The Elusive West

AND THE CONTEST FOR

EMPIRE,

1713–1763

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PEOPLES AND TERRAIN, DIFFICULTIES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

> Who has yet pretended to define how much of America is included in Brazil, Mexico, or Peru? It is almost as easy to divide the Atlantic Ocean by a line, as clearly to ascertain the limits of those uncultivated, uninhabitable, unmeasured regions.
>
> —SAMUEL JOHNSON, "Observations on the Present State of Affairs," 1756

Spain initiated early modern Europe's engagement with western North American geography, and so it is with the Spanish Empire that a study of the influence of western geographic ideas properly begins. From the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, with the results of the last two and a half centuries of geographic investigation close at hand, it is remarkable how little early- and mid-eighteenth-century Spanish officials knew about the North American continent their empire had been colonizing since 1519.We can more completely and easily understand the effects of their uncertainty if we first pay some attention to the extent of and reasons for this Spanish geographic ignorance.[1]

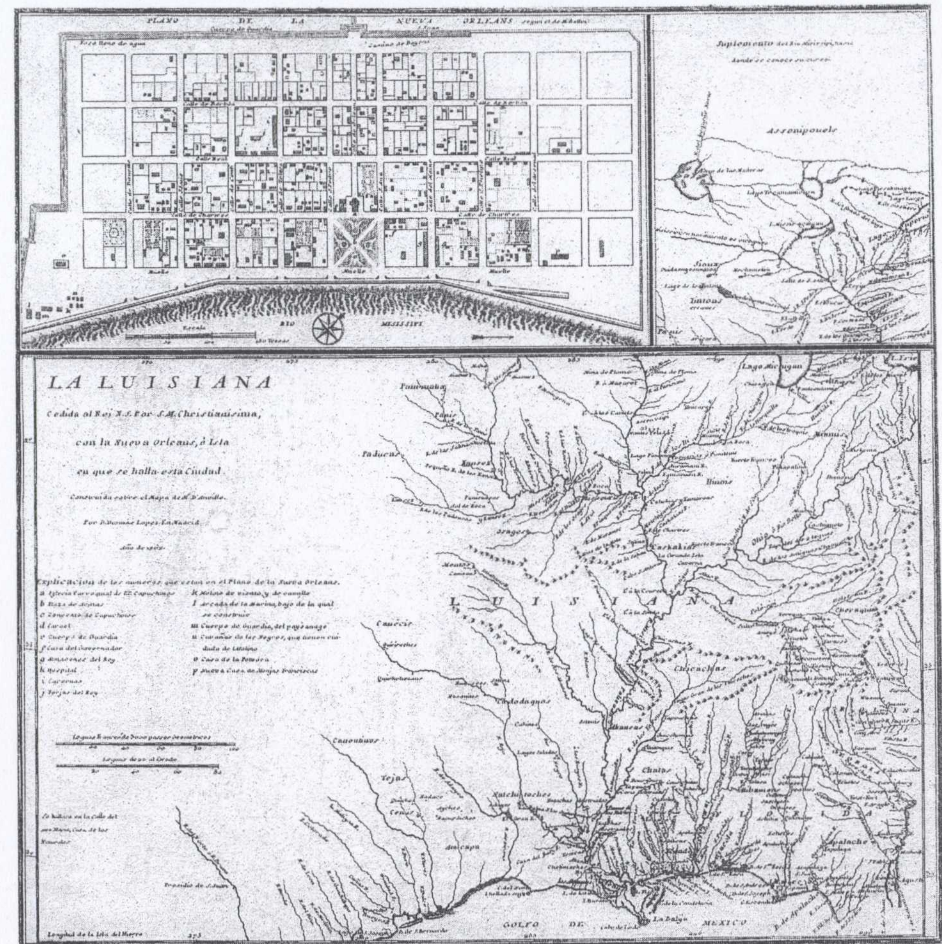
The two French traders briefly alluded to in the Introduction furnish a good starting point. On August 6, 1752, Jean Chapuis and Louis Feuilli, two intrepid but unfortunate travelers from the Illinois country, arrived at the Pecos Mission on the outskirts of New Mexico. Like the scattering of French scouts who had preceded them, Chapuis and Feuilli represented an immediate opportunity for and a potential danger to New Mexico. For the inhabitants of a colony at the northern extremity of Spain's American empire, French traders offered the possibility of a new source of European goods, perhaps of better quality and lower price than those lugged by mules up the eighteen-hundred-mile dirt track from Mexico City. On the other hand, for Spanish officials in a cautious or conscientious frame of mind, French travelers challenged the mercantilist goals of reserv-

1. See Samuel Johnson, "Observations on the Present State of Affairs, 1756," in *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, X, *Political Writings*, ed. Donald J. Greene (New Haven, Conn., 1977), 184–196, esp. 189.

ing imperial markets for Spanish goods and merchants. More seriously, routes reconnoitered by French explorers one year and employed by French traders the next might carry French soldiers in the future. On this occasion, caution prevailed over opportunism, and New Mexico governor Tomás Vélez Cachupín gave the French visitors an unpleasant welcome. He had Chapuis and Feuilli arrested, relieved of their goods, and escorted to Santa Fe. He questioned the two merchants and then dispatched them to Mexico City. The viceroy of New Spain shipped them to a Cadiz cell in 1754.

Questions Spanish officials put to Chapuis and Feuilli suggest that their arrival was so alarming in part because their successful journey to New Mexico demonstrated a familiarity with North American regions about which the Spanish government knew frustratingly little. When interrogators asked Chapuis and Feuilli the distance "from the presidio of Illinois to this capital of Santa Fe," "the conditions of the journey," and "whether the trade of" New Mexico "with Canada . . . could or could not be made with ease," they were not simply assessing the travelers' intentions and capacities. They were trying also to obtain information about the plains east of New Mexico and north of the Texas missions from Frenchmen who had recently been there. For the Spanish, the region remained, as the 1755 instructions to the new viceroy of New Spain put it, "the unknown country lying between our populated provinces and the western extremity of Louisiana."[2]

2. Questions to Chapuis and Feuilli from "Council of the Indies to His Majesty, Madrid, Nov. 27, 1754," and "Declaration of Juan [Jean] Chapuis, Frenchman," in Alfred Barnaby Thomas, [ed. and trans.], *The Plains Indians and New Mexico, 1751–1778: A Collection of Documents Illustrative of the History of the Eastern Frontier of New Mexico* (Glendale, Calif., 1940), 82–89, 103–106, esp. 83–84, 105. For the viceroy's instructions, see Julian de Arriaga, "Instruccion reservada que trajo el marqués de las Amarillas, recibida del Exmo. Sr. D. Julian de Arriaga, ministro de Indias," June 30, 1755, in *Instrucciones que los vireyes de Nueva España dejaron a sus sucesores. . . .* (Mexico City, 1867), 94–103, esp. 97: "El país incógnito que média entre las provincias que tenemos pobladas y la extremidad occidental de la Luisiana." These instructions are discussed in Council of the Indies, "Expediente sobre la aprehension que Dn Jacinto de Barrios . . . ," Oct. 22, 1756, AGI, Guadalajara 329, 345–366. For other references to the mysterious plains, see "The Diary of Juan de Ulibarri to El Cuartelejo, 1706," "Governor Cuerbó Reports the Return of the Picuríes, 1706," and "Diary of the Campaign of Governor Antonio de Valverde against the Ute and Comanche Indians, 1719," in Alfred Barnaby Thomas, ed. and trans., *After Coronado: Spanish Exploration Northeast of New Mexico, 1696–1727; Documents from the Archives of Spain, Mexico, and New Mexico* (Norman, Okla., 1935), 59, 62, 77, 79, 128; "Don Francisco Cuervo y Valdez to His Majesty, Santa Fé, October 18, 1706," in Charles Wilson Hackett, ed., *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and Approaches Thereto, to 1773*, comp. Adolph F. Bandelier and Fanny R. Bandelier, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1923–1937), III, 383–384, esp. 383; and marqués de Altamira, Mexico, Jan. 9, 1751, in José Antonio Pichardo, *Pichardo's Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas: An Argumentative Historical Treatise with Reference to the Verification of the True Limits of the Provinces of Louisiana and Texas*, ed. and trans. Charles Wilson Hackett, trans. Charmion Clair Shelby, 4 vols. (Austin, Tex., 1931), III, 329–333, esp. 330.



MAP 9. Tomás López de Vargas Machuca, *La Luisiana cedida al rei*. 1762. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, g4010 ar167400

Spanish geographic doubt was not confined to the lands descending from the Rockies to the Mississippi. Uncertainty and error also characterized Spanish ideas about regions north and west of New Mexico. One misconception was that the Pacific or some inland arm of it lay close to the upper Rio Grande Valley or the eastern slopes of the Rockies. In 1750, Vélez Cachupín reported, "From the accounts which the Moaches [Utes] give it is believed that the sea is not very far away" from New Mexico. In 1716, Texas Franciscan missionary Fray Francisco Hidalgo could credibly tell the viceroy of New Spain of indications that "the coast of the South Sea and many vessels" could be seen "from the summit of the range" from which the streams comprising the Missouri flowed. As late as 1775,

Spanish naval explorer Bruno de Hezeta could think little enough of the distance and terrain involved to suggest that a colony at northern California's Trinidad Harbor could "easily deposit . . . trade goods in the interior of New Mexico."[3]

Part of what made the idea of a proximate Pacific credible was the lingering notion that some kind of Northwest Passage — or Strait of Anian, as Spanish geographers often called the elusive water route between the oceans — existed in western North America. New Mexico missionary Fray Alonso de Posada wrote, in a 1686–1687 report on New Spain's northern provinces, of the "gulf" and "Strait of Anian" lying in the region beyond the mountains "east and northeast" of Santa Fe and extending from the North Pacific to Labrador. In 1792, more than a century after Posada's reference to the Strait of Anian and more than a decade after Captain James Cook's exploration had rendered the existence of such a strait unlikely, Spanish captains Dionisio Alcalá Galiano and Cayetano Valdés set out to search inside the Strait of Juan de Fuca for "any communication with the Atlantic by way of the Bays of Hudson, Baffin, et cetera."[4]

More generally, in the mid-eighteenth century, the entire coastline north of modern Oregon's Cape Blanco remained a mystery for Spain. Spanish ships regularly sailed within view of upper and Baja California. Winds occasionally drove them close enough to the lands north of California to see or, in the most dire circumstances, to touch them. Nonetheless, Spanish geographers received too little reliable information from these voyages to form confident or accurate views of the northwest coast. They were uncertain, for instance, how far north familiar landmasses reached. As Jesuit procurator general Gaspar Rodero wrote from Madrid in 1737, "According to modern geographers, the full extent of the Californias is not known." Where charts failed, speculation arose. The great southwestern explorer Father Francisco Eusebio Kino opined in 1710 that northwestern North America would provide a "convenient land route to Asia," suggesting that hazy North Pacific territories referred to as "Jesso" and "Company Land" were sufficiently close or connected to each other and mainland North America to furnish mostly solid footing to "Great Tartary" and "Great China."[5]

More basic than the question of how far "the Californias" extended was that of what the vaguely defined entity designated "California" was. Here, too, misconceptions lingered in the mid-eighteenth century. Attached to the pleasing idea of a fabulous island off North America's west coast, geographers and explorers kept finding ways to separate California from the continent. Though Kino's turn-of-the-eighteenth-century lower Colorado River reconnaissance had confirmed Baja California's peninsularity, the informed and accomplished Spanish explorer and Jesuit missionary Jacobo Sedelmayr was still asserting in the mid-1740s that "our knowledge is not certain" with regard to the question of "whether California be island or continent."[6]

While exploration along the lower Colorado was slowly illuminating the character of Baja California, the upper course of the Southwest's great river remained obscure. In the late 1690s and early 1700s, Kino journeyed along the Gila River upstream from its junction with the Colorado and along the Colorado downstream from this confluence to the sea. He left the upper waters of the Colorado untouched. By 1744, Sedelmayr had ascended the Colorado to its junction with the Williams River and could write with confidence about the entire course of the Gila. For the upper Colorado, he could only repeat and reflect

3. Tomás Vélez Cachupín to Juan Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas [conde de Revilla Gigedo], Mar. 8, 1750, in Pichardo, *Pichardo's Treatise,* ed. and trans. Hackett, trans. Shelby, III, 327; "Fray Francisco Hidalgo to the Viceroy, November 4, 1716," in Mattie Austin Hatcher, trans., "Descriptions of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691–1722, III," *SWHQ*, XXXI (1927), 60; Herbert K. Beals, ed. and trans., *For Honor and Country: The Diary of Bruno de Hezeta* (Portland, Ore., 1985), 72–73.

4. S. Lyman Tyler and H. Darrel Taylor, eds. and trans., "The Report of Fray Alonso de Posada in Relation to Quivira and Teguayo," *NMHR,* XXXIII (1958), 284–314, esp. 305–306; Fray Alonso de Posadas, "Informe á S. M. sobre las tierras de Nuevo Méjico, Quivira y Teguayo," in Cesáreo Fernández Duro, *Don Diego de Peñalosa y su descubrimiento del reino de Quivira* (Madrid, 1882), 53–67, esp. 66; "Instructions from Alejandro Malaspina," and "Instructions from Viceroy Revillagigedo," in John Kendrick, trans., *The Voyage of Sutil and Mexicana, 1792: The Last Spanish Exploration of the Northwest Coast of America* (Spokane, Wash., 1991), 39–48, 49–54, esp. 41, 50. On the origins of the phrase "Strait of Anian," see W. Michael Mathes, "The Early Exploration of the Pacific Coast," in John Logan Allen, ed., *North American Exploration,* I, *A New World Disclosed* (Lincoln, Neb., 1997), 400–451, esp. 412.

