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# Old Heat and New Light Concerning the Search for Coronado's Bridge: A Historiography of the Pecos and Canadian Rivers Hypotheses

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JOSEPH P. SÁNCHEZ

As the relatively quiet two-year 450th anniversary of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's expedition (1540–1542) comes to an end, scholars continue to speculate about the route he took across Sonora, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. Although Coronado failed to achieve his primary objective to find fabulously wealthy Quivira, he did succeed in taking an important step in the European expansion and development of North America. Significantly, the expedition began a written tradition for a wide geographical area from western Mexico to California and across the Southwest to Kansas. Etched into the national stories of Mexico and the United States, Coronado's expedition has added to the romance and lore of a great geographic area. If place names like Cicuye, Cíbola, and Quivira tantalized early explorers, modern-day scholars are hopeful of someday locating Chichilticale, Coronado's bridge, and the deep canyons on the Great Plains seen by the expedition. Unfortunately, the precise route taken by the expedition has eluded scholars of both nations for over a century and a half.

Even though much was written by the men of Coronado, literally

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hundreds of questions about what they did and saw during the two years will likely never be answered. Aside from the unknown location of the bridge mentioned by the expedition before it crossed onto the Texas panhandle from New Mexico, at least thirteen other major issues about their route remain unresolved. They include questions about the route from Compostela, Mexico, to the present-day Arizona border; the location of Chichilticale; the direction taken from Chichilticale to Zuni; the paths taken by three segments of the expedition to the Rio Grande; the line of march from the Rio Grande pueblos to Pecos; identification of the river bridged by Coronado before crossing to the Llano Estacado; the location of the *barrancas* (canyons) on the Plains; the location of Cona; the route of the return of the main army from the Llano Estacado; the direction taken by Coronado and the Chosen Thirty north from the barrancas; the location of Quivira; Coronado's return route from Quivira to the Rio Grande; and, the route of the expedition from New Mexico to Compostela. Each issue is intricately linked in such a way that the succeeding issue cannot be satisfactorily solved until the preceding one has been resolved. All of these issues have supporters who have speculated and hypothesized about them. Recently, the location of Coronado's bridge has sparked another round of debate. If the site can be conclusively identified, it will significantly influence how scholars view Coronado's march to the barrancas on the Texas panhandle. And, like dominos collapsing upon one another, its resolution would affect the interpretation of Coronado's direction from the barrancas to Quivira.

The chronological sequence leading to the bridge began when the expedition departed eastward from Tiguex on the Rio Grande. Although the Spaniards had traveled from the Rio Grande to Pecos several times, they did not describe a clear route to it. Consequently, one may speculate that they traveled from Tiguex to the Galisteo pueblos, which they had explored previously, then northeast to Pecos, or that the expedition marched north along the Rio Grande to *Quirix*, that is, the Keresan pueblos south of present La Bajada, picking up supplies there before veering east around the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and then to Glorieta Pass to Pecos. In preparation for leaving Tiguex, Vázquez de Coronado did send his men north along the Rio Grande to collect supplies and one detachment went as far west as Zia Pubelo for provisions.<sup>1</sup>

The route from Tiguex to Galisteo was known. Pedro de Castañeda

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1. Herbert E. Bolton, *Coronado on the Turquoise Trail: Knight of Pueblos and Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1949), 234–39.

de Nájera, chronicler of the expedition, described it saying "Between Cicuye [Pecos] and the province of Quirix [Keres] there is a small, strong pueblo, which the Spaniards named Ximena, and another pueblo, almost deserted, for only one of its sections is inhabited. This pueblo must have been large, to judge by its site, and it seemed to have been destroyed recently. This was called the town of Los Silos, because big maize silos were found in it."<sup>2</sup> The Spaniards were aware of warfare between the various pueblos and their Plains tribes enemies. As well as they could determine, the Spaniards learned that a large body of Teyas had besieged Cicuye sixteen years previously but could not take the powerful pueblo. Just beyond Los Silos the Spaniards found more evidence of Indian warfare: another large pueblo completely destroyed. "The patios," wrote Castañeda, "were covered with numerous stone balls as large as jugs of one *arroba* (approximately twenty-five pounds). It looked as if the stones had been hurled from catapults or guns with which an enemy had destroyed the pueblo."<sup>3</sup>

