



Fr. Alonso de Benavides

# MEMORIAL

to King Philip IV of Spain

on the Indians missions of New Mexico

1630 \_\_EXCERPTS

With the founding of the small Spanish settlement of Santa Fé in 1607, Franciscan missionaries began to preach to the Indians of the region, building churches in their villages and baptizing thousands of converts. From 1626 to 1629 Father Alonso de Benavides served as the director of the New Mexico missions, submitting his official report to the king in 1630. Excerpts from each chapter are included to reflect Benavides's organization and goals for his report.

## 1 The Nations That Live Along the Road to New Mexico

The kingdom and provinces of New Mexico are situated some four hundred leagues to the north of Mexico City, at 37 degrees north latitude. And though that is where the settlements are found, this district actually begins two hundred leagues to the south, in the valley of Santa Bárbara [northeast Mexico], the last settlement of New Spain. The Rio Conchos divides this more southerly area from the north; its name from the Concha tribe, who live along it.

From there, we go off in search of the Rio del Norte<sup>1</sup> for a hundred leagues, over which a man must travel at great risk. This stretch is inhabited by Tobosos, Tarahumares, Tepoanes, Tomites, Sumas, Hanos, and others, all fierce, barbarous, and indomitable people. As they always go about completely naked, without a house or a sown field to their name, they live on what they can hunt. This is all kinds of animals, some of which are very unsavory. . . .

Ever since the discovery of New Mexico, there have been fights with the Indians along this hundred-league passage. Defending ourselves against all the harm they wish to do us, we Spaniards have always emerged victorious through the mercy of Our Lord God. We have attempted wherever possible to convert and pacify these tribes, as much for the good of their souls as to secure the road through their lands. But they

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<sup>1</sup> Rio del Norte: the modern Rio Grande.

are so barbarous that they will not let anyone speak with them. Our Lord will be well served when the time for their conversion arrives, as it has for others before them.

## 2 The Mansa Nation of the Río del Norte

... They are a well-turned out people, nicely featured and robust. Every time we have asked, they have told me that they would be glad to have clerics among them who could teach and baptize them, and that this was important to them.

In addition to the principal issue, which is the conversion of redeemable souls that are much like our own through the blood of Our Lord, we must also secure the way north across two hundred hard leagues. In order to convert and confine other neighboring tribes, something that needs to be done, three or four clerics could be stationed with perhaps fifteen or twenty soldiers as escorts. This might help to avoid all the problems that have cost Your Majesty so much every time someone undertakes a journey to New Mexico. The resulting security would increase the population of the rich mining camps that are scattered all along this road, as well as that of many superb ranch sites with good water and other parcels of very good land.

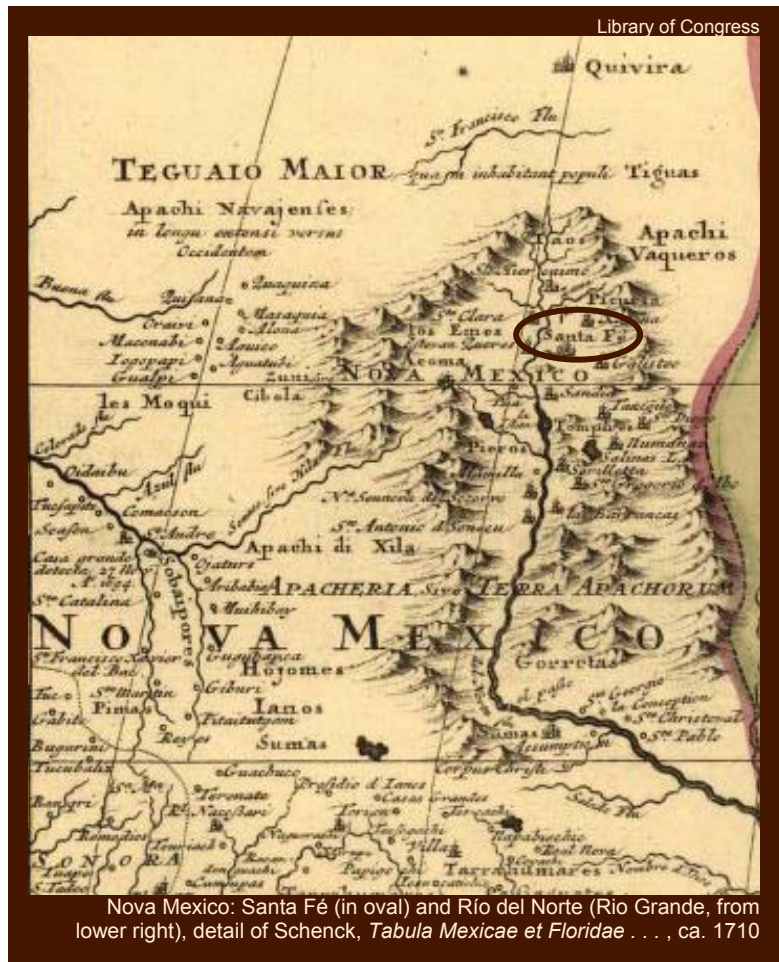
There would be a lot of bustling to and from along this road each year. This sort of commerce has been desirable for some time, but has not been possible as the road is not secure. Often five or six years pass in New Mexico with no word at all from Spain. . . .

