

7-1-1973

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Recommended Citation

Riley, Carroll L.. "Las Casas and the Benavides Memorial of 1630." *New Mexico Historical Review* 48, 3 (2021). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol48/iss3/3>

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LAS CASAS AND THE BENAVIDES MEMORIAL OF 1630

CARROLL L. RILEY

IT HAS long been noted that there is an inconsistency in the very last part of Fray Alonso de Benavides' *Memorial of 1630*. The portion of the *Memorial* that begins with a section entitled "Coast of the South Sea" and continues to the end of the document seems to have been an interpolation by some other writer. This was commented on as recently as 1954 by C. J. Lynch in a translation published by the Academy of American Franciscan History:

There are several reasons for believing that the original version of the *Memorial* as composed by Benavides ends at this point [before the "Coast" section]. What follows, appears to be an interpolation of another person who probably never set foot in New Mexico. As his chief source of information this interpolator probably employed some contemporary account of the Coronado expedition.¹

In the Ayer edition of the *Memorial*,² however, F. W. Hodge had already expressed some reservation as to this kind of interpretation. Because of the spelling of various town and province names, Hodge does agree that the account may have been derived from one of the Coronado narratives. Hodge also feels that the section in question might be an addendum originating with Francisco de Apodaca, Franciscan Commissary General of New Spain:

And yet it seems impossible that such atrocious blunders as occur in this account of Coronado's exploits could have been made by a member of the expedition, or even by any one else at all familiar with the narratives.³

One thing that might suggest a multi-authored work comes from the letter of Father Juan de Santander, Commissary General of the Indies, whose letter is included with the *Memorial*. Santander speaks of Benavides' writing and "other authentic accounts."⁴

The same variant information in paraphrased form also appears in the *Revised Memorial* of Benavides. In this revised version, however, the interpolated sections are placed—more logically—near the beginning of the document.⁵ The *Revised Memorial* has also led to speculation about the origin of the aberrant material:

Benavides does not here write from personal knowledge, but from information, not entirely accurate, derived from accounts of the Coronado expedition and incorporated in the Memorial of 1630 at its close.⁶

What seems to have been overlooked is the relationship of the last pages of Benavides' 1630 *Memorial* to Book III, Chapter 53, of the *Apologética Historia Sumaria* of Bartolomé de las Casas.⁷ Clearly, either Benavides draws from Las Casas (or from another source that used Las Casas) or Benavides and Las Casas both depend on some common source.

Actually the Chapter "Coast of the South Sea" in the *Memorial* is a transitional passage telling the King that after having been informed of the Pueblo area it was proper that he should

hear of another treasure which has been kept for you for more than seventy years. . . . It is some seventy years since the Viceroy of New Spain, Don Antonio de Mendoza, sent Captain Alonso [Francisco] Vázquez Coronado to discover the coast of the South Sea and four friars of my order went with him.⁸

The *Memorial* goes on to say that the best way to approach this journey would be from Mexico north to the Southwest.

It seems more logical to me to begin from this city [Mexico] and to reach the provinces of Chiametla, Culiacán and Sinaloa which are fifty or sixty leagues distant from those of Xalisco. One comes upon these nations in the following order.⁹

In the next section entitled "Valley of Sonora" the account largely echoes Las Casas, summarizing and shortening—in fact, leaving out whole sentences. Curiously, Benavides speaks of the town of Corazones as having "seven hundred very well-arranged houses"¹⁰ whereas Las Casas speaks of eight hundred houses "muy bien ordenadas."¹¹ Benavides then has a one-paragraph section entitled "Agastán" which is described as a city with three thousand well-built houses.¹² Here the Benavides account is very similar to Las Casas but slightly abridged. The next very short section, "Síbola" [Cíbola or Zuñi], closely paraphrases Las Casas.

