FRAMING FRONTIERS: LANDSCAPE AND DISCOURSE IN BALTASAR DE OBREGÓN’S *HISTORIA DE LOS DESCUBRIMIENTOS DE NUEVA ESPAÑA* (1584)

Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the discourses of landscape as they relate to the representation of indigenous peoples in Baltasar Obregón’s narrative report of exploration, Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España (1584). As it narrates the course of expeditions of exploration into the northern borderlands of New Spain between 1564 and 1584, the primary purpose of this text was not only to report to the crown and officials in New Spain the events that occurred during the expeditions, but also to report on the geography of the largely unknown territory beyond the northern frontier of New Spain, since no maps yet existed for it. Obregón, the narrating subject, then, made important decisions about what his anticipated readership would “see” of the region through what information he chose to present, and how he chose to present it. These decisions about how to frame the view of the landscape directly affected the representations that were created of these lands, and of their peoples. At the same time, Obregón’s narrative would have more than likely been influenced not only by what he saw as he traversed the territory, but also by the documentation, legend, and lore of the expeditions into North America that preceded his; in particular, the relaciones and rumors that had circulated about the journeys of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1528-1536), Fray Marcos de Niza (1539) and Francisco Vázquez de Coronado (1540-1542).
Just how the landscape and its peoples presented in the text were perceived by the anticipated readers would have hinged, to a great extent, on the representations provided by the narrating subject, a *criollo*, himself influenced by his very particular locus of enunciation, the frontier of New Spain in the late sixteenth century. I argue that it is in landscape description where the context of textual production, textual mapping and the textual projection of European institutions converge, and create a place, a *textualscape*, from which the human element cannot escape.
Dedicated to my parents
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CHAPTER 1

THE LANDSCAPE OF THE NORTHERN FRONTIER IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY NEW SPAIN

“Geography is made...largely in terms of the country we perceive, or are conditioned to perceive: the country of the mind.” –James Wreford Watson, 1970

Introduction

“In Spanish American colonial texts, space (geographical, physical, and cultural) is at the center of all textual constructions, from the literature of exploration, to the autobiographies of nuns” (Arias and Meléndez 15). In the past several years, scholarly studies focusing on the importance of space and place have emerged across disciplines. With their critical theories regarding spatial production and practices, Henri Lefebvre (The Production of Space 1974), Michel de Certeau (“Spatial Practices” in The Practice of Everyday Life 1984) and Michel Foucault (“Of Other Spaces” 1986), have all greatly influenced the disciplines of cultural geography, cultural anthropology, history, art,
literature, and literary theory.¹ In the fields of cultural anthropology and literary studies, this recognition and examination of the importance of space and place in studying humanity has contributed to exploring the creation of a sense of place, the creation of a sense of identity, and to examine how place is experienced, “fusing setting to situation” (Basso 8). The field of Latin American Colonial Studies has been no exception to this trend.

In their introduction to *Mapping Colonial Spanish America: Places and Commonplaces of Identity, Culture, and Experience* (2002), Santa Arias and Mariselle Meléndez cite some of the most important works in the study of colonial Spanish America produced in the past decade, (Gruzinski 1991, Pratt 1992, Zamora 1993, Mignolo 1995, et al.) and demonstrate the degree to which space has played a fundamental role in them. “Space influenced the way colonial Spanish America was created discursively, historically, culturally, politically, and legally.” They suggest that “space offers a critical stance from which we can further examine colonial discourse as it relates to gender, ethnicity, race, identity, and the colonial experience as a whole” (16, 21). Perhaps most notably, for more than a decade scholars of colonial Latin American texts have utilized theories of space and place as a critical stance from which to examine colonial discourse in terms of mapping (Ahern 1999, 2002, 2003, Hill-Boone 1994, 1998, Mignolo 1992, 1994, 1995, Mundy 1996, Padrón 2004, et al.). Yet, for as much as these

¹ Mitchell (2002), Arias and Meléndez (2002), Basso (1996) and Hirsch and O’Hanlon (1995) all reference the influence of one or more of these scholars in their respective fields.
studies have contributed to an analysis of space and place in colonial Latin America, they have tended to neglect the important factor of landscape.

W.J.T. Mitchell addresses the role of landscape in studies of space and place in his preface to *Landscape and Power* (2002): “What happens to landscape when its effects are gauged in relation to space and place? How do these three terms resonate together?” (viii). He cites two major shifts in the past century in the study of landscape. The first, associated with Modernism, has read the history of landscape as the history of landscape painting, while the second, associated with postmodernism, has de-centered the role of painting in favor a semiotic approach, one that has “treated landscape as an allegory of psychological or ideological themes” (Introduction 1). In Mitchell’s view, both of these models are missing the fundamental question of what landscape does, and how it works as a cultural practice (Introduction 1). This notion of looking at landscape as praxis is strongly rooted in the studies of place and space that have emerged in the past century. In fact, Mitchell boldly claims in the preface to the second edition, that, given the chance to retitle *Landscape and Power* today, he would call it *Space, Place, and Landscape*. Categorizing scholarly pursuits regarding space and place into two traditions, the phenomenological (Gaston Bachelard and Martin Heidegger) and the Marxist (Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Foucault), Mitchell argues that despite their differences, “they agree on the primacy of ‘space’ and ‘place’ as the fundamental
categories of analysis” (Preface viii). Furthermore, they all fail to attend to the issue of landscape:

Landscape remains relatively underanalyzed (sic). It has been left primarily to art historians interested in painting or landscape architecture, or to cultural geographers such as J.B. Jackson. To my knowledge, no one has really attempted to think the three terms together as a conceptual totality. (Preface viii)

This dissertation examines landscape as it relates to human experiences of space and place in an analysis of Latin American Colonial discourses by looking at representations of the indigenous in a text replete with landscape descriptions, Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España (1584), an account written in sixteenth-century New Spain by a criollo, Baltasar de Obregón. I hypothesize that it is in landscape description where issues relating to space and place, such as the context of textual production, discursive mapping, the textual projection of European institutions and indigenous America, all converge, and create a place, a “textualscape,” from which the human element, or the “humanscape” to borrow a term from Maureen Ahern, cannot

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2 While Mitchell includes de Certeau as a part of the Marxist tradition along with Lefebvre and Foucault, it should be noted that de Certeau was, in fact, a Jesuit. However, all three philosophers do share in common a sociological methodology in dealing with space and place.

3 The cultural concept of the “criollo” refers to the sons of Spaniards born in the Americas and infers a social, economic and political category. (See Le Riverend and Venegas, 2005)
escape, but rather become part and parcel of the project of landscape description

**History and Background**

“La Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España, relación enviada por Baltasar de Obregón al Consejo de Indias en 1584 […] presenta la relevante particularidad de ser, hasta hoy, la primera historia escrita por un autor criollo mejicano”. –Eva María Bravo, 1997

Baltasar Obregón, a *criollo* born in 1544, inherited his father’s *encomienda* at Tezontepec in the present-day state of Hidalgo, Mexico.  
He participated in an expedition to California at the age of nineteen, in the hopes of increasing his family’s fortune, later joining the expedition of Francisco de Ibarra (see fig. 1.1). *Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España* narrates that exploration project. Francisco de Ibarra left from San Martín in 1564 to found the mining settlements of Durango and Nombre de Dios, and to suppress indigenous rebellions in the region.  

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4 Arjun Appadurai employs the suffix “scape” to his five “dimensions of global cultural flow” in order to explore the disjunctures between economy, culture and politics of the current global economy. What is of interest to this study is his use of the suffix “scape.” The significance of this regarding “textualscape” will be treated in greater detail in chapter three, but for now, it should be noted that Appadurai employs the suffix to speak to fluid and perspectival constructs (275-276).

5 The *encomienda* refers to a tribute system in which the Spaniard was allotted Indians as an entrustment to protect and to Christianize. In return the Spaniard could demand tribute, usually in the form of labor (Burns 2002).

6 These rebellions were a part of the fifty year war commonly referred to as La Guerra Chichimeca. When the mines of San Martín, Chalchihuities, Avino, Sombrerete, Fresnillo, Mazapil, and Nieves were established, Spanish soldiers soon began raiding native settlements to capture slaves for the mines and for sale. The Chichimeca ethnic groups were nomadic, and viewed as savages by the Mexica, who served as auxiliary
his own participation in the Ibarra expedition in order to garner favor with the Crown,
Obregón’s Historia attempted to provide a comprehensive interpretive history of
northward Spanish expansion, including two later expeditions (of which Obregón was not
a part) that began to push the frontier even farther north into present-day New Mexico;
the Chamuscado-Rodríguez party (1581-1582) and the expedition led by Antonio de
Espejo in 1583 (see fig. 1.2). Obregón wrote his account twenty years after the Ibarra
expedition to send to the Consejo de Indias. Obregón relied principally on his eye-
itness experiences in order to recount the events and descriptions in his text, employing
the testimonies of other soldiers and prospectors in order to reinforce his own
experiences, and to recount those of which he was not a part, all the while offering advice
and recommendations regarding the routes and practices for consideration by future
expeditions.

While Obregón’s Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España (1584) offers
some of the earliest descriptions of the pueblos of present-day Sonora, it must be noted
that other written descriptions preceded his. Indeed, the vestiges of the European visitors
that had traversed the territory before him reveal themselves in Obregón’s text. The first
European contact with the indigenous peoples of northern Mexico occurred when Alvar
Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, along with three other companions who had survived the

soldiers to the Spanish during the conflict, which lasted until the turn of the century. See
Phillip Wayne Powell for a detailed account of these conflicts, (1977).

El Consejo de Indias was the Spanish Crown’s principal governing body for the
colonies in the New World. Any decision regarding commissions for further exploration
would have come from the Consejo de Indias, and this is more than likely why Obregón
sent his Historia there.
shipwrecked Pánfilo de Narváez expedition, trekked westward from Florida across the American continent between 1527 and 1537, with the goal of reaching New Spain (see fig. 1.3). One of the survivors that accompanied him, an African slave called Estebanico, later returned to the area in 1539 as a guide accompanying the Franciscan friar, Marcos de Niza. This group had been sent as an advanced party by Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza in the hopes of discovering riches based on tales of wealthy cities to the north generated from the oral and written reports of the four survivors who made up the Cabeza de Vaca party that had reached Culiacan in 1537. Fray Marcos de Niza and his group were to report back to Mendoza on the territory to the North and its purported riches.

The de Niza scouting expedition generated much enthusiasm regarding the supposed existence of the fabled Seven Cities of Antilia. The legend of the Seven Cities, that seven Portuguese bishops, having fled the Moorish invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, founded seven cities somewhere in the western Atlantic, was strongly entrenched in the European imagination of the time. De Niza’s report that he had seen seven cities, albeit

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8 Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was the royal treasurer of the expedition led by Pánfilo de Narváez, which landed on the coast of Florida in 1528 with 400 men. While 300 men set out by land in search of riches, the ships were to follow along the coast. However, the sea and land crews were separated, and after a year of searching, the sailors gave up hope and headed back to Cuba. The abandoned land expedition suffered storms, hunger, thirst, and native attacks, ultimately creating makeshift rafts to try to reach Mexico, but to no avail. Cabeza de Vaca was one of the four survivors of the expedition who made his way to present-day Sinaloa, Mexico on foot, practicing cures as a medicine man for food and lodging along with three other survivors (Weber 1992).

9 The belief in the existence of these seven cities was such an integral part of the era’s “reality” that the island of Antilia is included in many fifteenth-century maps. In fact, the Western Antilles are named so because Europeans at first believed that Columbus had
from a distance, coupled with the strongly held belief that these cities existed in the New World, spurred the huge expedition sent out by Viceroy Mendoza in 1540.\textsuperscript{10} This expedition, led by Captain Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, penetrated as far north as Kansas and west to the Grand Canyon (see fig. 1.4). However, the Coronado expedition was viewed as a failure upon its return to New Spain in 1542, since no fabled cites were found, nor any wealth comparable to that of Perú or México.\textsuperscript{11}

After Coronado’s “failure,” the remote reaches of the northern frontier that make up present-day New Mexico and Arizona were left alone by the Spaniards. For approximately the next forty years the mining frontier and its enterprises slowly spread northward from central Mexico northeast, to the territory entitled Nueva Vizcaya, which

\textsuperscript{10} De Niza reports in his \textit{relación}, “Solamente vi, desde la boca de la abra, siete poblaciones razonables, algo lexos un valle abaxo muy fresco […] tuve razon que hay en ella mucho oro y que lo trataron los naturals de ella en vajisas y joyas…”. (de Niza xix)

\textsuperscript{11} Having conquered the wealthy city of Tenochtitlan in 1521, Spanish soldiers had high hopes of finding more wealthy cities in the New World. Also, the rich golden treasure of the Incas that had been found in Cuzco (c. 1530) had produced fabulous wealth for the Crown, and fueled Spanish desire to continue chartering unexplored territory. (Another mine would be founded in Potosí in 1546). Finally, Fray Marcos de Niza, who knew firsthand the wealth of Mexico and Peru, provided encouraging testimony of “mucho oro y que lo tratan los naturales de ella en vajisas y joyas…” (de Niza xix).
included the area north of Zacatecas and most of the area of the modern Mexican states of Chihuahua and Durango, and at times, part of the state of Coahuila. During this period, slave raids to nearby indigenous communities, repression of indigenous rebellions, and military and evangelization efforts consumed the attention of the Spanish. Obregón’s *Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva Hispana* emerges from the expeditions that began to take place in the second half of the sixteenth century when friars, soldiers, and settlers from these mining areas turned their attention northward again, with dual and contradictory aspirations of saving souls and prospecting for mines.

**Review of the Literature**

“¿Qué es, pues, el texto? Lo definiremos, brevemente y en función de nuestros propósitos, como un acto verbal conservado en la memoria colectiva y de alta significación en la organización de una cultura.”

–Walter Mignolo, 1982

Over the past several decades, numerous studies of the accounts produced in sixteenth-century New Spain have been published by scholars from the fields of history, anthropology, and literary criticism. Yet, Baltasar Obregón’s *Historia* has been largely ignored by scholars across disciplines. Scholarly attention has been paid to a much greater extent to the Coronado corpus, including *La relación del descubrimiento de las siete ciudades* by Fray Marcos de Niza (1539), Fernando de Alarcón’s *relación* (1540), and *Relación de la Jornada de Cíbola* by Pedro de Castañeda y Nájera (1568). In fact, Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint note in their introduction to *Documents of the Coronado Expedition* (2005), that the Coronado Expedition has been so popularly commemorated, and is so well known throughout the Southwest United States, that it has
Figure 1.1: Ibarra’s route according to Armando Hopkins Durazo (1988)
Figure 1.2: The routes of Chamuscado Rodríguez and Antonio de Espejo. Modified from Weber.
Figure 1.3: Cabeza de Vaca’s route (In Disease, Depopulation and Culture Change, Reff 1991)
Figure 1.4: The route of Fray Marcos de Niza and the partial route of Coronado
(Disease, Depopulation and Culture Change, Reff 1991)
largely been viewed as “an orange that was squeezed dry long ago” (4). However, even in
the case of these well known texts, the interest showed in them has been primarily
from the fields of ethnohistory and cultural anthropology, with F.W. Hodge (1865),
George Bancroft (1834-1874), Arthur Aiton (1925, 1940), A. Grove Day (1940), Herbert
E. Bolton (1949), George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey (1940, 1966), Carroll Riley
(1991, 1996) making important contributions in this area. Most notably, George P.
Hammond and Agapito Rey provided scholars with English translations of the documents
from the Coronado expedition, replete with laudatory romantic images of Spanish
conquistadors, as part of the Coronado Historical Series launched in 1940 in celebration
of the Coronado Cuarto Centennial. These English-language editions have been more
closely scrutinized in the past decade by Jerry Craddock (1996), Richard and Shirley
scholarly criticisms of these translations, as well as annotated transcriptions, have
sparked renewed scholarly interest in the expedition.

Despite this rich historical tradition, the studies of the Coronado expedition have
focused nearly exclusively on the historical and geographical dimensions, largely
neglecting discursive analysis. The most notable exception is the work of Maureen
Ahern, who has analyzed the discursive and semiotic strategies in these texts (1989,
1993, 1994, 2003), in particular, the narrating subjects’ employment of direct and indirect
discourses, as well as how these same narrators manipulate code and sign (in the cases of
de Niza and Alarcón), and how, by measuring and naming, these narrators provide
precise cartographic and material references to otherwise “mythical” places, as in the cases of Castañeda y Nájera and de Niza.

The recent scholarly attention to the Coronado expedition notwithstanding, the texts generated from the expeditions that occurred after its return in 1542 and before the attempt at permanent Spanish settlement by Juan de Oñate in 1598, are still relatively understudied. The interest that has been shown, as in the case of Coronado, has largely come from the fields of cultural anthropology and ethnohistory (Hammond and Rey 1966, Greenleaf 1971, Riley 1971, 1987, Reff 1987, Troike 1988, Hopkins Durazo 1988, Weber 1992, Dobyns 1993, Schroeder 1993, et al.), with little attention from the field of literary and cultural studies. Once again, we find a notable exception in the case Maureen Ahern, who has examined the discourse in two texts that will be important to this study.

In her article ““La relación y conçudio de Hernán Gallegos: glosa, guía y memoria de Nuevo México 1581-1582” (2001), Ahern suggests that in their respective accounts of the Chamuscado-Rodríguez and Espejo expeditions, Hernán Gallegos and Diego Pérez de Luxán provide us with a textual site, a paradigm, of the contradictions of the Spanish venture in the New World. She demonstrates how these accounts performed a fundamental function in the role that written, oral and visual representation played in the configuration of the “imaginario de la frontera del norte” at a moment of internal contradictions among the Spanish invaders themselves. Analyzing the Gallegos text in particular, Ahern demonstrates how the territory of “la Nueva México de San Felipe” is inscribed as a new cultural space for conversion, exploitation, and colonialization. Also
important is her examination of the role that the reports of previous expeditions played in the formation of a paradigm of a first contact “script” that Gallegos and this “second generation” of expeditions adapted to produce their own new guide; one that “le servía a su nueva agenda ideológica y económica cuyo propósito era abrir los espacios culturales de la frontera norteña para la conversión y la colonización” (399).12

In “Testimonio oral, memoria y violencia en el diario de Diego Pérez de Luxán, Nuevo México, 1583” (1995) Ahern analyzes the field diary kept by Diego Pérez de Luxán, demonstrating how this document, probably written for Luxán’s own use and not intended for publication or persuasion, reveals serious differences between the image that Gallegos and Espejo represented in their official reports and what was probably the reality of the northern frontier at the time. She analyzes the function of the “double voiced discourse” employed in this relación that values indigenous memory, interpretation and witness, as well as the Hopi’s transformation of the cross in order to protect cultural space. In this way, Ahern demonstrates how the “discurso marginal” of this document debunks the propaganda that Espejo had sent to Spain, including the reality of the violence of La masacre de Puala.13

12 Ahern also reasons that texts such as Gallegos’ can be read as a bridge that connects these two generations and their different agendas: “La relación de Gallegos puede leerse como un texto puente entre el pasado mítico y apropiado de Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca y el futuro proyectado de colonización y evangelización que Juan de Oñate y los franciscanos intentarían imponer en las próxima décadas”(400).

13 In 1541, when Coronado learned that ten of his horses had been killed by the Tiguas of Puala, he led Spanish soldiers in an attack against the town, virtually wiping it out. Maureen Ahern relates the account of the events remembered through indigenous witnesses provided by Luxán in 1583, a participant of the Espejo expedition, “testimonio
Another essay by Ahern, “Fronteras mudables: un informe náhuatl de la Guerra Chichimeca, 1563,” although not dealing directly with the texts studied here, it is important for two reasons: first, it lends insight into the milieu of the region at the time of northward expansion, and second, it demonstrates how the narrators of official reports and relaciones made important decisions about what information was included and excluded in these documents, and how they would have failed to recognize “difference” among indigenous groups. This is clear from studying the notorial documents written in Nahuatl from the settlement of Nombre de Dios that attest to and claim acknowledgement of the Nahua auxiliaries’ important role in the Guerra Chichimeca (1550-1600), a dimension that is otherwise suppressed in Obregón and Ibarra’s official reports.

In addition to Maureen Ahern, few other scholars have studied the Luxán, Espejo, and Obregón texts. Richard Gordon has studied the texts written by Gallegos, Espejo and Obregón in his article “Following Estevanico: The Influential Presence of an African Slave in Sixteenth-century New World Historiography” (2007), in which he analyzes the discrepancies and differences in the descriptions of the African slave, Esteban, in these texts by comparing them to the representations in the earlier texts produced by de Niza, Coronado, Castañeda and Alarcón.

In the particular case of Baltasar Obregón’s Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España (1584), very few studies have been published from the field of literary and cultural studies. Obregón’s crónica of northward expansion was not published in the author’s lifetime, but was sent to the Consejo de Indias. The original is held in the

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indígena sobre una violencia tan intensa que la reaparición de soldados españoles a los cuarenta años después la evoca instantáneamente (155-156, 1995).
Archivo General de Indias in Seville (AGI. Patronato. 22. R7. fol. 603-850) (see figs. 1.5 and 1.6). The first known published edition was produced by Father Mariano Cuevas in 1924, and then was reedited in 1988. Cuevas transcribed the entire work in only ten days, and consequently, there are many errors in interpretation as well as omissions. The Cuevas version was later translated into English by Hammond and Rey and published in 1928. Finally, in 1989, The University of Seville published a paleographic edition in microfiche along with a philological study of the work, edited by Eva María Bravo. I will refer to this paleographic edition in microfiche, however the edition to which I will refer as a primary source, and from which I will cite, will be the published edition based on that paleograph, with modernized language, also edited by Bravo (1997).

Eva María Bravo’s philological study, and her introduction to the annotated edition of the text, (1988, 1997) both include some analysis of the rhetoric of the late sixteenth century period when Obregón wrote. Additionally, Rosa Camelo’s article “La idea de la historia en Baltasar de Obregón” (1971) examines what the text reveals about Obregón’s own conceptions of History. Both of these studies contribute to the understanding of the worldview of the day, contextualizing Obregón’s writing and identifying how the style of discourse he employs reflects European notions of history, truth and testimony. Another study that examines the context in which Obregón wrote is Elide Pittarello’s “Scienzia/ Esperienza nella Historia de los descubrimientos antiguos y modernos de la Nueva España di Baltasar de Obregón” (1984), in which the European zteigeist of the 16th century is considered, including the debates of the day and influence
Figure 1.5: First page of Libro Primero in *Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España* (1584) (AGI. Patronato. 22. R7. fo. 608).
Figure 1.6: Final paragraph of the prologue to *Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España* (1584), signed by Baltasar Obregón. (AGI. Patronato. 22. R7. fo. 613).
of the Renaissance humanist tradition, as well as notions about testimony and truth, history, and science.

While Camelo and Pittarello offer insight into the zeitgeist of the era from which these narrators write, a factor that will be considered at length in this investigation, the works of Ahern and Gordon lend significantly more precise insight into, and analysis of, the discourses employed by these narrators. These studies, while few compared to the wealth of studies that have emerged from other disciplines, provide an important foundation for further investigation. Specifically, Ahern’s notions of these texts as bridges between two generations of expeditions, and their roles as paradigms, will be useful, as will her work on mapping discourse (1989, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003). Gordon’s notion of discourse as a mode of identity creation, not a mere reinforcement or representation of it will also be important in connecting mapping discourse and indigenous representation (2007).

La historia, relación and crónica

“[La relación] Es una lectura que construye la historia a través del texto e inclusive es la historia contenida en ello. Es, por consiguiente, una historia tan poderosa y tan limitada y frágil como el lenguaje mismo, y el proceso de ver crearse la agencia humana, su abogacía y sus límites.”

-- Rolena Adorno, 1993

It is not surprising that Baltasar Obregón employs the terms crónica, historia, comentario, and relación interchangeably to refer to his document since, as Bravo explains, the terms “eran, asimismo, vocablos empleados como sinónimos hasta el siglo XVI, para designar obras cuyo autor daba cuenta de hechos que realmente habían
acontecido” (Bravo 14). However, Obregón does choose one of these terms, historia, to entitle his text (see fig. 1.7). According to Bravo, this may be because in 1569, not long before Obregón wrote Historia, the Ordenanzas were revised to outline the historiographic procedures recommended by the Crown for the relaciones written in the New World (14). Thus, the historia began to be distinguished from other discursive modes. The two factors Bravo cites that contribute to this distinction include the point-of-view of the narration, and its scope.

(M)ientras que en la primera (la historia) se puede separar el punto de vista del autor-testigo del narrador, en la segunda (la crónica) son uno mismo; y por otra, la historia constituye un todo cerrado y continuo desde el principio de los hechos hasta el fin, mientras que la crónica es el relato de un segmento del tiempo y de unos sucesos concretos que interesan particularmente a su autor. El conocimiento directo o indirecto de lo que se está narrando es un elemento que divide marcadamente dos tipos de obras... (Bravo 14)

Walter Mignolo contends that the term “historia,” in its Greek etymology, indicated, “ver o formular preguntas apremiantes a testigos oculares; y significa también el informe de lo visto o lo aprendido por medio de las preguntas” (75, 1982). The usage of the term, “historia” did not necessarily indicate temporal sequence, an aspect which instead was signaled by the employment of the term, “crónica.” However, “ya hacia el siglo XVI los antiguos anales y crónicas habían ido desapareciendo gradualmente y fueron reemplazados por la historiae (sic)” (76, 1982).

[L]a historiografía como formación discursiva [...] no lo hace, como en el caso de las cartas y de las relaciones, sólo por la obligación de informar, sino que lo hace aceptando el fin que la caracteriza y la distingue (i.e. el fin de la actividad historiográfica). El fin de la historia (del escribir historia) se caracteriza, por un lado, en un nivel filosófico y por otro, público” (Mignolo 77, 1982).
Figure 1.7: Title page of text published by S.E.P. (Hopkins Durazo)
Obregón’s *Historia* does emulate the philosophical characteristic that Mignolo cites, and incorporates the testimony of others as well as his own, both points to which I will return. Also, while there is a certain chronology to events, Obregón does not necessarily adhere to a strict temporal ordering, but rather flashes forward and back in time and place in relating stories, as will be evident in subsequent chapters.

Additionally, *Historia* exemplifies other discursive characteristics that Mignolo cites as salient features that emerge during particular periods in New Spain (103-110, 1982). It is interesting to note that in Obregón, we see an overlapping of this periodization. For example, Mignolo argues that the *historia indiana* during the period between 1480 and 1543 included the following characteristics, all of which are reflected in the *Historia*: “la expansión territorial de España”; “el impulso humanístico en la historiografía”; “el abandono de tipo de crónica medieval”; “el auge de las historias nacionales y nuevo capítulo en la historiografía castellana”, and “la historia de las Indias” (104). While Obregón’s text does not reflect the “preocupación por la historia indígena” cited as a hallmark of the period between 1543-1592, or “el auge de los cronistas oficiales y consolidación de la historiografía oficial” it is a text indicative of “la profusión de géneros” (105). Finally, as will be elaborated in the section on evangelization, Obregón’s *Historia* is demonstrative of “la predicación del cristianismo se aneja a la historia eclesiástica,” a salient feature of the period 1592-1623.15

14 The history of the Indies here is a limited term, referring to that of the history of Spanish experience in the Indies.

15 It should be noted that while Mignolo cites the date 1623, Pérez de Ribas’s *Historia de los triunfos de nuestra santa fe entre gentes las mas barbaras y fieras del Nuevo Orbe*
Obregón’s text represents a truly complex interweaving of elements from both the *historia*/*crónica* and the *relación* genres. In terms of point-of-view, Obregón is at times the *autor-testigo* of events that he relates, but at other moments, he is narrating events related to him either discursively or orally by others, such as soldiers, priests, indigenous persons, and settlers. In terms of scope, Obregón attempts to be inclusive (as the plural in the title “los descubrimientos” would indicate) and seems to view his text as a synthesis of multiple, longer accounts, in addition to his own.

Por estar de ordinario muy ocupados en el grave peso e inmensa carga de la administración de tantas regiones y gentes, no suelen poder leer historias ni otras borras que en su progreso sean de relaciones largas, por el poco tiempo que les resta para ver y pasar escrituras prolijas; para cuyo conveniente remedio, deseando servir a V.M. y después a estos sus reinos de las Indias – según verbalmente tengo referido a V.M. – hice y ordené este general y universal crónica y relaciones de las partes y valles contenidas, reducido a honesta brevedad y compendio sus historias escritas difusamente y otras no bien entendidas y otras casi incógnitas.16 (Obregón 43-44)

In this project of “reducing” and “summarizing,” Obregón draws from accounts of contemporary events, and those that occurred before his birth in 1544, in addition to drawing from his personal memories of the Ibarra expedition twenty years earlier. Thus, while *Historia* does represent “un todo cerrado y continuo desde el principio de los

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16 While the word “historia” here may refer to “stories,” the point that I wish to emphasize is the compilation of stories from various sources and his role as editor, both functions of compiling a “history.”
hechos hasta el fin,” at the same time, Obregón’s firsthand experiences emerge as “unos sucesos concretos que interesan particularmente a su autor” (Bravo 14).

What, then, is the role of the narrating subject in this seemingly hybrid genre? Rolena Adorno has pointed to the complexity of the “yo” in the relación, noting that the subject insists on his presence and authority, yet, at the same time, must rely on third-person witnesses in order to provide evidence and prove his claims (Adorno “Discurso jurídico,” 1993). Obregón’s case demonstrates such a complexity, as he refers to his Historia as a source for his own, personal testimony, but also as a source for comparing the veracity of various accounts.

En lo cual daré verdadero testimonio de lo que vi, anduve y experimenté en seiscientas leguas de diversas tierras, lenguajes y naciones que yo anduve en su compañía; y en lo demás que tratare, daré autores fidedignos con historias y relaciones de sus casos y verdaderos hechos de las tierras que han visto y descubierto, haciendo relación de las que son buenas o malas. (43, my emphasis)

Moreover, the complexity of the “yo” is compounded when considering that, while writing out of an obligation to inform the crown, the narrating subject is also writing in order to relate his participation and deeds in order to garner royal favor, as these texts informed imperial perception and policy and had important implications for their authors, most of whom were seeking future commissions to explore and settle lands. The autor-testigo was “generalmente, un soldado o un religioso que da a conocer hechos dignos de loa y de pasar a la posteridad para que sean conocidos, valorados y recompensados por la autoridad real...” (Bravo 14, my emphasis). Obregón’s desire to
earn a commission, if not at least the opportunity to participate in one, is evidenced in his openly volunteering to explore the lands beyond San Felipe on the Sea of Cortés.

Y aunque el menor vasallo de V.M. yo me ofrezco ponerlo por obra y servir a V.M. en ver, saber y descubrir quinientas leguas de tierras desde la provincia de San Felipe en adelante y si no fuere aceptado en este servicio, hay en estas partes capitanes muy suficientes para el dicho efecto... (255-256)

Perhaps, as part and parcel of this objective, Obregón incorporates the exposition of his own deeds as well as those of other explorers throughout his account “para que no se sepulten en el olvido y poca memoria de los hombres los buenos ejemplos y casos y sucesos” (42). In doing so, he demonstrates these deeds as acts of courage and sacrifice, lauding the praises of his peers and obsequiously mentioning his own service for Crown and King. I will discuss this theme in more detail in chapter three, but for the moment it must be noted that certain literary elements emerge as Obregón highlights various “protagonists” and tells their “stories.”

La atención se centra en los grandes protagonistas de la acción, haciendo el elogio de sus personas y hazañas. Son los “héroes” que hay que imitar y que merecen obtener justa recompensa. (Bravo 17)

At the same time, it should be noted that it is this type of literary interpretation that Walter Mignolo has warned against, emphasizing that relaciones were written out of an obligation to inform the Crown, and not with the goal of being read as literature: “La cultura los convierte de discurso en texto, debido a la importancia del hecho cultural que relatan” (Mignolo 1982, 59). However, in “Discurso jurídico, discurso literario: el reto de leer en el siglo XX los escritores del XVI” (1993), Rolena Adorno argues that the
relación represents a type of discourse unto itself, apart from, yet related to, the traditional concept of literature. While the model for the relación was primarily the judicial format rather than any literary one, at the same time, the modern reader recognizes elements of both in the relación. Adorno suggests that attempts to differentiate between these texts as judicial or literary are arbitrary, as both genres are interpretive constructions, and neither is purely transparent nor purely self-reflective (17). In this sense, to categorize the relación as one or the other is as limiting as it is irrelevant. For the purposes of this analysis, the greater import lies in understanding how and why the narrating subject employs literary and juridical elements in order to relate what is seen in terms of the landscape.

Finally, how the narrating subject was read and interpreted by his readership would have been crucial to winning a commission from the Crown for authority to explore and settle the regions to the north, the competition for which was intensely fierce. As Adorno has pointed out, before the text would have reached its destination, such as the audiencia, the virrey or, in the case of Obregón, the Consejo de Indias, the narrator’s text would first have had to go through the hands of the escribano and relator for witness verification and certification (21). The escribano was an individual who served as “a combination secretary, scribe, and notary [and] could be either a governmental or private position” (Flint and Flint 706, 2005). The relator played an equally if not more important role.

En efecto, el discurso jurídico está mayormente constituido por instancias de tercera persona y todos los trámites de la corte se realizaban en escritos y testimonios de tercera persona. Así se redactaba, por ejemplo, la probanza, que
consistía en testimonios personales hechos por una serie de testigos. El oficial más importante era el relator. Tuvo que ser un abogado calificado aunque no practicaba la abogacía mientras trabajaba para el corte. El relator estaba encargado de preparar, a base de toda la evidencia ofrecida por los demandantes y sus testigos, las relaciones y resúmenes por escrito de los hechos del caso. Fue el relator que leyó estas relaciones ante los oidores al comienzo del proceso. Así, jurídicamente hablando, el relator no era el “yo narrador” como parece que se ha pensado; hablar de relator “capaz de afirmar su “Yo” o del “cronista-relator” reduce y confunde el asunto. (Adorno 21, 1993)

It was the testimonies made by others that assured the confirmation of services as related by the chronicler. The importance of this lies in the recognition that “la autoridad más eficaz no residía en la auto-proclamación sino en la del testigo ajeno” (Adorno 21, 1993). Obregón’s text would have gone through a process such as this. Bravo’s linguistic analysis of the Historia indicates that in terms of phonetic-phonological aspects, “surgen las características del español meridional y los vulgarismos extendidos por toda la Península, que aparecen arraigados en el habla de los escribanos que intervienen en la redacción del texto” (28). Additionally, regardless of any number of verified, laudatory deeds, as a criollo narrator, how Obregón would have been viewed in the eyes of his ultimate readership would have played a considerable role in winning a commission.
A criollo’s relación

“A sospecho que el suelo y el cielo de América no es tan bueno para hombres como para yerva y metales, aunque sean descendientes de España. El buen trigo suele bastardear en la ruyn tierra y de candial se haze centeno.”

