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## THE DISCOVERY OF NEW MEXICO RECONSIDERED

By CARL O. SAUER

FRAY MARCOS and the negro Esteban, setting out to find the Seven Cities, are most familiar figures in the gallery of American pioneers, yet the friar should be remembered, not as a discoverer, but as one of the most successful publicity agents in our history. The first white men in New Mexico were the party of Cabeza de Vaca. Fray Marcos, the record shows, did not enter New Mexico, never came even to the Colorado Plateau.

Among older historical opinions one finds support for these positions. Bandelier and Bancroft, it is true, established the prevalent view that Cabeza de Vaca's party cut across Chihuahua and that Fray Marcos saw the towns of Zuñi. In this instance, however, the conclusions of these eminent scholars are not upheld by an examination of all the available data. Incidental to a study of aboriginal conditions in northern Mexico, it became necessary for me to scrutinize the routes of Spanish exploration. This was done by applying a first-hand knowledge of virtually the whole terrain to the interpretation of the documents. The resultant reconstruction of the northern explorations led me to disagree in numerous respects with the customary rendering of their course. The study was published in 1932 as "The Road to Cibola."<sup>1</sup> In this journal Henry R. Wagner presented in 1934 a fully documented account of Fray Marcos de Niza, in which the credibility of the friar's statements is examined closely and which agrees generally with my conclusions.

Lately I have considered further the northern Spanish discoveries, and have located additional documents which lead me to reaffirm and to extend the conclusions presented in "The Road to Cibola." The evidence which I have developed previously need not be repeated here in detail, but it

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1. *Ibero-Americana*, No. 3, 1932.

appears desirable to restate briefly the principal conclusions concerning the discovery of New Mexico and to insert in their proper places in this statement the added considerations:

I. The "Northern Mystery" was "in the air" before Cabeza de Vaca and his ragged party regained the Spanish settlements in 1536.

(a.) On August 30, 1527, the pilot Luís Cárdenas addressed a letter to the King, ostensibly to describe the nature and inhabitants of New Spain.<sup>2</sup> Though the communication is principally a diatribe against Cortés he mentions a number of interesting facts and guesses about the country. Concerning the northern frontier of New Spain Cárdenas says:

"La quarta partida comienza de rrio de palmas [central Tamaulipas] hazia el poniente que es la demanda de narvaez que dize que le dio v. m<sup>t</sup> y que asy lo lleva capitulado que desde rrio de palmas siguiendo por el hueste hasta dar en la otra mar y de alli en todo el poniente y tambien en el levâte. en este capitulado ovo yerro por no contratar con quien bien lo sabia y porque desde rrio de palmas por el hueste ay DCL leguas hasta dar en la otra mar y boluendo rio de palmas hasta la florida ay M que son MDCL leguas en derrota derecha y por medio de la tierra entre maestral y tramotana no le hallo cabo, pues siendo la volütad de v. m<sup>t</sup> de poblar y ennoblecer aquellos rreynos para traer a los naturales a conoscimiento de la fe no bastarian tres principes cada uno con grande armada para poblar aquellas tierras, pues como bastara el dicho panfilo. digo aqui con gracia de v. m<sup>t</sup> lo que en ello me parece. haga su voluntad que desde rrio de palmas entra narvaez dozientos leguas por la rraya del hueste y de alli por el norte otros dozientos y de alli hasta la cibdad que se dize coluntapan y hasta nuxpalo donde se arman de plata y juegan con espadas de metal . . ."

Distances are exaggerated, but there is a realization of a great continental land mass extending an unknown distance between northwest and north, a report of a city by the name of Coluntapan lying more than two hundred leagues

2. This and the other manuscripts referred to were found and photographed for me by Dr. Sanford Mosk. The Cárdenas item is from the Archivo General de Indias, Patronato, leg. 16, no. 2, ramo 6.

west and another two hundred north of the Pánuco-Tamaulipas country and still farther beyond another locality Nuxpalo "where they arm themselves with silver and use metal swords." Direction and distance both point toward New Mexico, unless the entire statement is moonshine. The coincidence may be pointed out that the next word of New Mexico (discussed in the following section) also appears to have come from the northeast of New Spain.