According to the *Memorial*:

Saliendo pues del ultimo pueblo deste valle de Señora al mismo Norte, por la misma costa de la mar del Sur, quarenta, o cinquéta leguas està la Provincia de Sibola; y assi se llama tambien la principal ciudad; la qual tiene en su comarca otras siete ciudades. La primera serà de mil casas y las otras de mucho mas, son de piedra y madera, y de a tres y quatro altos muy vistosas.¹³

Whereas, in the *Apologética Historia*:

Cuarenta o cincuenta leguas de los postreros pueblos deste valle, todavía yendo al norte, està la provincia de Cívola y ciudad, que alrededor tiene otras siete ciudades; la primera será de mil casas y las otras de muchas más. Eran hechas de piedra y madera, y tenían dos y tres y cuatro altos y doblados . . .¹⁴

The description of Tihues (Tiwa) is much the same in the two accounts though considerably shortened in Benavides, with the phrases and sentences somewhat rearranged. The account of the city again is much the same. In the *Memorial*:

Otra ciudad està media legua desta de Tihues, tambien a la orilla del río de tres mil casas, donde el Rey tiene sus mugeres, ciudad muy hermosa y fuerte en quadra, cuyas casas son de piedra; tiene tres plaças, y la menor es de ducientos passos de ancho, y otros tantos de largo. Destas plaças se sale por calles tan angostas, que apenas caben dos de a caballo, todas las casas tienen sus corredores a las plaças, como las del Nuevo-Mexico . . .¹⁵

The river, the Río Bravo, "tendra de ancho un tiro de arcabuz."¹⁶
Compare Las Casas:

Otra ciudad estaba y está un tiro de ballesta desta de Tigués, junto al río, que será de tres mil casas, donde el rey tenía sus mujeres, ciudad muy hermosa y muy fuerte. Las paredes de las casas eran de piedra las más dellas. Está edificada en cuadra; tiene tres plazas; la menor dellas tiene de anchura docientos pasos y de largo otros tantos. La salida de las plazas es por calles bien derechas, puesto que son algo angostas, que apenas pueden ir juntos dos de caballo. Todas las casas tienen sus corredores que salen a las calles, que es cosa mucho graciosa de ver.¹⁷

The remainder of Benavides' account of the city summarizes material also found in Las Casas. In both cases there are more than twenty large estufas. On the same side of the river, from half a league to four leagues away, are twenty more settlements, some stronger than others.¹⁸ Both accounts measure the width of the Río Grande in terms of an harquebus shot. The names for the river, however, are different. In the *Memorial* it is called Río Bravo and in Las Casas, the Espíritu Santo.¹⁹

The "Marvelous Rock" (Acoma) section of the *Memorial* is again very like that of Las Casas but with some variations in number of inhabitants. For example, compare:

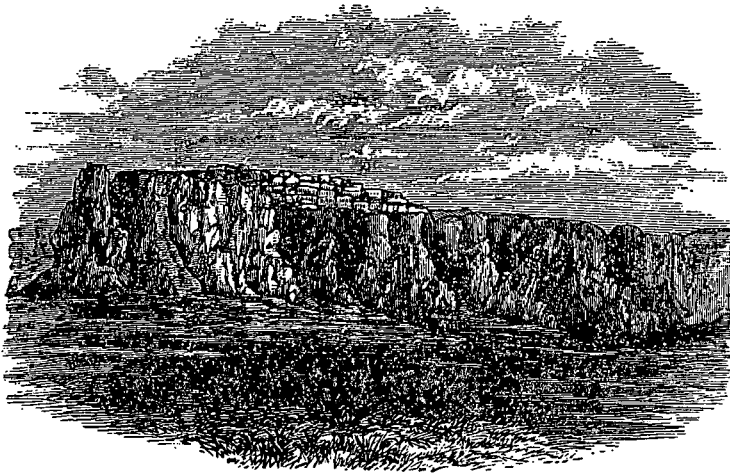
Saliendo de Tihués, házia el Poniente, y no al Norte, como hasta aqui, espacio de dos jornadas, está una Ciudad la mas estraña y fuerte, que deve de auer en el múdo; la qual es de mas de dos mil casas, tan capaces, q̄ dezian auer en ellas mas de siete mil vezinos, y aun llegaron a dezir mas; està en unos grandes llanos de quinze leguas, en medio de los quales està un Peñol tan alto como la torre de la Iglesia de Sevilla, que parece tener mas de mil estados. En lo alto deste Peñol està todo llano por espacio de una legua, sin genero de arbol, ni cerro; en el qual està edificada la ciudad; alli, y abaxo en los llanos tienen sus seméteras y mayzales: . . .²⁰

In Las Casas:

Dos jornadas de Tigués, hacia el poniente, según creo, está una ciudad la más extraña de fuerte y de su postura que se puede hallar

en mucho de lo poblado del mundo, la cual será de dos mil casas, porque bien creemos que había más de cuatro y cinco y quizá diez mill vecinos. Está en unos grandes llanos de quince leguas asentada, en medio de los cuales está un peñol tan alto como la torre de la iglesia mayor de Sevilla, que parece tener mil estados. En la cumbre o en lo alto deste peñol hay un llano que dura una gran legua, raso, sin árbol ni otro embarazo alguno; en aquel llano sobre la peña está la ciudad edificada, y lo demás de aquel llano alto tienen sus sementeras de maizales.²¹

The rest of the account of Benavides' "Marvellous Rock" closely resembles Las Casas' but is more abridged.