Herbert Eugene Bolton suggested that the first phase of the march was covered in four days between Tiguex and Pecos. They went, wrote Bolton, "north up the Rio Grande, around the end of Sandia Mountains, and eastward through Galisteo Valley, passing the famous turquoise mines. On the way they noted several towns similar to those of Tiguex, some of whose ruins are still to be seen today. The first pueblo, reached after one day's travel, had about thirty inhabited houses. Coronado stopped here in passing, embraced the chief, and instructed the people to tell their neighbors to remain quiet in their homes. . . . The implication is that these people had joined in the Tiguex rebellion but were now forgiven."<sup>4</sup> Next they passed through Los Silos, evidently picking up corn from its storage rooms, before proceeding north. Bolton suggested they went northeast "presumably through Lamy Canyon and Glorieta Pass, or perhaps more directly over the mountains, to Cicuique, or Pecos."<sup>5</sup> Juan de Jaramillo corroborated the itinerary writing, "After leaving this settlement and the river, we passed two other pueblos whose names I do not know, and in four days we came to Cicuique . . . this route was to the northeast."<sup>6</sup>

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2. George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, *Narratives of the Coronado Expedition 1540-1542* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), 257.

3. *Ibid.*, 258.

4. Bolton, *Coronado*, 239.

5. *Ibid.*, 240.

6. Hammond and Rey, *Narratives*, 300.

That they went to Pecos and camped there is a given. Castañeda's description of the pueblo has become a classic statement. Of it he wrote:

Cicuye is a pueblo containing about 500 warriors. It is feared throughout that land. It is square, perched on a rock in the center of a vast patio or plaza, with its estufas. The houses are all alike, four stories high. One can walk on the roofs over the whole pueblo, there being no streets to prevent this. The second terrace is all surrounded with lanes which enable one to circle the whole pueblo. These lanes are like balconies which project out, and under which one may find shelter. The houses have no doors on the ground floor. The inhabitants use movable ladders to climb to the corridors on this terrace. The corridors are used as streets. The houses facing the open country are back to back with those on the patio, and in time of war they are entered through the interior ones. The pueblo is surrounded by a low stone wall. Inside there is a water spring, which can be diverted from them. The people of this town pride themselves because no one has been able to subjugate them, while they dominate the pueblos they wish. The inhabitants [of Cicuye] are of the same type and have the same customs as those in the other pueblos. The maidens here also go about naked until they take a husband. For they say that if they do anything wrong it will soon be noticed and so they will not do it. They need not feel ashamed, either, that they go about as they were born.<sup>7</sup>

Castañeda did leave some clues with reference to the geographic perspective regarding New Mexico's location and how far they had traveled to that point. Given his knowledge of the Sierra Madre Occidental and the Sierra Madre Oriental, he believed that the Sierra Madre Occidental curved westward following the configuration of the coast and that possibly the two ranges widened out to the north, and within them, lay the Great Plains. Castañeda recorded his observations as follows:

We have already told of the terraced settlements, which, it seems, were located in the center of the cordillera, in the most level and spacious portion of it, for it is 150 leagues across to the plains located between the two mountain ranges. I refer to the one along the North sea and the one on the South sea, which on this coast could be more properly called West sea. This cordillera is the one at the South sea. Thus to better understand how the settlements I am describing extend along the middle of the cordillera, I will

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7. *Ibid.*, 257.

state that from Chichilticale, which is the beginning of this stretch, to Cibola, there is a distance of eighty leagues. From Cibola, which is the first pueblo to Cicuye, which is the last one on the way across, is seventy leagues; from Cicuye to the beginning of the plains it is thirty leagues. Perhaps we did not cross them directly but at an angle so that the land seemed more extensive than if it had been crossed at the center. The latter route might have been more difficult and rough. One can not determine this very clearly because of the bend which the cordillera makes along the coast of the gulf of the Tizon river.<sup>8</sup>

Having departed Pecos with Indian guides who hoped to lose the expedition in the wilderness before them, the Spaniards proceeded for several days until they reached a river "we Spaniards called Cicuique," wrote Jaramillo.<sup>9</sup> Castañeda reported that the Spaniards "traveled in the direction of the plains, which are on the other side of the mountain range. After four days' march, they came to a deep river carrying a large volume of water flowing from the direction of Cicuye. The general named it the Cicuye River."<sup>10</sup> How the expedition reached the Pecos River is unknown.

