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## **The Exploratory Expedition of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado**

**This is a summary of the Coronado Expedition of 1540-42 with a particular focus on what was the extent and methods of hunting bison by the natives of the plains of North America before their acquisition of horses. There are two reasons for this focus. First, why did tribes such as the Lakota not live by hunting bison before the acquisition of the horse? The Lakota before the acquisition lived a settled existence on the shores of Lake Superior gathering wild rice and hunting smaller game. Clearly having horses made bison hunting easier and safer but did the lack of horses really preclude their surviving as nomadic bison hunters? One possibility is that it was so dangerous to be hunting on foot in a bison herd that it was just not done. Natives killed bison since ancient times but the method was to stampede them over a cliff with the use of fire. Hunting bison by this method was probably a feast-or-famine affair. It is also possible that the process of following the roaming bison herds was such a burden with only humans and dogs to carry the tribal possessions that tribes elected not to do it until horses eased the transport problems.**

**Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca in his narrative says that he ate bison meat only once in three years. His experience was in Texas and perhaps there were very few bison in that area at that time. This is why the narrative of the Coronado Expedition is so important**

**on the question of pre-horse bison hunting. The expedition traveled through prime bison country in what is now Kansas.**

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**The impetus for the Coronado Expedition was from the impression Cabeza de Vaca gave that there were valuable things in the area to the north of New Spain. Cabeza de Vaca created this belief by refusing to tell anyone except the King of Spain what he had seen, as though what he had to tell was so important that only the King should hear it. *Important* for Cabeza de Vaca meant the Christian conversion of the natives and their humane assimilation into the Spanish Empire. *Important* to those less pious than Cabeza de Vaca meant treasures. Cabeza de Vaca did mention *emeralds* but probably meant *turquoise*. Those who heard *emeralds* probably did not consider the possibility that there might have been a confusion in terminology.**

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## **Historical Background**

### **Hernán Cortez and the Matter of Bureaucratic Rivalries and Jealousies**

**Hernán Cortez, conqueror of the mighty Aztec Empire, was the victim of petty bureaucratic jealousies. Even before his invasion of Mexico he was forced to cope with administrative jealousies within the bureaucracy of the Spanish Empire. In 1504 at age nineteen Cortez sailed from Spain to Hispaniola. For six years he was a farmer and a minor local government official. In 1511 he sailed with Diego Velazquez to conquer Cuba. When Cuba was conquered Velazquez became the governor of Cuba and Cortez became a clerk to the treasurer. Cortez had significant status in the regime of Velazquez in the then capital of Cuba, Santiago.**

**Cortez fell out of favor with Velazquez when he began an affair with the sister of the woman that Velazquez was courting. Cortez married the sister, Catalina Juarez, and he was once again on good terms with Velazquez. Cortez was twice elected mayor (*alcalde*) of Santiago.**

**There had been two Spanish expeditions to the mainland of North America and Velazquez felt there was a need for a followup expedition to establish a permanent colony there. In 1518 Velazquez called upon Cortez, a man of proven leadership ability, to lead that expedition. Cortez knew that unless he acted quickly Velazquez was likely to change his mind. In less than a month Cortez had gathered 300 soldiers and sailed with six ships from Santiago. He picked up other recruits at other Cuba ports so that when the expedition embarked from Cuba to the vicinity of what subsequently became Veracruz Cortez' force numbered somewhat over 600 in 11 ships. The number of horses was however only 16. Velazquez was jealous of the organizational ability shown by Cortez and decided to replace him as the expedition's leader. But Cortez was too quick for Velazquez and Velazquez was not able to execute the formal action of replacing Cortez as the leader of the expedition. But Cortez' official assignment was a very limited one, establishing a Spanish colony on the coast of the mainland. In particular there was no provision for Cortez to undertake any expedition to the interior of the continent.**

**In this matter again Cortez was quick and agile. Cortez established the town of Veracruz and had the town officially elect him captain and chief justice. Cortez could then take action independent of the limitations imposed upon him by Velazquez. Cortez, having heard of the rich empire of the Aztecs, burned his ships and set out for the interior and conquest.**

**The story of the Conquest is told elsewhere: [Conquest of Mexico](#) and [Aztecs](#).**

**The emphasis here is the rivalries and jealousies within the Spanish Empire bureaucracy and how they affected the exploration of what is now northwest of Mexico and the southwest of the United States.**

