

The Expedition of
Hernando De Soto

Between 1539 and 1543



By
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HERNANDO DE SOTO

The story of Hernando de Soto is one of the most important stories of the 1500s. I have tried to show the importance of de Soto's expedition and the exploration of North America, and at the same time, show the cruelty of de Soto and his army toward our native Americans.

For references, I have used a number of books about de Soto -- primarily **HERNANDO DE SOTO AMONG THE APALACHEES** and John Swanton's **INDIANS OF THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES**, but the heart of the story comes from Charles Hudson's **KNIGHTS OF SPAIN, WARRIORS OF THE SUN**. Charles Hudson, as no other writer, has shown the great injustices on a day to day basis that was brought on our native Americans. I follow Hudson's book very closely and urge anyone who is interested in this story to read his book in its entirety. I have barely scratched the surface of excellent detailed information that he has in his book about de Soto, the Indians and the land that de Soto passed over with his army. To better understand the Spanish cruelty, you need to see the illustration he put into his book showing a large stump with an Indian about to have his hand cut off. Around the stump are many hands that have been severed as other Indians are awaiting their punishment of losing one or both hands.

There is a book entitled **HERNANDO DE SOTO AMONG THE APALACHEES** by Charles R. Ewen and John H. Hann. On the last page of this book the final paragraph sums up de Soto's expedition very well. It makes the observation that the expedition was one of the most important events in the New World during the 16th century. De Soto's army explored almost 4,000 miles between 1539 and 1543 in Florida and the southeast to Texas. This expedition of his was the most impressive of Spain's attempts to conquer and settle the territory of our Gulf States. The book notes that de Soto's army was merely the vanguard of what would become the true European invasion into North America. This expedition marked both a beginning and an end. It was the beginning of the Spanish involvement in

the continental United States, and so sadly, the end of the traditional way of life of its first inhabitants, our native Indians.

What a high price the native Americans paid for de Soto and his 620 man army plus 100 slaves and all his horses to pass through their villages. If they stood and fought, they were killed or they became prisoners or slaves or eaten alive by giant dogs. Many were tortured or burned to death. Some were forced to march along with de Soto's expedition in chains.

As de Soto's group marched, they took the food and supplies and slaves from the villages. Consequently, many Indians starved to death in the cold months. Later the white mans' diseases would spread through their villages like wildfire and many more would perish long after his exit. This will be discussed in detail.

Now let's take a close look at Hernando de Soto. He was born in the small town of Xeres de los Caballeros in the Province of Estremadura in Spain in the year 1500. When he was only 14 in 1514, he accompanied Pedro Arias de Avila when de Avila became the Commander of Castilla del Oro. By the time young de Soto was 20 years of age, he had become a Captain, and in the next 10 years he was in constant warfare with Indians and civil broils. He became a well-seasoned and efficient Captain. De Soto came from a poor family, but he was very ambitious, ambitious enough to become a superb horseman and the best lancer in the New World he would soon enter. De Soto's ambition led him to the New World to become rich – even though he left Spain with nothing but his sword, his shield, and a burning ambition.

On February 25th, 1514, de Soto sailed from Spain to Panama. He was in his element, and with a teacher like Pedro Arias de Avila, a man well known for his ruthlessness and cruelty, young de Soto, now in Panama, continued his schooling in the art of killing and conquering the Panamanian Indians. De Soto and his men were surrounded by hundreds of Castilla del Oro colonists who were starving to death. Young de Soto learned how to raid the surrounding Indian villages and steal their food and supplies with great brutality. He then left there and went to Nicaragua.

By 1530 de Soto and his partner Herman Ponce de Leon were among the richest men in Nicaragua. Most of their income came from the brutal enslavement and sale of local natives. De Soto had large dogs, some trained to catch and hold, and others, like Greyhounds, trained to attack and eat

victims. The dogs were used widely by de Soto in his great Florida and southeastern exploration. The Indians had no defense against these terrible animals they could not outrun.

In the year of 1526 through 1527, the cruel conquistador Pizarro invaded Peru at a time when there was a great division among the Incas. Pizarro took full advantage of the Inca Civil Wars. Plague and anarchy were the Spanish allies, and the Spanish army even though vastly outnumbered, they slaughtered the Incas by the thousands. De Soto was in his glory and played an important part in capturing the Aztec leader Atahualpa. Atahualpa showed Pizarro where his gold and silver were hidden, but Pizarro executed him anyway. When the wealth was divided, de Soto received a portion that was the third largest share after Francisco Pizarro and Hernando Pizarro. De Soto continued to loot and extort all the gold and silver he could lay his hands on. De Soto was now a very wealthy man.

For a time he served the governor of Cuzco. It was here that de Soto took a beautiful Inca noble woman as his mistress. They had a daughter who was named Leonor after his mother.

De Soto returned to Spain in 1536 with all his gold and silver worth about 100,000 ducats. A serious quarrel broke out between him and his friend and partner, Ponce de Leon with the matter reaching the courts. When de Soto reached Seville, his gold and silver were seized. A year later he was paid back in Granada with six annuities minus 50,000 ducats. But in return, King Charles V granted de Soto the right to conquer La Florida, and de Soto was appointed Adelantado (top leader). Cuba was thrown in the deal also. De Soto now took over all royal contracts formerly held by Juan Ponce de Leon's peninsula Florida and Narvaez' Gulf Coast and Ayllon's Atlantic Coast and all the vast territory contained in these three areas. The exploration would have to be done with de Soto's personal fortune. Now as Governor of Cuba, he could extract the necessary provisions and supplies to get his army underway.

In seemingly perfect timing, Cabeza de Vaca returned to Spain with stories and written accounts of his survival from the fated Narvaez expedition. His account led his acquaintances to believe that La Florida was a rich land. As we have previously seen, de Soto was generally depicted as a hero in the popular culture of the United States. He was the perfect man to drive his army through the New World's Indians. He was ambitious and greedy. He

was intelligent and fearless, expertly skilled in all forms of warfare, and he wished to conquer and govern a portion of the New World. He had absolutely no compunction about killing anyone in his way or defined as an enemy. He had no apparent qualms about subjecting people to mutilation, torture and horrible death.

When de Soto began his expedition plans, he quickly chose some of his tried and trusty battle-worthy officers. This included Luis de Moscoso y Alvarado, Nuno de Tovar and Juan Rodriquez Lobillo. De Soto's army was held together by powerful bonds of locality and kinship of the 257 known survivors of the expedition. A substantial company of Portuguese some who had fought with him in North Africa elected to go. It is impossible to know how many people were included in de Soto's army. One list suggests he had signed on 657 men, but this list omits de Soto himself and his entourage of slaves – maybe 700 would be a better count. Six of the company were known to be women. The army consisted of mostly educated men skilled in a wide range of occupations – most were considered commoners.

