

Spain and Its North American Empire in the Eighteenth Century: The Other Revolution

An Online Professional Development Seminar

Cynthia Radding

University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Professor of History and
Latin American Studies

AMERICA *in* CLASS®

from the National Humanities Center

FROM THE FORUM

Challenges, Issues, Questions

- How can we reorient US history curricula to provide a more diverse and complicated narrative of our nation's past?
- What does the enslavement of indigenous people mean in different historical contexts?
- What were the goals of Spain's imperialistic efforts in the New World?
- Why did Spain establish its colonies where it did?
- How did Spanish imperialism differ from that practiced by other colonial powers in the New World?
- How was religion used to subjugate indigenous people, and how effective was it? How did indigenous peoples, in turn, modify Catholicism?
- How can we use images and other kinds of materials for teaching about history in the classroom?

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING

The history of indigenous and European relations in the Americas shows us the limits of imperial power in any colonial setting:

- imperial power is never absolute;
- it is especially compromised in the borderlands where indigenous inhabitants and colonizers confront each other;
- in the borderlands claims to territory were negotiations, not simple matters of conquest and pacification;
- indigenous people are essential to the colonization process and can shape and limit colonial expansion.

FRAMING QUESTION

Does the late 18th century represent an emerging imperial crisis or the stabilization of Spanish colonization of the socially and ethnically mixed borderlands of Spain's North American territorial possessions?



Cynthia Radding

Professor of History and Latin American Studies
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

National Humanities Center Fellow
2010-11

*Bountiful Deserts and Imperial Shadows.
Seeds of Knowledge and Corridors of Migration
in Northern New Spain*
(Forthcoming, 2014)

*Landscapes of Power and Identity. Comparative
Histories in the Sonoran Desert and the Forests
of Amazonia from Colony to Republic*
(2005)

Seminar Structure

- The role of the natural environment in shaping the process of colonial encounter in the territories that Spain claimed in North America
- The impact of violence, through war and enslavement, in creating the imperial borderlands of Spanish North America
- Modifying our ideas about conquest and pacification to think about the negotiated nature of imperial administration and the contested claims to territory

In 1831 Governor Bustamente, who governed Mexico, ordered the Governor of Sonora to treat the Opatas justly, but he ignored the order and insulted the Opatas.

Your Excellency, Mr. President:

Juan Isidro Bojórques, *natural* [native to] the town of Oposura and of the Opatas nation in Sonora, speaking for himself and as the envoy of the thirty-six pueblos that together constitute this nation, I approach our highest Mexican government, before your excellency, with the proper respect and obedience, I come before you to say the following: that five years ago, in 1831, when other representatives commissioned by the Opatas traveled to the national capital of Mexico City and exposed at that time their complaints concerning the hardships that had befallen them, his excellency, the president who at that time governed the Mexican nation, Don Anastasio Bustamente, deigned to listen attentively to our calls for justice, and in response gave those representatives a presidential order for the Governor of Sonora to administer justice to the pueblos; notwithstanding the President's intention, as soon as the order was given to the governor, he looked upon it with disdain and, rather than administering justice, he mistreated the Opatas envoys, speaking to them with offensive words. [I tell you this], your excellency, for you to see how the orders coming from the highest levels of government are obeyed.

Indigenous Demand for Justice in the Early Mexican Republic (1836)

The Governor of Sonora arrested the Opatas who tried to get their land back from the priest who had stolen them.

Be so kind, your excellency, to hear a small summary of what has happened to Opatas pueblos of Sonora: most of the towns have been dispossessed of their lands through violent means, and the most recent case is that of Cumpas, where the Governor of the Department of Sonora sent armed troops to protect the lands that belonged to the priest Don Juliano Moreno, taking prisoner the Opatas who had burned the fences that the priest had placed around the village lands, and carrying them off to Arizpe [the capital of Sonora] – without taking into account that this same parish priest had first burned the fences that the villagers had build around their fields, sending his horse and mule herds into the Indians’ planted fields in order to damage their crops.

The Opatas endure such injustice because the government serves the wealthy, not them.

And, why does the Opatas nation suffer such violent assaults and losses in their pueblos? For two reasons: first because they are obedient to the laws and to the government of Mexico; and, second, because the usurpers of our lands are all brothers, relatives, *compadres* [fictive kin] and friends of the Authorities, that is, of the Sonoran government and its subalterns, and finally, because they have money and in this we find that the government there serves the powerful, but not the ones who have justice on their side. The ones who control the government in Sonora are the Escalantes, Morales, Morenos and Escobosos and, since they are all related, particularly in Oposura, whose pueblo I represent, all of [these families] follow the governor considering that we Indians are ignorant and will tolerate anything. Because of this the oficiales who govern in Sonora are worse than the Spaniards, and we Indians live in the epoch of freedom more oppressed than when we were subjected [to colonial rule]. There was independence for the Morenos, the Esclantes, the Morales and Escobosos, but not for us; I say this because in those times [the colonial past] they never took away our lands, and now they deprive a community of its land and there is no justice.

Indigenous Demand for Justice in the Early Mexican Republic (1836)

Opatas want the governor to order the officials in Sonora to return our land, treat us well, refrain from taking our lands, reissue Bustamante's order, and send someone who will recognize our land titles.

For all of these reasons, filled with confidence, the Opatas pueblos of Sonora have sent me to your excellency to tell you to issue an order so that they will return the lands to the pueblos that have been dispossessed. Make the government officials in Sonora understand that you, as the highest authority in the Mexican nation, demand that they treat us well and not take away our property. The pueblos also want your excellency to order that they should not charge us more than very moderate parochial fees for marriages, baptisms and burials, because our people are very poor and constantly occupied in the military campaigns against the Indians who do not live in villages as Christians [*gentiles*].

These benefits [*gracias*] Mr. President, which the thirty-six Opatas pueblos of Sonora ask of your excellency through my agency as their representative, were already granted by the president who preceded you, Don Anastasio Bustamante. What has happened, however, is that they have not been honored and, in this way, the highest government of the land has not been obeyed. For this reason, I beg you to issue another order the same as the first one, and I ask you to name someone of the complete confidence of your government to go to Sonora and officially recognize the land titles for the town commons of each of the Opatas pueblos, so that you will be properly informed of the losses they have suffered, which are the cause of their hunger and misery, and their lands will be returned to them.

I beg your excellency to excuse the language of my explanation, for it is not my intent to fail in my respect for you as the President of the Mexican Republic and as the sovereign father of all your subjects. Arizpe [Sonora], July 2, 1836. Juan Isidro Bojórques.

Source: Archivo General de la Nación, *Gobernación*, caja 4.

