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## Petition to the King

Don Patricio Hinachuba

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# Early Visions of Florida

Poetry • Stories • Chronicles from an American Borderland

## Don Patricio Hinachuba, Petition to the King

*Before the formation of the Seminoles, one of the most powerful of the Indian provinces in Florida was Apalachee. A cacique, or chief, led each town within the province. The paramount cacique of Apalachee during the turn of the eighteenth century, however, was Don Patricio Hinachuba. In a time of blurred boundaries between the colonies, Hinachuba skillfully maneuvered both the Spanish and English bureaucracies for the benefit of his people. As conditions for Indians in Spanish territories deteriorated, Hinachuba wrote a letter, in Spanish, to the king. Gently reminding the Spanish monarch that though he was loyal to the crown, his people needed to be treated with respect in order to count on their cooperation against Spain's adversaries. Due to exploits and abuses, many Indians were fleeing the Spanish missions for Guale territory, located along coastal Georgia and the Sea Islands of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. They discovered a business-like alliance with the English that was a direct threat to Spaniards both in Florida and overseas.*

*Hinachuba is a fascinating character in the story of conquest. Today, in history and literature alike, Indians are typically portrayed as ingenuous peoples who thought the invading Europeans were gods or subversive rebels. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, as an example of the latter, was born of a Spanish conquistador and an Incan noble woman. [Guaman Poma](#) wrote a letter to the king of Spain as well, though there is debate over whether he actually sent it or not. His letter ends with an imagined conversation in which the king asks the author to suggest solutions to the problems he expressed in his letter. Though Hinachuba was essentially asking for the same thing as Poma, he is not an example of either stereotype. He is, however, a more accurate representation of most natives during that era. He did not take orders from Europeans, and did not rebel against them. In fact, the king's responding letter is evidence that Hinachuba was an active participant in the business affairs of the period.*

*The letter from Hinachuba to the King is presented below along with selections from two other letters. The first is displayed in its entirety because so much of its value comes from its structure. Hinachuba purposefully constructed the letter according to courtly standards. Beginning with his distinguished introduction and extreme flattery, the letter gives the impression that among*

*the many tragedies the most important was that his people were prevented from attending mass. The final two letters have been displayed in sections for the ease of the reader and to eliminate redundancies. In his response, the King emphasized the importance of treating the Indians, especially the caciques, favorably, which — on paper — was quite a victory.*

Edited by Rachel Louise Sanderson, University of South Florida St. Petersburg

### **Further Reading**

Boyd, Mark F., Hale G. Smith and John W. Griffin. *Here They Once Stood: The Tragic End of the Apalachee Missions*. Gainesville: U P of Florida, 1999.

Bushnell Turner, Amy. "Patricio de Hinachuba: Defender of the Word of God, the Crown of the King, and the little children of Ivitachuco." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 3 (July 1979): 1-21.

from Boyd, Smith and Griffin, *Here they Once Stood: The Tragic End of the Apalachee Missions*.

Don Patricio, Cacique of Ivitachuco, and Don Andres, Cacique of San Luis, to the King. February 12, 1699.

Don Patricio Hinachuba, the principal cacique of the Province of Apalachee, and Don Andres, cacique of San Luis, in the name of all the province, and for themselves, humbled at the feet of Your Majesty (whom God protect), say that in the time when the Sergeant Major Don Pablo de Hita Salazar was governor of this plaza, he granted permission for some Spanish families to settle in this province at the place of San Luis, where are stationed the infantry of its garrison. One of these families was that of Captain Juan Fernández de Florencia, who was deputy [governor] and superior magistrate, and who has remained until the present, inasmuch as Captain Jacinto Roque [Pérez], the present deputy [governor], got him to establish a ranch of cattle, swine, and horses, from which we receive considerable injury to our fields from his cattle, as well as [from] those of Diego Florencia and Francisco de Florencia, his brothers-in-law, who reside with him. Although we have sought redress from various sources, we have not had it, since they are so powerful, and we are without a person to protect and defend us. Justice is not administered to us in this, nor in other lesser injuries, [such] as committed by Juana Caterina, wife of the said deputy, who gave two slaps in the face to a cacique of [the Indians] of San Luis, because he had not brought her fish on one Friday, and obliged the village to furnish six Indian women for the grinding every day without payment for their work; and although this was [contrary to] an order of the inspector, it is not observed, and notwithstanding, [they] continue doing it. As also that she be given an Indian to go and come every day with a pitcher of milk for the house of the said deputy.

