The Calusa:

A Savage Kingdom?

Halputta Hadjo

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Editorial

The following essay is a turning point for eco-extremist theory. The author accomplishes a meticulous investigation of the Calusa of the coast of Florida in the present-day United States. In doing so, he opens up a significant panorama with respect to the examples that can be used that are not necessarily historical examples from nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes. Before this essay, eco-extremist theory always felt obligated to only cite these aforementioned tribes as the basis of its theory. "The Calusa: A Savage Kingdom?" teaches a valuable lesson; namely, that much can be learned from both the small nomadic groups and the great pre-Columbian civilizations. Here there is no danger of falling into a theoretical "contradiction," as eco-extremists can reference the Selk'nam as well as the Mayas. They can refer to the experiences of petty criminals as well as those of the large mafias; the Guatemalan gangs as well as the rigid organization of the Islamic State. That is to say, eco-extremists are free to refer to whatever they like, without any hint of morality, with the only condition that it gives a particular useful lesson concerning the planning and execution of their war.

This is the case in citing the Calusa. The author devotes himself to exposing the characteristics of that people, emphasizing their ferocity against the invaders, but also focusing on their way of life, their customs and traditions, their form of government, and their pagan beliefs related to wild nature as seen in their surroundings. That is to say, it treats themes that many would consider discomforting, politically incorrect, and inhuman, thus leaving valuable lessons to be learned.

In this way *Halputta Hadjo* leaves his mark.

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"We ourselves, controlled by the imperious program of our present nature, are conceived and born like the other beasts of the earth, then become children, and finally are led from youth to the wrinkles of age like a flower that only lives for a moment, dies, and gives rise to new life; truly we deserve to be called God's playthings."
-Maximus the Confessor, 7thcentury A.D., quoted in Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor, pg. 60

"For much of human history and for all of prehistory, humans did not see themselves as being any different from the other animals among which they lived. Hunter-gatherers saw their prey as equals, if not superiors, and animals were worshiped as divinities in traditional cultures. The humanist sense of the gulf between ourselves and other animals is an aberration."
-John Gray, Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals (21stcentury A.D.), pg. 17

All things are full of gods.
-Attributed to Thales of Miletus, 6thcentury B.C.

1. No Gods, No Masters?

This paper will attempt to address two themes that have been of interest in anti-civilization / anti-authoritarian / eco-radical discourse in the last few months. The themes are those of authority and animism / paganism. We will argue here from the eco-extremist position, with the caveat that eco-extremism may have as many viewpoints as it does adherents. We are not attempting here to "herd cats" in that regard, but we are trying to deepen points made in passing in communiqués, polemics, and interviews from various actors from this tendency. Many will ridicule eco-extremism if it merely manifests itself in curt, abrasive, and opportunistic rhetoric. While this tendency has expressed many times that it has no interest in proselytizing or making adherents of other hostile tendencies, clarity of thought is always welcome. All we are offering here is such clarity in the form of a gloss on the historical, archeological, and anthropological sources available to us from one specific and peculiar case. Please note that we don't take these sources as absolute in their veracity, but rather we struggle with the texts with a "trust, but verify" mentality.
Two eco-extremist quotes serve as the setting for our reflection. The first comes from the recent interview of the "Mexican" eco-extremist group, Individualists Tending Toward the Wild (Individualistas Tendiendo a lo Salvaje, – ITS) with the national press after the assassination of a Chemistry Department worker at the UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico) in June 2016:
"We respond to be clear that we kill because this is WAR. We do not recognize any other authority but the authority of our pagan deities tied to nature and who are against Catholicism and the Judeo-Christian god. These gods push us toward confrontation."

Some weeks prior, a group of eco-extremists stated the following in a polemic against anarchists critical of ITS and its actions entitled, "Our response is like an earthquake: It comes sooner or later":
"On this we're not going to attempt to make them understand that not all forms of authority are harmful, since they obviously WON'T GET IT. They should think more profoundly and not remain in the old expired discourse of social criticism that they defend. It's true that 'authority' has existed in ancient ethnic groups before civilization, but it's worth asking: Is the authority exercised by a leader of a Bushman tribe (for example), one that helps to feed them, something that is harmful? Is the authority of the Taromenane shaman, one which cures and alleviates illnesses in his band of wild humans, something harmful? Was the authority of the great Teochichimeca warriors, who were able to take revenge against the Spanish in their day, something harmful? If you say 'yes', you're hopeless…"

The two points are valid in our opinion, if flippantly made. Also, they are no doubt tied together. The evolution of eco-extremist discourse owes much to the history of anarchism, which in itself was anti-clerical and fiercely secular. As with many things, however, eco-extremism has evolved beyond its anarchist roots, and some eco-extremists now cling to the historical pagan gods and spirits of the lands where they inhabit. Some claim direct descent from native peoples and are thus reclaiming their peoples' gods with a war-like ethos. The premise is that anarchism, with its humanistic secularism, is not

anarchic enough, or rather, it veils the artificiality and control that civilization breeds into us ipso facto. Wild Nature, as a sort of filler for what should be an elaborate cosmovision and spirituality of a particular "primitive people", is seen as both the primary agent of the struggle against civilization and the ultimate beneficiary of civilization's demise.

This can be contrasted to the leftist and humanistic approach of U.S. anarcho-primitivism, particularly of the school of John Zerzan and Kevin Tucker. The latest endeavor of this group is the publication of a journal entitled *Black and Green Review*, the third issue of which was released in May of this year. One of the showcase pieces of that issue, "Wild Resistance, Insurgent Subsistence: An interview with BC green anarchists on native resistance, building community and undermining civilization", aims to show the current "praxis" of anarcho-primitivism, mainly, helping native peoples in British Columbia in Canada to resist the oil and gas industry that wants to exploit their ancestral lands. More specifically, a group of green anarchists is both providing logistical support to the tribes' struggles and trying to establish their own "community of resistance" based on immediate-returns nomadic hunter-gatherer paradigms advocated by Kevin Tucker in particular. This would be akin to attempting to follow the lifeways of the peoples of the Kalahari, Alaska, the central African jungle, etc.; that is, of the last nomadic hunter-gatherers who live in small and relatively egalitarian bands.

At one point, the interviewer Kevin Tucker asks about the problem of authority. It seems that even in this green anarchist Arcadia, "authority" has reared its bony, eyeless head. Namely, the tribes that they assist in the Pacific Northwest have been historically very hierarchical, sedentary, and rigid in their societal structure. They are still fighting for their ancestral "rights", however, but their societies fall far short of green anarchist aspirations.

Our "shepherds", however, try to take a middle course of both assisting these natives in their fight, but also maintaining their autonomy to realize their own dream of "True Anarchy":

"As anarchists we're always dealing with the question of how to work, fight and play with non-anarchists and traditional cultures. I've got to admit that over the years I've found more reciprocity and anarchistic relations with indigenous people who come from a more nomadic, small band, cultural background in the interior than in the more sedentary and slave/commoner/nobility ranked coastal cultures. This is a generalization, as I have met coastal folks who share our desires, but the feeling and experience of a more rigid culture stands.

In any solidarity and decolonization efforts with traditional cultures, we are asking ourselves; are we helping to revive traditions that are diametrically opposed to our desire for free relationships instead of institutionalized, coercive ones? Are we enabling a revamped version of older national liberation schemes, where the mythical golden age of a heavenly past before the devil appeared, is to be re-established, lock, stock, and barrel? I think those are complex questions, given the transformative capacity and diversity of individuals and cultures involved, and the legacy of colonization."

