

# Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca

VOLUME ONE



# Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca

His Account, His Life, and the Expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez

Rolena Adorno & Patrick Charles Pautz

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*We dedicate this work to Dr. David S. Adorno and to the memory of Mrs. Lorna Pautz*



Una montaña podía ser la palabra del dios, o un río o el imperio o la configuración de los astros. Pero en el curso de los siglos las montañas se allanan y el camino de un río suele desviarse y los imperios conocen mutaciones y estragos y la figura de los astros varía. En el firmamento hay mudanza—JORGE LUIS BORGES, “La escritura del dios”





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The bibliographic sine qua non of this project is the imprint of the original (Zamora, 1542) edition of Cabeza de Vaca's *relación*. We have used as the basis for our own edition the copy preserved in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. We thank Norman Fiering, director and librarian of the JCB, for the cooperation he and his staff have provided.

Those friends who made special efforts on our behalf, helping us with specific tasks at crucial moments of our investigation, include Mary Catherine Miller of Austin, Texas, Princetonians Belén Atienza, Shirley Cardozo, and Paul Swigart, and historian Helen Rand Parish of Berkeley, California.

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Princeton University provided the setting, facilities, and support for the research and writing of this study from 1991 through 1995. Rolena Adorno began her research on Cabeza de Vaca while a member of the faculty at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, first as a fellow of the university's Institute for the Humanities in 1988–89 and then with a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in 1989–90; she is grateful to both institutions for their support. Patrick Pautz first read Cabeza de Vaca's text in the fall of 1990 at Princeton in Rolena Adorno's undergraduate course, "The Invention of Spanish American Traditions," and went on to write his 1991 undergraduate senior thesis on the narrative complexities of Cabeza de Vaca's account under Rolena Adorno's direction in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures.

The Adorno/Pautz collaboration began in the summer of 1991, and since that time the project has seen its full and complete development. From 1991 to 1996 Princeton University provided Rolena Adorno research support

through the Office of the Dean of the Faculty and the University Committee on Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Firestone Library's Department of Rare Books and Special Collections and the Scheide Library housed in Firestone made available to us the imprints of Cabeza de Vaca's 1555 Valladolid *relación* against which we compared the 1542 text in preparing our critical edition.

To supplement our research in the general collections at Firestone, we consulted the collections of the John Carter Brown Library, Harvard University's Widener and Houghton Libraries, the Research Divisions of the New York Public Library, the Hispanic Society of America, New York City, the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley, and the United States Library of Congress. Research was carried out in March 1990 and October 1993 in Seville at the Archivo General de Indias and in July and August 1994 in Madrid at the Biblioteca Nacional, the Real Academia de la Historia, and the Centro de Información Documental de Archivos of Spain's Ministerio de Cultura.

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For all these things we are unendingly grateful.

Hamden, Connecticut

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the twentieth century, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's account of his participation in the Pánfilo de Narváez expedition to sixteenth-century *Florida* (the vast unexplored lands that lay beyond the northern frontier of New Spain from the Florida Peninsula to the Pacific Coast) has enjoyed tremendous popularity as the quintessential story of the European confronting the wilderness of North America and its native inhabitants for the first time. At least forty-four editions of the work have appeared since 1922, and the epic journey of Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions has inspired narrative accounts, dramatizations, and poetry; these recreations and meditations have run the gamut from the learned to the popular, from scholarly works to representations in the mass media ranging from radio to film. Unlike many accounts of the Spanish arrival and settlement in the Americas, it is a tale retold with equal interest in Spain (where some thirty-seven of the editions mentioned have been published), Spanish America (where critical and creative reflections on the ethical and social implications of conquest have tended to flourish), and the United States (where the route traveled through North America has been the subject of scholarly speculation since the end of the nineteenth century until today and is now augmented by the emerging interest in the U.S. Hispanic heritage). At least six editions of the work and four new or reissued English translations have appeared since 1983, providing evidence that Cabeza de Vaca's narrative continues to survive the test of time and maintain its hold on the ever-renewed interests of the reading public.

Why has the work endured over so many centuries and generations of readers? There is obviously no single answer to this question. Two considerations set the stage for this remarkable phenomenon. Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was a Castilian whose account of his experience in North America suggested that he had honored his country's noblest aims: service to the king, maintenance of the standards of personal honor and integrity, and devotion to the cause of the peaceful evangelization of America's indigenous peoples. He was also one of the few men of his generation to have held high-ranking expeditionary appointments (first, royal treasurer, then, *adelantado* [military commander] and governor) on the respective continents of North and South America. If during Cabeza de Vaca's lifetime readers of the

original *relación* published in Zamora in 1542 looked for information about the mysterious areas to the north of New Spain, and those who read the second version (the *Relación y comentarios* published in Valladolid in 1555) contemplated the “vicissitudes of fortune” experienced on two continents by the governor and *adelantado* of Río de la Plata, we can locate the creation of a clear historical interest in the eighteenth century, when in the 1730s Andrés González de Barcia’s edition of the 1555 publication spawned the modern rereadings of the text. Whether readers’ fascination focused on the four Narváez survivors’ apparent performance of miraculous cures of the Indians’ maladies or on the interest the men’s presumed passage through a particular region held for later Spanish settlement in the area, the variety of motivations for reading the *relación* continued and flourished throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. In the twentieth century, Cabeza de Vaca’s pan-American experience has engaged the creative and critical energies of a range of American (Latin, Latino, Anglo) and European scholars, writers, and artists. They have set out and continue to explore the great themes suggested by the account: quest and adventure, freedom and bondage, empire and colonialism, miracles and shamanism. The ever-unknowable quality of the experiences Cabeza de Vaca described (as well as those upon which he did not comment) seems perpetually to stimulate the imagination and makes Cabeza de Vaca’s saga and its implications relevant to other people in other times and places.

Perhaps some of the greatest attractions of the work include its appeal in showing what it was like to be a member of a seaborne and land expedition of conquest in the early period after the conquest of Mexico and before that of Peru. Cabeza de Vaca reveals the dynamics of expeditionary politics and the trials of making life-and-death decisions under conditions of extreme hardship and the greatest uncertainty. On every front, and certainly on the fascinating topic of dealing directly and without benefit of arms with the natives of America (a topic about which so many other early reporters were elliptical or silent), Cabeza de Vaca’s account offers to its readers not the seamless, triumphant story of Castilian expedition and conquest but rather a tale of both mundane and momentous expeditionary challenges. These include dangers at sea, from a Caribbean hurricane on the voyage out to an encounter with French pirates on the journey home, as well as those on land: conflicts not only with the Indians but also among the men of the expeditionary company, the institution and disintegration of expeditionary leadership, the unspeakable hardships of surviving starvation, and the unending tests of fortitude that ultimately and incredibly resulted in his and his three companions’ physical and psychic survival.

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### Cabeza de Vaca Studies

Much of the fascination with Cabeza de Vaca's account in recent decades has concerned the areas that the four men traversed and the ethnic groups they encountered. Apart from occasional debate about their route through the present-day state of Florida, the most intense scholarly interest and disagreement have focused on the four men's route of travel from coastal Texas to northwestern Mexico, that is, from the area of the Gulf of Mexico across North America to the Gulf of California. Although most route scholars agree that the survivors of the raft voyage across the Gulf of Mexico (September–November 1528) arrived on the Texas coast, the debate centers on whether the four final survivors who escaped their hosts in coastal Texas in the summer of 1535 crossed the Rio Grande from Texas into Mexico and traversed Mexico from east to west, or whether they followed a course that took them across Texas and through New Mexico and Arizona before heading southward into Mexico.

Like scholars of preceding generations, we have studied the narratives of both Cabeza de Vaca and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés (who wrote an account based on the men's official report of their experience) and have assessed the work done before us. Unlike earlier scholars and editors, we have refrained from attempting to set precisely the men's route or naming, on the basis of subsequent reports, the ethnic groups encountered along the course of their travels. In most cases, subsequent European exploration or habitation was too far removed in time and too uncertain about the identity of place to allow us to name retrospectively the groups encountered by the Narváez expedition or its four overland survivors. The names we have applied to ethnic groups are exclusively the ones provided by Cabeza de Vaca.

Acknowledging the impossibility of establishing the actual historical route and recognizing that regional and national interests have often played a role in assessing it, we have attempted merely to sketch the range of plausible options that emerge from the study of the original accounts as they pertain to any given area of the four men's habitation or movement. With respect to their crossing of North America, we project a broad swath through which the men moved from eastern coastal Texas into northern Mexico, then northwest through northeastern Mexico into western Texas and, continuing to move westward, into northwestern Mexico, where they encountered their countrymen while heading south (see map 1).

With regard to the entire sea and overland journey, our clearest contribution to the advancement of Cabeza de Vaca studies has been to argue that Cabeza de Vaca's and Oviedo's accounts reveal not one but in effect two



successive journeys. The first narrates the Narváez expeditionaries' attempt during the course of nearly seven and a half years to reach the Spanish settlement of Santisteban del Puerto on the Río Pánuco in the present-day state of Veracruz. (This is dated from February–March 1528, when the expedition was blown off the northwestern coast of Cuba, to the summer of 1535, when the last four surviving members departed from the Avavares people during the prickly pear [tuna] season in southern Texas near the Río Grande.) Reaching Pánuco was the expeditionaries' original and enduring intention. After nearly seven years of surviving the hostilities of climate, habitat, and native inhabitants for the purpose of moving slowly but surely ever southward along the Texas coast, the final four surviving members of the overland expedition changed their course. Their reasons for doing so remain obscure; most immediately, they needed sources of food and feared hostile coastal peoples. And so they decided to travel southward but inland from the coast.

The second journey commenced not at that point but when the four men decided to go overland in search of the South Sea. This new itinerary, invented sometime in the mid- to late summer of 1535 and very probably in a series of tentative stages, unfolds in both the Cabeza de Vaca and Oviedo accounts as though it were a natural and self-evident course to follow, and neither text explicitly refers to the group's abandonment of their search for Pánuco. This period of accelerated travel, from Tamaulipas in the summer of 1535, to northern Sonora perhaps by Christmastime of that year in a movement that often zigzagged north and south while heading west, took the four men from one sea to the other, that is, from the Gulf of Mexico nearly to the Gulf of California.

The discreteness of these separate and successive journeys would not have been evident without our systematic and simultaneous study of book 35, chapters 1–7, of Oviedo's *Historia general y natural de las Indias*. This textual comparison of Cabeza de Vaca and Oviedo has served the dual purpose of allowing us to generate a more complex and complete picture of the men's travels as well as to shed light on Cabeza de Vaca's and Oviedo's common source: the now-lost Joint Report filed on behalf of the three Castilians with the Audiencia of Santo Domingo and at court.

In addition to reconstructing at second hand the general shape of that common source text, we have also taken into account a work contemporaneous with the reporting of the Narváez survivors' reemergence but previously unstudied in relation to it. This is Alonso de Santa Cruz's *Crónica del emperador Carlos V* (pt. 5, chap. 41), which has been ignored until now despite its relevance as an account written at the time by an historian who lived at Charles's Castilian court. In addition, we have untangled the web

of confusion that has conventionally named as an early Cabeza de Vaca text a partial, manuscript account of the *relación* (known herein as the Short Report). We have conclusively identified the Short Report as a late, secondhand copy of a version (manuscript or printed) of the 1542 *relación*.

Analyzing the *relación* in light of these related texts, we focus on the urgency and pragmatism of its immediate purpose and the retrospective character of its composition. Unlike the 1555 edition, designed to be read at leisure and at intervals suggested by its chapter divisions and titles, Cabeza de Vaca wrote the work published in 1542 for the urgent purpose of filing at court a report that he hoped the emperor would read with favor and respond to by bestowing a new royal commission on its author. Equally important as understanding the immediacy of the writer's goal is to bear clearly in mind the conditions of his writing. Cabeza de Vaca did not write the *relación* while living in the uncharted lands of North America, nor did he write it while he was still in New Spain in 1536–37 waiting patiently through autumn and winter until spring for the next departure of the armada for Spain. He was instead back in Castile when he drafted the work sometime between the autumn of 1537 and late 1540. Only by keeping these circumstances in mind does the retrospective nature of the entire account emerge and the mingling on the same page of diverse experiences—occasionally separated by considerable amounts of time and occurring at places separated by considerable distances—become evident.

### This Edition

This is the first modern edition of the original 1542 Spanish publication, the only previous version of which was published in 1905 in an English translation. Cabeza de Vaca's account of his *Florida* sojourn had the distinction of being published twice within the space of two decades. Although we have analyzed and reproduced the significant variants of the 1555 Valladolid edition, our primary contribution is to make available the original work published in Spanish in Zamora in 1542. We chose the 1542 text over the 1555 for several reasons, the first of which is the former edition's rarity. There are only four copies of the 1542 edition cataloged in research libraries today (the John Carter Brown Library, the New York Public Library, the British Library, and Texas Christian University, Forth Worth), and they are so little known that even as late as 1984 a scholar who prepared an edition of Cabeza de Vaca's *relación* claimed in print that the 1555 edition was the first one.

Apart from this bibliographic consideration, the more compelling, philological reason for our choice is our interest in the Narváez expedition and the four overland survivors' North American odyssey in their immediate

historical contexts. The journey to *Florida* (the lands bordering the northern arc of the Gulf of Mexico) and beyond was the sole focus of the 1542 text, in contrast to the 1555 edition, which included Pero Hernández's *Comentarios* on Cabeza de Vaca's governorship of Río de la Plata (1542–45) and had as its objective the presentation (and defense) of Cabeza de Vaca's entire Indies career. Both subject and audience differ from the 1542 to the 1555 publications. When in the proem to the 1555 work Cabeza de Vaca observed that Hernández's *Comentarios* read alongside his own earlier account of his *Florida* experience (1527–36) would offer the courtly reader the pleasure of contemplating a variety of subject matters and numerous changes of fortune, he acknowledged a purpose far removed from his earlier, urgent goal of informing the emperor of his services in order to win another royal contract. Cabeza de Vaca's identification of a broader courtly audience for the 1555 edition as well as his clearly didactic and literary goals for his readership underscore by contrast the pragmatic character of the 1542 work. Charged with the need to win royal favor, the Zamora imprint shows its author working under the pressure of securing his precarious Indies career at its midpoint rather than seeking to consolidate its outcomes at its end. That imperative of the late 1530s is one of the important values we seek to foreground in these pages.

### This Project

While the focal point of this project is our edition and English translation of Cabeza de Vaca's *relación*, our aim in this three-volume, seven-part publication has been to augment it with contextualizing bodies of inquiry that complement the reading of the original work. Each of these adjuncts to the *relación* provides the means to contextualize it in different ways. Our study of the life of Cabeza de Vaca is one of the frames through which the *relación* can be read. Three other such framing structures consist of our commentary on the Narváez expedition accounts (chaps. 2–10, vol. 2), preceded and followed by our inquiries into the preparation of the expedition in Spain and the fates of Cabeza de Vaca's three surviving companions in Mexico (chaps. 1 and 11 in vol. 2, respectively). Another investigation (chaps. 12–14, vol. 3) contextualizes the *relación* by studying the many stages of its creation and the centuries-long history of its reception and continued production. The final portion of our project (chaps. 15–17, vol. 3) sets forth the *relación*'s relevant historical contexts regarding exploration in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Sea and public affairs in New Spain and Nueva Galicia.

None of these avenues of investigation is meant to have priority over any other, either among themselves or in relation to the *relación*. Thus, while the

edition and translation of Cabeza de Vaca's work purposely occupy first-rank position herein, the distribution of its six complements into three volumes is intended simply to produce an equitable physical distribution of materials on the basis of which it is the reader's prerogative to assign rank and priority to the various parts according to his or her specific interests.

"The Life of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca" in this volume takes us from his chivalric ancestry through his governorship of the province of Río de la Plata to the end of his life. In order to give a fuller view of the historical Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, we have studied in detail the accounts and testimony regarding his governance of Río de la Plata and uncovered new (often simply underutilized) information that has enabled us to reinterpret the final years of his life in Spain. With this biographical study we seek not only to elucidate the events of Cabeza de Vaca's life but also to suggest a broader pattern of experience of the Castilian caballero who sought economic gain and social prestige by serving the crown in Andalusia, on the Mediterranean, in Italy, and ultimately in the Spanish Indies. As occurred in the case of many contemporaries of Cabeza de Vaca, this quest touched three generations of his family, and we therefore consider in detail the lives of his father and grandfather insofar as they illuminate the trajectory of Andalusian military men's experience before and after the fall of Granada in 1492.

The "Commentary on the Narváez Expedition Accounts" (chaps. 2–10) is designed to accompany or augment the reading of the *relación* with regard to its specific contents. For the purpose of our analysis, we have divided Cabeza de Vaca's narrative into nine parts on the basis of its description of the expedition's location and movement. Inasmuch as the apparent linearity of the *relación* masks its complex structure, and the occasional repetitiousness of Cabeza de Vaca's prose conceals its presentation of an extraordinary variety of peoples and places, our commentary is intended to heighten the reader's awareness of the differences in landscape, ecology, ethnic groups, and interactions that fill the narrative account and to facilitate the reader's access to them. Our aim has been to analyze the account as it unfolds in order to highlight and render intelligible the text's innumerable complexities, untangle its apparent simplicity, and address its many conundrums.

Our division of the text according to chronological sequence and general geographical orientation constitutes the basis of our analysis of the *relación*, and it was first developed by Patrick Pautz in 1991 in his Princeton University senior thesis entitled "The North American Odyssey of Cabeza de Vaca: An Analytical Study of the Original Accounts." Based on the progress of the expedition and the succession of its survivors' experiences, the present nonpartite commentary on the *relación* (chaps. 2–10) takes the reader from the expedition's departure from Sanlúcar de Barrameda through its winter in

Cuba, to its inland explorations on the Florida Peninsula (the easternmost area of sixteenth-century *Florida*), its raft voyage along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, its survivors' arrival on the islands of coastal Texas and their various fates, and ultimately along the remarkable trajectory of its four overland survivors. It also gives an account of the one-hundred-person seaborne contingent whose search for the overland explorers along the coast of the Florida Peninsula resulted in failure and sent them back to Cuba a year later (chap. 4).

The sine qua non of this analysis is Oviedo's account of the expedition as based on the Joint Report, and we have coordinated its account with that of Cabeza de Vaca in order to provide balance for the latter's personal account, to fill where possible its many lacunae, and to reevaluate where needed its particular assertions. We consider the preeminence of Oviedo's work to be undisputed; it serves as our most important critical tool by which to take the measure of Cabeza de Vaca's account.

Preceding the nine-part commentary, chapter 1 details the preparations for departure. It elucidates the contractual arrangements between the crown and the officers of the expedition and discusses the conditions met and provisions needed to launch a major Castilian seagoing expedition of exploration and conquest in the 1520s. "The Fates of the Overland Travelers" (chap. 11) focuses on Andrés Dorantes, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, and Estevanico, the two Castilian caballeros and the black Arabic-speaking Christian slave from northwestern North Africa who accompanied Cabeza de Vaca. They are known from a small handful of documentary sources, and we have been able to reconstruct their lives in basic outline.

In the "Creation and Reception of the *Relación*" (chaps. 12–14), we begin by reconstructing the 1542 work's creation and its relationship to its antecedents, most notably the now-lost Joint Report, as well as to its successor, the 1555 *Relación y comentarios* published in Valladolid (chap. 12). We go on to examine the ways in which readers and writers from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries used and interpreted the account in their own works (chap. 13). Finally, we study the "new era" of the reception of the work that began with Andrés González de Barcia's publication of it in the 1730s (the first since 1555) and led to a series of republications of the account in Spanish that brings us up to the present day (chap. 14).

"Historical Contexts of the *Relación*" (chaps. 15–17) sets the stage for the Narváez men's entrance into the Caribbean in 1527 and the Gulf of Mexico in 1528 and spells out the difference between the world they left behind in Cuba in 1528 and the one they reentered in 1536 in Nueva Galicia and New Spain.

"Pánfilo de Narváez and Spanish Activity in the Gulf of Mexico (1508 to 1528)" (chap. 15) examines the state of exploration of the Gulf of Mexico at

the time of the departure of the Narváez expedition and reconstructs from primary sources the history of the exploration of and competition for the possession of the rim of the Gulf of Mexico from the early rivalry of Diego Velázquez, Hernán Cortés, and Pánfilo de Narváez in the 1510s through that of Cortés and Francisco de Garay that ended in Cortés's favor in 1523.

"The South Sea from Columbus to Cabeza de Vaca" (chap. 16) assesses what was known and/or believed about the South Sea (Pacific Ocean) at the time the Narváez expedition departed from Cuba for *Florida* in 1528 as well as what the four men would have learned about its interim exploration upon their arrival in the Spanish-held territory of northwestern Mexico in 1536; the latter discussion highlights the competition in this marine area between Hernán Cortés and Nuño de Guzmán and ultimately the viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza.

"Nuño de Guzmán (c. 1490 to 1558) and the Conquest of Nueva Galicia" (chap. 17) foregrounds the world of public affairs in New Spain from 1527 to 1536 by examining the career of Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán, the conqueror and governor of the area of northwestern Mexico called Nueva Galicia who received the four men when they arrived at its capital of Compostela in Jalisco in 1536. The story of Guzmán's rise and fall vividly illuminates Castilian governance and entrepreneurial activity in the Indies in the period from the Narváez expedition's departure through the return of its four overland survivors.

As a complement to our edition and study we have prepared a series of maps for general reference. Maps 1 through 4 in this volume offer, respectively, an overview of the areas traversed by the Narváez expedition and its four overland survivors from 1527 to 1536; a sketch of Cabeza de Vaca's voyages through the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Caribbean over the course of his seagoing career (1511 to 1545); and views of the Iberian, western Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds that constituted for Cabeza de Vaca, his forebears, and his peers their common sphere of European and North African reference. In volume 2, maps 5 through 10 set out the areas relevant to the Narváez expedition: Cuba and the Florida Peninsula (map 5), the Florida Peninsula, the northern Gulf Coast, Texas, and eastern Mexico (maps 6 through 8), and western Mexico (maps 9 and 10). We emphasize that these maps, like map 1, are presented not to trace the four men's overland route through North America but rather to put the reader in mind of the geographical areas in question. Where feasible in these regional maps we have introduced pertinent natural landmarks, appropriate historical sites, and relevant present-day locations. Maps 8, 9, and 10 are repeated in volume 3. Map 11 in volume 3 places the Narváez expedition in the broader context of Spanish exploration related to North America from the time of the

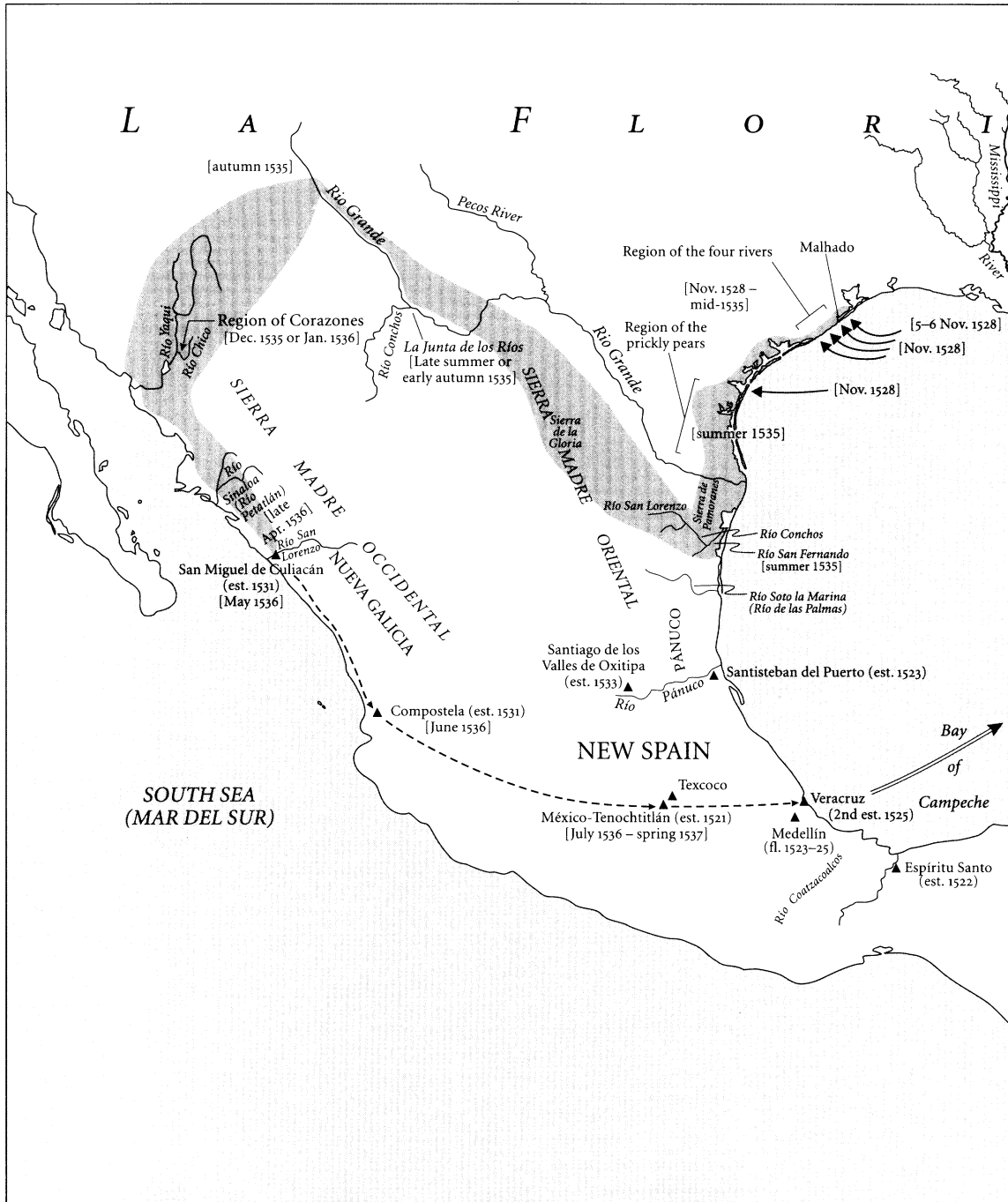
circumnavigation of Cuba in 1508 through the last of Hernán Cortés's South Sea explorations in 1539.

Overall, since we consider questions of historicity and interpretation to be critically linked and mutually reinforcing, and since we have had as our goal the contextualized understanding of Cabeza de Vaca's *relación*, we are aware that we have created rather than simply recovered its appropriate contexts. Likewise, although we would like to know at every step of the way what actually happened to Cabeza de Vaca and his fellows, we are aware that our reconstructions pertaining to the events and practices described by Cabeza de Vaca (and by Oviedo) are plausible but nevertheless provisional in character. The historical plausibility we have sought to achieve on the basis of the available written evidence is tempered by our awareness of the indecipherability of described human experience, which defeats pretensions to certitude and confounds even the most basic of empirical facts.

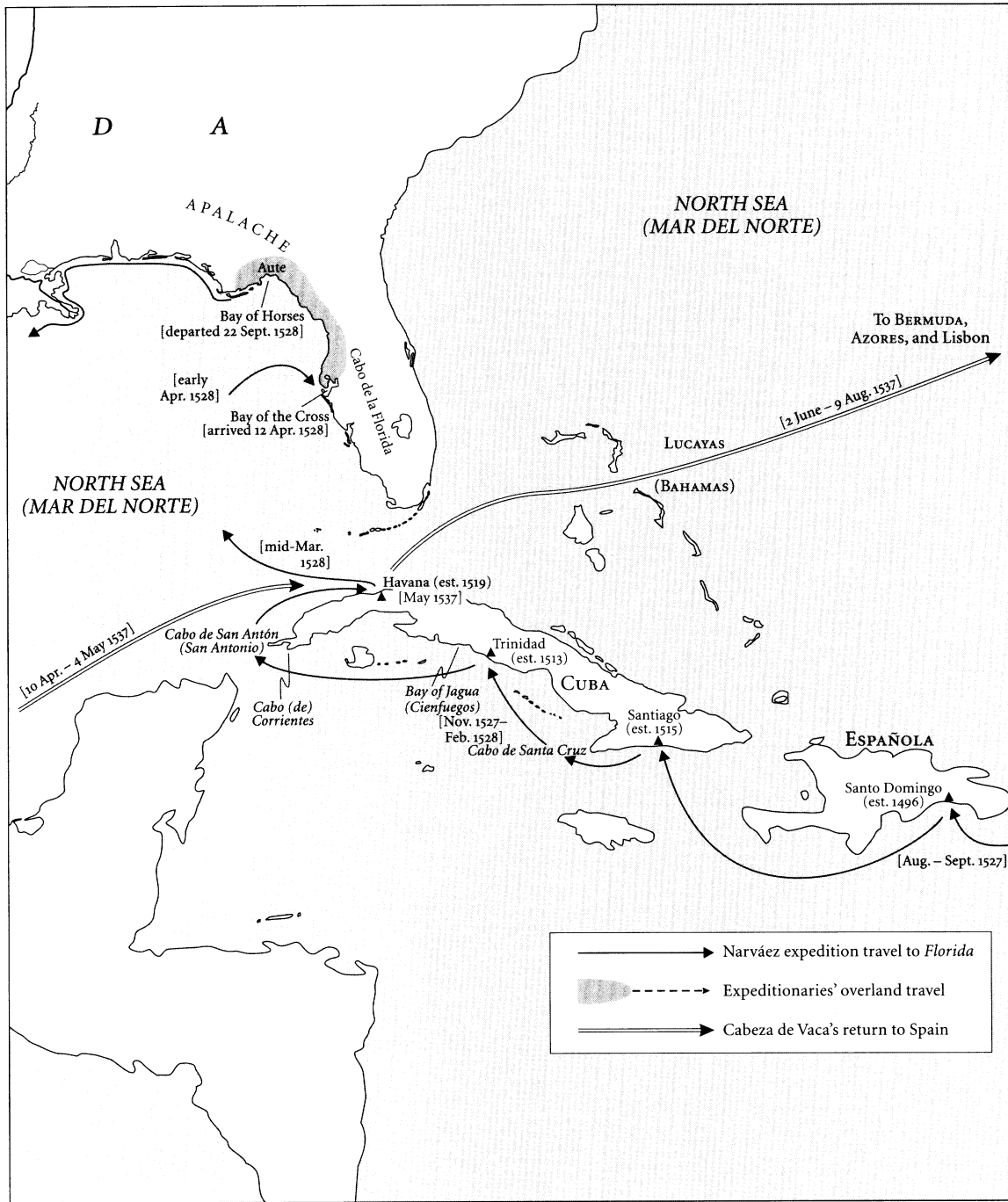
In developing this project, we understood very early that preparing an edition and translation of the *relación* alone would not satisfactorily deal with the many issues raised by the Cabeza de Vaca account and its implications for the Spanish-language chronicles of the Indies and their sources and complements of the first half of the sixteenth century. As a result, we have tried not only to illuminate the reading of Cabeza de Vaca's 1542 *relación* but also to offer a guide to the sixteenth-century world that Cabeza de Vaca and Castilian members of his generation inhabited and the experiences they shared. Some were men of the land who had to acquaint themselves with the life of the sea; others were mariners whose knowledge of the Mediterranean did not prepare them for the tropical storms of the Caribbean. Many were hidalgos whose successful manipulation of their low- and midlevel aristocratic pedigree depended on their having the economic means to impose their pretensions and prestige on others. By elucidating Cabeza de Vaca and his companions' experience, we hope to have produced a study that is pertinent to other eyewitness accounts left by sixteenth-century Castilians about their experiences in the Indies and that can in general serve as a resource for reading the myriad works on exploration, conquest, and settlement that make up the sixteenth-century historiography of Spanish America.

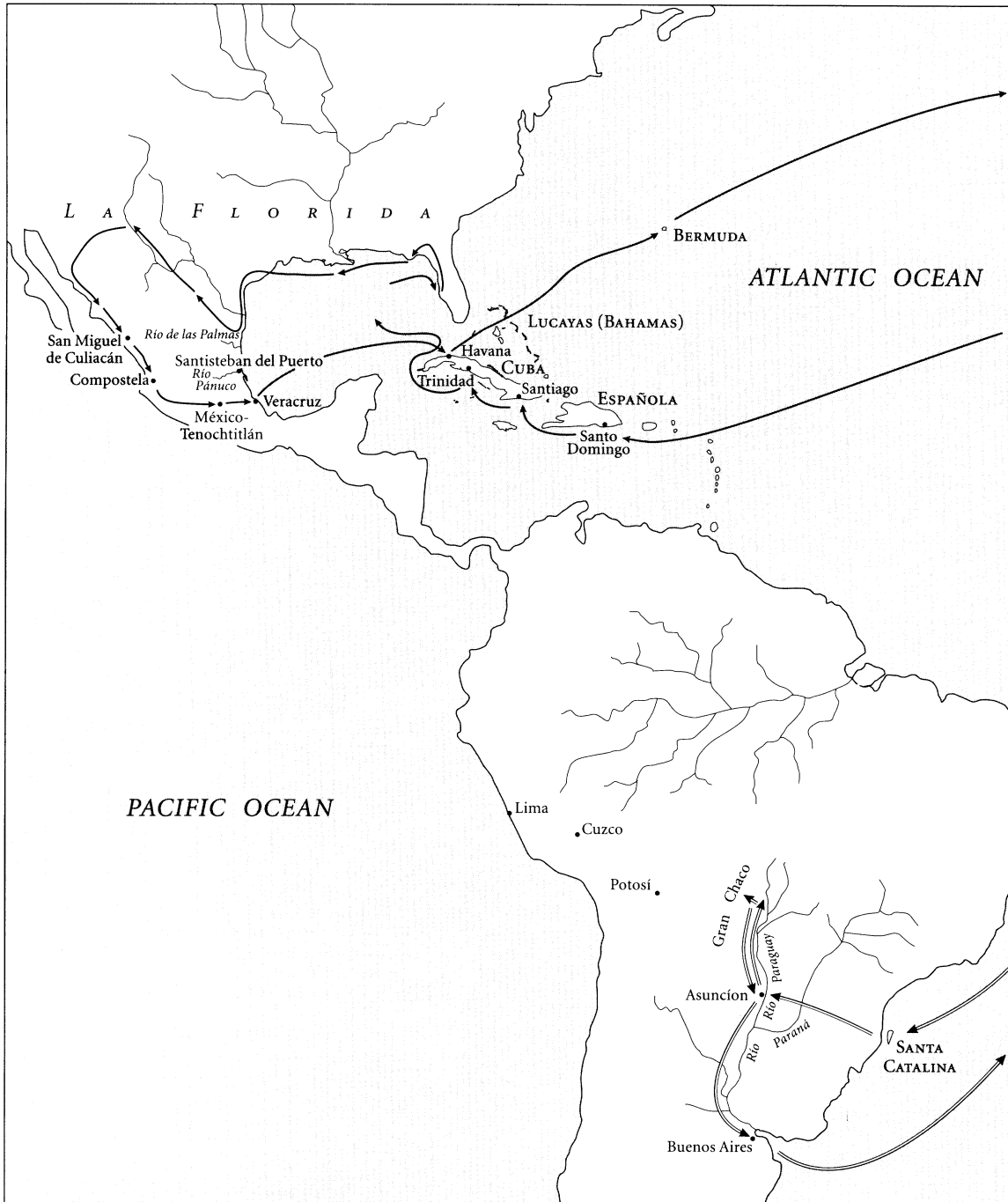
## Maps



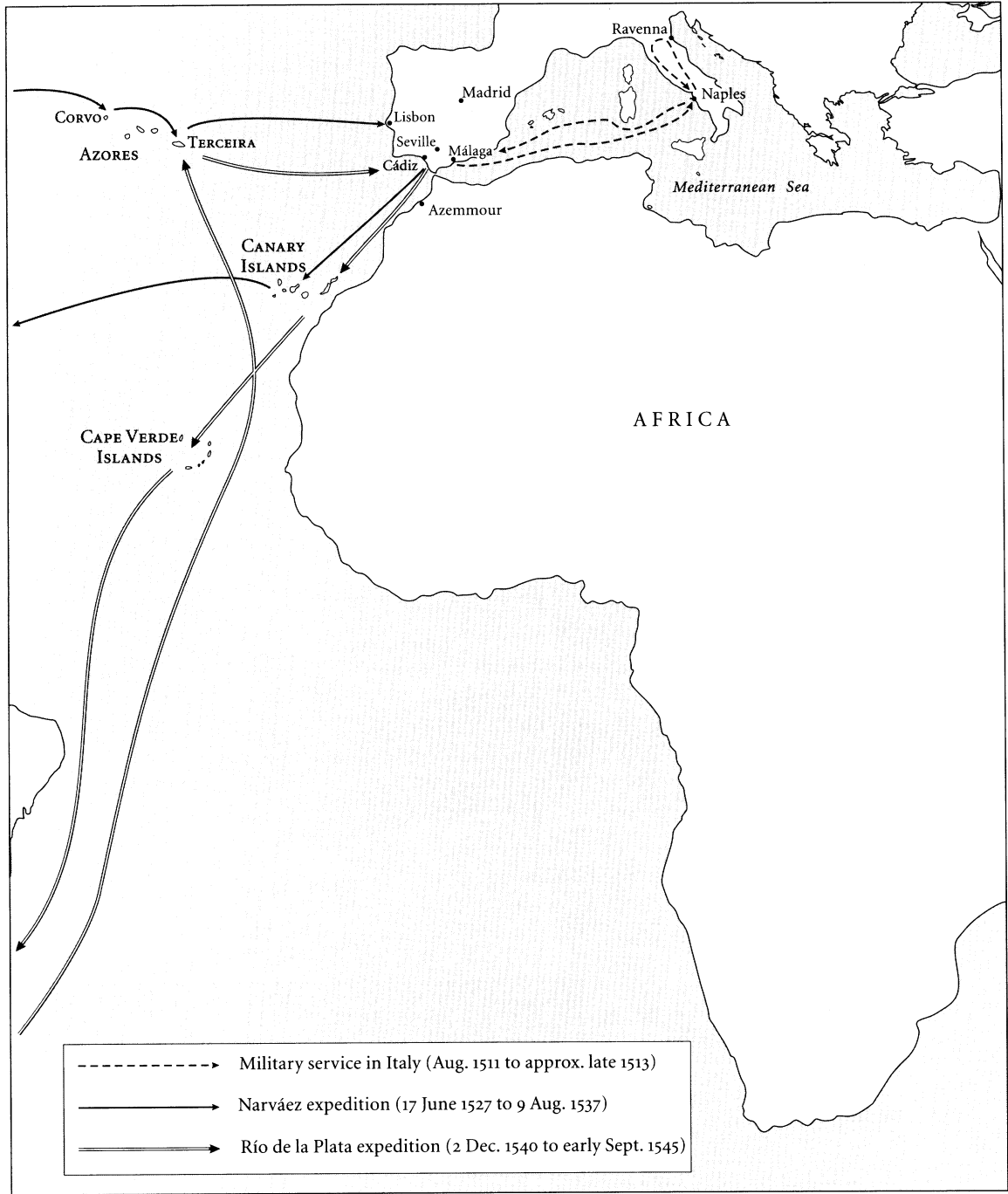


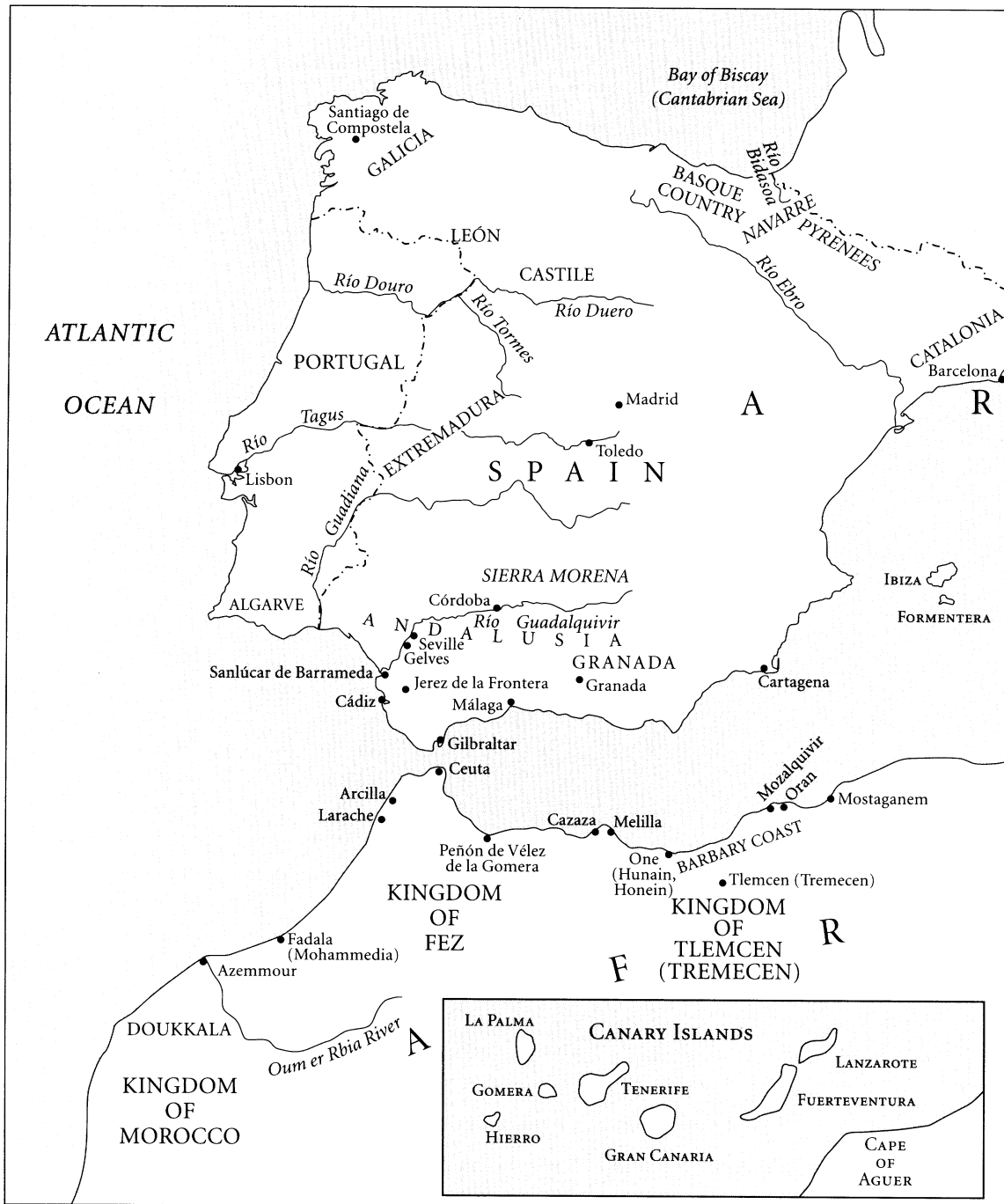
Map 1: Areas traversed by the Narváez expedition (1527 to 1528) and its four overland survivors (1528 to 1536)



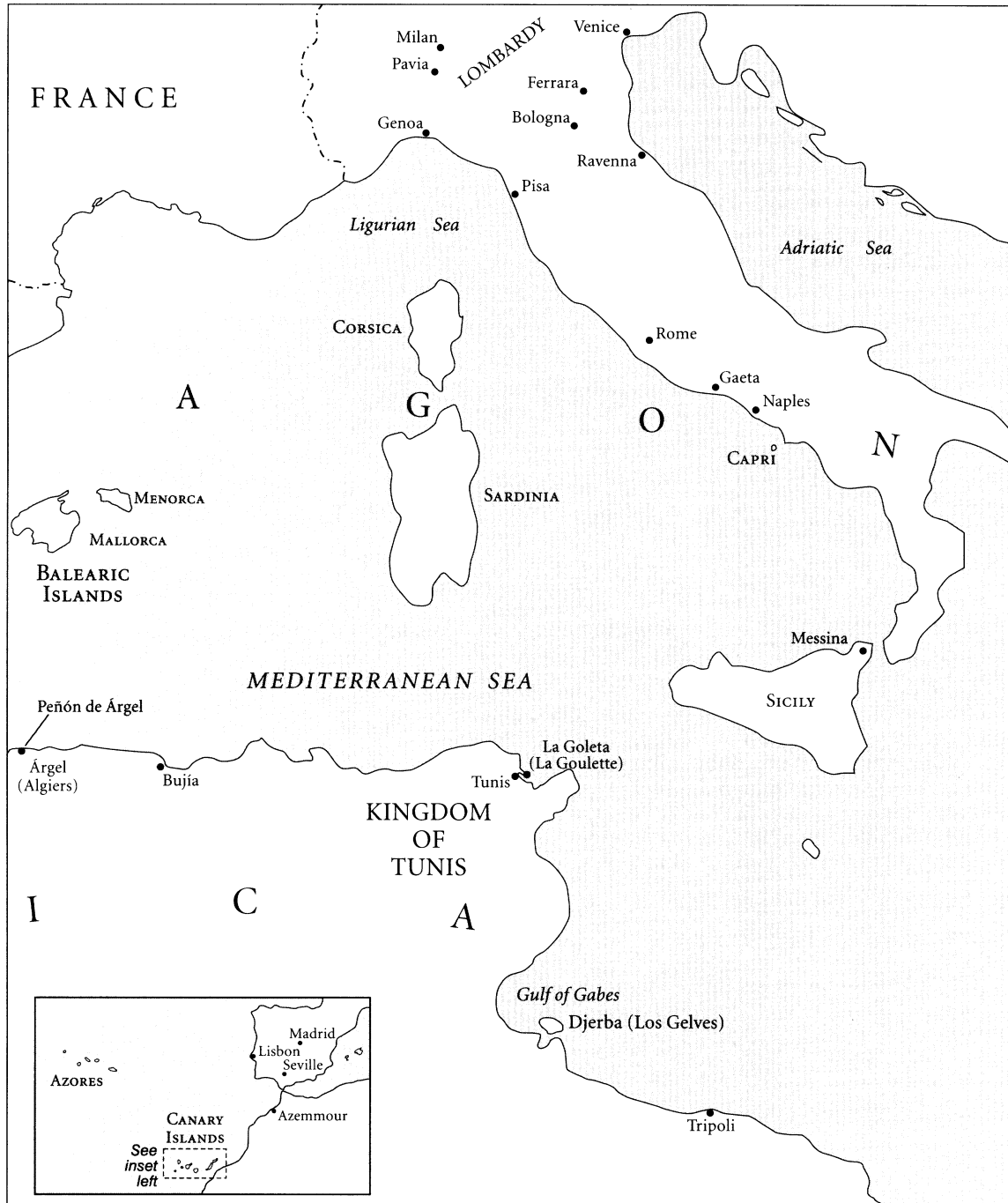


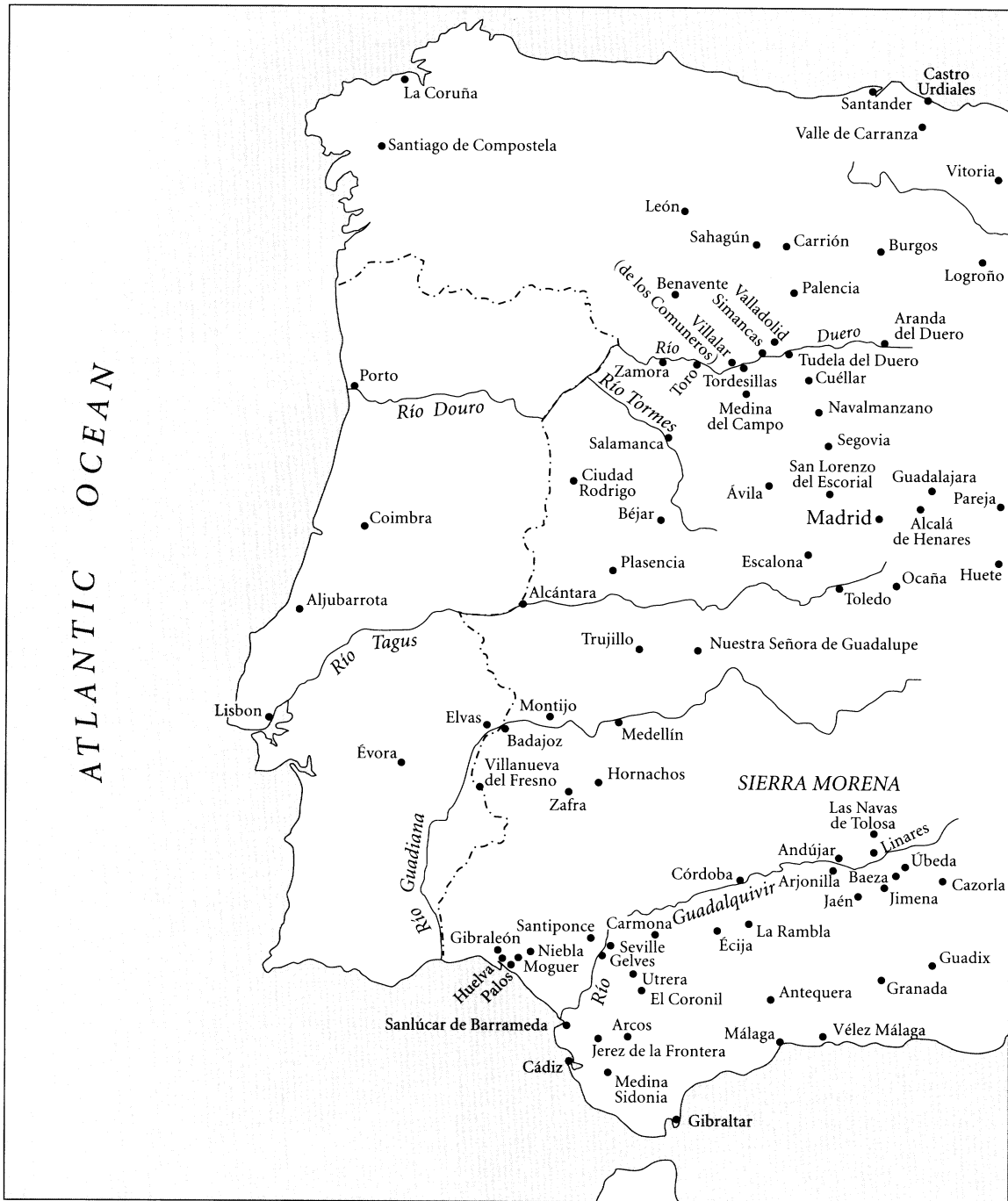
Map 2: Travels of Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1511 to 1545)



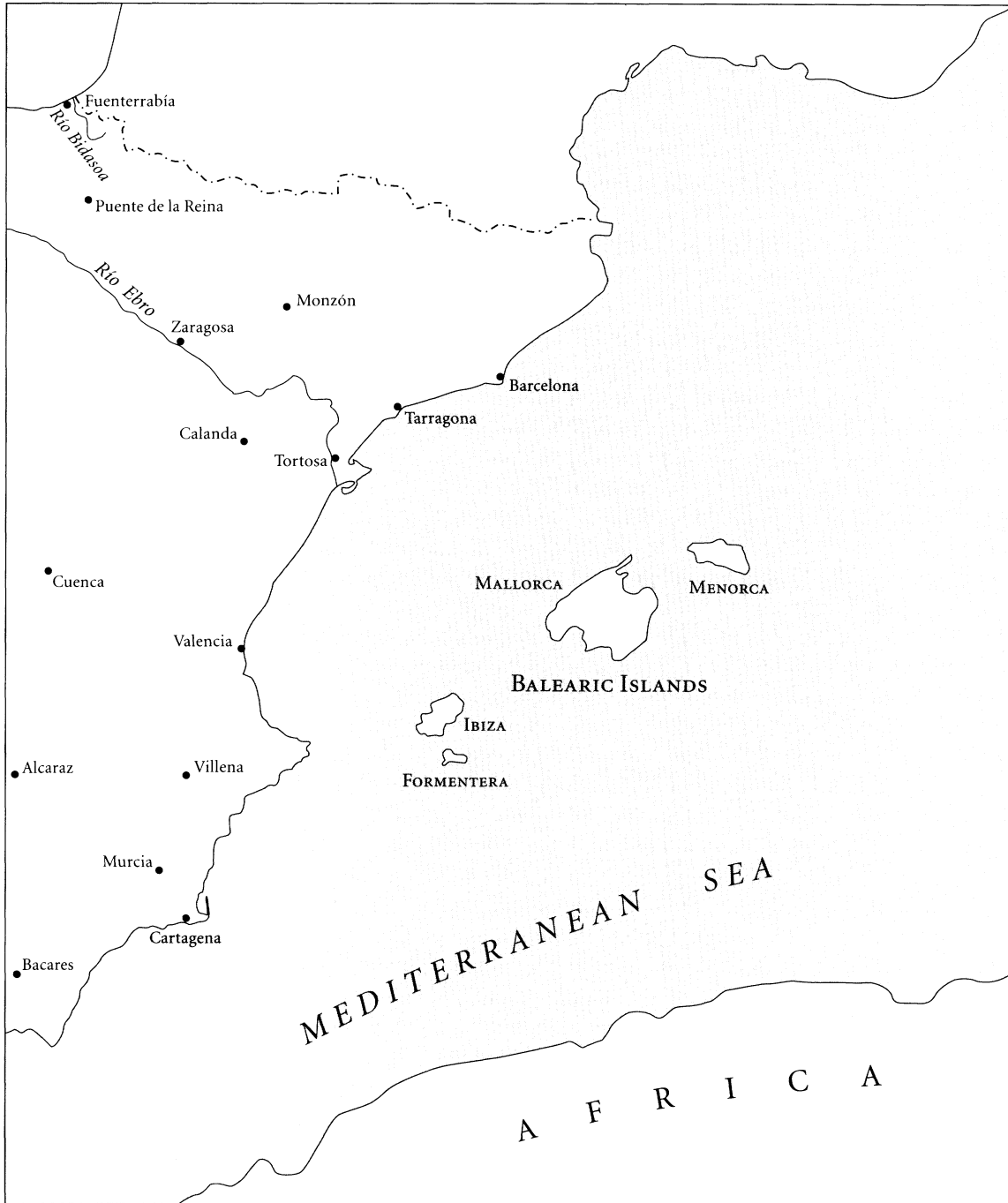


Map 3: Spain, Italy, and northern Africa reference map





Map 4: Spain and Portugal reference map







## ABBREVIATIONS

AGI	Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain
CDI	<i>Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía</i>
CDIE	<i>Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España</i>
CDU	<i>Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de Ultramar</i>
CSIC	Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid, Spain
DHC	<i>Documentos inéditos relativos a Hernán Cortés y su familia</i>
DRAE	Real Academia Española. <i>Diccionario de la lengua española</i>
ENE	<i>Epistolario de Nueva España, 1505–1818</i>
JCBL	John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence RI
USLC	United States Library of Congress, Washington DC

## Criteria of This Edition and Translation

### Critical Edition of the Zamora (1542) *Relación*

This edition presents for the first time a critical transcription of Cabeza de Vaca's *relación* as it was first published in Zamora, Spain, in 1542. We prepared it from a photocopy of a microfilm of the copy of the Zamora edition preserved in the John Carter Brown Library in Providence, Rhode Island. In preparing the transcription, we have followed a modified version of the protocol for the transcription of medieval texts outlined in the *Normas de transcripción y edición de textos y documentos* (1944) of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid, Spain.

The foliation of the original 1542 edition has been maintained. Since the leaves of the original are unmarked, we have identified the head of each transcribed page with a square-bracketed entry identifying the edition, folio, and side of the leaf (recto [r] or verso [v]), for example, [Z:flr] for the Zamora edition, folio one recto. Lineation of the Zamora edition has not been preserved, and thus word hyphenation in the original is not reflected in our transcription. Where a word has been split between two pages, we have transcribed the complete word at the beginning of the page where the second part of it appears in the original.

The original paragraph divisions of the Zamora edition, represented in the original text by large capital letters, have been maintained and are represented in our transcription by the modern system of paragraph indentation. The chapter divisions and titles that appear in the Valladolid edition of 1555 have been included in our critical apparatus according to the system described below. To facilitate comparison of the Zamora and Valladolid editions, we have inserted the Valladolid edition's folio numbers into the transcribed Zamora text according to the same system of notation described above, for example, [V:fiv] denotes the Valladolid edition, folio one verso. We have not included in our transcription the Zamora edition's signatures, that is, the letters appearing in the lower margin of the first leaf of each gathering and used as a guide to assemblage for binding. The Zamora edition lacks catchwords.

In transcribing the Zamora text, we have resolved all abbreviations and preserved all contractions. We have retained the original orthography with the exception of the following modifications prescribed by the *Normas*

*de transcripción:* *y* has been rendered as *i* where *i* represents the modern spelling; *u* and *v*, employed indiscriminately as vowels or consonants, have been transcribed according to their phonetic value, regardless of the form in which they appear in the Zamora edition; all double letters (e.g., *ff*, *ss*, *rr*) have been maintained as in the original, except when they appear at the beginning of a word, in which cases they have been transcribed as single letters. Archaic symbols have been transcribed according to their modern equivalents (e.g., *cristiano* for *xp̄iano*, *hombres* for *hōbres*, *que* for *q̄*, etc.). These modifications of the original have not been identified in the transcription. Proper nouns have been excluded from these transcription modifications and appear exactly as they do in the original text, except that the modern equivalents of archaic symbols have been introduced (e.g., Pánphilo for Pāphilo, Apalachen for Apalachē). Orthographic variations found in the Zamora edition (e.g., *volver* vs. *bolver*), some of which may represent variant pronunciations (e.g., *agora* vs. *ahora*) or variant word forms (e.g., *adó* vs. *adonde*), have been preserved unless otherwise identified.

We have applied word divisions according to the norms of modern Castilian (e.g., preposition and article combinations have been separated when they do not represent contractions, and enclitic pronouns have been attached to the gerund or infinitive verb form when they appear with them). We have introduced syntactic divisions throughout the text and added modern punctuation and accentuation. Modern norms of capitalization have been employed throughout, regardless of capitalization used in the Zamora edition.

We have scrupulously compared the print of the microfilm of the JCBL copy of the Zamora edition, used for our transcription, with the copy of the Valladolid edition held in the Kane Collection of the Rare Books Division of Firestone Library, Princeton University. The variations observed in this comparison are represented in the critical apparatus of the transcription. Each variant is indicated in the text by a superscript letter; the reading of the main text that the variant replaces appears following the corresponding letter in the critical apparatus directly to the left of the main text of each page. The variant itself appears in the critical apparatus following the right bracket that separates it from the corresponding letter and the text from the main body of the transcription. The origin of the variant entry is given as V:, referring to the Valladolid edition, and Z:, to the Zamora edition, according to the edition to which the variant corresponds.

When a V: variant appears alone in an entry of the critical apparatus of the transcription, it is assumed that the corresponding word or phrase in the body of the text represents the Zamora reading, and vice versa. Because we give priority in this edition to the Zamora version of the text, we have

generally listed the divergent Valladolid readings as variants. Where the Zamora entry renders an obvious printing or grammatical error that was subsequently corrected in the Valladolid version, we have substituted the Valladolid reading into the body of the text and noted the Zamora reading as the variant in the critical apparatus. The rare simultaneous appearance in the critical apparatus of both a Z: variant and a V: variant indicates that the transcription text diverges from both the Zamora and Valladolid readings (see below). The use of *om.* signals the absence of text in the stated edition.

In identifying variations between the Zamora and Valladolid versions of the *relación*, we have attempted to catalog potential and obvious *semantic* differences. Thus, we have corrected obvious printing errors in the Zamora edition by supplying a correction from the Valladolid edition and noting the Zamora error in the critical apparatus, but since the Zamora text is our object of study we have not documented such errors that appear in the Valladolid edition alone. Where orthographic and word-form variations between the Zamora and Valladolid editions represent no significant semantic difference, we have maintained the Zamora text and have not noted the Valladolid variant, in spite of the potential linguistic interest that cataloging all such variants between the two versions might have had. We have, however, preserved all differences in the orthography of toponymic and onomastic references found in both editions. The same protocol used in transcribing the Zamora edition was employed in transcribing the variants taken from the Valladolid edition. Where the objective of the critical apparatus is to show only a typographical error, however, no punctuation, capitalization, or accentuation has been applied.

Where the Zamora entry seems to be a misprint that produces a dubious lexical choice (“esteras de cama,” [sleeping mats], to produce “houses made of sleeping mats”) but the Valladolid edition corrects it (“esteras de cañas” [reed mats], in the expression “houses made of reed mats”), we have inserted the Valladolid entry into the main text and presented the Zamora reading as a variant. Occasionally we have inserted the Valladolid entry into the transcription text as a correction verified by external information, for example, the substitution of the surname Suárez for Gutiérrez on [Z:f3r] in reference to the expedition’s commissary; in these cases the Zamora text is listed as the variant. Where both a Z: and a V: variant appear together in the critical apparatus, the corresponding entry in the main text corrects the error that appears at that point in both editions (e.g., the substitution of Porcallo for Z: Porcalle, V: Porcalle on [Z:f3v]). Again, this type of substitution has been made only when justified by compelling external information. Finally, and most importantly, we have noted all omissions/interpolations between the two versions, always presenting the Valladolid text as the variant.

As we point out in our discussion of the publication of the Zamora and Valladolid editions (chap. 12, sec. 3.E), the lack of a license to print in the Zamora edition is explained by the fact that systematic state licensing to print books in Castile was not put into effect until the royal edict of 1554. Although the royal license to print the Valladolid edition does not pertain to the Zamora edition, this document offers important information about the publication of the Valladolid text and contains relevant references to the Zamora text. For this reason we have transcribed the license, granted on 21 March 1555, in the appendix following the text. (In the corresponding critical apparatus, the listing of a variant signifies that a correction has been made to the main text, though there is no other version against which to verify the correction.)

Another significant feature of the 1555 Valladolid edition is its division of the *relación* into chapters and its corresponding table of contents. As mentioned above, we have inserted the chapter numbers and titles as part of our critical apparatus, again relying on the system of superscript letters and treating the interpolated chapter headings as textual variants. We have included in the appendix the table of contents to which these chapter divisions pertain and which is presented at the end of the Valladolid edition. The folio numbers given in that table pertain to the foliation of the Valladolid text, which, as mentioned above, we have inserted into our transcription in square brackets. In both documents of the appendix we have identified the folios on which the respective texts appear in the Valladolid edition.

Throughout the body of our transcription square brackets have been used to denote words we have interpolated into the text; these bracketed entries, made only where essential to understanding, consist of conjunctions or the identification of the subjects of verbs in cases where the antecedent is not obvious.

### **English Translation of the Zamora (1542) Edition**

Our aim in translation has been to provide the reader with a strong verbal impression in English of Cabeza de Vaca's language, conveying the texture or "feel" of the lexicon and syntactic structures he used in Spanish.

With respect to grammar and syntax, we have attempted to take advantage of the correspondences between Spanish and English where it is possible to maintain structural order (the same word order and the representation of the same grammatical categories); where there is no match between the two languages, we have had to rely on functional/semantic correspondences, using word order and grammatical categories in English that differ from those of Spanish yet offer the most reasonable translation equivalents. Where

possible, we have endeavored to retain in English Cabeza de Vaca's syntax, maintaining its sequence for those utterances in which the systems of the two languages share common features and when there is a choice of position in both; we have avoided loose paraphrase except when essential to guarantee intelligibility in English.

With regard to Cabeza de Vaca's lexicon, we have tried to carefully observe the limits of its range and content. Here the challenge has been to convey adequate representations of his vocabulary without overspecifying it according to twentieth-century knowledge or bias, while at the same time avoiding the use of such vague and generic terms in English that the translation fails to denote the content of Cabeza de Vaca's word choice in Spanish. As we indicate below, some of these lexical problems cannot be solved through translation without seriously distorting the text; thus we address them in the textual annotation.

