would eventually bring out the rest of the hostages, but was not able to do so immediately, because they were very far inland.²⁰

While the Spaniards presented the clothing as gifts intended to facilitate Menendez's entrance into Calusa territory, they also wanted the Indians to wear it and cover themselves. Clothing the Indians would, in Spanish eyes, begin their transformation into civilized beings. Spaniards probably felt uneasy at the prospect of being surrounded by scantily-clothed natives, and may have believed that giving the cacique clothing would prompt the rest of the tribesmen to follow his example. Menendez

and his contingent also wanted to redeem their own countrymen from native influence, since they gave the scantily covered hostages clothing and ordered them to dress as Europeans almost immediately after the cacique brought them forth.²¹

Other gifts that Menendez gave the cacique and other members of the Calusa elite included chemises, which he presented to the cacique's wife and "to his own future wife [Dona Antonia]; he [also] gave them green gowns, beads, scissors, knives, hawk bells, [and] mirrors—the last mentioned causing great hilarity among the Indians when they saw therein their own reflections."²² The Indians' reaction to seeing their reflection in the mirrors probably stemmed from their beliefs concerning the human soul. The Calusa believed that each person had three souls, one of which was seen as a reflection, such as the one produced "in a calm pool of water."²³ If the Spaniards gave the Calusa an object that allowed them to see one of the human souls, they would, undoubtedly, consider it to possess supernatural power. That the Adelantado was giving these presents in exchange for hostages would have further implied to the Calusa that they were no ordinary items, since they were given in exchange for people whom the Spanish apparently regarded highly.

In Calusa society, only elite tribesmen would have had access to such extraordinary objects, and, in turn, they would have believed that the gifts Menendez was presenting to the cacique and his councilmen were such that only the Spanish elite would have had access to. Further demonstrating the prestige that the Calusa head chief attributed to the goods Menendez was giving them was the cacique's presentation of a bar of silver in exchange for what the *Adelantado* had given him. Since Florida did not naturally produce mineral wealth, it is safe to assume that the bar of silver had originated from the cargo of a shipwreck. That D'Escalante Fontaneda described Escampaba as the cacique who not only had initial rights to the shipwreck goods, but also oversaw the distribution of them among the caciques from other tribes, indicates just how powerful Escampaba was relative to the local caciques. When the *Adelantado* arrived and provided a source for such gifts, the cacique may have rightly assumed that Menendez provided him the means to increase his power among Florida's local tribes.

Exchanges between other Europeans and Indians in Florida during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may have further reinforced the Indians' notion that the gifts presented to them were goods that only the

elite had access to. Throughout Florida, Spaniards as well as Frenchmen and Englishmen presented Indian leaders with clothing, trinkets, and ornaments in a manner that Indians would have interpreted as gift giving for the ceremonial forging of an alliance with a powerful leader. Since Indians reserved their most select goods for the purposes of tribute payment and ceremonial gift exchange, they would assume that the goods European leaders were presenting to them also bore those same characteristics. In 1567, for example, French Captain Dominique de Gourgues arrived at Fort Caroline in order to seek retribution against the Spaniards for Menendez's massacre. When de Gourgues entered into an alliance with the Timucuan cacique Saturiba, the captain sealed this alliance by presenting him with a series of trinkets and ornaments. Saturiba then requested that de Gourgues give him clothing, although the cacique did state that he desired to wear them only on special occasions and eventually to be buried with them, as was customary with their most prized possessions. Saturiba's statement that he did not desire to wear the clothing that de Gourgues had given him indicated that he perceived it as a ceremonial item.²⁴

Once Indians had developed a penchant for European goods, they took to raiding the cargoes of shipwrecks in order to obtain their coveted goods, and even to tearing the clothes off the shipwreck survivors themselves. Jonathan Dickinson, for example, described how Indians "rushed violently on [us] rending and tearing the few clothes we had. ... They tore all from [my] wife and espying her hair-lace some were going to cut it, hair and (all) away to get it."²⁵ Yet although Indians demonstrated their predilection for European garments, documents relating to early exchanges between native groups and Europeans do not show that the Indians initially adopted the use of European clothing, indicating a refusal to embrace European culture, or their perception of these gifts as sanctified items not intended for daily use. In Barrientos' and Solis de Meras' accounts of Escampaba's initial encounter with the Spaniards, the only mention of the Indians donning clothes that the Spaniards brought was when Menendez specifically dressed the cacique in a shirt, shoes, and a hat. Neither account mentions either the cacique's wife or members of his council dressing in the clothing that Menendez provided. That the *Adelantado* chose to dress the cacique in particular may have communicated to the rest of the Indians that the goods were of the highest status, intended only for their most powerful leader.