**After Cortez and his army had conquered Tenochtitlan, Velazquez sent a punitive force in 1520 under the command of Panfilo Narvaez to punish Cortez. Cortez had no difficulty thwarting the punitive expedition, particularly one commanded by such an inept leader as Narvaez (later the leader of the disastrous expedition that Cabeza de Vaca survived). He in fact persuaded the punitive expedition force to join him. But while Cortez was away from Tenochtitlan dealing with Narvaez' punitive expedition Pedro de Alvarado who was left in command in Tenochtitlan drove the Aztecs to rebellion. Cortez won the city back again but at great cost.**

**Despite Cortez' extraordinary victories there were jealous enemies in Spain, including Velazquez, that tried to poison the mind of the Spanish king, Charles V, against him. Special envoys were sent from Spain to exert royal authority over him. Even in Mexico his enemies tried to harm him. When Cortez went into Central America for two years those he left in charge confiscated his properties. Finally in 1528 Cortez sailed to Spain to answer the charges against him. In Spain Charles V met with him and gave him a royal title, Marquis del Valle de Oaxaca, and the captaincy General for New Spain but not its governorship.**

**Cortez returned to New Spain in 1530 but he was bedeviled by his enemies. He was accused and tried on a charge that he strangled his first wife.**

**In 1535 Cortez led an another expedition to the west that reached Baja California, which was thought to be an island. In the context of the situation faced by Cortez, this *entrada* was an attempt to regain glory by finding a new kingdom to conquer. Of course he found only desolate country and primitive peoples and no glory. Finally in 1540 Cortez returned to Spain after a viceroy had been appointed for New Spain. He remained in Spain until his death in 1547, which occurred as he started a journey to return to New Spain.**

## **Precursors to the Coronado Expedition**

**Before Cortez's *entrada* to Baja California there was a much more significant expedition to the west by Nuño Beltran de Guzman. In 1526 de Guzman was appointed the governor of the province around the city of Panuco on the northeast coast of what is now Mexico. In 1527 he became president of the administrative and judicial body (*Audiencia*), which ruled New Spain. His rule of the natives was harsh and cruel. A bishop, Zumarraga, sent letters to the King of Spain protesting de Guzman's harsh and corrupt rule. De Guzman reacted to the complaints by raising an expedition to explore the west and northwest of what is now Mexico. The motivation for this exploration came from a native who told de Guzman that as a child he had journeyed**

with his trader father to the north where there were large, rich cities that paid for their trade goods in gold and silver. In 1529 de Guzman had built a chapel that became the nucleus for the city of Guadalajara. He founded the cities of Santiago de Compostela and San Miguel de Culiacan (hereafter Compostela and Culiacan). During this time Cortez was in Spain defending himself against various charges. In 1531 when de Guzman was ready to return from his *entrada* the political situation in Mexico was precarious for him. Cortez, a bitter enemy of de Guzman, had returned from Spain in 1530 and was still the Captain General of New Spain. The *Audiencia* in Mexico City sent orders for de Guzman to come to Mexico City for review. When de Guzman ignored those orders Cortez sent a unit of a hundred soldiers to arrest de Guzman. De Guzman arrested the troops that Cortez had sent but the Administration in Mexico City did not relent. In 1536 de Guzman was finally arrested and imprisoned. He remained in prison until 1538 when he was exiled.

### **Cabeza de Vaca and the Remnants of the Narvaez Expedition to Florida**

After the disastrous collapse of the 1527 expedition to Florida due to the incompetent leadership of Panfilo Narvaez the survivors tried to sail to Panuco on several rafts. Many, including Narvaez, were lost at sea but some were blown ashore near Galveston Island in what is now Texas. These survivors were rescued by natives but made slaves. For about six years Cabeza de Vaca while enslaved served as a trader in the region carrying out trade that members of warring tribes themselves could not engage in. When the time was right Cabeza de Vaca and three others (two Spaniards -- Dorante and Castillo Maldonado -- and a Moorish slave -- Estaban (Steven)) made their escape. They journeyed across Texas and northern Mexico because they were told that the natives in the region north of Panuco, who hated the Spanish, would kill them immediately.