In the account of Tuzayan, the *Memorial* uses only thirty-five words to Las Casas' eighty-six, the Benavides account being a parsimonious paraphrase.

In terms of comparison with Las Casas the most curious section of the *Memorial* is the one entitled "Cicuyo" (Pecos).²² This indeed is related to Las Casas but reproduces material that was

deleted from the original holograph (the only manuscript now extant).²³ In that manuscript, unlike the *Memorial*, the section on Cicuyo came before, rather than after, Tuzayan.

According to the *Memorial*:

Dando la buelta al Norte, desde la ciudad de Tihues, tres ò cuatro jornadas, està un llano, que tiene seis leguas, todo lleno de labranças entre unos pinales, que dan maravillosos piñones, y otros arboles graciosos, y grandes. Alli està edificada una grande y hermosa ciudad llamada en la lengua de aquella tierra Cycuyo, en tierra llana, que tendrà mas de seis mil casas muy grandes de seis y siete altos.²⁴

And in Las Casas:

Adelante de Tigués la vía del norte o septentrión, según creo, tres o cuatro jornadas está un llano de seis leguas todo sembrado y lleno de labranzas, en medio del cual y entre unos grandes montes de pinales de los alvares que dan piñones muy buenos, y otras arboledas grandes, está puesta y asentada una gran y hermosísima ciudad que se llama en la lengua de aquella tierra Zyquay, en tierra llana que terná seis mil casas; ésta es fuerte, pero menos fuerte, aunque admirable, que la pasada.²⁵

The remainder of the *Memorial* account of Cicuyo repeats a series of set phrases that paraphrase those appearing in previous sections. There is a discussion of narrow streets where only two men on horseback can pass, very large plazas, many estufas, and houses with balconies facing the plazas. The Las Casas account, however, contains only the short marked-through section. Las Casas then turns to a description of Uruba or Valladolid (Taos), not mentioned in this portion of the *Memorial*.

The final section of the *Memorial* is a description of Quivira and differs from the Las Casas account. The elements in it (straw houses, simple culture, pleasant climate, etc.) are found in accounts such as that of Herrera²⁶ and in the actual documents of the Coronado Expedition. One statement in Benavides does suggest a rather early source. Speaking of Quivira, Benavides says,

“. . . y aunque llamamos a esta la mar del Sur, es la de la California, que del Sur al Norte atraviessa hasta salir al estrecho de Anian.”²⁷ The Quivira section of the *Memorial*, moreover, is integrated with the rest of the interpolated section. As in the introductory portion of the account (“Coast of the South Sea”) reference is made to Alonzo (rather than Francisco) Vázquez de Coronado and to his four friars.

To sum up, these last few pages of the Benavides *Memorial of 1630* contain an interpolated section that either consists of reworded and reworked sections of Las Casas' *Apologética Historia* rather skillfully combined with other material, or utilizes a source common to both writers.

Benavides arrived in Spain (probably) in August 1630 and very shortly thereafter presented the complete *Memorial* manuscript to King Philip IV, so it seems unlikely that he could have consulted the original Las Casas document.²⁸ As has been said, the only existing manuscript of the Las Casas *Apologética Historia Sumaria* is the original holograph. At present this manuscript, entirely in Las Casas' handwriting, is in the Muñoz collection of the Royal Academy of History, Madrid, but from its completion around 1560, at least into the early seventeenth century, it remained in the College of San Gregorio in Valladolid.²⁹ In the sixteenth century, however, there were several manuscript copies. For example, the Dominican Province library in Mexico City had a copy, not of the holograph manuscript, but made from still another copy held by the Dominicans in Chiapa. This Mexico City copy was used by Mendieta in his *Historia eclesiástica indiana*³⁰ which, however, is not the source of Benavides. Father Antonio de Remesal, Las Casas' first biographer, published an *Historia General* in 1619, and he too made use of Las Casas, probably drawing from the holograph manuscript, from which he may have made his own copy. Certainly he consulted the San Gregorio document, for he describes it in some detail. Remesal, however, does not reproduce the material on the far north of New Spain.³¹

A third source derived from the *Apologética Historia* is that of

Román y Zamora whose work, *Repúblicas del mundo*, was published in 1575. For the Americas, Román copies extensively from Las Casas but he includes none of the material discussed here.³²

The most likely possibility is that Benavides (or some other earlier writer from whom Benavides borrowed) had available a copy of the *Apologética Historia* which did not incorporate all the editorial changes by Las Casas presently found in the holograph manuscript, or alternatively, one which copied struck-out passages. This may have been the Chiapa document, a copy of it, or it may possibly have been a copy of the holograph made by Remesal for his own use.

