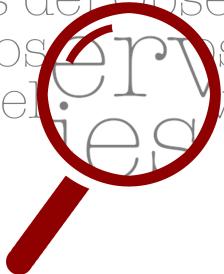


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The King of Spain's Slaves in St. Augustine, Florida (1580–1618)

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Abstract: There is a historiographic gap on the topic of slavery in 16th-century Spanish Florida, noted by several authors, which has recently become more conspicuous given its uncomfortable overlap with *The 1619 Project*, which has shifted the current conversation about slavery in the United States. Therefore, further research is needed on slavery in Spanish Florida during the period known as 'The Forgotten Century,' the nearly hundred-year span prior to the establishment of Jamestown in 1607, during which there was a Spanish presence in North America. This study's goal is to fill in a portion of this historiographic gap. Drawing on documents from the General Archive of the Indies (Seville, Spain), it presents a previously unpublished overview of slavery in Spanish Florida, where two contingents of slaves to the Crown landed in the 16th century. It outlines the reasons behind their consignment, the authorities involved, the number of individuals enslaved, their place of origin and the date of their arrival in Florida, the organization of their labor, the income and expenditure this practice represented for the monarchy, aspects of their everyday lives—such as dress, diet, and healthcare—, an attempt at manumission, an instance of escape, and their relationship with the Catholic faith. Their presence in present-day South Carolina is documented in 1583, nearly forty years before the first Africans were brought to Virginia in 1619. Finally, to complete this overview of slavery in Florida, it reports on slaves owned by private individuals and on a few instances of white and Indigenous enslavement there in the late 16th century. This project describes the Spanish system of slavery in North America, which was markedly distinct from the Anglo-Saxon system that ultimately prevailed there; it presents a new vision of the beginnings of Black enslavement in the U.S., which predated and differed from the practice described in *The 1619 Project*.

Keywords: Black slavery, Spanish Florida, Governance of Florida, General Archive of the Indies, Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo, *The 1619 Project*.

¹ [Editors' note: This is an English translation, offered by the Observatorio, of the Spanish original submitted by the author. See study 074-12/2021SP.]

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1. Introduction and Relevance

This project has its origins in our ongoing research into Spanish Florida in the era of Admiral Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo (1554-1622), who governed this province of the Spanish Empire from 1597 to 1603.² Our necessarily contextual approach to Floridian society at that time has enabled us to confirm that the province's Black population has been largely forgotten to history, despite the fact that, as we will see, it constituted a significant portion of St. Augustine at the close of the 16th century, with 12% of the city's 500 inhabitants (Francis, 2015, p. 82).

The recent effort to deepen our understanding of enslavement in the Americas has yet to turn with sufficient focus to the practice's origins in Spanish Florida, where the first Black people of African origin in North America landed in the 16th century. In the mid-20th century, Charles Arnade wrote: "The position of the Negro in the first period of Spanish Florida remains an intriguing story" (1959, p. 273). This statement remains true today, at least as regards the 16th century and first half of the 17th. One need only turn to a reference book such as *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, which dedicates a mere two pages to the period examined in this study (Landers, 1999, pp. 18-19); Paul Hoffman's 2013 text *The Historiography of Sixteenth-Century La Florida* not only points out the nonexistence of studies on the topic published after Landers', but even questions whether such research would be viable, since, in his opinion, "source limitations may restrict what more could be done about that ethnic group" (2013, p. 346). David Colburn believes that we must wait at least until the next generation of historians for a reasonably complete understanding of the Black population in Spanish Florida (1995, p. 2).

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² Admiral Gonzalo Méndez de Cancio Donlebún is also known as Gonzalo Méndez de Canço and Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo, three variations on his name that appear in documents from the era. In this study, we will employ the latter form, which is typically used in American historiography about Florida.

This historiographic lacuna has recently become more conspicuous given its uncomfortable overlap with *The New York Times'* controversial *1619 Project*, about which rivers of ink have been spilled since its launch in August of 2019. This initiative posits a profound reinterpretation of the country's history by centering the consequences of slavery and the Black population's contributions to the U.S. narrative.³ Its core theme is the arrival of a small contingent of Black slaves in the British Colony of Virginia in 1619, a critical historical moment that the project's promoters all but assert to be the beginning of slavery in the United States. The media coverage surrounding the project has led a large majority of the U.S. population to tacitly accept this as fact, despite the efforts of several historians—like Michael Francis, Gary Mormino, Kathy Deegan, and Susan Parker, among others—whose reminders that Black slaves were brought to Florida prior to 1619 have not received nearly as much attention. Furthermore, the dearth of research described above has only reinforced *The 1619 Project*'s Anglocentric focus; consequently, African Americans in North America have been deprived of several decades of their history in Spanish Florida, a region that is every bit as much a part of the present-day United States as the British Colony of Virginia.

In his 1946 book *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*, Tannenbaum compares the two systems of slavery that coexisted in the Americas for centuries: the Spanish system and the Anglo-Saxon system (under Britain and later the U.S.). His study demonstrates how even within the inherently cruel phenomenon of slavery, there were gradations of cruelty. Florida was under the Spanish system—which was, relatively speaking, less severe than the Anglo-Saxon system—though, given the course of history, the Anglo-Saxon system ultimately prevailed there. Thus, it is also this system—whose cruelty was refined in the U.S. and resolved traumatically with a

³ The project posits the radical alternative of considering 1619, rather than 1776 (when the colonies declared independence from Britain), to be the true date that the United States of America was born.

civil war, and whose social wounds remain open today—that monopolizes the current debate about slavery in North America, while virtually nothing is known about the Spanish system applied in that very same territory.⁴

These circumstances necessitate further, timely research on slavery in Spanish Florida during the period known as ‘The Forgotten Century,’ the nearly hundred-year span prior to the establishment of Jamestown in 1607. This study’s goal is to fill a portion of the research gap regarding the Spanish Crown’s slaves in Florida between 1580 and 1618.

This study’s subject matter has determined the years considered. It was in 1580 that the Floridian authorities implored the Crown to send a first contingent of slaves, which reached St. Augustine in 1582. It consisted of thirty people. Later, in 1595, the King of Spain decided to dispatch a second contingent, consisting of twenty men, which arrived in 1597. And our study concludes in 1618—a year before the well-known arrival of “twenty & odd” slaves⁵ in Virginia —when Governor Treviño requested a third contingent that was never sent to St. Augustine.

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Like any historical study concerned with previously undiscussed issues, this project has a significant documentary component. The General Archive of the Indies (Seville, Spain) holds untold volumes of information pertaining to the period in Florida

⁴ It is worth noting—indeed, we believe it is imperative to note—that since the publication of Tannenbaum’s study in 1946, his view of both systems of slavery and their impact on contemporary race relations throughout the Americas has been the subject of considerable controversy and widely debated in the U.S. Particularly valuable, in our view, is the work of Alejandro de la Fuente (2010) who has condensed and summarized various disparate readings of Tannenbaum’s study. That said, as the scope of our study is limited to the late 16th and early 17th centuries, it does not discuss the possible impact that either system of slavery had on current race relations in various places throughout the Americas; their existence and differences, however, strike us as undeniable.

⁵ On the “twenty & odd” enslaved Africans brought to Virginia in 1619, see: Knight (2011) and McCartney (2003).

that concerns this study.⁶ However, as enslaved Africans had no protagonism in that era, there are no books or records anywhere in the Archives dedicated specifically to this population in Florida. Quite the contrary, in fact. In order to study slavery, its organization, and the number of individuals subjected to it, as well as the ways those individuals lived, ate, and dressed, their health, their role in the economy and other aspects of their lives in Spanish Florida, a researcher must review virtually all the documentation available, making due with the little information concerning slaves that surfaces here and there, often in the most unlikely passages. This process requires patience and more than a little luck. Add to this the need for a solid grasp of the era's Spanish language and paleography, and the lack of research on this topic is perhaps not so surprising after all.⁷

We have divided this study into two major sections. In the first, we describe the two abovementioned contingents of the Crown's slaves that landed in St. Augustine in the 16th century: the Crown's motivations, the authorities involved, the slave traders commissioned, as well as the number and sex of the slaves themselves, their place of origin, the circumstance of their passage, and the date they landed in Florida, among other details. We also discuss the administrative mechanisms designed—not without some tensions—by the authorities in Florida for

⁶ The General Archive of the Indies is the collection *par excellence* for research into any aspect of the Spanish Empire in the Americas. As we will see, throughout this study we have worked with holdings from several sections of the Archive. One of these is the Accounting Section, which requires the following clarification: in December of 1924, a fire in the Accounting Section of the Archive destroyed nine bundles of documents and seriously damaged another 750, including the eleven accounting ledgers that we have consulted for this study. Thousands of pages were scorched on all four sides, affecting the readability of their contents to a greater or lesser degree. Many of these sheets are now loose, having been separated from their original binding, and in some instances, they are in the incorrect order. These factors make it virtually impossible to follow their original pagination. Thus, in this study, we reference these files as follows: we identify the appropriate accounting entry with the most complete information and its date; we use the description of the accounting ledger that appears in the index of the General Archive of the Indies, even when this, in some instances, contains errors or does not faithfully align with the document's contents; and we replace the original pagination, which in most instances is unknowable, with the document's digitization number.

⁷ As Jane Landers notes, ignorance of Spanish paleography is one of the hindrances to U.S. historians' progress in understanding the history of Spanish Florida (2014, p. 471). On this topic, it is worth highlighting the work that the University of South Florida is conducting: under the direction of Hispanist Michael Francis, the university has created a department of Spanish paleography, which will surely bear fruit before long. David Colburn has identified additional obstacles for North American historians: documents on Spanish Florida are held in archives in Spain, and researchers must possess reading knowledge of Spanish in order to understand them (1995, p. 3).

the handling of slaves; the main jobs they were assigned in the King's service, and their tasks within certain components of the city's infrastructure, such as the mill, the hospital, and the smithy. Apart from these topics, this section also includes information on an attempt at manumission,⁸ an instance of escape (*cimarronaje*),⁹ slaves' relationship with the Catholic faith, the fruitless fifteen-year effort to entice the King to send a third contingent of slaves, and other matters.

This section also documents at least four months during which ten slaves were present in Santa Elena (present-day Parris Island). This fact is of particular relevance to the debate surrounding slavery's origins in various parts of North America, as it reveals the presence of Black slaves in present-day South Carolina¹⁰—one of the thirteen colonies that declared independence from England in 1776—nearly forty years before enslaved Africans were brought to Virginia in 1619. The documents referenced also enable us to precisely track the number of Spanish royal slaves, from the arrival of the first contingent until the request for a third, as we have data on this topic for twenty of the forty years included in this research.¹¹

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The second section of this study addresses how slaves to the Crown fit within the economy of Spanish Florida. To achieve this, we have identified and reconstructed the economic model that the provincial authorities designed for their management. We have quantified the sources of revenue they generated for the royal coffers, the expenses they represented for the monarchy—food, clothing, healthcare—and thereby taken stock of their value to the King. This section also describes certain vestiges of this population's material culture, based on accounting ledgers, which include information about attire, work tools, and household items.

⁸ The act of manumitting, that is, granting freedom to a slave.

⁹ *Cimarrones* (runaways) were Black slaves who escaped their Spanish enslavers and took refuge in the wilderness in pursuit of freedom, risking murder or cruel punishment if they were captured.

¹⁰ At the end of the 16th century, the Spanish Province of La florida spanned across the present-day states of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, North and South Carolina, Virginia (which the Spanish called *Jacán* and whose British sovereignty Spain did not recognize until the 1670 Treaty of Madrid), and a broad region with unclear borders in the north.

¹¹ The number of slaves during the period studied here is included in Appendix I.

Furthermore, we have pieced together a series of thirty-eight (nearly) consecutive months in which we have identified the type and volume of food provisions allotted to the slaves. This enables us to make estimates about their daily calorie intake and determine if they were sufficiently fed.

This section also addresses the important topic of the slaves' health, such as identifying syphilis as a common affliction, the medical care they received at the city's hospital, and how they were treated upon their death. As we will see, these and other questions enable us to discern, albeit vaguely, some aspects of the everyday life of slaves in Spanish Florida at the time.

Although this study focuses on the slaves belonging to the Spanish Crown, it felt appropriate to include two brief closing sections that offer a broader portrait of slavery in Spanish Florida. Thus, we have conducted a surface-level study of slaves owned by private individuals in Saint Augustine at the end of the 16th century, including the number of slaves and their percentage of the city's population, a close look at a few slave sales, and a social profile of their owners. Finally, we address some cases of white and Indigenous enslavement in Florida in the final quarter of the 16th century.

The effort behind this study was entirely worthwhile. Once assembled in the proper order, the numerous disjointed pieces of information—which were taken from letters, files, entries in accounting ledgers, etc.—offer an unprecedented, fresh, and surprising panorama on the application of the Spanish system of slavery in the late 16th and early 17th century. It presents a previously unseen panorama of the beginnings of Black enslavement in the U.S., which predated and differed from the practice described in *The 1619 Project*, and which, furthermore, disrupts the debate that same controversial project has generated in the U.S. To our knowledge, this is the first study on the King's slaves in Florida, a group that Deschamps Chapeaux

would call a “people without a history” (2015), making this a new contribution to our knowledge of African American enslavement in North America. That is, perhaps, the most valuable contribution this study has to offer.¹²

2. Slaves to the Spanish Crown in Florida

From Ponce de León’s first expedition to Florida in 1513 until the founding of St. Augustine (*San Agustín*) in 1565, people of African origin, both free and enslaved, participated in nearly every Spanish expedition during the *Conquista* (Landers, 1999, pp. 12-15). Particularly relevant was the figure of Juan Garrido, one of the two free Black men in Ponce de León’s company, who later joined Hernán Cortés in his expedition in Mexico. Garrido is credited with the introduction of wheat to New Spain and the construction of one of the first chapels in Mexico City (Francis, 2015, pp. 119-120). The first recorded Black resident in St. Augustine was Juanillo, a castaway captured by the Timucua in 1562, who was later captured from the same by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés. Thanks to his knowledge of several Indigenous languages, Juanillo was extraordinarily valuable to the Spanish as an interpreter (Francis, 2015, p. 120).

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The status of Black Africans in Spanish Florida in the 16th and 17th centuries was the same throughout Hispanic America, where the determining factor in social hierarchy was still race.¹³ Below Spaniards and other Catholic Europeans were the

¹² I am grateful to the following individuals for their invaluable help with this project: Antonio José Rodríguez Hernández, professor at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), who encouraged me to undertake this project and shared perceptive insights; Ismael Sarmiento Ramírez, professor at the Universidad de Oviedo, who generously shared his thorough knowledge of the practice of slavery; Michael Francis, professor at the University of South Florida, who gave me access to myriad documents that were essential to this research; María Jesús Hernández Macarrón, who helped me estimate the nutritional value of the food rations given to slaves; Marta Mateo Martínez-Bartolomé, Executive Director of the Observatory of the Instituto Cervantes at Harvard University, who made valuable suggestions about the text; and Avelino Fernández García-Rancaño, with whom I corroborate all my research.

¹³ This pattern later evolved unequally across the Americas until certain regions reached what some authors have called ‘racial democracy,’ even as racial tensions in other regions remained latent. For more on this controversial topic, see the work of Alejandro de la Fuente (2010).

Indigenous people or ‘*naturales*,’ whose social status—granted by legislation over the course of centuries—was more apparent than real, since in everyday life skin color carried more weight than written law. Finally, people of African origin or ‘*negros*’ were at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Zooming in on that lowest rung on the ladder, however, there were still distinct levels of social status among *negros*. The most esteemed were free Blacks, a status to which most slaves aspired, even though freedom did not necessarily entail an improvement in living conditions.¹⁴ Next came slaves belonging to the Spanish Crown, simply because the King had to set an example in his treatment of them, complying with his own ordinances on food provisions, dress, religious education, marriage, etc. Thus, in general, the King’s slaves experienced better living conditions than slaves owned by private individuals, whose owners did not always adhere to these rules and dealt out cruel punishments.¹⁵

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Soon after its establishment in 1565, St. Augustine required slave labor for its consolidation and development. The Laws of the Indies, issued by the Spanish Crown, provided that wherever there is [military] construction, slaves be brought to work.”^{16*} This was the primary reason why two contingents of slaves were sent to

¹⁴ For this reason, there were many people who, over time, ultimately accepted their status as slaves. The reasons behind resigning oneself to a situation so contrary to human nature could be manifold: an unwillingness to leave one’s family, the inability to provide for oneself, lack of experience with other ways of life, old age, etc. However, one of the manifestations of slavery’s inherent cruelty was the nonconsensual freeing of slaves when they were elderly, ill, or not useful at work, an act that condemned them to an even worse existence. Some regions of the Spanish empire issued decrees to prevent this inhumane practice. For example, in Santo Domingo, enslavers were required to retain elderly, sick, or disabled slaves and, if they abandoned them, they were fined three silver *reales* per day to finance their care at the hospital (Lucena Salmoral, 2000, p. 303).

¹⁵ For the purposes of this study, the terms ‘the king’s slaves’ (*esclavos del rey*) and ‘privately-owned slave’ (*esclavos de particulares*)—terms also used in documents from the era—denote these slaves’ owners; it does not imply the existence of a legal distinction between them.

¹⁶ As was established in 1589, per: *Recopilación de leyes de los Reynos de las Indias, mandadas imprimir y publicar por la Magestad católica del rey Don Carlos II nuestro Señor*. (1791). Madrid: Real y Supremo Consejo de las Indias, First Volume, Book III, Title VI “De las fábricas y fortificaciones,” Law XV “Que donde hubiere fábrica se lleven esclavos, que trabajen,” p. 578. This law stipulates that slaves had to be “in sound health and of a good age and disposition for construction and fortification labor.”

* Editors’ Note: Original Spanish citations, translated here into English, can be found in the Spanish version of this study (074-12/2021SP).

Spanish Florida in the 16th century, the consequence of King Philip II of Spain's resolute focus on the difficult undertaking in Florida.

2.1 *The First Contingent of Royal Slaves in Florida*

In January of 1580, royal officials in Florida ¹⁷ notified the King that the fort in St. Augustine had been completed.¹⁸ The soldiers themselves had been charged with its construction, meaning that "the people were fatigued from the construction and from bringing lumber on their shoulders from the wilderness."¹⁹ They also noted that, since the fort was made of wood, costly repairs, sawyers, and other maintenance costs would represent a significant expense.²⁰ In their opinion, all of this could be solved if the Crown would send some of the slaves it held in Havana to St. Augustine.²¹

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In March of that same year, likely under pressure from irate soldiers,²² the royal officials reiterated their request: "we have already indicated how effective it would be to have a few slaves in this land for the maintenance of these forts,"²³ wrote the royal accountant; the royal treasurer concurred: "in our previous letter, we implored Your Majesty to send some slaves from Havana."²⁴

¹⁷ As in other provinces of the Spanish empire, in Florida, there were three royal officials: the accountant (*contador*), the treasurer (*tesorero*) and the business manager (*factor*). Information pertaining to their appointment, functions, etc. was regulated by the Laws of the Indies in: *Recopilación de leyes de los Reynos de las Indias, mandadas imprimir y publicar por la Magestad católica del rey Don Carlos II nuestro Señor*. (1791). Madrid: Real y Supremo Consejo de las Indias, Second Volume, Book VIII, Title IV "De los oficiales reales, y contadores de tributos, sus tenientes y guardas mayores," pp. 425-446.

¹⁸ Consulta del Consejo de Indias, Madrid, 4 de junio de 1580, Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Indiferente, 739, N.260, fol. 1.

¹⁹ *Idem*.

²⁰ *Carta del contador Lázaro Sáez de Mercado al rey*, St. Augustine, March of 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 168.

²¹ *Consulta del Consejo de Indias*, June 4, 1580, AGI, Indiferente, 739, N.260, fol. 1.

²² In 1580, there were 150 soldiers in St. Augustine and 84 in Santa Elena, as well as 40 sailors, navigation officers, and masters (*maestres*) who served in Florida's three royal frigates. In: *Carta del tesorero Juan Cavadilla y del contador Lorenzo Sáez de Mercado al rey*, St. Augustine, October 12, 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 29.