-- Juan de la Puente, 1612

Prior to Obregón, all of the relaciones written about the northern frontier region of New Spain had been produced by Spaniards. Since the term “criollo” was already being used to refer to those of Spanish blood born in the Americas by Obregón’s time, he was likely well aware of this label, one that carried important implications in New Spain.

Hasta ahora, lo que sí parece cierto, tal y como citan numerosos autores, es que, cuando aún no ha concluido el tercer cuarto del siglo XVI, se anota por vez primera la palabra “criollo,” para referirse a los hijos de españoles nacidos en América. (Le Riverend and Venegas 11-12)

What would this label have meant to Obregón and to those for whom he wrote?

First, the term would not have had the same provincial connotations as it would much later in the eighteenth century, when “creole pioneers” as Benedict Anderson has called

17 Juan de la Puente was a Dominican priest and theologian from Madrid, and autor of Tomo primero de la conveniencia de las dos monarquías católicas, la de la Iglesia romana y la del imperio español, y defensa de la precedencia de los reyes católicos de España a todos los reynos del mundo (1612). In Estudios sobre el criollo by Le Riverend and Venegas (25-26).

18 Bravo points out in her introduction that Obregón’s Historia “presenta la relevante particularidad de ser, hasta hoy, la primera historia escrita por un autor criollo mejicano” (13). Hopkins Durazo likewise notes that Obregón has been credited by many with “el honor de haber sido el primer historiador mexicano” (Hopkins Durazo 11).
them, emerged as visible social groups with a “full awareness of provincials in worlds parallel to their own,” increasingly possessing their own cultural and political identities (62, 83). Julio Le Riverend Brusone and Hernán Venegas Delgado examine the early implications of the creole identity in *Estudios sobre el criollo* (2005). They point out that before the term “criollo” began to be used to describe those sons of Spaniards born in America, *peninsulares* and Spaniards residing in New Spain had long employed various labels in order to distinguish between themselves and *criollos*, using phrases such as “hijos del reino,” “hijos de la tierra,” “hijos y nietos de los conquistadores,” “hijos de los encomenderos,” or “beneméritos” (13). This distinction became increasingly important, as issues of “quality” began to surface once those sons, who had never seen the shores of Spain, began to increase in number in the New World.

La idea, muy común entre los españoles de los siglos XVI y XVII, de que aquel que viniese a América terminaría por transformarse de alguna manera; así como de otra, de oscuras manipulaciones políticas, de que los hijos de estos españoles, los criollos, correrían peor suerte que los que sus progenitores en este sentido. (Le Riverend and Venegas 20)

Le Riverend and Venegas demonstrate how various writers in the sixteenth century charged that the *criollo* had mutated somehow, due largely, according to the hypothesis of the day, to the region’s climate. For example, Juan López de Velasco argued in 1571 that *criollos* “conocidamente salen ya diferenciados en el color y el tamaño (…) y no solamente en las calidades corporales se mudan, pero en la del ánimo suelen seguir las del cuerpo, y mudando él se alteran también” (20). Juan de Cárdenas contended in 1591 that criollos usually died younger, turned gray earlier, and suffered
from gastric and venereal illness more frequently than Spaniards (25). Similarly, in 1568, Bernardino de Sahagún blamed the climate of the region for *criollos* who “en el aspecto parecen españoles, y en las condiciones no lo son” (24). To the Spanish mind, the climate’s ostensible negative effects on the *criollo* person were, as López de Velasco claimed, “transformaciones físicas y síquicas” (25).

Le Riverend and Venegas argue that this image of the *criollo* as inferior emerged in order to justify power relations and maintain the status quo in New Spain, countering the growing influence and number of *criollos*. This was accomplished in three principal ways, the first of which was to put obstacles in place that prevented the extension of the *encomienda*. From the second half of the sixteenth century until the beginnings of the eighteenth, a bitter debate raged over the rule of “por dos vidas,” under which the *encomienda* extended from father to son, but not to descendants thereafter (27). A second tactic involved control of the land. “Plena propiedad” for the *criollo* meant that he had to take on prohibitively expensive and hard to prove legal battles, “dilatados y costosos procesos legales.” Finally, *prelación* – the priority or right that the *criollos* had to seek vacant administrative or religious posts, while initially favorable to *criollos*, changed dramatically when arguments of their defects abounded, depicting the *criollo* as incapable of governing (27-28).

As a *criollo*, Obregón must have been aware that he would be perceived by his readers as lower in social status than his Spanish counterparts. Indeed, as Bravo notes, “hay que adscribir este autor a un estrato social no muy culto” (13). Yet, while he may very well have written his *Historia* fully knowing that it would be even more difficult for
him to win a commission to explore and settle to the north, as will be elucidated in this study, he nonetheless considers himself every bit the Spaniard and a part of the larger Spanish empire. In order to earn the coveted opportunity to explore and settle the north, Obregón would have to demonstrate his capabilities and his particularly “Spanish” interests, both of which could be evidenced in his showing compliance with royal orders and policies.

Compliance and Competing Interest

“A los Virreyes presidentes Audiençias y gouernadores de las nuestras Indias del mar oceano y a todas las otras personas a quien lo infrascripto toca y atañe y puede tocar y atañer en cualquier manera saued que para que los decubrimientos nueuas poblaciones y paçificaciones de las tierras y prouincias que en las Indias estan por descubrir poblar y paçificar se hagan con mas façilidad y como conuiene al seruicio de dios y nuestro y bien de los naturales entre otras cossas hemos mandado hazer las ordenanças siguientes.” –Felipe II of Spain, Las Ordenanzas de descubrimiento, 1573

Compliance with the Ordenanzas and Requirements of Settlement as prescribed by the Crown were a prerequisite to any future commission to lead an exploration himself, since the Crown’s official approval was required. In particular, Obregón had to demonstrate diligent adherence to the Ordenanzas de descubrimiento, nueva población y pacificación de las Indias (1573) in his account.19 Although many of the restrictions regarding settlement that had been outlined in the previous, and stricter, Las leyes nuevas

19 While the Ordenanzas de descubrimiento nueva población y pacificación de las Indias are held in the AGI in Seville, I will refer to a transcription of the original document. See Transcripción de las Ordenanzas de descubrimiento, nueva población y pacificación de las Indias dadas por Felipe II, el 13 de julio de 1573, en el Bosque de Segovia, según el original que se conserva en el Archivo General de Indias de Sevilla. Madrid: Ministerio de la Vivienda, 1973.
de las Indias (1542) had been relaxed, these laws, as well as the regimen de capitulaciones would also have been at the forefront of the frontier mentality, and must be considered.20

The Ordenanzas of 1573 aimed to outline the policies of settlement in all of the Americas in both philosophical and economic terms: “La cristalización de ‘la nueva política’ influida por un fuerte carácter ético-religioso, que aunaba la justicia y la moral cristiana con los intereses políticos y económicos” (del Vas Mingo 1985). As del Vas Mingo argues in “Las Ordenanzas de 1573, sus antecedentes y consecuencias,” the nucleus of the Ordenanzas of 1573 was the meticulous regulation of settlement, with the word and concept of pacificación replacing that of conquest.21 Additionally, the Ordenanzas prohibited the use of Crown funds in settlement expeditions and forbade the entry of unlicensed parties into new lands under pain of death and loss of all property (Weber 81).

Ninguna persona de qualquier estado y condiçion que sea haga por su propia autoridad nueuo descubrimiento por mar ni por tierra ni entrada nueua poblaçion ni rancheria en lo que estuuiere descubierto o se descubriere sin licencia y prouission o de quien tuuiere nuestro poder para la dar so pena de muerte y de

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20 Las leyes nuevas (1542) represented an attempt by the Crown to prevent the maltreatment of indigenous people in the New World by regulating and eventually abolishing the encomienda system, and prohibiting the enslavement of indigenous peoples, as strongly argued by Bartolomé de las Casas in his Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias (1542). However, having caused discontent among the colonists, and a revolt in Perú, the Crown repealed the New Laws in 1545. See Las leyes nuevas, 1542-1543; ordenanzas para la gobernación de las Indias y buen tratamiento y conservación de los indios. Edición, estudio y notas por Antonio Muro Orejón. Ed. Antonio Muro Orejón. Corp Author. Spain. Sevilla: 1961.

21 Despite this edict, Obregón continually uses the term “conquistar” throughout the Historia, as well as “pacificar.”
In addition to the expedition’s financial legitimacy, Obregón had to demonstrate its compliance with these policies regarding pacification and settlement, perhaps the most important aspect of which was native conversion to Christianity. Conversion of the indigenous was a top priority of pacificación, since religious conversion of the native peoples was the main rationale for imperial expansion. Consequently, the Spanish Crown required that a religious representative accompany all expeditions. Yet, while the missionaries that participated in these expeditions had very specific evangelical goals that affected their perceptions of indigenous peoples and the purpose of expeditions of northward expansion, soldiers and settlers had other, more material objectives. For many soldiers and prospectors, the motive was pure profit; gaining booty and a share of the spoils, and gaining lands and favor with the Crown, were often paramount to saving

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22 The Franciscan project in the New World was extremely significant to exploration projects in this region for a variety of reasons. While brevity prevents a detailed analysis here, it should at least be mentioned that the Franciscans in New Spain, a mendicant order that vowed poverty, chastity, and obedience, “inherited a rich eschatological tradition expressed in a spirit of apocalyptic conversion” (West 293). Many Franciscans believed themselves to be the evangelical order of the Third Age, based on the twelfth-century writings of Joachim of Fiore, who predicted an evangelical order would convert the world and lead it into the Third Age, an age of peace. This notion would later be adapted to suit other apocalyptic theories that emphasized the salvation of the entire world, the recapture of Jerusalem, and the emergence of rule by one leader. A desire to make fundamental changes within the Order as part of the Counter Reformation, coupled with the discovery of the New World and the age of print, “added more fuel to the apocalyptic fires already burning in Spain” (Weber 302). “Spain is interpreted as the spiritual Jerusalem to whom God has shown a new world to save” (West 311). This perceived mission created “urgency to action,” and apocalyptic thinking extended outside the Order into the public sphere. (See Delno West and John Leddey Phelan.)
souls. Indeed, the _relación_, in addition to being written for royalty an ocean away, by Obregón’s time was also serving far more “practical” purposes for the Viceroy in Mexico City as well as those soldiers and prospectors living in New Spain.

Notwithstanding the consideration taken to “show” the readers in Spain what the narrating subject believes they may want to “see,” the _relación_ also does attempt to relate what is seen in order to “contener un mundo misceláneo, el mismo que veían y sentían sus autores” (Bravo 15). After all, some type of “on the ground,” itinerary-driven information needed to be compiled if unknown lands were to be settled. As Ahern has argued, the _relaciones_ became paradigms for the itineraries or guides to be followed by future expeditions. Exactly what future expedition parties could expect to see and what areas had potential for settlement, which lands were less desirable, where water could be found, where horses could and could not pass, all of this practical information was included in these documents. This type of practical, eye-witness “mapping out” was one of the principal functions of the _relación_.

**Mapping**

“For New Spain to be mapped, it needed to be imagined.” – Barbara Mundy, 2002

Mapping of both land and population centers was a primary objective of the expeditions to the north of the Valley of Mexico in New Spain, a factor which is reflected in Obregón’s representations of landscape. As Mignolo suggests, the relationship, in the case of the discovery, between _la carta_, in the sense of written information that describes
the position of these new lands, and *la carta*, in the sense of the map, graphic information that designs the position of these new lands is of “dos sistemas de signos que van articulando una misma modificación conceptual. He ahí una de las dimensiones textuales que tienen tanto la carta como el mapa, en la transformación de las nociones cosmográficas” (Mignolo 1992, 60).

However, it must be made clear that “mapping” for Obregón may have held very different meaning than it did for cosmographers in Spain at the time. This is important to keep in mind in the analysis of his descriptions, which reflect both mathematical and descriptive forms of mapping. Barbara Mundy notes the disconnect between officials in New Spain regarding mapping, citing the example of the *Relación Geográfica*, a survey consisting of fifty questions that would have reached New Spain in the 1570’s and then again in the 1580’s, about the time that Obregón was writing his *Historia*. The *Relación Geográfica* requested both textual information, in the form of answers to the questionnaire, and spatial information, in form of maps from officials in New Spain. The importance of the *Relación Geográfica* lies in the fact that it was sent to New Spain about the same time that the expansion of the northern frontier was occurring. While Obregón’s *Historia* is not a response to it, the *Relación Geográfica* provides a clear indication of the information wanted by the Crown, and the responses to it provide us with an idea of the attitudes and ideas toward mapping in New Spain. It is particularly telling that although the royal cosmographer, López de Velasco, sent the *Relación Geográfica* to various colonial officials, it failed to produce the desired results;
Figure 1.8: López de Velasco’s 1570 map of the Indies: Originally published in Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas’ *Descripción de las Indias Occidentales* (1601).
specifically that of gathering information that would aid in measuring longitude to better “view” the New World, in particular the territory to the north of New Spain, as no maps yet existed for it (see fig. 1.8). While it was more than likely that Obregón was not writing with the *Relación Geográfica* in mind, some of the factors that Mundy cites as contributing to the survey’s failure, I believe, will help to demonstrate the attitudes and ideas toward mapping in New Spain in the late sixteenth-century. They also lend insight into Obregón’s discursive mapping, as he corrects what he perceives to be errors in accounts from previous expeditions to the area, and projects future expeditions and settlements onto the landscape for his readers.

While the explorers and organizers of expeditions from central New Spain to the north may have seen, and even tried to imitate the maps of the day, they did not have the knowledge, nor in fact the means, to produce the type of advanced maps that López de Velasco wanted: “A typical survey in sixteenth century New Spain was little more than a *vista de ojos*, literally ‘the eyes’ view’” or a glance (Mundy 57). Obregón’s distance measurements are almost invariably communicated in terms of leagues, days of travel, or “tiros de arcabuz”/ length of an harquebus shot (85). Means of orienting direction in the text are grounded in experience, another characteristic cited by Mundy: “Orientation was reckoned by the position of the sunrise or by relationships to prominent features in the landscape, such as mountain peaks or lakeshores” (57-58). Phrases that exemplify orientation grounded in experience abound in the *Historia*, such as “a la banda del nacimiento del sol”/ toward the sunrise (187), “hacia el poniente”/ toward the (sun)set, “hacia Irlanda”/ toward Ireland (192) and “doscientas leguas a la mano izquierda”/ two
hundred leagues to the left hand side (196). Mundy reasons that from a practical standpoint, criollo officials did not share the royal cosmographer’s view of the importance of detailed mapping.

Spanish officials in New Spain saw little need for detailed survey maps to record land ownership or decide regional boundaries. At the time they responded to the questionnaire, colonists in most parts of New Spain outside the Valley of Mexico found plentiful amounts of land, owing to the precipitous dip in native population over the course of the sixteenth century. In addition, in the early years of the colony, Spaniards were more concerned with native labor needed to exploit the land itself. Thus their territorial records were often little more than lists of population centers. (57, my emphasis)

This abundance of land to the north, coupled with the primacy of distribution of land and native labor, are reflected in Obregón’s descriptions of population centers and the routes taken to get to them.

It must be noted however that Obregón does speculate about the greater issues of cosmography, in particular the possibility of a land connection to La gran China and the existence of El Estrecho de los Bacalaos just beyond Quivira. How, Obregón wonders, could “historiadores y antiguos cronistas” write about longitude and leagues, let alone know the extent of these tierras firmes “sin saber ni estar averiguado, descubierto, ni andado las tierras y descubrimientos que hay desde Quivira adelante, ni de Nuevo Méxcio adelante, que la tierra y su anchura encamina hacia la gran China en lo cual hay sospecha de muchos descubrimientos y naciones de gentes nuevas” (211)? These contemplations may reflect Obregón’s desire to emphasize the validity of experience, and to promote the possibilities for future discovery, and perhaps even the “nivel filosófico” cited by Mignolo as a feature of the historias of the period (77). Regardless, the Historia
presents to its readers an amalgam of both mathematical and discursive mapping, at once
grounded in experience, but also influenced by the larger imperial mapping project.

Integral to mapping, authorial and European perceptions of space must be
considered as they relate to the representation of landscape. As many scholars have
demonstrated (Mignolo, Mundy, Hill-Boone, et al.) perceptions of space vary among
cultures. For example, while maps painted by native artists tended to reflect the notion of
\textit{pueblo} as both the land and its people, to the Spaniard it was the architectural entity that
defined a given human community (Mundy 91). Furthermore, many indigenous groups
looked at the landscape spiritually, associating land with primordial history, tradition and
myth. However, Spaniards looked at landscape in political and economic terms.

\begin{quote}
“New Spain” filtered through to its indigenous inhabitants in the ways that
Spanish colonists looked at the landscape and through the exercise of power by
the viceregal government, the embodiment of New Spain. Official power made
itself felt in possessing the landscape, at least implicitly, and then giving it away
with land grants. (Mundy 214)
\end{quote}

Perhaps these cultural conceptions of space, architectural vs. pueblo, political vs.
societal, economical vs. spiritual, as reflected in graphic conceptions of space, may also
be found in the \textit{relación}, itself a discursive construction of space. \textit{Álvaro Félix Bolaños},
crediting Mignolo’s point that the narrators of such texts did not so much transcribe what
was seen, but rather responded to specific requests, argued that “A pesar de sus
limitaciones de observación libre (o precisamente en virtud de ellas), la ‘relación’ es
también un aparato escriturario capaz de definir [...] claras nociones de cultura de
frontera, status quo y ciudad fundada” (2005, 16). In this way, the \textit{relación} serves as a
source for understanding European notions of la frontera and the institutions that the Spanish meant to impose there.\textsuperscript{23} We see in Obregón that these institutions seem to be at the forefront of the narrator’s mind as he “shows” the reader the landscape, focusing heavily on pueblo housing, crop production, clothing, and such elements that will support the encomienda and mining projects of Spanish expansion.

\textbf{Chapter Contents}

> “Landscape provides a means of training the mind to envision the country in particular scenic, spatial terms. It can mindscape a people.”
> -- Kenneth Olwig, 2002

In order to have any hope of winning a commission from the Crown to lead an expedition of his own to settle the Pueblos to the north, Obregón had to demonstrate compliance and capability. At the same time, his text also had to show which areas of the landscape would be most conducive to European settlement and institutions, such as the encomienda system, writing, law, and evangelization. In such a landscape, soldiers and prospectors could become wealthy, indígenas would be easy to “pacify,” buildings could be erected and agriculture sustained. Certainly, all of these issues deal in large part with the land and its perceived quality, but population centers would have been equally, if not more important, since native labor would be critical to any mining endeavors. This investigation examines the representations of landscape from the perspectives of the two

\textsuperscript{23} Bolaño’s frontera is at once a geographical and a textual space conceived by European culture that is perceived as an exterior, distant place, an open space that is to be penetrated and molded by the European. I will examine further his conceptions of la frontera and others in Chapter 5.
principal functions that Obregón himself claims that his text should perform: 1) provide a comprehensive history and 2) provide itinerary information for future expeditions. In the chapters that follow, I will examine how all of these issues come to bear on how the landscape in terms of the dynamic relationship between the land and its people, are represented textually in Baltasar Obregón’s *Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España* (1584).

In chapter two, “Theoretical Framework and Methodology,” I examine influential studies of space and place that emerged over the past few decades and consider how these studies inform recent theories of landscape. In particular, the etymology of landscape is considered as well as the term’s usage and practice as a social construct. By examining the ways in which culture invests meaning in the landscape, I will show how this theory lends itself to discourse analysis, and in particular to *Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España* (1584).

In chapter three, “Previous Expeditions to the Area: Mapping an Occidental History” I explore how the previous expeditions made to the area may have influenced Obregón’s narration as he synthesized accounts. I look at how both discursive and oral narratives, generated from expeditions previous and subsequent to Obregón’s participation in the Ibarra Expedition in 1564, influenced Obregón’s textual re-telling of the landscape. In order to relate “verdaderos hechos de las tierras que han visto y descubierto, haciendo relación de las que son buenas o malas,” Obregón determined to compare various written accounts with his own memories, and those of participants in other expeditions. The resultant references to other texts and witnesses periodically
appear throughout the text, affecting landscape perceptionDESCRIPTION IN THE (RE)TELLING OF
expedition stories and in the discursive itinerary mapping of the territory.

The fourth chapter, “Vestiges of Spanish Contact,” explores the ways in which
Spanish exploration to the north of New Spain altered the landscape in both tangible and
intangible ways. Material items left by Spaniards, including religious iconography and
tools, as well as changes to the makeup of the landscape and its flora and fauna are
analyzed, as well as issues of miscegenation and the collective memory of violence. How
these alterations, purposeful and otherwise, affect the landscape of the northern frontier is
considered.

Chapter five, “The Itinerary and the Landscape: ‘Lo que hay en esta tierra’”
examines Obregón’s apparent conceptions of “buenas” versus “malas” lands and pueblos.
Land that is viewed as empty “space” to be traversed in order to reach a “place” is
compared with more positive landscape descriptions. In surveying descriptions of
pueblos that he qualifies as either “buenos” versus “malos” in terms of structure and
population, I investigate how Obregón views such factors as clothing, various crops, and
architecture in describing pueblos as civilized, predisposed to religious conversion,
bellicose, etc. How do these factors relate to terms used to categorize people, such as
caribe, serrano, and gente de policía?

In Chapter six I demonstrate how the projection of a European worldview and
Spanish institutions are discursively projected onto the landscape by showing how the
inextricable ties between people and land are manifested in the encomienda system,
evangelization, the law and bureaucracy. I argue that these institutions, at least in part, would have driven Obregón’s perception and representation of the landscape.

Chapter seven has been dedicated to conclusions, and offers suggestions as to where future study of Obregón’s text might go from here. I also examine how the application of landscape theory to other texts may illuminate broader trends in discursive constructions of landscape.
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

“Landscapes are links to personal and collective pasts.” -- Anne Spirn, 1998

Landscape is ubiquitous. Yet for as much as scholars across disciplines have employed the term, it remains under analyzed, banalized to a certain degree, or simply taken for granted. In the introduction to *The Anthropology of Landscape* (1995) Eric Hirsch observes that, as a cultural concept, “it is in fact difficult to isolate it [landscape] from a number of related concepts, including place and space; inside and outside; image and representation” (Hirsch 4). Recently, studies from a variety of fields have emerged that call the notion of landscape to question, problematize the use of the term, and grapple with landscape as an analytical and cultural concept (Mitchell, Olwig, Spirn, Hirsch and O’Hanlon, et al.). As will become clear in this chapter, many of these studies recognize that in treating the concept of landscape, one need first address issues of space and place.
Space and Place

“Place is the most fundamental form of embodied experience – the site of a powerful fusion of self, space and time.” - Edward S. Casey in “How to Get from Space to Place,” 1996

It is widely agreed that critical theories of space and place have wielded significant influence over the past several decades across various disciplines. As Michel Foucault suggests: “The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space” (Foucault 22, 1986). Theories regarding space and place have played an important role in studies relating to landscape. Mitchell cites Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau’s studies of space and place as having contributed the important insight of the “expression of power in the landscape as a manifestation of law, prohibition, regulation and control” (Mitchell, Preface x).

In The Production of Space (1974) Henri Lefebvre contends, “epistemologico-philosophical thinking has failed to furnish the basis for a science which has been struggling to emerge for a very long time […] a science of space” (7). He presents the notion of social space, that “(social) space is a (social) product,” reasoning that every society produces a space, its own space, as even the ancient city “had its own spatial practice, forged its own -appropriated- space” (31). One important implication of the production of social space is that “our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production” (36). Lefebvre presents a triangulated framework
consisting of perceived, conceived and lived space in which perceived space is viewed as practiced space, the presupposed propounded space; conceived space as the space of scientists, engineers and urban planners and lived space as the realm of inhabitants and users, the dominated, passively experienced space (38-39).

In “Spatial Practices” in his *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Michel de Certeau similarly views space as socially organized. He looks at everyday practices in terms of lived space and how spatial practices “secretly structure the determining conditions of social life” (96). He considers “narrative actions” that demonstrate practices in organizing space. In addition, de Certeau draws a distinction between space (*espace*) and place (*lieu*) in terms of oppositional qualities in which place is associated with the law of the “proper” and indicates stability, whereas space, by contrast, exists when vectors of direction, velocities and time variables are considered. “On this view, in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of actualization.” For de Certeau, “space is a practiced place,” the operation as opposed to the “being there” (117).

These theories share the notion that space is a social construct, and certain practices, including discursive practices like the *historia* and/or *relación* or report, along with societal relations of power, are at work in the production and reproduction of space and/or place, thereby illuminating the connection between discourse as praxis and how it may play a role in landscape production. However, Mitchell sites an important difference between the theories put forth by de Certeau and Lefebvre that is critical to the study of landscape. While de Certeau conceives of a space-place binary, Henri Lefebvre “insists
on a relentlessly triadic conceptual organization, based in the differences between what he calls perceived, conceived, and lived space,” with perceived space corresponding roughly to de Certeau’s notion of “spatial practices” (Mitchell, Preface ix). While these three categories, perceived, conceived and lived space, roughly correspond to what Mitchell calls space, place, and landscape, the forced concordance is less important to his study than heeding Lefebvre’s basic advice to triangulate the whole topic, and to resist the temptation to binarism (x) (see fig. 2.1).

One might think, then, of space, place and landscape as a dialectical triad, a conceptual structure that may be activated from several different angles. If a place is a specific location, a space is a “practiced place,” a site activated by movements, actions, narratives, and signs and a landscape is that site encountered as image or “sight.” [...] No one of these terms is logically or chronologically prior to the others. (x)

Relating theories of space and place to the cultural concept of landscape, Mitchell rescues the term from the background and brings it to the foreground. This is noteworthy because although, as I stated earlier, landscape is ubiquitous, some scholars have recently recognized that it has historically been ignored, loosely defined, and used interchangeably with the terms “space” and “place” (Hirsch, Olwig, Mitchell, et al.). As Lefebvre signaled the perennial and ill-defined usage of the term “space,” so does Mitchell signal the vague, yet loaded referent of “landscape.”

Landscape exerts a subtle power of people, eliciting a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify [...] As the background within which a figure, form, or narrative act emerges; landscape exerts the passive force of setting, scene, and sight. It is generally the “overlooked,” not the “looked at,” and it can be quite difficult to specify what exactly it means to say that one is “looking at the landscape.” (Mitchell vii)
Although few studies had “looked at” landscape and attempted to specify what it means, more recently, some indeed have recognized the importance of it and have attempted to include landscape in studies in the fields of cultural and geography, cultural anthropology and linguistics. An examination of the various contributions that these studies have made will help to bring landscape into clearer focus as a cultural concept, understand the origins of the term, how it has been used and misused in the past, and where scholars suggest we might go from here.

**Landscape Theories**

“The language of landscape recovers the dynamic connection between place and those who dwell there.” -- Anne Spirn in *The Language of Landscape*, 1998

Mitchell cites two major shifts in the past century in the study of landscape. The first, associated with Modernism, has read the history of landscape as the history of landscape painting, while the second, associated with postmodernism, has de-centered the role of painting in favor of a semiotic approach (Mitchell, Introduction 1). The former, most closely associated with the field of Art History, is probably best known and most recognizable to the layperson; Occidental culture’s idea of what landscape “means.” The word “landscape” usually connotes the view of the land, of nature, be it a depiction on canvas or the vista from the mountaintop. However this is precisely the connotation that has recently been scrutinized by scholars studying landscape.
Figure 2.1: A visual representation of the dialectical triad of space, place and landscape (Mitchell) and its parallels with Lefebvre’s conception of space and de Certeau’s conceptions of space and place.
The geographer Kenneth Robert Olwig has devoted a significant portion of his book, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic* (2002) to tracing the lexicological heritage of the term landscape, demonstrating that the contemporary notion of landscape as “natural scenery” has been divorced from the terms original meaning, a meaning that included a human element. Olwig’s study goes on to focus on the “hidden agenda” of landscape, and how “our environment, conceived in landscape scenery, is fundamentally linked to our political landscape,” but for the moment, I would like to examine the implications of this lexicological heritage (xxxii).

In the preface to Olwig’s study, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan recognizes that the “major contribution of this book lies in forcing us to acknowledge, through the deployment of irrefutable evidence, that landscape was, historically, a thoroughly humanized word” (xix). The word landscape originated from the Germanic family of languages wherein the term “designated an area or region and meant much the same as country,” as it did also in older forms of English (Olwig 232). To the Dutch landschap, the Danes landskab, the Swedes landskap, and the Germans Landschaft, the term carried essentially the same connotations of community and people as country and land. The equivalent Italian terms, paese and paesaggio, and the French pays, have carried the same meaning: country, land, or province (Olwig 232). Spanish shares this Latin etymology: “El término paisaje procede del latín "pagus" (territorio, campo, distrito, pueblo.). El latín "pagensis" dio en francés "pays", "paysage" (relativo al campo, al territorio usado)” (Méndez García, 2005). Denis Cosgrove notes that the English word landscape has equivalents in all the other European languages, “although the emphasis given to
different aspects of its meanings varies, especially between those languages which owe their origins to Latin and those with roots in Germanic speech,” specifically in terms of spatiality (65, 1998).

If the spatiality of Germanic Landschaft emphasizes locality and small-scale intimacy, an alternative spatiality which has powerfully influenced the environmental organization and design in Europe comes from Rome’s expansion of imperial order across the south and west of the continent. This is a spatiality of distant control radiating from a powerful centre along straight roads, mapping its colonial appropriations in surveyors’ grids and marking its power in military camps, mileposts, arches and columns. […] the heritage of Roman colonial influence can still be traced in language, in legal tradition, in local customs and even sometimes in traditions of construction and decoration across the [European] continent. (66, 1998)

I will return to this issue of spatiality, however for the moment I would like to call attention to the commonalities that these etymological traditions share. In The Language of Landscape, Anne Spirn explains that the word is made up of the two roots “land,” meaning both a place and its people, and various forms of the word “shape.” However, this inclusive meaning of place, people, and the verb “to shape” has morphed in the English tradition. “Still strong in Scandinavian and German languages, these original meanings have all but disappeared from English” (Spirn 17). Similarly, the Latin pagus denotes a socially defined area of land (Cosgrove 66, 1998). This etymology reveals two important aspects of landscape to consider: 1) In its original meaning, landscape has included a human element and 2) the term was meant to include an active, verbal, dynamic element.

This begs the question, why has a term so rooted in the dynamic culture(s) of humanity come to be more associated with the idea of scenic, “natural” land, divorced of
its inhabitants? This may be due in large part to the term’s strong association with art. Denis Cosgrove asserts that at the turn of the sixteenth century, “landscape” came to denote “a painting whose subject matter was natural scenery” (9, 1993). In The Anthropology of Landscape (1995), Hirsch and O’Hanlon explain the term as emerging in the late sixteenth century as a technical term used by painters. Olwig, on the other hand, rejects these definitions and origins, and argues rather that the term was in use for some time before its application to painting. He particularly takes issue with scholars viewing the term as deriving from painting (23). He points out that the conceptual subject matter of “landscape” had been present in European discourse for a long time before its application to art (xxv).

Furthermore, even in its application to art, in the sixteenth century the term carried an association with the human element and included the land and its people. Although it is commonly believed, as art historian Mark Roskill notes in his introduction to The Languages of Landscape that, “Landscape represents traditionally the domain of nature as opposed to culture,” Olwig disagrees. “The primary subject matter of landscape paintings [from the emergence in the 16th] was not predominantly ‘natural scenery.’ These paintings usually depicted life in countries filled with culture. Rather than nature they were concerned with the regional habitation” (xxv).24

24 These depictions that showed man in his relationship to the country may reflect, at least in part, the shift in the view of nature taking place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Antithetical to the Greek view of nature as saturated or permeated by mind, this conception of nature was based on the “denial that the world of nature is an organism, and the assertion that it is devoid both of intelligence and life” (Collingwood 5). In this view, the natural world is a like a machine – an arrangement of parts designed and put together for a definite purpose by an intellectual mind outside itself. Just as a
This debate about the etymology of the word “landscape” brings into focus the polemical nature of the term, a usage with which scholars have recently grappled. For example, while Hirsch and O’Hanlon criticize Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove’s definition of landscape as “neglecting what exists as a part of everyday social life, capturing only half of the experience intrinsic to landscape,” when Olwig’s argument is applied, their own emphasis on citing the “painterly origins” of the term is likewise flawed (5). While the association with “painterly” dimensions is important, in my view, Hirsch and O’Hanlon’s use of the word “origin” demonstrates that what Mitchel has charged are erroneous assumptions, are taken for granted as “fact,” about landscape. In his essay “Imperial Landscape” (2002), Mitchell contends that studies of landscape have labored under the following erroneous assumptions: 1) landscape is, in its “pure” form, a western European and modern phenomenon; 2) that it emerges in the seventeenth century and reaches its peak in the nineteenth century and 3) that it is originally and centrally constituted as a genre of painting associated with a new way of seeing (Mitchell 7). Mitchell warns that these “facts” about landscape are rarely questioned, although they are “highly questionable” and argues that, “the historical claim that landscape is a ‘postmedieval’ development runs counter to the evidence” (8-9). In fact, he contends that landscape, perceived in terms of the enjoyment of the view ‘for its own sake,’ can be
clockmaker is to a clock, so is God to nature. (Collingwood 3-9) This also bespeaks the Biblical notion that man has dominion over nature.

25 Denis Cosgrove refers to the “new and more pictorial meaning of landscape [that] had been established by the turn of the 16th century” (68, 1998). He furthermore contends, “Prior to the 18th century few Europeans took aesthetic pleasure in the wild or uncultivated scenes of mountain, moorland, marsh or rocky coastline” (71, 1998).
traced back to the writings of St. Augustine, who viewed the contemplation of nature as sinful. “His admonition is itself testimony to the antiquity of the contemplation of nature. Long before Petrarch and long before St. Augustine, people had succumbed to the temptation of looking at natural wonders ‘for their own sake’” (11). Likewise, the work of Pliny the Elder (AD 23- AD 79), the Roman compiler of the encyclopedic, 37-volume *Naturalis Historia*, lends credence to the argument against landscape as a postmedieval development. Trevor Murphy argues that the *Natural History* set a precedent for the organization of knowledge under imperial authority, assimilating “the unfamiliar to the operating system of Roman Culture” (15): “The *Naturalis Historia*, which is concerned to demonstrate to the reader the availability of things, describes geography so as to allow the reader’s eye to sweep over the orbis terrarium as a thing to be possessed. This kind of survey occurs often in the rhetoric of ancient history and poetry; these parallels in turn force us to think further about the political implications of such geographical description” (Murphy 131).

Scholars like Mitchell and Olwig argue for a return to an earlier meaning of landscape rooted in a much earlier usage of the word and originally disassociated with painting and “pure” nature, by recognizing its human and dynamic elements. As will be evident in the paragraphs that follow, a few studies have indeed recognized the human and dynamic aspects of landscape. However, it seems that scholars have been compelled to “add on” to the term, rather than recognize these aspects as already being there as Mitchell and Olwig point out. These previous studies have nonetheless recognized both the importance of landscape and the importance of including humanity in discussions of
it, and the need to provide useful tools for textual analysis that will be applicable to this investigation.