Within Indian tribes, members of the elite used dress and ornamentation in order to indicate their status as political or religious leaders. Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, who accompanied Panfilo de Narvaez on his expedition through Florida, wrote that a cacique presented Panfilo de Narvaez with a painted deer skin belonging to the head chief.²⁶ Laudonniere mentioned similarly an exchange with Saturiba, who presented him with a deer skin painted in different colors.²⁷ Given the fact that Florida Indians typically wore little clothing, those painted deerskins would have been garments reserved for the elite and for ceremonial occasions. Jacques Le Moyne de Mourgues, who accompanied Laudonniere in 1564, composed a series of paintings representing Timucuan rituals and daily life, including a depiction of the cacique Saturiba. Le Moyne's painting shows Saturiba wearing a head piece made of what appears to be raccoon tails, with shell fringes around his loincloth, a beaded wristband, and two shell necklaces over his shoulder, hanging diagonally over his upper body. The other men and women pictured were wearing no such ornamentation, thus demonstrating that the cacique's adornment symbolized his prestige as a leader.²⁸ Other ornaments such as beads, feathers, and intricately carved pendants of bone or shell typically worn around the neck or as headpieces, also were also indicative of elite status.

Like other Indian groups throughout Florida, the Calusa used ornamentation as a way to distinguish members of the elite. Menendez's biographer Barrientos, for example, mentioned that when the cacique's wife appeared after being summoned to meet Menendez, she wore "a collar of pearls and precious stones and a small necklace of gold beads."²⁹ Furthermore, when recounting the events leading to the conflict between Escampaba and Felipe for the title of cacique, Rogel noted that "while this don Felipe was a child, as his uncle the king did not have sons ... he named him as his successor ... And when the child was a little older, ... his uncle placed the royal insignia on him which are an old *chaguala* [small ornament], on the forehead and some strings of beads on the head."³⁰ Florida Governor Juan Fernandez de Olivera, in his account of the 1612 Cortaya expedition to the Calusa, alludes to these *chagualas* and mentions that they were of varying sizes, the larger ones being "as big as the palm of one's hand," and the smaller ones "weigh[ing] about two ounces."³¹ That the cacique presented them to Cortaya as a way to cement their alliance demonstrates the symbolic importance of these ornaments. Their variation in size may have been a way to designate dif-

ferent ranks within the elite. If members of the Calusa elite appropriated the clothing that religious and military officials gave to them, one can safely argue that it would have been for the purposes of exhibiting the status of members of the elite within Calusa society, thereby reinforcing the pre-existing nature of the social, political, and cultural matrix.

If the Calusa and other Florida Indians received gifts of clothing from Spanish and other European explorers, and if they were appropriating other forms of ornamentation in order to complement the regalia of the cacique and other members who held a high political and religious rank, then it would logically follow that elite members of native groups would have adopted the use of European clothing in order to denote status and distinguish themselves from other members of the population. For example, evidence from Indian burials in Southern and Central Florida suggests a use, albeit limited, of European clothing among native groups. Archaeological findings for the Goodnow Mound also reveal that beads had been sown onto clothing as ornaments. Other findings from Mound Key show that decorative bangles retrieved from the site may have also been sown onto clothing.

The context in which clothing was exchanged among leaders like Menendez de Aviles and Escampaba suggested to the natives that it was a high status item. By the late seventeenth century, the Appalachee were using clothing and cloth as a form of currency.³² This, combined with evidence of clothing having been present in Southwestern and Central Florida burials, suggests that a similar phenomenon may have occurred among the Calusa. It stands as a possibility, therefore, that the Calusa incorporated items of European clothing into their attire and embellished them with glass, amber, metal, or rock crystal beads.