²³ *Carta del contador Lázaro Sáez de Mercado al rey*, St. Augustine, marzo de 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 168.

²⁴ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cavadilla al rey*, San Agustín, March 6, 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 22.

In June of 1580, the Council of the Indies raised the matter with the King, indicating that if the “thirty pieces of Your Majesty’s slaves” were not indispensable in Havana, they could be sent to Florida “for the requested purposes.”²⁵ King Philip II’s unwavering commitment to Spanish Florida took care of the rest. On September 30, 1580, through official dispatches sent to the governor of Cuba²⁶ and the royal officials in Florida,²⁷ the Crown arranged for their transfer to St. Augustine.

Given the considerable delay in transatlantic correspondence at the time, this resolution did not arrive in Florida for nearly a year. In September 1581, Governor Pedro Menéndez Marqués ordered Captain Tomás Bernaldo de Quirós to take the frigate *Concepción* to Havana to fetch the Crown’s slaves.²⁸ In early November, Quirós wrote from Cuba that he was preparing to set out for Florida with twenty-seven slaves.²⁹ However, he ultimately brought thirty, the first number suggested. In January 1582, royal treasurer Juan Cevadilla reported that the thirty slaves intended for use by the fort in St. Augustine “arrived well, the twenty-three males and seven females.”³⁰ In some ways, their arrival³¹ marked the beginning of institutional slavery in North America, a phenomenon that would endure until January 1, 1863, when U.S. President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

²⁵ Consulta del Consejo de Indias, Madrid, June 4, 1580, AGI, Indiferente, 739, N.260, fol. 1.

²⁶ Real cédula al gobernador de la isla de Cuba, Badajoz, September 30, 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2528, L.1, fol. 129.

²⁷ Real cédula a los oficiales reales de las provincias de La florida, Badajoz, September 30, 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2528, L.1, fol. 128-128v.

²⁸ Resumen de la carta del gobernador de La florida Pedro Menéndez Marqués al capitán Tomás Bernaldo de Quirós, St. Augustine, September 20, 1581. Accessed April 19, 2021, from the website of the University of Florida: <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/USACH00595/00059/26j>.

²⁹ Resumen de la carta del capitán Tomás Bernaldo de Quirós al rey, Havana, November 1, 1581. Accessed April 19, 2021, from the website of the University of Florida: <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/USACH00595/00059/29j>.

³⁰ Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla al rey, St. Augustine, January 22, 1582, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 46v.

³¹ However, prior to this, a small number of privately held slaves had been present in Florida.

We cannot be certain about these individuals' place of origin, nor when they were brought to Cuba. But, considering that they were slaves to the Spanish Crown, we can make some reasonably educated guesses. In November of 1571, the King authorized Juan Fernández de Espinosa, treasurer of Queen Anna of Austria, to send three hundred Black slaves to Cuba for labor related to the fortification of Havana.³² The agreement with Espinosa established that the slaves must be natives of Cape Verde and must be delivered between June and December of the following year. Thus, on July 26, 1572, Espinosa brought 193 slaves to Havana aboard the ship *San Pedro* (Arriaga Mesa, 2014, p. 399).

In 1576, the governor of Cuba complained to the Crown that he had not yet received the remainder of the three hundred promised slaves (Arriaga Mesa, 2014, p. 400), and there is no indication that any other contingents of royal slaves were brought to Cuba before the thirty described above were transferred to Florida. Thus, all indications seem to suggest that these thirty individuals were originally from Cape Verde, that they had been brought to Cuba aboard the *San Pedro*, and that they had been on the island for ten years.

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There is no doubt that the Cuban authorities did not send their best, healthiest, or youngest slaves. At least two of them—a married man and woman—were sick with syphilis when they arrived in St. Augustine; the woman died shortly thereafter, despite attempted medical care.³³ Furthermore, two years after this contingent's arrival, royal treasurer Juan Cevadilla complained that several of these slaves were too old and proposed bringing them to Havana or New Spain to be sold off.³⁴

³² Real cédula de asiento con Juan Fernández de Espinosa, tesorero de la reina Ana, sobre el envío de 200 esclavos y 100 esclavos negros de edades entre los 18 y los 30 años a la villa de San Cristóbal de La Habana, Cuba, para que trabajen en la fortaleza de la misma, El Escorial, November 20, 1571, AGI, Indiferente,426, L.25, fol. 137-139v.

³³ Carta del contador Lázaro Sáez de Mercado al rey, St. Augustine, July 17, 1582, AGI, Santo Domingo,231, fol. 193.

³⁴ Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla al rey, St. Augustine, January 9, 1584, AGI, Santo Domingo,231, fol. 288v.

Before this first contingent's arrival, Floridian authorities had no experience in managing slaves. Perhaps anticipating the problems this would bring, in one of his initial petitions for some of the King's slaves to be sent to Florida, royal accountant Sáez de Mercado implored the Crown to also issue "an order regarding who shall be in charge of their oversight and administration."³⁵ But the monarchy's order was limited to instructing the authorities to take "account of them and their handling, and to not incur costs for the royal treasury."³⁶ Thus began the conflict. The flashpoint was the royal business manager's ambition³⁷ to be the sole administrator of the slaves, an aspiration the royal accountant and royal treasurer opposed; they argued that this responsibility ought to be shared equally among the three royal officials. The dispute reached the governor, who expressed that he would only take charge of them if they were placed under the orders of the business manager; as he was absent, they were temporarily the responsibility of the royal treasurer and the royal accountant,³⁸ an unstable situation, which the governor resolved by implementing the same system in Florida as had been followed in Cuba for the management of slaves to the Crown: he appointed one individual to administer them, with the title of slave overseer (*mandador de esclavos*). Furthermore, the governor made clear that "overseeing what they were to do was solely his responsibility" and that other royal officials were not to interfere in this matter.³⁹

The royal accountant, dissatisfied with this arrangement, reported to the King that this situation would remain unchanged "until Your Majesty orders something merely to avoid discord with him [the governor]."⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the royal treasurer,

³⁵ *Carta del contador Lázaro Sáez de Mercado al rey*, St. Augustine, March of 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 168.

³⁶ *Consulta del Consejo de Indias*, Madrid, June 4, 1580, AGI, Indiferente, 739, N.260, fol. 1.

³⁷ The royal business manager's duties principally involved providing supplies, munitions, and anything else that may be necessary in the territory laid out in his royal commission. Royal stores within the territory fell within the scope of his responsibilities.

³⁸ *Carta del contador Lázaro Sáez de Mercado al rey*, St. Augustine, July 17, 1582, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 193.

³⁹ *Idem*.

⁴⁰ *Idem*.

without so much as acknowledging the established procedures, insisted that command of the slaves had to be entrusted to the three royal officials so that “their administration by the proper party shall not be hindered, as the business manager is there [in Spain]; it remains with Your Majesty to command if it is to be solely he who handles administration or the three royal officials together, so that they do not hinder one another.”⁴¹ The question reached the Council of the Indies, which decreed that the governor was to have command of the slaves and assign their tasks, while the royal officials’ involvement would be limited to questions of accounting for them.⁴² In keeping with these royal directives, the procedure was refined and ultimately established as follows:

[...] the governors shall assign them [the slaves] those tasks that they deem to be in the service of His Majesty, giving daily verbal orders to an individual [the slave overseer] who is in charge of them, and this individual, at the end of every month, would give a sworn and signed attestation of how, by order of said governor, said slaves were occupied that month with those things that that attestation declared, and the total value, where applicable, of the daily payments for the hiring of said slaves by certain residents and private individuals. These attestations were used to determine the total value of those *aprovechamientos*, and a copy of the same was delivered to the royal treasurer so that he could collect these sums and add them to the royal coffers, balancing those *aprovechamientos* with the *situado*⁴³ from which they [the slaves] were fed and clothed.⁴⁴

The slave overseer (*mandador de esclavos*) was the nexus between the administrative labyrinth of the Spanish province of Florida and any questions pertaining to the slaves under his command. Everything pertaining to their food, clothing, health, tools, hiring out to private third parties, etc. went through him; thus,

⁴¹ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla al rey*, St. Augustine, July 19, 1582, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 200v.

⁴² *Real cédula al gobernador de Florida, que ordene lo que hubieren de hacer los esclavos que se llevaron a aquella tierra*, Madrid, April 13, 1583, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2528, L.1, fol. 135.

⁴³ *Situado* was the term used for the annual budget that the Spanish Crown gave to support St. Augustine. These funds were used to pay the salaries of the 300 soldiers in the city, as well as their rations and benefits; part of the governors’ and royal officials’ salaries; upkeep for the Franciscan brothers; provisions of gunpowder, munitions, and other supplies; and expenses related to repairing the forts. But many other expenses came out of the *situado*, such as those associated with the King’s slaves; the slaves did not generate enough revenue to offset these expenses, as we will see. The value of the *situado* reached 48,000 ducats per year, which were placed (*situado*; hence the term) in the royal coffers in Mexico City. Every year, a trusted person—generally one of the royal officials—was sent to collect the *situado* in New Spain, partially in cash and partially already converted into all sorts of gear that was necessary for the operation of St. Augustine. For more on these matters, see: *Situado and Sabana: Spain’s support system for the presidio and misión provinces of Florida* (Bushnell, 1994).

⁴⁴ *Carta de Bartolomé de Argüelles, Juan Menéndez Marqués y Pedro López de San Julián al rey*, St. Augustine, January 23, de 1602, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 311-314.

this figure justifies a brief digression. This was a lower position in the administrative hierarchy; the overseer was recruited by the governor of Florida from among the soldiers in the garrison (*presidio*).⁴⁵ But by dint of his responsibilities, the overseer was involved in intermediary tasks throughout the city on a daily basis. Furthermore, unlike other figures of greater relevance, he had frequent access to the governor. Thus, this was a coveted position despite the low status of the everyday tasks in which the overseer was engaged, and even average performance in this position promised promotion to more consequential and prestigious roles. For example, the soldier Adrián de Cañizares, one of the first overseers, was designated as the shipmaster (*maestre*)⁴⁶ of the *presidio's* frigate *Concepción*, built in 1593.⁴⁷ His successor, Francisco Morgado was appointed supply officer (*escribano de raciones*) in 1596.⁴⁸ But Andrés de Sotomayor's career was even more remarkable: after being named overseer in 1596,⁴⁹ in 1601 he became steward of the Church of St. Augustine,⁵⁰ and in 1615 he was among the royal officials, acting as the royal business manager of Spanish Florida.⁵¹

⁴⁵ *Presidio*, in the sense of fort, fortress, or defensive bastion, shelter and protection for a border territory, as was the case in the *presidio de San Agustín*. In documents from the era, there are frequent references to the fort of St. Augustine and, almost by extension, to the entire city, whose population consisted chiefly of soldiers at the fort (*presidio*) and their families.

⁴⁶ *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, January 17, 1595, AGI, Contaduría,946, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos y pertrechos.1591-1594. Dadas por Gaspar Fernández Perete, tenedor de bastimentos, fol. 348.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem.*, *Asiento contable n°33*, St. Augustine, January 15, 1593, fol. 394.

⁴⁸ *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, March 29, 1596, AGI, Contaduría,947, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos y pertrechos. 1595 a 1597. Dadas por Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor. Tomadas por comisión por Pedro Redondo Villegas, contador de la fábrica y fundición de artillería de Cuba; y cargos que resultaron contra varias personas, fol. 282.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem.*, *Asiento contable n°74*, St. Augustine, December of 1596, fol. 308.

⁵⁰ *Asiento contable n°99*, St. Augustine, February 20, 1601, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 a 1602. Número 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602, fol. 1181-1183.

⁵¹ *Petición del gobernador Juan Treviño Guillamas al vicario general de la ciudad de San Agustín*, St. Augustine, August 8, 1615, AGI, Contaduría,947, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos y pertrechos. 1595 a 1597. Dadas por Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor. Tomadas por comisión por Pedro Redondo Villegas, contador de la fábrica y fundición de artillería de Cuba; y cargos que resultaron contra varias personas, fol. 818.

In 1583, ten of the best slaves to the Crown were temporarily sent to Santa Elena, in present-day South Carolina. There, their tasks were meant to be limited to covering the fort, but “when the work began, the wood was found to be so damaged that it became necessary to bring down the whole body of the fort and, with maximal brevity, turn to fortification.”⁵² Construction of the new fort lasted at least four months. The slaves also helped build a new church and boat for use by Santa Elena.⁵³ Around these same dates, slaves did repairs on the fort in St. Augustine and built the city’s smithy.⁵⁴

In June of 1586, St. Augustine was laid waste by an English fleet under Sir Francis Drake’s command. Following the attack, the twenty-seven royal slaves in the city at that time were ordered to rebuild the city. Their efforts produced a new fort, barracks, storehouses, a gatehouse, etc.⁵⁵ They also built a new frigate and other vessels for the *presidio*. All under the direction of Governor Pedro Menéndez Marqués.⁵⁶

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In 1591, royal accountant Argüelles informed the Crown that five of its slaves had already died, and that twenty-five remained, including women and children.⁵⁷ By 1592, two more had died.⁵⁸ The following year, Pedro Menéndez Marqués insisted that it would be beneficial to remove some elderly slaves from Florida. Rather than

⁵² *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla y de Fernando de Miranda al rey*, St. Augustine, December 20, 1583, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 282-284.

⁵³ *Idem*.

⁵⁴ *Idem*.

⁵⁵ In St. Augustine, Drake abandoned three Black slaves he had taken from Santo Domingo and Cartagena. Governor Pedro Menéndez Marqués decided that they, too, would join in the reconstruction work on the fort. In: *Resumen de la carta del gobernador de La florida Pedro Menéndez Marqués al rey, San Agustín, 17 de julio de 1586*. Accessed April 19, 2021, from the website of the University of Florida: <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/USACH00595/00064/104>.

⁵⁶ *Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo gobernador y capitán general de las provincias de La florida a los oficiales reales de ellas para que comprasen sustento a los negros esclavos de su majestad que allí asisten*, St. Augustine, September 16, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 315-324.

⁵⁷ *Carta del contador Bartolomé de Argüelles al rey*, St. Augustine, May 12, 1591, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 87.

⁵⁸ As can be gleaned from: *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, February 10, 1592, AGI, Contaduría, 946, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos y pertrechos. 1591-1594. Dadas por Gaspar Fernández Perete, tenedor de bastimentos, fol. 124.

selling them, he proposed they be exchanged for younger, better trained slaves from Havana.⁵⁹ His request received a favorable response, and the governor of Cuba was ordered to send St. Augustine “six sawyers and two carpenters, to be exchanged for another four or five from Florida who, them being old and the land being cold, are of no use there.”⁶⁰

2.2 The Second Contingent of Royal Slaves in Florida

Though the first contingent of slaves in Florida were sent at the urging of royal officials, the second contingent was sent at the initiative of the Spanish Crown itself.

In early 1595, in the middle of the Anglo-Spanish War (1585-1604), news that an English fleet was preparing to set sail for the Americas caused a commotion in Spain and raised alarms at all the Spanish strongholds in the Caribbean. Sir Francis Drake was returning to the Americas, and the Spanish were unsure where, specifically, he would strike at their interests. In Florida, the 1586 attack on St. Augustine had made it clear that a wooden fort was insufficient for repelling such a formidable enemy. Therefore, in mid-1595, the Crown deemed it necessary to build a new fortress, this time made of stone. The King ordered Governor Avendaño⁶¹ to begin construction based on designs by Gaspar Ruíz.⁶² Simultaneously, Philip II decreed that 10,000 ducats earmarked for the construction of the new fortress were to be sent from Mexico to Florida.⁶³ To oversee the construction, the King ordered

⁵⁹ Pedro Menéndez Marqués, *relación hecha a su majestad en su real Consejo de las Indias sobre lo tocante a La florida*, Madrid, 1593, AGI, Patronato,260, N.1, R.25, fol. 4.

⁶⁰ Real cédula al gobernador de la isla de Cuba que de los esclavos que allí hay envíe seis aserradores y dos carpinteros para que se truquen por otros cuatro o cinco de La florida que por ser viejos y la tierra fría no son de provecho allí, San Lorenzo, October 2, 1593, AGI, Santo Domingo,2528, L.1, fol. 206v. 207.

⁶¹ Domingo Martínez de Avendaño, Governor of Florida (1594-1595).

⁶² Real cédula al gobernador de La florida sobre que haga hacer de piedra y cal el fuerte de San Agustín que por ser de madera y tierra tiene poca defensa, Madrid, June 21, 1595, AGI, Santo Domingo,2528, L.1, fol. 219-219v.

⁶³ Real cédula a los oficiales reales de la ciudad de Méjico que a cuenta del situado den y entreguen a los oficiales reales de la provincia de La florida 10000 ducados anticipados para que con ellos se haga el fuerte de San Agustín de piedra y cal y los vayan descontado del situado 1000 ducados cada año, Madrid, June 18, 1595, AGI, Santo Domingo,2528, L.1, fol. 217-217v.

the House of Trade of the Indies in Seville to send a master stonemason, a stonework officer, and a bricklayer to St. Augustine.⁶⁴ For the brute manpower, on July 29, 1595, he ordered the slave trader Pedro Gómez Reynel to deliver twenty Black slaves to the authorities in Havana within a year; from there they could be sent to St. Augustine.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, the royal officials in Florida —who had taken charge of governance following Avendaño's death in November 1595— were faced with the distressing news about Drake's return to the Caribbean. Unaware that Drake's expedition had been an unmitigated failure and that Drake himself was dead,⁶⁶ they decided to undertake emergency repairs to reinforce the old wood fort, a course of action that involved “embanking the walls of said fort and deepening and cleaning the surrounding ditch.”⁶⁷ But by that point only twenty-two royal slaves remained in St. Augustine: sixteen men and six women, many of them now elderly. Therefore, the authorities turned to the help of Christianized Indigenous people and hired out nine Black slaves from private individuals.⁶⁸

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As with the first contingent, we can only make educated guesses about these individuals' places of origin. However, the conditions of the contract between the Spanish Crown and Pedro Gómez Reynel enable us to narrow the question. The contract granted Reynel exclusive rights to abduct “negros” from Guinea and hold

⁶⁴ Real cédula al doctor Pedro Gutiérrez que haga enviar y envíe un maestro y un oficial cantero y un albañil para que entienda en el edificio y fábrica que se ha de hacer en el fuerte de San Agustín, Madrid, June 23, 1595, AGI, Santo Domingo,2528, L.1, fol. 220.

⁶⁵ Carta del gobernador Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo, el contador Bartolomé de Argüelles, el tesorero Juan Menéndez Marqués y el factor Juan López de Avilés al rey, St. Augustine, June 1, 1599, AGI, Santo Domingo,229, fol. 128-129.

⁶⁶ Sir Francis Drake died on January 28, 1596 in Portobelo Harbor (Panama). For more on his disastrous final expedition to the Americas, see: *The Last Voyage of Drake and Hawkins* (Andrews, 1972) and *Gonzalo Méndez de Cancio: un almirante asturiano en el ocaso de Francis Drake* (Cancio-Donlebún, 2004).

⁶⁷ Maravedíes pagados por el dicho tesorero en jornales y fletes, ayudas de costa y otras cosas extraordinarias, asiento contable nº33, St. Augustine, July 3, 1596, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602, fol. 1249.

⁶⁸ The treasurer paid their owners 1029 reales for the 171 days that their slaves worked, a rate of 6 reales per day. *Idem*.

them at compounds in São Tomé, Cape Verde, and Mina. Consequently, in 1595, Reynel dispatched three ships to Cuba; there is no record of any other vessel under his command between 1596 and 1600 (Arriaga Mesa, 2014, p. 387). The three ships followed the same route, departing from Lisbon, passing through Cape Verde, and from there, setting out for Cuba (Arriaga Mesa, 2014, p. 387). One of these ships was *Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria*, which in Cape Verde loaded a shipment of human cargo from Angola. At nearly the end of its voyage, in January 1597, the *Candelaria* was attacked and sunk by English corsairs on the coast of Cuba, near Cabo Corrientes. Only eighty of the one hundred and seventy-six slaves aboard survived the journey; the rest died during this clash or at other moments on their unfortunate voyage from Africa. The eighty survivors reached Havana on February 8, 1597 (Arriaga Mesa, 2014, pp. 387-388) and, given the date of these events, all indications suggest that the twenty individuals designated for Florida were among this group.