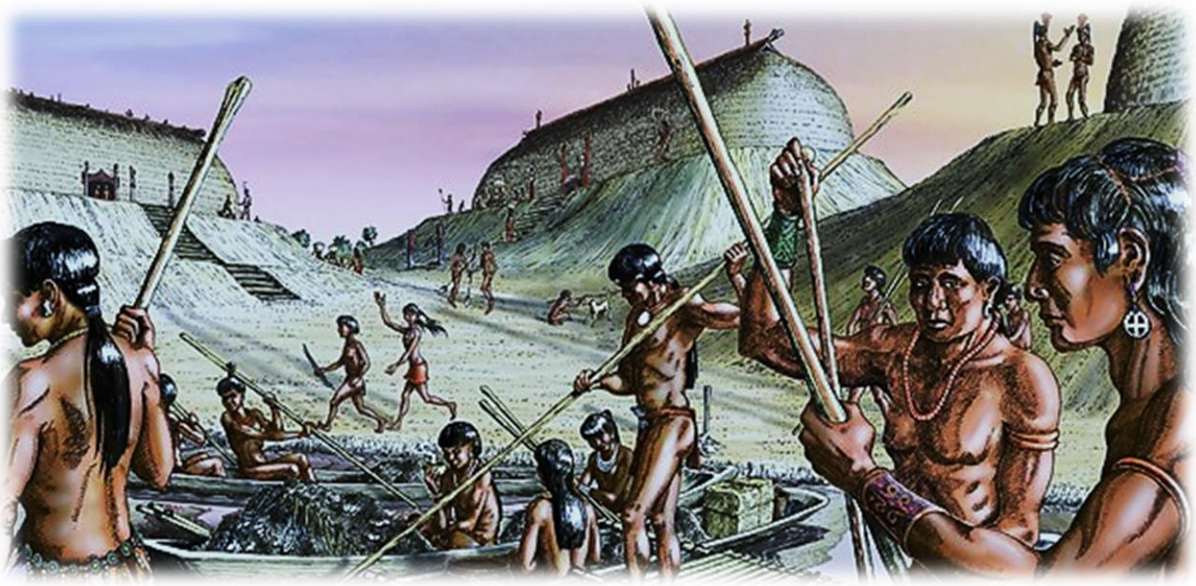
As defenders of the eco-extremist tendency, we admire the "flexibility" shown by these anarchists, but we still find this attitude problematic. It seems that they are picking "primitive" societies out of a catalog, and choosing the ones that most "speak to them", while trying to compromise in their activism in order to not become totally irrelevant. In the end, what we see here is the fatal flaw of anarcho-primitivism: the belief that societies can be made whole cloth from a series of principles learned in college-level anthropology textbooks. Zerzan, Tucker, et. al.'s view of human nature seems like the Kantian category, i.e. a mental box in one's head that determines reality, or rather, a "software program" that needs to be rebooted and run again so that the hardware reverts to factory specifications. The technological analogy is entirely appropriate since, as we will summarize at the end of the article, the ethos of anarcho-primitivism / green anarchy remains anthropocentric, humanistic, and rationalist.

Eco-extremism in contrast is pessimistic and misanthropic, at least when it comes to civilized "humanity" (which is perhaps a redundant term). It is pessimistic in that its analysis doesn't aim to create a new "blueprint" or to fix the bug in the software language that led to its mortal enemy, civilization. If eco-extremists could do that, they would be gods, and that is a ridiculous proposition on its face. It is thus misanthropic because it does not consider humans to be outside their own animality, and thus there is no real agency as individuals, societal or otherwise. Ultimately, the individual is an ensemble of involuntary and natural processes that make him incredibly fickle and functionally powerless. The real agents are those things that make him thus.

He can lash out or he can surrender, but whatever he does, he does within the blindness and impotence of his own carnal nature. That is no reason to give up, and it is no reason to despair. It is every reason, however, to revere those forces that created things this way, and these are the "spirits" or the "gods" of a specific environment, whatever you want to call them. The attitude of eco-extremists is undying hostility toward technological civilization in the name of the spirits that are his lost patrimony.

In order to explore these themes in depth, we move from the abstract to the concrete, that is, from analyzing principles to investigating the development of a historical people from its primordial beginnings to its tragic end in historic times. We speak here of the Calusa tribe of southwest Florida, a group that has the added benefit of being similar to the chiefdoms mentioned in the *Black and Green Review* interview. The Calusa had the same "problematic" characteristics of hierarchy and complexity but on a larger scale and in a more pronounced manner. In the Calusa, we find a fierce people who created what

could be considered a “civilization” without agriculture, or rather, as hunter-gatherer-fishers. As with all peoples, they were a product of their land / sea-scape and their historical reactions to it through the centuries. The result was a proud and cunning people who resisted Spanish colonialism for two centuries after initial contact.



2. Emergence of the Calusa polity

The Calusa Indians of southwestern Florida have long intrigued researchers as they appear from the historical evidence to have been a society with extensive social stratification and political development but without any staple crops to speak of. That is, they were able to create and sustain surpluses that created a “civilization” as hunter-collectors, mostly through extensive harvesting of fish and other animal products from the sea. While other tribes such as those of the U.S. Pacific Northwest also seemed to have created high levels of social organization without agriculture, the Calusa did so on a larger scale by developing centralized political power in a paramount chief and nobility. In spite of this, or because of it, the Spaniards were unable to proselytize and defeat the Calusa in their encounters with them in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, the Calusa cleaved to their animist beliefs and caused great consternation in the Spanish Catholic missionaries who tried to convert them. It was only with the invasions of tribes from the north in the 18th century, in large part due to pressures placed on them by European powers, that the Calusa faded into the oblivion of history that was the fate of many now-defunct tribes of that period. All the same, we posit that the shape and characteristics of Calusa society, at least what we know of it, blur the line between what we know as “civilization” and “wildness”. In particular, the Calusa show that we should be mindful of the limits of our own conceptions concerning societies of the past, and attentive to how Wild Nature herself shapes societies in a given context; and how human societies, at least before our own, are manifestations of nature in a given context, ever changing, self-constructing, and passing away.

A history of the Calusa is tightly bound to their unique environment of southwest Florida. As William Marquardt states in his essay, “The Emergence and Demise of the Calusa,”

“South Florida straddles temperate and tropical biomes, fostering rich and intergrading plant communities (Scarry and Newsome, 1992). In the sixteenth century, the zone of Calusa influence stretched across the vast wetlands and flatlands of the southern Florida peninsula from the Gulf to the Atlantic coast and south to the Florida Keys. The Calusa heartland centered on Charlotte Harbor, near present-day Fort Myers. In Charlotte Harbor the combination of river overflow from the interior and the enclosing barrier islands furnished a protected, shallow, grassy estuary of extraordinary year-round activity.” (158)

One paper from this year found in the *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* entitled, “The Calusa and prehistoric subsistence in central and south Gulf Coast Florida” by Hutchinson et. al state the following concerning the Florida coastal environment:

“Florida has the longest shoreline in the United States at 13,676 km, with massive areas of open estuaries and tidal marshes along the Gulf Coast (Livingston, 1990). This rich biotic environment has afforded a dependable subsistence base for the human inhabitants living along the coast at least since the beginning of the Archaic period (8000 B.C. lasting until about 500 B.C.; Milanich, 1994). The protected waters of the lagoons that lie behind barrier islands provide substantial food resources, as do the near-shore environments of the barrier islands. Adjacent terrestrial areas include grasslands,

freshwater marsh, cypress and mangrove swamp, and pine forests that are both home to and foraging areas of numerous mammals, birds, reptiles, freshwater fish, amphibians, and freshwater molluscs."(56)

Of the Calusa themselves, Lucy Fowler Williams states in her article, "The Calusa Indians: Maritime Peoples of Florida in the Age of Columbus":
"The Calusa lived from at least A.D. 1000 up to the middle of the 18th century in what are now southwest Florida's Lee, Charlotte, and Collier counties. While estimates vary, their population probably numbered between 4,000 and 10,000. Historic sources reveal that they were a warlike people who economically and politically dominated most of southern Florida.
Archaeological and historical evidence indicates the Calusa's primary source of food was the sea, and virtually all evidence suggests they did not practice agriculture. The rich and relatively stable coastal ecology of southwest Florida provided an abundance of marine life—numerous kinds of fish, shellfish, and sea mammals—that was capable of supporting a large human population. As noted in an early 1566 account, Pedro Menendez de Aviles, a Jesuit missionary in charge of an early and unsuccessful attempt to convert the tribe to Christianity, was welcomed by the principal leader of the Callus with a large meal consisting only of many kinds of boiled, roasted, and raw fish (Goggin and Sturtevant 1964). Fruit and roots were gathered, and deer, bear, and raccoon were probably eaten as well."

Daniel F. Austin, in his article entitled, "The Glades Indians: Ethnobotany of an Extinct Culture," found in the Summer/Fall 1997 edition of *The Palmetto: Quarterly Magazine of the Florida Native Plant Society*, states the following known facts about Calusa society:
"This culture may have taken their name from their second historical leader, Calos. These were as coastal people of Southwestern Florida between Charlotte Harbor and Cape Sable who relied heavily on the ocean for food. The most powerful group in historic times, the Calusa extracted tribute from the Atlantic coastal villages."

John H. Hann, in the book, *Missions to the Calusa*, further elaborates on the historical record showing the Calusa as a society based on conquest but not on agriculture (226):
"The Calusa world that Fontaneda described and that the Spaniards encountered in the 1560's was a complex chiefdom, headed by the Calusa ruler, Carlos. According to Fontaneda, Carlos, and his father before him, were the lord of fifty towns, some of which were as far inland as Lake Okeechobee and two of which were in the Keys. Still others were tributary to the Calusa ruler, at times at least. The power of that chiefdom reflected, as Henry F. Dobyns observed, in the mid-sixteenth century Spaniards' perception of its ruler as a king. Dobyns went on to describe the Calusa polity as a 'conquest kingdom' and remarked that its pattern of tribute collection 'very much resembled that of the Aztecs and Incas, although Calusa society was smaller in scale.' One might view that comparison as stretching a point, but the basis for the remark leaves no doubt as to the Calusa polity's chiefdom status."

As for agriculture, Marquardt states the following (ibid):
"But until solid new evidence is found, one must agree with John W. Griffin that 'All of the ethnohistorical sources characterize South Florida as non-agricultural at the time of contact.' And they remained so long after contact. In 1697, on seeing hoes the friars brought with them, the Calusa asked what purpose they would serve inasmuch as they had not brought blacks to wield them, implying that in no way could the Indians be induced to use them."
Thus, the Calusa did not "play by the script" of the rise of the typical warlike kingdom subjugating peoples around it. Its surplus did not come from the ground in the form of domesticated crops, but from the sea. The Calusa did not have a peasantry, and according to William H. Marquardt, this time in "Tracking the Calusa: A Retrospective," found in *Southeastern Archaeology* in 2014, they did not have slavery either (2). Indeed, while there may have been shortages at times (which we will discuss below), overall there was no need to store or dry food because their food sources were theoretically abundant and always available. In contrast to the salmon-based food culture of the Pacific Northwest, the character of Calusa fishing was not dependent on seasonal abundance. As Randolph J. Widmer describes in his book dissertation, *The Evolution of the Calusa: A Nonagricultural Chiefdom on the Southwest Florida Coast*:
"While numerous studies of sociopolitical evolution have been made for terrestrial, agricultural adaptations, to my knowledge only the Northwest Coast of North America has been subject to empirical studies of coastal adaptation similar to the present one [i.e. the Calusa]. Still, these coastal adaptations are markedly different from the one in Southwest Florida, since the latter adaptation was tropical and involved pseudocatadromous, rather than anadromous, fish resources. Pseudocatadromous fish spend their lives in the inshore estuarine zones and breed offshore at sea, the opposite of anadromous fish, and are therefore available throughout the year. Even during periods of offshore spawning these fish aggregate in large masses before moving offshore and are at optimal availability for human use. Some species, notably sea trout, spend their entire life cycle in the estuary. Thus the availability of pseudocatadromous fish in tropical estuarine

environments is dependent on the primary productivity of the habitat, since that is where they obtain their food. In an anadromous inshore habitat, primary productivity is not important because the waters are used mainly for breeding rather than feeding." (8)

Widmer elaborates later in his text:
"Certain coastal, aquatic ecosystems can be much more productive for human exploitation than natural terrestrial, nonagricultural systems. Not only is productivity extremely high – approaching if not equaling, that possible with agricultural systems – but unlike anadromous fish resources, they are available on a continuous year-round basis, not just during the spawning period. The stability is due to the primary productivity of the region in general, which dictates the trophic structure of the area, rather than to the amenability of a river for the spawning behavior of certain fish species." (114)

Widmer also presents an argument at the end of the book as to why the Calusa never felt compelled to adopt agriculture. In the first place, their coastal environment was not amenable to large scale agriculture. Secondly, the interior of the southern end of the Florida peninsula also could not sustain agricultural production. Widmer points out that in many places where large coastal societies develop, people in the interior usually enter into a productive relationship with the coast wherein they produce greater amounts of calorie-rich staples such as maize, taro, manioc, etc. The adaptive system thus begins to integrate both the protein-rich production of coastal fishing with agricultural production of the interior agricultural regions. Such a model could not take place in southern Florida for geographical regions:
"South Florida is one of the rare tropical environmental regions where agriculture is not feasible in the adjoining interior. The Manus' ethnographic situation is another such example. The highly productive zone is therefore very circumscribed, with an almost eight-to-one demographic edge on the interior population. Interestingly, it seems that maize agriculture was practiced for a while in the Lake Okeechobee area, possibly taking advantage of this trade potential, although more likely the context was ritual. It seems to have been abandoned after 1000 A.D. most probably owing to the rise of the water table, which compounded the difficulties – that is, drained areas followed by ridge-field development – encountered in growing the crop in the first place. For these reasons, few coastal tropical coastal adaptations which rely primarily on fish are found." (278)