The letter of Cárdenas was written in Spain after a varied experience in New Spain and gives hear-say knowledge of the northern interior prior to any reports from the ill-fated expedition of Narváez. These rumors of northern civilization may therefore also have been known to Narváez and hence to Cabeza de Vaca. It is at least possible that some such rumors had a bearing on the enormous detour north and west taken by Cabeza de Vaca. The hostility of the coastal Indians is an insufficient reason for the extraordinary wanderings of the party, which could have reached Pánuco and safety by a short swing through the Monclova and Saltillo country.

(b.) It is known that Nuño de Guzmán was said to have had information of the Seven Cities from an Indian who had traded there. Castañeda in his account of the expedition of Coronado<sup>3</sup> relates that in 1530 Nuño de Guzmán had in his power this Indian who was a native of the valley or valleys of Oxitipar and who told of the manner in which he had gone with his father to the Seven Cities. Both the first and second anonymous relations of the Guzmán expedition<sup>4</sup> refer to the advance notice that Guzmán had of the Seven Cities and identify Huxitipa as a district attached to Guzmán's old government of Pánuco, as lying about twenty leagues from Pánuco, and as inhabited by Indians whom we must identify either as Huastec or as of very closely related culture. Bancroft relegates the story to a footnote,<sup>5</sup> undecided whether

3. Winship ed., pp. 416-17.

4. García Icazbalceta, *Col. Doc. Hist. Mex.*, vol. 2, pp. 291, 295, 303.

5. Vol. 15, p. 27.

it was pure invention or founded on some knowledge of the New Mexico pueblos.

The Seven Cities may be a Spanish, and later interpolation, but there seems to be some background of fact to the Indian's story: (1) The Indian informant apparently came from the northern end of the Huasteca, the last outpost of the higher civilization of Mexico. Castañeda describes his father as a professional trader taking fine feathers to the northern land of townspeople. The Huasteca reaches about the northern limits of the brilliantly colored tropical birds. Their plumage was an important item of trade and such feathers were traded into the Pueblo country, from the west coast, as we well know. (2) Castañeda further reports the Indian as indicating a trip of forty days to the Pueblo country "y todo despoblado y que la tierra por do iban no tenia yerba," not a bad version of the desert between the Rio Pánuco and Rio Grande to have been set down at a time when no Spanish explorations had been undertaken across north-eastern Mexico. (3) Finally Castañeda reports the direction as "al largo de la tierra entre las dos mares." This correct definition of general direction may explain the strange deflection of Guzmán's men in their attempts to breach the mountain walls, first to the north and then to the east of Culiacán. The Spanish explorers generally knew at least roughly their latitudes. Guzmán's men on the west coast in Sinaloa got several degrees above the latitude of Pánuco. The coast was bearing more and more westward. It is difficult, in the final stages of the Guzmán *entrada*, to explain the sustained and desperate attempts to turn across the mountain barrier behind Culiacán unless there was in mind an important objective in the northern interior. Party after party was sent mountainward until the whole expedition was spent by its efforts to cross the barrier. (4) Reference is made again to the coincidence of the same general place of origin for the Cárdenas account of 1527 and of the Guzmán Indian story.

(c) In the Coronado expedition Chichilticalli appears as an important landmark between the Pima country and the foot of the Colorado Plateau. I have concerned myself elsewhere with the probable location of this prehistoric ruin.<sup>6</sup> Chichilticalli is an Aztec name meaning red house. How did this name appear in Arizona on the great Indian trail to the Zuñi country? The party of Coronado was well informed of this place and its name before reaching it. If Fray Marcos had reached it before, which I do not think was the case, he would hardly have caused an Aztec name to be applied to it, especially since there appear not to have been any Mexicans in his party. This name is a minor puzzle. May it be that Aztecs, who penetrated apparently as traders into the north-west coast of Mexico, knew the western road to Cibola and that some of this knowledge was available to Coronado's men?