Certain differences between noun and verb phrases in Spanish and English have provided the instances of greatest frequency where we have had to depart from the structure of the original Spanish utterances. In the noun phrase, a significant difference is due to the process of nominalization in Spanish whereby noun modifiers of various types come to replace the noun itself. Pervasive in Spanish, the practice of nominalization is neither as active nor as extensive in English. Our common solution has been to replace the nominalized adjectival modifiers in Spanish with the deleted noun or the dummy carrier *one* in English. This has occurred with nominalized demonstratives ("ésta le dijo" [this woman told him]; "éste" [this gourd]; "éstos" [these Indians]; "yendo con éstos" [going with these Indians]); possessives ("los nuestros" [our Indians]); definite determiners ("los de la tierra" [the men of the land]; "los de los higos" [the people of the figs]; "los que nos solían acompañar" [the ones who usually accompanied us]); limiting adjectives ("los otros" [the other ones]; "estos mismos" [these same ones]; "otras diez y siete" [another seventeen days]); descriptive adjectives ("el francés" [the French ship]; "los enfermos" [the sick people]); and neuter nominalized adjectives ("aquello a que éramos idos" [the endeavor upon which we were embarked]; "paresçer y manera dello" [the semblance and appearance of houses]).

A second area of major structural difference occurs in verb phrases and concerns the pattern of verbal complementation by which a second, subordinate clause is attached to the sentence's principal clause and related to it by the contingency of the imposition of will of one person on another and verbs of suasion. With the exception of certain verbs such as *hacer*, "to make," *dejar*, "to allow," *mandar*, "to order," and *rogar*, "to beg," Spanish prefers the construction of an additional, complete clause that is characterized by the

use of a conjugated verb (usually in the subjunctive mood); in the same circumstances, English tends to use the complement construction, using a phrase that contains no finite verb. As one of the areas of most common structural disparity between English and Spanish, the respective patterns of verbal complementation provide these translation equivalents:

Rogávannos que nos fuésemos con ellos  
They begged us to go with them (f18v)

nos dezían que nos fuésemos de la tierra  
they were telling us to leave the land (f6r)

Yo les dixé que me llevassen adonde estava su capitán  
I told them to take me to their captain (f58v–f59r)

Y mandámosles que abaxassen de las sierras  
And we ordered them to come down from the sierras (f62r)

Other significant areas of noncorrespondence between the verb systems of Spanish and English for the purpose of translation include the presence of explicit verbal aspect in Spanish and the existence in English of modal auxiliary verbs that have no direct equivalent in Spanish. A single textual example will suffice to suggest the differences:

E después desto proveído, en presencia de los que allí estavan me dixo, que pues yo tanto estorvava y temía la entrada por la tierra, que me quedasse y tomasse cargo de los navíos y la gente que en ellos quedava y poblasse si yo llegasse primero que él.

And when this was done, in the presence of those who were there he said to me that since I objected so much and feared the inland expedition, I should stay and take charge of the ships and the people who remained on them and settle the land if I arrived before him. (f8r–v)

In this passage, the Spanish utterance communicates verbal aspect (i.e., the imperfective versus perfective dimensions of an action or state of being of the verbs used), whereas English must rely on verb tense only. Thus we have translated “I objected,” “[I] feared” while the Spanish utterance, using the imperfective aspect (“estorvava y temía”), emphasizes the action-in-progress and the durational aspect of Cabeza de Vaca’s state of mind. In the same manner, the durational aspect of the crew’s status aboard ship set forth in the original Spanish (“quedava”) is lost in the English translation. On the other hand, English introduces the useful modal auxiliary verbs, in this case to convey obligation-advisability (“should stay,” “[should] take charge,” “[should] settle the land”), to elaborate a verbal modification that



the Spanish text here handles by means of tense and mood. The modifications of contingency-permission, potentiality, obligation-advisability, and obligation-probability are handled in Spanish by tense or verbs (such as *poder, querer, deber*) that carry lexical meanings that overlap the meanings of English modal auxiliaries. In translating from Spanish to English, the English modal auxiliaries (“can,” “could,” “will,” “would,” “shall,” “should,” “may,” “might”) have been the most common way to render notions of potentiality, contingency, and obligation that the Spanish language text presents through the use of verbs in the subjunctive mood.

A final contrast regarding the verb phrase that is worthy of note is adverbial placement. Spanish tends to associate the verb and adverb closely; in English, the verb and object are more likely to come together: “y hallamos allí una sonaja de oro entre las redes” versus “and we found a rattle of gold there among the nets” (f6r).

Cabeza de Vaca’s lexicon has provided a special set of challenges. Overall, in order to present a plausible translation we have collected all the pertinent references to semantic fields used in the account and evaluated them in relation to one another and, in turn, in relation to the broader narration in which they are embedded. Two cases in point are the terms *bien dispuesto(a)* and its variant meanings regarding physical stature or personal disposition (f13r) and *monte*, used throughout the text to variously refer to the forested areas of tropical Cuba (f4v), the abundant and variously open and dense woods of the Florida Peninsula (f11v, f12r), the wooded areas of coastal Texas (f36v), and, finally, the thorny scrub savanna vegetation and highland areas from the Río Sinaloa southward in northwestern Mexico (f58r–f61v). Problems such as these, impossible to resolve by discrete lexical entries in the translation, have been treated not only in the footnotes to the translation but also in the nine-part commentary (chaps. 2–10) we have prepared to accompany the reading of the *relación*.

With regard to onomastics and toponyms, we have uniformly adopted the modern spelling of Spanish proper and place-names (Enríquez for Enrríquez, Pantoja for Pantoxa, Jagua for Xagua, Santiago for Sanctiago). We have retained the original place-names given by Cabeza de Vaca in Spanish for those items specific to the time and place of his description (Cabo de Santa Cruz, Cabo de Corrientes) or introduced by him (Malhado, Corazones). Some entries in this latter category, in wide use subsequently, are rendered in English (Bay of Horses). All references to saints, in place-names as well as holy days, have been rendered in English. Names of Amerindian ethnic groups and languages (see table 6 in chap. 6), many of which never appeared again in primary source accounts subsequent to Cabeza de Vaca’s

and Oviedo's accounts of the Narváez expedition, are rendered as given in each specific occurrence in the Zamora text.

In presenting the English translation, we have retained the divisions of the body of the text according to the foliation of the Zamora edition used in our transcription. With few exceptions (see f2r, f2v), we have likewise reproduced in our English translation the sentence divisions that we established in our transcription of the original Zamora text. By both these means, we have sought to enable the reader to compare, if desired, the original and translated texts.

As in the transcription, square-bracketed entries in the translation represent our introduction of words necessary for the intelligibility of the utterance. We use parentheses and dashes, however, to set off utterances given in the original text. We have introduced parentheses where Cabeza de Vaca interrupted his main utterance to interpolate relevant, often clarifying information, such as when, for example, he explained the commissary's position that the ships should skirt the coast rather than set sail to find a new land and port; in the midst of this account of the commissary's opinion, Cabeza de Vaca introduced the pilots' views on the location of Pánuco, and we have indicated this interruption by the use of parentheses (f7v). We have set off with dashes remarks by which Cabeza de Vaca added emphasis to the observations he was making: "they say that those people who were there saw and heard—all of them very clearly—how that woman said to the other women that since their husbands were entering inland and were putting themselves in such great peril, they should not count in any way on them" (f66r).

Two types of annotation appear on each folio page. The first, appearing in the left margin, is the critical apparatus, identified by letters of the alphabet, in which we have brought forward and translated only those variants that contain differences of meaning between the Zamora and Valladolid editions. The abbreviation *om.* signifies that the edition under examination lacks the term or phrase found at the corresponding place in the other edition. The most noteworthy entries in the critical apparatus are the chapter titles that appeared in the body of the text of the 1555 Valladolid edition and the emendations that elaborate or suppress utterances found in the 1542 Zamora edition (see chap. 12, sec. 6.A for a discussion of these differences). The superscript letters that appear in the translation correspond to the same letters used for their counterparts in the transcription.

The second body of annotation, identified by numbers, consists of explanatory footnotes in which we have attempted to provide information or interpretive commentary necessary to reduce the opacity of the text itself. These notes fall roughly into the ten following categories: (1) the

identification of historical personages, geographical locations, and flora and fauna; (2) the explanation or definition of words or concepts peculiar to the text or to the experience recounted in it (“la vía de la Florida”); (3) a related category of the presentation of terms, with explanations, in the original Spanish where the English translation may be deceptively simple or nontechnical (“opinion” for *parecer*); (4) the specification of an unclear referent or antecedent; (5) the correction of factual error; (6) temporal references; (7) the measurement of weights and distances; (8) cross-references; (9) references to Oviedo’s contributions on issues discussed by Cabeza de Vaca; and (10) broadly interpretive explanations pertaining to the narration’s construction or the historical issues represented in it. These latter two categories of annotation merit further explanation.

In the absence of the Joint Report, Oviedo’s text serves as the fundamental key to the interpretation of Cabeza de Vaca’s *relación*; Oviedo’s unique position as a reader of *both* the Joint Report as well as the *relación* has prompted us to privilege the information he provided, using it as an essential component of our textual annotation as well as our nine-part textual commentary. With respect to the final category of annotation, our footnotes present conclusions drawn from the arguments we present in our analysis of the text (chaps. 2–10); annotations on f30v and f31r regarding the manner in which Cabeza de Vaca received the accounts he gives of the fate of the other rafts offer revealing examples. Since much of the research we have done in order to render the best possible translation cannot be made available in the translated text, we offer as essential complements to this translation the textual commentary that divides the *relación* into nine parts and the explanatory footnotes to the translation that are drawn from it.

## Transcription and English Translation of the 1542 *Relación*

a. La relación . . . compañía.]  
V: La relación y comentarios  
del gobernador Álvar Núñez  
Cabeça de Vaca, de lo acaescido  
en las dos jornadas que hizo  
a las Indias. Con privilegio.  
Está tassada por los señores  
del Consejo en ochenta y cinco  
maravedís.

La relación que dio Álvar Núñez Cabeça de Vaca de lo acaescido en las Indias en la armada donde iva por governador Pánphilo de Narbáez, desde el año de veinte y siete hasta el año de treinta y seis que bolvió a Sevilla con tres de su compañía.<sup>a</sup>

a. The account . . . company.]  
V: The account and commentaries of Governor Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, of what occurred on the two journeys he made to the Indies. By royal authorization. Valuated by the lords of the Council [of Castile] at eighty-five *maravedís*.

The account that Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca gave of what occurred in the Indies on the expedition of which Pánfilo de Narváez served as governor, from the year [15]27 to [15]36, when he returned to Seville with three members of his company.<sup>a1</sup>

1. Cabeza de Vaca returned to Spain alone in August 1537.

Sacra, Cesárea, Católica Magestad:

a. puede] V: podrá

b. sino] V: mas

Entre quantos príncipes sabemos aya avido en el mundo, ninguno pienso se podría hallar a quien con tan verdadera voluntad, con tan gran diligencia y desseo ayan procurado los hombres servir como vemos que a Vuestra Magestad hazen oy. Bien claro se puede<sup>a</sup> aquí conoscer que esto no será sin gran causa y razón; ni son tan ciegos los hombres que a ciegas y sin fundamento todos siguiessen este camino, pues vemos que no sólo los naturales, a quien la fee y subjección obliga hazer esto, mas aun los estraños trabajan por hazelles ventaja. Mas ya que el desseo y voluntad de servir a todos en esto haga conformes, allende la ventaja que cada uno puede hazer, ay una muy gran diferencia no causada por culpa dellos, sino solamente de la fortuna, o más cierto sin culpa de nadie, sino<sup>b</sup> por sola voluntad y juizio de Dios, donde nasce que uno salga con más señalados servicios que pensó, y a otro le suceda todo tan al revés que no pueda mostrar de su propósito más testigo que a su diligencia, y aun ésta queda a las vezes tan encubierta que no puede bolver por sí. De mí puedo dezir que en la jornada que por mandado de Vuestra Magestad hize de tierra firme, bien pensé que mis

Holy, Imperial, Catholic Majesty:<sup>1</sup>

Among as many princes as we know there have been in the world, I think none could be found whom men have tried to serve with truer will or greater diligence and desire than we see men honoring Your Majesty today. It is quite evident that this is not without great cause and reason; nor are men so ignorant that all of them blindly and arbitrarily pursue this course, since we see not only countrymen, whom faith and duty oblige to do this, but even foreigners strive to exceed their efforts. But even when the desire and will of all makes them equal in this matter, beyond the particular advantage that any one can secure for himself, there is a very great disparity not caused by the shortcoming of any one of them, but only by fortune, or more certainly through no fault of one's own, but only by the will and judgment of God, where it happens that one may come away with more notable services than he expected, while to another everything occurs so to the contrary that he cannot demonstrate any greater witness to his intention than his diligence, and even this is sometimes so obscured that it cannot make itself evident. For myself I can say that on the expedition that by command of Your Majesty I made to the mainland,<sup>2</sup> well I thought that my

1. Charles V, Holy Roman emperor (1519–58), king of Spain (as Charles I, 1516–56).

2. *tierra firme*.



a. nueve] V: diez

b. salir] V: salir de

obras y servicios fueran tan claros y manifiestos como fueron los de mis antepassados, y que no tuviera yo necesidad de hablar para ser contado entre los que con entera fe y gran cuidado administran y tratan los cargos de Vuestra Magestad y les haze merced. [V:f2v] Mas como ni mi consejo, ni diligencia aprovecharon para que aquello a que éramos idos fuesse ganado conforme al servicio de Vuestra Magestad, y por nuestros peccados permittiesse Dios que de quantas armadas a aquellas tierras an ido, ninguna se viesse en tan grandes peligros, ni tuviesse tan miserable y desastrado fin, no me quedó lugar para hazer más servicio deste, que es traer a Vuestra Magestad relación de lo que en nueve<sup>a</sup> años por muchas y muy estrañas tierras que anduve perdido y en cueros, pudiesse saber y ver, ansí en el sitio de las tierras y provincias y distancias dellas, como en los mantenimientos y animales que en ellas se crían, y las diversas costumbres de muchas y muy bárbaras naçiones con quien conversé y viví, y todas las otras particularidades que pude alcançar y conoscer que dello en alguna manera Vuestra Magestad será servido. Porque aunque la esperança que de salir<sup>b</sup> entre ellos tuve siempre fue muy poca, el cuidado y diligencia siempre fue muy grande de tener particular memoria de todo, para que si en algún tiempo Dios nuestro Señor quisiesse traerme adonde agora estoy, pudiesse dar testigo de mi voluntad y servir a Vuestra Magestad como la relación dello es aviso, a mi parescer no liviano, para los que en su nombre fueren a conquistar aquellas tierras; y

a. nine] V: ten

deeds and services would be as illustrious and self-evident as those of my ancestors, and that I would not have any need to speak in order to be counted among those who with complete fidelity and great solicitude administer and carry out the mandates of Your Majesty, and whom you favor. But since neither my counsel<sup>1</sup> nor diligence prevailed in order that the endeavor upon which we were embarked be completed as service to Your Majesty, and since no expedition of as many as have gone to those lands ever saw itself in such grave dangers or had such a wretched and disastrous end as that which God permitted us to suffer on account of our sins, I had no opportunity to perform greater service than this, which is to bring to Your Majesty an account of all that I was able to observe and learn in the nine<sup>a</sup> years that I walked lost and naked through many and very strange lands,<sup>2</sup> as much regarding the locations of the lands and provinces and the distances among them, as with respect to the foodstuffs and animals that are produced in them, and the diverse customs of many and very barbarous peoples with whom I conversed and lived, plus all the other particularities that I could come to know and understand, so that in some manner Your Majesty may be served. Because although the hope that I had of coming out from among them was always very little, my care and effort to remember everything in detail was always very great. This I did so that if at some time our Lord God should wish to bring me to the place where I am now,<sup>3</sup> I would be able to bear witness to my will and serve Your Majesty, inasmuch as the account of it all is, in my opinion, information not trivial for those who in your name might go to conquer those lands and

1. Cabeza de Vaca here alludes to critical decisions made early in the expedition about which his counsel was disregarded (f7v, f8r-v).

2. Cabeza de Vaca traveled through North American lands for a maximum of eight years—from April 1528, when he arrived with the Narváez expedition on the Florida Peninsula, until he encountered Spaniards in northwestern Mexico in early 1536.

3. Castile.

a. dubda] Z: dnda

juntamente traerlos a conoçimiento de la verdadera fe y verdadero Señor y servicio de Vuestra Magestad. Lo qual yo escreví con tanta çertinidad que aunque en ella se lean algunas cosas muy nuevas y para algunos muy difficiles de creer, pueden sin dubda<sup>a</sup> creellas, y creer por muy cierto que antes soy en todo más corto que largo, y bastará para esto averlo yo offrescido a Vuestra Magestad por tal. A la qual supplico la resçiba en nombre de servicio, pues éste solo es el que un hombre que salió desnudo pudo sacar consigo.

at the same time bring them<sup>1</sup> to knowledge of the true faith and the true Lord and service to Your Majesty. I wrote all this with such sure knowledge that although some very novel things may be read in it, very difficult for some to believe, they can absolutely give them credence and be assured that I am in everything brief rather than lengthy, and it will suffice for this purpose to have offered it to Your Majesty as such, for which I ask that it be received in the name of service, because this alone is what a man who came away naked could carry out with him.

1. The “barbarous peoples” referred to above (f2r).

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo primero:  
En que cuenta cuándo partió el  
armada y los oficiales y gente  
que en ella iba.

b. Suárez] Z: Gutiérrez

<sup>a</sup>A diez y siete días del mes de junio de mil y quinientos y veinte y siete partió del puerto de Sanct Lúcar de Barrameda el governador Pámphilo de Narváez con poder y mandado de Vuestra Magestad para conquistar y gobernar las provincias que están desde el Río de las Palmas hasta el cabo de la Florida, las quales son en tierra firme. E la armada que llevaba eran cinco navíos, en los quales, poco más o menos, irían seiscientos hombres. Los oficiales que llevaba, porque dellos se ha de hazer mençion, eran estos que aquí se nombran: Cabeça de Vaca por thesorero y por alguazil mayor; Alonso Enríquez [por] contador; Alonso de Solís por fator de Vuestra Magestad y por veedor. Iva un fraile de la Orden de Señor Sanct Francisco por comissario que se llamava frai Juan Suárez<sup>b</sup> con otros quatro frailes de la misma orden. Llegamos a la isla de Sancto Domingo donde estuvimos quasi quarenta y cinco días proveyéndonos de algunas cosas necessarias, señaladamente de cavallos. Aquí nos faltaron de nuestra armada más de çiento y quarenta hombres que se quisieron quedar allí por los partidos y promessas que los de la tierra les hizieron. De allí partimos y llegamos a Sanctiago, que es puerto en la isla de Cuba, donde en algunos días que estuvimos el governador se rehizo de gente, de armas y de cavallos. Succedió allí que un gentilhombre que se

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter one: In which is told when the expedition departed and the officials and people who went on it.

b. Suárez] Z: Gutiérrez

<sup>a</sup>On the seventeenth day of the month of June 1527, Governor Pánfilo de Narváez, with the authority and mandate of Your Majesty, departed from the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda<sup>1</sup> to conquer and govern the provinces that are found from the Río de las Palmas to the cape of *Florida*, which are on the mainland.<sup>2</sup> And the fleet that he led was composed of five ships, in which there went about six hundred men, more or less. Because it is necessary to make mention of them, the officers<sup>3</sup> he commanded were the ones who are named here: Cabeza de Vaca as treasurer and *alguacil mayor*;<sup>4</sup> Alonso Enríquez [as] comptroller; Alonso de Solís<sup>5</sup> as factor of Your Majesty and inspector of mines. A friar of the Order of Saint Francis named Fray Juan Suárez<sup>b</sup> went as commissary,<sup>6</sup> and four other friars of the same order went with him. We arrived at the island of Santo Domingo, where we spent nearly forty-five days stocking up on certain necessary items, notably horses.<sup>7</sup> Here more than one hundred and forty men of our crew deserted us, choosing to remain there because of the favors and promises that the men of that land made to them. We departed from there and arrived at Santiago, which is a port on the island of Cuba, where, during the number of days we were there, the governor resupplied himself with men, arms, and horses. There it occurred that a prominent gentleman

1. The main port of embarkation for the Indies, at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River on the southwestern coast of the Iberian Peninsula.

2. The area referred to here included the lands along the western and northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico from the mouth of the Río Soto la Marina in the present-day state of Tamaulipas in northeastern Mexico to the tip of the Florida Peninsula. In the 1520s the term *Florida* described the vast unexplored lands that lay beyond the northern frontier of New Spain from the Florida Peninsula to the Pacific Coast. Throughout this work, italicized *Florida* is used in contrast to Florida, which denotes the modern-day state.

3. Officials of the royal treasury.

4. Narváez, not Cabeza de Vaca, held royal appointment as

chief law-enforcement official (CDI 22:226).

5. Diego de Solís, according to the document assigning him the position of inspector (AGI, Casa de la Contratación 3309, 32-4-29/35, f48v-f51v).

6. Provincial governor in the Order of Saint Francis.

7. Most likely during August and September 1527.

- a. Porcallo] Z: Porcalle V:  
Porcalle
- b. mitad] Z: meitad
- c. navío] Z: nanio
- llamava Vasco Porcallo,<sup>a</sup> vezino de la villa de la Trinidad, que es en la mesma isla, offresció de dar al governador çiertos bastimentos que tenía en la Trinidad, que es cient leguas del dicho puerto de Sanctiago. El governador con toda la armada partió [V:f3v] para allá. Mas llegados a un puerto que se dize Cabo de Sancta Cruz, que es mitad<sup>b</sup> del camino, paresciole que era bien esperar allí y embiar un navío que traxesse aquellos bastimentos. Y para esto mandó a un capitán [llamado] Pantoxa que fuesse allá con su navío,<sup>c</sup> y que yo, para más seguridad, fuesse con él. Y él [Pánfilo de Narváez] quedó con quatro navíos porque en la isla de Santo Domingo avía comprado un otro navío. Llegados con estos dos navíos al puerto de la Trinidad, el capitán Pantoxa fue con Vasco Porcallo<sup>a</sup> a la villa, que es una legua de allí, para resçebir los bastimentos. Yo quedé en la mar con los pilotos, los quales nos dixerón que con la mayor presteza que pudiésemos nos despachássemos de allí, porque aquél era un muy mal puerto y se solían perder muchos navíos en él. Y porque lo que allí nos sucedió fue cosa muy señalada, me paresció que no sería fuera de propósito y fin con que yo quise escribir este camino, contarla aquí. Otro día de mañana començó el tiempo a dar no buena señal porque començó a llover y el mar iba arzeziando tanto que, aunque yo di licencia a la gente que saliesse a tierra, como ellos vieron el tiempo que hazía y que la villa estava de allí una legua, por no estar al agua y frío que hazía, muchos se bolvieron al navío. En esto vino una canoa de la villa en

named Vasco Porcallo, resident of the *villa* of Trinidad,<sup>1</sup> which is on the same island, offered to give the governor certain provisions that he possessed in Trinidad, which is located one hundred leagues<sup>2</sup> from the previously mentioned port of Santiago. Taking the entire fleet, the governor departed for there. However, having arrived at a port called Cabo de Santa Cruz,<sup>3</sup> which is located halfway there, it seemed to him that it was a good idea to wait there and send a ship ahead to acquire those provisions. To this end, he ordered a captain [named] Pantoja to go to Trinidad with his ship, and for greater security, he ordered me to go with him. And he [Pánfilo de Narváez] remained with four ships, since on the island of Santo Domingo he had purchased another vessel. Arriving with these two ships at the port of Trinidad, Captain Pantoja went with Vasco Porcallo to the town, which lies one league from the port, to receive the provisions. I remained at sea with the pilots, who told us that we should depart from there as quickly as possible because it was a very bad port and a great number of ships were customarily lost in it. And because what happened to us there was such a notable thing, it seemed to me that to tell it here would not be unrelated to the purpose and goal for which I chose to write an account of this journey. The following morning the weather showed signs of becoming ominous, as it began to rain and the sea became so turbulent that, although I gave permission to those aboard the ship to take to land, many of them, when they saw the inclement weather and that the town was a league away from there, returned to the ship in order to avoid the wet and cold. At this point a canoe arrived from the town,

1. On the southwestern coast of Cuba.

2. A Spanish league was slightly over 3 miles (4.8 kilometers), according to period and modern sources (Covarrubias 757b; Krieger, "Nuevo estudio" 64–68); see Chardon.

3. On the southeastern coast of Cuba, in the region of the Gulf of Guacanayabo.



a. yo] V: om.

que me traían una carta de un vezino de la villa rogándome que me fuesse allá, y que me darían los bastimentos que uviessse y neçessarios fuessen, de lo qual yo me escusé diziendo que no podía dexar los navíos. A mediodía bolvió la canoa con otra carta en que, con mucha importunidad, pedían lo mesmo, y traían un cavallo en que fuesse yo.<sup>a</sup> Yo di la misma respuesta que primero avía dado, diziendo que no dexaría los navíos. Mas los pilotos y la gente me rogaron mucho que fuesse porque diessse priessa que los bastimentos se truxessen lo más presto que pudiese ser, porque nos partiésemos luego de allí donde ellos estavan con gran temor que los navíos se avían de perder si allí estuviessen mucho. Por esta razón yo determiné de ir a la villa aunque primero que fuesse dexé proveído y mandado a los pilotos que si el Sur, con que allí [V:f4r] suelen perderse muchas vezes los navíos, ventasse y se viessen en mucho peligro, diessen con los navíos al través y en parte que se salvasse la gente y los cavallos. Y con esto yo salí; aunque quise sacar algunos conmigo por ir en mi compañía, los quales no quisieron salir, diziendo que hazía mucha agua y frío y la villa estava muy lexos, que otro día, que era domingo, saldrían con el ayuda de Dios a oír missa. A una ora después de yo salido, la mar començó a venir muy brava y el Norte fue tan rezio que ni los bateles osaron salir a tierra, ni pudieron dar en ninguna manera con los navíos al través por ser el viento por la proa, de suerte que con muy gran trabajo con dos tiempos contrarios

bringing me a letter from one of its residents, beseeching me to go there and saying that they would give me the provisions that were necessary and available, to which I declined, saying that I could not leave the ships. At midday the canoe returned with another letter in which, insisting greatly, they asked the same thing, and they sent a horse that was to take me. I gave the same reply I had previously given, saying that I would not leave the ships. But the pilots and crew strongly urged me to go so that haste be made and the provisions brought as quickly as possible, so that afterward we could depart from where they had great fear of the ships being lost if they remained there much longer. For this reason I decided to go to the town, although before leaving I made preparations and instructed the pilots that if the south wind, which often causes ships to be lost in that place, came up, and if they found themselves in great danger, they should scuttle the ships and do it in a place where the people and the horses could be saved. And with this I left; although I tried to get some men to go with me in my company, they refused to leave, saying that it was very wet and cold and the town very far away, [and] that the next day, which was Sunday, they would go ashore, with God's help, to hear mass. One hour after I left, the sea became very rough and the north wind was so strong that not even the rowboats dared to leave for shore, nor were the men able in any way to run the ships aground, because the wind was against the prow, such that despite the very great effort against two contrary winds

y mucha agua que había, estuvieron aquel día y el domingo hasta la noche. A esta hora el agua y la tempestad comenzó a crecer tanto que no menos tormenta avía en el pueblo que en la mar, porque todas las casas e iglesias se cayeron, y era necesario que anduviésemos siete o ocho hombres abraçados unos con otros para podernos amparar que el viento no nos llevase. Y andando entre los árboles no menos temor teníamos dellos que de las casas, porque como ellos también caían, no nos matassen debaxo. En esta tempestad y peligro anduvimos toda la noche sin hallar parte ni lugar donde media ora pudiésemos estar seguros. Andando en esto oímos toda la noche, especialmente desde el medio della, mucho estruendo y grande ruido de bozes, y gran sonido de cascaveles y de flautas y tamborinos y otros instrumentos que duraron hasta la mañana que la tormenta çessó. En estas partes nunca otra cosa tan medrosa se vio. Yo hize una provança dello, cuyo testimonio embié a Vuestra Magestad. El lunes por la mañana baxamos al puerto y no hallamos los navíos. Vimos las boyas dellos en el agua adonde conosçimos ser perdidos, y anduvimos por la costa por ver si hallaríamos alguna cosa dellos. Y como ninguno hallássemos, metímonos por los montes, y andando por ellos un quarto de legua de agua, hallamos la barquilla de un navío puesta [V:f4v] sobre unos árboles, y diez leguas de allí por la costa se hallaron dos personas de mi navío y ciertas tapas de caxas y las personas tan desfiguradas de los golpes

and the heavy rains, they were there that day and Sunday until nightfall. At this time the sea and the storm began to swell so much that there was no less tempest in the town than at sea, because all the houses and churches blew down, and it was necessary for us to band together in groups of seven or eight men, our arms locked with one another, in order to save ourselves from being carried away by the wind. We were as fearful of being killed by walking under the trees as among the houses, since the storm was so great that even the trees, like the houses, fell. In this great storm and continual danger we walked all night without finding an area or place where we could be safe for even half an hour. Walking along in this way we heard all night long, especially after midnight, much noise and a great clamor of voices, and the loud sounds of bells and flutes and tambourines and other instruments, all of which continued until the morning when the storm ceased. In these parts such a fearful thing had never been seen. I prepared a *probanza*<sup>1</sup> documenting it, the testimony of which I sent to Your Majesty.<sup>2</sup> Monday morning we went down to the port and we did not find the ships. There we saw their buoys in the water where we knew they had been lost, and we went along the coast to see if we could find any remains of them. And since we found none, we went into the woods, and walking through them a quarter of a league from the water, we found the rowboat of one of the ships on top of some trees, and ten leagues from there along the coast two men from my ship were found and certain lids of crates, and the bodies were so disfigured from the blows

1. A series of oral testimonies offered by several witnesses, sworn before and written down by a notary public (*escribano*), responding to a questionnaire prepared to establish certain facts.

2. Charles V replied on 27 March 1528 (AGI, Indiferente General 421, 139-1-7) to a 28 November 1527 communication that Cabeza de Vaca had sent to him, which was possibly the *probanza* here mentioned.

de las peñas que no se podían conocer. Halláronse también una capa y una colcha hecha pedaços, y ninguna otra cosa paresció. Perdiéronse en los navíos sesenta personas y veinte cavallos. Los que avían salido a tierra el día que los navíos allí llegaron, que serían hasta treinta, quedaron de los que en ambos navíos avía. Assí estuvimos algunos días con mucho trabajo y necesidad porque la provisión y mantenimientos que el pueblo tenía se perdieron y algunos ganados. La tierra quedó tal que era gran lástima vella: caídos los árboles, quemados los montes, todos sin hojas ni yerva. Assí passamos hasta cinco días del mes de noviembre que llegó el governador con sus quatro navíos que también avían passado gran tormenta, y también avían escapado por averse metido con tiempo en parte segura. La gente que en ellos traía y la que allí halló estavan tan atemorizados de lo passado que temían mucho tornarse a embarcar en invierno, y rogaron al governador que lo passasse allí. Y él, vista su voluntad y la de los vezinos, invernó allí. Diome a mí cargo de los navíos y de la gente para que me fuesse con ellos a invernarse al puerto de Xagua, que es doze leguas de allí, donde estuve hasta veinte días del mes de hebrero.

a. ] Z: om. V: Capítulo segundo:  
Cómo el governador vino al  
puerto de Xagua y truxo  
consigo a un piloto.  
b. dezian] V: dezia

<sup>a</sup>En este tiempo llegó allí el governador con un vergantín que en la Trinidad compró, y traía consigo un piloto que se llamava Miruelo; avíalo tomado porque dezían<sup>b</sup> que sabía y avía estado en el Río de las Palmas y era muy buen piloto de toda

of the rocks that they could not be recognized. Also found were a cape and a quilt shredded to ribbons, and not another thing appeared. Sixty men and twenty horses perished in the ships. Those who had gone ashore the day the ships arrived there, probably about thirty persons, were all that remained of the ones there had been on both ships. Thus we found ourselves for some days in great hardship and necessity because the town's provisions and stores had been lost, along with some cattle. The land was left in such a state that it was a great pity to see it: the trees fallen, the woods destroyed, all stripped of leaves and grass. Thus we were there until the fifth of November, when the governor arrived with his four ships, which had also experienced the great tempest and which had escaped by having gotten themselves to a safe place in time. The men he brought in them and the ones he found there were so terrified by what had happened that they greatly feared embarking again in winter, and they begged the governor to spend it there. And he, recognizing their will and that of the residents, wintered there. He put me in charge of the ships and men, so that I would go with them to winter in the port of Jagua,<sup>1</sup> which is twelve leagues from there, where I stayed until the twentieth of February.

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter two: How the governor came to the port of Jagua and brought a pilot with him.

b. they] V: he

<sup>a</sup>At this time the governor arrived there with a brigantine that he had purchased in Trinidad, and he brought with him a pilot named Miruelo; he had taken him because they<sup>b</sup> said that he knew and had been in the Río de las Palmas and was a very good pilot of the entire

1. The Bay of Cienfuegos on the southern coast of Cuba.

- a. Lixarte] V: la Avana
- b. quillas] Z: tillas
- c. Aguaniguanico] V: a Guaniguanico
- d. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo tercero: Cómo llegamos a la Florida.
- la costa del norte. Dexava también comprado otro navío en la costa de Lixarte,<sup>a</sup> en el qual quedava por [V:f5r] capitán Álvaro de la Çerda, con quarenta hombres y doze de cavallo. Y dos días después que llegó, el governador se embarcó, y la gente que llevaba eran quatroçientos hombres y ochenta cavallos, en quatro navíos y un vergantín. El piloto que de nuevo avíamos tomado metió los navíos por los baxíos que dizen de Canarreo, de manera que otro día dimos en seco. Y así estuvimos quinze días tocando muchas vezes las quillas<sup>b</sup> de los navíos en seco, al cabo de los quales una tormenta del Sur metió tanta agua en los baxíos que podimos salir, aunque no sin mucho peligro. Partidos de aquí y llegados Aguaniguanico,<sup>c</sup> nos tomó otra tormenta que estuvimos a tiempo de perdernos. A Cabo de Corrientes tuvimos otra donde estuvimos tres días. Passados éstos, doblamos el Cabo de Sanct Antón y anduvimos con tiempo contrario hasta llegar a doze leguas de la Havana. Y estando otro día para entrar en ella, nos tomó un tiempo de Sur que nos apartó de la tierra. Y atravessamos por la costa de la Florida, y llegamos a la tierra martes, doze días del mes de abril, y fuimos costeando la vía de la Florida. Y Jueves Sancto surgimos en la misma costa en la boca de una baía, al cabo de la qual vimos ciertas casas y habitaçiones de indios.
- <sup>d</sup>En este mismo día salió el contador Alonso Enrriquez y se puso en una isla que está en la misma baía. Y llamó a los indios, los quales vinieron

a. Lixarte] V: Havana

c. Guaniguanico]  
Z: Aguaniguanicod. ] Z: om. V: Chapter three:  
How we arrived in *Florida*.

north coast.<sup>1</sup> He also left another ship which he had purchased on the coast of Lixarte,<sup>a</sup> on which Álvaro de la Cerda was stationed as captain, with forty foot soldiers and twelve horsemen. And two days after he arrived, the governor set sail, taking with him four hundred men and eighty horses in four ships and one brigantine. The pilot whom we had recently enlisted guided the ships through the shoals,<sup>2</sup> which they call the shoals of Canarreo, in such a manner that the following day we ran aground.<sup>3</sup> And we were in this predicament for fifteen days, the keels of the ships frequently touching bottom, after which time a storm caused by the south wind brought so much water into the shallows that we were able to get out, although not without great danger. Having departed from here and arriving at Guaniguanico,<sup>c</sup> another storm overtook us and we were nearly shipwrecked. At Cabo de Corrientes we encountered another storm and were there for three days.<sup>4</sup> At the end of them, we rounded Cabo de San Antón and sailed against the wind until we arrived at a point twelve leagues from Havana. And waiting another day to enter the port, a south wind took us and drove us away from land. And we passed over to the coast of *Florida*,<sup>5</sup> and came to land on Tuesday, the twelfth of April,<sup>6</sup> and we went along the coast the way of *Florida*.<sup>7</sup> And on Maundy Thursday we anchored on the same coast at the mouth of a bay, at the back of which we saw certain houses and habitations of Indians.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>d</sup>On this same day the comptroller Alonso Enríquez went onto an island in the same bay. And he called to the Indians, who came

1. Miruelo was most likely "Diego Fernández de Mirnedo [*sic*]," the chief pilot of Francisco de Garay's 1523 expedition from Jamaica to the Río de las Palmas and Pánuco (CDI 26:99).

2. *baxíos*.

3. Off the south coast of Cuba, probably in the Gulf of Batabanó to the east of the Isla de Pinos.

4. On the southwestern tip of Cuba, as the ships sailed around the island's western end.

5. From Ponce de León's discovery of the Florida Peninsula in 1513, *Florida* referred specifically to the peninsula, and more generally to the Spaniards' evolving

concept of mainland North America.

6. 12 April 1528 was actually Easter Sunday. The expedition had been at sea for approximately one month.

7. *la vía de la Florida*. Traveling "the way of *Florida*" meant to follow along the coast toward the tip of the Florida Cape. Traveling "the way of Palms" or "the way of Pánuco" signified movement in the opposite direction, toward the mouths of the Río Pánuco and the Río de las Palmas.

8. An inlet slightly north of the mouth of Tampa Bay on Pinellas Peninsula.



y estuvieron con él buen pedaço de tiempo, y por vía de rescate le dieron pescado y algunos pedaços de carne de venado. Otro día siguiente, que era Viernes Sancto, el governador se desembarcó con la más gente que en los bateles que traía pudo sacar. Y como llegamos a los buihios, o casas, que avíamos visto de los indios, hallámoslas desamparadas y solas porque la gente se avía ido aquella noche [V:f5v] en sus canoas. El uno de aquellos buihios era muy grande que cabrían en él más de trezientas personas. Los otros eran más pequeños, y hallamos allí una sonaja de oro entre las redes. Otro día el governador levantó pendones por Vuestra Magestad y tomó la possessión de la tierra en su real nombre y presentó sus provisiones y fue obedescido por governador como Vuestra Magestad lo mandava. Ansimismo presentamos nosotros las nuestras ante él, y él las obedesçió como en ellas se contenía. Luego mandó que toda la otra gente desembarcase y los cavallos que avían quedado, que no eran más de quarenta y dos, porque los demás con las grandes tormentas y mucho tiempo que avían andado por la mar eran muertos. Y estos pocos que quedaron estaban tan flacos y fatigados que por el presente poco provecho podimos tener dellos. Otro día los indios de aquel pueblo vinieron a nosotros. Y aunque nos hablaron, como nosotros no teníamos lengua, no los entendíamos. Mas hazíannos muchas señas y amenazas y nos paresçió que nos dezían que nos fuéssemos de la tierra, y con esto nos

and were with him a considerable amount of time, and by means of exchange they gave him fish and some pieces of venison. The following day, which was Good Friday, the governor disembarked with as many people as he could get into the rowboats that the ships carried. And when we arrived at the Indians' *buhíos*,<sup>1</sup> or houses, that we had seen, we found them abandoned and empty because the people had gone away that night in their canoes. One of those *buhíos* was so big that more than three hundred people could fit in it. The others were smaller, and we found a rattle of gold there among the nets. The next day the governor raised the standard on Your Majesty's behalf and took possession of the land in Your royal name and presented his orders and was obeyed as governor just as Your Majesty commanded. In the same manner we presented ours before him, and he obeyed them as required.<sup>2</sup> Then he commanded the rest of the men to disembark and unload the horses that had survived, which were no more than forty-two in number, because the rest of them had perished due to the great storms and long time at sea. And these few that remained were so thin and worn out that for the present we could make little use of them. The next day<sup>3</sup> the Indians from that village came to us. And although they spoke to us, since we did not have an interpreter we did not understand them. But they made many signs and threatening gestures to us and it seemed to us that they were telling us to leave the land, and with this

1. House or habitation in the Taino language of the Caribbean.

2. The formal presentation of orders between the expedition's leader and its officers was a standard requirement on all royally authorized missions.

3. Easter Sunday, 1528, according to Oviedo (583a). This and all subsequent Oviedo citations giving only a page number or page and chapter numbers refer to his account of the Narváez expedition (*Historia* 3:579–618 [bk. 35, chaps. 1–7]).

- dexaron sin que nos hiziessen ningún impedimiento y ellos se fueron.
- a. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo quarto:  
Cómo entramos por la tierra. <sup>a</sup>Otro día adelante el governador acordó de entrar por la tierra por descubrilla y ver lo que en ella avía. Fuímosnos con él el comissario y el veedor y yo, con quarenta hombres y entre ellos seis de cavallo, de los quales poco nos podíamos aprovechar. Llevamos la vía del norte hasta que a ora de bísperas llegamos a una vaía muy grande que nos pareció que entrava mucho por la tierra. Quedamos allí aquella noche, y otro día nos bolvimos donde los navíos y gente estavan. El governador mandó que el vergantín fuesse costeando la vía de la Florida y buscasse el puerto<sup>b</sup> que Miruelo, el piloto, avía [V:f6r] dicho que sabía. Mas ya él lo avía errado y no sabía en qué parte estávamos ni adónde era el puerto. Y fuele mandado al vergantín que si no lo hallasse, travessasse a la Havana, y buscasse el navío que Álvaro de la Çerda tenía, y tomados algunos bastimentos nos viniessen a buscar. Partido el vergantín, tornamos a entrar en la tierra los mismos que primero con alguna gente más, y costeamos la vaía que avíamos hallado, y andadas quatro leguas tomamos quatro indios. Y mostrámosles<sup>c</sup> maíz para ver si lo conosçían, porque hasta estonces no avíamos visto señal dél. Ellos nos dixeron<sup>d</sup> que nos llevarían donde lo avía. Y assí nos llevaron a su pueblo que es al cabo de la baía cerca de allí, y en él nos mostraron un poco de maíz que aun no estava para cogerse. Allí hallamos muchas
- b. puerto] Z: puerro
- c. mostrámosles]  
V: mostrámosle
- d. dixeron] Z: dixero

a. | Z: *om.* V: Chapter four:  
How we entered inland.

they parted from us without producing any confrontation and went away.

<sup>a</sup>And the next day the governor decided to go inland to explore the land and see what it contained. The commissary, the inspector of mines, and I went with him, with forty men, and among them six horsemen, whose horses were of little use to us.<sup>1</sup> We followed to the north<sup>2</sup> until, at the hour of vespers, we arrived at a very large bay that seemed to us to go far inland.<sup>3</sup> We remained there that night, and the next day we returned to where the ships and crew were stationed. The governor ordered that the brigantine go along the coast toward *Florida* and look for the port that Miruelo, the pilot, had said he knew.<sup>4</sup> But he had already miscalculated, and he did not know where we were nor where the port was. And the brigantine was ordered, in case it did not find the port, to travel to Havana and pick up Álvaro de la Cerda's ship, and after taking on some provisions, to come to search for us. When the brigantine had departed, the same group of us as before, along with some others, again went inland, and we followed along the coast of the bay we had found and, having gone four leagues, we took four Indians. And we showed them maize to see if they recognized it, because up to that point we had not seen any sign of it. They told us that they would take us to where it could be found. And thus they took us to their village, which is at the back of the bay near there and in which they showed us a little maize that was not yet ready to harvest. There we found many

1. The comptroller, Alonso Enríquez, was serving at this time as Narváez's lieutenant governor (f30v) and remained at the expedition's settlement on the coast (f7r).

2. Northeast (Oviedo 583a).

3. Old Tampa Bay, forming the western arm of Tampa Bay. The Spaniards would name this bay Bahía de la Cruz (f15v).

4. Miruelo claimed to have been acquainted with the mouth of the Río de las Palmas. This place, on the opposite side of the Gulf of Mexico from where the ships had landed, was the original destination of the Narváez expedition.

a. lienço] V: lienço y  
 b. ser] V: *om.*

c. Apalachen] V: Apalache

d. Palachen] V: Apalache

e. estava] V: estava ya

caxas de mercaderes de Castilla, y en cada una dellas estava un cuerpo de hombre muerto, y los cuerpos cubiertos con unos cueros de venados pintados. Al comissario le pareció que esto era especie de idolatría, y quemó las caxas con los cuerpos. Hallamos también pedaços de lienço<sup>a</sup> de paño y penachos que parecían ser<sup>b</sup> de la Nueva España. Hallamos también muestras de oro. Por señas preguntamos a los indios de adónde avían avido aquellas cosas. Señaláronnos que muy lexos de allí avía una provincia que se dezía Apalachen,<sup>c</sup> en la qual avía mucho oro, y hazían seña de aver muy gran cantidad de todo lo que nosotros estimamos en algo. Dezían que en Palachen<sup>d</sup> avía mucho. Y tomando aquellos indios por guía partimos de allí. Y andadas diez o doze leguas hallamos otro pueblo de quinze casas donde avía buen pedaço de maíz sembrado que ya estava para cogerse, y también hallamos alguno que estava<sup>e</sup> seco. Y después de dos días que allí estuvimos, nos bolvimos donde el contador y la gente y navíos estava, y contamos al contador y pilotos lo que avíamos visto y las nuevas que los indios nos avían dado. Y otro día, que fue primero de mayo, el governador llamó aparte al comissario y al contador y al veedor y a mí, y a un marinero que se llamava Bartolomé Fernández, [V:f6v] y a un escrivano que se dezía Jerónimo de Alaniz. Y assí juntos nos dixo que tenía en voluntad de entrar por la tierra adentro, y los navíos se fuessen costeano hasta que llegassen al puerto, y que los pilotos dezían y creían que yendo

c. Apalachen] V: Apalache

d. Palachen] V: Apalache

e. was] V: was already

crates belonging to Castilian merchants, and in each one of them was the body of a dead man, and the bodies were covered with painted deer hides. This seemed to the commissary to be a type of idolatry, and he burned the crates with the bodies in them.<sup>1</sup> We also found pieces of linen cloth and plumes that seemed to be from New Spain. In addition, we found samples of gold. By means of signs we asked the Indians where those things had come from. They indicated to us by gestures that very far away from there there was a province called Apalachen,<sup>c</sup> in which there was much gold, and they made signs to indicate that there were very great quantities of everything we held in esteem.<sup>2</sup> They said that in Palachen<sup>d</sup> there was great bounty. And taking those Indians as guides we departed from there. And going some ten or twelve leagues we found another village of fifteen<sup>3</sup> houses where there was a good-sized plot of sown maize that was ready to be harvested, and we also found some that was<sup>e</sup> dry. And after being there two days, we returned to where the comptroller and the crew and the ships were located, and we told the comptroller and the pilots about what we had seen and the news that the Indians had given us. And the next day, which was the first of May, the governor called aside the commissary, the comptroller, and the inspector, and myself, as well as a sailor named Bartolomé Fernández, and a notary<sup>4</sup> named Jerónimo de Alaniz. And thus all together, he told us that it was his will to enter inland, and that the ships should go along the coast until they arrived at the port,<sup>5</sup> and that the pilots said and believed that going

1. Cabeza de Vaca (f66v) later says that these corpses were of Christians. Oviedo (583b) related that Narváez ordered that the crates be burned, and he commented (615a) that the Spaniards learned from the Indians that the corpses were of Christians; he concluded that since these corpses were of Christians they should not have been burned.

2. Oviedo (583b) said that the Indians informed the Spaniards by signs that they had found the crates as well as the woven cloth and other items, apparently from New Spain, in a ship wrecked on that bay.

3. Twelve to fifteen (Oviedo 584a).

4. *escribano*.

5. The mouth of the Río de las Palmas or possibly the settlement of Santisteban del Puerto located south of the mouth of the Río de las Palmas slightly inland on the Río Pánuco.

a. la] Z: a	la <sup>a</sup> vía de Palmas estaban muy cerca de allí. Y sobre esto nos rogó le diésemos nuestro parecer. Yo respondía que me parecía que por ninguna manera debía dexar los navíos sin que primero quedassen en puerto seguro y poblado, y que mirasse que los pilotos no andavan ciertos, ni se afirmavan en una misma cosa ni sabían a qué parte estaban, y que allende desto, los cavallos no estaban para que en ninguna necesidad que se offresciese nos pudiésemos aprovechar dellos, y que sobre todo esto íbamos mudos y sin lengua por donde mal nos podíamos entender con los indios, ni saber lo que de la tierra queríamos, y que entrávamos por tierra de que ninguna relación teníamos, ni sabíamos de qué suerte era, ni lo que en ella avía, ni de qué gente estava poblada, ni a qué parte della estábamos, y que sobre todo esto no teníamos bastimientos para entrar adonde no sabíamos, porque visto lo que en los navíos avía, no se podía dar a cada hombre de ración <sup>b</sup> para entrar por la tierra más de una libra de bizcocho y otra de toçino, y que mi parecer era que se debía embarcar e ir a buscar <sup>c</sup> puerto y tierra que fuese mejor para poblar, pues lo que avíamos visto en sí era tan despoblada y tan pobre quanto nunca en aquellas partes <sup>d</sup> se avía hallado. Al comissario le pareció todo lo contrario, diciendo que no se avía de embarcar, sino que yendo siempre hazia la costa, fuessen en busca del puerto (pues los pilotos dezían que no estaría sino diez o quinze leguas de allí la vía de Pánuco, y que no era possible yendo siempre a la costa que no topássemos con él, porque dezían que entrava doze leguas adentro por la tierra), y que los primeros que lo hallassen esperassen allí a los otros, y que
b. ración] Z: razón	
c. buscar] Z: busear	
d. partes] Z: pattes	

in the direction of the Río de Palmas they were very close to there. And on this matter he requested that we give him our opinion.<sup>1</sup> I responded that it seemed to me that by no means should he leave the ships without first assuring that they remained in a secure and inhabited port, and that he should take notice that the pilots were not convinced, nor were they all affirming the same thing, nor did they know where they were, and that beyond all this, the horses were in such condition that we could not make use of them in any need that might present itself, and that above all we were traveling mute, that is, without interpreters, through an area where we could hardly make ourselves understood by the Indians or learn about the land what we desired to know, and that we were entering into a land about which we had no information, nor did we know what it was like, nor what was stored in it, nor by what people it was populated, nor in which part of it we were located, and that beyond all this, we did not have adequate provisions to enter a place of which we were ignorant, because having seen the stores of the ships, no more than a pound of hardtack and another of salt pork could be given to each man as a ration<sup>b2</sup> to take in exploring the land, and that in my opinion we should set sail and go to seek a port and a land better for settling, since what we had seen was in itself as unpopulated and as poor as any place that had been discovered in those parts.<sup>3</sup> To the commissary it seemed quite the opposite, he saying that it was not necessary to embark, but rather that, always going along the coast, they should go in search of the port (because the pilots said that going in the direction of Pánuco it would not be but ten or fifteen leagues from there, and that it was not possible, always going along the coast, for us to miss it, because they said that it entered twelve leagues inland),<sup>4</sup> and that the first ones to find it should wait there for the others, and that

b. man as a ration] Z: man of reason

1. *parecer*. Formal opinion recorded and certified by the notary.

2. *hombre de ración*. The Zamora (1542) edition uses *razón* (reason) in place of *ración* (ration), so that the original text might have been read, “to each man of reason.”

3. Oviedo (584a) adds that Cabeza de Vaca also argued that Narváez should wait for the return of Miruelo in the brigantine with Álvaro de la Cerda's ship and provisions

from Havana before initiating an overland journey.

4. The search for the Río de las Palmas, and perhaps also Santisteban del Puerto on the Río Pánuco, determined the route of travel directly along the coast or slightly inland and parallel to it. The entire expedition would follow this course west along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and the final four survivors would seemingly unintentionally abandon it in 1535 (see f47v–f48r).



a. los] V: los otros

b. otros] V: *om.*

c. dexasse] Z: dexassen

embarcarse era tentar a Dios, pues desde que partimos de Castilla tantos trabajos avíamos pasado, tantas tormentas, tantas pérdidas de navíos y de gente avíamos tenido hasta llegar allí, y que por estas [V:f7r] razones él se debía de ir por luengo de costa hasta llegar al puerto, y que los<sup>a</sup> navíos con la otra gente se irían la misma vía hasta llegar al mismo puerto. A todos los otros<sup>b</sup> que allí estaban pareció bien que esto se hiziesse assí, salvo al escrivano, que dixo que primero que desamparasse los navíos, los debía de dexar en puerto conoçido y seguro y en parte que fuesse poblada; que esto hecho, [el gobernador] podría entrar por la tierra adentro y hazer lo que le pareciesse. El governador siguió su parescer y lo que los otros le aconsejavan. Yo, vista su determinación, requerile de parte de Vuestra Magestad que no dexasse<sup>c</sup> los navíos sin que quedassen en puerto y seguros, y ansí lo pedí por testimonio al escrivano que allí teníamos. Él [el gobernador] respondió que pues él se conformava con el parescer de los más de los otros oficiales y comissario, que yo no era parte para hazelle estos requerimientos. Y pidió al escrivano le diese por testimonio como, por no aver en aquella tierra mantenimientos para poder poblar ni puerto para los navíos, levantava el pueblo que allí avía assentado e iva con él en busca del puerto y de tierra que fuesse mejor. Y luego mandó apercebir la gente que avía de ir con él que se proveyessen de lo que era menester para la jornada. E después desto proveído, en presencia de los que allí estaban me dixo, que pues yo tanto estorbava y temía la entrada por la tierra, que me quedasse y tomasse cargo de los navíos

to embark was to tempt God, because since we departed from Castile we had suffered so many hardships and had experienced so many storms, so many losses of ships and men until arriving there, and that for these reasons he should go along the coast until reaching the port and that the<sup>a</sup> ships with the other men should go along the same route until arriving at the same port. To all the others<sup>b</sup> who were there assembled it seemed appropriate to do this in this manner, except for the notary,<sup>1</sup> who said that, rather than abandoning the ships, they should be left in a known and secure port and in an area that was inhabited; that once this was done, he [the governor] could enter inland and do whatever seemed best to him. The governor followed his opinion as well as what the others counseled him. I, having seen his resolution, requested on behalf of Your Majesty that he<sup>c</sup> not leave the ships without their being in port and secure, and thus I asked that my request be certified by the notary we had there with us.<sup>2</sup> He [the governor] responded that since he agreed with the assessment of the majority of the other officials and the commissary, I had no right to make these demands of him. And he asked the notary to certify that on account of there not being adequate foodstuffs in that land to establish a settlement or a port for the ships, he was moving the settlement that he had established there and was going with it in search of the port and of land that would be better. And then he commanded that the people who were going to go with him be advised to supply themselves with whatever was necessary for the journey. And when this was done, in the presence of those who were there he said to me that since I objected so much and feared the inland expedition, I should stay and take charge of the ships

a. the] V: the other

b. the others] V: *om.*

c. he] Z: they

1. Jerónimo de Alaniz (f7r).

2. These certification procedures formed part of the juridical protocols by which formal actions were taken and documented on Spanish expeditions of conquest.

a. a] Z: *om.*

y la gente que en ellos quedava y poblasse si yo llegasse primero que él. Yo me escusé desto. Y después de salidos de allí aquella misma tarde, diciendo que no le parecía que de nadie se podía fiar aquello, me embió a<sup>a</sup> dezir que me rogava que tomasse cargo dello. Y viendo que importunándome tanto yo todavía me escusava, me preguntó qué era la causa porque huía de açetallo, a lo qual respondí que yo huía de encargarme de aquello porque tenía por cierto y sabía que él no avía de ver más los navíos ni los navíos a él, y que esto entendía viendo que tan sin aparejo se entravan por la tierra adentro, y que yo quería más aventurarme al peligro que [V:f7v] él y los otros se aventuravan y passar por lo que él y ellos passassen que no encargarme de los navíos y dar ocasión que se dixesse que, como avía contradicho la entrada, me quedava por temor y mi honrra anduiesse en disputa, y que yo quería más aventurar la vida que poner mi honrra en esta condición. Él, viendo que conmigo no aprovechava, rogó a otros muchos que me hablassen en ello y me lo rogassen, a los quales respondí lo mismo que a él. Y así proveyó por su teniente para que quedasse en los navíos a un alcalde que traía que se llamava Caravallo.

b. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo cinco:  
Cómo dexó los navíos el  
governador.

<sup>b</sup>Sábado, primero de mayo, el mismo día que esto avía passado, [el gobernador] mandó dar a cada uno de los que avían de ir con él dos libras de bizcocho y media libra de toçino. Y así nos partimos para entrar en la tierra. La suma de toda la gente que llevávamos eran trezientos hombres. En ellos iba el comissario, fray

and the people who remained on them and settle the land if I arrived before him. I refused to do this. And after having gone from there that same afternoon, saying that it did not seem to him that he could entrust it to anyone else, he sent me a messenger to say that he was beseeching me to take charge of it. And he, seeing that in spite of entreating me so much I still declined to accept it, asked me why I avoided doing so, to which I responded that I refused to take that responsibility because I was certain and knew that he would not see the ships again nor the ships him, and that I understood this on seeing how unprepared they were to go inland, and that I was more willing than he and the others to expose myself to danger and endure whatever he and the others were to endure than to take charge of the ships and give occasion that it be said, as I had opposed the overland expedition, that I remained out of fear, for which my honor would be under attack, and that I preferred risking my life to placing my honor in jeopardy. He, seeing that he could not prevail upon me, beseeched many others to speak with me about it and beg me to do it, to whom I responded the same as I had to him. And thus, through his lieutenant,<sup>1</sup> he dispatched an order by which an *alcalde*<sup>2</sup> he brought with him, named Caravallo, was to remain with the ships.

b. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter five: How the governor left the ships.

<sup>b</sup>Saturday, the first of May,<sup>3</sup> the same day that this had happened, he [the governor] commanded that each one of those who was to go with him be given two pounds<sup>4</sup> of hardtack and half a pound of salt pork. And thus we set out to enter inland.<sup>5</sup> We took with us a total of three hundred men. Among them went the commissary, Fray

1. Evidently the comptroller, Alonso Enríquez.

2. Magistrate, first-instance judge.

3. 1 May 1528 was actually a Friday.

4. One pound (Oviedo 584b).

5. Cabeza de Vaca omits telling here about the loss of a ship and other events that occurred prior to his departure. He relates this information, as well as the account of what happened to the other three ships, the brigantine, and the ship brought by Álvaro de la Cerda, at the end of the narrative (f65v–f66v). Unlike the shipwreck, these other events occurred subsequent

to his departure, and he did not learn about them until he arrived in New Spain and Castile eight and nine years later, in 1536 and 1537, respectively.

a. Suárez] Z: Xuárez	Joan Suárez, <sup>a</sup> y otro fraile, que se dezía fray Juan de Palos y tres clérigos y los oficiales. La gente de cavallo que con éstos íbamos éramos quarenta de cavallo. Y ansí anduvimos <sup>b</sup> con aquel bastimiento que llevamos <sup>c</sup> quinze días sin hallar otra cosa que comer salvo palmitos de la manera de los del Andalucía. En todo este tiempo no hallamos indio ninguno, ni vimos casa ni poblado. Y al cabo llegamos a un río que lo passamos con muy gran trabajo a nado y en balsas. Detuvimosnos un día en passallo, que traía muy gran corriente. Passados a la <sup>d</sup> otra parte, salieron a nosotros hasta dozientos indios, poco más o menos. El gobernador salió a ellos, y después de avellos hablado por señas, ellos nos señalaron de suerte que nos uvimos de rebolver con ellos. Y prendimos çinco o seis, y éstos nos llevaron a sus casas que estaban hasta media legua de allí, en las quales hallamos gran cantidad de maíz que estava ya para cogerse. Y dimos infinitas gracias a nuestro [V:f8r] Señor por <sup>e</sup> avernos socorrido en tan gran necesidad, porque çiertamente como éramos nuevos en los trabajos, allende del cansançio que traíamos, veníamos muy fatigados de hambres. <sup>f</sup> Y a tercero día que allí llegamos, nos juntamos el contador y veedor y comissario y yo, y rogamos al gobernador que embiasse a buscar la mar por ver si hallaríamos puerto, porque los indios dezían que la mar no estava muy lexos de allí. Él nos respondió que no curássemos de hablar en aquello porque estava muy lexos de allí. Y como yo era el que más le importunava, dixome que <sup>g</sup> fuesse yo
b. anduvimos] Z: andunimos	
c. llevamos] V: llevávamos	
d. a la] Z: al	
e. por] Z: par	
f. hambres] V: hambre	
g. que] V: que me	

a. Suárez] Z: Xuárez

Juan Suárez,<sup>a</sup> and another friar, who was called Fray Juan de Palos, and three clerics,<sup>1</sup> and the [royal] officials. We the horsemen who went with them numbered forty. And thus we traveled with those provisions, which we carried for fifteen days without finding anything to eat other than hearts of palm of the type found in Andalusia. During this entire time we did not find a single Indian, nor did we see a single house or village. And at the end [of the fifteen days] we came to a river<sup>2</sup> that we crossed by swimming and on rafts with very great difficulty. It took us an entire day to cross it because it had a very strong current. Having crossed to the other side, nearly two hundred Indians, more or less, confronted us. The governor went out to them, and after having spoken to them by means of signs, they gestured to us in such a way that we had to turn on them. And we captured five or six of them, and these Indians took us to their houses, which were a half league from there, where we found great quantities of maize ready to be harvested. And we gave infinite thanks to our Lord for having aided us in so great a need, because since we were most certainly new to these hardships, beyond the fatigue we suffered, we came very worn out from hunger. And on the third day after having arrived there, we—the comptroller, the inspector, the commissary, and I—met together, and we begged the governor to send scouts to look for the sea to see if we could find a port, because the Indians said that the sea was not very far from there. He replied to us that we should not trouble ourselves with talking about that, because it was very far from there. And since I was the one who importuned him the most, he told me that I should go

1. *clérigos*. Identified earlier (f3r) as Franciscan friars.

