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Ball Game Manuscript

Juan de Paiva

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Early Visions of Florida

Poetry • Stories • Chronicles from an American Borderland

Juan de Paiva, Ball Game Manuscript

Father Juan de Paiva's manuscript, detailing the ball game played by Florida natives, is valued today because it provides a first-hand account of the culture



- *Plate XXXVI: The Youth at Their Exercises, by [Theodor de Bry](#) (ca. 1591). Bry depicts the Timucua, eastern neighbors to the Apalachee, playing a variation of the ball game found throughout eastern North America. (Courtesy, [Florida Memory](#), State Library and Archives of Florida)*

and customs of the seventeenth-century Indians. Written at the high point of the Spanish mission period, the original manuscript is entitled “Origin and beginnings of the game of pelota [ball] which the Apalache and Ustaqua Indians have played since pagan times up to the year 1676, brought to light by the Reverend Father Fray Juan de Paiva, Father of the mission of San Luis de Talimali. September 23, 1676.” In writing the ball game manuscript, Paiva collaborated with the royal interpreter Diego Salvador and the parish interpreter and Apalachee leader Juan Mendoza, and

any layering and repetition within the work may be partially explained by the collaboration with his interpreters and complicated uses to which this manuscript was put.

Rife with superstitious rituals and sometimes used as a substitute for war, the ball game was a violent competition played with a small ball and two high goal posts. The Spanish officials of Paiva's time had determined that the ball game was dangerous to the bodies and souls of the natives, and a threat to the peace of the region. Intent upon banning the ball game forever, Paiva recounts the mythology behind its creation and highlights the most dangerous and violent aspects of the game.

Editor's note: Paiva's account compresses native religion, descriptions of the ball game, its socio-political context and judgement. Subheadings have been added to the manuscript for clarity. Readers should note that within the manuscript, the author frequently interjects, with commentaries that diverge from the structural timeline. Additionally, there are inconsistencies with capitalization, spelling, and names.

Edited by Mikaela Perron, University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Further Reading

Arbesú, David. "[La Crónica de Juan de Paiva sobre el juego de pelota en Apalache.](#)" *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 74: 2 (2017). 733-60

Bushnell, Amy. "'That Demonic Game' The Campaign to Stop Indian *Pelota* Playing in Spanish Florida, 1675-1684." *The Americas* 35:1 (July 1978). 1-19.

Hann, John H. *Apalachee: The Land between the Rivers*. Gainesville, Florida: U P of Florida, 1982.

Mission San Luis

Juan de Paiva. "Origin and Beginning of the Game of Ball that the Apalachee and Yustagan Indians Have Been Playing since Pagan Times until the Year of 1676. The Reverend Father Friar Juan de Paiva, pastor of the doctrina of San Luis de Talimali, brought it to light. May it be for the honor and glory of God. Amen." From John H. Hann. *Apalachee: The Land Between the Rivers*. Gainesville: U P of Florida, 1988.

I. Origins

In the pagan times of this Apalachee nation there were two chiefs, whose experiences I am going to recount, who in their [time of] blindness lived close to one another as neighbors. One was named Ochuna nicogwadca, whom they say is Lightning Bolt. And the other Ytonaslaq, a person of banked fires. And in his understanding both [are] the names of demons, which they have held as such, especially for Ytonanslalaq.

The latter had an orphaned granddaughter named Nico Taijulo, woman of the sun. The leading men, who are those who are in charge of the place, the aldermen, as we would say, sent her out for water every day. She became pregnant in this employment and gave birth to a son and hid him among some bushes, where the panther, the bear, and the jay found him. And they brought him to Itonanslac, his great-grandfather. And they told him how his granddaughter, Nicotaijulo, had given birth to that child. He then ordered that they should not say anything to anybody or reveal that his granddaughter had given birth. He was given the name Chita. They do not know what it means, nor have I been able to discover it. He was reared to the age of twelve with this name, and [then] it was changed and he was given another, which was Oclafi, Baron of water. This is their way of speaking. He was reared with that name until the twentieth year. And [then] it was taken from him and he was given another, which was eslafiyupi. Neither did they know what this one meant. They say they are ignorant of it. The which young man excelled everyone in courage and in his skill with the bow and arrow and in the game of *quicio* [chunkey], which all these nations play, which is [played] with two long poles about three yardsticks in length and a flat and round stone.

Ochuna Nicogvadca harbored suspicions that that young man was the son of Taijulo because his shamans had told him, or, prognosticated, as we would say, that the son to which Nico taijulo gave birth was destined to kill him. And in order [to learn] if perchance this was so, he tried to see if he might kill him. And he set the following three traps for him, so that he might perish in one.