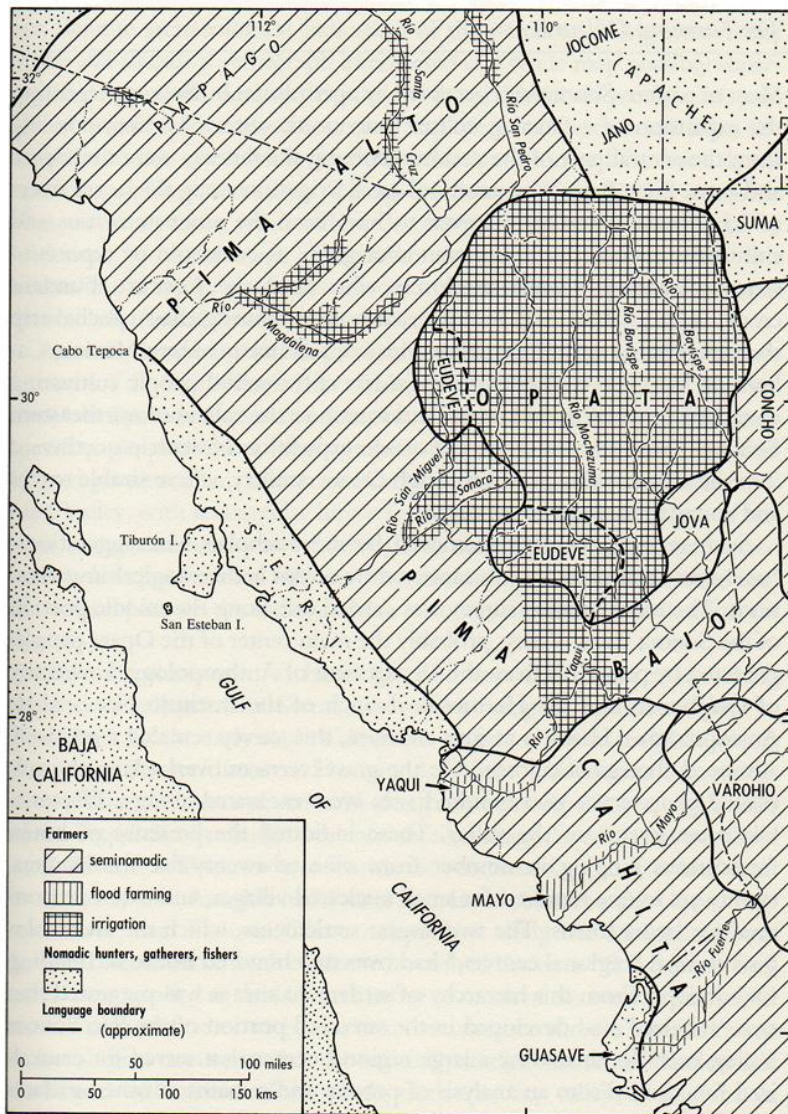
Note: Anastasio Bustamante was President of Mexico in 1830-1832 and again, 1837-1839. Valentín Gómez Farías was president in 1833-1834, and Miguel Barragán was President in 1835-1836, when Bojórques penned or dictated his letter.

Discussion Points

Note the word *natural*, by which Bojórques identified himself at the beginning of the letter. This was a common way of referring to Indians in colonial documentation, distinguishing their status as “native peoples” but also indicating their claim to certain basic protections in their lands and persons as vassals of the king. By 1836, when this letter was written, Indians in Mexico were legally citizens; yet, it is noteworthy that Bojórques called himself a “natural,” or was so designated by governmental intermediaries. It illustrates the ambiguity of citizenship in this early period of the Mexican Republic.

“Your Excellency”: the title by which Bojórques sought to express his respect and deference to the Mexican President came from the conventions of colonial hierarchy in which “Your Excellency” was the proper form of address for the viceroy, the highest ranking colonial official in New Spain.

What is Bojórques’s principal complaint? What do you make of the final sentence in this letter, in which Bojórques characterizes the President of Mexico as “the sovereign father of all your subjects”?



Ethnographic Map Sonora-Sinaloa

Source: Robert C. West

Sonora: Its Geographical Personality

Aboriginal languages and economies, ca. A.D. 1500. Modified from Sauer, 1935a (map: Tribes and Subsistence Modes of the Aboriginal Population of Northwestern Mexico).

FIG. 10



The *gran septentrion*: the great north

or

The *gran chichimeca*: from Nahuatl, meaning the land of dry rocks

Northern New Spain





Osprey



Sonoran Desert

Central Corridor



Piedmont Landscapes
of the western slopes
of the Sierra Madre Occidental





Earthen dam in the Sonora River
Village of Bamoa, south of Arizpe



Mazocahui
Río Sonora

Living Fence Row

New Northern Spain



Casas Grandes (Paquimé)



- What to you is remarkable or noteworthy about the landscapes of Northern New Spain?
- How might they affect the process of colonization?

Northern New Spain

Spanish forays fueled by ambition for wealth, Crown's need to expand its dominion, and a desire to convert the natives to Christianity.

After the discovery of silver in Zacatecas in 1543, the Spanish no longer sought mythical cities of gold but turned to mining

Mining operations attracted settlers from other parts of Mexico—Spanish, Indians, Africans, both free and enslaved

Repatriamiento system regulated Indians mine workers



Spain and Its North American Empire

POPULATION TRENDS AMONG NATIVE AMERICAN GROUPS in NORTHWESTERN NEW SPAIN

	TOTAL	Serrano groups	Cáhita Proper	Cáhita of Río Fuerte	Guasave & Ahome	Yaqui	Mayo	Nébome	Utes and Mountain Pima	Sisibotari Oyata of the Río Sahuaripa	Ayvino & Batuco Oyata	Oyata of "Señora"	Oyata, Pueblos, & Pima Alto
1500	587,250	87,000	22,000	40,000	22,500	60,000	60,000	20,000	12,000	8,750	15,000	20,000	220,000
ca. 1625	234,203	¹ 10,014	¹ 2,880	² 12,938	¹ 4,261	² 20,450	² 16,000	² 11,750	² 10,000	³ 4,410	⁵ 7,500	⁵ 15,500	⁵ 118,500
1678	92,344	3,821	1,298	4,219	1,422	7,549	7,197	2,380	1,946	2,007	2,470	4,035	⁶ 54,000