## 3 The Beginning of the Apache Nation

... Although they are quite warlike, you can trust them more than the previous Indians. We travel through their lands with much less risk until we arrive again on the banks of the Río del Norte, where the settlements of New Mexico begin in the following order.

## 4 The Province and Nation of the Piros, Senecú, Socorro, and Sevilleta

Once the traveler arrives in this region, the first settlements begin. The Piro province and tribe, with a large number of pueblos and adobe houses, one and two stories high, with covered terraces facing the plazas, are found here. The well-dressed people, subject to their captains, have a republican government. They are terrific laborers with all kinds of seeds, both theirs and some that we have brought them. . . .



Nova Mexico: Santa Fé (in oval) and Río del Norte (Rio Grande, from lower right), detail of Schenck, *Tabula Mexicae et Floridae* . . . , ca. 1710

I have founded in this province three churches and friaries: one at the pueblo of Senecu,<sup>2</sup> dedicated to Saint Anthony of Padua, another at the pueblo of Pilabó, dedicated to the Virgin of Socorro; and another at Sivilleta, dedicated to San Luis Obuispo. . . .

## 5 The Mines of Socorro

Our Lord God has been pleased to show no lack of enthusiasm in regard to the secular well-being of this province, which, of course, Your Majesty supplies with its greatest wants. As a good Catholic, Your Majesty does indeed sustain both our priests and the churches.

Well, all this land is full of great treasures — namely, very rich and prosperous silver and gold mines. As His affectionate chaplains and vassals, we customarily ask God for things like this. And applying a little diligence, as an intelligent person will do, we did indeed discover these mines. We have Him endless thanks for this in the name of Your Majesty — in particular for the range<sup>3</sup> near the pueblo of Socorro, which is the principal and primary settlement of this province of the Piros. . . .

The ease with which silver may be taken from this range is the greatest in all the Indies. It would be wiser to extract eight ounces of silver here than many more ounces from other places, as elsewhere mining materials and supplies must be hauled from great distances to a source of water, which is certainly necessary to extract silver anywhere. But in these Socorro mines everything needed for the job is right at hand.

And although it is true that at the beginning of our conversions we simply tried to get Indian labor for the minds, I now believe that, all things considered, the mines should be administered only by moderately greedy persons. These administrators should treat the Indians well and pay them for their work, paying close attention from the outset to their rather simple capacities and their lackadaisical work habits. Not only should they be gathered up to perform these labors, but they should also be gently guided down the proper road, compelled to follow our way of doing things and our speech. . . .

## 6 The Tiwa Nation

Going up the same river seven leagues, the Tiwa nation begins. With fifteen or sixteen pueblos in a district of twelve or thirteen leagues, in which there are seven thousand souls breathing, all baptized, there are two friaries. . . .



## 7 The Queres Nation

Going onward another four leagues, the land of the Queres begins at its first pueblo of San Felipe. It extends for more than ten leagues, with seven pueblos, the home at present of four thousand souls. All these people are baptized.

There are three friaries with their very costly churches, each distinct, and next to each of these, of course, is its town. These Indians are quite clever at reading, writing, and playing all musical instruments — good hands at all trades. This comes from the tremendous industry of the priest who converted them.

It is also a very fertile land, full of the bounty of everything that is planted in it.

<sup>2</sup> Senecu: modern San Antonio. [Morrow, p. 7]

<sup>3</sup> Possibly the Magdalena Mountains, about twenty miles west of Socorro, the site of many modern mines. [Morrow, p. 9]



## 8 *The Tompiro Nation*

... All the people of the pueblo had become convinced of the truth of God's Word through my arguments and were determined to become Christians. This angered the sorcerer greatly, and he said loudly, "You Spaniards and Christians are lunatics. You live like crazy people, and you want to teach us to be crazy as well."

I asked him in what way we were crazy. He must have seen a Holy Week procession in some Christian pueblo in which people were scourging themselves, as he said, "You Christians are such lunatics that you all run insanely through the streets lashing yourselves, splattering blood everywhere. And it is certainly your desire that this pueblo lose its senses as well."

And with this, very angry and shouting, he left the pueblo, saying he had no wish to go crazy. This made everyone laugh, me more than anyone. I knew then that it was indeed the devil who was fleeing, confused by the virtue of the Holy Word.