And that they likewise built a house of singular architecture for the infantry, with notable detriment to us and to the natives, since in addition to the donation of their personal labor, they brought their own axes and food, and with the remainder of the timber they made houses for one of his brothers-in-law and other Spanish settlers. And as a consequence, the natives of San Luis are

found withdrawn a league into the woods, for their places have been seized for the Spaniards. For this reason, and because they flee from the continued labor of the deputy's house, they do not even go to Mass on feast days. And not only this, but there are many Apalachee Indians withdrawn to the Province of Guale, where many die without confession, because they do not understand the language of the missionaries of that province. All this is because of the great hardships imposed on us by the families which are settled in our village of San Luis; and we are sufficiently annoyed by the said deputy and brothers-in-law, since they compelled the *mico* of la Tama, who is new in the faith, [and] who is skilled in tanning, to prepare skins for them without pay for his work, [because of which] he went to the place of Saint George; from his revolt we are disconsolate, for fear others may follow him.

All, Sir, arises from our lack of a protector who was petitioned [for], to hear our grievances and redress them, for which we ask of your Majesty, [whom] God protect, the necessary relief of our afflictions, [by your] sending us shortly alleviation through your royal decree, and [by your] appointing for us a person who can defend us, or by giving authority to Don Laureano de Torres y Ayala, governor and captain general, that for the present we name one to his satisfaction and ours. Thus we will be relieved from all these grievances and many more, which we have not expressed in order not to bother Your Majesty, whom God protect and prosper with succession to the crown as Christianity needs.

San Luis, February 12, 1699.

Don Patricio Hinachuba

Don Andres, Cacique of San Luis

Don Patricio Hinachuba to Don Antonio Ponce de León

Ivitachuco, April 10, 1699

Don Antonio Ponce de León: I wish that the Divine Majesty may give to Your Grace the most perfect health, which I desire in company with all your children. I and all my subjects are at Your Grace's service. Here [we continue] subject to many annoyances and are much aggrieved for many reasons, the principal being what Francisco Florencia did this past winter to the pagan Indians of the Province of Tasquique [Tuskegee]. The said señor having departed on a hunt for buffalo with forty Chacato Indians, they unexpectedly encountered twenty-four Indians coming peacefully to trade in this province, to sell their buffalo skins, leather shirts, and madstones; and having amicably conversed with them, he asked them where they would spend the night. They replied they would halt nearby, as they did. And the said Francisco de Florencia said that he would go to another part of the woods, and at midnight he returned with his party and killed sixteen men, the others fleeing. He gathered up the spoils and brought them to his province ... and it is certain that the deed is such that all of us will have to pay for these activities, since this aggravation has aroused misgivings, although to this date the opening of hostilities which we expect has not begun [...]

Although we have complained to the deputy, since these matters are his responsibility, he has done nothing, nor has he done anything about the murders committed by his brother-in-law; and [he has] even informed the governor that he was attacked by the pagans, when the truth is quite the contrary, since the very Indians who accompanied him are telling the truth, all of which was done without fear of God [...]

Don Nicolas Ponce, your father, who has loved and protected us so much, for as he has been governor of that plaza, he can tell to the present governor what he should do to give us the comfort that would be afforded by withdrawing these families to the presidio, as they are depriving us of our manner of living, and our sweat and labor should be for God to whom we would leave it; and we ask that His Divine Majesty protect Your Grace for our protection and aid.

Ivitachuco, April 10, 1699.

I kiss the hands of Your Grace, your great servant and friend.

~ Don Patricio Hinachuba

Royal Cedula, Madrid, May 7, 1700

THE KING

... Don Patricio Hinachuba, the principal cacique of the entire province, and Don Andres, cacique of the village of San Luis, in their names and for the entire province, have written to me in a letter dated the 12th of February, 1699, of the continuous affronts, vexations, and annoyances which they receive from the families that ... went to settle in that province, as well as from its deputy [governor]. [As a consequence of these conditions], they are driven from their home sites for the houses which they have constructed, obliging them to work for them without giving them food or otherwise compensating for their labor, by which they are obliged to withdraw to the woods where they do not hear Mass or go to confession, some even passing to Saint George. He requests me that for the correction of these evils you appoint some person to protect them, [or] that I give authority to the governor of those provinces to select someone to the satisfaction of him and of those Indians, before whom their grievances may be rectified. His letter and representations were presented to my Royal Council for the Indies and viewed by the fiscal, who has approved sending them with this dispatch, [a] copy of which is signed by my undersigned secretary; and I direct you, and I command you (as I do), that, informed of its contents, you assume the office of magistrate and investigate the allegations of these unhappy caciques and Indians of the said Province of Apalachee [...]

You should always remember and have ever present before you that one of your principal duties is to exercise the greatest care so that the caciques and Indians of the said Province of Apalachee live without annoyance, and to remove whatever is prejudicial, taking note that the council will be always observant of the zeal and diligence which they expect of you in this matter and of other [duties] which are presented by my service, as I desire greatly that these poor caciques and

natives should be well treated, and that you help, protect, and defend them, as is your duty and as I have ordered in repeated cédulas to the governors, your predecessors, with which again I charge you, that thus my resolution and the service of God be advanced and my [ending].