5. "Gaspar Rodero's Report to Philip V on California, 1532–1736: Description and Exploration of the Country, Account of the Progress of the Enterprise," in Ernest J. Burrus, ed. and trans., *Jesuit Relations: Baja California, 1716–1762* (Los Angeles, Calif., 1984), 184–202, esp. 184–185. For the original Spanish, see "Informe del P. Rodero sobre California (1737)," in Francisco María Piccolo, *Informe del estado de la nueva Cristiandad de California, 1702, y otros documentos,* ed. Ernest J. Burrus (Madrid, 1962), 279–300, esp. 280. Eusebio Francisco Kino, *Kino's Historical Memoir of Pimería Alta: A Contemporary Account of the Beginnings of California, Sonora, and Arizona . . . ,* ed. and trans. Herbert Bolton, 2 vols. (Cleveland, Ohio, 1919), II, 259–260. For a comparable French view, see Jean-Bernard Bossu, *Travels in the Interior of North America, 1751–1762,* ed. and trans. Seymour Feiler (Norman, Okla., 1962), 210–213.

6. Kino, *Kino's Historical Memoir of Pimería Alta,* ed. and trans. Bolton, I, 329–354, II, 87–88; Jacobo Sedelmayr, "Relación, 1746," in Peter Masten Dunne, trans., *Jacobo Sedelmayr: Missionary, Frontiersman, Explorer in Arizona and Sonora: Four Original Manuscript Narratives, 1744–1751* ([Tucson], Ariz., 1955), 15–42, esp. 36; Dora Beale Polk, *The Island of California: A History of the Myth* (Spokane, Wash., 1991), 301; "Royal Cédula of King Philip V on the California Missions, 1744," in Charles W. Polzer and Thomas E. Sheridan, eds. and comps., *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain: A Documentary History,* 2 vols. (Tucson, Ariz., 1986–1997), II, part 1, *The Californias and Sinaloa-Sonora, 1700–1765,* 185–193, esp. 186, 190. Ultimately, Jesuit Fernando Consag's 1746 voyage around the Gulf of California persuaded holdouts like Sedelmayr. See Miguèl Venegas and [Andrés Marcos Burriel], *Noticia de la California, y desu conquista temporal, y espiritual hasta el tiempo presente sacada de la historia manuscrita, formada en Mexico año de 1739 por el Padre Miguèl Venegas . . . ,* 3 vols. (Madrid, 1757), I, 3, II, 552, III, 140–195; Polk, *Island of California,* 324–326.

upon Indian reports "that it issues from a great hollow of the earth and carries down with it corn and corncobs." As late as 1773, Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza was writing of the Colorado, "It has been explored only in the neighborhood of its mouth, and that badly."[7]

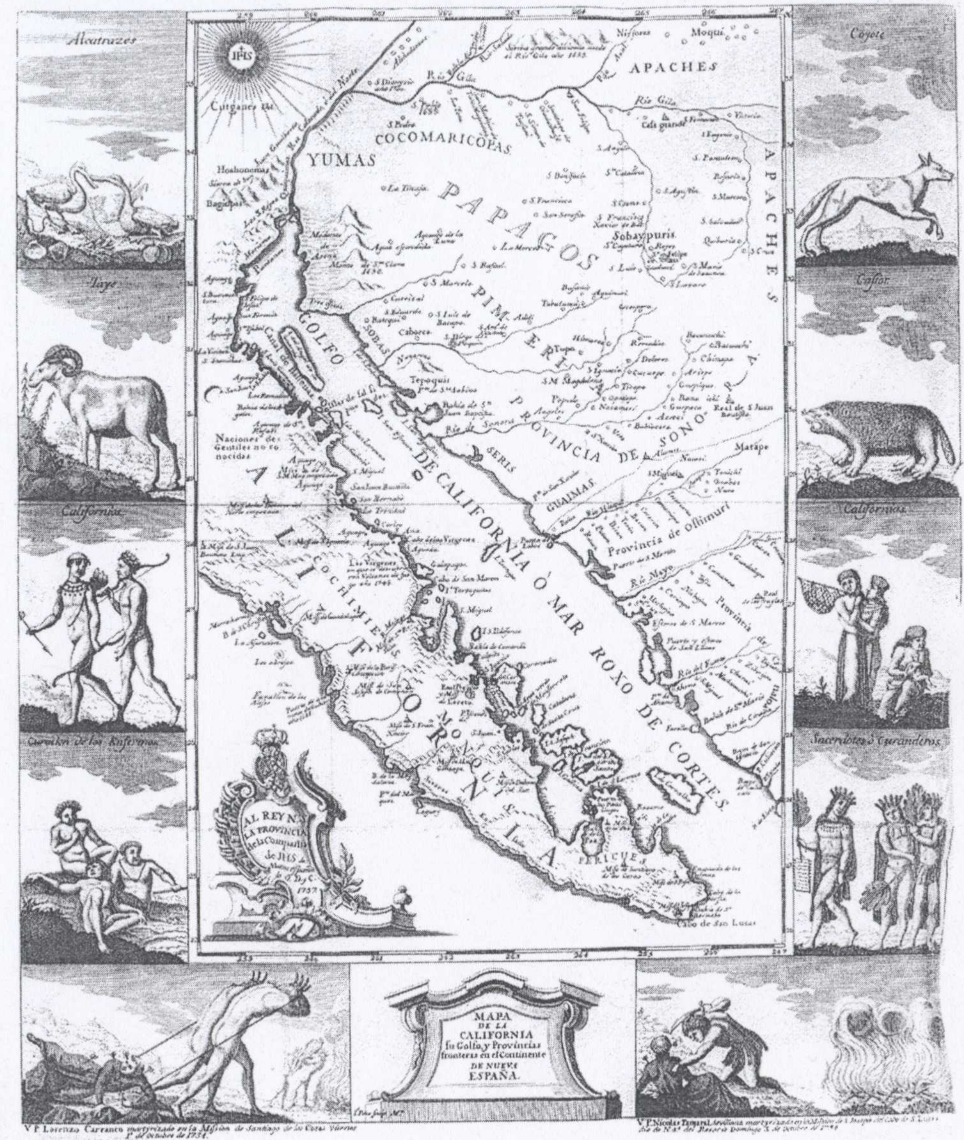
In the mid-eighteenth century, a sizeable chunk of the New World remained as enigmatic for frustrated Spanish officials as it was for Spain's envious rivals. In the 1755 instructions to New Spain's incoming viceroy, the marqués de Las Amarillas, minister of the Indies Julián de Arriaga requested composition of a map covering the territories from Louisiana to the Pacific. Arriaga observed that maps previously sent to Spain did not allow a full understanding of the terrain and distances involved "because of the small amount of land they comprehend" ["por el corto terreno que comprenden"]; a replacement, he allowed, would be the "work of many years" ["será obra de muchos años"]. Spanish officials trying to protect their empire from British, French, and Indian challenges found their work made much more difficult by confusion about the geography of what New Spain's earlier viceroy the conde de Revilla Gigedo had referred to as "the vast unknown continent of this northern America."[8]

Spanish geographic nescience of such extent at such a late date is remarkable, as the Spanish Empire would seem to have enjoyed the situation, motivation, and duration requisite for filling in the western voids on its North American maps. The same advanced positions making Spanish missions, settlements, and presidios in provinces like New Mexico, Baja California, Sonora, and Texas vulnerable to attack and difficult to supply also made them potential springboards for western exploration, a role they would fulfill after 1763.

Spain would also seem to have had sufficient reason for wanting to investi-

7. Sedelmayr, "Relación, 1746," in Dunne, trans., *Jacobo Sedelmayr*, 20–21, 28; Juan Bautista de Anza to Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursúa, Mar. 7, 1773, in Herbert Eugene Bolton, ed. and trans., *Anza's California Expeditions, V, Correspondence* (Berkeley, Calif., 1930), 57–67, esp. 62. Regarding the upper course of the Colorado, Kino could only opine, "Since this Colorado River . . . carries so much water, it must be that it comes from a high and remote land, as is the case with the other large volumed rivers of all the world and terraqueous globe" (Kino, *Kino's Historical Memoir of Pimería Alta*, ed. and trans. Bolton, II, 253).

8. Arriaga, "Instruccion reservada que trajo el marqués de las Amarillas," in *Instrucciones que los vireyes de Nueva España dejaron a sus sucesores*, 97; translations in "The King to the Viceroy, the Marquis of Las Amarillas, Aranjuez, June 30, 1755," in Charles Wilson Hackett, "Policy of the Spanish Crown regarding French Encroachments from Louisiana, 1721–1762," in George P. Hammond, [ed.], *New Spain and the Anglo-American West: Historical Contributions Presented to Herbert Eugene Bolton, I, New Spain* (Lancaster, Pa., 1932), 107–145, esp. 138–139. Revilla Gigedo quotation in Aug. 6, 1751, AGI, Guadalajara 137: "El basto incognito Contiente de esta Septentrional America." See also Venegas and [Burriel], *Noticia de la California*, III, 297 ("del vasto Continente desconocido de la America desde la California, hasta el Norte"); Kino, *Kino's Historical Memoir of Pimería Alta*, ed. and trans. Bolton, I, 212, 358, II, 74, 144, 224, 232, 238, 258, 264.



MAP 10. Miguèl Venegas, *Mapa de la California su golfo, y provincias fronteras en el continente de Nueva España*. 1757. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

MAR DEL SUR Ó PACÍFICO

NUEVO
MAPA GEOGRÁFICO
DE LA
AMÉRICA SEPTENTRIONAL,
PERTENECIENTE AL VIRREYNATO DE MEXICO:
Dedicado á los Sabios Miembros
de la Academia Real de las Ciencias de Paris
Por su mui rendido Servidor y Capellan
D. Josef Antonio de Alzate y Ramirez.
AÑO DE 1768.

I. Arzobispado de MEXICO.
II. Obispado de PUEBLA.
III. Obispado de OAXACA.
IV. Obispado de VALLADOLID.
V. Obispado de GUADALAXARA.
VI. Obispado de DURANGO.

Cabeza de Arzobispado
Cabeza de Obispado
Residencia de Audiencia ... A
Cabeza de Govierno ... G
Presidio existente
Presidio antiguo

Escala de 103 leguas castellanas de 17½ en grado.

Nueva Vera Cruz — *Longitud* ... *Latitud*
Mexico — *Longitud*
S. Josef — *Longitud* ... *Latitud*

MAP 11. José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez, *Nuevo mapa geográfico de la América septentrional*. 1768. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

MAP 12. Manuel Agustín Mascarò, *Mapa geografico de una gran parte de la America septentrional*. 1782. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

MAP 13. Tomás López de Vargas Machuca, *Mapa de América, sujeto à las observaciónes astronomicas*. c. 1783. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

gate the still-uncharted regions of the North American West before 1763. For nervous officials, the possible existence of a Strait of Anian might mean a potential avenue of advance toward the Pacific, the empire's jealously guarded "Spanish Lake." For aspiring conquistadors, the West might offer new realms to conquer. A new Tenochtitlán or an American Tokyo might lie a few hundred leagues beyond Santa Fe or Sonora. Missionaries might find new souls to save and new sites for essaying isolated utopian communities. Slavers might find new bodies to seize, governors new enemies to forestall, traders lucrative sources of or markets for goods.

In addition to apparent motive and suitable position, Spain had also had, in contrast with relative newcomers to the West like France and Britain, time. By the 1750s, Spain had been active in the New World for more than 250 years. The results of its western exploration might have been limited, but the efforts and accomplishments of its explorers had been considerable. Francisco Vásquez de Coro-

nado's (1540–1542) and Juan de Oñate's (1598–1605) *entradas* had investigated the upper Rio Grande Valley, the Grand Canyon, the lower Colorado River, and the trans-Pecos plains. Ships from Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo's and Sebastián Vizcaíno's expeditions might have sailed two thousand miles up the coast from Acapulco in 1543 and 1603. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Spanish missionaries and scouts reconnoitered southern Arizona and Texas, and Spanish parties rode into areas comprising the modern states of Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska. Nonetheless, for want of means or resolve, Spanish explorers before 1763 failed to anticipate the achievements of their Enlightenment successors by following the Pacific coast to Alaska, pushing well beyond Baja California, lower Arizona, New Mexico, and the North Platte and returning with records clear and copious enough to establish and explicate their accomplishments.

This bounded reach of pre-1763 Spanish western reconnaissance contrasts not only with the actual achievements of Spain's later Enlightenment expeditions but also with the exploits of early modern Spanish scouts in other parts of the Americas. In the sixteenth century, Spanish explorers and conquerors threaded the Straits of Magellan, circumnavigated the globe, traversed the Isthmus of Panama, crisscrossed the Andes, strode the causeway to Tenochtitlán, descended the Amazon, and ascended the Paraná. Yet Idaho remained elusive. Consequently, in the centuries after 1492, a Spanish cartographer in Seville or Cadiz or a Spanish king in Madrid, Aranjuez, or the Escorial could sit in a sunny room and direct his gaze from Tierra del Fuego to Cape Blanco and the Rio Grande. He could see, with varying degrees of precision, Mexican and Peruvian territories unimaginable to his medieval predecessors. But his vision failed north of New Mexico's Santa Fe and modern Oregon's Rogue River. What was it about the American West that frustrated the kinds of imperial reconnaissance efforts that succeeded so brilliantly elsewhere and forced Spanish officials to rest weighty decisions on a foundation of dubious information?