## 9 *The Tano Nation*<sup>4</sup>

Turning once again to the north some ten leagues, we run into the first and principal pueblo of the Tanos nation, which stretches onward ten leagues with five pueblos and four thousand baptized souls. In this pueblo there is one very good rectory and church. The other pueblos have their churches as well, and the priests from each rectory say mass in them. There are schools in these pueblos that teach all the crafts just as they are taught elsewhere.

## 10 *The Pecos Nation*

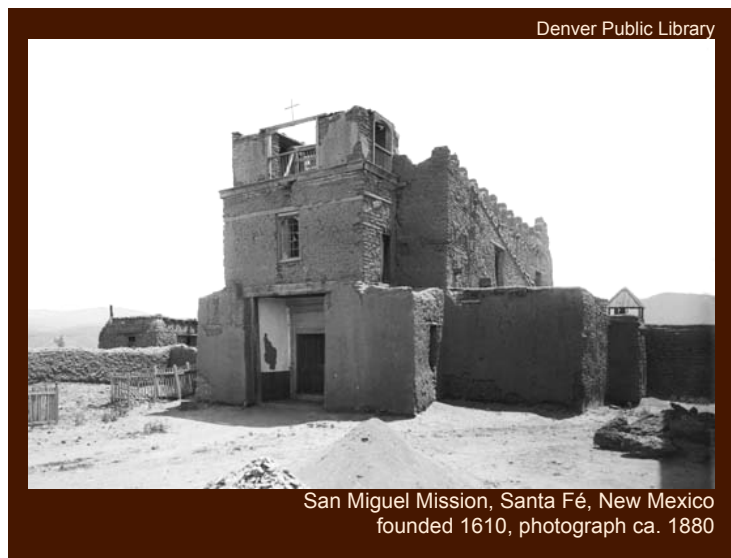
Some four leagues onward in the same northerly direction, you will come to the pueblo of Pecos, which has over two thousand souls. Here there is an elegant rectory and temple, of particularly fine and distinct architecture and construction, into which a priest put extraordinary work and care. . . .

## 11 *The Villa of Santa Fé*

Turning from the preceding pueblo to the west seven leagues, there is the Villa of Santa Fé, the capital of this kingdom, where the governor and about two hundred and fifty Spaniards reside. Only about fifty can go about armed due to lack of weapons, and although they are few and poorly provisioned, God has permitted them to constantly emerge victorious in their fights.

God has also caused among the Indians a great fear of the Spaniards and their harquebuses. I have heard they flee whenever they hear that a Spaniard is going to their pueblos. In order to promote this kind of fear, the Spaniards use the harquebuses with great vigor whenever they go out to punish a

rebellious pueblo. If this were not the case, the Indians would often be inclined to murder the Spaniards, knowing that they are so far from New Spain, from which a bit of help might come.



<sup>4</sup> This is the southern Tewa series of pueblos found along Galisteo Creek, just south of Santa Fé. These people now live only on First Mesa in the Hopi country, where they migrated after the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680. They still speak Tewa. [Morrow, p. 21]

The soldiers are all well drilled and humble, and for the most part a good example for the Indians.

Your Majesty does not support this presidio [Santa Fe] with payments from his royal coffers, but rather by allowing the governor to appoint *encomenderos*<sup>5</sup> for those pueblos. The tribute that each household of Indians gives them is a blanket, which is a *vara*<sup>6</sup> of cotton cloth, and a *fanega*<sup>7</sup> of corn each year, with which the poor Spaniards sustain themselves. They hold about seven hundred souls in service, so that with Spaniards, mestizos, and Indians there are perhaps a thousand people. The Spaniards are so scrupulously obedient to their governors that they go forth with their arms and horses at their own expense in response to whatever group there may be rising in opposition and acquit themselves valiantly.

The only thing they lack is the most important: a church. What they have is a wretched shack.<sup>8</sup> This is because the priests have concentrated on establishing churches for the Indians they have been converting. They constantly tend to and live among these people.

And so when I came into the area as its custodian, I began the construction of a church<sup>9</sup> and rectory to the honor and glory of Our Lord God that would be outstanding anywhere. Our clerics now teach Spaniards and Indians there to read, write, play instruments, and sing, as well as all the arts of polite society.

This place, although cold, is the most fertile in all of New Mexico.

## 12 The Tewa Nation

. . . This nation was the first in this kingdom to be baptized, which is something the people put a lot of stock in. They are great friends of the Spaniards, whom they serve with more than ordinary attention, and they accompany the Spaniards in all their wars.

The province has three friaries and churches of singular distinction — particularly the church of San Ildefonso, into which its founding friar put a lot of care. All the pueblos have their churches, where they say mass, and the people are well instructed in all the trades. . . .