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By whatever means, Reynel made good on his commitment and delivered the agreed-upon twenty slaves to the Cuban authorities. Captain Vicente González was sent to retrieve them with the *presidio's* frigate. Thus, on May 16, 1597, the 16th century's second and final contingent of slaves to the King—twenty young men—disembarked in St. Augustine.⁶⁹ They arrived exhausted, in a state of shock, and sick. The accountancy ledgers from May of 1597 include an entry for cornmeal that was given to “twenty newly arrived Blacks, for their nourishment and healing.”⁷⁰ They continued to receive these provisions the following month in the hopes their health would be restored, as they remained unwell.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Carta del gobernador Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo, el contador Bartolomé de Argüelles, el tesorero Juan Menéndez Marqués y el factor Juan López de Avilés al rey, St. Augustine, June 1, 1599, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 128-129.

⁷⁰ Asiento contable n°275, St. Augustine, May 31, 1597, AGI, Contaduría, 947, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos y pertrechos. 1595 a 1597. Dadas por Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor. Tomadas por comisión por Pedro Redondo Villegas, contador de la fábrica y fundición de artillería de Cuba; y cargos que resultaron contra varias personas, fol. 1003.

⁷¹ *Ibidem.*, Asiento contable n°278, St. Augustine, June of 1597, fol. 1005-1006.

On June 2, 1597, Admiral Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo took charge as governor and general capital of the provinces of Florida in St. Augustine. Thus began the term of “the most original and imaginative executive that Florida has yet seen” (Arnade, 1959, p. 12). Upon his arrival, Canzo found himself in command of forty-two of the King’s slaves—the largest number in St. Augustine until well into the second half of the 17th century—and he managed to fully capitalize on their labor.

The new governor’s achievements included the urbanistic transformation of St. Augustine: he added six blocks to the original plans, as well as a central square and another plaza adjoined to the Soledad hermitage. In doing so, he doubled the city’s size; St. Augustine remained within these new limits until 1672 (Montequín, 1980, p. 12). He also ordered the construction of major infrastructure, such as the new parochial church, the governor’s house, and the first mill and first two hospitals within the territory of the present-day U.S.⁷² Thus, in Montequín’s judgment, “St. Augustine’s debt to Governor Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo, with respect to its urbanistic and architectural expansion, is very great,” 1980, p. 14. The royal slaves were instrumental to these developments, though they were still engaged in the primary task for which they were consigned to Florida: the construction of the new stone fort and the upkeep of the old wooden one. However, the architects that Canzo repeatedly requested to lead his construction projects never arrived in Florida.⁷³ For this reason, all that these slaves could do for the new fort was make lime and mine rock, which they transported to St. Augustine from two quarries located three and five common leagues from the city, respectively.⁷⁴

⁷² For more on the first two hospitals in Florida, see: (1968) First Hospital-U.S.A. *Florida Health Notes: Journal of the American Medical Association*, 60(2), 29-56.

⁷³ For example, he raises this issue with the monarchy in: *Carta del gobernador de La florida Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo al rey*, St. Augustine, June 28, 1600, AGI, Santo Domingo,224, R.5, N.36, fol. 43r.-45v.

⁷⁴ *Carta del contador Bartolomé de Argüelles al rey*, San Agustín, August 3, 1598, AGI, Santo Domingo,229, fol. 111v.

One common league—which replaced the Castilian league by order of Philip II in 1568—was equal to 5,572.7 meters (3.463 miles).

Governor Avendaño decided that slaves would be housed in wood-and-straw huts on the outer limits of the city but within its trenches,⁷⁵ rather than in the first dwellings the slaves had built for their own lodging in 1582.⁷⁶ With the arrival of the second contingent, the slave population had likely become too large to be conveniently housed in town. In any case, Canzo deemed it appropriate to have them live outside the city, in the agricultural land they worked for their own sustenance.⁷⁷ But this new location displeased Argüelles, who considered it too far removed; he worried the slaves might turn on the Spanish in the event of an enemy presence or betrayal by the Native people. As an alternative, Argüelles suggested that they be lodged between the village and the fort, within the trench, in a space that was then occupied by four wood-and-palm barracks for soldiers, which would be easy to move. To finance this operation, Argüelles suggested selling the slaves' work camp so the *situado* would not absorb the cost.⁷⁸ There is no indication that his initiative succeeded.

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Governor Méndez de Canzo assigned some elderly slaves to certain services that were commensurate with their limited physical capacity, but which were of undoubtedly value to the city. In 1598, upon the completion of the mill described above, the governor ordered a soldier familiar with the trade to operate it and sent an elderly male slave to the King to help handle the horses; his monthly earnings were taken from the value of the mill's yield and added to the royal coffers, along with the revenue the other slaves generated for the Crown [aprovechamientos].⁷⁹ Furthermore, thanks to the complaints of the senior master of the town's smithy—who was unhappy with his working conditions—we know that he, too, worked with one

⁷⁵ *Carta del contador Bartolomé de Argüelles al rey*, St. Augustine, August 3, 1598, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 111v.

⁷⁶ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla y de Fernando de Miranda al rey*, St. Augustine, December 20, 1583, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 282-284.

⁷⁷ *Idem*.

⁷⁸ *Idem*.

⁷⁹ *Carta del gobernador Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo al rey, adjunta informe de los oficiales reales sobre los frutos y rentas de la tierra*, St. Augustine, October 8, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo, 224, R.5, N.41, fol. 33-40.

of the King's slaves, along with his own two privately held slaves and one paid Indigenous worker. The smithy manufactured hoes, saws, ploughshares, axes, picks, stonemason's hammers, and all the other tool the slaves needed for their work, which gives us some idea about the nature of their tasks.⁸⁰ As we will see, Canzo also assigned one of the King's female slaves to the city's hospital.

As in other parts of Spanish America, slaves in Florida could generate a *peculio*⁸¹ with which to purchase their own freedom.⁸² In St. Augustine at the end of the 16th century, one of the King's slaves, named Salvador, attempted to do just that, but died in 1597 before saving enough to attain manumission. Upon his death, a public clerk (*escribano*) took stock of his possessions, which were sold at public auction for 353 *reales*: the equivalent of thirty-two ducats, a soldier's yearly salary. The clerk received twenty-four *reales* for his services, and the rest was deposited in the royal coffers.⁸³

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In terms of religion, the Laws of the Indies stipulated that slaves must abandon their ancestral beliefs and be Christianized.⁸⁴ *Bozales*⁸⁵ were baptized before being shipped from Africa or when they arrived in the Americas (Lucena Salmoral, 2000, pp. 4-6); those born in the Americas had always been baptized. Thus, we know that at least on paper, all slaves in St. Augustine were Christians.

⁸⁰ *Petición de Cristóbal González maestre mayor de la fragua del presidio de las provincias de La florida*, circa 1605, AGI, Santo Domingo, 232, fol. 286-286v.

⁸¹ Sum of money or set of goods that an individual possesses, resources.

⁸² For more on slave manumission, see: Lucena Salmoral, 2000, pp. 22-23 y p. 150.

⁸³ *Cuentas que se le tomaron de los maravedíes que recibió y entraron en su poder del aprovechamiento de los esclavos de su majestad desde 18 de junio 1594 que empezó a servir el dicho oficio hasta fin de junio de 1602 que se le tomó esta cuenta*, St. Augustine, June 30, 1602, AGI, Contaduría, 948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. *Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602*, fol. 2290-2336.

⁸⁴ According to the provisions laid out by King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor Charles the V and King of Spain Philip II in 1538 and 1549, respectively, as found in: *Recopilación de leyes de los Reynos de las Indias*, mandadas imprimir y publicar por la Magestad católica del rey Don Carlos II nuestro Señor. (1791). Madrid: Real y Supremo Consejo de las Indias, First Volume, Book I, Title I "De la Santa Fe Católica," Law XIII "Que los Esclavos, Negros y Mulatos sean instruidos en la Santa Fe Católica como los Indios," p. 5.

⁸⁵ The term used to refer to people captured and enslaved in Africa or purchased from intermediaries in their places of origin.

In Florida, the Franciscans were tasked with the Indigenous population's religious instruction, and their correspondence with the Crown frequently included reports of their progress or difficulties. But the order entirely ignored the Black enslaved population, which never appears in their many lengthy letters. Slaves were parishioners at the church in St. Augustine, which was, by proximity, part of the Diocese of Cuba. But there is no indication that slaves received religious instruction from the parish, either. To the contrary, there is reason to believe that they received discriminatory treatment from the Irish pastor, Richard Arthur. During his seven years as parish priest, from June 1597 to mid-1604, Arthur did not enter the baptism of a single Black slave in the church ledger for which he was responsible, thereby suspending a practice dating back to 1595, if not earlier.⁸⁶

When the Bishop of Cuba made a pastoral visit to St. Augustine in March of 1606, he performed the sacrament of confirmation for "all the children of Spaniards who had yet to be confirmed and all the Native Indians who were Christians,"⁸⁷ but there is no record of him doing the same for Black parishioners, who by that point were numerous.

As the regular friars ignored the Black slave population and the secular friars neglected them, all indications suggest that they were considered second-class souls, and that in St. Augustine, their religiosity was limited to imitating the behavior of their masters: participating in the rites and rituals whose underlying meaning would have been difficult for most of them to understand.

⁸⁶ On January 5, 1595, when a Franciscan named Marrón was acting as pastor at the parish in St. Augustine (which would otherwise have been vacant), he entered the christening of Estebana, the daughter of a slave named Gracia, into the baptismal ledger. This entry is the earliest known church document from within the territory of the present-day U.S. that references a Black slave. In: *Libro de Bautismos, Box 1, 1594–1612. Archive of the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine, St. Augustine, Florida. Ecclesiastical and Secular Sources for Slave Societies*. Accessed May 19, 2014, from the website of Vanderbilt University: www.vanderbilt.edu/esss.

⁸⁷ *Carta de Juan Menéndez Marqués, Alonso de las Alas y Alonso Sancho a la Corona*, St. Augustine, June 28, 1606, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 385.

It is surprising, then, to consider the care that went into slaves' funerals, though it is perhaps only another of the many inexplicable contradictions of enslavement. In 1601, when a slave to the Crown named Antón Rongo died, not only was his funeral shroud purchased with funds from the *situado*, but the parish celebrated a chant mass for him.⁸⁸ To underscore just how extraordinary this was, consider that in 1614, the Cabildo of Lima forbade the use of coffins in the burial of Black people, a prohibition that was personally ratified by the Viceroy of Peru (Lucena Salmoral, 2000, p. 137).

Likely by order of the bishop on his visit mentioned above, the pastor Manuel Gudiño resumed recording baptisms of slaves in the church ledgers beginning in 1606. Thanks to these records, we know that between August of 1606 and March of 1612, the parish baptized eight enslaved boys, one enslaved girl, and four enslaved adults, probably *bozales* who had not previously been baptized, or whose baptisms prior to their arrival in St. Augustine could not be confirmed.⁸⁹ In general, a slave's godfather was another slave. In this regard, one notable figure is the King's slave Francisco, who was a godfather on four separate occasions, suggesting either that he had a more solid religious formation than the other slaves or that he held a high standing within the enslaved community.

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Only three babies born to Black mothers were the children of married couples in which both spouses were enslaved.⁹⁰ In all other instances, either the father is unknown or there is evidence—concealed to a greater or lesser extent—of Spanish

⁸⁸ *Maravedíes pagados por bastimentos municiones y otras cosas que se compraron para provisión y sustento de la gente de guerra de este presidio y otras cosas tocantes a él. Compras, asiento contable nº101*, St. Augustine, May 20, 1601, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594–1602, fol. 1184–1185.

⁸⁹ On August 27, 1606, a woman named Susana—enslaved by Domingo Hernández—was godfathered by one of the King's slaves, Francisco. Two months later, on November 12, Susana's son Matías was baptized and godfathered by another slave, also named Matías: In: *Libro de Bautismos, Box 1, 1594-1612. Archive of the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine, St. Augustine, Florida. Ecclesiastical and Secular Sources for Slave Societies*. Accessed May 19, 2014, from the website of Vanderbilt University: www.vanderbilt.edu/esss.

⁹⁰ In Florida, from 1594 to 1612, the years included the abovementioned baptismal ledger. For more on Black slave marriages, see: Lucena Salmoral, 2000, pp. 147-150.

paternity.⁹¹ Conversely, we have not identified any instance of a child with a Spanish mother and an enslaved Black father.⁹² Additionally, despite the strict ordinances against contact between the Black and Indigenous populations (Salmoral Lucena, 2000, p. 154), there is a record of an Indigenous person named Mandinga who was present in the village of Nombre de Dios, very close to St. Augustine, in 1605; he was likely the son of a slave of that ethnicity and an Indigenous woman from that village.⁹³

2.3 Royal Slaves in Florida in the Early 17th Century

Philip II's immediate successors did not share his enthusiasm for Spanish Florida. After his death, advocates for St. Augustine to be transferred north to a more favorable location—if not outright dismantled and abandoned—grew louder. In 1602, Philip II instructed the governor of Cuba to conduct an independent inquiry into the usefulness of Florida. Charles Arnade (1959) has thoroughly studied the proceedings carried out in St. Augustine and believes that the figure of the governor, Méndez de Canzo, was instrumental to the maintenance of the *presidio*; Arnade goes so far as to say that “he, more than anyone else, was responsible for the result of the Florida investigation being the maintenance of Spanish troops in Florida and keeping St. Augustine as the capital of Florida” (1969, p. 263).

⁹¹ On July 15, 1608, Jusseipe Hernández was baptized; he was the son of Lucrecia Morena, who was enslaved by the royal treasurer, Juan Menéndez Marqués. No record indicates Jusseipe's father, but his godfather was the Spaniard Diego Hernández de Medina. The shared surname and the Spanish godparent leave little room for doubt. In: *Libro de Bautismos, Box 1, 1594-1612. Archive of the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine, St. Augustine, Florida. Ecclesiastical and Secular Sources for Slave Societies*. Accessed May 19, 2014, from the website of Vanderbilt University: www.vanderbilt.edu/essss.

⁹² There is no record of such a child in the baptismal ledger.

⁹³ *Carta del gobernador Pedro de Ibarra al rey. Diligencias y averiguaciones que se han hecho sobre el traer a la obediencia de su majestad los indios de la costa de Ais, Mosquitos y Surruque y los demás de la banda del sur de este presidio*, St. Augustine, July 10, 1605 to December 14, 1605, AGI, Santo Domingo, 224, R.6, N.50, fol. 729-730.

The favorable result of the inquiry did not discourage Florida's detractors. In 1605, Canzo, the former governor, was again required to share his reasoning on the subject. He reiterated that "It is my opinion that under no circumstances should this fort [of St. Augustine] be dismantled" (Arnade, 1969, p. 260). However, probably in a move to reconcile these two positions, he recommended reducing St. Augustine's 300 soldiers by one half to 150, the same number as had been there before Drake's attack, after which all of Santa Elena's soldiers were transferred to St. Augustine (Hoffman, 2002, p. 97).

But the opponents of St. Augustine prevailed, at least for a time. On February 13, 1607, the King ordered the destruction of the fort and offered to transfer members of the Indigenous population to Hispaniola if they so desired (Hoffman, 2002, pp. 97-98). The news reached the city in October. There was unanimous protest from the authorities and the Franciscans, who stressed, above all, that 6,000 members of the Indigenous population there had already been baptized, and another 30,000 remained ripe for conversion (Hoffman, 2002, p. 98). But it was ultimately news of the establishment of Jamestown in 1607 that turned the tables. On August 16, 1608, the King not only decreed that Spain would retain the fort—including artillery and 300 posts—but also sent 120 additional soldiers to cover vacancies and relieve troops who were no longer fit to serve (Hoffman, 2002, p. 98). The city had been saved, though Spain's enthusiasm for the province did not go much farther.⁹⁴

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Uncertainty surrounding the city's future in the early years of the 17th century halted its development. Consequently, since reaching a peak of forty-two in 1597—the largest number within the chronological scope of this study—the population of slaves to the Crown gradually decreased. By 1604, that figure had dropped to thirty-four.⁹⁵ Furthermore, as the King's slaves aged and their health deteriorated, their

⁹⁴ One significant example of this apathy is the stone fortress whose construction Philip II ordered in 1595: it did not become a reality until the final quarter of the 17th century. See: Hoffman, 2002, pp. 115-116.

⁹⁵ See the table in Appendix I.

capacity to work diminished accordingly, and in 1605, Governor Ibarra wrote to the King “most of the Blacks that I found here are those who worked forty years ago in the service of Havana and many have been dying”⁹⁶ and ultimately requested another dozen men and three or four women. The note that the Council of the Indies made on the margin of this section of Ibarra’s letter leaves no room for doubt about the Crown’s intentions for St. Augustine at that time: “no need to reply.”⁹⁷ Far from sending a favorable response to this request, the Crown feared that in the event of an attack, Black slaves—whose numbers, including slaves owned by private individuals, reached one hundred in 1606, according to Ibarra (Landers, 1999, p. 19)—could ally themselves with enemy forces, and he ordered the governor to block admittance of any more privately held slaves into Florida.⁹⁸ The number of slaves to the Crown continued to drop. By January of 1610, twenty-two remained,⁹⁹ and by July of the following year, that number had fallen by one half,¹⁰⁰ a sudden drop that we are unable to explain; speculatively, it could have been caused by a disease or a collective escape that the Spanish never documented.

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In December of 1603, seven slaves—one enslaved by the King and six enslaved by private individuals—escaped from St. Augustine. They traveled south to the Horruque Province. Pursued by land and by sea, five were promptly captured, but two others managed to reach the Ais Province even farther south, where they began living with Ais women. The governor viewed this as a potential threat to St. Augustine, since, if Spain’s enemies could make a deal with the Ais, these men could act as interpreters and guides during a hypothetical attack on the city. He also feared that if

⁹⁶ *Carta del gobernador Pedro de Ibarra al rey*, AGI, Santo Domingo, 224, R.6, N.51, fol. 755v.

⁹⁷ *Idem*.

⁹⁸ *Real cédula al gobernador de La florida Pedro de Ibarra para que se conserve el presidio de San Agustín con las 300 plazas que había antes de la reformación*, Valladolid, August 16, 1608, AGI, México, 1065, L.5, fol. 44-46v.

⁹⁹ *Asiento contable nº487*, St. Augustine, January 6, 1610, AGI, Contaduría, 957, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y pertrechos desde 16 de mayo de 1602 hasta 27 de julio de 1611. Receptas de las cuentas de Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor, formadas por los oficiales reales de esta Caja para su presentación en el Consejo, y documentos correspondientes a ellas, fol. 251.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*., *Asiento contable nº550*, St. Augustine, July 15, 1611, fol. 282.

a Spanish vessel shipwrecked on the coast—a common occurrence—the fugitives would be crueler with the survivors than the Native people. Thus, the governor sent valuable gifts to the chief of the Ais to entice him to surrender the runaway slaves, but to no avail. He then asked Second-Lieutenant Cartaya to bring an Ais interpreter known as *Capitán Chico* with him on his return from Cuba, willingly or by force. In St. Augustine, the governor lavished the interpreter with clothes, tools, and other gifts for himself as well as for the Ais chief and neighboring chiefs. *Capitán Chico* then went back to his homeland, promising to return with the other chiefs and the two fugitive slaves. But seeing that he did not make good on this promise, in January 1605, Ibarra ordered Cartaya to go in search of the escapees and bring them back to St. Augustine. Following these orders, Cartaya took the Ais chief and other leaders prisoner, and held them hostage on his ship until the tribe finally surrendered the fugitives.¹⁰¹

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Governor Treviño began arranging for a third contingent of slaves in 1618 and, as we see below, Florida continued in this effort for at least fifteen years, but to no avail:

- In 1618, Treviño requested thirty male slaves of a useful age and six female slaves “to feed them and heal their ailments,”¹⁰² because repairs to the fort were unremitting and St. Augustine was left with only “eleven elderly Blacks unfit for the labor.”¹⁰³ That same year, the King commanded the governor of Cuba to send these thirty-six slaves—or at least as many as possible—to

¹⁰¹ This escape is described in *Carta del gobernador Pedro de Ibarra al rey. Diligencias y averiguaciones que se han hecho sobre el traer a la obediencia de su majestad los indios de la costa de Ais, Mosquitos y Surruque y los demás de la banda del sur de este presidio*, St. Augustine, July 10, 1605 to December 14, 1605, AGI, Santo Domingo,224, R.6, N.50, fol. 729–730.