The sources most usefully connecting early modern western conditions to Spanish officials' perceptions of the region are the records of Spanish western explorers, missionaries, and officers. These documents display the kinds of information available to early modern Spanish statesmen, and they also disclose a great deal regarding not just how the West looked from Madrid but also how it looked to people who had actually been there. From Cabeza de Vaca's roamings onward, castaways and conquistadors, proselytizers and profiteers, explorers and officials had a great deal to say about western peoples and landscapes.

Such records suffer from grave shortcomings. Their authors had blind spots, biases, and, perhaps worst of all, literary aspirations. Missionaries seeking governmental support for a move north needed to demonstrate natives' suscep-

tibility to conversion. Governors reporting to their superiors wanted to excuse—or obscure—their conduct. Disappointed explorers might have deemed it expedient to tell acquaintances and authorities back home that unendurable privations, insurmountable obstacles, and innumerable Indians had stopped progress rather than admit that surfeit of blisters, longing for loved ones, or lack of resolve had led to ignominious reverse. Spanish scouts could misunderstand what indigenous informants told them, could hear what hope encouraged them to hear, and could see and report what preconceptions and aspirations led them to expect: rumors of villages became reports of cities; a coastline's turn to the northeast became the entrance of a Northwest Passage.

Fortunately, these Spanish western sources do not exist in isolation. Individual Spanish western accounts can be placed alongside one another, as indeed they were by early modern Spaniards, who were no less concerned by evidentiary unreliability than are modern historians. Official investigations often gathered evidence from multiple witnesses. Later explorers and authors criticized their predecessors' wilder claims and unfavorably compared venerable assertions to recent findings. In addition, we can take advantage of the geographic range of early modern Spanish reconnaissance and compare Spanish western writings to those treating other parts of the New World. Though Spanish authors and witnesses from across the Americas often began with similar preconceptions and predispositions, they nevertheless spoke differently about diverse American locales and Amerindian peoples. These variations within the corpus of Spanish sources provide a more reliable indicator of diverse American circumstances than do the words of individual Spanish reports viewed by themselves. In addition to these documentary comparisons, the contentions of Spanish written sources can be checked against the arguments of more than a century of Southwestern and plains archaeological, ethnographic, literary, and historical investigations. Indeed, because existing accounts of Spanish western exploration have done such a nice job of establishing and presenting the course of Spanish western expeditions, this inquiry can pursue an analytical approach, using examples from two and a half centuries of Spanish reconnaissance to illustrate the conditions limiting Spanish western geographic comprehension. The focus will be on pre-1763 exploration, with material from after 1763 adduced when it illuminates issues relevant to earlier decades. With sources in hand, and caveats in mind, it is possible to address the matter of lingering Spanish geographic uncertainty.[9]

9. Excellent overviews of Spanish western exploration include Dennis Reinhartz and Oakah L. Jones, *"Hacia el Norte!* The Spanish *Entrada* into North America, 1513–1549," and Mathes, "Early Exploration of the Pacific Coast," both in Allen, ed., *North American Exploration,* I, 241–291, 400–

Investigation of the limits of Spanish western exploration and geographic comprehension begins most straightforwardly with assessment of the difficulties the West's physical features and indigenous inhabitants presented to Spanish explorers. These obstacles can then be weighed against the inducements attracting Spanish attention and explorers to the region. Throughout, these western challenges, incentives, and opportunities can be considered alongside pertinent aspects of Spanish South and Central American reconnaissance.

Such an inquiry yields a two-layered explanation, the first level of which will appear in this chapter. Most basically, Spanish exploration of western North America lagged because of an unfavorable ratio of possible rewards to manifest difficulties. Early Spanish western explorers found a forbidding coast, perilous plains, and harsh deserts and mountains. They encountered indigenous peoples who were sometimes hostile, occasionally deceptive, and often perplexing. At the same time, Spanish scouts happened upon less in the way of removable wealth, tractable populations, and imposing civilizations than experiences among the Incas, Mayas, and Aztecs had led them to hope for.

Terrain and Peoples

The easiest explanation for this abatement of Spanish western American reconnaissance is that the West's physical characteristics made investigating the region so difficult for explorers. This hypothesis is worth looking into, not least because the relatively comfortable conditions of modern scholarship and travel render the raw physical challenge of the early modern Pacific coast, Mountain West, and Great Plains easily forgotten. European explorers bewailed the land and seascapes so bewitching to modern tourists.

Even today, those parts of the Pacific coast away from the great port cities

451; Jones, "Spanish Penetrations to the North of New Spain," and James R. Gibson, "The Exploration of the Pacific Coast," both in Allen, ed., *North American Exploration,* II (Lincoln, Neb., 1997), 7–64, 328–396; Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543–1819* (New Haven, Conn., 1973); Bernard DeVoto, *The Course of Empire* (Boston, 1952); and William H. Goetzmann and Glyndwr Williams, *The Atlas of North American Exploration: From the Norse Voyages to the Race to the Pole* (New York, 1992). In addition, David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, Conn., 1992); Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln, Neb., 2003); and Donald Cutter and Iris Engstrand, *Quest for Empire: Spanish Settlement in the Southwest* (Golden, Colo., 1996) are always useful. Such works provide much of the foundation necessary for understanding the role of the mysterious West in eighteenth-century international affairs. In the chapters in this book about Spanish and later French exploration, I have synthesized pertinent insights from existing secondary literature and used comparison between western exploration and the reconnaissance of other parts of the world to yield conclusions going beyond those of earlier works.

remain forbidding as well as beautiful, or perhaps beautiful because forbidding. Long stretches lack safe harbors. Waves are high. Water gives way to rocks, fog conceals them, picturesque capes become lee shores, sudden and strong winds drive ships to destruction. In the early modern period, the currents and winds carrying returning Manila galleons south along the California coast hindered the northward movement of vessels for much of the year. In winter, storms and a countervailing current could carry ships north into unknown waters and east against unforgiving shores. Vessels unable to acquire fresh provisions from an unfamiliar and perilous coast were subject to scurvy.

In such conditions, an exploratory effort like Vizcaíno's 1602–1603 expedition up the California coast could quickly become a catalog of horrors. According to Vizcaíno's diary, by the time the three Spanish ships comprising his flotilla reached Monterey Bay, their "supplies were becoming exhausted because of the length of time" they "had spent in coming." As provisions ran low, men grew ill, making it difficult to work the ships. The officers deemed it necessary to send one vessel back to Mexico with the records of the voyage and the bodies of the infirm. The two remaining ships continued north. As they did so, Spanish sailors found the weather intemperate. The cosmographer attached to Vizcaíno's expedition, Fray Antonio de La Ascensión, wrote of "the severity of winter in this climate, and of the cold" off Cape Mendocino. Worse, a storm struck the ships there and drove them farther north. When healthy sailors were most needed, battering seas and bad food incapacitated them. One ship, the *San Diego,* was reportedly blown to 42° north before a northwest wind made it possible to return. Vizcaíno claimed that, by the time the vessel and its rotting provisions made it back to Monterey, "the mouths of all were sore, and their gums were swollen larger than their teeth, so that they could hardly drink water, and the ship seemed more like a hospital than a ship of an armada." The other ship, the *Tres Reyes,* was impelled into higher latitudes than the *San Diego,* allegedly to the vicinity of Cape Blanco, where, according to the recorded testimony of the boatswain, "the cold was so great that" the Spanish mariners "thought they should be frozen." More significant, at the moment when the coast was trending northeast and the ship had therefore apparently reached the entrance of the Northwest Passage, the crew was unable to proceed. Ascensión averred, "If on this occasion there had been on the captain's ship even fourteen sound men, without any doubt we should have ventured to explore and pass through this Strait of Anian. . . . But the general lack of health and of men who could manage the sails and steer the ship obliged us to turn about toward New Spain, to report what had been discovered and seen, and lest the whole crew should die if we remained longer in that latitude." All told, even though they turned back short of the mythical strait, more than forty men on Vizcaíno's three ships died. Modern historians cannot dismiss the possibility that the mariners involved exaggerated the hardships of the voyage, but early modern Spaniards could not reject the possibility that they had not. Little wonder that more than a century and a half would pass before Spanish ships voluntarily ventured north of Cape Blanco.[10]

Like the Pacific coast, the spectacular terrain of the dry and mountainous Southwest that today invites visitors then repelled explorers. Lands along southwestern rivers like the Gila and Colorado were often lush, cultivated, and populous, and forests often graced higher elevations. But when reconnaissance took Spanish parties away from the Southwest's greener zones, they frequently encountered lands "where the soil is dry and sterile" or the terrain "extremely rough." To journey overland from Tubac (in modern Sonora) to the San Gabriel Mission (the site of modern Los Angeles) in 1774, Juan Bautista de Anza and Father Francisco Garcés required two tries to cross the Colorado Desert and its "horrible sand dunes." Even the famously "phlegmatic" Garcés avowed his "extreme repugnance" at the prospect of another such journey. More spectacularly, in 1540, a party from the Coronado expedition set out to reconnoiter lands northwest of New Mexico. They were blocked by a Grand Canyon so vast they could barely comprehend its dimensions. Scouts failed to reach the chasm's bottom "because of great obstacles they found." Lack of water precluded remaining

10. "Diary of Sebastian Vizcaíno, 1602–1603," in Herbert Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542–1706* (New York, 1916), 52–103, esp. 86, 92–97, 101; Vizcaíno's Diary, in Francisco Carrasco y Guisasola, ed., *Documentos referentes al reconocimiento de las costas de las Californias desde el cabo de San Lucas al de Mendocino* (Madrid, 1882), 95, 99–103, 106; Antonio de La Ascensión, "Brief Report of the Discovery in the South Sea," in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest,* 104–134, esp. 108, 120–121; [Antonio de La Ascensión], "Relacion breve en que se dá noticia del descubrimiento que se hizo en la Nueva-España, en la mar del Sur, desde el puerto de Acapulco hasta más adelante del cabo Mendocino . . . ," in Luis Torres de Mendoza, ed., *Coleccion de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía,* VIII (Madrid, 1867), 539–547, esp. 542, 557–558; "The Voyage of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo," "Father Antonio de La Ascension's Account of the Voyage of Sebastian Vizcaíno," and "Facsimile of the Account of the Cabrillo Expedition," all in Henry R. Wagner, ed., *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America in the Sixteenth Century* (San Francisco, 1929), 72–93, 180–272, 450–463, esp. 92, 244–246, 252–258, 264–265, 461–462; "Relacion, ó diario, de la navegacion que hizo Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo . . . ," in [Buckingham Smith], ed., *Colección de varios documentos para la historia de la Florida y tierras adyacentes* (London, 1857), 173–189, esp. 187–188; "Letter of Sebastián Vizcaíno, Dated at Monterey Bay, 28th December, 1602, Giving Some Account of What He Has Seen and Done during His Exploration of the Coast of the Californias," and "Letters of Sebastián Vizcaíno to the King of Spain, Announcing His Return from the Exploration of the Coast of the Californias, as Far as the Forty-Second Degree of the North Latitude—Dated 23rd May, 1603," both in Donald C. Cutter, ed. and trans., and George Butler Griffin, trans., *The California Coast: A Bilingual Edition of Documents from the Sutro Collection* (Norman, Okla., 1969), 105–109, 111–117, esp. 106, 116.

in the area to investigate further. The Southwest seemed constructed to discourage intruders.[11]

Though less obviously lethal, more generally covered with vegetation, and in many respects more inviting for eventual settlement, the plains proved no less difficult for Spanish explorers. Spanish adventurers in the Southwest marveled at the strikingly varied and precipitous terrain. Spanish scouts east of the Rockies lost themselves on what Coronado referred to as "plains so without landmarks that it was as if we were in the middle of the sea." In this monotony, errant Spanish explorers could easily suffer the same thirst and exhaustion described by figures like Anza and Garcés. In "extreme need," Coronado drank a substance "so bad it contained more mud than water." Navigation on the plains was so challenging that it was not just the alien Spanish who missed their way. Even the Indian inhabitants of the region could go astray. In his diary of a 1706 expedition onto the plains north and east of Taos, Juan de Ulibarri claimed that, although his Indian guide "took especial care," finding "his direction from hummocks of grass placed a short distance apart on the trail by the Apaches, who lose even themselves there," the expedition "became lost entirely." Venturing onto the plains was easy; getting around and back could prove more difficult.[12]

Closely connected to the challenges posed by topography were those presented by human geography. When Spanish expeditions set out into the lands of the American West, the indigenous peoples they encountered could, and frequently did, stop them. The mere threat of attacks discouraged travel in many regions. On the plains, the reception of Spanish parties varied. Some ventured

11. First quotations from Sedelmayr, "Relación, 1746," in Dunne, trans., *Jacobo Sedelmayr,* 18; and "Instruction of Don Thomas Vélez Cachupín, 1754," in Thomas, [ed. and trans.], *Plains Indians and New Mexico,* 129–145, esp. 130. On Anza and Garcés, see Pedro Font, in Herbert Bolton, ed. and trans., *Anza's California Expeditions,* 5 vols. (Berkeley, Calif., 1930), IV, *Font's Complete Diary of the Second Anza Expedition,* 121; Francisco Garcés, "Garcés's Diary of His Detour to the Jalchedunes, 1774," ibid., II, *Opening a Land Route to California: Diaries of Anza, Díaz, Garcés, and Palóu,* 373–392, esp. 391; see also "Anza's Complete Diary, 1774," ibid., 1–130, esp. 57–67, 72–82; and Pedro Font, "Diario Extendido de Font de 1776," or "Expanded Diary of Pedro Font," Dec. 8, 1775, at Web de Anza, http://anza.uoregon.edu/archives.html (accessed June 17, 2009). On the Coronado expedition, see "The Relación de la Jornada de Cíbola, Pedro de Castañeda de Nájera's Narrative, 1560s," in Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, eds. and trans., *Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 1539–1542* (Dallas, Tex., 2005), 397–398, 451. See also "The Relación del Suceso (Anonymous Narrative)," ibid., 494–507, esp. 499, 504–505.