2. Withlacoochee River.

a. capitán] Z: copitan

a descubrilla y que buscasse puerto, y que avía de ir a pie con quarenta hombres. Y así otro día yo me partí con el capitán<sup>a</sup> Alonso del Castillo y con quarenta hombres de su compañía. Y así anduvimos hasta ora de mediodía que llegamos a unos plaçeles de la mar que paresçía que entravan mucho por la tierra. Anduvimos por ellos hasta legua y media con el agua hasta la mitad de la pierna, pisando por ençima de hostiones, de los quales resçibimos muchas cuchilladas en los pies y nos fueron causa de mucho trabajo, hasta que llegamos en el río que primero avíamos atravessado que entrava por aquel mismo ancón. Y como no lo podimos passar por el mal aparejo que para ello teníamos, bolvimos al real y contamos al governador lo que avíamos hallado, y como era menester otra vez passar por el río por el mismo lugar que primero lo avíamos passado para que aquel ancón se descubriese bien y viéssemos si por allí avía puerto. Y otro día mandó a un capitán que se llamava Valençuela que, con sessenta hombres y seis de cavallo, pasasse el río y fuesse por él abaxo hasta llegar a la mar y buscar si avía puerto, el qual, después de dos días que allá estuvo, bolvió. Y dixo que él avía descubierta el ancón y que todo era baía baxa hasta la rodilla, y que no se hallava puerto, y que avía visto cinco o seis canoas de indios que passavan de una parte a otra, y que llevavan puestos muchos penachos. Sabido esto, otro día partimos de allí yendo siempre en [V:f8v] demanda de aquella provincia que los indios nos avían dicho<sup>b</sup> de Apalachen,<sup>c</sup> llevando por guía los que dellos

b. dicho] Z: didicho

c. de Apalachen] V: Apalache

to find it and seek a port, and that I was to go on foot with forty men to do this. And thus the next day I departed with Captain Alonso del Castillo and forty men of his company. And thus we walked until noon, when we arrived at some sandbars of the sea that seemed to extend far inland. We walked through them about a league and a half<sup>1</sup> in water up to our knees, treading on oyster shells from which we received many cuts on our feet and that were the cause of much difficulty for us, until we arrived at the river that we had first crossed, which passed through that same bay. And since we could not cross it because we were so ill equipped for the purpose, we returned to camp and told the governor what we had found, and how it was necessary to cross the river again in the same place where we first had crossed it<sup>2</sup> in order to explore that bay well and see if there was a port there. And the next day he ordered a captain named Valenzuela to cross the river with sixty<sup>3</sup> foot soldiers and six horsemen, and to follow the river downstream until arriving at the sea, and to look for a port;<sup>4</sup> and after having been there two days, he returned. And he said that he had found the bay, and that all of it was shallow with water only knee-deep, and that a port could not be found, and that he had seen five or six canoes of Indians that crossed from one side to the other, and that they wore many plumes. Having learned this, the next day we departed from there, always going in pursuit of that province of Apalachen<sup>c</sup> that the Indians had told us about, taking as guides the ones from among them whom

c. Apalachen] V: Apalache

1. Two leagues (Oviedo 585a).
2. See (f9r).
3. Forty (Oviedo 585a).
4. The Spaniards evidently believed that this river, which emptied into the Gulf of Mexico on the west coast of the Florida Peninsula, was potentially the Río de las Palmas or the Río Pánuco, and that they would find their ships at the mouth of it.



a. caña] Z: cana

b. Palachen] V: Apalache

c. Apalachen] V: Apalache

d. con su cavallo] V: om.

avíamos tomado. Y así anduvimos hasta diez y siete de junio que no hallamos indios que nos osassen esperar. Y allí salió a nosotros un señor que le traía un indio a costas, cubierto de un cuero de venado pintado. Traía consigo mucha gente, y delante dél venían tañendo unas flautas de caña.<sup>a</sup> Y así llegó do estava el governador y estuvo una ora con él. Y por señas le dimos a entender que íbamos a Palachen,<sup>b</sup> y por las que él hizo, nos paresció que era enemigo de los de Apalachen,<sup>c</sup> y que nos iría a ayudar contra él. Nosotros le dimos cuentas y caxcaveles y otros rescates, y él dio al governador el cuero que traía cubierto, y así se bolvió. Y nosotros le fuimos siguiendo por la vía que él iva. Aquella noche llegamos a un río, el qual era muy hondo y muy ancho y la corriente muy rezia. Y por no atrevernos a passar con balsas, hezimos una canoa para ello, y estuvimos en passarlo un día. Y si los indios nos quisieran offender, bien nos pudieran estorvar el passo, y aun con ayudarnos ellos, tuvimos mucho trabajo. Uno de cavallo que se dezía Joan Velázquez, natural de Cuéllar, por no esperar, entró en el río con su cavallo<sup>d</sup> y la corriente, como era rezia, lo derribó del cavallo, y se asió a las riendas, y ahogó así y al cavallo. Y aquellos indios de aquel señor, que se llamava Dulchanchellin, hallaron el cavallo y nos dixerón donde hallaríamos a él [a Velázquez] por el río abaxo, y así fueron por él. Y su muerte nos dio mucha pena, porque hasta entonces ninguno nos avía faltado. El cavallo dio de çenar a muchos aquella noche. Passados de allí, otro día llegamos al pueblo de aquel señor, y allí nos embió maíz. Aquella

b. Palachen] V: Apalache

c. Apalachen] V: Apalache

d. on his horse] V: *om.*

we had captured.<sup>1</sup> And thus we walked until the seventeenth of June, during which time we found no Indians who dared to face us. And there, a native lord,<sup>2</sup> carried on the shoulders of an Indian and covered with a painted deer hide, came forth to meet us. He brought with him many people, and before him they came playing reed flutes. And thus he arrived to where the governor was and he spent an hour with him. And by gestures we gave him to understand that we were going to Palachen,<sup>b</sup> and by those which he made, it seemed to us that he was an enemy of the people of Apalachen,<sup>c</sup> and that he would go to help us against them. We gave him beads and bells<sup>3</sup> and other items of exchange, and he gave the governor the deerskin garment he was wearing, and thus he returned. And we went following him in the direction that he took. That night we reached a river that was very deep and very wide and had a very strong current.<sup>4</sup> And because we did not dare to cross it with rafts, we made a canoe for the purpose, and it took us a day to cross it. And if the Indians had wanted to attack us, they could easily have obstructed our passage, and even with their help we had great difficulty. One of the horsemen, who was named Juan Velázquez, a native of Cuéllar, because he did not want to wait, went into the river on his horse,<sup>d</sup> and the current, since it was strong, swept him off his horse, and he held tight to the reins, and thus he drowned and drowned the horse as well. And those Indians of that lord, who was called Dulchanchellin, found the horse and told us where we could find him [Velázquez] downstream, and thus they went to retrieve him. And his death gave us much grief, because up to that point none of us had perished.<sup>5</sup> The horse fed many that night. Once departed from there, we arrived the next day at the village of that lord, and there he sent us maize. That

1. The account that follows, through the expedition's arrival at Apalache (fiov), is absent from Oviedo's account.

2. Dulchanchellin, as Cabeza de Vaca notes below. Cabeza de Vaca used the Spanish "señor" as well as the Taino "cacique" to refer to native rulers.

3. *caxcaveles*. Covarrubias (315a) observed that such metal bells were used to decorate horses on festive occasions and served as warning devices in general. He noted their use

by musicians and as a way to track hunting birds and stock animals such as mules.

4. Suwannee River.

5. Valenzuela was the first to die from among those who had gone on the overland expedition in *Florida*; sixty men had been killed in the hurricane in Cuba (see f5r).

noche donde ivan a tomar agua nos flecharon un cristiano y quiso Dios que no lo hirieron. Otro día nos partimos de allí sin que indio ninguno de los naturales<sup>a</sup> paresçiesse, porque todos avían huído. Mas yendo nuestro camino, paresçieron indios los quales venían de guerra. Y aunque nosotros los llamamos no quisieron bolver ni [V:f9r] esperar, mas antes se retiraron siguiéndonos por el mismo camino que llevávamos. El governador dexó una çelada de algunos de cavallo en el camino que, como passaron, salieron a ellos y tomaron tres o quatro indios. Y éstos llevamos por guías de allí adelante, los quales nos llevaron por tierra muy trabajosa de andar y maravillosa de ver, porque en ella ay muy grandes montes, y los árboles a maravilla altos, y son tantos los que están caídos en el suelo que nos embaraçavan el camino, de suerte que no podíamos passar sin rodear mucho y con muy gran trabajo. De los que no estavan caídos, muchos estavan hendidos desde arriba hasta abaxo de rayos que en aquella tierra caen donde siempre ay muy grandes tormentas y tempestades. Con este trabajo caminamos hasta un día después de Sant Joan que llegamos a vista de Apalachen<sup>b</sup> sin que los indios de la tierra nos sintiessen. Dimos muchas gracias a Dios por vernos tan cerca dél (creyendo que era verdad lo que de aquella tierra nos avían dicho que allí se acabarían nuestros trabajos grandes<sup>c</sup> que avíamos passado), assí por el malo y largo camino para andar como por la mucha hambre que avíamos padescido. Porque aunque algunas vezes hallávamos

a. naturales] Z: naturnles

b. Apalachen] V: Apalache

c. nuestros trabajos grandes]  
V: los grandes trabajos

night, where they went to get water, they shot at one of our Christians, and God willed that they not wound him. The next day we left from there without even one of the Indians of that area appearing, because all of them had fled. But following our course, there appeared Indians who came prepared for war. And although we called to them, they refused to return or even hold their ground, but, rather, they retreated, following us along the same road we were traveling. The governor left some of the horsemen behind as an ambush on the road, so that as the Indians passed, they assaulted them and took three or four Indians. And we took these Indians as guides from that point onward; they took us through land very difficult to maneuver and glorious to see, because in it there are very great forests, and the trees wonderfully tall, and there are so many that are fallen upon the ground that they hindered our progress, so that we could not pass without making many detours and having very great difficulty. Of those trees that were not downed, many were split from top to bottom by lightning bolts that strike in that land where there are always great storms and tempests. With these difficulties we walked until the day after the Day of Saint John,<sup>1</sup> when we arrived within sight of Apalachen<sup>b</sup> without being perceived by the Indians of the area.<sup>2</sup> We gave many thanks to God upon seeing ourselves so near it (believing that what they had told us about that land was true, that there the great hardships that we had suffered would end), as much because of the long and difficult road we had walked, as because of the great hunger we had suffered. Because although sometimes we found

b. Apalachen] V: Apalache

1. 25 June, following the saint's day of 24 June.

2. Somewhere in the region between the Aucilla and Apalachicola Rivers in the north-central portion of the present-day state of Florida.

a. o] V: y  
 b. avía] Z: ania

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Capitulo seis:  
 Cómo llegamos a Apalache.  
 d. Apalachen] V: Apalache

maíz, las más andávamos siete o<sup>a</sup> ocho leguas sin toparlo. Y muchos avía<sup>b</sup> entre nosotros que, allende del mucho cansançio y hambre, llevavan hechas llagas en las espaldas de llevar las armas a cuestras sin otras cosas que se offresçían. Mas con vernos llegados donde desseávamos y donde tanto mantenimiento y oro nos avían dicho que avía, paresçionos que se nos avía quitado gran parte del trabajo y cansançio.

<sup>c</sup>[V:f9v] Llegados que fuimos a vista de Apalachen,<sup>d</sup> el governador mandó que yo tomasse nueve de cavallo y çinquenta peones y entrasse en el pueblo. Y así lo acometimos el veedor y yo. Y entrados, no hallamos sino mugeres y mochachos, que los hombres a la sazón no estavan en el pueblo. Mas de aí a poco, andando nosotros por él, acudieron y començaron a pelear, flechándonos. Y mataron el cavallo del veedor, mas al fin huyeron y nos dexaron. Allí hallamos mucha cantidad de maíz que estava ya para cogerse, y mucho seco que tenían encerrado. Hallámosles muchos cueros de venados, y entrellos algunas mantas de hilo pequeñas y no buenas con que las mugeres cubren algo de sus personas. Tenían muchos vasos para moler maíz. En el pueblo avía quarenta casas pequeñas y edificadas baxas y en lugares abrigados, por temor de las grandes tempestades que continuamente en aquella tierra suelen aver. El edificio es de paja. Y están çercados de muy espesso monte y grandes arboledas y muchos piélagos de agua, donde ay tantos y tan grandes árboles caídos que embaraçan

maize, most of the time we walked seven or eight leagues without finding any.<sup>1</sup> And there were many among us who, apart from the great fatigue and hunger they suffered and, since there was no other recourse, had wounds on their backs from carrying their weapons on their shoulders. But on finding ourselves where we desired to be, and where they told us there were so many foodstuffs and so much gold, it seemed to us that a great portion of our hardship and weariness had been lifted from us.

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter six: How we arrived at Apalache.

d. Apalachen] V: Apalache

“Upon arriving within sight of Apalachen,<sup>d</sup> the governor ordered that I take nine horsemen and fifty foot soldiers and enter the village. And thus the inspector<sup>2</sup> and I attacked it. And having entered it, we found only women and children, since at that time the men were not in the village. But a little while later, as we walked through it, they rushed in and began to attack, shooting us with arrows. And they killed the inspector’s horse, but in the end they fled and left us alone. There we found a great quantity of maize that was ready to be harvested, as well as much that they had dried and stored. We found many deer hides and among them some small woven mantles of poor quality with which the women partially cover their bodies. They had many vessels for grinding maize. In the village there were forty small houses, built low to the ground and in protected places, out of fear of the great tempests that commonly occur with great frequency in that land. The construction is of grass. And they are surrounded by very thick woods and great groves and many lagoons where there are many and very large fallen trees that form obstructions

1. Oviedo (585a) claimed the expedition sometimes went four or five days without finding maize.

2. Alonso (Diego) de Solís.

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo siete:  
De la manera que es la tierra.  
b. Apalachen] V: Apalache  
c. tiesto y firme] V: tierra firme  
d. liquidámbar] V:  
Z: laiquidámbar

e. Apalachen] V: Apalache  
f. están] V: están tan  
g. las] Z: los  
h. animales] Z: anima  
i. conejos] Z: coneios

y son causa que no se puede por allí andar sin mucho trabajo y peligro.

<sup>a</sup>La tierra por la mayor parte desde donde desembarcamos hasta este pueblo y tierra de Apalachen<sup>b</sup> es llana, el suelo de arena y tiesto y firme.<sup>c</sup> Por toda ella ay muy grandes árboles y montes claros donde ay nogales, y laureles y otros que se llaman liquidámbar,<sup>d</sup> cedros, savinas y enzinas y pinos y robles, [y] palmitos baxos de la manera de los de Castilla. Por toda ella ay muchas lagunas grandes y pequeñas, algunas muy trabajosas de passar, parte por la mucha [V:fior] hondura, parte por tantos árboles como por ellas están caídos. El suelo dellas es arena, y las que en la comarca de Apalachen<sup>e</sup> hallamos son muy mayores que las de hasta allí. Ay en esta provincia muchos maizales. Y las casas están<sup>f</sup> esparzidas por el campo de la manera que están las<sup>g</sup> de los Gelves. Los animales<sup>h</sup> que en ella vimos son venados de tres maneras, conejos<sup>i</sup> y liebres, ossos y leones, y otras salvaginas, entre los quales vimos un animal que trae los hijos en una bolsa que en la barriga tiene, y todo el tiempo que son pequeños, los traen allí hasta que saben buscar de comer, y si acaso están fuera buscando de comer y acude gente, la madre no huye hasta que los ha recogido en su bolsa. Por allí la tierra es muy fría. Tiene muy buenos pastos para ganados. Ay aves de muchas maneras: ánsares en gran cantidad, patos, ánades, patos reales, dorales y garçotas y garças, [y] perdizes. Vimos muchos halcones, neblís, gavilanes, esmerejones y otras muchas aves.

and make it impossible to traverse the land without great difficulty and danger.

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter seven:  
Of the character of the land.  
b. Apalachen] V: Apalache

e. Apalachen] V: Apalache

f. are] V: are so

<sup>a</sup>For the most part, the land from where we disembarked up to this village and province of Apalachen<sup>b</sup> is flat, the ground being composed of hard, firm sand. Throughout the entire land there are very large trees and open woods where there are walnut trees, and laurels and others that are called liquidambers, cedars, savins and evergreen oaks and pines and oaks, [and] palmettos of the type commonly found in Castile. Throughout, there are many large and small lagoons, some very difficult to traverse, in part because of their great depth, in part because of the many downed trees in them. Their floors are of sand, and those we found in the district of Apalachen<sup>c</sup> are larger than those we had found previously. There are many fields of maize in this province. And the houses are<sup>d</sup> scattered about the countryside in the same manner as those of the Gelves.<sup>1</sup> The animals that we saw in it are deer of three types, rabbits and hares, bears and lions, and other wild beasts, among which we saw an animal that carries its young in a pouch in its belly, and all the while the offspring are small, they carry them there until they know how to forage for food, and if by chance they are searching for food and human beings come upon them, the mother does not flee until she has gathered them up in her pouch.<sup>2</sup> In that region it is very cold. There are many good pastures for grazing cattle. There are birds of many types: geese in great numbers, ducks, mallards, royal-ducks, fly-catchers and night-herons and herons, [and] partridges. We saw many falcons, gyrfalcons, sparrow hawks, merlins, and many other birds.

1. The island of Djerba, located off southeastern Tunisia in the Mediterranean at the entrance to the Gulf of Gabes.

2. The common opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), the only species of opossum native to North America.



a. días] V: oras	<p>Dos días<sup>a</sup> después que llegamos a Apalachen<sup>b</sup> los indios que de allí avían huído vinieron a nosotros de paz, pidiéndonos a sus mugeres e hijos. Y nosotros se los dimos, salvo que el governador detuvo un caçique dellos consigo, que fue causa por donde ellos fueron escandalizados. Y luego otro día bolvieron de guerra. Y con tanto denuedo y presteza nos acometieron que llegaron a nos poner fuego a las casas en que estávamos. Mas como salimos, huyeron y acogiéronse<sup>c</sup> a las lagunas que tenían muy cerca. Y por esto y por los grandes maizales que avía no les podimos hazer daño salvo a uno que matamos. Otro día siguiente otros indios de otro pueblo que estava de la otra parte vinieron a nosotros y acometiéronnos de la mesma arte que los primeros. Y de la mesma manera se escaparon y también murió uno dellos. Estuvimos en este pueblo veinte y cinco<sup>d</sup> días en que hezimos tres entradas por la tierra, y hallámosla muy pobre de gente y muy mala de andar por los muy<sup>e</sup> malos passos y montes y lagunas que tenía. Preguntamos al caçique que les avíamos [V:fiov] detenido y a los otros indios que traíamos con nosotros que eran vezinos y enemigos dellos, por la manera y población de la tierra y la calidad de la gente y por los bastimentos y todas las otras cosas della. Respondiéronnos, cada uno por sí, que el mayor pueblo de toda aquella tierra era aquel Apalachen,<sup>f</sup> y que adelante avía menos gente y muy más pobre que ellos, y que la tierra era mal poblada y los moradores della muy repartidos, y que yendo adelante avía grandes lagunas y espesura de montes y grandes desiertos y despoblados. Preguntámosles<sup>g</sup> luego por la tierra que estava hazia<sup>h</sup> el sur, qué pueblos y mantenimientos tenía. Dixerón</p>
b. Apalachen] V: Palache	
c. acogiéronse] Z: acogéronse	
d. veinte y cinco] Z: XXV	
e. muy] V: om.	
f. Apalachen] V: Apalache	
g. Preguntámosles] Z: Preguntámosle V: Preguntámosle	
h. hazia] Z: gazia	

a. days] V: hours

b. Apalachen] V: Palache

e. very] V: om.

f. Apalachen] V: Apalache

Two days<sup>a</sup> after we arrived in Apalachen,<sup>b</sup> the Indians who had fled from there came to us in peace, asking us for their women and children. And we gave them to them, except that the governor kept with him a cacique of theirs, which was the cause of their being greatly offended. And later, the next day, they returned to make war. And they attacked us with so much skill and swiftness that they successfully set fire to the houses in which we were lodged.<sup>1</sup> But as we came out, they fled and took to the lagoons that were nearby. And because of this and the great fields of maize in the area, we could not do them any harm except to one whom we killed. The following day other Indians from another village on the other side came to us and attacked us in the same manner as the first ones had done. And in the same way they escaped, save one of them who also died. We were in this village for twenty-five days,<sup>2</sup> during which time we made three incursions into the land, and we found it very sparsely inhabited and very difficult to traverse because of the very<sup>c</sup> difficult passes and woods and lagoons it contained. We asked the cacique whom we had detained from them and the other Indians whom we brought along with us who were neighbors and enemies of theirs about the character and habitation of the land and the quality of the people and about the food supply and everything else in it. They told us, each one by himself, that the largest village of that entire land was Apalachen,<sup>f</sup> and that ahead there were fewer people, who were much poorer than they, and that the land was poorly populated and its inhabitants widely dispersed, and that going forward there were great lagoons and dense woods and great empty and unpopulated areas. We asked them later about the land that lay to the south, what villages and what provisions it contained. They said

1. According to Oviedo (585b), some two hundred Indians attacked the village.

2. Twenty-six (Oviedo 585b).

- a. vía] Z: avia  
 b. nueve] Z: mueve  
 c. y que allí] V: om.  
 d. llaman] V: llamavan

- e. flechavan] Z: flexavan  
 f. Tescuco] Z: Tezaico

que por aquella vía<sup>a</sup> yendo a la mar nueve<sup>b</sup> jornadas, y que allí<sup>c</sup> avía un pueblo que llaman<sup>d</sup> Aute, y los indios dél tenían mucho maíz y que tenían frixoles y calabças, y que por estar tan çerca de la mar alcançavan pescados, y que éstos eran amigos suyos. Nosotros, vista la pobreza de la tierra y las malas nuevas que de la poblaçión y de todo lo demás nos davan, y como los indios nos hazían continua guerra, hiriéndonos la gente y los cavallos en los lugares donde íbamos a tomar agua (y esto desde las lagunas y tan a su salvo que no los podíamos ofender, porque metidos en ellas nos flechavan<sup>e</sup> ), y mataron un señor de Tescuco<sup>f</sup> que se llamava don Pedro que el comissario llevaba consigo, acordamos de partir de allí e ir a buscar la mar y aquel pueblo de Aute que nos avían dicho. Y assí nos partimos a cabo de veinte y cinco días que allí avíamos llegado. El primero día passamos aquellas lagunas y passos sin ver indio ninguno. Mas al segundo día llegamos a una laguna de muy mal passo porque dava el agua a los pechos y avía en ella muchos árboles caídos. Ya que estávamos en medio della, nos acometieron muchos indios que estaban escondidos detrás de los árboles porque no los viésemos; otros estaban sobre los caídos. Y començáronnos a flechar de manera que nos hirieron muchos hombres y cavallos y nos tomaron la guía que llevávamos antes que de la laguna saliésemos. Y después de salidos della nos tornaron a seguir [V:fi1r] queriéndonos estorvar el passo, de manera que no nos aprovechava salirnos afuera ni hazernos más

c. and that there] V: *om.*

f. Tescuco] Z: Tezaico

that through that land, going to the sea was a nine-day journey, and that there,<sup>c</sup> there was a village called Aute,<sup>1</sup> and the Indians of that place had a great deal of maize and they had frijoles and squash, and that because of being so close to the sea they obtained fish, and that these people were their friends. Seeing the poverty of the land and the unfavorable reports that they gave us about the population and everything else, and since the Indians made war on us continually, wounding the people and the horses when we were at the places where we went to get water (and doing this from the lagoons and so safely that we could do them no harm, because they shot arrows at us while being submerged in them) and had killed a lord of Tescuco<sup>f2</sup> who was called Don Pedro, whom the commissary had brought with him, we decided to depart from there and go to seek the sea and that village of Aute about which they had told us. And thus we departed after having been there for twenty-five days.<sup>3</sup> The first day we crossed those lagoons and passes without seeing a single Indian. But on the second day we came to a lagoon very difficult to traverse because the water was chest-high and in it there were many fallen trees. When we were in the middle of it, many Indians, who were hidden behind the trees so that we could not see them, attacked us; others were on top of the logs. And they began to shoot arrows at us in such a way that they wounded many of our men and horses, and they captured the guide we carried with us before we could get out of the lagoon. And after getting out of it, they again pursued us, trying to block our path, so that it did us no good to get out of it, nor to increase our

1. In the region between the Aucilla and Apalachicola Rivers.

2. Kingdom to the east of Tenochtitlán whose warriors served as Cortés's allies in the conquest of Mexico (1519–21) and continued in the service of the Spaniards in further conquest efforts.

3. Twenty-six (Oviedo 586a). The expedition remained at Apalache from about 25 June to 19–20 July 1528.

a. a] V: om.

b. huvo] Z: hnuo V: ovo

c. son] V: son tan

fuertes y querer pelear con ellos que se metían luego en la laguna y desde allí nos herían la gente y cavallos. Visto esto, el gobernador mandó a los de a<sup>a</sup> cavallo que se apeassen y les acometiessen a pie. El contador se apeó con ellos y assí los acometieron, y todos entraron a bueltas en una laguna, y assí les ganamos el passo. En esta rebuelta hubo algunos de los nuestros heridos que no les valieron buenas armas que llevavan, y huvo<sup>b</sup> hombres este día que juraron que avían visto dos robles, cada uno dellos tan grueso como la pierna por baxo, passados de parte a parte de las flechas de los indios, y esto no es tanto de maravillar vista la fuerça y maña con que las echan, porque yo mismo vi una flecha en un pie de un álamo que entrava por él un xeme. Quantos indios vimos desde la Florida aquí todos son flecheros, y como son<sup>c</sup> crescidos de cuerpo y andan desnudos, desde lexos paresçen gigantes. Es gente a maravilla bien dispuesta, muy enxutos y de muy grandes fuerças y ligereza. Los arcos que usan son gruesos como el braço [y] de onze o doze palmos de largo que flechan a dozientos passos con tan gran tiento que ninguna cosa yerran. Passados que fuimos deste passo, de aí a una legua llegamos a otra [laguna] de la misma manera, salvo que por ser tan larga que durava media legua era muy peor. Este passamos libremente y sin estorvo de indios, que como avían gastado en el primero toda la muniçión que de flechas tenían, no quedó con qué osarnos acometer. Otro día siguiente, passando otro semejante passo, yo hallé rastro de gente que iva adelante y di aviso dello al governador que venía en la

c. of] V: of such

strength and ardor to fight against them, because they went back into the lagoon and from there they wounded our people and horses. Seeing this, the governor ordered that the horsemen dismount and attack them on foot. The comptroller dismounted with them and thus they attacked them, and all retreated into a lagoon, and in this manner we won the passage from them. In this struggle there were some of our wounded who could not make use of the good weapons they carried, and there were men this day who swore that they had seen two oaks, each one of them as thick as a man's lower leg, pierced through and through by the arrows of the Indians, and this is not to be wondered at, having seen the strength and skill with which they shoot them, because I myself saw an arrow in the base of a poplar tree that had entered it to the depth of a *xeme*.<sup>1</sup> All the Indians we had seen from *Florida* to here<sup>2</sup> are archers, and as they are of large build and go about naked, from a distance they appear to be giants. They are a people wonderfully well built,<sup>3</sup> very lean and of great strength and agility. The bows they use are as thick as an arm [and] eleven or twelve spans<sup>4</sup> long so that they can shoot arrows at two hundred paces with such great skill that they never miss their target. After having departed from the point of this crossing, a league's distance from there we arrived at another [lagoon] of the same type, except that this one was much worse on account of it being so long, extending for half a league. We passed this one freely and without being hindered by Indians, who, since in the first skirmish they had spent all the ammunition of arrows they had, had been left without anything with which to venture to attack us. Making a similar crossing the following day, I found the track of people ahead of us, and I notified the governor, who was traveling with the

1. The distance between the tip of the thumb and the tip of the outstretched index finger (Covarrubias 1015a; DRAE 768b).

2. Roughly, the lands adjacent to the northern half of the west coast of the Florida Peninsula.

3. *bien dispuesta*. Of well-proportioned physical stature, or of good personal disposition, inclinations, or intentions (Covarrubias 477b; DRAE 486b, 1238c). Cabeza de Vaca frequently makes reference to the former (see also f17r, f24r, f32r, f47r, f53r), occasionally to the latter (f18v, f47v, f52v, f60r).

4. Equivalent to the English span, *palm* refers to the distance between the tip of the thumb and the little finger of a spread hand (Covarrubias 847a; DRAE 965a; Webster's *Ninth* 1130a).

- retaguarda. Y así aunque los indios salieron a nosotros, como íbamos apercebidos, no nos pudieron offender. Y salidos a lo llano, fuéronnos todavía siguiendo. Bolvimos a ellos por dos partes y matámosles dos indios, y hiriéronme a mí y dos o tres christianos. Y por acogérsenos al monte no les podimos hazer más mal ni daño. Desta suerte caminamos ocho días. [V:f11v] Y desde este passo que he contado no salieron más indios a nosotros hasta una legua adelante que es el<sup>a</sup> lugar donde he dicho que íbamos. Allí yendo nosotros por nuestro camino salieron indios, y sin ser sentidos dieron en la retaguarda. Y a los gritos que dio un mochacho de un hidalgo de los que allí ivan que se llamava Avellaneda, el Avellaneda bolvió y fue a socorrerlos. Y los indios le açertaron con una flecha por el canto de las coraças, y fue tal la herida que passó casi toda la flecha por el pescueço y luego allí murió, y lo llevamos hasta Aute. En nueve días de camino desde Apalachen<sup>b</sup> hasta allí llegamos. Y quando fuimos llegados hallamos toda la gente dél ida y las casas quemadas, y mucho maíz y calabaças y frisoles que ya todo estava para empeçarse a coger. Descansamos allí dos días, y estos passados el governador me rogó que fuesse a descubrir la mar, pues los indios dezían que estava tan cerca de allí; ya en este camino la avíamos descubierto por un río muy grande que en él hallamos, a quien avíamos puesto por nombre el Río de la Magdalena.<sup>c</sup> Visto esto, otro día siguiente yo me partí a descubrirla juntamente con el comissario y el capitán Castillo y Andrés Dorantes y otros siete de cavallo y cinquenta<sup>d</sup> peones. Y caminamos
- a. el] V: *om.*
- b. Apalachen] V: Apalache
- c. Magdalena] Z: Madalena
- d. cinquenta] Z: L

b. Apalachen] V: Apalache

c. Magdalena] Z: Madalena

rear guard. And thus although the Indians charged us, since we went forewarned, they were unable to do us any harm. And having come out into the clearing, they continued to follow us. We doubled back on them on two sides and killed two of their Indians, and they wounded me and two or three other Christians. And because they took refuge from us in the woods, we could do them no more ill or harm. In this way we traveled for eight days. And from this passage about which I have told, no more Indians confronted us until one league ahead, which is the place to which I have said we were going.<sup>1</sup> There, as we were making our way ahead, Indians came out, and without being perceived they attacked the rear guard. And at the shouts of a boy of an hidalgo<sup>2</sup> of those who were going along there, named Avellaneda, this Avellaneda turned back and went to rescue them. And the Indians struck him with an arrow at the edge of his breastplate, and the wound was such that almost the entire arrow passed through his neck, and later he died there, and we carried his body to Aute. We arrived there after nine days' travel from Apalachen.<sup>b</sup> And when we arrived, we found all the people of the village gone and the houses burned, and much maize<sup>3</sup> and squash and frijoles that were all on the point of being ready for harvest. We rested there for two days, and when these had passed, the governor beseeched me to go look for the sea, because the Indians said that it was very near there; along this route we had already discovered it by means of a very great river that we found on this path, which we had named the Río de la Magdalena.<sup>c4</sup> Seeing this, the following day I left to explore it together with the commissary and Captain Castillo and Andrés Dorantes as well as seven<sup>5</sup> other horsemen and fifty foot soldiers. And we marched

1. Aute.

2. The boy was probably a native youth in the Spaniard's service, who, as an hidalgo, was a member of the lower-ranking nobility of Castile.

3. According to Oviedo (587a), the fields of maize had also been burned.

4. Probably a river that flows into Apalachee Bay (e.g., Aucilla, Saint Marks, Ochlockonee). Cabeza de Vaca seems to suggest that this river had earlier been followed to the sea, evidently in search of a port and the expedition's ships.

5. Oviedo (587a) claimed there were nine horsemen and did not mention the commissary.



- a. llegamos] Z: llegamss hasta ora de vísperas que llegamos<sup>a</sup> a un ancón o entrada de la mar donde hallamos muchos ostiones con que la gente holgó, y dimos muchas gracias a Dios por avernos traído allí. Otro día de mañana enbié veinte<sup>b</sup> hombres a que conosciessen la costa y mirassen la disposición della, los quales bolvieron otro día en la noche, diziendo que aquellos ancones y vaías eran muy grandes y entravan tanto por la tierra adentro que estorvavan mucho para descubrir lo que queríamos y que la costa estava muy lexos de allí. Sabidas estas nuevas y vista la mala disposición y aparejo que para descubrir la costa por allí avía, yo me bolví al governador. Y quando llegamos, hallámosle enfermo con otros muchos. Y la noche passada los indios avían dado en ellos y puéstolos en grandíssimo trabajo por la razón de la enfermedad que les avía sobrevenido.
- b. veinte] Z: XX V: XX
- c. al governador] V: om. También [V:fi2r] les avían muerto un cavallo. Yo di cuenta al governador<sup>c</sup> de lo que avía hecho y de la mala disposición de la tierra. Aquel día nos detuvimos allí.
- d. ] Z: om. V: Capitulo ocho: Cómo partimos de Aute. <sup>d</sup>Otro día siguiente partimos de Aute y caminamos todo él<sup>e</sup> hasta llegar donde yo avía estado. Fue el camino en extremo trabajoso porque ni los cavallos bastavan a llevar los enfermos ni sabíamos qué remedio poner porque cada día adolescían, que fue cosa de muy gran lástima y dolor ver la neçessidad y trabajo en que estávamos. Llegados que fuimos, visto el poco remedio que para ir adelante avía, porque no avía dónde, ni aunque lo huviera, la gente [no] pudiera passar adelante por estar los más enfermos y tales que pocos avía de quien se pudiesse aver algún provecho. Dexo aquí de contar esto más largo porque cada uno puede pensar lo que se passaría en tierra tan estraña
- e. él] V: el día

until the hour of vespers, when we arrived at a bay or entrance to the sea where we found many oysters which pleased the men very much, and we gave many thanks to God for having brought us there. The next morning I sent twenty men to reconnoiter the coast and to take note of its layout; they returned during the night of the following day, saying that those coves and bays were very large and went so far inland that they made it very difficult to find what we were looking for and that the seacoast was very far from there. Informed of this news and having seen the poor situation and means there were for reaching the coast through that area, I returned to the governor. And when we arrived, we found him ill, along with many others. And the previous night the Indians had attacked them and put them in exceedingly great danger on account of the sickness that had overcome them. They had also killed a horse. I gave an account to the governor<sup>c</sup> of what I had done and the poor lay of the land. That day we remained there.

c. to the governor] V: *om.*

d. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter eight:  
How we departed from Aute.

<sup>d</sup>The following day we departed from Aute and marched the whole day until we arrived to where I had been.<sup>1</sup> The journey was difficult in the extreme, because neither the horses were sufficient to carry all the sick, nor did we know what remedy to seek because every day they languished, which was a spectacle of very great sorrow and pain to see the necessity and hardship in which we found ourselves. Having arrived and seen the little prospect there was for going forward, because there was no way that would allow us to proceed, and even if there had been, the men could [not] have gone on because most of them were ill and in such a state that there were few by whom any progress could have been made. I refrain here from telling this at greater length because each one can imagine for himself what could happen in a land so strange

1. At a saltwater bay, well inland from the open seacoast in the vicinity of Apalachee Bay.

y tan mala y tan sin ningún remedio de ninguna cosa ni para estar ni para salir della. Mas como el más cierto remedio sea Dios nuestro Señor y déste nunca desconfiamos, succedió otra cosa que agravava más que todo esto; que entre la gente de cavallo se començó la mayor parte dellos a ir secretamente pensando hallar ellos por sí remedio y desamparar al governador y a los enfermos, los quales estavan sin algunas fuerças y poder. Mas como entre ellos avía muchos hijos de algo y hombres de buena suerte, no quisieron que esto passasse sin dar parte al governador y a los oficiales de Vuestra Magestad. Y como les afeamos su propósito y les posimos delante el tiempo en que desamparavan a su capitán y [a] los que estavan enfermos y sin poder y apartarse sobre todo del servicio de Vuestra Magestad, acordaron de quedar y que lo que fuesse de uno fuesse de todos sin que ninguno desamparasse a otro. Visto esto por el governador, los llamó a todos y a [V:fi2v] cada uno por sí, pidiendo paresçer de tan mala tierra para poder salir della y buscar algún remedio, pues allí no lo avía, estando las terçias partes<sup>a</sup> de la gente con gran enfermedad y cresçiendo esto cada hora, que teníamos por cierto todos lo estaríamos assí, de donde no se podía seguir sino la muerte que por ser en tal parte se nos hazía más grave. Y vistos<sup>b</sup> estos y otros muchos inconvenientes y tentados muchos remedios, acordamos en uno harto difiçil de poner en obra, que era hazer navíos en que nos fuéssemos. A todos paresçia imposible porque nosotros no los sabíamos hazer, ni avía herramientas, ni hierro, ni fragua,

a. las terçias partes] V: la tercia parte

b. vistos] Z: visto

and so poor and so lacking in every single thing that it seemed impossible either to be in it or to escape from it. But since the most certain remedy is God our Lord and in him our faith never falters, another thing occurred that worsened the situation more than all of this; that is, among the horsemen, the majority of them began to plan secretly to find relief for themselves and abandon the governor and the sick men, who were altogether powerless, without strength or the means to impose authority. But since among them there were many hidalgos and men of good breeding, they refused to let this happen without informing the governor and the officials of Your Majesty. And since we discredited their intentions and placed before them the occasion on which they were abandoning their captain and those who were sick and without strength, and above all else removing themselves from the service of Your Majesty, they agreed to remain, affirming that what would be the fate of one would be the fate of all without any one abandoning the others. This being understood by the governor, he called everyone to him and each one by himself, soliciting opinions about so poor a land in order to be able to leave it and seek some solution, since there there was none, a full third of the men being gravely ill and the number of them increasing by the hour, such that we held it to be certain that we would all be thus, from which nothing could follow but death, which on account of being in such a place was to us all the more ominous. And having considered these and many other obstacles, and having tried many solutions, we decided upon one very difficult to put into effect, which was to build ships in which we could leave. To everyone it seemed impossible, because we did not know how to make them nor were there tools, nor iron, nor a forge,

a. venados] V: venado

b. entradas] Z: entradas

c. pudiesse] V: pudiessen

ni estopa, ni pez, ni xarcias, finalmente ni cosa ninguna de tantas como son menester, ni quién supiese nada para dar industria en ello, y sobre todo no aver qué comer entretanto que se hiziessen y los que avían de trabajar del arte que avíamos dicho. Y considerando todo esto, acordamos de pensar en ello más de espacio y çesó la plática aquel día, y cada uno se fue encomendándolo a Dios nuestro Señor que lo encaminasse por donde él fuesse más servido. Otro día quiso Dios que uno de la compañía vino diziendo que él haría unos cañones de palo y con unos cueros de venados<sup>a</sup> se harían unos fuelles. Y como estábamos en tiempo que qualquiera cosa que tuviesse alguna sobre haz de remedio nos parecía bien, diximos que se pusiesse por obra. Y acordamos de hazer de los estribos y espuelas y ballestas y de las otras cosas de hierro que avía los clavos y sierras y hachas y otras herramientas de que tanta necesidad avía para ello. Y dimos por remedio que para aver algún mantenimiento en el tiempo que esto se hiziesse, se hiziessen quatro entradas<sup>b</sup> en Aute con todos los cavallos y gente que pudiesse<sup>c</sup> ir, y que a terçero día se matasse un cavallo el qual se repartiessse entre los que trabajavan en la obra de las barcas y los que estavan enfermos. Las entradas se hizieron con la gente y cavallos que fue possible, y en ellas se traxeron hasta quatrocientas hanegas de maíz aunque no sin contiendas y pendençias con los indios. Hezimos coger [V:f13r] muchos palmitos para aprovecharnos de la lana y cobertura dellos, torçiéndola y aderesçándola para usar

nor oakum, nor pitch, nor ropes, nor finally any single thing of all those that are necessary, nor was there anyone who knew anything about carrying this out, and above all there was nothing to eat while they were being constructed, nor were there adequate men to perform the tasks we had mentioned. And considering all this, we agreed to think about it for a while longer, and the conversation ceased for that day, and each one went off, entrusting himself to our Lord God to direct him where he might be best served. The next day God ordained that a member of the company came, saying that he would make some tubes of wood, and with some deerskins some bellows would be made. And since we were in such straits that anything that had some semblance of a solution seemed to us a good thing, we said that he should set to the task. And we agreed to make the nails and saws and axes and other tools of which there was such great necessity from the stirrups and spurs and crossbows and other iron objects that we had. And we determined that, in order to provide means of sustenance during the period in which this was to be carried out, four incursions would be made into Aute with all the horses and people well enough to take part, and that every third day a horse would be killed to be distributed among those who were working on building the ships and those who were sick. The forays were made with all the available men and horses, and in them up to four hundred *fanegas*<sup>1</sup> of maize were seized, although not without fights and skirmishes with the Indians. We had many palmettos gathered in order to make use of their fibers and coverings, twisting and preparing them to use

1. A measure commonly used for grain (Covarrubias 584b), equivalent to about 1.6 bushels in Spain (Hemming 518). Approximately 640 bushels of maize were seized from the Indians at Aute.

a. tea . . . traxo| V: pez de alquitrán que hizo un griego llamado don Theodoro

b. lastre| V: lastre y ancles

en lugar de estopa para las barcas, las quales se començaron a hazer con un solo carpintero que en la compañía avía. Y tanta diligencia pusimos que, començándolas a quatro días de agosto, a veinte días del mes de setiembre eran acabadas cinco barcas de a veinte y dos codos cada una, calafeteadas con las estopas de los palmitos, y breámoslas con çierta tea que un griego llamado don Theodoro traxo<sup>a</sup> de unos pinos. Y de la misma ropa de los palmitos y de las colas y crines de los cavallos hezimos cuerdas y xarçias, y de las nuestras camisas velas. Y de las sabinas que allí avía hezimos los remos que nos pareció que era menester. Y tal era la tierra en que nuestros peccados nos avían puesto que con muy gran trabajo podíamos hallar piedras para lastre<sup>b</sup> de las barcas ni en toda ella avíamos visto ninguna. Dessollamos también las piernas de los cavallos enteras y curtimos los cueros dellas para hazer botas en que llevásemos agua. En este tiempo algunos andavan cogiendo marisco por los rincones y entradas de la mar, en que los indios en dos vezes que dieron en ellos nos mataron diez hombres a vista del real sin que los pudiésemos socorrer, los quales hallamos de parte a parte passados con flechas que, aunque algunos tenían buenas armas, no bastaron a resistir para que esto no se hiziesse, por flechar con tanta destreza y fuerça como arriba he dicho. E a dicho y juramento de nuestros pilotos, desde la vaía que pusimos nombre de la Cruz hasta aquí anduvimos dozientas y ochenta leguas poco más o

b. ballast] V: ballast and anchors

in place of oakum for the rafts, the construction of which was begun by the only carpenter<sup>1</sup> in the company. And we put so much effort into it that, beginning them on the fourth day of August, five rafts of twenty-two cubits<sup>2</sup> each were finished on the twentieth day of September, caulked with the oakum made from the palmettos, and we tarred them with a certain pitch that a Greek named Don Teodoro<sup>3</sup> extracted from some pine trees. And from the same covering of the palmettos and from the tails and manes of the horses, we made cords and ropes, and from our shirts we made sails. And from the savins growing there we made the oars that it seemed to us were necessary. And such was the land in which our sins had placed us, that only with very great effort could we find stones for ballast<sup>b</sup> on the rafts, because in all that area we had not seen even one. We also stripped the legs of the horses whole and cured their hides in order to make vessels in which to carry water. During this time, some went about gathering shellfish in the inlets and coves of the sea, and on the two occasions on which the Indians attacked them, they killed ten of our men within sight of camp without our being able to rescue them; we found them shot through and through with arrows, and although some of them had good weapons, their arms were not sufficient to prevent this from happening because the Indians shot arrows with as much skill and force as I have described above.<sup>4</sup> And upon the declaration and oath of our pilots, from the bay that we named the Bay of the Cross<sup>5</sup> to this point, we had traveled two hundred and eighty leagues, more or

1. Apparently the Portuguese Álvaro Fernández (f23v). of modern-day Florida and the mouth of the Mississippi River.

2. *codo*. One of several possible Spanish units of measure: *codo a la mano*, *codo real*, *codo geométrico* (Covarrubias 332a). The cubit is any of various ancient units of length based on the length of the forearm to the tip of the middle finger and equivalent to approximately 18–21 inches (46–53 centimeters) (*Webster's Ninth* 313b). One estimate of the size of the raft would be approximately 33 feet (10 meters) in length.

3. This Greek will reappear later in the narrative (f18r), left among the native groups on the coast somewhere between the western part of the panhandle

4. See (f13r).

5. Old Tampa Bay (f6v).



a. otros] V: *om.*

b. embarcamos] Z: embarcamos

c. otros] V: *om.*

d. dio] Z: día

e. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo nueve: Cómo partimos de Baía de Cavallos.

menos. En toda esta tierra no vimos sierra ni tuvimos noticia della en ninguna manera. Y antes que nos embarcásemos, sin los que los indios nos mataron, se morieron otros<sup>a</sup> más de quarenta hombres de enfermedad y hambre. A veinte y dos días del mes de setiembre se acabaron de comer los cavallos que solo uno quedó. Y este día nos embarcamos<sup>b</sup> por esta orden: que en la barca del governador ivan [V:fi3v] quarenta y nueve hombres; en otra que dio al contador y comissario ivan otros tantos; la tercera dio al capitán Alonso del Castillo y Andrés Dorantes con quarenta y ocho hombres; y otra dio a otros<sup>c</sup> dos capitanes que se llamavan Téllez y Peñalosa con quarenta y siete hombres; la otra dio<sup>d</sup> al veedor y a mí con quarenta y nueve hombres. E después de embarcados los bastimientos y ropa, no quedó a las barcas más de un xeme de bordo fuera del agua, y allende desto íbamos tan apretados que no nos podíamos menear. Y tanto puede la necessidad que nos hizo aventurar a ir desta manera y meternos en una mar tan trabajosa, y sin tener noticia de la arte del marear ninguno de los que allí ivan.

<sup>e</sup>Aquella vaía de donde partimos ha por nombre la vaía de Cavallos. E anduvimos siete días por aquellos ancones entrados en el agua hasta la cinta sin señal de ver ninguna cosa de costa, y al cabo dellos llegamos a una isla que estava cerca de la tierra. Mi barca iva delante y della vimos venir cinco canoas de indios, los quales las

a. another] V: *om.*c. other] V: *om.*e. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter nine:  
How we departed from the Bay  
of Horses.

less.<sup>1</sup> In all this land we saw no mountains nor any sign of them. And before we embarked, more than another<sup>a</sup> forty men, excluding the ones whom the Indians had killed, died of sickness and starvation. On the twenty-second day of the month of September all but the last horse had been eaten. And this day we embarked in this order: the governor's raft carried forty-nine men; as many men went on the one he assigned to the comptroller and the commissary; he gave the third one to Captain Alonso del Castillo and Andrés Dorantes with forty-eight men; he gave another to two other<sup>c</sup> captains named Téllez and Peñalosa with forty-seven men; the last one he assigned to the inspector and me with forty-nine men.<sup>2</sup> And after loading the provisions and clothing, the rafts rode so low that only a *xeme*<sup>3</sup> of their sides showed above water, and in addition to this, we were so crowded that we could not even move. And so greatly can necessity prevail that it made us risk going in this manner and placing ourselves in a sea so treacherous, and without any one of us who went having any knowledge of the art of navigation.

<sup>e</sup>That bay from which we departed is called the Bay of Horses.<sup>4</sup> And we went for seven days through those inlets in water no more than waist deep, without finding any sign of the coast, and at the end of them we arrived at an island that was near the shore.<sup>5</sup> My raft went ahead, and from it we saw five canoes of Indians approaching, which

1. Probably only one third of this distance had been covered. From 1519 the length of the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico between Pánuco and the tip of the Florida Peninsula had been estimated to be three hundred leagues.

2. Of the approximately three hundred men who left the ships on the expedition on 1 May 1528 near Old Tampa Bay, more than fifty apparently perished on the overland trek. Cabeza de Vaca here accounts for 242 if the leaders of the rafts are included in the numbers cited. Oviedo (588ab) accounted for 239.

3. See (f13r).

4. Some point along the coast in Apalachee Bay.

5. The expedition seems to have wandered through

shallow inland waterways for seven days before coming to the open water of the sea. The island is not identifiable, since the Spaniards' location in the region of Apalachee Bay cannot be determined.

a. liças] Z: licas

desampararon y nos las dexaron en las manos viendo que íbamos a ellas. Las otras barcas passaron adelante y dieron en unas casas de la misma isla donde hallamos muchas liças<sup>a</sup> y huevos dellas que estavan secas que fue muy gran remedio para la neçessidad que llevávamos. Después de tomadas, passamos adelante y dos leguas de allí passamos un estrecho que la isla con la tierra hazía, al qual llamamos de Sant Miguel por aver salido en su día por él. Y salidos llegamos a la costa donde con las çinco canoas que yo avía tomado a los indios remediamos algo de las barcas, haziendo falcas dellas y añadiéndolas de manera que subieron dos palmos de bordo sobre el agua. Y con esto tornamos a caminar por luengo de [V:fi4r] costa la vía del Río de Palmas, cresçiendo cada día la sed y la hambre, porque los bastimentos eran muy pocos e ivan muy al cabo y el agua se nos acabó porque las botas que hezimos de las piernas de los cavallos luego fueron podridas y sin ningún provecho. Y más, a<sup>b</sup> vezes entramos por ancones y vaías que entravan mucho por la tierra adentro; todas las hallamos baxas y peligrosas. Y así anduvimos por ellas treinta días donde algunas vezes hallávamos indios pescadores, gente pobre y miserable. Al cabo ya destos treinta días que la neçessidad del agua era en estremo, yendo çerca de costa una noche sentimos venir una canoa. Y como la vimos, esperamos que llegasse. Y ella no quiso hazer cara. Y aunque la llamamos, no quiso bolver ni aguardarnos. Y por ser de noche no la seguimos y fuímonos nuestra vía. Quando

b. Y más, a] V: Algunas

they abandoned and left in our hands, seeing that we were headed for them. The other rafts went ahead and came upon some houses on the same island where we found much mullet and dried roe, which were of great help for the necessity in which we found ourselves. After taking them, we went ahead, and two leagues from there we crossed a strait that the island makes with the mainland and we named it Saint Michael, having come upon it on that saint's day.<sup>1</sup> And having departed, we arrived on the coast where, with the five canoes that I had taken from the Indians, we partially repaired the rafts, making washboards out of the canoes and adding them so that the sides of the rafts protruded two spans<sup>2</sup> above water. This done, we again took up our journey along the coast in the direction of the Río de Palmas, each day our hunger and thirst increasing, because the provisions were very few and nearly exhausted and our water was gone because the vessels that we had made from the legs of the horses later rotted and were of no use whatsoever. And furthermore, sometimes we entered inlets and bays that extended far inland; we found all of them shallow and dangerous. And thus we went through them for thirty days, during which time we sometimes found Indian fishermen, people poor and wretched. At the end of these thirty days, at which time our need for water was extreme, going near the coast one night we detected a canoe approaching. And having seen it, we waited for it to arrive. And it refused to present itself. And although we called to it, it refused to return or wait for us. And since it was nighttime we did not follow it, and we went on our way. When

1. 29 September 1528. Cabeza de Vaca's geographic references to places the expedition visited on their raft journey from the Bay of Horses to the Texas coast (22 September 1528 to November 1528) cannot be identified with certainty.

2. See (f13r).

amaneció vimos una isla pequeña. Y fuimos a ella por ver si hallaríamos agua, mas nuestro trabajo fue en balde, porque no la avía. Estando allí surtos, nos tomó una tormenta muy grande, porque nos detuvimos seis días sin que osássemos salir a la mar. Y como avía cinco días que no bevíamos, la sed fue tanta que nos puso en necesidad de beber agua salada. Y algunos se desatentaron tanto en ello que súpitamente se nos morieron cinco hombres. Cuento esto assí brevemente porque no creo que ay necesidad de particularmente contar las miserias y trabajos en que nos vimos, pues considerando el lugar donde estábamos y la poca esperança de remedio que teníamos, cada uno puede pensar mucho de lo que allí passaría. Y como vimos que la sed crecía y el agua nos matava, aunque la tormenta no era çessada, acordamos de encomendarnos a Dios nuestro Señor y aventurarnos antes al peligro de la mar que esperar la certenidad de la muerte que la sed nos dava. Y assí salimos la vía donde avíamos visto la canoa la noche que por allí veníamos. Y en este día nos vimos muchas vezes anegados y tan perdidos que ninguno hubo que no tuviesse<sup>a</sup> por cierta la muerte. Plugo a nuestro Señor, que en las mayores necesidades [V:fi4v] suele mostrar su favor, que a puesta del sol bolvimos una punta que la tierra haze adonde hallamos mucha bonança y abrigo. Salieron a nosotros muchas canoas y los indios que en ellas venían nos hablaron, y sin querernos aguardar se bolvieron. Era gente grande y bien dispuesta y no traían flechas ni arcos. Nosotros

a. tuviesse] Z: tuniesse

dawn came we saw a small island. And we went to it to see if we could find water, but our efforts were in vain, because there was none. Being thus anchored, a great storm overtook us, causing us to remain there for six<sup>1</sup> days without daring to take to the sea. And as it had been five days since we had drunk any water, our thirst was so great that we were obliged to drink salt water. And some were so careless in doing so that suddenly five<sup>2</sup> men died on us. I tell this briefly in this manner because I do not think there is need to tell in detail the miseries and hardships in which we found ourselves, since considering the place where we were and the little hope we had of survival, each one can imagine a great deal of what would happen there. And as we saw our thirst increasing and the water killing us, even though the storm had not ceased we agreed to entrust ourselves to God our Lord and risk the danger of the sea, rather than await the certainty of death that our thirst foreboded. And thus we departed, taking the route of the canoe we had seen the night that we had come through there. And on this day we found ourselves many times sinking and so lost that there was not one among us who did not take death to be a certainty. It pleased God, who at the time of greatest need customarily shows his favor, that at sunset we rounded a point that the land makes, where we found great calm and refuge. Many canoes came out to meet us and the Indians who came in them spoke to us and, without wanting to wait for us, turned back. They were large people and well proportioned and they did not carry bows or arrows. We

1. Three (Oviedo 588b).

2. Five or six (Oviedo 588b).

les fuimos siguiendo hasta sus casas que estaban çerca de allí a la lengua del agua, y saltamos en tierra. Y delante de las casas hallamos muchos cántaros de agua y mucha cantidad de pescado guisado. Y el señor de aquellas tierras offresçió todo aquello al gobernador, y tomándolo consigo, lo llevó a su casa. Las casas déstos eran de esteras que a lo que paresçió eran estantes. Y después que entramos en casa del çaçique nos dio mucho pescado. Y nosotros le dimos del maíz que traíamos y lo comieron en nuestra presencia y nos pidieron más y se lo dimos. Y el gobernador le dio muchos rescates, el qual estando con el çaçique en su casa a media ora de la noche, súpitamente los indios dieron en nosotros y en los que estaban muy malos echados en la costa. Y acometieron también la casa del çaçique donde el gobernador estava y lo hirieron de una piedra en el rostro. Los que allí se hallaron prendieron al çaçique, mas como los suyos estava tan çerca, soltóseles y dexoles en las manos una manta de martas zebelinas que son las mejores que creo yo que en el mundo se podrían hallar. Y tienen un olor que no paresçe sino de ámbar y almizcle, y alcança tan lexos que de mucha cantidad se siente. Otras vimos allí mas ningunas eran tales como éstas. Los que allí se hallaron, viendo al gobernador herido, lo metimos en la barca y hezimos que con él se recogiesse<sup>a</sup> toda la más gente a sus barcas. Y quedamos hasta çinquenta en tierra para contra los indios que nos acometieron tres vezes aquella noche, y con tanto ímpetu que cada vez nos hazían retraer más de

a. recogiesse | Z: recogesse

went following them to their houses, which were near there at the edge of the water, and we went ashore. And in front of the houses we found many vessels of water and a great quantity of cooked fish. And the lord of those lands offered all that sustenance to the governor, and taking it with him, he took him to his house. The houses of these people were made of woven rushes and appeared to be stationary. And after we entered the cacique's house, he gave us much fish. And we gave him some of the maize that we carried, and they ate it in our presence and they asked us for more and we gave it to them. And the governor gave him many trinkets whereupon, being with the cacique in his house in the middle of the night, the Indians suddenly attacked us, as well as those who were very sick, lying scattered on the shore.<sup>1</sup> And they also assaulted the house of the cacique where the governor was, and they wounded him in the face with a rock. Those who were there captured the cacique, but since his people were so near, they released him, and he left in their hands a cloak of sable skins that I believe are the finest to be found anywhere in the world. And they have a scent that resembles nothing other than ambergris and musk, and it is so strong that it can be detected at a great distance. We saw other furs there, but none like these. Those of us who were there, seeing the governor wounded, put him on the raft and we made all the rest of the men return to the rafts with him. And about fifty of us remained on land to fight against the Indians, who attacked us three times that night and did so with such force that each time they made us retreat more than

1. Oviedo (589a) states that three of the Spaniards were killed here.



a. [V:fi5r] foliation error; folio is numbered "fol xxv."

un tiro de piedra. Ninguno huvo de nosotros que no quedasse herido y yo lo fui en la cara, y si, como se hallaron pocas flechas, estuvieran más proveídos [V:fi5r<sup>a</sup>] dellas sin duda nos hizieran mucho daño. La última vez se pusieron en çelada los capitanes Dorantes y Peñalosa y Téllez con quinze hombres. Y dieron en ellos por las espaldas y de tal manera les hizieron huir que nos dexaron. Otro día de mañana yo les rompí más de treinta canoas que nos aprovecharon para un Norte que hazía, que por todo el día ovimos de estar allí con mucho frío sin osar entrar en la mar por la mucha tormenta que en ella avía. Esto passado nos tornamos a embarcar, y navegamos tres días. Y como avíamos tomado poca agua y los vasos que teníamos para llevar assimesmo eran muy pocos, tornamos a caer en la primera necessidad. Y siguiendo nuestra vía, entramos por un estero, y estando en él, vimos venir una canoa de indios. Como los llamamos, vinieron a nosotros. Y el governador, a cuya barca avían llegado, pidioles agua y ellos la offresçieron con que les diessen en qué la traxessen. Y un christiano griego llamado Dorotheo Theodoro, de quien arriba se hizo mención, dixo que quería ir con ellos. El governador y otros se lo procuraron estorvar mucho y nunca lo podieron sino que en todo caso quería ir con ellos. Y assí se fue, y llevó consigo un negro. Y los indios dexaron en rehenes dos de su compañía. Y a la noche los indios bolvieron y traxéronnos nuestros vasos sin agua, y no traxeron los christianos que avían llevado. Y los que avían dexado por rehenes, como los otros los hablaron, quisiéronse echar al agua.

the distance of a stone's throw. Not one of us remained uninjured and I was wounded in the face, and if, as very few arrows could be found, the Indians had been better provided with them, they undoubtedly would have done us great harm. The last time, Captains Dorantes and Peñalosa and Téllez hid themselves with fifteen men in ambush. And they attacked them from behind and in that way made them flee and leave us. The next morning I broke up more than thirty of their canoes, which were of use to us against the cold of a north wind, since we had to be there the entire day, being very cold, without daring to enter the sea because of the great storm that was upon it. This having passed, we embarked again and sailed for three<sup>1</sup> days. And since we had brought little water, and the vessels that we had to carry it likewise were very few, we again found ourselves in this first of all necessities. And continuing our course, we entered an estuary, and while there, we saw a canoe of Indians approaching. Upon calling to them they came to us. And the governor, to whose raft they had arrived, asked them for water, and they offered to bring it provided that we give them something in which to carry it. And a Greek Christian named Doroteo Teodoro, of whom mention was made earlier,<sup>2</sup> said that he wanted to go with them. The governor and others tried very hard to prevent him from going, but they were unable, since in any case he wanted to go with them. And so he left, and he took a black man<sup>3</sup> with him. And the Indians left as hostages two of their company. And at night the Indians returned and brought our vessels without water, and they did not bring the Christians whom they had taken. And those they had left as hostages, with the encouragement of those who called to them, tried to throw themselves into the water.

1. Three or four (Oviedo 589a).

2. See (f15v).

3. *un negro*. An African slave on the expedition, described a few lines below and on (f18v) as a Christian. African slaves were brought to the Indies from at least 1501, when royal instructions to Nicolás de Ovando as governor of its islands and mainland required that they be Christian, that is, born in the possession of Christians under Castilian rule (CDI 31:23).

a. aquellos] Z: aquesello

b. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo diez: De la refriega que nos dieron lo[s] indios.

Mas los que en la barca estavan los detuvieron, y así se fueron huyendo los indios de la canoa. Y nos dexaron muy confusos y tristes por aver perdido aquellos<sup>a</sup> dos christianos.

<sup>b</sup>[V:fi5v] Venida la mañana vinieron a nosotros muchas canoas de indios pidiéndonos los dos compañeros que en la barca avían quedado por rehenes. El governador dixo que se los daría con que traxessen los dos christianos que avían llevado. Con esta gente venían çinco o seis señores y nos paresçió ser la gente más bien dispuesta y de más autoridad y conçierto que hasta allí avíamos visto, aunque no tan grandes como los otros de quien avemos contado. Traían los cabellos sueltos y muy largos, y cubiertos con mantas de martas de la suerte de las que atrás avíamos tomado, y algunas dellas hechas por muy estraña manera, porque en ellas avía unos lazos de lavores de unas pieles leonadas que paresçían muy bien. Rogávannos que nos fuésemos con ellos y que nos darían los christianos y agua y otras muchas cosas. Y contino acudían sobre nosotros muchas canoas procurando de tomar la boca de aquella entrada. Y assí por esto, como porque la tierra era muy peligrosa para estar en ella, nos salimos a la mar donde estuvimos hasta mediodía con ellos. Y como no nos quisiessen dar los christianos, y por este respecto nosotros no les diésemos los indios, començáronnos a tirar piedras con hondas y varas con muestras de flecharnos, aunque en todos ellos no vimos sino tres o quatro arcos.

b. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter ten: Of the skirmish we had with the Indians.

But those who were on the raft stopped them, and thus the Indians in the canoe went fleeing. And they left us very perplexed and saddened at having lost those two Christians.

<sup>b</sup>When morning came, many canoes of Indians approached us, asking us for their two companions who had remained on the raft as hostages. The governor said that he would release them provided that they bring the two Christians they had carried off. With these people came five or six<sup>1</sup> lords, and they seemed to us to be the most well disposed people and of the greatest authority and bearing of any we had seen up to that point, even though they were not as large as the others of whom we have spoken. They wore their hair loose and very long, and they were covered with cloaks of sable skins like the one we had previously taken, and some of them were made in a very strange manner, because they were laced together with ties of tawny-colored leather that made them very handsome. They begged us to go with them, claiming that they would give us the Christians and water and many other things. And during this time many canoes were coming toward us, trying to close the mouth of the estuary. And therefore because of this, since this was a very dangerous land to enter, we went out to sea, where we were surrounded by them until midday. And since they refused to return the Christians to us, and for this reason we would not give them the Indian hostages, they began to hurl stones at us with slings and throw spears, feigning to shoot arrows at us, although among all of them we saw no more than three or four bows.