Bolton suggested that Vázquez de Coronado left Pecos Pueblo, "situated on an arroyo tributary to Pecos River,"<sup>11</sup> and followed a route paralleling the present-day highway to Las Vegas. Descending the valley, the expeditionary force kept Glorieta Mesa to their right. On their left was the Pecos River. Passing present-day Rowe, speculated Bolton, the expedition proceeded to present-day San Jose before reaching the Pecos River where today's highway crosses it. From there, the expedition followed the river downstream, past present-day Ribera, San Miguel, Pueblo, and Villanueva. They proceeded along this route until they reached Anton Chico, where Coronado bridged the Rio Cicuye or Pecos River. Once across the river, the expedition began a new phase of their search for Quivira which, they supposed, was on the Buffalo Plains.

"If I remember correctly, it seems to me that to reach this river, at the point where we crossed it, we went somewhat more to the northeast. Upon crossing it we turned more to the left, which must be more to the northeast, and we began to enter the plains where the cattle

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8. *Ibid.*, 260–61.

9. *Ibid.*, 300.

10. *Ibid.*, 235.

11. Bolton, *Coronado*, 242.

roam," wrote Jaramillo.<sup>12</sup> Was Jaramillo mistaken about the direction of march? Could it have been a slip of memory or a typographical error in transcription by the sixteenth-century copyist? Other accounts of the expedition such as the "Relación del Suceso"<sup>13</sup> clearly state that the line of march was southeast. The error, if indeed it is one, has confounded historians and searchers for Coronado's bridge for over a century.

Working with great dedication for over eight years to determine the route from Pecos Pueblo to the Pecos River, Richard and Shirley Flint have proposed an alternative to the Bolton hypothesis. Thoroughly analyzing primary and secondary sources, the indefatigable Flints have discounted many other hypotheses regarding the route to the Pecos River. With methodological skill, the Flints examined the hypotheses proposed by proponents of the following bridge sites: the Rio Grande, the Gallinas River, the Canadian, and the Pecos rivers.<sup>14</sup> Their assessments of the various hypotheses are based on four critical elements: the location of Cicuye; the direction of the expedition's line of march from Cicuye; the distance of march to the Rio de Cicuye's bridge site; and the identity of the Rio de Cicuye.<sup>15</sup>

In regard to the Rio Grande hypothesis, the Flints immediately discount it because it is obviously the wrong river.<sup>16</sup> It is, however, worth mentioning Henry M. Brackenridge's proposal because it represents part of the historiography of the search for the bridge. As early as 1857, write the Flints, Brackenridge in *Early Discoveries by Spaniards in New Mexico: Containing an Account of the Castles of Cibola and the Present Appearance of their Ruins*, suggested that the Pecos River was bridged "probably above Taos." Brackenridge was mistaken in regards to the location of Cicuye and the line of march to the river.

Likewise, the Flints discount the Gallinas River hypothesis because of its lack of documentary support. In 1871 James H. Simpson proposed that the bridge was located along the Gallinas River, at or near Las Vegas, New Mexico, about fifty miles from Pecos Pueblo and, in 1916, Michael Shine proposed that the bridge was constructed on the Gallinas

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12. Hammond and Rey, *Narratives*, 300.

13. *Ibid.*, 289.

14. Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, *Identifying the Coronado Expedition's Route: Cicuye to the Rio de Cicuye Bridge. A Proposal for an Historical Archaeological Project, San Miguel and Guadalupe Counties, New Mexico* (1990), 6. Also see Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, "The Coronado Expedition: Cicuye to the Rio de Cicuye Bridge," *New Mexico Historical Review* 67 (April 1992).

15. Flint and Flint, *Identifying the Route*, 8.

16. *Ibid.*, 6.