Archaeological findings point to the use of Spanish clothing among elite members of the Calusa, and it is probably correct to assume that not all members of Calusa society adopted the use of European clothes. The evidence of beads on clothing points to the embellishment of garments, and since high status people were the only ones who traditionally wore ornamentation among the Calusa, it is safe to argue that only the Calusa elite wore European clothing. The presence of other metal-forged ornaments such as beads, plaques, and animal effigies in burials where clothing fibers were found attests that they were, in fact, burials of high ranking political or religious officials, since such artifacts are absent in non-elite Calusa burials. If only members of the Calusa elite adopted the use

of European clothing, this demonstrates that there was no general shift in the values that condemned nudity or movement to adopt the use of European-style clothing as the typical, accepted norm throughout the entire population.

Continuous contact with the Spaniards would not only demonstrate that the Calusa had a penchant for Spanish items, but that good relations with the Spaniards were often contingent on the continuous distribution and availability of these goods. Rogel indicated for example, that when he had food and gifts available to give the Indians, they seemed interested in learning the catechism; however, when his provisions ran short, they left. Similarly, during the seventeenth-century mission, relations between the Indians and the missionaries began to sour when the natives realized that the missionaries could not provide them with an endless supply of gifts: at best, Indians ceased to attend catechism lessons; they became hostile and combative.

Even when missionaries did give the Indians clothing and other presents, the natives were dissatisfied if the gifts presented did not appear to be high-status items. In his 1698 testimony about the Calusa missions' failure, readers may recall, Friar Feliciano Lopez recounted that when the cacique Carlos brought over two young boys to be baptized, expecting material rewards in return, the chief became upset when Friar Lopez presented him with "two little pieces of cloth and other trifles," demanding instead the "clothing that the king had ordered [for] him" to give.³³ This exchange between Friar Lopez and the cacique Carlos reveals the Indians' expectations that the missionaries would provide them access to elite goods. The Indians' final act of resistance during the seventeenth-century mission also reveals the Indians' desire for Spanish possessions, since the Indians stripped the missionaries of their clothing and all of their possessions one final time before abandoning them in the Florida Keys. While this act of rebellion can correctly be interpreted as a symbolic affront, we should also recognize the pragmatic element behind it, since the Indians, having gained little else, decided to exploit the missionaries one final time. Finally, when friars arrived among the Calusa in 1743, the Indians decided to show their dissatisfaction towards the missionaries' presence by taking all of their possessions and demanding that "the king our lord is to support and clothe them, and not with burlap, which they detest[ed] as [it was] identified with blacks."³⁴

The Indians' persistence in raiding Spanish shipwrecks as soon as they came ashore demonstrated their interest in the appropriation and incorporation of Spanish items into their material culture. While no sources exist describing an encounter between the Calusa and shipwrecked Spaniards, Jonathan Dickinson recounts how Indians foraged through the cargo of his wrecked ship off Jupiter Inlet, and his party's consequent exchanges with the cacique and other tribesmen:

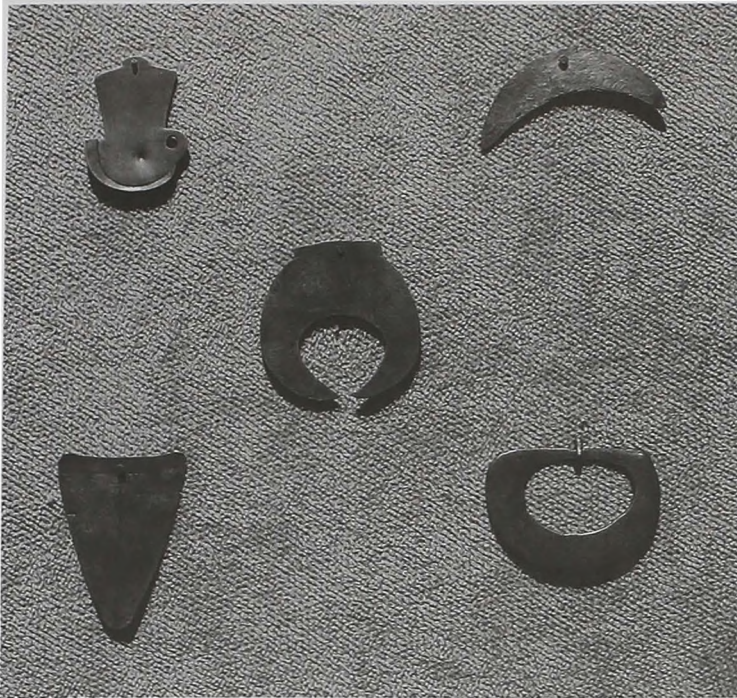
About this time our vessel lay dry on shore and the Indians gathered themselves together men and women, some hundreds in numbers. Having got all the goods out of the vessel, and covered the bay for a large distance, opened all the stuffs and linens and spread them to dry, they would touch no sort of strong drink, sugar, nor molasses, but left it in the vessel. They shouted and made great noises in the time of plunder. Night coming on, the Caseekey put those chests and trunks which he had reserved for himself in our tent ... The Caseekey went down to the waterside amongst his people and returned with three old coats that were wet and torn, which he gave us ... And about midnight we heard a company of Indians coming from the vessel towards, making terrible shouts, and coming fiercely up to the tent, the Caseekey called to them. ... It seemed they had killed a hog and brought him ... they threw the hog down before the tent, and the Caseekey sent them away. They went shouting to the seashore, where there were some hundreds of them reveling about our wreck.³⁵