In a much earlier study from the field of geography, Carl Sauer’s “The Morphology of Landscape” (1925), sought to establish a critical system in the field that would “embrace the phenomenology of landscape.” For Sauer, “Geography is based on the reality of the union of physical and cultural elements of the landscape” (29). In this way, landscape is viewed as dynamic in space and time, with man as the shaping force of landscape. It follows, then, according to Sauer, that culture must be viewed as agent, the natural landscape (the area prior to the man’s introduction to it) as medium, and the cultural landscape as result. In this view, humans are not the product of their environment, but rather they produce a cultural landscape, the manifestations of which include population centers, housing and production. While one may take issue with a subject-object conceptual framework that presupposes a “natural landscape,” Sauer’s study does provide several critical tools. In the first place, he brings landscape to the table in the field of geography. Second, although he adds “cultural” to “landscape,” which, viewed in light of the term’s etymology, may be criticized as redundant, he recognizes the human element in landscape as well as the idea that landscape is dynamic in space and time. Finally, he calls attention to cultural manifestations in landscape,

26 John Agnew notes the coincidence, in the early part of the twentieth century, of Carl Sauer’s notion of cultural geography and the overwhelming abandonment of the notion of environmental determinism in the field of Human Geography, an abandonment that would be replaced by historical particularism (135).
manifestations that, as I will argue in this dissertation, reveal themselves frequently in textual production.

Citing Sauer’s concept of *cultural landscape*, Robert-Lawson Peebles focuses on the human element of landscape in his analysis of textual production from the period of the American Revolution.

Sauer proposed the marriage of phenomenology and geography when he suggested that elements in a terrain should not be examined in isolation, but in relation to other elements and to the shaping agency of man. Such an examination resulted in what he called ‘the cultural landscape’. A number of geographers have developed Sauer’s initial thesis to emphasise (sic) the role of our preconceptions in the way we look at terrain. They have shown me that, in the words of James Wreford Watson: “Geography is made […] largely in terms of the country we perceive, or are conditioned to perceive: the country of the mind.” (3)

Lawson-Peebles goes on to apply this idea of perceptual geography in his textual analysis of writings of the American Revolutionary era, using the term ‘landscape’ to mean “the land as percept (sic)” (4). This union of landscape and textual analysis calls attention to issues of language and perception since language, be it semiotic (mapping) or discursive (writing), becomes inextricably linked to landscape in description.

Lawson-Peebles refers to the famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as a starting point in an attempt to establish the nature of the relationship between language and landscape.27 This hypothesis suggests “the principle of linguistic relativity, which states […] that the structure of a human being’s language influences the manner in

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27 A contemporary of Sapir, Whorf studied the Hopi language in 1936 and 1938. His studies with the Hopi led him to conclude that thinking is dependent on language, and language influences the way one understands his environment. This hypothesis has been highly polemical in the field of linguistics.

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which he understands reality and behaves with respect to it” (Carroll 18). In this sense, language shapes thought. While Lawson-Peebles did not embrace Whorf’s notion that language is the key to cognition, he recognizes that “perception and language exist together” thereby eliminating a direct connection, as he puts it, between Word and the World (5). While Lawson-Peebles, I believe, does not provide as inclusive a conception of landscape as Mitchell or Olwig, his recognition of the coexistence of language and perception is particularly applicable to an analysis of landscape as it is described textually.

If, for Lawson-Peebles, the word serves as metaphor for landscape, for landscape architect Anne Spirn, the relationship between language and landscape is far more direct (The Language of Landscape 1998). Spirn argues that landscape is language itself, in fact, it is humans’ native language, and not merely in a metaphorical or metaphysical sense. Landscape, read by humans long before their inventions of signs and symbols, is translated into signs and symbols.

Landscape has all features of language. It contains the equivalent of words and parts of speech- patterns of shape, structure, material, formation, and function. All landscapes are combinations of these. Like the meanings of words, the meanings of landscape elements (water, for example) are only potential until context shapes them. Rules of grammar govern and guide how landscapes are formed, some specific to places and their local dialects, others universal. (15)

In this view, it follows that landscape can be read and interpreted differently by different cultures, and indeed misread by one who is illiterate in the language of landscape or lacks local knowledge: “Landscape elements have, as I.A. Richards said of words, ‘equally and simultaneously, vastly different’ meanings” (Spirn 34).
While I am reluctant to recognize a connection as direct as the concept that landscape is human’s native language, Spirn’s point that landscape can be perceived differently by different cultures, and “mean” different things to different cultures, will be applicable to this study. For example, the Spanish or early criollo interpretation of the landscape, transcribed textually, may very well reveal occidental (mis)interpretations and the reliance on local knowledge and guides for “translation.”

Scholars like Spirn, Olwig, and Mitchell, argue for more than the mere recognition of landscape. They insist that the term “landscape,” as a cultural concept, be understood as including a human element, as its etymology demonstrates it once did in the English language. Furthermore, they call for landscape to be viewed as a process, rather than a static backdrop or mere context. As Mitchell contends, “’Landscape’ must be changed from a noun to a verb” so that a focus on what landscape does as a “dynamic medium by which social and subjective identities are formed” may be considered (Introduction 1). We must consider “the way landscape circulates as a medium of exchange, a site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity” (Introduction 2).

Landscape, viewed in this dissertation, is the site perceived; it is dynamic; it is the land and its people and it performs a cultural function; it is praxis and it is a focus for the formation of identity. It is not understood as having “painterly origins” or as having more to do with “nature” than with culture. In fact, if, as Olwig postulates, “landscape, understood as the historical ‘invention’ of a new visual/pictorial medium, is integrally connected with imperialism” than what he cites as the “politically charged connotations
of landscape in the artistic and political discourse of the sixteenth century” (xxv), I postulate, is exceptionally applicable to an investigation of a criollo’s textual representation of landscape in sixteenth century New Spain.

Theories of space and place have been incorporated in studies across a number of disciplines, and many have included landscape in passing. However, landscape can no longer be relegated to the position of backdrop or setting, nor can the term be employed without being addressed. Furthermore, if, as Mitchell asserts, the attention to the 17th and 18th centuries is misinformed, and landscape as a cultural concept pre-dates that time, why then have studies of landscape largely ignored sixteenth century Spain and Spanish America? Would not writers in sixteenth century New Spain have been experiencing landscape in a very revealing way? It would seem that theories involving landscape would be particularly insightful in the field of colonial literature, in which studies point to the “imagined” and “invented” America (O’Gorman 1958, Rabasa 1993, et al.).

Perhaps the most telling indication of how the field of colonial literature lends itself to analysis involving landscape theory can be found in the essay “Space and the Rhetorics of Power in Colonial Spanish America: An Introduction,” in which Arias and Meléndez refer to “landscape” repeatedly. While their introduction is a discussion that emphasizes the importance of issues of space and place in the field over the past several years, landscape unavoidably emerges.

The Foucauldian axiom, knowledge is power, applies very aptly to the fields of colonial history and literature. The mythification of the new lands and the representation of landscape engage the relationship of space and political and social power. In the act of producing geographical knowledge, the representation of landscape can be read as an instrument of ideology where “the
“Culture pervades the way that places are perceived and the fact that they are perceived, as well as how we act in their midst.”—Edward S. Casey, 1996

Projected Conclusions

While a few scholars from literary and cultural studies have begun to look at the discourses in the second-generation relaciones (Ahern, Gordon, et al.), the discursive elements of Obregón’s Historia, to my knowledge, have not yet been thoroughly investigated. Furthermore, while studies applying theories of space and place have abounded in the past few of decades in studies of Latin American colonial texts, the cultural concept of landscape, as in other fields, has been largely overlooked. This
dissertation proposes to address Baltasar Obregón’s *Historia* by applying theories of landscape, as it relates to human experiences, in an analysis of indigenous representation in this text.

I hypothesize that it is in landscape description where issues relating to space and place, such as the context of textual production, discursive mapping, the textual projection of European institutions and indigenous America, all converge, and create a place, a textualscape, from which the human element, or the “humanscape” to borrow a term from Maureen Ahern, cannot escape, but rather become part and parcel of the project of landscape description (“Mapping, Measuring, and Naming” 2003). I expect that this investigation will reveal that the construction of the discourses of landscape employed, and the representations that they produced of indigenous peoples, will have contributed not only to the imagining of the land, but to the imagining of people as a part of it in new ways, ways that projected the disappearance of the individual indigenous person into the masses, into the landscape. While this may be due in large part to the representations set forth by the narrating subject, it may also reflect a broader discursive construction in which textual mapping, landscape description, and cultural discourse converge.
“Landscape is the discursive terrain across which the struggle between the different, often hostile, codes of meaning construction has been engaged.” -- Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, 1993

This chapter examines how both discursive and oral narratives that were generated from expeditions previous and subsequent to Obregón’s participation in the Ibarra Expedition in 1564, influenced Obregón’s textual re-telling of the landscape. Obregón contends that his intention in writing the Historia is to provide busy Spanish officials, who lacked the time to read copious, lengthy, narratives with this “conveniente remedio” (43). He also claims that by recording these events, he hopes to ensure that “no se sepulten en el olvido y poca memoria de los hombres los buenos ejemplos y casos y sucesos” (42). In order to provide a comprehensive history of northward expansion, Obregón determined to compare various written accounts with his own memories, and those of participants in other expeditions. The resulting references to other texts and witnesses appear periodically throughout the text, affecting landscape perception/description in three notable aspects; the (re)telling of expedition stories,
discursive itinerary mapping of the territory, and vestiges of past expeditions found on/in the landscape.

**Telling (His) Stories**

“Stories […] carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces and spaces into places.” – de Certeau, in “Spatial Stories,” 1984

Rosa Camelo has argued that Obregón is aware that the term “historia” carries specific connotations and, consequently, the author “expresa sus ideas sobre lo que debe ser la labor del historiador y sobre la función de la historia” (54). She cites three major functions of *historia* in Obregón: to serve as an example for other men; to preserve memory and fame of the conquistadors that they may be recognized for their efforts, and to tell the truth. Yet, as this chapter will demonstrate, “history” in Obregón is a far more complicated concept, the functions of which may not be so easily categorized or described.

Obregón’s narrative role in the *Historia* presents a far more complex case than Camelo’s categories would indicate, due to the fact that, in terms of point-of-view and scope, the narrating subject assumes the double role of *autor-testigo*. Further compounding this complexity is his additional dual role of *soldado-historiador*. Further still, Obregón must have been aware that his status as a *criollo* writer would not have served in his favor regarding possible rewards from the Crown. “*Junto a sus peticiones aparece una y otra vez el temor de que algún otro, sin ningún mérito, sea designado para este cargo y participe de las amargas quejas de sus contemporáneos que se sienten...*
dejados de lado injustamente ante cortesanos desconocedores de la tierra” (Camelo 53). Indeed, it would be difficult to dispute that this criollo chronicler had his own interests in mind in compiling the text: “[Obregón] tiene como finalidad impresionar al Rey para obtener las mercedes que sus penalidades y esfuerzos le habían ganado” (Hopkins Durazo 3). For his part, Obregón contends that his intention is to provide busy Spanish officials, who lack the time to read copious, lengthy relaciones, with this “conveniente remedio” (43). He also claims that by recording these events he hopes to ensure that “no se sepulten en el olvido y poca memoria de los hombres los buenos ejemplos y casos y sucesos” (42).

It is precisely in the relating of these “ejemplos, casos y sucesos” that Obregón’s competing roles seem to converge. As an historiador, it is the compiling of stories related in various relaciones and testimonios that elevates his text from “relación,” or mere reports of “lo que hay en esta tierra,” to the genre of the “historia.” As soldado, he is able to include stories of his personal deeds and participation, thus establishing credibility as an eye witness and merit for material recompense. The role of autor provides Obregón with the opportunity to select which events to include, which not to include, and how to interpret them. His role as testigo lends credibility to the stories he includes, emphasizing “lo que vi, anduve y experimenté” (43). Finally, as a criollo, Obregón can emphasize stories that promote his experience as an asset: “Que la experiencia ha sido maestra de los que allá venimos” (43).

A sole narrator with multiple roles and objectives, one may liken Obregón to the bricoleur, drawing from the landscape’s stories and compiling a patchwork history.
“composed of fragments drawn from earlier stories and fitted together in makeshift fashion” (de Certeau 122). Obregón’s *bricolage* of stories appears to perform a much larger cultural function beyond his own motivations in compiling it, creating what de Certeau has called “a theatre of actions” (de Certeau, 123). That is to say, by (re)telling stories about Spanish protagonists in the region, including himself, Obregón projects a sense of European history onto the terrain of the northern borderlands of New Spain, allowing the frontier landscape to form a part of European imagined experience. In this sense, the story serves as a means to appropriate the land by creating a foundation. “The founding is precisely the primary role of the story. It opens a legitimate theatre for practical actions” (de Certeau 123).

First, it must be considered that for Obregón, the stories from other expeditions that he selects for inclusion provide a platform from which to critique their successes and failures. He openly criticizes what he views as misdeeds or mistakes from previous expeditions, and disputes, as Bravo has indicated, the prominence and importance of their chroniclers (Bravo 21). He is particularly critical of the maltreatment of the indigenous peoples during the course of the Coronado expedition, contending that this only results in the creation of enemies, instead of producing Christianized vassals of the king.28

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28 It is interesting that Obregón refers to the indigenous people as potential vassals throughout the text. Weckmann examines what the word meant in the sixteenth century in juridical and social terms. He finds that the Crown identified vassalage with “the payment of a tribute of considerable worth,” made by the ecomenderos, the true vassals. However the conquistadors often used the term “vassal” to refer to indigenous people, reflecting the word’s classical feudal meaning, in which a vassal could refer to a free fief holder or to non-free famers, or *solariegos*. (Weckmann 75).
case of Diego de Alcaraz at Sahuaripa, the story of his abusive treatment of the indigenous people ends, from the narrator’s perspective, in a violent but, justified death.  

Stories that relate failures and mistakes also serve as kind of a contrast against which Obregón demonstrates the successes of the Ibarra expedition. For example, he relates Nuño de Guzmán’s failure to pacify Chiametla (Chametla) after founding a villa there. Ibarra, on the other hand, successfully pacifies Chiametla, and even makes allies of its inhabitants.

29 In 1641 a permanent Spanish settlement was established called “Nuestra Señora de los Angeles de Sahuaripa”. See Enciclopedia de los Municipios de México.
Of course, relating stories of failures and successes of past expeditions also provides a kind of didactic function, allowing Obregón to offer advice for future expeditions to the North, while emphasizing his service to the king in the form of useful knowledge.

Para que en esta relación sea vuestra real majestad servida con acrecentamiento de muchas provincias, villas, quintos, tributos y vasallos; y para que los generales, gobernadores y capitanes de su real servicio fueren a descubrir, conquistar y poblar, vayan advertidos e informados de muchos casos y cosas necesarias a la utilidad y provecho de lo que en semejantes jornadas y sucesos conviene, y vayan desengañados de los daños que solían suceder a los primeros, a quien faltó avisos. (43 my emphasis)

In this way, stories serve a very practical function, and as Ahern has noted, as guides for future expeditions (55, 1995).

Pragmatic considerations aside, it would be difficult to ignore that traditional literary elements abound in Obregón’s writing, particularly in relating stories of laudatory deeds of Spanish experience. Eva María Bravo cites their collective memory of novelesque poetry and prose, such as ballads, romances, and novels of chivalry, as a way for Europeans in the New World to culturally explain and approach the unknown and seemingly supernatural phenomena that they believed they were experiencing, hence the emergence of their comparisons with the heroes of stories of knight-errantry in the popular libros de caballería of the period. “Men’s exploits were on the threshold of implausibility: the novel of chivalry attained a previously unsuspected reality, and each
soldier was a potential Florisel, a Tirant lo Blanc, a Palmerin of England, or an Amadis of Gaul” (Weckmann 9).30

Chivalry was simply the sense of honor that was held in the Middle Ages. For the Hispanic world, chivalric ideals were fixed in the fourteenth century by Raymond Lully (sic) in his Book of the Order of Chivalry, a code of conduct so widely read and greatly valued at the end of the medieval period that William Caxton translated and printed it in England in 1484. At that time Spain was more faithful to chivalric values than the rest of Europe, where they were already in decline; and so the Spanish conquistador carried these ideals with him, more or less intact, to the other side of the Atlantic […] The Conquest, says Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, can validly be interpreted as an exploit inspired by the knightly sense of life, can be explained as a fantasy, as imagination, and as a passion charged with symbols […] The conquistadors, says Orozco y Berra, believed themselves to be champions of wild adventure in an enchanted country, where they had to cope with malign forces and necromancers in the style of Merlin. (Weckmann 135)

It is not surprising that the juridical textual production of the day would emulate these novels of chivalry since, as Weckmann points out, “the conquistadors were assiduous readers of the novels of chivalry” and enthusiasm for reading these books reached its zenith during the conquest in Mexico (140).31 Documents such as relaciones and crónicas were often written by soldiers and expedition participants, and, as Adorno

30 Weckmann points out the following example: “The name of California […] comes from medieval balladry and from the novels of chivalry. It was given to the peninsula (now Baja California) in 1534 by Cortés’s expedition, and almost certainly by Cortés himself, for he was both a reader and a doer of knightly deeds. Although the name appears as Califerne as early as the eleventh century, in the Chanson de Roland, it is unequivocally called California in the Sergas de Esplandián, a continuation of the Amadís de Gaula, which recounts the deeds of that knight-errant’s son. It is derived from the name of its queen, Califía…” (19-20 Weckmann).
31 “In the census of books ordered in Mexico City by the inquisitor Moya de Contreras in 1571-1572, the list of books of chivalry seems interminable; and moreover, a large number of copies (in some forty boxes) were sent to the bookseller Diego Navarro Maldonado from Medina del Campo in 1584, all of which proves the great popularity of such reading.” (Weckmann 140)
has argued, literary elements are not uncommon in such texts. Obregón’s text is no exception, and certain heroic elements emerge as he highlights various “protagonists” and tells the stories of their noble deeds and bravery.

Inmersa en la tradición de una retórica medieval este nuevo tipo de crónica desborda los cauces lingüísticos y estilísticos que la caracterizaban tradicionalmente [...] que la acerca más, incluso, a la prosa novelada que a la histórica [...] Surge así la comparación con el héroe de los libros de caballería y la influencia de dichas obras en el espíritu de aventura de estos hombres, que veían en su mano la posibilidad de hacer reales las hazañas que dieron fama y gloria a Amadís de Gaula y a todos sus seguidores. (Bravo 15-16)

As Obregón commemorates these heroes, he draws on an historical framework, starting with Hernán Cortés in Tenochtitlán, over twenty years before the author’s birth.

En la casa real, palacio y salas del poderoso y riquísimo rey Moctezuma, señor de la insigne y gran ciudad de México Tenochtitlán y reinos del imperio mexicano, halló el marqués don Hernando Cortés muchas curiosas y agradables pinturas, letras y caracteres al modo de su antiguo escribir [...] Estas antiguas crónicas, historias y relaciones fueron fundamento, principio, causa que el marqués don Hernando Cortés y el virrey don Antonio de Mendoza codiciasen saber y descubrir el origen, venida, raíz y tronco de los antiguos culguas mexicanos, teniendo sospecha sería de gran número de indios, poblazones y riquezas, para sujetarlos al gremio de nuestra santa Fe católica. (45-46, my emphasis)

Although the Historia thus begins with references to the indigenous historical accounts, these accounts have been appropriated and filtered, first by Cortés, the “hero” who conquered a powerful and extremely rich leader, and second by the autor-historiador who assures the former’s role as agent of action in the re-telling. Thus, from the very first paragraph, it is the Spanish protagonist who occupies the scene. In this way, even though the action occurs in a space unfamiliar to the reader in Spain, that space is
“Europeanized” through this narrative act; a narrative act which establishes a familiar spatial connection by inserting the Spanish hero into the previously unfamiliar space and populates it.

While this spatial connection may appear to be tenuous, the narrating subject reinforces it by establishing a direct connection between the Old and New Worlds through the protagonist, Cortés, and the larger framework of European history.

[C]uando Dios nuestro Señor permitió la infernal y abominable secta contagiosa, daño en las almas por las culpas y pecados de los hombres de la secta del abominable y ponzñoso basilisco Martín Lutero, fue servido permitir y ordenar que el día que nació este pérfido dañador y enemigo de nuestra santa Fe católica, nació el católico y cristianísimo marqués don Hernando Cortés para el remedio, conversión y salvación del gran número de indios idólatras... (46-47)

The coincidence of the birth of Martin Luther and the birth of Hernán Cortés in Europe, explained as providence that allowed for the conversion of the “idolatrous Indian” in New Spain, historically connects the unfamiliar, foreign New World to the familiar Old. John Leddy Phelan demonstrates that this parallel between Luther and Cortés was not an uncommon one, citing the Franciscan missionary Gerónimo de Mendieta and his contemporaries as disseminators of such a narrative.32 The narrative created surrounding Cortés broadens the spatial scope of the Counterreformation, presupposing the appropriation of indigenous space as a part of the European imagination. “The Church’s losses in the Old World were being compensated by her gains on the other side of the Atlantic” (Phelan 32).

32 However it would seem that Obregón further disseminates a critical error: “Mendieta had again confused his dates. Luther was born in 1483, and Cortés in 1485” (Phelan 32).
This Cortés/Luther narrative exemplifies the analogy that de Certeau has drawn between stories and *metaphorai* (vehicles used for mass transportation in modern Athens).

Stories could also take this noble name: every day they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories [...] With [...] subtle complexity stories, whether everyday or literary, serve us as a means of mass transportation, as metaphorai. (de Certeau 115)

Like the metaphorai, the Cortés narrative traverses the Atlantic and links the Counterreformation with indigenous conversion. “It placed the conversion of the Indians in a universal historical framework” (Phelan 33). The hero, the Spanish protagonist, now belongs to both places, and both places are thus each one a part of the other.

Comparisons of Cortés with other heroes of European history serve to strengthen this notion: “[F]ue a verse con el invictísimo César de gloriosa memoria que estaba en el imperio de Alemania, castigando a los rebeldes y enemigos de nuestra santa Fe católica y a la inobediencia de su real Imperio y Corona” (47).33 Throughout the text, Obregón draws similar comparisons between protagonists of the Conquest and European heroes.

33 A.R Pageden, translator and editor of *Hernán Cortés: Letters from México* (1971) concludes that the first Spanish edition of Cortés’s second letter was printed on November 8, 1522 in Seville, after Cortés had already been appointed governor (October 15, 1552). The third letter was first printed in Seville on March 30, 1523 and the fourth in Toledo on October 20, 1525. There was a decree issued on March 1527 forbidding any further printings, and eventually, in October of 1553, a decree was issued forbidding the export of all histories of the conquest of México to the Indies. “The reason may possibly have been that the Crown found Cortés’s popularity an embarrassment” (Pagden lxi-lxii). It is reasonable to conclude that even if Obregón did not have access to an early publication of Cortés letters per se, he would have more than likely had access to texts in which Cortés was written about that would have circulated in New Spain at the
La aventura de lo desconocido atraía demasiado a los descubridores para no ver en ello un claro paralelismo con los famosos personajes de la historia; como reminiscencia de las crónicas medievales, en la indiana se produce también la integración arbitraria de sucesos muy distantes en el tiempo. Así, Obregón compara la batalla de Sahuaripa con la victoria del rey Alfonso XI ante Alboacén (Abul-Hasan ‘Ali), la de Tamerlán (Timur Lang) contra Bayaceto I en 1402, o lo más recientes hechos de Cortés en México o Pizarro en Perú. (Bravo 16)

Such comparisons provide a space within what Obregón calls “católica memoria” for the deeds of caballeros in an otherwise unknown, unexperienced space, thereby incorporating that space into the larger framework of Occidental history (66). He appropriates the local space and memory, events occurring in the borderlands of New Spain, and incorporates them into what, in his view, is the universal, the imperial space and the imperial (catholic) memory. This is also perhaps reflective of a “dream of a universal Christian Empire” that prevailed at the time (Seed 118). Just as J.B. Harley has signaled the tendency of the map to “focus the viewer’s attention upon the center, and thus to promote the development of exclusive, inward-directed worldviews” I would propose that the historias related in Obregón’s text are depicted “according to a set of beliefs about the way the world should be, and present[s] its construction as truth” (Harley 290, 1989, my emphasis).

time, as indicated by his popularity mentioned by Pagden. Also, the printing press was already a part of the reality of New Spain by 1539, disseminating relaciones and other texts (Romero, 1940).
Legends, Gossip, and Myth

Obregón dedicates the first five chapters to relating the events lived by the Spanish protagonists that led up to the departure of Ibarra from San Martín, Nueva Vizcaya, in 1564: the travails of Cabeza de Vaca, “caballero de mucho valor, cristianidad y estimación [...] nieto de Pedro de Vera, el que ganó las islas de Canaria (48); the “engañoso estilo” of fray Marcos de Niza that had the majority of the inhabitants “en este reino de México [...] en breve tiempo [...] conmovidos, alterados y codiciosos,” clamoring to join the expedition to explore the Siete Ciudades de Cibola; stories from Coronado’s expedition including the death of the maese de campo, Lope de Samaniego; Nuño de Guzmán’s conquest and settlement of Culiacán; the founding of a villa near Cibola, and the exploration of pueblos along the river Tibuex. With each telling of events featuring Spanish protagonists, one can see the banda del norte (edge of the north) beginning to take shape as an historical space from which stories of a European protagonist unfold.34 Consider the following account of Coronado’s fall from his horse:

Volvió el general [Coronado] de Quivira marchando con su campo por sus ordinarias jornadas hasta juntarse con su campo, que estaba en el río de Tibuex, adonde por su desgracia cayó de un caballo, de la cual caída afirman los antiguos que fueron en su compañía y estuvieron presentes que descaeció y fue a

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34 In Spain, “banda” was almost exclusively a nautical term, “mientras que en América desde Oviedo se extiende hasta significar ‘zona’ y ‘orilla; margen.’” (Corominas 485, v.1)
menos su buen entendimiento y gobierno, ocasión de su determinación a la vuelta de la tierra que había descubierto y podía poblar; otros afirman que la causa fue haber dejado mujer hermosa e hijos y hacienda en la ciudad de México. (59-60, my emphasis)

In the course of the “daily” march in the long journey back to his camp from Quivira, in present-day New Mexico, Coronado was thrown from his horse. Since the river Tibuex (The Rio Grande) is the location where this unfortunate event takes place, it enters the imperial historical landscape. It is noteworthy that this episode, devoid of the knightly valour and heroic acts expressed in other tales, takes on an almost gossipy tone, suggesting an alternative story. Witnesses have speculated about what could have caused Coronado to fall from his horse, suggesting multiple versions and various possibilities of what happened on the way back from Quivira to the camp of the main army, near present-day Albuquerque, along the river Tibuex.

The verbal relics of which the story is composed, being tied to lost stories and opaque acts, are juxtaposed in a collage where their relations are not thought, and for this reason they form a symbolic whole. They are articulated by lacunae. Within the structured space of the text, they thus produce anti-texts, effects of dissimulation and escape, possibilities of moving into other landscapes, like cellars and bushes: “ô massifs, ô plurieis.” (de Certeau 107)

Perhaps no better example of the function of the story is found than an episode that Obregón relates about a scouting party that ends in death, a death that permanently alters the landscape. When Ibarra sends the maese de campo, Martín de Gamón, along with twenty soldiers and some indigenous guides on a scouting mission to Topia, the

35 “Ordinario” indicated “daily.” (Corominas 291, v. 4)
soldiers grow suspicious of the guides when the journey takes longer than they had estimated.  

[...]

Gamón hangs the guides from the beautiful, flowering tree and it miraculously withers, leaving a mark on the landscape that denotes the injustice and malice that lead to their deaths. Later, the tree “retells” the story when the expedition heads for Topia, “hasta llegar al valle de los ahorcados que justició Martín de Gamón, adonde vieron el árbol que, sin muestra de ser lisiado de rayo ni fuego, está seco, por lo cual se coligió ser por divina permisión” (82, my emphasis). The use of the present tense connotes the permanency of this indelible mark on the landscape of the northern frontier, a mark that holds a history, telling a story of greater significance for all who pass by it. “In landscape, representation and reality fuse when a tree, path or gate is invested with larger significance” (Spirn 27).  

36 In the Bravo edition that I cite from throughout this dissertation, “Topía” is spelled with the “í”. However, I employ the more common spelling of “Topia” when not quoting directly from Bravo’s edition.
All of these stories mentioned above, part gossip, part legend, part history, allow Obregón to specify places within the landscape in terms of a Spanish experience, as if to say, “That is the tree where those guides died” or “That is the spot where Coronado fell off of his horse”. They also allow Obregón to re-signify the landscape. Maureen Ahern has argued that, prior to the Coronado Expedition, the northern frontier had been conceived in the European mind as either the “mythical places of the Seven Cities inherited from medieval lore […] or as lands known to those born in Mexico as the territory of the Chichimecas” or as tierra de guerra (2002, 33-34). Castañeda’s account of the Coronado expedition, however, written in 1563, “transformed the geography of North America from the medieval island imagery of Columbus to that of a new continent about to appear on maps, where the toponyms of Cibola, Acoma, Tiguex, Cicuyue, and Quvira configured new political and cultural spaces” (2002, 27). Written over twenty years later, the Historia exemplifies how by its time of the 1580’s, these recognizable toponyms and cultural spaces hold a history, and as such, represent a landscape in/on which the stories of expeditions now literally “take place.” That historical events have happened in these places is presupposed, serving as foundation narrations that create a theatre of actions: “The story’s first function is to authorize, or more exactly, to found” (de Certeau 123). What Lawson-Peebles calls the country as percept, now holds a history that is culturally recognized and shared (among the Spanish or Europeans of course, but not with the indigenous peoples), “giving the environment definition and form from a particular angle of vision and through a special filter of values and beliefs” (Abrahamsson 52). In these discourses the projection of a European history onto the
landscape of the northern frontier has transformed it textually to reflect that particular cultural identity, a process reflective of what Carter has called “Imperial History,” “[…] the form of history which ‘reduces space to a stage’ upon which actors enact significant historical events such as those leading to […] ‘discovery’ and ‘settlement’” (Carter xxii).

At the same time it must be noted that just as Castañeda’s account of the Coronado Expedition “realizes the cultural and spatial configuration of a ‘new’ norte and a ‘new’ frontier- forming an intersection where the text must confront the terrain” (Ahern 28, 2002), Obregón’s text must also confront the terrain, the landscape. However, in the latter’s text, the landscape confronted represents a historicized, and even politicized, spatial configuration; and, as will be discussed in the section that follows, one that was emerging from the fog of conflicting reports.

The Itinerary and Intertextuality

“The Itinerary and Intertextuality

“On the northern frontier in New Spain, the relación or written report preceded the map, assuming a normative role in establishing a spatial order for resolving the articulation of the territory traveled, its alterity and above all, its future place in universal cosmography.”

-- Maureen Ahern, 2002

The narrative report served to plot out the itinerary taken by participants in order to relate the length of time and number of leagues traveled between pueblos, stops along the way, orientation and way finding, sources for water and routes passable by horse, all of which were observations grounded in experience, information essential for purposes of future settlements and mining. As de Certeau has argued, the itinerary presupposes the geographical map, thus it is the telling of the discursive series of operations that allow for
maps to exhibit products of knowledge (1984, 121). It would seem that Obregón’s itinerary-driven narration does indeed reflect the European conceptions of mapping of his day. That is to say, while the geographical map was emerging as a part of scientific discourse at the time of his writing, in New Spain, the mapping that was taking place tended to be an on-the-ground itinerary operation.

Over the past five centuries, they [tours and maps] have been interlaced and then slowly dissociated in literary and scientific representations of space. In particular, if one takes the “map” in its current geographical form, we can see that in the course of the period marked by the birth of modern scientific discourse (i.e. from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century) the map has slowly disengaged itself from the itineraries that were the condition of its possibility. (de Certeau 120)

In *The Spacious World* (2004), Ricardo Padrón considers conceptions of space in the process of the invention of America and argues that throughout the sixteenth century, a medieval perception of space persisted, one grounded in a linear sense of space based on embodied experience. Authors writing from and describing the New World reflect a “culture rooted in the linear spaciality of the Middle Ages, that sense of space as distance rather than area, that habit of imagining territory in and through the body’s journey from one place to the next” (235). The narration of itinerary found in the *Historia* brings the reader down to the ground to travel along side the narrator in a manner akin to, as Ahern (2003) and Turchi (2004) have demonstrated, the American Automobile Association’s “Triptik” maps of today. “The itinerary addresses a reader who is embodied, earthbound, and dynamic” (Padrón 61). While Obregón specifically addresses his text to the royal authorities in Spain, who no doubt would have read the text from a very different vantage point in terms of spatiality, he nonetheless emphatically proposes to provide such
practical itinerary information. His view is that of the bottom-up nature of the itinerary, as opposed to the top-down nature of the map (Olwig 26).

I will elaborate upon these conceptions of space and how the itinerary influenced Obregón’s descriptions of landscape in chapter five, but at this point, I wish to focus on how multiple expeditions to the tierras incógnitas north of New Spain produced manifold itinerary information, impelling Obregón to undergo the task of clarifying the confusion stemming from conflicting reports containing practical itinerary information, such as multiple toponyms, the distance and length of time between pueblos, and the presence and size of pueblos found in other accounts. For Obregón, in order to report the “verdaderos hechos de las tierras,” he would have to contend with the clarification of contradictions and conflicting accounts found in various relaciones.37 Put simply, Obregón grappled discursively with textual and oral verification of the “where, how, and what” of way-finding through the northern landscape.

37 These passages draw from multiple sources, relying principally on Cabeza de Vaca’s Relación (1542, 1555), documents and interviews with members of the Coronado Expedition, Obregón’s own experience with Ibarra, and finally the expeditions of Chamuscado and Espejo. As Eva María Bravo has demonstrated: “Aunque tomar ideas de libros ajenos no era motivo de desdoro en la época, los autores no creen necesario confesar sus fuentes; el propio Obregón señala algunas, lo cual supone ya un deseo de sinceridad y un afán de respaldar su testimonio con otros” (Bravo 24).
Naming

“A whole series of comparisons would be necessary to account for the magical powers proper names enjoy. They seem to be carried as emblems by the travelers they direct and simultaneously decorate.” –de Certeau in *Spatial Practices*, 1984

Barbara Mundy has stated that, “Naming is at the heart of mapping” (138). As expeditions that pushed the frontier north traversed the land, participants (re)named pueblos as they went, sometimes after the saint of the day it was “founded,” as Ibarra did in the case of Chiametla: “Fundó el gobernador la villa de Chiametla a la cual nombró por abogado a San Sebastián porque fue fundada en su día” (129). This practice, based on the concept that settlements needed a saint to defend and protect them, also “christianized” the landscape. In other cases a geographical feature of the area inspired the toponym, as in the following case from the Chamuscado party described by Obregón.

