

## CORONADO'S DISCOVERY OF THE SEVEN CITIES.

BY REV. EDWARD E. HALE, D.D.

---

It is with great pleasure that I read a part of a letter from Lieut. John G. Bourke, of the United States Army, on the location of the "seven cities" of Cibola, discovered by Coronado, in 1540. From the time of the Cabots, adventurers had been lured on by the hope of finding the "seven cities" founded by the seven bishops who, according to the legend, had sailed west from Portugal.<sup>1</sup> Coronado, at last, in following out the clue given by the lying friar, Marcos de Niza, came out at the seven cities of Cibola, and with the discovery of these seven villages, the quest for the "seven cities" for the time subsided. But we are obliged to renew it, that we may determine what were the "seven cities" of Coronado.

Forty years after him, Espejo, in pushing his independent line of discovery by the valley of the Rio Grande, supposed he had found Coronado's seven cities. Following his indications, I ventured the suggestion, in the second volume of the "Popular History of America," that these towns were the pueblos of the Zuñi, fixed by our geographers in about longitude 109° W., latitude 35° N. Lieut. Bourke, one of those intelligent officers of the army who are doing so much to enlarge our knowledge, both of the history and geography of these interesting regions, has himself followed a large part of Coronado's route, or what it appears to be. His interesting letter seems to shew that we are to find Coronado's seven cities, not with the Zuñi, but in the seven

---

<sup>1</sup> See note XXIV., Irving's Columbus, Vol. III.

towns of the Moquis in North-eastern Arizona. It is quite possible that Espejo's towns were the Zuñi villages, and Coronado's those of the Moqui. It is to be observed that there is more than one instance recorded where the people of these very interesting tribes inhabited groups of seven towns.

Hakluyt and Ramusio had preserved for us one of the original reports of Marcos de Niza, whose exaggerations and lies started the Spaniards on this enterprise. They also give us some of Coronado's manly reports of his Quixotic expedition. As lately as 1838, Ternaux-Compans discovered and published two additional narratives of the expedition;—one by Pedro de Castañeda de Nagera, and one by Juan Jaramillo, a captain under Coronado. The first of these is long and careful, and gives to us the detail of Coronado's whole route. Jaramillo's account is shorter, but supplies some interesting local color.

In all the accounts we are fortunately able to place one point of departure. This is the Casa Grande, near the Gila river, still perfectly identified. It is described and figured by our associate, Dr. Bartlett, at the 275th page of the second volume of his narrative. As he is present with us to-day, I cannot but hope that he will favor us with his view of the questions suggested by Lieutenant Bourke. The Casa Grande will be found marked even on the railway maps of to-day, for "Casa Grande" is now one of the stations on the Southern Pacific route, just now opened in connection with the Atchison and Topeka railroad. From this point, according to Lieutenant Bourke, the march of Coronado was nearly northerly. It is thus described by Castañeda:

“When the general had crossed all the inhabited country nearly to Chichilticale [Casa Grandé], we came to the desert, and as we had seen nothing good, we could not prevent a feeling of sadness, although we were promised wonders farther on. No one had seen them except the Indians,

who had accompanied the negro, and they had already told many lies. We were much disappointed to see that Chichilticale, of which we had heard so much, came down, on inspection, to be one house in ruins, without a roof; but which, however appeared to have been fortified. We could easily see that this house, made of red earth, was the work of people civilized and who came from a distance."

They departed from this place and entered the desert. In about fifteen days they arrived within eight leagues of Cibola, on the borders of a river which they named Rio Vermejo, because of the color of the water.

Coronado and his party, which consisted of three hundred Spaniards and eight hundred native Mexicans, remained at Cibola. Making it their base of operations, but relying on reënforcements which they received from the south, Coronado in the next year marched east and south-east in search of the great kingdom of Quivira, where he had been told that the king worshipped a cross of gold, and that, throughout the land, the commonest utensils were of silver, while bowls, plates, and similar utensils were of gold. Several stages of this march are indicated by Castañeda, but there is often some omission in his topographical statements which makes a difficulty in tracing the route precisely.