De Soto's journey really begins in Cuba. De Soto's fleet approached the harbor of Santiago, Cuba on June 7, 1538 to a hero's welcome. The people of Santiago were very glad to meet their new Governor. While in Santiago, de Soto was visited by Vasco Porcallo de Figuerora, the wealthiest man in Cuba. He acquired his great wealth through the capturing and selling of slaves. He asked to join de Soto's expedition to catch more slaves. So he was appointed Lt. General of the Fleet and Army. Vasco promised to take a number of servants as well as stores of food and equipment. He brought along a large number of horses and a herd of pigs for the expedition.

For final preparation for the expedition, de Soto sailed to Havana. During the winter of 1538 de Soto sent out an advance party to scout the Florida west coast for exploration of the Bay de Soto wanted to land in (probably Tampa Bay). The scouting party consisted of officers and fifty men in a caravel and two smaller bergantines to explore the Bay for a safe landing place. It took them two months to decide on the best place, so they wisely brought back two Indians they had captured on the coast to serve as guides and interpreters. The Indians told them there was much gold and corn.

On May 10, 1539, de Soto completed his Will before he left Cuba. As history will soon show us, it was a good move. On Sunday, May 18, 1531,

de Soto's ships, men, animals and supplies sailed from Cuba to begin their expedition in La Florida – a place surely to be full of riches like Peru. The expedition consisted of nine ships, five of them large ships, two caravels and two smaller bergantines. On Sunday, May 25, 1539, de Soto's fleet sighted a string of sandy island off the coast of La Florida. Special Note: It seems that no one knows for sure just where de Soto's fleet ended up on the southwest coast of Florida, but it is now that thought his ships sailed through Boca Grande but unloaded at both Cape Haze and Locust Point. With considerable difficulty, the entrance of Tampa Bay had been located. There are maps which indicate the location of Tampa may have at that time been elsewhere than where it is known today. It took 5 days to pilot the ships into the harbor from Monday the 26th until Friday the 30th.

De Soto anchored his ships about four leagues from the village of Ozita. The dominant chief was in Ozita. On May 30th the horses started swimming to shore. It did not take long for the carnage to begin. Vasco Porcallo was already hunting for slaves, and when they came upon some Indians, the Indians put up a resistance, and two of the Indians were killed. One horse died along with the two Indians. The Spanish discussed the power of the Indian bow, and would soon be in awe of its power. The Spanish invaders, for the very first time, saw the power of the bow that had struck the horse so hard that the arrow passed through the horse's cloth, saddle tree and pack saddle and still carried enough force so a third of the arrow penetrated the horse's rib cage. The Spanish intruders would hear and experience much more about these arrows in the months and years to follow. On May 31st, all the horses had been unloaded, and the nearby Indians had all fled.

On June 1st, the men who went ashore braved mud and undergrowth but finally found themselves at the mouth of the Little Manatee River. Eventually, de Soto landed an army estimated at 620 men, slaves and perhaps 220 horses. The Indians who saw the ships being unloaded could not believe their eyes as the Spanish soldiers unloaded metal helmets, armor, knives, swords, shirts made of chain mail and lances 12 feet long. They saw the black powder arquebus, leg armor and cross bows.

De Soto's first camp was at the now deserted Indian village of Ozita. It consisted of only about 7 small houses.

The de Soto chroniclers describe the town of Ozita with what archeologists have learned about the Safety Harbor culture who were ancient people who

had lived around Tampa Bay. The Withlacooche River appears to have been the boundary line separating Safety Harbor cultures from the cultures that are found farther north. De Soto's information gathered from the Tampa area and from the Safety Harbor people showed they greatly feared, and with good reason, the fierce Apalachee people who were a Mississippi people living in northwest Florida. (The Mississippi people being more advance and engaging in agriculture).

De Soto now met the Chief of Ozita who had earlier fled but was now back. On June 3rd, de Soto took formal possession of the country for Charles V. The first Americans (Indians) no longer owned their land in the eyes of Spain. To add to the strange army of de Soto, the natives saw a parade of domestic animals – the Spanish horses, their dogs and their pigs. There were about 200 horses, as mentioned before, an uncounted number of large and fierce dogs, highly trained to obey their Spanish masters against any enemy. There were also highly trained catch dogs to catch the runaway Indians and hold them until they could be put into chains as porters or be slave laborers. If the Indians threatened the Spanish, Greyhounds were unleashed on the marked Indians. The dogs were probably kept hungry and were trained to catch and eat the Indians alive. There must have been several hundred pigs tended by both dogs and swine herders. Picture if you will, this fearful parade invading the Indian settlements which were mostly just small camps of 300 or less, and everything they owned was used and destroyed.

It was the mounted armored soldiers (all expert riders) with their terrible lances that decimated so many thousands of unprepared Indians. Hand to hand combat at which the Indians excelled was rarely possible. The Indians soon learned to kill all the horses they could. The Spanish attack dogs were often protected with a spiked leather or wide steel collar so the Indians could not choke the attacking dog. Also a number of the attack dogs' bodies were protected with jackets of thick quilted cotton armor. These dogs were taught to kill by attacking a man's body and disemboweling him. Often they would attack a man's genitals. The dogs were probably trained in Central and South America doing the same things.

De Soto soon found his following army in a country with no roads or good trails, and his interpreters had escaped. One Indian from Ozita told de Soto about a Spaniard named Juan Ortiz and used the Spanish word for gold – oro. This was like manna from Heaven to de Soto. To find this Juan Ortiz, de Soto sent out scouting parties in several directions. One advanced party

got its first taste of Indian resistance. The Indians managed to wound six soldiers one of whom soon died. One of the Indians separated from the other Indians and approached the Spanish soldier who bore down on him with his lance. He knocked the lance aside and began to shout "Seville" and asked, "For the Love of God and St. Mary, do not kill me. I am a Christian and a native of Seville, and my name is Juan Ortiz". Ortiz asked that the attack be stopped against the other Indians, so a message was sent to Chief Mococho saying there had been a mistake. Through his years of captivity, Ortiz looked just like an Indian and used a bow and arrow. It took Ortiz four days to regain his native Spanish language, for he had not spoken it for 12 years. It turned out that Ortiz was from Seville, the son of a wealthy noble family. He was captured by the Indians when the ship he was on ran aground. Ortiz was treated horribly, because of what members of the Narvaez' expedition did to the people of Chief Orita. Chief Orita decided to burn Ortiz to death, but one of the Chief's daughters saved his life and brought him back to good health from his massive burns. Later Ortiz protected the body of a child from a wolf. Ortiz killed the wolf, and the child was saved, so Ortiz was treated well for three years. When Ortiz learned he was to be killed, he fled to the great Chief at Mococho where Mococho wanted him as a subject. Ortiz then swore his allegiance to Mococho. When Mococho learned of the Spanish intrusion, he sent Ortiz to the Spanish to save himself and his people. Ortiz joined de Soto and was treated like royalty. He was badly needed as an interpreter.

On June 7, the chief, Mococho, returned to his village. De Soto's soldiers captured two Indian women. The Spanish would now have their first resistance. A woman named Lobillo and nine warriors fired arrows at the Spanish captors. One Spaniard was killed, and four others received wounds. At the same time de Soto sent Porcallo to the next chief they were to meet. His name was Urriparacoxi. The Spanish learned an Indian woman held captive had sent word to Urriparacoxi that he should not return. She was then promptly thrown to the dogs to eat.