The Indians' reaction to the shipwreck and the actions they performed afterward reveal that they perceived it as a momentous occasion. Their screams and their sacrificing of the hog suggest that they were celebrating the occurrence of a shipwreck with a religious ceremony. Animal and human sacrifice was characteristic rituals for native religious ceremonies, and perhaps the Indians sacrificed the hog in order to thank their deities for the bounty of materials found in the shipwreck. Calusa mission documents indicate that the natives made loud noises as part of religious ceremonies such as the healing ritual that the shaman performed when one of the tribesmen fell ill, which entailed his gesturing and

“howling” over the sick person. The shouts that Dickinson heard may have been the Indians’ noises of elation, celebration, or perhaps gratitude to their gods for gifts sent through the shipwreck. That the Indians marked the occurrence of the shipwreck with such ceremony suggests that they saw the gifts having arrived to them through means of divine intervention, and that, therefore, these gifts may have been imbued with supernatural qualities.

The acquisition of clothing, ornamentation and other elite goods through shipwrecks and interactions with Spanish explorers reinforced rank and status among the Calusa. But there is no surviving documentary evidence to suggest that members of the elite wore the clothing that Spanish civil and religious officials gave them for everyday use, even though we might assume that doing so would reinforce their power and status among their tribesmen, but also among other local chiefs. Yet archaeological evidence suggests that by the seventeenth century, elite members of the Calusa had incorporated ornaments, if not garments, that Spaniards had given them into the regalia that designated them as members of the elite. The evidence reveals, however, that the Calusa did not simply adopt the use of Spanish items, but rather appropriated them for their own purposes. A 1948 archaeological excavation led by John Griffin and Hale Smith in a Southern Central Florida burial mound referred to as the Goodnow Mound yielded a number of Spanish artifacts the use of which had been altered from their original purpose. The findings included a set of iron scissors lying over the clavicle with blue beads running under the skull, through the handle of the scissors. Another set of scissors were found with a bead necklace wrapped around its blades.³⁶ This indicates that these scissors were being worn as the pendant of a beaded necklace, perhaps to show the status of a political or religious leader. That the Indians wore the scissors as an ornament indicates that they regarded it as a high status good rather than as a mundane tool.

Archaeological findings also reveal a plentiful supply of amber and rock crystal beads as well as gold, silver, and glass beads. The workmanship on these beads indicates that they were produced in Europe, most probably as parts of necklaces or rosaries. Their presence in Calusa burials indicates that Indians probably wore them to indicate status, and that the beads either complemented or replaced traditional beads made from shell, characteristic of the regalia worn by the cacique and other leaders. A number of archaeological excavations have also revealed gold and silver



Silver ornaments. HistoryMiami, 1977.021.002-.006.

coin beads, which the Indians reworked into ornaments from Spanish coins. The most plentiful source for Indians to have acquired these coins was from shipwrecks. The coins were perforated in the center, the perforations probably made with a nail, spike or awl. The coin was then hammered on the edges, and beaten into a spherical, cylindrical, or barrel shape, and then worn as ornaments on a necklace. Florida Indians, who typically wore shell or bone beads in the absence of precious metals, probably incorporated the use of gold and silver bead coins as high status goods. That the coin beads were made from an imported material not naturally found in Florida would have lent them more prestige. The Indians' endeavor to rework Spanish coins introduced them to metal working. Yet in spite of their experimentation with a new manufacturing technique, their intention was one of appropriation, since wearing the reworked Spanish coins would have reinforced the status of their political and religious elite, thus supporting the traditional power structure.³⁷



Copper gorget. HistoryMiami, 1998.023.005.