Tusayan was twenty-five leagues from Cibola. It consisted, like Cibola, of seven towns, the houses of several stories. The people of Tusayan told of a great river, by descending which many days, the Spaniards would come to very tall people. To discover this river Garci-Lopez de Cardonas was sent. He crossed a desert of twenty days and came to the river "of which the banks were so high that they seemed to be three or four leagues in the air." This river was undoubtedly the Colorado, and they came on its great cañon. They called it the Tizon.

While this expedition went forward, Coronado heard of a village called Cicuyé, situated seventy leagues to the east.



Seventy leagues—as the bird flies—would bring them to the upper waters of the Rio del Norte, if Lieutenant Bourke has correctly fixed the cities of Cibola. Hernando d'Alvarado was sent to Cicuyé, with some of its own people for guides. In five days they came to Acuco, situated on a rock, and inhabited by “brigands” who could put two hundred warriors in the field. The ascent was by a stairway which for the first two hundred steps was “wide enough,” but afterward consisted of a hundred much more narrow, while at the very top of the last three “toises,” it was necessary to mount by holes in the rock. This description corresponds almost precisely with that of Acoma,<sup>1</sup> which, in 1860, Judge Cozzens thus described :

“It stands upon the top of a rock at least three hundred and fifty feet above the surrounding plain. The Pueblo can only be reached by means of a staircase containing three hundred and seventy-five steps, cut in the solid rock. At the upper end of this is a ladder eighteen feet long, made from the trunk of a tree, in which notches have been cut for the feet.”

In three days from Acuco, Alvarado came to Tiguex, and he sent back thence a proposal to Coronado to unite there. Five days from Tiguex he came to Cicuyé, which he found to be a well fortified village, with houses four stories high. Here they found an Indian slave who gave them, as they supposed, accounts of Florida. Alvarado returned to Tiguex and wintered there, and heard there of a great number of villages toward the north.

Coronado took Alvarado's advice and marched to Tiguex, but with a part of his force visited Tutahaco, a similar town, where the people told him that by descending the river he would find more villages. He however “ascended the river” and so came to Tiguex. This is the first intimation of any

<sup>1</sup> Acoma, on Simpson's map is about the longitude of 107° W. just south of the parallel of 35°.

river, but the river was either the Del Puerco, the San Jose, or possibly even the Del Norte or Rio Grande.

A quarrel with the natives compelled Coronado to "besiege" and capture Tiguex, after a siege of fifty days. He then sent a captain to Chia, a large and populous town "four leagues west of the river." Six other Spaniards went to Quirix, also a province of seven villages. And, in the spring, as soon as the river was no longer frozen, the expedition marched on the long deferred expedition in search of Quivira. It marched on the 5th of May and took the road to Cicuyé, twenty-five leagues. There they obtained another guide to Quivira. They entered the mountains, and on the fourth day came out on a broad river, which also passes Cicuyé, which they therefore called the river of Cicuyé. They bridged this river and marched ten days, when they met Indians living like Arabs, who were called "Querechos." They were now in a genuine prairie country, and their narrative reads much like the narratives of our own officers in the same regions forty years ago.

In a very careful and instructive paper read before the Nebraska Historical Society,<sup>1</sup> by Judge James W. Savage, he carefully follows the route as given by the different narrators. The march was in all two hundred and fifty leagues. The army then encamped for some days in a valley where a little brook watered a plain covered with trees, among which were vines, mulberries, and *rosales*. There were also pears like those of France, and plums like those of Castile. Judge Savage supposes this to have been in the valley of the Arkansas. Leaving the body of the army here, Coronado himself, with a smaller party, pushed northward, and as Judge Savage believes, crossed the plains of Kansas and came out upon the Platte River. The guide who had led them thus far, told them that they were now at Quivira, for want of a better kingdom of gold and silver. The chief, alas, knew no metal but copper, of which he had

---

<sup>1</sup>April 16, 1880.

but little. Coronado hanged his guide and returned. Judge Savage does not agree with General Simpson in his opinion of the point reached by Coronado. General Simpson<sup>1</sup> had placed it much farther east.