¹⁰² *Real cédula a Sancho de Alquiza, gobernador de Santiago de La Habana y capitán general de Cuba, para que informe sobre lo que solicita Juan de Treviño, gobernador de Florida, de que se le envíen 30 negros desde La Habana a San Agustín de La florida para efectuar reparaciones*, Madrid, April 9, 1618, AGI, Mexico,1094, L.20, fol. 47v.-48r.

¹⁰³ *Idem*.

Florida.¹⁰⁴ But the governor died without executing that order or explaining his failure to do so.¹⁰⁵

- In 1620, the royal treasurer of Florida remembered Treviño's request and again ordered Cuba to send "said thirty male slaves and six female slaves, among whom there should be two blacksmiths, three carpenters, and another three quarrymen, given the lack of skilled laborers for all of the work in the *presidio*."¹⁰⁶ This second order also went unexecuted.
- In 1621, Governor Salinas insisted that in Florida "there is a shortage of Blacks, because those who had been here have been dying of age and exhaustion."¹⁰⁷ The King ordered Francisco Benegas, governor of Cuba, to "send thirty Blacks for the labor in that *presidio* [St. Augustine]."¹⁰⁸ But when Salinas demanded that Benegas comply with this order, he refused, arguing that these slaves were needed in Havana.¹⁰⁹
- In 1624, a new governor of Florida, Luis de Rojas y Borja, recalled the need for slaves in St. Augustine and implored the King to order Benegas to deliver "the quantity of Blacks that Your Majesty shall be willing to indicate for said *presidio*".¹¹⁰ The unprecedented repetition of the same request prompted intervention by the Junta of War, which expressed surprise that Benegas had not complied with the orders he had received and that at no point had he justified this inaction in his correspondence with Spain. The Junta enjoined Benegas to execute the order, noting that "this failure to respond represents a

¹⁰⁴ *Idem*.

¹⁰⁵ *Real cédula al gobernador y capitán general de la isla de Cuba y ciudad de San Cristóbal de La Habana para que vea la petición de Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero de La florida, provisto como gobernador de Popayán, acerca de la conveniencia de enviar algunos negros desde La Habana al presidio de aquella provincia; y guarde las órdenes dadas al respecto en otra cédula*, Madrid, June 20, 1620, AGI, Mexico,1094, L.21, fol. 29-30.

¹⁰⁶ *Idem*.

¹⁰⁷ *Carta del gobernador de La florida Juan de Salinas*, St. Augustine, May 15, 1621, AGI, Santo Domingo,225, R.3, N.12, fol. 2.

¹⁰⁸ *Memorial de Luis de Rojas y Borja, gobernador de La florida*, circa 1624, AGI, Santo Domingo,225, R.4, N.15.

¹⁰⁹ *Carta del gobernador de La florida Juan de Salinas al rey*, San Agustín, May 15, 1621, AGI, Santo Domingo,225, R.3, N.12, fol. 2.

¹¹⁰ *Memorial de Luis de Rojas y Borja, gobernador de La florida*, circa 1624, AGI, Santo Domingo,225, R.4, N.15.

great carelessness.”¹¹¹ But this urging had the same outcome as earlier efforts.

- In 1633, Nicolás Ponce de León, interim governor of Florida, continued asking the Crown to send the thirty-six promised slaves...¹¹²

By these years, it is likely that all the royal slaves in St. Augustine who had arrived in 1582 and 1597 had already died. However, their lineage remained in Florida through the bonds they had formed with other privately held slaves, as in the two following cases:

- On February 10, 1605, Simón, one of the King’s slaves, married María, a slave belonging to Antón Martín (Francis, 2015, p. 121).
- On January 11, 1609, a boy named Antonio was baptized; he was the son of Lucía, the privately held slave of an individual with the surname Bargas, and Pedro, a slave to the Crown.¹¹³

In the chart included as Appendix I, we break down the trajectory of the population of slaves the King of Spain kept in in Florida from the arrival of the first contingent in 1582 to the request for a third in 1618.

¹¹¹ *Idem*.

¹¹² Resumen de la carta del gobernador de La florida Nicolás Ponce de León al rey, San Agustín, 20 de septiembre de 1633. Accessed April 19, 2021, from the website of the University of Florida: <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/USACH00595/00111/7j>. The response to this request is unknown.

¹¹³ In: *Libro de Bautismos, Box 1, 1594-1612. Archive of the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine, St. Augustine, Florida. Ecclesiastical and Secular Sources for Slave Societies*. Accessed May 19, 2014, from the website of Vanderbilt University: www.vanderbilt.edu/eoss.

3. The Royal Slave Economy in Spanish Florida

There is ample documentary evidence that the Indigenous peoples of Florida in the 16th and 17th century had a voice of their own. Chiefs interacted with the Spaniards on a nearly equal plane in many negotiations—as we will see—and in some instances they even wrote to the King of Spain, who responded to their missives.¹¹⁴

Black slaves, however, had no individual or collective representation whatsoever, and not a single one of their words can be found in documents from the era. We can intuit the horror of their everyday life in St. Augustine by dint of the inhumanity inherent to enslavement, but in reality, we know nothing about it. Therefore, this section is of particular importance to our study because along with other matters addressed here, it discusses a series of topics (housing, tasks, religion) that help us piece together a portrait—however incomplete—of the slaves’ everyday life in Florida. With this goal in mind, we will extensively analyze the revenue and expenses associated with the Crown’s slaves using the wealth of details included in the accounting ledgers from Spanish Florida, as the nuances from these records enable us to surmise some information about how they lived.

In their letter to the Crown requesting the first contingent of slaves, the royal officials expressed that “as for their food, they will work the earth to provide for themselves without incurring any expense to the royal treasury.”¹¹⁵ This could have been an optimistic assessment, or perhaps a knowingly fallacious argument to lend weight to their request. Regardless, though this was not Philip II’s reason for

¹¹⁴ Carta de doña María, cacica de Nombre de Dios al rey, La doctrina de Dios de La florida, February 26, 1600, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 775r-775v.

¹¹⁵ Consulta del Consejo de Indias, Madrid, June 4, 1580, AGI, Indiferente, 739, N.260.

authorizing the shipment of the first of his slaves to Florida, when he licensed their use, he reminded the officials that the slaves “shall not, as you have stated, entail cost to our treasury.”¹¹⁶

The greatest expense was the slaves’ rations, which caused the most concern among the authorities. But there were other expenses, including clothing and healthcare. The goal was to cover all of these costs without dipping into the *situado* or, if so, to earn this money back by having the slaves perform value-generating tasks known as ‘*aprovechamientos*’ (‘exploitations’). There were only three such tasks: hiring slaves out to third parties, who would pay cash directly to the royal coffers; corn production, which decreased the amount of grain that had to be bought for the slaves; and manufacturing slow match for arquebuses, thereby reducing the amount purchased. Neither the conservation of the fort—the reason the King sent slaves to Florida, and their primary assignment there—nor the other tasks in the King’s service, as assigned by the governor, entered into this equation. The hoped-for balance was only achieved if the *aprovechamientos* compensated for expenses incurred. And that was impossible.

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Governor Pedro Menéndez Marqués, not wishing to himself be held responsible for the costs the slaves incurred against the *situado*, promptly informed the King of how unviable such a setup would be:

[...] I must inform Your Majesty that although the Blacks gather all the corn they need, they also require meat, fish, lard, and oil, and many other things that must be given to them from our stores, and whoever wrote that they could henceforth bring in funds from *aprovechamientos* has little experience in such things, because if Your Majesty will have Blacks here, it is impossible that there will not be a cost.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Real Cédula a los oficiales reales de las provincias de La florida, Badajoz, September 30, 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo,2528, L.1, fol. 128-128v.

¹¹⁷ Carta del gobernador de La florida Pedro Menéndez Marqués al rey, St. Augustine, December 27, 1583, AGI, Santo Domingo,224, R.2, N.21.

Consequently, the slaves' working hours were divided between tasks in the service of the Crown and the *aprovechamientos* to offset their expenses. Needless to say, the slaves suffered under this model, as they were subjected to exhausting workdays in the service of competing interests. Furthermore, this difficult balance created frequent tension between the governors and royal officials. In 1593, the royal accountant Argüelles complained that the governors sometimes kept the slaves occupied with unnecessary tasks; this prevented them from working elsewhere to earn their keep, and the costs for their clothing and food had to be taken from the *situado*.¹¹⁸ But in 1598, Argüelles criticized Governor Canzo for precisely the opposite: rather than working on the stone fort, the slaves were busy sawing wood to build ships and being hired out to private parties.¹¹⁹ Even more confusingly, in 1601, Argüelles and the other royal officials warned the governor that, because the slaves were busy with tasks related to building the stone fort, they were not earning enough from the *aprovechamientos* to match their expenses.¹²⁰

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3.1 Revenue Generated by the King's Slaves in Spanish Florida: Aprovechamientos

Annoyed by Argüelles's attitude—the royal accountant always opposed his decisions—Governor Méndez de Canzo responded that

[...] I believe that Your Majesty has sent said slaves for the building of the fort and making the necessary repairs, and that the *aprovechamientos* for said slaves shall be known by the royal ledgers kept by those same royal officials; I believe that in this *presidio* there has never been as much *aprovechamiento* of said slaves as after I began governing these provinces [...] and that in terms of occupying these slaves, I will occupy them on the occasions and with the work that best serves Your Majesty.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Representación de Bartolomé de Argüelles, contador de Florida, sobre varios puntos que propone para la buena administración y gobierno de aquellas partes, Madrid, July 7, 1593, AGI, Patronato, 179, N.5, R.8.

¹¹⁹ Carta del contador de las provincias de La florida Bartolomé de Argüelles al rey, St. Augustine, August 3, 1598, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 109-113.

¹²⁰ Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo gobernador y capitán general de las provincias de La florida a los oficiales reales de ellas para que comprasen sustento a los negros esclavos de su majestad que allí asisten, St. Augustine, September 16, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 315-324.

¹²¹ *Idem*. In this English translation, the text has been changed from the third to the first person for ease of reading.

Canzo further ordered that a report be drafted on the *aprovechamientos* to which the slaves had been dedicated, going back as far as the accounting ledgers would allow,¹²² with the aim of highlighting his sound management of that particular matter.¹²³ In his report, Argüelles gave a year-by-year report on the three forms of *aprovechamientos*. His summary can be found below:

Task	Corn production			Slow match		Hiring out to third parties	Total <i>aprovechamiento</i>
Year	Arrobas	Kg.	Value in reales	Fathoms	Value in reales	Value in reales	Value in reales
1586 and 1587	196	2.254	784			5.301	6.085
1588 to 1590				No data			
1591				4.875	696	3.185	3.881
1592				1.990	284	3.335	3.619
1593				3.875	553	1.430	1.983
1594				3.325	475	3.907	4.382
1595	544	6.256	2.176			3.518	5.694
1596						2.235,5	2.235,5
1597						2.939	2.939
1598	948	10.902	3.792	2.025	289	4.171	8.252
1599	736	8.464	2.944	900	128	4.314	7.386
1600	723	8.314,5	2.892			2.065	4.957

Table 1. Aprovechamientos of the King's slaves in Florida. Prepared by the author with information from:
Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo gobernador y capitán general de las provincias de la Florida a los oficiales reales de ellas para que comprasen sustento a los negros esclavos de su majestad que allí asisten,
St. Augustine, September 16, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo,229, fol. 315-324.

¹²² In 1593, royal accountant Bartolomé de Argüelles had suggested that for greater clarity in accounting ledgers for the slaves, a box be created for profits from *aprovechamientos*, and that a book be kept for the days that they worked "so that in your Royal Treasury there is accounting and justification to better see if the cost is greater than the work they do." The proposal pleased the Council of the Indies and that same year, the King ordered the governor to being following that procedure. In: *Representación de Bartolomé de Argüelles, contador de Florida, sobre varios puntos que propone para la buena administración y gobierno de aquellas partes*, Madrid, 7 de julio de 1593, AGI, Patronato,179, N.5, R.8.

¹²³ *Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo gobernador y capitán general de las provincias de La florida a los oficiales reales de ellas para que comprasen sustento a los negros esclavos de su majestad que allí asisten*, San Agustín, 16 de septiembre de 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo,229, fol. 315-324.

The following table lists the annual *aprovechamiento* obtained from each of the King's slaves:¹²⁴

Year	1586 and 1587	1588 to 1590	1591	1592	1593	1594	1595	1596	1597	1598	1599	1600
No. of slaves	27	=	25	23	26	25	24	22	33,7	39,8	39	37,9
Total <i>aprovechamiento</i> value	6085	=	3881	3619	1983	4382	5694	2235	2939	8252	7386	4957
Aprovechamiento value per slave per year	112,7	=	155,2	157,3	76,3	175,3	237,3	101,6	87,2	207,2	189,4	130,7

Table 2. *Aprovechamientos* per slave per year. Prepared by the author with data from Table 1 and the table in Appendix I. All figures in *reales*.

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It is clear that Argüelles's 1593 warning was justified, as that year saw a 50% drop relative to the prior year, resulting in the lowest slave-hiring rate in the series and zero corn production. However, in 1596 and part of 1597, the royal officials themselves—including Argüelles—ran the provincial government and were responsible for nearly the worst results in the entire series. There is a notable improvement during Governor Avendaño's term (1594-95), though this was necessarily to the detriment of the tasks in the King's service. Méndez de Canzo (1597-1603) saw sound results during his two full years as governor. The figures drop in 1600, most likely because the slaves were ordered to rebuild the city after the fire and flooding of 1599.¹²⁵ Below, we will take a detailed look at each form of *aprovechamiento*.

¹²⁴ The number of slaves in 1594 and 1595 has been estimated based on the numbers from 1593 and 1596. In the years for which there is data on the number of slaves in specific months of the year, we have calculated the annual weighted average. See the table in Appendix I.

¹²⁵ For more on the fire, see: *Carta del factor Alonso de las Alas al rey*, St. Augustine, March 20, 1599, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 125-129.

On the hurricane that punished the city that same year, see: *Carta de fray Baltasar López al rey*, St. Augustine, December 12, 1599, AGI, Santo Domingo, 235, fol. 35-37.

3.1.1 Hiring of Royal Slaves to Private Individuals

This was a frequent point of friction among the authorities, due to differences of opinion as to the best way to use slaves' time, as well as spurious interests that at times pursued governors.¹²⁶

The King's slaves were hired out for the first time in 1583, when Governor Menéndez Marqués leased eleven people to several soldiers for the period of one year against royal treasurer Juan Cevadilla's opinion.¹²⁷ In his view, the soldiers had hired these slaves to help them conduct business, rather than for their labor, which they did not need and could not afford. To demonstrate, he pointed out that a soldier was paid thirty-two ducats per year, and that each slave cost between 27 and 30 ducats per year, "from which it is evident that the soldier aims to turn a profit off the Black, whose labor could better be conducted for Your Majesty."¹²⁸ As was confirmed, the soldiers had them "acting as galley slaves, rowing night and day," moving merchandise between Santa Elena and St. Augustine, and, "sometimes bringing their goods on the ships of those who are said to be governing,"¹²⁹ insinuating that Governor Menéndez Marqués himself was behind this business operation. Cevadilla also complained that six months after they had been hired out, the soldiers had yet to pay for them.¹³⁰ But the royal treasurer was not the only one decrying this practice. In a letter to the King, Domingo de León wrote: "Your Majesty also purchased several Blacks, I do not know for what they were requested nor why Your Majesty sent them, the soldiers do as much now as before. I merely see them hiring for thirty ducats and as much as they can, I do not know what they do with the

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¹²⁶ Slaves were an asset of their owner, no different from land, a ship, or a pack animal. As such, they could be leased to third parties for a given length of time and at an agreed-upon price.

¹²⁷ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla al rey*, St. Augustine, January 9, 1584, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 286-289.

¹²⁸ *Idem*.

¹²⁹ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla al rey. Suma del discurso de las cosas que han pasado y pasan en La florida el día de hoy sacadas muy sumariamente con todas cosas tocantes al servicio de Dios y del rey*, St. Augustine, January 9, 1584, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 290-306v.

¹³⁰ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla y de Fernando de Miranda al rey*, St. Augustine, December 20, 1583, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 282-284.

money.”¹³¹ The King then ordered Menéndez Marqués that, until the Council of the Indies attended to the matter, he was to keep the slaves occupied “with the office for which they were sent, without engaging them in any new activity.”¹³² The leasing of slaves was then temporarily suspended, although it was resumed in 1587, if not earlier.¹³³

Under Governors Avendaño (1594-1595) and Méndez de Canzo (1597-1603),¹³⁴ lessees were notable figures within the city¹³⁵ who hired slaves for service rather than commercial purposes.¹³⁶ At the close of the 16th century, the cost for leasing a slave for one day of agricultural work was four *reales*.¹³⁷ In 1598, total revenue from hiring out slaves equaled 4,171 *reales*, the equivalent of hiring out a little more than three slaves full-time for one full year,¹³⁸ far fewer than the eleven slaves that had been leased for other purposes in 1583.

¹³¹ *Carta de Domingo de León al rey*, Madrid, October 13, 1584, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 311-319.

¹³² *Real cédula al gobernador de La florida Pedro Menéndez Marqués, que envíe relación sobre que se ha entendido que ha alquilado a algunos de los negros que allí se llevaron*, Zaragoza, March 25, 1585, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2528, L.1, fol. 138v.

¹³³ The date from which the accounting records from Florida are conserved, following Drake's attack in 1586, as is clear in: *Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo gobernador y capitán general de las provincias de La florida a los oficiales reales de ellas para que comprasen sustento a los negros esclavos de su majestad que allí asisten*, St. Augustine, September 16, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 315-324.

¹³⁴ *Cuentas que se le tomaron de los maravedíes que recibió y entraron en su poder del aprovechamiento de los esclavos de su majestad desde 18 de junio 1594 que empezó a servir el dicho oficio hasta fin de junio de 1602 que se le tomó esta cuenta*, St. Augustine, June 30, 1602, AGI, Contaduría, 948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602, fol. 2290-2336.

¹³⁵ These included Second-Lieutenants Juan Ramírez de Contreras, Juan de Solís, and Domingo Hernández, Captains Juan de Posada, Sebastián de Malleza, and Juan García de Navia, Doña Petronila de Junco, the escribano Alonso García de la Vera, royal accountant Bartolomé de Argüelles, and royal business manager Alonso de las Alas; but also Governors Domingo Martínez de Avendaño and Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo. Lessees also included foot soldiers, such as the German artilleryman Juan de Bran, and slave overseers themselves, such as Andrés de Sotomayor. In: *Ibidem.*, fol. 2313-2318.

¹³⁶ These were mostly for tasks such as: “quantity of planking and wood that said slaves of Your Majesty sawed for them, as well as work days and hirings served by these same slaves, in *Ibidem.*, fol. 2316, or for the harvesting of maize, in *Ibidem.*, fol. 2319-2320.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem.*, fol. 2320.

¹³⁸ Bearing in mind that they worked every day of the year except for Sundays and holy days of obligation, as established by law in 1541, as written in: *Recopilación de leyes de los Reynos de las Indias, mandadas imprimir y publicar por la Magestad católica del rey Don Carlos II nuestro Señor*. (1791). Madrid: Real y Supremo Consejo de las Indias, First Volume, Book I, Title I “De la Santa Fe Católica,” Law XVII “Que los Indios, Negros y Mulatos no trabajen los Domingos y Fiestas de guardar,” p. 6.