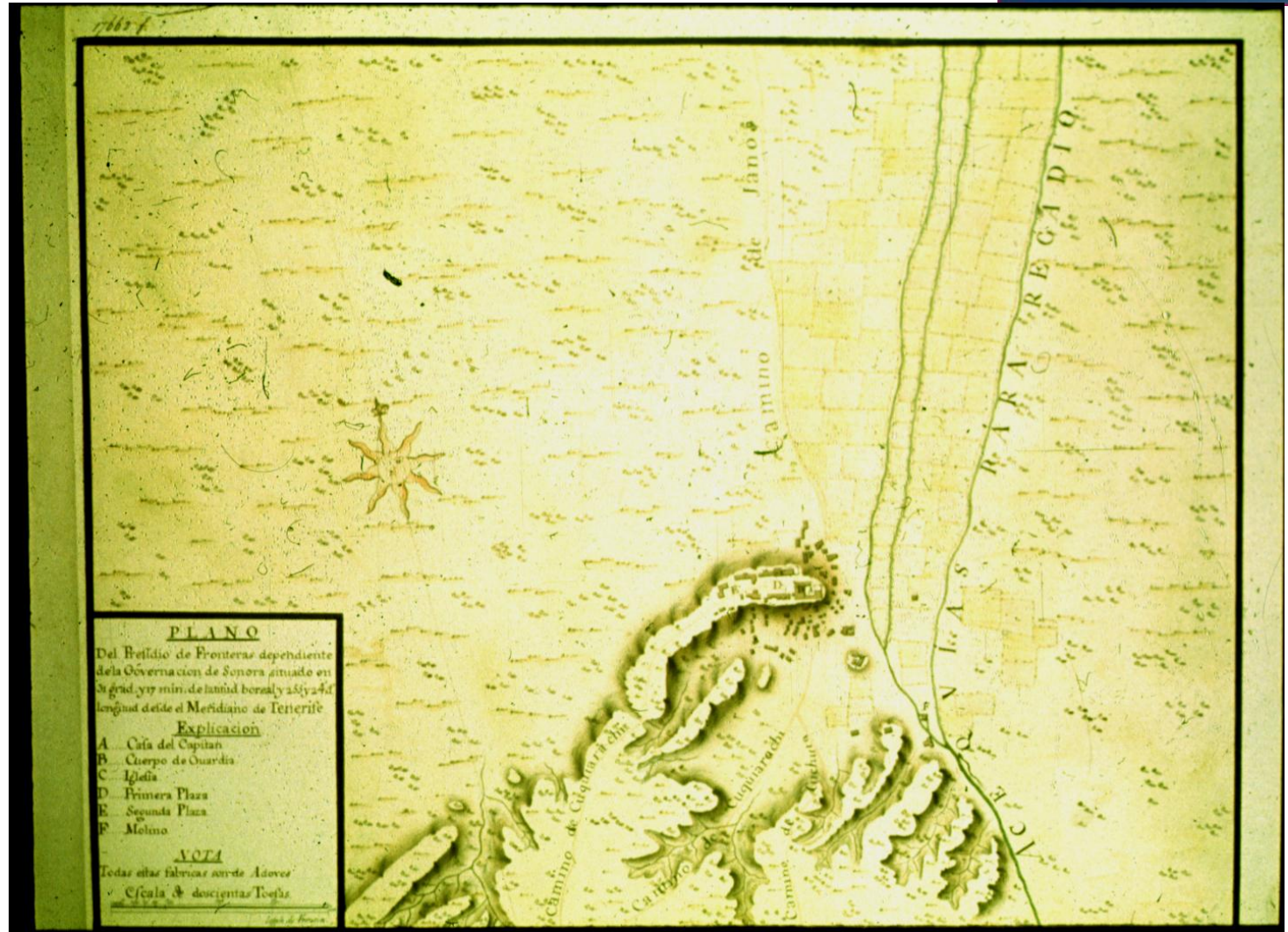
¹1624 ²1624 ³1628 ⁴1629 ⁵1638 ⁶1678: Totals from 1678 (Oyata), 1680 (Pueblos) and 1700 (Pima Alto). 1500 estimates were derived from various sources (see Reff).

Numbers based on count by missionaries of Indians who had been baptized and who effectively lived in the mission villages. An indeterminate number of Indians who lived outside the missions, or who came and went, may have gone uncounted when the missionaries prepared their annual reports. These numbers all represent estimates, no hard and fast counts.

- Spanish governance required settled Indians who accepted Christianity and would work in colonial enterprises
- Viceroyalty of New Spain curtailed Indian enslavement and turned to Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries to bring Indians into village life and Christianity
- Nomadic Indians adapted to village life and rebuilt communities after demographic losses
- Communities grew up around presidios, forts, built to guard roads and defend against rival European powers and pirates
- Spanish maintained no standing army, relied on Indian troops

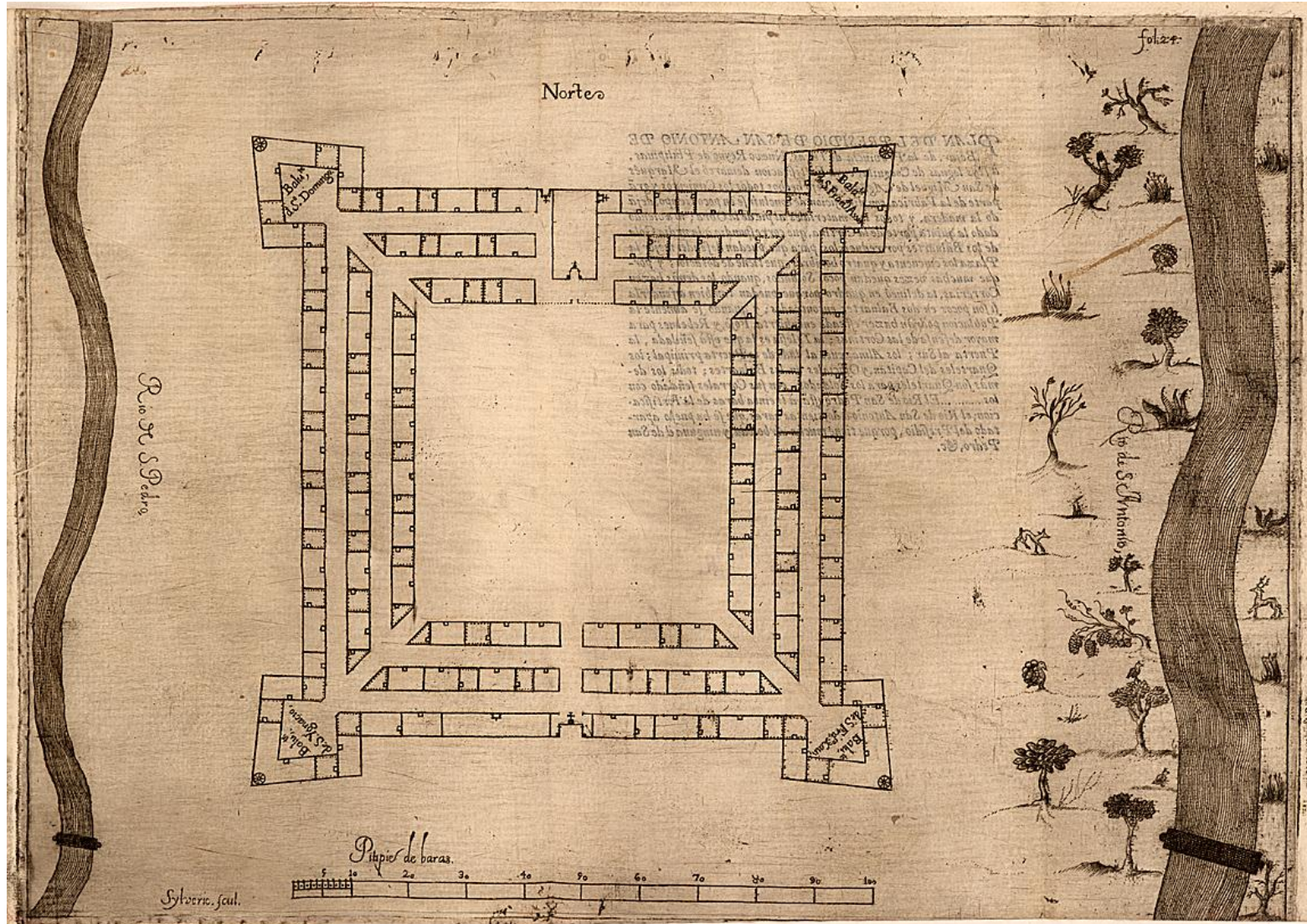
Presidio de Fronteras, Sonora, 1769

Map oriented to the east, showing irrigation canals, main buildings, roads, and a flour mill.



