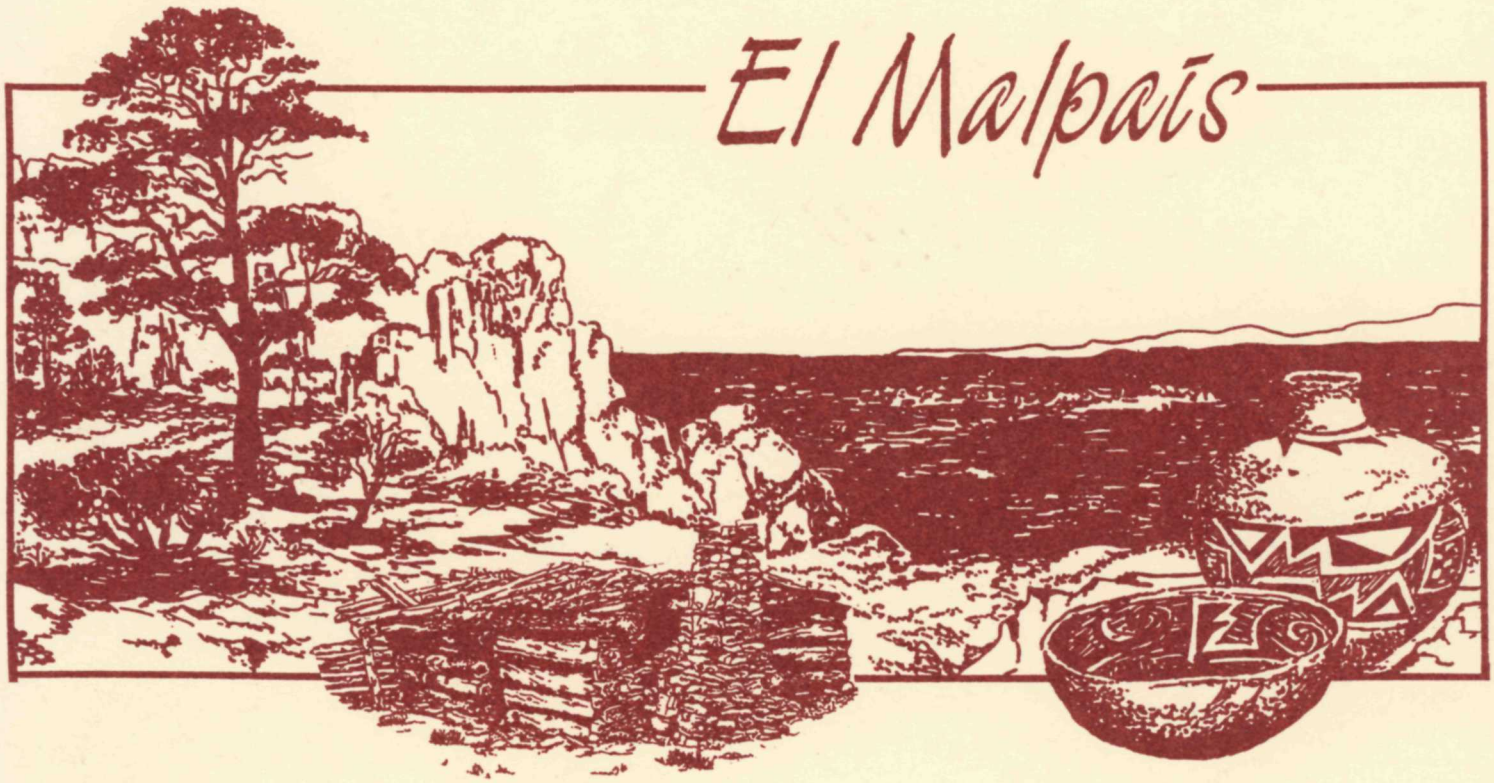
SOUTHWEST REGIONAL OFFICE
DIVISION OF HISTORY

IN THE LAND OF FROZEN FIRES



A HISTORY OF OCCUPATION IN EL MALPAIS COUNTRY

by Neil C. Mangum

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, parks and recreation areas, and to ensure the wise use of all these resources. The Department also has major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for the people who live in island territories under U. S. administration.

IN THE LAND OF FROZEN FIRES: A HISTORY OF OCCUPATION IN EL MALPAIS COUNTRY

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CHAPTER II

GLORY, GOD, AND GOLD: THE CONQUEST OF NEW MEXICO

When Francisco Vásquez de Coronado's expedition entered the present United States border in 1540, it constituted the first intensive exploration of what is now the Southwest United States. Coronado's trek through the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico was designed and patterned after similar Spanish conquests in Central and South America. Indeed, for the previous 40 years a procession of Spanish conquistadors had been searching for wealth, fame, and adventure. In rapid succession Spain conquered vast chunks of real estate in the Americas. The Aztecs fell to Hernan Cortes in 1521; Francisco de Pizarro devastated the Incas of Peru in 1532; Mexico was subjugated and in the process, Spain planted in 1535, the first permanent vice royalty in America. Political power was invested in the viceroy and a judicial tribunal, the Audencia. Because of the behemoth size of Spain's New World holdings, it became an administrative necessity to divide the kingdom into smaller more manageable regions. Mexico City became the seat of Spain's occupied provinces. To the north lay an unexplored empire and potentially as lucrative as the wealth found in Peru and Mexico. Exploration into the northern provinces followed without delay.

Spanish expansionism used dual paths. One path pursued an unrelenting push for exploitation and diversion of Indian wealth into the coffers of Spain. The other route championed Spain's desire to expand Christianity by converting the demonic souls of its new-found subjects to Catholicism. For the first two decades of the sixteenth century, Spain principally engaged the Aztec and Inca Empires. In quick succession it extracted huge deposits of mineral wealth from its victims and began the process of rescuing the souls of the natives. By the third decade, Spanish attention turned northward, beyond Mexico, to the pervasive rumors of treasures in North America.