These are, admittedly, only straws but they point to some familiarity of central Mexican Indians with the Pueblo country and to some communication of such knowledge to the Spaniards.

II. The party of Cabeza de Vaca continued on American soil through Southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona. The tracing of the greater part of the Cabeza de Vaca route we owe principally to the painstaking work of a number of Texas historians,<sup>7</sup> which also established a strong likelihood for a crossing west from the Rio Grande in New Mexico.

(a.) The sufficiently established parts of the route are first, the journey across Texas to the Rio Grande near the mouth of the Conchos River, secondly, the route from Corazones, in the basin of Ures on the Sonora River, south to Culiacán. The reader may be cautioned that in Coronado's

6. Sauer and Brand, "Pueblo Sites in Southeastern Arizona," *Univ. Calif. Publ. Geol.*, vol. 3, no. 7, pp. 423 and 450, 1930; and Sauer, "The Road to Cibola," *Ibero-Americana*, No. 3, pp. 32-37, 1932.

7. Reference is made especially to the highly competent analysis of document and terrain by J. N. Baskett, in *Tex. Hist. Ass'n Quart.*, vol. 10, pp. 308-345, and H. Davenport and J. K. Wells, *ibid.*, vol. 22.

time the name Corazones was first applied to Cabeza de Vaca's village, then twice transferred to sites much farther up the Sonora River.

I should like to displace the approach to the Rio Grande some distance above the mouth of the Conchos, say about latitude 30°, or even somewhat above, perhaps as high as 30°30', for the following reasons: (1) The two accounts of Cabeza de Vaca give too unfavorable a picture of culture and country for the heart of the Jumano country at the river junction, where we know good-sized and numerous pueblos to have lain about valuable bottom lands. The earlier (Oviedo) account<sup>8</sup> states that there were many people but little land and that rough for planting. Both accounts refer to cooking by stone boiling, a pretty primitive procedure to assign to a population that in other respects had strikingly sedentary qualities. (2) It is also obvious that the contact with the people of permanent houses was made close to their northern limit. The change from sedentary Jumano to their semi-nomadic kindred, usually called Suma, took place on the Rio Grande well above the mouth of the Conchos.<sup>9</sup> (3) Cabeza de Vaca<sup>10</sup> said that where they came to the people of permanent houses the river flowed between sierras—a description that is more applicable up-stream than it is to the Rio Grande-Conchos junction. (4) There is no mention of a river junction.

(b) Bandelier's construction of a route up the Conchos and across the Sierra Madre via the Sahuaripa district rests on no part of either account and is contradicted by every recognizable element in the accounts. They continued up the river (the Rio Grande) for fifteen or seventeen journeys before crossing it, mostly among people of the same speech as those of the permanent houses. The Suma who spoke the same language as the sedentary Jumano extended up the Rio Grande at least to the vicinity of El Paso. Toward the

8. Book 85, Ch. 6.

9. Sauer in *Ibero-Americana*, No. 5, pp. 65-74, and map, for a discussion of Jumano-Suma location and relations.

10. *Naufragios*, Ch. 30.

end of the century we find the Manso tribe seated along the Rio Grande from El Paso upstream. Almost nothing is known of the culture and affinities of the Manso. There is a possibility that they may have come down from the north after the time of Cabeza de Vaca, or the two tribes may have been so similar that no difference was noted. The number of up-river marches cannot be interpreted as falling short of the El Paso region and there is leeway aplenty to carry them quite a bit farther up the Rio Grande before the river was crossed and the westward march begun.

(c) The record of the westward march after crossing the river is most meagre. We only know that it took seventeen to twenty or more marches, that the Indians at this season lived on ground wild plant food and game, and that the route was by plains and between some very large sierras. The fact that nothing more was found worthy to report may however be significant. Compressed though both accounts are Cabeza de Vaca had a good eye and a dependable memory for water courses, relief, and vegetation. Elsewhere we do not fail to find these noted. There really was nothing notable to report in a crossing of southwestern New Mexico except the things he mentioned.