Back at Tampa Bay, de Soto sent his larger ships now unloaded back to Cuba. On June 20th, de Soto sent Gallegos with eighty horses and one hundred footmen (Infantry men) out to the place of Urriparacoxi to seek information. About the same time de Soto heard that the Indian Chief Hirrihigua was camped close by. De Soto sent a swivel gun and foot soldiers in his ship's boat to attack the Indians. The Spanish quickly killed or injured the Indians, but the Spanish, much to their surprise, failed with

about the same number of casualties. The remaining Indians quickly disappeared.

Vasco Porcallo, the slave trader, tried to capture some Indians for slaves. They managed to capture a few women before they had to give up. When Vasco Porcallo got back to camp, he and de Soto had a heated argument. Porcallo gathered his slaves and servants, and returned to Cuba leaving behind his food and his herd of hogs.

De Soto's army began its trek northward. He did not know it then, but this would be the land of the fierce Apalachee. De Soto had to frequently give his troops "pep talks" about the treasures ahead, and as de Soto met Indians of other tribes, they were smart enough to tell him about treasures at other places. Now the Indians learned from other Indians about him and told him he should go forward to Ocale. He had to find a place to settle down for the winter.

On July 15, de Soto took leave from Calderon leaving about 100 men to guard the base camp, so he started out in front of a column of 320 people. He chose an easterly direction to find Ocale. Last came the rear guard of horsemen to protect them from behind and prevent any stragglers from defecting or escaping from the expedition. (Unknown to de Soto, his 4,000 mile trip would lead him through a large part of central and north Florida. Then he and his men would pass through the lower fringe of the huge southeastern pine forests of Georgia, central and southern Alabama, parts of lower Mississippi, then west of the Mississippi, through Louisiana and a small part of eastern Texas. Unfortunately, those vast pine forests are mostly gone now).

As de Soto moved forward, he must have passed through "no man's land" between Chief Ozita and Chief Mococho. The first day brought the army to a deserted area around the Alafia River which they crossed with their newly constructed two small foot bridges. On July 16th, they came to a small lake near present day Plant City. It is estimated that the army could probably only make about 15 miles per day. July 17th found the army hot and dry with water much needed. In the evening they bivouacked near the Upper Withlacoochee River for a much needed watering stop. By July 23, the column halted at the present-day Nobleton or Istachatta. On July 24th, he came to Tocaste or a large lake near present-day Floral City. De Soto figured he was not too far from Ocale where they would find their "riches".

On July 25, the main part of the army began moving forward to catch up with de Soto who had ridden up ahead. De Soto had had a brush with some hostile Indians and several Spaniards had been wounded, one horse killed. To make matters worse, they were not finding food supplies. Then they found a small field of immature corn. They ate the immature green ears along with the cobs – ate it all. On July 26th, de Soto came to a village left vacant by the fleeing Indians, but Ortiz persuaded one Indian they found in his dugout to be a guide. The Indians that were caught knew they had to obey or die. Again on July 26th, the Indian guide led de Soto's column into the swamp of Ocale near the present day Turner Camp Road. Once inside the swamp, the Indians would fire arrows at the Spaniards, then HIDE! De Soto, furious at the captured Indian guides, set his dogs on four of the Indians. De Soto had his men build a footbridge across the Withlacooche River to transverse the river on the way to Ocale. De Soto came across a small deserted village. In short order they ate the Indians' supplies of corn, beans and their "small dogs". The Indians continued their scattered attacks. One soldier was wounded and another died. As they came closer to Ocale, de Soto sent out the captured Indians to the Chief of Ocale to tell him and his people they must come out of hiding. Coming even closer to Ocale, de Soto lost several more Spaniards to Indian arrows. The Spanish were only able to kill a few of the hidden Indians.

Northward from Ocale, the Spanish met stiff resistance. It started when de Soto's men went to the Indians of Acuera to take all their food. Acuera is believed to have been in the vicinity of Lake Weir or Lake Griffin. The Indians killed three more Spanish soldiers and wounded several more. One horse was killed. The Spanish captured enough food stores to feed them for three months. You can imagine how many Indians would starve to death after losing their stores of winter foods. On August 11th, de Soto left Ocale in search of Apalachee with 50 horsemen and one hundred foot soldiers. By the end of the first day they came to Itarraholata - a small village located somewhere west of Ocale. The land was opening up more now, and it was much easier for the men on horses to travel and do combat.

The next day, August 12th, they came to Potano which was probably on the west side of Orange Lake. Chief Potano was a powerful chief. His name, Potano, refers to all the Indians living in present-day Alachua County. On August 13th, de Soto and his men were in the vicinity of Gainesville. From there they went to Alachua where a very bad experience was awaiting them.

It is here that de Soto loosened his most vicious dog, Bruto. Bruto was a huge Irish Greyhound. The dog was ordered to catch the fleeing Indians. In just a few minutes, all four Indians were on the ground and soon would be executed.

On August 15th, de Soto and his army arrived at Cholupaha (northern Alachua county near Robinson's Sinks area). The Santa Fe River was high, but on August 16th, 1540 they spent the day building a bridge to cross the river. The next day they came to the Indian village of Aguacaleyquen quite probably on the Ichetucknee River. The natives fled, but one man and one woman were captured and forced to show de Soto where their supply of corn was hidden and to a place where de Soto captured seventeen Indians including the daughter of the Chief. As they traveled northward, the Spaniards found a series of Indian societies (Mississippi period type) that had a strong political and military organization, but they would not compare to the Apalachees up ahead. Here again, the Spanish dogs were set upon the fleeing Indians – Bruto dropping all four.

By September 10th, de Soto had reunited his army. On September 12th, 13th and 14th, de Soto's column rested at a place thought to be in the Peacock-White Lake area near Wellborne. On September 15th, they traveled across a difficult swamp and arrived at Napituca, a small village with plenty of food. This was possibly in the area of Live Oak. Here de Soto took over the Chief's house, and the Indians were friendly. It was here that the Chief of Napituca had hoped to do a surprise attack, but the plan failed because de Soto had been informed of the treachery. The next day four hundred Indians, armed with bows and arrows, were sent to take positions in the woods. When the Indians attacked, the Spanish lancers killed 30 or 40 Indians. The rest of the Indians fled to two lakes and dived into the water swimming from shore. The Spanish soldiers completely surrounded the smaller lakes. One by one the Indians surrendered. De Soto sent some of the Indians who survived back into the lake to take out the now nearly drowned men who had been treading water for so long. Sadly the Spanish took three hundred prisoners from the lake. Among them were six Chiefs including the Chief of Uriutina. The Indians were chained and distributed about as slaves. One Chief sprung on de Soto knocking him unconscious. The Chief was killed by the guards. After this revolt, the soldiers began killing every Indian in sight. Only a few of the Indians survived, and they were slain with halberds and pikes. Some were tied to posts and shot. Several Spaniards were killed in the revolt, but many more would have died

if the Indians were not in chains. The end result – nearly four hundred young Indian men were killed at that time or later would die as slaves in chains. Winter was not far off.