Hallaron cantidad de cuernos que al parecer eran de carneros grandes y de diferente modo y naturaleza que los de cristianos [...] por esta causa nombraron los descubridores a este valle el de los Carneros. (235)

This cultural practice stemmed primarily from the Spanish custom of renaming conquered territories, a practice inherited from the Roman tradition. Patricia Seed explains in “Taking Possession” (1993), the practice of renaming topographical features was a ceremonial act that, in the Americas, began with Columbus and continued throughout the period of European expansion in the New World.
The practice represents a form of ritual speech that undertakes a renaming of the land. Naming geographical features in effect converts them from their former status to a new European one: the external body of the land remains the same, but its essence is redefined by a new name. The use of ritual speech to name territory is analogous to the process of baptism practiced upon the peoples of the New World. (Seed 122)

Similarly, David Spurr has argued that “Nomination and substantivization may also be seen as grammatical forms of appropriation: by naming things, we take possession of them” (32), a notion that in fact informed the Crown’s policies in New Spain.

Luego que los descubridores lleguen a las prouncias y tierras que descubrieren juntamente con los ofiçiales pongan nombre a toda la tierra a cada prouincia por ssi a los montes y rios mas principales que en ellas ouiere y a los pueblos y ciudades que allaren en la tierra y ellos fundaren. (Ordenanzas 16)

However, it should be noted that for practical purposes, (re)naming pueblos would have also provided Spanish explorers, and readers, with a sense of orientation, giving direction and meaning to the vast and unfamiliar lands lying to the north of Nueva Vizcaya, lands that were still depicted as empty space on the existing cartography of the period (see fig. 3.1).³⁸

It depended on positioning a ‘here’ (the traveler’s viewpoint and orientation) and a ‘there’ (…the horizon). And where such viewpoints did not exist, they had to be hypothesized, rhetorically asserted by way of names […] Mountains and rivers were culturally desirable, they conjured up pleasing associations. But, more fundamentally, they signified differences that made a difference. They implied the possibility of viewpoints, directions... (Hirsch 3, my emphasis)

³⁸ The World Map by Agnese Battista, although created ca.1544, beautifully illustrates the conception of the northern reaches of the Indies as empty space. Of course, the Velasco map from the 1570’s (See Fig. 1.7) further illustrates that this conception had not changed even at the time Obregón was composing the Historia.
Figure 3.1: World Map c. 1544 by Agnese Battista
In Obregón, in the absence of mountains and rivers, where topographical difference was not recognized by Spanish explorers, certain confusion and dangers were generated, as in the case of the *Llanos de Vacas*, the extensive plains area named by the Spaniards for the “vacas de pequeña estatura,” the bison, which inhabited them (56).

Y así prosiguió [Coronado] sus jornadas, al cabo de las cuales toparon los llanos de las Vacas, que afirman son de más de cuatrocientas leguas, de tan extraña suerte y manera que no se ven ni divisan sierras, lomas ni cerro de ninguna manera, ni señales para atinar, conocer la tierra, ni de donde se apartan ni salen de una jornada a otra, ni de un lugar a otro; y es en estos llanos muy necesario la aguja del marear como si fuese por la mar. Y el riesgo de que aconteció salir a cazar algunos soldados y no acertaron a volver, ni tuvieron señales por dónde ni cómo poder atinar a su salida al campo de donde salieron a tierras pobladas, de manera que nunca más se supo de ellos ni adónde salieron ni si los mataron. (55-56)

Like *Llanos de vacas*, much of the mysterious north was perceived by Europeans on both sides of the Atlantic as empty, unfamiliar space, and an imperative function of Obregon’s discursive project was to “make sense” of this “empty” landscape. One means of accomplishing this is to establish fixed proper names. “[Proper names] are the impetus of movements, like vocations and calls that turn or divert an itinerary by giving it a meaning (or a direction) (*sens*) that was previously unforeseen. These names create a nowhere in places; they change them into passages” (de Certeau 104). I argue that by sorting out multiple toponyms, Obregón attempts to explain the locations of pueblos in relation to one another, their number, the distances between them, and even their populations. This of course consistently allows Obregón to construct direct itineraries and travel paths for future expeditions, a topic which will be discussed in chapter five.
By the time Obregón sent his Historia to the Consejo de Indias in 1584, various expeditions had already begun pushing the frontier of New Spain northward, at times retracing the steps of their predecessors. Armando Hopkins Durazo, an historian of the state of Sonora, elucidates Ibarra’s route in Imágenes Prehispánicas de Sonora (1988), proposing that, prior to Ibarra’s expedition in 1564, the southern part of the modern day state of Sonora had already been visited by Diego de Guzmán, Cabeza de Vaca, Fray Marcos de Niza, and Coronado (3). As a result, multiple toponyms had emerged that referred to the same locations, since expedition participants commonly took it upon themselves to name places. It follows, of course, that multiple namings were inevitable, and in terms of producing cohesive geographical knowledge, these double nomenclatures may have caused significant confusion.

To set the record straight, Obregón refers to the toponyms imposed by various parties as he relates particular events, thereby signaling double nomenclatures. For example, as he retells Coronado’s route from Tibuex to Quivira by way of Cibola, he explains that the party discovered “el río y el poblazón de Tucayan que nombra Antonio de Espejo, Mohoce” (58). By employing each name separately, he demonstrates that these places are one in the same, thereby generating geographic knowledge of the areas, and simultaneously establishing the order of events of “discovery” for future claims. This is significant because at the time, the clarification of who had discovered what lands first would have been of paramount importance in securing a commission from the Crown to settle a territory, or to be named gobernador with the legal permission to distribute lands and indigenous laborers, or conduct an expedition for settlement or
exploration. “Ningun descubridor ni poblador pueda entrar a descubrir ni poblar en los términos que a otros estuvieren encargados o ouieren descubierto” (Ordenanzas 30).

Estos conquistadores, cuyo principal objetivo era la multiplicación de sus riquezas y el reconocimiento real, no recibían fondos para realizar las empresas de la conquista, por lo que tenían que arriesgar sus propias fortunas antes de lograr el éxito. (Hopkins Durazo 6)

The significance of first discovery is exemplified in a passage in which Obregón relates the case of Acuco (Acoma), a pueblo that was visited by Spaniards on more than one occasion. Obregón clarifies that the pueblo was first “seen and discovered” by Coronado, then Chamuscado and finally Antonio de Espejo.

Ha sido visto y hallado por Francisco Vázquez de Coronado primeramente y los segundos que le visitaron fueron los de Francisco Sánchez Chamuscado y los terceros fueron los de Antonio de Espejo […] y según lo que he experimentado, sabido y examinado a los descubridores, parece que la poblazón que nombran los descubridores de Francisco Sánchez Chamuscado son éstas del río de Tubuex, por razón de que los de Coronado afirman que Acuco, pueblo fuerte, está quince leguas del río de Tubuex, que los de Francisco Sánchez Chamuscado nombraron Guadalquivir y provincia de San Felipe. Los compañeros de Antonio de Espejo afirman está este río de Tubuex quince leguas de Acuco, y Cibola cincuenta leguas, de manera que es averiguado ser las poblazones que descubrieron antiguamente Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. (54-55, my emphasis)

Acknowledging that Chamuscado’s party called this river Guadalquivir, for the great river that flows past Sevilla, Obregón employs the testimony of participants from the

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39 While at the time that Obregón was writing the encomienda system and the distribution of lands and people had come under decades of intense criticism, and there had even been an attempt to outlaw the institution under the New Laws of 1540, Obregón still refers to this institution throughout the text. This topic will be elaborated in chapters five and six.
Coronado and Espejo expeditions to demonstrate that the toponyms of Guadalquivir and
the Río Tibuex (The Rio Grande) refer to the same body of water. He concludes that, as
the river of Guadalquivir is reported to be 15 leagues from Acuco (Acoma), and 50
leagues from Cibola, it stands to reason that the river(s) are one and the same, and thus
the poblazones, or large settlements, to which Chamuscado referrers are those that
Francisco Vázquez de Coronado had already discovered.\(^{40}\) This again serves the double
function of 1) creating geographical knowledge (that there is one, not multiple pueblos,
and its distance from the river and from Cibola) and 2) establishing who arrived first.\(^{41}\)
In short, Obregón makes it clear to the reader that Chamuscado has discovered nothing
new.

In a similar instance, Obregón employs the testimony of the descendents of a
participant from the Espejo expedition, Bernardino de Luna, in order to resolve the
seemingly conflicting reports emerging from the Coronado, Chamuscado and Espejo
expeditions.

Téngola por verdadera por el examen que hice de lo que certifican de los pueblos
que anduvo del cuál descubrimiento de Francisco Vázquez de Coronado […] que
por su cotejo en los nombres de los pueblos, provincias y lo demás se puede ver
[…] así por ser enterados de la verdad como para ver, saber y averiguar, qué
cantidad de leguas que hay del descubrimiento de […] Chamuscado de las
provincias de San Felipe del Nuevo México a las de Cíbola, Tibuex, Cicuic y las
demás que descubrió y anduvo Francisco Vázquez Coronado para que V.M.

\(^{40}\) Bravo defines “poblazón” as “el efecto de poblar” (286). The *Diccionario crítico
etimológico castellano e hispánico* Corominas (1954) includes “poblazón” as deriving
from “pueblo”: “Es corriente desde la Edad Media el uso de ‘pueblo’ con el valor de
congregación numerosa de gente afectada por una común condición política” (673; v. 4)

\(^{41}\) The Ibarra expedition never traveled as far north as Cibola, thus Obregón identifies its
location textually, and not from personal experience.
Figure 3.2: The Spanish Frontier circa 1550-1600. Deborah Reade, Artist. School for Advanced Research (2004)
sepa que son descubrimientos antiguos; y parece haber crecido y multiplicado la gente y pueblos según las relaciones y lo que he inquirido de los que hay vivos de Coronado y no se puede sospechar ser mentira, porque afirman los que entraron con Antonio de Espejo ser más cuantiosas [...] de lo que certifican los que entraron con el dicho Francisco Sánchez Chamuscado. (268, my emphasis)

By comparing the names of the pueblos (toponyms), and counting leagues (mathematical mapping) in combination with counting people and pueblos (population mapping) – Obregón deduces that Espejo and Chamuscado are retracing old discoveries, thereby clarifying the number of pueblos that exist in the same area, and the size of their populations. Now it is known that the Chamuscado routes were actually, in part, new ones that visited more than sixty indigenous settlements, many of which represent first contact with many pueblos that Coronado did not visit (see fig. 3.2).

The population information in the previous passage buttresses the mathematical mapping and toponyms in order to dispel or confirm the existence of purported areas of “significance” in terms of settlement and resources. In a similar instance, Obregón refers to the Turk, a guide from the Coronado expedition who had claimed the existence of pueblos ten days travel from Quivara to the west, where clothed people cultivated maize. However, since it was presumed that the Turk was lying in order to send Coronado on a wild goose chase, his claims had been dismissed. Yet upon study and examination of information about later expeditions that reported similar circumstances, Obregón concludes that the existence of such pueblos was quite possible.

Después tuvo el general Francisco Vázquez de Coronado algunas noticias de Quivira que fue la ultima tierra que anduvo en su viaje, aunque no se conformaron.
las guías que fueron el Hisopete y el Turco y en las noticias estuvieron varios y diferentes; y en particular el Turco, por haber mentido en las noticias, mandó darle garrote el general Francisco Vásquez Coronado. Dieron noticia que diez jornadas de Quivira hacia el poniente había un gran río poblado de muchas gentes vestidas y que cogen mucho maíz y andan y se sirven de muchas canoas; tuvose por mentira, por la experiencia que se hizo del Turco y así esto está dudoso aunque se tiene por cosa cierta, porque después acá han dado esta noticia a los descubridores que han estado en estas tierras y en particular Antonio de Espejo. (189, my emphasis)

All of the above passages demonstrate how multiple expeditions to the area had left in their wake a muddled mapping predicament that Obregón proposes to elucidate by analyzing multiple toponyms, multiple “discoveries” and even changes in population, and then plotting them onto a discursive map. Certainly this is an ambitious task, the undertaking of which begs the question: To what degree would such clarification have been possible? As Peter Turchi reminds us, “every map goes out of date, every map asserts a truth that it can never attain” (2001). The discursive itinerary, it would seem, is not exceptional in this regard, as it too attempts to commit to text the dynamic phenomenon of the landscape. In the next section I examine how Obregón attempts to manage this disorder by textualizing the landscape, as he contends not only with a landscape that has undergone dramatic changes, but one that was changing even as he wrote.
CHAPTER 4

VESTIGES OF SPANISH CONTACT

“The modification of flora and fauna and the elimination of the aboriginal human dwellers should not be forgotten or silenced. For we are dealing with a series of imperial acts that constitute the genesis of the current conditions of human (and animal and botanical) life in the territory.”

--Gustavo Verdesio, 2002

In addition to demonstrating the confusion that abounded regarding the whereabouts and distances between pueblos, Obregón’s textual description of the landscape reveals the presence of significant vestiges from previous Spanish forays into the mysterious north that appear on the physical landscape. These vestiges reflect important changes to what Carl Sauer called the “cultural landscape,” a concept which examines “man’s record upon the landscape” (Sauer 46). From this theoretical standpoint, with the introduction of a new, alien culture (Spanish) a new landscape is superimposed on an older (indigenous) one. The shaping force of the physical landscape, then, is culture. A close reading of Obregón’s Historia demonstrates how European contact with the pueblos of the frontier had already transformed the landscape in irreversible ways. As Gustavo Verdesio argues, what Edmundo O’Gorman called “the
invention of America” must be understood as a “long process that included acts of actual territorial appropriation…”  

Those actions had very concrete, tangible effects over the territory, the fauna, the flora and the human beings that inhabited the American continent. Those actions are proof that the Spaniards and the other Europeans who arrived in America did not limit themselves to rethink the landscape […] but that they set out to modify, through specific actions, the nature they encountered. Confronted with an unknown nature, the European subject decided to modify it, as Gerbi rightly points out (1992, 337). (Verdesio 137)

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of change to the landscape as a result of Spanish entradas (an expedition penetrating a new territory) are the physical, tangible vestiges, traces and tracks on the landscape, as described in various accounts generated during the period of northward expansion.

A number of material items are documented as being traded to the Indians or being left behind by the explorers. These include beads, glassware, iron objects, a trunk, and a book (which was extant forty years after Coronado left it behind in Zuñi). In addition there is indication that some livestock was left in the Southwest by Coronado on his return to New Spain in 1542 (Riley 33, 1974). In fact, Obregón notes that in the valley of “Señora” (Sonora) one of the referents to the Spanish explorers used by the aborigines is “hombres de hierro” (155). Obregón also witnessed the indigenous people’s use of European tools: “Y de ordinario siguieron el campo mostrando tener codicia de las cosas y atavíos de los cristianos, mayormente de cosas de hierro para cortar o labrar sus tierras” (153). Similarly, along the way to Topia, the group comes across “pedazos

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42 Here Verdesio referí to O’Gorman’s *La invención de América* (1958)
de carreta que los frailes habían llevado hasta allí" (82).\textsuperscript{43} Furthermore, Obregón reports that Espejo’s group finds in the “provincia de los quires, indios amigos adonde habían estado antes, en la cual dejó a guardar Bernardino de Luna unas herramientas para sacar plata al cacique del pueblo” (268).\textsuperscript{44} Finally, there are several instances mentioned in which Ibarra presents vidrio and mantas to various indigenous groups encountered, typical gifts of exchange at the time of first contact.

Obregón also mentions the introduction of animals and plants that would have resulted in significant changes to the flora and fauna of the landscape, for example the livestock in the form of “vacas que hallaron multiplicadas de las que dejó perdidas Francisco Vázquez de Coronado cuando iba al viaje de Cibola, y de las que iban dejando vecinos de Culiacán cuando metían ganado en su villa” (131). Another living legacy seems to be found in the introduction of new crops. In the Valle de Señora (Sonora) the group finds melons “de la semilla que les quedó de cuando mataron a los de Alcaraz” (153). They also find beans thought to have been brought from Culiacán: “Halláronse en esta valle habas de la tierra y de Castilla traídas de Culiacán” (87).

European intervention was motivated by the need the inhabitants of the Old World felt to change, to modify, the new lands they were colonizing in order to make them more similar to the landscape in their native countries […] [A]s Crosby points out, Europeans believed their survival in the New World depended on their ability to Europeanize the local biota (1972, 64). This belief has to do

\textsuperscript{43} While Obregón does not specify to which friars he refers, they may have arrived there from Culiacán with Nuño de Guzmán, who had tried to establish an encomienda in Topia c. 1531.

\textsuperscript{44} Bernardino de Luna was a participant in the Espejo expedition who Obregón explains “murió en servicio de V.M.”. Luna’s descendants provided the testimony for the Historia.
[... ] with another one: the belief that the only possible “civilized” diet was the European one. (Verdesio 139-140)

These introductions and modifications no doubt altered the landscape considerably, as is evinced in a 1940 study conducted by two Berkley graduate students who had studied under Carl Sauer, Robert West and James Parsons. The pair traveled to Mexico in order to retrace what had become known as the Topia Road, a 140 mile-long trail that had served as colonial Mexico’s main trans-Sierran trail route linking the mountain mining hamlets of the Pacific Coast with the interior (see fig. 4.1). The road’s foundation can be traced to the expedition of Francisco de Ibarra.

An old colonial camino real proceeds across the highlands from the mission pueblo of Tepehuanes, 125 miles northwest of Durango City, passing through the mining town of Topia, to Culiacán on the coastal plain of Sinaloa. This trail is known as Topia Road [...] The establishment and maintenance of the Topia Road in the last quarter of the sixteenth century were closely associated with the search for, and exploitation of, precious metals in the Sierra Madre. In 1563, rumors of silver and gold deposits lured Francisco de Ibarra, explorer and first governor of Nueva Vizcaya, into the Sierra to the Acahee Indian village of Topia. From this point, at which indications of silver were found, Ibarra and his forces continued westward to the coastal plain and the frontier settlement of Culiacán, thereby establishing a route across the high plateau. (West and Parsons 408)

The establishment of such a well-traveled trail would eventually leave a dramatic mark on the landscape. In December of 1995, armed with field observation notes and photos from the journey made in 1940 by Parsons and West, Johnathan Walker and Jonathan Leib retraced the journey, evaluating landscape alteration. Using the method of repeat-photography, reoccupying the original camera position and taking a new photograph of the same scene, they demonstrate what they call “changes in the cultural landscape”
Figure 4.1: The Topia Road: Tepehuanes, Durango, to Culiacán, Sinaloa (Cartography by Ray Brod, University of Illinois, Chicago in Walker and Leib, 2002)
(Walker and Leib 558). The comparison photo is meant to illustrate the degree to which the trail has begun to disappear due to lack of use, however I wish to call attention to the deep gouges the “Topia Road” made on the land in the first place, ruts that formed from years of passage spurred by the mining industry, and whose first cut was made by the footsteps of the Ibarra expedition (see fig. 4.2).

Additional physical evidence of a changing landscape includes the Christian crosses that were left behind in order to demarcate dominion. “Europeans in the New World, as well as in Asia and Africa, used a variety of symbolic acts to mark their presence or their contact with lands or peoples […] The medium of the cross defined dominion over territory at a time when the dream of a universal Christian Empire still prevailed” (Seed 118). Throughout the Historia, Obregón insists on the primacy of building a church or placing a cross in a central location of the pueblo visited. From the very start, upon founding the villas of Nombre de Dios and Durango, Ibarra “Puso y edificó por su mano el cimiento y primer edificio de las iglesias para el ejemplo de los de su campo” (75). This is a process that had already begun with Cabeza de Vaca. “When conversion of the Indians was sealed […] they were entreated to mark their villages with the Christian emblem and to meet the Spanish with crosses, not bows” (Ahern 224, 1993). Fray Marcos de Niza and other Franciscan friars likewise utilized the cross as a sign to demarcate territory: “Fray Marcos and Esteban agreed upon a code of crosses that would transmit geographical information about the territory” (Ahern, 226, 1993). The act of demarcating space with a cross is repeated throughout the duration of the Ibarra
Figure 4.2: The photograph comparison of Topia Road (Walker and Leib, 2002)
expedition and, consequently, passages abound with similar instances. The following
two episodes from the *Historia* represent exemplary cases.

[Ibarra] Mandó poner en el pueblo **una gran cruz**, que fue necesaria mucha gente
para la traída del madero y levantarla en alto. **Enteró en la peña de ella todos**
**los ídolos que pudo descubrir**, tenían y halló, y los demás que tenían en la gran
altura, sierras y cuevas de aquella serranía. (88, my emphasis)

[El maese de campo] Tomó por defensor y abogado de ella al santo apóstol y
evangelista San Juan y para su principio hizo, amasó y empezó el primer barro,
cimiento y tapia, de manera que con su solicitud trabajo y cuidado **fue fundada la**
**iglesia en la provincia de Cinaro** [...] Puso el maese de campo en el patio de la
iglesia un altar y hermosa cruz y **por consiguiente la mandó poner en medio de**
todos los pueblos comarcanos a la villa. (108, my emphasis)

In the first case, that of Topia, not only is a huge cross erected, but any and every
indigenous idol that can be found in and around the pueblo is buried underneath it. The
space is appropriated as “Christian” by the symbolic placing of the cross, but also, like a
palimpsest, the cross buries the indigenous religious symbols. In Cinaro (Río Fuerte
region), the cross also appropriates space, and the intention to repeat this act
demonstrates its function in the larger agenda of *pacificación*. In both instances, the
cross is a semiotic tool in the ceremonial act of taking possession. “In the Roman
tradition of taking possession, Europeans would first, mark their presence on the land and
second, manifest intent to remain” (Seed 112). Here, the cross functions as *synecdoche*,
signifying the church, Christianity and intent to remain, “expand[ing] a spatial element in

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45 “Cinaro” refers to the modern-day region around the Río Fuerte and the Valle
Carapoa, about 30 kms. north of the modern-day city of Los Mochis in the state of
Sinaloa. Obregón uses the names “Cinaro” and “Tigueco y Cinaro” when referring to
these lands to the north of Culiacán. The rivers of Petatlán (Río Sinaloa) and Ocoroni (a
tributary to Río Sinaloa) are included in his depictions of this region, as well as the
villages of Petatlán, Ocoroni, Ciguini and Tigueco y Cinaro (see fig. 4.3).
Figure 4.3: Key locations visited by the Ibarra expedition
In this way, the vestige of the cross alters the physical landscape as well as the “spiritual landscape,” to borrow a term from Harley (294, 1989). This is evidenced in the case of Chiametla, where the cross serves the semiotic function of taking possession in the interim of church construction.\footnote{This passage also reflects the declaration of intent to remain and the role of witnesses and writing. For more on this topic, see Seed.}

The construction of crosses and churches in taking possession represents significant cultural and physical changes to the landscape on the “frontera de tierra de cristianos,” since land and people are perceived according to how they are “read” by those Europeans who see the cross as “Christian.” For example, when Antonio de Espejo encountered the Querecho people after Chamuscado had already visited them, they are described as having “puesta cruces por orden que les dieron los de atrás porque no les hiciesen daño, las cuales traían puestas en la cabeza que caían sobre la frente hasta el nacimiento de la nariz” (266). In this passage, the cross that had served to demarcate Christian territory now ostensibly also demarcates bodies capable of Christian conversion, and thus deserving of protection. The shift here is subtle, but it may be viewed as one from Spanish appropriation of the land with the semiotic tool of the cross.
to Spanish appropriation of indigenous bodies with the same semiotic tool, in which bodies become signifiers.

**Indigenous Bodies**

Perhaps no more corporal manifestation of appropriation of the indigenous body can be found than in that of the miscegenation that occurred in and among the indigenous populations of the sixteenth century. Upon arrival at a pueblo in the Valley of Sonora, Obregón comments, “Dieron noticia de dos mestizos hijos de indias naturales de allí y de los cristianos que ellos habían muerto y que asistían en un pueblo llamado Saguaripe en la sierra” (152).47 The progeny of a Spanish settlement founded during the time of the Coronado expedition, and later governed by Diego de Alcaraz, “Los mestizos nacidos de estas indias quedaron al cuidado de las madres [...] soldados españoles y mujeres ópatas, dando inicio a un proceso de integración racial que no ha cesado y que ha integrado totalmente esta tribu a la nueva raza” (Hopkins Durazo 37).

While Obregón’s text clearly demonstrates the myriad changes occurring on the landscape of the northern borderlands in terms of material cultural elements and miscegenation, it must be noted that such changes were not all the result of strictly European-indigenous cultural exchange, but also of increased contact among indigenous groups. This is not to say that contact had not been established long before the arrival of Europeans to the region. As ethnohistorian Carroll L. Riley has noted, “contacts between

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47 Hopkins cites these sons as the first mestizos sonorenses. (37)
Mesoamerica and the Greater Southwest long predated the Spaniards and were long-term and complex in nature” (25). At the same time however, it should be considered that the Spanish institution of the encomienda, the attempts at establishing mining settlements, and the practice of bringing indigenous allies on expeditions, only served to increase this contact.

Carl Sauer cites the encomiendas established in the region during the sixteenth century as a direct cause of increased contact among indigenous groups. According to Sauer, since the encomendero was granted one or several communities, if the Indians ran away or died, he would replace them to the degree possible with others taken from other the settlements or with other indigenous peoples brought up from Jalisco, Michoacán, or Mexico, or in some cases with African slaves “who promptly bred a mulatto progeny” (2).

An encomienda meant quickly the end of tribal individuality […] This was true of the lowlands but also of the plateau country, at about Durango and Santa Bárbara. Local Indians were mingled with Negro slaves and Indians from the south. Spanish and Mexican speech prevailed and often the Franciscan missionaries did not learn the language at all. (Sauer 2)

While Sauer’s assessment may be viewed as glib, the main point that I wish to take from it is that by virtue of its nature, the Spanish expansion project and the institutions inherent in its mission, such as the encomienda and the establishment of mining camps, served to

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48 Similarly, in his study of the Historia, Hopkins Durazo views the familiarity of groups in the Sonora valley with objects from the sea indicates exchange prior to European contact: “Es notable también el aprecio en que tienen los indígenas de la sierra los objetos provenientes del mar, como conchas y caracoles, así como los plumajes elegantes de aves de otras latitudes, lo que demuestra que entre las diversas tribus existía un comercio o intercambio de productos de su región” (Hopkins Durazo 23).
increase forced migration and eventually increased miscegenation. Furthermore, due to the inability of the Spanish to recognize differences individual cultural identities were not perceived or encouraged to thrive.  

An exemplary case of the encomienda system forcing migration is found in chapter eleven, when Ibarra’s group, arriving in Petatlán, seeks a translator. They hear of “una india cristiana” who resides in the nearby enemy pueblo of Ocoroni: “Diéronle noticia de una india cristiana que sabia la lengua mexicana y otras tres de aquellas provincias” (96). While it is evident from the description of her as “Christian” that she had at least been exposed to European contact, it is telling that she now resides with an indigenous group different from her own people, and speaks Nahuatl. “Luisa había nacido en Culiacán, donde se hizo cristiana, pero muy joven se escapó para no tener que pagar tributos” (Hopkins Durazo 8). The presence of the multilingual indígena in

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49 In her article, “Fronteras mudables” (1998), Maureen Ahern underscores “las diferencias étnicas de color y raza pueden no haber sido distinguidas por los españoles” (70). However, Ahern demonstrates how, at the same time, indigenous peoples did in fact recognize such difference and used it to their advantage in fighting the Spanish. “los chichimecas rápidamente desviaron esta ceguera étnica en un arma táctica importante: la traición” (70). The chichimeca, however, could not deceive the mexicas and michoacanos that could distinguish the linguistic, ethnic and territorial differences. This illuminates, in my view, the complexities of the cultural interactions that Sauer seems to overlook.

50 Petatlán (Sinaloa) was the northernmost settlement visited by one of Nuño de Guzmán’s scouting parties. “Petatlán reportedly had eighty houses, but recently had been abandoned. Although Guzmán attributed the absence of people to the fact that the river had overflowed its banks, inundating the village, the inhabitants of Petatlán probably fled to avoid capture and enslavement. This proved to be the case almost everywhere Guzmán traveled” (Reff 32, 1991).

51 Obregón notes that the people of Ocoroni are enemies of those of Petatlán, Ciguini and Tegueco y Cinaro.
Ocoroni is a direct result of Spanish expansion and growth in mining enterprises. Luisa’s liminal status results from her forced migration.\textsuperscript{52}

Esta Luisa fue cautiva en cinco parcialidades, desde donde vino derrotándose de valle en valle, desde donde quedó huida u olvidada de los de Francisco Vázquez Coronado viendo del viaje de Cibola. Y algunos antiguos afirman que fue natural de la villa de Culiacán; la cual, por excusarse de servir y tributar, se huyó y aportó a Ocoroni. Era diestra en los secretos y lenguajes de doscientas leguas de aquellas provincias desde Ocoroni hasta los valles de señora de Corazones, cerca de los llanos de las Vacas; y sirvió en el viaje desde su pueblo ida y vuelta de los llanos con mucha fidelidad, verdad, cuidado y solicitud. (98, my emphasis)

The case of Luisa does not seem to be isolated, but rather demonstrative of a larger trend, according to Obregón: “El pueblo de Matoen está en la frontera de Culiacán. Es gente que por la mayor parte es huída de los pueblos de Culiacán por no tributar ni servir a sus encomenderos. Eran salteadores y enemigos de los vecinos de Culiacán y sus encomendados” (90).

Another impetus for increased exchange was the fact that expeditions commonly took auxiliary soldiers along with them. To cite just one example, Francisco Vázquez de

\textsuperscript{52} Daniel T. Reff and Courtney Kelley examine the role of Luisa in Obregón and to a greater extent in Pérez de Ribas in “Good Witch, Bad Witch, and Little in Between”. Reff and Kelley argue that while Obregón does acknowledge Luisa’s intelligence and ability, “these traits are largely negated by his repeated and confusing emphasis on Luisa as the wife of various male caciques, some of whom purportedly kept her captive, which implied that Luisa’s husbands rather than Luisa exercised ultimate authority” (17). Perez de Ribas is similarly incapable of grasping that the Ocoroni were “matrilineal and afforded women rights and privileges, including the right to speak for all Ocoroni” (18). I would add that it is interesting that Obregón dedicates a significant portion of text to describe Luisa, given that there are few instances in the text when an indigenous person is depicted as an individual.
Coronado left New Spain in 1540 with several hundred auxiliary indigenous allies, including women, however he did not return with as many. While some died, others chose to remain behind. “There are various mentions of unnamed Mexican Indians who remained in the Pueblo area on Coronado’s return” (Riley 30, 1974). Obregón refers to two Mexica in Tucayan as reported by Antiono de Espejo.

[Y] así lo afirman dos indios ladinos de la lengua mexicana que halló en estas provincias Antón de Espejo, los cuales dijeron y afirmaron se quedaron cuando pasó por naturales de la ciudad de México y del barrio de San Hipólito y afirmaron lo contenido en esta mi relación. (188, my emphasis)

Saliéronlos a recibir particularmente cuatro indios cristianos que quedaron en aquellas provincias cuando estuvo en ellas Francisco Vázquez Coronado, los cuales son lenguas mexicanas; los dos que son hermanos se llaman Andrés y Gaspar, naturales de la ciudad de México, y Martín, natural de Tinala y Antón, natural de la villa de Culiacán. (263, my emphasis)

Riley, then, poses the pertinent question: “What were the effects of Mexican Indians living in the upper Southwest in the sixteenth century?” (33). While Sauer’s study and

53 Riley explains: “The exact number of [Indian allies] will probably never be known, but there were at least several hundred Indians. Castañeda gives the figure ‘more than 1,000 persons’[…] It seems likely that a number of women went on the expedition, though there is very little mention of them. Only three women (one Indian and two Spaniards) are specifically noted as wives of soldiers […] Women and children actually do not seem to have been considered exceptional. In the Jaramillo narrative, for example, there is passing mention of a black slave of Melchior Pérez who has his wife and children at Tiguex and remained there” (28, 1974).

54 Riley rejects the notion that Mesoamerican influences to pueblo ceremonialism, such as masked religious dances and mythology, occurred in the sixteenth century, but rather argues that this influence had occurred in pre-Columbian times. Recent studies have, in fact, lent credence to the notion that complex trade routes existed. Ken Kokrda in “Approaching Casas Grandes” cites the “Frequent appearance of a plumed or horned serpent found in central and southern Mexico is imagery also depicted on Casas Grandes
Obregón’s observation would indicate at least three important effects; miscegenation, language, and cultural identity, Riley’s study adds an additional impact.

[I]t is likely that the most important influences of Mesoamerican Indians in the sixteenth century Southwest were to reinforce the Mesoamerican element in Southwestern culture, and to introduce certain Spanish traits and ideas. To some degree, then, Mesoamerican residents in the Southwest may have influenced Indian reaction to later Spanish entradas. (Riley 33, 1974)

“To some degree” this may be the case, however what is of more interest to the present study is the concept of reaction: Aside from physical changes to the landscape, the indigenous recognition and memory of previous Spanish contact also reveals an intangible change to the landscape. Obregón relates how the Querecho people, recalling Cabeza de Vaca, expect Ibarra’s group to perform a ritual similar to the one that the former had performed: “Eran muy continos (sic) e importunos a que los tocásemos y santiguásemos, que es ceremonia que uso Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca” (179).55 This reflects not just a mere expectation, but also an indigenous perception of the European Other, in this case, one of ceremonial and spiritual significance.

ceramics” as an indication of such connections that existed long before the arrival of the Spanish (113).

55 A similar encounter takes place in Alarcon’s text when he uses the identity of an “hijo del sol” in order to garner friendly treatment. See Ahern’s “Articulation of Alterity” (1994). Ahern has also noted this phenomenon in Gallegos. When the Spanish erect crosses the Conchos recognize them as “hijos del sol.” The Spanish then, take advantage of reports such as Cabeza de Vaca’s as a source to guide them in dealing with the indigenous people: “Ciertas relaciones anteriores aportaron la formación del paradigma de primer contacto” (385, 2001). See Ahern’s “Glosa, guía y memoria” (2001).
De lo cual afirmo y atestiguo en realidad de verdad que los naturales **nos contaron ser verdad los milagros en su historia y contenidos** y los demás que haré mención, por cuyos milagros y sucesos nos trataron bien en las partes, lugares y gentes que vieron y anduvieron, adorándonos y sirviéndonos en todo por **todo como a hijos que afirmaban éramos del sol**. (Obregón 178, my emphasis)

Not only does this prior contact affect indigenous perception of Spaniards, presumably believing them to be miracle working “sons of the sun,” it equally affects Spanish perception of the indigenous, who here are depicted as docile subjects, serving and adoring the Spanish visitors, and one can infer, easily pacified.\(^{56}\)

**Memories of Violence**

“(R)ather than making a clear distinction between law and criminality, we should carefully consider the fine line separating legal from abusive violence in the exercise of colonial dominance.” –José Rabasa, 2000

However, not all aspects of indigenous collective memory of Spanish contact are spiritual in nature. To the contrary, much cultural memory is of violence. For example, in Topia, where Nuño de Guzmán had founded an *encomienda*, the indigenous people are depicted as vividly remembering the violence of the past: “Preguntaban los naturales si eran los cristianos hechiceros, porque entendían que habían bajado por los aires, imposibilitando la venida por tan espantosa serranía. Quedó el anciano ferocísimo del rostro y decía que le había herido un hombre de hierro” (Obregón 87). When the expedition enters Urique from Tegueco, the people flee in terror.