Courtesy of British Library

Presidio of San Antonio Bejar (Texas)



Courtesy John Carter Brown Library

- The institutional structures of Spain's governance of its overseas territories grew out of three major developments at the turn of the sixteenth century: the "reconquest" of Muslim Andalucía, the coming of the Hapsburg dynasty to the unified kingdoms of Aragon and Castile, and Spain's sponsorship of the Columbian voyages, extending the claims of the Kingdom of Castile to beyond the Atlantic Canary islands to the Caribbean and then to the American mainland.
- The Hapsburgs perceived of Spain itself as a collection of kingdoms, and the provinces that came under Spanish control in the Americas were known as kingdoms, too – New Spain, New Galicia, New Biscay, New León – and in South America, Peru became the Kingdom of New Castile.
- Even as the king ruled through several councils in Spain, so the overseas colonies were governed by councils called *Audiencias*, which carried out both judicial and administrative functions. The House of Trade (1503) and the Council of the Indies (1524), founded in Spain, set policies and reviewed a multitude of petitions, conflicts, and competing jurisdictions in Spain's American colonies. Documentation flowed from the colonial *Audiencias* to the Council of the Indies—and through the Council to the king.

- Through this bureaucracy, the Hapsburg monarchs attempted to curb the power of individual conquistadores and assert state power over their American colonies.
- A large part of the legislation and judicial decrees that constituted the Laws of the Indies concerned the treatment of the Indian peoples.
- Church and state were perceived as two columns of the imperial edifice: the Crown sponsored the missionary effort in the New World and, in turn, retained the power to authorize clerical appointments.

- The Spanish monarchy spent enormous effort and attention to detail in governing its American colonies, but it never imposed a blueprint for imperial administration on the settlers or native peoples.
- Local officials in northern New Spain had, in fact if not by law, a great deal of autonomy because of the vast territories governed and because of their distance from the viceregal capital.
- In the eighteenth century Spain built more presidios in the territory and tried to tighten control over the Spanish colonists and the indigenous peoples through military regulations and inspections, missions, and gathering information through reports and maps.

- Significant changes did occur in Spanish colonial administration with the advent of the Bourbon dynasty to the throne of Spain, following the bitterly contested War of the Spanish Succession (1700-1713), known as Queen Anne's War in British history.
- The Bourbons in Spain, as they had done in France, attempted to consolidate and centralize the power of the monarch through an expansion of the bureaucracy and the tightening of vertical control through the appointment of ministers who reported directly to the king, altering the Hapsburg formula of king-and-council.
- The Bourbons reshaped provincial administration by creating *Intendancies* that effectively absorbed the former "kingdoms" of New Spain.
- Bourbon rule militarized the northern Borderlands, by expanding the number of presidios and increasing the resources allotted to them, and by establishing the General Commandancy of the Interior Provinces (1779).
- The Bourbons altered the formula of church and state by asserting greater power over the religious orders and, most dramatically, expelling the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) from all Spanish dominions in 1767, bringing the mission enterprise more nearly under the purview of civil and military officials.