1. Three or four (Oviedo 589b).

a. refrescó] Z: refresco

b. bolvieron] Z: bolnieron

c. juntamos] Z: juntamos tos

Estando en esta contienda el viento refrescó<sup>a</sup> y ellos se bolvieron<sup>b</sup> y nos dexaron. Y assí navegamos aquel día hasta ora de bísperas que mi barca, que iva delante, descubrió una punta que la tierra hazía y del otro cabo se veía un río muy grande. Y en una isleta que hazía la punta hize yo surgir por esperar las otras barcas. El governador no quiso llegar, antes se metió por una vaía muy çerca de allí en que avía muchas isletas. Y allí nos juntamos,<sup>c</sup> y desde la mar tomamos agua dulce, porque el río entrava en la mar de avenida. Y por tostar algún maíz de lo que traíamos, porque ya havia dos días que lo comíamos crudo, saltamos en aquella isla, mas [V:fi6r] como no hallamos leña, acordamos de ir al río que estava detrás de la punta una legua de allí. Y yendo era tanta la corriente que no nos dexava en ninguna manera llegar, antes nos apartava de la tierra. Y nosotros trabajando y porfiando por tomarla, el Norte que venía de la tierra començó a crescer tanto que nos metió en la mar sin que nosotros pudiésemos hazer otra cosa. Y a media legua que fuimos metidos en ella sondamos y hallamos que con treinta braças no podimos tomar hondo y no podíamos entender si la corriente era causa que no lo pudiésemos tomar. Y assí navegamos dos días todavía trabajando por tomar tierra, y al cabo dellos, un poco antes que el sol saliesse, vimos muchos humeros por la costa. Y trabajando por llegar allá nos hallamos en tres braças de agua. Y por ser de noche no osamos tomar tierra, porque como avíamos visto tantos humeros

Being in this dispute the wind came up, and they turned back and left us. And thus we sailed that day<sup>1</sup> until the hour of vespers, when my raft, which was leading the way, came upon a point that the land made and on the opposite side a very large river could be seen.<sup>2</sup> And on an island that the point made I ordered that we anchor in order to wait for the other rafts. The governor refused to come, and instead entered a bay very near there, in which there were many islands. And there we came together, and from the sea we drank fresh water, because the river entered the sea as a freshet. And in order to toast some of the maize that we carried, because we had been eating it raw for two days, we disembarked on that island, but since we found no firewood, we agreed to go to the river that was behind the point one league from there. On going, the current was so great that it was not possible to land; instead it drove us away from the shore. And while we were working and struggling to reach land, the north wind, which was blowing from the land, became so strong that it drove us out to sea without our being able to do anything about it. And half a league out to sea, at the point to which we had been driven, we took a sounding, and we found that even with thirty fathoms<sup>3</sup> we could not touch bottom, and we could not determine whether the current was the reason we were unable to do so. And thus we sailed two<sup>4</sup> days, still struggling to reach land, and at the end of them, a little before sunrise<sup>5</sup> we saw many spires of smoke along the coast. And endeavoring to get there we found ourselves in water three fathoms deep.<sup>5</sup> And since it was nighttime, we did not dare to land, because since we had seen so many smoke spires,

1. Another two days (Oviedo 589b).

2. The Mississippi.

3. The Spanish *braza* corresponds roughly to the English fathom. The *braza* equals 5.5 feet, or 1.67 meters (Hemming 518; DRAE 201b). Evidently extending a rope about 165 feet (50 meters) down into the water, the men were unable to touch bottom.

4. One (Oviedo 589b).

5. About 16.5 feet (5 meters).

a. podía  V: podría	creíamos que se nos podía <sup>a</sup> recresçer algún peligro sin nosotros poder ver por la mucha escuridad lo que avíamos de hazer. E por esto determinamos de esperar a la mañana, y como amanesció cada barca se halló por sí perdida de las otras. Yo me hallé en treinta <sup>b</sup> braças, y siguiendo mi viage, a ora de bísperas vi dos barcas, y como fui a ellas, vi que la primera a que llegué era la del governador, el qual me preguntó <sup>c</sup> que qué me paresçía que devíamos hazer. Yo le dixé que devía recobrar aquella barca que iva delante y que en ninguna manera la dexasse, <sup>d</sup> y que juntas todas tres barcas seguiéssemos nuestro camino donde Dios nos quisiesse llevar. Él me respondió que aquello no se podía hazer porque la barca iva muy metida en la mar y él quería tomar la tierra, y que si la quería yo seguir que hiziesse que los de mi barca tomassen los remos y trabajassen, porque con fuerça de braços se avía de tomar la tierra. Y esto le aconsejava un capitán que consigo llevaba que se llamava Pantoxa, diziéndole que si aquel día no tomava la tierra <sup>e</sup> que en otros seis no la tomaría, y en este tiempo era necessario morir de hambre. Yo, vista su voluntad, tomé mi remo y lo mismo [V:fi6v] hizieron todos los que en mi barca estaban para ello, y bogamos hasta casi puesto el sol. Mas como el governador llevaba la más sana y rezia gente que entre toda avía, en ninguna manera lo podimos seguir ni tener con ella. <sup>f</sup> Yo, como vi esto, pedile que para poderle seguir me diesse un cabo de su barca, y él me respondió que no harían ellos poco si solos aquella noche pudiessen llegar a tierra. Yo le dixé que, pues vía la poca
b. treinta  Z: XXX	
c. preguntó  Z: preguuto	
d. dexasse  Z: daxasse	
e. tierra  Z: tierro	
f. ella  Z: eella	

we believed that some danger might befall us without our being able to see what we ought to do, because of the great darkness. And for this reason we decided to wait until morning, and as the dawn broke each raft found itself separated from the others. I found myself in thirty fathoms of water, and continuing my course to the hour of vespers,<sup>1</sup> I saw two rafts,<sup>2</sup> and as I went toward them I saw that the first one I came upon was that of the governor, who asked me what it seemed to me we ought to do. I told him that he should catch up with the raft that went before us, and that in no way should he leave it, and that together all three of our rafts would follow along whatever path God might choose to carry us. He told me that that could not be done because the raft was very far out to sea and he wished to return to land, and that if I wanted to follow it<sup>3</sup> I should have my men take their oars and row, because only by the strength of arms could land be taken. And a captain whom he carried with him, called Pantoja,<sup>4</sup> advised him to do this, saying that if he did not reach land that day, he would not do so in six more, and in that length of time death by starvation would be inevitable. Knowing his will, I took my oar and all those on my raft who were able did the same, and we rowed almost until sunset. But since the governor carried the healthiest and most robust men among us, in no way were we able to follow or keep up with him. Having seen this, I asked him if he would allow me to attach my raft to his so that I might be able to keep up with him, and he responded that they themselves would have to expend no little effort if they alone were to reach land that night. I told him that since I saw the small possibility

1. Midday. According to Oviedo (590a) the rafts were sighted at midday.

2. The raft of Narváez and Pantoja and that of Téllez and Peñalosa.

3. The governor's raft.

4. Cabeza de Vaca refers here to Pantoja as though he had not been mentioned earlier (f3v).



- a. avía| Z: ania
- b. pareciesse| Z: paresçeisse
- c. que| Z: qua
- d. rescebido| Z: resçedo
- posibilidad que en nosotros avía para poder seguirle y hazer lo que avía<sup>a</sup> mandado, que me dixesse qué era lo que mandava que yo hiziesse. Él me respondió que ya no era tiempo de mandar unos a otros, que cada uno hiziesse lo que mejor le pareciesse<sup>b</sup> que era para salvar la vida, que él así lo entendía de hazer. Y diziendo esto se alargó con su barca. Y como no le pude seguir, arribé sobre la otra barca que iva metida en la mar, la qual me esperó. Y llegado a ella, hallé que era la que llevavan los capitanes Peñalosa y Téllez. Y así navegamos quatro días en compañía comiendo por tasa cada día medio puño de maíz crudo. A cabo destes quatro días nos tomó una tormenta que<sup>c</sup> hizo perder la otra barca, y por gran misericordia que Dios tuvo de nosotros, no nos hundimos del todo según el tiempo hazía. Y con ser invierno y el frío muy grande y tantos días que padeçíamos hambre con los golpes que de la mar avíamos rescebido,<sup>d</sup> otro día la gente començó mucho a desmayar de tal manera que quando el sol se puso todos los que en mi barca venían estaban caídos en ella unos sobre otros tan cerca de la muerte que pocos avía que tuviesen sentido. Y entre todos ellos a esta ora no avía çinco hombres en pie. Y quando vino la noche, no quedamos sino el maestre y yo que pudiésemos marear la barca. Y a dos horas de la noche el maestre me dixo que yo tuviesse cargo della, porque él estava tal que creía aquella noche morir. Y así yo tomé el leme, y pasada medianoche yo llegué por ver si era muerto el maestre. Y él me respondió que él antes estava mejor y que él gobernaría hasta el día. Yo

we had to be able to follow him and do what he had commanded, he should tell me what it was that he ordered me to do. He answered me that it was no longer time for one man to rule another, that each one should do whatever seemed best to him in order to save his own life, [and] that he intended so to do it. And saying this he veered away with his raft.<sup>1</sup> And since I was unable to follow him, I headed for the other raft that was at sea, which waited for me. And upon approaching it, I discovered that it was the one that carried Captains Peñalosa and Téllez. And thus we sailed for four days together, eating as rations each day half a handful of raw maize. At the end of these four days, a storm overtook us and caused us to lose the other raft, and because of the great mercy God had for us, we did not sink in spite of the foul weather. And with it being winter and the cold very great and so many days that we suffered hunger along with the blows that we had received from the sea, the next day the people began to faint in such a manner that when the sun set all those who came in my raft were fallen on top of one another in it, so close to death that few were conscious. And among all of them at this hour there were not five men left standing. And when night came, only the helmsman and I were still able to guide the raft. And two hours into the night, the helmsman told me that I should take charge of it, because he was in such condition that he thought he would die that very night. And thus I took the tiller, and after midnight I went to see if he was dead. And he answered me that, on the contrary, he was feeling better and would steer until daybreak.

1. Cabeza de Vaca's testimony in the Joint Report moved Oviedo (590a) to contrast Narváez's self-interest with the selfless heroism of "that memorable count of Niebla, Don Enrique de Guzmán, who, in order to save others, bringing them onto his boat, filled it with so many that he and they drowned at Gibraltar." The count of Niebla was praised by Juan de Mena in his *Trescientas* (stanzas 160–85).

çierto aquella ora de muy mejor [V:f17r] voluntad tomara la muerte que no ver tanta gente delante de mí de tal manera. Y después quel maestre tomó cargo de la barca, yo reposé un poco muy sin reposo, ni avía cosa más lexos de mí entonçes que el sueño. Ya çerca del alva paresçíome que oía el tumbo de la mar, porque como la costa era baxa, sonava mucho. Y con este sobresalto llamé al maestre, el qual me respondió que creía que éramos çerca de tierra. Y tentamos y hallámonos en siete braças. Y paresçíole que nos devíamos tener a la mar hasta que amanesçiesse. Y assí yo tomé un remo y bogué de la vanda de la tierra que nos hallamos una legua della, y dimos la popa a la mar. Y çerca de tierra nos tomó una ola que echó la barca fuera del agua un juego de herradura, y con el gran golpe que dio, quasi toda la gente que en ella estava como muerta tornó en sí. E como se vieron çerca de la tierra, se començaron a descolgar y con manos y pies andando. Y como salieron a tierra a unos barrancos, hezimos lumbre y tostamos del maíz que traíamos. Y hallamos agua de la que havía llovido, y con el calor del fuego la gente tornó en sí y començaron algo a esforçarse. El día que aquí llegamos era sexto del mes de noviembre.

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo onze:  
De lo que acaesció a Lope de  
Oviedo con unos indios.

b. que] V: *om.*

<sup>a</sup>Desque la gente ovo comido, mandé a Lope de Oviedo, que tenía más fuerça y estava más rezió que todos, que<sup>b</sup> se llegasse a unos árboles que çerca de allí estavan, y subido en uno dellos, descubriesse la tierra en que estávamos, y procurasse de aver alguna notiçia della. Él lo hizo assí y entendió que estávamos en isla. Y vio que la tierra estava cavada a la manera que suele estar tierra

Certainly, at that hour I would have willingly chosen to die rather than to see so many people before me in that condition. And after the helmsman took charge of the raft, I lay down for a short time without being able to rest at all, nor was there anything farther from me at that moment than sleep. Later, near dawn, it seemed to me that I was hearing the rise and fall of the sea because, since the coast was a shoal,<sup>1</sup> the waves broke loudly. And with this startlement, I called the helmsman, who replied that he thought we were near land.<sup>2</sup> And we took a sounding and found ourselves in seven fathoms<sup>3</sup> of water. And it seemed to him that we should stay at sea until daybreak. And thus I took an oar and rowed on the land side as we were a league away from it, and we turned the stern toward the sea. And near land a wave took us that pitched the raft out of the water the distance of a horseshoe's throw,<sup>4</sup> and with the great blow that its fall occasioned, almost all the people who were nearly dead upon it regained consciousness. And since they saw themselves near land, they began to leave the raft half walking, half crawling. And as they came on land to some bluffs, we made a fire and toasted some of the maize that we carried. And we found rainwater, and with the heat of the fire the men revived and began to regain strength. The day we arrived here was the sixth of the month of November.<sup>5</sup>

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter eleven: Of what happened to Lope de Oviedo with some Indians.

<sup>a</sup>After the men had eaten, I ordered Lope de Oviedo, who was healthier and stronger than the rest, to go to some trees that were near there and, climbing one of them, to survey the land in which we found ourselves, and to try to gain some information about it. He did so and discovered that we were on an island.<sup>6</sup> And he saw that the land was rutted in the way that it usually is

1. *baxa*. Archaic for *bajío* (DRAE 156c); see (f5v).

2. The raft was approaching the Texas coast near Galveston Bay.

3. About 38.5 feet (11.7 meters).

4. *juego de herradura*.

5. The temporal references in the narration to the raft journey suggest that the date was somewhere between 11 and 18 November. Factoring in ten days to adjust for the nearly ten days that the Julian calendar had wandered from the solar year, the season probably more closely resembled that of modern early December.

6. Directly south of Galveston Island at Galveston Bay, Texas. Cabeza de Vaca will call the island Malhado (f24r).

donde anda ganado, y paresçiole por esto que devía ser tierra de christianos, y así nos lo dixo. Yo le mandé que la tornasse a mirar muy más particularmente y viesse si en ella avía algunos caminos que fuessen seguidos [V:f17v] y esto sin alargarse mucho por el peligro que podía aver. Él fue, y topando<sup>a</sup> con una vereda se fue por ella adelante hasta espacio de media legua. Y halló unas choças de<sup>b</sup> indios que estavan solas porque los indios eran idos al campo. Y tomó una olla dellos y un perrillo pequeño y unas pocas de liças, y así se bolvió a nosotros. Y paresçiéndonos que se tardava, embié otros dos christianos para que le buscassen y viessen qué le avía sucedido. Y ellos le toparon çerca de allí, y vieron que tres indios con arcos y flechas venían tras dél llamándole, y él assimismo llamava a ellos<sup>c</sup> por señas. E así llegó donde estávamos, y los indios se quedaron un poco atrás, assentados en la misma ribera. Y dende a media hora acudieron otros cient indios flecheros,<sup>d</sup> que agora ellos fuessen grandes o no, nuestro miedo los<sup>e</sup> hazía paresçer gigantes. Y pararon çerca de nosotros donde los tres primeros estavan. Entre nosotros, escusado era pensar que avría quien se defendiesse porque diffiçilmente se hallaron seis que del suelo se pudiessen levantar. El veedor y yo salimos a ellos, y llamámosles. Y ellos se llegaron a nosotros, y lo mejor que podimos, procuramos de assegurarlos y assegurararnos. Y dímosles cuentas y cascaveles y cada uno dellos me dio una flecha, que es señal de amistad. Y por señas nos dixerón que a la mañana bolverían y nos traerían de comer porque entonçes no lo tenían.

a. topando] Z: topada

b. de] V: de unos

c. ellos] Z: ello

d. flecheros] Z: flecheron

e. los] V: les

where cattle roam, and it seemed to him for this reason that it must be land inhabited by Christians, and thus he reported it to us. I ordered him to look again more carefully and see if in this land there were any roads that could be followed, and to do this without going too far away because of the danger that there might be. He left, and coming upon a trail, he went ahead along it for the distance of half a league. And he found some Indian huts that were deserted, because the Indians<sup>1</sup> had gone into the countryside. And he took one of their pots and a small dog and a few mullet, and thus he returned to us. And since it seemed to us that he delayed in returning, I sent two other Christians to look for him and find out what had happened to him. And they came upon him near there, and they saw that three Indians with bows and arrows were following him, calling to him, and he in turn was calling to them with gestures. And thus he arrived to where we were, and the Indians stayed back a little, seated on the same bank. And half an hour later, another one hundred<sup>2</sup> Indian archers arrived, and now, whether or not they were of great stature, our fear made them seem like giants. And they stopped near us, where the first three were. It was out of the question for us to think that anyone could defend himself, since it was difficult to find even six who could raise themselves from the ground. The inspector and I went to the Indians and called them. And they came up to us, and as best we could, we tried to assure them and reassure ourselves. And we gave them beads and bells and each one of them gave me an arrow, which is a sign of friendship. And by gestures they told us that they would return in the morning and bring us food to eat because at that time they had none.

1. Members of one of the two groups—those of Capoques or of Han—that inhabited the island (f26v, f44r).

2. Two hundred (Oviedo 59ob).

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo doze:  
Cómo los indios nos truxeron  
de comer.

b. de en] V: *om.*

c. indios] V: indios nos

d. que] Z: qne

e. pedimos] Z: podimos

<sup>a</sup>Otro día de en<sup>b</sup> saliendo el sol que era la ora que los indios<sup>c</sup> avían dicho, vinieron a nosotros como lo avían prometido, y nos traxeron mucho pescado y de unas raíces que ellos comen y son como nuezes, algunas mayores o menores; la mayor parte dellas se sacan de baxo del agua y con mucho trabajo. A la tarde bolvieron y nos traxeron más pescado y de las mismas raíces. E hizieron venir sus mugeres [V:fi8r] e hijos para que nos viessen, y así se bolvieron ricos de cascaveles y cuentas que les dimos. Y otros días nos tornaron a visitar con lo mismo que estotras vezes. Como nosotros víamos que estábamos proveídos de pescado y de raíces y de agua y de las otras cosas que<sup>d</sup> pedimos,<sup>e</sup> acordamos de tornarnos a embarcar y seguir nuestro camino. Y desenterramos la barca de la arena en que estava metida. Y fue menester que nos desnudássemos todos y passásemos gran trabajo para echarla al agua, porque nosotros estábamos tales que otras cosas muy más livianas bastavan para ponernos en él. Y así embarcados a dos tiros de ballesta dentro en la mar, nos dio tal golpe de agua que nos mojó a todos, y como íbamos desnudos y el frío que hazía era muy grande, soltamos los remos de las manos. Y a otro golpe que la mar nos dio, trastornó la barca. El veedor y otros dos se asieron della para escaparse, mas suçedió muy al revés, que la barca los tomó debaxo y se ahogaron. Como la costa es muy brava, el mar de un tumbo echó a todos los otros enbultos en las olas y medio ahogados en la costa de la misma isla sin que faltasen más de los tres que la barca avía tomado debaxo. Los que quedamos escapados [estábamos]

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter twelve:  
How the Indians brought us  
food.

c. had said] V: had told us

<sup>a</sup>The next day at sunrise, which was the hour the Indians had said,<sup>c</sup> they came to us as they had promised, and they brought us much fish and some roots that they eat, which are like nuts, some larger, some smaller; the majority of them they dig out from under water with great difficulty. In the afternoon they returned and brought us more fish and some of the same roots. And they had their women and children come to see us, and thus they went home rich in the bells and beads that we gave them. And on subsequent days they returned to visit us, bringing the same things as on previous occasions. Since we found ourselves provided with fish and roots and water and the other things we requested, we resolved to embark again and continue on our journey. And we dug the raft out of the sand in which it was stuck. And it was necessary for us to undress and endure great labor in order to launch it, because we were in such a condition that other much less strenuous tasks would have sufficed to place us in difficulty. And thus embarked, at a distance of two crossbow shots out to sea, we were hit by such a huge wave that we were all soaked, and since we went naked and the cold was very great, we dropped the oars from our hands. And with a successive wave the sea overturned our raft. The inspector and two others clung to it in order to save themselves, but the result was quite the opposite, for the raft dragged them under and drowned them.<sup>1</sup> Since the shoreline is very rugged, the sea, with a single thrust, threw all the others, who were in the waves and half drowned, onto the coast of the same island<sup>2</sup> without the loss of any more than the three whom the raft had taken under. Those of us who escaped [were]

1. Cabeza de Vaca gives the first account of a raft to sink; it was his own. The inspector, Alonso (Diego) de Solís, with whom he had shared the command on the raft from the Bay of Horses (*fi6r*), and two other men were drowned.

2. Malhado.



a. para escusar razón] V: por  
escusar razones

b. quedamos] V: quedávamos

desnudos como nascimos y [habíamos] perdido todo lo que traíamos. Y aunque todo valía poco, para entonces valía mucho. E como entonces era por noviembre y el frío muy grande y nosotros tales que con poca dificultad nos podían contar los huessos, estábamos hechos propria figura de la muerte. De mí sé dezir que desde el mes de mayo passado yo no avía comido otra cosa sino maíz tostado, y algunas vezes me vi en necessidad de comerlo crudo, porque aunque se mataron los cavallos entretanto que las barcas se hazían, yo nunca pude comer dellos, y no fueron diez vezes las que comí pescado. Esto digo para escusar razón,<sup>a</sup> porque pueda cada uno ver qué tales estaríamos. Y sobre todo lo dicho avía sobrevenido viento norte, de suerte que más estábamos çerca de la muerte que de la vida. Plugo a nuestro Señor que buscando los tizones del fuego que allí avíamos fecho, hallamos lumbré con que hezimos grandes fuegos. Y [V:f18v] así estuvimos pidiendo a nuestro Señor misericordia y perdón de nuestros peccados, derramando muchas lágrimas, aviendo cada uno lástima no sólo de sí mas de todos los otros que en el mismo estado vían. E a hora de puesto el sol, los indios, creyendo que no nos avíamos ido, nos bolvieron a buscar y a traernos de comer. Mas quando ellos nos vieron así en tan diferente hábito del primero y en manera tan estraña, espantáronse tanto que se bolvieron atrás. Yo salí a ellos y llamelos, y vinieron muy espantados. Hízelos entender por señas como se nos avía hundido una barca y se avían ahogado tres de nosotros. Y allí en su presencia ellos mismos vieron dos muertos, y los que quedamos<sup>b</sup> ívamos aquel camino. Los indios, de ver el desastre que nos avía

naked as the day we were born and [we had] lost everything we carried with us. And although all of it was of little value, at that time it was worth a great deal. And since it was November and the cold very great, we, so thin that with little difficulty our bones could be counted, appeared like the figure of death itself. For myself I can say that since the month of May I had not eaten any other thing but toasted maize, and sometimes I found myself having to eat it raw, because although the horses were killed during the time the rafts were being constructed, I could never eat of them,<sup>1</sup> and there were not more than ten occasions on which I ate fish. I say this by way of explanation so that each one might understand the conditions in which we found ourselves. And beyond all this, a north wind came up, bringing us closer to death than to life. God granted that while looking for firebrands from the fire that we had built there, we discovered a flame with which we made great bonfires. And thus we were beseeching our Lord for mercy and the pardon of our sins, shedding many tears, each one having pity not only for himself but for all the others whom they saw in the same state. And at the hour of sunset, the Indians, believing that we had not gone away, came back to look for us and bring us food. But when they saw us in this manner and dressed so differently from the first time, and in such a strange state, they were so frightened that they withdrew. I ran after them and called them, and they came back very frightened. I made them understand through gestures how a raft had sunk on us and three members of our company had drowned. And there in their presence they themselves saw two dead men, and those of us who remained were traveling that same road. The Indians, on seeing the disaster that had

1. Oviedo (588a) states that some of the men had helped construct the rafts for the sole purpose of being allowed to eat some of the horse meat.

venido y el desastre en que estábamos con tanta desventura y miseria, se sentaron entre nosotros. Y con el gran dolor y lástima que huvieron de vernos en tanta fortuna, començaron todos a llorar rezió y tan de verdad que lexos de allí se podía oír. Y esto les duró más de media<sup>a</sup> ora, y cierto ver que estos hombres, tan sin razón y tan crudos a manera de brutos, se dolían tanto de nosotros, hizo que en mí y en otros de la compañía cresçiesse más la pasión<sup>b</sup> y la consideración de nuestra desdicha. Sosegado ya algo<sup>c</sup> este llanto, yo pregunté a los christianos y dixé, que si a ellos paresçia, rogaría a aquellos indios que nos llevassen a sus casas. Y algunos dellos que avían estado en la Nueva España respondieron que no se devía hablar en ello, porque si a sus casas nos llevavan nos sacrificarían a sus ídolos. Mas visto que otro remedio no avía y que por qualquier otro camino estava más çerca y más çierta la muerte, no curé de lo que dezían, antes rogué a los indios que nos llevassen a sus<sup>d</sup> casas. Y ellos mostraron que avían gran plazer dello, y que esperássemos un poco que ellos harían lo que queríamos. Y luego treinta dellos se cargaron de leña y se fueron a sus casas que estavan lexos de allí. Y quedamos con los otros hasta cerca de la noche que nos tomaron, y llevándonos asidos y con mucha priessa, fuimos a sus casas. Y por el gran [V:f19r] frío que hazía, y temiendo que en el camino alguno no muriesse o desmayasse, proveyeron que oviesse quatro o cinco fuegos muy grandes puestos a trechos, y en cada uno dellos nos escalentavan; y desque vían que avíamos tomado alguna fuerça y calor, nos<sup>e</sup> llevavan hasta el otro, tan a priessa que casi los pies no nos dexavan poner en el suelo. Y desta

a. media] Z: medio

b. pasión] Z: passiu  
c. algo] V: om.

d. sus] Z: su

e. nos] Z: nas

c. somewhat] V: om.

befallen us and the disaster that was upon us with so much misfortune and misery, sat down among us. And with the great grief and pity they felt on seeing us in such a state, they all began to weep loudly and so sincerely that they could be heard a great distance away.<sup>1</sup> And this lasted more than half an hour, and truly, to see that these men, so lacking in reason and so crude in the manner of brutes, grieved so much for us, increased in me and in others of our company even more the magnitude of our suffering and the estimation of our misfortune. When this weeping was somewhat<sup>c</sup> calmed, I asked the Christians and said that, if it seemed acceptable to them, I would ask those Indians to take us to their houses. And some of them who had been in New Spain replied that we should not even speak of it, because if they took us to their houses, they would sacrifice us to their idols.<sup>2</sup> But realizing that there was no other solution, and that by any other course death was closer and more certain, I did not heed their words, but rather beseeched the Indians to take us to their houses. And they showed that they took great pleasure in this, and that we should wait a little while, that they would do what we wanted. And later, thirty of them gathered firewood and went to their houses, which were far away from there. And we remained with the others until close to nightfall, when they took us, and by their carrying us by clutching us tightly and making great haste, we went to their houses. And because of the great cold, and fearing that on the road some one of us might fall unconscious or die, they made provision for four or five very great bonfires placed at intervals, and at each one they warmed us; and when they saw that we had regained some strength and warmth, they carried us to the next one, so rapidly that they almost did not let our feet touch the ground. And in this

1. Cabeza de Vaca (f24v, f26v) later describes ritual weeping among these coastal peoples of the northwestern Gulf of Mexico.

Rumor and knowledge of human sacrifice among the Mexica (Aztecs) circulated throughout the Hispanic world.

2. A number of the men on this expedition were veterans of the conquest of Mexico (1519–21), including many who had accompanied Narváez to Mexico in 1520 to oppose Cortés. Juan Suárez was one of the first Franciscan missionaries to New Spain, arriving there in 1524 (f3r).

a. aviendo] V: avía plazer,

b. a] V: *om.*

c. y] Z: he

d. ] Z: *om.* V: Capitulo treze:  
Cómo supimos de otros  
christianos.

manera fuimos hasta sus casas donde hallamos que tenían hecha una casa para nosotros y muchos fuegos en ella. Y desde a una ora que avíamos llegado, començaron a bailar y hazer grande fiesta que duró toda la noche, aunque para nosotros no aviendo<sup>a</sup> fiesta ni sueño, esperando cuándo nos avían de sacrificar. Y a la mañana nos tornaron a dar pescado y raíces, y a<sup>b</sup> hazer tan buen tratamiento que nos asseguramos algo, y<sup>c</sup> perdimos algo el miedo del sacrificio.

<sup>d</sup>Este mismo día yo vi a un indio de aquellos un rescate y conosco que no era de los que nosotros les avíamos dado. Y preguntando dónde le avían avido ellos, por señas me respondieron que se lo avían dado otros hombres como nosotros que estaban atrás. Yo, viendo esto, embié dos christianos y dos indios que les mostrassen aquella gente, y muy çerca de allí toparon con ellos que también venían a buscarnos, porque los indios que allá quedavan los avían dicho de nosotros, y éstos eran los capitanes Andrés Dorantes y Alonso del Castillo con toda la gente de su barca. Y llegados a nosotros se espantaron mucho de vernos de la manera que estábamos. Y resçibieron muy gran pena por no tener qué darnos, que ninguna otra ropa traían sino la que tenían vestida. Y estuvieron allí con nosotros y nos contaron como a cinco de aquel mismo mes su barca avía dado al través legua y media de allí, y ellos avían escapado sin perderse ninguna cosa. Y todos juntos [V:fi9v] acordamos de adovar su barca e irnos en ella los que tuviessen fuerça y disposición para

a. neither] V: neither pleasure,  
 manner we went to their houses, where we found that they had prepared a house for us and many fires in it. And an hour after we arrived, they began to dance and make a great celebration that lasted all night long, although for us there was neither<sup>a</sup> rejoicing nor sleep, as we were awaiting the moment when they would sacrifice us. And in the morning they again gave us fish and roots and treated us so well that we were somewhat reassured, and we lost some of our fear of being sacrificed.

d. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter thirteen:  
 How we learned of other  
 Christians.

<sup>d</sup>This same day I saw on one of those Indians an item of barter and I knew that it was not from the ones that we had given them. And asking where those items had been acquired, they responded to me by signs that other men like us who were farther back<sup>1</sup> had given it to him. Seeing this, I sent two Christians and two Indians to show them those people, and very near there they came upon them, and they were also coming to look for us, because the Indians who lived there had told them about us, and these men were the captains Andrés Dorantes and Alonso del Castillo with all the men of their raft. Upon encountering us, they received a great fright to see us in the condition we were in. And it gave them great sorrow not to have anything to give us, because they brought no clothing other than what they were wearing. And they remained there with us and told us how on the fifth day of that same month their raft had capsized a league and a half from there, and they had escaped without losing anything.<sup>2</sup> And all together we agreed to repair their raft, to go forward in it those of us who had the strength and will to

1. *atrás*. Farther back on the island of Malhado, that is, in the direction of the Florida Peninsula. From this point in the narration, Cabeza de Vaca uses the term *atrás* (back) in the same sense as “la vía de la Florida” (the way of Florida). The opposite, *adelante* (forward), is equivalent to “la vía de Palmas” (the way of Palms) or “la vía de Pánuco” (the way of Pánuco) and refers to movement toward the mouths of the Río de las Palmas and the Río Pánuco.

2. On 5 November 1528 (Oviedo 591b), Dorantes and Castillo’s raft had landed on Malhado, but nearer the Florida end of the island than that of Cabeza de Vaca. Here Cabeza de Vaca accounts for the second of the five rafts.

- ello [y] los otros quedarse allí hasta que convalesciessen para irse como pudiesen por luengo de costa, y que esperassen allí hasta que Dios los llevasse con nosotros a tierra de christianos. Y como lo pensamos assí nos posimos en ello. Y antes que echássemos la barca al agua, Tavera, un cavallero de nuestra compañía, murió. Y la barca que nosotros pensávamos llevar hizo su fin y no se pudo sostener a sí misma<sup>a</sup> que luego fue hundida. E como quedamos del arte que he dicho, y los más desnudos y el tiempo tan rezio para caminar y passar ríos y ancones a nado, ni tener bastimento alguno ni manera para llevarlo, determinamos de hazer lo que la necesidad<sup>b</sup> pedía, que era invernar allí. E acordamos también que quatro hombres que más rezios estavan fuessen a Pánuco,<sup>c</sup> creyendo que estábamos cerca de allí, y que si Dios nuestro Señor fuesse servido de llevarlos allá, diessen aviso de como quedávamos en aquella isla y de nuestra necesidad y trabajo. Éstos eran muy grandes nadadores: y al uno llamavan Álvaro Fernández, portugués, carpintero y marínero; el segundo se llamava Méndez; y al terçero Figueroa, que era natural de Toledo; el quarto Estudillo,<sup>d</sup> natural de Çafra. Llevavan consigo un indio que<sup>e</sup> era de la isla de Avia.<sup>f</sup>
- §Partidos estos quatro christianos, dende a pocos días succedió tal tiempo de fríos y de<sup>h</sup> tempestades que los indios no podían arrancar las raíces. Y de los canales<sup>i</sup> en que pescavan ya no avía provecho ninguno. Y como las casas eran tan desabrigadas, començóse a morir la gente. Y cinco christianos que estavan en Xamho<sup>j</sup> en la costa llegaron a tal
- a. a sí misma] Z: assí misma V: assí misma
- b. necesidad] Z: necessariad
- c. Pánuco] Z: Panunco V: Panunco
- d. Estudillo] V: Astudillo
- e. que] Z: que
- f. de Avia] V: om.
- g. ] Z: om. V: Capítulo catorze: Cómo se partieron quatro christianos.
- h. de] V: om.
- i. canales] V: cañales
- j. Xamho] V: rancho

do so, the others to remain there until they recovered to the point where they could go along the coast as they were able, and wait there until God should take them with us to the land of Christians. And as we contemplated it, so we put it into effect. And before we had launched the raft, Tavera, a man of gentle birth from our company, died. And the raft we planned to take met its end, and it could not remain afloat and later was sunk. And as we remained in the circumstances that I have described, with most of the men naked and the weather too severe to walk and swim across rivers and bays, and without any provisions or the means to carry them, we decided to do what necessity dictated, which was to spend the winter there. And we also agreed that four of the most hearty men should go to Pánuco, believing that we were near there, and that if God our Lord should see fit to carry them there, they should give notice of how we remained on that island and of our great need and hardships. These men were very great swimmers:<sup>1</sup> and one was named Álvaro Fernández, a Portuguese carpenter and sailor;<sup>2</sup> the second was called Méndez; and the third, Figueroa, who was a native of Toledo; the fourth, Estudillo,<sup>d</sup> a native of Zafra. They took with them an Indian from the island of Avia.<sup>3</sup>

d. Estudillo] V: Astudillo

f. of Avia] V: *om.*

g. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter fourteen:  
How four Christians departed.

i. waterways] V: weirs

j. in Xamho] V: encamped

<sup>8</sup>These four Christians having departed, a few days later the weather turned so cold and there were such great storms that the Indians could not pull up the roots. And from the waterways<sup>4</sup> where they fished there was no yield whatsoever. And as the houses were so unprotected, the people began to die. And five men who were in Xamho<sup>j</sup> on the coast came to such

1. Most of the expeditionaries' inability to swim was a great hindrance to them and is mentioned by Cabeza de Vaca on other occasions (f28r, f29v). Oviedo (598b) referred to two of the most successful travelers among the survivors—Figueroa (mentioned here) and another, the Asturian cleric (see f27r)—as “chripstianos nadadores” (Christians who knew how to swim).

2. See (f15v).

3. *de Avia*. This reference, omitted from the Valladolid (1555) edition, is unidentified. The four Christians and the Indian left Malhado in late 1528.

4. “Waterways” (*canales*) in the Zamora (1542) edition, “weirs” (*cañales*) in the Valladolid (1555). The latter are fences or enclosures set in waterways for taking fish; it is unclear whether these Indians constructed such traps.



- a. uno] V: uno solo                   estremo que se comieron los unos a los otros hasta que quedó uno,<sup>a</sup> que por ser solo, no hubo quien lo comiese. Los [V:f20r] nombres dellos son éstos: Sierra, Diego López, Corral, Palaçios, Gonçalo Ruiz. Deste caso se alteraron tanto los indios y hubo entre ellos tan gran escándalo que sin duda que<sup>b</sup> si al principio ellos lo vieran los mataran, y todos nos viéramos en grande trabajo. Finalmente en muy poco tiempo, de ochenta hombres que de ambas partes [de la isla] allí llegamos, quedaron bivos solos quinze. Y después de muertos éstos, dio a los indios de la tierra una enfermedad de estómago de que murió la mitad de la gente dellos. Y creyeron que nosotros éramos los que los matávamos. Y teniéndolo por muy cierto, concertaron entre sí de matar a los que avíamos quedado. Ya que lo venían a poner en efeto, un indio que a mí me tenía les dixo que no creyessen que nosotros éramos los que los matávamos, porque si nosotros tal poder tuviéramos, escusamos<sup>c</sup> que no murieran tantos de nosotros como ellos veían que avian muerto sin que les pudiéramos poner remedio, y que ya no quedávamos sino muy pocos, y que ninguno hazía más<sup>d</sup> daño ni perjuizio, que lo mejor era que nos dexassen. Y quiso nuestro Señor que los otros siguieron este consejo y paresçer, y así se estorvó su propósito. A esta isla posimos por nombre isla de Malhado. La gente que allí hallamos son grandes y bien dispuestos. No tienen otras armas sino flechas y arcos en que son por extremo diestros. Tienen los hombres la una teta horadada de una parte a otra y algunos ay que las tienen ambas. Y por el agujero que hazen, traen una caña atravessada tan larga como dos palmos y medio
- b. que] V: *om.*
- c. escusamos] V: escusáramos
- d. más] V: *om.*

dire need that they ate one another until only one remained, who because he was alone, had no one to eat him. The names of these men were: Sierra, Diego López, Corral, Palacios, Gonzalo Ruiz. The Indians became very upset because of this and it produced such a great scandal among them that without a doubt, if at the start they had seen it, they would have killed them, and all of us would have been in grave danger. Finally, in a very short time, of us eighty men who arrived there from both ends [of the island], only fifteen remained alive.<sup>1</sup> And after these men had died, a stomach ailment befell the Indians of the land, from which half of them died. And they thought that we were the ones who had killed them. And taking this to be very true, they planned among themselves to kill those of us who remained. When they came to put it into effect, an Indian in whose possession I had been placed told them that they should not believe that we were the ones who killed them, because if we had such power, we would not have allowed so many of our own to die, as they saw, without our being able to prevent it, and that since no more than a few of us now remained, and since none of us did any harm or ill, the best thing to do would be to leave us alone. And our Lord God granted that the others followed this advice and opinion, and thus they were diverted from their intention. To this island we gave the name Malhado.<sup>2</sup> The people<sup>3</sup> we found there are large and well proportioned. They have no weapons other than bows and arrows, which they employ with great skill. The men have one pierced nipple and some have both pierced. And through the hole they make, they wear a reed up to two and a half spans<sup>4</sup> long

1. Cabeza de Vaca (f27r) later gives the names of fifteen men besides himself who survived the winter of 1528–29 in the region of Malhado. Oviedo (593b) mentions one additional survivor whose name is not given.

2. Oviedo (615a) points out that the three hidalgos did not name the island in the Joint Report, and he objects to Cabeza de Vaca's coining the name "Isle of Ill Fate" (Mal Hado).

3. The Indians of Capoques and of Han (f26v, f44r).

4. See (f13r).

a. canales] V: cañales

b. a] V: om.

c. cumplido] Z: cnmplido

d. házenle] Z: hozenle

y tan gruesa como dos dedos. Traen también horadado el labio de abaxo y puesto en él un pedaço de la caña delgada como medio dedo. Las mugeres son para mucho trabajo. La habitación que en esta isla hazen es desde octubre hasta en fin de hebrero. El su mantenimiento es las raíces que he dicho, sacadas de baxo el agua por noviembre y deziembre. Tienen canales<sup>a</sup> y no tienen más pesçes de para este tiempo; de aí adelante comen las [V:f20v] raíces. En fin de hebrero van a otras partes a buscar con qué mantenerse porque entonçes las raíces comiençan a nasçer y no son buenas. Es la gente del mundo que más aman a sus hijos y mejor tratamiento les hazen. Y quando acaesçe que a<sup>b</sup> alguno se le muere el hijo, llóranle los padres y los parientes y todo el pueblo. Y el llanto dura un año cumplido,<sup>c</sup> que cada día por la mañana antes que amanesca comiençan primero a llorar los padres, y tras esto todo el pueblo. Y esto mismo hazen al mediodía y quando amanesçe. Y pasado un año que los han llorado, házenle<sup>d</sup> las honrras del muerto y lávanse y límpianse del tizne que traen. A todos los defuntos lloran desta manera, salvo a los viejos de quien no hazen caso, porque dizen que ya an passado su tiempo, y dellos ningún provecho ay antes ocupan la tierra y quitan el mantenimiento a los niños. Tienen por costumbre de enterrar los muertos, si no son los que entre ellos son físicos, que a éstos quémanlos. Y mientras el fuego arde, todos están bailando y haziendo muy gran fiesta. Y hazen polvos los huessos. Y passado un año, quando se hazen sus honrras, todos se jasan en ellas, y a los

a. waterways] V: weirs

and as thick as two fingers.<sup>1</sup> They also have their lower lip pierced and a piece of reed as thin as half a finger placed in it. The women are given to hard work. They inhabit this island from October to the end of February. They sustain themselves on the roots that I have mentioned, which they dig out from under water in November and December. They have waterways<sup>2</sup> and they do not have fish apart from this period; from then on they eat the roots. At the end of February they go to other places to look for food because at that time the roots begin to sprout and become inedible. These people love their children more and treat them better than any other people in the world. And when it happens that one of their children dies, the parents and the relatives and all the rest of the people weep. And the weeping lasts a whole year, that is, each day in the morning before sunrise, first the parents begin to weep, and after this the entire community also weeps. And they do this at noon, and at daybreak. And after a year of mourning has passed, they perform the honors of the dead and wash and cleanse themselves of the ashes they wear. They mourn all the dead in this manner, except for the elderly, to whom they pay no attention, because they say they have lived past their time, and from them no gain is to be had, rather, they occupy land and deprive the children of their share of the food. Their custom is to bury their dead, except those among them who are physicians,<sup>3</sup> whose remains they burn. And while the fire burns, they all dance and make a great celebration. And afterward they pulverize the bones. And a year later, upon paying homage to them, they all lacerate themselves, and to the

1. *dedo*. A measurement of approximately 18 millimeters (somewhat less than an inch) (DRAE 425c).

2. See (f23v).

3. *fisico*. For the definition of *fisico*, see (f25v).

a. dan] Z: davan

parientes dan<sup>a</sup> aquellos polvos a beber de los huesos en agua. Cada uno tiene una muger conosciada. Los físicos son los hombres más libertados; pueden tener dos y tres, y entre éstas ay muy gran amistad y conformidad. Quando viene que alguno casa su hija, el que la toma por muger, dende el día que con ella se casa, todo lo que matare caçando o pescando todo lo trae la muger a la casa de su padre sin osar tomar ni comer alguna cosa dello. Y de casa del suegro le llevan a él de comer, y en todo este tiempo [ni] el suegro ni la suegra no entran en su casa, ni él ha de entrar en casa de los suegros ni cuñados. Y si acaso se toparen por alguna parte, se desvían un tiro de ballesta el uno del otro, y entretanto que así van apartándose, llevan la cabeça baxa y los ojos en tierra puestos, porque tienen por cosa mala verse ni hablarse. Las mugeres tienen la<sup>b</sup> libertad para comunicar y conversar con los suegros y parientes. Y esta costumbre se tiene desde la isla [de Malhado] hasta más de çinquenta leguas por la tierra adentro. Otra costumbre ay, [V:f21r] y es que quando algún hijo o hermano muere, en la casa donde muriere tres meses no buscan de comer, antes se dexan morir de hambre. Y los parientes y los vezinos les proveen de lo que an de comer. Y como en el tiempo que aquí estuvimos murió tanta gente dellos, en las más casas avía muy gran hambre por guardar también su costumbre y çerimonia. Y los que lo buscavan por mucho que trabajavan, por ser el tiempo tan rezió no podían aver sino muy poco. Y por esta causa los indios que a mí me tenían se salieron de la isla, y en unas

b. la] V: om.

relatives they give the powdered bones so that they may drink them in water. Each of them has one wife.<sup>1</sup> Among them, the physicians are the most unconstrained; they can have two or three wives, among whom there is great friendship and harmony. When one gives his daughter in marriage, from the day that the one who takes her as his wife marries her, everything that he kills hunting or fishing is taken by his wife to the house of her father without daring to take or eat anything of it. And from the house of the father-in-law, food is brought to the husband, and in all this time [neither] the father-in-law nor the mother-in-law enters his house, nor is he to enter the house of any of his in-laws. And if it should happen that they meet anywhere, they veer a crossbow's shot from their course, and as they go distancing themselves from one another, they carry their heads lowered and their eyes to the ground, because they consider it a bad thing to see or speak with one another. The women are at liberty to communicate and converse with their parents-in-law and relatives. And this custom is common from the island [of Malhado] to more than fifty leagues inland. They have another custom, which is that when a child or a sibling dies, in the household in which the death occurs they cease to seek food for three months, but rather they allow themselves to starve. And their relatives and neighbors supply them with the food they are to eat. And because in the time we were there so many of them died, in most of the houses there was very great hunger in the effort to also keep their custom and ceremony. And those who sought food, in spite of their great labors, could find but very little, because the weather was so severe. And for this reason, the Indians who held me left the island, and in some

1. *mujer conocida*. A woman recognized by the group as belonging to a particular man.

canoas se passaron a tierra firme a unas vaías adonde tenían muchos ostiones. Y tres meses del año no comen otra cosa y beven muy mala agua. Tienen gran falta de leña, y de mosquitos muy grande abundancia. Sus casas son edificadas de esteras sobre muchas cáxcaras de ostiones. Y sobre ellos duermen en cueros, y no los tienen sino es acaso. Y assí estuvimos hasta en fin de abril que fuimos a la costa de la mar adó comimos moras de çarças todo el mes, en el qual no<sup>a</sup> cessan de hazer sus areitos y fiestas.

a. no] Z: *om.*

b. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo quinze:  
De lo que nos acaesció en la  
villa de Malhado.

<sup>b</sup>En aquella isla que he contado nos quisieron hazer físicos sin esaminarnos ni pedirnos los títulos, porque ellos curan las enfermedades soplando al enfermo y con aquel soplo y las manos echan dél la enfermedad. Y mandáronnos que hiziésemos lo mismo y sirviésemos en algo. Nosotros nos reíamos dello, diciendo que era burla y que no sabíamos curar. Y por esto nos quitavan la comida hasta que hiziésemos lo que nos dezían. Y viendo nuestra porfia, un indio me dixo a mí que yo no sabía lo que dezía en dezir que no aprovecharía nada aquello que él sabía, ca las piedras y otras cosas que se crían por los campos tienen virtud, y que él con una piedra caliente trayéndola por el estómago sanava [V:f21v] y quitava el dolor, y que nosotros que éramos hombres çierto era que teníamos mayor virtud y poder. En fin nos vimos en tanta neçessidad que lo huvimos de hazer sin temer que nadie nos llevasse por ello la pena. La manera que ellos tienen en curarse es ésta: que en viéndose enfermos, llaman un médico y

canoes crossed to the mainland to certain bays that had many oysters. And for three months of the year they eat nothing else and drink very bad water.<sup>1</sup> There is a great scarcity of firewood, and there are mosquitoes in great abundance. Their houses are built of woven reeds on top of beds of oyster shells. And they sleep on them on animal skins, if they happen to have them.<sup>2</sup> And thus we were there until the end of April when we went to the seacoast where we ate blackberries<sup>3</sup> the entire month, during which time they do not<sup>a</sup> cease to perform their *areitos*<sup>4</sup> and celebrations.

a. do not] Z: om.

b. ] Z: om. V: Chapter fifteen:  
Of what happened to us in the  
villa of Malhado.

<sup>b5</sup>On that island about which I have spoken, they tried to make us physicians<sup>6</sup> without examining us or asking us for our titles, because they cure illnesses by blowing on the sick person, and with that breath of air and their hands they expel the disease from him. And they demanded that we do the same and make ourselves useful. We laughed about this, saying that it was a mockery and that we did not know how to cure. And because of this, they took away our food until we did as they told us. And seeing our resistance, an Indian told me that I didn't know what I was saying when I said that what he knew how to do would do no good, because the stones and other things that the fields produce have powers, and that he, by placing a hot stone on the abdomen, restored health and removed pain, and that it was certain that we, because we were men, had greater virtue and capacity. In short, we found ourselves in such need that we had to do it, without fearing that anyone would bring us to grief for it. The manner in which they perform cures is as follows: on becoming sick, they call a physician and

1. Oviedo (592a) describes this as "salobre," or salt water. Both accounts speak of the shortage of water, the collection of rainwater, and the natives' movement in search of it in these coastal saltwater regions.

2. Cabeza de Vaca makes many references to the use of deerskins by the coastal Indians (f26v–f40v) and describes the manner of hunting deer among groups farther down the coast from Galveston Bay (f33v). Oviedo (601a) also describes the hunting of deer among these same groups, who drove them into the water, where they would drown.

3. *moras de zarzas*. Literally, blackberries, black dewberries, according to Coopwood (116).

4. Ritual song and dance, in the Taino language of the Caribbean.

5. This title (probably added by a typesetter or editor, given its erroneous content) indicates that the Spanish established a municipality (*villa*) on Malhado, which was not the case.

6. *físico*. "He who professes the science of the nature of things and knows their qualities and properties" (Covarrubias 597a). According to the *Siete partidas* (Castile 1:f24r–v [pt. 2, tit. 9, law 10]), it is "knowledge of the nature of things and their interactions; knowing such things, one can do much good and remove evil, particularly preserving

the life and health of men and preventing them from falling ill." For Cabeza de Vaca's description of native shamans of the island, see (f24v–f25r). Oviedo (603b) says the men did not begin curing until they reached groups beyond the Avavares more than six years later.



a. suscedió] Z: succçedio

b. un] Z: una

después de curado no sólo le dan todo lo que poseen, mas entre sus parientes buscan cosas para darle. Lo que el médico haze es dalle unas sajas adonde tiene el dolor y chúpanles al derredor dellas. Dan cauterios de fuego que es cosa entre ellos tenuta por muy provechosa, y yo lo he experimentado y me suscedió<sup>a</sup> bien dello. Y después desto soplan aquel lugar que les duele, y con esto creen ellos que se les quita el mal. La manera con que nosotros curamos era santiguándolos y soplarlos, y rezar un Pater Noster y un<sup>b</sup> Ave María, y rogar lo mejor que podíamos a Dios nuestro Señor que les diesse salud y espirasse en ellos que nos hiziessen algún buen tratamiento. Quiso Dios nuestro Señor y su misericordia que todos aquellos por quien suplicamos luego que los santiguamos dezían a los otros que estaban sanos y buenos, y por este respecto nos hazían buen tratamiento, y dexavan ellos de comer por dárnoslo a nosotros, y nos davan cueros y otras cosillas. Fue tan estremada la hambre que allí se passó que muchas vezes estuve tres días sin comer ninguna cosa, y ellos también lo estaban, y pareçíame ser cosa imposible durar la vida, aunque en otras mayores hambres y necessidades me vi después, como adelante diré.

Los indios que tenían a Alonso del Castillo y Andrés Dorantes y a los demás que avían quedado vivos, como eran de otra lengua y de otra parentela, se passaron a otra parte de la tierra firme a

after being cured they not only give him everything they possess, but they also seek things to give him from among their relatives. What the physician does is to make some incisions where the sick person has pain, and then sucks all around them. They perform cauterizations with fire, which is a thing among them considered to be very effective, and I have tried it and it turned out well for me. And after this, they blow upon the area that hurts, and with this they believe that they have removed the malady. The manner in which we performed cures was by making the sign of the cross over them and blowing on them, and praying a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria, and as best we could, beseeching our Lord God that he grant them health and move them to treat us well. Our Lord God in his mercy willed that all those on whose behalf we made supplication, after we had made the sign of the cross over them, said to the others that they were restored and healthy, and on account of this they treated us well, and refrained from eating in order to give their food to us, and they gave us skins and other things. The hunger that we suffered there was so extreme that many times I went three days without eating anything, and they also suffered the same, and it seemed impossible to me to remain alive, although many times afterward, I found myself in even greater hunger and necessity, as I will recount later.

The Indians who held Alonso del Castillo and Andrés Dorantes and the others who had remained alive, since they spoke another language and were of a different lineage, crossed to a different part of the mainland

a. estará] V: estava

comer ostiones, y allí estuvieron hasta el primero día del mes de abril, y luego bolvieron a la isla, que estará<sup>a</sup> de allí hasta dos leguas por lo más ancho del agua, y la isla tiene media legua de través y cinco en largo. Toda la gente desta tierra anda desnuda. Solas las mugeres traen de sus cuerpos algo cubierto con una lana que en los [V:f22r] árboles se cría. Las moças se cubren con unos cueros de venados. Es gente muy partida de lo que tienen unos con otros. No ay entre ellos señor. Todos los que son de un linaje andan juntos. Habitan en ella dos maneras de lenguas: a los unos llaman de Capoques y a los otros de Han. Tienen por costumbre, quando se conosçen y de tiempo a tiempo se veen, primero que se hablen estar media hora llorando, y acabado esto, aquel que es visitado se levanta primero y da al otro todo quanto posee, y el otro lo rescibe. Y de aí a un poco se va con ello, y aun algunas vezes después de rescebido se van sin que se<sup>b</sup> hablen palabra. Otras estrañas costumbres tienen, mas yo he contado las más principales y más señaladas por passar adelante y contar lo que más nos succedió.

b. se] V: om.

c. ] Z: om. V: Capítulo diez y seis: Cómo se partieron los christianos de la isla de Malhado.

<sup>c</sup>Después que Dorantes y Castillo bolvieron a la isla, recogieron consigo todos los christianos que estavan algo esparzidos, y halláronse por todos quatorze. Yo, como he dicho, estava en la otra parte en tierra firme donde mis indios me avían llevado y donde me avía dado tan gran enfermedad que ya que alguna otra cosa me diera esperança de<sup>d</sup> vida, aquélla bastava para del todo quitármela. Y como los

d. esperança de] Z: en esperança

to eat oysters, and they remained there until the first day of the month of April,<sup>1</sup> and afterward they returned to the island, which is probably about two leagues from there at the point where the water is the widest, and the island is a half league wide and five long. All the people of this land go about naked. Only the women cover part of their bodies with a type of fiber that grows on trees. The young women cover themselves with deerskins. They are people who freely share what they have with one another. There is no lord among them. All who are of a single lineage band together. On the island live people of two different languages: some are called of Capoques, and the others, of Han. They have as a custom that, when they know one another and meet from time to time, before they speak they weep for half an hour, and when this is done, the one who receives the visit rises first and gives to the other everything he possesses, and the other receives it. And a little while later he goes away with it, and it even happens sometimes that after receiving the goods, they part without speaking a single word. They have other strange customs, but I have told the most important and most notable ones so that I may go on and tell what else happened to us.

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter sixteen:  
How the Christians departed  
from the island of Malhado.

After Dorantes and Castillo returned to the island, they gathered together all the Christians who were somewhat dispersed, and found them to be fourteen in number.<sup>2</sup> As I have said, I was on the other side, on the mainland, where my Indians had taken me and where a great sickness had befallen me, such that if any other thing were to give me hope of survival, that illness alone sufficed to deprive me of it altogether. And when the

1. 1529.

2. Including themselves, since they left two men on Malhado when they and ten other men departed from the island. See (f24r, f27r).

a. fueron] V: *om.*

christianos esto supieron, dieron a un indio la manta de martas que del caçique avíamos tomado, como arriba diximos, porque los passasse donde yo estava para verme. Y assí vinieron doze porque los dos quedaron tan flacos que no se atrevieron a traerlos consigo. Los nombres de los que entonçes vinieron son: Alonso del Castillo, Andrés Dorantes, y Diego Dorantes, Valdeviesso, Estrada, Tostado, Chaves, Gutiérrez, Esturiano clérigo, Diego de Huelva, Estevanico el negro, [y] Benítez. E como fueron venidos a [V:f22v] tierra firme, hallaron otro que era de los nuestros que se llamava Francisco de León. Y todos treze fueron<sup>a</sup> por luengo de costa. Y luego que fueron passados, los indios que me tenían me avisaron dello y como quedavan en la isla Jerónimo de Alaniz y Lope de Oviedo. Mi enfermedad estorvó que no les pude seguir ni los vi. Yo huve de quedar con estos mismos indios de la isla más de un año, y por el mucho trabajo que me davan y mal tratamiento que me hazían, determiné de huir dellos e irme a los que moran en los montes y tierra firme que se llaman los de Charruco, porque yo no podía sufrir la vida que con estos otros tenía; porque entre otros trabajos muchos, avía de sacar las raíces para comer de baxo del agua y entre las cañas donde estavan metidas en la tierra. Y desto traía yo los dedos tan gastados que una paja que me tocasse me hazía sangre dellos, y las cañas me rompían por muchas partes porque muchas dellas estavan quebradas y avía de entrar por medio dellas con la ropa que he dicho que traía. E por esto yo puse en

Christians found this out, they gave to an Indian the cloak of sable skins that we had taken from the cacique,<sup>1</sup> as we mentioned above, so that he would cross them over to where I was to see me. And thus twelve of them came, because two had become so weakened that they did not dare to bring them with them. The names of those who came over at that time are: Alonso del Castillo, Andrés Dorantes, and Diego Dorantes, Valdivieso,<sup>2</sup> Estrada, Tostado, Chaves, Gutiérrez, the Asturian cleric,<sup>3</sup> Diego de Huelva, the black man<sup>4</sup> Estevanico, [and] Benítez. And having arrived on the mainland, they found another one of our men named Francisco de León. And all thirteen went along the coast.<sup>5</sup> And after they had crossed, the Indians who held me informed me of it, and of how Jerónimo de Alaniz<sup>6</sup> and Lope de Oviedo<sup>7</sup> had remained on the island. My sickness prevented me from following them, nor did I see them. I had to remain with these same Indians from the island for more than a year,<sup>8</sup> and because of the great labors they forced me to perform and the bad treatment they gave me, I resolved to flee from them and go to those who live in the forests and on the mainland, who are called those of Charruco, because I was unable to endure the life that I had with these others; because among many other tasks, I had to dig the roots to eat out from under the water and among the rushes where they grew in the ground. And because of this, my fingers were so worn that when a reed touched them it caused them to bleed, and the reeds cut me in many places because many of them were broken, and I had to enter into the thick of them with the clothes I have said I was wearing.<sup>9</sup> And because of this, I set to the

1. See (f17v). Oviedo (593a) says that the Christians paid with “certain things” (*ciertas cosas*).

2. Pedro de Valdivieso. Both Diego Dorantes and Valdivieso were cousins of Andrés Dorantes (Oviedo 598b).

3. *clérigo*. “One who receives holy orders” (DRAE 311a), impossible to identify more specifically, possibly one of the Franciscan friars on the expedition.

4. *el negro*. Cabeza de Vaca (f67r) will identify Estevanico as an Arabic-speaking native of Azemmour. Cabeza de Vaca and Oviedo (610a) confirm that Estevanico was a Christian. In 1526 a royal decree sought to control the number of *negros*

*ladinos* (acculturated, Spanish-speaking black Africans) brought to the Indies (see f18r) by requiring their owners to obtain special permission to take them, as Estevanico’s master, Andrés Dorantes, may have had to do.

5. The group departed from the region of Malhado in the spring of 1529.

6. The notary (f7r).

7. The same one Cabeza de Vaca had ordered to climb a tree and survey the land when his men arrived at Malhado (f20v).

8. Evidently until sometime in 1530.

9. Cabeza de Vaca was “naked as the day he was born” (f21v,

f22r; see also f28r, f36v, f39v, f40r, f58v).

a. tienen] V: traen

b. o] Z: y

c. cortavan] V: cortan

d. dentro] V: adentro

obra de passarme a los otros y con ellos me succedió algo mejor. Y porque yo me hize mercader, procuré de usar el officio lo mejor que supe. Y por esto ellos me davan de comer y me hazían buen tratamiento, y rogávanme que me fuesse de unas partes a otras por cosas que ellos avían menester, porque por razón de la guerra que contino tienen<sup>a</sup> la tierra no se anda ni se contrata tanto. E ya con mis tratos y mercaderías entrava la tierra adentro todo lo que quería, y por luengo de costa me alargava quarenta o<sup>b</sup> cinquenta leguas. Lo principal de mi trato era pedaços de caracoles de la mar y coraçones dellos; y conchas con que ellos cortavan<sup>c</sup> una fruta que es como frisoles con que se curan y hazen sus bailes y fiestas (y ésta es la cosa de mayor presçio que entre ellos ay); y cuentas de la mar y otras cosas. Assí esto era lo que yo llevaba la tierra dentro.<sup>d</sup> E en cambio y trueco dello traía cueros y almagra con que ellos se untan y tiñen las caras y cabellos, pedernales para puntas de flechas, engrudo y cañas duras para [V:f23r] hazerlas, y unas borlas que se hazen de pelos de venados que las tiñen y paran coloradas. Y este offiçio me estava a mí bien, porque andando en él, tenía libertad para ir donde quería, y no era obligado a cosa alguna y no era esclavo, y dondequiera que iva me hazían buen tratamiento y me davan de comer por respeto de mis mercaderías, y lo más principal porque andando en ello, yo buscava por dónde me avía de ir adelante. Y entre ellos era muy conosciado; holgavan mucho quando me vían y les traía lo que avían menester.

task of going over to the others, and with them things were somewhat better for me. And because I became a merchant, I tried to exercise the vocation as best I knew how. And because of this they gave me food to eat and treated me well, and they importuned me to go from one place to another to obtain the things they needed, because on account of the continual warfare in the land, there is little traffic or communication among them. And with my dealings and wares I entered inland as far as I desired, and I went along the coast for forty or fifty leagues. The mainstay of my trade was pieces of snail shell and the hearts of them; and conch shells with which they cut a fruit that is like frijoles, with which they perform cures and do their dances and make celebrations (and this is the thing of greatest value that there is among them); and beads of the sea<sup>1</sup> and other things. Thus, all this is what I carried inland. And in exchange and as barter for it, I brought forth hides and red ochre with which they smear themselves and dye their faces and hair, flints to make the points of arrows, paste, and stiff canes to make them, and some tassels made from deer hair which they dye red. And this occupation served me well, because practicing it, I had the freedom to go wherever I wanted, and I was not constrained in any way nor enslaved, and wherever I went they treated me well and gave me food out of want for my wares, and most importantly because doing that, I was able to seek out the way by which I would go forward.<sup>2</sup> And among them I was very well known; when they saw me and I brought them the things they needed, they were greatly pleased.

1. *cuentas de la mar*. Probably pearls, since Cabeza de Vaca (f25v) observed that the Indians of the region around Galveston Bay consumed oysters and dwelt upon oyster-shell middens.

2. *adelante*. Like those who had departed from Malhado before him, Cabeza de Vaca's intention was to travel along the coast in the direction of the Río Pánuco in search of the Spanish outpost of Santisteban del Puerto located near the river's mouth (f23r).