Take note that the Ytonanslaq had commanded his great-grandson that, concerning everything that they ordered him to do or that happened, that it was important for him that he should let him know about it before he obeyed it. And, accordingly, [when] he was ordered first that he should go to a certain place where there was a large and very deep sinkhole, that he should obtain flints there for arrowheads, and that they should not be from any other place, the young man went at once and told his great-grandfather of what they were ordering him [to do]. And he said to him, son, this spring is very deep. You cannot obtain the flints from it without risking your life. He gave him some beads [made] of shell and told him to give those beads to a little bird that would be there diving and ask for the flints from it. And so he went, gave it the beads and asked it for them [the flints]. And it gave them [to him], and he brought them to Ochuna Nicogvadca. He ordered him secondly to go to a certain thicket where he would find a canebrake of bamboo, and that he should cut canes there, and bring them for arrows. The young man went and told his great-grandfather what they had commanded of him. The old man said to him, Son, there are many poisonous snakes in that canebrake, you would be running great danger. What you can do is form hoops from the grapevines and carry them along. And when the snake comes, throw the hoop where it is crawling. Then it will chase the hoop and you [can] rush up and cut the canes. With which he did just that. He went, cut his canes, and he brought them. Thirdly and lastly, he ordered him to go to a certain place where he would find a nest of eagles in a tree, that he should go and kill the parents and bring back the fledglings. The youth went and informed the old man and he gave him the advice that follows. And it was that he should bring some gourds with him that he might put on his hands and on his head, and, that he should bring a lariat with him, and, that when he should see the eagle about to bite him, he should let go with the aforesaid lariat. And that is what he did. He went and killed the eagles and brought the young ones and presented them to Ochuna Nicogvadca. On seeing that he could not kill him, he arranged then that they should play the ball game. This is how it had its beginning. And it is in this fashion.==

II. The Game

They send a courier, challenging the place with whom they are going to play, citing the day, and with how many players, let's say forty or fifty more or less, in accord with the people to be had. It has to be [played] at midday or at two in the afternoon, and, in the summer. And in winter they do not play. It is to eleven strikes with the ball that they fire at the pole. And it must be with the foot. And as I understand it, one holds the ball with the hand, lets it fall, and, lifting it up with the foot and giving it a kick upwards, one fires the said ball, which will be the size of a musket-ball, [or] a little larger. If it remains on the pole it is worth two. They all crowd together like a clump of pinecones, naked as when their mother bore them, except for a deerskin breech cloth that covers their private parts, and, [with] their hair braided. And a leading man throws the ball in the midst of all of them, who are erect and with their hands raised. It falls into the hand of someone. And they fall upon one another at full tilt. And the last to arrive climb up over their bodies, using them as stairs. And, to enter, others [step on] their faces, heads, or bellies, as they encounter them, taking no notice [of them] and aiming kicks without any concern whether it is to the face or to the body, while in other places still others pull at arms or legs with no concern as to whether they may be dislocated or not, while still others have their mouths filled with dirt. When this pileup begins to become untangled, they are accustomed to find four or five stretched out like tuna; over there are others gasping for breath, because, inasmuch as some are wont to swallow the ball, they are made to vomit it up by squeezing their windpipe or by kicks to the stomach. Over there lie others with an arm or a leg broken. In this exercise, the fashion in which I have described it is but a sketch of what took place, because their faces are like a living fire from this exertion and from the midday sun. What damage must not be done to these bodies [from this]! And they resuscitate them by dint of a bucket of water. What kind of a remedy is this, when they have their pores open in this fashion? How can these wretches stay alive thus? Accordingly, they are destroying themselves and this nation is being extinguished. And all this is only a sketch!

When the courier left, it was obligatory that he go in the following fashion, that he be in the guise *dosuai*, which is the raccoon, with his tail, and stained with black, [with] something like horns(?) on his head, and his face painted with red and his body stained with black and with raylike streaks of red, so that they looked like the devil himself. As for me, I say that each time that I saw them, they represented the image of the devil. And, when the challenge was not accepted, there was a ceremony whereby the trappings were removed, and he came slinking back without entering the plaza, except with all the instruments put away and hung from the shoulder on a little stick. But, if it were accepted, he would enter in the aforesaid guise, and with rattles or little bells or cowbells making a great harmony with the instruments, calling out so that they might come out to receive him. And, having accepted the challenge, Ytonanslac called to all his vassals, who were the panthers, wolves, and bears, all the dark and strong animals. And thus they use Cuy Juan as a surname. Cuy is the panther. Nita Agustin is the bear and equally *seteris pauper*, etc. And it was their understanding, as the players proceeded and descended from the plaza and the ball pole, that these were their very ancestors from whom they were descended. And accordingly, these all entered painted with black, representing those animals. And the rivals painted in other colors, different from these, representing other animals such as the deer and the fox. They all came and entered into the plaza naked as their mothers bore them except for a little breechclout with which they covered their private parts.

And it is where the greatest assembly of people is to be found, as I shall speak about farther on. And from time to time they let out howls, like wolves. And, with these sights [before you], consider now, for the love of God, I ask each one of you, "How does such a game appear to you?" and "Whom) would such a game not appall?" Could this fail to hold something from their pagan times concealed in it!