Further, other resources such as fresh water were at times scarce in the region, which necessitated a central authority to allocate. It appears that the Calusa created cisterns, canals, and other structures to store and transport fresh water to their villages, which meant higher village populations wherein disputes had to be resolved. Thus, the situation, "leads to a need for leadership or centralized authority for quelling disputes. Since higher social tensions are tolerated, the ever-present need for individuals to resolve disputes would favor the development of fixed – that is, hierarchical – leadership and centralized authority…(265).
Thus, the very geography of the region where the Calusa inhabited was, according to Widmer, highly favorable to sedentism (due to the highly productive fishing areas) but unfavorable to agriculture. This dynamic created the conditions for the formation of a unique social formation where hierarchy and "complex" society could develop without "delayed returns" or significant food storage. This formation is the rare but still known "hunter-gatherer-fishing" society, though it is unclear when the predecessors of the Calusa in Southern Florida became fully sedentary. Widmer's premise at least is that the Calusa grew from sedentary fishing communities into a larger kingdom of conquest due to a stabilization of sea level and climate leading to abundance of fish stocks, and the reaching of carrying capacity on their land at around 800 A.D. This necessitated conquest and the seeking of the augmentation of resources outside of their traditional territories in the form of tribute from neighboring tribes. For example, Widmer discusses the likelihood of roots being demanded as tribute by the Calusa from tribes in the interior:
"Because the Calusa has a large demographic base, at least eight times that found in the interior, political usurpation through military conquest was easy. Such usurpation, documented in Fontaneda's memoir, could result in a situation where interior groups would be forced to produce or to collect roots well in excess of their own needs to avoid punitive raids by numerically superior military groups from the coast. Therefore, threat of military coercion would be one of the means of obtaining excess roots from the interior. The incentive for production would be great, because military parties could raid villages which did not meet production quotas. The threat of military coercion would also foster political alliances and bolster political power of the controlling coastal paramountcy. The demographic imbalance would result in a valuable adaptive advantage to military intensification, and I argue that this is one of the key reasons for the military profile found in the Calusa adaptation." (275)

William H. Marquardt has recently questioned Widmer's narrative on many important fronts in a recent 2014 *Southeastern Archaeology* essay. He upholds the evidence that the role of agriculture or horticulture in Calusa society was minimal, and

that their sustenance came primarily from fishing as well as hunting and gathering from inland sources. However, he disputes Widmer's position of the Calusa having continuous and sustained abundance leading up to the formation of a complex polity around the first millennium of the present epoch. Marquardt states that recent evidence requires a more dynamic view of the conditions under which the Calusa polity evolved. Firstly, Marquardt states that the evidence does not support a stabilization of sea level and climate leading up to the formation of the Calusa "kingdom". Instead, the sea level and climatic conditions of southern Florida continued to be dynamic, as was the availability of the resources tied into the growth of the Calusa polity. While "rich estuarine resources" were essential to the formation of the Calusa chiefdom, other factors played a role in its consolidation, namely, its trade and cultural interactions during the Early Mississippian period in the now U.S. Southeast (A.D. 1000-1200). Overall, as Marquardt states:

"Goggin and Sturtevant and Widmer are correct that rich estuarine resources played an important role, but it is now clear that the Calusa were most successful during sea-level transgressions that brought a diverse and ample array of fish for the taking and were most challenged when sea level fell. Even when sea level was relatively high, warm sea-surface temperatures fostered more frequent and large storms which could be destructive. In sum, new evidence discussed above confirms the Calusa's environment's immense potential but also its heterogeneity, dynamism, and vulnerability to abrupt climate changes and stochastic weather events. I suggest that the Calusa entered into social relations with people of other polities and adjusted their relationship to the changing physical structures of their world. In doing so, they transformed nature and transformed themselves." (13)

Marquardt also posits in his 2014 essay the likelihood of the gradual evolution of the Calusa polity from "heterarchy" to hierarchy. That is, Marquardt remains unconvinced that the paramount Calusa chiefdom was something that preceded contact with Europeans in the 16thcentury, and may have been a product of it. (14) Also, such consolidation of power may have been the result of long-standing rivalry with a rival neighboring tribe and the power relations that this created:

"I suggest that when longstanding relations of reciprocity within South Florida were challenged by Tocobaga expansion, the Calusa leadership attempted to impose a system of patronage / clientage on people to the south and east with whom they had long enjoyed cooperative heterarchical relations. In other words, the leaders of the Calusa may have believed that coercive power was needed to replace consensual power if the Calusa polity was to respond effectively to the aggressive expansion of the Tocobaga, with its emerging Mississippian connections. Even so, I see no reason to conclude a state level of political complexity the Calusa social formation during the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries." (15)

At the risk of contradicting an expert, I have to state that I find Marquardt's certainty of the sudden transformation of the Calusa polity into a state rather odd and unconvincing. It seems that, when the Spaniards first encounter the Calusa, they had a system of protocol and societal hierarchy firmly in place. I believe at times that modern people like to impose their perceptions of how they perceive time and change on what has occurred in the past, without taking into consideration that "primitive peoples" were often fiercely conservative and stalwart when it came to their received way of life. It has only been recently that modern humanity has adopted the truism: "change is good." Ancient peoples, on the other hand, more often than not found change anathema: the past was at least known, and the future was never guaranteed to be better, indeed, it had a good chance of not being so. Thus, I am skeptical that there was a sudden emergence of a complex polity when faced with the Spanish existential threat, even one that was somewhat distant at the time. There must have been more continuity here than Marquardt lets on, I believe, especially since this is clearly only one reading of archaeological evidence.

I believe that Hutchinson et. al.'s paper supports these doubts when it states the following concerning the consistent abundance of resources produced by South Florida estuaries:

"Recent reconsiderations of complexity for coastal populations, however, have questioned the stability of coastal resources citing ample evidence of periods of fluctuating instability. They have in turn emphasized the importance of other cultural

mechanisms, such as resource exchange, in fulfilling subsistence needs during times of uncertainty…
[More recent] multiple lines of evidence confirm that marine-based protein and terrestrial C3 plants provided a large and reliable portion of the diet in southwestern Florida as early as 4000 years ago and up to European contact." (55)

The Calusa diet was thus solidly sea-based, with no need for complex exchange to augment their subsistence.
Kelsey Marie McGuire in her Master's thesis, "They are rich only by the sea: Testing a model to investigate Calusa Salvage of 16th – and early 17thcentury Spanish shipwrecks," states the following concerning the chronology of the Calusa polity:
"This primary account suggests that a stable Calusa chiefdom existed prior to the conquest of Cuba, which occurred in 1511. Regardless of the specifics, the Calusa seemed to have had a vast, organized territory under their control by the time of European contact." (10)

Overall, what we can know of the Calusa is the following: they were an advanced chiefdom on the southwest coast of Florida that had no agriculture to speak of and prospered off of the surplus of the sea, even if that surplus was uncertain at times. A complex polity most likely emerged in order to distribute and organize resources needed for their hunter-gatherer-fishing lifestyle such as water and fishing territory. Gradually this chiefdom developed until it was encountered by the Spanish and perceived as a complex kingdom with a paramount leader, "palaces," and a nobility, but no agriculture. In the next section, we will discuss what the Spanish encountered in terms of the shape of Calusa society and beliefs.

3. The shape of Calusa life
Zach Zorich begins his essay, "The Fisher Kings," found in *Hakai Magazine* with a narrative of the hostile greeting the Calusa gave to the Spanish when they first approached their shores:
"In 1517, indigenous fishermen watched warily as Spanish ships dropped anchor off the mangrove-lined shores of southern Florida. Only a quarter century had passed since Christopher Columbus and his crewmen first landed on an island in the Bahamas, but word of the foreigners' hunger for land, slaves, and gold had spread along the coasts of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. In Cuba, 385 kilometers south of Florida, Spanish forces had recently taken brutal control of the island, enslaving many of the indigenous Taíno. So when 20 Spanish soldiers and sailors waded ashore in southern Florida to replenish their ships' water supplies, the local inhabitants were ready.
One of the Spanish soldiers, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, later chronicled the battle. Florida's indigenous fighters, Díaz noted, 'had immense sized bows with sharp arrows, lances, and spears—among these some were shaped like swords—while their large powerful bodies were covered with the skins of wild beasts.' The attack was swift and ferocious. The first volley of arrows alone injured six Spanish soldiers. The rest barely escaped with their lives, fleeing back to the ship with the water they so badly needed."