Y los que no me conoçían me procuravan y desseavan ver por mi fama. Los trabajos que en esto passé sería largo contarlos, assí de peligros y hambres como de tempestades y fríos, que muchos dellos me tomaron en el campo y solo, donde por gran misericordia de Dios nuestro Señor escapé. Y por esta causa yo no tratava el offiçio en invierno, por ser tiempo que ellos mismos, en sus choças y ranchos metidos, no podían valerse ni ampararse. Fueron casi seis años el tiempo que yo estuve en esta tierra solo entre ellos y desnudo como todos andavan. La razón porque tanto me detuve fue por llevar conmigo un christiano, que estava en la isla, llamado Lope de Oviedo. El otro compañero, [Jerónimo] de Alaniz, que con él avía quedado quando Alonso del Castillo y Andrés Dorantes con todos los otros se fueron, murió luego. Y por sacarlo de allí, yo passava a la isla cada año y le rogava que nos fuésemos a la mejor manera que pudiésemos en busca de christianos. Y cada año me detenía diziendo que el otro siguiente nos iríamos. En fin al cabo lo saqué. Y le pasé el ancón y quatro ríos que ay por la costa, porque él no sabía nadar. Y así fuimos con algunos indios adelante hasta que llegamos a un ancón que tiene una legua de través y es por todas partes hondo, y por lo que dél nos pareció y vimos, es el que llaman del Spíritu Sancto. Y de la otra parte dél vimos unos indios que vinieron a ver los nuestros, y nos dixerón como más adelante avía tres hombres como nosotros, y nos dixerón los nombres dellos. Y preguntándoles por los demás, [V:f23v] nos respondieron que todos eran muertos de frío y de hambre, y que aquellos indios de adelante ellos mismos por su passatiempo avían muerto a Diego Dorantes y a Valdevieso y a Diego de

And those who did not know me desired and endeavored to see me because of my renown. It would take long to tell the hardships that I suffered in this, not to mention the great dangers and hunger, as well as storms and cold, many of which took me in the countryside and alone, from which I escaped thanks to the boundless mercy of God our Lord. And for this reason, I did not ply my trade in winter, on account of it being the time when even they, staying inside their huts and shelters, could neither support nor protect themselves. The time that I spent in this land, alone among them and as naked as they, was nearly six years.<sup>1</sup> The reason I stayed so long was to take with me a Christian who was on the island, named Lope de Oviedo. His companion, [Jerónimo] de Alaniz, who had stayed with him when Alonso del Castillo and Andrés Dorantes left with all the others, had since died.<sup>2</sup> And in order to take him out of there, I crossed over to the island every year and begged that we go, in the best manner that we could, in search of Christians. And every year he kept me from going, saying that we would go the following year. In the end I took him. And I carried him across the inlet and four rivers that are along the coast, because he did not know how to swim.<sup>3</sup> And thus we went forward with some Indians<sup>4</sup> until we arrived at an inlet that is a league wide and deep throughout, and because of what it seemed to us and we saw, it is the one they call Espiritu Santo.<sup>5</sup> And from the other side of it we saw some Indians<sup>6</sup> who were coming to see ours,<sup>7</sup> and they told us that farther ahead there were three men like us, and they told us their names.<sup>8</sup> And asking them about the rest of them, they replied to us that they had all died of cold and hunger, and that those Indians ahead<sup>9</sup> had, for their own amusement, killed Diego Dorantes and Valdivieso and Diego de

1. Cabeza de Vaca probably dwelt alone among the Indians in the region of Malhado from the winter of 1528 until the time when he fled from them in the spring of 1533, that is, for a period of under four and a half years. Oviedo (598b) said that it had been five years since the other Christians had left Cabeza de Vaca at Malhado, although, in fact, it had been only four, from the spring of 1529 to the spring of 1533.

2. Alaniz's death would have occurred sometime between the springs of 1529 and 1533.

3. Cabeza de Vaca and Lope de Oviedo departed from

Malhado in the spring of 1533, traveling down the coast from Galveston Bay to Matagorda Bay. Ponton and McFarland identified the four rivers as Oyster Creek, the Brazos River, the San Bernard River, and Caney Creek, the main channel of the Colorado River in the sixteenth century.

4. Deaguanes (f28v).

5. Both Cabeza de Vaca and the thirteen-man party that went down the coast before him associated the large inlet (*ancón*) with the name Espiritu Santo (Oviedo 592b, 593b, 594b), pertaining to a river and bay between the Río de

las Palmas and the Florida Cape, the identity of which has never been clearly established. Although the name has often been associated with the Mississippi River, the Narváez expeditionaries seem to have applied it to Matagorda Bay. Espiritu Santo was believed in the 1520s to lie two hundred leagues toward the Florida Peninsula from the mouth of the Río Pánuco.

6. Quevenes.

7. Deaguanes.

8. Alonso del Castillo, Andrés Dorantes, and Estevanico, who in the spring of 1533 were the only survivors of the thirteen-

man party that had departed from the Galveston Bay area in the spring of 1529.

9. It is difficult to determine which group of Indians was responsible for the deaths of the Spaniards. The Guaycones were the next Indians beyond the Quevenes, but from the various references in both Cabeza de Vaca's account and in Oviedo, it seems possible that other Indians farther down the coast or even the Quevenes themselves might have killed the men.

a. muchas] Z: mnchas

b. como] Z: comos

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo diez y siete: Cómo vinieron los indios y truxeron a Andrés Dorantes y a Castillo y a Estevanico.

Huelva porque se avían passado de una casa a otra, y que los otros indios sus vezinos, con quien agora estava el capitán Dorantes, por razón de un sueño que avían soñado avían muerto a Esquivel y a Méndez. Preguntámosles qué tales estavan los vivos. Dixéronnos que muy mal tratados porque los mochachos y otros indios, que entre ellos son muy holgazanes y de maltrato, les davan muchas<sup>a</sup> coçes y bofetones y palos, y que ésta era la vida que con ellos tenían. Quesímosnos informar de la tierra adelante y de los mantenimientos que en ella avía. Respondieron que era muy pobre de gente, y que en ella no avía qué comer, y que morían de frío porque no tenían cueros ni con qué cobrirse. Dixéronnos también si queríamos ver aquellos tres christianos, que de aí a dos días los indios que los tenían vernían a comer nuezes una legua de allí a la vera de aquel río. Y por que viésemos que lo que nos avían dicho del mal tratamiento de los otros era verdad, estando con ellos, dieron al compañero mío de bofetones y palos, y yo no quedé sin mi parte, y de muchos pellazos de lodo que nos tiravan, y nos ponían cada día las flechas al coraçon diziendo que nos querían matar como<sup>b</sup> a los otros nuestros compañeros. Y temiendo esto, Lope de Oviedo, mi compañero, dixo que quería bolverse con unas mugeres de aquellos indios con quien avíamos passado el ancón que quedavan algo atrás. Yo porfié mucho con él que no lo hiziesse, y passé muchas cosas, y por ninguna vía lo pude detener. Y assí se bolvió y yo quedé solo con aquellos indios, los quales se llamavan Quevenes, y los otros, con quien él se fue, llaman Deaguanes. <sup>c</sup>[V:f24r] Y

Huelva, merely because they had passed from one house to another,<sup>1</sup> and that the neighboring Indians,<sup>2</sup> with whom Captain Dorantes now was, because of a dream they had dreamed, had killed Esquivel<sup>3</sup> and Méndez.<sup>4</sup> We asked them about the condition of the ones who were alive. They told us that they were very ill treated, because the boys and other Indians, who are among them very idle and cruel, kicked and slapped and cudged them, and that this was the life they had among them. We tried to inform ourselves about the land that lay ahead and the provisions that were in it. They responded that it was very poorly populated, and that in it there was nothing to eat, and that the people died of cold because they had neither skins nor any other thing with which to cover themselves. They told us also that if we wanted to see those three Christians, that within two days the Indians who held them<sup>5</sup> would come to eat nuts<sup>6</sup> a league from there on the bank of that river.<sup>7</sup> And in order that we might see that what they had told us about the bad treatment of the others was true, while we were with them they gave my companion slaps and blows, and I did not lack my share, and they threw mud balls at us, and each day placed arrows at our hearts, saying that they wanted to kill us as they had killed our other companions. And fearing this, Lope de Oviedo, my companion, said that he wanted to go back with some women of those Indians with whom we had crossed the inlet, and who had remained a short distance back. I entreated him repeatedly not to do it, and I pointed out many things, but I was unable to detain him by any means. And thus he returned and I remained alone with those Indians, who were called Quevenes, and the others, with whom he went, are called Deaguanes.<sup>8</sup> ‘And

c.] Z: *om.* V: Chapter seventeen: How the Indians came forth and brought with them Andrés Dorantes and Castillo and Estevanico.

1. The deaths of these three men, as well as the fate of the entire group of thirteen men who departed from the region of Malhado in the spring of 1529 until Cabeza de Vaca joined the three survivors in the spring of 1533, are recounted in much fuller detail in Andrés Dorantes's testimony for the Joint Report, which Oviedo (593a–95a, 598b–601b) paraphrased in his account.

2. The Mariames, coastal mainland dwellers to whom some of the Spaniards (Méndez, Esquivel, Andrés Dorantes, and possibly also Diego Dorantes) fled to escape

the bad treatment they received from the island-dwelling Indians.

3. Esquivel had come on the raft of the comptroller and the commissary (f30r–f31r). This early information about Esquivel was evidently the first Cabeza de Vaca received about the fate of any of those who had gone on the rafts of the comptroller/commissary and Narváez/Pantoja.

4. One of the four Narváez expeditionaries sent from Malhado in search of Pánuco in November 1528 (f23v).

5. Dorantes was being held by

the Mariames, Castillo and Estevanico by the Yguases.

6. Wild pecans, likened by Cabeza de Vaca (f29r) to the “nuts of Galicia.”

7. The confluence of the San Antonio and Guadalupe Rivers.

8. Also identified as “de Aguanes” (f42v), of which “Deaguanes” seems to be a contraction, the name signifying “from Aguanes.”

- a. Y [Z:f29r] de a[í] V: Desde de añ<sup>a</sup> a dos días que Lope de Oviedo se avía ido, los indios que tenían a Alonso del Castillo y Andrés Dorantes vinieron al mesmo lugar que nos avían dicho, a comer de aquellas nuezes de que se mantienen moliendo unos granillos con ellas dos meses del año sin comer otra cosa. Y aun esto no lo tienen todos<sup>b</sup> los años porque acuden uno y otro no. Son del tamaño de las de Galizia, y los árboles son muy grandes y ay gran número dellos. Un indio me avisó como los christianos eran llegados y que si yo quería verlos me hurtasse y huyesse a un canto de un monte que él me señaló, porque él y otros parientes suyos avían de venir a ver aquellos indios, y que me llevarían consigo adonde los christianos estaban. Yo me confié dellos y determiné de hazerlo porque tenían otra lengua distinta de la de mis indios. Y puesto por obra, otro día fueron y me hallaron en el lugar que estava señalado, y así me llevaron consigo. Ya que llegué cerca de donde tenían su aposento, Andrés Dorantes salió a ver quién era porque los indios le avían también dicho como venía un christiano. Y quando me vio fue muy espantado porque avía muchos días que me tenían por muerto, y los indios assí lo avían dicho. Dimos muchas gracias a Dios de vernos juntos, y este día fue uno de los de mayor plazer que en nuestros días avemos tenido. Y llegado donde Castillo estava, me preguntaron que dónde iva. Yo le dixé que mi propósito era de passar a tierra de christianos y que en este rastro y busca iva. Andrés Dorantes respondió que muchos días avía que él rogava a
- b. todos] Z: todo

two days after Lope de Oviedo had gone, the Indians<sup>1</sup> who held Alonso del Castillo and Andrés Dorantes came to the same place they had told us about to eat of those nuts, on which they sustain themselves by grinding some small granules with them for two months of the year without eating any other thing. And even this they do not have every year, because the trees bear fruit one year but not the next. They are the size of those of Galicia, and the trees are very large and there is a great number of them. An Indian informed me that the Christians had arrived, and that if I wanted to see them I should steal away and flee to the edge of a woods that he indicated to me, because he and other relatives of his had to go to see those Indians, and they would take me with them to where the Christians were. I trusted them and decided to do it, because they had a language different from that of my Indians.<sup>2</sup> And put into effect, the next day they went, and found me in the place that was indicated, and thus they took me with them. When I arrived near to where they had their dwelling, Andrés Dorantes came out to see who it was, because the Indians had also told him that a Christian was coming. And when he saw me, he was greatly astonished, because it had been many days<sup>3</sup> that they had taken me for dead, and so the Indians had told him. We gave many thanks to God upon finding ourselves reunited, and this day was one of the days of greatest pleasure that we have had in our lives. And arriving to where Castillo was, they asked me what my intentions were. I told him that my purpose was to go to the land of Christians and that on this path and pursuit I was embarked. Andrés Dorantes responded that it had been many days since he had beseeched

1. Yguases and Mariames.

2. Quevenes.

3. Cabeza de Vaca had been separated from Dorantes and the others since the spring of 1529, that is, for a period of about four years (f28r).

a. y] V: y a

b. determinavan] Z: determinauu

c. y] V: om.

d. entender] Z: ender

e. estava] V: estava, el qual era tuerto, y su muger y un hijo que tenía y otro que estava en su compañía, de manera que todos eran tuertos

f. iva] Z: ina

Castillo y<sup>a</sup> Estevanico que se fuessen adelante, y que no lo osavan hazer porque no sabían nadar, y que temían mucho los ríos y ancones por donde avían de passar, que en aquella tierra ay muchos. Y pues Dios nuestro Señor avía sido servido de guardarme entre tantos trabajos y enfermedades, y al cabo traerme en su compañía, que ellos determinavan<sup>b</sup> de huir, y<sup>c</sup> que yo los passaría de los ríos y ancones [V:f24v] que topássemos. E avisáronme que en ninguna manera diesse a entender<sup>d</sup> a los indios ni conosçiesen de mí que yo quería passar adelante, porque luego me matarían, y que para esto era menester que yo me detuviesse con ellos seis meses, que era tiempo en que aquellos indios ivan a otra tierra a comer tunas (Ésta es una fruta que es del tamaño de huevos y son bermejas y negras y de muy buen gusto. Cómenlas tres meses del año, en los quales no comen otra cosa alguna.), porque al tiempo que ellos las cogían, venían a ellos otros indios de adelante que traían arcos para contratar y cambiar con ellos, y que quando aquéllos se bolviessen, nos huiríamos de los nuestros y nos bolveríamos con ellos. Con este concierto yo quedé allí y me dieron por esclavo a un indio con quien Dorantes estava.<sup>e</sup> Éstos se llaman Marianes, y Castillo estava con otros sus vezinos, llamados Yguases. Y estando aquí, ellos me contaron que después que salieron de la isla de Malhado, en la costa de la mar hallaron la barca en que iva<sup>f</sup> el contador y los frailes al través, y que yendo passando aquellos ríos, que son quatro muy grandes y de muchas corrientes, les

Castillo and Estevanico to go forward, and that they did not dare to do it because they did not know how to swim, and that they greatly feared the rivers and inlets they had to cross, which in that land are many. And since God our Lord had been served by preserving me through so many hardships and sicknesses and finally by bringing me to their company, they decided to flee, I carrying them across the rivers and inlets that we might encounter. And they advised me that by no means was I to tell the Indians nor give them reason to suspect that I wanted to go on ahead, because then they would kill me, and that for this purpose it was necessary that I remain with them for six months,<sup>1</sup> which was the time in which those Indians would go to another land to eat prickly pears<sup>2</sup> (this is a fruit the size of an egg, and they are vermilion and black and of very good flavor; they eat them three months out of the year,<sup>3</sup> during which time they eat nothing else), because at the time that they harvested them, other Indians from farther on<sup>4</sup> would come to them, bringing bows to trade and exchange with them, and that when they returned, we would flee from our Indians and return with them.<sup>5</sup> With this plan I remained there, and they gave me as a slave to an Indian with whom Dorantes was staying.<sup>e</sup> These Indians are called Marianes, and Castillo was with others, their neighbors, called Yguases. And being there, they told me<sup>6</sup> that after they left the island of Malhado, on the seacoast they found the raft<sup>7</sup> in which the comptroller and the friars had capsized, and that going across those rivers, which are four very large ones and of many currents,<sup>8</sup>

e. staying] V: staying, who was blind in one eye, as was his wife and a son that he had as well as another person who was in his company, to the effect that all of them were blind in one eye.

1. From about April until September 1533; Cabeza de Vaca makes two further references to this same six-month period of waiting (f33r, f34r).

2. Tuna, the Taino word for the fruit of certain cactus species. See also (f33r, f34v–f35r).

3. One and a half to two months (Oviedo 601a) or fifty to sixty days (Oviedo 601b).

4. Avavares.

5. Andrés Dorantes, Alonso del Castillo, and Estevanico had unsuccessfully attempted to escape toward Pánuco in this manner the previous year (Oviedo 601b).

6. Here begins Dorantes and Castillo's account of what had happened to the thirteen men

since the spring of 1529, when they left Cabeza de Vaca near Malhado. Oviedo's (593a–95a, 598b–601b) version of the same events, drawn from Andrés Dorantes's testimony, gives an account of the same period but in much greater detail. Dorantes and Castillo's account ends on (f31r).

7. The fate of the third of the five rafts is revealed; it had arrived south of Malhado at the mouth of the San Bernard River in early November 1528.

8. Oyster Creek, the Brazos River, the San Bernard River, and Caney Creek (f28r).



a. llevó] Z: levo	llevó <sup>a</sup> las barcas en que <sup>b</sup> passavan a la mar donde se ahogaron quatro dellos, y que assí fueron adelante hasta que passaron el ancón, y lo passaron con mucho trabajo. Y a quinze leguas adelante hallaron otro, y que quando allí llegaron ya se les avían muerto dos compañeros en sesenta leguas que avían andado, y que todos los que quedavan estavan para lo mismo, y que en todo el camino no avían comido sino cangrejos e yerva pedrera. Y llegados a este último ancón, dezían que hallaron en él indios que estavan <sup>c</sup> comiendo moras, y como vieron a los christianos, se fueron de allí a otro cabo. Y [Dorantes y Castillo me contaron] que estando procurando y buscando manera para passar el ancón, passaron a ellos un indio y un christiano, y que llegado, conosçieron que era Figueroa, uno de los quatro que avíamos embiado adelante en la isla de [V:f25r] Malhado. Y allí [Figueroa] les contó [a Dorantes y Castillo y los otros cinco sobrevivientes de los que desde Malhado habían llegado adonde él estaba] como él y sus compañeros [Fernández, Estudillo y Méndez, quienes habían salido de Malhado en noviembre del año anterior] avían llegado hasta aquel lugar donde se avían muerto dos dellos y un indio, todos tres de frío y de hambre porque avían venido y andado <sup>d</sup> en el más rezió tiempo del mundo, y que a él y a Méndez avían tomado los indios, y que estando con ellos, Méndez avía huído, yendo la vía lo mejor que pudo de Pánuco, y que los indios avían ido tras él [tras Méndez] y que lo avían muerto. Y [Figueroa les contó a Dorantes, Castillo y los otros cinco] que estando él con estos indios, supo dellos como con los Mariames estava un christiano que avía passado de la otra parte, y [que él, Figueroa] lo avía hallado [al cristiano] con los que llamavan Quevenes, y que este christiano era Hernando de Esquivel, natural de Badajoz, el qual venía en compañía del comissario. Y [Figueroa les dijo] que él supo de Esquibel
b. en que] Z: con que le	
c. estavan] Z: estauau	
d. andado] V: estado	

the rafts in which they were traveling carried them out to sea where four of them drowned,<sup>1</sup> and that thus they went onward until they crossed the inlet,<sup>2</sup> and they crossed it with great difficulty. And fifteen leagues ahead they found another,<sup>3</sup> and when they arrived there, two of their companions had already died in the sixty leagues that they had gone, and that all those who remained were in a similar state, and that along the entire route they had not eaten anything except crayfish and kelp.<sup>4</sup> And having arrived at this last inlet, they said that they found in it Indians<sup>5</sup> who were eating blackberries, and since they saw the Christians, they went from there to another cape. And [Dorantes and Castillo told me] that being in the process of finding a way to cross the inlet, an Indian and a Christian crossed over to them, and when he had arrived, they learned that it was Figueroa, one of the four whom we had sent ahead from the island of Malhado.<sup>6</sup> And there he [Figueroa]<sup>7</sup> told them [Dorantes and Castillo and the other five survivors of those who had arrived from Malhado to where he was] how he and his companions [Fernández, Estudillo, and Méndez, who had left from Malhado in November of the preceding year] had arrived to that place, where two of them and an Indian had died, all three from cold and hunger, because they had set out and traveled during the harshest weather ever seen in the world, and that the Indians<sup>8</sup> had taken him and Méndez, and that being with them, Méndez had fled, going along the route toward Pánuco as best he could, and that the Indians had gone after him [Méndez] and that they had killed him.<sup>9</sup> And [Figueroa told Dorantes, Castillo, and the other five] that being with these Indians, he learned from them that with the Mariames there was a Christian who had crossed over from the other side, and [that] he [Figueroa] had found him [the Christian] with the ones who were called Quevenes, and that this Christian was Hernando de Esquivel, a native of Badajoz, who had come in the company of the commissary. And [Figueroa told them] that he had learned from Esquivel

1. Oviedo (593b) mentions only two drownings.

2. Between Matagorda Peninsula and Matagorda Island, referred to by Cabeza de Vaca (f28r) as the inlet (*ancón*) of Espíritu Santo.

3. Between Matagorda and St. Joseph Islands.

4. *yerba pedrera*. Oviedo (593a) describes this as growing plentifully along the coast and notes its use in Spain in making glass.

5. Probably Quevenes.

6. Figueroa had left Malhado in November 1528 (f23v).

7. Here Cabeza de Vaca narrates the information that Dorantes and Castillo gave him, in 1533, about Figueroa's experiences as he had related them to Dorantes, Castillo, and their men in the spring of 1529. Figueroa's account is concluded on (f31r).

8. Quevenes.

9. Although the immediate context suggests that these Indians were Quevenes or other island groups farther down the coast, Cabeza de Vaca (f28v) earlier indicated that Méndez had been killed by the Mariames because of a dream.

el fin en que avían parado el gobernador y contador y los demás. Y [Esquivel] le dixo [a Figueroa] que el contador y los frailes avían echado al través su barca entre los ríos, y viniéndose por luengo de costa, llegó la barca del gobernador con su gente en tierra y él [el gobernador] se fue con su barca hasta que llegaron a aquel ancón grande, y que allí tornó a tomar la gente y la passó del otro cabo, y bolvió por el contador y los frailes y todos los otros. Y [Esquivel] contó como estando desembarcados, el gobernador avía revocado el poder que el contador tenía de lugarteniente suyo, y dio el cargo a un capitán que traía consigo que se dezía Pantoxa, y que el gobernador se quedó en su barca y no quiso aquella noche salir a tierra. Y quedaron con él un maestre y un page que estava malo, y en la barca no tenían agua ni cosa ninguna que comer, y que a medianoche el Norte vino tan rezio que sacó la barca a la mar sin que ninguno la viesse, porque no tenía por resón sino una piedra, y que nunca más supieron dél. Y [Esquivel le dijo a Figueroa] que visto esto, la gente que en tierra quedavan<sup>a</sup> se fueron por luengo de costa, y que como hallaron tanto estorvo de agua, hizieron balsas con mucho trabajo en que passaron de la otra parte, y que yendo adelante, llegaron a una punta de un monte, orilla del agua, y que hallaron indios que, como los vieron venir, metieron sus casas en las<sup>b</sup> canoas y se passaron [V:f25v] de la otra parte a la costa. Y los christianos, viendo el tiempo que era, porque era por el mes de noviembre, pararon en este monte porque hallaron agua y leña y algunos cangrejos y mariscos, donde de frío y de

a. quedavan] V: quedaron

b. las] V: sus

about the end to which the governor and the comptroller and the others had come.<sup>1</sup> And he [Esquivel] told him [Figueroa] that the comptroller and the friars had capsized in their raft between the rivers,<sup>2</sup> and coming down along the coast, the raft of the governor landed on the shore with his men, and he [the governor] went with his raft until they arrived at that large inlet,<sup>3</sup> and that there he again boarded the men<sup>4</sup> and crossed them from the other side, and went back for the comptroller and the friars and all the others. And he [Esquivel] told how being disembarked, the governor had revoked the authority of the comptroller as his lieutenant, and he gave the command to a captain whom he had with him, named Pantoja,<sup>5</sup> and that the governor remained on his raft and refused that night to come on land. And a helmsman and a page<sup>6</sup> who was ill remained with him, and on the raft they had neither water nor anything to eat, and at midnight the north wind blew so strongly that it took the raft out to sea without anyone seeing it, because it had no grapnel<sup>7</sup> except for a rock, and that nothing more was ever heard of it.<sup>8</sup> And [Esquivel told Figueroa] that having seen this, the people who remained on land went down the coast, and that because they found such a great barrier of water,<sup>9</sup> with great difficulty they made small rafts in which they crossed to the other side, and that going ahead, they arrived to a point of a woods at the edge of the water, and that they found Indians<sup>10</sup> who, as they saw them coming, put their houses in their canoes and crossed from the other side to the coast. And the Christians, seeing the weather as it was, because it was the month of November,<sup>11</sup> stopped at this wood, because they found water and firewood and some crayfish and shellfish, where, from cold and from

1. Cabeza de Vaca here tells what he had learned from Dorantes and Castillo in 1533; Dorantes and Castillo had met Figueroa in 1529 and learned from him, on the basis of Esquivel's account to Figueroa earlier that same year, what had happened to Narváez's raft and that of the comptroller and the commissary in the autumn and winter of 1528.

2. Between the Brazos and the San Bernard Rivers (f29v).

3. Espiritu Santo, between Matagorda Peninsula and Matagorda Island (f30r).

4. Oviedo (594a) explicitly states that Narváez had his company disembark and walk along the shore. This is not completely evident here.

5. Pantoja has been mentioned twice before (f3v, f9v). Oviedo does not mention this detail.

6. Oviedo (594b) identifies these two as a pilot named Antón Pérez and his page, Campo.

7. *resón*. A small anchor with four or five flukes or claws.

8. The fourth raft of the five, commanded by the governor and Captain Pantoja; it had been swept out to sea sometime in November 1528.

9. Between Matagorda and St. Joseph Islands.

10. Quevenes or others farther ahead.

11. 1528.

- a. podiéndolo] V: lo pudiendo
- b. campo] Z: canpo
- c. tasajos] Z: tasasajos
- d. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo diez y ocho: De la relación que [Figueroa] dio de Esquivel.
- hambre se començaron, poco a poco, a morir. Allende desto, Pantoxa, que por teniente avía quedado, les hazía mal tractamiento. Y no podiéndolo<sup>a</sup> sufrir, Sotomayor (hermano de Vasco Porcallo, el de la isla de Cuba), que en el armada avía venido por maestre de campo,<sup>b</sup> se rebolió con él y le dio un palo de que Pantoxa quedó muerto, y assí se fueron acabando. Y los que morían los otros los hazían tasajos. Y el último que murió fue Sotomayor y Esquivel lo hizo tasajos,<sup>c</sup> y comiendo dél [de Sotomayor], [Esquivel] se mantuvo hasta primero de março, que un indio de los que allí avían huído vino a ver si eran muertos y llevó a Esquivel consigo. Y estando en poder deste indio él [Esquivel], Figueroa lo habló. Y [Figueroa] supo dél [de Esquivel] todo lo que avemos contado. Y [Figueroa] le rogó [a Esquivel] que se viniessen con él para irse ambos la vía del Pánuco, lo qual Esquivel no quiso hazer, diziendo que él avía sabido de los frailes que Pánuco avía quedado atrás, y assí se quedó allí. Y Figueroa se fue a la costa adonde solía estar.
- <sup>d</sup>Esta cuenta toda dio Figueroa [a Dorantes, Castillo y los otros cinco] por la relación que de Esquivel avía sabido, y assí de mano en mano llegó a mí, por donde se puede ver y saber el fin que toda aquella armada huvo y los particulares casos que a cada uno de los demás aconteçieron. Y [Figueroa] dixo más, que si los christianos algún tiempo andavan por allí, podría ser que viessen a Esquivel, porque sabía que [Esquivel] se avía huído de aquel indio con quien estava a otros que se dezían los Mareames que eran allí vezinos. Y como acabo de dezir, él [Figueroa] y el asturiano se [V:f26r] quisieran ir a otros indios que adelante estavan. Mas

hunger, they began little by little to die. Beyond this, Pantoja, who had remained as lieutenant,<sup>1</sup> treated them very badly. And not being able to endure it, Sotomayor<sup>2</sup> (the brother of Vasco Porcallo, the one from the island of Cuba), who had come on the expedition as camp master, set against him and gave Pantoja such a blow that it killed him, and thus they went on dying. And the flesh of those who died was jerked<sup>3</sup> by the others. And the last one to die was Sotomayor, and Esquivel made jerky of him, and eating of him [of Sotomayor], he [Esquivel] maintained himself until the first of March,<sup>4</sup> when an Indian of those who had fled from there came to see if they were dead, and he took Esquivel with him. And while he [Esquivel] was in the custody of this Indian, Figueroa spoke to him. And he [Figueroa] learned from him [from Esquivel] all that we have told. And he [Figueroa] urged him [Esquivel] to come with him to go together along the route to Pánuco, which Esquivel refused to do, saying that he had learned from the friars that Pánuco lay behind, and thus he remained there. And Figueroa went to the coast where he usually stayed.<sup>5</sup>

d. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter eighteen: Of the account that [Figueroa] gave of Esquivel.

<sup>4</sup>Figueroa gave this entire account [to Dorantes, Castillo, and the other five] on the basis of the report that he had received from Esquivel, and thus it came from hand to hand to me,<sup>6</sup> by which can be seen and known the end that that entire expedition met, and the specific events that befell each one of the rest of them.<sup>7</sup> And he [Figueroa] said in addition, that if the Christians<sup>8</sup> wandered there for a time, that it was possible that they would see Esquivel, because he knew that he [Esquivel] had fled from that Indian with whom he was staying, to others, who were called the Mareames, who lived nearby there. And as I have just said,<sup>9</sup> he [Figueroa] and the Asturian attempted to go to other Indians who were farther ahead. But

1. Narváez's lieutenant governor. See (f30v).

2. See (f3v). As camp master (*maestre de campo*), Sotomayor would have been second-in-command of the military troops on the expedition, responsible for tactics and supply (Hemming 515).

3. *tassajar*. To jerk or preserve meat in long, sun-dried strips.

4. 1529.

5. Between November 1528 and March 1529 the Franciscan friars who had come on the expedition apparently became convinced that they had passed

their destination of Pánuco and landed to the south of it. Thus, Esquivel and Figueroa had opposing views regarding the direction of travel along the coast necessary to reach Santisteban del Puerto on the Río Pánuco.

6. That is, from Esquivel, to Figueroa, to Dorantes and Castillo, to Cabeza de Vaca.

7. Cabeza de Vaca here resumes Figueroa's account to Dorantes and Castillo after this interrupting sentence commenting on the various accounts given thus far and the manner in which he received

them (f21v, f23v, f29v, f30v). The fate of the fifth raft, commanded by Téllez and Peñalosa, has not yet been revealed.

8. The survivors of Dorantes and Castillo's thirteen-man party that left Malhado in 1529 who encountered Figueroa along the coast.

9. At this point, Cabeza de Vaca ceases to narrate in the third person his paraphrase of the various accounts Dorantes and Castillo had related to him and begins to relate the experiences of these men from the spring of 1529 until he joined them

in the spring of 1533 in the first person as though he himself had witnessed them. The account Dorantes and Castillo gave Cabeza de Vaca in 1533 is in fact the source for all this information about events preceding Cabeza de Vaca's reunion with Dorantes, Castillo, and Estevanico in 1533. Oviedo (594b–95a, 598a–601b) replaces the fragmentary details about this period that Cabeza de Vaca did not witness with the account of considerably greater detail and clarity that he wrote from Andrés Dorantes's Joint Report testimony.

- a. los] V: lo
- b. una] Z: uno
- c. fin] Z: fin fin V: fin fin
- d. otros] V: om.
- e. al] V: a
- f. tomarían] V: tomarían por esclavos
- como los indios que los<sup>a</sup> tenían lo sintieron, salieron a ellos y diéronles muchos palos y desnudaron al esturiano y passáronle un braço con una<sup>b</sup> flecha. Y en fin<sup>c</sup> se escaparon huyendo. Y los otros<sup>d</sup> christianos se quedaron con aquellos indios y acabaron con ellos que los tomassen por esclavos, aunque estando serviéndoles fueron tan mal tratados dellos como nunca esclavos ni hombres de ninguna suerte lo fueron, porque de seis que eran, no contentos con darles muchas bofetadas y apalearlos y pelarles las barvas por su passatiempo, por sólo passar de una casa a otra mataron tres, que son los que arriba dixen: Diego Dorantes, y Valdeviesso, y Diego de Huelva. Y los otros tres que quedavan esperavan parar en esto mismo. Y por no sufrir esta vida, Andrés Dorantes se huyó y se passó a los Mareames, que eran aquéllos adonde Esquibel avía parado, y ellos le contaron como avían tenido allí al<sup>e</sup> Esquibel, y como estando allí se quiso huir porque una muger avía soñado que le avía de matar un hijo, y los indios fueron tras él y lo mataron. Y mostraron a Andrés Dorantes su espada y sus cuentas y libro y otras cosas que tenía. Esto hazen éstos por una costumbre que tienen, y es, que matan sus mismos hijos por sueños, y a las hijas en nasciendo las dexan comer a perros, y las echan por aí. La razón porque ellos lo hazen es, según ellos dizen, porque todos los de la tierra son sus enemigos y con ellos tienen continua guerra, y que si acaso casassen sus hijas, multiplicarían tanto sus enemigos que los sujetarían y tomarían,<sup>f</sup> y por esta causa querían más

d. other] V: *om.*

since the Indians<sup>1</sup> who held them found out about it, they confronted them and gave them many blows and stripped the Asturian and passed an arrow through his arm. And in the end they escaped, fleeing.<sup>2</sup> And the other<sup>d</sup> Christians remained with those Indians, who intimidated them in order to more easily make them their slaves,<sup>3</sup> although being in their service they were treated worse than slaves or men of any fate had ever been, because of the six of them, not content to slap them and strike them and pull out their beards for their amusement, for the mere reason of going from one house to another they killed three, who are those I mentioned above: Diego Dorantes, and Valdivieso, and Diego de Huelva.<sup>4</sup> And the other three who remained expected to meet the same end. And to not suffer this life, Andrés Dorantes fled and went over to the Mareames, who were those to whom Esquivel had gone, and they told him how they had held Esquivel there, and how, upon being there, he had tried to flee because a woman had dreamed that he was to kill a son of hers, and the Indians went after him and killed him.<sup>5</sup> And they showed Andrés Dorantes his sword and his beads and book<sup>6</sup> and other things that he had. These people do this because of a custom they have, and it is, that they kill their own children because of dreams, and when female children are born, they allow dogs to eat them, and cast them away from there. The reason they do this, according to what they say, is that all the people of the land are their enemies, and with them they have continual war, and that if by chance they should marry off their daughters, their enemies would multiply so much that they would be captured and enslaved by them, and for this reason they preferred rather

1. Quevenes or other Indians farther down the coast.

2. Oviedo (599a) recounts how Pedro de Valdivieso had seen the clothes, breviary, and journal of the Asturian in a native village through which the Asturian and Figueroa had passed, probably on the northern end of Padre Island, sometime in late 1529. See (f39v).

3. Oviedo (599a) comments that the men were taken as slaves and treated more cruelly than even a Moorish slave master would do, because apart from going naked and barefoot along that coast (which “burned like fire in the

summer”), they were forced to bring firewood and water and everything else that the Indians needed and to pull the canoes about in the heat.

4. The deaths of these three were mentioned earlier (f28r–v).

5. This incident was recounted earlier (f28v).

6. Evidently a rosary and a breviary or Bible.



a. su pariente . . . enemigo] V:  
sus parientes ni a sus enemigos

b. Yaguazes] V: Yguazes

c. largo] V: largo. Matan sus  
hijos y mercan los agenos.  
No dura el casamiento más  
de quanto están contentos,  
y con una higa deshazen el  
casamiento

d. dexávamos] V: dexamos

e. como ellos] V: *om.*

matallas, que no que dellas mismas nasciesse quien fuese su enemigo. Nosotros les diximos que porqué no las casavan con ellos mismos y también entre ellos. Dixeron que era cosa fea casarlas con sus parientes y que era muy mejor matarlas que darlas a su pariente ni a su enemigo.<sup>a</sup> Y esta costumbre usan éstos y otros sus vezinos que se llaman los Yaguazes<sup>b</sup> solamente sin que ningunos otros de la tierra la guarden. Y quando éstos se an de casar, [V:f26v] compran las mugeres a sus enemigos, y el preçio que cada uno da por la suya es un arco, el mejor que puede aver, con dos flechas, y si acaso no tiene arco, una red hasta una braça en ancho y otra en largo.<sup>c</sup> (Dorantes estuvo con éstos, y desde a pocos días se huyó. Castillo y Estevanico se vinieron dentro a la tierra firme a los Yeguazes.) Toda esta gente son flecheros y bien dispuestos aunque no tan grandes como los que atrás dexávamos,<sup>d</sup> y traen la teta y el labrio horadados como ellos.<sup>e</sup> Su mantenimiento principalmente es raíces de dos o tres maneras, y búscanlas por toda la tierra; son muy malas y hinchan los hombres que las comen. Tardan dos días en assarse, y muchas dellas son muy amargas, y con todo esto se sacan con mucho trabajo. Es tanta la hambre que aquellas gentes tienen que no se pueden passar sin ellas, y andan dos o tres leguas buscándolas. Algunas vezes matan algunos venados, y a tiempos toman algún pescado, mas esto es tan poco y su hambre tan grande que comen arañas y huevos de hormigas y gusanos y lagartijas y salamanquesas y culebras y bívoras que

b. Yaguazes] V: Yguazes

c. long] V: long. They kill their own children and buy those of other groups. Their marriages last only as long as they are content, and they dissolve their marriages over the slightest things.

e. like them] V: *om.*

to kill them, than that there be born of them those who would be their enemies. We asked them why they did not marry them themselves and also among one another. They said it was an ugly thing to marry them to their relatives, and that it was much better to kill them than to give them either to a relative or to an enemy. And these Indians and others, their neighbors who are called the Yaguazes,<sup>b</sup> alone practice this custom, without any others of the land keeping it. And when these Indians are to marry, they buy women from their enemies, and the price that each one pays for his is a bow, the best that can be found, with two arrows, and if by chance he has no bow, then a net up to one fathom wide and one long.<sup>c</sup> (Dorantes was with these Indians, and after a few days he fled. Castillo and Estevanico came to the mainland to the Yeguazes.)<sup>1</sup> All these people are archers and well built, although not as large as those we had left behind, and like them,<sup>e</sup> they have one nipple and their lower lip pierced. Their sustenance is chiefly roots of two or three kinds, and they hunt for them throughout the land; they are very bad and the men who eat them bloat. They take two days to roast, and many of them are very bitter, and with all this they dig them out with great difficulty. The hunger that those people have is so great that they are forced to eat them, and they roam up to two or three leagues looking for them. Sometimes they kill some deer, and sometimes they take some fish, but this is so little and their hunger so great that they eat spiders and ant eggs and worms and lizards and salamanders and snakes and vipers that

1. The Indians, referred to here as holding Dorantes before he fled, were probably Guaycones, insofar as the interpolation is not related to the surrounding text, most of which describes the customs of the Mariames. These sentences, interpolated into the account of native customs, summarize a much more detailed account in Oviedo (599b–601b) of Andrés Dorantes, Castillo, Estevanico, and Diego Dorantes's passage over from the islands where they were originally enslaved to the mainland and their life among the natives between 1529 and 1533. Cabeza de Vaca's narrative of Dorantes and Castillo's account to him of their experiences subtly ends here, subsumed by generalized ethnographic

description and followed by the commencement of Cabeza de Vaca's narration of the four men's common experience from the spring of 1533 onward, beginning with the six months they waited to go to the prickly pear grounds.

- a. quando pican] V: que muerden  
 matan los hombres quando pican,<sup>a</sup> y comen tierra y madera y todo lo que pueden aver y estiercol de venados y otras cosas que dexo de contar; y creo averiguadamente que si en aquella tierra huviessse piedras las comerían. Guardan las espinas del pescado que comen y de las culebras y otras cosas para molerlo después todo y comer el polvo dello. Entre éstos no se cargan los hombres ni llevan cosa de peso, mas llévanlo las mugeres y los viejos, que es la gente que ellos en menos tienen. No tienen tanto amor a sus hijos como los que arriba diximos. Ay algunos entre ellos que usan pecado contra natura. Las mugeres son muy trabajadas y para mucho, porque de veinte y quatro horas que ay entre día y noche no tienen sino seis horas de descanso, y todo lo<sup>b</sup> más de la noche passan en atizar sus [V:f27r] hornos para secar aquellas raíces que comen. Y desde que amanesçe, comiençan a cavar y a traer leña y agua a sus casas, y dar orden en las otras cosas de que tienen neçessidad. Los más déstos son grandes ladrones, porque aunque entre sí son bien partidos, en bolviendo uno la cabeça su hijo mismo o su padre le toma lo que puede. Mienten muy mucho. Y son grandes borrachos y para esto beven ellos una çierta cosa. Están tan usados a correr que sin descansar ni cansar corren desde la mañana hasta la noche y siguen un venado. Y desta manera matan muchos dellos porque los siguen<sup>c</sup> hasta que los cansan, y algunas vezes los toman vivos. Las casas dellos son de esteras<sup>d</sup> puestas sobre quatro arcos. Llévanlas y sacan éstas,<sup>e</sup> y múdanse cada dos o tres días para buscar de
- b. lo] Z: la
- c. siguen] Z: sig.en
- d. de esteras] Z: desteras
- e. y sacan éstas] V: a cuestas

a. when they strike] V: whom  
they bite

kill men when they strike,<sup>a</sup> and they eat earth and wood and everything that they can find and deer excrement and other things that I refrain from mentioning; and I believe assuredly that if in that land there were stones they would eat them. They keep the bones of the fish they eat and of the snakes and other things in order to grind up everything afterward and eat the powder it produces. Among these people, the men do not burden themselves nor carry anything of weight, rather, the women and the old people, who are the ones they value the least, carry it. They don't love their children as much as the ones about whom we spoke earlier. There are some among them who practice sodomy.<sup>1</sup> The women are very hardworking and endure a great deal, because of the twenty-four hours there are between day and night, they have only six of rest, and the rest of the night they spend in firing their ovens in order to dry those roots they eat. And from daybreak, they begin to dig and bring firewood and water to their homes, and put in order the other things of which they have need. Most of these people are great thieves, because although among one another they share a great deal, in turning one's back, one's own son or father will take whatever he can. They lie a great deal. And they are great drunkards, and for this they drink a particular thing.<sup>2</sup> They are so skilled in running that without resting or tiring they run from morning until night following a deer. And in this way they kill many of them, because they follow them until they tire them, and sometimes they take them alive. Their houses are of woven reeds placed upon four bows. They dismantle and carry them<sup>e</sup> and move every two or three days in order to look for

e. dismantle and carry them]  
V: carry them on their backs

1. *pecado contra natura*.  
Sodomy and bestiality,  
punishable by death (Castile  
3:f72v–f73r [pt. 7, tit. 21, laws  
1–2]; Lea 4:361–62).  
2. See (f44v).

a. desde el] Z: desde l

comer. Ninguna cosa siembran que se puedan aprovechar. Es gente muy alegre; por mucha hambre que tengan, por esso no dexan de bailar ni de hazer sus fiestas y areitos para ellos. El mejor tiempo que éstos tienen es quando comen las tunas, porque estonçes no tienen hambre y todo el tiempo se les passa en bailar, y comen dellas de noche y de día. Todo el tiempo que les duran, esprímenlas y ábrenlas y pónenlas a secar. Y después de secas, pónenlas en unas seras como higos y guárdanlas para comer por el camino quando se buelven, y las cáxcaras dellas muélenlas y házenlas polvo. Muchas vezes estando con éstos, nos aconteció tres o quatro días estar sin comer porque no lo avía. Ellos por alegrarnos nos dezían que no estuviésemos tristes, que presto avría tunas y comeríamos muchas y beberíamos del çumo dellas, y terníamos las barrigas muy grandes, y estaríamos muy contentos y alegres y sin hambre alguna. Y desde el<sup>a</sup> tiempo que esto nos dezían hasta que las tunas se huviessen de comer avía çinco o seis meses. Y en fin huvimos de esperar aquestos seis meses, y quando fue tiempo, fuimos a comer las tunas. Hallamos por la tierra muy gran cantidad de moxquitos de tres maneras que son muy malos y enojosos, y todo lo más del verano nos [V:f27v] davan mucha fatiga. Y para deffendernos dellos, hazíamos al derredor de la gente muchos fuegos de leña podrida y mojada para que no ardiessen e hiziessen humo. Y esta defensión nos dava otro trabajo porque en toda la noche no hazíamos

food. They sow nothing that they can use. They are a very happy people; in spite of the great hunger they have, they do not on that account fail to dance or to make their celebrations and *areitos*. The best season that these people have is when they eat the prickly pears, because then they are not hungry, and they spend all their time dancing and eating of them, night and day. The entire time that they last, they press them and open them and place them to dry. And after being dried, they put them in certain baskets like figs, and save them to eat along the way when they return, and they grind the skins and make a powder of them. Many times when we were with these people, we went three or four days without eating, because nothing was available. To cheer us up, they told us that we should not be sad, because soon there would be prickly pears, and we would eat many and drink of their juice, and our bellies would be very big, and we would be very content and happy and without any hunger whatsoever. And from the time that they told us this until the prickly pears were ready to eat, was five or six months. And in the end we had to wait those six months,<sup>1</sup> and when it was time, we went to eat the prickly pears. We found throughout the land a very great quantity of mosquitoes of three types that are very bad and vexatious, and all the rest of the summer they exhausted us. And in order to defend ourselves from them, we made around the edge of the group great bonfires of rotted and wet wood that would not burn but rather make smoke. And this defense gave us yet another hardship, because all night long we did nothing

1. Cabeza de Vaca's second mention of this waiting period, from spring to late summer 1533. On the location of the prickly pear grounds, see (f34r).

a. y| V: om.

sino llorar del humo que en los ojos nos dava, y sobre esto gran calor que nos causavan los muchos fuegos, y salíamos a dormir a la costa. Y si alguna vez podíamos dormir, recordávannos a palos para que tornásemos a ençender los fuegos. Los de la tierra adentro para esto usan otro remedio tan imcomportable y más que éste que he dicho; y es andar con tizones en las manos, quemando los campos y montes que topan para que los mosquitos huyan, y también para sacar de baxo de tierra lagartijas y otras semejantes cosas para comerlas. Y también suelen matar venados, çercándolos con muchos fuegos. Y usan también esto por quitar a los animales el pasto, y<sup>a</sup> que la neçessidad les haga ir a buscarlo adonde ellos quieren, porque nunca hazen assiento con sus casas sino donde ay agua y leña, y alguna vez se cargan todos desta provisión y van a buscar los venados que muy ordinariamente están donde no ay agua ni leña. Y el día que llegan, matan venados y algunas otras cosas que pueden, y gastan toda el agua y leña en guisar de comer y en los fuegos que hazen para defenderse de los mosquitos. Y esperan otro día para tomar algo que lleven para el camino. Y quando parten, tales van de los mosquitos que paresçe que tienen enfermedad de Sant Lázaro. Y desta manera satisfazen su hambre dos o tres vezes en el año a tan grande costa como he dicho. Y por aver passado por ello, puedo afirmar que ningún trabajo que se sufra en el mundo iguala con éste. Por la tierra ay muchos venados y otras<sup>b</sup> aves y animales de las que atrás he contado.

b. otras] Z: atras

but weep from the smoke that got in our eyes, and beyond this the many fires caused us to be very hot, and we would go to sleep on the shore. And if on occasion we were able to sleep, they would remind us with blows to return to light the fires. Those from inland areas<sup>1</sup> use for this purpose another remedy even more intolerable than this one that I have just mentioned; and it is to walk, with torches in hand, burning the fields and woods they encounter to drive the mosquitoes away, and also to drive out from underground lizards and other similar things in order to eat them. And they also often kill deer, surrounding them with many bonfires. And they also use this to take pastureland away from the animals, since necessity forces them to go to seek it where they want, because they never set down their houses except where there is water and firewood, and sometimes they all carry these supplies and go to hunt the deer that are ordinarily found where there is no water or wood. And the day they arrive, they kill deer and whatever else they can, and they use all the water and wood in cooking what they eat and in the fires they make to protect themselves from the mosquitoes. And they wait until the next day to get something to take on their journey. And when they leave, they go in such condition from the mosquitoes that it seems that they have the sickness of Saint Lazarus.<sup>2</sup> And in this way they satisfy their hunger two or three times a year at as great a cost as I have said. And for having lived through it, I can affirm that no hardship endured in the world equals this one. Throughout the land there are many deer and other birds and animals of the types about which I have previously told.

1. Here Cabeza de Vaca refers not to native groups he has already encountered but rather to those living somewhat inland but still near the coastline of the Gulf of Mexico whom he would meet later.

2. Leprosy.



a. largo] V: largo, merino, como una bernia	Alcançan aquí vacas y yo las he visto tres vezes y cómodo dellas. Y paréçeme que serán del tamaño de las de España. Tienen los cuernos pequeños como moriscas y el pelo muy largo. <sup>a</sup> Unas son pardillas y otras negras, y a mi [V:f28r] paresçer, tienen mejor y más gruessa carne que de las de acá. De las que no son grandes hazen los indios mantas para cobrirse, y de las mayores hazen çapatos y rodela. Éstas vienen de hazia el norte por la tierra adelante hasta la costa de la Florida y tiéndense por <sup>b</sup> la tierra más de quatroçientas leguas. Y en todo este camino por los valles por donde ellas vienen, baxan las gentes que por allí habitan y se mantienen dellas y meten en la tierra grande cantidad de cueros.
b. por] V: por toda	
c. ] Z: om. V: Capítulo diez y nueve: De cómo nos apartaron los indios.	
d. avrá] V: avía	<sup>c</sup> Quando fueron cumplidos los seis meses que yo estuve con los christianos esperando a poner en efecto el conçierto que teníamos hecho, los indios se fueron a las tunas, que avrá <sup>d</sup> de allí adonde las avían de coger hasta treinta leguas. Y ya que estávamos para huirnos, los indios con quien estávamos unos con otros reñieron sobre una muger, y se apuñearon y apalearon y descalabraron unos a otros. Y con el grande enojo que huvieron, cada uno tomó su <sup>e</sup> casa y se fue a su parte, de donde fue neçessario que todos los christianos <sup>f</sup> que allí éramos también nos apartamos, <sup>g</sup> y en ninguna manera nos podimos juntar hasta otro año. Y en este tiempo yo passé muy mala vida, así por la mucha hambre como por el mal tratamiento que de los indios resçibía, que fue tal que yo me huve de huir tres vezes
e. su] Z: sn	
f. christianos] Z: christiananos	
g. apartamos] V: apartássemos	

a. long] V: long, merino, like an Hibernian cape.

b. over] V: over all

c. ] Z: om. V: Chapter nineteen: Of how the Indians separated us.

Cows sometimes range as far as here, and three times I have seen and eaten of them. And it seems to me that they are about the size of those of Spain.<sup>1</sup> They have small horns like Moorish cows, and their fur is very long.<sup>a</sup> Some are brown and others black, and in my opinion they have better meat and more of it than those from here.<sup>2</sup> From [the skins] of the young ones the Indians make robes to cover themselves, and from [the hides of] the mature animals they make shoes and shields. These cows come from the north forward through the land to the coast of *Florida* and they extend over<sup>b</sup> the land for more than four hundred leagues. And along this entire route throughout the valleys through which they come, the people who inhabit them come down and sustain themselves on them, and they supply the land with a great quantity of hides.<sup>3</sup>

“When the six months<sup>4</sup> that I was with the Christians were over, waiting to put into effect the plan that we had made, the Indians went to the prickly pears, which is from there<sup>5</sup> to where they were to gather them, some thirty leagues.<sup>6</sup> And when we were on the point of fleeing, the Indians who held us fought amongst themselves over a woman, and they punched each other and struck one another with sticks and wounded one another in the head. And with the great rage they felt, each one took his house and went off by himself, whereupon it was necessary for all of us Christians who were there also to part company, and by no means were we able to reunite until the following year.<sup>7</sup> And during this time I endured a very bad life, as much because of my great hunger as because of the bad treatment I received from the Indians, which was such that I had to flee three times

1. Cabeza de Vaca was the first European to give an account of the American bison (*Bison bison*). Oviedo does not record Cabeza de Vaca's sighting of bison on the Texas coast; the first reference to bison in his account pertains to the region north of La Junta de los Ríos in southwestern Texas (608a).

2. Castile.

3. Cabeza de Vaca evidently drew on his exposure to the bison along his entire journey for this account; the people who harvested the many hides were evidently not the coastal Indians but rather ones the men encountered on their overland journey.

4. Cabeza de Vaca's third mention of the waiting period during the spring and summer of 1533.

5. Where the pecans were eaten at the confluence of the San Antonio and Guadalupe Rivers.

6. In the area of Corpus Christi Bay and south of the Nueces River from the coast inland. Oviedo (601a) states that the prickly pears were located forty leagues away in the direction of Pánuco and that the Indians followed along the coast until they left the salt water and went inland eating prickly pears.

7. The men were separated at the end of the prickly pear

season (late summer) in 1533 and were forced to wait until the end of the season of 1534 to escape.

a. hasta] Z: hasta a

b. Eanagados] V: Anagados

de los amos que tenían, y todos me anduvieron a buscar y poniendo diligencia para matarme. Y Dios nuestro Señor por su misericordia me quiso guardar y amparar dellos. E quando el tiempo de las tunas tornó, en aquel mismo lugar nos tornamos a juntar. Ya que teníamos concertado de huirnos y señalado el día, aquel mismo día los indios nos apartaron y fuimos cada uno por su parte. Y yo dixé a los otros [V:f28v] compañeros que yo los esperaría en las tunas hasta<sup>a</sup> que la luna fuesse llena. Y este día era primero de setiembre y primero día de luna. Y aviselos que si en este tiempo no viniessen al concierto, yo me iría solo y los dexaría. Y así nos apartamos, y cada uno se fue con sus indios. Y yo estuve con los míos hasta treze de luna, y yo tenía acordado de me huir a otros indios en siendo la luna llena. E a treze días del mes, llegaron adonde yo estava Andrés Dorantes y Estevanico y dixéronme como dexavan a Castillo con otros indios que se llamavan Eanagados,<sup>b</sup> y que estava cerca de allí, y que avían passado mucho trabajo, y que avían andado perdidos. E que otro día adelante nuestros indios se mudaron hazia donde Castillo estava, e ivan a juntarse con los que lo tenían y hazerse amigos unos de otros, porque hasta allí avían tenido guerra, y desta manera cobramos a Castillo. En todo el tiempo que comíamos las tunas teníamos sed, y para remedio desto bevíamos el çumo de las tunas, y sacávamoslo en un hoyo que en la tierra hazíamos y desde estava lleno bevíamos dél hasta que nos hartávamos. Es dulce y de color de

b. Eanagados] V: Anagados

from the masters who held me, and they all went looking for me and put forth great effort to find and kill me.<sup>1</sup> And God our Lord in his mercy chose to preserve and protect me from them. And when the time of the prickly pears returned,<sup>2</sup> we again gathered in that same place. Inasmuch as we had resolved to flee and had set the day to do so, that same day the Indians separated us, and each one of us went his own way. And I said to my companions that I would wait for them at the prickly pear grounds until the moon was full. And this day was the first of September, and the first day of the new moon.<sup>3</sup> And I informed them that if they did not come during this time as we agreed, I would go alone and leave them behind. And thus we parted, and each one went off with his Indians. And I was with mine until the thirteenth day of the moon, and I had resolved to flee to other Indians on the full moon. And on the thirteenth day of the month, Andrés Dorantes and Estevanico arrived to where I was, and they told me how they had left Castillo with other Indians who were called Eanagados,<sup>b</sup> and that they were near there, and that they had endured great hardship, and that they had been wandering lost.<sup>4</sup> And the following day our Indians moved toward where Castillo was, and they went to join those who held him and make friends with one another, because up to that point they had been at war, and in this manner we recovered Castillo. During the entire time we ate the prickly pears we suffered thirst, and to remedy this we drank the juice of the prickly pears, and we extracted it and drew it out of a hole that we had made in the ground, and once it was full, we drank from it until we were satisfied. It is sweet and the color of

1. In the spring of 1533, Cabeza de Vaca had been given to some relatives of the Mariames who were holding Dorantes (f29v).

2. Late summer 1534.

3. Cabeza de Vaca's references to specific dates six years after losing contact with Spanish civilization cannot be taken literally.

4. Using Dorantes's testimony from the Joint Report, Oviedo (601b–02b) offers an account of what happened to the three others up to the time of their reunion with Cabeza de Vaca.

arrope. Esto hazen por falta de otras vasijas. Ay muchas maneras de tunas y entre ellas ay algunas muy buenas, aunque a mí todas me paresçían ansí, y nunca la hambre me dio espacio para escogerlas ni parar mientes en quáles eran mejores. Todas las más destas gentes beven agua llovediza y recogida en algunas partes, porque aunque ay ríos, como nunca están de asiento, nunca tienen agua conocida ni señalada. Por toda la tierra ay muy grandes y hermosas dehesas y de muy buenos pastos para ganados, y parésceme que sería tierra muy frutífera si fuesse labrada y habitada de gente de razón. No vimos sierra en toda ella en tanto que en ella estuvimos. Aquellos indios nos dixeron que otros estavan más adelante, llamados Camones, que biven hazia la costa, y avían muerto toda la gente que venía en la barca de Peñalosa y Téllez, y que venían tan flacos que aunque los matavan, no se deffendían y assí los acabaron [V:f29r] todos. Y nos mostraron ropas y armas dellos, y dixeron que la barca estava allí al través. Ésta es la quinta barca que faltava, porque la del governador ya diximos como la mar la llevó. Y la del contador y los frailes la avían visto echada al través en la costa, y Esquivel contó el fin dellos. Las dos en que Castillo y yo y Dorantes íbamos, ya hemos contado como junto a la isla de Malhado se hundieron.

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo veinte:  
De cómo nos huimos.

<sup>a</sup>Después de avernos mudado, desde a dos días nos encomendamos a Dios nuestro Señor y nos fuimos huyendo, confiando que aunque era ya tarde y las tunas se acabavan, con los

boiled must.<sup>1</sup> They do this because they lack other vessels. There are many kinds of prickly pears, and among them some are very good, although all of them seemed to me to be so, and my hunger never permitted me to choose among them or to consider which were the best. The majority of these peoples drink rainwater collected in certain places because, even though there are rivers, since they are never permanently settled, they never have a known or fixed source of water. Throughout the land there are many and very beautiful grazing lands and good pastures for cattle, and it seems to me that it would be very productive land if it were worked and inhabited by men of reason.<sup>2</sup> We saw no mountains in any part of it that we had seen. Those Indians<sup>3</sup> told us that there were others farther ahead, called Camones, who live toward the coast, and they had killed all the men who came on the raft of Peñalosa and Téllez, and that they came so weakened, that although they were killing them, they did not defend themselves, and thus all of them perished.<sup>4</sup> And they showed us their clothes and weapons, and said that the raft was capsized there. This is the fifth raft to be accounted for, because the governor's had been carried out to sea, as we have said.<sup>5</sup> And that of the comptroller and the friars had been seen overturned along the coast, and Esquivel reported their fate.<sup>6</sup> About the two in which Castillo and I and Dorantes were traveling, we have already said that they sank next to the island of Malhado.<sup>7</sup>

a. ] Z: om. V: Chapter twenty:  
Of how we fled.

<sup>a</sup>After having moved, two days later we commended ourselves to God our Lord, and we left fleeing,<sup>8</sup> trusting in the fact that although it was already late and the prickly pear season was ending,<sup>9</sup> with the

1. *arrope*. Must (*mosto*) is the expressed juice of fruit and especially of grapes before and during fermentation. *Arrope*, a Spanish term derived from Arabic, was used in the sixteenth century to describe a grape syrup produced by evaporating the juice to one third its original volume or to refer to a new sweet wine (Covarrubias 153a, 816a).

2. *gente de razón*. Euphemistically, Christians. See (f7v).

3. Throughout this section Cabeza de Vaca does not state the name of the Indian groups with which he was living from the time he left the Mariames until the four men reached

the Avavares. This reference may refer to the Eanagados, with whom Dorantes and Estevanico had left Castillo, or to the Indians with whom they had found Cabeza de Vaca, whom he does not identify.

4. This last of the five rafts, pertaining to Téllez and Peñalosa, probably landed somewhere on Padre Island in mid-November 1528.

5. See (f30v).

6. See (f29v, f30v).

7. See (f21v, f23v).

8. This point does not mark the beginning of the men's continuous overland journey to México-Tenochtitlán. On

the same day that the men fled from the Eanagados and the Indians with whom Cabeza de Vaca was staying, they encountered the Avavares in the prickly pear region. They would remain with them in the area north of the Rio Grande from the end of the prickly pear season of 1534 until the beginning of the season the following year.

9. September or October 1534.

a. hazia] Z: hazian

b. aposentáronles] Z: aposen-  
táronle V: aposentaron

c. otros] V: otro

d. a] Z: om.

frutos que quedarían en el campo podríamos andar buena parte de tierra. Yendo aquel día nuestro camino con harto temor que los indios nos avían de seguir, vimos unos humos. Y yendo a ellos, después de bísperas llegamos allá do vimos un indio que, como vio que íbamos a él, huyó sin querernos aguardar. Nosotros embiamos al negro tras dél. Y como vio que iba sólo, aguardolo. El negro le dixo que íbamos a buscar aquella gente que hazía<sup>a</sup> aquellos humos. Él respondió que cerca de allí estaban las casas, y que nos guiaría allá. Y así lo fuimos siguiendo. Y él corrió a dar aviso de como íbamos. Y a puesta del sol vimos las casas. Y dos tiros de ballesta antes que llegásemos a ellas, hallamos quatro indios que nos esperavan, y nos resçibieron bien. Dixímosles en lengua de Mareames que íbamos a buscarlos. Y ellos mostraron que se holgavan con nuestra compañía, y ansí nos llevaron a sus casas. Y a Dorantes y al negro aposentáronles<sup>b</sup> en casa de un físico, y a mí y a Castillo en casa de otros.<sup>c</sup> Éstos tienen otra lengua y llámense Avavares, y son aquellos que solían llevar los arcos a los nuestros e ivan [V:f29v] a<sup>d</sup> contratar con ellos. Y aunque son de otra naçión y lengua, entienden la lengua de aquellos con quien antes estávamos. Y aquel mismo día avían llegado allí con sus casas. Luego el pueblo nos ofresçió muchas tunas porque ya ellos tenían notiçia de nosotros y como curávamos y de las maravillas que nuestro Señor con nosotros obrava, que, aunque no huviera otras, harto grandes eran abrirnos caminos por tierra tan despoblada, y darnos gente por donde muchos tiempos

fruits that remained in the countryside, we could travel a considerable distance. Pursuing our course that day with great fear that the Indians would follow us, we saw some spires of smoke. And going toward them, after vespers we arrived there, where we saw an Indian who, as he saw that we were coming toward him, fled without wanting to wait for us. We sent the black man after him. And since he saw that he was coming alone, he waited for him. The black man told him that we were going to look for those people who were making those spires of smoke. He responded that the houses were near there, and that he would guide us there. And thus we went following him. And he ran on ahead to give notice that we were coming. And at sunset we saw the houses. And at a distance of two crossbow shots before we came upon them, we found four Indians who were waiting for us, and they received us well. We told them in the language of the Mareames that we were coming to look for them. And they showed that they were pleased with our company, and thus they took us to their houses. And they lodged Dorantes and the black man in the house of a physician, and Castillo and me in that of others.<sup>c</sup> These people have another language, and they are called Avavares, and they are the ones who customarily took bows to our Indians and went to trade with them.<sup>1</sup> And although they are of another nation<sup>2</sup> and language, they understand the language of the ones we were with previously. And that same day they had arrived there with their houses. Later the people offered us many prickly pears, because they already had news of us and about how we were curing and about the wonders that our Lord was working through us, which although there should be no others, were truly great, opening roads for us through a land so deserted, bringing us people where many times

c. others] V: another

1. The Avavares were mentioned earlier (f29v). The prickly pear grounds where the men encountered them seem to have marked the northern extreme of this group's migratory range.