\(^{56}\) This notion of ease of conversion to Christianity also affects categorization of people, and the areas in which they live, a point which will be analyzed further.
Entró (la expedición) en un pueblo llamado Urique, la gente de él estaba en extremo amedrentada y temerosa de los cristianos, arcabuces y caballos, en tanto grado que se pusieron en huida con gran alboroto y vocería, de manera que con dificultad hubo remedio de asegurar el llanto y extremo de las indias y muchachos con un indio que acaso salió huyendo de cerca del arcabuco y junto a unas gruesas ceibas y ciénagas de la tierra. Daban notable lástima el temor y miedo que les causó ver a los cristianos y caballos, de manera que pensaron ser allí muertos o cautivos. Estuvieron tan sobresaltados y medrosos que fue necesario asegurarlos, llamarlos y amansarlos con el preso, el cual aunque con dificultad, los trajo de paz poco a poco y el maestro de campo los acabó de asegurar (111)

Obregón also reports that the Chamuscado party found that the Chichimecos and the Cabrís were deathly afraid that the Christians would make them slaves.

Los Chichimecos, que nombran los rayados – estaban tímidos y recatados del daño que les habían hecho algunas compañías de soldados que habían entrado a hacer esclavos y los habían llevado cautivos en colleras. (228)

De cuyo temor están tímidos, retraídos y escondidos en la sierra de que, según afirmaron, les habían llevado cautivos y presos a sus parientes, mujeres e hijos algunas compañías de soldados que han entrado a este efecto con injusta causa, porque éstos nunca han hecho daño sin que se le hagan. (230)

A similar reaction occurs when Antonio de Espejo enters Cicuic.

Tuvieron por caso notable que los de Francisco Vásquez de Coronado tuvieron cercado y oprimido este pueblo más de cuarenta días con seiscientos hombres españoles y tres mil indios mexicanos y lo batieron y pretendieron asolar; [...] Y entró Antonio de Espejo con cinco soldados adonde habiéndoseles atrevido y desvergonzado con palabras y desdén, entraron a castigarles sus atrevimientos y desvergüenza que habían tendido con ellos; y entraron en la dicha ciudad a castigarlos... les puso de tan notable temor que no pareció casi indio si no fue un atrevido y osado indio mexicano de los de Coronado que con mucho temor y exageraciones les rogó y dijo que no disparasen arcabuces ni hubiese rompimiento de batalla... (269, my emphasis)
The violence, or more precisely the collective memory of it, informs indigenous reaction to subsequent Spanish entradas. Ahern has demonstrated in “La relación de la jornada de Cibola” that the Coronado expedition had instilled such terror in the indigenous with whom they came in contact that Hernán Gallegos would later marvel at “la reacción de gran temor y huida que provocó la mera aparición de su compañía compuesta por nueve soldados y tres frailes” (Ahern 196, 1994). Daniel T. Reff has also proposed that references to “la mala cosa” in Cabeza de Vaca’s relación represents indigenous reactions of fear that stemmed from Spanish slave raiders under the governorship of Nuño de Guzmán (1527-1533) who had previously terrorized the peoples in that region.

Cabeza de Vaca did not become aware of events in Pánuco and Nueva Galicia until the very end of his journey; the native peoples he encountered in Texas and northwestern Mexico undoubtedly had learned from trading partners about the destruction taking place to the south. Arguably, this information gave rise to Indian fear of bearded, sword-wielding men, who had a strange and frightening power to kill with disease […] Examination of the Evil Thing tale suggests that native peoples knew something of Spanish atrocities and introduced disease. (Reff 118-119, 1996)

Rolena Adorno’s essay, “The Negotiation of Fear in Cabeza de Vaca” (1991) also treats issues of fear, in terms of the Spaniards attempts to control their own fear of the aboriginal peoples they encountered, and also the manner in which Spanish learned to inspire fear in the aboriginal peoples. “Fear of the other was a weapon by both sides, the Native American and the European” (167).

This landscape of fear represents a produced space (Lefebvre) that is concretely exemplified in the despoblado. When the Ibarra expedition arrives at the villa of
Chiametla, already renowned for its riches in minerals and resources, Obregón relates the story of the abandonment of the *encomienda* that Nuño de Guzmán had founded there.\(^{57}\)

Unlike the case of Alcaraz, who had abused the indigenous people under his charge, in Obregón’s version, Nuño de Guzmán is a victim of the “bestial Indian.” The *encomienda*, a legitimate, legal institution by the criollo writer’s standards, is ransacked and destroyed by an indigenous people who refuse to accept servitude and Christianity. Here, the notion that fear was instilled in them in the first place by the Spanish settlement is not a recognizable factor, and the ejection of said settlement is viewed as unjust. To the contrary, Obregón contends that the indigenous people at Chiametla have been their own worst enemies, having to live like animals in the mountains out of fear of a well-deserved punishment before finally returning to the area. Human values and emotions;

\(^{57}\) It should be noted that the nefarious Guzmán terrorized the indigenous peoples to the extent that the legitimacy of the *encomienda* system came under question in New Spain. Guzmán was eventually arrested and jailed in 1536. Under *Las Leyes Nuevas* (1542) the *encomienda* system was regulated and slavery of the indigenous people prohibited. However these laws caused intense resistance in New Spain and by 1545 the encomienda was once again a legitimized institution under the Crown.
wealth, greed, vengeance, religion, fear, and justice, are projected onto the landscape, now clearly marked in terms of both a culture of fear and the produced space of the refuge of rebels and outlaws.58

De Certeau has argued, “haunted places are the only ones people can live in” (108, 1984). In this view, the place of abandonment (forced or otherwise) can be perceived by the members of the Ibarra expedition as a place of potential due to the very idea that people of their own ilk have lived there before. The allure of Chiametla is generated by its fame of riches, riches that were once in the possession of a Spaniard.

Esta provincia y sierras de Chiametla fue muy afamada de riquezas de oro, plata y metales de todo género de ropa, pescado, sal, tierras, pastos y frutas. Halláronse orejeras de oro y plata, fueron causas que levantaron a muchos los ánimos y pensamientos a que deseasen, codiciosen y pretendiesen la conquista y pacificación de ella después que se le despobló a Nuño de Guzmán. (115)

As Lefebvre reminds us, “An already produced space can be decoded, can be read” (17). Although Obregón describes how the indigenous people “mataron, robaron y asolaron sin dejar cosa enhiesta ni rastro de [la villa],” the despoblado at Chiametla is at once collectively read by the Ibarra group in terms of what is there, what was there, and what could be there in the future.

58 In fact, the indigenous people at Chiametla had treated Guzmán’s party well, providing 150 porters and fowl, helping the expedition transport its supplies from Aztatlán to the Río Baluarte, and then even supplying Guzmán and his men with supplies for two months. “At the end of this period, in January 1531…once his army was replenished, Guzmán repaid his hosts by provoking them to acts of hostility that resulted in the destruction of many native settlements and the enslavement of their inhabitants” (Reff 24, 1991)
It is striking here that the places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences. What can be seen designates what is no longer there: “you see, here there used to be….,” but it can no longer be seen. Demonstratives indicate the invisible identities of the visible: it is the very definition of a place, in fact, that it is composed by these series of displacements and effects among the fragmented strata that form it and that it plays on these moving layers. (de Certeau 108)

Multiple Expeditions Breed Multiple Landscapes

“Every river is more than just one river; every rock is more that just one rock.”
- Greider and Garkovich in “Landscapes,” 1994

While the issues examined in this chapter, and chapter three, such as History, mapping, material cultural goods, miscegenation, taking possession, fear and memory, have certainly been examined in many illuminating studies in terms of cultural exchange and the experience of the frontera in New Spain, through study of the references to expeditions that occurred before and after Obregón’s experience with Ibarra, it is clear that these issues must all be examined further in terms of their inexorable ties to the cultural function of landscape – the perceived site of the dynamic relationship of the land and people. As these chapters have demonstrated, the Spanish, or more specifically in the case of Obregón, criollo perception of the landscape of the northern frontier reflects the filter of the narrator’s cultural background, and produces a textualscape that projects Spanish history, mapping, and culture onto the regional, frontier, landscape.

People “charge” their space, i.e. the environment in a limited sense, symbolically, and for people within the same culture that space becomes readable, communicative, and comprehensible, because it is charged by people with the same value system. Jones proclaims that landscape is a mirror of human values.
Values are not intrinsic to the landscape; *values lie within people* or groups of people. (Abrahamsson 57)

In this view, the text demonstrates the process of *landscaping*, “the process by which environmental interpretations are formed” (Abrahamsson 53), while simultaneously impacting upon that landscape in real time, for indigenous peoples and Spanish alike, in irrevocable ways. Thus, the landscape of the frontier of New Spain is physically changed forever, as well as in terms of how it would be perceived. In the following chapter, I examine how the process of *landscaping* in Obregón’s text creates meaning that can be interpreted by the reader in order to “fill […] cognitive landscapes with details” (Abrahamsson 53) by describing what lands are perceived as “buenas” and which are perceived as “malas”. 
CHAPTER 5

THE ITINERARY AND THE LANDSCAPE: “LO QUE HAY EN ESTA TIERRA”

“The writer’s eye is always in some sense colonizing the landscape, mastering and portioning, fixing zones and poles, arranging and deepening the scene as the object of desire.” –David Spurr in *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1993)

In the prologue, Obregón proclaims that the *historia y relación* that he has composed will provide “verdaderos hechos de las tierras que han visto y descubierto, haciendo relación de las que son buenas o malas” for the officials that henceforth set out to conquer and populate the “tierras, partes y comarcas de la banda del norte” (43). Arguing that experience is the best teacher, Obregón will make a case for which lands are “buenas” and which lands are “malas”. As such, the text abounds with extensive descriptions of the landscape traversed as Obregón interjects itinerary-driven information about the location of mines, population centers, routes passable by horse, and supplies. He also highlights the difficulties of passage through rough lands, the hardships endured in harsh climates, and the dangers faced in hostile encounters. In this chapter, I examine these representations of “good” and “bad” landscapes and demonstrate how Obregón’s perceptions of the people and the land inform them. I propose that the resultant
textualscape not only reflects Obregón’s cultural views of landscape/ space/ place, but also may play a role in the (re)production of this cultural view.

The Itinerary and the Textualscape

“In Greek, narration is called “digesis”: it establishes an itinerary (it ‘guides’) and it passes through (it ‘transgresses’).”--Michel de Certeau, 1984

Obregón insists that in addition to providing a comprehensive history his text will also serve the Crown by preparing those officials who explore and settle the northern borderlands with crucial information so that they may be “advertidos e informados [...] y vayan desengañosos de los daños que solían suceder a los primeros” (43). The way to do this of course is to learn from past mistakes. Clearly, one important function of the text is to serve as an itinerary, a discursive map that will demonstrate the best routes, provide practical information, and avoid past mistakes.

This type of earth-bound, discursive itinerary mapping reflects what Padrón has described as a medieval conception of space, one based on perceptions of “place” and “nonplace,” with “space” as the route one takes to get from one place to another, unidimensional spatiality (Padrón 81). To the medieval imagination, he argues, “places” were viewed as charged with a positive sense of thickness and stability that space did not possess (58). As a result, the geography related in the itinerary is organized as a journey, “as a linear movement through space, a route of travel” (60). Here I refer to “places” as those stops along the route of travel that are charged with stability and thickness, and furthermore recognized as a part of the Spanish imagination, whereas “nonplaces,” while
charged with that same sense of stability and thickness, are not (yet) recognizable as a part of the larger spatial construct. It is precisely, I would argue, in the depiction of these places and nonplaces encountered in the journey that the itinerary map posits, or places the reader in the textual zed landscape, what I will henceforth refer to as the textualscape. This textualscape represents the landscape as perceived by the narrator, and is therefore a creative narrative act, one driven by description.

“Description,” would seem to be the most mundane of discursive modes, the most innocent, most purely referential way of utilizing language. But “description,” like “emplotment” entails the encounter between data and expectations, between observations and culturally contingent assumptions about the production of meaning. (Padrón 21)

Environmental geographer Kurt Abrahamsson argues that the landscape perceived is laden with value judgments. He calls this creative process of perception “landscaping”: “Landscaping is a process that creates meaning in the landscapes and helps us to fill our cognitive landscapes with details, with areas we like, topophilia, and some that we dislike, topophobia” (Abrahamsson 53). I propose that by comparing passages of landscape description, we can begin to see how moments that seem to speak to Obregón’s own topophobia and topophilia reflect particular cultural views of landscape/ space/ place.
“Sensory stimuli are potentially infinite: that which we choose to attend (value or love) is an accident of individual temperament, purpose, and of the cultural forces at work at a particular time.”
– Yi-Fu Tuan, 1974

In *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (1974), geographer Yi-Fu Tuan defines topophilia as “human love of place” (92). Coupling sentiment with place, two important implications emerge: 1) human beings respond to their physical setting – or better said, their perception of it, and 2) they place value on it: “The word ‘topophilia’ is a neologism, useful in that it can be defined broadly to include all of the human being’s affective ties with the material environment. These differ greatly in intensity, subtlety, and mode of expression” (Tuan 93). Tuan further argues that the human individual, at once a biological organism, a social being, and a unique individual, experiences topophilia on all three of these levels, and this is reflected in perception, attitude, and value, respectively (245). In the case of Obregón, the attitudes and values revealed in his landscape representations lend insight into his worldview (attitude) and his individual information project (value).

Moments of topophilia emerge frequently in Obregón’s text and, in a sense, it is topophilia that actually spurs the Ibarra expedition in the first place. The soldiers hear of a place called Topia from the indigenous inhabitants of Nueva Vizcaya, and more specifically, of purported riches that can be found there: “[Topía] del cual habían traído y
manifestaron una rodela de pluma de muchas colores y gala y un plumaje de plata y ropa de algodón tejida de hilo torcido...” (76). However, before the reader may “arrive” at the topophilic place of Topia, Obregón first leads him/her through the topophobic space that must be traversed in order to get there (see fig. 4.3).

[...] haciendo cortas jornadas por no fatigar los soldados y caballos [...] pasando por sierras de gran altura, de grandes montañas, riscos y hondables barrancas y quebradas, y cargando y descargando los caballos de carga que muy a menudo caían por la mucha aspereza de las sierras. Lo cual hacían con mucho ánimo y contento aunque en tierras solitarias, pobres y desaprovechadas y adonde ni aun aves no habitan ni se divisan volar en las alturas y regiones, hasta llegar a las sierras de las Cruces, sierra de mucha más aspereza y que parecía dar consejo que no pasasen de allí; la cual está cercada y murada de espantables riscos, peñas y terribles quebradas, de manera que para que pasasen los caballos fue necesario quitar algunas piedras. (83)

Here, the topophobia is revealed in the rough journey over imposing mountains and deep crags. It is precisely the passage, or better stated, the (im) passability, the moving through, that is the focus of the description. The difficulty for the horses to pass is of paramount importance, since, as Obregón argues “sin caballos no podemos ser señores de nuestros enemigos” (215). Not only is this land difficult to pass by horse, it is simply land wasted, an inhospitable space in which not even birds can be spotted. The group is

59 Ibarra’s expedition spent several months in the Sierras around Topia and spent the winter of 1564 in Topia after fighting a battle with the Acaxee warriors. (Reff 1991)

60 Sergio Rivera-Ayala explains in “Riding High” that the horse served an important social function during the colonial period. “[I]ts use was an exclusive privilege of the European population […]Within the chivalric environment of the sixteenth century the horse was not just a means of transportation or for moving goods but rather represented a social status” (261).
walled in by “horrifying crags” and “terrible ravines.” The adjectives “huge,”
“horrifying” and “terrible” pepper the textualscapes.

Indeed the landscape is so terrible that upon finally spotting the houses and fort of
Topia, a sight that should animate the group, Obregón describes the soldiers as
incredulous, “por ser la tierra tan inhabitable y desusada de sendas y caminos” (82). It is
as if they wonder who could live here. Adding to the drama of the topophobia, there is a
huge storm, lasting two days and nights, “tan terrible y espantosa peñolería que
imposibilitaba al entendimiento poderla pasar.” Thirty-eight horses freeze, and Ibarra’s
horse “amaneció yerto, helado, arrimado a un árbol y al maes de campo se le helaron
tres” (83).

As we see in the next passage, even upon viewing the pueblo, the soldiers have
trouble viewing it as a “place” but rather seem to view it as a “nonplace” that emerges in
the horrible space that they have traversed thus far.

Fue a ganar a Topía por sierras de mucha aspereza y montañas, muy dudosos de la
certificación que habían dado los cinco descubridores, aunque personas de
crédito. Y como empezaron a ver cuervos, estuvieron más certificados de su
esperanza y llegada a Topía; al cual, habiendo pasado la barranca y una subida de
una muy alta sierra, le divisaron y señorearon con la vista el valle y comarcas,
todas semejantes a las pasadas, como de gente serrana, indómita y fuera de
buena orden, vida y costumbres. Y aunque no parecían las casas, fue grande la
alegría que recibieron el gobernador y su campo, entendiendo conseguían el
efecto de sus esperanzas de riquezas y gente política para descansar de los
trabajos que habían padecido en el viaje. (83-84, my emphasis)

The transition from the perception of the land to the expectations held for the people who
occupy it is seamless: The soldiers’ doubt about the people stems from their perception
of the land, land which, in their view, could only be inhabited by “gente serrana, indómita
y fuera de buena orden, vida y costumbres.” While the sighting of crows gives them some hope, they are still dubious because this land is as rough and mountainous as that just traveled. How could the fine artifacts they had seen in Nueva Vizcaya, “rodela de pluma de muchas colores y gala y un plumaje de plata y ropa de algodón tejida de hilo torcido,” have been produced by such a people in this nonplace? Obregón claims that even the indigenous inhabitants wonder at the arrival of the Spanish to their rough lands: “Preguntaban los naturales si eran los cristianos hechiceros, porque entendían que habían bajado por los aires, imposibilitado la venida por tan espantosa serranía” (87).

Yet, according to Obregón, the soldiers’ perception is influenced again, and they are heartened because they spy crops of maize, beans and squash, “lo cual les acrecentó el ánimo” (85). They are even more encouraged upon seeing six indigenous women dressed in cotton clothes, and houses with multiple rooms constructed of walls of stone.

Pasado [el río] fueron por labores de maíz, frijol y calabaza, lo cual les acrecentó el ánimo, contento y mayor ver seis indias vestidas de la cintura debajo de mantas de algodón [...] Fueron divisando las casas y un hermoso fuerte, y otra casa de tres cuartos y muralla de piedra [...] todo lo cual con la primera vista les pareció poblazón de mucha importancia. Movidos de la codicia, ansia y deseo de lo que habían significado vieron los autores de Topía, dando a entender habían hallado otro México. (84-85, my emphasis)

The above passage presents a paradigm that continues throughout the text, in which depictions of population centers, clothing, housing, and crops dominate the textualscape. Interestingly, these focal points of description mirror what Carl Sauer has cited as the manifestations of the cultural landscape: population centers, housing and production (Sauer 1925). This particular description reflects a topophilic sentiment that
would seem to indicate that Topia is perceived as a suitable place for future settlement. However, Obregón explains that, years before, Nuño de Guzmán had tried to settle Topia from Culiacán without success, and expounds upon the reason for this failure: “Por ser sus habitaciones en tierras tan fragosas y ocasionadas a la huída de los riscos y estar tan apartados de tierras llanas y de provecho, no pudieron ser sujetos [en la santa Fe católica)” (87). Obregón postulates that the land actually prevented the evangelization of the indigenous people of Topia. Furthermore, when the people of Topia inform the participants of the expedition that the surrounding villages are few and the lands rough, impossible to pass on horse, Obregón describes the soldiers as: “descontentos de no hallar tierras a su gusto” (87). They have not found “otro México,” and their disappointment is evident, to the degree that Ibarra fears desertion: “Temió [Ibarra] la huida de algunos soldados arrepentidos, cansados y atemorizados de pasar otros trabajos semejantes a los que habían pasado” (92). For his part, Obregón laments the inability of the indigenous people of Topia to be Christianized: “por estar como están en tierras tan remotas, ásperas e imposibilitadas de poblarlas cristianos, ¿dónde se harán cristianos si no es poblando algunas minas buenas o poniendo Dios nuestro Señor el remedio necesario?” (90). Christians cannot live here, and why would they live anywhere in which there is no wealth, material or spiritual, as their culture perceives it? In short, this place lacks one crucial element: mines. The material is a prerequisite for the spiritual.

The narrator next leads the reader along with the expedition from Topia on to Ocoroni and Tegueco along the Cinaro River (present-day Tepantita de Ocoroni, Sinaloa) (see fig. 4.3). Obregón describes Tegueco as “El más poblado y mejor pueblo de la
provincia de Cinaro” and the people the “más afamado y temido de los naturales” (100). Ocoroni is likewise described in relatively positive terms:

Están poblados y congregados en el río y sus riberas de una y otra parte, en cuyos rededores hay mucha montaña y cerrados arcabucos, de los cuales se aprovechan de fortificarse y defenderse de sus enemigos. Está de la Mar del Sur catorce leguas, todo él poblado de gente desnuda que sólo traen un pañete de algodón ceñido en la cintura. Ellas visten de la cintura arriba con unos faldellines de cueros de venados adobados. Siembran y cogen maíz, algodón, frijol y calabaza; tienen cerca la serranía de la cual tienen experiencia de ríos metáles de plata y poblezuelos pequeños de casas de terrado [...] Los de su campo recibieron notable alegría de ver pueblo y gente de tanta orden, concierto y hartura de bastimentos. (96-98, my emphasis)

Just as in the case of Topia, the population center, clothing, housing, and crops make up the foci of the narrator’s attention. Additionally, Obregón focuses on the water sources, the natural defense that the mountains provide, and of course, the presence of precious metals for mining. However, the happiness of the soldiers specifically stems from the presence of people of “orden y concierto” and the provisions and permanent shelter that they supply. Obregón describes these people in more detail in a section entitled, “Lo que hay en esta tierra.”

Éstos de este río [Cinaro] son dispuestos, diestros y cursados en el uso y ejercicio de la guerra; son buenos labradores, señores de labranzas de maíz, frijol, calabazas y algodón y buenos pescadores. Habitan este río hasta la Mar del Sur, que está de allí catorce leguas, y hasta la sierra que es seis. Es río ahocinado, ancho, bravo y florido de arboledas de mucha frescura; tiene cerco de fértiles riberas llanadas para ganados y labores; es el más ancho que hay en aquellas provincias desde el de Centipias, ciento y cuarenta leguas atrás y mejores llanadas, pastos, temples y calidades que el de Chiametla ni Culiacán. Pueden

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61 Obregón’s reference to “gente desnuda” that “visten con cueros” should be noted here, a point regarding cultural perceptions of clothing to which I will return.
The people here are skilled, and referred to as señores. The positive description of the inhabitants is noteworthy, but perhaps even more noteworthy is how this positive description seamlessly flows into that of the river and the land surrounding it. Additionally, the area of Cinaro is fit for foundation, above all because it presents a population center that is viewed as suitable for a mining enterprise.

Habiendo visitado el gobernador y su maeso de campo los ríos, sierras y comarcas de la provincia acordó fundar una villa en el río de Cinaro, así por la mucha cantidad de gente que en aquella provincia estaba sin lumbre de fe, como por el servicio que se conseguía al servicio de la real Corona de su majestad, para cuyo efecto vieron y visitaron pueblos y repartimiento que bastaban para la comodidad de los vecinos que pudiesen sustentarla y defenderla de los naturales si se pusiesen en defensa de su fundación. Y asimismo había sierras cómodas y dispuestas para minas de plata que los naturales habían dado noticia de cantidad de metales que para sus embajes sacaban de la serranía; y asimismo había cantidad de valles y tierras para ganados y labores para los aprovechamientos de los dueños. (103)

Again, the textualscape is defined by the quantity of people and the projected ability to sustain a mining settlement. Yet, shortly after the founding of Cinaro, Obregón notes yet again a state of discontent among the soldiers. It must be remembered that the soldiers are not being paid in monies, but rather in potential booty, and while Obregón perceives the landscape through a topophilic lens, this is not the “otro Perú” or “otro México” of the soldiers’ dreams. In Obregón’s relating of events, he recalls a speech that Ibarra gives, empathizing with the soldiers, but also appealing to their sense of duty.
Y para que este acuerdo y fundación fuese pacíficamente, sin compeler ni oprimir a los soldados que, además de que no ganaban sueldo estaban cansados de los trabajos pasados acordó el gobernador llamar a consejo de guerra, después de haber tratado su intento a cada soldado en particular como gobernador prudente y deseoso de acertar en caso tan importante [...] Y para aficionar a sus soldados a que no rehusasen hecho de tanta importancia, utilidad y provecho de aquella gente y rústica nación, les hizo la plática y razonamiento siguiente: «Escogidos y esforzados cristianos y amigos míos: Yo quisiera haber descubierto y conquistado otra nueva y riquísima Constantinopla y otra próspera y fortísima Venecia o, a lo menos, otro insigne y rico México u otro atesorado Perú, para apoderaros y haceros señores de sus señoríos y riquezas con mayor título y grandeza que lo poseen, señoréan y gozan (sic) los que los tienen. Mas es justa y moderada consideración, como de católicos y esforzados soldados, que los tesoros, riquezas y señoríos los de Dios nuestro sumo bien, a quién y cómo y cuándo Él es servido. Y considerando la recta obligación que a su santo servicio tenemos los que somos cristianos y hemos prometido y profesado la santa obediencia y dirección de las cosas pertenecientes al uso y ejercicio de nuestra santa Fe católica, es justo ocurrir a su santo servicio aumentando en ella a esta nación bárbara, rústica y desconocida de su Dios criador y salvador, para que conozcan, gocen y alcancen luz de sus inestimable y resplandeciente sol de justicia y seamos principio, parte y medio para rescatarlos de las eternas penas del infierno [...] (B)uscaremos otros medios que consigan y aumenten la grandeza y colmo de mi deseo para que empareje a la gratificación de vuestros méritos obras y leales servicios, y os certifico es el fundamento de mis hechos, promesas e intención después del que enderezo y consigo al servicio de la potestad de Dios nuestro Señor y el de la imperial majestad de nuestro católico y poderoso Emperador y señor natural.» (103-104)

Ibarra’s speech as remembered and related by Obregón emphasizes the empathy and understanding of the former in identifying with the soldiers’ desires to find a rich city (perhaps of gold) and gain titles and wealth. He identifies the European places of Constantinople and Venice, at once elevating Mexico and Peru to their ranks and identifying all of these places as a part of a larger imperial framework. Yet he tempers this empathy with the reminder of their primary purpose of exploration: the conversion of these ignorant people so as to save them from eternal damnation. Topia, then, while not such a place, does represent the object of the imperial project, one of pacification, not
of conquest. The reader must take pause here and wonder if relating this speech
supposedly delivered by Ibarra does not also somehow function as a way for Obregón to
speak to the reader in order to demonstrate compliance with the Ordenanzas. For their
part, the soldiers seem unmoved, as shortly after this grand speech is delivered, the maeso
de campo tries to organize the men in order to build a fort, however their distaste for the
proposal is evident:

A lo cual no hicieron buen rostro y fue darles a gustar acíbar porque entendieron
había de ser fundado y hecho a fuerzas de sus brazos y como ganaban sueldo real,
usó el maestro de campo un ardid para obligarlos [...] Daban remedios para
excusarse de este trabajo con razones sin fundamento [...] Representáronle que
que era obra larga y dudosa de acabar [...] y si estaba determinado en concluirla
fuese rogando a los naturales que le ayudasen o fuesen para su efecto
compelidos... (105-106)

While this passage demonstrates plurality of perception, a point to which I will
return shortly, what I would like to call attention to here is the presumption on the part of
the soldiers. They expect indigenous workers, if not voluntary than “compelled.” As the
speech intimates, and the soldiers’ resistance to work indicates, they are disenchanted
with the mission. In fact, Obregón reports that when Ibarra leaves Cinaro in June of
1567, the soldiers are extremely restless for Ibarra to distribute “los pueblos y
encomiendas de la provincia [de Cinaro]” (140). The soldiers’ unrest is a serious
concern, and Obregón contends, “Puso en condición y término de despoblar se la villa por
no dejar repartida la tierra,” citing the flight of many soldiers as the first indication of
trouble. This tension reflects the differences in the interests and motivations of the members of the expedition; interests and motivations that seemingly inform their perceptions of the landscape, a perception that is evidently different from that of the narrating subject.

**Chiametla**

“Chiametla fue muy afamada de riquezas de oro, plata y metales de todo género...”

—Baltasar de Obregón, 1584

Departing from Cinaro, Obregón leads his reader to another focal place of the Ibarra expedition, a pueblo called Chiametla, a region that had once been invaded by Nuño de Guzmán (1531), but then later abandoned by the European encroachers after the indigenous population rebelled and took it back. Despite this turbulent history, the soldiers with Ibarra are intrigued by Chiametla, famous for its riches of gold and silver, clothing, lands, pastures, fish, salt and fruits, all of which “levantaron a muchos los ánimos y pensamientos a que deseasen, codiciasen y pretendiesen la conquista y pacificación de ella después que se le despobló a Nuño de Guzmán” (115). In fact,

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62 Later in the expedition, when Ibarra determines to settle the area along the river Yaquimi (Yaqui in present-day Sonora), he sends word to the **maeso de campo** in Cinaro to send soldiers to help: “Y asimismo le dio aviso del descontento que tenían los soldados que le había dejado en no dejarles señalados sus repartimientos, ocasión de haberse huido los que estaban ausentes, y que importaba su ida a Cinaro para muchos efectos, mayormente para el amparo de la villa de Cinaro, las demás de su gobernación y que la de Cinaro estaba en términos de despoblarse” (217).
Chiametla does meet the expectations of the Ibarra group, while again, crops, clothing, houses and metals are the foci of description.

\[A\]somaron trescientos gandules en mucho concierto y ordenanza de guerra, lucidos, galanes y compuestos de mucha plumería, conchas, caracoles y dijes de la mar, con arcos, flechas, lanzuelas, macanas y rodelas [...] recibieron al gobernado y los de su campo con mucho respeto, amor y comedimiento y con presente de muchas(sic) gallos y gallinas de la tierra, maíz, frijol, calabaza, frutas y caza y lo demás necesario para los caballos y servicio personal [...] Ofreciéronse a la ayuda y pacificación y conquista de los caribes serranos, gente salvaje, vil y villana, indómita y glotona de carne humana y tan fiera que por gala trae cola y espejo en la trasera, aunque belicosa y valiente. Habitan y asisten ocho leguas del río de Chiametla en las sierras ásperas, quebradas cóncavas y riscos de su altura, la cual [gente] de ordinario había sido contraria y enemiga de los de Chiametla. (118-119)

In this passage, a sharp contrast is drawn between the people of Chiametla, a pueblo, and those of the mountains. Despite their past rebellion, the people of Chiametla are nonetheless viewed with a degree of respect, while the “caribes serranos” are viewed with contempt. It should be noted that while the term “caribe” was commonly used at the time of the first encounters in America to refer to any person that inhabited the extreme south of present-day Florida and the regions of the Caribbean, the term also carried the connotation of cannibalism and referred to an “hombre cruel e inhumano” (Bravo 283). The caribes serranos, “gente indómita y glotona de carne humana,” are the enemies of the expedition’s newfound Chiametlan allies who are well-adorned and cultivate the land, ergo viewed positively over the serranos, or mountain dwellers.63

When the expedition, aided by the people of Chiametla, approaches the caribes serranos, they fall under attack, but eventually Ibarra manages to broker a peace accord

63 I will expound upon the topic of cannibalism in the section entitled, “Fronteras”.
between the two groups. He threatens the *serranos* with punishment if they break the accord or “si comían carne humana y cometían el pecado nefando que le usaban” (121). He also manipulates their purported fear of the dark-skinned Africans who were part of the expeditionary force. “Eran informados que volaban por los aires y los sacaban de las cuevas” (121). Ibarra tells them that, “los castigaría con el daño que hacían los negros con mayor rigor y crueldad [...] Bajaron trescientos rústicos fieros y abominable caribes” (121). The contrast drawn between the people of the pueblo of Chiametla, and those of the mountains, is a sharp one. The *caribes serranos* are “abominable” and “rustic,” and viewed as animals, although at the very least, they are easily manipulated by threats. They inhabit “las sierras ásperas, quebradas cóncavas y riscos de su altura.” Antithetically, Chiametla’s richness is found in its people and in its land:

> En esta provincia [Chiametla] hay muchos bastimentos de maíz frijol, calabaza, gallinas de la tierra, frutos de la tierra y vacas [...] Hay mucho pescado, hostia, camarón, sal y algodón, de todas las cuales cosas hay entre los vecinos granjerías, especialmente en el pescado, sal y labores de maíz para las minas, de las cuales han sacado y sacan mucha plata. (131, my emphasis)

The word “para” lends insight into the value laden lens through which the narrator views the landscape. First, the passage is little more than a litany of resources, but resources that are already in existence and seemingly there for the taking. That is to say, the land here has already been cultivated, and now simply needs to be put to “proper” use to supply a mining enterprise. “The colonizing imagination takes for granted that the land and its resources belong to those who are best able to exploit them…” (Spurr 31). Additionally, the use of the past perfect and the present tenses, “han sacado y sacan
mucha plata” presupposes the gaze of possession while simultaneously emphasizing proof of value and reassuring the reader that this resource has not been exhausted.

Obregón’s perception of the landscape is thus driven by his cultural view of how the land and its people should be put to use, and as part of this process a sort of visual appropriation takes place. This is a landscape that is seemingly ready-made.

“Everything is in order; it is simply a question of substitution and supplement rather than true transformation…the valley calls for the colonizer to bring it in to being” (Spurr 30).

Recalling Cosgrove’s emphasis on the cogent influence that Roman imperial expansion wielded in the dissemination of conceptions of spatiality in Europe may lend insight into a similar diffusion of such a view in New Spain.