A crossing south of El Paso is not to be regarded favorably.<sup>11</sup> The great belt of sand dunes south and west of El Paso interpose a serious barrier as far west as the Laguna Santa María and Laguna Guzmán. Had the Spaniards been so ill advised as to try this grievous way, the hardships would certainly have impressed them as did all major incidents of their wanderings. West of the Médano belt lay great playa lakes, swamps, and stream courses. Still farther beyond were the northern spurs of the Sierra Madre with forests of oak and pine. The reasonable inference as to why none of these features are mentioned is that they were not seen because the route lay to the north of all of them, that is,

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11. This is the area indicated in the latest monographic study of Cabeza de Vaca. Morris Bishop in the *Odyssey of Cabeza de Vaca* (1933) chooses a route from San Elizario on the Rio Grande by way of Samalayuca, the Rio Sta. María, and the Corralitos Pass to Bavispe in Sonora. I do not think that he has tried it!



across the high plains and between the detached ranges that lie above the high plains of southwest New Mexico and southeast Arizona.

If, then, by process of elimination, we are forced to regard a route west from some place above El Paso, it may remain for some New Mexican to work out the most feasible route, bearing in mind that the crossing was made when a great drought of two years' duration lay upon the land, and that we may assume that the party was passed on from *ranchería* to *ranchería*. The country near the Mexican border is not prepossessing under these circumstances with its desert, sand, and malpais stretches and the long distances between perennial water. From the Rincón of the Rio Grande, however, across the Mimbres country and then along the base of the Peloncillo or Chiricahua Mountains, the going should have been comfortable and there should have been a string of Indian camps.

(d.) At the end of the plains between the sierras they came to the maize people, the Opata. The most northeasterly settlements of these Indians were on the San Bernardino Wash close to the boundary between Arizona and Sonora, and it is here that we place the beginning of the next stage of the route.<sup>12</sup> Henceforth the relation becomes quite legible. The ethnic notes apply properly to the Opata. They passed to the Sonora Valley, later to become the great Spanish way north as it probably was the immemorial western Indian tradeway between Pueblo country and the south. At the lower end of the Valley of Sonora they went through the much traveled river gap (Canyon of Ures) to come out briefly into Pima country at the Town of the Hearts, or Corazones, a little above Ures.

III. The supposed northern journey of Franciscan friars in 1538, which Bancroft doubted and Bandelier and Coues supported, is apocryphal. The development of the

12. A minor change therefore is indicated in the map accompanying *The Road to Cibola*, so that Cabeza de Vaca's route leaves Arizona at the San Bernardino instead of at Douglas, to pass on to Fronteras.

which is actually a dependable contemporary version of the legend can be traced from the relation in Toribio Motolinía, expedition of Fray Marcos. Since Motolinía mentioned no friar by name, subsequent clerical authors mistook the story as referring to still another expedition. One copied from another and the story grew with time. I have set forth at length the manner of growth of the legend in my previous study.

IV. Fray Marcos has been credited incorrectly with having reached the country of Cíbola or Zuñi. Whether this is a falsehood put forth on his own initiative by the friar or whether it was edited into his report for the sake of advancing the ends of the Viceroy Mendoza is not certain. The one extenuating circumstance is the account of Toribio Motolinía, referred to in the previous section, which was written after the start of Coronado's expedition and which makes no claim that the friar entered the pueblo country.

A new and significant piece of evidence is available in a letter from Coronado to the king, written at Compostela July 15, 1539, of which the relevant excerpt follows:

"Yo lleve comigo a esta provyncia de culiacan un rreli-gioso de la horden de san fran<sup>co</sup> que se dize fray marcos de nisa el qual / me encomendo el visorrey dla nueva españa que metiese la tierra adentro por que yva por su mandado en nõbre de v<sup>ra</sup> mag<sup>t</sup> a descubryr por tierra la costa desta nueva españa para saber los secretos tierras y gente que ay en aquella que no se a visto / y para que entrase con mas siguridad / enbie ciertos yndios dlos quel visorrey liberto dlos esclavos que se hizieron en esta provincia de galizia a los pueblos de petatlan y dl cuchillo ques cerca de sesenta leguas adelante de culiacan a los quales dixे que llamasen algunos yndios naturales de aquellos pueblos y que les dixesen no toviesen temor por que v<sup>ra</sup> mag<sup>t</sup> tiene mandado que no se les haga guerra ni mal tratamiento ni sean hechos esclavos y con esto y con ver libres los mensajeros que los yvan a llamar de que nõ poco se espantaron de su libertad me binieron mas de ochenta onbres a los quales despues de avelles dado muy particularmente a entender la rreal voluntad de v<sup>ra</sup> mag<sup>t</sup> ques que v<sup>ra</sup> mag<sup>t</sup> al presente no quiere dellos otra cosa sino que sean xpi<sup>anos</sup> y conoçan a nos y a v<sup>ra</sup> mag<sup>t</sup> p<sup>a</sup>

señor les encomende / llevasen con toda siguridad la tierra adentro a fray marcos y a estevan un negro quel visorrey conpro para este efeto de uno dlos que escaparon dla florida que se dize estevan / y ellos lo hizieron asy haziendoles todo buen tratamiento y yendo por sus jornadas plugo a dios que toparon con una tan buena tierra como v<sup>ra</sup> mag<sup>t</sup> vera por la rrelacion de fray marcos y por lo quel visorrey escribe a v<sup>ra</sup> mag<sup>t</sup> que por hazello el no lo hago yo aqui / espero que dios y v<sup>ra</sup> mag<sup>t</sup> an de ser muy servidos asi por la grandeza que fray marcos cuenta de la tierra como por la buena horden e yndustria quel vysorrey a tenido en descubrilla y tendra en pacificalla y ponella debaxo del dominio de v<sup>ra</sup> mag<sup>t</sup>.<sup>13</sup>

In "The Road to Cíbola" I showed that the Fray Marcos account stood convicted of fraud by its own calendar, and it will therefore not be necessary to take up again the entire *relación*. Certain points in it can now be settled, however:

(a.) The starting point of the journey was at San Miguel de Culiacán, which at that time was not located where the modern Culiacán stands, but ten leagués farther south on the Rio of Navito or San Lorenzo. Guzmán formed the villa first in the Valley of Culiacán and then moved it south. The Abecedario of the encomiendas drawn up in the 1540's<sup>14</sup> shows that the villa was at that time still in the more southerly location.

(b.) By disregarding Fray Marcos' calendar commentators have sought to find his major stop, Vacapa, in various parts of middle and even of far northern Sonora. Yet the elapsed time between the start and the arrival at Vacapa was only two weeks, of which three days were lost by the illness of the second friar, who had to abandon the trip. It becomes apparent at once that Vacapa can hardly lie much north of the present Sinaloa-Sonora boundary. Previously I had considered both the identifications of Vacapa with the modern Vaca, a Mayo Indian village on the Fuerte River, which has an hispanicized Indian name, and with some place

13. In Arch. Gen. Ind., Aud. de Guadalajara, leg. 5 (66-5-74).

14. Published by Paso y Troncoso, in *Papeles de Nueva España*, ser. 2, vol. 1. There are many encomiendas listed for the Culiacán Valley and the country south, with indications of their distance to the villa.

on the Mayo River near Alamos. The question of Vacapa is important because Fray Marcos did not leave there until the day after Easter, which fell on April 6 in 1539 according to the Julian calendar in which Fray Marcos' dates must be reckoned, exactly a month after he set out from the villa of Culiacán, with one fourth of the time of his expedition accounted for. The time of Fray Marcos' start is checked by a letter of Coronado. According to the friar's own statements he had at most eleven days' marches from Culiacán to Vacapa, if he did not stop on Sundays. Credit him with sixty leagues for this time, a good performance on foot, and he is at the border line of Sinaloa and Sonora, reckoning that the villa of Culiacán lay ten leagues south of its present position.