<sup>5</sup> *Encomendero*: the owner of an estate granted by the Spanish crown. [Morrow, p. 26]

<sup>6</sup> *Vara*: approximately thirty-three inches. [Morrow, p. 26]

<sup>7</sup> *Fanega*: approximately one to one-and-a-half bushels. [Morrow, p. 26]

<sup>8</sup> *Jacal* appears in the original Spanish. This is a native New Mexican building or outbuilding of upright, rough poles covered with mud plaster. [Morrow, p. 27]

<sup>9</sup> Possibly the San Miguel Mission in Santa Fé. [Morrow, p. 27]



San Ildefonso Mission, New Mexico, founded 1711, photograph ca. 1911



Ruins of the San José (de Guisewa) de Jémez Mission, New Mexico, founded 1627, photograph ca. 1915

## 13 *The Jémez Nation*

... These people had been scattered all about this kingdom when I arrived as custodian, and their lands were nearly deserted due to hunger and war. These two plagues were finishing them off. Then I began to settle them, with tremendous effort, in a place where some had already been baptized and had their churches, which were attended by several priests. I got them all together in the same province.

... We gave them houses already built, along with food and sustenance for several days and plowed fields for their seed plots.

For these expenditures, and other similar acts of kindness, we priests would give up even the woolen sackcloth that Your Majesty contributes for our hassocks. And so today that congregation constitutes one of the best towns in the Indies, with its church, friary, and schools teaching all the trades that may also be found elsewhere. And although over half of this nation has died, Your Majesty may still count here on more than three thousand newly assembled taxpayers.

## 14 *The Picurís Nation*

... The Picurís people have been the most indomitable and treacherous in the entire kingdom, and some of the clerics have suffered a great deal because of this. The Picurís have struck them and otherwise treated them badly in their hatred of our Holy Catholic Faith. The friars enduring this deserve a great deal of credit. Several times, the Indians have wanted to kill the priests who is currently ministering to them, and it is only Our Lord who has delivered him from their hands. Once, going out to seize and kill him on the road, they broke out in a cold sweat in his presence and trembled with fear. And another time when they came in to grab him, he became invisible and they were greatly confounded.

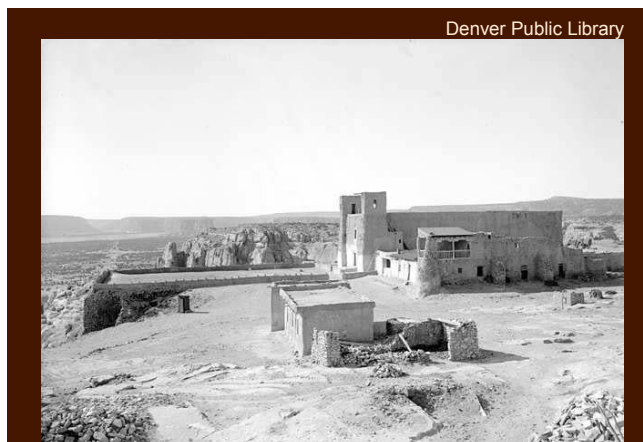
Today, God be praised, they are quite peaceful and well instructed in their catechisms. Although these Indians belong to the Tewa nation, they are on their own, as they are separated from the rest of the Tewa people. They have quite a fertile country, which produces fruit in great abundance in very little time. There is a great deal of water here in various creeks, and trout in them, and mines with fine garnets in them, and no one around with a will to work them.

## 15 *The Taos Nation*

... There are two thousand five hundred baptized souls, with a friary and church that have been established with great care by the two friars in charge of its conversion. ...

## 16 *The Great Rock of Acoma*

... This place has cost the lives of very many Spaniards and friendly Indians, as much due to its notched and impregnable rock as to the great courage of its inhabitants, who must number about two thousand souls. And in this past year of 1629, God was well served: we were able to pacify them,



San Esteban del Rey Mission, Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico, founded 1629, photograph ca. 1920



Distant view of the "Great Rock of Acoma" and San Esteban del Rey Mission, New Mexico, 1934



and they now have a friar who is teaching them the catechism and baptizing them.

Our Lord has confirmed the truth of this holy sacrament of baptism with a miracle. Here is how it happened: a little creature only a year old was dying, literally in the throes of her last breaths, in the arms of her mother. The mother was weeping over her as though she were dead. The padre said to her that, as he had been teaching, if she loved the baby enough, she should allow her to be baptized so that should she die, she would enjoy eternal glory in heaven. And although the mother was a pagan, she took the baby to the friar and asked him to baptize the child.

At this, the padre said, "Well, my daughter, have faith, because this holy baptismal water is quite powerful. It can revive your child." And sprinkling it on the baby and saying the baptismal words, a marvelous thing happened: the little girl arose and was well and healthy. . . .

Seeing all this, every one of those Indians was confirmed in the Faith. With great devotion they quickly began to pray that they be baptized.

Blessed be God for all this.

## 17 *The Zuni Nation*

. . . There are more than ten thousand converted souls here studying their catechism and undergoing baptism in two rectories and churches.