The Spanish crown nodded in acquiescent to a series of land and sea campaigns, some of which failed disastrously. One expedition commanded by Panfilo de Narvaez set sail from Cuba in the spring of 1528 bound for Florida. Coming to shore near present-day Tampa, the command wandered in search of the rumored wealthy kingdom of Apalachee. They found nothing but trouble. The Indians were unfriendly and poor. Moreover, Navarez's supply ships, which intended to rendezvous with him up the Florida coast returned to Cuba.[1] Disillusioned and fatigued by their ordeal, the commander aborted the mission. The expeditioners decided to seek refuge in Mexico, and they constructed makeshift boats fashioned from the skins of their horses to transport them. Setting a westerly course across the Gulf of Mexico, disaster struck when the ships foundered in a storm. The survivors came to shore on or near Galveston Island in November 1528. A combination of disease, exposure, and Indians attacks whittled the approximately 100 survivors down to four.[2] Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, Andres Dorantes, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, and Dorantes's Moorish slave, Estevanico, eventually banded together. They began an overland odyssey punctuated by seven long years of living off the land and from handouts of local Indians. In the summer of 1535, Cabeza de Vaca and his motley entourage waded the Rio Grande near the confluence of that river with the Rio

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[1]Herbert E. Bolton, The Spanish Borderlands (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 19-25.

[2]John Francis Bannon, The Spanish Borderlands Frontier 1513-1821 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 13. Cabeza de Vaca's account of the four survivors of Navarez's ill-starred expedition has been translated and contained in Frederick W. Hodge and Theodore H. Lewis, editors, Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States, 1528-1543 (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907). See also Cyclone Covey, translator and editor, Cabeza de Vaca's Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America (New York: Crowell-Collier, 1961). See also Cleve Hallenbeck, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca: The Journey and Route of the First European to Cross the Continent of North America (Glendale: California, 1940).

Conchos (near Presidio, Texas). Plodding westward, they crossed the backbone of the Sierre Madres where by happenstance they bumped into Spanish military.[3]

The quartet appeared before Nuno de Guzman, provincial governor of Nueva Galicia. Later de Vaca's group visited Mexico City, where they had an interview with Viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Mendoza. Mendoza listened as de Vaca related how they had acquired "undeniable indications of gold, antimony, iron, and copper, and other metals."[4] Cabeza de Vaca's epic journey spawned lurid stories of immense riches said to be located in Texas and New Mexico. Moreover, de Vaca's report confirmed the presence of a large land mass between Florida and Mexico, provided knowledge about Indians and Indian trails in the region, and led directly to the missionary work of the Southwest.[5]

Spanish authorities reacted cautiously to the gilded report. Two years elapsed before a pair of priests, Fathers Fray Juan de la Asuncion and Fray Pedro Nadal, undertook a reconnaissance to locate the Seven Cities of Cibola. The priests may have traveled as far north as the Gila River in Arizona before turning back. The next year Mexico's viceroy commissioned Fray Marcos de Niza to reconnoiter the northern territory.[6] The appointment of Fray Marcos to search for the Seven Cities was based on Marcos's credentials as a navigator, his experiences in dealing with Indians, and his work as a cosmographer. Marcos assembled his diminutive command at Culiacan, located on the Pacific coast of Mexico. The exploratory group included laybrother, Fray Honorato[7], a few Indians, and Estevanico, the black slave who accompanied Cabeza de Vaca on his eight-year wanderings.[8] Relations between Estevanico and Fray Marcos deteriorated. Estevanico's flamboyant demeanor (he adorned himself with brilliant feathers, plumes, and bells) and his confident attitude of superiority clashed with the pious, dull Marcos. When Estevanico added a cortege of Indian females to his camp, Marcos retaliated by sending the black forward, to examine the land and to keep him apprised of what he discovered.[9]

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[3]Arthur R. Gomez, A Most Singular Country: A History of Occupation on the West Texas Frontier (Santa Fe: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1985), 2-5. For a detailed analysis of Cabeza de Vaca's travels, see Adolph F. Bandelier, The Discovery of New Mexico by the Franciscan Monk, Friar Marcos de Niza in 1539, trans. and ed. Madeleine Turrell Rodack (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1981), 42-63. Rodack provides ample evidence that Cabeza de Vaca never reached New Mexico soil as some historians have asserted.

[4]F. Ross Holland, Jr., Hawikuh and the Seven Cities of Cibola, Historical Background Study (U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, Division of History Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, 1969), 3.

[5]Charles C. DiPeso, John B. Rinaldo, and Gloria J. Fenner, Casas Grandes, 8 vols. (Flagstaff: Northland Press, 1974), 4:56. The trio of authors provide a comprehensive analysis of de Vaca's travel. See also Carl O. Sauer, The Road to Cibola (Berkeley: University of California, 1932), 20.

[6]Bandelier, The Discovery of New Mexico, 68-69.

[7]Fray Honorato dropped out of the expedition after only a few days on the trail. Beset with illness, Fray Honorato remained behind at the banks of the Pitatlan [or Petatlan] River north of Culiacan. See Bandelier, The Discovery of New Mexico, 72; and Charles C. Di Peso, Casas Grandes, 3:806.

[8]Fr. Angelico Chavez, Coronado's Friars (Richmond: William Byrd Press, 1968) 11.

[9]Holland, Hawikuh, 7-8; Little is known of Estevanico, although his exploits are covered in many of the Cabeza de Vaca sources. John U. Terrell, Estevanico the Black (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1968) produced a biography on the subject, however, judging from the padding and conjectural information, it hardly qualifies under the definition of a book.