Hapsburg Imperial Vision of the Americas



Courtesy
John Carter Brown Library

Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

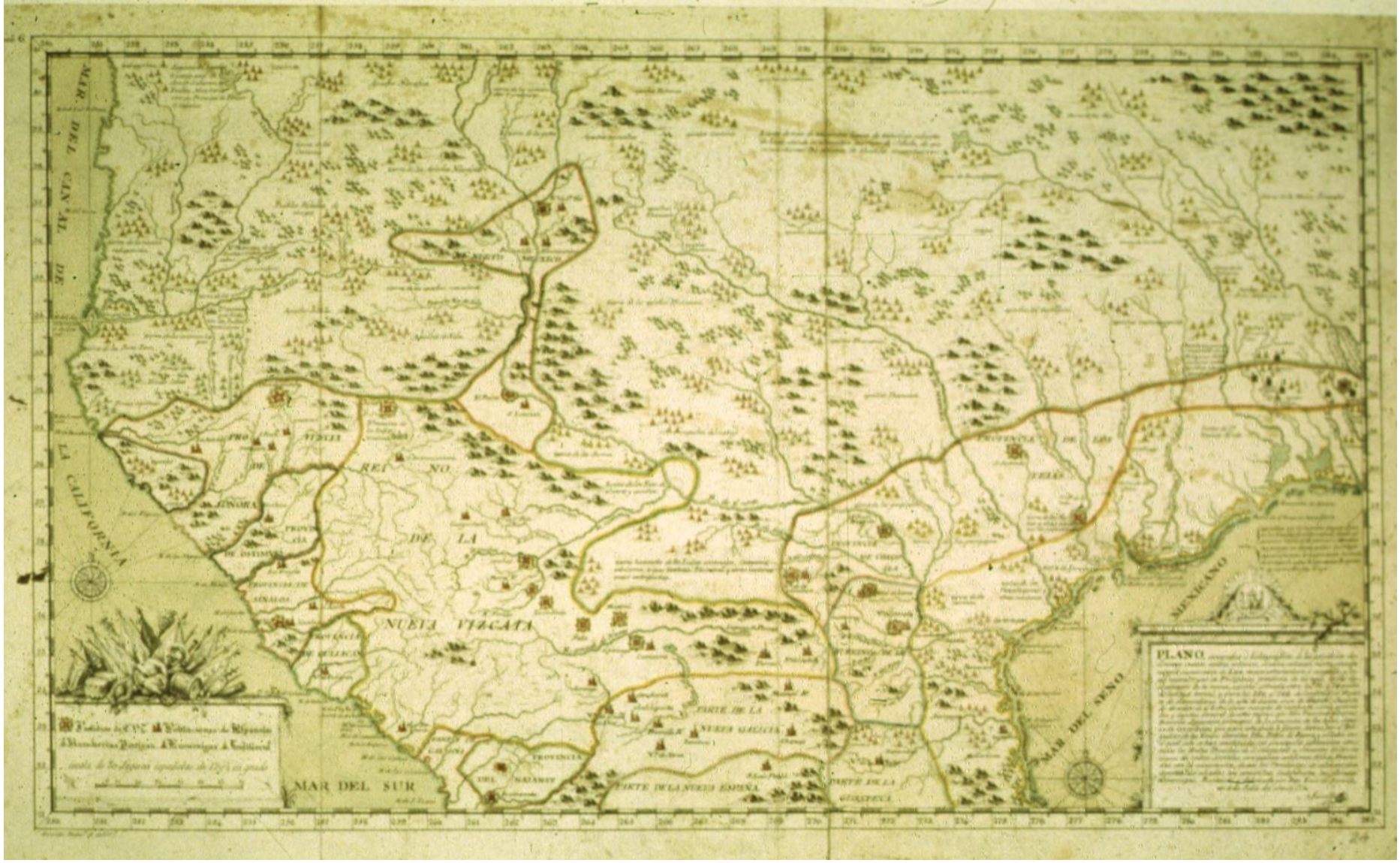
Teatro Americano

Joseph Antonio Villaseñor y
Sánchez

Courtesy DeGolyer Library



Francisco Alvarez Barreiro: 18th-century Northern New Spain



Alzate y Ramirez Map of New Spain, 1768



Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

Courtesy of
John Carter Brown Library

Central Corridor



Berroterán on Nueva Vizcaya: The Indians Dig a Ditch

“During September of that year, it was rumored that there was unrest in the pueblos at the confluence of the Rio [Grande] del Norte and the Rio Conchas, and that this had caused the missionary fathers to leave. It was decided that Captain Don Juan Bautista de Lizasola should set out with a detachment of seventy or eighty soldiers and a similar number of Indian auxiliaries to investigate and determine the cause of the unrest. According to the captain's verbal report, the unrest arose when Reverend Father Lipian, their vice-custodian, ordered the Indians of those settlements to clean out the ditches for the cultivation of their fields. They obediently complied and worked on the ditch for more than one league, which was all that the seasonal rise of the Rio Conchas permitted. At the first flood the banks of the irrigation ditch were washed out, along with all the work they had done.”

Discussion Questions

How would you characterize the relationship between the Indians and the Father Lipian?
Why would the Indians be willing to work on the ditch?

Berroterán on Nueva Vizcaya: The Indians Dig a Ditch

“Moving to another location judged by the father [to be better], the Indians worked obediently doing what the father ordered them to do— just as well or even better than before, and the same thing happened again. The third time this happened, in view of their experiences and their lost labor, the leaders of those settlements and their people advised the reverend father that, if he would request that the governor of [Nueva] Vizcaya send them a skilled person to determine by the rising and falling [floodwaters] where the irrigation ditch could be placed and its banks maintained, they would gladly contribute their personal labor and toil. To that end they dispatched their chief with a petition to the governor. [The chief] ignored this task; perhaps because of his practical knowledge of farming in the Valle de San Bartolomé, where he had grown up, he believed the proposal to be impossible and did not deliver it.”
(cont’d.)

“For this reason [the Indians], lacking the decision they had hoped for—along with the materials with which to put it into practice, to be obtained from the funds for peace and war—resolved to depose their chief from his position because he did not attend to matters vital to their preservation and well-being, as this [incident] demonstrated. The reverend fathers inferred that [the Indians] wanted to rebel and attempted to secure themselves at the villa of San Felipe el Real. All the priests’ successors have done the same, entering [the region] only briefly, and the Indians have always received them without trouble. The captain's formal report of these events was found by that government, as well as your excellency’s higher government, to be consistent with the account that the aforementioned governor would give to the captain general’s office.”

Discussion Questions

Where does the allegiance of the Indians lie, with the Spanish or with their chief?
Judging from the evidence in this passage, how well do the priests know the Indians?

“These misfortunes [an Indian raid on the town of Santiago de Monclova] were reported to the governor, Don Martin de Alday, who was in the city of Durango performing his inspection. They [the Spanish messengers] also advised him that Don Pablo, leader of the Coahuileños, had sent two Indians to his brother, who was settled with his people in the pueblo of Cinco Señores, so that he would rise up and join them. [The Indian messengers] were to tell him what had been carried out in Coahuila and Parral and say that all of them together would put an end to all the presidios and towns. To prevent this from happening, the governor took all the necessary protective measures in the presidio of El Pasaje, and his captain and soldiers did the same at [Cinco Señores]. There the convoy of soldiers stood guard at the site that was overtaken and captured everyone, as well as those who came later. They brought the Indians to the presidio, where they were imprisoned and chained.”

Discussion Question

Why would the Indians want “to put and end to the presidios and towns”?

“With this action completed, the governor proceeded against the offenders, launching a campaign with soldiers from all the presidios. Informed by the captain of Valle de San Bartolome and the document written by Don Fernando Santalla [of the three Spaniards held for ransom], the governor set out, ordering the captain to advise the Indians posthaste that they should come down to the Rio Florida with their captives, and that when the governor arrived he would grant them everything they requested.”

Discussion Questions

Why might the governor have ordered the Indians to come to him rather than dispatching troops to capture them?

Why do think the governor was willing to grant their requests?

Berroterán on Nueva Vizcaya: The Governor “Captures” the Indians

“Notified that the governor had arrived at Parral, the Indians came down to the pueblo of Atotonilco with Santalla and his companions, and [the captives] were exchanged for the requested clothing. The governor warned them that they should all come down together with their families [to settle] close to the town in a suitable site of their choosing; if they did not, he had orders from his majesty requiring him to bring in by fire and blood any Indians who abused his clemency, due to the deceptions [the Indians] had practiced upon the governor and his predecessors with similar peace treaties, when they enjoyed the benefit of the royal treasury, in that they were supported and received clothing for themselves and their families. Henceforth, if they did not keep their agreement, they would receive the punishment prescribed by [his majesty’s] order. To this the Cocoyomes and Acoclames responded that they would not have broken the agreement had the Coahuileños not stirred them up.” (cont’d.)

Discussion Questions

Why did the Indians comply with this request rather than resist it?
Why would the Indians ask for clothing?