His players having come together, Ytonanslac gave them the rules so that they would not lose. And they are those which follow. And they are kept inviolate, so I understand. And should they cease to do so, they consider it inevitable that they would lose. And as proof I shall tell you what happened to me in a certain place to which I used to go to say Mass on Sundays because of the absence of its priest. I came to the place having only recently arrived [in Florida]. And those of this place had lost two important games and they were about to play another one that Sunday. And there was a soldier there, who today is an Inactive Captain, and he told me that the Indians were very demoralized because they considered it a certainty that they would lose. And, on being asked the reason, he told me, "Because they have not been assembling at night 'to sleep the ball,' and because they were not opening the church for them as [they did] formerly." On taking note of all this, I pretended not to understand.

The first rule [is] that the players are not to sleep the night before they have to play. I have been given to understand that, if they are to play on a Sunday, during the night of the Saturday before they have to play, if the players do not keep the vigil and carry out the practices I shall speak about farther on, because, if one should feel something in his hand and go to sleep, it would be easy for someone else to take it away from him. And, thus, if he slept, it would be a sign that he would lose. And they did it thus. And they would remain in vigil all night long, all bunched together and seated on some low benches, speaking very softly. And from time to time they let go with some wolf howls. And these were made occasionally from midnight on. And at once the dogs of the place, which are not few, would accompany them, howling. And I will let each one imagine what this seemed like in the silence of the night. As for me, I say that it gave me the horrors and a start. And it made me wonder how that could be good, that it was impossible that it should fail to conceal or to contain some abuses and superstitions. And, when I questioned some of the priests about it, they told me that they [the howls] gave them the sign for when they should be playing all piled together. But, despite this, I did not desist in believing the contrary, because what did the sign have to do with not sleeping and with the giving of those howls from time to time.==

The second [rule is] that they should order four or five elderly men to go to sleep. And, that, early in the morning, they should tell what they dreamed about to the leading man or to whomever the ball-game courier reported to. And it is said that, if one dreams that the enemy entered from a certain direction and killed them and took what they had, it is a bad dream. Consequently, they are not to put the benches for the players on that side, because they would lose. And, if the other one said that he dreamed that a very gallant chief entered from such a direction with many gifts that he distributed among them, it was a good dream. The benches for the [players] should be placed on that side.

The third [rule is] that they must make a new fire and that they are not to approach it; nor are they to use it for anything other than what it is destined for, because to use it so, they believe without a doubt, would make them lose, even if it were [merely] for smoking tobacco. And they must carry it

[the new fire] to the ball game in some bundles of lighted palm-thatch. They are accustomed to place this in front of themselves.

The fourth [rule is] that, on entering into the plaza, they should not enter with all the people who have consented of their own accord to play. If it was arranged for fifty persons, let them enter with four or five less. And when they ask them if you have all the people assembled, let them say they do not, that they lack so many. And if they then command them to include [some] from the young men and from the other people who are there, it would appear to be considered as a good sign that they will win. And thus he did it. And thus they have continued doing it. And this and all the rest [is] the worst of it in our view, as will be seen. This occurs in all the places of Apalachee, being common and equal in all the province. And because they were considered simple people, they passed for such, when it was us in effect who were the simpletons.

They entered the plaza and, on being asked if their people were assembled and at full strength, those on Ytonanslac's side said "no," that they were short so many people. The rivals told them that they should choose from those young men who were in the vicinity. They called to eslafiyupi, the son of Nicotajulo, he who killed the eagle and tricked the snakes, etc., and who gave the appearance of being ill, leaning up against a post, wrapped with a cloak of feathers. And upon his entering the game, the battle was begun. And when those of Ytonanslac had reached seven, eslafiyupi let out a thunderous roar and they were all terrified. And eslafiyupi was recognized for Nicogvadca, who is the Lightning-flash, son of Nicotajulo and of the sun, who is nico. And since then it has remained for an omen that the first who arrived at seven would win because Nicogvadca helped him. And the rivals lose heart at once. And they were accustomed to tell this story every night, sometimes in the council house and sometimes under the ball post.

After having lost at the ball [game], Ochuna Nicogvadca challenged Nicogvadca to play at *e/quisio* which is the game which, at the beginning, I said all these nations play, which is with a stone and two poles, for, as I say, he challenged Nicogvadca, and having won from him all that he had, they say that he tried to ensnare him and he pretended to the aforesaid Ochuna Nicogvadca that he was thirsty and wanted to go to drink. And they say nicogvadca hit the ground with the stick's sharp end [and] made water spring forth and said to him, "Drink." At this point he pretended to need to relieve himself. And Nicogvadca fashioned a little thicket for him and said, "Over here." And finally he said he was going to light a tobacco and entered into a house and opened a hole [in the wall] and fled to Apalachocolo. And Nicogvadca then went in search of him with his warriors. And they say that he formed much fog, cold mists, [and] frost, etc. But despite it all he vanquished him and killed him and his warriors. And his vassals fashioned the ball pole for him that is shown here on this page, the nature of which, with God's help, I shall go on explaining, concerning the [] with which he killed the eagle. At the foot of this pole they are to place or bury a scalp from a dead person in memory of Ytonanslac, its founder, great grandfather of Nicogvadca. The little sticks with which they adorn it have to be of sassafras and of no other wood. They have to raise it with wild grapevines, and not with anything else, even though they might have ropes, as happened to me when I gave them ropes. They answered me, "No," that the former were stronger and that they were [used] in memory of those which he [Eslafiyupi] carried with him, when he went for the arrow shafts, from which he made the hoops with which he tricked the snakes. Consequently, they made and established this ball post of the devil to the honor of Nicogvadca, to put it better, with all

its frauds, as is seen. And this is not the end of it, as will be seen. And this has been the acclaimed and celebrated, etc. [ball game].

