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A RECONSIDERATION OF THE DATING
OF A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY
NEW MEXICAN DOCUMENT

STUART J. BALDWIN

IN 1929 FRANCE V. SCHOLES published an English translation of a seventeenth-century Spanish colonial document listing and describing the missions in New Mexico that Scholes believed to be a part of or a supplement to the *Relación* of Fray Gerónimo de Zárate Salmerón.¹ Later, in 1944, Scholes retracted this assessment on the basis of internal evidence indicating a later date.²

This internal evidence mentioned events at Zuñi and Taos that were clearly later than the *Relación*. The document itself was a copy of an original; the copy was dated 24 May 1664, but no date was given for the original. Scholes suggested that the original must date prior to 1659 since it failed to mention the reestablishment of a mission at the pueblo of Las Humanas, which occurred in that year. Likewise, the events mentioned for Taos and Zuñi placed the original not earlier than 1639. Within this framework, Scholes suggested a date of 1641 for the original document based on its report that the Zuñis were without missions (but had requested new missionaries) and on equivocal evidence from other documents that the Zuñi missions might have been refounded in the period from 1642 to 1644.

This equivocal evidence consisted in part of a document reporting an expedition to Zuñi in 1642 that Scholes considered a forgery. The other documentation Scholes cited contained circumstantial evidence that would support a reestablishment of the Zuñi missions from 1642 to 1644 *only* if the suspect document's information on the putative expedition were correct.³ Since no evidence is extant in any other source for mission activity in the Zuñi pueblos

in the 1640s,⁴ the existence of such activity is undemonstrated and cannot be given much weight in dating the original document.

What, then, is the date of the original document? Further internal evidence, the description of the mission at the pueblo of Abó, suggests a date of approximately 1656:

The pueblo of Abó has a church and *convento*, organ and choir, and provision for public worship. It has two *visitas*, the one for the Jumanos, the other is Tabirá. It has 1580 souls under its administration.⁵

The significant information is the reference to an organ, which is also mentioned in a letter from the custodian and *defnidores* of New Mexico addressed to the viceroy of New Spain and dated 11 November 1659:

God is good enough to allow certain pine-nuts to grow in the forests of five or six pueblos in this country, and the minister is accustomed to ask his parishioners to gather some of them for their churches, giving them abundant sustenance while they are doing so. From the pine-nuts which are gathered and sent to Mexico the proceeds are given to God (for instance, recently there was brought a fine organ for the convent of Abó, and certain things used in the divine cult for the convent of Cuarac). . . .⁶

The use of "recently" in this passage suggests that only a few years had passed since the organ had arrived from Mexico City as part of the cargo of a mission supply train, perhaps with the last supply train *procurador general* Tomás Manso sent out and that would have arrived in New Mexico in 1656.⁷ The original document could have been prepared only subsequent to the arrival of the organ, and might very well have been sent south with the returning supply train, which returned to Mexico City in the spring of 1657.⁸ This evidence would indicate a date of 1656 for preparation of the original document.

If the document is thus dated 1656, the request of the Zuñis for new missionaries was not made until the mid-1650s, which explains the lack of evidence for Zuñi missions during the 1640s and 1650s.

This dating also implies that the Zuñis were not included in the census of 19,870 Pueblo Indians that Governor Alonso Pacheco de Heredia reported in 1643.⁹

NOTES

1. France V. Scholes, "Documents for the History of the New Mexican Missions in the Seventeenth Century," *New Mexico Historical Review (NMHR)* 4 (January 1929): 45-51.

2. France V. Scholes, "Correction," *NMHR* 19 (July 1944): 243-46.

3. Scholes, "Correction," 245-46.

4. A. F. Bandelier, "An Outline of the Documentary History of the Zuñi Tribe," *Journal of American Ethnology and Archaeology* 3 (1892): 1-115; Frederick Webb Hodge, *History of Hawikuh, New Mexico*, Publications of the Frederick Webb Hodge Anniversary Publication Fund, Vol. 1 (Los Angeles: The Southwest Museum, 1937); France V. Scholes and Lansing B. Bloom, "Friar Personnel and Mission Chronology: 1598-1626, II," *NMHR* 20 (January 1945): 81-82.

5. Quoted from Scholes, "Documents," p. 48.

6. Quoted from Charles Wilson Hackett, trans., *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and Approaches Thereto, to 1773, Volume 3*, Publication No. 330 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1937): p. 192.

7. Scholes, "The Supply Service of the New Mexican Missions in the Seventeenth Century, II," *NMHR* 5 (April 1930): 189-91.

8. Scholes, "Supply Service, II," p. 192.

9. Scholes, "Correction," p. 246.