Cabeza de Vaca who was a simple soldier of fortune at the beginning of the expedition became devoutly religious as a result of his experience. The more complete story is found in Cabeza de Vaca. The significant thing was that Cabeza de Vaca saw a different potential to the territories he passed through than would a conquistadore. He saw the opportunity to bring the people into the Spanish Empire under Christianity in a humane and enlightened way. When Cabeza de Vaca came out of the wilderness into Culiacan in 1536 he wanted to return as the leader of an expedition to that same area. He therefore tried to express his knowledge of what was in the territories in such a way that it would appeal to the interests of the leaders of the Empire. For example, he mentioned precious stones, by which he meant turquoise, but this was interpreted to mean emeralds. He did tell of his hearing of cities in which the buildings were four and five stories high. He declined to tell anybody except the King of Spain the details of his observations. This was interpreted to mean that that the territory was so rich that a

knowledge of the details would prompt a rush to exploit them and preempt their development by the King.

The King would have been willing to send Cabeza de Vaca back into the territory of Florida but he had already given that assignment to Hernando de Soto. Cabeza de Vaca was sent instead to South America to find out what had happened in the Spanish colony of what is now Paraguay and if necessary to become the governor. That story is told in [Cabeza de Vaca in South America](#).

### **The *Entrada* of Father Marcos de Niza and Estaban**

After the miraculous return of Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions in 1536 Mexico City would have been rife with speculation about what was to the north. The residents of Mexico City would have been aware of the tales told to Nuño de Guzman about large, rich cities to the north that inspired his *entrada*. By 1539 they were probably aware of Cabeza de Vaca's special audience with the King and the King's having enough confidence in him to send him to the colony in South America. With de Soto's *entrada* exploring the Florida territory (what is now the southeastern United States) there was no time to waste.

The viceroy of New Spain was Don Antonio de Mendoza and his best friend and protégé was Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. Francisco Vázquez traveled throughout Mexico as an inspector for Viceroy Mendoza. Mendoza appointed Vázquez de Coronado as Governor of New Galicia, the territory to the northwest of Mexico City which included the cities of Compostela and Culiacan. Mendoza and Vázquez decided to outfit an *entrada* to find and conquer the fabulous cities of the north. Vázquez invested most of his fortune in the venture and Mendoza invested a substantial share of his as well. Based upon the silver content of money invested the cost in present day terms would have been about \$600,000.

To be prudent Mendoza and Vázquez decided to send into the northern territory three Franciscan brothers accompanied by Estaban, the companion of Cabeza de Vaca. Estaban would have been familiar with the language and customs of the natives of the area. He had passed through their territories before without causing them any harm so he would likely be accepted again. The leader of the Franciscans was Father Marcos de Niza, a priest. He was of French background and his command of Spanish was less than perfect but he was willing to serve. Brother Marcos was accompanied by two other Franciscans and Estaban from Culiacan.

The small group travelled about 300 leagues (800 miles) north from Culiacan to the city which became known as Cibola. Along the way friction developed between

**Esteban and the friars because Esteban accepted the gifts of women and turquoise that natives along the way offered to them. Esteban not only accepted what was offered but began to demand more. To reduce frictions between Esteban and themselves the friars allowed Esteban to travel ahead of them with his escort of natives. Soon Esteban and his entourage were days ahead of the friars.**

**When Esteban reached Cibola the native leaders of the community put him in a hut near the city and questioned him for three days. He told them of white men that were coming to instruct them about things in the sky (religion). The leaders weighed answers that Esteban was giving them. They decided he must be giving them false information for why else would people who were white send a man who was black to visit them. They were also probably offended at his demands for women. They then killed Esteban but allowed most of the natives who were traveling with him to leave. Those fled back to the friars upset at the loss of their companions. Father Marcos placated them by distributing everything he possessed except for the ceremonial vestments. He asked the natives to take him on to where he could see the city of Cibola. He was able to view Cibola from a hill and see that it did have buildings, some of which were four or five stories tall.**

**Father Marcos returned to Culiacan and on to Mexico City to give a report. Father Marcos in fact wrote a report of what he saw. His report exaggerated. But because he was not perfectly adept in writing Spanish the report had to be rewritten. The editor of Father Marcos' report tended to exaggerate the exaggerations. The final report was then signed by Father Marcos and distributed to priests throughout Mexico City who incorporated elements of it in their sermons. The net result was that there was a great interest throughout Mexico City in Francisco Vázquez' plans for a northern *entrada*, a venture that not only had the potential for bringing wealth but fulfilled a religious obligation as well.**

## **The *Entrada* of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado**

**The publicizing of Father Marcos' report on Cibola created so much interest in Mexico City that 300 Spaniards and about 800 natives volunteered to join the expedition. Many of the Spaniards were young men of high status families in Mexico City. They hoped to make their fame and fortune in the enterprise of Mendoza and Vázquez. Some were also in need of funds at the time.**

