

Spirit of a Nation Part 2

Guiding Question: What choices and dilemmas did Apalachee chiefs face in responding to the arrival of Spanish missionaries in the early 1600s?

Original Text: *Lauersdorf, Aubrey. "An Apalachee Revolt?: Reconceptualizing Violence in Seventeenth-Century Apalachee." Florida Historical Quarterly 100, 1 (2021): 30-31*

While the Spaniards viewed Franciscan friars as a means to gain power over Indigenous people through religious instruction and conversion, Timucua, Apalachee and other Indigenous leaders often saw Franciscans as a way to augment their spiritual power and, by extension, their authority in their towns and politics. Holatas' status had long been rooted in spiritual power, and holatas and others from elite lineages tried to control access to spiritual symbols to demonstrate this power. According to archaeologist John Worth, Timucuan holatas could easily integrate missionaries into their towns as "subordinate religious practitioners within and beneath chiefly authority, just as indigenous religious practitioners had done before contact." For both Timucuan and Apalachee holatas, this was part of practicing spiritual diplomacy. Political leaders in Indigenous Florida "who chose to ally themselves with the Spanish and to convert to Catholicism understood this as a political and spiritual act of self-empowerment rather than the first step in a slippery slope of assimilation," argues Denise Bossy.

Adapted passage:

The Spaniards saw Franciscan friars as a way to control **Indigenous** people by teaching them about Christianity and converting them. The Spanish believed that if they could convince the Indigenous people to adopt Spanish culture and religion, then it would be easier to govern and control them. However, leaders or **holatas** from the Timucua and Apalachee tribes often viewed the Franciscan friars as a way to strengthen their own spiritual power and authority in their communities.

The holatas, or leaders, had a long history of being connected to spiritual power. They worked to control access to important spiritual symbols to show their strength.

Archaeologist John Worth explains that Timucuan holatas could easily include missionaries in their towns, allowing them to serve as religious helpers under the authority of the chief, just like Indigenous religious leaders had done before the Spanish arrived. For both Timucuan and Apalachee holatas, this was part of a practice called spiritual **diplomacy**.

According to Denise Bossy, a historian studying Native groups in Florida, the political leaders in Indigenous Florida who chose to ally with the Spanish and convert to Catholicism saw this as a way to empower and strengthen themselves, rather than a step toward losing their culture.

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Warm up Activity:

Directions: Read the definition of diplomacy below and answer the questions that follow.

Diplomacy (n.) - The practice of communicating and working with different groups to solve problems, build understanding, and achieve peaceful relationships.	
1. Give an example of how you might use diplomacy in your everyday life.	2. How do the sisters' actions in Part 3, such as preparing food for the Spanish and accepting gifts from Kamasa, demonstrate diplomacy?

Text Analysis: Summary Activity

Directions: As you read each section, summarize each passage in your own words. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Spaniards saw Franciscan friars as a way to control Indigenous people by teaching them about Christianity and converting them. The Spanish believed that if they could convince the Indigenous people to adopt Spanish culture and religion, then it would be easier to govern and control them.	Section 1: Summarize in your own words:
However, leaders or holatas from the Timucua and Apalachee tribes often viewed the Franciscan friars as a way to strengthen their own spiritual power and authority in their communities. The holatas, or leaders, had a long history of being connected to spiritual power. They worked to control access to important spiritual symbols to show their strength within their communities.	Section 2: Summarize in your own words:

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Archaeologist John Worth explains that Timucuan holatas could easily include missionaries in their towns, allowing them to serve as religious helpers under the authority of the chief, just like Indigenous religious leaders had done before the Spanish arrived. For both Timucuan and Apalachee holatas, this was part of a practice called spiritual diplomacy .	Section 3: Summarize in your own words:
According to Denise Bossy, a historian studying Indigenous groups in Florida, the political leaders in Indigenous Florida who chose to ally with the Spanish and convert to Catholicism saw this as a way to empower and strengthen themselves, rather than a step toward losing their culture.	Section 4: Summarize in your own words:

Word Bank

Holatas (n.) - Chiefs or leaders within the Native communities of South Florida.

Diplomacy (n.) - The practice of communicating and working with different groups to solve problems, build understanding, and achieve peaceful relationships.

Indigenous (adj.) - The original people of a particular place

After-Reading Questions

1. Why did the Spaniards view Franciscan friars as important in their interactions with Indigenous people?
2. How did the holatas from the Timucua and Apalachee tribes view the presence of Franciscan friars in their communities?
3. According to historian Denise Bossy, what did the Indigenous political leaders hope to gain by allying with the Spanish and converting to Catholicism?
4. In part 2, did you choose to have the friar involved in your sister's recovery? How might accepting the friar's help threaten Apalachee spirituality?
5. Why do you think that Father Serrano dislikes it when the Apalachee include the cross alongside dancing and healing rituals? Why do you think the Spanish are opposed to Apalachee spiritual practices?