Soon the Spanish would return again, this time welcomed by the Calusa "king," Carlos, who sought Spanish help for his own power struggles and to bolster his profile throughout the region with Spanish trade goods. In exchange, the Spanish demanded what they demanded from all of their conquered peoples: submission to the "One True Catholic Faith" and that they become good peasants in the fields under to the Spanish crown. In this, the Calusa would prove most problematic for their would-be conquerors. The Calusa had a complex religion based on a pantheon of gods, a clerical caste, and the supreme ruler who was the manifestation of the divine will. Their clinging to paganism, as well as their idea of the cosmos, would drive them to resist the Spanish for the next two centuries.
Before explaining the resistance of the Calusa to Christian religious forms, we should backtrack and describe in depth various aspects of Calusa society. A good summary of what we know concerning Calusa life and thought is found in the Darcie A. MacMahon and Willam H. Marquardt book, *The Calusa and Their Legacy: South Florida People and Their Environment*. This book is valuable in that it also extensively describes the South Florida environment, as well as its flora and fauna. Going into detail on these latter items is beyond the scope of this essay, but is recommended as a source for further study.

The Calusa are known to have consumed fifty species of fish and twenty kinds of mollusks and crustaceans, along with land animals, sea birds, and various plant species. The Calusa subsistence strategy of fishing and gathering maritime products required the fabrication of nets, hooks, spears and other implements from plant materials and shells, among other resources (3). The Calusa, as was mentioned above, were extremely proficient at the manufacture and use of dugout canoes, most likely from pine and cypress, and could travel as far as Cuba, which was 90 miles away, if needed (ibid, 73). More notably, the Calusa were able to organize enough labor for the construction of canals, mounds, and even entire settlements that were made from middens that later transformed into the foundations of larger structures. Some Calusa earthworks, such as a canal at the Pineland Site Complex, are still visible today. (95)

The Calusa built their houses on top of these mounds for protection from the elements (storms, flooding etc.) and other tribes. The largest of these was reserved for the Calusa "cacique" or leader, as described in the Spanish chronicles, thought now to be on Mound Key near Estero Bay:
"2000 men might gather [in the cacique's house] without being very crowded… [Governor Menéndez de Avilés] entered the cacique's house alone, with about 20 gentleman, and stood where there were some large windows, through which he could see his men: the cacique was in a large room, alone on a [raised] seat with a great show of authority, and with an Indian woman, also seated, a little apart from him… and there were about 500 principal Indian men and 500 women; the men were near him, and the women near her, below them." (95)

As insinuated in the above quote, Calusa society was a class society divided between the supreme leadership, a class of nobles, and commoners. The Calusa leadership consisted of a supreme leader (a "king", who was expected to marry his own "sister" – perhaps a close relative – among other things), a military leader, and a spiritual leader, and was intricately tied into Calusa beliefs, as MacMahon and Marquardt indicate:
"The spiritual and material realms made up one seamless and world for the south Florida native people. According to documents, common people believed in the absolute power of the Calusa leader. His power was a function of – and proof of – his identification with both the practical and the spiritual features of the everyday world. As their leader prospered, the land and the waters would continue to bring forth their abundance. His struggles, his wars and alliances, and his dealings with the spirits of the dead were in the interests of all; and whatever he required of them had to be given without question. Spiritual authority and political authority, easily discussed separately in our society, were for the Calusa one and the same." (84-85)

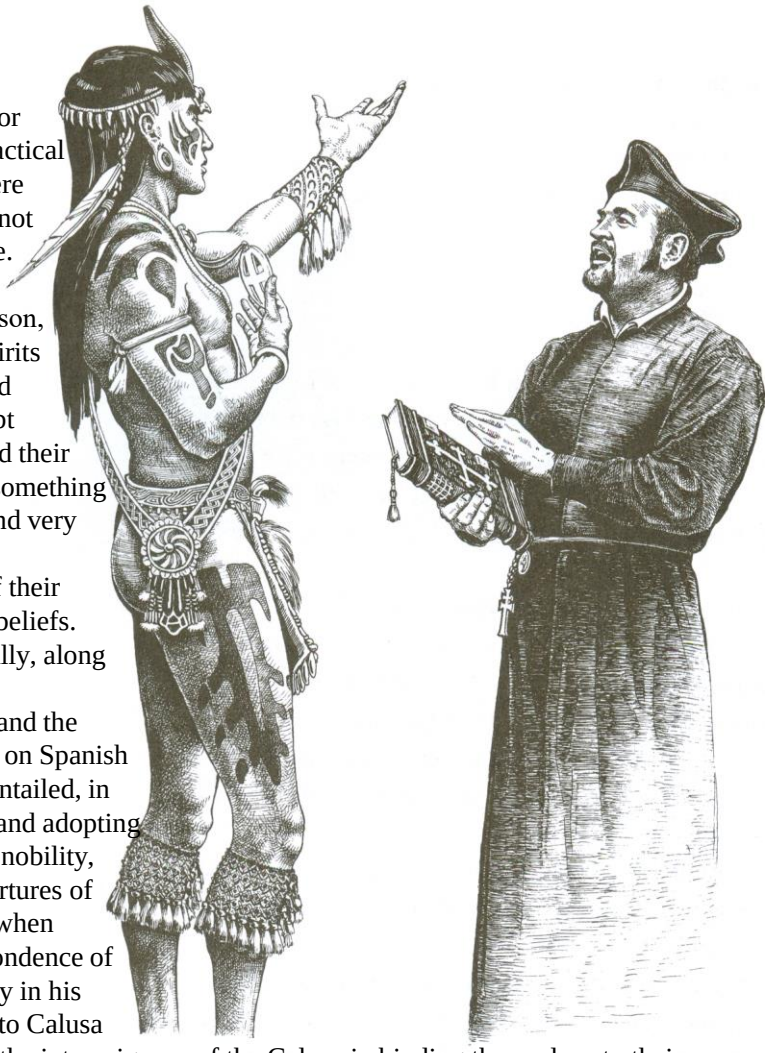
The Calusa, though they wore little clothing, took great care of their personal adornment that also served a spiritual purpose:
"Body paint was common, especially on ritual occasions, and had a spiritual significance. In 1568 Spanish Jesuit missionary Juan Rogel noted that the Calusa leader wore his hair long and stained his face and his body black. Commenting on events in the Florida Keyes in 1743, Joseph Javier Alaña and Joseph Maria wrote that 'the men paint themselves variously almost every day, a custom they practice, we have learned, for the honor of the principal idol that they venerate.'" (MacMahon and Marquardt, 4).