It is now probably possible to fix the location of Vacapa as between the Fuerte and Mayo rivers: (1) The pueblo of Cuchillo—i. e. of the knife-like ridge—was so named by Cabeza de Vaca. Oviedo describes it as being "on a sierra above a very high and rough crag (risco)"<sup>15</sup> and places it at forty leagues north of "Culuacán" (which may have been either the valley or the villa, but in either case is somewhat short of the actual distance). It was an important Indian center and is the only one noted by Cabeza de Vaca for this part of the journey. (2) Coronado, in the letter of which an extract is given above, gives the distance of the Pueblo of the Cuchillo as about sixty leagues north from Culiacán. He sent freed slaves as messengers of good will to Petatlan (now the town of Sinaloa) and to Cuchillo before starting Fray Marcos on his journey. As a result more than eighty men came down from the northern villages to see Coronado at Culiacán. To these new-found friends Coronado entrusted the order "that they conduct Fray Marcos and Esteban inland with all security." Since both Petatlan and Cuchillo were on the road north which the friar wished to take, which was the road by which Cabeza de Vaca had brought the negro down, and since the guides came from these places it

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15. Book 35, Ch. 6.

would be passing strange if Fray Marcos had not been taken north through both Petatlan and Cuchillo. (3) The friar does indeed mention Petatlan on his way and broke his journey there for three days. His account lacks straightforwardness, thereafter, because he works in a claim of having gone to see the island where Cortés had been. After leaving Petatlan he mentions a stretch of twenty-five to thirty leagues with nothing worth reporting (the dry scrub country north of Río Sinaloa), and later three days of marching through Indian settlements (Fuerte Valley) to the pueblo of Vacapa, and Vacapa he thought was forty leagues from the sea. Cuchillo sixty leagues on the road north from Culiacán, the Franciscan guided by Indians from Cuchillo, the first major leg of the journey ended after a march of eleven days at Vacapa, which is far in from the sea and at the end of a three days' stretch of inhabited country—all these items seem to add up to an identification of Cuchillo with Vacapa or Vaca, or at least to point to a near-by location. (4) The great captain of the northern frontier in the early seventeenth century, Martínez Hurdaide, had to do with an Indian pueblo situated at or near the present Vaca, which he called Vacapa.<sup>16</sup> (5) The modern Vaca lies on a broad terrace south of the Fuerte River. A short distance up-stream the foothills of the Sierra Madre set in and to the north and northwest lies a deeply trenched mountain country. The present village was relocated in the eighteenth century from a highland situation farther northwest. An undated manuscript of about 1777 heightens the probability that Vacapa and Cuchillo were the same pueblo.<sup>17</sup> A crude map shows the Pueblo de Vaca south of the Fuerte in its present location, across the river and apparently north of west at a distance of four leagues the Puerto de Yataque, *placeres de oro este puesto de Imemorial tiempo, esto es de bollagua*. The description reads "*puesto de babollagua placeres de oro este puesto de Imemorial tiempo, esto es de*

16. "The Road to Cibola," p. 25.

17. *Descripción topográfica de la Villa y Fuerte de Montesclaros*, in Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, Ms. 2449.

su conquista, era de esta Jurisdiccion y en el estaba radicada el pueblo que es hoy de Vaca. Modernamente se descubrio en el los placeres de oro." Then follows an account of the capture of title to the land and of the relocation of the pueblo on the Fuerte River.

The original Vaca, which earlier was called Vacapa, is to be sought therefore seven leagues from the present Vaca within a triangle formed by the pueblos of Vaca and Toro on the Fuerte River and the ranch and valley of Guirocoba in Sonora above Alamos. The reader may place it about twenty miles by air line due north of the modern town of El Fuerte, or twenty-five to thirty southeast of Alamos, and lying probably slightly within the limits of Sonora. This is a land of "picachos and peñascos," or as Oviedo reported, of "riscos;" sharp, knife-like crests with valleys between. The name Cuchillo is therefore most aptly applied in this area. The locality will approximate very closely to Coronado's estimate of sixty leagues from the Culiacán of that time, by a straight trail through Petatlan (Sinaloa). It was therefore attainable in the friar's marching time of eleven days. It is also about forty leagues from the sea, as Fray Marcos said.