12. "Coronado's Letter to the King," in Flint and Flint, eds. and trans., *Documents of the Coronado Expedition,* 319–320, 323–324; "Diary of Juan de Ulibarri," in Thomas, [ed. and trans.], *After Coronado,* 66. See also "Diary of the Campaign of Governor Antonio de Valverde," ibid., 110–133, esp. 111; "Gallegos' Relation of the Chamuscado-Rodríguez Expedition," in George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, eds. and trans., *The Rediscovery of New Mexico, 1580–1594: The Explorations of Chamuscado, Espejo, Castaño de Sosa, Morlete, and Leyva de Bonilla and Humaña* (Albuquerque, N.M., 1966), 67–114, esp. 90–92.

east and returned without incident or after having been the beneficiaries of a friendly reception. On other occasions, even large and well-armed Spanish *entradas* might encounter compelling reasons to beat a hasty retreat. The 1601 Oñate expedition reportedly, and perhaps exaggeratedly, fought a three-to-five-hour "skirmish" with 2,500–5,000 "Escanxaque" Indians, near the Arkansas River in south-central Kansas or north-central Oklahoma. The armored Spanish soldiers apparently suffered no deaths from Indian arrows, but thirty "received slight wounds." Even before the clash, reports of hostile Indians ahead had led Oñate's followers to request that the expedition turn back, and Oñate had reluctantly agreed. Though less lethal than it might have been, the actual combat confirmed the good sense of the fainthearted. Those contemplating future expeditions would have to ruminate on the possibility that the next engagement might turn out worse. A warning by friendly Indians about the hostile Quivira Indians to come sufficed to persuade Captain Alonso Vaca to turn his 1634 expedition around.[13]

In 1720, Pedro de Villasur and his roughly 105-man party turned back too late, and the leader and some 43 of his men never returned to Santa Fe. Determined to ascertain the veracity of reports of Frenchmen moving west toward New Mexico, Villasur appears to have made it to the junction of the Platte and Loup rivers in modern eastern Nebraska, where what was probably a Pawnee-Oto force attacked, inflicting what former New Mexico governor Antonio Valverde called "the most outstanding misfortune that has come to pass in this country." The loss demonstrated most clearly the damage Plains Indians could inflict on even a sizeable and martial Spanish-Indian expedition, particularly when the passage of a century since Oñate's skirmish and the arrival of French traders in the region had dispersed at least some firearms to plains peoples such as those attacking Villasur.[14]

13. For friendly receptions, see Tyler and Taylor, eds. and trans., "Report of Fray Alonso de Posada," *NMHR,* XXXIII (1958), 293–298; Posadas, "Informe á S. M. sobre las tierras de Nuevo Méjico, Quivira y Teguayo," in Duro, *Don Diego de Peñalosa,* 57–61. On Oñate, see "Official Inquiry Made by the Factor, Don Francisco de Valverde, by Order of the Count of Monterrey, concerning the New Discovery Undertaken by Governor Don Juan de Oñate toward the North beyond the Provinces of New Mexico," in George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, eds. and trans., *Don Juan de Oñate: Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595–1628* (Albuquerque, N.M., 1953), II, 836–871, esp. 848, 858–859, 868; Marc Simmons, *The Last Conquistador: Juan de Oñate and the Settling of the Far Southwest* (Norman, Okla., 1991), 162–164. On the warning to Cabeza de Vaca, see Tyler and Taylor, eds. and trans., "Report of Fray Alonso de Posada," *NMHR,* XXXIII (1958), 298; Posadas, "Informe á S. M. sobre las tierras de Nuevo Méjico, Quivira y Teguayo," in Duro, *Don Diego de Peñalosa,* 60–61.

14. Antonio Valverde to marqués de Valero, Oct. 8, 1720, 162–167 (quotation on 164), Revolledo to Valero, Dec. 9, 1720, 175–177, "Testimony of Aguilar, Santa Fé, July 1, 1726," 226–228, "Testimony of Tamariz," July 2, 1726, 228–230, all in in Thomas, ed. and trans., *After Coronado;* "Charlevoix Visits Wisconsin: His Description of the Tribes," in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., State Historical Society

The Villasur disaster points to a more general difficulty. Frontier provinces formed shaky foundations for exploration because soldiers who might have been detached for reconnaissance were instead often engaged in defending existing settlements against outside raiders or in preventing or suppressing revolts by nominally subject populations. In 1735, fifty soldiers at the Corodeguachi Presidio (about forty miles south of modern Douglas, Arizona), the kind of force that might have been used for exploration, were "occupied now in watching over the disturbances among the Pimas Altos, now over those among the Seris, and lastly over anything which might happen in the province which might need the attention of the forces of his Majesty." In the case of New Mexico, the loss of Villasur and so many of his men inhibited Spanish exploration in the following decades. The small colony, nearly destroyed by the Pueblo Revolt forty years before and increasingly beset by raids from its neighbors as the eighteenth century unfolded—"enclosed on all sides by innumerable and warlike nations of heathen enemies," as the Spanish auditor the marqués de Altamira put it in 1753—could ill afford the loss of forty soldiers in 1720 or the risking of more in the decades that followed.[15]

West and southwest of New Mexico, western Apaches loomed especially large in the consciousness and sometimes the lives of eighteenth-century Spanish officials, soldiers, and missionaries. As Kino put it, aspiring explorers had to cope with "the obstacle of the very difficult passage through the Apaches." Juan Bautista de Anza, the father of the famous California explorer of the same name, noted in a 1735 report that Apaches ambushed journeyers in narrow passes and would "sometimes . . . gather in large numbers to mount a major attack against

of Wisconsin, *Collections*, XVI, *The French Regime in Wisconsin*, I, *1634–1727* (Madison, Wis., 1902), 408–418, esp. 413–414; Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 169–171; Gottfried Hotz, *Indian Skin Paintings from the American Southwest: Two Representations of Border Conflicts between Mexico and the Missouri in the Early Eighteenth Century*, trans. Johannes Malthaner (Norman, Okla., [1970]). Identification of site and Indian nations is from Weber.

15. "Statement of Don Agustín de Vildosola," 1735, in Donald Rowland, "The Sonora Frontier of New Spain, 1735–1745," in Hammond, [ed.], *New Spain and the Anglo-American West*, I, 147–164, esp. 155; marqués de Altamira, "Opinion," Jan. 14, 1753, in Thomas, [ed. and trans.], *Plains Indians and New Mexico*, 126; see also "Instruction of Don Thomas Vélez Cachupín, 1754," ibid., 129–145, esp. 135; and Robert Ryal Miller, ed. and trans., "New Mexico in Mid-Eighteenth Century: A Report Based on Governor Vélez Capuchín's Inspection," *SWHQ*, LXXIX (1975), 166–181, esp. 169–181. Calloway provides a nice discussion of the general issue of Spanish troops' being tied down by defense burdens in *One Vast Winter Count*, 177–185, 330–331.

The dangers of the plains for New Mexicans might have been long-standing: Gallegos understood Pueblo Indians in 1581 to have said that "they did not want to go" into buffalo country "because the Indians who followed the buffalo were enemies and very cunning; and that the two peoples would kill each other and start trouble." See "Gallegos' Relation," in Hammond and Rey, eds. and trans., *Rediscovery of New Mexico*, 87–88.

travelers, soldiers, or settlements." In such conditions, even a military escort might fail to get a traveler to his destination. Jesuit missionary Ignatius Keller and nine soldiers tried in 1743 to journey north from the Gila River (near modern Coolidge, Arizona) to the Little Colorado Moqui pueblos—settlements formerly visited by Franciscans but lost to the church during the Pueblo Revolt. En route, "Apaches attacked his party," killing one of the soldiers and stealing "most of the horses so that the father was forced to return."[16]

Means other than violence were also available to Indians wishing to check Spanish progress. Locals holding back information about water sources, food supplies, and practicable routes; informants overstating the human and physical dangers to come; and guides leading parties along arduous and indirect paths or simply disappearing when most needed—all these could make the lives of Spanish explorers difficult in the best of circumstances and short in the worst. Franciscan fathers Silvestre de Vélez de Escalante and Francisco Atanasio Domínguez's party had to overcome these kinds of challenges during a 1776 journey through lands comprising the modern states of Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico. Ute communities in southwestern Colorado claimed to be unfamiliar with the country through which the Spanish party wished to proceed, warned of hostile Comanches who "would impede" the Spaniards' "passage and even deprive" them of their "lives," and hesitated to "make exchanges for the hoofsore horses" the Spanish were using. Guides withheld route information, "vanished" at inopportune moments, and were rumored to be deliberately choosing the most difficult paths so as to keep the Spanish "needlessly winding around for eight or ten days, to make" them "turn back."[17]

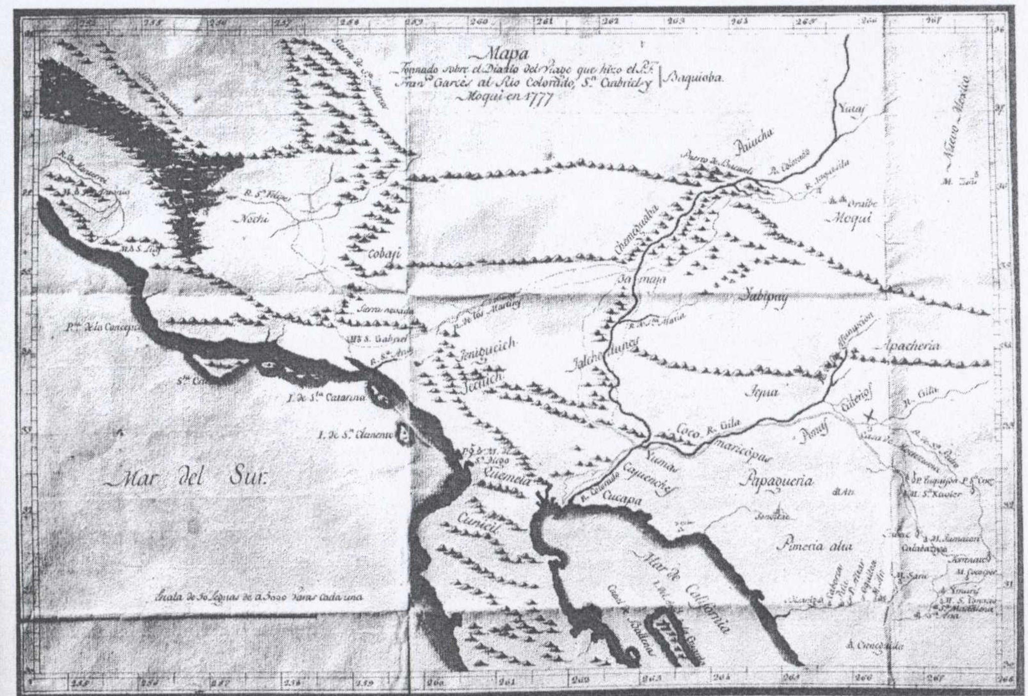
16. Kino, *Kino's Historical Memoir of Pimería Alta*, ed. and trans. Bolton, I, 198; in the same work, see also I, 237, II, 25–32, 171, 254–255; "Juan Bautista de Anza Discusses Apache and Seri Depredations," Aug. 13, 1735, in Polzer and Sheridan, eds. and comps., *Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain*, II, part 1, 307, 311. Quotations regarding Keller from Sedelmayr, "Relación, 1746," in Dunne, trans., *Jacobo Sedelmayr*, 23, 33. See also the somewhat different account, which doesn't identify the attackers as Apaches, in "Informe anónimo dirigido al provincial (hacia 1753) sobre los acontecimientos bélicos en la región más norteña de las misiones de la Compañía," in Ernest J. Burrus and Félix Zubillaga, eds., *El Noroeste de México: Documentos sobre las misiones jesuíticas, 1600–1769* (Mexico City, 1986), 307–348, esp. 314.

17. Ted J. Warner, ed., *The Domínguez-Escalante Journal: Their Expedition through Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico in 1776*, trans. Angelico Chavez (Provo, Utah, 1976), 28, 31–32, 34, 38, 69, 76–77, 100, 147, 149–151, 153, 170, 174–175, 188. See also Francisco Garcés, *A Record of Travels in Arizona and California, 1775–1776*, ed. and trans. John Galvin (San Francisco, 1965), 18–19, 47, 53, 61; Francisco Garcés, *Diario de exploraciones en Arizona y California en los años de 1775 y 1776* (Mexico City, 1968), 28, 53, 56, 64; Joseph P. Sánchez, trans., "Translation of Incomplete and Untitled Copy of Juan María Antonio Rivera's Original Diary of the First Expedition, 23 July 1765," and "Translation of Juan María Antonio Rivera's Second Diary, Oct. 1765," in Sánchez, *Explorers, Traders, and Slavers: Forging the Old Spanish Trail, 1678–1850* (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1997), 137–147, 149–157, esp. 145, 149–150, 153–155.