The alternative possibility, that Benavides and Las Casas used a common source is, indeed, an interesting one. What can we say about such a source? First of all, it must have been a manuscript composed within a very narrow span of time. The information on Corazones, Cíbola, Tihues, etc., was not available until the Marcos voyage of 1539, and the *Apologética Historia* was certainly completed by, or shortly after, 1560. We are dealing, then, with a matter of some twenty years.

One obvious candidate for authorship of this source is Motolinía (Fray Toribio de Benavente) whose works Las Casas almost certainly used³³ even though he was savagely attacked by Motolinía in a 1555 letter to Charles V.³⁴ The material quoted in the first part of the present paper is not in the published works of Motolinía. It has been cogently argued, however, most recently by O'Gorman, that there existed an important work of Motolinía, now lost.³⁵ O'Gorman suggests that this manuscript had reached Spain by 1544 or 1545 and was used by Las Casas in the *Apologética Historia*.³⁶

One puzzling aspect of this theory is that the author of the *Apologética Historia*—or, at least, the Cíbola section of it—indicates that certain material on the far north of New Spain came from “un religioso de Sant Francisco que yo bien cognosci, llamado Fray Marcos de Niza.”³⁷ Motolinía presumably knew Marcos well, but his published works indicate no knowledge of Niza's famous trips. Although his history can be dated to 1540 or

1541, Motolinía makes no mention of Marcos but instead speaks of two friars sent toward the North. A rough outline of Marcos' trip is given but no geographical details.³⁸ Of course in a later manuscript Motolinía may have incorporated this Cíbola material either from Marcos or from another member of the Coronado party.

Another fascinating possibility is that Las Casas himself received data on northern New Spain from Marcos de Niza. Wagner believes that the two men were friends, meeting first in Guatemala in 1536.³⁹ Las Casas' *Brevissima relación* (printed in 1552 but written somewhat earlier) includes a letter from Marcos on Peruvian matters.⁴⁰ Other contacts between the two are very uncertain, though Wagner suggests that Las Casas may actually have influenced Marcos to take the Cíbolan trip.

We know of no manuscript of Marcos from which Las Casas and Benavides could have drawn. If Las Casas did receive information from Marcos de Niza it was probably by letter—with a copy available to the Franciscans. Of course this is pure speculation for we have no records of such a letter.

As of this writing it is very difficult to choose between alternate theories to explain the virtual identity of the sections of Las Casas and Benavides described above. Assuming a common source would clear up certain of the difficulties (reproduction of deleted portions, etc.) but the most plausible common source, Motolinía, presents us with other kinds of difficulties. Clearly, what is needed is not only detailed textual analysis of the materials being compared but an in-depth study of the various complex relationships among Las Casas, his detractors, and his defenders.