This is a spatiality of distant control radiating from a powerful centre along straight roads, mapping its colonial appropriations in surveyors’ grids and marking its power in military camps, mileposts, arches and columns. […] the heritage of Roman colonial influence can still be traced in language, in legal tradition, in local customs and even sometimes in traditions of construction and decoration across the [European] continent. (66, 1998)

While Cosgrove recognizes the permancy and the lingering influences of this Roman perception of spatiality in Europe, I would argue that he lists the hallmarks of the top-down view of spatiality (mapping, grids and mileposts) to the exclusion of the on-the-ground, bottom-up itinerary description. In the simplest of terms, we see in Obregón that a criollo writing an itinerary-driven history of northward expansion to send to Spanish
officials was just as capable of the appropriating gaze so often associated with the panoptic eye of the Empire.⁶⁴

This perception and appropriation is textualized to produce a textualscape for the reader that communicates and reflects these shared attitudes, this shared worldview. Chiametla, like Cinaro, is depicted in terms of potential, emerging as the centerpiece of the textualscape, from which very specific factors, those favorable to a mining enterprise, emerge as the principal points of representation. As the seamlessness of the land-and-its-people descriptions of “buena” versus “mala” reveals, the humanscape is part and parcel of the creation of the textualscape.

**Humanscapes**

“The natives too are always discussed from the viewpoint of their relationship with the Spaniards: as vassals, enemies, converts or allies.” –Antonello Gerbi, 1985.

In her essay, “Mapping, Measuring and Naming,” Maureen Ahern introduces the term *humanscapes* in reference to Castañeda’s depictions of the Zuni pueblo, employing the term to signal the narrative shift from the gaze that describes the architectural environment, to the gaze that includes more detailed information about dress, hairstyles, and sexual and marriage practices in Zuni, “drawing on it real figures that fleshed out the nebulous mythic landscapes fray Marcos had proclaimed” (277-278). Akin to chorographic mapping, which “deals with the partial and particular views of a whole” these depictions focus both the built environments of human settlements and the

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⁶⁴ I will return to this notion of emperial expansion in Chapter 6.
specificities of the human occupants themselves (Mundy 3). In Obregón’s textualscape
the transition from the mythical to the practical seems to be complete in that the
humanscape forms a factor in an institutional enterprise in which architecture still plays
an imperative role in description, but in which people are paramount.

Perhaps no better example of this shift can be found than when Obregón describes
how, upon their “primer encuentro de indios serranos” after leaving Chiametla, the
expedition’s first order of business is to find out from them through the interpreter
“cuántos pueblos había en aquella sierra y comarca y de qué calidades, cantidad y partes
y qué vestían y comían” (147-148). The *serranos* tell them about Oera.65

Hay gente de mucha más policía que ellos, así de casas como de vestidos y
bastimentos; y que los serranos habitan en casas de terrado para ampararse del
frío y que las suyas son de cañas de estera para amparo de la [sic] gran calor que
hace en sus tierras; y que la gente de adelante viste mantas de algodón y pita de
magueyes pequeños y cogen mucho maíz, frijol, calabaza y melones, tunas y
pithahys y muchos géneros de caza y pescado de todos géneros, en todo lo cual
trataron verdad porque así lo vimos. (148)

Again, as in the case with Chiametla and the bordering community of *serranos*, the
humanscapes of *serranos* versus pueblo peoples are inextricably connected to, and
contrasted in terms of, the land they occupy. The topophilia for lands inhabited by
clothed people that cultivate crops and inhabiting *casas* is palpable, while the topophobic
passages, such as the one below, embody the space of getting there and the “uncivilized”
people who inhabit the uninhabitable “nonplaces.”

65 Hopkins Durazo hypothesizes that Oera “pudo estar localizado en algún lugar sobre el
alto río Yaqui […] cerca del actual San Pedro de la Cueva” (22). Obregón contends that
the Oera were enemies of the peoples of Cinaro, Corazones, Guaraspi, and Asenmuça,
and comments on the Oera’s “bellicose nature” (174).
Despidióse de éstos [los serranos] y fue marchando el campo por las más hondas y espantosas sierras y quebradas que pasamos en aquella provincia; eran de extraña oscuridad y peñolería, de manera que gozan poco de la claridad y luz del sol. **Hallamos que en estas espantosas cóncavas y cuevas de esta inhabitable serranía visten** de cueros de venados, pocas mantas de pita, andan los más desnudos, traen crecido el cabello hasta el ombligo, cubren sus lugares secretos con cueros de venado, traen caperuzas de mismo cuero puntiagudas. **Es su habitación** en estas hondables quebradas por gozar el vino de maguey y de uvas silvestres. Fueron llamados del fraile, guías e intérpreta (sic), los cuales no quisieron aguardar razones, antes se pusieron en huída desamparando sus rústicas habitaciones. En esta inhabitable tierra anduvo el campo tres hornadas en las cuales pasaron los soldados intolerable trabajo, oscuridad y peligro de sus vidas porque pocos indios nos podían estorbar el paso y salida o matarnos desde lo alto echando a rodas peñascos y flechándonos [...] salimos a lo alto aunque la subida fue por altas sierras, riscos y quebradas pobladas de cantidad de robles, pinos y albarradones, vetas de metales y muchas señales y rastro de metales... (148-9)

**Fronteras**

“There is no spatiality that is not organized by the determination of frontiers.” —Michel de Certeau, 1984

Throughout his textualscape, Obregón imposes frontiers that, in his view, delineate the gente de policía and the gente salvaje. Indeed, it would seem that the primary function of la frontera in the Historia is to delineate for the purpose of identity construction (Trigo 80). Just as the people of Chiametla noted above are surrounded by caribes serranos, the people of Guaraspi similarly “están en frontera de la más valiente y esforzada gente de aquellas provincias que son los querechos, gente vaquera” (159). In another instance, in Saguaripa (Sahuaripa) Obregón relates, “Este valle y pueblo de Saguaripa está en la frontera de los indios de los llanos, gente la más diestra, belicosa y cursada en el uso y ejercicio de la guerra de todas las demás naciones y provincias, hasta
los vaquereos llamados querechos con los cuales tienen guerra” (163). Furthermore, despite the days long battle fought between the Spanish and the people of Saguaripa, Obregón holds these people, who reside in a permanent settlement, in esteem, recognizing their determination to “defender sus personas, mujeres e hijos” (169). This binary of pueblo vs. serrano parallels the city vs. wilderness trope of European tradition: “Según la herencia religiosa o el grado de civilización, los europeos habían clasificado a los hombres en cristianos o paganos, civilizados o bárbaros. La consideración de bárbaros, tomada de Aristóteles, era sinónimo de hombre salvaje o fiero que vive solitario, en las selvas, sin religión ni sociedad” (29 Barrera). 

Obregón employs the term “caribe” in a few instances, accusing the people he had visited of anthropophagy, including the one reference above regarding the people of Caguaçan, outside of Chiametla, who “vivían contra la ley de Dios nuestro señor, siendo glotones de carne humana” (119). Also outside of Chiametla in Cacalotlán, in the“sierra alta y fragosa, les habían muerto y comido muchas mujeres e hijos” (120). Obregón calls these people “los serranos,” “fieros bárbaros” and “los caribes,” contending that they are sodomites who eat human flesh. Those people inhabiting the areas outside of Nombre de Dios in the Valley of Guatimape are similarly labeled, “caribes salteadores,” after having stolen some of the soldiers’ horses.

Dejando como dejó por guarda del real al maeso de campo y con la prevención y rescate necesario en su campo, subió la sierra de noche de una orden hasta llegar a lo alto, la cual estaba muy poblada de indios caribes salteadores, a los cuales desbarató estando almorzando con victoria de algunos muertos y heridos (caballos), de manera que se dividieron y esparcieron unos de los otros sin orden ni concierto de guerra. (79)
Outside of Culiacán where Nuño de Guzmán had tried to establish an *encomienda*,

Obregón refers to the “carnicerías” of the “indios del despoblado”, carnicerías to which Francisco de Ibarra had put to an end:

Los indios de las serranías alzados y rebelados de ordinario les han molestado y hecho notable daños, matándoles y comiéndolos a ellos (los vecinos) y bebían como brutos animales carniceros de su propia naturaleza humana; comíanse unos a otros haciendo extrañas crueldades en los que cautivaban, tomaban y robaban… (92).

The term “caribe” tends to be used with the label of “serrano.” The only permanent settlement that Obregón accuses of anthropophagy is Topia: “Cómense unos enemigos a otros; halláronse infinidad de huesos y calaveras de los que mataban y comían” (87). In another instance, at the settlement of Cumupa, Obregón at first suspects its people of eating human flesh.

Son belicosos como gente de frontera y raza de los querechos, los cual mostraron por las insignias que tenían en su pueblo y casas de altos maderos en las calles, y cantillos colgados de cuerpos muertos, cabezas, brazos, piernas, lenguas y orejas, repartidos y divididos en todas las calles, lo cual hacen como gente cruel y carnicera. (160)

However, he is corrected when the indigenous people tell him that the hanging body parts represent a “señal de victoria” over their enemies, and are not the byproducts of consumption, an explanation that he appears to accept.

“Caribe” is a term that was used considerably in New Spain throughout the sixteenth century. According to Peter Hulme, the word is a corruption of the word “canibales” which is found in Columbus’ journal, where he writes that the local Arawaks
regarded a particular island with great trepidation, telling him that the people of this island, the “canibales,” were extremely warlike and ate their enemies (Hulme, 1986). The label quickly became synonymous with anthropophagy and the “savage” in the New World: “From the time of Columbus, ‘cannibal’ became synonymous with the savage, the primitive, the ‘other’ of Europe, its use a signification of a debased state of being. In this sense the term came to play an important part in the moral justification for imperial rule” (Ashcroft 31). Thus, Obregón’s labeling of a group of people as “caribe”, whether true or not, would have been read as a justification for the Spanish pacifying mission, a justification written right into the Ordenanzas: “Deseles a entender (a los indígenas) especialmente que les hemos embiado quien les enseñe (sic) la doctrina xpiana y fe fe en que se pueden salbar […] y que no se maten ny coman ni sacrifiquen como en algunas partes se hazia” (Ordenanzas 106).

Civility and cannibalism were born together in the colonial imaginary, insofar as the former made of the latter its absolute moral antithesis […] Colonial discourse was heavily invested in the spectacle of savage cannibalism […] to the extant that it encouraged a certain moral violence against the unity of humankind, that is, the hierarchical division of peoples into races, states, and types…” (Phillips 192-193)

66 Ashcroft argues that the superseding of ‘anthropophagy’ by ‘cannibalism’ was not a simple change in the description of the practice of eating human flesh, but rather was the replacement of the descriptive term with an ontological category.

67 Many scholars have argued that “cannibalism” was not a new phenomenon to the Spanish, but rather had existed in the European imagination long before their arrival in the Caribbean. Hulme cites a passage from Diego Alvarez Chanca who sailed with Columbus on his second voyage. In the passage, Chanca reports that upon going ashore, Columbus and some of his men enter an indigenous person’s house and retrieve several material items, including, “four or five bones of the arms and legs of men.” Hulme points out that Chanca has only reported second-hand information and infers cannibalism a priori. This original passage is then rewritten in several texts, including Peter Martyr,
In the cases noted in Obregón, one indigenous group is typically the enemy of the other, which may well have been the case, yet it is Obregón who actually imposes the binary – *gente salvaje* vs. *gente de policía*, *caribes* vs. the more benign *naturales*. It is also interesting that the *serranos* are most often associated with savagery, and with anthropophagy. The narrating subject creates frontiers in and among these groups based on his cultural perceptions and worldview in order to create an identity for them, in terms understandable and relatable to his intended reader. In this process, the motivations or explanations of the territorial disputes among these indigenous groups are not revealed. That is to say, the text only reflects Obregón’s frontier constructions, while any information beyond the simple determination of enemy groups, is repressed. What notions of territory were held by the indigenous groups depicted? What were their cultural values? How did they perceive their contested landscapes? How did the landscape inform identity for them? Long before, and after, Spanish *entradas* into the region represented in Obregón’s *Historia*, major tribal groups spanned the regions and territory was contested among them (Radding 25). These issues of cultural identification with the land often eluded the Spaniards.

The elusive concept of cultural identity remains inseparable from the social networks that describe living communities and landscapes they create through who “never got nearer to the Caribbean than Andalucía” with each depiction is added new, increasingly horrifying elements, such as pieces of human flesh on a spit ready for roasting and the head of a young boy dripping blood hanging from a beam. (16-18). Hulme argues that the actual question as to whether or not people eat each other is less of a point to discuss, than “the fact that the idea that they do so is commonly accepted without adequate documentation.” (See Hulme 1998, and Arens 1998.)
conflicting claims to resources, labor and community. It suggests that ethnicity is not so much a fixed category as a historical process of changing identities and translations. [...] The social and cultural meanings of ethnicity point to processes of amalgamation and hybridization in Sonora. (Radding 159)

While the cultural anthropologist, the archeologist or the scholar of discourse may study and even try to imagine the complexities and subtleties of the relationships between these groups, to the intended reader of the Historia, the Spanish officials of the Consejo de Indias, cultural difference is based solely on the frontiers drawn by the narrating subject and the binaries that they impose.68

In reality of course, these frontiers were in such a state of perpetual flux that no textualscape could hold them fixedly, a reality that did not completely elude Obregón, who repeatedly emphasizes the need for a greater Spanish presence in the frontier to “poblar” and “pacificar” the region and its peoples. “People establish their relationship to the land historically, through the landscapes they build and their use and replenishment of resources. The spaces they occupy and the boundaries that distinguish one form the other are contested, fluid, and changing, despite the illusion of fixity that cartography brings to the mapping of ethnic territories” (Radding 118). Perhaps the following passage best represents the ever-shifting northern frontier of the late sixteenth century, a cultural space of coexistence in which frontiers were constantly being negotiated and renegotiated.

68 Once again, Ahern’s article, “Fronteras mudables” (1998), offers insight into the context of multiple cultural identities, in which the Spanish, ignorant of the cultural differences among groups of indigenous peoples could be deceived and manipulated by the Chichimecas during the Guerra Chichimeca. This also demonstrates the crucial role that auxiliary soldiers and interpreters, who did recognize difference, played in the negotiation of identity.
Miners, merchants, and explorers, and their slaves and servants, were all under constant threat of violence in the frontier. It follows that, while Obregón constructs frontiers between and among indigenous groups, the ultimate frontier is the one established between Christian territory and the lands of the infidels. If there remains any doubt as to Obregón’s perception of such delineation, it is clarified in the first land in the province of Chiametla, Piaztla. “Hízoles saber el efecto de su venida a su tierra y pueblos porque así convino, porque habitan en frontera de cristianos” (Obregón 118, my emphasis).

Mary Louise Pratt uses the term “contact zone” to refer to “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or the aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (34). The idea of the contact zone thus illuminates the encounter as a dialogue between two cultures, or more, and the cultural exchange that takes place. Of course the Spanish-versus-indigenous may be considered such a zone of contact, yet in the case of the northern frontier in the sixteenth century, it is important to realize that “power” is far from asymmetrical, for while in Obregón we are presented with a criollo’s conviction that these lands must be “conquistado” “pacificado” and “poblado,” we are also presented with a genuine recognition of the dangers that these expeditions face. The Spanish are not powerful in the northern
frontier, and in fact the permanency of settlements, which were under constant attack, is quite tenuous. Furthermore, the present study addresses the narrating subject’s representation, who doubtless did not perceive the landscape as a “contact zone,” regardless of the reality of the landscape. That is to say, the narrating subject repeatedly depicts the borderlands as an area that needs to be brought under imperial control, but in which such control is far from established, and in many cases has already failed.

Obregón depicts, far from a space of mutual exchange, a *frontera* between a landscape that is tamed, and one that is untamed, or to be more precise, the space that has yet to be “pacificado.” Alvar Félix Bolaños argues that for the Spaniard, and I would add *criollo*, in sixteenth-century New Spain the *frontera* was an open, exterior, distant space that was desired and little known. It was a space full of potential riches, but also different, barbaric, pagan, and bestial. He argues that *la frontera* represents all that should be corrected and absorbed by European culture, (16-17). This conception of the frontier is exemplified in the landscapes of terror that Obregón remembers twenty years after the expedition as he writes from Central Mexico to the officials back in Spain, landscapes that he presents with what can only be perceived as horror.
Landscapes of Terror

“Empezamos a topar casas de dos y tres altos despobladas. Alegráronse todos de ver la hermosura y fertilidad de aquella buena tierra y mucho más de haber salido de la fragosidad y horno infernal de nuestros enemigos.” – Baltasar de Obregón, 1584

Above all other landscapes that Obregón depicts, the Valle de Señora (Sonora) may represent the paragon of topophobia as well as the intimate connection between the land and people in perceptions of landscape. In particular, two chapters in their entirety are dedicated to the árbol ponzoñoso, the poisonous tree, and mention of it emerges throughout the text to the point where it takes on a personage of sorts (see fig. 5.1).69

The tree is first mentioned when Obregón relates his first personal experience with it.

En este alojamiento fui a cortar dos horcones para componer la tienda de mis compañeros y de tomar la madera de un árbol en las manos me dio notable comezón en ellas y llevando los horcones al real conocieron las guías era del árbol ponzoñoso, de lo cual se alteraron haciendo muchos visajes y exageraciones hacia el árbol, diciendo que le dejase que era dañoso y muy ponzoñoso mayormente el jugo y leche de él, con la cual untadas sus flechas al que herían moría, padecían extraño dolor y rabiosa muerte aunque fuesen pequeñas las heridas. (152)

69 El árbol ponzoñoso, al que Baltazar de Obregón dedica varios párrafos llenos de temor, por el efecto que producían las flechas envenenadas “con su jugo”, es un arbusto genuinamente sonorense conocido con el nombre de “hierba de flecha”, precisamente aludiendo al uso que le daban los naturales. Los ópatas llamaban a este árbol “magot” y su nombre científico es Sapium Biloculare. Pertenece a la familia Euphorbiaceae [...] crece en algunos sitios a alturas entre 4 y 6 metros. (Hopkins Durazo 53)
Figure 5.1: El árbol ponzoñoso, *Sapium Biloculare*. Phillip James, photographer.
Obregón’s simple act of touching the wood frenzies the indigenous guides. From this point forward, the árbol ponzoñoso becomes a terrifying antagonist in Obregón’s textualscape.

Obregón goes on to explain in horror that nothing grows under the shadow of this tree, and the wounds that it causes are incurable, lasting twenty years without ever completely closing. Worse still, this menacing tree-weapon is not alone in the textualscape, and once again, the landscape depicted is directly, seamlessly associated with the people who occupy it. The indigenous peoples of the lands of the árbol ponzoñoso have successfully used their knowledge of the tree as a tool against their enemies, and Obregón describes these indígenas as cruel and bestial. Yet, if we recall the description of the people of

70 [...] desde veinte leguas del río y poblazones de Yaquimi y cuarenta desde Mayambo como van de Cinaro al poniente [west] y de Chichiltic y Calí hacia Cina, vinien de Cibola a los valles de los Corazones y de Señora, Guaraspi, Cumupa, Batuco, Chuparo Saguaripa, Horeco, sus comarcas, pueblos y rededores [..]
Chiametla who likewise rebelled, they are referred to as “guerreros,” but still described positively. They are associated with the topophilia of Chiametla, while the “salvajes” of the Valle de Señora are associated with the poisonous tree and the rough terrain upon which it grows.

Son estos valles calidísimos, arcabucos llenos de muchos árboles ponzoñosos de los cuales están las sierras llenas; [...] Y los cristianos que fueren a sus tierras a poblar o pasar de camino por ellas, vayan advertidos y recatados de ellos [los naturales] porque son en extremo codiciosos, traídores, ladrones y belicosos. Y en este valle y lenguaje hay la mayor gruesa de árbol ponzoñoso, de lo cual su daño con más diestros y cursados que los atrás. (153)

The people of Uparo, who also occupy the valley are similarly viewed as savages who do not cultivate fields: “Son salvajes, no siembran, comen el grano de bledos, caza y pescado y todo género de sabandijas silvestres y aunque todo es gente idólatra y malvada, no comen carne humana, aunque a los que matan en sus guerras los hacen cuartos y los cuelgan y reparten por blasón en sus casas y terrados y tratan mal a los cautivos habidos por guerra” (153).

The extensive descriptions of the soldiers’ intense fear of the Valle de Señora and its inhabitants, beyond a mere topophobia, seem to speak to what geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has called a “landscape of fear”. Tuan concedes that fear does have its origins in external circumstances that are truly threatening. However, he argues, the notion of landscape is a construct of the mind as well as a physical and measurable entity. The term “landscapes of fear” refers to both psychological states and tangible environments (6). The landscape of the Valle de Señora, remembered and textualized by Obregón twenty years after his personal experience, materializes as a terrifying and hostile textualscape, one that reflects
the force of this perception and memory of fear. “With time lapse concepts may form; a person can stand back and interpret the perceptual cues in different ways as an exercise in rationality. One interpretation is preferred, and strongly adhered to, because it seems true” (Tuan 61, 1974).

One indication that lends itself to such an interpretation is the intensity of the descriptions. Hopkins Durazo notes, “El árbol ponzoñoso es un arbusto genuinamente sonorense conocido con el nombre de ‘hierba de la flecha,’ precisamente aludiendo al uso que le daban los naturales [...] Según don Baltasar, el árbol que él describe alcanza alturas hasta de ‘doce estados’, que equivaldrían a 20 metros, lo cual es, sin duda, una exageración” (53). This “exaggeration” may very well be indicative of an intimidating landscape driven by a fear that, while originating from external circumstances that were truly life-threatening, results in a construction of the mind, a psychological perception that Obregón then textualizes. In fact, Obregón recalls that Ibarra’s group was so terrified of the árbol ponzoñoso and the “tierras de los infieles”, they chartered a new route on the return to Culiacan in order to avoid it.

Yet, fissures exist within Obregón’s carefully constructed textualscape, cracks through which moments emerge that suggest a wholly different cultural perspective that views this “nonplace” as a “place,” or even a landscape perception not restricted by such binaries. Far from a source of topophobia, Obregón’s landscape of fear serves as a defense for its aboriginal inhabitants against their enemies and provides an extremely effective weapon against invaders, a fact that even Obregón perceives: “[P]orque si peleaban los naturales con flechas ponzoñasas y por ser muchos no dudo nuestra
The peoples of the valley, this is not a landscape of fear, but rather one of refuge and defense from enemies who lack the knowledge to survive, let alone thrive within it. The landscape serves them against their enemies, providing, as has been illustrated, an extremely effective weapon against invaders and even a means of escape from them, particularly when their pursuers are on horses. In fact, on more than one occasion the indigenous inhabitants lead the expedition’s soldiers into the highlands specifically to escape them (Obregón 155,160). As Radding has convincingly demonstrated in her comparative study, *Landscapes of Power and Identity* (2005), for its inhabitants, the landscape that so horrified the Spanish was an important place for travel, trade, foraging, and conducting religious pilgrimages, especially for the Pima-Tepehuan, Yaqui-Mayo, and Opata-Eudeve peoples (Radding 24-25). This landscape was a source of food, defense, and even power for the indigenous peoples. In fact, the Yaquis took refuge in the sierra from Spanish and Mexican military forces well into the twentieth century (Radding 212). Radding argues the centrality of the environment to stories of power and colonial confrontation, and demonstrates that the sacred, topophilic, landscape of the Yaqui in southern Sonora was a landscape not visible or readable to the Spanish eye.

The Yaquis of southern Sonora associate *huya aniya* with the Sierra Bacatete, a mountain range that marks the eastern boundary of their traditional territory. Yaquis took refuge in the sierra from Spanish and Mexican military forces on innumerable occasions, from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Moreover, the Bacatetes- the Tall Cane-Reed Mountains – harbored a profound sense of power, arising from the geology of uplifted earth and desert plain, and expressed in Christian terms as “the place where Jesus walked.” […] The cultural systems of meaning that evolved historically in the colonial province[s] of Sonora [and Chiquitos] imbued material landscapes with the religious dimension of spiritual
power; the Indian’s moral cosmologies of life and death, good and evil, were envisioned in terms of the natural environment in which they lived. (Radding 212)

Moreover, Obregón’s textualscape reflects a cultural view of the landscape that does not recognize the value of its agrarian space or shelter. Radding distinguishes three major cultural and environmental regions in Sonora, moving from east to west: the highland cordilleras that merged with the Sierra Madre Occidental; the “zona serrana” of valleys and ranges (the piedmont), and the desert plains (see fig. 5.2). In the highlands, where cultivation was dependant on seasonal rainfall, the valleys supported permanent villages while encampments were erected for “ephemeral plantings, hunting, and gathering” (Radding 25).

Constructing spaces in the cordillera were distinguished by ribbons of narrow irrigated fields in the floodplains with small gardens and shallow wells at their edges; swidden plots in different stages of seeding, harvesting, and fallowing; and stone terraces built in canyons and close to caves and natural springs that provided planting surfaces, water and protection against predators. (Radding 27)

In the zona serrana, or piedmont, groups such as the Opata, Eudeve and Pima practiced floodplain farming.

Serrano peoples created agrarian spaces characterized by irregularly shaped milpas carved from the silt that flowed through the fence rows of cottonwood and willow saplings planted at the river’s edge and intertwined with acacia brush. Repeated lines of planted trees at different angles to one another and the river channel, as well as the packed earthen weirs built across the streams were (and are) signs of a living agricultural architecture. (Radding 29).
Figure 5.2: Sonora, place map drawn by Jason Casanova under the direction of Jane Domier, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
Some of the territorial configurations were seasonal while others went through specific periods of construction, expansion and abandonment. For example, Obregón does not recognize the purposefulness of what he describes as the “rústicas habitaciones.” As Radding explains, interspersed among more permanent settlements “smaller hamlets signaled the movements of seminomadic peoples and seasonal displacements of serrano villagers to encampments for hunting and gathering in the scrub forest” (30).

In the desert plains, nomadic groups such as the Cunca’ac (Seri) and O’odham gathered fruit of the saguaro, nopal and cholla buds, sand roots, wild greens and seeds. “Hunters, gatherers, fishers, and craftpersons, they exploited fully the seasonal cycles of the desert plains and the aquatic resources of the Gulf of California” (Radding 31-32). For their very way of life, it was imperative that “the architecture of desert peoples rested lightly on the land” so that houses could be assembled and disassembled and areas revisit from season to season (Radding 33). These three major regions comprised a highly complex landscape that often was unreadable to the Spaniard who is “illiterate” in reading the indigenous landscape (Spirn 34). The landscape that Obregón describes as “uninhabitable” was actually one rich in history and human culture.

On the eve of Spanish contact, the Sonoran peoples had developed long histories of trade and warfare, population growth and dispersion, and of technological innovation. Their societies ranged from nonhierarchical bands to chiefdoms with possible tributary linkages to centers of Mesoamerican cultural influence. The religious and aesthetic expressions of both nomadic and farming peoples seem to have been closely linked to shamanism, health, and the natural environment that structured their world. (Radding 33)
What Obregón does not see, cannot see, or simply refuses to relate, speaks to the notion of the narrating subject’s role in deciding what the reader will “see” and what he or she will not see. While, as I have argued, fissures do exist in Obregón’s textualscape, the text reveals little else than what the criollo sees for the future of the landscape and its “place” in the larger Spanish empire. Yet, while this speaks to his narration project, it must also be emphasized that it also reflects his cultural view. It is telling that Yi-Fu Tuan utilizes the Spanish-versus-indigenous model to exemplify his point that while one culture may view a landscape as “uninhabitable” the peoples indigenous to that landscape are quite at home in it. Tuan also recognizes how purpose constitutes an important factor in perception.

The objects we perceive are commensurate with the size of our body, the acuity and range of our perceptual apparatus, and purpose. The south Californian desert, uninhabitable to Spaniards, was ample home to the Indians. Bushmen learn to read the fine script of spoors in the sand and recognize the location of individual plants on the barest plains of the Kalahari. (Tuan 14, 1974, my emphasis)

As Abrahamsson has argued, “There are many symbolic values in […] landscape, symbols that vary greatly between people who live in and those who visit, that landscape” (51). Obregón’s textualscape demonstrates how a landscape can be perceived and (re)created in multiple ways by different cultures. Furthermore, if we consider, as Abrahamsson argues, that these semiotic resources of the landscape change over time and in the mind during a person’s lifetime, we may even find moments that speak to shifting perceptions of value within the same culture over time. For while the binary comparison between visitor and inhabitant, indigenous American and Spaniard, certainly emerges in
the *Historia*, the textualscape that Obregón constructs also reveals a subtle tension within Spanish cultural perception.

The earth’s surface is highly varied. Even a causal acquaintance with its physical geography and teeming life forms tells us as much. But the ways in which people perceive and evaluate that surface are far more varied. **No two persons see the same reality.** No two social groups make precisely the same evaluation of the environment. The scientific view itself is culture-bound – one possible perspective among many. (Tuan 5, 1974, my emphasis)

**A Shifting Cultural Perception**

“Custom and culture defined a Land, not physical geographical characteristics – it was a social entity that found physical expression in the area under its law.” - Kenneth Robert Olwig, 2002

Once the expedition has emerged from the horrifying “tierras de los infieles,” Obregón describes a return to “buenas tierras” in Guaraspi (Arizpe), where the expedition finds houses, clothing, potential laborers and supplies (159) (see fig. 4.3). “Estas jornadas que anduvo el gobernador y campo desde el valle de Señora hasta Saguaripa es lo mejor y más bien poblado de todo lo que anduvo en estas provincias […]”(160). These people are compared with their warring neighbors: “Están en frontera de la más aliente y esforzada gente de aquellas provincias que son los querechos, gente vaquera” (159). Hopkins Durazo explains, “El nombre de querechos lo aplicaba Obregón a cualquier grupo indígena que según su criterio era más salvaje, en la misma forma que se aplicaba el término chichimecas, a todas las tribus al norte de Mesoamérica” (28). There are two interesting aspects of this description of the peoples of this region that I would like to underscore. First, although the people of Guaraspi (Arizpe) are described as “lo mejor”
in the region and are perceived as “better” than the *querechos*, Obregón ultimately concludes that they are “codiciosos, ladrones, cautelosos y más diestros y cursados en la malicia y ejercicio de la guerra” (159). Hopkins Durazo points to this description’s contradictions: “Es raro que primero diga de los indígenas que son más políticos que los anteriores, lo que en su pintoresco lenguaje significa de mejor compartimiento y urbanidad, sin embargo, después termina condenándoles como codiciosos ladrones...” (27). Second, although Obregón concedes that the region is “el mejor y más poblado desde el valle de Señora hasta Sanguaripa” (160), he goes on to reject Cabeza de Vaca’s view of the landscape of Cumupa (Cumpas) and Guaraspi (Arizpe) as “la mejor y más fértil tierra de cuantas hay en las Indias...

Porque aunque es abundante de bastimentos, hay muy poco algodón y es tierra muy cerrada y espesa de arcabucos y montañas y áspera de sierras y en extremo cálida y poblada del árbol ponzoñoso. Pedregosa y la gente de ella ladrona, traidora y desnuda por la mayor parta hasta empezar a entrar en las faldas de la sierra, en tierras templadas, que empiezan casas de terrado. (174)

Obregón’s personal hierarchy aside, can these contradicting perceptions of the landscape be explained by cultural difference such as those noted previously between the Spanish and the indigenous? One may speculate to a certain degree that these differing visions are, at least in part, due to the odyssey that Cabeza de Vaca had experienced, a ten year trek that certainly would have affected his landscape perceptions. The difference in perception may also speak to Obregón’s *criollo* identity. I propose that an equally compelling factor is that Obregón perceives the landscape through the lens of the mining settlement, a lens that filters his perception of various lands and peoples.
There is no ‘absolute’ landscape: the salience and relationship between place and space, inside and outside and image and representation are dependent on the cultural and historical context […] There is not one absolute landscape here but a series of related, if contradictory, moments – perspectives-which cohere in what can be recognized as a singular form: landscape as a cultural process. (Hirsh 3)

As Verdesio contends, “The perfect model for a prosperous settlement had to include an easily attainable labor force” (154). The presence, absence, or perceived quality of peoples encountered would have certainly played a role in forming Obregón’s view, and his textualscape may very well illustrate what Maureen Ahern has identified as the shifting project of northward expansion, one that is no longer based on the myth and legend generated from Cabeza de Vaca and de Niza, but rather on the projects of evangelization and establishing mining settlements. “Natural environment and world view are closely related: world view, unless it is derived from an alien culture, is necessarily constructed out of the salient elements of a people’s social and physical setting” (Tuan 79, 1974). In this mining milieu, the narrator’s projection of the intimately related and human-based institutions of the *encomienda* and evangelization onto the landscape would have played a fundamental role in the formation of a cultural view of the indigenous Other, playing a significant role in identity creation. In the sections that follow, I examine these institutions and their role in the formation of a cultural perception of the indigenous peoples.
“Spanish imperial authority relied centrally upon articulation a relationship between Europeans and a living, breathing Other.”
- Patricia Seed, 1993

The mining enterprise in New Spain was a key component in the project of Spanish imperial expansion in the New World, and depended primarily on people. In *Power and Penury* (1988), David Charles Goodman examines mining operations in Spain and the Americas under the reign of Phillip II (1556-1598) and concludes, “Nowhere was mining attempted on the scale of the Spanish monarch’s operations” (Goodman 151). Along with the important site in Spain of Guadalcanal (about twelve leagues, or roughly 60 miles, north of Seville in the foothills of the remote Sierra Morena) the Americas, including San Luis Potosi and the region of Durango, Zacatecas, made up the crucial portion of the Crown’s mining operations. Between 1555 and 1600, over 23,827 million *maravedias*, or about one quarter of the king’s income, derived from the Americas
After 1560 silver production exceeded gold and the silver boom in Zacatecas, New Spain (1546), coupled with the production at the great cerro of Potosí (1545), centralized the production of mercury and silver as “the twin foci of the crown’s mining policy in the Indies” (183). Another factor contributing to the focus on the potential wealth of mines in New Spain was the dwindling production of the mine at Guadalcanal, which, by 1563, had begun to show its first signs of decline. This decline in production coincided with a sharp dip in silver receipts from the Indies, all when the crown’s military expenditures were on the rise.

The discovery of new mines in northern New Spain, and securing existing ones, was a top priority and a major factor of imperial expansion at the time that Obregón wrote and sent his Historia to the Crown. The criollo subject’s awareness of the importance of mining is evidenced in the text.

As the passages of topophilia reveal, Obregón demonstrates a bias for lands that he perceives as conducive to permanent mining settlements. These mining settlements were dependent upon the exploitation of a labor force, which was achieved through the

71 The mine at Guadalcanal, Spain, was described as “the richest that has ever been discovered in Christendom.” The comment, made in 1556, came from García Martín de la Bastida, who had acquired a share in the mine. (Goodman 200)

72 The process used for extracting silver from its ore in New Spain and Peru was at first smelting, as at Guadalcanal, and later smelting with bellows was established in New Spain. However a much more important technological change transforming silver production came with the successful introduction of the cold process of amalgamation, first in New Spain from 1555 and much later in Potosí in 1572. This process used mercury. (175)

73 Goodman explains that, in addition to the debts and huge military expenditures that Phillip II had already inherited, wars with the Turks, the Morisco rebellion, and the draining revolt in the Low Countries, were all strains on the Crown’s treasury. (165)
institutions of the *encomienda* and the *repartimiento*. These institutions allowed for, under the authority of the crown, the distribution of lands and peoples.