**Mendoza and Vázquez decided that the expedition would start from the western city of Santiago de Compostela and that the excess cargo and baggage for the expedition would be carried on ships under the command of Alarcón. The ship would follow the**

**expedition along coast in the Gulf of California. It was mistakenly thought that the expedition would stay within easy communicating distance of the coast.**

**The physical effort of the expedition turned out to be more than some of the young aristocrats from Mexico City had counted on. Some had to walk while using their horses to carry their luggage. Father Marcos had said the trail was an easy one, but Father Marcos was in extremely good condition from his extensive walking. What might have been an easy hike for Father Marcos was a heavy slog for the young men of Mexico City.**

**While the expedition was still within the territory of New Spain and conditions were still generally pleasant. When the expedition approached the city of Culiacan at Easter the residents assembled outside of the the town in a mock show of defense so they could receive Coronado as a conqueror.**

**In Culiacan suspicions were beginning to grow as to whether there would be as much treasure as had been supposed. Some thought of leaving the expedition but honor put severe restrictions upon them. One came up with an ingenious resolution. He told Coronado that the Devil had appeared to him and said that if he killed him he would get all of Coronado's wealth and would be able to marry Coronado's beautiful young wife. He said that he had piously turned down the Devil's offer. The narrator of the expedition, Pedro de Castaneda, saw the story for what it was, a ploy to get Coronado to separate the young man from the expedition. Coronado of course could not have someone in the expedition that might be being persuaded to kill him so he assigned the young man to stay in the outpost city of northwestern Mexico. It was a perfect solution to the young man's problem. He avoided the hard and dangerous expedition that was likely to provide little or no reward and maintained his personal honor.**

**But not all the incidents, even at this early stage of the expedition, were humane. At one town a Spanish officer was shot through the eye with an arrow and died. The soldiers rounded up hostages in the vicinity and executed all those from the locale where the officer was shot. The Spanish king, Philip II, had admonished the Spaniards to treat the natives humanely and prohibited the use of natives as porters for the Spanish army. Coronado tried to adhere to the the policy promulgated by the Crown but when violence occurred he reverted to the traditional policy of countering violence with overwhelming retaliation, as will be seen later in the history of the expedition.**

**Coronado left Culiacan with the advance units of the expedition. He intended to take all of the friars with him but a few days out one friar broke his leg and had to be taken back to Culiacan. The soldiers left in Culiacan and the friar were not necessarily happy to find that they unexpectedly had to deal with each other for the foreseeable future.**



## **Into the Wilderness**

**The territory north from Culiacan was uninhabited. The only evidence of past habitation was the remains of some fortification called by the Aztecs, *The Red House*. The red color came from the natural color of the soil in the area. The redish soil was also responsible for the coloration of the rivers and streams, which were given names such as *Rio Colorado*. The Red House was roofless but it was still impressive to the Spaniards at the time. It reflected the past existence of a more advanced civilization in the region.**

**At about twenty miles from the native town which Friar Marcos had called *Cibola* the expedition camped near a river where the Spaniards found mullet fish. The expedition's presence was discovered by the natives there. When the expedition came within about five miles of Cibola some natives came in the night to yell at the soldiers from hiding places. The soldiers scrambled to defend themselves from what they feared was an attack. Some of the inexperienced soldiers got so rattled that they put the saddles on their horses backward, to the amusement of the veteran soldiers.**

**The next day the expedition saw Cibola and there was great consternation between reality of Cibola and their expectations based upon Friar Marcos' description. Cibola was in reality simply a Zuñi pueblo. The narrator Casteña described it as looking like a small, crowded village that had been crumpled together. The young aristocrats who had left the comfort of Mexico City for the chance of finding fame and fortune in Cibola were not happy. Friar Marcos had to fear for his safety.**

## **The Conquest of Cibola**

**Cibola refused to surrender. Defenders from the other villages assembled in Cibola to help defend it. The Spaniards quickly captured it but not without some difficulty. The defenders threw large rocks down upon the attackers. Coronado himself was knocked down and might well have been killed if it had not been for two of his lieutenants coming to his rescue. They shielded him with their bodies and dragged him to safety. The rescuers received several blows from rocks in the course of the rescue.**

**The Spaniards subdued Cibola in less than an hour and the rest of the villages accepted Spanish control. The Spaniards found much food in the villages.**

**A small force was left in Cibola and the expedition moved on to a town which originally had been founded by Cabeza de Vaca. It was on what is now the Sonoran coast of Mexico. There was an urgent reason for directing the expedition toward the coast. The expedition had put supplies and luggage on three ships that were to travel along the**

coast and link up with the overland expedition. Melchior Diaz was sent with eighty men to find the ships. At the same time Juan Gallego was sent back to Mexico City to inform the viceroy of the progress of the expedition. Friar Marcos whose safety was at risk from the disgruntled soldiers of the expedition was sent with Gallego for his protection.