NOTES

1. Peter P. Forrestal and Cyprian J. Lynch, *Benavides' Memorial of 1630* (Washington, D.C., 1954), p. 67, n. 137.
2. Mrs. Edward E. Ayer, trans., *The Memorial of Fray Alonso de Benavides, 1630*, annotated by Frederick Webb Hodge and Charles Fletcher Lummis (Chicago, 1916).
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 281-82, n. 61.
4. Forrestal and Lynch, p. 73.
5. See Frederick W. Hodge, George P. Hammond, and Agapito Rey, *Fray Alonso de Benavides' Revised Memorial of 1634* (Albuquerque, 1945), vol. 4, pp. 46-49.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 240, n. 39.
7. Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Apologética Historia Sumaria*, 2 vols., ed. by Edmundo O'Gorman (Mexico, 1967).
8. Forrestal and Lynch, pp. 67-68.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
10. *Ibid.* In the revised version it is six hundred houses (Hodge, Hammond, and Rey, p. 46). Hodge, Hammond, and Rey state that "The Memorial of 1630 is the only known writing to give the definite size of Corazones at so early a period." (P. 240, n. 35). Actually, not only Las Casas, but also G. Fernández Oviedo y Valdés, *Historia General y Natural de las Indias*, vol. 4, *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, vol. 20 (Madrid, 1959), p. 303, gives a population figure for Corazones. That of Oviedo—some twenty houses—is much more modest than Las Casas'.
11. Las Casas, vol. 1, p. 281.
12. Forrestal and Lynch, p. 69. The term Agastán is something of a mystery. My colleague, Campbell W. Pennington, suggests that it might possibly be an early rendering of Aconchi, a mission town between Arispe and Ures on the Sonora River. Hodge, Hammond, and Rey (p. 240, n. 38) suggest that Agastán is a Nahuatl word but feel that it cannot be identified with any known historic town. See also Hodge, in Ayer, p. 281, n. 61.
13. "Leaving the last village of this valley of Señora [continuing on] north along the same coast of the South Sea forty or fifty leagues [120-150 miles] is the Province of Sibola; the principal city also has the same name. [The Province] has within its borders some seven other cities. The first has about a thousand houses and the others many more; they are of stone and wood, and three to four stories high [and] very beautiful." Alonso de Benavides, *Memorial que fray Ivan de Santander, de la orden de San Francisco, comissario general de Indias, presenta a la Magestad catolica del rey Don*

Felipe Quarto nuestro señor. Hecho por el padre fray Alonso de Benavides . . . (Madrid, 1630), p. 102.

14. "Forty or fifty leagues from the last mentioned villages of this valley, still going northward is the province and city of Cibola, that has around it seven other cities; the first has about a thousand houses and the others many more. They were made of stone and wood and were two, three and four stories high and well built . . ." Las Casas, vol. 1, p. 281.

15. "There is another city of some three thousand houses a half league from Tihues, also on the river bank, where the king keeps his women. [It is] a very strong and beautiful square city whose houses are of stone. It has three plazas, the smallest of which is two hundred paces wide, and the same in length. From these plazas one leaves through streets that are so narrow that two horsemen can barely fit. All of the houses have their balconies facing on the plazas like those in New Mexico." Benavides, p. 103. Although the term *Nuevo México* was probably coined in the early 1560's it was not used in this particular sense until after Las Casas' time.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

17. "Another city was and is a crossbow shot distant from Tigues, beside the river, made up of about three thousand houses, where the king kept his women; a very beautiful and strong city. The walls of the houses were made of stone for the most part. [The city] is constructed in a square. It has three plazas, the smallest of which is 200 paces wide and the same in length. Exit from the plazas is through very straight streets, which are certainly somewhat narrow to the extent that two horsemen can barely fit through them. All the houses have their balconies facing the streets, a very pretty sight to behold." Las Casas, vol. 1, p. 282.

18. Benavides, p. 104.

19. In earlier sections of the *Memorial* it is always Río del Norte. Forrestal and Lynch, p. 70, n. 150.

20. "Leaving Tihues and going westward—not northward as before—for a period of two days there is one of the most unusual and strongest cities which can be found in the world. It has more than two thousand houses so spacious that they say there are more than seven thousand inhabitants and some say even more. [The city] is situated on some large plains fifteen leagues long in the middle of which is a rock [outcropping] as high as the tower of the cathedral of Seville which seems to be more than a thousand *estados* high [that is to say, more than a mile in height!]. On the top of this rock it is completely flat for the distance of a league without any kind of tree or hill. The city is built there and below in the plains they have their cultivated land and maize fields." Benavides, p. 104.

21. "Two days' journey from Tigues westward, according to my understanding, there is a most extraordinarily strong and best-situated city that one can find in the inhabited parts of the world. It has about two thousand houses, a good reason for us to believe that there were more than four or five, and perhaps even more than ten thousand inhabitants. It is in some large plains fifteen leagues across in the middle of which is a rock as high as the tower of the cathedral of Seville. It appears one thousand *estados* high. At the summit or on the heights of this rock there is a flat area that stretches more than a league, clear of obstructions without a tree or any other impediment. On that flat area on top of the rock the city is built and on the rest of that high flat land are their maize fields." Las Casas, vol. 1, pp. 282-83.

22. Benavides, p. 105.

23. The three complete printed texts of the *Apologética Historia*, those of Manuel Serrano y Sanz, Juan Pérez de Tuleda Buseo, and O'Gorman, all taken from the holograph manuscript, reproduce, in part or whole, passages struck out in the manuscript.