(c.) The second month of the expedition was taken up by the journey north through Sonora. There are just enough critical points of support to keep the second stage in order. They are: (1) departure from Vacapa April 7, (2) march of three days from Vacapa to the place of the first news of Cibola, (3) arrival at the end of the settled country May 5, (4) distance from the place of the first news of Cibola to the end of the settled country, 112 or rather 116 leagues, almost the only specific distance in the entire *relacion*. In the three days from Vacapa Brother Mark should have passed through Alamos and reached the Mayo River at the crossing of the Camino Real, Conicarit. This then was the place of the first accounts of conditions at Cibola.

If we follow the great colonial road of northwestern New Spain we shall go up the Cedros River, over an easy gap to the Rio Chico, and thus straight down to the Yaqui River. Thence the road goes up the Yaqui to Soyopa, thereupon across a wide granitic upland to drop again, this time into the lower part of the Valle de Sonora below Babiadora. Thus far the road has run north-northwest from Alamos by a nearly constant course. Up the Valley of Sonora it passes almost due north. In the headwaters of the Sonora River lay also, in this direction, the end of the settled Indian country. We know that the last farming settlement was about Bacoachi, in several arroyos that form the sources of the Sonora River, southeast of Cananea. From here the old Camino will measure approximately the 112 leagues of Fray Marcos to the Mayo River.

Add the three days from Vacapa to the Mayo, and the total distance claimed for the second month is 125 to 130 leagues. The total elapsed time from Vacapa to the last settled place at the north was four weeks. If the friar rested only Sundays, and there is no reason to think from the amount of gossip he relates from this part of the country that he was in any driving hurry, this would still leave an average march of six leagues per traveling day. He therefore maintained a very creditable traveling rate through both Sinaloa and Sonora.

During both months he simply backtracked the road down which Cabeza de Vaca had come, by the most eligible natural series of passageways from Sinaloa to Arizona. This was the route which Coronado was to follow the next year, which thereafter was to be the Spanish highway into all the northwest, and which undoubtedly was nothing else than the Indian road between the Pueblo country and the valley provinces of the Mexican west coast. There has been much needless mystification about the routes across the State of Sonora. Essentially there was one way, the straight way between the north and south, the road through the most settled and most valued land, the famous camino real via

Alamos, the Sonora Valley, and the Cananea Plain. There is no reason to doubt that Mark stayed closely with this route; it is the only route moreover that will place him at the head of the Sonora River, i. e. at the beginning of the last great *despoblado*, in the necessary time as given in his account.

Once more his account of the coast is faked, a translation of hearsay into his own observation. But the rest of the notes on the country and the Indian data make sense as I have shown in my previous study.

The usual assignment of the northern settlements of Fray Marcos to the Pima of Arizona does violence to both the ethnography and geography. The people of the irrigated lands and the *barrios* were the Opatá of the Valley of Sonora, as the friar's statements show sufficiently well. It has not been noted widely that Buckingham Smith picked up an identification of this area by name on the part of Fray Marcos. He cites las Casas as saying: "A friar whom I knew well, Marcos de Niza, of the order of Saint Francis, in coming to Sonora entered the chief and principal town, where the lord of the valley came out to receive him."<sup>18</sup> (During the sixteenth century and much later, Sonora referred only to the Valley of Sonora, a stretch between the canyon below Arizpe and above the canyon of Ures.)

(d.) We can be quite confident therefore that the last *despoblado* entered was the high plain of Cananea at the headwaters of the Sonora. This marks the boundary between the Opatá valley pueblos and a land within the range of the Upper Pima Indians, but mostly unsettled. This *despoblado* was entered May 9. Of the approximate period of one hundred days available from the start at San Miguel de Culicán to his return to the same place sixty-three were past when the last *despoblado* was entered. From Bacoachi, the last Opatá settlement on the route north, to Naco on the international border is about sixteen of the leagues of that

18. His footnote to Chapter 32 in the translation of Cabeza de Vaca. Buckingham Smith did a much better job than most later commentators. His critique was remarkably acute considering the status of knowledge at his time.



time. By the usual marches this would place him at the border of Arizona on May 12, five weeks or less to get up to Zuñi and back to Culiacán! The answer is simple, it couldn't be done and it was not done.