### **The Discovery of the Firebrand River (Which is now the Colorado River)**

Melchior Diaz' expedition took him to what is now Sonora where he divided his expedition. Diaz himself took twenty five men to travel north leaving the rest of his expedition under the command of Diego de Alcaraz. Casteña described Alcaraz as a man unsuited to command other men. Diaz took his men to the coast and along the coast up to where the Colorado River enters the Gulf of California. He missed the ships by just a few days. After the ships could not find any trace of the expedition the captain left a message at the foot of a tree and sailed back to New Spain.

Although Diaz' expedition encountered what is now called the Colorado River that is not the name which was given to the river. Instead they called it the Firebrand River (*Rio del Tiso*) because the natives in the area carried firebrands with them to keep their hands warm when they traveled. And perhaps the red color of the river reminded them of the color of ash covered firebrands.

The river was too broad at the mouth to cross and so the expedition travelled five or six days upstream to find a place where they thought it would be safe to cross the river on rafts. As they were building the rafts they found that the natives were eager to help them. But while the raft building was progressing a Spaniard noticed a large number of armed natives crossing a mountain and go into hiding. The Spaniards suspected a trap. They took one of the natives who was helping with the raft-building and tortured him until he revealed that the natives intended to attack the expedition when it was divided into three parts, the one who had crossed the river, the one who were waiting to cross and the ones on the rafts actually crossing. The Spaniards waited until the rafts were finished. When the natives realized that the Spaniards were suspicious of them and apparently knew of their plan they attacked. The Spaniards, ready for the attack, killed many and dispersed the rest so they and their native allies were able to cross the river in safety.

### **Meanwhile Back in Cibola**

Back in Cibola Coronado learned from the people of a community of seven villages called Tusayan about 65 miles from them. The villages were similar but different from those of Cibola and although the people of Cibola could communicate with those

people they did not because those people were warlike. Coronado sent a contingent of about twenty soldiers to establish contact with the Tusayans. The warriors of Tusayan assembled to do battle with the Spaniards. They drew lines on the ground that were not to be crossed. After some waiting for the villagers to change their attitude the Spanish soldiers attacked and scattered the natives. The Spaniards set up headquarters in the village and the villagers quickly brought gifts and sued for peace. From the Tusayans the Spaniards heard of another group of villages several days travel downstream.

### **The Discovery of the Grand Canyon**

When the information gathered from the Tusayans was reported to Coronado he sent a contingent of about twelve men to find the new set of villages. This exploratory party encountered the Grand Canyon. When they looked down from the rim they thought the river below was about six feet across but the natives with them said it was over a mile wide. A few of the more agile members of the party were sent down to explore. They had to turn back after only covering one third of the distance to the bottom because of a lack of water. They did get far enough to tell that some of the rocks that the people on the rim thought were only six feet tall were actually more than 200 feet tall.

### **Again Back in Cibola**

Back in Cibola there were again new developments. A delegation of people from a region called Cicuye arrived to offer their friendship to Coronado. They brought presents of hides as tokens of their friendship and told Coronado if he and his army wanted to come to their territory they would be treated as friends. Among the delegation was a young chief the Spaniard named Mustachio (Bigotes) because of his long mustache. He was tall and well built and respected by his people.

### **The Expedition Finds Out About Bison**

The people from Cicuye told the Spaniards of some animals whose description led them to believe they were cows. But the hair on the hides was wooly and snarled unlike that of cows. Obviously the animals were bison, a creature unfamiliar to the Spaniards. The natives of the area made use of the bison but they were not the main source of food and clothing. The natives were farmers and grew not only food but also cotton which was woven into cloth. It is not even certain that the natives in this area hunted the bison. They could have acquired the hides from animals killed in stampedes. Castañeda mentions that if stampeding bison came to a gulley the leaders would fall into the gulley until it filled up and the rest of the herd ran over the top of them. The Spaniards were shown the bison herds by the natives of this area but Castañeda does