“All the authors who have written on this subject (he says) seem to have discredited Coronado's report that he explored northwardly as far as the 40° of north latitude; but not only do the reports of Castañeda and Jaramillo bear him out in his statement, but the peculiar description of the country as given by them all—namely, that it was *exceedingly rich*; its soil *black*; that it bore, spontaneously, grapes and prunes (wild plums); was watered by many streams of pure water, &c.; and the circumstance of this kind of country not being found anywhere in the probable direction of Coronado's route, except across the Arkansas and on the head waters of the Arkansas River; all this, together with the allusion to a large river, the ‘Saint Peter and Saint Paul’ (probably the Arkansas), which they crossed before reaching Quivira, in latitude 40° north; and to a still larger river further on (probably the Missouri)—makes it exceedingly probable that he reached the fortieth degree of latitude, or what is now the boundary between the States of Kansas and Nebraska, well on towards the Missouri River.”

Mr. Hale placed upon the table for the inspection of members, several pieces of pottery, and some knit or woven blankets, showing the handiwork of the Indian races who still inhabit these “Pueblos.” He also exhibited some beautiful photographs of their villages, taken recently. These articles were all kindly contributed, for the interest of the meeting, by Mr. Cargill, of the Atchison and Topeka Railroad Company.

---

<sup>1</sup> Smithsonian Report, 1869.



EXTRACT FROM A LETTER FROM LIEUT. JOHN G. BOURKE, AIDE-DE-CAMP OF GENERAL CROOK.

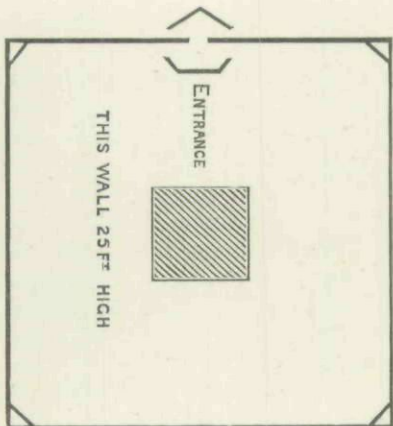
“HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE :  
FORT OMAHA, NEBRASKA, Feb'y 25, 1881.

\* \* \* \* In my opinion, the seven (7) cities of Cibola alluded to in the narrative of Fray Marco de Niza and of Coronado are the Moqui Villages, in north-eastern Arizona. In this view I may not be supported by the weight of authority, but that to me, under present circumstances, is no great matter. I have been over much of the trail which Coronado's expedition must have followed, and knowing the topography of the Arizona part of it at least, pretty well, I have no hesitancy in expressing myself as above. So far as I understand the record, Coronado started from the state of Jalisco, and after journeying in a generally north course, found himself at the Casa Grande in Pimeria (or what is now a part of Arizona), on the Gila River. This old ruin, still of considerable size, is situated in the country of the Pima Indians, and a little east of south of the mouth of the Verde river, on Salt river, on which latter stream they had, till within very late years, large 'Milpas' or cornfields. The distance to the Verde river is not quite 40 miles, over a level desert, offering no obstacle to the progress of a military command, except the want of water. The Verde river, for a considerable part of its length, runs nearly due north and south, and a skilful soldier, such as I am satisfied Coronado was, would at once determine upon following its course, and thus avoid the Massissal and other rugged ranges (impassable almost at this day), which lie immediately to the east. Running out from this valley, is a trail much used by the Moquis, leading to their principal town, Oraybe. They use it to this day to get to the white settlements—Prescott and others—and no doubt travelled in the same general line 300 years ago to trade with the Pimas.