In order to maintain communications with Estevanico, Fray Marcos deployed a system based on the crucifix. Should Estevanico possess good news he was to send an Indian back to Marcos with a cross the size of a man's palm. If the discovery of a rich province occurred, a runner would return to the friar with a crucifix twice the size of a palm, and if the discovery rivaled New Spain, a larger cross.[10] Imagine the expression on Fray Marcos's face when an Indian courier shortly appeared carrying a cross "as high as a man." The Indian runner declared that Estevanico wanted Fray Marcos to hurry forward, that Estevanico had encountered Indians who had visited a province and a city called Cibola, and it was "the greatest province in the world."[11]

Marcos hurried on, following the black's path. More crosses, more Indians, foretold of an immense and wealthy province. When Marcos ranged within two or three days of the province, he encountered an Indian who possessed "the deepest sadness in his whole person." The Franciscan was horrified to learn that truculent Zunis had killed Estevanico and sent the remainder of his fact-finding expedition fleeing for their lives. According to Fray Marcos, he continued his journey with intentions of gaining a glimpse of Cibola's beauty and magnitude. From a hill overlooking Cibola Fray Marcos paused to view the city. Fray Marcos recorded that "The town is bigger than the city of Mexico."[12] According to Marcos's account, he wanted to visit the city "because I knew that I risked nothing but my life, which I had offered to God the day I commenced the journey." He convinced himself, however, that this irrational course would deny everybody in Mexico information on his revelation. Leaving a pile of stones affixed with a small cross to claim the land for Spain, Marcos quickly retraced his steps and returned to Mexico.[13]

In Mexico City Fray Marcos presented a glowing report of his trip claiming he had found the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola, probably an Indian term for the Zuni pueblos.[14] Fray Marcos's account stirred the imagination of the people of Mexico, for he characterized the city of Cibola as "larger than the city of Mexico . . . the doorways to the houses have many decorations of turquoises, of which there is great abundance."[15] One Indian witness, the friar recounted, said Cibola is "a land rich in gold, silver, and other wealth, and has great cities."[16]

Considerable debate has surfaced over whether Fray Marcos actually glimpsed Cibola. The current thought that washes up indicates the friar never came near the Zuni province. One historian-geographer, Carl O. Sauer, maintains Marcos traveled only as far as southern Arizona,

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[10]Holland, Hawikuh, 8; Herbert E. Bolton, Coronado Knight of Pueblos and Plains. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1964) 27.

[11]Holland, Hawikuh, 8.

[12]Holland, Hawikuh, 9-13; Bandelier, The Discovery of New Mexico, 86-88; Hammond and Rey, Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, 1540-1542 2 vols. (Albuquerque: University of ew Mexico Press, 1940)141, 145; Bolton, Coronado, 35-36.

[13]Holland, Hawikuh, 14; Fray Marcos de Niza, Percy M. Baldwin, trans., and ed., "Discovery of the Seven Cities of Cibola," Historical Society of New Mexico 1 (November 1926): 28-30; Bolton, Spanish Borderlands, 87.

[14]David J. Weber, editor, New Spain's Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West 1540-1821 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 21.

[15]Ibid., 22; George P. Hammond and Agaptio Rey, Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, 2: 66-79.

[16]Bolton, Coronado, 50.

that his report was doctored for use by Mendoza to parry any claims by Mendoza's rival Hernan Cortez. Fray Marcos has his supporters too, among them Adolph Bandelier and Herbert Bolton, so the debate is likely to never end.[17]

Fray Marcos's stories, widely circulated in Mexico, were embellished with each accounting. "The country was so stirred up by the news which the friar had brought from the Seven Cities that nothing else was thought about," reported one Spaniard. So pervasive was the rumor of wealth in the northern territory, that Viceroy Mendoza encountered no problems in finding recruits for an expedition into Cibola. The lucky man to head just such an enterprise was Mendoza's good friend and compatriot, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, newly appointed governor of Nueva Galicia (Guadalajara, Mexico). Coronado like many other Spaniards of his day became addicted to the boundless opportunities offered in the New World. He entered Mexico in 1535, casting his fortunes with Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza.

Coronado represented all that Spain could boast in a cavalier: loyal to the throne, brave beyond a doubt, wealthy, light-complexioned, and fair-headed. A gutty crew of 300 Spaniards and 800 Indian allies comprised the ranks. Fray Marcos served as guide. Captain-General Coronado departed from his base at Culiacan, on the west coast of Mexico in the middle of April 1540. Coronado's course took him northward into present-day Arizona. On July 7, scouts informed Coronado he was approaching Cibola, probably at the Zuni village of Hawikuh. The inhabitants of Zuni had been warned of the impending menace and prepared to give the Spaniards a proper welcoming. When the Zunis refused to submit to peaceful overtures, the battle-cry "Santiago" signalled the Spanish attack.

Indians shot arrows and hurled rocks at their adversary but to little avail. Within an hour Coronado drove the Zunis inside their walled fort. Wasting little time, the Spaniards catapulted over the walls, drove the Indians from their shelters, and took possession of Cibola.[18] The Battle of Hawikuh (named for one of the six pueblos that comprised the Zuni settlement) was over. The victory was barren. Cibola represented no Incan Empire. No gold-filled rooms or pendants studded with silver greeted the conquerors. Instead, the Spaniards discovered squalid adobe and stone structures reminiscent of the small villages in Mexico. Nonetheless, Coronado remained indefinitely at Zuni to rest and reconnoiter the countryside and the surrounding pueblos.