**not mention the natives hunting the bison.**

### **A Journey to the City of Cicuye**

**Coronado chose twenty men under the command of Hernando de Alvarado to accompany the delegation from Cicuye back home. Alvarado was to return after eighty days to report on his findings.**

**On the way to Cicuye Alvarado's party passed by the village of Acoma (ak o MAH) which was situated on a small mesa with steep sides about 360 feet high. Acoma still exists and has a population of several hundred. It is the oldest continuously inhabited community in what is now the United States. Acoma is virtually a fortress with cisterns for collecting and storing water.**

**Alvarado's party also passed through the village of Tiguex (tee wesh). The people of Triguex greeted Alvarado's party as friends because Mustachio was with them. The country was noticeably more pleasant than that around Cibola and Alvarado sent back a messenger to tell Coronado to move to Triguex.**

**Cicuye was five days journey beyond Tiguex. Cicuye was an impressive village of five stories. The people greeted their returning delegation with their war chief Mustachio with joy. Alvarado and his party were welcomed as friends and given presents of cloth and turquoise.**

### **The Turk Begins His Desperate Deception**

**While the Spaniards were enjoying the comfort of Cicuye they became acquainted with a slave in Cicuye. The slave, whom the Spaniard called *The Turk* because they thought he looked like a Turk, was from the region east of the Mississippi River. He told the Spaniards of the great breadth of the Mississippi and said that there were fish in it as big as horses. The Turk then began a deception that ultimately cost him his life. He wanted the Spaniards to travel toward his home territory where he might escape and return to his people. He told the Spaniards that there were rich and powerful cities where he came from. He said they even had gold. He enhanced his story by telling the Spaniards that he had gold bracelets which were taken from him when he was captured. By that time Coronado had come to Tiguex and the Turk was brought there for Coronado to hear his story. Coronado believed the Turk and sent one of his captains, Alvarado, to demand that their hosts in Cicuye produce the Turk's gold bracelets. The people of Cicuye knew nothing of any gold bracelets and the Spaniards refused to believe the truth. To force the return of the phantom gold bracelets the Spaniards took Mustachio and an elder of Cicue captive in chains. This act of betrayal**

**of the people of Cicuye lost the Spaniards a good deal of credibility among the natives.**

### **The Spaniards Turn the Tiguex Community Against Them**

**In Tiguex Coronado demanded that the community provide the Spaniards with 300 pieces of cloth. The Spaniards needed better clothing to cope with the winter. The leader of the people at Tiguex said that the Spaniards would have to go to each village and demand of it a number of pieces of cloth. In carrying out this requisition of cloth the Spanish soldiers resorted such tactics as demanding of the people they met in each village that those people should give up the clothing they had on. If the soldiers saw someone with better clothing they demanded that person's clothing in exchange for some poorer clothing the soldiers had. The net result was the people of Tiguex were enraged at their treatment by the Spaniards.**

**There then occurred an act of evil committed by a Spanish soldier, a scoundrel named Viegas, that set in motion events that brought great tragedy to the native and the Spaniards as well. Viegas rode up to a village and spotted a pretty woman on one of the upper stories. He called up for her husband to come down and hold his horse. While the native man was holding the horse Viegas went up to second story and entered the man's house and raped (or tried to rape) the man's wife. Viegas then came down, took his horse and rode off.**

**The village was enraged at Viegas' evilness and the man went to Coronado to demand justice. Coronado said that if the man could identify the soldier that soldier would be punished. The soldiers were assembled but the native could not identify the soldier. The native man had seen the soldier only briefly and at a time when his attention was focused on the horse. The native man said that he could identify the horse. He was shown the horses and identified the one the rapist had rode. The horse's owner, Viegas, was determined and Coronado should have carried out his promise to punish him, but Coronado listened to Viegas plea that since the man was not able to identify him he might have made a mistake in identifying the horse. Viegas went unpunished and this led to events in which hundreds of natives and tens of Spaniards were killed. The expedition under Coronado's command was seriously jeopardized as a result of Coronado's failure to exercise proper leadership.**

**The natives of the Tiguex region were outraged at the Spaniards and the next day the natives attacked those guarding the horses and mules and drove the horses and mules away. The Spaniards were able to recover some of the animals but many were lost. This act of rebellion against the Spaniards then had to be punished. Coronado gave orders that the rebels who refused to surrender should be killed.**