Thus far I have adduced no argument of special value in support of my assertion, but I have now to say that on March 21st, 1873, while serving with General Crook's expedition against the hostile Apaches of Arizona, Lieutenant Almy and myself came upon a ruined building, concerning

which the following remarks are to be found in my journal of that date :

'FRIDAY, March 21st, (1873). \* \* \* \* To-day, just after crossing the Verde, we came to the ruins of an old fortification of greater magnitude than any we have yet encountered. Being in a completely ruined condition, we could only conjecture its previous configuration, size and purpose; but they seemed to indicate that in the centre had been a vast, rectangular, two or three-storied pile, with well defined entrances and loop-holed walls, while the exterior line of work represented a parapet behind which the animals could find temporary shelter. The entire work was of limestone, laid in adobe cement, the "vegas" (Spanish for "rafters") being of cottonwood, but so much decayed that we could only find little pieces of them in the walls. 500 to 1000 men could be accommodated within the lines; which, however, seemed from the number of partition walls to have been intended for storehouses. One of the corners is still more than twenty feet high, perhaps twenty-five. Almy suggested that perhaps the structure had been erected by Coronado, as a base of supplies, and the idea is certainly a good one.'



This sketch is a rough copy from the rough work in my journal; the scale, unfortunately, was not given at the time of making the drawing, but I think now that it was  $\frac{1}{3600}$ , or one inch to the hundred yards. Lieutenant Almy has long since been killed by the Apache Indians, but I may say here that he was a young officer of unusual intelligence, gallantry and promise; a

native I believe of your state, and a graduate of the Military Academy, where I first made his acquaintance. We had a number of conversations together regarding this old structure, of which I have never seen or heard a word from any other source. We came to the conclusion that, from its great age and position, that it had been erected by Coronado. I don't want to be prolix, but I may say that the mode in which the entrance was defended, the loop-holed walls, and the corner of the outer rampart cut away in such a manner (see figure) that a small field-piece could be used *en barbette*; these facts and the trueness



of the angles of the main building proclaimed Spanish origin.

The greater part of the prehistoric remains of Arizona will be found to be "slouchy" at the corners, either the angles are not an exact  $90^{\circ}$ , or the workmanship is defective at these points. Again, the natives built on promontories or cliffs, while this building was in a grassy bottom, and the idea of affording protection to animals while grazing seemed to be paramount.

I have been talking with General Crook this morning, on the same subject, and find that he agrees substantially with me in this statement about the site chosen for building purposes; and, in fact, he could call to mind during the whole period of his stay in Arizona but one, or at most two, instances of deviation from this rule, and even in these cases the deviation was more apparent than real, as the location gave a satisfactory command of the country within bow-shot, which was the main point to be considered.

From the head of Beaver Creek the Moqui trail leads around the eastern base of the San Francisco mountains straight to the seven villages, which correspond, in all things to the descriptions given by the Spaniards. Tegua, Hualpi, and Moqui occupy one elevated plateau; Osaybe another, Mushaugnevny a third, and Sumo-porvy and Suponolevy a fourth; the different plateaus being from eight to ten miles apart. What other nation of Pueblo Indians has now, or has had at any time, seven villages situated within such distances of each other and formed of houses of stone and adobe, four stories high, and entered by ladders? The Zunis have but one pueblo, used permanently as a place of residence, but in all other points their village fulfils all conditions that can be exacted. You will admit, my dear sir, that Coronado would not be likely to report having seen seven towns unless he had seen them.

I find I have gone at some length into this matter; perhaps I have wearied your patience, but I have as yet had no opportunity to express myself to people who would take an interest in the subject. General Simpson, of the Engineer Corps of the Army, wrote a monograph in the Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1869. I have not it at hand just now, and may be mistaken as to some of its salient features, because I have not seen it since 1875, when I came across a copy of it in a Mormon village while I was

travelling in south-west Utah: but my impression is that Simpson thinks that Coronado came out at the Zuñi villages. While I have great respect for Simpson's knowledge of the subject, I must differ with him in this conclusion, and say, in all modesty, that I have seen enough of the country between the Gila and the northern boundary of Arizona to entitle my opinions to some consideration.

I will say no more upon this point at this time, but should you feel any interest in the story of Coronado's march, I think I can send you a copy of the interesting lecture delivered in Omaha, by my friend Judge James W. Savage (Harvard, 1849), who has carefully investigated all written authorities to be found in this country."

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.