The priests who have served and continue to serve here have suffered through many difficulties and expended a lot of hard work due to the tremendous repugnance in which they are held by the local sorcerers. As God watches over everything, the friars always emerge victorious in their struggles. . . .

## 18 *The Moqui (Hopi) Nation*

. . . It is customary among the infidel Indians to receive a friar very well in their pueblos in the beginning, and to submit themselves for baptism. And seeing how well the friars teach the Indians the doctrines of the church, which means, of course, the giving up of their idolatries and witchcraft, the sorcerers feel it greatly and stir up all the rest. They divert the attention of the others, trying their best to keep them from turning Christian.

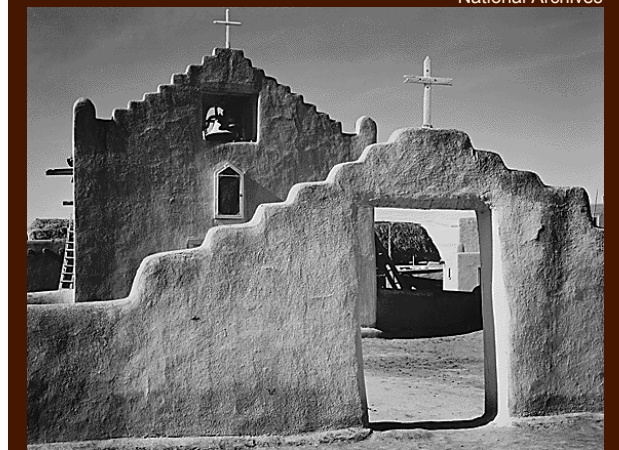
Not only this, but they may also throw the priest out of the pueblo, or kill him. . . .

## 19 *The Rites of These Heathens*

These are the settlements that we have converted and baptized in this region, which we call New Mexico. From San Antonio Senecú, the first pueblo in the Piro province, up the Río del Norte to the pueblo of San Gerónimo de los Taos, the district runs on some one hundred leagues. . . All of these together have just under eighty thousand souls.



Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Mission, Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico, founded 1629, photograph 1873



San Gerónimo de los Taos Mission, New Mexico, founded ca. 1620, photograph 1941



San Miguel Mission, New Mexico, founded 1610, photograph 1934

Their religion, although not formally idolatry, was almost just that. It seems they would make an offering for whatever undertaking they might be about to start — for instance, if the time came for them to go and fight their enemies, they would offer cornmeal and other things to the long-haired scalps of enemies they had already killed. If they were about to go hunting, they would offer cornmeal to the heads of rabbits, deer, jackrabbits, and other dead animals. If they were about to go fishing, they would make an offering to the river. . . .

These people have always had a government and been a republic. The elders customarily meet with the primary captain to confer with each other and discuss matters of common interest. After they have reached a conclusion of some issue, the primary captain goes out to proclaim the new orders about the town. To the present day, the announcement of what course of action a pueblo will take is seen as an act of great authority on the part of the primary captains.

## 20 *How Well They Take to Christian Practices*

Today, to the honor and glory of Our Lord God, and thanks to the kind care that we clerics have exercised with the Indians, they are well taught in the doctrines of the church and are Christians. When we ring the bell for mass, they all come as well scrubbed

and neat as can be. They enter the church to pray as though they had been Christians forever. And the young boys and girls, who morning and afternoon always come to catechism, apply themselves without exception and with the greatest of care. . . .

In this way more than fifty churches have been constructed with amazing ceilings, ornately carved in filigreed patterns, and handsomely painted walls. This is possible because of the marvelous mountains abounding in all kinds of wood. And due to the great diligence that we clerics have exercised in teaching the Indians in this missionary area, there are skilled carpenters and craftsmen in other trades. These people have been well trained in everything — particularly in matters of faith and Christianity.

It is an admirable thing to see that less than twenty years after the first baptisms began, and, in particular, eight years since they began right here, where the harvest of souls has been the most abundant, the people seem to have been Christians for a hundred years. . . .

## 21 *What the Kingdom Owes to Your Majesty*

. . . Although here it is clearly evident that God is the author and primary mover of things — and for that we give Him our infinite thanks — we also owe thanks to Your Majesty, because without your royal assistance we would never have been able to defray such expenses. Your Majesty should bask in the glory of having been the source of all this transformation. Your Majesty should all enjoy the fruits of all these conversions, in which we have snatched so many thousands of souls from the claws of the devil. Nothing but a miracle can explain it. . . .