Calusa mortuary practice was also notable and elaborate:
"The Calusa buried their dead in mounds or cemeteries. They feared the dead and placed food, herbs, and tobacco offerings for the departed on mats at the burial places. Skulls of animals (such as stags, turtles, and barracudas) were also placed at gravesites. The Calusa consulted their dead ancestors in order to foretell the future or to learn of happenings in other places." (ibid)

Calusa ceremony and art could be extremely elaborate. Choirs of 500 women were observed by the Spaniards singing on special festive occasions, and wooden figures of animals and masks have been found by archeologists and can be seen to this day in museums in Florida. The Calusa carved these artifacts using shark teeth and other materials, and decorated the interior of their temples in honor of fierce idols which the Spanish feared upon encountering them (ibid).
MacMahon and Marquardt go on to state, "The Calusa steadfastly refused to accept Spanish beliefs and Spanish authority, successfully resisting European intrusion for nearly 200 years after Ponce de León's first incursion." (85)
Kelsey McGuire elaborates upon this point in her thesis:
"Calusa objects, ideologies, and politics were unique to native Southeastern culture. Their naturalistic, non-agricultural motifs suggest that their aesthetic culture was similar to that of the Hopewell; yet their tool assemblage drew heavily from

Archaic influences, and their sociopolitical interactions were similar to those of large-scale Mississippian societies. Perhaps their unique qualities were exactly what equipped them to resist Spanish dominance until the 18th century. As this thesis contends, the Calusa were selective in accepting anything with the potential to compromise their way of life or the authority of their chief. Meanwhile, neighboring tribes and chiefdoms willingly exchanged aspects of their aboriginal cultures for Spanish goods, ideological regimes, and political control." (21-22)

4. The struggle against Christianity



Before discussing Calusa religion and the Spaniards' opposition to it, I feel that it is appropriate to discuss briefly the schism in the modern mind between religion and knowledge. To get immediately to the point, religion for the vast majority of its existence has been an eminently practical thing. That is, how people believed and how they knew were one in the same. That is because human beings usually do not have the luxury to make leaps of faith, hoping against hope. "Blessed art they who have not seen, yet believe," would have been an unfathomable premise to any "primitive" person, and this was most likely the case with the Calusa. Their spirits and their environment were one, their religious practice and their way of life were one, and there was no reason to doubt them because they were based on the things that constituted their daily reality. The Calusa believed in a world full of gods, something that we cannot possibly conceive of in our very Western and very secularized mentality. Thus, challenging their beliefs was challenging their way of life. Out of most of the peoples of their region, it was the Calusa who held out the longest in their beliefs. They were never conquered, but rather disappeared gradually, along with the spiritual world which they inhabited.

As indicated above, the initial contact between the Calusa and the Spanish was one of hostility. Part of that hostility centered on Spanish attempts to convert the Calusa to Catholicism, a task that entailed, in the Spanish mind, the Calusa finally taking up agriculture and adopting Spanish customs. The Calusa, with their priestly caste and nobility, as well as an established animist theology, resisted the overtures of the Catholic priests and friars vehemently, using violence when necessary. John H. Hann edited and translated the correspondence of these Spanish missionaries between the 16th and 18th century in his book, *Missions to the Calusa*. The reaction of the Spanish to Calusa religious practices was usually one of horror, as well as to the intransigence of the Calusa in binding themselves to their pagan beliefs. This intransigence is characterized in the following passage:

"Throughout this period south Florida's natives continued to cling to their own religious traditions, although in times of stress they spoke of being willing to become Christians in order to obtain what they wanted from Spanish authorities. For most such statements seem to have been no more than a ploy. In 1743 Alaña remarked that although the 'idolatrous errors and superstitions of this people are of the crudest sort… what is surprising is the very tenacious attachment with which they maintain toward all this and the ridicule they make of beliefs contrary [to theirs]'."

Fr. Joseph Javier Alaña, a Spanish missionary, wrote an extensive description of the Calusa idols that he saw as well as some religious practices, which is worth quoting extensively:

"… We saw two idols. The principal one is a board sheathed in dearskin with its poorly formed image of a fish that looks like a barracuda and other figures like tongues. They have [now] hidden this one, because one day we stepped on it with the purpose of freeing them experientially of the fear of the disasters that they thought would follow such disrespect for it. And we have but slight hope of taking it from them without violence. The other idol, which is the God of the cemetery, the theater of their most visible superstitions, was a head of a bird, sculpted in pine, which in the matter of hideousness well represented its original, and which we burned after it had been smashed, along with the hut that they had for a church, which it appeared to us that it could not be done without a tumult on the part of the Indians, as proved to be the case, although not without many signs of grief and even lamentations and tears from their women. In the said church they had the most ugly

mask destined for the festivals of the principal idol, which was placed there on top of a table or altar. And they call it sipi or sipil. We also saw a large log which, on certain days, they adorn with flowers and with feathers and celebrate, at the foot of which some silver had been buried that the Indians removed. They have an Indian whom they call bishop, consecrated with three days of races. He drinks many times until he passes out. And they think such a one dies and returns sanctified. There is another Indian whom they call tirupo or like God, terms that are synonymous for them, whom they consult concerning the future and the distant. He is considered to be the doctor of the place. His remedies are great growls and gestures that he makes over the one who is ill, adorning himself with feathers and painting himself horribly. And he is indeed a man who has in his appearance I do not know just what traces of [being] an instrument of the Devil.
They venerate the cacique and his sons with incensing in which the bishop takes part. At his death and that of other leading men they kill children so that they may serve them in the other life, a cruel ceremony that they practice in the [celebration of] peaces [as well]."(422-423)

Escalante Fontaneda, quoted by Marquardt in "The Emergence and Demise of the Calusa," gives further description of the role of human sacrifice in Calusa religious practice:
"Those [Indians] of Carlos firstly have the custom [that] each time a child of the cacique dies, each resident sacrifices his sons or daughters who go in company of the death of the child of the cacique. / The second sacrifice is that when a cacique himself dies, or the cacica, they kill his or her own servants, and this is the second sacrifice. / The third sacrifice is that they kill each year a Christian captive in order to feed their idol which they adore, and which they say eats the eyes of the human male and eats the head. They dance each year, which they have for custom./ And the fourth sacrifice is that after the summer come some sorcerers in the shape of the devil with some horns on their heads, and they come howling like wolves and many other different idols which yell like animals in the woods, and these idols stay four months, in which they never rest night or day, running so much with great fury. What a thing to relate the great bestiality that they do!" (166)

Fray Feliciano López describes a temple of the Calusa in the following passage:
"While examining the village because of having heard much celebration on the preceding night, and not seeing anything more than a house in the area where I heard them, they say [it is] the house of Mahoma, and when I was unprepared for it, all the Indians came running and yelling so that I reckoned my hour had arrived, but I took it as a joke, making them think that I had not seen it. And as they saw me in celebration they themselves showed me everything. It is a very tall and wide house with its door and a [hole] in the middle of the hillock or very high flat-topped mound and on top of it a sort of room [made] of mats with seats all closed. One can imagine the purpose it serves. They dance around it. The walls are entirely covered with masks, one worse than the other. The cacique [has] given his word to me that we may destroy the house, but by my poor understanding they are opposing it. May God help me and give me his divine assistance as, at this date, I am much afflicted." (159-160)
The friar continued:
"I had written up to this point, when two leading Indians called me in great secrecy this night, the vespers of St. Matthew, and told me that I should withdraw inside and remain at home with my friars because their Holy One was very irritated. And when I told them that my God was more powerful than their Holy One, they told me not to jest and that I should care how I proceeded. The matter deprived me of my sleep, but we are already in the palisade. And it appears to me that on the first next occasion that we return to the house of their superstitions, they will knock us down…" (160)