Metal disks that have been reworked from European metal goods made of copper, gold, and silver are also common in South Florida archaeological sites. They have a perforation in the center, and are sometimes ornamented with incised designs.³⁸ Similar disks made from shell have also been retrieved, thus indicating the appropriation of European metals to enhance an item of pre-contact origins.³⁹ These disks were probably the *chagualas* that Rogel and Governor Fernandez de Olivera referred to when describing the regalia of the cacique and his top officials. Le Moyne's engravings suggest that these disks were used to indicate rank among the elite in the illustration where Chief Outina and other Indians are wearing round metal disks when marching off to war.⁴⁰ There seems to be a relation between the metal disks and the indication of status, since the chief is the only one wearing two metal disks, while the other two



Chief Outina, wearing two metal disks. After a print by Jacques Le Moyne. HistoryMiami, 1983-097-3.

Indians pictured are only wearing one. The placement of the metal disk in the center of the chest over the heart, however, implies the possibility of its use as a measure of protection against arrows shot in warfare. Forging the disks from metal would not only have lent more prestige to an ornament previously made from shell, but it would have also allowed for the disk to be larger, and offer more protection, since it is easier to manipulate the size of the disks by producing them from metal.

The Calusa also appropriated European goods and reworked them into Calusa artistic and zoomorphic patterns. Both archaeological and documentary evidence indicates that likenesses of animals were a central characteristic of Calusa religion. Frank Cushing's archaeological excavation in Key Marco during the 1890s revealed numerous wooden artifacts, including a turtle shell with carved images of porpoises, a bone carving

representing a pelican, and a sculpture of a panther.⁴¹ Masks representative of animal heads, an alligator carved from wood, the likeness of a deer, and a painting of a woodpecker were also retrieved from the site. William Sears' 1967 excavation in Polk County, located in Southwest Florida, similarly yielded a number of zoomorphic religious artifacts ranging from small wooden effigies to large ceremonial masks carved from bone and wood.⁴² Mission documents also mentioned zoomorphic idols, such as the "poorly formed image of a fish that looks like a barracuda," and "the head of a bird sculptured in pine," which Alana and Monaco referred to in their 1760 "Report on the Indians of Southern Florida."⁴³ Missionaries also recounted numerous occasions on which the Indians worshipped idols and donned masks, which incidentally were often at the root of hostilities between the Indians and the missionaries.

Archaeological evidence also reveals that the Calusa often reworked metal goods into animal-shaped ornaments, including pendants in the shape of a fish, a bird, a seal, and a shark's tooth. Other finds included a woodpecker ornament made from a thin sheet of silver, and gold and silver tablets with zoomorphic designs engraved into them representing the mouth, bill, nose, or eyes of an animal. Animal imagery was more clearly delineated on metal tablets, such as those found in Key Marco, which bore more distinct animal representations, including the images of a duck and a dolphin. Since Florida yielded virtually no mineral wealth in the form of gold and silver, ornaments made from these materials would have had to have been reworked from Spanish metal items. That the Calusa reworked metal artifacts to serve their own symbolic purposes, imagery further indicates not only the status that Spanish items had achieved within Calusa society, but also the natives' appropriation of these items in order to enhance their own traditional forms of cultural expression. Animal representations on tablets among the pre-contact Calusa confirm that the Indians appropriated European materials in order to enhance their own material culture. Excavations on Key Marco, for example produced a wooden tablet with the image of a dolphin carved into it.⁴⁴

Given the ceremonial or religious significance of animal imagery within Calusa society, their use of a rarer, more prestigious material for these carvings implies an effort to render them all the more illustrious. Metal tablets and ornaments bearing zoomorphic designs most probably carried a ceremonial or religious significance, since the animals repre-

sented on them were those that the Calusa depended on for subsistence. Part of the Calusas' religious worship entailed ceremonies for an abundance of their food supply. The cacique, for example, whom the Calusa perceived as a semi-deity and often worshipped as such, was believed to have had power over the productivity of the ocean, which was the main source from which the Calusa derived their sustenance. His connection to the supernatural world would ideally prevent natural disasters such as hurricanes and ensure that the nature would continue to produce bountifully.⁴⁵ Since the Calusa drew a supernatural connection to their sustenance, engraving images of animals which were dietary staples on metal tablets and then displaying them may have had a ceremonial significance as part of the Indians' rituals to ensure a plentiful supply of food.