2. *nación*. A community of people of the same ethnic origin, generally sharing the same language and a common cultural tradition (DRAE 909a). Covarrubias (823a) uses *nación* in this sense when he refers to the Spanish people as "la nación española."



- no la avía, y librarnos de tantos peligros y no permitir que nos matassen, y sustentarnos con tanta hambre y poner aquellas gentes en coraçón que nos tratassen bien, como adelante diremos.
- a. | Z: *om.* V: Capítulo veinte y uno: De cómo curamos aquí unos dolientes.  
b. ruegoándole] Z: ruéganle
- c. enfermos] V: enfermos en
- d. misericordia] Z: misericordia
- e. cinco] Z: V
- <sup>a</sup>Aquella misma noche que llegamos, vinieron unos indios a Castillo y dixéronle que estaban muy malos de la cabeça, ruegoándole<sup>b</sup> que los curasse. Y después que los hubo santiguado y encomendado a Dios, en aquel punto los indios dixeron que todo el mal se les avía quitado. Y fueron a sus casas y truxeron muchas tunas y un pedaço de carne de venado, cosa que no sabíamos qué cosa era. Y como esto entre ellos se publicó, vinieron otros muchos enfermos<sup>c</sup> aquella noche a que los sanasse. Y cada uno traía un pedaço de venado. Y tantos eran que no sabíamos adonde poner la carne. Dimos muchas gracias a Dios porque cada día iba creciendo su misericordia<sup>d</sup> y mercedes. Y después que se acabaron las curas, començaron a bailar y hazer sus areitos y fiestas hasta otro día que el sol salió. Y duró la fiesta tres días por aver nosotros venido. Y al cabo dellos les preguntamos por la tierra de adelante y por la gente que en ella hallaríamos y los mantenimientos que en ella avía. Respondiéronnos que por toda aquella tierra avía muchas tunas, mas que ya eran acabadas, y que ninguna gente avía porque [V:f30r] todos eran idos a sus casas, con aver ya cogido las tunas, y que la tierra era muy fría y en ella avía muy pocos cueros. Nosotros, viendo esto, que ya el invierno y tiempo frío entrava, acordamos de passarlo con éstos. A cabo de cinco<sup>e</sup> días que allí

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter twenty-one: Of how we cured some sick people here.

there were none, and liberating us from so many dangers and not permitting us to be killed, and sustaining us through so much hunger, and inspiring these people to treat us well, as we will describe later.

<sup>a</sup>That same night that we arrived, some Indians came to Castillo and said to him that they suffered a malady of the head, begging him to cure them. And after he had made the sign of the cross over them and commended them to God, at that point the Indians said that all the sickness had left them. And they went to their houses and brought many prickly pears and a piece of venison, a thing that we could not identify. And when this news was spread among them, many other sick people came that night to be cured. And each one brought a piece of venison. And there were so many of them that we did not know where to put the meat. We gave great thanks to God because each day his mercy and blessings were increasing. And after the cures were completed, they began to dance and make their *areitos* and celebrations, which lasted until sunrise of the following day. And the celebration held on account of our arrival lasted for three days. And at the end of them, we asked them about the land that lay ahead, and about the people that we would find in it, and the sources of food that were in it. They responded to us that throughout that entire land there were many prickly pears, but that the season was already over, and that there were no people because they had all gone to their homes, having already collected the prickly pears, and that the land was very cold and in it there were very few hides. Seeing that winter and cold weather were already upon us, we decided to spend it with these Indians.<sup>1</sup> Five days after we

1. Oviedo (602b–03a) remarks that from October (1534) until August of the following year the Christians lived in complete freedom among the Avavares, although they suffered great hunger and ate nothing but roots. He says they overwintered with them because they needed to collect hides with which to cover themselves on the journey ahead.

avíamos llegado, se partieron a buscar otras tunas adonde avía otra gente de otras naçiones y lenguas. Y andadas çinco jornadas con muy grande hambre, porque en el camino no avía tunas ni otra fruta ninguna,<sup>a</sup> allegamos a un río donde assentamos nuestras casas. Y después de assentadas, fuimos a buscar una fruta de unos árboles que es como hierros.<sup>b</sup> Y como por toda esta tierra no ay caminos, yo me detuve más en buscarla; la gente se bolvió y yo quedé solo, y viniendo a buscarlos, aquella noche me perdí. Y plugo a Dios que hallé un árbol ardiendo, y al fuego dél passé aquel frío aquella noche, y a la mañana yo me cargué de leña, y tomé dos tizonos y bolví a buscarlos. Y anduve desta manera çinco días, siempre con mi lumbré y carga de leña, porque si el fuego se me matasse en parte donde no huviesse<sup>c</sup> leña, como en muchas partes no la avía, tuviesse de qué hazer otros tizonos y no me quedasse sin lumbré, porque para el frío yo no tenía otro remedio por andar desnudo como nascí. Y para las noches yo tenía este remedio, que me iva a las matas del monte que estava çerca de los ríos, y parava en ellas antes quel sol se pusiessse. Y en la tierra hazía un hoyo con una coçe,<sup>d</sup> y en él echava mucha leña que se cría en muchos árboles de que por allí ay muy gran cantidad. Y juntava mucha leña de la que estava caída y seca de los árboles, y al derredor de aquel hoyo hazía quatro fuegos en cruz. Y yo tenía cargo y cuidado de rehazer el fuego de rato en rato, y hazía unas gavillas de paja larga que por allí ay con que me cobría en

a. ninguna] Z: ningun

b. hierros] V: hieros

c. huviesse] V: tuviesse

d. con una coçe] V: om.

had arrived there, they left to hunt for other prickly pears where there were other people of different nations and tongues. And traveling five days with very great hunger because there were no prickly pears nor any other fruit along the route, we arrived at a river where we put up our houses.<sup>1</sup> And after setting them up, we went to look for the fruit of some trees, which is like [the fruit of] a vetch.<sup>2</sup> And since through all this land there are no trails, I stopped to investigate it more fully; the people returned and I remained alone, and going to look for them, that night I got lost. And it pleased God that I found a tree aflame, and warmed by its fire I endured the cold that night, and in the morning I gathered a load of firewood, and I took two firebrands and again looked for the people. And I continued in this manner for five days, always with my lighted torch and load of wood, so that if my fire died in a place where there was no firewood (since in many areas there was none), I would have the means to make other firebrands and I would not remain without a light, because against the cold I had no other recourse since I went naked as I was born. And for the night I had this defense, that is, I went to the groves of the wood near the rivers, and stopped in them before sunset. And in the earth I dug a pit with the butt of a timber<sup>d3</sup> and in it I threw a great deal of firewood from the trees that grow in great quantity there. And I gathered much dry wood fallen from the trees, and around that pit I placed four fires like the points of a cross. And I made an effort and took care to rekindle the fire from time to time, and from the long grass that grows there I made some bundles to cover myself in

d. with the butt of a timber]  
V: om.

1. There is insufficient evidence to identify this river or the ones where Cabeza de Vaca says that he collected firewood and was lost. The Avavares seem to have migrated over an area somewhat inland but not completely isolated from the seacoast, between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande.

2. *yeros* (*hierros*, *hieros* in the Zamora [1542] edition). Coopwood (129) and Campbell and Campbell (26) identify this as the Texas ebony; Cabeza de Vaca's description is not

specific enough, however, to determine that this was not simply his first reference to mesquite. See (f40r).

3. *coçe* (archaic for *coz*). Lowest or thickest part of a tree or timber (DRAE 375c).

a. saqué] Z: sacaque

b. avía] Z: ania

c. ] Z: om. V: Capítulo veinte y dos: Cómo otro día nos truxeron otros enfermos.

d. flechas] Z: fechas

aquel hoyo. Y desta manera me amparava del frío de las noches. Y una dellas el fuego cayó en la paja con que yo estava cubierto. Y estando yo durmiendo en el hoyo, començó a arder muy rezió, y por mucha priessa que yo me di a salir, todavía saqué<sup>a</sup> señal en los cabellos del peligro [V:f3ov] en que avía estado. En todo este tiempo no comí bocado ni hallé cosa que pudiesse comer, y como traía los pies descalços, corriome dellos mucha sangre. Y Dios usó conmigo de misericordia que en todo este tiempo no venteó el Norte, porque de otra manera ningún remedio avía<sup>b</sup> de yo bivar. Y a cabo de çinco días, llegué a una ribera de un río donde yo hallé a mis indios, que ellos y los christianos me contavan ya por muerto, y siempre creían que alguna bívora me avía mordido. Todos huvieron gran plazer de verme, principalmente los christianos, y me dixerón que hasta entonçes avían caminado con mucha hambre, que ésta era la causa que no me avían buscado, y aquella noche me dieron de las tunas que tenían. E otro día partimos de allí y fuimos donde hallamos muchas tunas, con que todos satisfizieron su gran hambre. Y nosotros dimos muchas gracias a nuestro Señor porque nunca nos faltava su remedio.

“Otro día de mañana vinieron allí muchos indios, y traían çinco enfermos que estavan tollidos y muy malos, y venían en busca de Castillo que los curasse. Y cada uno de los enfermos offresció su arco y flechas.<sup>d</sup> Y él los resçibió, y a puesta del sol los santiguó y encomendó a Dios nuestro Señor y todos le

that hole. And in this way I protected myself from the cold of night. And during one of them, the fire fell on the grass with which I was covered. And while I was sleeping in the pit the fire began to burn fiercely, and despite the great haste that I made to get out, my hair nevertheless received the sign of the danger in which I had been. In this entire time I did not eat a mouthful of food, nor did I find anything that I could eat, and since my feet were bare, they bled a great deal. And God took pity upon me, that in all this time the north wind did not blow, because otherwise it would have been impossible for me to survive. And at the end of five days, I arrived at a bank of a river where I found my Indians, for they and the Christians had already taken me for dead, and they were convinced that some viper had bitten me. All took great pleasure in seeing me, especially the Christians, and they told me that until then, they had traveled with great hunger, that this was the reason they had not searched for me, and that night they gave me to eat some of the prickly pears they had. And the next day we departed from there and went to where we found many prickly pears with which all satisfied their great hunger.<sup>1</sup> And we gave many thanks to our Lord because his succor never failed us.

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter twenty-two: How they brought us other sick people the next day.

“The next morning many Indians came there, and they brought five sick people who were crippled and very ill, and they came in search of Castillo, so that he could cure them. And each one of the sick people offered their bow and arrows. And he accepted them, and at sunset he made the sign of the cross over them and entrusted them to God our Lord and we all

1. This second region of prickly pears was slightly north of the Rio Grande.

- a. diéssemos] V: embiasse      suplicamos con la mejor manera que podíamos les diéssemos<sup>a</sup> salud, pues él vía que no avía otro remedio para que aquella gente nos ayudasse y saliéssemos de tan miserable vida. Y él lo hizo tan misericordiosamente que, venida la mañana, todos amanesçieron tan buenos y sanos y se fueron tan rezios como si nunca huvieran tenido mal ninguno. Esto causó entre ellos muy gran admiración, y a nosotros despertó que diéssemos muchas gracias a nuestro Señor y<sup>b</sup> que más enteramente conosçiésemos su bondad, y [V:f31r] tuviéssemos firme esperança que nos avía de librar y traer donde le podiésemos servir. E de mí sé dezir que siempre tuve entera<sup>c</sup> esperança en su misericordia que me avía de sacar de aquella catividad. Y así yo lo hablé siempre a mis compañeros. Como los indios fueron idos y llevaron sus indios sanos, partimos donde estavan otros comiendo tunas. Y éstos se llaman Cuthalchuches<sup>d</sup> y Malicones, que son otras lenguas. Y junto con ellos avía otros que se llamavan Coayos y Susolas, y de otra parte otros llamados Atayos; y éstos tenían guerra con los Susolas con quien se flechavan cada día. Y como por toda la tierra no se hablasse sino en los misterios que Dios nuestro<sup>e</sup> Señor con nosotros obrava, an venido<sup>f</sup> de muchas partes a buscarnos para que los curássemos. Y a cabo de dos días que allí llegaron, vinieron a nosotros unos indios de los Susolas, y rogaron a Castillo que fuesse a curar un herido y otros enfermos, y dixeron que entre ellos quedava uno que estava muy al cabo. Castillo era médico muy temeroso,<sup>g</sup> principalmente quando las curas eran muy temerosas y peligrosas. Y
- b. y] V: a
- c. entera] V: om.
- d. Cuthalchuches] V: Cutalches
- e. nuestro] Z: nnestro
- f. an venido] V: venían
- g. temeroso] Z: tameroso

- a. we might bring] V: God send    prayed in the best way we could that we might bring<sup>a</sup> them health, since he saw that there was no other means by which to make those people help us so that we could leave so miserable a life. And he did it so mercifully that, come the morning, they all awoke so fit and healthy, and they went away as vigorously as if they had never had any malady whatsoever. This caused very great wonder among them, and it moved us to give many thanks to our Lord and to experience more fully his mercy, and to maintain firm the hope that he would deliver us and take us to where we could serve him. And for myself I can say that I always had complete<sup>c</sup> faith in his mercy that he would deliver me from that captivity. And so I always said to my companions. Since the Indians had gone and taken away their ill ones now restored to health, we departed to where others were eating prickly pears. And these are called Cuthalchuches<sup>d</sup> and Malicones, which are other languages. And together with them there were others who were called Coayos and Susolas, and from another area, others called Atayos; and these were at war with the Susolas, and they shot arrows at each other every day. And since throughout the land nothing was talked about except the mysteries that God our Lord worked through us, people came from many places to seek us out so that we could cure them. And two days after they arrived there, some Indians of the Susolas came to us, and they begged Castillo to go and cure a wounded man and other sick people, and they said that among them there was one who was very near his end. Castillo was a very cautious physician, particularly when the cures were threatening and dangerous. And he
- c. complete] V: *om.*
- d. Cuthalchuches] V: Cotalches



- creía que sus pecados avían de estorvar que no todas vezes suçediesse bien el curar. Los indios me dixeron que yo fuesse a curarlos porque ellos me querían bien y se acordavan que les avía curado en las nuezes, y por aquello nos avían dado nuezes y cueros, y esto avía passado quando yo vine a juntarme con los christianos. Y assí huve de ir con ellos, y fueron conmigo Dorantes y Estevanico. Y quando llegué çerca de los ranchos que ellos tenían, yo vi el enfermo que íbamos a curar que estava muerto, porque estava mucha gente al derredor dél llorando y su casa desecha, que es señal que el dueño está<sup>a</sup> muerto. Y así quando yo llegué, hallé el indio los ojos bueltos y sin ningún pulso, y con todas señales de muerto; y a mí así<sup>b</sup> me paresció y lo mismo dixo Dorantes. Yo le quité una estera que tenía ençima con que estava cubierto. Y lo mejor que pude, supliqué a nuestro Señor fuesse servido de dar salud a aquél y a todos los otros que della tenían necesidad. E después de santiguado y [V:f31v] soplado muchas vezes, me traxeron su arco y me lo<sup>c</sup> dieron y una sera de tunas molidas. Y lleváronme a curar otros muchos que estavan malos de modorra, y me dieron otras dos seras de tunas, las quales di a nuestros indios que con nosotros avían venido. Y hecho esto, nos bolvimos a nuestro aposento. Y nuestros indios a quien di las tunas se quedaron allá, y a la noche se bolvieron a sus casas y dixeron que aquel que estava muerto y yo avía curado en presencia<sup>d</sup> dellos se avía levantado bueno y se avía paseado y comido y hablado con ellos, y que todos quantos avía curado quedavan sanos y sin calentura y<sup>e</sup> muy alegres. Esto
- a. está] V: estava
- b. y a mí así] V: según a mí
- c. lo] Z: le
- d. presencia] Z: prensencia
- e. sin calentura y] V: om.

believed that his sins would prevent the cures from turning out well every time. The Indians<sup>1</sup> told me that I should go to cure them because they held me in esteem, and they remembered that I had cured them at the nut-gathering grounds, and because of that, they had given us nuts and hides, and this had happened when I came to join the Christians.<sup>2</sup> And thus I had to go with them, and Dorantes and Estevanico went with me. And when I arrived near their huts, I saw the sick man whom we were going to cure, who was dead, because there were many people around him weeping and his house was undone, which is the sign that the owner is dead. And thus when I arrived, I found the Indian, his eyes rolled back in his head, and without any pulse, and with all the signs of death; so it seemed to me, and Dorantes said the same. I removed a mat that he had on top of him, with which he was covered. And as best I could, I beseeched our Lord to be served by giving health to that man and to all the others among them who were in need. And after having made the sign of the cross and blown on him many times, they brought me his bow and they gave it to me along with a basket of crushed prickly pears. And they took me to cure many others who had sleeping sickness,<sup>3</sup> and they gave me two other baskets of prickly pears, which I gave to our Indians<sup>4</sup> who had come with us. And having done this, we returned to our lodgings. And our Indians, to whom I had given the prickly pears, remained there, and at nighttime they returned to their houses and said that that one who had been dead and whom I had cured in their presence had arisen revived and walked about and eaten and spoken with them, and that as many as I had cured had become well and were without fever and<sup>e</sup> very happy.<sup>5</sup> This

e. without fever and] V: *om.*

1. Susolas.

2. The reference ostensibly suggests that the Susolas followed an annual migration route that extended, north to south, from the San Antonio and Guadalupe Rivers, where they ate pecans, to the prickly pear grounds near the Nueces River, to the southern prickly pear region near the northern bank of the Rio Grande, where they spent the winter. The curing episode would have taken place during the spring of 1533 (see f41v).

3. *modorra*. A sickness that makes its victim unconscious (Covarrubias 809a).

4. Avavares.

5. Cabeza de Vaca and his companions might not have been perceived as great shamans because they performed cures but rather performed cures because they were taken to be great shamans. Lévi-Strauss (173–75) theorizes that group expectation is a critical element in the shamanic complex, that is, the relations between the shaman, the sick person, and the community, organized around the poles of the intimate experience of the shaman on one extreme and group consensus on the other.

a. cosa] Z: cesa

b. estaban] Z: estanan

c. Culthalcuches] V: Culthalcuchiches

d. que] Z: qne

e. aquellos] Z: aquellos

causó muy gran admiración y espanto, y en toda la tierra no se hablava en otra cosa.<sup>a</sup> Todos aquellos a quien esta fama llegava nos venían a buscar para que los curássemos y santiguássemos sus hijos. Y quando los indios que estaban<sup>b</sup> en compañía de los nuestros, que eran los Culthalcuches,<sup>c</sup> se huvieron de ir a su tierra, antes que se partiessen nos ofresçieron todas las tunas que para su camino tenían sin que ninguna les quedasse. Y diéronnos pedernales tan largos como palmo y medio con que ellos cortan y es entre ellos cosa de muy gran estima. Rogáronnos que<sup>d</sup> nos acordássemos de ellos y rogássemos a Dios que siempre estuviessen buenos, y nosotros se lo prometimos, y con esto partieron los más contentos hombres del mundo, aviéndonos dado todo lo mejor que tenían. Nosotros estuvimos con aquellos<sup>e</sup> indios Avavares ocho meses. Y esta cuenta hazíamos por las lunas. En todo este tiempo nos venían de muchas partes a buscar. Y dezían que verdaderamente nosotros éramos hijos del sol. Dorantes y el negro hasta allí no avían curado, mas por la mucha importunidad que teníamos, [los indios] veniéndonos de muchas partes a buscar, venimos todos a ser médicos, aunque en atrevimiento y osar acometer qualquier cura era yo más señalado entrellos. Y ninguno jamás curamos que no nos dixesse que quedava sano, y tanta confiança tenían que avían de sanar si nosotros los curássemos, que creían que en tanto que nosotros allí estuviésemos ninguno dellos avía de [V:f32r] morir. Éstos y los demás atrás nos contaron una cosa muy estraña, y por la cuenta que nos figuraron

c. Culthalcuches] V: Cuthalchiches

caused very great wonder and fear, and in all the land they spoke of nothing else. All those to whom this report arrived came looking for us so that we could cure them and make the sign of the cross over their children. And when the Indians who were in the company of ours, who were the Culthalcuches,<sup>c</sup> had to return to their land,<sup>1</sup> before leaving, they offered us all the prickly pears that they had gathered for their journey without keeping even one for themselves. And they gave us flints as long as a span and a half,<sup>2</sup> which they use for cutting, and it is an object of very great esteem among them. They beseeched us to remember them and to ask God to always keep them well, and we promised them that we would do so, and with this they departed the most contented people in the world, having given us all the best things they had. We were with those Avavares Indians eight months. And this reckoning we made by the moon.<sup>3</sup> In all this time people came from many areas looking for us. And they said that truly we were children of the sun.<sup>4</sup> Until then Dorantes and the black man had not performed any cures, but on account of the great demands made on us, [the Indians] coming from many places to look for us, we all became physicians, although in boldness and daring to perform any cure I was the most notable among them.<sup>5</sup> And we never cured anyone who did not say that he was better, and they had so much confidence that they would be cured if we performed the cures, that they believed that as long as we were there, none of them would die. These and the rest whom we had left behind told us something very strange, and by the explanation they put together for us,

1. The four Narváez survivors were with the Avavares; the Cuthalchiches were departing.

2. See (f13r).

3. From September or October 1534 to midsummer 1535. Cabeza de Vaca's calculation of the eight months spent with the Avavares according to the lunar cycle suggests that his calculations of the months, not to mention specific dates, were at best approximations.

4. The Narváez men understood the Indians to refer to indigenous beliefs about solar deities and their association of the Spaniards

with them. Elsewhere Cabeza de Vaca (f48r) remarks that the Indians used this ruse in order to dupe one another about the four Narváez survivors.

5. See (f38r, f41v).

a. pudieran] V: pudieron

b. echávalo] V: echava

c. poniales] V: poniale

d. dende] Z: dde

parescía que avía quince o diez y seis años que avía acontecido; que dezían que por aquella tierra anduvo un hombre que ellos llaman mala cosa, y que era pequeño de cuerpo, y que tenía barvas aunque nunca claramente le pudieran<sup>a</sup> ver el rostro, y que quando venía a la casa donde estaban, se les levantaban los cabellos y temblaban, y luego parescía a la puerta de la casa un tizón ardiendo. Y luego aquel hombre entrava y tomava al que quería dellos, y dávalos tres cuchilladas grandes por las hijadas con un pedernal muy agudo, tan ancho como una mano y dos palmos en luengo. Y metía la mano por aquellas cuchilladas y sacávalos las tripas, y que cortava de una tripa poco más o menos de un palmo, y aquello que cortava echávalo<sup>b</sup> en las brasas, y luego le dava tres cuchilladas en un brazo, y la segunda dava por la sangradura y desconçertávaselo. Y dende a poco, se lo tornava a conçertar, y poniales<sup>c</sup> las manos sobre las heridas, y deziánnos que luego quedavan sanos, y que muchas vezes quando bailavan aparescía entre ellos en hábito de muger unas vezes, y otras como hombre, y quando él quería, tomava el buhío o casa y subíala en alto, y dende<sup>d</sup> a un poco caía con ella y dava muy gran golpe. También nos contaron que muchas vezes le dieron de comer y que nunca jamás comió, y que le preguntavan [de] dónde venía y a qué parte tenía su casa, y que les mostró una hendedura de la tierra y dixo que su casa era allá debaxo. Destas cosas que ellos nos dezían nosotros nos reíamos mucho burlando dellas. Y como ellos vieron que no lo creíamos,

it seemed that it had occurred some fifteen or sixteen years earlier;<sup>1</sup> that they said that through that land went a man they call an evil being,<sup>2</sup> and that he was small in body and that he had a beard, although they were never able to see his face clearly, and that when he came to the house where they were, their hair stood on end and they trembled, and afterward he appeared at the door of the house with a flaming firebrand. And later that man came in and took whichever one of them he wanted, and he gave them three large incisions in the sides with a very sharp flint, a hand wide and two spans long.<sup>3</sup> And he placed his hand into those wounds and pulled out their entrails, and that he cut off a piece, more or less a span long, and threw the part that he cut off into the fire, and afterward he made three cuts in the arm, and the second one he made in the crook of the arm,<sup>4</sup> and dislocated it. And a little while afterward, he set it back into place, and he placed his hands over the wounds, and they told us that later they were healed, and that many times when they danced, he appeared among them, sometimes in the costume of a woman, and other times dressed as a man, and when he wanted, he picked up the *buhío*, or house, and raised it into the air, and a little while afterward he dropped it and it fell with a great blow. They also told us that many times they gave him food to eat and that he never ate anything, and that they asked him where he came from and where he had his house, and he showed them a cleft in the earth and said that his house was there below. We laughed a great deal about these things they told us, making fun of them. And since they saw that we did not believe them,

1. About 1518 or 1519.

2. *mala cosa*. In anthropological terms, the trickster, that is, the figure of the creator and destroyer without reference to divinity. The trickster is considered to be one of the most ancient expressions of humanity. His earliest forms are found among the natives of North America, and he is characterized by isolation from society and sexual transformation (Radin xxiii, 132–37). *Mala cosa* seems to replicate these traits.

3. See (f13r).

4. *sangradura*. The bend of the arm opposite the elbow (DRAE 1177b).

truxeron muchos de aquellos que dezían que él avía tomado, y vimos las señales de las cuchilladas que él avía dado en los lugares en la manera que ellos contavan. Nosotros les diximos que aquél era un malo. Y de la mejor manera que podimos les dávamos a entender que si ellos creyessen en Dios nuestro Señor y fuessen christianos como nosotros, no ternían miedo de aquél ni él osaría venir [V:f32v] a hazelles aquellas cosas, y que tuviessen por çierto que en tanto que nosotros en la tierra estuviésemos, él no osaría paresçer en ella. Desto se holgaron ellos mucho,<sup>a</sup> y perdieron mucha parte del temor que tenían. Estos indios nos dixeron que avían visto al esturiano y a Figueroa con otros que adelante en la costa estaban, a quien nosotros llamávamos [los] de los higos. Toda esta gente no conosçían los tiempos por el sol ni la luna, ni tienen cuenta del mes y año, mas<sup>b</sup> entienden y saben las diferencias de los tiempos quando las frutas vienen a madurar y en tiempo que muere el pescado y el apareçer de las estrellas, en que son muy diestros y exerçitados. Con éstos siempre fuimos bien tratados aunque lo que avíamos de comer lo cavávamos y traíamos nuestras cargas de agua y leña. Sus casas y mantenimientos son como las de los passados aunque tienen muy mayor hambre, porque no alcançan maíz ni vellotas ni nuezes. Anduvimos siempre en cueros como ellos, y de noche nos cubríamos con cueros de venado. De ocho meses que con<sup>c</sup> ellos estuvimos, los seis padesçimos mucha hambre, que tanpoco alcançan pescado. Y al cabo deste tiempo ya las

a. mucho] Z: mueho

b. mas] V: y mas

c. con] Z: cou

they brought many of those who said that he had taken them, and we saw the scars of the cuts that he had made in the places and in the manner they had said. We told them that he was an evil person. And in the best manner that we could, we gave them to understand that, if they believed in God our Lord and were Christians like us, they would not be afraid of him, nor would he dare to come and do those things to them, and they could be assured that as long as we were in the land, he would not dare to appear in it. With this they were very pleased, and they lost a great deal of the fear they had. These Indians<sup>1</sup> told us that they had seen the Asturian and Figueroa with others who were ahead on the coast,<sup>2</sup> whom we called [the people] of the figs.<sup>3</sup> All these people did not know how to calculate the seasons either by the sun or the moon, nor do they have reckoning of the months and years, but they understand and know the differences between the times when the fruit comes to mature and when the fish die and the stars appear, in the observance of which they are very skilled and well practiced. With these Indians we were always well treated, although we had to dig up what we ate, and we carried our loads of water and wood. Their houses and foodstuffs are like those of the previous people, although they have much greater hunger, because they do not have maize or acorns or nuts. We always went about naked as they did, and at night we covered ourselves with deerskins. Of the eight months we spent with them, we suffered great hunger during six, for even fish are not obtainable there.<sup>4</sup> And at the end of this time,<sup>5</sup> the

1. Avavares.

2. In the region of southern Mustang Island or Padre Island. Figueroa and the Asturian had fled down the coast from the region of Matagorda and St. Joseph Islands in the spring of 1529. According to Oviedo (598b–99a), they had vowed not to stop until they either reached Pánuco or met their death (see f31v).

3. See (f44r).

4. Cabeza de Vaca's remark about the lack of fish, also mentioned by Oviedo (602b), has led commentators to suppose that the Avavares lived considerably inland. The fact that the Avavares identified the time of year according to the availability of fish and that they provided information

about the raft of Téllez and Peñalosa reveals that their zone of habitation was not far from the coast.

5. Midsummer 1535.



- a. fuésemos] V: fuemos
- b. açerca] V: cerca
- tunas començavan a madurar, y sin que dellos fuésemos sentidos, nos fuésemos<sup>a</sup> a otros que adelante estaban, llamados Maliacones. Estos estaban una jornada de allí donde yo y el negro llegamos. A cabo de los tres días embié que traxesse a Castillo y a Dorantes. Y venidos nos partimos todos juntos con los indios que ivan a comer una frutilla de unos árboles de que se mantienen diez o doze días entretanto que las tunas vienen. Y allí se juntaron con éstos otros indios que se llaman Arbadaos, y a éstos hallamos muy enfermos y flacos e hinchados, tanto que nos maravillamos mucho, y los indios con quien avíamos venido se bolvieron por el mesmo camino. Y nosotros les diximos [a los Malicones] que nos queríamos quedar con aquéllos, de que ellos mostraron pesar, y assí nos quedamos en el campo con aquéllos açerca<sup>b</sup> de aquellas casas. Y quando ellos nos vieron, juntáronse después de aver hablado [V:f33r] entre sí, y cada uno dellos tomó el suyo por la mano y nos llevaron a sus casas. Con éstos padesçimos más hambre que con los otros, porque en todo el día no comíamos más de dos puños de aquella fruta, la qual estava verde; tenía tanta leche que nos quemava las bocas. Y con tener falta de agua, dava mucha sed a quien la comía. Y como la hambre fuesse tanta, nosotros comprámosles dos perros, y a trueco de ellos les dimos unas redes y otras cosas y un cuero con que yo me cubría. Ya he dicho como por toda esta tierra anduvimos desnudos, y como no estábamos acostumbrados a ello, a manera de serpientes mudávamos

prickly pears were beginning to mature, and without our being perceived by them, we went to others who were ahead,<sup>1</sup> called Maliacones.<sup>2</sup> These Indians were a day's journey from where I and the black man arrived. At the end of three days, I sent him to bring over Castillo and Dorantes. And having come, we departed all together with the Indians who were going to eat a small fruit from some trees,<sup>3</sup> on which they sustain themselves during ten or twelve days before the prickly pears ripen. And there they met with these other Indians who are called Arbadaos, and we found these Indians to be very sick and emaciated and bloated, so much so that we were astonished, and the Indians with whom we had come returned by the same route. And we told them [the Maliacones] that we wanted to remain with those [others, the Arbadaos], about which they showed sorrow, and thus we remained in the countryside with those Indians near those houses. And when they saw us, they met together after having spoken among themselves, and each one of them took his own [Christian] by the hand and took us to their houses. With these people<sup>4</sup> we suffered more hunger than with the others, because in the entire day we ate nothing more than two fistfuls of that fruit, which was green; it had so much milk that it burned our mouths. And there being a lack of water, it produced great thirst in whomever ate it. And as our hunger was so great, we bought two dogs from them, and in exchange for them we gave them some nets and other things and a deerskin with which I covered myself.<sup>5</sup> I have already said how, throughout this entire land, we went about naked, and since we were not accustomed to it, like serpents we changed

1. This flight from the Avavares in midsummer 1535 (not the flight to them in late summer 1534) marks the beginning of the journey that led the four Christians back to Spanish civilization. See (f35r).

2. Sometime in midsummer 1535, when the prickly pears were first beginning to ripen. The date of the four men's departure from the Avavares to the Maliacones, whom they had first encountered the previous summer (f37v), is uncertain. Dates from May (eight months after their arrival at the Avavares), as stated by Cabeza de Vaca (f38v, f39v), to August (Oviedo 603a) 1535 have been proposed.

3. Mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*). See (f45r-v).

4. Arbadaos.

5. Cabeza de Vaca here commences a digression (f40r-f41r) on the men's experiences from the Avavares Indians to the Arbadaos.

a. rastrando] V: arrastrando

b. aquellas] Z: aquell s

c. que] Z: que

los cueros dos veces en el año. Y con el sol y aire hazíanse nos en los pechos y en las espaldas unos empeines muy grandes de que resçibíamos muy gran pena por razón de las muy grandes cargas que traíamos, que eran muy pesadas, y hazían que las cuerdas se nos metían por los braços. E la tierra es tan áspera y tan çerrada que muchas vezes hazíamos leña en montes, que quando la acabávamos de sacar nos corría por muchas partes sangre de las espinas y matas con que topávamos que nos rompían por donde alcançavan. A las vezes me aconteçió hazer leña donde después de averme costado mucha sangre no la podía sacar ni a cuestras ni rastrando.<sup>a</sup> No tenía, quando en estos trabajos me vía, otro remedio ni consuelo sino pensar en la Passión de nuestro Redemptor Jesuchristo y en la sangre que por mí derramó, y considerar cuánto más sería el tormento que de las espinas él padesçió que no aquel que yo entonces suffría. Contratava con estos indios haziéndoles peines, y con arcos y con flechas y con redes. Hazíamos esteras que son cosas de que ellos tienen mucha neçessidad. Y aunque lo saben hazer no quieren ocuparse en nada por buscar entretanto qué comer. Y quando entienden en esto passan muy gran hambre. Otras vezes me mandavan raer cueros y ablandarlos. Y la mayor prosperidad en que yo allí me vi era el día que me davan a raer alguno, porque yo lo raía muy [V:f33v] mucho y comía de aquellas<sup>b</sup> raeduras, y aquello me bastava para dos o tres días. También nos aconteçió con éstos, y con los que<sup>c</sup> atrás avemos

our skins twice a year. And with the sun and wind, there appeared on our chests and backs some very great ulcerations, which caused us very great distress on account of the large loads we carried, which were very heavy and caused the ropes to cut into the flesh of our arms. And the land is so rugged and impassable that many times when we gathered firewood in the dense thickets, when we finished taking it out we were bleeding in many places from the thorns and brambles that we encountered, for wherever they ensnared us they broke our skin. Sometimes it happened to me that, after shedding much blood in gathering wood, I could not haul it out, either on my back or by dragging it. I did not have, when I saw myself in these difficulties, any other remedy or consolation but to think about the Passion of our Redeemer Jesus Christ and the blood he shed for me, and to consider how much greater had been the torment that he suffered from the thorns, than that which I had to endure at that time. I traded with these Indians<sup>1</sup> by making combs for them, and with bows and arrows and nets. We made mats, which are objects of which they have great need. And although they know how to make them, they do not want to occupy themselves in any of it because of the need at the same time to search for food. And when they devote themselves to this they suffer very great hunger. On other occasions they ordered me to scrape hides and soften them. And the greatest prosperity in which I found myself there was the day they gave me a hide to scrape, because I scraped it very clean and ate of those scrapings, and that sufficed me for two or three days. It also happened to us, with these Indians and with the ones whom we

1. Avavares.

- a. pusiésemos] V: pusiéramos      dexado, darnos un pedaço de carne y comérnoslo assí crudo. Porque si lo pusiésemos<sup>a</sup> a assar, el primer indio que llegava se lo llevaba y comía. Paresçíanos que no era bien ponerla en esta ventura, y también nosotros no estávamos tales que nos dávamos pena por<sup>b</sup> comello asado, y no lo podíamos también passar como crudo. Ésta es la vida que allí tuvimos, y aquel poco sustentamiento lo ganávamos con los rescates que por nuestras manos hezimos.
- b. por] V: *om.*
- c. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo veinte y tres: Cómo nos partimos después de aver comido los perros.      <sup>c</sup>Después que comimos los perros, paresçiéndonos que teníamos algún esfuerço para poder ir adelante, encomendándonos a Dios nuestro Señor para que nos guiasse, nos despedimos de aquellos indios. Y ellos nos encaminaron a otros de su lengua<sup>d</sup> que estaban çerca de allí. Y yendo por nuestro camino, llovió y todo aquel día y<sup>e</sup> anduvimos con agua. Y allende desto perdimos el camino, y fuimos a parar a un monte muy grande. Y cogimos muchas hojas de tunas y assámoslas aquella noche en un horno que hezimos, y dímosles tanto fuego que a la mañana estaban para comer. Y después de averlas comido, encomendámonos a Dios, y partímonos y hallamos el camino que perdido avíamos. Y passado el monte, hallamos otras casas de indios. Y llegados<sup>f</sup> allá, vimos dos mugeres y mochachos que se espantaron que andavan por el monte, y en vernos huyeron de nosotros y fueron a llamar a los indios que andavan por el monte. Y venidos, paráronse a mirarnos detrás de unos árboles, y llamámosles, y allegáronse con mucho temor.
- d. lengua] Z: lengna
- e. y] V: *om.*
- f. llegados] Z: llegodos

left behind, that we were given a piece of meat to eat raw. And if we put it to roast, the first Indian who came along carried it off and ate it. It seemed to us unwise to put it at such risk, and besides, we were not such that it troubled us to eat it roasted, but neither were we able to swallow it raw.<sup>1</sup> This is the life that we had there, and the little sustenance we obtained was through the objects of exchange that we made with our own hands.

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter twenty-three: How we departed after having eaten the dogs.

‘After we ate the dogs,<sup>2</sup> it seeming to us that we had the strength to be able to go on ahead, commending ourselves to God our Lord to guide us, we took leave of those Indians.<sup>3</sup> And they guided us to others of their language who were near there.<sup>4</sup> And pursuing our course, it rained that entire day and we walked in water. And in addition to this we lost our way, and we came to rest in a very great woods. And we gathered many prickly pear leaves and we cooked them that night in an oven we made, and we gave them so much flame that in the morning they were ready to eat. And after having eaten them, we entrusted ourselves to God, and we departed and found the path that we had lost. Beyond the woods, we found other houses of Indians. And when we arrived there, we saw two women and boys who became frightened as they walked through the thicket, and upon seeing us, they fled from us and went to alert the Indians who were going through the woods. And having approached, they stopped to watch us from behind some trees, and we called to them, and they came toward us with great fear.

1. The Spanish text is ambiguous. The statement can be interpreted as a commentary on either the four men’s cultural attitude toward eating raw meat or their physical capability to do so. We have elected the first interpretation, that the text implies a comparison between the cultural norms of the natives and the four Narváez survivors with respect to the consumption of raw flesh, suggesting that the natives were opposed to the four men cooking the meat and most likely did not understand the reason for doing so, because they perhaps thought that to cook the meat was to destroy it or render it inedible. Since the natives would carry off partially cooked meat and eat it, it seems most plausible that

their interest was in making the best use of the meat given its scarcity, and they probably thought that when the men cooked the meat they were wasting it. Smith (*Relation* 127) misinterprets the statement, insisting that the four Narváez survivors preferred raw meat to cooked.

2. Cabeza de Vaca here returns to the narrative of the four survivors’ journey at their departure from the Arbadaos after the digression mentioned above (f40r).

3. Arbadaos.

4. The Arbadaos are the last group of natives that Cabeza de Vaca identifies by name. Some commentators have suggested that the inhabitants of the settlement of fifty houses that the men reached shortly after

leaving the Arbadaos were the Cuchendados, since this is the last group to which Cabeza de Vaca refers in his summary of the Indian groups (f44r).

<p>a. avían] V: avía</p> <p>b. mostravan] Z: mostrava</p> <p>c. sus] Z: sus sus</p> <p>d. enfermos] Z: enfermos mos</p> <p>e. hojas] Z: hijas</p> <p>f. ] Z: <i>om.</i> V: Capítulo veinte y quatro: De las costumbres de los indios de aquella tierra.</p>	<p>Y después de averlos hablado, nos dixerón que tenían mucha [V:f34r] hambre, y que çerca de allí estaban muchas casas dellos propios. Y dixerón que nos llevarían a ellas. Y aquella noche llegamos adonde avían<sup>a</sup> çinquenta casas, y se espantavan de vernos y mostravan<sup>b</sup> mucho temor. Y después que estuvieron algo asosegados de nosotros, allegávannos con las manos al rostro y al cuerpo, y después traían ellos sus mismas manos por sus<sup>c</sup> caras y sus cuerpos. Y assí estuvimos aquella noche, y venida la mañana traxéronnos los enfermos<sup>d</sup> que tenían, rogándonos que los santiguássemos, y nos dieron de lo que tenían para comer, que eran hojas<sup>e</sup> de tunas y tunas verdes asadas. Y por el buen tratamiento que nos hazían, y porque aquello que tenían nos lo davan de buena gana y voluntad y holgavan de quedar sin comer por dárnoslo, estuvimos con ellos algunos días. Y estando allí, vinieron otros de más adelante. Quando se quisieron partir, diximos a los primeros que nos queríamos ir con aquéllos. A ellos les pesó mucho. Y rogáronnos muy ahincadamente que no nos fuéssemos. Y al fin nos despedimos dellos, y los dexamos llorando por nuestra partida porque les pesava mucho en gran manera.</p> <p><sup>f</sup>Desde la isla de Malhado todos los indios que hasta esta tierra vimos tienen por costumbre, desde el día que sus mugeres se sienten preñadas, no dormir juntos hasta que passen dos años que an criado los hijos, los quales maman hasta que son de edad de doze años, que ya entonçes están en edad que por</p>
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And after having spoken to them, they told us that they had great hunger, and that near there were many of their own houses. And they said that they would take us to them. And that night we arrived to where there were fifty houses, and they were astonished to see us, and they showed great fear.<sup>1</sup> And after they were somewhat calmed about our presence, they came to us, placing their hands on our faces and bodies, and afterward they passed their hands over their own faces and bodies. And thus we remained that night, and come the morning they brought us the sick people they had, begging us to make the sign of the cross over them, and they gave us of what they had to eat, which were prickly pear leaves and cooked green prickly pears.<sup>2</sup> And because of the good treatment they gave us, and because they gave to us gladly and willingly what they had and were pleased to remain without food in order to give it to us, we stayed with them for some days.<sup>3</sup> And being there, others came from farther ahead.<sup>4</sup> When they were preparing to leave, we said to the first ones that we wanted to go with those others. It saddened them very much. And they entreated us earnestly not to go. And in the end we took leave of them, and we left them weeping because of our departure, because it grieved them profoundly.

f. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter twenty-four: Of the customs of the Indians of that land.

<sup>f</sup>From the island of Malhado to this land<sup>5</sup> all the Indians whom we saw have as a custom, from the day their wives know they are pregnant, not to sleep with them until after two years of nurturing their children, who suckle until they are twelve years old, at which time they are of an age that by

1. Oviedo (603b) declares that this was the very first occasion on which the natives “began to fear and show reverence for these few Christians and to esteem them highly.” Cabeza de Vaca had attributed the beginning of the Indians’ reverential conduct toward the men earlier, upon their arrival at the Avavares (f35v).

2. In Oviedo’s (603b) account this is the first episode of curing. He compares the Narváez men’s manner of curing to that of *saludadores*, or curers, in Castile, that is, by blessing and breathing upon the patient. Covarrubias (923b) defines this type of healer as one who cures by grace, *gratis data*, curing men of madness and restoring livestock to

health. Covarrubias remarked that such individuals should be called “salivadores” instead of “saludadores” because they used their own saliva as an agent in curing.

3. According to Oviedo (603b), the men remained with these Indians for two weeks (fifteen days) and departed as the prickly pears were beginning to ripen.

4. From this point on, Cabeza de Vaca identifies no previously unmentioned native group by name.

5. Cabeza de Vaca here again interrupts the narration of the men’s journey to summarize his observations of the customs of the peoples encountered, this time from Malhado to near the Rio Grande (f41v–f45r).



a. que] V: *om.*

sí saben buscar de comer. Preguntámosles que por qué los criavan así, y dezían que por la mucha hambre que en la tierra avía que acontecía muchas vezes, como nosotros veíamos, estar dos o tres días sin comer, y a las vezes quatro; y por esta causa [V:f34v] los dexavan mamar porque en los tiempos de hambre no moriessen, y que<sup>a</sup> ya que algunos escapassen, saldrían muy delicados y de pocas fuerças. Y si acaso acontece caer enfermos algunos, déxanlos morir en aquellos campos si no es hijo, y todos los demás, si no pueden ir con ellos, se quedan, mas para llevar un hijo o hermano se cargan y lo llevan a cuestras. Todos éstos acostumbran dexar sus mugeres quando entre ellos no ay conformidad, y se tornan a casar con quien quieren; esto es entre los mançebos, mas los que tienen hijos permanescen con sus mugeres y no las dexan. E quando en algunos pueblos riñen y travan quisiones unos con otros, apuñéanse y apaléanse hasta que están muy cansados, y entonçes se desparten. Algunas vezes los desparten mugeres entrando entrellos, que hombres no entran a despartirlos, y por ninguna passión que tengan, no meten en ella arcos ni flechas. Y desque se an apuñeado y passado su quisión, toman sus casas y mugeres y vanse a<sup>b</sup> bivir por los campos y apartados de los otros hasta que se les passa el enojo. Y quando ya están desenojados y sin ira, tórnanse a su pueblo. Y de aí adelante son amigos como si ninguna cosa huviera passado entre ellos, ni es menester que nadie haga las amistades, porque desta manera se haze. Y si los que riñen no son casados, vanse a otros sus vezinos, y aunque sean sus

b. a] Z: *om.*

themselves they know how to search for food. We asked them why they raised them in this manner, and they said that because of the great hunger in the land it happened many times, as we had seen, that they went two or three days without eating, and sometimes four; and for this reason, they let their children suckle so that in times of hunger they would not die, since even if some should survive [without it], they would end up sickly and of little strength. And if by chance it happens that some fall ill, they leave them to die in those fields if it is not a child of their own,<sup>1</sup> and all the rest, if they cannot go with them, remain, but in order to transport a child or a sibling,<sup>2</sup> they carry them and bear them on their backs. All these men are accustomed to leaving their wives when there is disagreement between them, and they marry again whomever they please; this occurs among the childless men, but those who have children remain with their wives and do not leave them. And when in some villages they fight and have disputes with one another, they strike and club each other until they are worn out, and then they separate. Sometimes women separate them by going between them, since men do not intervene to separate them, and in spite of whatever passion grips them, they do not bring bows or arrows into it.<sup>3</sup> And as soon as they have fought with one another and settled the dispute, they take their houses and wives and go to live in the countryside, separated from the others until their rage has subsided. And as soon as they are calmed down and without anger, they return to their village. And henceforth they are friends, acting as if nothing had happened between them, nor is it necessary that anyone intervene to restore friendship, because this is the way they do it. And if those who are in conflict are not married, they go to others of their neighbors, and although they be their

1. *si no es hijo*. The Spanish is ambiguous, referring either to the practice of abandoning any infant not of one's own flesh (as we have here translated) or of abandoning female children. The Mariames and the Yguases are described (f31v–f32r) as the only groups who practiced female infanticide.

2. *un hijo o hermano*. The same ambiguity in the Spanish applies, as noted above.

3. Among the groups of this coastal area, women are described not only as mediators of intertribal conflict but also as conduits of travel and

exchange. The first mention of such activity in this area was the passage of Cabeza de Vaca and Lope de Oviedo from Malhado to the pecan region of the San Antonio and Guadalupe Rivers, on which Deaguanes women served as guides (f28v). Similar patterns were repeated in subsequent cultural and geographic areas (f43r, f45v, f48r, f51v, f52v).

a. quando] V: quando es	<p>enemigos, los resciben bien y se huelgan mucho con ellos y les dan de lo que tienen, de suerte que, quando<sup>a</sup> pasado el enojo, buelven a su pueblo, vienen<sup>b</sup> ricos. Toda es gente de guerra y tienen tanta astucia para guardarse de sus enemigos como ternían si fuessen criados en Italia y en continua guerra. Quando están en parte que<sup>c</sup> sus enemigos los pueden ofender, asientan sus casas a la orilla del monte más áspero y de mayor espessura que por allí hallan. Y junto a él hazen un fosso y en éste duermen. Toda la gente de guerra está cubierta con leña menuda y hazen sus saeteras. Y están tan cubiertos y dissimulados que, aunque estén [en] cabellos,<sup>d</sup> no los veen. Y hazen un camino muy angosto y entra hasta en medio del monte. Y allí hazen lugar para que [V:f35r] duerman las mugeres y niños. Y quando viene la noche, ençienden lumbres en sus casas para que, si huviere espías, crean que están en ellas. Y antes del alva tornan a ençender los mismos fuegos, y si acaso los enemigos vienen a dar en las mismas casas, los que están en el fosso salen a ellos y hazen desde las trincheas mucho<sup>e</sup> daño sin que los de fuera los vean ni los puedan hallar. Y quando no ay montes en que ellos puedan desta manera esconderse y hazer sus çeladas, assientan en llano en la parte que mejor les pareçe. Y cercanse de trincheas cubiertas con leña menuda y hazen sus saeteras<sup>f</sup> con que flechan a los indios, y estos reparos hazen para de noche. Estando yo con los de Aguenes, no estando avisados, vinieron sus enemigos<sup>g</sup> a medianoche y dieron en ellos y mataron tres y hirieron otros muchos, de</p>
b. vienen] V: y vienen	
c. que] Z: que	
d. estén [en] cabellos] V: esten cabe ellos	
e. mucho] Z: mncho	
f. saeteras] Z: salteras	
g. enemigos] Z: eneminos	

enemies, they receive them well and are pleased with them and give them of what they have, in such a manner that, when their anger has passed, they return to their village, coming back rich. They are all warlike people, and they have as much cunning to protect themselves from their enemies as they would have if they had been raised in Italy and in continuous war.<sup>1</sup> When they are in a place where their enemies can attack them, they set up their houses at the edge of the most rugged woods and of the greatest density they find there. And next to it they make a trench and sleep in it. All the warriors are covered with light brush, and they make their arrows. And they are so well covered and hidden that even if their heads are uncovered, they are not seen. And they make a very narrow path and enter into the middle of the woods. And there they make a place for their women and children to sleep. And when night comes, they light fires in their houses, so that if there should be spies, they would believe that they are in them. And before dawn, they again light the same fires, and if by chance their enemies come to attack the houses themselves, those who are in the trench surprise them and from the trenches do them much harm without those outside seeing them or being able to find them. And when there are no woods in which they can hide themselves in this manner and prepare their ambushes, they set up camp on the plain in the area that seems best to them. And they surround themselves with trenches covered with light brush and make their arrows with which they shoot the Indians, and these defenses they make for nighttime. While I was with the ones of Aguenes,<sup>2</sup> they not being warned, their enemies<sup>3</sup> came at midnight and attacked them and killed three of them and wounded many others, with the

1. A brief allusion to Cabeza de Vaca's military service in Italy in 1511–12 and the wars between France and Spain that occurred in Italy during his lifetime.

2. *De Aguenes*. A variant of *Deaguanes* (f28v).

3. Quevenes.

a. los] V: *om.*

b. enemistades] Z: enemistades

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo veinte y cinco: Cómo los indios son prestos a un arma.

d. una armada] V: un arma

e. enemigos] Z: euemigos

f. a] V: *om.*

suerte que huyeron de sus casas por el monte adelante. Y desque sintieron que los otros se avían ido, bolvieron a ellas. Y recogieron todas las flechas que los otros les avían hechado, y lo más encubiertamente que pudieron, los siguieron y estuvieron aquella noche sobre sus casas sin que fuessen sentidos. Y al quarto del alva les acometieron y les mataron çinco sin muchos otros que fueron heridos, y les hizieron huir y dexar sus casas y los<sup>a</sup> arcos con toda su hazienda. Y de aí a poco tiempo vinieron las mugeres de los que se llamavan Quevenes, y entendieron entre ellos y los hizieron amigos, aunque algunas vezes ellas son principio de la guerra. Todas estas gentes, quando tienen enemistades<sup>b</sup> particulares quando no son de una familia, se matan de noche por assechanças y usan unos con otros grandes crueldades.

<sup>c</sup>Ésta e s la más presta gente para una armada<sup>d</sup> de quantas yo he visto en el mundo, porque si se temen de sus enemigos<sup>e</sup> toda la noche están despiertos con sus arcos a par de sí y una dozena de flechas, y el que [V:f35v] duerme tienta su arco y si no le halla en cuerda le da la buelta que ha menester. Salen muchas vezes fuera de las casas baxados por el suelo de arte que no pueden ser vistos, y miran y atalayan por todas partes para sentir lo que ay. Y si algo sienten, en un punto son todos en el campo con sus arcos y flechas, y assí están hasta el día corriendo a unas partes y a<sup>f</sup> otras donde veen que es menester o piensan que pueden estar sus enemigos. Quando viene el día tornan a afloxar sus arcos

result that they fled from their houses forward through the woods. And as soon as they perceived that the others had gone, they returned to them. And they gathered up all the arrows that the others had shot at them, and as secretly as they could, they followed them and were near their houses that night without being perceived. And in the early morning<sup>1</sup> they attacked them and they killed five of them and injured many others, and made them flee and leave their houses and their bows with all their possessions. And a little while later the women of the ones who were called Quevenes came and negotiated between them and made them friends, although sometimes the women are the cause of war.<sup>2</sup> All these peoples, when they have particular enmities that are not among family members, kill each other at night by ambush and perform on one another great acts of cruelty.

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter twenty-five: How the Indians are quick with a weapon.

“These are the people most fit for war of all I have seen in the world, because if they are afraid of their enemies, all night they keep vigil with their bows at their sides and a dozen arrows, and the one who is sleeping checks his bow and if he finds it unstrung, he gives it the turns that are needed. Many times they go out of their houses crouched low to the ground so that they cannot be seen, and they watch and keep vigil all around to discover what is there. And if they sense something, in a moment they are all on the field with their bows and arrows, and thus they are until daybreak, running from one place to another, wherever they see it is necessary or they think their enemies might be. When day comes, they again unstring their bows

1. *al cuarto del alba*. Cabeza de Vaca used the Spanish military reference to the last of the four periods of the night watch in order to indicate when this event occurred.

2. Cabeza de Vaca would have witnessed the battle between the Deaguanes and the Quevenes in the region of Matagorda Bay in the spring of 1533.

a. mientras] Z: mientras V:  
mientras

hasta que salen a caça. Las cuerdas de los arcos son niervos de venados. La manera que tienen de pelear es abaxados por el suelo. Y mientras<sup>a</sup> se flechan, andan hablando y saltando siempre de un cabo para otro, guardándose de las flechas de sus enemigos, tanto que en semejantes partes pueden rezebir muy poco daño. De ballestas y arcabuzes antes los indios burlan dellos porque estas armas no aprovechan para ellos en campos llanos adonde ellos andan sueltos. Son buenas para estrechos y lugares de agua; en todo lo demás los cavallos son los que an de sojuzgar, y lo que los indios universalmente temen. Quien contra ellos huviere de pelear a de estar muy avisado que no le sientan flaqueza ni codicia de lo que tienen. Y mientras durare la guerra an los de tratar muy mal, porque si temor les conosçen o alguna codicia, ella es gente que sabe conoçer tiempos en que vengarse, y toman esfuerço del temor de los contrarios. Quando se an flechado en la guerra y gastado su munición, buélvense cada uno su camino sin que los unos sigan a los otros, aunque los unos sean muchos y los otros pocos, y ésta<sup>b</sup> es costumbre suya. Muchas vezes se passan de parte a parte con las flechas y no mueren de las heridas si no toca en las tripas o en el corazón, antes sanan presto. Veen y oyen más y tienen más agudo sentido que quantos hombres yo creo que ay en el mundo. Son grandes suffridores de hambre y de sed y de frío, como aquellos que están más acostumbrados y hechos a ello que otros. Esto he querido contar porque allende que todos los hombres dessean saber las

b. ésta] Z: esta esta

until they go out to hunt. The bowstrings are made from the nerves of deer. The manner in which they fight is low to the ground. And while they are shooting their arrows, they go talking and leaping about from place to place, avoiding the arrows of their enemies, so much so that in such places they manage to suffer very little harm. The Indians are more likely to make fun of crossbows and harquebuses because these weapons are ineffective against them in the flat, open areas where they roam free. They are good for enclosed areas and wetlands; but in all other areas, horses are what must be used to defeat them, and are what the Indians universally fear. Whoever might have to fight against them should be advised to prevent them from perceiving weakness or greed for what they have. And as long as war lasts, they must treat them very badly, because if they know that their enemy has fear or some sort of greed, they are the people who know how to recognize the times in which to take vengeance and they take advantage of the fear of their enemies. In war, when they have shot at one another and spent their ammunition, they return along their own route without following one another, although they be many and the others few, and this is their custom. Many times they are shot through and through by arrows, and they do not die of the wounds if they are not struck in the abdomen or the heart; instead they heal very quickly. They see and hear more and they have sharper senses than any other men that I think there are in the world. They are great sufferers of hunger and thirst and cold, as they are more accustomed and hardened to it than others. This I have wanted to tell because, beyond the fact that all men desire to know the



- a. costumbres] Z: costumbre  
 b. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo veinte y seis: De las nasciones y lenguas.  
 c. Cuchendados] V: *om.*  
 d. Cavoques] V: Caoques  
 e. Charruco] V: Chorroco  
 f. los Deguenes] V: Doguenes  
 g. Yeguazes] V: Yguazes  
 h. la] Z: Ir  
 i. Chavavares] V: Avavares  
 j. Cortalchulches] V: Cortalchiches  
 k. arraca] V: arre aca
- costumbres y exerçijos de los otros, los que algunas vezes se vinieren a ver con ellos estén avisados de sus costumbres<sup>a</sup> y ardidés que suelen no poco aprovechar en semejantes casos.
- <sup>b</sup>También quiero contar sus naçiones y lenguas que desde la isla de Malhado hasta los últimos Cuchendados<sup>c</sup> ay. En la isla de Malhado ay dos lenguas: los unos llaman de Cavoques,<sup>d</sup> y a los otros llaman de Han. En la tierra firme enfrente de la isla ay otros que se llaman de Charruco,<sup>e</sup> y toman el nombre de los montes donde biven. Adelante en la costa de la mar habitan otros que se llaman los Deguenes<sup>f</sup> y, enfrente dellos, otros que tienen por nombre los de Mendica. Más adelante en la costa están los Quevenes, y enfrente dellos dentro en la tierra firme los Mariames. Y yendo por la costa adelante están otros que se llaman Guaycones, y enfrente déstos dentro en la tierra firme los Yeguazes.<sup>g</sup> Cabo déstos están otros que se llaman Atayos, y detrás déstos otros, Acubadaos, y déstos ay muchos por esta vereda adelante. En la costa biven otros llamados Quitoles, y, enfrente de éstos, dentro en la<sup>h</sup> tierra firme los Chavavares.<sup>i</sup> Con éstos se juntan los Maliacones, y otros Cortalchulches,<sup>j</sup> y otros que se llaman Susolas, y otros que se llaman Comos. Y adelante en la costa están los Camoles. Y en la misma costa adelante otros a quien nosotros llamamos los de los higos. Todas estas gentes tienen habitaciones y pueblos y lenguas diversas. Entre éstos ay una lengua en que llaman a los hombres por «mira acá,» «arraca,»<sup>k</sup> a los perros «xo.» En toda la

<p>b. ] Z: <i>om.</i> V: Chapter twenty-six: Of the nations and languages.</p> <p>c. who are Cuchendados] V: <i>om.</i></p> <p>d. Cavoques] V: Caoques</p> <p>e. Charruco] V: Chorroco</p> <p>f. the Deguenes] V: Doguenes</p> <p>g. Yeguazes] V: Yguazes</p> <p>i. Chavavares] V: Avavares</p> <p>j. Cortalchulches] V: Cortalchiches</p> <p>k. arraca] V: arre aca</p>	<p>customs and practices of others, the ones who sometime might come to confront them should be informed about their customs and stratagems, which tend to be of no small advantage in such cases.</p> <p><sup>b</sup>I also want to tell about the nations<sup>1</sup> and languages that are found from the island of Malhado to the last ones, who are Cuchendados.<sup>c</sup> On the island of Malhado there are two languages: some are called of Cavoques,<sup>d</sup> and the others, of Han. On the mainland in front of the island there are others who are called of Charruco,<sup>e</sup> and they take the name of the woods where they live. Ahead on the coast of the sea live others who are called the Deguenes,<sup>f</sup> and in front of them, others who have as a name the ones of Mendica. Farther down the coast are the Quevenes, and in front of them on the mainland, the Mariames. And following forward along the coast are others who are called Guaycones, and facing these Indians, on the mainland, the Yeguazes.<sup>g</sup> Beyond these Indians are others who are called Atayos, and behind these others, Acubadaos, and of these there are many ahead along this route. On the coast live others called Quitoles, and in front of these Indians, on the mainland, the Chavavares.<sup>i</sup> With these join together the Maliacones, and others, the Cortalchulches,<sup>j</sup> and others who are called Susolas, and others who are called Comos. And ahead on the coast are the Camoles. And on the same coast farther along [are] others whom we call the people of the figs.<sup>3</sup> All these peoples have dwellings and villages and diverse languages. Among these Indians there is a language in which they call to a person saying for “look over here,” “arraca,”<sup>k</sup> and to dogs, “xo.” In the entire</p>
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1. See (f35v).

2. Deaguanes.

3. The term “figs” pertains to prickly pears, and the prickly pear cactus came to be known as the “fig tree of the Indies.” Although the general description “people of the figs” suggests “people of the prickly pears,” it obviously refers to a specific Indian group or groups, rather than to all those who frequented the prickly pear grounds. See (f39v).

a. desta] V: de la

b. cosa] Z: cosu

tierra se emborrachan con un humo y dan quanto tienen por él. Beven también otra cosa que sacan de las hojas de los árboles como de enzina, y tuéstanla en unos botes al fuego, y después que la tienen tostada, hinchen el bote de agua y así lo tienen sobre el fuego, y quando ha hervido dos vezes, échanle en una vasija [V:f36v] y están enfriándola con media calabaza. Y quando está con mucha espuma, bévenla tan caliente quanto pueden sufrir. Y desde que la sacan del bote hasta que la beven están dando bozes, diziendo que quién quiere beber. Y quando las mugeres oyen estas bozes, luego se paran sin osarse mudar, y aunque estén mucho cargadas no osan hazer otra cosa. Y si acaso alguna dellas se mueve, la deshonorran y la dan de palos, y con muy gran enojo derraman el agua que tienen [preparada] para beber. Y la que an bevido la tornan a lançar, lo qual ellos hazen muy ligeramente y sin pena alguna. La razón desta<sup>a</sup> costumbre dan ellos: y dizen que si, quando ellos quieren beber aquella agua, las mugeres se mueven de donde les toma la boz, que en aquella agua se les mete en el cuerpo una cosa<sup>b</sup> mala y que dende a poco les haze morir. Y todo el tiempo que el agua está coziendo a de estar el bote atapado. Y si acaso está desatapado y alguna muger passa, lo derraman y no beven más de aquella agua. Es amarilla y están beviéndola tres días sin comer. Y cada día beve cada uno arroba y media della. E quando las mugeres están con su costumbre no buscan de comer más de para sí solas, porque ninguna otra persona come de lo que ella trae. En el tiempo que assí estava entre éstos, vi una

land they intoxicate themselves with something they smoke<sup>1</sup> and they give everything they have for it. They also drink another thing, which they extract from the leaves of trees like those of an oak,<sup>2</sup> and they toast it in certain vessels over the fire, and after they have it toasted, they fill the vessel with water, and thus they keep it over the fire, and when it has boiled twice, they pour it into a different vessel and they cool it with half a gourd. And when it has a great deal of foam, they drink it as hot as they can tolerate it. And from the time they take it out of the vessel until they drink it, they shout, saying, “Who wants to drink?” And when the women hear these shouts, they immediately stop without daring to move, and although they may be carrying heavy loads, they do not dare to do another thing. And if by chance one of them moves, they dishonor<sup>3</sup> her and beat her with sticks and with very great rage they pour out the water that they have [prepared] for drinking. And what they have drunk they disgorge, which they do very easily and without any trouble. They give a reason for this custom: and they say that if, when they desire to drink that water, the women move from where they are when they hear the voice, through that water something bad enters their bodies, and that a little while later it makes them die. And all the while the water cooks, the vessel must remain covered. And if by chance it is uncovered and some woman passes by, they pour it out and drink no more of that water. It is yellow, and they drink it for three days without eating. And each day each one of them drinks one and a half *arrobas*<sup>4</sup> of it. And when the women are menstruating<sup>5</sup> they do not search for food except for themselves, because no other person will eat what she brings. In the time that thus I was among these people,<sup>6</sup> I saw a

1. Although some commentators have identified this plant as tobacco or peyote, it is not possible to identify it given Cabeza de Vaca's lack of description.