River at or near Chaparito, New Mexico, over forty-five miles from the pueblo. Based on topographic criteria, the Flints assess that the Gallinas River hypothesis could not be supported because it was based on the wrong direction of march and therefore, the wrong river.<sup>17</sup>

The Canadian River hypothesis held better hope, but after examining several proposals, the Flints discount its possibility. For example, Adolph F. Bandelier in 1892 proposed the Canadian River as a candidate; and George P. Winship in 1896 suggested the Canadian River "a little to the east of the present river and settlement of Mora." Both scholars estimated that the bridge was constructed somewhere over seventy-five miles from Pecos Pueblo. In 1962, Albert Schroeder revisited the sites of the Bandelier and Winship hypotheses and determined that the river crossed by the expedition was the Canadian River near Conchas Dam, New Mexico. In his essay, "The Locale of Coronado's 'Bridge,'" included in this current issue of the *New Mexico Historical Review*, Schroeder flatly states that the "bridge site could not have been on the Pecos River." In presenting his arguments for the Canadian River bridge site based on the length of time and distances recorded by the expedition, Schroeder eliminates the Pecos River as a candidate for Coronado's bridge. He reasserts his earlier conclusion that the river bridged by the expedition is the Canadian near Conchas Dam. Based on the direction of march taken by the expedition and the great distance and terrain covered, the Flints feel that the Canadian River hypothesis does not fit the distance criteria established by the expedition's chroniclers.<sup>18</sup> Schroeder argues to the contrary.

Notwithstanding Schroeder's logical argument, the Flints propose that the Pecos River hypothesis has the best possibilities. However, they are cautious about the placement of the bridge because of the distance factor. For example, Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, in 1897, proposed a Pecos River crossing near Roswell, New Mexico. However, the information used by Dellenbaugh was erroneous. He had mistakenly placed Cicuye at Nogal, fifteen miles northwest of Fort Stanton, New Mexico. A more reasonable proposal was advanced by Fredrick W. Hodge in 1899 by proposing Pecos Pueblo as the beginning point, with a line of march in a southeasterly direction and a distance of seventy-five to eighty miles. Hodge proposed that the crossing was

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17. *Ibid.*, 6.

18. See Albert H. Schroeder, "The Locale of Coronado's 'Bridge,'" *New Mexico Historical Review* 67 (April 1992), and Albert H. Schroeder, "A Reanalysis of the Routes of Coronado and Oñate into the Plains in 1541 and 1601," *Plains Anthropologist* 7 (February 1962). Also see Flint and Flint, *Identifying the Route*, 6.

made on the Pecos River at or a little south of Puerto de Luna, New Mexico.<sup>19</sup> In 1944, W. C. Holden took a middle-of-the-road approach in support of the army's southeastern direction from Pecos Pueblo but concluded that the bridge was constructed north of Santa Rosa. In one part of his analysis, Holden wrote, "It is probable that the bridge was built at Anton Chico."<sup>20</sup> Later in his study, Holden alluded to the expedition having passed "not very far north of Santa Rosa," and started across the plains to the east of there. "It is our opinion," continued Holden, "that Coronado stayed on the Llano Estacado from Santa Rosa to the Querecho village."<sup>21</sup> Thus Holden proposed a route from Pecos Pueblo to the High Plains via the Pecos River by following a line along the west side of the Pecos River valley to Anton Chico where the Spaniards built a bridge. Once across the river, Holden proposed that the expeditionary force proceeded in an east-southeast direction paralleling the river on the east side until they reached the vicinity of Santa Rosa. Before it reached Santa Rosa, the expedition veered to the east and reached the High Plains at Frio Draw to the south of Tucumcari.

In 1937, Paul A. Jones supported the Pecos River crossing but made no determination about location other than suggesting that the bridge was constructed forty to fifty miles from Pecos Pueblo. He did, however, support a southeasterly line of march.<sup>22</sup> Bolton supported the Pecos River hypothesis and placed the crossing at Anton Chico, New Mexico,<sup>23</sup> a probable distance of forty-five to fifty miles from Pecos Pueblo. Although Hodge, Jones, Holden, and Bolton appear correct in their conclusion that the direction of march was southeast, the Flints conclude that Hodge went too far; Jones was too vague; they express no opinion on Holden; and surmise that Bolton had the expedition meeting the river too soon, though his is the most likely of the previous hypotheses.<sup>24</sup>

Given the historiographical controversy over the bridge, the Flints propose a new hypothesis as follows:

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19. Frederick Webb Hodge, "The First Discovered City of Cibola," *American Anthropologist* 8 (1899), 61.

20. W. C. Holden, "Coronado's Route across the Staked Plains," *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook* 20 (October 1944), 7.

