

David Arbesú. *Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the Conquest of Florida: A New Manuscript.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017. xii + 431 pp. \$74.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8130-6124-5.

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David Arbesú's discovery and translation of a different and more complete manuscript of the Gonzalo Solís de Merás account of the Florida conquest of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés is of significant importance for historians of both Florida and the wider United States. The centrality of Menéndez to the histories of this state and country cannot be understated. In 1565, Menéndez founded St. Augustine, the first continuously occupied European settlement in what is today the continental United States. Four decades before English Jamestown, St. Augustine and the Spanish colony of La Florida changed the shape of the American Southeast. Thus, possessing a more complete accounting of Menéndez's defeat of the French at Fort Caroline, his establishment of St. Augustine, and his frequent dealings with a variety of Native American peoples is a boon for scholars in a number of subfields.

The account by Solís de Merás is of particular importance to understanding Menéndez's conquest of Florida. He was Menéndez's brother-in-law and he was present during the crucial early years of the Florida conquest from 1565 to 1567. Of the other major accounts of Menéndez's conquest, the one by also-present Father López de Mendoza Grajales is much shorter and the lengthier one by Bartolomé de Barrientos largely draws on Solís de Merás. In fact, Barrientos was not in Florida for the conquest. The Solís de Merás account tran-

scribed and translated by Arbesú thus offers both an eyewitness and a lengthy account of Menéndez's first frenetic years in Florida.

Arbesú's text has three major parts, including an English translation and a Spanish transcription of this newly uncovered version of the Solís de Merás account, and an informative and self-reflexive introduction, along with extensive endnotes on each of these sections. This introduction serves to introduce Menéndez, position the new manuscript vis-à-vis the existing manuscript copy and other contemporary primary sources about Menéndez's Florida conquest, and reflect on Arbesú's editorial and translatorial approach. Arbesú found this manuscript version of the Solís de Merás account among the papers of the Marqués de Ferrera. The Ferrera manuscript is more complete and written in an easier hand than the earlier used manuscript of the Solís de Merás account from the Count of Revillagigedo's archive. The Revillagigedo manuscript was the source for the existing published Spanish transcription that formed part of Eugenio Ruidíaz y Caravia's *La Florida: Su conquista y colonización por Pedro Menéndez de Avilés* (1893). All previously published Spanish transcriptions and English translations trace to Ruidíaz's volume. What is now clear from the Ferrera manuscript and Arbesú's work spot-checking Ferrera with Ruidíaz and a microfilm copy of Re-

villagigedo held by the St. Augustine Foundation is that both Ruidíaz's transcription and the Revillagigedo manuscript are deficient. Arbesú notes several issues with Revillagigedo and Ruidíaz, including an incorrect page order and at least twelve missing folios in the Revillagigedo manuscript, along with numerous issues with transcription, such as misread numbers and a number of silent corrections and additions by Ruidíaz. The discovery of the Ferrera manuscript permitted Arbesú to recognize and fix these problems with this new transcription and translation of the Solís de Merás account.

The second and third parts of Arbesú's text include the English translation and Spanish transcription of the Ferrera manuscript, respectively. The English translation is readable and flows well. This readability suggests possibilities of using some or all of this text in an undergraduate classroom, along with it, of course, taking residence on the shelves of academic offices. The inclusion of the Spanish transcription of the Ferrera manuscript also is important, because of the acknowledged deficiencies of the existing Ruidíaz transcription of the Revillagigedo manuscript. Whether reading the English or Spanish version, the fact that Solís de Merás was a booster for his brother-in-law reminds scholars to read this newly published volume critically and in concert with other information, such as archaeological data about the local Native American peoples.

Arbesú's effort is notable and a welcome addition to the published canon of La Florida primary sources. There are issues of note, however, that point toward a future perhaps grander Solís de Merás volume. Arbesú states clearly that it is not his "intention to offer an edition of Revillagigedo, although this is much needed" (p. 28). He further adds that the Revillagigedo manuscript included "hundreds of strike-outs in that text, which appear neither in the Ferrera copy nor in Ruidíaz's 1893 edition." He then teases that "all these deleted passages would indeed give us a very different text"

(p. 27). This, however, is not Arbesú's undertaking in the current book. This book succeeds resoundingly in its goals to offer this new manuscript copy of Solís de Merás to historians of Florida and the wider United States.

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