III. Significance

Let us begin now, bringing to light all its virtues. First of all, let me say of them, that to list all of them, would be an infinity, because they are as many as [the great number] of deceitful teachers they have and have had. And I call to your attention that everything that you see written here is [written] by two interpreters, who are considered among the most loyal among them, as has been learned by experience. And it has been [read] in the presence of some leading Indians and chiefs. And all in unison confess and state that this is indeed truly what was done in all of Apalachee, no less in one place than in another, because a pole like the one you see, this is set up in all the places, with the baubles with which they decorate it and which they hang from it. In all they sleep the ball. They dance in all. And in all they enter in the fashion in which I have painted it, giving the howls that I have spoken about in the very same way. And they were accustomed to play in all the places after a similar ceremony. I will tell about this farther on.

Abuses and omens and superstitions for the raising of the ball pole. And this was their greatest fiesta. Firstly, when they have put it together, but without the little sticks with which they adorn it, as we would put it, [when it is] in embryo, its crown must be toward where the sun rises, and the hole for it was made on that side, because if they placed it on another as they were doing it they considered it an omen that they would lose. And the eagle had to be looking toward the setting sun.

Secondly, that it had to be raised with wild grapevines, as I have said.

By the third [rule], that before it is raised, the warriors have to be dancing around the pole to the sound of a drum and occasionally giving howls like dogs and at other times barking, and at others doing as would wolves.

The fourth, that after these warriors have danced, six women must enter with another six warriors and they must remain dancing until the pole is put in place.

And fifth, that the men must pull the wild grapevines from one side and the women from the other. And no one must remain in her house.

The sixth, that a young woman, she must not be married, must be there with a crooked-headed bat, which is in effect a bamboo a yard and a half in length, split and doubled over, as is seen in the margin, which is [that] with which the women play their ball. And the latter [young woman] must be performing ceremonies under the pole while they pull on it, etc., and while they are raising it. They say that it was in memory of Nico tai Julo, the mother of Nicoguada.

[Seventh.] And, that as the pole is on the point of being set upright and put in place, the usinulo, which signifies beloved son, thus they speak of the son of the chief, who alive or dead, such a one has to be the son of the principal chief of the place, because these places have three or four little places, each one [of which] has its chief. San Luis, for example, is the principal place. It has joined

to it, San Francisco, San Bernardo, and San Agustín. Consequently, the usinulo of the place of San Luis must be the one who must perform the ceremony I shall speak about. When they are lifting it, as I have said, he must make the *gua* to the pole, which is what we would call the "reverence." And it is in the following fashion. Placing his hands together straight, he says three times, *gua, gua, gua*, which is the salutation that they make to the chiefs. And, immediately, he must pour out *cacina*. Take note now that this usinulo is the person whom they love and reverence and respect most. Surely now, this making of the *gua*, offering of *cacina* to that pole, etc., What mystery does it hold? It was their idol. Does it appear to some that it [was] not? And if some understand this [to be] licit? Not me! Thanks be to God. And, accordingly, I would lose my life before I would consent to that.=

The eighth. That the night before the day that they had to raise the pole, there was permission so that anyone whatsoever could touch and fondle, etc. any whatsoever woman that was present, whether married or single, when she came to the dance that night. The which was not to defend herself, because if she did not consent, they considered it certain that all the games that were played on that pole that they were raising, they would be destined to lose. For which reason the leading men went about solicitous, begging them not to defend themselves, that they might have pity on them and on their husbands and brothers, etc., because they would lose what they had. Of this they assured me, that they had done this themselves. With all [this], I ask [you], Whose counsel is this? Oh powerful God!

The ninth. That at the foot of this ball pole, they had to place a skull or a scalp of a dead person, as I have already said, in memory of its founder, [in memory] of Ytonanslac, the father of the ball players. [Such were the] abuses, omens, and superstitions that they had when they played this bedeviled game!

First of all the ball must be of deerskin taken from the area of the animal's hooves, because it was said that the deer has all of his strength in his feet and his hands. And when the ball is [made] from the hooves, it infused their vigor in the one who caught it. And they filled this ball with clay, and set it out to dry. Afterward, as a result, one could not tell the difference between it and a shot.