21. Holden, "Coronado," 9.

22. Paul A. Jones, *Coronado and Quivira* (Lyons, Kansas: Lyons Publishing Co., 1937), 46.

23. Bolton, *Coronado*, 242-43.

24. Flint and Flint, *Identifying the Route*, 6.

Upon leaving Cicuye in the first week of May 1541, the Coronado expedition proceeded south to the area of modern Rowe, New Mexico. At that point they ascended a relatively gentle natural ramp onto Glorieta Mesa. Following the drainages of the mesa's gently tilted surface, they traveled south and slightly east to the vicinity of modern Leyba, New Mexico, and into Cañon Blanco. The canyon then served as a roadway all the way east to its junction with the Pecos River. The army then followed the river east and slightly south to its confluence with the Gallinas River. Not far downstream from there (roughly sixty-five miles southeast of Cicuye) a bridge was built across the Pecos River and the whole company of people and animals crossed over.<sup>25</sup>

The Flints propose their hypothesis based on agreement with the Pecos River proponents. They suggest that the bridge was built below La Junta. They conclude that Cicuye was Pecos Pueblo; that the Rio Cicuye was the Pecos River; that the line of march was southeasterly; that the distance of march was between forty-seven and seventy-three miles; that the expedition ascended Glorieta Mesa by way of Rowe Rincon because it is the easiest egress from the Pecos Valley and the only easy route out before cliffs close in enough to force traffic to the river; and that Cañon Blanco offers the best likelihood of water and pasturage for the large herds in the expedition.<sup>26</sup> Without doubt the location of the bridge is critical toward explaining where the expedition went next.

Having crossed the bridge, which could have been anything from an actual wooden structure to a low water crossing, the expedition traveled four or five days to where they encountered large herds of buffalo. Bolton concluded they went "eastward across a wide plateau broken by boldly scarped mesas sprinkled with scrub juniper, cactus, and other desert plants."<sup>27</sup> Jones contended that "the route did turn to the northeast but the Turk, their chief guide, kept bearing more to the east and finally turned to a southerly direction."<sup>28</sup> Bolton's route had the expedition moving northeasterly for a distance of a hundred miles or more along the southern drainage of the Canadian River until they reached the Texas panhandle.

The Bolton route, in modern terms, led north after the expedition crossed the Pecos River but turned eastward following the Rock Island

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25. *Ibid.*, 10.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Bolton, *Coronado*, 243.

28. Jones, *Coronado and Quivira*, 46.

Railroad line and Highway 54-66. The expedition entered the Pajarito Creek basin by way of Cuervo near Newkirk. Near there they could see the rampart-like cliffs for which the Llano Estacado or Palisaded Plain is named. "They were called Stockaded Plains," wrote Bolton, "from the rim-rock which at a distance looks like a stone fortification. The usual explanation about driving down stakes to avoid getting lost, is an engaging folk tale."<sup>29</sup> The expedition was within sight of Tucumcari Peak.

The caprock and its canyonlands comprise the notable features of the Llano Estacado. Of the intriguing formation, Dan Flores writes "The old-time New Mexicans had a saying: 'Hay las sierras debajo de los llanos' (There are mountains below the plains). Modern travelers crossing the Southern Plains on the interstates from Oklahoma City to Albuquerque or San Antonio to Santa Fe might doubt it, but the New Mexicans were right. Below the level of the flat horizon, great canyons carve mesas and buttes, spires and badlands through the architecture of the Llanos of West Texas and New Mexico."<sup>30</sup>

Through Spanish colonial eyes, Castañeda wrote:

Now we shall describe the plains, a vast level area of land more than 400 leagues wide in that part between the two cordilleras. The one was crossed by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado on his way to the South sea, the other by the men of Don Fernando de Soto when coming from Florida to the North sea. What we saw of these plains was all uninhabited. The opposite cordillera could not be seen, nor a hill or mountain as much as three estados high, although we traveled 250 leagues over them. Occasionally there were found some ponds, round like plates, a stone's throw wide, or larger. Some contained fresh water, others salt. In these ponds some tall grass grows. Away from them it is all very short, a span long and less. The land is the shape of a ball, for wherever a man stands he is surrounded by the sky at the distance of a crossbow shot. There are no trees except along the rivers which there are in some barrancas. These rivers are so concealed that one does not see them until he is at their edge. They are of dead earth [*son de tierra muerta*], with approaches made by the cattle in order to reach the water which flows quite deep.<sup>31</sup>

On the Llano Estacado the Spaniards noticed marks on the ground

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29. Bolton, *Coronado*, 243.