2. This tree has been identified as a type of holly (genus *Ilex*)—the *Ilex cassine* by Hodge (88n1) and the *Ilex vomitiva* by Smith (*Relation* 139n3). Hodge describes the liquid prepared as a black tea; Cabeza de Vaca reported that the drink he saw was yellow. Again, the description is too vague to identify the plant.

3. *deshonrar*. A euphemism for rape. *Deshonra*, “the affront

that removes one's honor” (Covarrubias 461a).

4. A weight of 25 pounds (11.5 kilograms). A measure of liquid that varies in weight according to the density of the liquid and the region where the measurement is used (Covarrubias 152a; DRAE 123c). A Spanish liquid measure, weighing 25 pounds and varying from 2.6 to 3.6 gallons in volume (*Simon and Schuster's* 955b).

5. *Están con su costumbre*. “Menstruation, in women, is called ‘custom’ because of being normal and habitual” (Covarrubias 366b).

6. The group in which Cabeza de Vaca encountered the men he describes here cannot be identified.

- a. no] V: *om.*
- b. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo veinte y siete: De cómo nos mudamos y fuimos bien rescebidos.
- c. de] Z: da
- d. ella] Z: el
- e. otra almohaçada] V: otros puños
- f. paresçiere] V: paresce
- diablura, y es que vi un hombre casado con otro, y éstos son unos hombres amarionados impotentes. Y andan tapados como mugeres y hazen offiçio de mugeres, y no<sup>a</sup> tiran arco y llevan muy gran carga. Y entre éstos vimos muchos dellos assí amarionados como digo, y son más membrudos que los otros hombres y más altos; sufren muy grandes cargas.
- <sup>b</sup>[V:f37r] Después que nos partimos de los que dexamos llorando, fuímonos con los otros a sus casas. Y de los que en ellas estavan fuimos bien resçebidos, y traxeron sus hijos para que les tocássemos las manos, y dávannos mucha harina de mezquiquez. Este mezquiquez es una fruta que, quando está en el árbol, es muy amarga y es de<sup>c</sup> la manera de algarrovas, y cómese con tierra y con ella está dulce y bueno de comer. La manera que tienen con ella<sup>d</sup> es ésta: que hazen un hoyo en el suelo de la hondura que cada uno quiere. Y después de echada la fruta en este hoyo, con un palo tan gordo como la pierna y de braça y media en largo la muelen hasta muy molida, y demás que se le pega de la tierra del hoyo traen otra almohaçada<sup>e</sup> y échanla en el hoyo y tornan otro rato a moler, y después échanla en una vasija de manera de una espuerta. Y échanle tanta agua que basta a cobrirla de suerte que quede agua por çima. Y el que la ha molido pruévala, y si le paresçiere<sup>f</sup> que no está dulce, pide tierra y rebuélvela con ella. Y esto haze hasta que la halla dulce. Y assiéntanse todos alrededor, y cada uno mete la mano y saca lo que puede, y las pepitas della tornan a echar sobre unos cueros y las cáxcaras. Y el que lo a molido las

- wicked behavior,<sup>1</sup> and it is that I saw one man married to another, and these are effeminate, impotent men. And they go about covered like women, and they perform the tasks of women, and they do not<sup>a</sup> use a bow, and they carry very great loads. And among these we saw many of them, thus unmanly as I say, and they are more muscular than other men and taller; they suffer very large loads.<sup>2</sup>
- a. do not] V: *om.*
- b. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter twenty-seven: Of how we moved on and were well received.
- c. [an amount equivalent to] a curry-combful] V: more handfuls
- <sup>b</sup>After we departed from those whom we left weeping,<sup>3</sup> we went with the others to their houses. And we were well received by those who were in them, and they brought their children for us to touch with our hands, and they gave us much mesquite flour. This mesquite is a fruit that, when it is on the tree, is very bitter, and it is like carobs,<sup>4</sup> and it is eaten with earth and with it, it is sweet and good to eat. The manner in which they prepare it is as follows: they make a pit in the ground to the depth that they desire. And after throwing the fruit in this hole, they grind it with a timber as thick as a man's leg and a fathom<sup>5</sup> and a half long until it is very fine, and in addition to the earth that sticks to it from the hole, they bring [an amount equivalent to] a curry-combful<sup>6</sup> and they throw it in the hole, and they grind it again a while longer, and afterward they pour it into a vessel that is like a two-handed basket. And they put in as much water as is necessary to cover it completely. And the one who has ground it tastes it, and if it seems to him that it is not sweet, he asks for more dirt and he mixes it with it. And he does this until he finds it sweet. And they all sit down around there, and each one puts his hand in and takes out what he can, and they again toss the pits and the pods of it onto some skins. And the one who has ground them

1. *diablura*. Covarrubias's (468a) definition, under the entry *diablo* (devil), suggests a range of meaning from prankish to satanic.

2. To a limited degree these individuals correspond to the modern anthropological category of the berdache (see Angelino and Shedd; Schnarch).

3. Cabeza de Vaca here resumes the narration that he had previously interrupted (f41v).

4. *algarrovas*.

5. 5.5 feet (1.67 meters) (Hemming 518; DRAE 201b).

6. *almohazada*. According to Covarrubias (100b), the

*almohaza* was "a curry-comb made of iron with three or four types of teeth with which horses and other animals were brushed, removing from them dirt and dead skin, and smoothing the hair." *Almohazada* probably referred to an estimated measure related to this instrument.

a. muy] Z: mny

coge y las torna a echar en aquella espuerta y echa agua como de primero y tornan a esprimir el çumo y agua que dello sale, y las pepitas y cáxcaras tornan a poner en el cuero. Y desta manera hazen tres o quatro vezes cada moledura. Y los que en este banquete, que para ellos es muy<sup>a</sup> grande, se hallan, quedan las barrigas muy grandes de la tierra y agua que an bevido. Y desto nos hizieron los indios muy gran fiesta. Y huvo entre ellos muy grandes bailes y areitos en tanto que allí estuvimos. Y quando de noche durmíamos, a la puerta del rancho donde estábamos, nos velavan a cada uno de nosotros seis hombres con gran cuidado sin que nadie nos osasse entrar dentro hasta que el sol era salido. Quando nosotros nos quesimos partir dellos, llegaron allí unas [V:f37v] mugeres de otros que bivían adelante. E informados dellas donde estavan aquellas casas, nos partimos para allá aunque ellos nos rogaron mucho que por aquel día nos detuviésemos, porque las casas adonde íbamos estavan lexos, y no avía camino para ellas. Y [dijeron] que aquellas mugeres venían cansadas, y descansando otro día se irían con nosotros y nos guiarían, y así nos despedimos. Y dende a poco las mugeres que avían venido con otras del mismo pueblo se fueron tras nosotros. Mas como por la tierra no avía caminos, luego nos perdimos, y así anduvimos<sup>b</sup> quatro leguas. Y al cabo dellas llegamos a beber a una agua adonde hallamos las mugeres que nos seguían, y nos dixeron el trabajo que avían passado por alcançarnos. Partimos de allí llevándolas por guía. Y passamos un río quando ya

b. anduvimos] Z: andnuimos

collects them and again tosses them into that basket and adds more water as he did previously, and again presses out the juice and water that comes from it, and he places the pits and pods again on the skin. And in this manner they do this grinding three or four times. And those who find themselves in this banquet, which for them is very great, end up with very swollen bellies from the earth and water that they have drunk. And from this the Indians made for us a very great celebration. And there were among them very great dances and *areitos* as long as we were there. And when we were sleeping at night, at the door of the dwelling where we were staying, six men kept watch with very great care over each one of us so that no one would dare to come inside until the sun had risen. When we wanted to leave them, some women of the others who lived ahead arrived there. And informed by them where those houses were, we departed for there, although they beseeched us greatly to remain there that day because the houses to which we were headed were far away, and there was no road in their direction. And [they said] that those women arrived tired, and resting another day, they would go with us and guide us, and thus we took our leave. And a little while later, the women who had come went after us with others from the same village. But since there were no trails through the land, we subsequently got lost, and thus we walked four leagues. And at the end of them we managed to drink at a watering place where we found the women who were following us, and they told us about the difficulty they had had in reaching us. We departed from there, taking them as guides. And we crossed a river<sup>1</sup> when it was already late

1. The Rio Grande, somewhere between its confluence with the Río San Juan and the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.



- vino la tarde que nos dava el agua a los pechos; sería tan ancho como el de Sevilla, y corría muy mucho. Y a puesta del sol llegamos a çien casas de indios, y antes que llegássemos salió toda la gente que en ellas avía a reçebirnos con tanta grita que era espanto y dando en los muslos grandes palmadas. Traían<sup>a</sup> calabças horadadas con piedras dentro, que es la cosa de mayor fiesta y no las sacan sino a bailar o para curar, ni las osa nadie tomar sino ellos. Y dizen que aquellas calabças tienen virtud y que vienen del çielo, porque por aquella tierra no las ay ni saben donde las aya sino que las traen los ríos quando vienen de avenida. Era tanto<sup>b</sup> el miedo y turbaçión que éstos tenían, que por llegar más presto los unos que los otros a tocarnos, nos apretaron tanto que por poco nos huvieran de matar. Y sin dexarnos poner los pies en el suelo nos llevaron a sus casas. Y tanto<sup>c</sup> cargavan sobre nosotros y de tal manera nos apretavan que nos metimos en las casas que nos tenían hechas. Y nosotros no consentimos en ninguna manera que aquella noche hiziessen más fiesta con nosotros. Toda aquella noche passaron entre sí en areitos y bailes. Y otro día de mañana nos traxeron toda la gente de aquel pueblo para que los tocássemos y santiguássemos como avíamos [V:f38r] hecho a los otros con quien avíamos estado. Y después desto hecho, dieron muchas flechas a las mugeres del otro pueblo que avían venido con las suyas. Otro día partimos de allí y toda la gente del pueblo fue con nosotros. Y como llegamos a otros indios fuimos muy<sup>d</sup> bien
- a. Traían] V: Traían las
- b. tanto] Z: tanto era
- c. tanto] V: tantos
- d. muy] V: om.

in the afternoon, which had water that came up to our chests; it was probably as wide as that of Seville,<sup>1</sup> and it ran very swiftly. And at sunset we arrived at a hundred houses of Indians, and before we arrived, all the people who were in them came out to receive us with so much shouting that it was a fright and vigorously slapping their thighs. They carried pierced gourds with stones inside, which is the item of highest celebration, and they do not take them out except to dance or to cure, nor does anyone but they dare to use them. And they say that those gourds have virtue and that they come from the sky,<sup>2</sup> because throughout that land there are none nor do they know where they might be, but only that the rivers bring them when they flood. So great was the fear and agitation that these people experienced that with some trying to arrive more quickly than others to touch us, they crowded us so much that they nearly could have killed us. And without letting our feet touch the ground, they carried us to their houses. And they fell so much<sup>c</sup> upon us and pressed us in such a manner that we went into the houses they had prepared for us. And we did not consent in any way to their making more celebrations with us that night. They spent that entire night dancing and performing *areitos* among themselves. And the next morning they brought us all the people of that village for us to touch and make the sign of the cross over them, as we had done to the others with whom we had been. And after this was done, they gave many arrows to the women of the other village who had come with theirs. The next day we left there, and all the people of the village went with us. And when we arrived at other Indians we were very<sup>d</sup> well

c. they fell so much] V: so many of them fell

d. very] V: om.

1. The Guadalquivir River (Oviedo 604a).

2. Here and later (f55v, f56v), Cabeza de Vaca reports the Indians' explanation for the origin of plants and people not indigenous to their area. In the phrase "vienen del cielo" the term *cielo*, understood to mean "sky," may be assigned cosmological significance, but not that of the sacred Christian concept of heaven that commentators since Oviedo and Las Casas have given it.

reçebidos como de los passados. Y así nos dieron de lo que tenían y los venados que aquel día avían muerto. Y entre éstos vimos una nueva costumbre, y es que los que venían a curarse, los que con nosotros estavan les tomavan el arco y las flechas y çapatos y cuentas si las traían. Y después de averlas tomado, nos las traían delante de nosotros para que los curássemos. Y curados, se ivan muy contentos, diziendo que estavan sanos. Assí nos partimos de aquéllos y nos fuimos a otros de quien fuimos muy bien resçebidos, y nos traxeron sus enfermos que santiguándolos,<sup>a</sup> dezían que estavan sanos. Y el que no sanava creía que podíamos sanarle. Y con lo que los otros que curávamos les dezían, hazían tantas alegrías y bailes que no nos dexavan dormir. <sup>b</sup>Partidos déstos, fuimos a otras muchas casas, y desde aquí començó otra nueva costumbre, y es que resçibiéndonos muy bien, que los que ivan con nosotros los començaron a hazer tanto mal que les tomavan las haciendas y les saqueavan las casas sin que otra cosa ninguna les dexassen. Desto nos pesó mucho por ver el mal tratamiento que a aquellos que también nos resçebían se hazían,<sup>c</sup> y también porque temíamos que aquello sería o causaría alguna alteración y escándalo entre ellos. Mas como no éramos parte para remediallo ni para<sup>d</sup> osar castigar los que esto hazían, huvimos<sup>e</sup> por entonçes de sufrir hasta que más autoridad entre ellos tuviésemos. Y también los indios mismos que perdían la hacienda, conosçiendo nuestra tristeza, nos consolaron diziendo que [V:f38v] de aquello no resçibiésemos pena, que ellos estavan tan contentos de avernos visto que davan por bien

a. santiguándolos] Z: santiguandodolos

b. | Z: *om.* V: Capítulo veinte y ocho: De otra nueva costumbre.

c. hazían] Z: hazía

d. para] Z: parr

e. huvimos] V: y ouvimos

b. ] Z: *om. V*: Chapter twenty-eight: Of another new custom.

received as we had been by the previous ones. And thus they gave us some of the things they had and the deer they had killed that day. And among these people we saw a new custom, and it is that the ones who were with us took from those who came to be cured their bows and arrows and shoes and beads if they brought them. And after having taken them, they placed those people before us, so that we might cure them.<sup>1</sup> And once cured, they went away very content, saying that they were healed. Thus we departed from those Indians and we went to others by whom we were very well received, and they brought us their sick, who, on our making the sign of the cross over them, said that they were healed. And any one who did not improve believed that we could cure him.<sup>2</sup> And with what the others whom we cured told them, they made such merriment and dancing that they did not let us sleep. <sup>b</sup>Departing from these people, we went to many other houses, and at this point another new custom commenced, and it is that receiving us very well, those who came with us began to treat the others very badly, taking their possessions and sacking their houses without leaving them any single thing. About this we were much distressed to see the bad treatment that was given to those who thus received us, and also because we feared that that practice would be or would cause some altercation and scandal among them. But since we were powerless to remedy it or to dare to punish those who did it, for the time being we had to endure it until we had more authority among them. And also the same Indians who lost their households, on seeing our sadness, consoled us by saying that we should not be grieved by that, because they were so content to have seen us that they considered that

1. Here begins a pattern of ritual pillage and exchange that was repeated many times over the course of this ten-month journey. Cabeza de Vaca explains that the practice needed to be taught to the inland-oriented groups with whom the Christians subsequently came into contact (f48r-v).

2. On the nature of the consensual relationship between shaman and patient, see (f38r).

a. de] Z: om.

empleadas sus haciendas, y que adelante serían pagados de<sup>a</sup> otros que estaban muy ricos. Por todo este camino teníamos muy gran trabajo por la mucha gente que nos seguía. Y no podíamos huir della aunque lo procurávamos porque era muy grande la priessa que tenían por llegar a tocarnos. Y era tanta la importunidad de ellos sobre esto que passavan tres horas que<sup>b</sup> no podíamos acabar con ellos que nos dexassen. Otro día nos traxeron toda la gente del pueblo. Y la mayor parte de ellos son tuertos de nuves, y otros dellos son çiegos de ellas mismas de que estávamos espantados. Son muy bien dispuestos y de muy buenos gestos, más blancos que otros ningunos de quantos hasta allí avíamos visto. Aquí empeçamos a ver sierras y paresçía que venían seguidas de hazia el Mar del Norte. Y assí por la relación que los indios desto nos dieron, creemos que están quinze leguas de la mar. De aquí nos partimos con estos indios hazia estas sierras que dezimos. Y lleváronnos por donde estaban unos parientes suyos porque ellos no nos querían llevar sino por do habitavan sus parientes, y no querían que sus enemigos alcançasen tanto bien como les paresçía que era vernos. Y quando fuimos llegados, los que con nosotros ivan saquearon a los otros. Y como sabían la costumbre, primero que llegássemos escondieron algunas cosas. Y después que nos ovieron resçebido con mucha fiesta y alegría, sacaron lo que avían escondido y viniéronnoslo a presentar. Y esto era cuentas y almagra y algunas taleguillas de plata. Nosotros según la costumbre dimoslo

b. que] Z: que

their possessions had been well employed, and that farther ahead they would be compensated by others who were very rich. Along this entire road we had very great difficulty because of the many people who followed us. And we could not flee from them, although we tried, because the quickness with which they came to touch us was very great. And so great were their demands about this, that for three hours we could not finish with them so that they would leave us alone. The next day they brought us all the people of the village. And the majority of them are blind in one eye from a clouded spot that they have in it,<sup>1</sup> and others of them are completely blind because of them; about all this we were astonished. They are very well proportioned and of very good features, whiter than any others of all those we had seen up to that point. Here we began to see mountains,<sup>2</sup> and it seemed that they came in a chain from toward the North Sea.<sup>3</sup> And thus by the account that the Indians gave us about this, we believe that they are fifteen leagues from the sea. From here we departed with these Indians, heading toward these sierras to which we refer. And they took us to where some relatives of theirs were, because they did not want to take us except through where their relatives lived, and they did not want their enemies to obtain as much good as it seemed to them it would be to see us. And when we had arrived, those who came with us sacked the others. And since they knew the custom, before we arrived they hid some things. And after they had received us with great festivity and elation, they brought out what they had hidden and came to present it to us. And this was beads and red ocher and some little bags of silver.<sup>4</sup> According to our custom, we then gave it

1. *nube*. A film that develops in the eye (Covarrubias 831b); a small white film that forms on the cornea, obscuring sight such that light rays entering the eye seem to be passing through a cloud (DRAE 926a).

2. Mountains of Tamaulipas, most likely the chain of the Sierra de Pamoranés and the Sierra San Carlos farther south. On two occasions (f16r, f35r) prior to this first sighting, Cabeza de Vaca remarked on the absence of mountains in the coastal regions that they had traversed (in Florida and Texas). The reference to the mountains' proximity to the sea suggests that the men hoped that these mountains

would be, or would merge into, the coastal range that extended from the Río de las Palmas to the Río Pánuco, their final destination.

3. The combined Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of Mexico. Here the immediate reference is to the Gulf of Mexico.

4. See (f49r).

a. mantenimientos] Z: man-  
teuimientos

b. nuevas] Z: nueurs

c. que] Z: que

d. tunas] Z: tnnas

luego a los indios que con nos venían, y quando nos lo huvieron dado, començaron sus bailes y fiestas y embiaron a llamar otros de otro pueblo que estava çerca de allí para que nos viniessen a ver, y a la tarde vinieron todos y nos traxeron cuentas y arcos y otras cosillas que también repartimos. Y otro día, queriéndonos partir, toda la gente nos quería llevar a otros amigos suyos que [V:f39r] estavan a la punta de las sierras, y dezían que allí avía muchas casas y gente y que nos darían muchas cosas. Mas por ser fuera de nuestro camino, no quisimos ir a ellos, y tomamos por lo llano çerca de las sierras, las quales creíamos que no estavan lexos de la costa. Toda la gente della es muy mala y teníamos por mejor de atravesar la tierra, porque la gente que está más metida adentro es más bien acondicionada, y tratávanos mejor y teníamos por cierto que hallaríamos la tierra más poblada y de mejores mantenimientos.<sup>a</sup> Lo último, hazíamos esto porque atravesando la tierra veíamos muchas particularidades della, porque si Dios nuestro Señor fuesse servido de sacar alguno de nosotros y traerlo a tierra de christianos, pudiesse dar nuevas<sup>b</sup> y relación della. Y como los indios vieron que estábamos determinados de no ir por donde ellos nos encaminavan, dixéronnos que<sup>c</sup> por donde nos queríamos ir no avía gente ni tunas<sup>d</sup> ni otra cosa alguna que comer. Y rogáronnos que estuviésemos allí aquel día, y ansí lo hezimos. Luego ellos embiaron dos indios para que buscassen gente por aquel camino que queríamos ir. Y otro día nos partimos, llevando con

to the Indians who had come with us, and when they had given it to us, they began their dances and fiestas and sent ahead to call others from another village that was near there so that those people could come to see us, and in the afternoon they all came and they brought us beads and bows and other little things that we also distributed. And the next day, when we were wanting to leave, all the people wanted to bring us to other friends of theirs who were at the near end of the sierras, and they said that there there were many houses and people, and that they would give us many things. But because this was off our route, we refused to go to them, and we took the course through the plain near the mountains, which we believed were not far from the coast.<sup>1</sup> All the people of the coast are very bad, and we considered it preferable to go through the land because the people farther inland are of a better disposition and they treated us better, and we considered it certain that we would find the land more populated and with better means of sustenance.<sup>2</sup> Finally, we did this because, by crossing through the land, we would see many of its particularities, because if God our Lord were served by taking some one of us out of there and bringing him to the land of Christians, he could give an account and description of it.<sup>3</sup> And since the Indians saw that we were determined not to go through the area where they led us, they told us that where we wanted to go there were no people, nor prickly pears, nor any other thing to eat. And they begged us to remain there that day, and thus we did so.<sup>4</sup> Later they sent two Indians to search for people along the road we wanted to pursue.<sup>5</sup> And the next day we departed, taking with

1. The Sierra de Pamoranés of northern Tamaulipas. The men still desired to travel southward toward Pánuco.

2. Cabeza de Vaca here implies that the men had improved their condition by moving slightly away from the coast to the Avavares and subsequent peoples. The men had undoubtedly hoped to find agricultural peoples, rather than more hunters and gatherers of the type with whom they had spent the previous seven years (1528–35) on or very near the seacoast.

3. This statement has been interpreted almost universally as a declaration of the party's decision to cross overland to the other sea. It represents

instead the men's intention to travel somewhat inland and parallel to the coast rather than directly along it in their search for Pánuco. By doing so, they could potentially gather new data about the unknown inland areas north of the Río Pánuco rather than duplicate information about the coastal areas already available from Spanish maritime exploration of the Gulf of Mexico.

4. The Indians desired to take the four men into the mountains and to the coastal areas where they lived. The men sought to avoid both the rugged terrain, where they would be vulnerable to surprise attack, and the coastal groups, whom they

expected to be hostile. Their immediate aim was to seek better sources of sustenance. At this point, the men had not yet abandoned their search for Pánuco; ultimately, however, they continued on a northwestward course until reaching western Mexico.

5. Inland, to Pánuco.



a. la] Z: lo

nosotros muchos dellos. Y las mugeres ivan cargadas de agua, y era tan grande entre ellos nuestra autoridad que ninguno osava beber sin nuestra liçençia. Dos leguas de allí topamos los indios que avían ido a buscar la gente y dixeron que no la<sup>a</sup> hallavan, de lo qual los indios mostraron pesar, y tornáronnos a rogar que nos fuésemos por la sierra. No lo quisimos hazer, y ellos, como vieron nuestra voluntad, aunque con mucha tristeza se despidieron de nosotros y se bolvieron el río abaxo a sus casas. Y nosotros caminamos por el río arriba. Y desde a un poco topamos dos mugeres cargadas que, como nos vieron, pararon y descargáronse y traxéronnos de lo que llevavan, que era harina de maíz, y nos dixeron que adelante en aquel río hallaríamos casas y muchas tunas y de aquella harina. Y ansí nos despedimos dellas porque ivan a los otros donde avíamos partido. Y anduvimos hasta puesta del sol. Y [V:f39v] llegamos a un pueblo de hasta veinte casas adonde nos resçibieron llorando y con grande tristeza, porque sabían ya que adondequiera que llegávamos eran todos saqueados y robados de los que nos acompañavan. Y como nos vieron solos, perdieron el miedo y diéronnos tunas y no otra cosa ninguna. Estuvimos allí aquella noche y al alva los indios que nos avían dexado el día passado dieron en sus casas. Y como los tomaron descuidados y seguros, tomáronles quanto tenían sin que tuviessen lugar donde asconder ninguna cosa, de que ellos lloraron mucho. Y los robadores, para consolarles, los dezían que éramos hijos del sol y que teníamos poder para sanar los enfermos y para matarlos y otras mentiras aun mayores que éstas, como ellos

us many of them. And the women went carrying the water, and so great was our authority among them that none dared to drink without our permission. Two leagues from there we came upon the Indians who had gone to look for the people, and they said that they had not found them, about which the Indians showed sadness, and they again beseeched us to go through the mountains.<sup>1</sup> We refused to do it, and since they saw our determination, they bade us farewell, although with great sorrow, and they returned downriver to their homes. And we traveled upstream.<sup>2</sup> And a little while later we came upon two women encumbered, who, upon seeing us, stopped and put down their loads and brought us some of what they were carrying, which was maize flour, and they told us that farther ahead on that river we would find houses and many prickly pears and more of that flour.<sup>3</sup> And thus we took leave of them, because they were going to the others from whom we had departed. And we walked until sunset.<sup>4</sup> And we arrived at a village of about twenty houses where they received us weeping and with great sorrow because they already knew that wherever we went all the people were sacked and robbed by those who accompanied us. But since they saw us alone, they lost their fear and gave us prickly pears and not another single thing. We stayed there that night, and at dawn the Indians who had left us the previous day fell upon their houses.<sup>5</sup> And since they took them unprepared and vulnerable, they took from them all that they wanted without there being opportunity to hide anything, about which they wept greatly. And the attackers, to console them, told them that we were children of the sun,<sup>6</sup> and that we had the power to cure the sick and to kill them and other lies even greater than these, since they

1. The Sierra de Pamoranes of north-central Tamaulipas.

2. Somewhere on the San Lorenzo–Conchos–San Fernando river system in Tamaulipas, heading upstream and south-southwest on the Río San Fernando from a point downstream from its confluence with the Río Conchos, or going upstream on the Río Conchos from a spot downstream from its confluence with the Río San Lorenzo. Their eventual turn northwestward and passage from present-day Tamaulipas into Nuevo León can be explained by their following

either river upstream to its point of confluence and taking the north-northwest-trending branch, that is, the Río Conchos or the Río San Lorenzo, respectively.

3. This account is absent from Oviedo's text. Given Cabeza de Vaca's need to justify a detour in the course toward Pánuco, he may have invented this incident in order to demonstrate that travel farther inland was the most prudent course in the men's search for food and their quest for survival. The men had not encountered maize since they had left the Florida Panhandle,

and they would find no further evidence of it until they reached La Junta de los Ríos at the Texas-Chihuahua border (f52v).

4. This is virtually the last time the party traveled without Indian guides until the end of their journey.

5. The attacking Indians are those who had earlier stated that there were no people in this direction and whose scouts had said that they had found none (f47v; Oviedo 605b–06a).

6. See (f38v).

- a. las] Z: la
- b. saqueassen] V: saquease
- c. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo veinte y nueve: De cómo se robavan los unos a los otros.
- d. Y] V: *om.*
- e. teniendo] Z: tenido
- f. que] Z: qne
- g. llegásemos, ellos]  
V: llegásemos a ellos,
- h. nosotros] Z: nosotras
- i. acompañado] Z: acompañaado
- j. por] Z: *om.*
- las<sup>a</sup> saben mejor hazer quando sienten que les conviene. Y dixéronles que nos llevassen con mucho acatamiento y tuviessen cuidado de no enojarnos en ninguna cosa, y que nos diessen todo quanto tenían, y procurassen de llevarnos donde avía mucha gente, y que donde llegássemos robassen ellos y saqueassen<sup>b</sup> lo que los otros tenían, porque assí era costumbre.<sup>c</sup> Y<sup>d</sup> después de averlos informado y señalado bien lo que avían de hazer, se bolvieron y nos dexaron con aquéllos, los quales, teniendo<sup>e</sup> en la memoria lo que los otros les avían dicho, nos començaron a tratar con aquel mismo temor y reverencia que<sup>f</sup> los otros. Y fuimos con ellos tres jornadas y lleváronnos adonde avía mucha gente. Y antes que llegássemos, ellos<sup>g</sup> avisaron como íbamos y dixeron de nosotros<sup>h</sup> todo lo que los otros les avían enseñado y añadieron mucho más, porque toda esta gente de indios son grandes amigos de novelas y muy mentirosos, mayormente [V:f40r] donde pretenden algún interesse. Y quando llegamos çerca de las casas salió toda la gente a resçebirnos con mucho plazer y fiesta, y entre otras cosas dos físicos dellos nos dieron dos calabças. Y de aquí començamos a llevar calabças con nosotros y añadimos a nuestra autoridad esta çerimonia que para con ellos es muy grande. Los que nos avían acompañado<sup>i</sup> saquearon las casas, mas, como eran muchas y ellos pocos, no pudieron llevar todo quanto tomaron y más de la mitad dexaron perdido. Y de aquí por la halda de la sierra nos fuimos metiendo por<sup>j</sup> la tierra adentro más de çinquenta leguas, y al cabo dellas hallamos

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter twenty-nine: Of how they robbed one another.

know how best to do it when they feel that it suits them. And they told them to lead us onward with great respect and to be careful not to anger us in anything, and to give us everything they had, and to try to take us where there were many people, and that wherever we arrived, to steal and loot what the others had, because such was the custom. ‘And after having informed and instructed them well in what they were to do, they returned and left us with those Indians who, mindful of what the others had told them, began to treat us with that same fear and reverence that the others had. And we traveled with them for three days, and they took us to where there were many people. And before we arrived, they announced that we were coming and they told everything about us that the others had taught them and they added much more, because all these Indian peoples are very fond of tales and very deceitful, particularly when they are pursuing some gain. And when we arrived near the houses, all the people came out to receive us with great pleasure and festivity, and among other things, two of their physicians gave us two gourds.<sup>1</sup> And from this point forward we began to carry gourds with us, and we added to our authority this ceremony, which to them is very great. Those who had accompanied us sacked the houses, but since the houses were many and they were few, they could not carry everything they took, and they left more than half of it abandoned. And from here through the foothills of the sierra, we went inland more than fifty leagues,<sup>2</sup> and at the end of them we found

1. The four Narváez expedition survivors had recently come upon gourds for the first time. After crossing the Rio Grande, they encountered natives who used them ritually and indicated that they had obtained them as they came floating down the river (f46r). Cabeza de Vaca may have overlooked his earlier mention (f44v) of “half a gourd” used by the Indians of the area north of the Rio Grande to cool the intoxicating drink they prepared for consumption, or he may have considered the gourds (*calabazas*) used ceremonially to be of a different type. The men were still in Tamaulipas when they took up their own ceremonial use of the gourds.

2. North-northwest from the upper Río San Lorenzo through the low ranges of the Sierra de Cerralvo or west along the Río Conchos into the foothills of the Sierra Madre Oriental, passing from Tamaulipas into Nuevo León.

a. dixéronles] Z: y dixéronles  
b. allá] V: allí  
c. una] Z: un  
d. plata] V: margaxita  
e. y] V: om.

quarenta casas. Y entre otras cosas que nos dieron huvo Andrés Dorantes un caxcavel gordo grande de cobre y en él figurado un rostro, y esto mostravan ellos que lo tenían en mucho. Y les dixerón que lo avían avido de otros sus vezinos. Y preguntándoles que dónde avían avido aquéllos, dixéronles<sup>a</sup> que lo avían traído de hazia el norte, y que allá<sup>b</sup> avía mucho y era tenido en grande estima. Y entendimos que doquiera que aquello avía venido, avía fundición y se labrava de vaziado. Y con esto nos partimos otro día y atravessamos una<sup>c</sup> sierra de siete leguas, y las piedras della eran de escorias de hierro. Y a la noche llegamos a muchas casas que estavan assentadas a la ribera de un muy hermoso río. Y los señores della salieron a medio camino a resçebirnos con sus hijos a cuestras, y nos dieron muchas taleguillas de plata<sup>d</sup> y de alcohol molido; con esto se untan ellos la cara. Y dieron muchas cuentas y muchas mantas de Vacas, y cargaron a todos los que venían con nosotros de todo quanto ellos tenían. Comían tunas y piñones, y<sup>e</sup> ay por aquella tierra pinos chicos y las piñas della son como huevos pequeños, mas los piñones son mejores que los de Castilla, porque tienen las cáxcaras muy delgadas. Y quando están verdes muélenlos y házenlos pellas y así los comen, y si están secos, los muelen con cáxcaras y los comen hechos polvos. Y los que por allí nos recibían, desque nos avían tocado, [V:f40v] bolvían corriendo hasta sus casas. Y luego davan buelta a nosotros y no cesavan de correr yendo y viniendo. Desta manera

forty houses. And among other things that they gave us, they gave Andrés Dorantes a large, thick, copper bell,<sup>1</sup> and on it was outlined a face, and they showed that they valued it greatly. And they told them<sup>2</sup> that they had obtained it from other people who lived nearby. And asking them where those people had obtained them, they told them that they had brought it from toward the north, and that there was a great deal more of it there, and it was held in great esteem. And we understood that from wherever it had come, there was metalworking and that they worked it by casting.<sup>3</sup> And with this we departed the next day and we crossed a sierra of seven leagues,<sup>4</sup> and the stones in it were of iron slag.<sup>5</sup> And at night we arrived at many houses that were set up along the bank of a very beautiful river.<sup>6</sup> And the owners of them came halfway to meet us with their children on their backs, and they gave us many little bags of silver<sup>d7</sup> and others of powdered antimony;<sup>8</sup> with this they smear their faces. And they gave many beads and many hides of cows,<sup>9</sup> and they loaded all those who came with us with some of everything they had. They ate prickly pears and pine nuts,<sup>10</sup> and there are throughout that land<sup>11</sup> small pines, and the cones of them are like small eggs, but the pine nuts are better than those of Castile, because they have a very thin hull. And when they are green they grind them and make them into lumps and they eat them in this manner, and if they are dry they grind them with the hulls and they eat them as a powder. And those who received us there, as soon as they had touched us, turned running toward their houses. And then they returned to us, and they did not cease running back and forth. In this way they

d. silver] V: marcasite

1. Oviedo (606a) adds that these people also gave them cotton mantles, which also came from the north.

2. The Indians of this village of forty houses here explain the provenance of the copper bell not directly to the four men but to the Indians who accompanied them.

3. The evidence of cast metals to the north suggested a higher civilization than any the party had encountered since arriving on the Florida Peninsula.

4. Sierra de la Gloria, southeast of Monclova in present-day Coahuila.

5. *escoria*. The scoriaeous lava from a volcano or the dross or

scoria of a metal (Covarrubias 539a).

6. Rio Nadadores, north of Monclova, or one of its tributaries.

7. Probably marcasite. Oviedo (617b–18a) says in the chapter he wrote after reading Cabeza de Vaca's published *relación* that "plata" (silver) was a printer's error; his own text, however, reads "margarita" (margarite or pearl). This too is evidently an error in printing; Oviedo's text should have read "margaxita" (modern *margajita*), that is, marcasite (crystallized iron pyrites), which has a metallic appearance.

8. *alcohol* (Arabic *al-kuhl*, *kohl*), powder of antimony.

A preparation of crushed antimony or galena used in Muslim and Asian countries, as well as in Europe, as a cosmetic around the eyes. Covarrubias (76a) describes it as a powder used to make the eyes sparkle and darken the eyelashes in order to make them beautiful.

9. See (f34r).

10. In English there is a distinction between the older "pine nut" (twelfth century), which is the edible seed of any of several pines, and "piñon," from the Spanish *piñón*, which is the edible seed of any of various low-growing pines

(such as *Pinus cembroides*, *P. parryana*, *P. edulis*, and *P. monophylla*) of western North America, including Mexico.

11. Present-day Coahuila from the Monclova Basin northward; Cabeza de Vaca's reference may extend to the north of the Rio Grande, where the men also found piñon nuts in abundance.

a. puntos] Z: puutos V: puntos,  
(y dados) se me desangrava,  
y con raspa de un cuero le  
estiqué la sangre

b. dende a dos días] V: otro día  
le

c. sano] V: sano, y no parecía  
la herida que le avía hecho sino  
como una raya de la palma de  
la mano

d. dixéronnos] Z: dixeronsno

e. el] V: aquel

f. suertes] Z: snertes

traíannos muchas cosas para el camino. Aquí me traxeron un hombre y me dixerón que avía mucho tiempo que le avían herido con una flecha por el espalda derecha, y tenía la punta de la flecha sobre el corazón. Dezía que le dava mucha pena, y que por aquella causa siempre estava enfermo. Yo le toqué y sentí la punta de la flecha y vi que la tenía atravessada por la ternilla. Y con un cuchillo que tenía le abrí el pecho hasta aquel lugar. Y vi que tenía la punta atravessada y estava muy mala de sacar. Torné a cortar más, y metí la punta del cuchillo y con gran trabajo en fin la saqué. Era muy larga, y con un hueso de venado, usando de mi offiçio de mediçina, le di dos puntos.<sup>a</sup> Y quando huve sacado la punta pediéronmela y yo se la di. Y el pueblo todo vino a vella y la embiaron por la tierra adentro para que la viessen los que allá estavan. Y por esto hizieron muchos bailes y fiestas como ellos suelen hazer. Y dende a dos días<sup>b</sup> corté los dos puntos al indio y estava sano.<sup>c</sup> Y dixo que no sentía dolor ni pena alguna. Y esta cura nos dio entre ellos tanto crédito por toda tierra quanto ellos podían y sabían estimar y encareçer. Mostrámosles aquel caxcavel que traíamos y dixéronnos<sup>d</sup> que en el<sup>e</sup> lugar de donde aquél avía venido, avía muchas planchas de aquello enterradas, y que aquello era cosa que ellos tenían en mucho, y avía casas de asiento. Y esto creemos nosotros que es la Mar del Sur, que siempre tuvimos notiçia que aquella mar es más rica que la del Norte. Déstos nos partimos y anduvimos por tantas suertes<sup>f</sup> de

a. stitches.] V: stitches, (and after they had been given) he bled a great deal and with a piece of shredded hide I stopped the bleeding.

b. two days later] V: the next day

c. healed.] V: healed, and the incision that I had made in him looked like nothing more than a crease in the palm of one's hand.

brought us many things for our journey. Here they brought me a man, and they told me that a long time ago he had been wounded through the right shoulder with an arrow, and the point of the arrow rested over his heart. He said that it caused him much distress, and that for that reason he was always ill. I touched him and felt the point of the arrow, and I saw that it had passed through the cartilage.<sup>1</sup> And with a knife that I had, I opened his chest to that place. And I saw that the point had passed through and was very difficult to remove. I again cut deeper, and I inserted the knife point, and with great difficulty, at last I pulled it out. It was very long and, with a deer bone, plying my trade as a physician, I gave him two stitches.<sup>a</sup> And when I had removed the point, they asked me for it and I gave it to them. And the entire village came to see it, and they sent it through the land so that those who were there could see it. And on account of this they performed many dances and celebrations as they are accustomed to doing. And two days later,<sup>b</sup> I removed the two stitches from the Indian and he was healed.<sup>c</sup> And he said that he felt no pain or discomfort whatsoever. And this cure gave us a very great reputation among them throughout the whole land, to the degree that they were able and knew how to esteem and appreciate anything. We showed them that bell that we were carrying, and they told us that in the place from which it had come, there were many deposits of that material<sup>2</sup> in the ground, and that it was a thing they valued highly, and that there were permanent houses. And this we believe to be the South Sea since we always had notice that that sea is richer than the one of the North. We departed from these people<sup>3</sup> and we went through so many types of

1. *ternilla*. Neither flesh nor bone but like the tissue of the nose and ears (Covarrubias 959a).

2. *planchas de aquello*. Here, copper sheets. *Plancha*: broad, thin sheets of metal, according to Covarrubias (873b).

3. The ones whom the men encountered along the beautiful river (Río Nadadores or a tributary of it) after crossing the Sierra de la Gloria and who had given them bison hides, cotton mantles, piñon nuts, and bags of marcasite and powdered antimony.



- a. ninguna] Z: ningnna
- b. seis, y muchos] V: seis venados y
- c. Todo . . . matava] V: Finalmente todo quanto aquella gente hallavan y matavan
- d. sin] V: y sin
- gentes y de tan diversas lenguas que no basta memoria a poderlas contar. Y siempre saqueavan los unos a los otros, y assi los que perdían como los que ganavan quedavan muy contentos. Llevávamos tanta compañía que en ninguna<sup>a</sup> manera [V:f41r] podíamos valernos con ellos. Por aquellos valles donde íbamos cada uno dellos llevaba un garrote tan largo como tres palmos y todos ivan en ala. Y en saltando alguna liebre, que por allí avía hartas, çercávanla luego y caían tantos garrotes sobre ella que era cosa de maravilla. Y desta manera la hazían andar de unos para otros, que a mi ver era la más hermosa caça que se podía pensar, porque muchas vezes ellas se venían hasta las manos. Y quando a la noche parávamos eran tantas las que nos avían dado que traía cada uno de nosotros ocho o diez cargas dellas. Y los que traían arcos no paresçían delante de nosotros. Antes se apartavan por la sierra a buscar venados. Y a la noche quando venían, traían para cada uno de nosotros çinco o seis, y muchos<sup>b</sup> páxaros y codornizes y otras caças. Todo quanto finalmente aquella gente matava<sup>c</sup> nos lo ponían delante sin quellos osassen tomar ninguna cosa aunque muriessen de hambre, que assi lo tenían ya por costumbre después que andavan con nosotros, sin<sup>d</sup> que primero lo santiguássemos. Y las mugeres traían muchas esteras de que ellos nos hazían casas para cada uno la suya aparte y con toda su gente conocida. Y quando esto era hecho, mandávamos que assassen aquellos venados y liebres y todo lo que avían tomado. Y esto

people and such diverse languages that memory is insufficient to be able to recount them.<sup>1</sup> And the ones always sacked the others, and thus those who lost, like those who gained, were very content. We carried so great a company that in no manner could we make use of them. In those valleys through which we passed each of them carried a club three spans long and all of them went in a row. And when a hare, of which there was an abundance there, jumped out, they surrounded it and fell upon it with so many clubs that it was a wonder to see. And in this manner they made it run from one to another, which in my opinion was the most beautiful type of hunting that one could imagine, because many times they came right up to their hands. And when at night we stopped, they had given us so many that each of us carried eight or ten loads of them. And those who carried bows did not go before us. Rather, they spread out over the sierra to hunt deer. And at night when they returned, they brought for each one of us five or six, and many<sup>b</sup> birds and quail and other game. Everything, finally, that the people<sup>c</sup> killed, they put before us without daring to take one single thing without our first making the sign of the cross over it, even though they might be dying of hunger, because thus they had it as a custom since traveling with us. And the women carried many mats of which they made houses for us, for each of us a separate one, with all his company.<sup>2</sup> And when this was done, we ordered that they roast those deer and rabbits and everything that they had taken. And this

b. six, and many] V: six deer and

c. Everything, finally, that the people] V: Finally, everything that that people found and

1. The party was heading north-northwest through the valleys of the north-northwest-tending sierras of northwestern Coahuila.

2. *con toda su gente conocida*. Cabeza de Vaca suggests that each of the four travelers had a group of followers, including women, who associated exclusively with him.

a. quatro] Z: qnatro

también se hazía muy presto en unos hornos que para esto ellos hazían. Y de todo ello nosotros tomávamos un poco y lo otro dávamos al principal de la gente que con nosotros venía, mandándole que lo repartiessse entre todos. Cada uno con la parte que le cabía venían a nosotros para que la soplásemos y santiguásemos, que de otra manera no osaran comer della. Y muchas vezes traíamos con nosotros tres o quatro<sup>a</sup> mil personas. Y era tan grande nuestro trabajo que a cada uno avíamos de soplar y santiguar lo que avían de comer y beber, y para otras muchas cosas que querían hazer nos venían a pedir liçençia, de que se puede ver que tanta importunidad resçebíamos. Las mugeres nos traían las tunas y arañas y gusanos y lo que [V:f41v] podían aver, porque aunque se moriessen de hambre, ninguna cosa avían de comer sin que nosotros la diésemos. E yendo con éstos, passamos un gran río que venía del norte. Y passados unos llanos de treinta leguas hallamos mucha gente que de lexos de allí venía a resçebirnos. Y salían al camino por donde avíamos de ir y nos resçibieron de la manera de los passados.

b. ] Z: om. V: Capítulo treinta:  
De cómo se mudó la costumbre  
del rescebirnos.

<sup>b</sup>Desde aquí hubo otra manera de resçebirnos en quanto toca al saquearse, porque los que salían de los caminos a traernos alguna cosa a los que con nosotros venían no los robavan. Mas después de entrados en sus casas, ellos mismos nos offresçían quanto tenían, y las casas con ello. Nosotros las dávamos a los principales para que entre ellos las partiessen. Y siempre los que quedavan despojados nos

also was done very quickly in some ovens that they made for the purpose. And we ate a little of all of it and the rest we gave to the lord of the people who went with us, ordering him to distribute it among them all.<sup>1</sup> Each one came to us with the portion assigned to him so that we might blow on it and make the sign of the cross over it because otherwise they would not dare to eat of it. And many times we brought with us three or four thousand people. And our labor was so great because we had to blow on and make the sign of the cross over what each of them was to eat and drink, and for many other things they wanted to do, they came to ask our permission, for which reason one can see how many importunities we entertained. The women brought us prickly pears and spiders and worms and whatever they could find, because, although they might be dying of hunger, they would eat nothing without our giving it to them. And going with these Indians, we crossed a great river<sup>2</sup> that flowed from the north. And after crossing some plains<sup>3</sup> of thirty leagues, we found many people who came to receive us from very far from there. And they came out to the road over which we were to travel and received us as the previous ones had.

b. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter thirty:  
Of how the custom of receiving  
us changed.

<sup>b</sup>From here there was another manner of receiving us with regard to the sacking, because those who came out to the roads to bring us something for those who came with us were not robbed. Rather, after we had entered their houses, they themselves offered to us everything they had, and their houses with it. We gave them to the lords for them to distribute among the people. And those who remained dispossessed always

1. The native lords were in charge of the distribution of these goods, which suggests that, despite Cabeza de Vaca's claims, the leadership of this entourage was not exclusively in the hands of the four men.
2. The Río Babia or its southern extension, the Río Sabinas, flowing from northwest to southeast across northern Coahuila.
3. High plateau area through which the lower Río Babia and the Río Sabinas pass, between that river system and the Río Grande.

seguían, de donde crecía mucha gente para satisfacerse de su pérdida. Y dezíanles que se guardassen y no escondiessen cosa alguna de quantas tenían porque no podía ser sin que nosotros lo supiésemos y haríamos luego que todos moriessen.<sup>a</sup> Tan grandes eran los temores que les ponían que los primeros días que con nosotros estaban, nunca estaban sino temblando y sin osar hablar ni alçar los ojos al çielo. Éstos nos guiaron por más de çincuenta leguas de despoblado de muy ásperas sierras. Y por ser tan secas no avía caça en ellas, y por esto passamos mucha hambre, y al cabo un río muy grande que el agua nos dava hasta los pechos. Y desde aquí nos començó mucha de la gente que traíamos a adolesçer de la mucha hambre y trabajo que por aquellas sierras avían passado, que por extremo eran agras y trabajosas. Éstos [V:f42r] mismos nos llevaron a unos llanos al cabo de las sierras donde venían a resçebirnos de muy lexos de allí. Y nos resçibieron como los passados y dieron tanta hazienda a los que con nosotros venían que, por no poderla llevar, dexaron la mitad. Y diximos a los indios que lo avían dado que lo tornassen a tomar y lo llevassen porque no quedasse allí perdido. Y respondieron que en ninguna manera lo harían, porque<sup>b</sup> no era su costumbre después de aver una vez offresçido tornarlo a tomar. Y assí no lo teniendo en nada lo dexaron todo perder. A éstos diximos que queríamos ir a la puesta del sol. Y ellos respondiéronnos que por allí estava la gente muy lexos. Y nosotros les mandamos<sup>c</sup> que embiassen

a. moriessen] V: moriessen,  
porque el sol nos lo dezía

b. porque] Z: porqne

c. mandamos] V: mandávamos

a. died.] V: died, because the sun so commanded us.

followed us, from which the number of people grew to compensate for their loss. And they told them that they should take care and not hide a single thing of whatever they had because it was impossible for us not to find out about it and later we would see to it that they all died.<sup>a1</sup> So great were the fears that they instilled in them that the first days they were with us, they were always trembling and did not dare to speak or raise their eyes to the heavens. These Indians guided us through more than fifty leagues of deserted land in very rugged sierras.<sup>2</sup> And because they were so dry there was no game in them, and because of this we suffered much hunger, and at the end [we crossed] a very great river<sup>3</sup> in which the water came up to our chests. And from here many of the people we brought began to fall ill from the great hunger and hardship they had suffered in those sierras, which were bitter and difficult in the extreme. These same ones took us to some plains at the end of the sierras, where they came to receive us from very far away from there.<sup>4</sup> And they welcomed us as the previous ones had done and gave so many things to those who came with us that, not being able to carry it, they left half of it. And we said to the Indians who had given it that they should reclaim and take it with them so that it not remain there abandoned. And they replied that by no means would they do so because it was not their custom, after having first offered it, to take it back again. And thus, holding it in low estimation, they let all of it be lost. To these Indians we said that we wanted to go to where the sun set.<sup>5</sup> And they replied to us that in that direction the people were far away. And we ordered them to send

1. The Valladolid (1555) edition adds the phrase “because the sun so commanded us,” thus underscoring the notion that the Indians either took the four Narváez expedition survivors to be divine or used this ruse to intimidate potentially uncooperative victims (see f38v, f48r–v).

2. The uninhabited desert mountains of the Sierra Madre Oriental in Coahuila, in the area of the Arroyo de la Babia and northward to the Rio Grande.

3. This was their second crossing of the Rio Grande, somewhere along the northern border of present-day Coahuila, probably in the vicinity of Boquillas del

Carmen or slightly farther northeast, into southwestern Texas.

4. The Stockton Plateau in southwestern Texas.

5. This clear notion of an itinerary is probably anachronistic; the party would only learn where to find maize (that is, to the west) after arriving at the permanent settlements at La Junta de los Ríos (f53v).

a hazerles saber como nosotros íbamos allá, y desto se escusaron lo mejor que ellos podían, porque ellos eran sus enemigos y no querían que fuésemos a ellos, mas no osaron hazer otra cosa. Y así embiaron dos mugeres, una suya y otra que dellos tenían cativa. Y embiaron éstas porque las mugeres pueden contratar aunque aya guerra. Y nosotros las seguimos y paramos en un lugar donde estava concertado que las esperásemos, mas ellas tardaron cinco días. Y los indios dezían que no devían de hallar gente. Diximosles que nos llevassen hazia el norte. Respondieron de la misma manera, diziendo que por allí no avía gente sino muy lexos, y que no avía qué comer ni se hallava agua. Y con todo esto nosotros porfiamos y diximos que por allí queríamos ir. Y ellos todavía se escusavan de la mejor manera que podían. Y por esto nos enojamos. Y yo me salí una noche a dormir en el campo apartado dellos, mas luego fueron donde yo estava. Y toda la noche estuvieron sin dormir y con mucho miedo y hablándome y diziéndome quan atemorizados estaban, rogándonos que no estuviésemos<sup>a</sup> más enojados, y que aunque ellos supiesen morir en el camino, nos llevarían por donde nosotros quisiésemos ir. E como nosotros todavía fingíamos estar enojados, y porque su miedo no se quitasse, sucedió una [V:f42v] cosa estraña, y fue que este día mesmo adolesçieron muchos dellos. Y otro día siguiente murieron ocho hombres. Por toda la tierra donde esto se supo, huvieron tanto miedo de nosotros que paresçía en vernos<sup>b</sup> que de

a. estuviésemos] Z: estuuissimos

b. vernos] Z: verlos

people to inform them that we were going there, and from this they excused themselves as best they could, because they were their enemies and they did not want us to go to them, but they did not dare to do anything else. And thus they sent two women, one of their own and another who was a captive of theirs. And they sent them out because women can mediate even when there is war.<sup>1</sup> And we followed them and stopped in a place where it was agreed that we would wait for them, but it took them five days to return. And the Indians said that they must not have found any people. We told them to lead us toward the north. They responded in the same manner, saying that in that direction there were only people very far away, and that there was nothing to eat nor was water to be found. And despite all of this, we insisted and said that we wanted to go there. And they still declined in the best way they could. And because of this we became angry. And I went one night to sleep in the countryside, apart from them,<sup>2</sup> but later they went to where I was. And they were there the entire night without sleeping and with very great fear and speaking to me and telling me how terrified they were, begging us to not be angry anymore, and that even though they knew they would die on the road, they would take us wherever we wanted to go. And as we still pretended to be angry, and because their fear did not subside, a strange thing occurred, and it was that this same day many of them fell ill. And the following day eight men died. Throughout the entire land<sup>3</sup> where this was known there was so much fear of us that it seemed that in seeing us

1. In this area of southwestern Texas, women once again served as intermediaries, just as Cabeza de Vaca said the women of gulf coastal areas had done (f42r).

2. Cabeza de Vaca's action apparently threatened these people, because, since traveling north from Coahuila, they had carried large bands of people with them, and each man seems to have customarily stayed with his own band or retinue in the encampments that the Indians set up for them (f50r).

3. The high plateau area of southwest Texas.



a. o] Z: y

temor avían de morir. Rogáronnos que no estuviésemos enojados ni quiésemos que más dellos moriessen. Y tenían por muy cierto que nosotros los matávamos con solamente quererlo. Y a la verdad nosotros rescebíamos tanta pena desto que no podía ser mayor, porque allende de ver los que morían, temíamos que no moriessen todos o<sup>a</sup> nos dexassen solos de miedo, y todas las otras gentes de aí adelante hiziessen lo mismo, viendo lo que a éstos avía aconteçido. Rogamos a Dios nuestro Señor que lo remediase. Y así començaron a sanar todos aquellos que avían enfermado. Y vimos una cosa que fue de grande admiración, que los padres y hermanos y mugeres de los que morieron, de verlos en aquel estado tenían gran pena, y después de muertos ningún sentimiento hizieron, ni los vimos llorar ni hablar unos con otros, ni hazer otra ninguna muestra; ni osavan llegar a ellos hasta que nosotros los mandávamos llevar a enterrar. Y más de quinze días que con aquéllos estuvimos, a ninguno vimos hablar uno con otro ni los vimos reír ni llorar a ninguna criatura, antes porque una lloró la llevaron muy lexos de allí. Y con unos dientes de ratón agudos la sajaron desde los hombros hasta casi todas las piernas. E yo, viendo esta crueldad y enojado dello, les pregunté que por qué lo hazían. Y respondieron que para castigarla porque avía llorado delante de mí. Todos estos temores que ellos tenían ponían a todos los otros que nuevamente venían a conosçernos, a fin que nos diessen todo quanto

they would die of fear. They begged us not to be angry nor to will that any more of them die. And they held it for certain that we were killing them by simply desiring it. And in truth this produced in us so much anxiety that it could not have been greater, because beyond seeing those who died, we feared that all of them would die or that they would abandon us out of fear, and that all the other peoples from there onward would do the same, seeing what had happened to these people. We beseeched God our Lord to remedy it. And thus all those who had been sick began to regain their health. And we saw a thing that was of great wonder, that is, the parents and brothers and sisters and wives of those who died, upon seeing them in that state, suffered much grief, and after they died, they expressed no sentiment, neither did we see them weep nor speak to one another nor make any other gesture; neither did they dare to go to them until we ordered them to bury them. And for more than fifteen days while we were with them, we saw no one speak to anyone else nor did we see them laugh nor any small child cry, rather, because one woman wept, they took her very far from there. And with some sharp teeth of a rat they lacerated her from her shoulders to almost the bottom of her legs. And seeing this cruelty and angered by it, I asked them why they did it. And they responded that it was in order to punish her because she had wept in front of me. All these fears that they had they put in all the others who newly came to meet us, to the end that they would give us everything they

- a. obediente] Z: oobediente
- b. fuessen] Z: fueessen
- c. Estevanico] Z: Esteoanico
- tenían, porque sabían que nosotros no tomávamos nada y lo avíamos de dar todo a ellos. Ésta fue la más obediente<sup>a</sup> gente que hallamos por esta tierra y de mejor condición. Y comunmente son muy dispuestos. Convalescidos los dolientes y ya que había tres días que estábamos allí, llegaron las mugeres que avíamos [V:f43r] embiado, diciendo que avían hallado muy poca gente, y que todos avían ido a las vacas, que era en tiempo dellas. Y mandamos a los que avían estado enfermos que se quedassen y los que estuviessen buenos fuessen<sup>b</sup> con nosotros, y que dos jornadas de allí aquellas mismas dos mugeres irían con dos de nosotros a sacar gente y traella al camino para que nos resçibiessen. Y con esto, otro día de mañana todos los que más rezios estavan partieron con nosotros. Y a tres jornadas paramos. Y el siguiente día partió Alonso del Castillo con Estevanico el negro, llevando por guía las dos mugeres. Y la que dellas era cativa los llevó a un río que corría entre unas sierras donde estava un pueblo en que su padre bivia. Y éstas fueron las primeras casas que vimos que tuviessen paresçer y manera dello. Aquí llegaron Castillo y Estevanico.<sup>c</sup> Y después de aver hablado con los indios, a cabo de tres días vino Castillo adonde nos avía dexado, y traxo cinco o seis de aquellos indios. Y dixo como avía hallado casas de gente y de asiento, y que aquella gente comía frisoles y calabças, y que avía visto maíz. Ésta fue la cosa del mundo que más nos alegró y por ello dimos infinitas graçias a nuestro Señor. Y dixo que el

had, because they knew that we took nothing and would give it all back to them. This was the most obedient people we found throughout this land and of the best nature. And they are generally very well disposed.<sup>1</sup> When the ill had recovered, and we had already been there for three days, the women whom we had sent out arrived, saying that they had found very few people and that all had gone to the cows, since it was that season.<sup>2</sup> And we ordered the ones who had been sick to remain and those who were well to go with us, and that two days' journey from there those same two women would go with two of ours to bring out people and lead them to the road to receive us. And with this, the next morning all those who were the most hardy departed with us. And after a three-day journey we stopped. And the following day Alonso del Castillo departed with the black man Estevanico, taking as guides the two women. And the one of them who was a captive led them to a river<sup>3</sup> that flowed between some mountains where there was a village in which her father lived. And these were the first dwellings we saw that had the semblance and appearance of houses.<sup>4</sup> Castillo and Estevanico arrived here. And after having spoken with the Indians, at the end of three days Castillo came to where he had left us, and he brought along five or six of those Indians. And he told how he had found houses of people and permanent settlement, and that those people ate frijoles and squash, and that he had seen maize.<sup>5</sup> This was the thing that gladdened us more than anything else in the world, and for this we gave infinite thanks to our Lord. And he said that the

1. These were the people who greeted the men with a bounty of piñon nuts after the men's second crossing of the Rio Grande into southwest Texas. They had insisted that they could not take the men forward but were ultimately persuaded to do so after an epidemic befell them and they attributed the death of eight of their number to the Narváez men (f51v).

2. Bison hunting grounds to the north. It was late summer or early autumn 1535, and Oviedo (609a) notes that the bison were hunted during the summer.

3. The confluence of the Río Conchos, flowing from Chihuahua, and the Rio Grande, at Presidio, Texas, and Ojinaga, Chihuahua.

4. The "people of the cows" (f53r) occupied the first permanent settlements that the party had seen since they had left the Florida Panhandle in September 1528.

5. The frijoles and squash, and the people's familiarity with maize, meant crop cultivation and steady food sources. No maize had been found by the men since their departure from the Bay of Horses on the northeastern coast of the Gulf of Mexico (fi6r).

a. esperar] V: esperar

b. agua] Z: agna

negro vernía con toda la gente de las casas a esperar]nos<sup>a</sup> al camino çerca de allí. Y por esta causa partimos, y andada legua y media topamos con el negro y la gente que venían a resçebirnos, y nos dieron frisoles y muchas calabaças para comer y para traer agua,<sup>b</sup> y mantas de Vacas y otras cosas. Y como estas gentes y las que con nosotros venían eran enemigos y no se entendían, partimonos de los primeros, dándoles lo que nos avían dado. Y fuímonos con éstos. Y a seis leguas de allí ya que venía la noche llegamos a sus casas donde hizieron muchas fiestas con nosotros. Aquí estuvimos un día, y el siguiente nos partimos y llevámoslos con nosotros a otras casas de asiento donde comían lo mismo que ellos. Y de aí adelante hubo otro nuevo uso, que los que sabían de nuestra ida no salían a resçebirnos a los caminos como los otros [V:f43v] hazían, antes los hallávamos en sus casas, y tenían hechas otras para nosotros. Y estaban todos assentados y todos tenían bueltas las caras hazia la pared y las cabeças baxas y los cabellos puestos delante de los ojos, y su hazienda puesta en montón en medio de la casa. Y de aquí adelante començaron a darnos muchas mantas de cueros. Y no tenían cosa que no nos diessen. Es la gente de mejores cuerpos que vimos y de mayor biveza y habilidad y que mejor nos entendían y respondían en lo que preguntávamos. Y llamámoslos de las vacas porque la mayor parte que dellas mueren es çerca de allí. Y por aquel río arriba más de çinquenta leguas van matando muchas dellas. Esta

a. for us] V: *om.*

black man would come with all the people of the houses to wait for us<sup>4</sup> on the road near there. And for this reason we departed, and having gone a league and a half, we came upon the black man and the people who were coming to receive us, and they gave us frijoles and many squash to eat and for carrying water and robes of bison hide and other things. And because these people and those who came with us were enemies and did not get along, we took leave of the first ones, giving them what they had given us. And we went on with the others.<sup>1</sup> And six leagues from there, when night was already upon us, we arrived at their houses where they made great celebrations with us. We stayed here one day, and on the next day we departed and took them with us to other permanent houses where they ate the same things the others had. And from there<sup>2</sup> onward, there was another new custom, that is, those who knew about our arrival did not come out to receive us on the roads like the others did, but rather we found them in their houses, and they had others made for us. And they were all seated and all had their faces turned toward the wall with their heads lowered and their hair pulled over their eyes and their possessions placed in a pile in the middle of the house. And from here<sup>3</sup> onward, they began to give us many robes of hide. And they did not have anything that they did not give us. They are the people with the most well formed bodies we saw and of the greatest vitality and capacity and who best understood us and responded to what we asked them. And we called them the people of the cows because the greatest number of those cows are killed near there. And upstream along that river<sup>4</sup> for more than fifty leagues they go killing many of them.<sup>5</sup> These

1. These new hosts and guides are the “people of the cows”; the former guides who depart at this point are the “people of the piñon nuts” from just north of the Rio Grande in Texas.