**The Spaniards attacked a village where the rebels had taken refuge. The Spaniards captured the roof of the village but many of the rebels were in the lower story. The Spaniards forced these to surrender by smoking them out. The natives surrendered on the promise that they would not be killed. The commander of the Spanish forces was not told of the surrender agreement and called for stakes to be prepared to burn the rebels alive. When rebels found that they were going to be burned they tried to break out but the Spaniards on horseback chased them down and slaughtered them.**

**The community quickly spread the word throughout the region that the Spaniards could not be trusted to keep their word. From that point on the Spaniards could not negotiate any agreement with the natives because the natives were convinced that the Spaniards would never keep their word.**

**Later one of the captains of the expedition, Don Garcia Lopez, came to Tiguex to negotiate. The leaders said they would talk to him only if he dismounted and came unarmed to talk with three of them. When Garcia Lopez did as they requested he found that two of the natives had brought warclubs hidden behind their backs to the negotiation and tried to kill him. He was saved only by one of his men who had disobeyed his order to stay well back from the negotiation.**

**The Spaniards had to besiege a large village of the Tiguex region for weeks. Hundreds of the defenders died during the siege but also a few Spaniards were killed and about a hundred were wounded. Finally a lack of water forced the surviving defenders to make a desperate attempt to escape in which most of them were killed. Later the Spaniards attacked other villages in the Tiguex region killing most of the men and taking the women and children as slaves. Such was the high price ultimately paid for not punishing Viegas for his act of evil.**

### **[A Return to Cicuye](#)**

**After the subduing of Tiguex the Spanish journeyed to Cicuye to release the elder of that village that they held captive and to announce that the other captive, Mustachio, would be released in due time. Another village at this time sent a delegation to announce its submission to Coronado. Coronado also at this time sent a small group of soldiers to another region of six villages. The group of villages was called Quirix. At the approach of the Spaniards to the first village all of the inhabitants fled. The soldiers rode ahead of the fleeing people and induced them to return to their village. Quirix remained populated and peaceful. But the villages of Tiguex were abandoned by the people after the massacres and nothing could induce them to return.**

**Coronado then made preparations to travel east to the region where the Turk told**

them there was gold. Not all of the Spaniards had confidence in the lies that the Turk was telling to persuade the Spaniards to transport him back to his home territory. Ironically the Turk's lies were being countered by a fabrication created by a Spaniard named Cervantes. Cervantes said that the Turk asked him how many Spaniards were killed during the siege of Tiguex. Cervantes, not wanting to admit that the natives could kill Spaniards, told the Turk that none had been killed whereon the Turk said that was a lie and that five had been killed. Since five, in fact, was the correct number Cervantes asked the Turk who had told him. According to Cervantes, the Turk told him that no one had told him and that he knew without anyone telling him. Cervantes, according to his story, began to secretly watch the Turk and discovered that he talked to the Devil in a pitcher of water.

### **Coronado Goes to Quivira (Kansas)**

The army under Coronado's command started from Tiguex on the expedition to Quivira. They stopped at Cicuye to release Mustachio. At Cicuye Mustachio gave Coronado as a guide a native who was from Quivira. This guide, named Xabe, said there was some gold in Quivira but not as much as the Turk said there was. In fact there was no gold in Quivira but Xabe probably wanted to hold out the promise of gold to the Spaniards for the same reason as did the Turk; for the opportunity to get back home.

After traveling some distance into what is now Kansas Coronado's army came upon a tribe of nomadic natives who probably were a branch of the Apaches, perhaps the Kiowa Apaches. They lived by hunting buffalo and used dogs to transport their tents and other possessions. The Spaniards called these people the Querechos.

In contrast to the other native groups the expedition encountered the Querechos were nomadic bison hunters. The other groups had permanent habitations and engaged in farming as their main livelihood. The ancestors of the Apaches migrated south from what is now northwestern Canada in historical time. They necessarily were at least temporarily nomadic. Their language and culture were completely separate from the other native groups of the plains. For more on the history of these people see [Na Dené](#). Later the Kiowa Apache took up agriculture.

Since the Querechos had little of value to the Spaniards the army prepared to march on to the east to find Quivira. The army had acquired another native of Quivira at this time. His name was Ysopete. Ysopete declared that the stories of the Turk were lies but the Spaniards did not believe him. It must have been infuriating to Ysopete to tell the truth and have it disregarded.