Another possible explanation for these tablets is that they bore the insignia of a specific office. Excavations of the Goodnow Mound have yielded a ceremonial silver tablet along with numerous beads in a two-person burial site. The beads indicate that the silver tablet was most probably the ornament of a necklace, and the fact that it was found in the burial indicates its association with one of the two persons in the grave site.⁴⁶ A possible inference one can make is that the silver tablet was an emblem of rank or status. Similar tablets have been found in a number of sites throughout Southern and Central Florida. Their abundant number, as well as documentary evidence describing the cacique and high ranking council members as wearing gold disks rather than rectangular tablets, is a possible indication that the tablets pertained to a more commonly held rank, not one of very elite status.

Other metal ornaments not bearing zoomorphic designs have also been retrieved from archaeological sites, including kite-shaped pendants with cruciform and leaf-like designs and beaded edges.⁴⁷ Other ornaments were in the shape of a crescent, triangle, rectangle, circle, arrow-head or cone.⁴⁸ What is significant about these shapes and designs is that like the imagery on the metal tablets, they bear a striking similarity to the Calusas' pre-contact artistic forms carved onto materials such as wood and bone, thereby presenting another instance where the Indians appropriated metal goods brought over by the Spanish by working them into artistic forms evocative of their own material culture. Again, the fact that these ornaments were reworked from minerals that were naturally rare in Florida would have made them all the more exceptional and, therefore, all the more accessible only to members of the elite.

It is possible that metal-crested woodpecker ornaments found commonly throughout South and Central Florida were worn to embellish turbans and other forms of headdress. One metal-crested woodpecker ornament retrieved from a burial, for example, lay in direct association to the skull and a silver band that was most probably a decorative head band. Other findings yielded a cooper-crested woodpecker with fragments of cloth attached to it, suggesting that it may have in, fact been, used to embellish a turban. Anthropologists have suggested that the woodpecker ornaments may have been indicative of a particular rank or status among the elite, particularly one associated with warfare. Among other tribes of the eastern United States, for example, birds such as the woodpecker, the jay, and the kingfisher had a symbolic association with war.⁴⁹

One can see this connection by examining Le Moyne's engravings of the Timucua. One of his illustrations, which shows Chief Outina marching into battle, depicts an Indian who appears to be one of his war chiefs wearing a headdress made of a bird's head, and ear ornaments, which appear to be of bird claws. The Indian wearing the bird headdress and ear ornaments appears again in another engraving that illustrates a pre-war ritual. In both engravings, the tribesmen appear to be wearing headdresses made of feathers, which they do not wear in illustrations not associated with war or pre-war rituals.⁵⁰

Centuries of contact between the Calusa and Europeans provided for cultural exchange, though not the total assimilation into Spanish culture that the missionaries had hoped for. Instead, the Calusa appropriated elements of European material culture in order to enhance their own. The items that Indians attained from shipwrecks and from missionaries and explorers held much prestige as high status items and, therefore, became integral in native tribute networks, and as status symbols among the elite. Archaeological evidence reveals that these items held a high value and were possibly considered to hold supernatural qualities.

The Calusas' incorporation of these items had a long-standing impact on their culture, since eighteenth century documents reveal that the Calusa still treasured these items as prestigious goods. Alana and Monaco's 1760 "Report on the Indians of Southern Florida," for example, describes the Calusa worshipping one of their deities by offering it a bar of silver.⁵¹ Furthermore, that the Calusa appropriated Spanish items and incorporated them into their own material culture by reworking them for their own purposes made long-term use more likely, since the reworked metal goods

were evocative of items that were traditionally found among the Calusa. Yet while access to European items brought about a certain degree of cultural change, missionaries failed to achieve their central objective, to convert the Calusa to Christianity and have Spanish culture replace that of the Calusa. Both archaeological and documentary evidence show that the Calusa succeeded insofar as resisting missionary efforts at an all-encompassing religious and cultural conversion.

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