Fr. Juan Rogel was a Jesuit priest who tried to convert the Calusa in the 16thcentury. In the process, he recorded many of the beliefs of the Calusa that he learned in his discussions with them:
"And on explaining to them the creation of the soul, I corrected many errors that they have about it, which I shall explain to your Reverence so that you may understand how blind these poor men are. They say that each man has three souls. One is the little pupil of the eye; another is the shadow that each one casts; and the last is the image of oneself that one sees in a mirror or in a calm pool of water. And that when a man dies, they say that two of the souls leave the body and that the third one, which is the pupil of the eye, remains in the body always. And thus they go to the burial place to speak with the deceased ones and to ask their advice about the things that they have to do as if they were alive. And I believe that the devil speaks to them there, because from what they [the deceased] say to them there, they learn about many things that happen in other regions or that come to pass later. They tell them that they should kill Christians and other evil things…
They have another error also, that when a man dies, his soul enters into some animal or fish. And when they kill such an animal, his soul enters into a lesser one so that little by little it reaches the point of being reduced to nothing. And they are so fixed in this belief that there is need for special favor and help from God in order to persuade them of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead and the reward and punishment of the next life. They laugh at me when I tell them in the catechism lessons that all the souls of many men as there have been in the world are alive in heaven or in hell and that they cannot die. And that they have to return again to be joined with their bodies and to live immortally; and that they are to

be rewarded or punished in accord with the works that they have done in this world." (237-238)

Fr. Joseph Javier Alaña confirmed this report in the 18thcentury in his official report on the Calusa:
"In the midst of this they obstinately affirm that human souls do not survive their bodies, swallowing the absurdity of their not being any better than the beasts, laughing at the strongest of arguments, and turning their backs [to us] when they were confounded by having their own erroneous practices thrown up to them." (424)

Rogel went on to state that the Calusa believed in a sort of trinity of three divine persons who governed the world, human societies, and war, respectively; and that their power went in descending order of importance.
The Spanish clerics were also appalled by the lack of morality among the Calusa, especially their tolerance of random killing and homosexuality, as well as their lack of use of discipline in bringing up their children:
"[I]n the teaching of the children, no punishment at all is to be used. [This was] the first condition that the chief proposed to us in the name of all. Nor is it something to be surprised over. The passion that they have for their [children] reaches the extremity of suffering blows from them; of actually burning themselves or cutting themselves to show their grief over the same thing having happened by accident to the [child], without the father ever enjoying any sign of reverence from them.(421)

It is thus no surprise then that the hostility of the Calusa toward the Catholic priests sent to convert them could reach levels of exceptional cruelty and violence, including death (425). Fr. Alaña summarized their hostility saying:
"[T]hey ridicule the God of the Christians, denying his role in the creation of things and stating that they came to be by themselves and denying him as well the power to prevent men from carrying out what they wish to do and other blasphemies of this nature." (424)

Fray Feliciano López and companions recount the following anecdote from their failed 1698 mission to convert the Calusa:
"And that on another day, that he does not remember what [day] it was, while the cacique was in the house of the religious with all the Indians annoying them, the father commissary having said to the cacique that he should order the Indians to leave and let the religious pray, the said cacique became angry and gave said father commissary a number of blows to the face. And that when he had gone to the old chief to complain, the young one and the Indians went along behind him. This witness and another two religious followed them [in turn and] they saw that the young chief drove away with blows the said father commissary from the bed of the said old chief on which he was sitting, and that after he had gone outside the house he raised a cudgel to hit him, that this witness grabbed him from behind and blocked the intent, and that on this occasion one of the Indians from the crowd came up to the priest Fray Miguel Carrillo and rubbed human excrement on his face, and that on the vespers of St. Andrew an Indian came up to this same religious to try to make him lose his temper while he was praying, and when he did not succeed in this, he urinated on him saying to him, 'man boy, why are you so small?'" (171)

The end of this mission proved no less unpleasant for the friars, as the Calusa proved so hostile that the friars asked to leave, and then were robbed of all of their possession, even their clothes, in the process. (37) Much of the perceived progress of the preaching of Christianity in the missions was purely mercenary on the part of the Calusa: they only stayed if offered Spanish goods, especially rum, and left the missions once these ran out (426). Fr. Alaña asked the Crown at some point for sentinels to watch the Indians at his mission, as the Calusa were, *"a nomadic people and one that lives on the sea more than on the land, even the little girls and women, may disappear very easily." (425) Indeed, one lament by the Spanish missionaries was how easy it was for the Calusa to simply run off and, "go off to eat palm fruit and alligators." (370)*

One interesting twist in studying the Calusa in this historical period is the ease in acquiring Spanish goods that were so coveted by native peoples of that region by means of salvage. Kelsey Marie McGuire in her thesis indicates that the southwestern coast of Florida, which was under Calusa control, was a common place for Spanish shipwrecks, and salvage of Spanish goods became a vital part of internal and external Calusa relationships:
"In order to sustain a resource base for redistribution, the paramount chief [of the Calusa] maintained a tribute system. His resources originated within and beyond his territorial boundaries. Typical tribute items included food, women, feathers, hides, woven mats, shipwreck spoils, and shipwreck captives. He selected treasures from among the more valuable goods to build his private collection, which, at Mound Key [the Calusa capital] included silver and gold ornaments, beads, trinkets, and a dais-style bench. Lesser chiefs repeated the process of caching and redistributing in their own villages. For commoners, this cycle of redistribution meant diversity in food and material resources. For the paramount chief, the cycle spelled out absolute control over the availability of native and non-native goods. In addition, circulation of resources reinforced hierarchies, fomented inner-village alliances, and assisted the paramount chief in resolving disputes between vassals. As the Calusa were just one of seven native groups in South Florida, it was important for the paramount chief to

maintain avenues of internal solidarity." (15-16)
Thus, the only things that the Spanish could use as leverage to bring the Calusa into the colonial fold, their manufactured goods, were readily available to the Calusa by other avenues, and those were controlled by the heads of the Calusa polity. No doubt this played some role in the Calusa refusal of Spanish overtures at domination, ideological or otherwise.
Nevertheless, the near complete demise of the Calusa as a people came in the 18thcentury. War between the English and the Spanish pushed northern tribes into southern Florida, thus overwhelming the original inhabitants who were often enslaved by them for sale to the English. A Calusa chief fled to Cuba with 270 natives in 1711, and many followed later. Most of these refugees died of disease on arrival, and the Calusa quickly faded from history. (MacMahon and Marquardt, 170). Though never conquered, historical forces consigned the Calusa cosmovision, culture, and pantheon to the great mausoleum of societies extinguished by civilization.