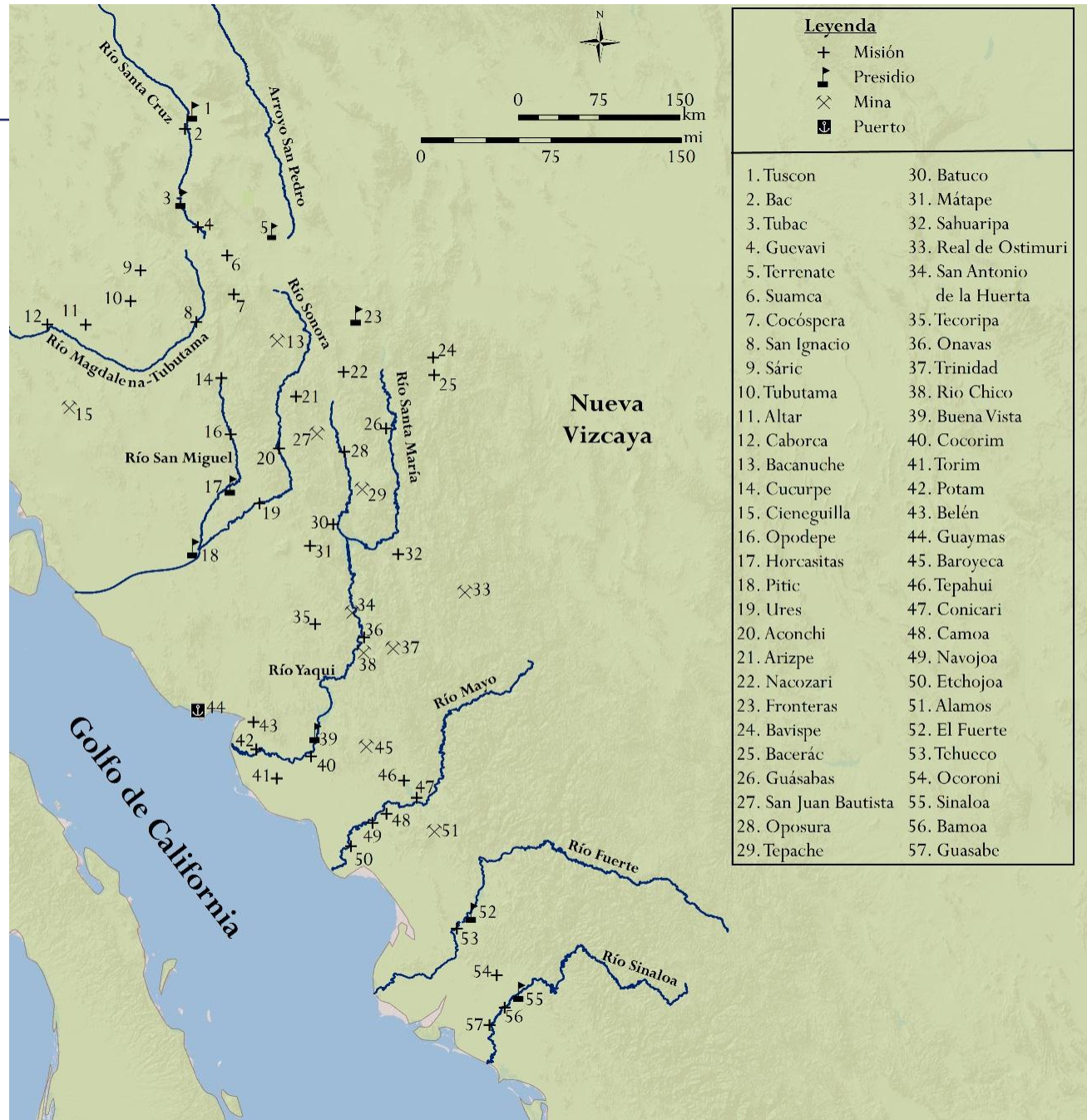
Berroterán on Nueva Vizcaya: The Governor “Captures” the Indians

“They accepted [the governor’s] proposal, and he placed them under the supervision of the reserve captain, Antonio Rodela, who was to supply them with food while they were settling into the pueblo. Rodela continued in this capacity, for he understood their language, and while standing as godfather for two of them, they let him in on the secret that the tribe was making bows and arrows in order to rise up in rebellion. When he received this news and had seen it for himself, he reported it to the governor who, as a soldier of great experience, issued secret orders to assemble the troops stationed in the immediate area, whose settlers are renowned for their valor and use of weapons. With troops numbering more than four hundred, in addition to the Indian auxiliaries from nearby pueblos, [the governor] surrounded the flat terrain where the enemies were situated. He ordered Antonio Rodela to go to their rancheria to reproach them and induce them with gentle means to surrender. They did not give up, however, and took their weapons in hand. Forty savages escaped the skirmish along with many women, but the rest were captured and taken to the prison in Parral.”

Discussion Questions

What does this story suggest about the nature of pacification?

What does this story suggest about relationships among the tribes?



“When asked what type of work or services were performed by the prisoners, the lieutenant stated that they have been building a dam and an irrigation ditch in order to channel water to the orchard and cultivated fields belonging to the governor. In addition, the prisoners fence, plow, and cultivate the orchard, and do whatever needs to be done in the cornfields and wheat fields, such as planting or harvesting. They also are constructing workshops to make wine, or carding, spinning, and weaving cloth on looms. One of the Indians is a blacksmith, and he is assisted by other prisoners at the forge. The prisoners also make a liquor [*aguardiente*] known as *mescal* from the countryside [from the agave plant].” (cont'd.)

“The governor runs a few small nearby mines, and the lieutenant has seen one of the prisoners working as a barretero. He does not know, however, whether other prisoners have also worked in those mines. Inside the presidio itself there are milling stones [*rastras*], cupels, and workshops for processing silver. The lieutenant therefore supposes that the Indians are also employed in this line of work, but he is not sure and has not actually seen them doing so. He has seen three or four prisoners working as shepherders. Finally, he states that he has seen one of the prisoners accompanying the mule train that brings provisions to the presidio. Even though a little sugarcane is processed in the area, the lieutenant has not seen any prisoners working at this task and is not certain whether they do.” (cont'd.)

“The lieutenant was also asked whether the Indians had been given anything to wear, what type of clothing it was, and whether he thought it was commensurate to the salary they should receive. He responded that the Indians’ clothing usually consists of a loose shirt [*cotón*] made of sackcloth [*sayal*] or coarse cotton [*patío*] which costs at most 20 reales, a blanket worth 3 pesos, a piece of cloth usually made of coarse cotton that they wear instead of trousers and that cannot be worth more than another 3 pesos, and a hat that is worth about the same. However, the justicias or prison bosses [*mandones*] are given wool cloaks [*capotes de paño*] worth about 24 pesos, as well as cloth overcoats [*gabán de paño*] shoes, socks, cloth trousers, hats, and coarse cotton shirts with printed cotton sleeves [*mangas de ruán*]. All of these items are prudently regulated, and depending on how often they are supplied, which is more or less once a year, the cost does not exceed the 72 pesos of their salary. And although it may be true that the prisoners’ wives are given skirts [*naguas*], cloth shawls, and vests [*cotones*] that they wear as blouses, and that their children are also supplied with clothing, it is also true that these Indian women work at making tortillas and grinding *pinole*, and that the children carry water and do other similar jobs. Consequently what is supplied to the Indian women should not be counted against the salaries of their husbands.”

(cont'd.)

“It is also true that when their rations run out, the Indians come around during the week asking for more pinole and other things, which are given to them. This happens regularly when there is a shortage of corn. Because corn is their basic staple, the ration they receive during such shortages may not be enough. Moreover, they usually consume their ration of meat in two days.

Their funerals and weddings, which are provided to all except the prison foremen, are paid for as well. Such events do not occur every day, however, so the expenses do not add up to 72 pesos a year. One must also consider that the work these Indians perform is more arduous than work in other places. Furthermore, if the shipment of supplies to this royal presidio is delayed for more than a year, the clothing allotment for the Indians is also delayed. Nevertheless, the witness points out that although these Indians are not actually paid for their work, one can rest assured that, unlike most other places, the Indians are versed in Christian doctrine because of the special attention that is given to their education and religious instruction.”

Paradoxes of Independence

Wars ease in the 1780s and 1790s with the establishment of “peace encampments.”

Calm that ensued brought prosperity and a degree of security.

In the western Interior Provinces indigenous militias, especially the Ópatas and Pimas, were recruited for presidial service with an assigned salary and the right to a parcel of land, not as commoners in their own villages, but as citizen-soldiers (*vecinos-soldados*).