On September 23rd, de Soto and his men left Napituca and traveled to the Suwannee River about where Dowling Park is now located. Across the Suwannee was a large gathering of warriors. This is the place where the horrible dog Bruto died from the Indian arrows. A bridge was built of pine trees, and the army proceeded across. That evening, they came to the village of Uzachile, and like the other villages, it was abandoned. The Spanish stayed there for three days devouring the Indians' winter store of food – all of their corn, beans and pumpkins. After the feast, de Soto sent out two slaving parties, complete with catch dogs and captured about one hundred men and women of Uzachile. As the Indians abandoned their villages, they had little knowledge of huge dogs or horsemen on fast horses. They simply did not run far enough from their homes to escape capture.

On September 30th, the Spaniards came to the village of Asile, the first town subject to the mighty Apalachee. The people tried to flee, but the Spanish were able to capture some women. This must have been on the eastern side of the Aucilla River in the northwest corner of Madison County. The captured women were used to pleasure the soldiers.

On October 1st, they left Asile and arrived at the river swamp of Ivitachuco – the Aucilla River and floodplain. They were just a few miles southeast of present-day Lamont. The River was swift with a swamp on both sides. The Apalachees were testing each step the army took. During the night of October 2nd, the army had completed their bridge and crossed over the River and the swamp. As they pushed forward, Apalachee arrows flew hard and fast at the intruders. The Apalachee warriors' arrows flew from their bows almost like shells from a machine gun. In the length of time it took a soldier to load his weapon at least six or seven arrows were headed his way. The sad news is of course to be expected. As soon as the Spanish reached clear ground the horsemen began lancing the Indians without mercy. By noon on October 3rd, the Spanish had lost only one horse. It is not known how many brave Indians warriors died that day.

On October 4th, the army traveled in a northwesterly direction where Hwy 27 is now. As far as the army could see were fields of corn and other vegetation. As they passed near Lake Catherina near Burnt Mill Creek, the

Apalachee attacked. They had added fences and barricades to slow the Spanish horse lancers. Again they failed, and again the number of Indian lives lost is unknown.

On October 5th de Soto's men reached the Indian village of Calahuchi where they were able to enslave two men and a woman, and they stole a large amount of dried meat. On October 6th, their new Indian woman led them to the village of Anhayca, the principal town of the Chiefdom of Apalachee. Anhayca was located within the present day city of Tallahassee. The people of the village fled before the Spanish army and hid in heavy swamps. The Spanish army had now marched about 320 miles. They left behind them many dead. The loss so was so great that some villages would not survive to the future. The remaining Indians could not protect themselves from other unfriendly tribes, and their winter supplies of food had been stolen. Many of the houses of the Indians had been destroyed so the Spanish could use the materials.

In the winter of 1539-1540 de Soto and his army settled in the large and now vacant Anhayca where they found enough lodging and food for the winter. De Soto now sent for the balance of his people still in the Tampa Bay camp area to join them in his winter encampment.

It is worthwhile to note that the Apalachee were of the Mississippi period people. An explanation of the Mississippi period is the time beginning about 800 AD to the time of the Spanish was a period of enlightenment where various tribes made great progress in government and farming. In addition to the structure of the Apalachee warriors, the now agricultural people raised and stored large amounts of corn, pumpkin, beans, nuts, wild food along with smoked venison and fish. De Soto's army was now ordered to raid the nearby village to remove any food that they had put aside for the winter.

The territory of the mighty Apalachee Chiefdoms lay between the Aucilla River to the east and the Ochlockonee River to the west, then south to the Gulf of Mexico. The total population of the Apalachee may have numbered between 50,000 and 75,000.

After de Soto was settled at Anyayca (Tallahassee) he began to send out exploring parties. One group probably reached present-day Grady or Thomas counties in Georgia. One group moved toward the Gulf, but their slave guide turned on the Spanish, and he was killed. Another attempt

brought a small Spanish force to a broad bay on the Gulf which was probably where the St. Marks Wildlife Cemetery is now. Once they reached the Gulf, they marked their place with flags so that the ships could find it. In the meantime, de Soto had learned from two young Indian slave men that there was probably gold ahead. This was like a beacon for his men. The slaves persuaded de Soto that gold and precious stones could be gotten at the Indian city of Cofitachequi. De Soto, now excited by the thought of great wealth, ordered Juan de Anasco to take a detachment of horsemen and go back to Tampa Bay with the message that Captain Calderon was to sail north to the land of Apalachee with part of Calderon's footmen and a large stock of supplies.

So, on November 17th, the detachment began to retrace their path back to Tampa. They met several Indians on their trail, and they lanced them to death so they would not betray their presence. Their trip back south was not easy, as they had to kill Indians along the way. When the thirty Spaniards reached the Indian town of Napituca they found that the Indians had burned it to the ground. The bodies of the Indians already killed by the Spanish were unburied and put into piles. The Indians now thought Napituca to be evil, and they would never return. On the 6th day of their travel, now November 22nd, they came to Ocale. Here several of the Spaniards died of a fever. The Spanish trip back to Tampa had become a nightmare with the crossing of swamps and rivers. On the 9th day of their trip, they encountered a group of five Indians and promptly killed them so they could not warn the others of their approach. The brave Spanish soldiers thought no more of killing the heathen Indians than swatting a fly.

When the column came near Mococho they found about 20 women and children and promptly captured them. The cries of the terrified women had no effect on the Spaniards. They quickly ate the Indians' food, and no mention was made of the captured women and children – if they were killed or taken as slaves as usual. The women were probably kept to amuse the soldiers.

The march continued, and on November 27th, the 11th day, they came to the village of Ozita where the two groups of soldiers again came together. Chief Mococho was smart enough not to offend the Spaniards even though they did not keep the women who were being used by the soldiers but released them.

In Tampa the Spaniards abandoned the base camp, and about November 29th a number of Indian slaves were transported to Cuba to show the riches of the slaves in La Florida. On the return trip to Apalachee, Anasco and Arias took thirty men. This left Calderon with forty additional horsemen and twenty-five foot soldiers. The Indians now began to put up stiff resistance. When the column reached the Aucilla River, the Apalachee warriors attacked with great fervor. Their many arrows killed one horse and wounded five others. Ten footmen were wounded. The Spanish were able to kill the Apalachee war captain. The Indians attacked again shooting the soldiers around their armor. Andres de Meneses fell with four arrows in his thighs and genitals. Five other soldiers were seriously wounded. The Spanish, now getting the upper hand in the battle, caused the Apalachee to withdraw. The Indians continued the harassment, but once the woods opened up, the Indians had to flee. The next day the Spanish arrived at Burnt Mill Creek. The Indians had learned about the horses and the lancers.

When Anasco and his men arrived at Apalachee they had to wait until December 28th before the arrival of the bergantines and the men.

Even with the tremendous losses, the Apalachee warriors kept up their war against the invading Spaniards. On November 29th, an Apalachee slipped by the sentinels and set some houses on fire resulting in the burning of two-thirds of the Spanish camp. When the Spanish caught an Apalachee he was burned to death, or their hands and noses cut off, but the will of the Apalachee warriors was never broken!