3.1.2 Manufacture of Slow Match for Arquebuses

The idea for this form of *aprovechamiento* dates back to the arrival of the first of the King's slaves in Florida. In 1582, royal treasurer Juan Cevadilla reported that:

[...] we have determined that some Blacks ought to busy themselves with and learn to make rope for these fortresses' munitions, as materials to do so can be drawn from the earth, and they shall make as much as shall be necessary for the two fortresses, which every year spend over five hundred ducats on said rope, meaning this will be no insignificant *aprovechamientos* for those required here.¹³⁹

The practice was kept, as the following year Cevadilla again reported that slaves were making slow rope.¹⁴⁰ That said, of the three *aprovechamientos*, this task was always of the least consequence. We do not have production data from the first years of this activity, but since the moment in which we have information, it appears the practice had little impact on the spending of over 500 ducats per year.¹⁴¹ 1591 saw the most slow-rope production, worth a total of 696 *reales*, which would have covered around 12% of the *presidio*'s needs. Avendaño and the royal officials scaled back and ultimately discontinued production during his term. It was then brought back by Canzo in 1598, only to be suspended again in 1600. At that point, seven fathoms of slow rope could be purchased for one *real*.¹⁴²

3.1.3 Corn Production for Slaves' Own Consumption

In January of 1582—the same month as they were brought to Florida—the King's slaves began breaking ground near the fortress for a field for corn, onions, garlic, as well as other grains and legumes. There were also plans for them to do their own fishing.¹⁴³ However, other necessary provisions, such as oil, vinegar, meat, etc., could not be produced in St. Augustine and had to be supplied from the *presidio*'s

¹³⁹ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla al rey*, St. Augustine, December 24, 1582, AGI, Santo Domingo,231, fol. 205-207.

¹⁴⁰ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla y de Fernando de Miranda al rey*, St. Augustine, December 20, 1583, AGI, Santo Domingo,231, fol. 282-284.

¹⁴¹ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla al rey*, St. Augustine, December 24, 1582, AGI, Santo Domingo,231, fol. 205-207.

¹⁴² *Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo...*, St. Augustine, September 16, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo,229, fol. 315-324.

¹⁴³ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla al rey*, St. Augustine, January 22, 1582, AGI, Santo Domingo,231, fol. 46v.

storehouses.¹⁴⁴ Thus, the slaves began to represent an unwanted expense that grew even more when the sowing field was damaged by two months of relentless drought, in response to which the authorities warned “as the slaves will necessarily represent a regular expense, may Your Majesty order what is to be done.”¹⁴⁵

The harvest was better the following year, and by December of 1583 the slaves had been eating from their own production for six months with only a small expense for oil and salt, and the promising expectation that they would have enough corn until the following harvest.¹⁴⁶ Since their arrival, however, their maintenance had necessitated an expense of 6,577 *reales* from the treasury, and around the same amount “from some *aprovechamientos* to which we have set them after they tended to the service of Your Majesty,”¹⁴⁷ revealing that the question of whether to employ slaves in the service of the King or for *aprovechamientos* was present from the time of their arrival. The royal treasurer estimated then that if the slaves did agricultural work for three months of the year, they would have food for all twelve,¹⁴⁸ but this was never the case.

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As is clear from Table 1, between 1586 and 1595 the King’s slaves stopped producing corn for their own sustenance, likely because they were busy rebuilding the city after Sir Francis Drake destroyed it in 1586. During Avendaño’s tenure in 1595, they resumed producing their own corn, only to discontinue the practice again in the nearly two years of the royal officials’ interim government following Avendaño’s death. Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo’s arrival in 1597 marked a major agricultural push

¹⁴⁴ *Carta del gobernador de La florida Pedro Menéndez Marqués al rey*, St. Augustine, July 19, 1582, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 203-204.

¹⁴⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁴⁶ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla y de Fernando de Miranda al rey*, St. Augustine, December 20, 1583, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 282-284.

¹⁴⁷ *Idem*.

¹⁴⁸ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla a la corona*, St. Augustine, January 9, 1584, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 286-289.

in Florida,¹⁴⁹ to the extent that, in the words of Arnade, it was “[u]nquestionably Méndez Canzo’s greatest success as governor” (1959, p. 74). The data on corn production under his governance for and by the slaves suggest that these were the best years of his term. As Canzo himself noted, during his time in office, the expense of feeding the slaves dropped significantly, as he ordered them to grow their own corn.¹⁵⁰ After his departure from Florida, grain production saw a notable decline. Under the tenure of Ibarra (Canzo’s successor), there was a harvest of 233.5 *arrobas* of corn planted by slaves in 1604¹⁵¹ and only 166.5 *arrobas* in 1605.¹⁵²

It is worth noting that the precision with which officials kept accounting records enables us to learn the yield of the land dedicated to corn production for slaves, which also gives some indication of the general productivity of corn agriculture in Florida at the time:

	Units	1599	1600
Corn for planting and replanting ¹⁵³	Arrobas	25,36	27,36
Corn harvested	Arrobas	736	723
Yield: Arrobas harvested / Arrobas planted		29,02	26,42

Table 3. Yield of land dedicated to corn for slaves. Prepared by the author with data from Table 1 and accounting ledgers.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ For more on Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo’s management of agriculture in Florida and the introduction of maize in northwest Spain upon his return to America, see: Cancio-Donlebún, 2015.

¹⁵⁰ *Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo gobernador y capitán general de las provincias de La florida a los oficiales reales de ellas para que comprasen sustento a los negros esclavos de su majestad que allí asisten*, St. Augustine, September 16, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo,229, fol. 315-324.

¹⁵¹ *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, September 16, 1604, AGI, Contaduría,957, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y pertrechos desde 16 de mayo de 1602 hasta 27 de julio de 1611. Receptas de las cuentas de Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor, formadas por los oficiales reales de esta Caja para su presentación en el Consejo, y documentos correspondientes a ellas, fol. 1331-1332.

¹⁵² *Ibidem.*, *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, December 31, 1605, fol. 1379.

¹⁵³ To facilitate comparison between the volumes of maize planted and harvested, we are expressing both in *arrobas*, knowing that one *arroba* is equal to 25 pounds and 11.502 kg.

¹⁵⁴ In May of 1599, 534 pounds of maize were planted and replanted on this land for the King’s slaves. In: *Asiento contable n°27 de cargos de maíz*, St. Augustine, May 20, 1599, AGI, Contaduría,956, cuentas tomadas al factor Juan López de Avilés por Pedro Redondo Villegas, fol. 612. Additionally, in May of 1600, 684 pounds of maize were planted for that same purpose. In: *Asiento contable n°44 de cargos de maíz*, St. Augustine, May 21, 1600, AGI, Contaduría,956, cuentas tomadas al factor Juan López de Avilés por Pedro Redondo Villegas, fol. 625.

The value of the corn that slaves harvested remained stable at four *reales/arroba* for every year covered by the report on *aprovechamientos*, based on an estimate by the royal accountant Argüelles.¹⁵⁵

3.2 The Expenses of the King's Slaves in Florida

As we know from accounting records, expenses incurred by slaves to the Crown in Florida were limited to their rations, clothing, and healthcare.

3.2.1 Rations

With information taken from accounting records, we have managed to reconstruct—without significant lacunae—a list of the rations that were provided to the King's slaves between September of 1598 and April of 1602. We will analyze said list below, which can be found in Appendix II.

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The foundation of this population's diet was corn, an energy-dense food they were given in grain form whenever possible. This spared the royal coffers grinding expenses, which could be as high as two *reales/arroba* at the city mill (Cancio-Donlebún, 2015, p. 28). Besides, the slaves themselves preferred the whole grain, which they erroneously considered more nourishing than cornmeal.¹⁵⁶

Nevertheless, they received large quantities of cornmeal when it was deemed so poorly preserved that it was not suitable for consumption by Spaniards, as we learn from the following case:

¹⁵⁵ *Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo....*, St. Augustine, September 16, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 315-324.

¹⁵⁶ *Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo....*, St. Augustine, September 16, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 315-324.

On the fifth day of the same month and year [February of 1599], again opening said storage in the presence of said accountant and said clerk, said business manager withdrew three hundred and eight pounds of corn which, by order of said governor, he delivered to the miller Pedro Delgado so he could grind it in the mill, as benefited said corn, which was being eaten and damaged by weevils and moths, and said damage was corrected, after which the corn was ground into meal for delivery to the royal business manager and subsequent consumption by said slaves.¹⁵⁷

Additionally, the small consignments of cornmeal suggest that some slaves were ill, since this product, as we will see, was always used in their medical care.

When there were insufficient quantities of both whole corn and cornmeal, the King's slaves were givenhardtack, an expensive product (22 reales/arroba in 1592)¹⁵⁸ that was probably also given to slaves when it was no longer considered suitable for the Spanish.

Meat was rarely included in slaves' rations; they were never given fresh meat, but only meat that had been salted and dried to produce pork and beef jerky. This was a scarcely imported product that was very prone to price fluctuations. In 1598, pork jerky was purchased for 16 reales/arroba and beef jerky was purchased for 14 reales/arroba,¹⁵⁹ though in 1600 pork jerky could be bought for 14 reales.¹⁶⁰ The dates on which they were given jerky suggests that it corresponded with the arrival of the *situado*. Giving meat in poor condition was a common practice elsewhere, including in Cuba, where slaves were even given the corpses of diseased livestock for

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¹⁵⁷ Asiento contable, St. Augustine, February 5, 1599, AGI, Contaduría, 951, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y municiones. Dadas por Pedro López de San Julián, factor, y tomadas por Pedro Redondo Villegas.

This consignment, given its size, as can be inferred from the table in Appendix II, is clearly an anomaly in the rations given to the slaves. Around those dates, the King's slaves ate around 1,450 kg of corn per month. Considering that there were deliveries of corn in the following months without there having been time for them to eat all of February's ration, we can infer that the slaves were only able to eat one half of that volume, which is the figure we use in our calculation; we must assume that the remainder was discarded.

¹⁵⁸ Asiento contable, St. Augustine, 1592, AGI, Contaduría, 948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Cuentas tomadas a Gaspar Fernández Perete, tenedor de bastimentos y municiones, fol. 1634.

¹⁵⁹ Asiento contable nº61, St. Augustine, October 5, 1598, AGI, Contaduría, 948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602.

¹⁶⁰ In 1600, pork cost 14 reales/arroba. In: *Ibidem.*, Asiento contable nº95, St. Augustine, September, 1600.

food (Sarmiento Ramírez, 2008, p. 140). Slaves in Florida not only ate rations of meat that had deteriorated in quality during its transport from Cuba—from where Florida generally imported its meat in that era—or while in the royal storehouses in St. Augustine, but also low-quality meat that had been purchased at a low price specifically for them. In 1604, the authorities bought seventy-six arrobas of pork jerky from a trader “which, being in poor condition, and not in accordance with said agreement, was purchased for Your Majesty’s Black slaves serving this fort at a price of six *reales* per arroba.”¹⁶¹

On some occasions, they were also given lard, which cost 14 *reales/arroba* in 1604,¹⁶² but they never received it at the same time as meat. Finally, their rations were also supplemented with small quantities of oil—another expensive product, which in 1591 cost 64 *reales/arroba* for one shipment and 80 *reales/arroba* for another.¹⁶³ They seasoned their food with salt, which they often received, though it seems that there was a shortage in 1600. In 1598, salt cost six *reales/arroba*.¹⁶⁴ As regards beverages, they were never given wine, except in some instances when they were ill, so we can reasonably assume that they regularly drank only water.

¹⁶¹ *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, 1604, AGI, Contaduría,957, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y pertrechos desde 16 de mayo de 1602 hasta 27 de julio de 1611. Receptas de las cuentas de Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor, formadas por los oficiales reales de esta Caja para su presentación en el Consejo, y documentos correspondientes a ellas, fol. 1338.

¹⁶² *Idem*.

¹⁶³ *Asiento contable nº45*, St. Augustine, 1591, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 4. Autos para que Juan de Junco dé cuenta de los bienes de la testamentaría del tesorero Cevadilla que estuvo a su cargo; Incluye el testamento y otros documentos presentados por Junco. 1585-1600.

¹⁶⁴ *Asiento contable nº61*, St. Augustine, October 5, 1598, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 a 1602. Número 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602.

Slaves' food was not simply available to them, but kept in a locked storeroom adjacent to their lodging,¹⁶⁵ and the overseer was charged with giving them their daily rations, which they cooked themselves. Their cookware consisted only of a large copper pot and another smaller one for when they had to work outside the city.¹⁶⁶ In May of 1597, following the arrival of a second contingent of slaves, the authorities had to purchase a new, larger copper pot.¹⁶⁷

The following table compares the amount of corn slaves harvested with the amount they consumed (whole or in cornmeal) over the course of three years:¹⁶⁸

Year	Corn harvested	Corn consumed	Deficit	
	Kg	Kg	Kg	%
1598	10.902	17.738	6.836	38,53%
1599	8.464	17.621	9.157	51,96%
1600	8.314	12.994	4.680	36,01%

Table 4. Comparison of the corn produced and consumed by the King's slaves.

Prepared by the author with data from Table 1 and the table in Appendix II.

As we can see, corn production covered only between 50% and 65% of this population's needs, depending on the yield of the annual harvest.

¹⁶⁵ In 1596, for 16 reales, a padlock was purchased to secure the storeroom where slaves' corn was kept. In: *Asiento contable nº3*, St. Augustine, August 16, 1596, AGI, Contaduría, 949, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de situados y Real Hacienda. 1590 to 1598. Number 4.- Cuentas de Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor tomadas por Redondo Villegas, fol. 141.

¹⁶⁶ *Asientos contables*, St. Augustine, July and October of 1586, AGI, Contaduría, 945, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Número 1. Diligencias hechas ante Pedro Redondo Villegas, comisionado para tomar estas cuentas sobre la averiguación de los bienes de Rodrigo del Junco. 1600, fol. 1382-1383.

¹⁶⁷ It weighed 27 pounds. In: *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, May 19, 1597, AGI, Contaduría, 957, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y pertrechos. Receptas de las cuentas de Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor, formadas por los oficiales reales de esta Caja para su presentación en el Consejo, y documentos correspondientes a ellas, fol. 1057.

Later, in 1603, they purchased another, new copper pot that weighed 19 pounds for 228 reales. In: *Ibidem.*, *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, October 11, 1603, fol. 1309.

¹⁶⁸ Calculating their average yearly consumption based on the monthly allotment available to them, reducing the entry from February 1599 by one half to 2,553 kg, for the reasons explained above.

To compensate for this deficit, the authorities had to purchase corn from Spaniards, usually soldiers from the *presidio* who grew the grain for personal consumption and supplemental income.¹⁶⁹ However, whenever there was a general shortage of corn, the authorities turned to buying grain from Indigenous populations in order to avoid depleting the city's granaries. In 1601, Governor Méndez de Canzo negotiated with Doña Ana, Chief of San Pedro,¹⁷⁰ for a consignment of corn to feed the Crown's slaves. They agreed to the sale of 1,000 *arrobas* at a rate of four *reales/arroba*, and the *presidio* sent boats to retrieve them from San Pedro at no cost,¹⁷¹ a transaction that also reveals how the Christianized Indigenous people of San Pedro were integrated in the Spanish economic system: they understood the meaning of money and did not always limit their commercial engagement to bartering in exchange for goods. In other cases, the Spaniards did acquire corn through bartering. In 1599, the soldier Gaspar de Salas, *lengua del presidio*,¹⁷² was sent to "purchase corn from among the Indians to feed Your Majesty's slaves." As trading currency, he brought two fine white blankets (*frazadas finas*)¹⁷³—likely for the chief—and fifty-six coarse blankets (*frazadas basta*s).¹⁷⁴ As a last resort, the governor could authorize taking the necessary corn from the corn tithes (*diezmos*)¹⁷⁵ by way of advance, or taking it from the city's *penas de cámara* harvested that year.¹⁷⁶ For

¹⁶⁹ In accounting ledgers we have identified the following transactions: in 1587, 150 *arrobas* were purchased at 5 *reales/arroba* from the clerk Alonso García de la Vera and 97 *arrobas* were purchased at 3 *reales/arroba*—cheaper because it was burned—from Juan Ruiz de Lucena; in 1594, 235 *arrobas* were purchased from Sergeant Domingo López at 6 *reales/arroba*; in 1596, 447 *arrobas* were purchased from Alonso de Pastrana at 4 *reales/arroba*; in 1597, 530 were purchased from the soldier Sebastián de Inclán for 4 *reales/arroba*; in 1598, 327 *arrobas* were purchased from the soldier Gaspar de Salas at 3 *reales/arroba*; and in 1598 345 *arrobas* were purchased from the artilleryman Juan de Bran at 5 *reales/arroba*.

¹⁷⁰ Known today as Cumberland Island, Georgia.

¹⁷¹ *Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo...,* St. Augustine, September 16, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 315-324.

¹⁷² "The *presidio*'s tongue"; this title was given to those who spoke one or more Indigenous languages and who often acted as interpreters with Indigenous populations.

¹⁷³ A very warm, thick blanket.

¹⁷⁴ *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, October 5, 1599, AGI, Contaduría, 951, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y municiones. Dadas por Pedro López de San Julián, factor, y tomadas por Pedro Redondo Villegas.

¹⁷⁵ A royal tax for 10% of the harvest yield. As corn was the primary crop, accounting ledgers only distinguished between *diezmos* of corn and of all other produce collectively, which were entered as *los menudos* ("trivial").

¹⁷⁶ The produce obtained from properties seized from their owners to settle their debts.

example, in 1603, given the need of corn for the King's slaves and the authorities' inability to purchase any, they chose to take 477 *arrobas* from the city's *diezmos*, which were valued at six *reales/arroba*.¹⁷⁷

With the information above, we have created this table on the annual cost to the Crown to feed royal slaves:¹⁷⁸

Year	Value of rations consumed	Number of slaves	Annual food expense per slave
1598	7.171,56	39	183,89
1599	7.159,79	39	183,58
1600	10.144,13	38	266,95

Table 5. Annual cost of slaves' rations. Prepared by the author based on information from the tables in Appendices I and II. All figures in *reales*.

In 1602, source of funding designated for slaves' rations provoked a bitter dispute between Governor Méndez de Canzo and the royal officials.¹⁷⁹ As we have seen, the Crown ordered 10,000 ducats be sent to Florida for the construction of the stone fort in 1595. However, given the lack of skilled technical oversight of the work, construction had not yet begun by 1602 and that budget line remained intact, with the slaves' expenses being charged against the *situado*. The royal officials, however, then contemplated whether their rations should be paid against those 10,000 ducats, arguing that the slaves' primary task was construction of the fort.¹⁸⁰ Canzo

¹⁷⁷ *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, November 4, 1603, AGI, Contaduría, 957, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y pertrechos desde 16 de mayo de 1602 hasta 27 de julio de 1611. Receptas de las cuentas de Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor, formadas por los oficiales reales de esta Caja para su presentación en el Consejo, y documentos correspondientes a ellas, fol. 1310-1311.

¹⁷⁸ For the reasons explained, we have corrected the entry for corneal from February of 1599 by one half, and we have increased the yearly production of each product per year, according to the average months for which we have information in the table in Appendix II. We have assigned whole corn and ground corn a value of four *reales per arroba*, without including the grinding cost, given that, as we have seen, these rations were in poor condition. For other calculations, we have assigned the following prices in *reales/arroba*: 70 for oil; six for salt; 14 for lard, beef and pork; and 22 for hardtack.

¹⁷⁹ *Orden que dio Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo....*, St. Augustine, September 16, 1601, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 315-324.

¹⁸⁰ *Idem*.

refused, replying that if those funds had been used for the slaves' rations since his arrival, most of the sum would already have been spent before even the first stone of the fort had been laid.¹⁸¹

It is worth considering whether Florida's authorities provided the King's slaves with sufficient food for the intense physical activity their forced labor demanded. It is difficult to provide a precise answer to this question with the information available to us; however, we can come to reasonable conclusions by assuming the following:

- They ate dried, whole grains of corn.¹⁸²
- The calorie content of the foods they ate, expressed in Kcal/kg, is as follows:
dry whole-grain corn, 3,410; cornmeal, 3,500; wheat flour, 3,400; oil, 8,840;
lard, 8,910, dry beef jerky, 1,160; dry pork jerky, 1,330;hardtack, 3,000.
- They worked every day of the year except for Sundays and holy days of obligation.¹⁸³
- We can assume that a typical man or woman, on their days off—approximately four and a half per month—did moderate physical activity, with an average energy expenditure of 2,500 and 2,000 Kcal/day, respectively.
- We estimate that the five women¹⁸⁴ present consumed 3,500 Kcal/day on their regular working days.