## 22 The Fertility of the Land

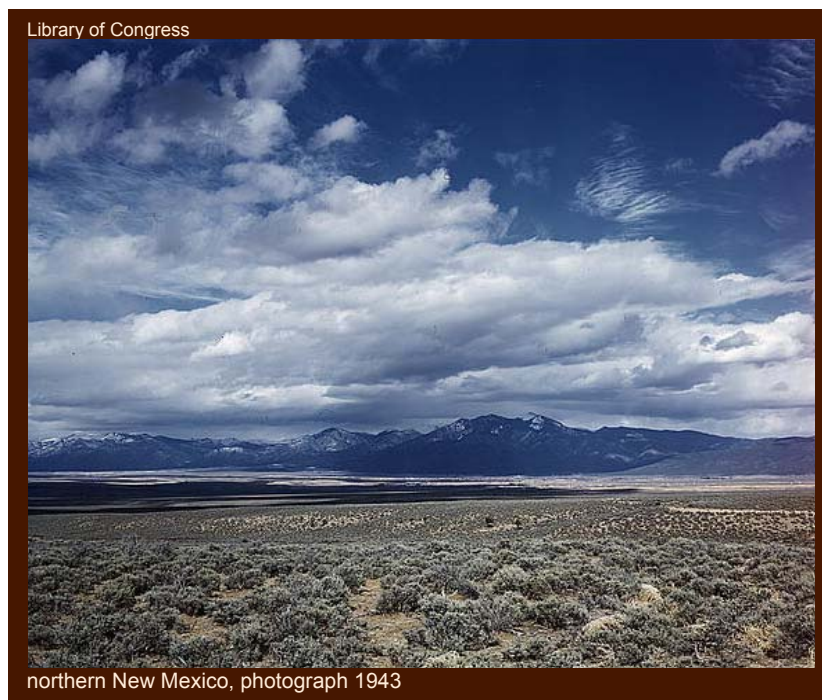
... I would like to describe separately the piñón trees, which are of a different species than those of Spain. The nuts are large and easy to crack, and the trees and their cones are small. And the quantity of nuts is so great that it seems endless; a *fanega* of these is worth twenty-three or twenty-four pesos in Mexico City. People who customarily sell them earn a lot. . . .

## 23 Fish

The land also has many rivers in which there are fish in great abundance. There are salt marshes, too. In particular, the Río del Norte, which we can ford when it is flowing low, comes up to our saddles. . . .

## 24 Game

... The kingdom has abundant quantities of all kinds of animals. And so our livestock, brought in from New Spain, have also increased well. Before, there were no livestock — such as cattle or sheep — as there



are now. Ordinarily, the ewes give birth to three lambs. There are also swine, mules, and famous horses — particularly warhorses. . . .

## 25 The Rigorous Climate

The climate is given to extremes. Winter is most rigorous, with many snows, much ice, and cold spells that cause all the rivers, salt marshes, and even the Río del Norte to freeze. . . .

On the other side of the coin, summer is more intolerable in its heat than winter is in its cold. And so it seems that, in some of these provinces more than others, there is sometimes nothing to be cheerful about.

## 26 The Great Apache Nation

Everything said so far will help in understanding the nature of the pueblos in New Mexico, which lie on the banks of the Río del Norte in a district of one hundred leagues from one boundary to the other. It is surrounded everywhere by the great Apache nation. . . .

They are quite obedient to their elders, and they have great respect for them. They both teach and punish their children, which is different than the other tribes, who exercise no punishment whatsoever. They value greatly telling the truth, and they are offended by anyone they catch in a lie. . . .

The Apaches are a nation so bellicose that they have served as the crucible of valor for the Spaniards. Because of this, the Apaches hold the Spaniards in high regard and say, “Only the Spaniards merit the title of *real people* — certainly not those tribes of settled Indians.”

## 27 The Beginning of the Conversion of the Apaches

I began the conversion of this Apache nation in the northern border area, in the hamlets of their Captain Quinia, well known for being so warlike. I planted the first crosses there, and, continuing the process, left a padre.

After the captain, his wife, and his children had been baptized, the people revolted. They wanted to kill this padre, who was instructing them in the Christian faith. They aimed their arrows at him, but in the end didn't dare let fly. They fled the little settlement and left the padre by himself. At that point he left them, and they settled down again.

This always happens at the start of these conversions.

## 28 The Conversion of the Gila Apaches. . . .

. . . Our Lord was well served that the primary captain of this Apache tribe, a man named Sanaba, had been converted by hearing me preach on many occasions in Senecú. He had been a regular churchgoer there.

He himself had preached in his own small hamlets, and by this means everyone living there had also been converted. Little by little the other hamlets subject to him were being converted as well. Today we have a cleric there who is instructing them in the ways of the church and encouraging them to settle down. . . .