This would be a good time to pause and take a look at an Apalachee warrior. These fearless warriors would smear red ocher on their bodies and wore multi-colored feathers on their heads before they entered into combat. They were scalp takers which terrified their enemies. A scalp was proof to his people that he had fought and killed an enemy. Their war-like society let a warrior advance himself within the warrior organization by taking a scalp, the warrior then became a Tascia. With more than one scalp, he advanced to a Noroco. His highest achievement would be the rank of Nicoguada with ten or more kills. The Apalachee warrior was fierce and aggressive and an expert with his powerful bow or war club.

Because of the Apalachee ferocity, the Apalachee confined the Spaniards to their camp for the entire winter. The Chief of the Apalachee was named Capafi. De Soto wanted to capture Capafi so he could better control them

but to no avail until a full assault was put in motion to capture Capafi. Many warriors died in his defense, but in the end, Capafi was captured by de Soto and taken prisoner, but Capafi's craftiness foiled de Soto, and he escaped and was not seen again.

As de Soto broadened his campaign, he sent Captain Francisco Maldonado to take fifty men in two boats and explore the shore to find a good harbor. In late December, Maldonado discovered an excellent harbor – Pensacola Bay. Here in the Indian town of Ochuse, Maldonado captured an Indian trader, and he was taken back to de Soto as a guide. With the Pensacola “port” for their use de Soto ordered Captain Maldonado to sail back to Cuba with news of their adventure and to bring back crossbows, arquebuses, lead, powder, footwear and other needed supplies. On February 26th, 1540 Maldonado sailed away in the bergantines.

In the early spring of 1540 de Soto began his plans to go into the interior to find the gold and riches he had heard of in the Indian city of Cofitachequi. De Soto loaded up what was left of the corn stolen from the Apalachees. Much of the corn had to be loaded on his own footmen, because so many of the unfortunate Indian slaves who were naked and in chains had died in the cold winter. They were also starved and weak, so death came easily to these poor people. On March 3rd, 1540, de Soto and his army left Anhayca and headed north and west away from the land of the Apalachee. The surviving Indians of Florida were about to see the last of the de Soto destruction except for the diseases the Spaniards left behind – diseases which later completely devastated some of the towns they had visited. Now it was Georgia's time to suffer the wrath of the de Soto expedition. On March 3rd at nightfall, the horse vanguard reached the Ochlockonee. Later they passed the present-day Cairo and Camilla, Georgia. On March 7th, the Spanish faced a river 250 feet wide with a strong current. They devised a system using two hawsers, pulling a flat-bottomed boat back and forth across the river moving men and materiel and crossed the river safely.

On March 10th the army arrived at the Chiefdom of Capacheque. Here they were able again to steal the Indians' stash of food. The terrified Indians had left their town and were hiding in the woods. By the end of the day of March 10th, having sacked the first town of Capacheque they arrived at the second town of Capachque of the Chiefdom and entered it with some difficulty. This site was probably what is now the Magnolia Plantation Mound site. On March 12th five Spanish soldiers went out to steal food.

They came upon five Indians who were hiding in the woods. A great battle ensued, this time favoring the five Indians who escaped leaving one Spaniard dead and three others badly wounded.

The Indian attacks that killed horses and wounded soldiers were the most effective against the Spanish. Each dead horse took away one more lancer, and the wounded required a great deal of assistance by the others. De Soto's path was leading toward the Indian village of Cofitachequi. They crossed the Flint River by building a footbridge. (For brevity, part of de Soto's march will be passed over with only the most significant parts of the exploration to be explored)

De Soto wanted to push swiftly on to the next Chiefdom without stopping at the village of Toa, but his men objected. De Soto gave in. They arrived at the Indian village of Toa, and were now probably following a path which is now Georgia State Road 127. Beyond S.R. 127 they must have passed through present-day Perry, Georgia and headed toward the present-day town of Westlake.

This turnabout by de Soto was thought by historians to be the most extraordinary maneuver of the entire expedition. On March 24th de Soto and his detachment of horsemen traveled from midnight to dawn and continued for that entire day and night, arriving on the morning of Holy Thursday, March 25th ^a at the banks of the Ocmulgee River. They had traveled continuously for thirty-five hours covering about thirty-four miles. Usually they traveled about fifteen miles per day. Only a well-disciplined army could have performed this feat. Once they crossed the river they surprised the people of the Indian town of Ichisi. They proceeded to eat all the food available and capture fresh slaves. The Chief of Ichisi wisely gave them gifts and tributes thereby saving his village. The Spanish were greatly relieved to be passing through Indian villages that were friendly.

On April 2nd de Soto and his army set out traveling northwest. They probably followed the now Old Hawkins Road near the Oconee River. On April 8th de Soto left from the Indian town of Altamaha. Here de Soto became angry with his semi-prisoner Chief Ocute, so Ocute tremblingly sent for two thousand Indians to serve as porters. They also brought food supplies. On April 12th, de Soto departed Ocute using 400 of the offered porters. They started out again for the promised land of Cofitachequi. They reached Cofaqui where people said they did not know of any people living in that

location. Cofitachequi, as they knew, was further away. They hated and feared the cheifdom called "The Lady of Cofitachequi" and saw a chance to get the Spanish to annihilate them. On April 17th de Soto came to the Savannah River where there were two large islands – Winns Island and Paces Island. Crossing the Savannah was a great task, but done successfully. When the herd of their pigs tried to swim the river many were swept away and lost.

The Spanish spent nine hungry days marching on the way to the Indian village of Cofitachequi. Their luck changed on April 25th when Anasco came riding into camp with the news he had found two Indians villages with food to the southeast. On April 26th de Soto's men found the Indian village of Hymahi and relieved the villagers of all of their parched corn meal along with mulberries and much fruit. On April 27th Captain Romo arrived in Hymahi with four or five captives. The Indians would not tell de Soto the location of their town, so de Soto burned one Indian at the stake in front of the others, but none would tell, so they were all burned alive. On April 30th the Spanish set out for their village, and at nightfall found the village on the other side of the river. The Spaniards were approaching the area where the Indian Muskogean was the major language.

At dawn the Indians paddled across the river to approach de Soto to ask about a his mission. The Spanish army, professing peace, met the lesser Chief who greeted de Soto. This chief was under the great Chieftainess of Cofitachequi. This Chieftainess was an attractive and regal woman who was the niece of the ruler. She gave de Soto gifts of animal skins, pieces of cloth and a large string of large freshwater pearls. She had the canoe men ferry the Spaniards across the river and had supplies of food brought to them consisting of dry bread, fritters, turkeys, venison and a supply of salt. The balance of de Soto's army arrived on May 3rd to join their comrades.

De Soto started immediately asking about gold. When the natives showed the Spanish their gold, it turned out to be pieces of copper and mica. The Indians did not even know what gold was. Before the Spanish left they looted the local treasury of two hundred pounds of pearls, most of the pearls were of low value. They looted the local temples, too.