For the Spaniards, the principal target of imperial authority was people, and all the major institutions of the first century of Spanish colonial rule established public and private authority over people. In addition to slavery, the Spaniards brought with them two other institutions that exerted authority over persons. The *encomienda*, the principal reward sought by Spanish settlers in the New World, was a grant of Indian labor to private citizens; the *repartimiento* was a bureaucratic process for organizing rotating weekly pools of Indian workers. The major institutions of the first century of Spanish rule thus exerted authority over people. (Seed 127)

While the *repartimiento* was not introduced in New Spain until 1575, several years after Obregón’s participation in the Ibarra expedition, the notion of it formed a part of Obregón’s conception of the region when he composed his text. In a section entitled “Repartimiento de pueblos y tierras,” Obregón describes the appropriation and distribution of lands and peoples at Nombre de Dios and Durango: “Poblólas [dos villas] de vecinos labradores a los cuales les dio sus repartimientos de pueblos, estancias y tierras para labradores” (75). The *encomienda* is mentioned even more frequently throughout the text, as Obregón describes Ibarra’s distribution of land and people to members of the expedition.

En la cual los dejó encomendados y redujo al servicio de algunos de Culiacán los pueblos y encomiendas que se les habían alcanzado y rebelado haciéndoles nuevas encomiendas […] que redujo y encomendó de nuevo en don Pedro de Tovar, que eran dos encomiendas: la una de mil hombres y la otra de cuatrocientos, los cuales prometieron reconocer, tributar y obedecer de nuevo a su encomendero don Pedro de Tovar. (93)

Y para su efecto mandó el maeso [sic] de campo que visitase los pueblos de la provincia y tantease la gente que había en cada parte […] empezó a repartir los
pueblos. Y al primero que dio encomienda fue al maese de campo que fue la cabeza de provincia llamado Cinaro y Huiri, que tenían seisientos indios. (219)

These passages evince the visual and textual appropriation of landscape, as well as Obregón’s familiarity with the institutions of the encomienda and repartimiento. These institutions formed a part of the narrator’s socio-political mentality, a mentality which implied that distribution “naturally” had as much to do with people as it did with land. In fact, in the last passage it is telling that there is no mention of the size of the parcel, but only the number of inhabitants, which speaks to Mundy’s contention that often territorial records were merely lists of population centers (57). “Official power made itself felt in possessing the landscape, at least implicitly, and then giving it away with land grants” (Mundy 214).

Goodman has cited the tension between the mining project and its need for labor and obligations to the aborigines early on in the Spanish project, citing Las Casas and the New Laws as evidence of this moral preoccupation. Under Carlos V, “when mining often meant no more than panning for gold in the river-beds of the Antilles, Indian mining labor could be restricted to ‘sifting, washing or other light work.’” (Goodman 185). However, the conditions of silver mining were far more demanding and posed new problems for the Crown.

Charles was determined to prevent the use of forced Indian labour for this purpose. Faced with the inherited debts of Castile and soaring military expenditures, and presented with the prospects of Potosí and Huancavélica, Phillip showed less open opposition to Indian labour in mines. (Goodman 186)
The increased acceptance of using indigenous labor under Phillip II, coupled with the persistence of the *encomienda* system, perpetuated an economy dependant upon the exploitation of indigenous labor, an exploitation that was justified by their conversion to Christianity.74 “Legitimacy (the right to rule or even be present in the New World) was contingent on evangelization of the natives” (Seed 115). In fact, the *Ordenanzas* explicitly stated that in considering what lands to settle, “que sean poblados de indios y naturales a quien se pueda predicar el evangelio pues este es el principal fin para que mandamos hacer los nuevos descubrimientos y poblaciones” (36).

While perhaps not directly cognizant of the specifics of the *Ordenanzas de descubrimiento, nueva población y pacificación de las Indias* (1573), during his experiences as a soldier, Obregón was undoubtedly exposed to their importance.75 In a section entitled, “Ordenanzas de guerra,” Obregón emphasizes the adherence to the “ordenanzas e instrucciones” as given to them by the viceroy.

Le bendijo el sacerdote y le entregó el general a su alférez Martín de Rentería. Después de lo cual y de haber repartido los cargos y cosas necesarias de armas y vestidos y caballos, mandó pregonar las ordenanzas e instrucciones que el virrey don Luis de Velesco mandó guardar, todas de mucha cristiandad, equidad y concierto de acertada guerra y modo de proceder en ella; las cuales siempre hizo guardar, cumplir y ejecutar con gran prudencia, cristiandad y cuidado, en cuyos efectos y su cumplimiento siempre hubo conformidad y cristiano efecto. (73)

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74 As Maureen Ahern argues in “Glosa guía y memoria,” the texts produced in this period reflect the internal contradictions of the Spanish expansion project.

75 Obregón’s use the term “conquistar” throughout the text, a term which the *Ordenanzas* condemned in favor of the term “pacificar” would indicate that he may not have had direct knowledge of them, but rather that knowledge which filtered down through the vice regal bureaucracy.
Obregón also specifically lists among his recommendations for future settlement that those who undertake such endeavors “guarden las ordenanzas de guerra y minas […] con cristiana equidad” (204). As part and parcel of his narrative project of demonstrating the expedition’s compliance with the Ordenanzas, Obregón is emphatic that the conversion project was paramount to all other worldly endeavors.

The Spiritual Landscape

“NO colonial empire in modern times was built upon so extensive a philisophical and theological foundation as that empire which the Spaniards created for themselves in the New World.” –John Leddy Phelan, 1970

Obregón expounds at length upon the spiritual nature of the Ibarra expedition and, while not himself a missionary, his religious conviction and support of the friars is unmistakable. “La cosa más útil y conveniente en la guerra es llevar frailes […] que sean regalados, tenidos y respetados para que tomen ejemplo y mediante este respeto la gente nuevamente convertida haga lo mismo...” (199). Obregón’s support of the friars is noteworthy, given the climate of the times during which he was composing the Historia. Three major events had taken place that directly impacted the relations of power in New Spain and had important effects on the mendicant missionaries: the epidemic of Old World diseases in Central Mexico that had devastated the indigenous population; the steps that the Crown had taken in 1572 to reign in the power of the Franciscans by replacing them with secular clergy, and the issue of the Ordenanzas of 1573, which stipulated that all expeditions be accompanied by a friar (Weber 95). In this context,
Obregón’s nod to the importance that expeditions “llevar frailes” may seem redundant, as this was already required by the Crown. Yet given the circumstances, his support of the spiritual aspects of exploration, and of the friars in particular, should be noted: “By the time the century ended, the friars were left with but two alternatives- to retire peacefully to their monasteries or to transfer their missionary enthusiasm to the colonial frontiers among the less civilized natives” (Phelan 54).

Obregón elaborates significantly regarding his views on the spiritual nature of the conquest, and many of his theological arguments reflect the debates of his day. While it is not clear from the text that Obregón would have shared any of the apocalyptic notions that were held by many missionaries and explorers at the time, he certainly shared in common the notion of the Franciscan missionary, Gerónimo de Mendieta, that placed “the conversion of the Indians in a universal historical framework” (Phelan 17). He also shared with these missionaries a firmly held belief in Providence, and the conviction that the project of Spanish expansion was of a spiritual nature. The coincidence that Obregón draws between the birth of Luther and that of Cortés referred to previously intimates that he shared the commonly held conviction of his day that the project of Spanish expansion in the New World was absolutely a matter of divine Providence, in which “the Spanish race under the leadership of her ‘blessed kings’ had been chose to undertake the final conversion of the Jews, the Moslems, and the Gentiles” (Phelan 11).

Tiénese por experiencia verdadera que los descubrimientos de gentes, naciones y tierras nuevas han estado y están ocultas hasta que Dios nuestro Señor es servido llegue el tiempo de su limitación y orden acordada por su divino concierto, cuyo secreto de estar mucha suma de años sin descubrirse es reservado al altísimo
secreto de Dios nuestro Señor, porque vemos que en nuestros tiempos se han descubierto y sujetado gran suma de naciones de gentes. (Obregón 227)

This sentiment of Providence applies not only to the greater Spanish empire, but also operates on the more parochial level of New Spain, in which who discovers what and when is likewise attributed to God’s divine plan. Why else, reasons Obregón, would the Ibarra expedition have come so close to the famous coveted pueblos of Nuevo México but never reach them?76

Por cuyos inconvenientes y sucesos y la voluntad de Dios nuestro Señor ante todas cosas, que no permitió ni fue servido que se descubriesen las poblazones del Nuevo México y porque permitió poblar y diese lumbre de fe a los de Cinaro, Chiametla y las demás villas como gente más poca y pobre que la de los llanos [...] pues es notorio llegamos dos jornadas de lo primero poblado de ellas si fuera servido con facilidad permitiera fuéramos los descubridores de estas provincias tan deseadas, trabajadas y buscadas... (Obregón 184)

Obregón’s use of the nosotros indicates more than his mere participation in the expedition. It also communicates his inclusion in the providencial plan. In “our time” (nuestros tiempos), argues Obregón, these nations are being discovered and subjugated by the Spanish empire, an empire of which he is a part and in whose expansion project he has been an active participant. God has determined this. Thus, although the Ibarra expedition had been privately financed by Francisco de Ibarra’s uncle, Diego de Ibarra, “con mucho gasto y trabajo” it represents a “more” (74). The narrating subject places the expedition as an episode in a larger framework of the history of imperial expansion

76 Of course, Obregón exaggerates or misjudges the expedition’s proximity to the pueblos of Nuevo México that would later be reached by “los descubridores nuevos,” namely Chamuscado and later Espejo (187) (see fig. 1.2).
and the fulfillment of God’s divine plan for the Spanish empire on earth. Within Obregón’s narrating project, enterprise, evangelization and empire converge.\footnote{The role of imperial discourse will be examined further in Chapter 7.}

The larger project of imperial expansion is thus inextraincably linked to its purported spiritual purposes. In fact, in arguing for the just dispensation of government posts, Obregón employs the tool of Biblical exegesis, a practice common in the sixteenth century (Phelan). In particular, he expresses his concern that “es muy ordinario que pertenecen los gobiernos, cargos y capitánías a hombres que si no se valiesen de medios desordenados y disfrazados con mañosas lisonjas, dádivas y ardides serían del todo olvidados, y otros con merecerlos están muy descuidados a lo menos de pretenderlos usando del buen medio y dicho de San Pablo, donde dice que nadie debe tomar, pretender ni procurar cargo sin ser llamado” (198). The election of generals, governors and captains to explore and settle new lands, then, must be considered carefully. He refers to the story of David in the Old Testament.

Ejemplo tenemos de esto en la divina Escritura cuando Dios envió a Samuel para que eligiese rey de Israel que habiéndole presentado Isaac (quien había sido enviado Samuel para que eligiese rey [a] uno de sus hijos), dice el texto que habiéndole presentado a Elías, uno de sus hijos que -- como dice la Escritura- era un hombre muy hermoso de rostro [...] y después todos sus hijos, dijo Dios a Samuel que no tuviese cuenta de la hermosura de rostro de Elías ni con su gran disposición “porque yo – dice Dios—no juzgo por los exteriores sino por los intrínsecos del corazón”. [...] Dios mandó a Samuel que eligiese rey de Jerusalén a David y así fue ungido y electo por rey de Israel [...] De esta manera fue hecha buena elección de persona que además de ser ingeniosa y de doctrina, era buen cristiano el cual – como se lee en el Eclesiástico—con su santidad y buena intención guardó, conservó y ejercitó la justicia y equidad de las cosas mejor y por mejor orden que muchos sabios muy hinchados. Y se ha de creer que haciendo su debido oficio e interponiendo en ello su diligencia y buenos medios enterándose de la paz, concordancia y reducción cristiana de los naturales y
At once Obregón offers advice regarding the election of officials, while recognizing that God’s divine will is exercised through the king, his earthly representative.

In addition to providing logic for his arguments, Obregón demonstrates his conviction in the spiritual nature of the conquest by reporting miracles that occur as part of God’s divine plan, a view that would have alarmed some friars. “The friars were afraid that too many miracles might confuse the neophytes and thus facilitate a relapse into magic, superstition and idolatry” (Phelan 51). Yet the medieval conception of the active intervention of God and of the devil is encountered in several instances in Obregón, who clearly demonstrates his belief in the appearance of both divine and diabolic acts in the secular world. Particularly, the expedition’s successes are credited to the acts of a merciful God aiding, protecting, and defending the Spanish soldiers in the, at times, terrifying landscape of the borderlands.
God's protects the soldiers thereby allowing them to fulfill their spiritual destiny while fulfilling the imperial destiny of Spain. Miracles likewise ensure these destinies, as they play a role in the conversion of the indigenous pagan to Christianity.\(^{78}\)

Entre todas las naciones que hasta hoy están descubiertas, vistas y experimentadas y conocidas, ninguna iguala y empareja con la española [...] Asimismo han sido vencedores y destructores de estos perjados competidores y enemigos de nuestra santa Fe católica, ayudándola y defendiéndola con el tesoro y limpieza de las Sagradas Escrituras, doctrina y teología han conquistado y sujetado muchas extrañas, diversas y remotas naciones, llegándolas y amparándolas al gremio y tesoro de nuestra inestimable Fe católica y nacen con esta virtuosa indignación, esfuerzo y firmeza y gran espíritu de aumentar y añadir este rebaño, el cual es fe de ser uno junto sin división de reino, mando, ley y costumbres y preceptos; de la cual nación ha acontecido pasar por tierras de bárbaros infieles desconocidos de nuestro Dios creador y salvador, adonde por su suma y piadosa y misericordia y permisión ha hecho milagros, porque esta gente desconocida y ciega del conocimiento de Dios y de su ley evangélica se aficione a ser cristiana. (178)

At the same time, the devil may conspire to undermine Spanish efforts to convert the natives to Christianity, principally by inspiring the Spaniards to perform evil acts, thereby destroying indigenous trust in Christians. Recalling the incident in which Martín de Gamón murdered his indigenous guides, Obregón cites the intervention of the devil:

“Y como deseaban llegar y el demonio estorbar a los naturales el ser cristianos, tuvo miedo y traza con su engaño e ilusión” (77, my emphasis). However, the devastating effects of this diabolical intervention are tempered by the divine miracle that follows:

“después de ahorcados se secó la madera verde y floridas hojas de él, caso milagroso [...]"

\(^{78}\) Phelan notes the preoccupation of many friars with the dearth of miracles in the New World as opposed to the age of the Primitive Church, and the emergent theories associated with this dilemma. For more on this topic see Phelan.
Above all other worldly motivations, then, Obregón insists that the enterprise on the frontier of New Spain is a spiritual endeavour, indicating “la concepción mesiánica del conquistador” (Bravo 19).

Obregón’s insistence that it be known to all his Christian readers that this battle has been fought in the name of God exposes the issue of forceful conversion, an issue that continued to be debated at length in Spain and the New World. It bears mentioning that for all of Obregón’s support of the friars and his conviction that they be key players in the expansion, in Jalisco a Franciscan friar refused him confession. “[Q]uise

79 This debate reached its apex in 1555 in Valladolid, Spain, when King Carlos V heard the arguments of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de las Casas, a Dominican friar, regarding the use of violence in the evangelization of the native inhabitants in the New World, with de Las Casas advocating peaceful means of conversion. While Sepúlveda argued that the Indians were inferior, “contrast[ing] the Indian with the Spaniard in order to justify the war on the Indians […]” Las Casas, “contrasts the gentleness, humility and peacefulness of the Indian with the ferocity of the Spanish soldier.” (Arias 172-173, 1993).
confesarme por la obligación y peligro en que iba, así de la enfermedad como por pasar
tierra de guerra, y no me quiso confesar un fraile franciscano por la mala opinión que
tenía de soldados, diciendo que matan indios” (126). This detail brings to light the larger
issue of the internal conflict among the various participants of the expansion project in
New Spain. While some Franciscans, such as Gerónimo de Mendieta, who composed the
*Historia eclesiástica indiana* (ca. 1596), defended the moderate use of coercion due to
the “practical necessity of destroying paganism as the prerequisite for missionizing,”
Dominican theologians on the other hand “usually minimized and often repudiated the
principle of force” (Phelan 10). Furthermore, as evidenced in the case of the Franciscan
who denied Obregón confession, the use of violent coercion was debated among
members of the same religious order.

Obregón’s views on the matter of violence in conversion seem to be more akin to
those of Mendieta, in that violence is acceptable when it is a means to the end of
pacification. As a soldier, Obregón invokes the cry to battle “¡Santiago a ellos!”, an
exercise that has its roots in the medieval battle tradition (Obregón 79, 170).80 Evoking
the name of the patron saint of Spain blessed a necessary and just battle.

Con el buen consejo, que es guía del acertamiento y enemiga de la ignorancia,
aciertan a mandar los emperadores, reyes y monarcas del universo mundo,
gobiernan los principes y no yerran los jueces, son acertadas y justas las guerras,
batallas y victorias por tierra y mar y, al fin, con él hay paz, concierto y quietad y
moderación en todos los casos sucedidos (Obregón 168).

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80 “The appeal to the patron saint of Spain, Santiago the Great (St. James), dates from the
battle of Clavijo in 844 when according to the legend and in response to the Christians’
call, the apostle fought on horseback on the Christian side against the emir of Córdoba”
(Weckmann 111).
Obregón insists that it is imperative there be “mucho castigo, rigor y aspereza en los primeros encuentros y atrevimientos de los naturales que hubiere y acometieren y valentía, sin que por ninguna vía presuman de ningún soldado cobardía ni flaqueza de ánimo” (133). He relates an incident in which, upon returning to Ciguini where they had previously been well received, there had been an uprising, “acometiendo en Guerra a los soldados con sus arcos y flechas” (111). The maeso de campo punishes the instigator.

Sabida el maeso de campo la desverguenza y atrevimiento y osadía de los indios, fue a ellos con gran presteza y apercibimiento y hallando el más culpado lo hizo azotar atado. Manifestó a los alzados el castigo que fue por su delito y que al osase tomar armas el castigo que fue por su delito y que al que osase tomar armas y ser contra cristianos, le cortaría las manos y que pues estaba castigado el culpado, que saliesen del arcabuco y por bien los hizo volver a su pueblo y llevó consigo al azotado; el cual yendo caminando dio un bofetón a un soldado, el cual encolerizado le dio siete puñaladas y se alzaron de veras aunque no murió el indio. Y habiendo dejado un jarro de plata en el pueblo un negro del maeso de campo, los enemigos le dieron al herido; el cual, con coraje y en venganza de las heridas que el soldado le dio, hizo pedazo el jarro. (112)

Yet, it would be erroneous to conclude that Obregón advocates violence, as he warns his Christian readers repeatedly that excessive mistreatment of the recently converted indigenous vassals is only counterproductive, as “aunque bárbaros, quieren que les trate en verdad en se les haga buen tratamiento” (133). The importance of good treatment is evidenced in God’s intervention in order to punish the Spaniards who abuse their power, as in the case of Diego de Alcaraz: “Dios nuestro Señor permitió por castigar como castigó sus desconciertos y mal ejemplo a gente que iban a poner en orden y concierto de nuestra santa Fe católico” (155). Thus violence, while essentially
unavoidable, must be exercised judiciously and peaceful means of pacification employed wherever possible.

Echar y repartir los servicios personales en los naturales nuevamente poblados con moderación y espacio de tiempo, porque por ocasión de oprimirlos y apremiarles a que tributen suelen alzarse como lo hicieron los de las provincias de Cinaro, Chiametla, Jalisco y valles de Señora, en las cuales mataron y asolaron a sus encomenderos y en las dos partes quedaron victoriosos y sin haberlos podido tornar a sujetarlos. (Obregón 204)

Excessive force will only be counterproductive. How can the indigenous subjects be evangelized if they are so oppressed that they rebel? In this way, Obregón depicts a spiritual landscape of evangelization and conversion, by the use of force if necessary, that overlaps the economic one; a landscape largely determined by the binary of Christian versus non-Christian in which the *encomienda* ostensibly provides a forum for evangelization.

Antes de ser cristianos traían guerra, y muy encarecidamente con amenaza que no comiesen carne humanan ni incurriesen en el pecado nefando, y que conociesen y sirviesen a sus encomenderos a los cuales les dio a conocer a cado uno en particular. Dioles a entender que cada uno de ellos a quien quedaban encomendados los ampararían, defenderían y favorecían así contra sus enemigos como en lo demás que se les ofreciese. (Obregón 130)

While this passage elucidates the intrinsic interdependency between evangelization and the *encomienda*, I would like to call attention to the implication of this view that those peoples perceived as not conducive to conversion, or conversely as living in lands not conducive to mining, are quickly dismissed. Recalling the case of Topia, Obregón had argued that its inhabitants showed little potential for conversion, “por estar
como están en tierras tan remotas, ásperas e imposibilitadas de poblarlas cristianos, ¿dónde se harán cristianos si no es poblando algunas minas buenas o poniendo Dios nuestro Señor el remedio necesario?” (90). A similar connection is made when Obregón relates Chamuscado’s encounters with indigenous inhabitants along the Río Conchas.

Estas dos parcialidades y manera de vivir de indios silvestres son desnudas, no siembran maíz, suténtanse de miquite, tuna, dátil, caza y pescado del río; serán malos de sujetar porque no tienen casas de asiento y sus comarcanos los imitan en el modo de vivir. Dieron buena noticia de las poblazones de la banda del norte y que está al lado del río, toda la cual será poblada y sujeta de cristianos si se descubren buenos metales para convertirlos a nuestra santa Fe católica aunque con trabajo y dificultad por no ser gente de asiento y posible que los obligue a sujeción porque imitan a los gitanos que llevan consigo todo posible. (229, my emphasis)

The indigenous people along the Río Conchas, due to their lack of dress, cultivated crops or permanent shelter, are described as “silvestres” that would be difficult to pacify. At the same time, the second group that they hear about could be pacified, albeit with some necessity of force, but even this is contingent upon the presence of precious metals. Mining is a prerequisite for conversion. By comparing this passage to the following in which Obregón describes the encounter of Antonio de Espejo with a group north of San Felipe, it becomes clear that the reverse is also true.

[E]n esta provincia hallaron metales relucientes y cuajadillo negro y metal blando que al parecer eran metales de plata, lo cual fue a la banda del Mar del Sur. Tiene la serranía gran disposición para minas; la gente de esta provincia es doméstica y la gente política y trabajadora y que siembran con cosa al uso mexicano cantidad de maíz, frijol, calabaza, piciete, yerba muy provechosa para la salud. (259)
The metals are indeed there. In addition, the people are predisposed to the mining enterprise. The foci of topophilic depictions, clothing, permanent shelter, and cultivation of crops are products of this ostensibly “civilized” culture. Those groups perceived as lacking these hallmarks are viewed as savages who reside in lands that are “uninhabitable.” By examining European cultural views of clothing, shelter, and cultivation, this perception is contextualized.

Obregón frequently depicts images of “gente desnuda,” only to immediately describe their dress. “Gente desnuda que sólo traen un pañel de algodón ceñido en la cintura...” (87). This bespeaks the notion born of the occidental Christian tradition that clothing represents civilization, a level of culture, based on the presupposition that clothing actually marked the very beginning of culture: “La desnudez, estado esencial – adánico – del hombre, pero rechazado por él, o por Dios, desde el instante mismo en que expulsó a Adán y Eva del Paraíso [...] de acuerdo con esta perspectiva, la historia de la civilización empezaría con el vestido” (Glantz 67). On the opposite end of the spectrum, where the absence of clothing is perceived, the indigenous are viewed as “irrational” and “vulnerable” (Glantz 56). That the indigenous peoples described did indeed wear “un pañal de algodón” is not viewed as clothing in Obregón’s eyes, but rather the absence of dress. As Gerbi has argued, to the Spanish and to the criollo mind, the indigenous peoples seemed to be at the mercy of the natural elements, and this “exposure” was associated with a lack of civilization (1973). In Obregón, the perception of the inherent superiority of Spanish garments is even transposed to the indigenous people, as he perceives their awe at the Spaniards’ clothing. Near Guaraspi, the people come from
neighboring communities all around to see the Spanish visitors: “la ocasión de dar cada uno un poco de lo que tenían que comer en su tierra era por ver y gozar del modo y traje de los cristianos” (160, my emphasis).

In addition to clothing, shelter and crop cultivation were an indication of civilization to the Spanish eye. Cynthia Radding demonstrates that the reports produced from the de Niza, Coronado, and Ibarra expeditions all reference similar landmarks, all concerning prominent house structures and agricultural valleys. Radding contends that this reflects the European bias for agriculture and permanent settlement, a bias that drives landscape perception in significant ways (32). The passage below illustrates the pejorative cultural view projected onto the landscape, and how this perception reveals itself in the textualscape.

La Florida está lejos del Nuevo México [...] Y más en paraje del norte poniendo las espaldas a la banda del sur, está la costa y mar de la Florida muy lejos más de cuatrocientas leguas, pobladas de gentes desnudas y pobres de bastimentos y la mayor parte de ellas despobladas, solitarias e inhabitables y ellos imposibilitados de casas y que carecen de policía y buen modo de vivir, lo cual afirma Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca [...] Y de allí [Nuevo Reino de León] hacia el poniente están las tierras y naciones salvajes, gente sin casas, razón ni bastimentos las cuales anduvo, vio y experimento Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca y sus compañeros por una parte, el francés por otra, Pedro Meléndez, los capitanes que se perdieron en La Florida más abajo; los cuales afirmaron por cosa cierta que hasta las provincias y pueblos de casas de mucha altura y hasta las vertientes de la gran serranía al sur no hallaron poblazones ni gentes que pueden ser pobladas ni de provecho.81 (Obregón 195-196 my emphasis)

Halláronse en el lado de estas sierras a la banda del norte, poblezuels de poca gente vil y villana; mantiénesel de bellota, calabaza y todo género de caza y sabandijas silvestres; no siembran ni cogen maíz. (Obregón 205)

81 “El poniente” refers to the setting of the sun, to indicate the westerly direction. (Corominas 607, v. 4)
[Guainamota y Guacamota] es tierra áspera, fragosa, de poca gente y la que halló es desnuda y cursada en la malicia de guerra y robo de su contrarios. Este viaje se hizo por la gran fama de metales ricos que de ordinario había habido noticia de religiosos y capitanes que en ellas y sus rededores habían andado, de ley de a treinta y cuatro marcos, los cuales no los hallaron ni es tierra que se puede poblar sin que primero estén descubiertos y experimentados los metales ricos, así por ser tierra áspera y poco poblada como por ser de gente indómita, rústica, débil y villana y sin casas de asiento y venado. (Obregón 220, my emphasis)

These passages demonstrate the inextricable link that Obregón makes between “culture” and shelter, crops, and clothing. His perception of the people as “salvajes,” “sin razón,” and “rústica” stems from his perception that their shelter, clothing and diet are uncivilized. Yet perhaps the phrase of most consequence to this analysis is the deceptively simple, “no se puede poblar.” It is as if these peoples are truly beyond hope or redemption in Obregón’s eyes. The lands are “inhabitable” for Christians. As Radding argues, “these explorers, who sought mineral wealth, land and people, were looking for permanent towns with surplus products that could be turned into tribute commodities” (Radding 23). Evangelization was a prerequisite for “pacification” and pacification was prerequisite of establishing permanent settlement to supply mining operations. In the absence of these crucial factors, not only is the land dismissed, its peoples are equally disregarded. The land and the people are clearly inseparable. Yet, upon examination of the two cases of Paquimé (also known as Casas Grandes) and Cinaro, two focal places in Obregón’s textualscape, the paramount role of people is unmistakable.
Paquimé (Casas Grandes)

“And between A.D. 1250 and 1300, an imposing multistory adobe town was built on the banks of the Río Casas Grandes in the desert of Chihuahua. The ruins of this imposing site, […] Paquimé, reveal that it was the largest of all the ancient Puebloan towns.” –Richard F. Townsend, 2005

Radding argues that one manifestation of the bias for permanent settlement is the focus of expedition narratives on the built landscapes of northern Mexico (Radding 23). It is not an exaggeration to claim that Paquimé may represent the built landscape *par excellence*, as the architecture of the site impresses Obregón over any other, likening the structures to those of the ancient Romans (see figs. 6.1 and 6.2). 82 He also notes myriad practical factors for settlement such as precious metals, a water source, accessibility, and food supplies.

Empezando por la notable esperanza que dio y da esta popular ciudad de edificios que parecían fundados de antiguos romanos, adonde estuvo el general y su campo. *Son admiración de verla*, la cual esta en uso fértiles y hermosos llanos que la cercan lindas y *provechosas* montañas y pequeñas cordilleras de sierras. Estaba fundada el río debajo de Paquimé en sus riberas, el cual es el *más útil y provechoso* de cuantos vimos en aquellas provincias. Tenía adorno de hermosos y altos alamos, sauces y sabinas; *puédense aprovechar* de sus regadíos en sus

82 “Paquimé is located in present-day Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chihuahua “The earliest archeological remains for Casas Grandes [Paquimé] date from the eighth century C.E., showing a cluster of village settlements that later developed into an urban trading and ceremonial center (1200-1490). Sonoran villages exchanged food surpluses, cotton cloth, tanned deer hides, coral, and human captives in return for turquoise, copper ornaments, and ceramic trade ware produced in Casas Grandes. In addition, some villages in the Altar valley of western Sonora became sites of craft specialization, working shells gathered from the Gulf Coast into adornments destined for Casas Grandes.” (Radding 22)
fertiles riberas con facilidad y muy poca costa. Está muy poblada de casas de mucha grandeza, altura y fortaleza de seis y siete sobrados, torreadas y cercadas a manera de fuertes para amparo y defensa de los enemigos [...] Halláronse grasas de metales que los naturales debían de beneficiar y piedras de amolar las grasas; se entendió debían de ser metales de cobre porque hallamos entre los indios salvajes dos patenas de cobre labradas de vaciado [...] Hallamos caminos empedrados. (181-182, my emphasis)

From this considerably condensed passage describing Paquimé, it can be concluded that Obregón views the numerous advantages that the place holds for settlement: fertile land, access to water, permanent structures, defense from enemies and, the coups de grâce, “grasas de metales”. Yet, even though he is presented with “dos patenas de cobre” from the indigenous people living in the area just outside of the abandoned structure, he describes them as “silvestre animales”.

Había cerca de ellas [las casas] gente silvestre, rústica y advenediza que dejaban de habitar en casas de tanta grandeza por asistir y morar en bohíos de paja como silvestres animales al sol, aire y fríos. Son cazadores, comen todo género de caza y sabandijas silvestres y bellotas. Andan desnudos; ellas traen faldellines de cuero de venado adobado y algunos de las vacas. (182, my emphasis)

Epstein has argued that, while never stated overtly, Obregón concludes that the former inhabitants of Paquimé must have worked the metal, and not the indigenous people who present it to him.
Figure 6.1: Aerial view of the southern portion of Paquimé. Adriel Heisey, photographer.
Figure 6.2: Aerial view, looking southeast over the partially excavated site of Paquimé. Adriel Heisey, photographer.
Again, noting shelter, diet, and clothing, the people are represented negatively.

Concurrently, Obregón recognizes the site of Paquimé as one of potential, even reasoning that the people that populate the river of Paquimé can be “sujetas y señoreadas” and that the location “puede ser provisto de mercadurías por la Mar del Sur con que primero se pueble una villa en el valle de Señora” (182-183). However, the soldiers remain disillusioned with Paquimé despite the virtues that Obregón perceives.

La buena esperanza que les había sostenido de descubrir grandes poblazones, según y como tenían noticia, lo cual duró hasta que llegaron a esa ciudad despoblada de Paquimé, adonde del todo perdieron sus buenas esperanzas en no verla poblada de gentes conforme a la medida de sus deseos e imaginativa. (183)

The plurality of perception is once again evident. While the architectural structures are impressive, and Obregón sees potential for permanent settlement, the soldiers do not based solely on their perceptions of the people. In my view, Paquimé provides an interesting case of the tensions that exist in landscape perception even among men of ostensibly the same cultural and worldview. The soldiers and Obregón do not seem to view the same landscape, and Obregón certainly seems to differentiate himself from the “cobardes soldados” (186). While the soldiers continue to insist on finding a landscape that reflects the landscape of their minds, “otro México” or “otro Perú,” the criollo views the land strategically as part of a broader imperial society. This is evidenced in his “pitch” for Cinaro (the present-day area of Río Fuertes) as a focal place for the development of an enterprise of expansion. Cinaro, it would seem, presents all of the elements conducive to settlement.
Obregón is insistent that Cinaro will offer a strategic location from which to operate in *la banda del norte*, providing a landscape conducive to establishing Spanish missionary and mining settlements, and serving as a base of operations from which to expand Spanish holdings. “In America, it was from the cities that the European subject organized the conquest of the land,” and the establishment of a permanent city on the ‘Christian frontier’ would have been imperative to future expansion” (Verdesio 138). To borrow a term from Powell, Cinaro could serve as an “outpost of empire” on a distant, unstable frontier (Powell 179).

En esta provincia y sus rededores en campos circuito de cuarenta leguas, habrá **treinta mil hombres** pocos más o menos desde la sierra a la mar y desde Petatlán hasta Mayombo, ríos de etrambas [sic] fronteras. Es tierra de mucha serranía en la banda del norte, en la cual hay **gran cantidad de metales** [...] Sácanse de las de San Andrés mucha plata y se hubiera sacado de los demás descubrimientos si **estuvieran poblados**. De esta manera que habiendo **tan buena y bastante comodidad, así de gente en cantidad como de bastimentos, tierras y metales**, es averiguado que vuestra S.C.C.R.M. acrecentará en sus reales y riesgos de pocos pobladores, porque cien hombres son bastantes sustentarla, poblarla y defenderla con buen fuerte, rescate y moderación en los servicios personales y tributos en los naturales, a los cuales ante todas cosas se les ha de hacer buen tratamiento, porque de lo contrario sucedió alzarse y matar a los que allí estuvieron poblados cinco años como declaré en su capítulo y lugar conveniente. Y poblada esta villa, desde ella irán conquistando y poblando las de más adelante... (Obregón 112, my emphasis)

**Es Puerto y entrada** de las demás de delante de Yaquimi valles de Señora, Corazones, Cibola, Paquimé y la provincia de San Felipe del Nuevo México, porque para ir a ellas por sus rededores lo impide y estorba la temerosa y honorable serranía de la parte del norte, que está ocho leguas de Cinaro y del río adonde estuvo poblada la villa [...] Y siendo vuestra real majestad servido de mandar poblar la provincia de Cinaro, en la cual **hay en cuarenta leguas de tierra veinticinco mil naturales**, es cosa cierta que desde ellas se pueden ir poblando y reduciendo a nuestra santa Fe católica las de más provincias áridas de adelante, en las cuales hay mucha gente poblada que habitan en **casas** de asiento y terrado, poseen **bastimentos** y hay en sus tierras cantidad y gruesa de **metales**; y así lo vi y experimenté [...] Y estando estas provincias pobladas, V.M.
hará notable servicio a Dios nuestro Señor y aumentará en su real Corona vasallos, tributos y quintos en cantidad [...] para el aumento de las contrataciones y granjerías de esta Nueva España... (Obregón 141-142, my emphasis)

Obregón depicts Cinaro as strategically located to offer access to other focal places: Cibola, Corazones, Paquimé and San Felipe de Nuevo México. Furthermore, all of the resources for establishing settlement are found there: gente, bastimentos, metales, and tierras. Obregón’s argument seems constructed to address what Goodman cites as the principal problems faced by the Crown and its viceroys in the northern borderlands: the challenge of rough terrain, an aspect to which I have eluded, and indigenous attacks.