Lessons from the Calusa
Widmer, in his book-length dissertation on the Calusa, describes the following general principles behind the behavior of living organisms in relation to their environment:
"Still, because these subsistence strategies tend to maximize their net yield, this behavior can be theoretically understood, using other general behavioral and ecological models for analyzing feeding strategy or other aspects of adaptation. Since human populations articulate with an environment, just as other species do, theoretical principles which have been developed from ecological studies of other animals can have direct applicability to human populations as well, particularly as they relate to increased energy capture and efficiency. For example, Pianka (1974), in a discussion of evolutionary ecology, shows how an animal will adapt its feeding strategy to the structure of its environment to maximize the capture of energy and resources necessary to its survival." (16)

The author Jon Young, in the book, *What the Robin Knows: How Birds Reveal the Secrets of the Natural World*, describes the same principle in another context:
"At all times, baseline conserves energy, because conservation of energy is a major priority of all animals, but especially for birds, almost all of whom run on a very lean energy budget. (A chickadee startled from its roost on a very cold night in the dead of winter loses the vital heat trapped in its feathers. This bird may well die by dawn.)… First imagine trying to feed your own hungry self off a landscape. Have you ever tried this? Now imagine feeding five starving teenagers off the landscape, and you'll know why birds conserve energy, particularly when they're also singing to mark their territories. Conservation of energy is why the ground bird that knows that a particular cat can jump only four feet off the ground will ascend to a branch five feet up, but not fifty feet or even fifteen feet, which would be a waste of energy." (9)

Here we can analyze the Calusa adaptation to the southern Florida environment as animals and not as "rational political actors" with the benefit of foresight on issues such as personal autonomy and hierarchy. In summary of what we wrote above, the Calusa were one of the last in a long line of shore dwellers who had inhabited the southwest Florida coast for thousands of years, becoming increasingly sedentary due to the exploitation of abundant fisheries where food was available year round. Due to a continuous cycle of plentiful and less plentiful years, and possibly due to interactions with complex Mississippian societies to the north, they became themselves a paramount chiefdom dominating adjacent tribes, all without radically altering their hunter-gatherer-fisher lifestyle. They knew of agriculture but never adopted it due to geographic and cultural factors. Such a cultural evolution also gave birth to a complex culture and theology wherein the fate of the cosmos was a reflection of the well-being of the polity, though their gods took the form of various fauna around them. They maintained their shifty ways and had such "hunter-gatherer" characteristics as refusing to discipline their children and not seeing themselves as different from the other animals with which they shared their environment. This was at least the ideological reason why the Spanish friars could not convert them: they were undomesticated and undomesticatable in the Spanish eyes, yet they remained warlike and rigidly hierarchical.

In this sense, we see the Calusa as a sui generis people formed by the unique environment of south Florida. We may even go out on a limb and state that they were the product of their gods and their vision of the spirit world, of their dead who told them to kill the Christian intruders. It is a shame that they fell so shockingly short of the fully nomadic, immediate returns hunter-gatherer paradigm that is the apex of anarcho-primitivist sanctity, but we would hope that the priests of that ideology find it in their hearts to forgive them of their mortal sins of hierarchy and authority…

All jesting aside, we return here then to the accusation that we leveled at the beginning of the essay, namely, that anarcho-primitivists of the Zerzan / Tucker school are anthropocentric and rationalist. In their treatment of the social engineering of human societies, the best description of their overall attitude comes, appropriately enough, from the writings of Karl Marx, and specifically his magnum opus, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*:

"A spider conducts operations which resemble those of a weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence it already existed ideally. Man not only effects change of form in materials of nature; he also realizes his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of, it determines his mode of activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it." (284)

In his more philosophical musing of his youth, specifically, the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx is even more concise and specific, couching the same point in Hegelian language:

"Man is a species-being, not only because he practically and theoretically makes the species – both his own and those of other things – his object, but also – and this is simply another way of saying the same thing – because he looks upon himself as the present, living species, because he looks upon himself as a universal and therefore free being."

Unlike the Calusa divines, and more like Marx, then, the "re-wilding" anarcho-primitivist bestows upon domesticated humans raised in civilization the divine power to know what can constitute a perfectly egalitarian society, as well as the power of will to accomplish such a plan (though with much effort, and only seemingly for the predestined few, certainly). As their slogan goes, "We have seen the world that we want to live in and we will fight for it." Human nature and the shape of any given human society are entirely transparent and static; they exist in our heart of hearts if only we purge domesticated thinking, renounce the right things, and run off to a little corner of Alaska or similar wilderness to carry it out in peace and tranquility. Of course, civilization will come intruding, which is why we must form "communities of resistance" which can respond appropriately. None of this, mind you, has anything to do with the imperceptible adaptations of peoples over thousands of years in particular environments, ones which created a myriad of adaptations which lasted for centuries with varying degrees of success. No, true human nature has all been scientifically distilled into Absolute Knowledge available in freshman-level anthropology textbooks, to be realized by those with the appropriate ambition and gumption to "tough it out" in hostile environments.

To say then that man is "an animal", tossed about by the hands of fate like any other, is "despair". It's "nihilism" to think that, like the numerous other animals going extinct, we can't save ourselves. It is *verboten* to suspect that, just as modern technological civilization buried hundreds if not thousands of other societies, with their own visions of the cosmos, man, and community, perhaps our own society won't last much longer. Anarcho-primitivism is man deified because it envisions modern human creating a society like they're standing in a buffet line, picking and choosing the qualities that most appeal to them (egalitarianism, mobility, personal autonomy, gender parity etc.) and leaving the rest. Never mind that no other animal has this luxury (and neither do humans, but don't tell them that.) Along with the ancient Roman priests, the anarcho-primitivist utters, *Quod licet Iovi non licet bovi*. [What is permissible for Jove is not permissible for the ox.]

In contrast, eco-extremist pessimism is only pessimism for civilized humanity. The Whole of living and non-living beings on Earth will continue in one form or another. The forces (or gods or whatever you want to call them) that created societies like a multiplicity of flowers in a meadow will continue on; they will create new things and destroy them again. Eco-extremists are a weak force in that nature, but a force all the same. War and revenge are natural responses, especially when faced with the hostility, ugliness, and falsehood of civilized life. These were the same responses of the Teochichimecas, the Selk'nam, the Yahi, and yes, the "civilized" Calusa. Eco-extremists may continue to draw their inspiration mostly from warlike nomadic hunter-gatherers, but I would speculate that, given the choice between a Calusa "king" obedient to his gods and nature, and a humanist green anarchist playing social engineer, they would choose the former as an ally, even if this is a purely academic exercise.

What is the eco-extremist in the light of these reflections? He is also a product of his environment, of the city that is the tomb of forests, swamps, plains, and wetlands; of modern knowledge which has collected all previous forms of knowledge like dead animals in a taxidermy collection; of a society where everything is bought and sold to the highest bidder. If he has no gods to speak of, it is because the modern human being is, as Jacques Camatte wrote, "dead" and a "ritual of capital," an afterthought of money creating more money, destroying more of the Earth, and enslaving every free moment of our modern lives. He is cut off from the mountains and rivers that can speak to him, the swamps where he can take refuge, the creatures that can be his totems, his inspiration, and his defenders. It is no surprise, then, that his only gods become rage and revenge, the spirits of an almost blind lashing out. What other reaction is possible? To echo the Italian nihilists' citation of a criminal thug: "The only God I believe in is a loaded pistol with a hair trigger."

That doesn't seem very fair, and it probably isn't, but the "gods" aren't fair. We did not choose to be born into a total war of civilization against the last vestiges of Wild Nature, but here we are. Not everyone can be born into a time of peace, stasis, and tranquility; where the solutions to one's problems are obvious and easy to carry out. No, that isn't the time we live in, and it is delusional to think that "running away" and "living to fight another day" are options. "Another day" is now, and our backs are against the wall with nowhere to run. It's not fair that the little nature that we have is being stripped from us before our eyes, and those who are long dead had it in abundance, but as the Crucified once uttered:

"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." (Matthew 3:12)

-*"Halputta Hadjo"*

New moon of hvyuce (July), 2,016th year of the Crucified

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Regresión

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