Indeed, perhaps disappointed by the results or unhappy about the difficulties of exploration, Spanish scouts often suspected that Indian pathfinders actively misled or misinformed them. During his 1684 expedition into Texas, Captain Juan Domínguez de Mendoza claimed that Jumano Indian guide (and expedition instigator) Juan de Sabeata had been generally mendacious and, in particular, had spread false reports of nearby hostile Apaches to halt the Spanish party. More famously, Castañeda's classic account of the Coronado expedition claimed that an Indian captive, "the Turk," used tales of the fabulous city of Quivira to draw the conquistadors away from the pueblos of New Mexico and onto the plains in hopes that Spanish horses would die and Spanish arms weaken there. In Castañeda's tale, when the disappointed Spanish found thatched huts in place of the rich city Indian stories had led them to expect, Coronado "asked El Turco why he had lied and had guided the [people of the expedition] so tortuously. He replied that his land was toward that area, and besides, the [people] of Cicuyc [Pecos] had begged him to get the [Spaniards] lost on the plains. [That was] so that, lacking food supplies, the horses would die. And [the people of Cicuyc] could kill [the Spaniards] without difficulty when they returned, [because they would be] weak. And [they would be able] to avenge what [the Spaniards] had done." Later critics have questioned the reliability of the story, and it is fair to say that its literary qualities suggest that Castañeda might have imposed his own sense of drama on events. At the same time, there is nothing incredible in the account, and Coronado's brutal entrada had given native peoples ample reason to decoy and destroy it.[18]

Less elaborate techniques of obstruction could also prove effective. Indians could merely refuse passage through their territories. The travels of Father Garcés offer one example. He succeeded in 1776 in ascending the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers to the Moqui pueblos. Garcés had passed through the Pima villages downstream on his journey, however, and the Moquis were apparently suspicious of a Spanish explorer on good terms with a people they frequently fought. They might also have been wary of any representative of the Spanish imperial authority they had successfully escaped. The Moquis enjoined Garcés to "go back to" his "own land." He did as he was told. The Moqui case is especially vivid, but a variety of Indian groups had ample reasons to hinder Spanish exploration, whether to exclude outsiders from key positions in exchange networks, to keep disruptive and ultimately deadly Spaniards at a distance, or to prevent Spaniards from trading and perhaps allying with enemy nations beyond.[19]

Aspects of the Spanish imperial experience farther south would seem, at first glance, to support an emphasis on the role of harsh terrain or unfriendly Indians in inhibiting Spanish exploration. Remote regions of southern South America—precipitous in the Andes; frigid, desolate, and allegedly giant-haunted east of



MAP 14. Pedro Font, *Mapa formado sobre el diario del viage que hizo el P. F. Franco Garcès*. 1777. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

18. "Itinerary of Juan Domínguez de Mendoza," in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest*, 320–344, esp. 336. See also Garcés, *Record of Travels in Arizona and California*, ed. and trans. Galvin, 84–85, 89; Garcés, *Diario de exploraciones en Arizona y California*, 83, 85, 89; and "Rivera's Second Diary," in Sánchez, *Explorers, Traders, and Slavers*, 153. Castañeda quotations from "Castañeda de Nájera's Narrative," in Flint and Flint, eds. and trans., *Documents of the Coronado Expedition*, 411, 467. The Flints question the reliability of this account, contending that the Turk was tortured into the admission, that he and his captors probably lacked much in the way of shared vocabulary, and that such tales of betrayal figured frequently in romances of the period. These are doubts worth raising. I find the underlying events of the account credible nonetheless. The Turk had been with the expedition a year, and this seems to me time enough to pick up a few useful phrases. Information extracted under duress need not be false, and I see nothing improbable about a captive trying to lead Coronado and his bloodstained men into trouble. Historical accounts may echo literary texts, but literary texts may also recall actual events.

19. Garcés, *Record of Travels in Arizona and California*, ed. and trans. Galvin, 75, 77; Garcés, *Diario de exploraciones en Arizona y California*, 76.

them; broken, soggy, and well defended by very real and lethal Araucanians west of them—retained their mysteries into the second half of the eighteenth century. When French mariner Louis-Antoine de Bougainville visited Patagonia in 1767, possible "existence of a race of giants" there remained "a contentious subject," and he felt obligated to mention in his journal that the tallest native he "met attained scarcely a height of 5 ft 9 in." As late as 1790, a Spanish expedition was seeking the "Enchanted City" of the Caesars near Lake Nahuel Huapí (in modern Argentina). Within living memory, the tropical climate, fearsome wildlife, and unwelcoming inhabitants of parts of the Amazon Basin have deterred or frustrated Euro-American interlopers. Parts and peoples of South and Central America long resisted Spanish conquest or cognizance.[20]

Although often making Spanish exploration arduous, however, South American and western North American physical and human obstacles rarely made it impossible. In western North America and the North Pacific, Spanish scouts and sailors would demonstrate this after the Seven Years' War, when foreign encroachments rendered more extensive western American reconnaissance a pressing matter. Spanish ships reached the northwest coast before Cook, and Spanish soldiers and missionaries preceded the United States in California and Utah. More strikingly, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Spanish explorers' achievements in large parts of South and Central America suggest that virtually no physical or human American obstacle could hold out against determined conquistadors or *marineros*. The North Pacific coast, the Southwest, and the plains might have been forbidding, but no more so than the Straits of Magellan, the breadth of the South Sea, the central and northern Andes, the northern Mexican deserts, the Chaco Boreal, and large parts of the South and Central American rain forests, all of which Spaniards explored, or at least traversed, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In many cases, these spectacular journeys occurred despite indigenous efforts to mislead and obstruct Spanish explorers and indeed notwithstanding running battles with serried Aztec and Inca armies or dispersed forest hunters and desert raiders. Because Spanish ships coasted the entire perimeter of South and Central America, and Spanish military and missionary expeditions crisscrossed their interiors, Spain was left with pockets of uncertainty interspersed among ribbons of geographic familiarity rather than with an enormous, uninterrupted zone of ignorance comprising roughly two-thirds of North America north of Mexico. Physical geography and indigenous resistance contribute to an explanation of the limits of Spanish western exploration but do not complete one.

20. Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, *The Pacific Journal of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, 1767–1768*, ed. and trans. John Dunmore (London, 2002), 11–12. On the Enchanted City of the Caesars, see Edward J. Goodman, *The Explorers of South America* (New York, [1972]), 164–178.

Disappointments

Ulloa reached California, rounded the cape [San Lucas], and sailed north to the parallel of San Andrés, at a point he named Cape Disappointment [Punta Baja], where he turned back to New Spain because of contrary winds and shortage of provisions. This voyage took him a whole year, and he brought back no word of a good new land. *The game was not worth the candle.*

In the belief that there were some very large and rich islands between New Spain and the Spice Islands, Cortés had thought he might discover a second New Spain on that coast and sea, but in spite of all the ships he had fitted out, and even commanded in person, he accomplished nothing but what I have said.

—FRANCISCO LÓPEZ DE GÓMARA, 1552

All or most of those who went on the expedition that Francisco Vázquez Coronado made in search of the seven *ciudades* . . .

Although they did not find the wealth of which they had been told, they found the beginning of a good land to settle and the wherewithal to search for [wealth] and to go onward. . . . Their hearts weep because they have lost such an opportunity of a lifetime. . . .

. . . I have understood [that] some of those who came back from there would be happy to go back, in order to continue farther so as to recover what was lost.

—PEDRO DE CASTAÑEDA DE NÁJERA, 1560s

To reach a deeper understanding of these limits of Spanish western exploration, it is necessary to consider the sources of the seemingly demonic determination of those demon-fearing sixteenth-century Spanish conquistadors and the consequences when their fonts of motivation ran dry. The discoveries of Spain's first American generations departed so far from expectation as to suggest for a time the need to extend the horizons of the possible. Scripture and romance—as in Columbus's paradisiacal speculations off the coast of Venezuela or Bernal Díaz's epic awe before Tenochtitlán—seemed at times a better guide to New World conditions than medieval Iberian experience. Spain's early conquistadors were willing to endure or inflict almost unimaginable hardship in part because their reward might be quantities of wealth and degrees of status unattainable and almost inconceivable in Europe. As Spanish explorers moved into what is now northern Mexico and the United States, the weight of reality began to drag Spanish fancies down to earth. The early American West disappointed hopes animated by the Central American Isthmus, the Straits of Magellan, Peru, and Mexico. Spanish explorers failed to find comparable riches and dominions north of the Aztec Empire or practicable water passages through North America, and

this reduced the incentive for future explorers to push into remaining unknown areas.[21]

A Strait of Anian's existence in the American West, for instance, remained possible but unrealized. La Ascensión had thought that around latitude 43° north, where "the coast and land turns to the northeast," he had seen "the head and end of the realm and mainland of California and the entrance to the Strait of Anian." Neither La Ascensión nor any other Spanish mariner, however, moved far enough into an apparent passage to prove its practicability and value.[22]

This failure to investigate a possible passage's depths was not universally regretted by Spanish officials. For shrewd Spanish statesmen, a Northwest Passage's potential utility might furnish good reason to avoid confirming its existence. For if such a passage was more than chimerical, it might provide a route more useful to British, Dutch, and French interlopers than to Spanish mariners. Francis Drake, who made it at least to and perhaps beyond the northern California coast in 1579, and Thomas Cavendish, who seized a Spanish galleon off Cape San Lucas (in Baja California) in 1587, had alarmed the defenders of Spain's empire by showing how far English raiders might reach even without a passage. Revealing to them an easier northern route to the Pacific might be less than prudent. Ascensión, alarmed by San Diego Bay Indian tales of "a people living inland, of form and figure like our Spaniards, bearded, and wearing collars and breeches" (perhaps members of the Oñate entrada), worried that Dutch or English ships might already have come through the Strait of Anian and established a settlement in western America. His suspicion proved unwarranted, but the dangers a Northwest Passage posed to the Spanish Empire remained.[23]

21. Francisco López de Gómara, *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary,* ed. and trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley, Calif., 1964), 403–404, brackets and italics in original (for the original Spanish, see Gómara, *Historia de la conquista de México,* ed. Jorge Gurria Lacroix [Caracas, 1979], 312); "Castañeda de Nájera's Narrative," in Flint and Flint, eds. and trans., *Documents of the Coronado Expedition,* 385–386, 436–437, brackets in original.

22. Ascensión, "Brief Report of the Discovery in the South Sea," in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest,* 121; [Ascensión], "Relacion breve en que se dá noticia del descubrimiento que se hizo en la Nueva-España, en la mar del Sur," in Torres de Mendoza, ed., *Coleccion de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía,* VIII, 558: "La costa y tierra da la vuelta al Nordeste, y aquí es la cabeza y fin del reino y Tierra Firme de la California, y el principio y entrada para el estrecho de Anian"; "Father Antonio de La Ascension's Account of the Voyage," in Wagner, ed., *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America,* 264–265, 267–268.

23. Ascensión, "Brief Report of the Discovery in the South Sea," in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest,* 117–118; [Ascensión], "Relacion breve en que se dá noticia del descubrimiento que se hizo en la Nueva-España, en la mar del Sur," in Torres de Mendoza, ed., *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía,* VIII, 554 ("una gente que estaba la tierra dentro, del talle y modo que nuestros españoles, barbados, y con cuellos y valonas"); "Father Antonio de La Ascension's

A less spectacular but more probable western possibility was that of great navigable river systems affording access to the interior or a route to the ocean, as the Paraná and Amazon systems did in South America. River systems comparable to these did, of course, exist in the North American West, but the Spanish Empire failed to exploit them fully. In some cases, along the Pacific coast beyond the Gulf of California, for example, Spanish sailors failed to locate the West's great rivers. The Columbia's mouth lay beyond the known limits of Spanish maritime exploration and the usual route of galleons returning from the Philippines; in any case, it was sufficiently inconspicuous to conceal its significance from Hezeta in 1775 and its existence from Cook in 1778. The Golden Gate into San Francisco Bay and the rivers of the California interior, though along routes sailed by both galleons and explorers, was indistinct enough against the backdrop of the coastal hills to elude verifiable Spanish detection until 1769.[24]

Members of the 1542–1543 Cabrillo-Ferrelo and 1602–1603 Vizcaíno expeditions did see, or at least suspected they saw, other "great," "large," and "copious" rivers between San Diego Bay and Cape Blanco. But they identified no commodity as attractive to Spanish merchants as northwestern sea otter furs would later be to traders from Old and New England. The "fish, game, hazel nuts, chestnuts," and "acorns" with which coastal Indians tried to entice them failed to inspire the avarice of Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro's compatriots. Spanish trading houses remained absent from the mouths of these rivers, and Spanish boats left their upper courses uncharted and their economic or strategic utility undemonstrated.[25]

In addition to practicable passages and navigable rivers, there was also the possibility of wealthy civilizations on the Pacific coast, perhaps comparable to

Account of the Voyage," in Wagner, ed., *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America,* 226–227, 268.

24. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America,* II, *The Southern Voyages, A.D. 1492–1616* (New York, 1974), 675–676.