Give the party three days on the Arizona side of the border. That would bring them to the middle of May, one month to get back to Culiacán with 220 to 230 leagues to cover. This is about the limit of what appears possible. Hence, it would seem, the failure to note the Pima settlements on the San Pedro River on the road ahead. They were not noted because the party got the word of Esteban that turned them back before reaching the San Pedro Pima. I have permitted Fray Marcos to get as far north as the record permits. They did excellent traveling back if they got as far north as I have indicated. He may not have crossed the Arizona line.

(e.) It has been my attempt to give the friar as much leeway as seems just, before starting the expedition on its return. Forced marches are hard to maintain for a long period. The outward journey was made in spring and, gradually, into high country. The return journey brought them soon into the full blast of summer heat. Southern Sonora and Sinaloa by June are among the hottest parts of the world, when people can not march fast and furiously. When the summer rains set in, the rivers become difficult or impossible to cross, especially in Sinaloa. The lowlands of Nayarit, through which the return to Compostela and Mexico lay, are then nearly or quite impassable. The end of June was about the limit of safety for getting through to Compostela. This was, I strongly suspect, the real reason for timing the return.

(f.) There remains the final question as to whether Fray Marcos returned to Culiacán around the middle of June and to Compostela by the end of the month. The tropical summer rainfall regime to which I have referred above is such that, if advice was got from residents of Culiacán, the friar must have planned to put the lowlands of Nayarit behind

him before the heavy summer rains flood them. A definite date of return has not been established. I submitted in my previous study evidence supporting the usual assignment of the end of June for the arrival of Fray Marcos at Compostela. Wagner in his 1934 study in this quarterly has supported the conclusion by a letter from Cortés.

The letter of Coronado which I was fortunate enough to secure (by photographic copy) gives the closest approximation yet found. The letter is dated at Compostela July 15. It is a formal communication to the king on the conduct of his government, in the handwriting of a clerk, signed by Coronado. The letter was probably the work of a number of days. The report on Fray Marcos is an integral part of the composition, not an afterthought or postscript. There is no mention that the friar has just then arrived. The latter part of Coronado's statement reads: "and going on their journeys it pleased God that they met with so fine a land as Your Majesty shall learn from the relation of Fray Marcos and by that which the viceroy is writing. Because he is doing this I shall not do so here. I hope that God and Your Majesty will be greatly served as well by the grandeur which Fray Marcos relates of the land as by the good order and industry which the viceroy has kept in discovering it and which he will maintain in pacifying it and bringing it under the dominion of Your Majesty." This certainly does not read like a breathless statement of extraordinary news received at the moment.

The puzzling part of the passage is the matter-of-fact manner in which Coronado speaks of what one Viceroy was doing and was about to do concerning the findings of Fray Marcos. The letter of Cortés, referred to by Wagner, indicates that Coronado was in Mexico City very near the date of the letter I have introduced. May therefore the signature of Coronado's letter as given at Compostela be an innocent fiction? Reporting as governor of New Galicia to the king, may he have signed as writing from his official residence at Compostela, whereas he was then actually in the City of Mexico and had been in conference with Mendoza?

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It is time that the story of the discovery of the Seven Cities by Fray Marcos be classed where it belongs, as a hoax devised in the interests of Mendoza's *Realpolitik*. All that can be credited in reason to Fray Marcos is that he was sent out to establish as strong a claim as possible for Mendoza against Cortés, that he got into northern Sonora, but little if any beyond, and that he brought back Indian accounts both of the Pueblo country and of the upper Gulf of California. These were dressed up into a claim of discovery, that would be useful to Mendoza in forestalling Cortés and in making propaganda for the official *entrada* and *conquista* that was to follow immediately.

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