30. Dan Flores, *Caprock Canyonlands: Journeys into the Heart of the Southern Plains* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), ix.

31. Hammond and Rey, *Narratives*, 261.

as if someone had dragged lances through the area. Curious, they followed the lines and came upon a rancharia or settlement of semi-sedentary Indians. The lines were made by the poles mounted on large dogs used in dragging their goods like a travois. The Querechos, Apachean people, were among the first tribe contacted on the Great Plains by the Spaniards. The expedition was, according to Bolton, approaching a point just west of the New Mexico–Texas line “where the trail to Quivira crossed the Canadian River.”<sup>32</sup>

W. C. Holden’s study of the route in 1944 offers a historiographical review of earlier literature about Vázquez de Coronado’s march through the Llano Estacado and beyond. In his critique, he discounted J. H. Simpson’s 1871 route because it is erroneous. Simpson ran the route from Pecos Pueblo in a northeasterly direction crossing the Colorado–New Mexico line near Raton, thence east following a line south of the Arkansas River to present-day Kingman, Kansas. There, noted Simpson, Vázquez de Coronado, having been slowed by the large army, picked thirty men to go forward and turned the rest of the army back to the Rio Grande. He then proceeded to the extreme northeastern part of Kansas. The army, contended Simpson, returned through the northwestern corner of Oklahoma and, marching in a southwesterly direction, crossed the Texas panhandle by way of Hemphill, Roberts, Carson, Potter, Randall, and Deaf Smith counties to the Pecos River near Fort Sumner, New Mexico. From there, wrote Simpson, the army went northwest to a point near Mora, and presumably crossed the mountains to the southwest to Pecos Pueblo.<sup>33</sup>

Holden also questioned the accuracy of Winship’s conclusions. Winship argued that the expedition left Pecos Pueblo in a southeasterly direction and crossed the Pecos River ten or fifteen miles south of Fort Sumner. From there, Winship contended, the Spaniards crossed Bailey, Cochran, Terry Lynn, Borden, Scurry, Mitchell, Crane, Runnels, and Coleman counties. There the expedition divided with the main army retracing its tracks and Vázquez de Coronado proceeding north into southern Kansas. Winship, as Holden saw it, concluded that “after making a big circle into north central Kansas, where Quivira was, he returned to Cicuye in a southwesterly direction, keeping the same route that later became the Santa Fe Trail.”<sup>34</sup>

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32. Bolton, *Coronado*, 249.

33. Holden, “Coronado,” 4; James H. Simpson, “Coronado’s march in search of the ‘Seven Cities of Cibola’ and discussion of their probable location,” *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution* (1871), 336–37.

34. Holden, “Coronado,” 4; George P. Winship, *The Coronado Expedition, 1540–1542*, 2 Parts (Washington, D.C.: Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1896), 1:400.

Seeking to support his hypothesis, Holden analyzed one more study. In 1929 David Donoghue proposed that the expedition had gone down the Pecos River on the west bank until reaching Santa Rosa, where the bridge was constructed. From there the Spaniards went east onto the Llano Estacado. They passed through Quay County, New Mexico, across the southern portion of Deaf Smith and Randall counties to Tule Canyon in the northeast corner of Swisher County, Texas. At Tule Canyon or Palo Duro Canyon is where the army divided, contended Donoghue. Of the route taken by the returning army, Donoghue proposed that it passed through northwestern Lamar County and Bailey County to Fort Sumner and followed the east bank of the Pecos River to the bridge north of Santa Rosa, where it crossed to the west bank and continued to Pecos Pueblo.