25. "Voyage of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo," "Father Antonio de La Ascension's Account of the Voyage," and "Facsimile of the Account of the Cabrillo Expedition," in Wagner, ed., *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America,* 72–93, 180–272, esp. 86, 88, 92, 255, 265, 455, 457, 462; "Relacion, ó diario, de la navegacion que hizo Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo," in [Smith], ed., *Colección de varios documentos para la historia de la Florida y tierras adyacentes,* 181, 183, 188; "Diary of Sebastian Vizcaíno," in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest,* 94, 102; Vizcaíno's Diary, in Carrasco y Guisasola, ed., *Documentos referentes al reconocimiento de las costas de las Californias,* 100, 106; Ascensión, "Brief Report of the Discovery in the South Sea," in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest,* 119–121; [Ascensión,] "Relacion breve en que se dá noticia del descubrimiento que se hizo en la Nueva-España, en la mar del Sur," in Torres de Mendoza, ed., *Coleccion de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía,* VIII, 556–558; Mathes, "Early Exploration of the Pacific Coast," in Allen, ed., *North American Exploration,* I, 423.

the Incas or connected to Japan. But Spanish explorers found the California coast unsatisfying, comparisons of it to lands farther south unfavorable. Consider the contrast between the initial indications offered by Peruvian and Californian shores. In 1527, Spanish pilot Bartolomé Ruiz captured a trading raft off the coast of modern Peru or Ecuador containing "blankets of wool and cotton, shirts, . . . and other articles of clothing, all beautifully worked in scarlet, crimson, blue, yellow, and all the other colors with various kinds of designs and figures of birds, animals, fish, and trees." In the same year, Pizarro and his men found on the Gulf of Guayaquil's Santa Clara Island "a great sample of the wealth of the land ahead of them because they found many small gold and silver pieces shaped as hands or a woman's breasts or heads, and a large silver vessel." At Tombes, Pizarro encountered an official ["oréjon"] reporting to Inca emperor Huayna Capac in Quito. The signs pointed to material wealth and imperial grandeur.[26]

The California coast promised less. Cabrillo and Vizcaíno met village rulers rather than imperial officials.[27] Instead of being shown wrought gold and silver by the Indians they came into contact with, Spanish expeditions up the California coast presented European metalwork to its inhabitants. Cabrillo and Vizcaíno's men encountered Indians wearing, not cloth adorned by representations of animals, but instead the skins of the animals themselves. When, on one occasion, coastal California Indians possessed silk, it came from a Spanish "ship . . . driven by a strong wind to the coast and wrecked." This did not encourage Spanish navigation in the area. Spanish vessels moving up North America's Pacific coast observed populous and comfortable towns and wrote enough about the

26. On Ruíz, see "Francisco de Jérez's Account of the Early Expeditions," in John H. Parry and Robert G. Keith, eds., *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17th Century, IV, The Andes* (New York, 1984), 14–17, esp. 16; "Relación de los primeros descubrimientos de Francisco Pizarro y Diego de Almagro, sacada del códice número CXX de la Biblioteca Imperial de Viena," in Martin Fernandez Navarrete, Miguel Salva, and Pedro Sainz de Baranda, eds., *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España,* V (Madrid, 1844), 193–201, esp. 197. On Pizarro, see Pedro de Cieza de León, *The Discovery and Conquest of Peru: Chronicles of the New World Encounter,* ed. and trans. Alexandra Parma Cook and Noble David Cook (Durham, N.C., 1998), 103, 108; Cieza de León, *La crónica del Perú,* in Carmelo Sáenz de Santa María, ed., *Obras completas* (1553; rpt. Madrid, 1984), I, 246–247.

27. On village rulers, see "Voyage of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo," "Father Antonio de La Ascension's Account of the Voyage," and "Facsimile of the Account of the Cabrillo Expedition," in Wagner, ed., *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America,* 72–93, 450–463, esp. 88, 239, 457–458; "Relacion, ó diario, de la navegacion que hizo Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo," in [Smith], ed., *Colección de varios documentos para la historia de la Florida y tierras adyacentes,* 183; Ascensión, "Brief Report of the Discovery in the South Sea," in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest,* 118; [Ascensión], "Relacion breve en que se dá noticia del descubrimiento que se hizo en la Nueva-España, en la mar del Sur," in Torres de Mendoza, ed., *Coleccion de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía,* VIII, 555. Ascensión speaks of a "petty king" ["reyezuelo"].

area's human richness to tantalize later scholars, but they saw little to indicate the material wealth or political structures so alluring to merchants or conquistadors, "no trace whatever of the City of Quivira, notwithstanding every effort."[28]

Inland, the 1540–1542 Coronado entradas into New Mexico, onto the plains, and through the Southwest, like the subsequent 1598–1605 Oñate ventures in the same area, proved less rewarding than anticipated. Coronado and his men found populated areas in both the Southwest and the plains and lands appealing enough to inspire nostalgia in aging conquistadors, but this was less than earlier reports had led them to hope for. When Cabeza de Vaca, the black slave Esteban, and their two companions finally made their way to Spanish settlements in Mexico in 1536, they brought not only tales of suffering but also rumors of

28. On the presentation of metalwork, see Ascensión, "Brief Report of the Discovery in the South Sea," in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest,* 117; [Ascensión], "Relacion breve en que se dá noticia del descubrimiento que se hizo en la Nueva-España," in Torres de Mendoza, ed., *Coleccion de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía,* VIII, 554. On skin clothing, see "Diary of Sebastian Vizcaíno," in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest,* 82, 84; Vizcaíno's Diary, in Carrasco y Guisasola, ed., *Documentos referentes al reconocimiento de las costas de las Californias,* 91, 93, 95; Ascensión, "Brief Report of the Discovery in the South Sea," 120; [Ascensión], "Relacion breve en que se dá noticia del descubrimiento que se hizo en la Nueva-España, en la mar del Sur," in Torres de Mendoza, ed., *Coleccion de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía,* VIII, 557; "Voyage of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo," "Father Antonio de La Ascension's Account of the Voyage," and "Facsimile of the Account of the Cabrillo Expedition," in Wagner, ed., *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America,* 85–86, 88, 236, 256, 455–456, 458; "Relacion, ó diario, de la navegacion que hizo Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo," in [Smith], ed., *Colección de varios documentos para la historia de la Florida y tierras adyacentes,* 179–181, 183.

The wrecked ship was likely the Acapulco-bound galleon *San Agustín,* lost trying to reconnoiter the California coast in 1595. After the ship's demise, a royal decree forbade risking precious and unwieldy galleons on hazardous coastal exploration. See "Diary of Sebastian Vizcaíno," and "Brief Report of the Discovery in the South Sea," both in Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest,* 85, 94, 120; Vizcaíno's Diary, in Carrasco y Guisasola, ed., *Documentos referentes al reconocimiento de las costas de las Californias,* 94, 101; [Ascensión], "Relacion breve en que se dá noticia del descubrimiento que se hizo en la Nueva-España, en la mar del Sur," in Torres de Mendoza, ed., *Coleccion de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía,* VIII, 558; "Father Antonio de La Ascension's Account of the Voyage," in Wagner, ed., *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America,* 249; "Paragraph of a Letter from the Royal Officials of Acapulco to the Conde de Monterrey, Viceroy of New Spain, Giving Tidings of the Loss of the Ship *San Agustín*—Dated 1st February, 1596," and "Paragraph of a Letter from the Conde de Monterrey, Viceroy of New Spain, to the King of Spain, Giving Notice of the Loss of the Ship *San Agustín* and of Discoveries Made in Her—Dated 19th April, 1596," in Cutter, ed. and trans., and Griffin, trans., *California Coast,* 32–39; William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (New York, 1959), 240; Iris H. W. Engstrand, "Seekers of the 'Northern Mystery': European Exploration of California and the Pacific," in Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi, eds., *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush* (Berkeley, Calif., 1998), 78–110, esp. 90. Quivira material from "Father Antonio de La Ascension's Account of the Voyage," in Wagner, ed., *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America,* 252, 255, 264.

wealthy and populous cities to the north. These rumors reinforced Indian merchant reports of gold, silver, and big pueblos. Esteban failed to survive a 1539 effort to investigate these rumors, but Fray Marcos de Niza, the leader of the Spanish reconnaissance effort, did. He wrote of "seven *ciudades*" and claimed to have seen the first of them, Cíbola, which was "grander than the *Ciudad de México*." When Coronado and his men ventured north looking for these cities, they found instead "seven small towns," the first of which was "a small *pueblo* crowded together and spilling down a cliff." In place of the "wealth of gold or rich jewels" they had imagined, they found "two bits of emerald . . . in some paper, also some very worthless, small, red stones." New Mexico fell short of the old.[29]

Coronado retained hopes for better prospects in the lands beyond the Rio Grande Valley. He claimed in a letter to Charles V that Indian informants had led him to believe that, on the plains, the entrada would encounter "much grander towns and buildings" than those of New Mexico, with "lords who ruled them" and "ate out of golden dishes." Instead, the Spanish expedition trudged to a Quivira with houses made "of thatch," where the conquistadors found "neither gold nor silver" nor "news of it." The closest they came was a "lord" wearing "a copper medallion [suspended] from his neck." Oñate's later expeditions led to a Spanish colony's establishment in New Mexico but did little to dispel the inauspicious impressions Coronado left of the regions to the east and west of it or to inspire governmental support for "new discovery."[30]

As Coronado and Oñate's entradas failed to find a Cibola or Quivira commensurate with their desires, Oñate and others of Coronado's successors were also frustrated in their quest for another celebrated will-o'-the-wisp in the lands north of the Valley of Mexico. In the sixteenth century, Spanish missionaries, scholars, and explorers heard and saw expressions of a vague and shifting tradition holding that major peoples of Mexico such as the Mexicas, Toltecas, and Tlaxcoltecas had migrated from someplace in the north denominated variously by names such as Aztlan, Whiteness, the Seven Caves, Chicomoztoc, Colhuacan, Teguayo, the Land of Herons, or the Lake of Copala.[31]

In at least some versions of the Mexican origin story, the physical and perhaps magical distance of Aztlan from the Valley of Mexico, the austerity of Aztlan's inhabitants, and the hardships of its emigrants made it seem an unlikely objective for Spanish exploration. It was not clear from the legends that Edenic Aztlan had been especially rich in the worldly treasures Spaniards sought nor that it could be reached by earthly means. In the most well-known version of the Mexican origin story—that from missionary-ethnographer Fray Diego Durán's 1581 *History of the Indies of New Spain*—the inhabitants of Colhuacan, living as they did "poorly and simply," knew "nothing about" "the wealth" possessed by the later Aztecs. Rich or poor, moreover, Aztlan sounded hard to get to. At one point, Durán suggests that the distance to Aztlan was "so short that it" could "be covered in a month." In a subsequent, Arabian Nights–like account of Aztec emperor Montezuma I's (reigned 1440–1469) attempt "to seek out the place where his ancestors had dwelt," however, Durán has the monarch's advisor Tlacaelel warn that after the Mexicas' ancestors had "departed from their home everything turned into thorns and thistles. The stones became sharp, . . . the bushes . . . prickly and the trees . . . thorny. . . . Everything there turned against them, . . . so they could not return there." In such circumstances, it was best to send "wizards, sorcerers, magicians, who with their enchantments and spells" could "discover that place" rather than a conventional expedition of conquest or reconnaissance. Perhaps fittingly, centuries later, what or where Aztlan was remains uncertain.[32]

29. For Marcos de Niza, see "The Viceroy's Instructions to Fray Marcos de Niza, November 1538, and Narrative Account by Fray Marcos de Niza, August 26, 1539," in Flint and Flint, eds. and trans., *Documents of the Coronado Expedition,* 75, 87. For the reactions of Coronado and his men, see "Coronado's Letter to the Viceroy, August 3, 1540," and "Castañeda de Nájera's Narrative," ibid., 258–259, 267, 393–394, 446–447.

30. On Coronado's hopes and disappointments, see "Coronado's Letter to the King, October 20, 1541," in Flint and Flint, eds. and trans., *Documents of the Coronado Expedition,* 319–320, 323–324: "muy mayores pueblos y casas meJores . . . señores que los mandavan y que se sirVian en VasiJas de oro"; "hay . . . de paJa." "No se Vio entre aquella gente oro ni plata ni notiçia de ello" ("Castañeda de Nájera's Narrative," 411, 467). For other references to thatched roofs in the same volume, see "Relación de Suceso" and "Juan Jaramillo's Narrative," 501, 506, 517, 523. On the copper medallion, see "Castañeda de Nájera's Narrative," 411, 467 (brackets in original): "El señor traya a el cuello Una patena de cobre." On Oñate's expeditions, see "Opinion of the Audiencia of Mexico as to the Continuation of the Conquest and Discovery of New Mexico, May 14, 1602," "Letter from the Fiscal of the Audiencia of Mexico, May 14, 1602, Regarding the Discovery of New Mexico," "Summary of the Five Discourses Presented by the Viceroy concerning the Situation in the Territory That Has Been Pacified and Settled by Adelantado Don Juan de Oñate in the Provinces of New Mexico . . . ," and "Discussion and Proposal of the Points Referred to His Majesty concerning the Various Discoveries of New Mexico," 1602, in Hammond and Rey, eds. and trans., *Don Juan de Oñate,* II, 895–924, esp. 895.

31. Diego Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain,* trans. Doris Heyden (Norman, Okla., 1994), 3–4, 9–21, 212–222; Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de la Tierra Firme* (Mexico City, 1967), II, 13, 18–29, 215–224. For a secondary introduction to this subject, see S. Lyman Tyler, "The Myth of the Lake of Copala and Land of Teguayo," *Utah Historical Quarterly,* XX (1952), 313–329; Tyler and Taylor, eds. and trans., "Report of Fray Alonso de Posada," *NMHR,* XXXIII (1958), 285–314.