The mining camps of the far frontier, many but newly opened by the activities of Francisco de Ibarra, were suffering particularly from the disastrous effects of constant Indian raids. Mazapil, rapidly developed early in 1568 by a heavy mining rush from Zacatecas, dwindled from more than a hundred and fifty to some thirty inhabitants by 1573 [...] The new mines at Indé and San Martín continued only precariously active [...] From the farthest northern outpost at Santa Bárbara to Tazazalca below the Río Lerma, and from Guadalajara to the Huaxteca, Spanish occupation was ever in danger. (Powell 188, 1944)

84 Recall that, while Obregón had referred to the soldiers disappointment in Cinaro not being “otro México,” he had also noted that the people had been viewed positively by himself as well as the soldiers (see page 91 of this text).

85 “The terrain presented formidable obstacles. The chief sites were hundreds of miles from the coast and located in arid, mountainous regions. Zacatecas was 8000 feet above sea-level and short of water [...] Attacks by the Chichimecas cut off Zacatecas in 1561 and repeatedly prevented mining at San Luis Potosí.” (174)

86 Powell also describes the development of a system of presidios and defensive towns placed at strategic points in the tierra de guerra of the silver frontier, a system that began during the administration of the second viceroy of New Spain, Luis de Velasco (1551-1564), and reached its greatest development under the fourth viceroy, Martín Enríquez de Almanza (1568-1580). (Powell 181)
“Si estuviera poblado” Obregón reasons, Cinaro would provide a future strategic location from which soldiers could “ir poblando y reduciendo”. The notion of “poblar” is important, because Cinaro is already considered part of the larger empire in Obregón’s textualscape. It now only need be molded in the image of said empire by Spanish or criollo vassals to better and more effectively serve the Crown.

When Spanish officials referred to settlement, they used the verb “to people” (poblar). But even this word bore connotations and significance that diverged sharply from the English word habitation. Poblar defines the arrival of people, rather than the construction of buildings or dwellings, as the critical step in occupying a region. Furthermore, to the Spanish Crown, peopling (poblando) did not establish the right to rule but was an activity sometimes taken after imperial authority had been established by naming and solemn declarations. (Seed 123)

Just as Obregón has projected a past onto the landscape (as discussed in chapter three of this dissertation), he likewise projects a future onto it, a future that he transcribes onto the textualscape. This textualscape provides a space in/on which the potential of the Americas forms a tangible part of the Spanish empire that officials on the other side of the Atlantic can hold and possess; an affirmation that, from Cinaro, the Spanish empire can expand its holdings and increase its vassals and tributes.

Tierras de las Indias no son todas inhabiteles y por la mayor parte son habitables […] La mayor parte de ellas son habitables, de lindos aires, calidades y habitaciones agradables, fructíferas y que en ellas se dan, crián y cogen las cosas que en Castilla […] Y en la mayor parte de estas tierras firmes y costas hay partes cómodas y pobladas para que V.M. emplee sus vasallos y para convertir a los ignorantes de nuestra santa Fe católica. (Obregón 211-214)

The Spanish self-image, encapsulated in Castilla, allows the reader to visualize an Hispanisized America. This includes the transference of Christianity in the form of the
evangelization project, as well as the economic institutions that the Spanish brought with them, the *encomienda* and *repartimiento*. The perception of the landscape – the land and its people – had to have been viewed, at least in part, through the lens of these institutions, and in turn would have driven the creation of Obregon’s textualscape. Just as these institutions and a human Other are inextricably connected, the lands and its peoples that were forced to absorb them are likewise inextricably linked. “As places gather bodies in their midst in deeply enculturated ways, so cultures conjoin bodies in concrete circumstances of emplacement” (Casey 46).
“Empires move outward in space as a way of moving forward in time; the “prospect” that opens up is not just a spatial scene but a projected future of “development” and exploitation.”
– W.J.T. Mitchell in “Imperial Landscape”, 2002

The Imperial Landscape

Álvaro Félix Bolaños examined the interrelation of the elements of la frontera, la ciudad, el status quo colonial, and the relación, and their roles in the transference of the European city to the Americas. He concluded that the foundation of the city, and in particular the construction of the central plaza, in la frontera americana was formulated by the imposition of apartheid, the reproduction of European intellectual and physical structures (legislatures, buildings, religious iconography), public displays of punishment for dissidence, and “el obsesivo y masivo registro textual de estos procesos en una forma discursiva llamada ‘relación’” (27). As is evidenced in the Historia, no one of these

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87 Bolaños likens Pratt’s contact zone and the intrinsic issues of two cultures meeting to what he terms “status quo colonial” (Bolaños 18). Here the asymmetrical relationships of power that Pratt cites are realized.
elements, physical structures, violence, or writing, necessarily precedes the other, but they do function together. In fact, Obregón himself recognizes the functions of writing and of violence.

La suma potestad y sabiduría de Dios Todopoderoso que con incomparable equidad y concierto crió sustenta y conserva a todas sus criaturas, puso en mayor merecimiento y grado al hombre sacado del dechado y grandeza de su retrato divino, al cual dio y ordenó el loable y virtuoso ejercicio de letras para que con él sepan y alcancen los secretos y casos convenientes y difíciles para que se rijan y gobiernen en justicia, paz, equidad y concierto con que justamente puso, ordenó y permite la milicia para el castigo de los sucesos y casos desordenados de que tenemos verdadera experiencia. (223, my emphasis)

I would like to focus primarily on the how the production of a meticulous discursive record served as a means of reproduction of Europeanized space, particularly in terms of indigenous identity creation. I have argued that Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España presents a complicated case in which the functions of the relación and the historia overlap, for while Obregón provides an historical perspective, he also relates his own personal experience. This results in a dual projection of a Spanish past and a Spanish future onto the landscape, at once appropriating the landscape and molding it in the imperial image through the medium of the textualscape. As Obregón’s projection of future mining settlements on the landscape of the borderlands of New Spain reflect, the frontier represents for the narrator a place to be worked by indigenous hands, but molded by Spanish ones. By expanding the role of the relación in Bolaños’s analysis in terms of the larger framework of Lefebvre’s notions of produced

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88 Yet we have also seen how this textualscape can be “decoded” or “read” to reveal the fissures through which the indigenous landscape emerges, a point upon which I will elaborate shortly.
and reproduced social space, we can gain insight into how the textualscape serves as a means of such spatial reproduction.

Lefebvre argued that (social) space is a (social) product, citing four important implications of this notion: 1) natural space is disappearing; 2) every society produces a space; 3) our knowledge of that space must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production, and 4) the History of space is not to be confused with a causal chain of events (i.e. dates) or with a sequence. How does this relate to Obregón’s textualscape? This dissertation has focused the third implication, the reproduction of the knowledge of the produced space. However, in the process, the present work has also revealed how these implications overlap and collide with another, and as such, I will address each of these implications briefly and consider where we might go from here and areas for future study.

First, if the History of space is not to be confused with causal or sequential history, what is the text’s role in this configuration? As exhibited in Obregón’s textualscape, when we read the textualscape, we find a “History.” This history would tend to be read as the “real,” to borrow a term from Higgins. History, after all, in the occidental conceptualization of it, has occurred, is past. However if we decode the textualscape, we find that this history is one that has been imposed on the landscape. Does the landscape hold a history or does this only exist in the land as percept? Whose history does the landscape then hold? The ‘land’s’? The indigenous peoples’? Or is this projection the history of one criollo in the guise of universal history? Or does the textualscape represent an amalgam of all of the echoes of all of these histories?
The other implication that Lefebvre cites is that Natural (physical) space is disappearing. While it would be difficult to argue against this point in today’s increasingly ecologically-conscious society, as Nature becomes more and more “lost to thought,” a “negative utopia,” it must also be considered that before the arrival of the European to the Americas, a socially produced space already existed (Lefebvre 31). I emphasize this point to call attention to the need to avoid the pitfalls of what Verdesio refers to as the “image of the blank page.”

Modern-day humans were not born yesterday. If one does not acknowledge that the American territory was not a blank page until the arrival of the Conquistadors, one runs the risk of imagining it in an impoverishing way. That impoverished vision of the past will, eventually, have an effect on the way in which projects for the future— for which that past is the foundation— are conceived. The historicization I am proposing in lieu of the mystification represented by the image of the blank page (also interpretable as a zero degree of history) could serve as an antidote against an ideologized representation of American lands in general […] It could serve, in other words, to promote a critical activity that, through the examination of the past, would help us produce a less Eurocentric representation of the present as well as more solid projects for the future. (Verdesio 156)

This point also brings us to Lefebvre’s implication that every society produces its own social space. While this analysis has focused on Obregón’s projections onto the landscape to demonstrate its effects on the social space produced, it must be emphasized that these are just that— projections. We see myriad moments of negotiation in Obregón’s text in which the indigenous peoples are active participants in the production of social space, not the passive receptacles that the depiction of the institutions of the encomienda and evangelization would seem to intimate. In short, the production of the social space has been negotiated by multiple cultures and societies. Furthermore, it has
been demonstrated that this negotiated social space has been constructed over the palimpsest of the *a priori* indigenous social spaces. Thus, while I argue that the textualscape is a tool in the reproduction of knowledge of that socially produced space, the textualscape represents a landscape that can never be attained, a simulacrum, to borrow a term from Cosgrove, “the realized image of a reality that never existed” (Cosgrove 81, 1998). Indeed, it is perhaps precisely what is not seen in the textualscape of the *Historia* that is most telling, or the limitations of the representation of the indigenous social space, representations that I have argued are reduced to the most fundamental elements of shelter, clothing and crop production, which themselves are described more in terms of their presence or absence than in any detailed description. When descriptive detail is provided, it is provided in terms of material value rather than cultural value or significance. As such, while I have shown that fissures do exist in Obregón’s textualscape that reveal the palimpsest of indigenous social space, I conclude that the projection of an imagined European landscape eclipses it more often than it reveals it.

Lefebvre’s final implication states, “If space is a product, our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production” (Lefebvre 36). Obregón’s textualscape demonstrates attempts at molding social space, assigning places to the social relations of production and reproducing that social space. Thus, I argue that the symbolic representations of landscape in Obregón’s *Historia*, the textualscape, is tied to “the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations” (Lefebvre 32). I postulate that
the discursive production of the textualscape serves as a means of producing such knowledge. Derrida argued that language is not a medium for conveying meaning, but for the production of meaning (1978). In the sixteenth-century Spanish empire, the obsessive maintenance of the written record cited by Bolaños, coupled with the Roman way of thinking about law as permanent written text, predominantly in the form of the relación, crónica or historia, imbued the textual production of space with a certain degree of unquestioned authority.89

The monomania in the Colony for scribal matters, which demanded the registration before a notary of all kinds of actions, manifestations, transactions, taking possession of land or offices, foundations of cities, etc., says Millares Carol, was the continuation of the ritual concept of law so characteristic of Spain during the High Middle Ages. (Weckmann 469)

As Cosgrove and Daniels argue in “Spectacle and Text”, in Europe, “Humanism elevated the text over image: ut pictura poesis. Leon Battista Alberti, whose On Painting (1435-6) became the handbook of the new orthodoxy in the arts, elevated storia to the highest point of artistic endeavor” (65). This elevation of text over image found in

89 “The laws and decrees that ruled colonization and the administration of justice in New Spain, and the methods employed in applying them, derive in a direct line from the medieval Spanish system of law, still in force in the Peninsula early in the sixteenth century. In its turn, this system was on the one hand an inheritance from Germanic, and especially Visigothic, law, and on the other from Roman and canon law as they were reflected in the Councils of Toledo. In the thirteenth century, laws were systematized and partially codified under the influence of a new interest in Roman imperial law. In that body of medieval laws, a concept of the respublica was taking shape according to which the entity that we call the State today was the constitutional equivalent of men’s temporal life in all its aspects. Such a concept laid upon authority the obligation to care for temporal welfare and to collaborate in spiritual welfare; the result was that in civil society religious aspirations, as well as economic and what we might call cultural aspirations, were inseparable.” (Weckmann 442)
Renaissance humanist writings “represents a long conservative tradition of respect for the stable and substantive authority of text” (66). Angel Rama confirms the elevation of text in La ciudad letrada/ The Lettered City (1996), arguing that in the early modern period in European culture, writing “took on an almost sacred aura” (24).

In New Spain, this sacred aura only increased exponentially, as writing served to legitimize and foment the Spanish project of imperial expansion. The extensive discursive production in New Spain not only created a tremendous bureaucracy of letrados or “lettered functionaries” consisting of myriad “administrators, educators, professionals, notaries, religious personnel, and other wielders of pen and paper” (Rama 18), but also served as a way to provide some semblence of control over the landscape for the vice regal officials, and for those on the other side of the Atlantic. “La historia contada, por su parte, les asegura a los lectores coloniales la veracidad de estos hechos, la legitimidad del proceso de fundación de civilización española y, principalmente, la posibilidad de reproducción de los hechos en otro tiempo y lugar futuros y por otros viajeros/ conquistadores” (Bolaños 12).

When we consider this in terms of the textualscape, we must consider how this representation of the-land-and-its-people is constructed discursively, and its role in imperial expansion: “The writer’s eye is always in some sense colonizing the landscape, mastering and portioning, fixing zones and poles, arranging and deepening the scene as the object of desire” (Spurr 26-27). If we recall the deceptively innocuous discursive tool of “description” cited by Padrón, upon decoding that description we see that writing is arguably the most violent landscaping weapon, and furthermore, once in the hands of its
readers, a violent “mindscaping” weapon, to borrow a term from Olwig. But who is mindscaping whom? While, as I argue in Chapter 1, Obregón’s role as a criollo would have placed him at a disadvantage for winning a commission for further exploration, the text does not reveal any sense of acknowledgement of a lower status on the part of the narrating subject. To the contrary, Obregón views himself as an active participant in the Spanish project of imperial expansion in both economic and spiritual terms. If we consider the *Historia* as a part of a larger imperial discourse, and I would suggest that we do, the landscape is created not in the top-down fashion of the survey or the map, but rather in the bottom-up fashion of the itinerary. I believe that this speaks to a more organic conception of landscape in which, while the panoptic eye of the distant empire certainly plays a major role, the faceless soldier, *escribano*, African, friar, Native American, prospector, translator, *relator*, mestizo, and yes, criollo, are active participants in the creation of their social space and of how the representation of that landscape is exported back to the “center” of empire.

Mitchell and Olwig have called for the reexamination and consideration of what landscape “does” and its role in projects of imperial expansion. If, as Mitchell argues, the Whig narrative of science, reason and naturalistic representation overcame contradictions for the British colonial project in the Pacific in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I would argue that, for Spain in the sixteenth, it was evangelization, pacification/settlement and the textualscape, in which “the real subject” is not the borderlands of New Spain, but
Spanish “imperial ‘vision’” of what should be there (Mitchell 19).\(^{90}\) The “place as polity” (to borrow a term from Olwig) of the *encomienda* “naturalized” Spanish imperial expansion in New Spain by subsuming the humans that lived in that landscape as part of a “civilized” march toward progress in both space and time, a naturalization played out by the everyday participants in imperial expansion.\(^{91}\)

Material and discursive factors tend to be inextricably intertwined with each other. Moreover, if one scrutinizes the literature of landscape and nature in its different manifestations […] the use that genre’s representations of the real make of different systems of tropes quickly becomes evident […] Any text is taken to represent [in much scholarship of Spanish American literature] a reality that is “pre-given,” whose existence has the status of an objective fact, an object unmediated by any symbolic system […] It is in a literature seemingly most concerned with representing a “real” that we are presented with a radical defamiliarization [sic] of established notions of the “real” in terms of both the experience of the settler societies seeking to “naturalize” their relationship to their surroundings and of that of native populations which see their “real” reshaped by the actions and representations of the colonizing people. In reading this literature of the “real” we, as readers, are made all the more conscious of the real’s artificial, re-constructed quality. (Higgins 159-160)

Of course, the principle function of this representation that I would like to stress is its role in identity creation of an indigenous Other, an Other that tends to be depicted in

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\(^{90}\) The ambivalence of European vision (“Romantic” versus “scientific,” “neoclassicism” versus “biological thought,” “imitations and expression” versus “philosophical speculation”) is mediated by its absorption into a progressive Whig narrative that overcomes all contradictions in the conquering of the Pacific by science, reason, and naturalistic representation. (Mitchell 19)

\(^{91}\) While Olwig’s study moves in time and place from Renaissance England to twentieth-century Germany and the United States, (where, he argues, the idea of nature and country as landscape scenery developed much of its present day meaning), his study is valuable here in terms of revealing the “hidden agenda” of landscape and how “our environment, conceived in landscape scenery, is fundamentally linked to our political landscape” (Olwig xxxii).
the text in terms of the binaries of male or female; naked or clothed, or peaceful or bellicose, or other such oppositions that are culturally defined and reliant upon one another (Derrida, 1978). In this endeavor, we gain insight from the field of Human Geography, which considers the effects of mapping on the human experience through time.\footnote{Human Geography emerged as a discipline in the 1880’s in Germany when Friedrich Ratzel sought to layout the conceptual foundations of a new discipline – \textit{Anthropogeographie}, a human geography. For information on this discipline’s notions of environmental determinism, historical particularism and regionalism influenced by positivism. See Agnew.} In the case of Obregón’s \textit{Historia}, I refer to discursive mapping and its role in identity formation. Many scholars in this field, (Gregory, Thrift, Pred, et al.) have sought to “locate geographical concerns at the heart of social theory by showing how the engagements between the individual and the social are always played out in particular arenas – places, domains, locales” (Agnew, et al. 136). This recognition is reflective of a shift in the field away from descriptive fieldword and positivist science to a hermeneutic approach that recognizes “the collision between the data and the interpreter” (Duncan and Ley 8). The use of such metaphors as spectacle, theatre, and text that have emerged over the past few decades from the field highlight the view of “landscape as irony, where an incongruous emplacement destabilizes meaning and provokes greater reflexivity, challenging the taken-for-granted world” (Duncan and Ley 14).

In this vein, Obregón’s mapping project, or better stated, his landscaping project, cannot be disengaged from the narrating subject, nor from the space in which it takes place, nor the human elements, Spanish, indigenous, and African that are included in that project. The “reassertion of particularities, of specifics, of places” coupled with the
understanding that the itinerary, like the map, does not merely convey meaning, but produces it, are conceptualizations from the field of Human Geography that clearly apply to the present study.

One way to investigate the duality of the representations of places is by situating the sites within an analysis of discourses about the Other. Such an analysis highlights the duality by showing how difference in the site of the Other is ‘recuperated’ by appropriating it into a categorical framework that is familiar and useful within the site from which the representation emanates. To claim simply that discourses of the Other ‘distort’ the nature of other places and peoples by representing them in ways that are alien to the residents of such places, while justified, misses the inescapability of discourses. Any discourse regardless of its claims, cannot create mimesis. (Duncan 39)

Obregón wrote from a very particular loci of anunciation and at a time when new means of defining and categorizing became imperative to the Spanish imperial project: “European expansion after 1500 gave a boost to defining and surveying regions and the need to draw administrative boundaries and to make inventories of assets became important” (Agnew, et al. 367). As this study has demonstrated, the land and the people are inextricably linked in the representations created of the landscape of the borderlands of New Spain. Just as Duncan proposes that discourses about the Other reveal much about representations of place, discourses of landscape likewise reveal much about the representations of the Other.

The bodies, not only of so-called primitive peoples but of all the colonized, have been a focal point of colonialist interest which, as in the case of landscape description, proceeds from the visual to various kinds of valorization: the material value of the body as labor supply, its aesthetic value as object of artistic representation, its ethical value as a mark of innocence or degradation, its scientific value as evidence of racial difference or inferiority, its humanitarian value as the sign of suffering, its erotic value as the object of desire. (Spurr 22)
Humans in Obregón’s textualscape, are viewed in terms of clothing, shelter, crops, conversion, and mining. Furthermore, as part and parcel of this project, they are defined by culturally constructed binaries: “salvaje”/ “de policía”; “serrano”/ “pueblo”; “caribe”/ “no comen carne humana”; “desnudo”/ “vestido”; “silvestre”/ “cultivan la tierra”, and “infieles”/ “cristianos”. This system of binaries permits a certain degree of convenience in depicting indigenous groups. For example, even when groups are described as peaceful in the serranía, they may quickly be dismissed as naked savages who do not cultivate the land and live in rustic shelters in lands that are “en extrema oscura” and “inhabitable” (148-149). At the same time, groups that resist Spanish encroachment may still be depicted as gente de policía. Furthermore, “los naturales” (a term which only serves to reinforce their closer association with the wild, untamed realm of nature), regardless of their depiction as “salvajes” or “gente de policía,” by virtue of these terms are depicted en masse. The indigenous individual disappears into the imperial landscape. With the exception of Luisa the interpreter, Obregón does not describe with any detail any indigenous individual.

Obregón does relate a story about “un indio valiente y osado”. When he and six other soldiers enter a village he calls Temosa along the Río Mayombo, they begin to take corn from a man’s house. “Nos salió a flechar y hacer daño en las personas y caballos de cargar sin temer del daño que les (sic) podíamos hacer…Fue caso digno de loa y memoria atreverse un solo indio a cinco soldados” (146). However this is quickly dismissed as the exception to the norm, when Obregón immediately adds that the hundred
other Indians in the village did not dare to come down to aid the *indio valiente*, or even come near the Spaniards.

Moreover, in the aspects that have been examined here, spiritual and economic, the indigenous peoples in Obregón’s textualscape are represented as ignorant and incapable of self-rule or intelligence. In all matters spiritual, these are a people in desperate need of Christianity, and in some instances, “atentos y espantados de oír cosas tan preciosas y que sus rústicos, bárbaros y bajos entendimientos no las comprendían ni osaban determinar” (101). In material terms, they are depicted as people who are simply sitting on wealth, ignorant to the potential of the landscape in which they live, and thereby not deserving of its governance.

These perceptions on the part of the narrating subject indicate a “doctrine of natural inheritance” that drives the very manner in which the landscape is perceived (Spurr 29). Over three thousand leagues of continuous land that holds such great hope and promise, Obregón laments, if only they were under the charge of the civilized Spaniard. This
bespeaks a Eurocentric notion that would seem to persist in what could be considered the new genre of the textualscape, the Hollywood film.

In the manner of Western historiography, Eurocentric cinema narrates penetration into the Third World through the figure of the “discoverer.” In most Western films about the colonies […] the status of hero falls to the voyager (often a scientist) who masters a new land and its treasures, the value of which the “primitive” residents had been unaware. It is this construction of the consciousness of “value” as a pretext for (capitalist) ownership that legitimizes the colonizer’s act of appropriation. In *Lawrence of Arabia* and the *Indiana Jones* series of the 1980’s, the camera relays the hero’s dynamic movement across a passive, static space, gradually stripping the land of its “enigma” as the spectator wins visual access to oriental treasures through the eyes of the explorer-protagonist. (Shohat and Stam 146)

The Empire of Landscape and Identity

The textualscape, recalling Appadurai’s use of the suffix -scape as connoting “fluid” and “perspectival,” is a creative narrative act that represents the landscape as perceived by the narrator. It attempts to embody, textually, or even visually, the dynamic site perceived, the land and its people, and demonstrates the cultural function of landscape. It is a means for the (re)production of social space and, most important to this investigation, inherently assigns social relations of reproduction and relations of production. The textualscape subsumes a people. This does not imply a sinister, conscious plot on the part of the narrator, or the empire for that matter.

It might be objected that at such and such a period, in such and such a society (ancient/slave, medieval/feudal, etc.), the active groups did not ‘produce’ space in the sense in which a vase, a piece of furniture, a house, or a fruit tree is ‘produced’. So how exactly did those groups contrive to produce their space?
The question is a highly pertinent one and covers all ‘fields’ under consideration. Even neocapitalism or ‘organized’ capitalism, even technocratic planners and programmers, cannot produce a space with a perfectly clear understanding of cause and effect, motive and implication. (Lefebvre 37)

Regardless of relations of motive and implication, cause and effect, the landscape and the textualscape do signal cultural phenomena that must be addressed, if only to address the question: To what degree have we been “mindscaped”?

The semiotic features of landscape, and the historical narratives they generate, are tailor-made for the discourse of imperialism, which conceives itself precisely (and simultaneously) as an expansion of landscape understood as an inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of “culture” and “civilization” into a “natural” space in a progress that is itself narrated as “natural.” Empires move outward in space as a way of moving forward in time; the “prospect” that opens up is not just a spatial scene but a projected future of “development” and exploration. (Mitchell, 17)

Return to Topia Road

When we return to the the case-place of Topia Road where the Ibarra expedition first tread so long ago, and where Leib and Walker visited in 1995 in order to retrace the journey of West and Parsons, we find that the landscape continues to tells a story of power and identity. San Antonio de la Sierra, a village along the Topia Road that Parsons had described in his field notes as “a town of 15 families” seemed at first glance to Leib Walker to be little changed (see fig. 7.1). However, upon closer inspection, differences emerged.
Our visit went seemingly unnoticed by the local residents. We soon saw why: San Antonio was a virtual ghost town. The 2000 Mexican census confirms our observation, listing San Antonio’s population as eight. Houses seemed to be in good condition—many had a pickup truck in the yard or padlocked inside flimsy garages—but they were empty and shackled shut, their windows boarded over as in La Mesa. Perhaps 90 percent of the town was vacant. We were informed that these houses had been built and possessions left for returning migrants who planned to retire in San Antonio. The presence of well-built, empty houses awaiting the return of their owners is common in many other parts or rural Mexico [...] When we queried local residents regarding settlements farther along the Camino Antiguo, to which Parsons referred in this field notes, we were met with either puzzlement or only vague remembrances of such places. Our retracing of West and Parsons’ footsteps on the northern route ended at San Antonio because it is effectively the last settlement on the new road. (565-567)

And Topia and its outskirts, the place that had lured the Ibarra expedition over 400 years before?

We inquired about completing this part of the route but were quickly disabused by the locals. The area around and west of Topia represents the greatest change in the region [...] The source of Topia’s recent economic affluence is not wholly known. Although León noted that farming was very difficult in and around Topia, given the hilly terrain, the Enciclopedia de los Municipios de Mexico lists beans, corn, potatoes, and wheat as the area’s main agricultural crops. On numerous occasions, however, local informants mentioned the most important economic engine of Topia: cultivation and production of illegal drugs [...] The production of both marijuana and opium had spread from the mountains down into the valleys just outside Culiacán which itself had become a main center for the Mexican drug trade. (576-577)
Figure 7.1: The “despoblado” at San Antonio (Walker and Leib, 2002)

*Top:* The plaza in the hamlet of San Antonio de la Sierra (West and Parsons 1941, 408).

*Bottom:* The plaza looked much the same in 1995, but around it additional houses, many of them vacant and padlocked, were scattered in decreasing density. A new road from La Mesa de los Navar entered from the right. (Photograph by Johnathan Walker)
Repeatedly asked by locals if they were CIA or DEA agents, Leib and Walker were finally told that the western *barrancas* once traveled by Parsons and West were unsafe, and locals emphatically warned them against hiking down them toward the Pacific Coast. One informant candidly told them, “Even WE don’t go there”: “In a supreme mix of irony and practicality, it is the very isolation of Topia and the region to its west that makes cultivation of marijuana and opium poppies viable” (Leib and Walker 578).

Radding’s study of the Sonoaran landscape demonstrates the centrality of the environment to stories of power and colonial confrontation, arguing first, that people create the landscapes in which they live even as their cultures are shaped by their physical surroundings, and second, that geographical differences matter in the course of human events because history occurs and is recorded in both space and time (Radding 3). This is not a call for a return to environmental determinism, but rather a recognition that humans and land are interactive and mutually interdependent. The landscape holds a story. “These dual histories of imperial and ecological frontiers develop the concept of cultural ecology through the association between human societies and the material worlds they create, which are perceived in the layered moral and historical meanings of particular geographies and landscapes” (Radding 5).

At the time when Obregón wrote his *Historia* the landscape was being radically transformed. Cultural exchange and identity negotiation, violence, socio-economical and historical forces, all left their mark on the land-and-its-peoples. But this is a landscape that can be decoded and read – and that has not remained static. As Leib and Walker’s study illuminates, migration from Sonora *al otro lado* – literally, to the other side of the
border- and drug-trafficking have emerged as the new historical and socio-economic forces; the U.S.-Mexican border as the new *frontera*, and the empty rural villages awaiting their homeowners return, the new *despoblado*. This landscape is once again, or perhaps better stated, still, determined and driven by some outside force, a force perhaps less visible than the Spanish soldiers. A sinister, conscious plot on the part of the empire? Probably not. But a cultural phenomenon that merits further study nonetheless.

**Subjects for Further Study:**

I have argued that transference of Christianity in the form of the evangelization project, as well as the economic institutions that the Spanish brought with them, would have driven, partially but significantly, Obregón’s perception of the landscape – the land and its people – and in turn would have driven the creation of Obregon’s textualscape. As I have shown, in New Spain, notions of “culture” and “civilization” are directly tied to mining and evangelization, and such particularities must be considered when addressing the issue of landscape’s function in the formation of identity, as do the particularities of the narrator’s information project, as such projects may shift over time. I have shown that as Obregón sets out to serve two primary functions, that of providing a history and providing advice for future settlement, he creates a textualscape that serves as means of landscape appropriation. Just as the second generation texts played a role in the configuration of “una imagen de la frontera del norte” the textualscape played a role in the configuration of an image of the indigenous Other. All of these aspects seem to
reflect a changing perception of the landscape in the borderlands of New Spain in the 1580’s, one marked by a very pragmatic appropriation and exploitation in which material enterprise has emerged as the matter-of-fact business of imperial expansion.

I believe that a comparative study that treats the texts generated from other expeditions that Obregón references will help to gain insight into broader cultural conceptions of space, place and landscape of the second generation of *entRADas*, and the degree to which those notions are driven by the individual project of the narrating subject, cultural influences, and intertextuality, particularly Hernán Gallegos’ *relación* of the Chamuscado-Rodríguez expedition (1582) and Diego Pérez de Luxan’s account of the Antonio Espejo Expedition entitled *Entrada que hizo en el Nuevo México, Antonio de Espejo en el año 82* (1582). The *relación* written by Hernán Gallegos, who served as notary for the expedition undertaken by Francisco Sánchez Chamuscado, describes the landscape as far North as Taos, as far East as the Pecos Mountains, and as far West as the Zuñi Pueblos. Additionally, Antonio Espejo’s official *relación* (1586) regarding the expedition he undertook in 1582, as well as the document composed by Luxán would lend themselves to such a comparative study. While this group had set out in search of the friars Rodríguez and López who had stayed behind from the Chamuscado expedition, once they knew these friars had perished, they pressed on to look for mines, traveling as far north as central Arizona, and visiting over sixty pueblos. The comparison of these texts to Obregón’s would be conducive to an analysis of plurality of perception, and perhaps reveal some of Obregón’s omissions, exposing more fissures in his textualscape that reveal more about the indigenous social space. Also, the inclusion of Pérez de
Ribas’ history of the Jesuit missionary enterprise in the region, Historia de los Triumphos de nuestra santa fe entre gentes las más bárbaras, y fieras del Nuevo Orbe (1645), would provide a useful source, broadening the historical framework and providing an additional history to draw upon, offering perhaps even more insight, particularly in terms of the advice that Obregón offers in his text, and the fruition or abandonment of such recommendations.

This investigation has touched on the notion that the narrating subject makes important decisions about what the reader is permitted, or not, to “see” in the textualscape. However, as has been demonstrated, the narrating subject will also be influenced by the anticipation of the very reader for whom he writes. The application of reception theory, such as Wolfgang Iser’s concept of “literary anthropology” wherein the text reveals something about the reader will be particularly applicable, specifically in bringing to light how the texts reveal, as Flint and Flint have worded it, “the cultural assumptions of author and reader alike” (10). This theoretical standpoint may reveal larger trends in a comparative study, particularly where different reading publics might be considered.

Terms admittedly taken for granted, such as body, the self, the person, identity and subject could be examined further, in particular in terms of cultural conceptions and personal motivations as layered on the body. In Mapping the Subject, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift argue that the subject, figuring into geographical discourse, has been little examined. While Thrift has examined the Subject in terms of both structure and agency (as opposed to, for example, Marxist theory which discounts agency for structure), the
authors here recognize that “this dualism has not exhausted the mapping of the subject”
and in particular, regarding the terrain of language, or discourse, as it is “neither structure
nor agency and both structure and agency”(4). Additionally, Pile and Thrift employ the
metaphor of six “pathways” over the terrain of the subject: position, movement,
practices, encounters, visuality, and aesthetics/ethics. How do these pathways relate to
the narrating subject, moving across perceived space, transcribing what he sees to text?

Finally, the issue of memory, that of the narrating subject and that of collective
cultural groups, may be examined in greater detail in Obregón. For example, Hopkins
Durazo notes the “huacales con red” that Obregón describes were “posiblemente sólo
fantasías del escritor, influenciado por lo que continuamente vio en la ciudad de México,
donde residió por casi veinte años antes de terminar su relación de la expedición” (18).
To what degree would this twenty year gap between the events recorded and their
representation have affected Obregón’s textualscape?

By continuing to answer Lefebvre’s call to stay away from the subjet-object
relationship that has separated mental and physical or “real” space, and by considering
the body and the moving through, the perceived-conceived-lived triad, perhaps we can
gain better understanding of the intimate relationship between landscape and cultural
identity formation.93 *Historia de los descubrimientos de Nueva España* by Baltasar
Obregón presents a rich textualscape worthy of further analysis on many levels, that
cannot be thoroughly examined in this dissertation. The text, and the loci of enunciation

93 Spatial practices (perceived space) presuppose a society’s space; conceptualized space
(conceived space) is the space of planners and engineers; representational space (lived
space) is space as it is directly lived and includes systems of non-verbal symbols and
signs.
from which it emerges, represent a field of inquiry that has only begun to be examined. Obregón’s *Historia*, layered in meaning and nuances, offers an opportunity for productive discursive analysis. Clearly, “an already produced space can be decoded, can be read” (Lefebvre 17). This dissertation has aimed to contribute to the study of Latin American Colonial discourse by examining a little-studied but important and rich text. It has also aimed to explore further a more organic conception of landscape, one not limited to the panopticon of the center of authority, but rather one that happens close to the ground and considers the people, spaces, places and perceptions that ultimately constitute it.
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