Meanwhile, the soldiers who had accompanied Coronado vented their anger at Fray Marcos, for it had been Marcos's exaggerated report that prompted many of the Spaniards to enlist in the expedition. Writing to Viceroy Mendoza from Zuni, Coronado acknowledged concern over the safety of the friar reporting, "such were the curses that some hurled at Fray Marcos that I pray God may protect him from them." Coronado, too, felt betrayed by Fray Marcos writing in the same letter that, "It now remains for me to tell about this city and kingdom and province, of which the Father Provincial [Fray Marcos] gave your Lordship an account. In brief, I can

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[17]For a treatment on whether Fray Marcos viewed Zuni or not, see Bandelier, The Discovery of New Mexico, 27-39; also Holland, Hawikuh, 14-15; The arguments against Fray Marcos going to Zuni are contained in Carl O. Sauer, "The Credibility of the Fray Marcos Account," New Mexico Historical Review 16 (April 1941); Carl O. Sauer, Road to Cibola (Berkley: University of California, 1932); Cleve Hallenbeck, The Journey of Fray Marcos de Niza (Dallas, 1949); and Henry R. Wagner, "Fray Marcos de Niza," New Mexico Historical Review 9 (April 1934); Supporters of Fray Marcos going to Zuni include the works of Bancroft, Bandelier, and Bolton; also George J. Undreiner, "Fray Marcos de Niza and His Journey to Cibola," The Americas 3 (April 1947).

[18]Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1530-1888 (Albuquerque: Horn and Wallace Publishers, 1962), 44-45.

assure you that in reality he has not told the truth in a single thing that he said, but everything is the reverse of what he said, except the name of the city and the large stone houses."[19] The reality of Cibola shattered Fray Marcos' reputation. Now an outcast among friends, he returned to Mexico at the first opportunity. Despite the spurious reporting of Fray Marcos de Niza, he ranks as a primary figure in Spanish conquest. His journey opened the doors for future Spanish explorations in hitherto uncharted lands.[20]

Rumors of strange bearded men sitting atop huge snorting beasts bedecked in brilliant ornate habiliments had been circulating wildly among the pueblos of New Mexico. The pervasive question asked by every Indian was, who were these omnipotent people who wrought havoc and destruction to everything they touched. And what kind of mystical powers did they possess, so deadly that they destroyed their enemies by merely aiming a magic stick?

From the pueblo of Cicuye (Pecos), 200 miles east of Zuni, an emissary of Indians departed for Zuni on an errand of peace and curiosity. A portion of their journey followed the Zuni-Cibola Trail, the pathway connecting the pueblos along the Rio Grande with the outposts of Acoma, Zuni, and Hopi.[21] This footpath dissected the malpais 13 miles west of Acoma Pueblo. Upon reaching Zuni, Bigotes, the chief spokesman from the Cicuye delegation met Coronado. Coronado probably still carried evidence of facial bruises received when he was pummelled in the face with stones during the battle for Hawikuh. Bigotes was tall but robust in appearance. The Spaniards gave Bigotes his sobriquet from the long mustached that embraced his face. He informed Coronado "they had come to serve him. . . .and that if the Spaniards planned to go to his land they would be welcomed." Bigotes exchanged gifts with the Spaniards, presenting them buffalo robes, shields, and headdresses. Coronado reciprocated with artificial pearls, glass vessels, and little bells. Coronado accepted Bigotes' invitation to visit Cicuye, no doubt hoping that it might be his Cibola. He ordered Captain of Artillery, Hernan de Alvarado, to take a squad of 20 men and visit Cicuye and report back to the captain-general within 80 days. On August 29, 1540, Alvarado bade farewell to Coronado and the Zuni encampment.[22]

Although Alvarado's precise route cannot be determined, his journey certainly threaded segments of the malpais. He was probably the first non-Indian to cast eyes on the malpais country. Although there is no mentioning of it in any of the Spanish chronicles, nor did they incise their names into its sandstone facing, the little cortege of Spanish and Pecos Indians probably passed El Morro en route to Pecos.[23] Beyond El Morro they skirted portions of modern-day State Highway 53 before dropping south of the main Acoma-Zuni Trail. Because the horses could not negotiate the rough lava terrain of the malpais, Alvarado's command did not cross the malpais. Alvarado's trajectory carried him south of the malpais into the extinct

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[19]Frederick W. Hodge, History of Hawikuh (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1937), 36, 49.

[20]Bandelier, The Discovery of New Mexico, 39; Father Angelico Chaves, Coronado's Friars. (Richard: William Byrn Press, 1968), 47-48.

[21]Roy W. Foster, "Scenic Trips to the Geological Past, No. 4 Southern Zuni Mountains New Mexico, Zuni-Cibola Trail", (Socorro: State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, 1971), 3.

[22]John L. Kessell, Kiva, Cross, and Crown (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1979), 7-8.

[23]Erik K. Reed, "Spanish Expeditions and El Morro Inscriptions, 1949," manuscript in El Morro National Monument Historical Files, 2-3; Bolton, Coronado, 182-183, presents evidence that Alvarado probably passed south of El Morro.

volcano region west and south of the malpais. Swinging east, the Spaniards crossed the southern extremity of the malpais to reach Acoma Pueblo, September 4.[24]

Alvarado's squad viewed the "Sky City" of Acoma, perched on a rocky monolith twice as high as the Giralda of Sevilla. Ascent could only be accomplished by negotiating a narrow stone staircase that terminated into "mere holes for the hands and feet." Initially, the Acomas exhibited hostility towards Alvarado, but relented when the Spaniards prepared for combat. The Spanish described the Acomas as being closely related to the Zunis in dress and culture. Alvardo did not linger at Acoma. Before he departed the Acomas presented his command with copious amounts of maize, beans, and turkeys.[25] Outfitted with provisions, Bigotes led the foreigners eastward. On September 7, eve of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, the cavalcade reached the Rio Grande Valley. The Spaniards christened the river, Neustra Señora, because of its discovery on the eve of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. Alvarado advanced northward, up the valley, and entered the province of Tiguex near present-day Bernallilo. Impressed with this extensive province, its large population, and its abundant food supplies, Alvarado sent word back to Coronado, recommending the town for winter quarters. Alvarado proceeded to Cicuye apparently reaching the pueblo after detouring to Taos.[26]