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¹⁸¹ Carta del gobernador de La florida Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo al rey, St. Augustine, May 22, 1602, Archivo de la Casa de Casariego, fondos del almirante Gonzalo Méndez de Cancio Donlebún. Today, for unclear reasons, the original version of this letter has not been saved in the General Archive of the Indies; however, there is a copy of the AGI's holding in the *Woodbury Lowery Collection relating to Spanish settlements in the United States, Library of Congress*, in Washington, DC.

¹⁸² As we have seen, these same slaves perceived this as more nutritious than cornmeal, which would not have been the case with fresh corn. We can assume that the grain was dried to facilitate its separation from the cob and its subsequent milling.

¹⁸³ Black slaves were prohibited from working on Sundays and holy days of obligation, on which they were required to attend Mass, with warnings from prelates and governors that there would be penalties for those who required the slaves to work. This was established by order in 1541, as set out in: Recopilación de leyes de los Reynos de las Indias, mandadas imprimir y publicar por la Magestad católica del rey Don Carlos II nuestro Señor. (1791). Madrid: Real y Supremo Consejo de las Indias, First Volume, Book I, Title I "De la Santa Fe Católica," Law XVII "Que los Indios, Negros y Mulatos no trabajen los Domingos y Fiestas de guardar," p. 6.

¹⁸⁴ As we see in the table in Appendix I, in May of 1596, there were six enslaved women in St. Augustine. We have estimated that during the period studied for the purposes of diet, only five were still alive.

Based on these assumptions, every enslaved man received the following average Kcal per day: in 1598, 4,720; in 1599, 4,740; in 1600, 4,200; in 1601, 4,460; and in 1602, 4,340. That is sufficient energy intake for the performance of high-intensity physical activity. However, given the lack of variety, we can conclude that their diet was lacking in vitamins, protein, trace elements, and other essential nutrients.¹⁸⁵

It is also worth considering how their diets compared to that of the fort's soldiers or the Franciscans, two groups with the right to a daily ration paid out of the *situado*. As for the quality of their food, as we have seen, it was not uncommon for slaves to be given low-quality food, unlike soldiers and friars, who only received such food in extraordinary circumstances. From the accountancy ledgers, the only differences in variety we can glean are that soldiers and friars received their rations in the form of cornmeal, rather than whole-grain corn, that they received meat more frequently, and that their rations typically included vinegar and wine. There was no significant difference, then, in terms of food paid for out of the royal coffers. That said, soldiers were also paid a salary, which they could use to purchase more or higher-quality food, though they constantly complained of the cost of living in St. Augustine and of their low pay, which they considered insufficient for feeding their families.¹⁸⁶

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3.2.2 Dress

In Florida, every year, it was customary for every slave to the Crown to be given one blanket and one garment of coarse sackcloth.¹⁸⁷ In 1592, nine *varas*¹⁸⁸ were used to

¹⁸⁵ Ismael Sarmiento Rodríguez arrives at similar conclusions in his study of slaves' diets in Cuba (2008, pp. 137 and 149).

¹⁸⁶ As several of the *presidio*'s soldiers expressed in: *Sobre el procedimiento seguido en San Agustín en septiembre de 1602, por orden del rey, para averiguar la utilidad de las provincias de La florida*, St. Augustine, 1602, AGI, Santo Domingo,2533.

¹⁸⁷ The accountancy ledgers frequently refer to this practice, for example: "These were given to your Majesty's Black Slaves for their dress and warmth, in said year, 1601, as they are given on Your Majesty's behalf every year." In: *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, November 18, 1600, AGI, Contaduría,951, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y municiones. Dadas por Pedro López de San Julián, factor, y tomadas por Pedro Redondo Villegas.

¹⁸⁸ The Castilian vara was the most used, with a length equal to 0.8359 m.

make each garment.¹⁸⁹ In 1596, the cloth was reduced to eight varas each for adults and four each for two young girls.¹⁹⁰ These volumes were still used in 1598, when the slave overseer was given sufficient cloth to manufacture the garments necessary for 1599.¹⁹¹ But costs were cut even further in 1600, when 213 varas were used to dress thirty-nine people.¹⁹² This volume probably proved to be too scant, and in 1601, it was slightly increased to six varas per person.¹⁹³ As is clear, the amount of cloth per adult was reduced by 33% between 1592 and 1601. This was probably to compensate for the arrival of the second contingent of royal slaves, whose presence meant there was a notable increase in this line item's total value.

There were no textile mills in Florida, meaning that all fabric used there had to be imported, thus the sackcloth used to dress slaves was purchased in New Spain on the same voyage undertaken to retrieve that year's *situado*. In 1597, the business manager Alonso de las Alas acquired 350 varas of coarse sackcloth in New Spain at a price of 4.5 *reales/vara*;¹⁹⁴ for his part, in 1598, treasurer Juan Menéndez

¹⁸⁹ As can be gleaned from: “*Mas se le ponen en data al dicho Gaspar Fernández Perete tenedor de bastimentos 207 varas de sayal que dio y repartió entre 23 negros y negras esclavos de su majestad de este presidio para su vestuario por mandado del general Gutierre de Miranda.*” In: *Asiento contable nº4*, St. Augustine, February 10, 1592, AGI, Contaduría,946, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos y pertrechos.1591–1594. Dadas por Gaspar Fernández Perete, tenedor de bastimentos, fol. 124.

¹⁹⁰ On May 12, 1596, 168 varas of sackcloth were used to dress the King's slaves, equal to eight varas for each of the 20 adults (16 men and four women) and four for each of the two girls then present in the *presidio*. In: *Asiento contable nº10*, St. Augustine, May 12, 1596, AGI, Contaduría,949, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de situados y Real Hacienda. 1590 to 1598. Number 4. Cuentas de Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor tomadas por Redondo Villegas., fol. 292.

¹⁹¹ In October of 1598, 308 varas of coarse sackcloth from New Spain were used to dress 39 slaves. In: *Asiento contable nº6*, St. Augustine, October 31, 1598, AGI, Contaduría,950, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y municiones. 1597 to 1601. Number 1. Cuentas dadas por Juan López de Avilés, factor. 1597–1601.

¹⁹² *Ibidem.*, *Asiento contable nº16*, St. Augustine, January 24, 1600. A ratio of 5.46 varas per person, suggesting that there was a child in the group.

¹⁹³ *Ibidem.*, *Asiento contable nº27*, St. Augustine, October 7, 1601. Except for one girl's garment, for which two varas were used.

¹⁹⁴ *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, 1597, AGI, Contaduría,949, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de situados y Real Hacienda. 1590 to 1598. Number 4. Cuentas de Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor tomadas por Redondo Villegas, fol. 120.

Marqués acquired 500 varas in Veracruz at 4.25 *reales/vara*:¹⁹⁵ more than twice the annual volume required, but at an advantageous price that made stockpiling for the future an attractive option.

The task of sewing slaves' garments was assigned to various tailors in St. Augustine. In 1598, the Indigenous tailor Alonso Jorge manufactured these garments at twelve *reales* apiece.¹⁹⁶ However, Jorge ultimately proved too expensive, both as a tailor and as a material vendor (to whom they sometimes had to turn for cloth).¹⁹⁷ Thus, in 1600, this task was assigned to Pedro Pérez, a tailor and soldier from the *presidio* of St. Augustine, who agreed to a price of ten *reales* per garment, including thread, which he provided himself.¹⁹⁸ The following year, another tailor and soldier was commissioned: Juan Fernández Portonovo, who agreed to in-kind payment of 1.25 *varas* of coarse sackcloth per garment and was to supply his own material and thread. But after he completed his assigned task, there was no longer sufficient cloth in the royal storehouses, and he was instead paid in cash, at 8.75 *reales* per garment.¹⁹⁹ This once again underscores how Christianized Indigenous people were perfectly integrated in the Spaniards' production system, as well as how some soldiers had to work in other professions to supplement their salary (which was no more than thirty-two ducats per year) and feed their families.

¹⁹⁵ Asiento contable nº36, St. Augustine, May 19, 1598, AGI, Contaduría,949, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de situados y Real Hacienda. 1590 to 1598. Number 2. Cuentas de Juan Menéndez Márquez, tesorero, tomadas por el dicho Redondo Villegas, fol. 492.

¹⁹⁶ Asiento contable nº70, St. Augustine, December 20, 1598, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602., fol. 1305-1307.

¹⁹⁷ In 1587, they purchased six *varas* of sackcloth from Jorge to dress a slave at an elevated Price of 6.5 *reales/vara*. En: Asiento contable nº1, St. Augustine, January 5, 1588, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 1. Cuenta de Real Hacienda dada por Juan Cevadilla tesorero. 1585-1590, fol. 288.

¹⁹⁸ Asiento contable nº77, St. Augustine, January 29, 1600, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602., fol. 1329-1330. After the garments were completed, they were distributed among the slaves by their overseer, Andrés de Sotomayor.

¹⁹⁹ Ibidem., Asiento contable nº85, St. Augustine, December 21, 1601, fol. 1349-1350.

Once a year each slave was given a blanket for warmth,²⁰⁰ which was manufactured from coarse material and cost 40 *reales* apiece.²⁰¹ When no coarse blankets were available, they had to be given “fine white blankets,” as happened in 1607 and 1609,²⁰² likely to the slaves’ great surprise.

From the information above, we can estimate that the annual cost of clothing royal slaves, including material, manufacture, and blankets, exceeded ninety *reales* per slave in 1592, 86 *reales* between 1596 and 1598, then dropped to 73.5 *reales* beginning in 1600.²⁰³

Finally, in the accountancy ledgers, there is no indication that slaves were given footwear, though there are line items for footwear allotted to soldiers and missionaries. Thus, we can assume they went barefoot.

3.2.3 Healthcare

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In Mexico City in 1568, there were three hospitals that admitted only Spanish and Indigenous patients; it was not until 1582 that the doctor Pedro López founded a hospital there specifically for Black and mixed-race patients (Martínez Hernández, 2014, p. 107). According to Byrd and Clayton, in Britain’s colonies in North American, and later in the United States, “African Americans, since arriving as slaves, have had the worst health care, the worst health status, and the worst health outcome of any

²⁰⁰ For example, as can be read in: *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, July 7, 1601, AGI, Contaduría,951, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y municiones. Dadas por Pedro López de San Julián, factor, y tomadas por Pedro Redondo Villegas.

²⁰¹ *Asiento contable* nº47, St. Augustine, May 24, 1597, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602., fol. 1111-1112.

²⁰² *Asiento contable* nº305, St. Augustine, February 28, 1607, AGI, Contaduría,957, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y pertrechos desde 16 de mayo de 1602 hasta 27 de julio de 1611. Receptas de las cuentas de Alonso de las Alas, factor y vedor, formadas por los oficiales reales de esta Caja para su presentación en el Consejo, y documentos correspondientes a ellas.

Ibidem., *Asiento contable* nº425, St. Augustine, January 4, 1609.

²⁰³ Based on the assumption that between 1592 and 1601, the price of a vara of sackcloth was 4.25 *reales/vara* and that sewing between 1592 and 1958 was done by the Indigenous tailor Alonso Jorge.

racial or ethnic group in the U.S" (2001, p. 11s). No such distinction based on skin color was practiced in Spanish Florida, where unwell slaves were attended by the *presidio*'s doctor and prescribed the same medication, food, and rest as Spaniards.

As we have seen, in 1582, an enslaved married couple arrived in St. Augustine with syphilis, after which point the infection was common among the city's Black population. In 1595, at the prescription of the *presidio*'s French doctor Juan de la Conte, also known as *Maestre Juan*,²⁰⁴ Governor Avendaño gave the slave overseer 492 *reales* to purchase hens, chickens, guayacan, sarsaparilla, and "other necessary and due things for the cure and comfort of Domingo Cacanga and Martín Bran and Baltasar and Inés Felipa, Black slaves of His Majesty."²⁰⁵ Their treatment lasted the entire year, and the medicines they were prescribed confirm that their malady was syphilis. The next case more explicitly names the ailment and also cites the slave Inés, who had likely driven the transmission of the illness. In 1597, seven pounds of sarsaparilla, eight pounds of guayacan, nine chickens, four *reales*' worth of eggs and two *reales*' worth of loquats were purchased; these were hand-administered by *Maestre Juan* to "Domingo Bivo and a little Black girl named Catalina, the daughter of Inés, another of His Majesty's slaves who was sick with yaws."²⁰⁶ Two hundred and forty *reales* were spent on her care, including forty for a blanket "for the little Black girl so that she could warm and cover herself."²⁰⁷

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Under Governor Méndez de Canzo's administration there was a qualitative leap in medical care in Florida, with the establishment of the first two hospitals in the present-day territory of the United States.²⁰⁸ When Canzo arrived in St. Augustine in 1597, he found that work on a hospital annex to the Soledad hermitage had stopped

²⁰⁴ For more on the doctor Juan de la Conte, see: Ehrhardt & O'Leary, 2020.

²⁰⁵ *Asiento contable* nº48, St. Augustine, May 24, 1597, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602., fol. 1113-1114.

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem.*, *Asiento contable* nº47, St. Augustine, May 24, 1597, fol. 1111-1112.

²⁰⁷ *Idem*.

²⁰⁸ For more, see: (1968) First Hospital-U.S.A. *Florida Health Notes. Journal of the American Medical Association*, 60(2), 29-56.

due to lack of funding. Given the healthcare crisis at the time of his arrival, Canzo fast-tracked a solution, because “if this past summer there were none [no hospital], many soldiers and Native Indians and your Black slaves would have perished and died, given the widespread fever disease there was.”²⁰⁹ This underscores that the first hospital patients in Florida history—and therefore the first hospital patients in the present-day U.S.—included several Black slaves.

To staff the hospital, Canzo asked the King for “one of your Black female slaves, of which there are many elderly here, to serve in said hospital and make the beds and cook some special dishes and keep it [the hospital] clean.”²¹⁰ His request was received favorably, and the King allowed that “for the service of said hospital, you may use one of my slaves there of your choosing provided it is for service there.”²¹¹

54 Unfortunately, in 1599, an accidental fire destroyed the Convento de San Francisco, and the Franciscans had to be relocated to the hospital, which ceased to operate as such.²¹² Thus, on January 1, 1600, Méndez de Canzo founded a new hospital in St. Augustine under the protection of Santa Bárbara, which was wholly financed by the latter.²¹³ The governor was aware of the slaves’ value and the benefit of treating them well. In the new hospital, Canzo continued his policy of universal healthcare with no racial discrimination, and wrote to the Crown that this hospital

²⁰⁹ *Carta del gobernador de La florida Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo al rey*, St. Augustine, February 23, 1598, AGI, Santo Domingo,224, R.5, N.31.

²¹⁰ *Idem*.

²¹¹ *Carta del rey a Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo, gobernador y capitán general de La florida*, Madrid, November 9, 1598, AGI, Santo Domingo,2528, L.1, fol. 247v.-252v.

²¹² This fire took place on March 14, 1599, and the governor informed the King of the brothers’ new lodging at the hospital in: *Carta del gobernador de La florida Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo al rey*, St. Augustine, February 28, 1600, AGI, Santo Domingo,224, R.5, N.35, fol. 219-228v.

²¹³ *Idem*. See also: (1968) First Hospital-U.S.A. *Florida Health Notes. Journal of the American Medical Association*, 60(2), 29-56, p. 37-39.

treated “all of the soldiers who fall sick in this *presidio* with much care, as well as your Black slaves who fall ill and the natives, without turning anyone away [...]”²¹⁴

The King thanked Méndez de Canzo for this policy and “the care you say you have placed in making the hospital amenable for the poor.”²¹⁵ This matter did not go unnoticed by his successor, Pedro de Ibarra,²¹⁶ who, shortly after taking office, reported that the slaves were well treated in terms of provisions, dress, and healthcare, and that when they fell sick they were transferred to the hospital, no different from the most valuable soldier (Landers, 1999, p. 19).

In the document establishing the Santa Bárbara hospital, Canzo expressed his trust that with the alms this institution received, “a female slave would be purchased to care for the sick.”²¹⁷ In the interim, he assigned the same slave who had already been serving the previous hospital.²¹⁸ Her name was María and the governor, aware of her work’s importance for the city of St. Augustine, petitioned the Crown to pay her a modest salary (Francis, 2015, p. 122). Thus, the first nurse in the territory of the present-day U.S. was a Black female slave.

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We know of some cases in which slaves received care in the Santa Bárbara hospital founded by Governor Canzo. There, between May of 1601 and June of 1602, Maestre Juan attended to “Pedro Soto the Black and Juan Primero and Miranda y

²¹⁴ *Carta del gobernador de La florida Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo al rey*, St. Augstine, May 22, 1602, Archivo de la Casa de Casariego, fondos del almirante Gonzalo Méndez de Cincio Donlebún. Today, for unclear reasons, the original version of this letter has not been saved in the General Archive of the Indies; however, there is a copy in the archive of the *Woodbury Lowery Collection relating to Spanish settlements in the United States*, Library of Congress, in Washington, DC.

²¹⁵ *Carta del rey a Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo, gobernador y capitán general de La florida*, El Pardo, November 14, 1600, AGI, Santo Domingo,2528, L.1, fol. 268v.-270.

²¹⁶ Pedro de Ibarra, Governor of Florida (1603-1609). Took possession in October of 1603.

²¹⁷ (1968) First Hospital-U.S.A. *Florida Health Notes. Journal of the American Medical Association*, 60(2), 29-56, p. 39.

²¹⁸ *Carta del gobernador de La florida Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo al rey*, St. Augustine, February 28, 1600, Santo Domingo,224, R.5, N.35.

Lorenzo and Manuel Enchico and Domingo Zape, also His Majesty's slaves."²¹⁹ During their convalescence, 431 *reales* were spent to provide them with hens, chickens, eggs, sarsaparilla (syphilis once again) and other items to aid in their recovery, which were prescribed and administered by the doctor, *Maestre Juan*.²²⁰ In 1601, the royal slave Pedro Sotonegro cut "his big toe while cutting firewood in the forest" and he spent 52 days recovering in the hospital.²²¹

As we mentioned earlier, the abandonment of slaves who were sick, elderly, or not useful for work was not infrequent in the Spanish empire. This inhumane practice even left its mark in *Don Quixote*: in one of his lucid speeches—which alternate with episodes of madness—as he discusses the poverty of old soldiers, the *hidalgo* of La Mancha says:

[...] for it is not right to deal with them [the soldiers] after the fashion of those who set free and get rid of their Black slaves when they are old and useless, and, turning them out of their houses under the pretense of making them free, make them slaves to hunger, from which they cannot expect to be released except by death.

Thus, in Florida there was the notable case of Catalina Zape, "His Majesty's slave who had been for many years crippled."²²² She was unable to work, but far from being left to fend for herself, as would have happened in other places, the slave overseer Francisco Morgado was given 120 *reales* to spend on whatever *Maestre Juan* advised for her treatment.²²³

²¹⁹ *Asiento contable* nº114, St. Augustine, June 30, 1602, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602., fol. 1203-1204.

²²⁰ *Idem*.

²²¹ *Cargos de bizcocho, asiento contable* nº58, St. Augustine, June 20, 1601, Contaduría,956, cuentas tomadas al factor Juan López de Avilés por Pedro Redondo Villegas, fol. 327-328.

²²² *Asiento contable* nº253, St. Augustine, February 3, 1589, AGI, Contaduría,942, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los gastos de bastimentos y situados. Cuentas tomadas al tesorero Juan Cevadilla, Also in: *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, January 29, 1589, AGI, Contaduría,945, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos y pertrechos de los factores desde 15 de septiembre de 1587 a fin de abril de 1591. Cuentas tomadas a Francisco Morgado.

²²³ *Idem*.