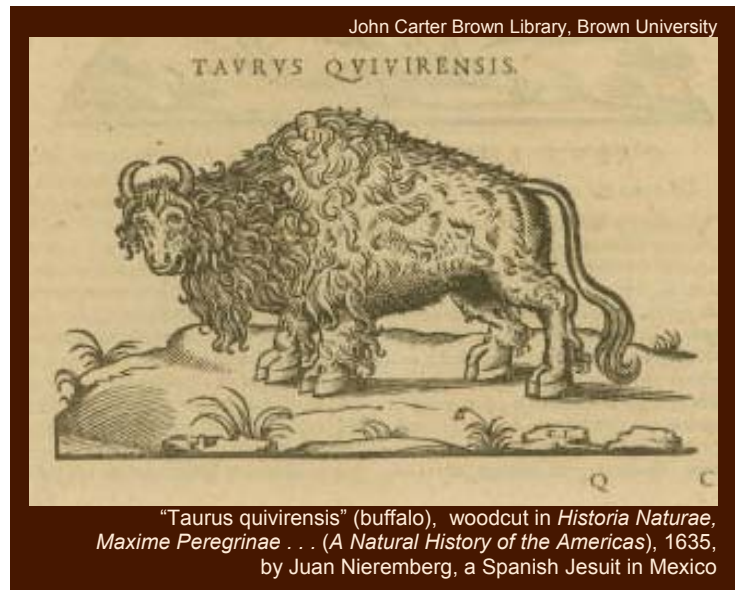
## 29 The Conversion of the Apaches of Navajó

. . . This province is the most bellicose of the entire Apache nation, and the place where the Spaniards have shown their greatest courage. his cordillera<sup>10</sup> runs another fifty or sixty leagues, all of which is filled with alum<sup>11</sup> deposited in the rock. The settled tribes and the Christians, who are all inclined toward using dyes, need alum to dye their clothes. This is only found in areas with iron deposits,<sup>12</sup> and two or three thousand of the Pueblo Indians at a time will gather together to collect it.

The Navajo Indians make war on these mineral collectors in defense of their land. A tremendous number of deaths will occur unless the collectors show up when the Navajos have gone off hunting in some other part of the iron deposit country. After they find out that people have been hauling off their minerals, they quickly band together and come to make war on the Christians. This is in revenge for people having entered their lands without permission. . . .

## 30 The Vaquero Apaches of the Buffalo Herd

. . . All this nation and province is sustained by cows that they call buffalo,<sup>13</sup> similar to ours in size but very different in form. . . .



<sup>10</sup> This cordillera that Fray Alonso refers to is probably an offshoot or offshoots of the southern Rockies, possibly the modern Lukachukai or Chuska ranges. [Morrow, p. 62]

<sup>11</sup> Alum, or *minerales de piedra lumbre*, is a double sulfate of aluminum and potassium used to fix dyes in cloth. [Morrow, p. 62]

<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly, the red mesa and cliff regions of modern-day New Mexico, eastern Arizona, and southeastern Utah. [Morrow, p. 62]

<sup>13</sup> In the original Spanish, Fray Alonso calls them *sibola*. The buffalo, or American bison (*Bison americanus*) stands about six feet high at the shoulder. [Morrow, p. 67]

... they are so numerous and widespread that we have found no end to them. One might note that they run on to the South Sea and to the North Sea, and there are so many that they blot out the plains. These cattle by themselves would be enough to make a prince very powerful, if he had or were given a means by which to convey them elsewhere . . . .

Well, these Indians travel through the neighboring provinces to trade and to deal in these buffalo hides. I mustn't forget to mention one thing — something incredible, though ridiculous. Here is it: when these Indians go out to trade and deal, the entire hamlet of wives and children comes along. They live in tents made of these buffalo hides all split very thin, and cured like suede. . . . .

Our Lord has seen fit to begin their conversion and pacification by means of the good treatment and ministering of a few clerics in newly converted neighboring districts. Their primary captains heard that in the Villa of Santa Fé the Spaniards had the Mother of God, which was an image in the form of a statue of the Dormition of the Virgin, Our Lady.<sup>14</sup> I had transported this statue there, and it had been nicely decorated in a chapel.

The Indians went to see her, and became very fond of her. They promised to become Christians, and, in particular, the elder statesman among them spoke in his own way and with great devotion.

Well, the devil could see that if they continued along this road, he would soon lose the empire he had enjoyed for so long. He employed one of his usual tricks in his own defense, using as a medium the greed of our Spanish governor.<sup>15</sup> In order to get slaves to send off for sale in New Spain, he sent for a gutsy Indian captain — an enemy of the visiting group of Vaquero Apaches — to bring him whatever he could catch.

This emissary from hell hit upon going to the hamlet of the primary captain, who had given his word to the Virgin that he would become a Christian along with all his people. The emissary fought with this man and killed him, along with many other people, as he had taken a number of Indian warriors along with him.

The poor dead captain had been wearing a rosary around his neck that I had given him. He had held it in front of him, pleading with his enemy on behalf of the rosary and the Mother of God that he not be killed. It wasn't enough to make this tyrant stop his cruelty.

The emissary brought a number of captives to the governor that he did not wish to get, due to the disturbance it would cause. The governor wanted to hang the man he had sent, due to the fact that his greed had been exposed so thoroughly.

All of this caused the whole province to rise up in revolt, although (blessed be the Lord) we are pacifying it once again. The Indians now know who is to blame, and that God must be worshiped above all. . . .