The transfer of a substantial part of the male labor force from the mission villages probably increased the tasks that fell to women and deepened class divisions among the Indians between those who paid their neighbors to work their land and those who did not have access to wage labor outside the missions.

Politically command hierarchy in the militias created parallel and competing lines of authority within the pueblos.



Alexander von Humboldt, New Spain, 1810, Courtesy DeGolyer Library

Paradoxes of Independence

In the opening years of the nineteenth century the monarchical crisis precipitated by the Napoleonic Wars in Europe and Napoleon's invasion of Spain, 1808, paralleled a series of imperial crises that had direct repercussions in the northern borderlands.

In the northern provinces the sense of crisis arose from recurring droughts and crop failures, the resurgence of Apache raiding following the failure of the Bourbon administration to maintain the peace encampments, and in the dispersion of presidial troops out of the province to combat the popular Insurgency in central New Spain.



Source:
David Rumsey
Historical Map
Collection

Authors:
Martin and
Tallis, 1851

Paradoxes of Independence

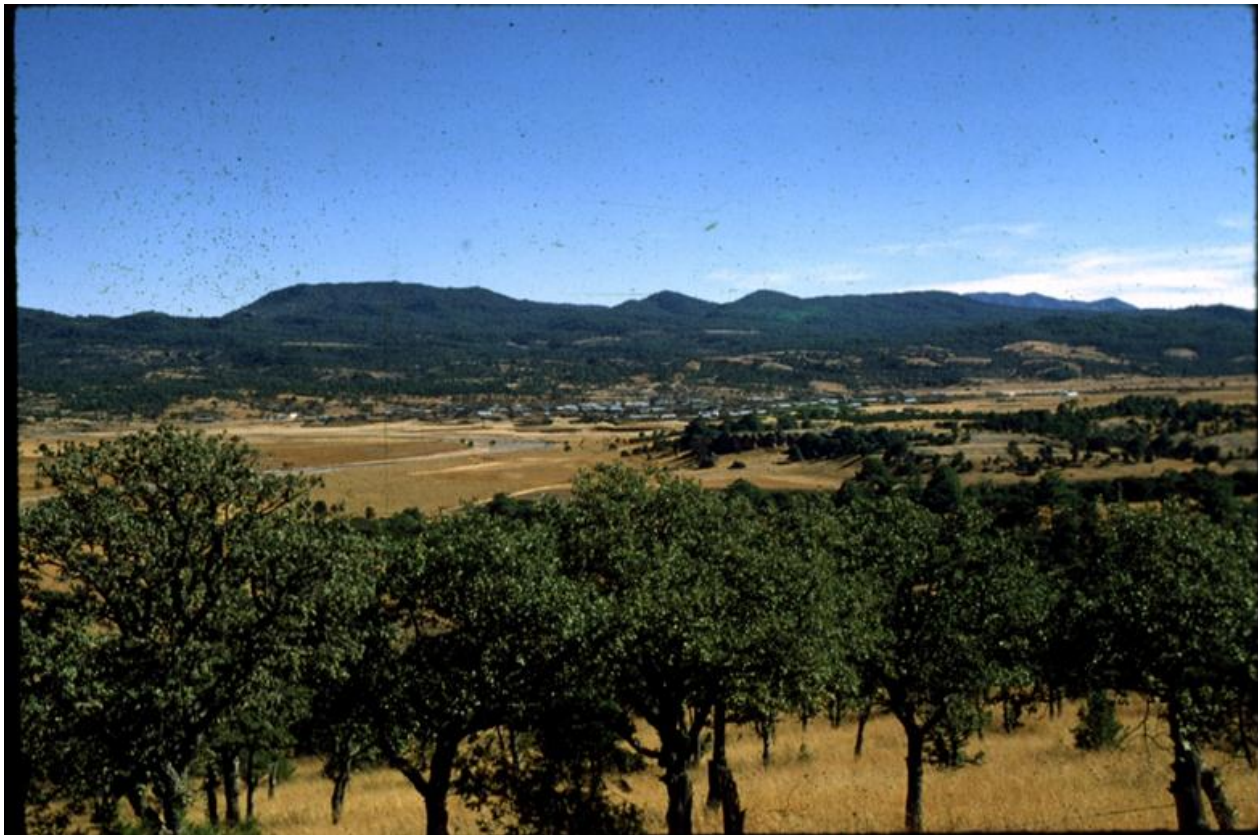
At the close of the Independence wars, when insurgent and royalist leaders were beginning to negotiate a treaty in central New Spain, the Ópata troops rose up against the Commandancy demanding payment of their salaries in arrears and the right to elect their own captains-general, the Ópatas raised a cry for autonomy within the communities they had re-created through the presidial system.

The Opata revolt was suppressed but indigenous warriors rebelled again in 1824, within the framework of the Mexican Republic and the Estado de Occidente, against the federal military commander of Sonora, who had removed their captain-general from office. In both instances, the Indians' protests centered on their right to elect their military leaders, thus defending longstanding practices of local political autonomy and – by inference – the common territories that marked their communities of origin.

The merchant and landed classes of northwestern Mexico took control of municipal councils (*ayuntamientos*) and the state legislature. Taking a leaf from their Bourbon predecessors, the new political elite defined citizenship in terms of individual land ownership and further accelerated the division and redistribution of lands that had remained in communal use in the former mission pueblos.

These actions violated what the Indians had considered to be a colonial pact of reciprocity and provoked new indigenous uprisings, bringing together different ethnic groups, most notably the Ópatas and Yaquis of northern and southern Sonora, in 1832-1833. Notwithstanding the military defeat of this rebellion and the execution of its leaders, indigenous leaders continued to defend by legal actions and by force of arms their local autonomy and their territory, as we have seen in Juan Isidro Bojórques's letter to the Mexican President in 1836.