The Indian city of Cofitachequi was almost deserted because of an earlier pestilence, so there was very little stored corn. A question remains – was the

pestilence diseases left by the Spanish visitors some twelve years before? No one knows.

The Spanish group was now located near present-day Cheraw, S. C. The Chieftainess had escaped from de Soto and not seen again. As the army continued to move forward, they had to constantly search for food. Any village they found was raided. On May 14th they entered the territory of Chalaque somewhere near present-day Charlotte, North Carolina. These were very poor people. On May 17th the Spanish continued northward to Guaquili in the general vicinity of present-day Hickory, North Carolina. The Indians gave the Spanish corn, many turkeys and some small dogs for roasting. On May 21st the army arrived at Joara, a village situated at the foot of the Appalachian mountains. On May 22nd the Spanish came together in the village of Joara where the Spanish saw evidence of copper which might lead to gold.

On May 25th they departed from Joara and began to climb the mountains of North Carolina. By May 28th the army bivouacked in an oak grove. They kept crossing the Toe River which followed down the Tennessee Valley. On May 30th they met friendly Indians from the village of Guasili probably in the land of the Cherokee. On May 31st de Soto departed for the Indian village of Guasili demanding food, and 20 Indians brought baskets of mulberries. By June 2nd they were near present-day Warrensburg, Tennessee. On June 4th de Soto bivouacked near the Indian village of Chiana, and on June 5th they arrived at Chiaha near present-day Dandridge, Tennessee. The Chieftdom of Chiaha was a subject of the great Chief Coosa. Once in Chiaha de Soto rested, and the natives, friendly in nature, gave them plenty of food, some of which they had not seen before. All went well for about two weeks when de Soto demanded that the Chief of the Chiaha provide them with their women, and so it was that on June 19th many of the Indians took their wives and children and ran away to hide from the greedy Spanish soldiers. De Soto was enraged and threatened to kill the young Chief if he did not show him where they were hiding. De Soto took thirty horsemen and thirty footmen, and forced the Chief to guide them to the women. On the way he burned the village's large corn fields. De Soto was then supplied with five hundred porters, and you can imagine how many of the five hundred ever returned home.

On June 28th, after being at Chiaha for twenty-four days, the army set off again. Their path took them along the southern bank of the French Broad

River in a beautiful part of Tennessee near what is now southwest Knoxville, Tennessee. On July 2nd the Spanish arrived at the Indian village of Coste, situated on Bussell Island in the mouth of the Little Tennessee River. As usual, things went well, but as the soldiers began ransacking the houses, stealing their food and whatever else the Indians valued, the Indians, even though they faced death, became infuriated. De Soto then seized the Chief and his men in collars and chains. After eight days in Coste after depleting it, on July 9th de Soto now entered into the most dense Indian population he had seen. De Soto and his men stayed in the village of Tali. On July 10th, they prepared to leave. By July 15th the army approached the principal town of Coosa just east of Carters, Georgia. The population of the very successful Coosa may have been as many as 4,650 people. Again de Soto took the Chief of Coosa and his close people as hostages, and they were kept in collars of iron and chains. When the Indians revolted, they were quickly captured. Many were put in chains. On August 20th de Soto departed Coosa. There is no mention of how many of the Indians held in irons were released, killed or kept as slaves. On August 21st the army continued all day along the Blue Ridge Mountains. They continued through small Indian towns, and de Soto reached a camping place near present-day Jacksonville, Alabama. On September 25th the Chief of the Indian village of Taliis came to de Soto, so de Soto released the Chief of Coosa but not the Chief's sister. The army rested in Talisi for eighteen days probably until the village's food supply was depleted. They departed on October 5th and proceeded to pass through numerous small Indian villages. When they entered the village of Tascaluza, de Soto again put the Chief in irons forcing the Chief to give him four hundred porters and a promise that women would follow. The Chief was in constant fear that de Soto would burn him at the stake, and he had every reason to be fearful. By October 16th de Soto bivouacked near present-day Selma, Alabama. Up to this point de Soto's men had not had a serious attack since leaving Apalachee. Chief Tasculuza, when approached by de Soto, refused to leave his house. When the Spanish soldiers rushed the house they found out that possibly 5,000 warriors were hidden in the town and ready to fight. The Indians ran the Spanish out of town for a short time. Five or six Spanish soldiers had been killed and many others were wounded. Also killed was Solis. The enraged Indians killed what horses they could, took Spanish weapons, baggage and supplies. De Soto now took his full army, and the one-sided battle began, lasting nine hours. The village was burned to the ground. What a sad battle it was. At its end only twenty-two soldiers died with 148 wounded. The Indians whose bodies were on the

battlefield and surrounding area numbered approximately 5,000. This loss of lives was the greatest of de Soto's battles.

I would like to note that the day after the battle, the Spanish cut the fat from the bodies of the dead Indians to use as compresses.

At village after village this story repeated itself. De Soto captured the Indian Chief Apafalaya to serve them as a guide, so on December 14th they headed in a westerly direction reaching the river of Chicaza, the Tombigbee. By now the Spaniards were less haughty and much more humble. The soldiers lost their clothing so wore animal skins. De Soto build a piragua in two days and crossed the river. He and his army spend a hard winter at the Indian village of Chicaza – probably near present-day Columbus, Mississippi. The soldiers traveled far and wide stealing enough food to get them through the winter. They tore down the Indians' houses for their own use. De Soto moved on to Caluza, and he knew he must turn west.

Of note is that in the village of Chicaza about March 3rd, 1541, de Soto caught three Indians who probably had their food stolen by the Spanish, stealing several of the Spaniards' pigs. For this crime the three Indians were killed, two at once. One Indian who had had both his hands cut off must have died later.

On March 4th the enraged Chief Chicaza sent his warriors to attack the Spanish. The Indians fired fire arrows on top of the houses where the Spanish were staying. Three hundred angry Indians hid around the town. They caught the Spaniards completely unaware. Many horses burned to death in their stables. The Indians wisely and quickly retreated, their attack a big success. Twelve Spaniards died. Others were badly burned. Fifty-seven horses were killed and four hundred pigs had been burned to death. The Spanish began to send out patrols, and they spared no one. When done, there were no more Indians alive within a radius of twelve miles. However, the infuriated area Indians kept up their relentless attacks. The Spanish would remember Chicazilla on April 27th. De Soto's men found an armed and well-made palisade protected by about three hundred warriors. De Soto had not learned his lesson. He attacked the fort. The arrows flew and hit their marks. Many Spaniards were wounded. When the Spanish began to enter the palisade, the Indians wisely fled. The Spanish would remember the Alibamo warriors. The total loss for the Spanish was fifteen killed. The

Indians lost only three men. The ignorant savages had learned how to defeat the Spaniards.