We have identified other instances of ill slaves from this period, though not with enough detail to know the specific nature of their maladies. However, in all instances, it seems that the custom was to increase their food intake with items that were not part of their regular diet, and to make eating corn easier by giving it to them in the form of cornmeal. Thus, in April of 1594, a slave was given 60 pounds of cornmeal “at a rate of two pounds per day because he was ill.”²²⁴ In February of 1602, 126 pounds of cornmeal were given to “three of His Majesty’s Black slaves, as they fell ill and could not eat [whole] corn for their food and sustenance.”²²⁵ Between March and July of 1596, 275 pounds of cornmeal were given to several slaves “who, as several of them were ill, were given said cornmeal for their food and sustenance and so they could regain their health.”²²⁶ Furthermore, during those months they were also given 36 *cuartillos* of wine “as several of them were ill, they were given said wine for their sustenance and so they could regain their health.”²²⁷ In 1596, 350 pounds of fresh fish were purchased from the soldier and fisherman Juan Ruiz de Sanlúcar—another moonlighting soldier—to complement the provisions given to seven slaves for four months.²²⁸

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3.3 Financial Return on Royal Slaves’ and their Cost to the Royal Coffers

As we have seen, the Floridian authorities’ economic objective was for the slaves to generate enough revenue—through *aprovechamientos*—to earn back the cost of their food, clothing, and healthcare.

²²⁴ Asiento contable nº95, St. Augustine, April of 1594, AGI, Contaduría,948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 a 1602. Cuentas tomadas a Gaspar Fernández Perete, tenedor de bastimentos y municiones, fol. 1716.

²²⁵ Asiento contable, St. Augustine, February 28, 1602, AGI, Contaduría,950, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y municiones. 1597 to 1601. Number 1. Cuentas dadas por Juan López de Avilés, factor. 1597-1601.

²²⁶ Asiento contable nº178, St. Augustine, August 4, 1596, AGI, Contaduría,947, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos y pertrechos. 1595 to 1597. Dadas por Alonso de las Alas, factor y veedor. Tomadas por comisión por Pedro Redondo Villegas, contador de la fábrica y fundición de artillería de Cuba; y cargos que resultaron contra varias personas, fol. 943.

²²⁷ *Ibidem.*, Asiento contable nº110, St. Augustine, August 4, 1596, fol. 1095. One *cuartillo* was equal to 0.50415 liters.

²²⁸ Equal to 161 kg. They were purchased at five pounds per *real*.

The table below compares the revenue and expenses associated with the royal slaves for a period of three years:

Year	1598	1599	1600
Revenue: <i>aprovechamiento</i> per slave	207,18	189,38	130,72
Expenses: food, clothing, and healthcare	284,89	272,08	355,45
Deficit	-77,71	-82,7	-224,73
Income over expenses in %	72,72%	69,60%	36,78%

Table 6. Revenue and expenses per royal slave in Florida. Prepared by the author with information from Table 2 and from section 3.2. We have estimated an annual healthcare cost of fifteen *reales* per slave.

All figures in *reales*.

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As is clear, the authorities did not achieve the economic balance they hoped for on any of these years, and in the best case, *aprovechamientos* covered only 73% of expenses. However, it is important to remember, again, that slaves' working time was divided into two major categories: tasks in the service of the King and tasks for generating revenue. Only the latter were taken into consideration in the economic analysis of their profitability.

This enables us to make an alternative—and more appropriate—reading of the deficit in Table 6; we can interpret this as the cost born by the royal coffers per slave for their work in the service of the King.²²⁹

Unlike the *presidio*'s soldiers—the Crown's non-forced laborers—whose salaries and rations represented a fixed cost, the expense of maintaining royal slaves—the Crown's forced laborers—was variable; this was true of both the revenue they generated and the expenses they incurred. However, the magnitude of the Crown's cost for slaves and soldiers was very different, as is clear from the table below:

²²⁹ As we have seen, these tasks included repairing the wood fort, building watercraft, extracting stone from quarries, building houses etc.

Year	1598	1599	1600
Cost per royal slave per year	77,71	82,7	224,73
Cost per soldier per year ²³⁰	1.264,5	1.264,5	1.264,5
Slave cost/Soldier cost	6,14 %	6,54 %	17,77 %

Table 7. Per-royal slave cost vs. per-soldier cost in Florida. Prepared by the author with information from Table 6 and information on soldiers' salaries. All figures in *reales*.

As this table shows, for the Crown, a slave represented between 6% and 18% the cost of a soldier.

4. Slaves Owned by Private Individuals

Studying the lives of slaves owned by private individuals in Florida during the years within the scope of this project presents greater limitations than a study of the King's slaves. To start with, none of the notarial protocols of the era—which would have recorded transactions involving the sale or purchase of slaves, contracts for their outside hiring, etc.—have been conserved. Second, as these slaves were not the Crown's property, they are scarcely mentioned in official documents, except where they impact the royal coffers (hiring, auctioning of confiscated slaves, etc.) and baptismal and marriage records from the parish ledgers. That said, we nevertheless believe this study would be incomplete without a brief overview of the topic, primarily for the purposes of estimating the total number of Black slaves in Florida in the late 16th century and their proportion of the capital city's population.

²³⁰ The soldiers in the *presidio* of St. Augustine had a salary of 1,000 *maravedíes* per month and a 2.5-real ration per day; that is, for the Crown, they represented a cost of 1,264.5 *reales* per year. This was the lowest of all the militia expenses in the *presidio* of St. Augustine. The cost of salaries and rations for captains, second lieutenants, sergeants, squadron commanders, and soldiers can be found in: *Carta de Pedro Redondo Villegas al rey*, San Agustín, June 30, 1600, AGI, Santo Domingo, 224, R.5, N.6, fol. 296-301.

Despite its urban attributes, St. Augustine was still a military post on the border of the Spanish empire at the turn of the century, and as such, was not ready for social sophistications, nor for the excesses of domestic servitude that had already appeared in other American capital cities. The unwealthy population—of approximately 500 people at the turn of the century (Francis, 2015, p. 82)—was made up chiefly of soldiers, who generally could not afford such a luxury. The closest slave market was in Havana, a meeting point for fleets on their return journey to Spain, where there was a vigorous economy and a thriving society. There are records there of some transactions involving slaves coming from or going to Florida, which we can track through notarial protocols.²³¹

As we have seen, in 1596, the authorities resorted to hiring nine slaves from private individuals for emergency labor. These slaves' owners included some of the city's most prominent denizens, including Catalina Menéndez, sister of Governor Pedro Menéndez Marqués; María de Pomar, widow of Captain Francisco de Salazar, former interim governor; Gil de Cevadilla, brother of royal treasurer Juan Cevadilla; and Juan López de Avilés, who acted as Florida's royal business manager.²³²

The following year, St. Augustine auctioned off the estate of the late royal treasurer Juan Cevadilla, whose fraudulent activities led to his estate being confiscated from his heirs. His property included six slaves, and the transactions of their sale represent the only instance of slaves being bought or sold on Floridian territory in the 16th century that we have been able to document. The value of each transaction and the profile of the buyers²³³ are listed below:

²³¹ For example, there was one transaction conducted by Rodrigo de Junco's wife, who, in 1587, sold a nineteen-year-old slave for 210 ducats to Juan Franco (Rojas, 1950, p. 301) in Havana.

²³² *Maravedíes pagados por el dicho tesorero en jornales y fletes, ayudas de costa y otras cosas extraordinarias. Asiento contable n°33, St. Augustine, March 29, 1597, AGI, Contaduría, 948, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los oficiales reales. 1585 to 1602. Number 3. Cuenta dada por Juan Menéndez Marqués, tesorero. 1594-1602, fol. 1249-1251.*

²³³ *Bienes y hacienda del tesorero Juan Cevadilla que se hallaron y vendieron en pública almoneda por orden del gobernador Gonzalo Méndez Canzo y deudas que se cobraron de la Veracruz, St. Augustine, June 24, 1600, AGI,*

- Navigation officer Mateo Luis purchased a slave named Isabel for 252 ducats.
- Soldier and scribe Alonso García de la Vera acquired a slave named Luis for 270 ducats.
- Francisco Bravo acquired “a mulatta girl named Felipa” for fifty ducats.
- The fort’s artillery constable Juan Rodríguez purchased a slave named Francisca for 304 ducats “with the first payment on credit to the people of this presidio because although it was announced for many days, no one realized it.”
- Juan García de Navia y Castrillón²³⁴ purchased a slave named María for 276 ducats.²³⁵
- Second-lieutenant Hernando de Mestas purchased a slave named Magdalena for ninety-one ducats.²³⁶

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Between 1578 and 1600, the average price for a slave in Havana was 232.85 ducats for men and 243.68 for women (Arriaga Mesa, 1999, pp. 17 and 23), but it was far from stable. Prices were subject to constant fluctuations, including a sharp drop between 1593 and 1596, when they fell slightly below 200 ducats (Arriaga Mesa, 1999, p. 35). It is surprising, then, to see the high values of these transactions in St. Augustine; this was likely due to supply scarcity (typical of an imperfect market), or the price of transporting purchased slaves from Cuba, or the purchasing of slaves of exceptional value due to some specific traits; the latter is likely, as their former owner had been a royal official. Furthermore, the market value

Contaduría,942, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de los gastos de bastimentos y situados, fol. 138-143.

²³⁴ Relative and right hand of Governor Méndez de Canzo, who named him captain of one of St. Augustine’s infantry companies and who, when he was absent from the city, left García de Navia y Castrillón as his deputy for matters of governance. In: *Carta del contador Bartolomé de Argüelles al rey*, St. Augustine, August 3, 1598, AGI, Santo Domingo,229, fol. 115-120.

²³⁵ *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, December 23, 1597, AGI, Contaduría,953, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de Real Hacienda, y sus resultas. Number 1. Cuenta del dinero que entró en la Real Caja. 1585-1603, fol. 259.

²³⁶ *Ibidem.*, *Asiento contable*, St. Augustine, December 10, 1597, fol. 260.

of slaves tended to increase between the ages of 20 and 40 (Arriaga Mesa, 1999, 23). Owning slaves from a young age meant owning a low-yield asset for an extended period of time; this may have been the reason the slave named Felipa was auctioned for such a low price.²³⁷

Governors of the Indies generally obtained a royal license to bring a certain number of slaves with them for their own service, duty-free. This was true of Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo, who arrived in St. Augustine from Spain in 1597 with three slaves, one man and two women.²³⁸

Numerous sources suggest that in the early 17th century there were approximately twenty slaves owned by private individuals in St. Augustine (Francis, 2015, p. 121), a figure that seems concordant with our own research. At that point, there was a major influx of slaves to Florida that lasted until 1606.²³⁹ That year, Governor Pedro de Ibarra informed the Crown that in St. Augustine there were “100 negros who would fight with the enemy for their freedom” (Bushnell, 1994, p. 118). Considering that in 1604 there were thirty royal slaves in the city,²⁴⁰ this would mean that seventy were owned by private individuals and that approximately fifty had been brought to Florida in the five or six preceding years. As we have seen, this warning from Ibarra—along with other considerations—prompted the King to temporarily forbid importation of more slaves to Florida.

²³⁷ Furthermore, as set out in: *Asiento contable nº2*, St. Augustine, April 28, 1599, AGI, Contaduría, 950, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y municiones. 1597 to 1601. Number 1. Cuentas dadas por Juan López de Avilés, factor. 1597-1601, Francisco Bravo worked as a caulkier in the *presidio* of St. Augustine, so it is reasonable to think he could not afford to invest in an adult slave, who would have represented a much greater expense.

²³⁸ Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo's license to bring three slaves can be found in: *Para que el dicho Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo pueda llevar tres esclavos negros para su servicio libres de derechos*, Ávila, May 15, 1596, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2528. L.1, fol. 229v.

With this license, Méndez de Canzo registered three Black slaves in Seville—two women and one man—in the records of the frigate Santa Ana, on which he undertook the voyage to Florida. In: *Registros de ida de naos que fueron sueltas a Florida. Número 4. Lucas Guillén, maestre de la fragata Santa Ana, Sevilla y Sanlúcar de Barrameda, 1596*, AGI, Contratación, 1453, fol. 17v.-18.

²³⁹ This is perhaps due, among other reasons, to a sharp drop in the price of slaves beginning in 1600, as Arriaga Mesa suggests in his study (1999, p. 35).

²⁴⁰ See table in Appendix I.

After the King of Spain, the largest slave owner we have been able to identify was royal treasurer Juan Menéndez Marqués, to whom Bushnell attributes a total of seven individuals (1981, p. 22). Of them, at least two were women, named Lucrecia Morena and Yumar Morena, and a mixed-race man named Cristóbal.²⁴¹ In 1608, royal accountant Argüelles also owned at least two slaves.²⁴² Between 1606 and 1612, the parish ledgers indicate that in St. Augustine there were at least twelve female slaves and seven male slaves owned by private individuals, as well as nine newborns who, according to custom, became the property of their mother's owner. With the exception of the royal officials mentioned above, the other slaveowners seem to have been people of little social relevance, cited only by their names, with no other responsibility mentioned.²⁴³ This suggests that the tendency toward owning slaves had gradually expanded to less wealthy, less relevant social strata. In keeping with this view, we know that in 1605 the master smithy also possessed two slaves.²⁴⁴

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On October 24, 1613, Governor Juan Treviño y Guillama granted a license and passport to Doña María del Corral, the widow of the late royal accountant Juan de Arrazola, so that she could undertake the return voyage to Spain in the company of her children.²⁴⁵ Perhaps for this reason, two days earlier, by order of the governor, a

²⁴¹ As is clear from baptisms recorded in the months of February and March of 1612, in: *Libro de Bautismos, Box 1, 1594-1612. Archive of the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine, St. Augustine, Florida. Ecclesiastical and Secular Sources for Slave Societies.* Accessed May 19, 2014, from the website of Vanderbilt University: www.vanderbilt.edu/essss.

²⁴² On October 4, 1608, Francisco, son of a female slave of accountant Argüelles, was baptized. *Idem*.

²⁴³ These include: Domingo Hernández, Vicente Morera, Luis Díaz, Lorenzo Jiménez, Lorenzo Hernández, and Alonso García, most likely soldiers and traders. *Idem*.

²⁴⁴ *Petición de Cristóbal González maestre mayor de la fragua del presidio de las provincias de La florida, circa 1605*, AGI, Santo Domingo, 232, fol. 286-286v.

²⁴⁵ *Licencia a María del Corral para regresar a los reinos de Castilla*, St. Augustine, October 24, 1613, in: *Expediente de concesión de licencia para pasar a La florida a favor de Francisco Ramírez, contador de La florida, en compañía de su mujer, hijos y cuatro criados*, 1614, AGI, Indiferente, 2075, N.56, fol. 3-4.

Curiously, as we learn from this document, as soon as Doña María del Corral arrived in Spain, she entered marriage with Francisco Ramírez, who had replaced her husband as royal accountant of Florida, and she returned there with him.

slave belonging to this woman was purchased for a value of 93,500 *maravedíes*²⁴⁶ “so that with the others that Your Majesty possesses in this *presidio*, he may tend to repairs and constructions, and thus was delivered to Francisco Morgado, the overseer of said slaves.”²⁴⁷

We have found no documentation confirming the presence of any free Blacks in Florida for the period within the scope of this study,²⁴⁸ though Michael Francis believes that a small number were present in St. Augustine in 1602 (2015, p. 83).

5. Other Forms of Slavery in Spanish Florida

In 1542, the Spanish Crown prohibited enslavement of American Indians. In 1543, it decreed that only Black slaves could be taken to the Indies, and it ordered the expulsion of all Berber and Morisco slaves. Thus, from that point on, slavery in the Americas was predominantly Black (Lucena Salmoral, 2000, pp. 75-76). That said, there were numerous exceptions to these norms, especially as regards Indigenous enslavement, and this was as true in Florida as it was elsewhere in the Spanish empire. During the years within the scope of this study, there were instances of white and Indigenous enslavement, and we must at least briefly discuss these practices in order to offer a reasonably complete portrait of the phenomenon of slavery in 16th-century Spanish Florida.

²⁴⁶ Equal to 249 ducats.

²⁴⁷ *Asiento contable n°44*, St. Augustine, October 22, 1613, AGI, Contaduría,956, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de Real Hacienda desde 25 de noviembre de 1611 hasta 26 de agosto de 1613. Dadas por José de Olivera, tesorero; tomadas por Francisco de Cendrera, contador, fol. 172.

²⁴⁸ Except for the previously mentioned Indigenous man named Mandinga, who was likely a ‘zambo,’ the child of a Black slave and an Indigenous woman and, therefore, free like his mother.

5.1 White Slavery in Florida

The first royal slaves in Florida were not Black, but rather white Frenchmen. In early 1580, the French ship *Le Prince* wrecked at the entrance to the port of Santa Elena, in present-day South Carolina. For the more than fifty survivors, this event was the first in a long chain of misfortunes. First, they were taken prisoner by a nearby Indigenous group, and many were killed. The eighteen survivors were later rescued by Governor Menéndez Marqués, at which point things turned from bad to worse.²⁴⁹ The governor ordered eight of them (likely Huguenots) to be hanged.²⁵⁰ Of the remaining ten, two were given special treatment: as he was a doctor, *Maestre Juan de la Conte*, already mentioned in this study, was allowed to continue practicing as such in Florida; and a German artilleryman who—when the authorities learned the French had been holding him against his will—was taken on as a soldier.²⁵¹

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Regarding the fate of the others, the governor informed the King that “I sentenced them to become slaves to Your Majesty and to serve Your Majesty’s works in those provinces,” and that they would retain this status until the Crown ordered otherwise.²⁵² All hope that these unhappy men may have held that the King would offer them a gentler fate vanished when St. Augustine received the royal response to the governor’s letter. It ordered that:

[...] upon receiving this, you are to order them sent in good order to this kingdom, to the president and officials of the House of Trade [Casa de la Contratación] of Seville, so that they may be dispatched to our Spanish galleys, where it is our will that they shall serve us.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ These events are described in: *Carta del capitán Tomás Bernardo de Quirós al rey y testimonio sobre los sucesos del navío El Príncipe*, Santa Elena, September 6, 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 183-187.

²⁵⁰ *Carta del tesorero Juan Cevadilla al rey*, St. Augustine, March 6, 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 229, fol. 19-22.

²⁵¹ *Carta del gobernador de Florida Pedro Menéndez Marqués al rey*, Havana, May 11, 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 231, fol. 176-177v.

²⁵² *Idem*.

²⁵³ *Respuesta al gobernador de La florida*, Badajoz, September 19, 1580, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2528, L.1, fol. 127v.

Thus, it is likely that these Frenchmen spent their final days in the Mediterranean as slaves aboard Spanish galleys.

5.2 Indigenous Slavery in Florida

To Philip II, *Adelantado* Pedro Menéndez de Avilés suggested waging war against hostile Indigenous groups in Florida and selling those taken prisoner as slaves; the Crown rejected this proposal outright (Bushnell, 1994, p. 118).

A quarter century later, Governor Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo issued two decrees on slavery affecting the Indigenous people of Florida. The first, in November of 1597, was issued against people from the “*lengua de Guale*” in the present-day state of Georgia, who a month earlier had begun a revolt against Spanish domination by slitting the throats of five Franciscan missionaries. His decree stated that:

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[...] All of the male and female Indians taken alive from said *lengua de Guale*, and the *doctrinas* where were said friars, were to be given to serve the soldiers that took them until His Majesty and his Royal Council order and command some other action, as the crime committed by said Indians is so grave and worthy of such a penalty and punishment [...] ²⁵⁴

The second was issued fifteen days later against the Ais tribe, to the south of St. Augustine, who killed Second-Lieutenant Juan Ramírez de Contreras, the governor's emissary:

[...] I firmly declare that, considering the great crime committed by said Indians did merit punishing them and making war against them, and if any male or female Indians be taken alive, the soldiers of this *presidio* may take service from them until His Majesty and his Royal Council of the Indies order and command some other action.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ *Testimonio de lo que sucedió en la lengua de Guale en el viaje que hizo Gonzalo Méndez de Cancio gobernador y capitán general de las provincias de La florida por el rey nuestro señor a averiguar y castigar la muerte de los religiosos que mataron en aquella lengua*, St. Augustine, San Pedro and other places, October 4, 1597 to November 16, 1597, AGI, Santo Domingo,224, R.5, N.31, block 2, fol. 1-26.