Meanwhile, Coronado organized the balance of his army at Zuni into three detachments for the movement to join Alvarado at Tiguex. In late November or early December, Coronado departed Zuni with his small force, consisting of 30 men. Like Alvarado's route, Coronado's path cannot be precisely measured. However, given the facts that Coronado reached the Rio Grande Valley near the vicinity of Socorro and that he did not visit Acoma Pueblo, it seems likely that he detoured farther south than his artillery captain. His course carried him south of Cebolleta Mesa probably through lands now set aside as the National Conservation Area. The column entered the Rio Grande Valley near Socorro. Tristan Arellano, who had commanded the main army from the outset of the expedition, followed the trail of Alvarado. Of the fourth division of Coronado's army under Lopez de Cardenas, nothing is known of his course. It is believed that Cardenas pursued the path of Alvarado and Arellano. At least three of the four groups passed El Morro or in proximity to it. All four columns experienced portions of the lava flows.

In April 1542 Coronado passed the lava flows again, this time on his return trip to Culiacan. He was not the same haughty, energetic Spaniard who had triumphantly trudged through the region two years before. The fire of conquest and vision of riches had vanished from his eyes. Disillusionment and poor health characterized his countenance. Two years of wandering over the Southwest and portions of the Midwest had sapped his ardor. Moreover, the failure to discover precious metals stamped him a failure by his peers.

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[24]Bolton, Coronado, p. 182-183; Considerable debate waxes over the route taken after departing Zuni and it may never be determined to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned. Based on the writings of Fray Juan de Padilla, who accompanied Alvarado, the Spanish column reached intersecting roads approximately 15 miles east of Hawikuh. Padilla recorded, "two roads branched out here, one to Chia [Zia], the other to Coco [Acoma]. We followed the latter." From Padilla's account it would appear that Alvarado approached Acoma from the southwest. See Chavez, Coronado's Friars, 50-51; However, it is possible that Alvarado's column reached Acoma Pueblo via the Rio San Jose Valley. See map in Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 54, which suggests Alvarado descended the Rio San Jose and Coronado traveled south of the malpais missing Acoma altogether.

[25]Bancroft, A History of Arizona and New Mexico, 50. Another Spaniard reported the Acomas were friendly, offering the Spanish "cotton cloth, skins of buffalo and deer, turquoises, turkeys, and some of their other kinds of food." See Bolton, Coronado, 183.

[26]Bancroft, A History of Arizona and New Mexico, fn. 50. Kessell, Kiva, Cross, and Crown, 8.

Although Coronado's expedition failed to reap fabulous riches from the region, it did succeed in providing the first detailed information about Spain's northernmost province. Viewed and interpreted in today's context, Coronado's sojourn into New Mexico is significant for its wealth of information concerning the area and its first inhabitants. Although most of the routes traversed are based on conjecture, El Malpais region figured prominently in Spanish movements. Unfortunately, Spanish authorities were not interested in acquiring descriptive accounts of squalid Indian pueblos. Coronado's lackluster performance went unnoticed as Spaniards turned their attention to Indian revolts in Mexico.[27]

It would be 40 years before Spain again attempted to explore New Mexico. In the summer of 1581, Frayles Agustin Rodriquez, Francisco Lopez, Juan de Santa Maria, and Captain Francisco Chamuscado, with 8 soldiers and 19 Indians servants initiated an exploratory expedition into New Mexico. Ostensibly, their mission served to convert Indians to Catholicism but also to develop silver and gold mining interest. Starting from Chihuahua, the cavalcade trekked northward down the Rio Conchos to present-day Presidio, Texas. Reaching that point, the Spaniards turned northward following the Rio Grande. They visited the pueblos of Tiguex and Pecos, the same seen by Coronado 40 years earlier. Angling west the entourage halted at the pueblos of Jemez and Acoma. Moving west, they passed the malpais en route to Zuni. The expedition proved disastrous. One of the priest was murdered. Two other priests ventured out alone, giving rise to speculation that Indians had martyred them. To make matters worse, Captain Chamuscado took ill and died before the expedition returned to Mexico, April 15, 1582.[28]

The Rodriguez expedition was not in vain for it spurred Spanish authorities to attempt to rescue the two priests. Antonio de Espejo organized a relief party. On November 10, 1582, Espejo and crew departed San Bartolome. Retracing Rodriguez's footsteps, Espejo ascertained at the pueblo of Puara, part of the Tiguex complex, that the two friars had been slained. Before returning to Mexico the expedition explored the region. Writing in his journal, Diego Perez de Luxan recorded the first official penetration of El Malpais. Luxan wrote: "March 7, to Acomita; March 8, another four leagues past a marsh [probably McCartys]; March 9, another 4 leagues in waterless malpais; March 10, 7 leagues, pine forest waterless mountain; March 11, three leagues, stopped at a water hole at the foot of a rock."[29] The reference to the "waterless malpais" represented the first historic notation of the lava beds.

The explorations of Rodriguez and Espejo reawakened Spain's interest in New Mexico. With renewed vigor Spain traveled a path devoted to expansionism and missionary work in New Mexico. An abortive and illegal endeavor to colonize New Mexico in 1590 and again 1594 went astray. Spurred by illegal colonization efforts, Spain in 1595, granted permission for a permanent settlement. Don Juan de Onate with a colony of 130 families, 270 unattached men, and 7000 head of livestock comprised the enterprise. Northward, they plodded to El Paso establishing the Chihuahua Trail that acted as an umbilical cord between Mexico and the northern frontier of New Mexico.