**The journey through the plains presented some new problems for the Spaniards. There was little in the way of landmarks. There was only sky and grass. The grass sprung back to its original condition after the men and animals passed through it so it was impossible to find a trail. Soldiers that went out hunting from a camp could not retrace their path back to the camp and were lost. Even the passage of the army with its thousands of animals left no traces. The Spaniard also experienced a hail storm so severe that the hail stones were injuring, even killing, their horses.**

### **The Villages of Quivira**

**The army came upon a village where Cabeza de Vaca and his companion had passed through years before. The people put out a pile of buffalo hides which the Spaniards thought was a gift to them. The Spaniards quickly took the hides to the consternation of the women of the village. They had placed the hides there to be blessed by the Spaniards as Cabeza de Vaca had blessed them years before.**

**Spaniards met other natives who were called *Tejas*. They were of the same tribe who later met the Spaniards coming up from Mexico by a Gulf Coast route and whose name was the origin of the name *Texas*.**

**From the Tejas Coronado's army was getting information about Quivira that confirmed what Ysopete had been telling them and cast great doubt on the veracity of the Turk. Soon the Turk was put in chains.**

**The route that the Turk led them on took them farther south than they needed to go. When the army did reach Quivira and it was not what the Turk had led them to believe they asked him why he had lied. He said it was because his home was in the direction he was leading them. He said the other reason was that the people of Cicuye had asked him to lead the Spaniards astray so that they would return in a weakened condition and could be defeated when they came back to Cicuye. At Cicuye the Turk had told them not to load their horses too heavily with food because they would be carrying back so much gold. The Turk was garroted for his deception and Ysopete was vindicated.**

**While there was no gold in Quivira the chief did have a copper plate he wore as a medallion. To the natives copper was a precious metal in no way inferior to gold, but copper was of no interest to the Spaniards.**

### **The Ignominious Return from Quivira to Tiguex**

**The army returned to Tiguex from Quivira. Under the guidance of natives their journey back took a much shorter time than the journey under the guidance of the**



**Turk. A Spanish priest and a few others stayed in Quivira and the natives attempted to kill them as soon as the army left. The priest was killed, but a Portuguese named Campo managed to make it back to the Panucho region of eastern Mexico, an incredible feat of survival.**

**The army once back in Tiguex found that the village of Cicuye was hostile to them and would not let them enter. Such was the price the Spaniards had to pay for the betrayal of the trust of Mustachio.**

### **The Politics of Ending the Expedition**

**In Tiguex Coronado contemplated another expedition into the territory of Quivira. But one day while out riding with a companion the cinch belt for his saddle broke and he tumbled off under the hooves of his companion's horse. His head was severely injured and he was not expected to live. He did survive but was seriously incapacitated. He wanted to return to his family in Mexico City but to abandon an expedition in which his friend Mendoza, the mayor of Mexico City, had been a principal investor required some careful preparation. He encouraged his soldiers to send him signed petitions requesting that he take the army back to Mexico. When he had enough signed petitions he announced the army would go back to Mexico City. The signors of the the petitions realized then that their petitions would be used as the excuse for Coronado abandoning the expedition without any profit. There were attempts to steal back the signed petitions but Coronado was too crafty for those trying to retrieve their signatures. He hid the petitions in his mattress.**

**Coronado did return to Mexico City with his army. There was a trial to determine who was responsible for the failure of the expedition. Coronado was absolved of wrong doing in his command of the expedition. He was also the governor of the province of New Galicia in northwest Mexico. He was indicted for misgovernance of that province and lost his governorship. He however retained his membership on a governing Council of Mexico City until his death in 1554. Although Francisco Vázquez de Coronado may have had his virtues he was a relatively weak and flawed leader. There was no way the expedition could have been a success in the way that the investors in it expected but the relationship with the natives in the region did not have to have turned out so disastrously. Unarmed Cabeza de Vaca and his companions traveled through some of the same territory and the natives revered them as gods. Coronado's expedition developed the reputation of lying monsters.**

**The fabled land that the expedition sought when found consisted only of the following communities.**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Number of Villages</b>	<b>Estimated Number of warriors</b>
<b>Cibola</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3,000 to 5,000</b>
<b>Tusayan</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Acoma</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Tiguex</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>Tutahaco</b>	<b>8</b>	
<b>Qurix</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>snowy mountains</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Ximena</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>Cicuye</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>500</b>
<b>Hemes</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Aguas Calientes (Hot Springs)</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>Yuqueyunque</b>	<b>6</b>	

<b>Braba</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Chia</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>20,000</b>

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