Teaching History through Art and Religion



Landscapes

Sonoran Piedmont and Desert Coast



Río Chico, Sonora



Tiburón Island, Sonora
Gulf of California

Landscapes



Sonoran Highlands

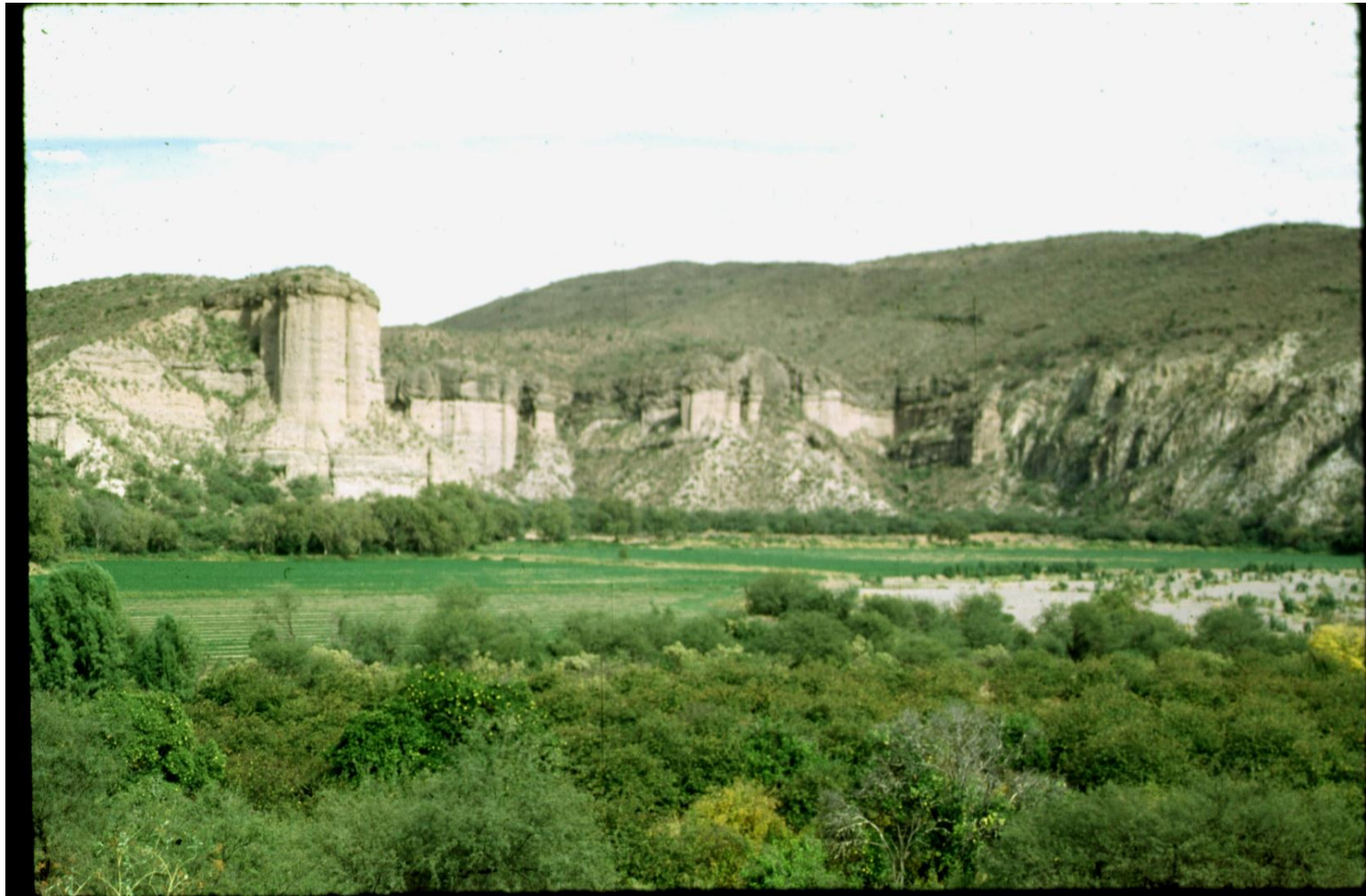
Live oak and grasslands

Technology

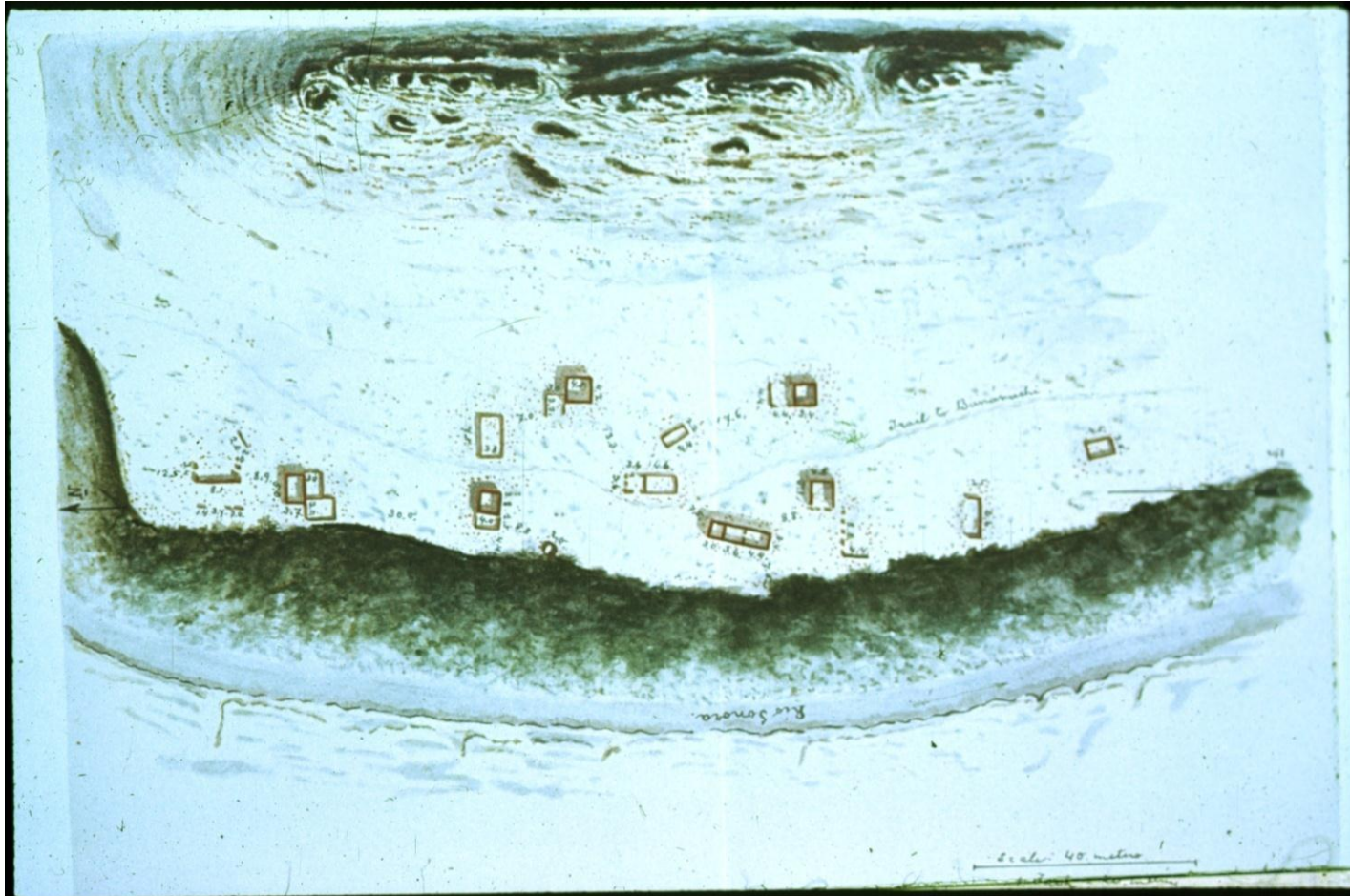
Earthen Dam

Living Fence Row





Sonora River



Adolphe Bandelier, Sonora River, 1887

Tohono O'odham



Wi:kita

Religious ceremony

Quitobac in the Sonoran Desert



O'odham
Labyrinth and I'itoi
O'odham Basketry
Courtesy Arizona State Museum

Final slide.
Thank You