The second. That the Usinulo, man or woman, and I have already explained who the usinulo is, that he is the son of the chief and in their language is called beloved son. And this person at once begins to fast. And it is in the following manner. He must not eat anything more than a little bit of *onsla*, which is the same as weak *atol*. And he must not eat anything else. And there is a designated number of spoonfuls that he is to drink from that *onsla*. No one was to approach to drink who was forbidden, because they would lose. Neither must the fire with which it was cooked be used for anything else other than to cook this *onsla* and to imbibe tobacco. And [for] the aforesaid faster, the tobacco which he inhales must not be of our [type], but of theirs, which they call *acchuma fina*, mixed with another, which they call *atabac*. And, although they always use this, when they do not have tobacco, or to mix with what they have, nevertheless, they are not to imbibe their *acchuma fina* without this other one. And this fire on which this *onsla* is cooked must be new.

The third. That in some places they are accustomed to place hair from people whom they have killed in the ball. And they say that it was to bewitch.

The fourth. That the chief of the place that was playing had to fast the night before the game, in this manner. At the setting of the sun or later they gathered in the *bujio*, which is to say, the houses of their government. They place benches for the players. And they are low, some logs hollowed out underneath, without legs. And they are to put them in front of the place with which they are playing. They give me to understand that, if the place lies to the north, they place the benches toward the south so that they will come to have their faces toward the north. And the dancers have to go out by the south side, letting out squeals [or yells], and indicating the direction with their arm extended. And the drummer and he of the marua and the women, all must be facing toward the place with whom they are to play, because, they say, if they were to turn their backs, it was a sign that they had to lose. Accordingly, they placed the fasting chief behind these benches of the players. And they placed fires between the chief and the players, [which] had to be new. And the latter was not to be used except by the chief for inhaling tobacco. And that had to be from theirs, *hachuma fina*, and not from ours, and *q de forsi ore* it had to be mixed with the atabac herb or leaf, that I spoke of above. The aforesaid fasting chief must remain seated all night long on that bench, giving advice to his players, etc., reminding them also that they were men and not women, that once they catch the ball, they should not let go of it, even though they killed them. And they said *Maquiliqui*. And I heard them say this not once, but many times. And not in San Luis. Thus it will be, as in fact it was. And from time to time, little by little, they must keep giving him cacina, even though he may not want it. What he did when he was very full was to throw it up. And he was constantly inhaling tobacco, of which I have spoken.

And at times other times. If this chief were a strong man, and even when he was not, he entered the game, having endured this exercise.

The fifth. On receiving news of these fasts, the rival place at once performs the *chacalica*, which in our speech is the "countermeasure." And, as I have said, on receiving news of these fasts, or of other things that they did, for these purposes they had their spies, either from the men or from the women. At once the rival village sought to kill a turkey or a squirrel or a raccoon. And it must not be from one of those animals that the rest say, will not do. And they immediately set it to cooking in such a way that the bones fall loose and what results in something like a mush. This [mess], of three or four days in the making, they poured into containers and carried it to the spot where they were staining their bodies and painting themselves. And with this fetid stew they liquefy the clay for staining, or whatever else they used for painting themselves. And it was so foul-smelling that they tell me that they could not stand it. And, that on entering into the plaza, they say that as soon as the rival side smelled them, they lost heart [or swooned]. And, consequently, the fast, which they had made as a countermeasure, etc. now no longer had any force.=

The sixth. When the courier came and told the people for the last time that they were to play, he counted that [the team] of the rival village, and [prepared] an equal number of sticks of the size of the finger of the hand. And, tying them all together like an *asesito* he threw them into a pot. And they ordered the making of cacina. It must not be of those from the sea coast, which is the one that is commonly drunk, but, rather, that of the forest from here up. And once the cacina is made, it is poured into that pot with those little sticks in the name of the rival players so that they may become weak and not have strength. And if, perchance, this pot were uncovered, while they were playing, they considered it certain they would lose.=

The seventh. The night they kept a vigil for the ball, the leading men asked whether there was anyone or some who felt anxiety or fear. And, if there were, they sent a man satisfactory to them to the rival village with whom they were to play. He carried a scalp of a dead person to bury under the ball pole where they must play, or, if he could, that he might throw it into the players' fire. If he could achieve this last [feat], they considered it to be certain that they would not lose. And they were so blind that, even though they lost, they were not disabused.

IV. Origins (continued)

Let us turn now to the entertaining story of how the beloved and dear Nicogvadca ended his days. They say that when he wished to die, or, to put it better, the time to deceive them, he called all his leading men. And, once they were assembled, he said to them, "Now I am about to die. He who might wish to be Nicogvadca now and remain in my place must kill seven warriors and three *hitas tascaias*. And, having achieved this, he will be Nicogvadca). As my children have told me, those from San Luis, that not long ago there died an Indian named Talpagana Luis, who had a staff or club the size of a *benoble*. And, on the tip of the said pole some scalps, and some painted. And I asked who [or possibly, what] that was. And they told me that he [or it] was *Itatascaia* and now they have confessed to me that he was Nicogvadca.