32. Durán, *History of the Indies,* trans. Heyden, 12, 212–222; Durán, *Historia de las Indias,* II, 21, 215–222: "esas riquezas que traéis, no usamos acá de ellas, sino de pobreza y llaneza"; "siendo tan poco el camino que en un mes se anda"; "enviar a saber en qué lugares habían habitado sus antepasados"; "después que de allí salieron, todo se volvió espinas y abrojos; las piedras se volvieron puntiagudas para lastimarlos y las yerbas picaban, los árboles, espinosos: todo se volvió contra ellos,

sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Spanish expeditions proceeded north, sometimes hearing what sounded like more encouraging reports en route. In one appealing variation of this tradition, they heard that somewhere to the northwest of Mexico and New Mexico lay a *"Laguna de Oro"* surrounded by rich and populous settlements. Spanish expeditions led by Francisco de Ibarra in the mid-1560s and Antonio de Espejo in 1582–1583 sought this Lake of Copala or Lake of Gold, and might have made it as far as the Gila Valley or the Casas Grandes region of Chihuahua (Ibarra) and Zuñi pueblo and the Colorado River (Espejo). One member of the Espejo expedition, Fray Bernaldino Beltran, reportedly heard from New Mexican Indians "of a large lake, with many towns and inhabitants, where the people rode in canoes bearing large, bronze-colored balls in the prows." Espejo wrote of hearing at Zuñi pueblo in 1583 about "a large lake where the natives claimed there were many towns. These people told us that there was gold in the lake region, that the inhabitants wore clothes, with gold bracelets and earrings, that they dwelt at a distance of a sixty days' journey from the place where we were." The 1604–1605 Oñate land expedition to the lower Colorado also picked up reports of "a lake on whose shores lived people who wore on their wrists bands or bracelets of a yellow metal" at a distance of "nine or ten days' travel." (They also heard fabulous tales of peoples sporting monstrously long ears or "virile members," sleeping in trees or underwater, and subsisting solely on the smell of food.)[33]

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para que no supiesen ni pudiesen volver allá"; "brujos o encantadores y hechiceros, que, con sus encantamientos y hechicerías, descubriesen estos lugares."

33. On the *Laguna de Oro,* see Tyler, "Myth of the Lake of Copala," *Utah Historical Quarterly,* XX (1952), 313–329; Tyler and Taylor, eds. and trans., "Report of Fray Alonso de Posada," *NMHR,* XXXIII (1958), 304–305; Posadas, "Informe á S. M. sobre las tierras de Nuevo Méjico, Quivira y Teguayo," in Duro, *Don Diego de Peñalosa,* 65; Alonso de Benavides, *Fray Alonso de Benavides' Revised Memorial of 1634: With Numerous Supplementary Documents Elaborately Annotated,* ed. and trans. Frederick Webb Hodge, George P. Hammond, and Agapito Rey (Albuquerque, N.M., 1945), 40–41. On the Ibarra and Espejo expeditions, see Tyler, "Myth of the Lake of Copala," *Utah Historical Quarterly,* XX (1952), 316–317; George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, trans., *Obregón's History of 16th Century Explorations in Western America, Entitled, Chronicle, Commentary, or Relation of the Ancient and Modern Discoveries in New Spain and New Mexico* (Los Angeles, Calif., 1928), 43, 50, 152–216; Hammond and Rey, eds. and trans., *Rediscovery of New Mexico,* part 2, 153–242. For Beltran, see "Brief and True Account of the Discovery of New Mexico by Nine Men Who Set out from Santa Bárbara in the Company of Three Franciscan Friars," ibid., 142–143; "Relacion breve y verdadera del descubrimiento del Nuevo Mexico," in Torres de Mendoza, ed., *Coleccion de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía,* XV (Madrid, 1871), 146–150, esp. 149. For the information from Zuñi pueblo, see "Report of Antonio de Espejo," in Hammond and Rey, eds. and trans., *Rediscovery of New Mexico,* 213–232, esp. 225, 227; "Relacion del viage, que yo, Antonio Espejo, . . . hize con catorce soldados y un relijioso de la orden de San Francisco, á las provincias y poblaciones de la Nueva México," in *Coleccion*

What did these northern tales of a fabulous lake signify? Polite or mischievous Indian informants might have been indulging the wishes or testing the gullibility of their Spanish audience. Or Spaniards might have been hearing what they wanted to hear. Desperately hoping for an El Dorado in North America surpassing that of the continent to the south, and in keeping with a tendency of many North American explorers, they might have translated their Indian interlocutors' words into a description compatible with Spanish greed or fancy. They might have taken Indian references to nonprecious metals as evidence of gold or silver. Copper bells formed an important article of southwestern trade, and lacustrine or riparian peoples possessing bells or other ornaments of this metal could easily have generated the kinds of reports Europeans were hearing. Father Francisco de Escobar, who kept a diary on Oñate's journey to the Gulf of California, alluded to the danger of such confusion when, after much describing, gesturing, pointing, and showing on the part of Colorado River Indians, he confessed, "They almost convinced me beyond all doubt that there were both yellow and white metals in the land, though there is no proof that the yellow metal is gold or that the white is silver, for of this my doubts are still very great."[34]

One other possibility is that eager Spaniards like Beltran and Espejo were misunderstanding imperfect rumors of some actual area or combination of areas approximating the characteristics appearing in tales. The Puget Sound–Inside Passage region of the Pacific Northwest fits parts of the descriptions. The inland Pacific extensions in this area resemble lakes in many respects and have long been dotted with populous settlements. The inhabitants Europeans observed there in the late eighteenth century exhibited a remarkable facility with canoes as well as striking cloaks, hats, and copper ornaments. A long chain of trading relations connecting the pueblos of New Mexico and Arizona to the distant

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de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía, XV, 118, 180–181 (volume includes two slightly different versions). On the Oñate expedition, see "Fray Francisco de Escobar's Diary of the Oñate Expedition to California, 1605," in Hammond and Rey, *Don Juan de Oñate,* II, 1012–1031, esp. 1019, 1025–1026. Zárate Salmerón's 1626 secondhand account of the Oñate entrada placed the alluring lake and its gold-wearing inhabitants 400 hundred leagues from Mexico City, "14 days' journey" beyond the Colorado River, northwest of New Mexico ([Gerónimo de] Zárate Salmerón, *Relaciónes: An Account of Things Seen and Learned by Father Jerónimo de Zárate Salmerón from the Year 1538 to Year 1626,* trans. Alicia Ronstadt Milich [New York, 1966], 67, 69, 75–76, 90–94). For the original Spanish, see Zárate Salmerón, *Relaciónes de todas las cosas que en el Nuevo México se han visto y sabido . . . ,* in *Documentos para servir a la historia del Nuevo México, 1538–1778* (Madrid, 1962), 113–204, esp. 165, 167, 174–175, 190–195.

34. On copper bells, see Brian M. Fagan, *Ancient North America: The Archaeology of a Continent,* 3d ed. (New York, 2000), 314, 319, 323, 332, 348. For Escobar, see "Fray Francisco de Escobar's Diary of the Oñate Expedition to California, 1605," in Hammond and Rey, eds. and trans., *Don Juan de Oñate,* II, 1018–1020.

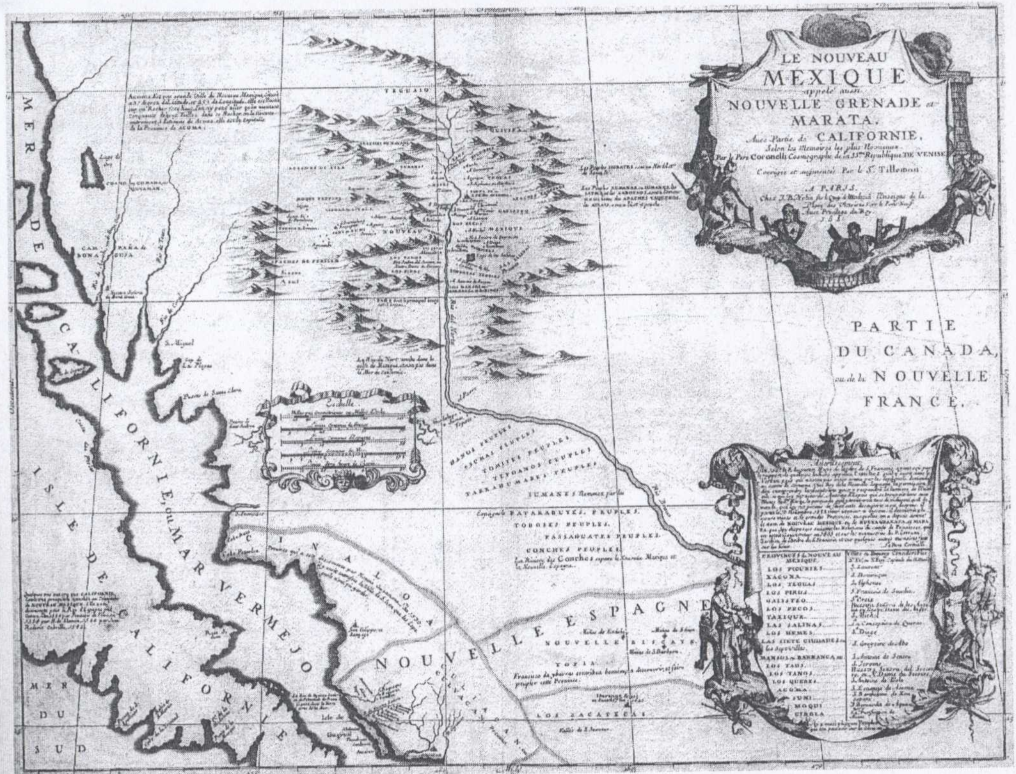
Pacific Northwest might have produced the kinds of stories Spanish explorers were hearing, especially if southwestern Indians were describing peoples they had heard about from others but had not seen themselves. Puget Sound and the Inside Passage might conceivably lie two hard months from Zuñi pueblo. A less distant explanation is that Spaniards were hearing and perhaps conflating accounts of other western bodies of water such as the Colorado Delta, intermittent Lake Cahuilla (in the Salton Trough in today's southern California), the Santa Barbara Channel, or the larger lakes in what is now Utah.[35]

In any case, though Spanish explorers heard tales of Aztec migration and observed monuments purportedly left by Aztec ancestors (such as the Casa Grande ruins in south-central Arizona), they failed to find a terrestrial realization of the desired Lake of Gold. This weakened or even discredited one impulse for exploration. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, though still mentioning without elaboration "Gran Teguayo" as an object of exploration, an explorer like Kino could number "a lake . . . of gold" among the "great errors and falsehoods imposed upon us by those who have delineated this North America with feigned things which do not exist."[36]

These early Spanish failures to find promised riches amid the challenging terrain and peoples of the West provide an almost satisfactory explanation for the slowing of Spanish exploration after the first decade of the seventeenth century. Only almost, because the mineral, agricultural, scenic, and human bounties found by later explorers make it difficult to accept even the most reasonable explanation for Spanish inertia. Almost, also, because seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French explorers found reasons and means to move toward western North American regions repelling Spanish advances, thereby throwing Spanish inertia into high relief.

35. Conversations with historian Peter Wood made me much more attentive to the possibility of connections between the northwest coast and other parts of the Far West. Good introductions to Northwest Coast Indians include Philip Drucker, *Cultures of the North Pacific Coast* (San Francisco, 1965); Erna Gunther, *Indian Life on the Northwest Coast of North America: As Seen by the Early Explorers and Fur Traders during the Last Decades of the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago, 1972); and Kenneth M. Ames and Herbert D. G. Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast: Their Archaeology and Prehistory* (London, 1999). On connections between Zuñi pueblo and other parts of the Southwest, see T. J. Ferguson and E. Richard Hart, *A Zuni Atlas* (Norman, Okla., 1985), 52–55.

36. Kino, *Kino's Historical Memoir of Pimería Alta,* ed. and trans. Bolton, I, 91, 127–129, 213, 359 (quotation), II, 243, 258, 264. For other eighteenth-century references to Teguayo, see "Information Which I, Fray Carlos Delgado, Give Your Reverence of El Gran Teguayo, Which Is between West and North: It Is Distant Two Hundred Leagues, More or Less, from This Custodia [1745?]," in Hackett, ed., *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico,* comp. Bandelier and Bandelier, III, 415–416; "Rivera to Casa Fuerte, Presidio del Paso del Río del Norte, September 26, 1727," in Thomas, ed. and trans., *After Coronado,* 211.



MAP 15. Vincenzo Coronelli, *Le nouveau Mexique.* c. 1685.
Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, g4300 ct001821

A basic Spanish difficulty arose from the North American West's geographic relation to the rest of the Spanish Empire. When seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French explorers moved west and south toward the Pacific, Mexico, and New Mexico, they were moving toward known concentrations of wealth in Peru, New Spain, and, ultimately, the East Indies. The intervening lands and waters were uncertain, but the galleons returning from Spanish America and the East India ships coming back from Asia repeatedly verified the value of the final objective. In contrast, when Spanish explorers moved north from Mexico up the Pacific coast, into the mountainous Southwest, or onto the western and southern plains, they were, in one sense, going the wrong way. They were moving away from the New World's established Peruvian and Mexican centers of gravity, away from what some historians have called "Nuclear America," and into areas of probable risk and uncertain reward or toward French and British colonies whose economic value lagged for many years behind those of Spain.