²⁵⁵ *Testimonio de la información que se hizo sobre la muerte de Juan Ramírez de Contreras*, St. Augustine, November 30 and December 1, 1597, AGI, Santo Domingo,231, fol. 858-863v.

Méndez de Canzo notified the Crown of these edicts upon his first opportunity to send correspondence.²⁵⁶ But once again, the King refused to authorize enslaving the Florida natives in any way, and ordered that “you shall not permit enslavement or servitude for any period of time among said Indians nor among those that have heretofore been taken.”²⁵⁷ However, the King’s letter did not reach its destination for over a year,²⁵⁸ and in the meantime, several Indigenous persons were enslaved.

In late 1598, the governor informed the King that he had ordered an attack against those responsible for Contreras’s death, and that fifty-four Indigenous people had been taken prisoner. Canzo then distributed them throughout St. Augustine, giving Indigenous women and their children to married soldiers and giving Indigenous men to unmarried soldiers, so that they could be “served by them and treat and comfort them well until Your Majesty orders and commands some other action.”²⁵⁹

When the letter in which the King prohibited enslavement of Indigenous people finally reached St. Augustine over a year later, the governor had to issue the following decree:

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[...] Therefore, it is ordered and announced to all persons of this city and officials and soldiers of the presidio that they are not to forcibly keep any male or female Indian from said provinces in their service under the title of slave, nor may they be served by them except with the willing consent of said natives, paying them what is fair and moderate, with said Indians being content and satisfied, and by no other means, under penalty of punishment with the requisite severity for that person or those persons who act against this order and proclamation and continue to receive service from said Indians by force; this order shall also be understood likewise for those taken from Surruque and those from Guale [...]²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ *Carta del gobernador de Florida Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo al rey*, St. Augustine, February 23, 1598, AGI, Santo Domingo,224, R.5, N.31, fol. 148–159.

²⁵⁷ *Carta del rey al gobernador de Florida Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo*, Madrid, November 9, 1598, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2528, fol. 247v.–252v.

²⁵⁸ It reached St. Augustine on January 18, 1600, as we will see.

²⁵⁹ *Carta del gobernador de Florida Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo al rey*, St. Augustine, November 14, 1598, AGI, Santo Domingo,224, R.5, N.34, fol. 215–217v.

²⁶⁰ *Auto y pregón del gobernador Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo sobre la libertad de los indios*, St. Augustine, January 31, 1600, AGI, Santo Domingo,224, R.5, N.36, fol. 16r.–16v.

This order marked the end of this late episode of Indigenous enslavement in Florida, which would cause some unpleasantness for Governor Canzo during his trial of residence [*juicio de residencia*].²⁶¹

6. By Way of Conclusion

The evidence presented in this study reveals a previously unpublished, multifaceted view of the Spanish system of slavery in Florida in the late 16th and early 17th century, thereby helping reduce the historiographic lacuna on this topic. This study has analyzed numerous aspects of slavery in Florida during the nearly forty years immediately prior to the well-known arrival of “twenty & odd” slaves in the English colony of Virginia in 1619. Although there were some slaves owned by private individuals in Florida before 1582, the arrival of the first contingent of the King’s slaves in St. Augustine in that year represents a critical milestone in the history of slavery in North America. This event marked the beginning of slavery as an institutional practice in that territory and prompted the creation of a distinct system of slavery by the Spanish in Florida.

To attend to the needs of the fort in St. Augustine, King Philip II chose to send two contingents of slaves: the first, mentioned above, in 1582, and the second in 1597. In consultation with the Council of the Indies, the Crown also set out the main directives for the operational and economic management of royal slaves in Florida:

²⁶¹ One of the charges made against Gonzalo de Méndez de Canzo during his trial of residence was that the war he led against these Indigenous people was unjust and that he enslaved several of them. This charge was absolved by the residence judge Pedro de Ibarra, his successor. However, the Council of the Indies revoked Ibarra's decision and sentenced Canzo to eight years of leave from employment in the Indies. Canzo turned to the King, who overturned and nullified that sentence by royal letter in November of 1608. In: *El almirante Gonzalo Méndez de Cancio = Pide se le alce la suspensión de los ocho años que fue condenado por sentencia del consejo en la residencia del oficio de gobernador y capitán general de las provincias de La florida habiendo pedido lo mismo en 10 de febrero de 606 se decretó lo acordado*, circa 1606, AGI, Santo Domingo, 232, fol. 366-376v. And in: *Real cédula a Gonzalo Méndez de Cancio que fue gobernador de La florida haciéndole merced de perdonarle el tiempo que le queda por cumplir de la condena a suspensión de oficio a que fue condenado*, El Pardo, November 8, 1608, AGI, Indiferente, 449, L. A.1, fol. 266v.-267.

authority over them lay with the governor, and they were not to represent an expense against the province's *situado*. The royal authorities in Florida expanded upon the instructions they received from Spain; they appointed a slave overseer and designed a system of slave labor that was divided into two main categories: work in the service of the King and jobs that generated income—known as *aprovechamientos*—by which they were to compensate for their expenses. The costs associated with slaves, however—their food, clothing, and healthcare—were not fully offset by this revenue, and yet the annual cost of keeping a royal slave was a mere 6% to 18% the cost of keeping a soldier.

The arrival of royal slaves led to the implementation of a Spanish system of slavery in Florida, where, as in many other matters, Cuba served as a model. It suffices to note that the first contingent of slaves came from Havana, where they had already been enslaved for ten years; the figure of the slave overseer was taken from Cuba; and the closest slave market was located in Havana. That said, Florida also developed its own approach to certain matters. The clearest example of this is probably healthcare: unlike elsewhere in the Spanish empire, in Florida, Black slaves received the same medical treatment as was given to Spaniards.

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The provisions given to the King's slaves in Florida were sufficient for the high-intensity physical activity they performed and did not differ, at least in terms of the kinds of food received, from what soldiers and Franciscans ate. However, it is important to note that they were often given food in poor condition and that their diet had little variety, meaning it was deficient in several essential nutrients.

In the early 17th century, Spain reconsidered the usefulness of maintaining a presence in St. Augustine, but this question was quickly forgotten when the English established Jamestown in 1607. Even so, the Crown's enthusiasm for the undertaking in Florida was never the same as it had been in the 16th century. Consequently, the number of royal slaves in St. Augustine dropped from forty-two in

1597 to eleven in 1618. The governor of Florida then requested a third contingent of slaves, which had still not arrived in Florida fifteen years later, despite repeated requests from the authorities.

Inversely, the number of slaves owned by private individuals in St. Augustine trended upward in tandem with the city's economic development. In the 1500's, this population, estimated to consist of twenty people by the end of the century, was enslaved by the city's elite. But by 1606, there were approximately seventy people enslaved by private individuals, and the average social profile of a slaveowner had decreased in prestige.

The Black population in St. Augustine at the turn of the century made up approximately 12% of the city's 500 inhabitants; this percentage gradually increased to 15-18% during the first decade of the 17th century. Furthermore, despite the inverse relationship between the number of royal slaves and slaves owned by private individuals, the King of Spain was the largest slaveowner in Florida throughout the period studied here. At the turn of the century, two out of every three slaves in St. Augustine belonged to the King.

Although we trust that this study will constitute a significant contribution to our knowledge of slavery in Spanish Florida, there is much more work to be done to achieve a thorough understanding of the subject. In this regard, we will allow ourselves to suggest a few lines of study that we hope will spur on other researchers:

- Comparing the topic of this study and our understanding of slavery in other parts of the Americas in the same era would enrich our findings and help us understand this study's discoveries; it would also shed light on which aspects of slavery in Florida were unique to the region.

- The parish ledgers in St. Augustine can help us understand the social relationships between slaves, the number of slaves owned by private individuals, the profile of their owners, questions of miscegenation, religiosity, etc.
- It is possible that the instances of white and Indigenous slavery addressed in this study were unique; however, it would be interesting to further investigate this topic.
- This study's methodology could be applied to successive periods of time in order to achieve a complete portrait of slavery in the so-called "First Spanish Period" (1565-1763).
- In 1619, two systems of slavery began to coexist in North America. Therefore, we believe that this study could again challenge Tannenbaum's theses, and his critics' opinions, about both systems.

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Finally, it is not our intention to participate in the heated debate that the controversial *1619 Project* has prompted in the U.S. That project's claims and implications go far beyond the mere origin of slavery on U.S. territory. However, in this regard, we wish to again note that our study reveals the existence of a Spanish system of slavery in present-day U.S. territory nearly forty years prior to 1619. There is no doubt, then, that the claims of *The 1619 Project* rest on a mistaken historical moment. Neglecting this fact would represent a return to an Anglocentric vision of U.S. history—which had seemingly already been overcome—and obscuring nearly forty years of African American history in North America.

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APPENDIX I

Shifts in the number of royal slaves in Florida from the arrival of the first contingent
in 1582 to the request for a third in 1618

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	No. of individuals			Information on the number of slaves in the document referenced	AGI Reference
	Total	Men	Women		
01/22/1582	30	23	7	The thirty Blacks that Your Majesty awarded for the service and reconstruction of the fort of St. Augustine arrived well, the twenty-three males and six females.	Santo Domingo,229, fol. 46v.
07/17/1582	29	23	6	Two of them arrived sick with yaws, were sent for treatment, the Black woman died, they were husband and wife.	Santo Domingo,231, fol. 193-194.
06/01/1586	27	21	6	Twenty-one male Blacks and six elderly female Blacks who were here since June of said year of eighty-six, when said fire occurred.	Santo Domingo,229, fol. 315-324.
05/12/1591	25			Of the Black slaves of Your Majesty here, five have died, and twenty-five remain.	Santo Domingo,229, fol. 87.
02/10/1592	23			207 varas of sackcloth were given and distributed among 23 male and female Black slaves of His Majesty in this <i>presidio</i> for their dress.	Contaduría,946, fol. 124.
10/02/1593	26			I command that upon receiving this notice, you send to Florida the said six enslaved sawyers and two carpenters, bringing said four or five from Florida so that they may work in the port of Havana.	Santo Domingo,2528,L.1, fol. 206v.-207.
05/12/1596	22	16	6	One hundred and sixty-eight varas of coarse sackcloth were used to dress twenty-two Black male and female slaves of the King Our Lord, the sixteen men and four women, at a rate of eight varas for each [woman] and for the two girls, four varas each.	Contaduría,949, fol. 292.
05/16/1597	42			They [the twenty slaves] were already received in the <i>presidio</i> of St. Augustine on the 16 th day of the month of May of 97, where they were delivered to the overseer who had in his charge other [slaves] of Your Majesty here.	Santo Domingo,229, fol. 128-129.
01/19/1598	40			320 varas of coarse sackcloth that were given and distributed among forty male and female Blacks of Your Majesty who serve in these provinces, for them to dress their persons.	Contaduría,950.
08/03/1598	40			In this <i>presidio</i> are forty Black slaves of Your Majesty, for labors therein, the twenty who came recently last year in ninety-seven by Your Majesty's order.	Santo Domingo,229, fol. 109-113.

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Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	No. of individuals			Information on the number of slaves in the document referenced	AGI Reference
	Total	Men	Women		
10/31/1598	39			<i>Por recaudo de 31 de octubre de 1598, 308 varas de sayal basto de la Nueva España y 38 frazadas mestizas y una frazada blanca que se gastó en dar vestuario y cobijas a los negros</i>	Contaduría,951.
01/24/1600	39			For collection the 31st of October of 1598, 308 varas of coarse sackcloth from New Spain and thirty-eight "mestiza" blankets and one white blanket were used for the dress and warmth of the Blacks.	Contaduría,950.
01/28/1600	38			213 varas of coarse sackcloth from New Spain /.../ were given and delivered to Pedro Pérez, a tailor and soldier of this <i>presidio</i> , so that he could make of them thirty-nine garments for the same number of male and female Black slaves of Your Majesty.	Contaduría,948, fol. 1329.
11/18/1600	37			38 coarse sackcloth garments from New Spain that were made by order of said governor for thirty-eight Black slaves of Your Majesty.	Contaduría,951.
07/07/1601	37			Two hundred and sixty-six varas and one span of coarse sackcloth and thirty-seven black blankets from New Spain that were given to the male and female Black slaves of His Majesty for their dress and warmth.	Contaduría,951.
11/16/1601	37			Two hundred and twenty varas of coarse sackcloth from New Spain and thirty-seven black blankets that were given and used to dress and warmth of His Majesty's Black slaves.	Contaduría,948, fol. 1349.
01/23/1602	36			Given and paid to Juan Fernández the tailor for the aforementioned making of thirty-seven coarse sackcloth garments from His Majesty's male and female Black slaves.	Santo Domingo,229, fol. 311-314.
01/06/1603	37			In this <i>presidio</i> , there remain thirty-six male and female slaves of Your Majesty, of the old ones who were first brought from Havana, and of the twenty that Your Majesty ordered sent in the last year of ninety-seven.	Contaduría,957, fol. 50, asiento 90.
02/12/1604	34			34 "mestiza" blankets were given to the Black slaves.	Contaduría,957, fol. 70, asiento 133.
01/31/1606	25			It is confirmed that 218 varas and three spans of coarse sackcloth were used to dress twenty-five of His Majesty's male and female slaves.	Contaduría,957, fol. 127, asiento 242.
02/28/1607	24			The Black slaves were given 24 fine white blankets.	Contaduría,957, fol. 154, asiento 305.
01/04/1609	22			The Black slaves were given 22 fine white blankets.	Contaduría,957, fol. 219, asiento 425.

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	No. of individuals			Information on the number of slaves in the document referenced	AGI Reference
	Total	Men	Women		
01/06/1610	22			Spent on twenty-two garments for His Majesty's male and female slaves in this <i>presidio</i> in said year.	Contaduría,957, fol. 251, asiento 487.
07/15/1611	11			Spent on dressing eleven of His Majesty's Blacks in the service of this <i>presidio</i> .	Contaduría,957, fol. 282, asiento 550.
04/04/1618	11			In that city there are only eleven elderly Blacks unable to work.	México,1094,L.20, fol. 47v-48r.
05/15/1621				There is much need for Blacks because those who had been here are dying of age and exhaustion.	Santo Domingo,225, R.3,N.12.

Table 8. Shifts in the number of royal slaves in Florida from the arrival of the first contingent in 1582 to the request for a third in 1618

ANEXO II

Diet of Royal Slaves in Florida between September of 1598 and April of 1602

The responsibilities of the royal business manager included monitoring the ins and outs of the royal warehouses within his territory. Thus, business managers' accounting ledgers are of particular interest, as they enable us to understand how all kinds of supplies and provisions were consumed, including the food given to royal slaves.

In February of 1598, Governor Gonzalo Méndez de Canzo notified the Crown of the dismissal and imprisonment of business manager Alonso de las Alas for certain irregularities in the execution of duties, and Juan López de Avilés was appointed as his replacement.²⁶² Avilés held this position until October 24, 1601,²⁶³ when he was relieved of his charge by Méndez de Canzo "over a certain displeasure he took in him",²⁶⁴ and Pedro López de San Julián was appointed as his replacement.²⁶⁵ Thus, in the time period included in this appendix, the two royal business managers of Florida were Juan López de Avilés and Pedro López de San Julián.

These business managers kept accounting ledgers, which are currently held in the General Archive of the Indies (*Archivo General de Indias*, AGI) under catalog numbers *Contaduría,950* and *Contaduría,951*. However, the Archive's description of these ledgers is inaccurate: *Contaduría,950* is described as the ledgers of Juan López de Avilés, when in reality they are the ledgers of Pedro López de San Julián; conversely, *Contaduría,951* is listed as the ledgers of San Julián, when in reality they

²⁶² *Carta del gobernador de Florida Gonzalo Méndez de Cano al rey*, St. Augustine, February 23, 1598, AGI, Santo Domingo,224, R.5, N.31, fol. 148-159v.

²⁶³ As stated in: AGI, *Contaduría,951*, Caja de San Agustín de La florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y municiones. Dadas por Pedro López de San Julián, factor, y tomadas por Pedro Redondo Villegas.

²⁶⁴ *Carta de Alonso de las Alas al rey*, St. Augustine, January 24, 1602, AGI, Santo Domingo,229, fol. 335 – 337.

²⁶⁵ *Idem*.

are the ledgers of Juan López de Avilés. We are making note of this error here, but we have retained it throughout this study in order to align with the information kept in the catalog of the AGI.

The table in this appendix, therefore, has been prepared based on the following documentary sources:

- *Asientos contables*, San Agustín September of 1598 to October 24, 1601, AGI, Contaduría,951, Caja de San Agustín de la Florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y municiones. Dadas por Pedro López de San Julián, factor, y tomadas por Pedro Redondo Villegas.
- *Asientos contables*, San Agustín, October 24, 1601 to April of 1602, AGI, Contaduría,950, Caja de San Agustín de la Florida. Cuentas de bastimentos, armas y municiones. 1597 a 1601. Número 1. Cuentas dadas por Juan López de Avilés, factor. 1597-1601.

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Furthermore, as is well known, in December of 1924 a fire destroyed nine bundles from the AGI's accountancy section and seriously damaged another 750, affecting the readability of their contents to a greater or lesser degree. These damaged bundles include all the documents from that section used for this study. Thus, this table is missing data from *Contaduría,951* corresponding to two months each from the years 1599, 1600, and 1601. For those months, we have been unable to read complete information about slaves' food provisions and we have chosen not to include partial information that could distort the result.

Finally, in *Contaduría,950* and *Contaduría,951*, the data pertaining to corn, cornmeal,hardtack, and meat consumption are expressed in pounds; consumption of oil and salt in arrobias; and lard in *botijas peruleras*, the era's habitual units of measurement. However, to facilitate understanding of this study, we have converted

these measurements into kilograms and liters, knowing that an *arroba* is equal to 25 pounds and 11.502kg, and that a *botija perulera* had a capacity of 11.5 liters.

The result is shown in the table below:

Product	Whole corn	Cornmeal	Wheat flour	Oil	Salt	Lard	Beef jerky	Pork jerky	Hardtack from New Spain
Unit	Kg	Kg	Kg	Kg	Kg	Liters	Kg	Kg	Kg
YEAR 1598									
September	1429						21	21	
October	1519				7,4		112		
November	1470				5,5				
December	1495						58	58	
YEAR 1599									
January	1358	7		5,8	2,3				
February		5106							
April		999	6	11,5	11,5				
May	203	840	29	11,5	11,5				
July		984			5,8				
August	1454	32			11,5	34,5			
September	1454	28			11,5	11,5			
October	1454	11			5,8		69	92	
November	1353	50			5,8		69	92	
December	1391	89					30	137	
YEAR 1600									
January	1391	43		5,8				344	
February	1280	50						109	
March	1476	21			11,5	23			
May	694	21			11,5	23			493
June						23			952
July		762				23			218
September		952						145	
October	1389	3		5,8	11,5			168	22
November	1351							148	24
December	1397			8,6	11,5				24

Product	Whole corn	Cornmeal	Wheat flour	Oil	Salt	Lard	Beef jerky	Pork jerky	Hardtack from New Spain
Unit	Kg	Kg	Kg	Kg	Kg	Liters	Kg	Kg	Kg
YEAR 1601									
January	1363	38		8,6	11,5				9
February	1409			5,8	11,5				17
April	1358			11,5	11,5				19
May	1403			11,5	11,5				20
July	462	247						125	370
August		951		5,8	11,5			167	
September	1387							110	
October	1310								
November	1322			11,5	11,5				32
December	1433			11,5	11,5				
YEAR 1602									
January	1352			11,5	11,5				
February	1101			17,3	11,5				
April	1229			11,5	11,5				
January	1180			17,3	11,5				

Table 9. Rations given to the King's slaves in Florida between 1598 and 1602.

Prepared by the author with information from AGI, Contaduría,950 and AGI, Contaduría,951.

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