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[27]Warren A. Beck. New Mexico, A History of Four Centuries (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 48.

[28]Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 75-78.

[29]Luxan's journal also records the first historical documentation for visiting El Morro. See Reed, "Spanish Expeditions and El Morro Inscriptions," 8.

Onate established the first colony in New Mexico at San Juan Pueblo (Chamita, New Mexico). Onate quickly explored his domain and announced to the Indian populace that they were now subject to the laws and dictates of the Spanish crown. Zutacapan, an Acoma warrior, heard of Onate's proclamation and hurriedly returned to the mesa top to incite his tribe to resist Spanish authority. Over council fires the elders debated their course of action. Should it be war or peace? Support for peace came from an unlikely source, Zutacapan's son, Zutancalpo. When the venerable statesmen, Chumpo interceded on behalf of the peace advocates, the Acomas sided with Zutancalpo.

On October 27, 1598, Onate arrived at Acoma as part of a goodwill tour with exploration plans to reach the Pacific Ocean. From an accommodating host, the Spaniards received an abundance of provisions. When invited by the hospitable Zutacapan to enter the pitch-black ceremonial kiva, Onate declined, fearing entrapment. Onate departed the pueblo and took his entourage to Zuni skirting the usual Zuni-Acoma highway leading through the malpais via modern-day Grants and San Rafael. Reaching Hawikuh, Onate rested to await the concentration of his command still stationed at San Juan.[30]

Meanwhile emotions reached the boiling point at Acoma. Spanish captain, Gaspar Villagra, on a mission to round up deserters, was ambushed near the Acoma citadel. The Acomas accomplished the killing of Villagra's mount but nothing else. Alone and on foot, Villagra traveled westward towards Zuni. A sudden snowstorm in the malpais impeded his progress. An exhausted Villagra, suffering from exposure, managed to reach El Morro. Three Spanish soldiers searching for loose livestock found his half-frozen body and transported him safely to Hawikuh.[31]

Onate's nephew, Juan de Zaldivar, with 30 soldiers departed San Juan in late November to join his uncle. Zaldivar approached the Acoma pueblo on December 1 and pitched camp at the base of the Acoma citadel. Conferring with the Acomas under Zutacapan, the Spaniards made it known that they desired fresh provisions. Having just supplied Onate's party barely a month before, the Acomas reacted less than favorably to the request. Nevertheless, the Acomas consented to the demand but requested a few days to gather the food and prepare the corn. On December 4, Zaldivar and half his command ascended the "Sky City" to receive the offerings. Without warning the Acomas pounced on the scattered column. Recounting of traditional Acoma oral histories infer that some of the soldiers attacked their woman, precipitating the fight. Spanish documents, however, are mute on the issue.[32]

In the initial outburst, Zaldivar fell, clubbed to death. Overall 14 soldiers were slain. Five Spaniards leaped from the cliff--one died in the plunge, but the other four escaped. They joined the stunned soldiers camped on the valley floor. The excited Spanish scattered, some joining Onate to inform him of the disaster. The remainder returned to San Juan to warn the remaining colonists of the trouble.

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[30]Velma Garcia-Mason. "Acoma Pueblo," in Handbook of North American Indians Vol. 9, Alfonso Ortiz, ed. (Washington: Smithsonian), 456.

[31]Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 140.

[32]Garcia-Mason, "Acoma Pueblo," 457; Jack D. Forbes, Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 87-88 places the blame for the conflict squarely on the soldiers who forcibly took food and blankets away from the Indians, and in particular one Indian woman. Some Acoma accounts revealed the battle erupted following the death of an Indian who refused to relinquish possession of food and blankets.

Onate was compelled to abandoned his friendship tour and Pacific exploration. He returned to San Juan, reaching that pueblo on December 21.[33] Quickly Onate organized a punitive expedition to avenge the death of his nephew and teach the Acomas a lesson. On January 12, 1599, he ordered Captain Vicente de Zaldivar, brother of Juan, to take 70 men and sack the Acoma fort. The Spanish reached the base of Acoma mesa on January 21 and pitched tents. Reduction of the Acoma stronghold would be difficult. Indians effectively blocked the only access to the summit. On the 23rd, Zaldivar feigned scaling the north wall at the foot of the stairs. The ruse worked as Acomas collapsed on the threatened sector. Meanwhile, the night before, Zaldivar had concealed a dozen soldiers at the southern exposure. While the Acomas engaged the main force, the 12 rock climbers accomplished the impossible. They scaled the precipitous cliff without detection. Once on top of the 400-foot mesa, they attacked with impetuosity the rear of the startled Indians, forcing them to relinquish their position. Zaldivar's command then joined the Spaniards on top and began a movement toward the pueblo itself.[34]

The mesa top is divided into two distinct sections separated by a ravine. The Indians sought refuge along the narrow ravine, but were forced to retreat into their rock fort. The persistent Spanish continued to press the Acomas. The Spaniards even managed to haul a cannon up the narrow stairway to the summit. Aiming the piece at point-blank range, they reduced the adobe and stone structures to a rubble. The Acomas surrendered about noon January 24, 1599.[35] According to Spanish historians, Acoma casualties numbered in the hundreds. They reported the death of one Spaniard in the three-day battle. Rather than submit to the invaders, some of the Acomas elected to jump from the cliff. Out of a total population of approximately 6,000, about 600 surrendered.[36] Many of the Acomas were imprisoned in the kivas. Later, the Spaniards took their prisoners, marched them to the edge of the cliff, murdered them, and tossed their corpses over the side.[37]