Now the Spanish were headed for the Mississippi Valley, floodplains and the Mississippi River. De Soto and his army first saw the mighty Mississippi River some time between May 9th and 21st. They halted on the Riverbank and began to build boats for the River crossing. At this time the principal Indian Chief Aquijo appeared, and the following day the great Chief arrived with a fleet of two hundred large canoes filled with armed Indians at ready. The Chief first sent food to de Soto, but the Indians were ready for a battle. The Spanish hurried to build four large piraguas. It took twenty-seven days to finish the boats. The Indians now withdrew from the site where the River was three miles wide. On June 18th de Soto and his army crossed the River, really a great feat, within a two hour period. Once on the west side of the River they saw about thirty Indians. The horsemen chased them down lancing ten and taking fifteen more to be put into chains as slaves. The army soon found a huge swamp. On June 23rd the destruction of people and stealing of food started again, so at the Indian village of Casqui, near the St. Francis River, the soldiers captured many men and women. The men to be slaves and porters, the women for the soldiers' use. They also took their garments, furs and food.

On August 5th the Spanish arrived at the Indian village of Quiquate. De Soto occupied half of the town and burned the other half down. After sacking a number of Indian villages and taking many prisoners, the army crossed the White River and began marching along past the Ozark Mountains. De Soto found the province of the Cayas. The Cayas were salt makers and tradesmen. The Spanish had great need for their salt. The Cayas area had a cluster of sites along the central portion of the Arkansas River near present-day Little Rock Arkansas. The Spanish and their horses grew fat in their three week stay. When de Soto marched into the Indian village of Tola, he found a hornet's nest of armed Indians. The Spanish soon had killed fifteen people – both men and women, and taken forty women into captivity. By the time the Tola battle was over de Soto's expedition had lost two hundred fifty men and one hundred fifty horses so far in his expedition.

On October 22 de Soto came to the vicinity of Nimrod Lake, Arkansas. At the Indian village of Utiangué he occupied the village and rested for the winter. The winter of 1541-42 was very cold with much ice and snow, but they were able to steal enough food from the surrounding Indians to take

them through the winter. A sad note for de Soto, his trusted translator Juan Ortiz died. De Soto now turned back east to the Indian village of Anilco near the Mississippi River. It became more evident to de Soto every day that he would not find great Aztec or Inca wealth in La Florida. His hopes had come to an end. Heartbroken, discouraged and beaten, de Soto became very ill and bedridden, but his cruelty still burned bright. Because the River Indians on both sides of the Mississippi kept up their threats and harassment, de Soto ordered an attack against the Indian village of Anilco. The army caught the villagers unaware. In the village of five or six thousand people, de Soto ordered his men to kill all the males. The Spanish proceeded to kill a hundred or more people and wounded many more. The Spanish killed without mercy, killing old men and young boys who offered no resistance. The Spanish captured the women and children – in all about eighty. What a great victory for de Soto in his last campaign. De Soto had treated the Indians as if they were animals not human.

Hernando de Soto died on the bank of the Mississippi River on May 21, 1542.

Luis de Moscoso then became the Captain General. Moscoso first job was to auction off the estate of de Soto. De Soto who had been one of the richest men in Central America left an estate of two male slaves, two female slaves, three horses and seven hundred hogs. Moscoso knew that the remaining army of de Soto had to exit their present location, so they again decided to move west where there must be great food supplies and great riches to be found.

On July 20 the army approached the native village of Naguatex. The local Indians tried to muster an attack, but soon many had been killed. A captured Indian was sent back to the Chief of Naguatex after having his nose and right arm cut off to warn the Chief not to resist. The Chiefdom of Naguatex was in the bend of the Red River just south of the present-day Fulton, Arkansas. When the Chief did not come to Moscoso, the Spanish burned down their towns and captured many slaves – destroying the Indians' food and stores.

As Moscoso traveled westward they came to the village of the Aays. When the Aays Indians tried to fight only a few Spanish horsemen and horses were wounded, but great damage was done to the Aays people. (Many of the villages were ravaged, and the resisters killed did not survive).

At an Indian village named Guasco, Moscoso did not trust the Indian guide he was using and was so angry he set all his dogs on the man. He was killed and devoured in a short time.

The Spanish continued their westward trek, and the Indians they encountered were poorer and poorer with not much for the Spanish to eat. The Spanish now had no choice but to give up the westward trek and return to the Mississippi River which the Spanish did not know would take them to the Gulf of Mexico. Early in December of 1542, Moscoso set out for the Indian village of Aminoxa. They were wet, tired, and many were sick. Some died along with a large number of Indian slaves who were probably in chains and had little clothing. At Aminoxa the Spanish carpenters found excellent wood for shipbuilding, and set about to build seven bergantines (actually the ships weren't bergantines they were small flat-bottomed boats large enough to each carry fifty people and about thirty feet long). They terrified the Indians throughout the winter. It is thought that Moscoso took thirty Indian men who he did not trust and had the right hand and nose of each of them cut off. The boats were completed in June having taken six months to construct.

On the morning of July 2, 1543 after freeing the slaves numbering several hundred the boats were rowed out loaded with all the food and supplies they could take. They soon began to learn about the currents of the mighty Mississippi. Their first stop was on the west side of the River near present-day Winterville, Mississippi and spent the night in their boats. As Moscoso and his boats floated down the River various Indians would come in their canoes and harass them.

On July 4th a hundred Indian canoes appeared. They were war canoes – some with sixty or seventy men to a boat. Now for the first time the Indians had the advantage. They attacked the boats. Moscoso sent out twenty-five men in five small canoes. The Indians waited and then some dove into the River. Only 4 men of the twenty-five made it back. The heartened warriors now began to close in on the seven large boats. Their first barrage of arrows wounded twenty-five Spaniards at once. For the balance of the day the Indians harassed the Spanish boats and wounded a few more Spaniards.

Moscoso and his men rowed their boats down the River for fifteen days from July 2nd to July 16th. They all knew that they were lucky to have escaped La

Florida with their lives. Many more perilous times faced the Spanish until they reached the shores of the Rio de Las Palmas in their trek for Mexico.

For the survivors who went with de Soto the trip was a complete disaster. Most had lost their personal fortunes. Of the original six hundred people with him from Cuba about half returned, but hundreds and maybe thousands of slaves and Indian prisoners' lives were lost with them. We will never know how many lives were lost or how many thousands of our Archaic Indians perished along de Soto's route - many by the sword and the lance. Many died because of having their limbs cut off, many villages because they were now unstable and unable to protect themselves. Many thousands or even millions were yet to die from the Europeans' diseases and viruses. The women that the soldiers used and returned home must have spread European diseases to their villages. The Indians died from the common cold, from measles, venereal diseases, fevers, chicken pox and a host of other foreign diseases from which they had no immunity - including small pox, typhoid, diphtheria, mumps. The Indians were the first people in history to die because of germ warfare. The European people had lived together in crowded cities. Their garbage and excrement was often thrown into the streets. People rarely bathed, and so many died of the diseases listed, but the survivors had built a natural immunity. They often remained as carriers of their diseases. Our native Americans had no defense against these diseases.

A historian named Dobyns estimated the Indian population in eastern United States in the 1500s at 9,258,000, and of the total Indian population of the southeast very few of these people survived into the 21st century.