While I was priest of this *doctrina*, the year of seventy-one, I left [to become] guardian of the convent of St. Augustine. And, during this time, while the Reverend Fray Francisco Maillo was its priest, this Indian died, and they still tell me that he said that he would have to come back and burn the ball post. As though by the just judgments of God Our Lord, a lightning bolt fell that year and burned that of San Luis. And another year, another fell and burned that of Bacuqua, it having happened two years before that another had fallen in Patale and burned another pole? [*sic*]. He [Nicogvadca] went on with his discourse and told them, "What I charge you today is that as soon as I die you should throw my body into some large pots with squashes, melons and watermelons and fill them with water. And put them on the fire until they boil very thoroughly so that I may leave with that steam, having been converted into mist [or smoke]. This is for when you have your fields sown. I will remember you and give you water. And, accordingly, when you hear it thunder, it is a sign that I am coming. And thus, they say, did he go, and that he did it. And up to the present, they, and particularly the old ones, continue to believe that when it thundered Nicogvadca was on his way to give them water. And who doubts but that many of their children and relatives, being so easily influenced, have not believed this, especially when we looked the other way, and they were not taken to task nor reprehended [for it], and persisted in this blindness, deceived by the devil. Blind! Dumb! I do not say deaf, because if they were ignorant concerning all this, how could they be reprehended for it and how could they hear the opposite of these abuses? So, for the love of God, I ask that we view this with charity. Let us see, as will be seen farther on, whether such a game can be permitted. What I feel is that after they have learned [the truth] and they have wanted to speak against he who does not abandon them [the abuses]. I do not know on what they can base this. Let us give many thanks to God that it has been taken away from them. I for my part do not know whether it will cease? [*sic*] For this reason I am asked, "What motive did I have for trying, with such effort, to bring about the abolition of this bedeviled game?" One might say, "With the help of Our Lord." When his Excellency Señor Don Gavriel Díaz Vara Calderón came on his visit, having seen the youths in this place of San Luis, by chance, playing that game, not as it was played with other places, he sent for his secretary, so that he might see that pileup, and what sort

of game [it was], and the kicking, and the climbing over one another as if it were upon a stone staircase. The aforesaid Don Pedro came and told him how bestial it was and his Lordship kept observing it with all his attention and afterwards commanded that all the poles be knocked down, that that was a barbarous and bestial game, and contrary to all common sense, and damaging to the human qualities of these wretches. With entreaties and petitions, I begged him to suspend the execution of his order for the present, [convinced] (?) that for the present he had not uncovered any evil [in it], neither had we in the meantime to make (?) legs, as they say, so that we might be able to abolish it. Because I had then seen the cedula of Her Majesty, May God hear her, in which she ordered that the natives of these regions should not be deprived of any of their dances or other games as long as they were not contrary to the law of God Our Lord or to their education.

I spoke as a Catholic. Consequently, His Grace gave me every consideration. Consequently, for the reasons mentioned and others, it appeared to me that I had good reason [for my stand], even though I had some minor misgivings. After another year, which was that of seventy-six, the province was on the point of being lost, all as a result of this game. My conscience began to bother me with the weight of scruples concerning them [His reasons for defending the game] and to make me responsible for everything that could happen. For the lord bishop had ordered the cutting down of the poles, and, at my request, suspended his order because I assured him that there was no risk. It was the will of God himself that I found myself as priest in a place of which I can say, "There are Indians of common sense and satisfaction." I called on those whom I considered to be most trustworthy and questioned them about the beginning and origins of this game. With this, infinite thanks be to God, I went about drawing out what they themselves have seen, with the two interpreters, which is all this [the contents of this manuscript] and much more, which I shall not go into, lest I be fatiguing. And from other interpreters, who were in the habit of coming here to San Luis, so it was said, and they confessed to me that it was true that this was done and much more. And, the beginning of this game and of its origins, Diego Salvador said, "Was told to him by the chief of Samoche," who is still living today, and by an *inija* from Ocone. And afterward the one in Yvitachuco verified all of it. And Mendoza has told me that his father told him all this story and that he had seen a pole raised in San Diego, a place of Tomole, and that there he had seen the pouring out of cacina and the making of the gua to the pole, the usinulo, and the rest. They say that this is *ymulista*, or as we would say it, these [are] their customs in Apalachee.