The surviving Acomas were escorted under guard to Santo Domingo Pueblo to await trial. Under sixteenth-century Spanish law "all Acoma males over 25 years of age were condemned to have one foot cut off and to give 20 years of personal service; all males between the ages of 12 and 25 were to give 20 years of personal service. All females above the age of 12 were sentenced to give 20 years of personal service. Two Indian men who had been captured while visiting Acoma were sentenced to have their right hands cut off and to be sent back to their own Pueblos as a warning of what could be expected if Spanish authority was flaunted."[38] On February 12 the guilty Acomas received their punishment. In all, some 60-70 Acoma women

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[33]Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 145; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, The National Survey of Historic Sites and Building, Theme IV, Spanish Exploration and Settlement (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959), 92; According to the study, Acomas lost 1,500, representing about half of the total Acoma population. In Garcia-Mason, "Acoma Pueblo," 57, the number of deaths is listed at more than 800; Kessel, Kiva, Cross, and Crown, 86, claims the number of captives exceeded 500.

[34]Ibid. Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 143-145.

[35]Garcia-Mason, "Acoma Pueblo," 457; Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 145.

[36]Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 145.

[37]Ward A. Minge, Acoma Pueblo in the Sky (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 12.

[38]Garcia-Mason, "Acoma Pueblo," 457; Myra Ellen Jenkins, "Onate's Administration and the Pueblo Indians," in When Cultures Meet (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 1987), 69 provides evidence that while amputations were meted out as punishment to the Acoma it was not widespread.

and children were transported to Mexico and turned over to the viceroy for final disposition. Many of the displaced Acoma found homes in convents scattered throughout Mexico.[39]

The pueblo itself was in ruins. Chumpo and his peace proponents were brandished to the plains below the rock fort. Other Acomas not so friendly towards the Spanish returned to the mesa top and began the slow process of rebuilding their city and lives. The Spanish sacking of Acoma, however, had successfully fragmented the Acomas into pro-and anti-Spanish factions. "The pride and strength of the valiant Acomenses were broken forever."[40]

Following the destruction of Acoma, Onate spent several years consolidating and strengthening his tenuous grip in New Mexico. In 1604, Onate realized his dream of completing an overland expedition to the western seas. He left San Juan and marched west crossing the malpais in the process. Onate's trip advanced him beyond Zuni land to the eastern shores of the Sea of Cortez. On his return, Onate stopped at El Morro and carved his name in the rock marking the earliest known inscription. Onate wrote: "Passed by here the Adelantado Don Juan de Onate, from the discovery of the Sea of the South, the 16th of April of 1605."[41]

Onate's rule in New Mexico proved to be short-lived. He fell into disfavor with authorities in Mexico. In addition, the colonists become disenchanted with his administration. Onate resigned in 1607, supplanted with Don Pedro de Peralta. In either 1609 or 1610, the new governor transferred the capital from San Juan to Santa Fe.

New Mexico's early pioneers diverted their attention from seeking mineral wealth to domestic activities. Farming and livestock industries assumed high priority. Mexico City provided minimal direction. Bitter feuds between civil and ecclesiastical officials highlighted seventeenth-century New Mexico. Political upheaval and constant quarreling stymied any chance of development of the region's natural and human resources. The province was constantly in turmoil.[42] Despite the chaos missionaries established a foothold in the pueblos and began in earnest the tedious task of winning converts. The influx of Spanish missionaries in the first quarter of the seventeenth century enabled a battery of friars to swell the role of Christianity to the outlying pueblos. To the east the Salinas pueblos of "Los Humanus," Abo, and Quarei were established. At Acoma, a bevy of priests arrived to assist in the rebuilding the mesa-top pueblo. The conversion of lost souls fell to Fray Andres Corchado. His sphere of influence included the pueblos of Acoma, Zia, Zuni, and Hopi. Because of the expanse of territory, Fray Andres could not devote the time, or the energy required to each pueblo.

A steady diet of priests at the pueblos, however, eventually cultivated the desired response. The chief cultivator at Acoma, Father Geronimo de Zarate Salmeron, arrived at the Sky City in 1620. Salmeron reported he succeeded in pacifying the natives, but he cautioned his superiors that the Acomas possessed a nasty history of hostile feelings towards the Spanish. But the primary settling force on the Acomas came from Fray Juan Ramirez, who arrived on the scene around July 1629. Fray Ramirez initiated construction of San Estevan del Ray Mission,

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[39]Minge, Acoma Pueblo in the Sky, 15.

[40]Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 145; Edward H. Spicer, Cycles of Conquest, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1972), 157.

[41]National Park Service, brochure "El Morro National Monument," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1988).

[42]National Park Service, The National Survey, Theme IV, Spanish Exploration and Settlement, 30.

which is still in use. Fray Ramirez gained widespread acceptance from tribal members for two miracles he allegedly performed. An eight-year-old girl had fallen off the cliff and Ramirez restored her unconscious form to the conscience world. In the second miracle recorded, he baptized an infant while on her death bed. When she recovered the Indians credited Father Ramirez with her miraculous turnaround.[43] Ramirez spent more than 20 years among the Acoma people. He assisted the Indians in cultivating their natural resources. Fray Ramirez instilled in the tribe the value of planting gardens, growing fruit orchards, and raising livestock.