For the close of the de Soto story, I think it's important to look at the native Americans or Indians who de Soto met on his four thousand mile journey. He met many, many different tribes and villages. He heard them speak at least seven different languages. They were Muskegean, Iroquoian, Catawban, Daddoan, Algonkian, Tunican and Timucuan. Because of the different languages many natives could not understand the other tribes' languages. Some tribes could not understand each other even though they spoke a similar language. The variations within their own native language was just too great.

Great differences existed among the Indians of the southeast. Many tribes were constantly at war with surrounding tribes. Most of the Indian tribes shared basic assumptions and thought. These assumptions included how the

cosmos was put together and a common thread about theories about why things happened. Their beliefs often ran deep. Most believed the cosmos was peopled by a panoply of spiritual beings. Many believed that their world was divided into four directions with each direction being associated with a different symbolic association. For instance, the east was associated with life, the west with death (reminds one of the sun rising in the east and setting in the west).

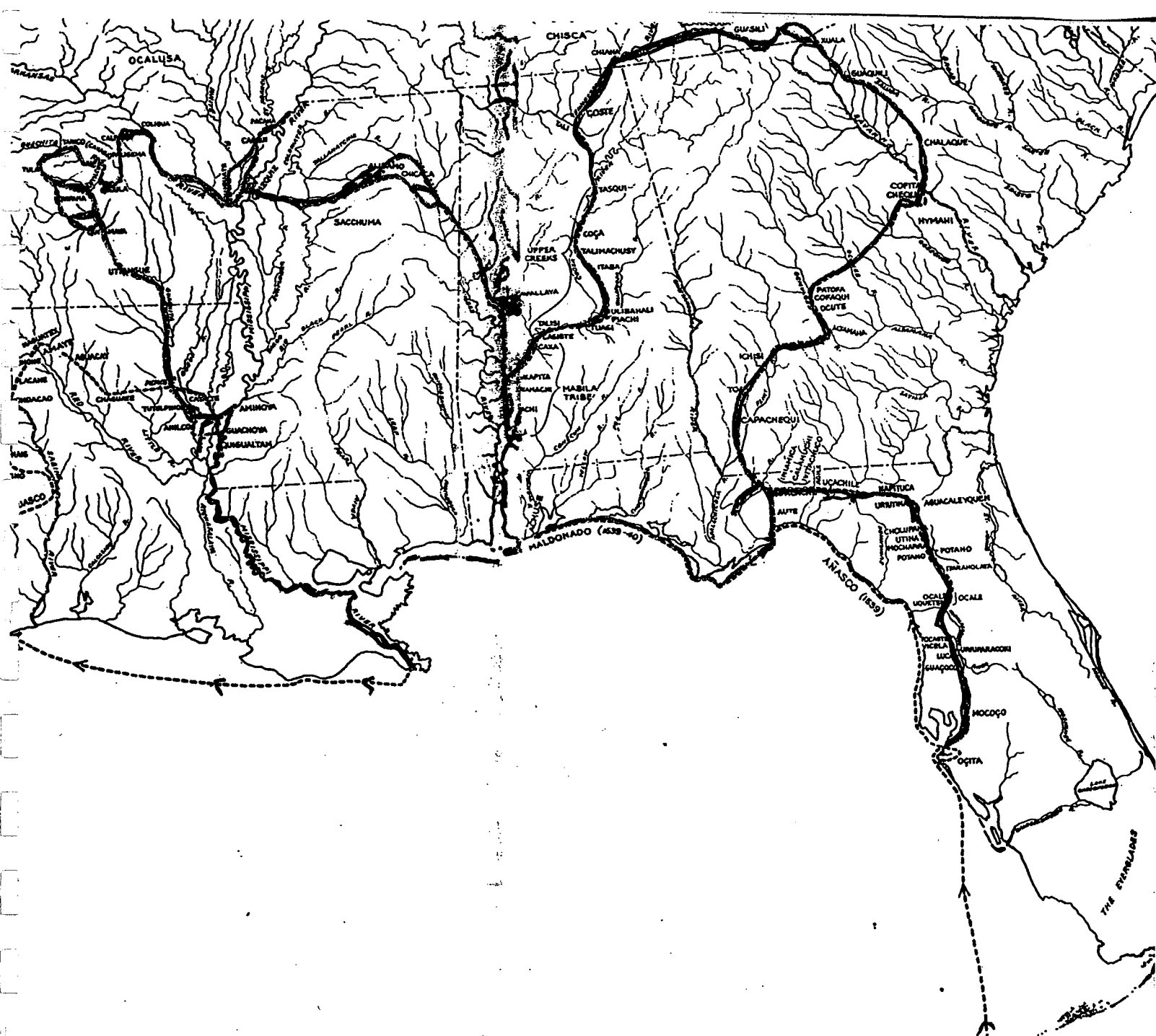
Another basis of similarities among the various tribes of the southeast was a wide-spread and fundamental social transformation that began occurring among them about 800 AD to 1,000 AD. By 1539 through 1543, De Soto's time, a vast number of people had been affected. This huge transformation period was coined by anthropologists as the Mississippian period as mentioned (starting about 800 AD through 1600 AD). The Mississippian transformation appears to have been set in motion by the agricultural people becoming more dependent on corn and other crops. This new social order stimulated the ascension or development of the Chieftdom. We see now a new kind of social order. Now for the first time, the people gave great power to their Chiefs. This expanding power gave way to greater military power and a more centralized government. The Chief would now have military power, and this led to military competition between the various tribes. De Soto would meet up with these Mississippian Chieftdoms in northern Florida when he met up with the well-organized army of Apalachee warriors.

The Spanish soon learned how to control the Indians by taking their Chief hostage thereby controlling his subjects. It was those Mississippian cultures that kept de Soto's soldiers fed. They found vast stores of corn in fields and other supplies put into storage by these more organized people. Our early people were primitive. They had no wheels, no iron for weapons. They had no gun powder or armor. They had no immunity to the European diseases. They had no horses. They were doomed from the start when the European invasion reached the land of the Americas.

The story of Hernando de Soto is one of the most important ones of the 1500s. I have tried to show the importance of de Soto's expedition and the exploration of North America, and at the same time, show the cruelty of de Soto and his army toward our native Americans. For references I have used several books about de Soto principally "Hernando de Soto Among The Apalachee" and John Swanton's "Indians Of The Southeastern United

States", but the heart of the story comes from Charles Hudson's "Knights of Spain, Warriors Of The Sun". Charles Hudson, as no other writer, has shown the great injustices on a day to day basis that were brought on our native Americans. I follow Hudson's book very closely, and urge anyone who is interested in this story to read his book in its entirety. I have barely scratched the surface with the excellent detailed information that Charles Hudson has in his book about de Soto, the Indians and the land that de Soto passed over with his army. To better understand the Spanish cruelty, you need to see the illustration he put into his book.

De Soto had a secretary whose name was Rodrigo Ranjel, but it is unclear what became of his records. The two books called The De Soto Chronicles are outdated, and Charles Hudson's books much more current. Please review the final page which shows de Soto's journey.



-Route of Hernando de Soto and Luis de Moscoso through the Southeast.