Meanwhile, wrote Donoghue, Vázquez de Coronado went north from Palo Duro Canyon, traversing western Armstrong and Carson counties into Hutchinson County, where he crossed the Canadian River, which the Spaniards called the San Pedro y San Pablo. "Of this much I am certain," wrote Donoghue, "the expedition never left the Llano Estacado; Palo Duro Canyon and its tributaries are the only ravines that fit Castañeda's descriptions; the salt lakes are found only in the southern Llano Estacado: Quivira was on the Canadian, or some of its tributary creeks at the edge of the plains."<sup>35</sup>

Holden declared that Simpson and Winship were in error and that Donoghue had "come closer to the truth" but disagreed with him on the location of Quivira. Still Holden was concerned with the route of the army after it crossed the Pecos River. Curiously, Holden remarked "The New Mexico highway markers indicate that the army crossed the Pecos at Puerto de Luna, eleven miles south of Santa Rosa, and went northeast, keeping just north of the caprock, going by Montoya, Tucumcari, and San Jon and climbing onto the Llano Estacado near Glenrio about the Texas-New Mexico line. This route would have been practically the same traversed by Highway 66, and New Mexico has placed markers along the highway indicating that such was Coronado's route. Recently we went over this route, checked the topography against the accounts and were unable to find any evidence to support the claims."<sup>36</sup> Although the expedition crossed through the general area, it would be inaccurate to claim that the route was the same as the present highway. By the same token, it would be inaccurate to deny that the

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35. Holden, "Coronado," 4-5; David Donoghue, "The Route of Coronado's Expedition in Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 32 (January 1929), 192.

36. Holden, "Coronado," 10.

army passed somewhere within a corridor in the area twenty miles wide on either side of the highway.

Once across the New Mexico–Texas line, the expedition crossed the Canadian River, the stream whose tributaries they had been following.<sup>37</sup> Holden states that “the Spaniards crossed streams like the Canadian without being impressed.”<sup>38</sup> Castañeda explained that “From there the general sent Don Rodrigo Maldonado ahead with his company; he traveled four days and came to a large barranca like those of Colima. At its bottom he found a large rancheria with people.”<sup>39</sup> However, traveling to the second Querecho rancheria, the expedition appears to have left the Canadian River route. Holden concluded that “With the possible exception of the bridge on the Cicuye river, the most pivotal landmark mentioned in all of the original accounts was the ‘ravine like those of Colima.’”<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Bolton aptly states, “The location of this second Querecho village was pivotal in the whole story of Coronado’s march to Quivira and back.”<sup>41</sup>

Although most scholars agree that the expedition was following the southern branch of the Canadian River drainage, the question of the canyonlands presents another riddle concerning the line of march. The route across the Llano Estacado led to a series of canyons. Were these canyons along the Canadian River drainage as suggested by Schroeder<sup>42</sup> or were they, as proposed by Bolton,<sup>43</sup> part of the Red River system? Had the expedition entered the ravines near the Canadian Breaks? Or, was the expedition in the Tule Canyon–Palo Duro Canyon system? If so, at which point did they leave the Canadian River and its tributaries? The answer to how they got there may lie in the location of Coronado’s bridge.

In an age of economic priorities, historical routes have become increasingly important in attracting tourists to certain areas, and tourist dollars have made history a lucrative business. Not surprising, the search for the trail has made the leap from the private notebooks of scholars and preservationists to interested groups, some of which are chambers of commerce in certain localities along the supposed route. In the case of Coronado’s route, serious historical research must precede tourism in order to justify asking local and out-of-state visitors to

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37. Bolton, *Coronado*, 249; Holden, “Coronado,” 14.

38. Holden, “Coronado,” 14.

39. Hammond and Rey, *Narratives*, 237.

40. Holden, “Coronado,” 13.

41. Bolton, *Coronado*, 250.

42. Schroeder, “Reanalysis of the Routes,” 3.

43. Bolton, *Coronado*, 237.

believe that what they spend money to see is based on fact—or truth—as well as it can be known. Unfortunately, only portions of the route can be verified through historical documentation and archaeological surveys. The historiography about the expedition is filled with a mixed bag of facts, conjectures, hypotheses, and theories. And, despite the speculations among scholars, few sites where Coronado and his men visited are indisputable. Among sites known to have been visited by the expedition are Compostela and Culiacan in Mexico, and Zuni, Acoma, the Rio Grande pueblos from Isleta to San Felipe as well as Zia, Galisteo, and Pecos pueblos in New Mexico. The consensus among scholars is that Coronado marched onto the Great Plains from New Mexico and reached as far as the Great Bend of the Arkansas in central Kansas. What is not known is the precise route he took at any given point between Compostela and the Arkansas. Knowledge of each step in the 4,000-mile round-trip trek of the expedition is critical for establishing where Coronado went. Coronado's bridge is only a part, albeit a critical one, of the conundrum presented by the elusive route.