At once I found myself supported by the governor, Don Pablo de Ita Salazar, and by our Reverend Father Provincial, Fray Francisco Perete, who accepted it, as they should have, assured consequently that what my children told me was true. And as you will see, in an assembly of the chiefs, which the Captain Juan Fernández de Florencia held, in order to thank them on the part of the governor for the good work that the chiefs had performed, who had knocked down the poles and put the holy cross in their place. Diego Salvador said to all of them in my presence [that it was true], and all of them also said that it was true, being, the Captain Juan Fernández and the Captain Juan Sánchez de Uriza and many others. And despite all this, [its abolition] has not failed to arouse its controversies. Not on the part of the Indians. I will say one [thing] that is the most fundamental, and it is, that they say that it was true that they had them [all those pagan practices], but that they no longer had recourse to them. To which I respond, "But who was responsible for their abandoning them? Who was it that made them understand this? Who was it that chided I them so that the pole in honor of Nicogvadca presently no longer is seen, so that they may no longer be seen to sleep the ball or keep the vigil for it, and so that they are not seen to enter [the

plaza] painted in the manner that I have spoken of. And this, until the present day, up to the last game that they played. Accordingly, this being the case, just as they abandoned it, when they saw that they were applauding him, so also from his method they are bound to abandon it, when we are watching them and following them closely [as with] (?) their doctors, who cure with a thousand cunning tricks, with both the priests and the lieutenant chiding them and even subjecting them to forced labor for a time to make them mend their ways. And despite the fact that there is no remedy to make them abandon it. For there are those who are not ignorant that, inasmuch as the Indian is the child of fear, how (?) are they from their own self-love (?) to abandon this game, hobbled [by] such great self-interest, when it is recognized that the Indian is so interested, and when they are confessing it with loud voices, that it is true, Blessed be God! The game has been abolished with all love and calm. The Indians themselves with loud voices [recognize] how good this is for their souls as well as for their bodies. Let us give God a thousand thanks for so great a benefit.

V. Conclusions

Let us see what resulted from playing this infernal ball game. The first, the many disagreements and the scant peace that have resulted from this devilish game. Nobody denied this truth to me. To it they simply reply that it is a matter of good policy that some places should be at odds with others. Policy of the devil, a Luciferian [philosophy] of government! For it is opposed to the doctrine and teaching of Christ [who said] "Beloved disciples, my peace I leave unto you, my peace I give unto you." In the end, peace was the most valuable gift he left entrusted to us. And that which the angel announced to the shepherds, "Glory be to God on the highest and peace to men of good will." For what policy can be good, that does not seek for peace, but rather discord. So erroneous a doctrine, that involves such blindness, is enough to make one shed tears of blood. They tell me that it is one of the reasons that they wrote to the governor, asking that he not abolish the game. I do not know that it is true. I only know that it was told to me by a trustworthy person.

Third. It is a barbarous game, that only people lacking the knowledge of God could play — for many reasons, that I shall go on giving you, and, for the many lamed, broken legs, persons without the use of one or both hands, blinded in one eye, broken ribs, and other broken bones, such as we are presently observing in the province. And not just a few, but many! And, in some cases, people who have been killed in the said game. I can give testimony about two that I am aware of in the place of San Luis.

Fourth. That, because of the harm when they played thus, there was a risk that not just one, but that many misfortunes could result, as I saw in the year seventy-six. In five successive games not one concluded without becoming a live war, from which it was resolved that the best path was to abandon it. And there is no doubt that worse calamities would have followed, if soldiers had not been present at the games. And they say this is good policy? They must have forgotten the words John the Evangelist [records that Christ] spoke to his disciples, when he said to them simply, that they should love one another, and they, reflecting on this, said to him, "But, Lord, do you teach us nothing more than that we should love one another?" And he said to them, "And, if you should do this, it will suffice." Could [any other course] be good policy?

Fifth. That while an Indian was a ball player, they dug his field for him and they built a house and a storage-crib for him. And he had license to practice any sort of roguery. And, no matter what it

was, the chiefs and leading men overlooked it all and covered it up, with no heed to the law of God, and without reporting it to the friar or to the lieutenant, fearful that, if they punished him, he would move to another village. The truth will come out. Let us all acknowledge it.

Sixth. And, while this harmful game was being played, it was the rule that there would be theft because they left their houses, which are such that they do not have padlocks or other hardware. Nor does the single entrance which the house and the storehouse possess, have any door in it. The most they do is to put a few boughs across it and all go to see this infernal game. And also, at times, because those who wager are such great rogues they walk off both with that which is theirs and with what belongs to another, and, in winning, they lose. And when it comes to setting matters to right, a great deal [of work] is necessary. And, at times, this cannot be achieved, because they do not know who the culprits are.

Seventh. That they lose many of their crops. And villages [perish] because they do not prepare their fields at the proper time. Because they are so totally absorbed in this infernal game, that they become so addicted to it that it becomes the center of every vice and evil, so that at times it was necessary for the lieutenant of this province to send *chacales* or soldiers to some places to order them to prepare the fields so that they might not perish. And despite this, the place that had many games would experience hunger that year, because it lost.

Eighth. That once it was announced that there was a ball game, they all foolishly ran to see it. They went whichever way they chose. The husband took off by one path, the wife by another. And if they had a daughter or sons, each one chose his own path, except that they all went to see the ball [game]. The husband did nothing to prevent his wife or his children from going with whomever they pleased and to wherever they pleased. They all ran off heedlessly. [On one occasion] when the village of San Luis was playing with Ybitachuco in the plaza of Ocuia, which was something over four leagues more or less from this, it happened to me that I found myself alone [at San Luis] with the sacristan and a young boy, without any other people in the place. And I would not give the sacristan permission to go there, nor the boy, as this would have left me there alone.