From an imperial perspective, this was a questionable diversion of men and money away from the protection of Spain's core assets; from the entrepreneurial point of view of a private expedition financier, a dubious proposition.

This did not stop entirely the extension of Spanish colonization. From the 1547 discovery of silver deposits at Zacatecas, silver strikes pulled New Spain's mining operations and support activities northward. Beyond this mining frontier, regions such as New Mexico, Baja California, Texas, and Florida became—like Chile, Paraguay, and northern Argentina—the sites of Spanish missions and settlements. Their utility as venues for Christian conversion efforts, for the supply or security of more vital mining regions and bullion routes, or for the generation of a modest livelihood for a small number of colonists sufficed to bring missions and settlements into existence and sometimes to sustain them. But this somewhat meager importance failed to generate rapid, thorough, and effective efforts to explore the regions beyond.

French western exploration possessed the additional advantage of a well-developed fur trade. Because this commerce formed a central part of the economy of New France, and because the American West furnished pelts in large quantities, French explorers had both an obvious motive to move into western lands and a possible means of financing their operations. Moreover, because Indian cooperation was critical for the fur trade and because the commerce in pelts was crucial for cementing the Indian alliances necessary for the survival of the underpopulated French colonies, French explorers and officials were more likely than their Spanish counterparts to think in terms of collaborating with select native peoples rather than dominating them. French explorers could move a well-developed and essential economic activity into profuse new terrain, and they benefited from a justification for their roamings less dependent on the location of mineral wealth or the subjugation of settled native peoples.

The Spanish Empire, in contrast, having acquired the precious metals and native labor its rivals coveted, had less need to develop the kind of alternative enterprises sustaining the French, Dutch, and British North American colonies. New Mexico provides an exception proving the rule. As David J. Weber has noted, lacking the economic opportunities blessing Peru and Mexico, needy New Mexican settlers sent slaves, hides, and coarse furs from their Indian neighbors to markets farther south. A combination of factors, however, kept these activities small in scale and limited in appeal. These included the high cost of transport, limited demand for furs in Mexico, measures prohibiting—with varying degrees of success—Indian enslavement, meager interest among southwestern Indians in trapping and trading in small mammals, the labor demands of New Mexican agriculture, and the dangers of Indian attacks. Consequently, settlers already in New Mexico trafficked in furs and slaves, but such commerce was insufficiently lucrative to draw many opportunity-seeking Spaniards from Mexico City to Santa Fe and beyond. New Mexico and its trades in animals and people remained marginal affairs. Before 1763, the colony did not serve, as Canada and the Illinois country did for France, as a jumping-off point for extensive and more-or-less sanctioned western exploration.[37]

When, moreover, Spanish officials were looking for new American revenue sources, other regions often appeared more promising than the North American West. For the French American Empire, the region west of the Great Lakes and Mississippi constituted one of the only areas relatively open for expansion: south from the Saint Lawrence and east from the Mississippi led to British entanglements, the islands of the Caribbean by their very nature left little room for growth, and France failed before the end of the Seven Years' War to establish a presence in South America substantial and lasting enough to open hinterlands for exploration. For the Spanish Empire, in contrast, many areas presented themselves to curious geographers and potential explorers. Why set out from Mexico into North American deserts or Pacific coastal rocks when the Amazon and Orinoco basins stood within reach of Peru and the Spanish Main? This question was particularly pointed when the tropics seemed more likely to offer plants and other resources of value than did the dishearteningly barren landscapes covering much of the plains and Southwest. By the mid-eighteenth century, reform-minded Spanish ministers were already contemplating the possibility of using the natural riches of South America's tropical forests to revive the Spanish imperial economy. It was not yet clear how the arid North American Southwest could contribute immediately to the same end.[38]

37. David J. Weber, *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540–1846* (Norman, Okla., 1971), 12–21. Unsanctioned exploration from New Mexico is a possibility worth considering. To give one example, the Spanish Empire had its illicit and therefore usually anonymous western traders. As Weber has noted in his study of New Mexico's fur and hide trade, Spanish traders hoping to acquire slaves and pelts from Ute Indians were certainly moving beyond the colony's frontiers into the Great Basin and the southern Rockies after 1765 and might very well have been doing so decades earlier. Such activities would have familiarized at least some Spaniards with lands and peoples of great interest to imperial officials. Because "a royal order prohibited trade in Indian lands," however, these wide-ranging New Mexicans and their collaborators had every reason to keep such activities secret. We are left to speculate about what unauthorized and therefore undocumented wanderers might have been saying among themselves but keeping from metropolitan authorities (Weber, *Taos Trappers,* 23–26). Along these lines, Kino mentioned having evidence that, before the Pueblo Revolt, New Mexican Spaniards were journeying as far as the junction of the Gila and San Pedro rivers (in southeastern Arizona) to trade with the Pimas Sobaiporis (Kino, *Kino's Historical Memoir of Pimería Alta,* ed. and trans. Bolton, II, 257). See also Warner, ed., *Domínguez-Escalante Journal,* trans. Chavez, 90; Sánchez, *Explorers, Traders, and Slavers,* 17–39.

38. On tropical forests and the Spanish economy, see Demetrio Ramos Pérez, "La época de la

Indeed, in the early modern period, it was in many respects South America and its Incas, rather than North America and its fallen Aztecs, that presented the most plausible and enticing mirages to aspiring discoverers. This was especially true of the comparatively well-grounded reasons for searching around the lengthy perimeter of the Inca Empire. The Inca royal family furnished the most evident of these. Between 1537 and 1572, a fleeing Manco Inca and his successors had managed to construct and maintain a capital and state in exile northwest of Cuzco in the Vilcabamba region, where varied and difficult terrain and climate offered the Incas some protection against Spanish invaders. Manco and his followers carried considerable wealth with them, and when a Spanish expedition finally destroyed Vilcabamba, it gained a new supply of Inca treasure. These were verifiable events yielding tangible rewards, and, as J. H. Parry has remarked, actual Inca flight and the muddled Spanish notions to which it gave rise made more plausible the idea that other escapees from the Inca Empire might have found shelter in impenetrable thickets of the Amazon jungle or inaccessible corners of the Andes. These dreams lingered long after the Inca Empire had fallen. Not only did an Indian (at least in some versions of the tale) metropolis like the Enchanted City of the Caesars remain a plausible fancy into the late eighteenth century, but lost cities of the Incas and the Amazon Basin have been sought and found in the twentieth century—and the twenty-first is still young.[39]

Moreover, the many manifest antagonisms created by the bruising and wide-ranging character of Inca expansion suggested to Spaniards that, in addition to wealthy Inca escapees, it might also be reasonable to seek rich Inca enemies. These likely foes could be connected to other tales of South American treasure, such as the persistent legend of El Dorado. A good example is the story of the celebrated Ancoalli, a leader of the Chancas, an Andean people who fought, served, and fled the Incas in the mid-fifteenth century. Peruvian cosmographer and historian Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa wrote in his 1572 *History of the Incas* of Ancoalli and the Chancas' decision to flee the treacherous designs of an Inca Empire jealous of Chanca martial prowess. The Chancas agreed "to seek a rugged and mountainous land where the Incas, even if they sought them, would not be able to find them." Other sixteenth-century Spanish authors, such as the celebrated Pedro Cieza de León, linked this fifteenth-century Chanca exodus to another vigorous South American legend, El Dorado. Cieza de León placed the "descendants of the famous chieftain Ancoallo" in the general area of Moyobamba (in what is now north-central, trans-Andean Peru) and indicated on the basis of Indian tales that, "having crossed the Andes Mountains," the Chancas "came to a great lake, which I believe must be the site of the tale they tell of El Dorado, where they built their settlements and have multiplied greatly."[40]

Together and separately, the story of fleeing Ancoalli and the legend of splendid El Dorado inspired Spanish exploration. A relative of Francisco Pizarro, Diego Pizarro de Carvajal, reportedly asked permission to lead an expedition to seek the errant Chanca chief. Francisco de Orellana's fantastic 1541–1542 descent of the Amazon occurred as a by-product of Gonzalo Pizarro's search not only for cinnamon trees in "the province of La Canela" but also of his quest for "[the region around] Lake El Dorado . . . a very populous and very rich land" east of Quito.[41]

Like the lost cities of the Incas sought and found by sixteenth-century Spaniards and twentieth-century Yale men, these stories of fleeing peoples, local spices, and golden lakes rested on a factual foundation. Though Spaniards never met him, Ancoalli existed, and sixteenth-century Spaniards observed the preserved skins of members of the Chanca nation he led. A kind of cinnamon tree grew east of the Andes, and, though reality fell short of legend, scholars have noted that there does seem to have been in the fifteenth century an Indian ceremony on Lake Guatavita (in modern Colombia) involving a chief's being coated in gold dust. Nearby Lake Siecha has yielded a golden statuette of what appears

nueva Monarquía," in Luis Navarro García, ed., *Historia general de España y América,* XI, *América en el siglo XVIII: Los primeros Borbones,* 2d ed., part 1 (Madrid, 1989), xi–xli, esp. xxxvii–xxxix.

39. On Vilcabamba, see John Hemming, *The Conquest of the Incas* (New York, 1970), 230–231, 250–261, 425–440. On the implications of Inca flight, see J. H. Parry, *The Discovery of South America* (New York, 1979), 261; Henry J. Bruman, "Sovereign California: The State's Most Plausible Alternative Scenario," in Bruman and Clement W. Meighan, *Early California: Perception and Reality* (Los Angeles, Calif., 1981), 1–41, esp. 6–8. On later South American exploration, see Goodman, *Explorers of South America,* 57–64, 170–178; Hemming, *Conquest of the Incas,* 474–500.

40. Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, *History of the Incas,* trans. Clements Markham (1907; rpt. Mineola, N.Y., 1999), 115–117; Sarmiento de Gamboa, *Historia Indica por Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa,* in P. Carmelo Sáenz de Santa Maria, ed., *Obras completas del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega,* 4 vols. (Madrid, 1960–1965), IV, 189–279, esp. 243. See also Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru,* trans. Harold V. Livermore, 2 vols. (Austin, Tex., 1966), I, 300–302; Pedro de Cieza de León, *The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de León,* ed. Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, trans. Harriet de Onis (Norman, Okla., 1959), 100, 130–131; Cieza de León, *Crónica del Perú,* in Sáenz de Santa María, ed., *Obras completas,* I, 104, 199: "los descendientes del famoso capitán Ancoallo"; "pasando por la montaña de los Andes, caminó por aquellas sierras hasta que llegaron, según también dicen, a una laguna muy grande, que yo creo debe ser lo que cuentan del Dorado, adonde hicieron sus pueblos y se ha multiplicado mucha gente."

41. Pizarro de Carvajal's expedition was "abandoned" around 1536 "for lack of supplies" (Cieza de León, *Discovery and Conquest of Peru,* ed. and trans. Cook and Cook, 421; Cieza de León, *Crónica del Perú,* in Sáenz de Santa María, ed., *Obras completas,* I, 349). On the Orellana expedition, see "Letter of Gonzalo Pizarro to the King" (brackets in original), in José Toribio Medina, ed., *The Discovery of the Amazon,* trans. Bertram T. Lee and H. C. Heaton (1934; rpt. New York, 1988), 245–251, esp. 245; see also "Oviedo's Description of Gonzalo Pizarro's Expedition to the Land of Cinnamon . . . ," ibid., 390–404, esp. 391–392, 402; Parry, *Discovery of South America,* 261–262; Goodman, *Explorers of South America,* 66–68.

to be a raft-borne royal ceremony. South America gave and continues to give good reasons to explore and reexplore its vast and difficult landscapes.[42]

Conditions north of the Valley of Mexico offered less sustenance for conquistador dreams. One reason was the absence of the notion that rich royals from or wealthy enemies of the Aztec Empire had sought refuge by fleeing north. No equivalent of Vilcabamba took shape in Arizona, and Spanish explorers lacked therefore one type of concrete example on which they could rest their conjectures. The passage of time also militated against North American entradas. The South American stories motivating exploration possessed a basis not only in reality but in recent reality. Vilcabamba was a city of the sixteenth century; Chanca flight and golden lacustrine ceremonies, happenings of the fifteenth. Aztlan, in contrast, was distant history, perhaps timeless mythology. To the extent that Durán's account can be rendered consistent with itself and conventional chronology, the ancestors of the Indian nations of Mexico seem to have left Aztlan in the ninth century. The intervening years made the reality of Mexican Indian origins that much more difficult to discern or believe. Finally, though Rocky Mountains promised silver veins, western shores sustained prosperous communities, and sierra streams would reveal golden nuggets, scholarly investigations have not yet uncovered an original of the Lake of Gold as closely connectable to its derivative legends as lakes Guatavita and Siecha are to El Dorado.[43]

Between the first decade of the seventeenth century and the years after the Seven Years' War, western North America gave prospective Spanish explorers good reason to stay home—and insufficient incentive to push Spanish reconnaissance more than incrementally or occasionally forward.

42. For the flayed Chancas, see Cieza de León, *Discovery and Conquest of Peru,* ed. and trans. Cook and Cook, 317; Cieza de León, *Crónica del Perú,* in Sáenz de Santa María, ed., *Obras completas,* I, 314. On the El Dorado legend, see John Hemming, *The Search for El Dorado* (New York, 1978), 104–105, 195–198; Goodman, *Explorers of South America,* 66–68, 77, 380; Parry, *Discovery of South America,* 260–261.

43. Durán, *History of the Indies,* trans. Heyden, 12; Durán, *Historia de las Indias,* II, 21.