### 31 The Miraculous Conversion of the Humana Nation

... Well, as I have said, in only one district of a hundred leagues, our order has baptized more than eighty thousand souls and built more than fifty churches, all with excellent friaries. We have pacified more than five hundred thousand Indians.<sup>16</sup> The people of all the neighboring nations are now subjects of Your Majesty, and little by little we are teaching them the ways of the church in order to baptize them. . . .



*La Conquistadora*, perhaps brought to New Mexico by Fray Alonso de Benavides, n.d.

<sup>14</sup> Probably the famous *La Conquistadora*, now in St. Francis Cathedral, Santa Fé. Fray Alonso refers here to the death and assumption into heaven of Mary. [Morrow, p. 76]

<sup>15</sup> This would be either Admiral Don Felipe Sotelo Ossario (governor, 1625-1629) or Captain Don Francisco Manuel de Silva Nieto (governor, 1629-1632). [Morrow, p. 76]

<sup>16</sup> Here Fray Alonso must be including many of the Indians of Old Mexico as well, as this number exceeds the entire population of seventeenth-century New Mexico by several times. [Morrow, p. 85]



. . . With your *reales*<sup>17</sup> we have founded churches in honor of Our Lord. Because of this, I have great faith that, as Your Majesty has done so much to spread our Holy Catholic Faith, Our Lord will reward you. It may even be a monetary reward in this life, extending the reign of your royal crown, subjecting to your hand many enemies of the Faith, or opening up for your use the great treasures of certain mines — which we have indeed now discovered.

### ❧32❧ *The Kingdom of Quivira and Aixaos*

. . . The Villa of Santa Fé lies at thirty-seven degrees north latitude. Going from there toward the east a hundred fifty leagues,<sup>18</sup> you will come to this kingdom, and thus it sits at the same latitude. Likewise, we know from the evidence and from eyewitness accounts that this kingdom and the Kingdom of Aixaos, which borders on it, hold within them a very great quantity of gold. We see the Indians of these kingdoms every day. They trade with our Indians and will testify to this.

They also trade to a much greater extent with the Flemings [Flemish] and the English, who in their section of Florida are close to these Indians. With them, they trade gold ore in great quantity, which they carry off to benefit their own countries. These heretics enjoy the very great wealth that the Catholic Church has conceded to Your Majesty in the Name of God. And with it they make war on us. . . .

And so, for Your Majesty to benefit from all this, you may wish to colonize the Kingdom of Quivira and that of Aixaos and to make Christians of those Indians. . . .

### ❧33❧ *The Holy Tasks With Which the Friars Keep Themselves Busy*

The exceptional journeys and many works of the friars of my Father Saint Francis while in the service of Our Lord God may well be inferred by everything I have said to this point. Not only has the devil been relieved of his dominion over these souls, which he certainly would still enjoy had he not been contradicted, but also every trace of idolatry and devil worship has been vanquished. . . .

. . . Your Majesty should know of the exceptional quality and great virtue of those chaplains of yours, who with such appreciation, love, and kindness commend you to God in that remote corner of the world. In that primitive church, where Our Lord works such marvels, Your Majesty must come to our aid with all your favors and assistance. This is due to the obligation made by the church on Your Majesty by the Bull of Pope Alexander IV,<sup>19</sup> when he gave you these kingdoms in the name of God so that you might sustain in them our Holy Catholic Faith and see to the conversion of a great number of souls.

There are also the many mercies that Our Lord God has showered upon Your Majesty in giving you the many riches that we have discovered in the province of the Piros, which I have mentioned, and in the Kingdom of Quivira and Aixaos.

To enjoy all the benefits of that monarchy, we need only settle its ports. From these we might take away enormous riches, and there should be someone who could develop them properly. It is certain, for instance, that bars of silver are not going to pop out of their mines ready-made. Someone will have to pay for smelting them and bringing them all the way home.

It is enough that Our Lord God should reveal the location of these rich metals to us, and show us the sites for our ports that will let us enjoy them to the fullest.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> A *real* is a Spanish coin comprising thirty-four *maravedis*. [Morrow, p. 85]

<sup>18</sup> About 450-650 miles. [Morrow, p. 87]

<sup>19</sup> The papal bull of 1493, confirmed by the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, in which all lands east of the meridian lying at 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands were given to Portugal, while all lands claimed west of this line were to belong to Spain. [Morrow, p. 92]

<sup>20</sup> It seems highly likely from the content and style of the *Memorial* that this is its original end. The chapters that follow probably were added by an ecclesiastical editor and then confirmed by Fray Alonso for reasons of his own. . . . The chapters that follow represent a rather clumsy attempt to describe the old, original route to New Mexico from New Spain that began at Culiacán, went north through Sinaloa and Sonora into modern-day Arizona, and then angled sharply east to the Rio Grande. [Morrow, p. 92]