24. "Turning northward from the city of Tihues three or four days' journey there is a plain that is six leagues long, all filled with cultivated fields among pine forests that yield marvelous piñon nuts, and other large, handsome trees. There is built there a large beautiful city called in the language of that region Cycuyo, [located] on flat land, which has more than six thousand very large houses, six and seven stories high." Benavides, pp. 105-06.

25. "Beyond Tigues, toward the north, as I understand it, some three or four days' journey, is a plain six leagues long and full of cultivated fields. In the middle [of the plain] and located among some large white pine forests (which provide very excellent piñon nuts) and other types of trees, is laid out and located a very beautiful large city which is called in the language of that region, Zyquay. [It was located] on flat land and must have had some six thousand houses. It is strong, but less strong, although impressive, than the one just described." Las Casas, vol. 1, p. 283, n. 24.

26. Antonio de Herrera, *Historia General de los Hechos de los Castellanos en las Islas y Tierra-firme de el Mar. Oceano*, vol. 7 (Editorial Guaranía, Asunción, Paraguay), p. 176.

27. ". . . and although we call this the South Sea, it is actually the [sea] of California which stretches from south to north until it reaches the Straits of Anian." Benavides, p. 106.

28. Forrestal and Lynch, p. xv.

29. Henry Raup Wagner and Helen Rand Parish, *The Life and Writings of Bartolomé de las Casas* (Albuquerque, 1967), pp. 287-89.

30. Wagner and Parish, p. 288. It might be plausibly argued that in view of the hostility between the Franciscans in New Spain and Las Casas, Fr. Gerónimo de Mendieta would have refrained from using the Dominican bishop's work. Mendieta, however, (*Historia eclesiástica indiana*, México, 1971) clearly states that he consulted the Mexico City copy of the *Apologética*, calling it, "una apología que escribió en defension de los Indios" (p. 42). Mendieta praises the work and its author and quotes from it at length. Compare, for example, the quoted material in Mendieta (*ibid.*, pp. 42-48) which is introduced by "Dice pues así el obispo de Chiapa," and Las Casas (vol. 2, pp. 552-56). There are other mentions of the "Apología" of Las Casas in Mendieta. See for example, p. 536.

31. Antonio de Remesal, *Historia General de las Indias occidentales y particular de la gobernación de Chiapa y Guatemala* (Madrid, 1964). See also the comments of Wagner and Parish, p. 289.

32. Fray Jerónimo Román y Zamora, *Repúblicas de Indias . . . antes de la Conquista* (New World portion of *Repúblicas del mundo*), vols. 14 and 15 of *Colección de libros raros o curiosos que tratan de América* (Madrid, 1897).

33. Edmundo O'Gorman, ed., *Fray Toribio de Benavente o Motolinía, Memoriales . . . con inserción de las porciones de la Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España que completan el texto de los Memoriales* (Mexico, 1971), p. lxi, 403-23. It is interesting that Las Casas does not identify Motolinía by name.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 403-23.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. xxi *et seq.*

36. *Ibid.*, pp. xlix-l *et seq.* It may have had the title *Libro de oro y tesoro indico* (p. l). A *Libro de Oro* was in the hands of Joaquín García Icazbalceta in the 1880's and seems to have been one source of the *Memoriales* published by García's son, García Pimentel. However, the *Memoriales* were probably only a portion of a larger manuscript. See Leslie A. White and Ignacio Bernal, *Correspondencia de Adolfo F. Bandelier* (Mexico, 1960), pp. 289-91, 294-97. See also the comments of Lange, Riley, and Lange in the *Southwestern Journals of Adolph F. Bandelier*, vol. 3 (*In press*, University of New Mexico Press), footnote for the entry of April 10, 1886.

37. Las Casas, vol. 2, p. 183. This statement, parenthetically, is not taken from the portion of the *Apologética Historia* that compares so closely with Benavides but from a summary of northern data that gives much the same information.

38. Fidel de Lejarza, O. F. M., ed., *Fr. Toribio Motolinía, O. F. M.*,

Memoriales e Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. 240 (Madrid, 1970), p. 292. Fr. Angelico Chavez, *Coronado's Friars* (Washington, D.C., 1968), p. 76 suggests that "Father Motolinía, [Marcos'] learned contemporary, obviously did not converse with him about his discovery of Cíbola, otherwise his own account would not have been so erroneous."

39. Wagner and Parish, p. 100, n. 23.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 267-68.