Ninth. That, at times, and [indeed], most of the time, some poor Indians went with their children without intending to gamble. [There] they would be given something, so that they might lay a bet, without paying any heed to the consequences that might emerge as a result from this infernal game or [how] they would grow, nor to how great an offense it was to God Our Lord, and to how contrary it was to his holy law. Nor did they take heed that it [the winnings] was the harvest of the devil and *sente suio a nois*. They also tried to get them to play and went about seeking out the players, rewarding them and flattering them, which amounts to the same thing as welcoming evil men and idlers, because, on average, the great ball player was a lazy lout. I have known more than one of that ilk in all of the places that I have administered. Nor, did I arrive yesterday, as they say, for it was fourteen years since I came to the land. And, of those fourteen years, I have spent only seven at San Luis. The rest of the time I have been in other places, teaching, or to put it better, administering, because, I, what doctrine could I teach? And accordingly, the thanks [are owed] to God [alone]. I am not ignorant of any of this. And I have seen it all. I know most [of the places] of the province. But, let us keep to the subject at hand. And, it is a ridiculous and frivolous thing which they [the opponents of the game's abolition] say, that the land would rise up and that the Indians would not dig or work. This alludes to the [experience] in Japan, when St. Francis

Xavier converted the kings and grandees, their Bonzes predicted to them that they would lose their kingdoms and that they would sacrifice the obedience of their vassals, who would turn to another King. And for the common people whom he converted they foretold famine and wars. And it appears to me that this alludes to That, just because they have been forbidden so fiendish and sacrilegious a game, one with so many abuses and evils, they predicted that the land would revolt. "What have we come to?" I ask, "to adjust ourselves to their laws and abuses in preaching the evangelical law to them, in correcting their vices, in teaching them virtue? Who would believe this! For the love of God! For the [love] of his most holy mother! By the wounds of our Señor Father St. Francis! Tell [me] of one single virtue possessed by the ball game that these [people] play. Tell me about it. For if you can point out just one to me, I shall be quiet. They will not find any to tell me. Consequently, I shall not keep quiet."

God's church would have been in a fine fix, if, out of fear, it had ceased to preach the holy gospel and to correct and to chastise evil and to teach virtue. There is no other course to follow. Hence I am not worried that they will attack these walls. And for the last time I say and make it clear that this game was invented by the-devil and that one could establish that by its effects, even if there were no other evidence. Accordingly, the abuses and distressing discords [show it] to be the focus of lust, the ruin of the constitutions of these poor souls, and, what makes my heart weep the most, this people is and is known to be so docile, as they are on the present occasion, and as they have been on many others. I have seen it and experienced it, above all now. For, having (?) formed an assembly of the chiefs and leading men and other people of influence from this place of San Luis, which is far from being the least in Apalachee, but [is] rather the greatest, and among the most important and loyal, and, having proposed to them that they abolish the ball game, laying out the reasons, and with Diego Salvador, who is the King's interpreter, reading this notebook to them [written] in his hand and having heard them, my children told me that everything which the interpreter had set forth was true, that not all the forms of the chacalica chacalica [sic] which is the countermeasure, that not all of these were resorted to in any one place, but rather, that one would be used here, and another over there, and [still] another over yonder, that this was in accord with [what] they had [from] their masters. And yet, that presently it was being done according as they knew and consequently had heard. And before making up my mind, I assembled them on two occasions, as I have said, and they ratified what they had already said, replying to me that I was their spiritual father, that I came to teach them the road to their salvation, to instruct and to enlighten them as to [how] to save their souls through the means that he was teaching them, and not in order to condemn them. And, accordingly, that they must not do anything other than what I might wish, inasmuch as it was above all for the welfare of their souls and bodies. And they gave me this reply in the presence of the two interpreters. And they said that they understood how beneficial it was for them to abandon the ball game, and, accordingly, that they would abandon it at once.

Let it be seen now that everything that I said was correct. And [as witness to this], the two interpreters signed it, both the one for the church and the one for the King, so that for all time, it would be evident. For they were the ones who had testified that this is a copy that is in concordance with its original, which remains in my possession. Done in San Luis de Talimali on the twenty-third of September, the year of sixteen hundred and seventy-six. Diego Salvador holata Juan Mendoza=

Diego Salvador holata Juan Mendoza

I, the Captain Mrn Lorenzo de la bora, Notary clerk de Ver and I give true testimony as to how the interpreters Diego Salvador and Juan de Mendoza examined this notebook, which they said was the same one that contained the abuses and superstitions of the Apalachee ball game, which was being played up to the day that this notebook was brought to light. And, so that this may be evident, I give the present affirmation in the place of San Luis de Talimali on the twenty-sixth day of the month of December of the year sixteen hundred and seventy-seven.

Mrn Lorenzo de la bora (Rubric)

[Martín Lorenzo de Labora]

Notary Clerk of Record