Westward, friars inundated the Zuni and Hopi pueblos. The Zunis and Hopis did not react favorably to the Franciscans either. The priest at Awatovi, a Hopi mission, died through poisoning. At Hawikuh Indians put to death two priests. True to form, the Spanish launched retaliatory raids on the Indians. Spanish soldiers marched via the Acoma-Zuni Trail, intersecting with the lava flows and Inscription Rock. One such carving in El Morro mentioned the killing of the priests: "They passed on March 23, 1632, to the avenging of the death of Father Letrado.-Lujan."[44]

Spain's primary seventeenth-century role in New Mexico focused on converting the Indians to Catholicism, especially along the heavily populated Rio Grande corridor. Economically, Spain found New Mexico a drain on the Spanish treasure. Despite New Mexico's unprofitability Spanish authorities maintained a presence in the northern frontier. To abandon the unproductive province was tantamount to relinquishing the territory to Spain's bitter New World competitors, France and England. Therefore, conversion of New Mexico's Indian population assumed Spain's chief thrust and guaranteed its foothold in the region. Peace with the Indians remained at best, tentative. Spain maintained law and order through intimidating, coercing, and mollifying the Indians. Spanish authorities continued the practice of enslaving the Indians or employing them as a cheap labor force. Pueblo Indians resented the foreign intruders into their homes and the displacement of cultural values. Pent-up frustrations exploded in 1680. Rising in revolt, the Indians threw off the mantle of oppression and struck viciously at their conquerors. Priests were murdered; missions torched. San Estevan del Ray Mission at Acoma miraculously survived the uprising. Resident priest, Fray Lucas Maldonado, was not so lucky. He perished in the revolt. Some accounts infer that Indians tossed him off the mesa top. All Spaniards not killed in the initial attack rallied at Santa Fe for a last stand. The attackers stormed the capital and forced its abandonment. Approximately 400 Spaniards died in the holocaust. The survivors, led by Governor Antonio de Otermin, fled down the Rio Grande to El Paso. For the next 12 years New Mexico belonged to the Indians.[45]

The man selected to reconquer New Mexico for Spain was Don Diego de Vargas. In 1691, De Vargas arrived in El Paso where the remnants of the New Mexico colony had collected. De Vargas found that morale problems, foul weather, and attacks by neighboring bands of Indians exacerbated the refugees. A determined De Vargas spent lavishly from his own purse in preparation for a reconquest. In August 1692, De Vargas led a minuscule band of 60 Spaniards and 100 friendly Indians into New Mexico. He discovered the takeover easier than envisioned.

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[43]Garcia-Mason, "Acoma Pueblo," 457-458.

[44]National Park Service, brochure "El Morro National Monument."

[45]National Park Service, The National Survey, Theme IV, Spanish Exploration and Settlement, 30-32.

Following the expulsion of the Spanish in 1680, Pueblo Indians encountered difficulty in divorcing themselves from more than 100 years of Spanish culture and influence. The Pueblo Revolt disintegrated when the Indians fragmented into warring factions, thus allowing De Vargas to overrun all opposition.[46] Initially, Santa Fe was reoccupied without bloodshed.

Capitalizing on his success, De Vargas embarked on a four-month tour to the Pueblos to show the Indians that Spain had officially returned to New Mexico. De Vargas followed the customary Spanish route through the malpais en route to Zuni and Hopi. On his return trip he encamped at Inscription Rock where he carved into the soft sandstone: "Here was the General Don Diego de Vargas who conquered for our Holy Faith, and for the Royal Crown, all of New Mexico at his own expense, year of 1692."[47] De Vargas did not return to Santa Fe. Instead he veered southeast striking the Rio Grande at Socorro. Traveling to El Paso, he readied a second expedition designed for resettlement of New Mexico.

The reconquest by De Vargas did not terminate Indian resistance. Bloodshed punctuated his return in 1693. The Tano Indians occupied Santa Fe following the overthrow of the Spaniards. De Vargas had to storm the city in order to retake the capital, further proof that the capitulation of New Mexico's Pueblo Indians had been symbolic rather than reality. De Vargas began a six-year sweep in re-establishing Spanish dominion over the natives.[48]

Spain had learned much about her northern province in a century and a half. Coronado and his successors roamed an uncharted wilderness. They had discovered a semi-desert region, poor in precious metals, but rich in human resources. In laying claim to the land and subjugating the inhabitants, Spain stamped an indelible trademark on the region that reflects that country's socio-economic contributions.

While the Spanish influenced the people of the region, the Spaniards, in turn, succumbed to the country's dominate geographical patternings. This was self-evident in the case of the malpais. Strategically situated, the malpais lay astride the Spanish travel route linking the Rio Grande Pueblos with the western outposts of the Zunis and Hopis. Despite the indomitable features of the lava beds, the malpais were a veritable oasis. Refreshing waters trapped in the lava, and thick stands of trees offered relief to the weary travelers. The malpais became a favorite resting place for Spanish wayfarers. The malpais springs and caves also attracted local Indians on their travels. Other Indians, such as Navajos and Apaches, who, like the Spanish were interlopers, utilized the malpais resources for their advantage.

At the close of the seventeenth century Spain had not altered its perception of New Mexico. The territory possessed few redeeming characteristics except for the salvation of native souls. Its inhabitants were poor. Spanish settlers were sparse. Economically, New Mexico offered few assets to the homeland. In return, New Mexicans received scant attention from the motherland.

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[46]Beck, New Mexico, A History of Four Centuries, 86.

[47]National Park Service, Brochure "El Morro National Monument."

[48]National Park Service, The National Survey, Theme IV, Spanish Exploration and Settlement, 31-32.

Noted Southwest historian, Adolph F. A. Bandelier, maintained that, "The New Mexico colony was an imperfect lightning-rod for the more renumbered Spanish possessions in Chihuahua and Coahuila."[49] Its pivotal role would be played in protecting the lucrative mines of northern New Mexico. New Mexico drained the royal treasury of Spain, but it was a cavity that had to be filled.

[49]Quoted in National Park Service, National Survey, Theme IV, Spanish Exploration and Settlement, 32; A.F. Bandelier, "An Outline of the Documentary History of the Zuni Tribe," Journal of American Ethnology and Archeology 3 (1892): 95.