2. The area of permanent settlements at La Junta de los Ríos.

3. La Junta de los Ríos.

4. The Rio Grande, traveling upstream through Texas from its confluence with the Río Conchos, to the northwest toward present-day El Paso, Texas.

5. Cabeza de Vaca’s earlier (f34r) observations about the extent of the bison range and people

who came down through the valleys hunting them were probably based on information gained here rather than on the Texas coast. This does not discredit his claim, however, that he also saw and ate bison while near the Gulf Coast.

a. se] V: *om.*

b. todos] V: los topos

c. unos árboles . . . la machacan] Z: unos árboles crían, que llaman Chacan V: llaman Chacan, y que la machucan

d. la] V: lo

gente andan del todo desnudos a la manera de los primeros que hallamos. Las mugeres andan cubiertas con unos cueros de venado y algunos pocos de hombres, señaladamente los que son viejos que no sirven para la guerra. Es tierra muy poblada. Preguntámosles cómo no sembraban maíz. Respondiéronnos que lo hazían por no perder lo que sembrassen, porque dos años arreo les avían faltado las aguas, y avía sido el tiempo tan seco que a todos se<sup>a</sup> les avían perdido los maíces todos,<sup>b</sup> y que no osarían tornar a sembrar sin que primero huviesse llovido mucho. Y rogávannos que dixésemos al çielo que lloviesse y se lo rogássemos. Y nosotros se lo prometimos de hazerlo así. También nosotros quesimos saber de dónde havían traído aquel maíz. Y ellos nos dixeron que de donde el sol se ponía, y que lo avía por toda aquella tierra, mas que lo más çerca de allí era por aquel camino. Preguntámosles por dónde iríamos bien, y que nos informassen del camino porque no querían ir allá. Dixéronnos que el camino era por aquel río arriba hazia el norte y que en diez y siete jornadas no hallaríamos otra cosa ninguna que comer sino una fruta que unos árboles crían, que la machacan<sup>c</sup> entre unas piedras. Y aun después de hecha esta diligencia no se puede comer de áspera y seca. Y assí era la verdad porque allí nos lo mostraron y no la<sup>d</sup> podimos comer. Y [V:f44r] dixéronnos también que entretanto que nosotros fuésemos por el río arriba iríamos siempre por gente que eran sus enemigos y hablaban su misma

people go completely naked in the manner of the first ones we found. The women go covered with deerskins, as do some of the men, notably the ones who are old and who are of no use in war. It is a very populous land. We asked them why they did not sow maize. They responded to us that they did this in order not to lose what they sowed because for the last two years the rains had not come and the weather had been so dry that all of them had lost all of their maize, and that they would not dare to sow again unless it first rained a great deal. And they begged us to command the heavens to rain and to ask for it for them. And we promised them to do it thus. We also wanted to know where they had brought that maize from. And they told us that it came from where the sun set, and that it grew in all that land, but that [the maize] nearest there was in that direction. We asked them by what route we could go without difficulty and that they inform us about the road since they did not wish to go there. They told us that the road was along that river<sup>1</sup> upstream toward the north and that in seventeen days' journey we would not find anything to eat but a fruit<sup>2</sup> that grew on some trees, which they crush<sup>3</sup> between some rocks.<sup>c</sup> And even after this effort it cannot be eaten because it is coarse and dry. And such was the truth, because there they showed it to us and we could not eat it. And they told us also that while going upstream along the river we would always be passing among peoples who were their enemies and spoke their same

c. grew . . . some rocks] Z: grew on some trees, that they call Chacan, between some rocks; V: they call Chacan, and that they crush between some rocks

1. The Rio Grande.
2. Oviedo (609a) says that the Indians called this fruit *masarrones*. He also says that it grew on trees and that it was not fit to be eaten by either man or beast.
3. It is probable that the name "Chacan" is an error and that the phrase "que la machacan" (that they crush) became "que llaman Chacan" (that they call Chacan), being thus transformed by the printer into the name of the fruit.



lengua y que no tenían qué darnos cosa a comer, mas que nos resçibirían de muy buena voluntad, y que nos darían muchas mantas de algodón y cueros y otras cosas de las que ellos tenían, mas que todavía les paresçía que en ninguna manera no devíamos tomar aquel camino. Dudando lo que haríamos y cuál camino tomaríamos que más a nuestro propósito y provecho fuese, nosotros nos detuvimos con ellos dos días. Dávannos a comer frisoles y calabças. La manera de cozellas es tan nueva que, por ser tal, yo la quise aquí poner para que se vea y se conozca quan diversos y estraños son los ingenios e industrias de los hombres humanos. Ellos no alcançan ollas, y para cozer lo que ellos quieren comer hinchén media calabça grande de agua. Y en el fuego echan muchas piedras de las que más façilmente ellos pueden ençender y toman el fuego. Y quando veen que están ardiendo, tómanlas con unas tenazas de palo y échanlas en aquella agua que está en la calabça hasta que la hazen hervir con el fuego que las piedras llevan. Y quando veen que el agua hierve, echan en ella lo que an de hazer.<sup>a</sup> Y en todo este tiempo no hazen sino sacar unas piedras y echar otras ardiendo para que el<sup>b</sup> agua hierva para cozer lo que quieren.<sup>c</sup>

a. hazer| V: cozer

b. el| Z: la

c. quieren| V: quieren, y assí lo cuezen

d. ] Z: *om.* V: Capitulo treinta y uno: De cómo seguimos el camino del maíz.

<sup>d</sup>Passados dos días que allí estuvimos, determinamos de ir a buscar el maíz. Y no quesimos seguir el camino de las vacas porque es hazia el norte, y esto era para nosotros muy gran rodeo, porque siempre tuvimos por çierto que yendo la puesta

language and who did not have anything to give us to eat, but who would receive us with very good will and give us many robes of cotton and hides and other things they had, but that it still seemed to them that by no means should we take that road. Uncertain as to what we should do and which road we should take that would be more to our purpose and advantage, we stayed with them for two days.<sup>1</sup> They gave us frijoles and squash to eat. The manner in which they cook them is so novel that, for being such, I wanted to put it here so that the extraordinary ingenuity and industry of humankind might be seen and known in all its diversity. They do not have pots, and in order to cook what they want to eat, they fill half a large gourd with water. And they place many rocks, of those that they can most easily ignite, into the fire, and they catch fire. And when they see that they are burning, they take them with some wooden tongs and they throw them in the gourd filled with water until they make it boil with the heat of the rocks. And when they see that the water is boiling, they put in it whatever they want to make.<sup>a</sup> And in all this time the only thing they do is take some rocks out and put other burning ones in, so that the water boils in order to cook whatever they want.<sup>c</sup>

a. make.] V: cook

c. want.] V: want, and in such a manner they cook it.

d. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter thirty-one: Of how we followed the maize road.

<sup>d</sup>After two days had passed that we were there, we decided to go in search of the maize.<sup>2</sup> And we did not want to follow the road of the cows because it is toward the north, and this was for us a very great detour, because we always held it for certain that going the route of the setting

1. Their choice, as Cabeza de Vaca implies they understood it, was to go to the bison-hunting lands to the north or to follow the maize road to the west. See (f51r).

2. Here the final decision to head for the South Sea is made. Contrary to common belief, it had not been decided earlier when the men were still near the Gulf Coast not far south of the Rio Grande. At that point (f47v), their intention had been to travel only slightly inland, parallel to the coast, not overland in search of the other sea. However, it is possible that their determination had been effectively made by the time Cabeza de Vaca says they told the "people of the piñon nuts" in southwestern Texas that

they wished to go "to the place where the sun set" and "to the north" (f51r, f51v) and that they had implicitly followed this course since learning in Coahuila that copper and permanent houses were to be found in that direction (f49v).

- a. seguimos] Z: seseguimos del sol avíamos de hallar lo que desseávamos. Y así seguimos<sup>a</sup> nuestro camino y atravessamos toda la tierra hasta salir a la Mar del Sur. Y no bastó
- b. mucha] Z: mncha estorvarnos esto el temor que nos ponían de la mucha<sup>b</sup> hambre que avíamos de passar, como a la verdad la passamos por todas las diez y siete jornadas que nos avían dicho. Por todas ellas el río arriba<sup>c</sup> nos dieron muchas mantas de Vacas. Y no comimos de aquella su fruta, mas nuestro mantenimiento era
- c. arriba] Z: aariba cada día tanto como una mano de unto de venado que para esta necesidad<sup>d</sup>
- d. esta necesidad] Z: estas ne-  
cessidad V: estas necesidades procurávamos siempre de guardar. Y así passamos todas las diez y siete<sup>e</sup>
- e. siete] Z: siece jornadas, y al cabo dellas travessamos el río y caminamos otras diez y siete a la puesta del sol por unos llanos y entre unas sierras muy grandes que
- f. Y] V: *om.* allí se hazen. Y<sup>f</sup> allí hallamos una gente que la tercera parte del año no comen sino unos polvos de paja. Y por ser aquel tiempo quando nosotros por allí caminamos, huvimoslo también de comer hasta que, acabadas estas jornadas, hallamos casas de assiento adonde avía mucho maíz allegado, y dello y de<sup>g</sup> harina nos dieron mucha<sup>h</sup> cantidad y de calabças y frisoles y mantas de algodón. Y de todo cargamos a los que allí nos avían traído. Y con esto se bolvieron los más contentos del mundo. Nosotros dimos muchas gracias a Dios nuestro Señor por avernos traído allí adonde avíamos hallado tanto mantenimiento. Entre estas casas avía algunas dellas que eran de tierra. Y las otras todas son de esteras de cañas.<sup>i</sup> Y de aquí passamos más de çien leguas de tierra, y siempre
- g. de] V: de su
- h. mucha] Z: muche
- i. cañas] Z: cama

sun we would find what we desired. And thus we followed our course and traversed the entire land until coming out at the South Sea. And the fear they put into us about the great hunger that we were to endure, which, in truth, we suffered all the seventeen days' journey about which they had told us, was not sufficient to stop us from doing this. For all the days we traveled upstream,<sup>1</sup> they gave us many bison robes. And we did not eat their fruit,<sup>2</sup> but instead our sustenance each day was no more than a handful of deer fat<sup>3</sup> that we were always careful to conserve for this necessity. And thus we traveled all seventeen days, and at the end of them we crossed the river<sup>4</sup> and walked another seventeen days in the direction of the sunset over some plains and among very great sierras that are found there.<sup>5</sup> And there we found people who eat nothing but some powders of grass<sup>6</sup> for a third of the year. And because it was that season when we walked through there, we also had to eat it until, when those days ended, we found permanent houses where there was much stored maize, and they gave us a great quantity of it, as well as of flour and squash and frijoles, and mantles of cotton.<sup>7</sup> And we loaded those who brought us there with everything. And with this they went home the most contented people in the world. We gave many thanks to God our Lord for having brought us there where we had found so much sustenance. Among these houses some of them were made of earth. And all the rest were made of reed<sup>1</sup> mats. And from here we passed through more than one hundred leagues of land,<sup>8</sup> and we always

i. reed] Z: sleeping

1. The Rio Grande, traveling up the Texas side.

2. *Masarrones* (Oviedo 609a).

3. Also called deer suet (Smith, *Relation* 166); the men probably carried it with them from the settlement at La Junta de los Ríos.

4. The Rio Grande, in the vicinity of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. This was the men's third and final crossing of the Rio Grande.

5. The dunes-covered desert highlands (*medranos*) and northwest-tending ranges and basins of northern Chihuahua.

6. *polvos de paja*.

7. This area of permanent settlement was either in northwestern Chihuahua

at Casas Grandes or in northeastern Sonora along the Rio Bavispe.

8. Through the area known archaeologically as Sonora River Culture, characterized by the cultivation of maize, frijoles, and cotton. It extended from the upper reaches of the San Miguel, Sonora, Moctezuma, and Bavispe Rivers in the north to the Yaqui, upper Mayo, Fuerte, and Sinaloa Rivers in the south (*Historia general de Sonora* 233, 241–42).

a. Dorantes] V: mí me dieron  
cinco

b. que] Z: que

c. tratadas] Z: tratados

hallamos casas de assiento y mucho mantenimiento de maíz y frisoles. Y dávannos muchos venados y muchas mantas de algodón, mejores que las de la Nueva España. Dávannos también muchas cuentas y de unos corrales que ay en la Mar del Sur, muchas turquesas muy buenas que tienen de hazia el norte. Y finalmente dieron aquí todo quanto tenían, y a Dorantes<sup>a</sup> esmeraldas fechas puntas de flechas, y con estas flechas hazen ellos sus areitos y bailes. Y paresciéndome a mí que eran muy buenas, les pregunté que dónde las avían [V:f45r] avido. Y dixerón que las traían de unas sierras muy altas que están hazia el norte y las compravan a trueco de penachos y plumas de papagayos. Y dezían que avía allí pueblos de mucha gente y casas muy grandes. Entre éstos vimos las mugeres más honestamente tratadas que a ninguna parte de Indias que<sup>b</sup> huviésemos visto. Traen unas camisas de algodón que llegan hasta las rodillas y unas medias mangas ençima dellas de unas faldillas de cuero de venado sin pelo que tocan en el suelo. Y enxabónanlas con unas raíces que alimpian mucho, y ansí las tienen muy bien tratadas;<sup>c</sup> son abiertas por delante y çerradas con unas correas. Andan calçados con çapatos. Toda esta gente venían a nosotros a que los tocássemos y santiguássemos. Y eran en esto tan inportunos que con gran trabajo lo suffríamos porque dolientes y sanos todos querían ir santiguados. Acontesçía muchas vezes que de las mugeres que con nosotros ivan parían algunas. Y luego en nasciendo, nos traían la criatura a que la santiguássemos y

a. Dorantes] V: me they gave  
five

found permanent houses and many stores of maize and frijoles. And they gave us many deer and many robes of cotton, better than those of New Spain. They also gave us many beads and some coral that is found in the South Sea [and] many very fine turquoises that they acquire from toward the north. And finally they gave here everything they had, and to Dorantes<sup>a</sup> emeralds<sup>1</sup> made into arrowheads, and with these arrows they make their *areitos* and dances. And seeming to me that they were very fine, I asked them where they had obtained them. And they said they had brought them from some very high mountains that are toward the north and they bought them in exchange for plumes and parrot feathers.<sup>2</sup> And they said that there were villages of many people and very large houses there. Among these people we saw the most decently clad women we had ever seen in any part of the Indies.<sup>3</sup> They wear some shirts of cotton that reach their knees and some half sleeves over them of folds of buckskin that touch the ground. And they rub them with certain roots that are good for cleaning, and thus they have them very well cared for; they are open in the front and close with some ties. They go about with their feet covered, wearing shoes. All these people came to us so that we might touch them and make the sign of the cross over them. And in this they were so insistent that we endured it only with great difficulty, because both the sick and the healthy wanted to be blessed. It occurred many times that of the women who went with us some gave birth. And after giving birth they brought us the infants so that we could make the sign of the cross over them and

1. Precious green stone, possibly a particularly green type of turquoise.

2. Cabeza de Vaca here provides the earliest European description of long-distance trade between northwestern Mexico, the pueblo country of present-day New Mexico, and possibly central Mexico.

3. Cabeza de Vaca implicitly contrasts the highly developed peoples of northwestern Mexico with the migratory peoples of the coastal regions of the Gulf of Mexico.

- a. veníamos] Z: veniames  
 b. vienen] Z: vieneu V: *om.*  
 c. porque . . . cielo] V: *om.*  
 d. y] V: *om.*  
 e. y] V: en paz, y
- tocássemos. Acompañávannos siempre hasta dexarnos entregados a otros. Y entre todas estas gentes se tenía por muy cierto que veníamos<sup>a</sup> del cielo, porque todas las cosas que ellos no alcançan, ni tienen notiçia de donde vienen,<sup>b</sup> dizen que vienen del cielo.<sup>c</sup> Entretanto que con éstos anduvimos, caminamos todo el día sin comer hasta la noche. Y comíamos tan poco que ellos se espantavan de verlo. Nunca nos sintieron cansançio y a la verdad nosotros estávamos tan hechos al trabajo que tampoco lo sintíamos. Teníamos con ellos mucha autoridad y gravedad. Y para conservar esto les hablávamos pocas vezes. El negro les hablava siempre y<sup>d</sup> se informava de los caminos que queríamos ir y los pueblos que avía y de las cosas que queríamos saber. Passamos por gran número y diversidades de lenguas. Con todas ellas Dios nuestro Señor nos favoreosció, porque siempre nos entendieron y les entendimos. Y ansí preguntávamos y respondían por señas como si ellos hablaran nuestra lengua y nosotros la suya, porque aunque sabíamos seis lenguas, no nos podíamos en todas partes aprovechar dellas, porque hallamos más de mil [V:f45v] diferencias. Por todas estas tierras los que tenían guerras con los otros se hazían luego amigos para venirnos a resçibir y traernos todo quanto tenían. Y desta manera dexamos toda la tierra y<sup>e</sup> dixímosles por las señas, porque nos entendían, que en el cielo avía un hombre que llamávamos Dios, el qual avía criado el cielo y la tierra, y que éste adorávamos nosotros y teníamos por Señor, y que hazíamos lo que nos

c. because they . . . from the sky.] V: *om.*

e. and] V: in peace, and

touch them.<sup>1</sup> They always accompanied us until they left us handed over to others. And among all these peoples, it was taken for certain that we came from the sky, because all the things that they do not have or do not know the origin of, they say come from the sky.<sup>2</sup> While we went with these people, we walked the entire day without eating until night. And we ate so little that they were astonished to see it. We never felt tired and in truth we were so hardened to the task that we did not even notice it. We had a great deal of authority and influence over them. And in order to conserve this we spoke to them but few times. The black man always spoke to them and informed himself about the roads we wished to travel and the villages that there were and about other things that we wanted to know. We passed through a great number and diversity of languages. With all of them God our Lord favored us, because they always understood us and we understood them. And thus we asked and they responded by signs as if they spoke our language and we theirs, because although we knew six languages, we could not make use of them in all areas because we found more than a thousand differences. Throughout all these lands those who were at war with one another later made friends in order to come to receive us and bring us everything they had. And in this manner we left the entire land and<sup>3</sup> we told them by signs, because they understood us, that in heaven there was a man whom we called God, who had created the heaven and the earth, and that we adored him and served him as Lord, and that we did whatever he

1. Oviedo (610a) notes that the mothers would put a few kernels of maize in the hands of the infants, inviting the Narváez men to take the grains from them in the belief that thus they would never suffer sickness or pain.

2. Cabeza de Vaca's explanation that "from the sky" meant "origin unknown" was deleted from the Valladolid (1555) edition. See (f46r, f56v).

3. The Valladolid (1555) edition here adds "in peace" to suggest the stabilizing and civilizing influence of the Christians over the Indians.



mandava, y que de su mano venían todas las cosas buenas, y que si así ellos lo hiziesen les iría muy bien dello. Y tan grande aparejo hallamos en ellos que si lengua huviera con que perfetamente nos entendiéramos, todos los dexáramos christianos. Esto les dimos a entender lo mejor que podimos. Y de aí adelante, quando el sol salía, con muy gran grita abrían las manos juntas al çielo y después las traían por todo su cuerpo. Y otro tanto hazían quando se ponía. Es gente bien acondiçionada y aprovechada [y] para seguir qualquiera cosa bien aparejada.

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo treinta y dos: De cómo nos dieron los coraçones de los venados.

<sup>a</sup>En el pueblo donde nos dieron las esmeraldas, dieron a Dorantes más de seisçientos coraçones de venado abiertos, de que ellos tienen siempre mucha abundançia para su mantenimiento. Y por esto le pusimos nombre el pueblo de los Coraçones, y por él es la entrada para muchas provincias que están a la Mar del Sur. Y si los que la fueren a buscar por aquí no entraren, se perderán, porque la costa no tiene maíz y comen polvo de bledo y de paja y de pescado que toman en la mar con balsas porque no alcançan canoas. Las mugeres cubren sus vergüenças con hierva y paja. Es gente muy apocada y triste. Creemos que çerca de la costa, por la vía de aquellos pueblos que nosotros traximos, ay más de mil leguas de tierra poblada. Y tienen mucho mantenimiento porque siembran tres vezes [V:f46r] en el año frisoles y maíz. Ay tres maneras de venados: los de la una dellas son tamaños como novillos de Castilla. De toda la gente las casas de asiento son buíos.<sup>b</sup>

b. De toda . . . buíos] V: Ay casas de asiento que llaman buíos

commanded us, and that from his hand came all good things, and if thus they were to do it, it would go very well for them. And we found such great readiness in them, that if we had had an interpreter through whom we could have understood each other perfectly, we would have left all of them Christians. This we gave them to understand as best we could. And henceforth when the sun rose, with very great shouting they opened their joined hands to the sky and afterward passed them over their entire bodies. And they did the same when the sun set. They are a people of good disposition and diligent [and] well equipped to follow any course.

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter thirty-two: Of how they gave us the deer hearts.

<sup>a</sup>In the village where they gave us the emeralds, they gave Dorantes more than six hundred open hearts of deer, of which they always have great abundance for their sustenance. And because of this, we named it the village of the hearts [Corazones],<sup>1</sup> and through it is the entrance to many provinces that lie toward the South Sea. And if those who should go searching for it do not pass through here, they will perish, because the coast has no maize, and they eat powders of lamb's-quarters,<sup>2</sup> and of grass and of fish that they take in the sea with rafts because they do not have canoes. The women cover their shameful parts with grasses and straw. They are a people timid and sad. We believe that near the coast along the route of those communities that we brought [with us], there are more than a thousand leagues of populated land. And they are well provided because they sow frijoles and maize three times a year.<sup>3</sup> There are three kinds of deer: those of one type are the size of young bulls of Castile.<sup>4</sup> Among all the people, the permanent houses are *buhíos*.<sup>b</sup>

b. Among all . . . are *buhíos*.  
V: There are permanent houses that are called *buhíos*.

1. Cabeza de Vaca and Oviedo (610a) locate Corazones, to which Oviedo (610b) referred as a cluster of settlements ("pueblos juntos"), as being twelve leagues from the coast. Its site is likely to have been in the area of Onavas on the Río Yaqui, upstream from where its tributary stream, the Río Chico, flows into it.

2. *bledos*. Cabeza de Vaca refers to a European potherb to describe the plant consumed by these Indians. Covarrubias (221b) describes *bledos* as greens known for their capacity to soothe the stomach as a digestive and states that they were commonly cooked with

oil, vinegar, and salt to make them tasty.

3. Cabeza de Vaca speculates about the lands of wealth to the north on the basis of features he would see later in southern Sonora and Sinaloa (f57r, f60r).

4. Because this sentence and the ones following it abruptly change topics, it is possible that a portion of Cabeza de Vaca's original text is missing. The Valladolid (1555) edition is roughly equivalent.

- a. una] V: la
- b. vido] V: vio
- c. hasta] V: hazia
- Y tienen yerva y esto es de unos árboles al tamaño de manzanos, y no es menester más de coger la fruta y untar la flecha con ella. Y si no tiene fruta quiebran una rama y con una<sup>a</sup> leche que tienen hazen lo mesmo. Ay muchos destos árboles que son tan ponçoñosos que si majan las hojas dél y las lavan en alguna agua allegada, todos los venados y qualesquier otros animales que della beven rebientan luego. En este pueblo estuvimos tres días, y a una jornada de allí estava otro, en el qual nos tomaron tantas aguas que, porque un río cresció mucho, no lo podimos passar y nos detuvimos allí quinze días. En este tiempo Castillo vido<sup>b</sup> al cuello de un indio una hevilleta de talabarte de espada, y en ella cosido un clavo de herrar. Tomóse la y preguntámosle qué cosa era aquélla. Y dixéronnos que avían venido del çielo. Preguntámosle más que quién la avía traído de allá. Y respondieron que unos hombres que traían barvas como nosotros, que avían venido del çielo y llegado a aquel río, y que traían cavallos y lanças y espadas, y que avían alañeado dos dellos. Y lo más dissimuladamente que podimos, les preguntamos qué se avían hecho aquellos hombres. Y respondiéronnos que se avían ido a la mar, y que metieron las lanças por debaxo del agua, y que ellos se avían también metido por debaxo, y que después los vieron ir por çima hasta<sup>c</sup> puesta del sol. Nosotros dimos muchas gracias a Dios nuestro Señor por aquello que oímos porque estábamos desconfiados de saber nuevas de christianos. Y por otra parte nos vimos en gran confusión y

And they have poison and this is from some trees about the size of apple trees, and it is not necessary to do more than gather the fruit and smear the arrow with it. And if they do not have the fruit, they break off a branch, and with a milk they draw from it, they do the same. There are many of these trees that are so poisonous that if they crush the leaves of it and soak them in some collected water, all the deer and whatever other animals that drink from it later bloat and die.<sup>1</sup> We were in this village for three days,<sup>2</sup> and a day's journey from there was another, in which we were overtaken by so much rain that, because a river<sup>3</sup> rose so much, we could not cross it, and we remained there for fifteen days. During this time Castillo saw, around the neck of an Indian, a buckle<sup>4</sup> of a sword belt, and sewn to it a horseshoe nail. He took it from him and we asked him what that object was. And they told us that they had come from the sky. We asked him further who had brought it from there. And they responded that [it was] some men who wore beards like us, who had come from the sky and arrived at that river, and who brought horses and lances and swords, and who had lanced two of them.<sup>5</sup> And hiding our intention as best we could, we asked them what those men had done. And they replied to us that they had gone to the sea and that they placed their lances under the water and that they also had gone under the water, and that afterward they watched them go overland<sup>6</sup> until sunset.<sup>c</sup> We gave many thanks to God our Lord for what we heard,<sup>7</sup> because we were doubtful of coming upon news of Christians. And at the same time we found ourselves greatly disturbed and

c. until sunset] V: toward the setting sun

1. Oviedo (618b) evidently learned in his conversations with Cabeza de Vaca in Spain in 1547 that Cabeza de Vaca had not actually seen these trees but had only heard of them.

2. Corazones or another village first mentioned in the possibly missing text (see f56r). A day's journey from there to the place where they were detained probably took them to the portion of the Río Yaqui that customarily swelled with floods, the area of today's Presa Álvaro Obregón.

3. The Río Yaqui as it begins its westerly course toward the sea, near present-day Cumuripa, where its flooding is contained today by the Presa Álvaro Obregón.

4. *hevilleta*, or *hevilla pequeña*. The iron prong that fastens the belt (Covarrubias 685a).

5. The slaving expeditions into northwestern Mexico began with Nuño de Guzmán's 1530–31 conquest of the area. The Indians' reactions and Cabeza de Vaca's concern at this moment in late 1535 or early 1536 suggest much more recent Spanish activity in the area (f57r) than Diego de Guzmán's expedition of 1533.

6. *por cima*. Cabeza de Vaca communicates the natives' observation that the horsemen submerged themselves in the water, then reemerged and departed as the natives watched their course of travel on land.

7. Oviedo (611a) reveals that when the four men encountered the Indian who wore the buckle, they had already come across other signs indicating that Christians were in the area.

a. tristeza] Z: tristezaa

b. íbamos] Z: inamos

c. alcançó] V: alcançava

d. desnaturados] V: desventurados

e. cuentas y mantas] V: mantas de

tristeza<sup>a</sup> creyendo que aquella gente no sería sino algunos que avían venido por la mar a descubrir. Mas al fin como tuvimos tan çierta nueva dellos, dímonos más priessa a nuestro camino, y siempre hallávamos más nueva de christianos. Y nosotros les dezíamos que les íbamos<sup>b</sup> a buscar para dezilles que no los matassen ni tomassen por esclavos, [V:f46v] ni los sacassen de sus tierras, ni les hiziessen otro mal ninguno; y desto ellos se holgavan mucho. Anduvimos mucha tierra y toda la hallamos despoblada, porque los moradores della andavan huyendo por las sierras sin osar tener casas ni labrar por miedo de los christianos. Fue cosa de que tuvimos muy gran lástima, viendo la tierra muy fértil y muy hermosa y muy llena de aguas y de ríos, y ver los lugares despoblados y quemados y la gente tan flaca y enferma, huída y escondida toda. Y como no sembravan, con tanta hambre se mantenían con cortezas de árboles y raíces. Desta hambre a nosotros alcançó<sup>c</sup> parte en todo este camino, porque mal nos podían ellos proveer estando tan desnaturados<sup>d</sup> que paresçía que se querían morir. Truxéronnos cuentas y mantas<sup>e</sup> las que avían escondido por los christianos, y diéronnoslas. Y aun contáronnos como otras vezes avían entrado los christianos por la tierra, y avían destruído y quemado los pueblos y llevado la mitad de los hombres y todas las mugeres y mochachos, y que los que de sus manos se avían podido escapar andavan huyendo, como los víamos tan atemorizados sin osar parar en ninguna parte, y que ni querían ni podían

saddened, believing that those men would not be but those who had come by sea to explore. But in the end, since we had such certain news of them, we made greater haste in our journey, and we always found more signs of Christians. And we said to the Indians that we were going to look for them to tell them that they should not kill them or take them as slaves,<sup>1</sup> nor should they take them out of their lands, nor should they do them any other harm whatsoever; and with this they were greatly pleased. We traveled through much land and we found all of it deserted, because the inhabitants of it went fleeing through the sierras without daring to keep houses or work the land for fear of the Christians. It was a thing that gave us great sorrow, seeing the land very fertile and very beautiful and very full of waterways and rivers,<sup>2</sup> and seeing the places deserted and burned and the people so emaciated and sick, all of them having fled and in hiding.<sup>3</sup> And since they did not sow, with so much hunger they maintained themselves on the bark of trees and roots. This hunger affected us in part along this entire road, because only poorly could they provide for us, being so displaced from their natural homeland<sup>d</sup> that it seemed that they wished to die. They brought to us beads and<sup>e</sup> robes that they had hidden on account of the Christians, and they gave them to us. And they even told us how other times the Christians had entered the land<sup>4</sup> and had destroyed and burned the villages and carried off half the men and all the women and boys, and that those who had been able to escape out of their hands now went fleeing, as we saw them so terrorized that they dared not stop in any place, and they neither wanted nor were able to

d. displaced from their natural homeland] V: wretched, miserable

e. beads and] V: *om.*

1. Cabeza de Vaca here anticipates knowledge that he could only have gained later, namely, that these were not maritime explorers but rather conquistadors in search of Indians to take as slaves.

2. The four survivors were traveling south of the Río Yaqui some ten to twelve leagues (approximately thirty to thirty-six miles or forty-eight to fifty-eight kilometers) inland from the coast, according to Oviedo (611a). These were alluvial plains of the fertile river valleys of Sonora.

3. The Indians fleeing this area went up into the ranges and low basins that rose from the plain to the escarpment of

the Sierra Madre Occidental (Sauer, "The Road" map facing 58).

4. Oviedo (611b) cites three previous *entradas* or incursions into this area.

- a. determinados| Z: determina sembrar ni labrar la tierra, antes estavan determinados<sup>a</sup> de dexarse morir, y que esto tenían por mejor que esperar ser tratados con tanta crueldad como hasta allí. Y mostravan grandíssimo plazer con nosotros, aunque temimos que llegados a los que tenían la frontera con los cristianos y guerra con ellos nos avían de maltratar y hazer que pagássemos lo que los christianos contra ellos hazían. Mas como Dios nuestro Señor fue servido de traernos hasta ellos, començáronnos a temer y a catar como los passados y aun algo más, de que no quedamos poco maravillados, por donde claramente se vee que estas gentes todas, para ser atraídos a ser christianos y a obediencia de la Imperial Magestad, an de ser llevados con buen tratamiento, y que éste es camino muy çierto y otro no. Éstos nos llevaron a un pueblo que está en un cuchillo de una sierra. Y se a de subir [V:f47r] a él por grande aspereza. Y aquí hallamos mucha gente que estava junta, recogidos por miedo de los christianos. Resçibióronnos muy bien y diéronnos quanto tenían, y diéronnos más de dos mil cargas de maíz que dimos a aquellos miserables y hambrientos que hasta allí nos avían traído. E otro día despachamos de allí quatro mensajeros por la tierra, como lo acostumbrávamos hazer, para que llamassen y convocasen toda la más gente que pudiessen<sup>b</sup> a un pueblo que está tres jornadas de allí. Y hecho esto, otro día nos partimos con toda la gente que allí estava. Y siempre hallávamos rastro y señales adonde avían dormido christianos. Y a mediodía tomamos<sup>c</sup> nuestros mensajeros que nos dixerón que no avían
- b. pudiessen| Z: pndiessen
- c. tomamos| V: topamos

sow or work the land; rather, they were determined to let themselves die, and they considered this better than waiting to be treated with as much cruelty as they had been up to that point. And they showed very great pleasure with us, although we feared that when we arrived at the ones who held the frontier against the Christians and were at war with them, they would treat us cruelly and make us pay for what the Christians were doing to them. But since God our Lord was served to bring us to them, they began to fear and respect us as the previous ones had done, and even somewhat more, about which we were not a little amazed, by which it is clearly seen that all these peoples, to be drawn to become Christians and to obedience to the Imperial Majesty, must be given good treatment, and that this is the path most certain and no other. These people took us to a village that is in the cleft of a mountain.<sup>1</sup> And it is necessary to climb very rugged terrain in order to reach it. And here we found many people who were gathered together, having taken refuge out of fear of the Christians. They received us very well and gave us everything they had, and they gave us more than two thousand loads of maize that we gave to those wretched and starving ones who had brought us there. And the next day we sent out from there four messengers through the land, as we were accustomed to doing,<sup>2</sup> so that they might call and bring together all the people they could, to a village that is a three-day journey from there. And this done, the next day we departed with all the people who were there.<sup>3</sup> And we always found traces and signs of where Christians had slept. And at midday we reached our messengers who told us that they had not

1. Oviedo (611b, 613a) calculated this highland refuge to be five leagues from where the Narváez party would meet Diego de Alcaraz and his men on the Río Sinaloa and forty leagues from the Spanish settlement at Culiacán. Sauer ("The Road" 19) suggests that this might be in the sierras on one of the headwaters of the Río Sinaloa.

2. Oviedo (607a) reports that along their entire course the four survivors sent out messengers in the name of each one of them to direct new people to prepare dwellings and gather food and provisions for them.

3. At the mountain refuge in Sinaloa.



- a. todos] V: toda hallado gente, que todos<sup>a</sup> andavan por los montes escondidos, huyendo porque los christianos no los matassen e hiziessen esclavos, y que la noche passada avían visto a los christianos, estando ellos detrás de unos árboles mirando lo que hazían, y vieron como llevavan muchos indios en cadenas. Y desto se alteraron los que con nosotros venían. Y algunos dellos se bolvieron para dar aviso por la tierra como venían christianos, y mucho más
- b. mucho más hizieran éstos] V: muchos más hizieran esto hizieran éstos<sup>b</sup> si nosotros no les dixéramos que no lo hiziessen ni tuviessen temor. E con esto se asseguraron y holgaron mucho. Venían entonces con nosotros indios de cien leguas de allí. Y no podíamos acabar con ellos que se bolviessen a sus casas. Y por asegurarlos dormimos aquella noche allí. Y otro día caminamos y dormimos en el camino. Y el siguiente los que avíamos embiado por mensajeros nos guiaron adonde ellos avían visto los christianos. Y llegados a ora de bísperas vimos claramente que avían dicho la verdad. Y conoçimos la gente que era de a cavallo por las estacas en que los cavallos avían<sup>c</sup> estado atados. Desde aquí, que se llama el Río de Petután, hasta el río donde llegó Diego de Guzmán, puede aver, hasta el desde donde supimos de christianos, ochenta leguas. Y desde allí al pueblo donde nos tomaron las aguas, doze leguas; y desde allí al pueblo de los Coraçones avía
- c. avían] Z: avía cinco leguas;<sup>d</sup> y desde allí hasta la Mar del Sur avía [V:f47v] doze leguas. Por toda esta tierra donde alcançan sierras vimos grandes muestras de oro y alcohol, hierro, cobre y otros metales. Por donde están las casas de assiento es caliente, tanto que por enero haze gran calor. Desde allí hazia el mediodía de la tierra, que es despoblada hasta la Mar del Norte, es muy
- d. y desde allí al pueblo de los Coraçones avía cinco leguas] V: om.

b. these people would have done much more] V: many more would have done this

d. and from there to the village of Corazones there were five leagues] V: *om.*

found people, because all of them went hidden through the mountains, fleeing to avoid being killed or made slaves by the Christians, and that the previous night while they were behind some trees watching what they were doing, they had seen the Christians and saw how they were bringing many Indians in chains. And those who came with us were very disturbed by this. And some of them returned to give notice through the land that Christians were coming, and these people would have done much more<sup>b</sup> if we had not told them not to do it and not to have fear.<sup>1</sup> And with this they were reassured and very pleased. Indians from a hundred leagues from there<sup>2</sup> were traveling with us at that time. And we could not convince them to return to their homes. And to reassure them, we slept there that night. And the next day we traveled and slept along the road. And the following day those whom we had sent out as messengers guided us to where they had seen the Christians. And arriving at the hour of vespers, we saw clearly that they had told the truth. And we understood the people to be horsemen because of the stakes to which the horses had been tied. From here, which is called the Río de Petután,<sup>3</sup> to the river to which Diego de Guzmán arrived,<sup>4</sup> to the one where we learned about the Christians,<sup>5</sup> there may be eighty leagues. And from there to the village where the rains had overtaken us, twelve leagues, and from there to the settlement of Corazones there were five leagues,<sup>4</sup> and from there to the South Sea there were twelve leagues.<sup>6</sup> Throughout all this land where there are mountains, we saw great evidence of gold and antimony,<sup>7</sup> iron, copper, and other metals.<sup>8</sup> Through the area where there are permanent houses it is hot, so much so that in January there is great heat. From there southward,<sup>9</sup> the land is uninhabited to the North Sea; it is very

1. Oviedo (611b–12a) gives the same account of the Indians' discovery of a deserted Spanish camp three days from the mountain village.

2. Inhabitants of the settlements of the Corazones area in Sonora, along the north-south course of the Río Yaqui probably in the area of Onavas, according to the calculations Cabeza de Vaca gives below. Oviedo (612a) says that Indians from eighty leagues back were accompanying them.

3. Also Petachán (f61v); the Petatlán, today's Río Sinaloa.

4. Río Yaqui, at some point on its east-west course, probably no more than forty miles (sixty-five kilometers) from the coast. Diego de Guzmán arrived here in 1533.

5. Either the Río Yaqui, near the base of its north-south course, or a river that Cabeza de Vaca had not previously mentioned.

6. This calculation of distance, going from south to north (from the Río Petatlán to the Río Yaqui, then to the Indian settlement of Corazones), is concluded by an east-west calculation—the distance from Corazones to the sea—of some twelve leagues (approximately

thirty-six miles or fifty-eight kilometers).

7. See (f49r).

8. Cabeza de Vaca's previous comments about the absence or presence of mountains (f16r, f35r, f47r–v) are here revealed to pertain to the promise of mineral wealth. Oviedo (618b) challenged this explicit attribution by Cabeza de Vaca of such wealth to this area from Corazones south to the Río Petatlán. See also (f60r).

9. *hazia el mediodia de la tierra.*

a. donde] Z: dondde

b. crudelíssima] Z: crudélima

c. casas] V: casa

d. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo treinta y tres: Cómo vimos rastro de christianos.

desastrada y pobre, donde<sup>a</sup> passamos grande e increíble hambre. Y los que por aquella tierra habitan y andan es gente crudelíssima<sup>b</sup> y de muy mala inclinación y costumbres. Los indios que tienen casas<sup>c</sup> de assiento y los de atrás ningún caso hazen de oro y plata ni hallan que pueda aver provecho dello.

<sup>d</sup>Después que vimos rastro claro de christianos y entendimos que tan cerca estábamos dellos, dimos muchas graçias a Dios nuestro Señor por querernos sacar de tan triste y miserable captiverio. Y el plazer que desto sentimos, júzguelo cada uno quando pensare el tiempo que en aquella tierra estuvimos y los peligros y trabajos por que passamos. Aquella noche yo rogué a uno de mis compañeros que fuesse tras los christianos, que ivan por donde nosotros dexávamos la tierra assegurada. Y havia tres días de camino. A ellos se les hizo de mal esto, escusándose por el cansancio y trabajo, y aunque cada uno dellos lo pudiera hazer mejor que yo por ser más rezios y más moços. Mas vista su voluntad, otro día por la mañana tomé comigo al negro y onze indios, y por el rastro que hallava siguiendo a los christianos, passé por tres lugares donde avían dormido. Y este día anduve diez leguas. Y otro día de mañana alcançé quatro christianos de cavallo que reçibieron gran alteración de verme tan estrañamente vestido y en compañía de indios. [V:f48r] Estuviéronme mirando mucho espacio de tiempo, tan atónitos que ni me hablaban ni açertavan a preguntarme nada. Yo les dixé que me llevassen adonde estava su

wretched and poor, where we suffered great and unbelievable hunger. And those who inhabit and roam that land are a people brutish and of very bad tendencies<sup>1</sup> and customs. The Indians who have permanent houses and those farther back pay no attention to gold and silver nor do they find that there can be any benefit from it.

d. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter thirty-three: How we came upon the track of Christians.

<sup>d</sup>After we saw clear signs of Christians and we understood that we were very near them, we gave many thanks to God our Lord for wanting to take us out of so sad and wretched a captivity. And may the pleasure we felt on this account be judged by every man when he considers the time we spent in that land and the dangers and hardships we endured. That night I entreated one of my companions to go after the Christians who were going through the area where we were leaving the land secured. And it was a three-day journey.<sup>2</sup> This they judged a troublesome undertaking, excusing themselves because of fatigue and hardship and in spite of the fact that each one of them would be able to do it better than I, on account of being hardier and younger. But seeing their will, the next day in the morning I took with me the black man and eleven Indians, and following the trail of the Christians that I found, I passed through three places where they had slept. And this day I went ten leagues. And the next morning I reached four Christians on horseback who experienced great shock upon seeing me so strangely dressed and in the company of Indians. They remained looking at me a long time, so astonished that they neither spoke to me nor managed to ask me anything. I told them to take me to their

1. *mala inclinación*.

2. Cabeza de Vaca here anticipates information that he acquired on his search for the Christians.

- a. estava] Z: estana
- capitán. Y assí fuimos media legua de allí donde estava Diego de Alcaraz, que era el capitán. Y después de averlo hablado, me dixo que estava<sup>a</sup> muy perdido allí porque avía muchos días que no avía podido tomar indios y que no avía por dónde ir porque entre ellos començava a aver neçessidad y hambre. Yo le dixé como atrás quedavan Dorantes y Castillo, que estavan diez leguas de allí con muchas gentes que nos avían traído. Y él embió luego tres de cavallo y çinquenta indios de los que ellos traían. Y el negro bolvió con ellos para guiarlos. Y yo quedé allí y pedí que me diessen por testimonio el año y el mes y día que allí avía llegado y la manera en que venía, y ansí lo hizieron. Deste río hasta el pueblo de los christianos que se llama Sant Miguel, que es de la governación de la provincia que dizen la Nueva Galizia, ay treinta leguas.
- b. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo treinta y quatro: De cómo embié por los christianos.
- <sup>b</sup>Passados çinco días llegaron Andrés Dorantes y Alonso del Castillo con los que avían ido por ellos. Y traían consigo más de seisçientas personas que eran de aquel pueblo que los cristianos avían hecho subir al monte, y andavan ascondidos por la tierra. Y los que hasta allí con nosotros avían venido, los avían sacado de los montes y entregado a los christianos, y ellos avían despedido todas las otras gentes que hasta allí avían traído. Y venidos adonde yo estava, Alcaraz me rogó que embiássemos a llamar la gente de los pueblos que están a vera del río, que andavan ascondidos por los montes de la tierra y que les mandássemos que traxessen de comer, [V:f48v] aunque esto no era menester porque ellos siempre tenían<sup>c</sup> cuidado de traernos todo lo que podían. Y
- c. tenían] Z: tetenian

captain. And thus we went half a league from there, where their captain, Diego de Alcaraz, was.<sup>1</sup> And after I had spoken to him, he said that he was very lost there because it had been many days since he had been able to take any Indians<sup>2</sup> and that there was no way to go because among them there began to be great need and hunger. I told him how Dorantes and Castillo remained behind at a place ten leagues from there with many people who had brought us. And he then sent out three horsemen and fifty Indians of those they were bringing. And the black man returned with them to guide them. And I remained there and I asked that they certify for me the year and the month and day that I had arrived there, and the manner in which I had come, and thus they did it.<sup>3</sup> From this river<sup>4</sup> to the village of the Christians, which is called San Miguel, which is under the governance of the province they call Nueva Galicia, there are thirty leagues.

b. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter thirty-four: Of how I sent for the Christians.

<sup>b</sup>Five days later, Andrés Dorantes and Alonso del Castillo arrived with those who had gone for them.<sup>5</sup> And they brought with them more than six hundred people<sup>6</sup> who were from that settlement that the Christians<sup>7</sup> had caused to ascend into the highlands, and they went about hidden throughout the land. And those who had come with us to that point<sup>8</sup> had taken them out of the mountains and turned them over to the Christians,<sup>9</sup> and they had sent away all the other peoples whom they had brought there. And when they had arrived to where I was, Alcaraz beseeched me to call the people of the villages that are found on the bank along the river,<sup>10</sup> who went hidden through the mountains of the land, and command them to bring food to eat, although this was not necessary because they always took care to bring us all they could. And

1. At the Río Petatlán. Alcaraz was a participant in Nuño de Guzmán's 1530–31 conquest of northwestern Mexico (Nueva Galicia) and would later serve as a captain in the Coronado expedition of 1540–42.

2. As guides and slaves; Oviedo (612a) specifies that it had been fifteen days since they had even seen an Indian.

3. In the spring of 1536, possibly April.

4. The Río Petatlán.

5. Estevanico and the men sent by Diego de Alcaraz.

6. The Indians the four men had encountered in the mountain refuge (f57v), somewhere south of their crossing of the Río Yaqui, in Sinaloa. Cabeza de Vaca and his companions had left that settlement approximately ten days earlier.

7. Alcaraz and his men.

8. Indians from the Corazones area on the north-south-running Río Yaqui in Sonora who were traveling with the men (f58r) and the ones from farther south, in Sinaloa, who

held the frontier against the Spaniards and had taken the four men to the mountain retreat (f57v).

9. Dorantes and Castillo.

10. The Río Petatlán.

embiamos luego nuestros mensageros a que los llamasen, y vinieron seis-cientas personas que nos traxeron todo el maíz que alcançavan. Y traíanlo en unas ollas tapiadas con barro en que lo avían enterrado y escondido. Y nos traxeron todo lo que más<sup>a</sup> tenían, mas nosotros no quesimos tomar de todo ello sino la comida. Y dimos todo lo otro a los cristianos para que entre sí la repartiessen. Y después desto, passamos muchas cosas<sup>b</sup> y grandes pendençias con ellos, porque nos querían hazer los indios que traíamos esclavos. Y con este enojo, al partir dexamos muchos arcos turquescos que traíamos y muchos çurriones y flechas y entre ellas las çinco de las esmeraldas que<sup>c</sup> no se nos acordó dellas, y así las perdimos. Dimos a los cristianos muchas mantas de Vacay otras cosas que traíamos. Vímonos con los indios en mucho trabajo porque se bolviessen a sus casas y se asegurassen y sembrassen su maíz. Ellos no querían sino ir con nosotros hasta dexarnos, como acostumbraban, con otros indios, porque si se bolviessen sin hazer esto, temían que se morirían, que para ir con nosotros no temían a los cristianos ni a sus lanças. A los cristianos les pesava desto, y hazían que su lengua les dixesse que nosotros éramos dellos mismos y nos avíamos perdido muchos tiempos avía, y que éramos gente de poca suerte y valor, y que ellos eran los señores de la<sup>d</sup> tierra a quien avían de obedesçer y servir. Mas todo esto los indios tenían en muy poco o no nada de lo que les dezían. Antes unos con otros entre sí placticavan, diziendo que los cristianos

a. que más] V: más que

b. cosas] V: om.

c. que] Z: que

d. la] V: aquella

b. annoyances] V: *om.*

d. the] V: that

we then sent out our messengers to call them, and six hundred people came who brought us all the maize they could obtain. And they brought it in some clay-sealed pots in which they had buried and hidden it.<sup>1</sup> And they brought us everything else they had, but we refused to take any of it except the food. And we gave everything else to the Christians<sup>2</sup> so that they could distribute it among themselves. And after this we suffered many annoyances<sup>b</sup> and great disputes with them, because they wanted to enslave the Indians we brought with us. And with this anger, on parting we left many Turkish bows<sup>3</sup> that we carried, and many leather pouches and arrows and among them the five made from emeralds<sup>4</sup> that we inadvertently left, and thus we lost them. We gave the Christians many bison robes and other things that we carried. We had great difficulty convincing the Indians to return to their homes and secure themselves and sow their maize. They did not want but to go with us until leaving us with other Indians, as they were accustomed to doing, because if they returned without doing this, they feared they would die, and going with us, they feared neither the Christians nor their lances. The Christians were disturbed by this, and they made their interpreter tell them that we were of the same people as they, and that we had been lost for a long time, and that we were people of ill fortune and no worth, and that they were the lords of the<sup>d</sup> land whom the Indians were to serve and obey. But of all this the Indians were only superficially or not at all convinced of what they told them. Rather, some talked with others among themselves, saying that the Christians

1. These carefully conserved stores of maize, also described by Oviedo (612b), reveal that the Indians of southern Sonora and northern Sinaloa had been taking measures for some time to protect themselves from the slave-hunting expeditions.

2. The armed and mounted men led by Diego de Alcaraz.

3. Native weapons commonly mentioned in conquistadors' accounts of northern New Spain and Spanish Nuevo México.

4. See (f55r).



- a. de] V: *om.*
- b. matavan] Z: mantauan
- c. traían] V: relatavan
- d. quatrocientas] Z: CCCC
- e. Primahaitu . . . todas ellas.] V: propriamente Primahaitu (que es como dezir vascongados), la qual más de quatrocientas leguas de las que anduvimos hallamos usada entre ellos sin aver otra por todas aquellas tierras.
- f. se] V: *om.*
- g. a] Z: *om.*
- mentían, porque nosotros veníamos de donde salía el sol y ellos de<sup>a</sup> donde se pone, y que nosotros sanávamos los enfermos y ellos matavan<sup>b</sup> los que estaban sanos, y que nosotros veníamos desnudos y descalços y ellos vestidos y en cavallos y con lanças, y que nosotros no teníamos codiçia de ninguna cosa antes todo quanto nos davan tornávamos luego a dar y con nada nos quedávamos y los [V:f49r] otros no tenían otro fin sino robar todo quanto hallavan y nunca davan nada a nadie. Y desta manera traían<sup>c</sup> todas nuestras cosas y las encareçían por el contrario de los otros. Y assí les respondieron a la lengua de los cristianos y lo mismo hizieron saber a los otros por una lengua que entrellos avía con quien nos entendíamos. Y aquellos que la usan llamamos Primahaitu, la qual más de quatrocientas<sup>d</sup> leguas de las que anduvimos hallamos usada, antes no hallamos otra por todas ellas.<sup>e</sup> Finalmente nunca se<sup>f</sup> pudo acabar con los indios creer que éramos de los otros cristianos, y con mucho trabajo e importunaçión los hezimos bolver a sus casas y les mandamos que se assegurassen y assentassen sus pueblos y sembrassen y labrassen la tierra, que de estar despoblada estava ya muy llena de monte, la qual sin duda es la mejor de quantas en estas Indias ay y más fértil y abundosa de mantenimientos. Y siembran tres vezes en el año. Tienen muchas frutas y muy hermosos ríos y otras muchas aguas muy buenas. Ay muestras grandes y señales de minas de oro y plata. La gente della es muy bien acondiçionada. Sirven a<sup>g</sup> los cristianos los que son amigos de muy buena voluntad. Son muy dispuestos, mucho más

e. call Primahaitu . . . all that distance. ] V: properly called Primahaitu (which is like saying Basques), which we found used among them in more than four hundred leagues of those we had traveled, without finding any other in all those lands.

were lying, because we came from where the sun rose, and they from where it set; and that we cured the sick, and that they killed those who were well; and that we came naked and barefoot, and they went about dressed and on horses and with lances; and that we did not covet anything but rather, everything they gave us we later returned and remained with nothing, and that the others had no other objective but to steal everything they found and did not give anything to anyone. And in this manner, they conveyed everything about us and held it in high esteem to the detriment of the others. And thus they responded to the Christians' interpreter and they made known the same thing to the others through a language that they had among them by which we understood one another. And those who speak it we call Primahaitu,<sup>1</sup> which we found used in more than four hundred leagues of those we had traveled, and we found no other in all that distance.<sup>e</sup> Finally, it was not possible to convince the Indians that we were the same as the other Christians, and with much effort and insistence we made them return to their homes, and we ordered them to secure themselves and settle their villages, and to sow and work the land since, because of being abandoned, it was now very overgrown with vegetation,<sup>2</sup> for that land is without doubt the best of any to be found in these Indies and the most fertile and abundant in foodstuffs. And they sow three times a year.<sup>3</sup> They have many fruits and many beautiful rivers and many other very good waterways. There are great indications and signs of mines of gold and silver.<sup>4</sup> The people are of very good inclinations. Those who are friends of the Christians serve them very willingly. They are very well disposed, much more so

1. A native lingua franca or trade language that no doubt facilitated the friendly reception and rapid travel of the Cabeza de Vaca party across northern Mexico.

2. *llena de monte*. The thorny scrub vegetation of cacti, small trees, and wild shrubs had overrun the alluvial plains in the five years since the Spanish had begun making incursions into the area.

3. These alluvial flood plains were nourished by early spring floods as well as summer rains, thus making possible multiple annual crop cycles.

4. Again Cabeza de Vaca suggests the possibility of

mineral wealth, this time for the region of the Río Petatlán southward. See (f58r). These brief remarks helped stimulate further exploration and served as an emblem of northern riches during the subsequent two centuries.

a. E después . . . tratamientos]

V: Después que ovimos  
 enbiado a los indios en paz, y  
 regraciándoles el trabajo que  
 con nosotros avían passado, los  
 christianos nos embiaron  
 debaxo de cautela a un  
 Zebreros, alcalde, y con él otros  
 dos, los quales nos llevaron por  
 apartarnos de la conversación  
 de los indios, y porque no  
 viésemos ni entendiésemos  
 lo que de hecho hizieron, donde  
 parece quanto se engañan los  
 pensamientos de los hombres,  
 que nosotros andávamos a  
 les buscar libertad, y [V:f49v]  
 quando pensávamos que la  
 teníamos, suscedió tan al  
 contrario,

b. despereçer] V: perescer

c. estava] Z: está

d. ] Z: om. V: Capítulo treinta  
 y cinco: De cómo el alcalde  
 mayor nos rescibió bien la  
 noche que llegamos.

e. El qual, como supo] V: Como  
 el alcalde mayor fue avisado

que los de México. Y finalmente es tierra que ninguna cosa le falta para ser muy buena. Despedidos los indios, nos dixeron que harían lo que mandávamos y assentarían sus pueblos si los cristianos los dexavan. Y yo assí lo digo y affirmo por muy çierto que si no lo hizieren será por culpa de los cristianos. E después que los huvimos embiado, debaxo de cautela los cristianos nos embiaron con un alcalde que se llamava Zebreros y con él otros tres cristianos, donde parece quanto se engañan los pensamientos de los hombres, que nosotros andávamos a les buscar libertad y quando pensávamos que la teníamos succedió tan al contrario. Y por apartarnos de conversación de los indios, nos llevaron por los montes despoblados a fin que no viésemos lo que ellos hazían ni sus tratamientos,<sup>a</sup> porque tenían acordados de ir a dar en los indios que embiávamos assegurados y de paz. Y ansí como lo pensaron lo hizieron. Lleváronnos por aquellos montes dos días sin agua, perdidos y sin camino. Y todos pensamos despereçer<sup>b</sup> de sed y della se nos ahogaron siete hombres, y muchos amigos que los cristianos traían consigo no podieron llegar hasta otro día a mediodía adonde aquella noche hallamos nosotros el agua. Y caminamos con ellos veinte y çinco leguas poco más o menos. Y al fin dellas llegamos a un pueblo de indios de paz. Y el alcalde que nos llevaba nos dexó allí, y él passó adelante otras tres leguas a un pueblo que se llamava Culiacán adonde estava<sup>c</sup> Melchior Díaz, alcalde mayor y capitán de aquella provinçia. <sup>d</sup>El qual, como supo<sup>e</sup> de nuestra salida y venida,

- a. And after . . . conduct,] V: After we had sent the Indians away in peace, and expressing to them our gratitude for the efforts they had made on our behalf, the Christians sent us off under the guard of an *alcalde* named Cebreros, and two others with him, who led us through overgrown and deserted areas in order to remove us from conversation with the Indians, and so that we would neither see nor learn about what they [the Christians], in fact, did, from which it is evident how much men's thoughts deceive them, for we went to them seeking liberty and when we thought we had it, it turned out to be so much to the contrary,
- d. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter thirty-five: Of how the *alcalde mayor* received us well the night we arrived.
- e. Upon learning] V: Since the *alcalde mayor* was advised

than those of Mexico. And, finally, it is a land that lacks nothing in order to be very good. When we dispatched the Indians, they told us that they would do what we commanded and would settle their villages if the Christians would let them. And thus I declare and affirm as true that if they should not do it, the Christians will be to blame. And after we had sent them away the Christians sent us off under the guard of an *alcalde* who was named Cebreros<sup>1</sup> and three other Christians with him, from which it is evident how much men's thoughts deceive them, for we went to them seeking liberty and when we thought we had it, it turned out to be so much to the contrary. And in order to remove us from conversation with the Indians, they led us through areas depopulated and overgrown so that we would not see what they were doing nor their conduct,<sup>a</sup> because they had conspired to go and attack the Indians whom we had sent away reassured and in peace. And they carried it out just as they had planned it.<sup>2</sup> They led us through those dense thickets for two days without water, lost and without a path. And we all thought that we would perish from thirst, and seven men died from it, and many friends<sup>3</sup> that the Christians brought with them were unable, until noon of the following day, to reach the place where we found water that night. And we walked with them twenty-five leagues, a little more or less. And at the end of them, we arrived at a village of peaceful Indians. And the *alcalde*<sup>4</sup> who was leading us left us there, and he went on ahead another three leagues to a settlement called Culiacán where Melchior Díaz, *alcalde mayor*<sup>5</sup> and captain of that province, was. <sup>d</sup>Upon learning<sup>e</sup> of our escape and arrival, he

1. Lázaro de Cebreros, who had participated in Guzmán's conquest of northwestern Mexico. In the colonial administration of Nueva Galicia in these early years the *alcalde* (first-instance judge) not only acted as a judicial officer but also presided over municipal governance (Parry, *The Audiencia* 5, 33).

2. Oviedo (613a) also reports that the Spanish slavers returned to their habitual pursuit.

3. Indians traveling with the Spanish soldiers and the Narváez survivors.

4. Lázaro de Cebreros.

5. As chief justice and civil official of the province (*alcalde mayor*), Díaz was the *alcalde* Cebreros's superior.

a. donde] V: adonde	<p>luego aquella noche partió y vino donde<sup>a</sup> nosotros estábamos, y lloró mucho con nosotros, dando loores a Dios nuestro Señor por aver usado de tanta misericordia con nosotros. Y nos habló y trató muy bien. Y de parte del governador Nuño de Guzmán y suya nos offreçió todo lo que tenía y podía. Y [Melchior Díaz] mostró mucho sentimiento de la mala acogida y tratamiento que en Alcaraz y los otros avíamos hallado. Y tuvimos por cierto que<sup>b</sup> si él se hallara allí se escusara lo que con nosotros y con los indios se hizo. Y passada aquella noche, otro día nos partimos para Auhacán,<sup>c</sup> y el alcalde mayor nos rogó mucho que nos detuviésemos allí y que en esto haríamos muy gran servicio a Dios nuestro Señor<sup>d</sup> y a Vuestra Magestad, porque la tierra estava despoblada y sin [V:f50r] labrarse y toda muy destruída, y los indios andavan escondidos y huídos por los montes sin querer venir a hazer assiento en sus pueblos; y [rogó] que los embiássemos a llamar, y que<sup>e</sup> les mandássemos de parte de Dios y de Vuestra Magestad que viniessen y poblassen en lo llano y labrassen la tierra. A nosotros nos pareçió esto muy difficultoso de poner en efeto porque no traíamos indio ninguno de los nuestros y<sup>f</sup> de los que nos solían acompañar y entender en estas cosas. En fin aventuramos a esto dos indios de los que traían allí cativos que eran de los mismos de la tierra, y éstos se avían hallado con los cristianos, quando primero llegamos a ellos y vieron la gente que nos acompañava y supieron de ellos la mucha autoridad y dominio que por todas aquellas tierras avíamos</p>
b. que] Z: que	
c. para Auhacán] V: om.	
d. a Dios nuestro Señor] V: s Dios	
e. que] V: om.	
f. y] V: ni	

c. for Auhacán,] V: *om.*

d. our Lord] V: *om.*

departed later that night and came to where we were,<sup>1</sup> and he wept a great deal with us, praising God our Lord for having shown so much mercy to us. And he spoke to us and treated us very well. And on behalf of the governor, Nuño de Guzmán,<sup>2</sup> as well as his own, he offered us everything that he had and could. And he [Melchior Díaz] showed much sorrow at the bad reception and treatment we had received from Alcaraz and the others we had found. And we took it for certain that if he had been there,<sup>3</sup> what was done to us and the Indians would have been prevented. And after that night, the next day we departed for Auhacán<sup>4</sup> and the *alcalde mayor*<sup>5</sup> beseeched us earnestly to stop there; that in doing so we would perform a very great service to God our Lord<sup>6</sup> and Your Majesty, because the land was abandoned and not cultivated and all of it greatly destroyed, and the Indians went about hidden and in flight through the highlands without wanting to come and settle themselves in their villages; and [he asked] that we have them called together and order them on behalf of God and Your Majesty to come and settle the plain and work the land. To us this seemed very difficult to put into effect, because we did not bring any Indian of ours or any of those who usually accompanied us and were skilled in these matters. Finally we entrusted this to two Indians of those whom they held captive there, who were of that land, and these Indians had been with the Christians when we first arrived to them, and they saw the people who accompanied us<sup>6</sup> and learned from them about the great authority and influence that

1. Three leagues from the native settlement of Culiacán and five leagues from the Spanish *villa* of San Miguel, according to Cabeza de Vaca; Oviedo (613a) said the men were eight leagues from the Spanish municipality, which he called simply the “villa de Culiacán.”

2. Named governor of the province of Pánuco in 1525 and president of the First Audiencia of New Spain in 1528, Guzmán conquered northwestern Mexico in 1530–31 and was appointed governor of this new province, called Nueva Galicia, in 1531.

3. Melchior Díaz, at the Río Petatlán, or Sinaloa, when the Narváez survivors met with Alcaraz.

4. The native settlement of Culiacán, three leagues distant and two leagues from the Spanish municipality of San Miguel de Culiacán.

5. Melchior Díaz.

6. The eleven Indians from the area of Corazones and farther south in Sonora, who had accompanied Cabeza de Vaca and Estevanico (f58v), and the six hundred Indians from the mountain refuge in Sinaloa, brought by Dorantes and Castillo (f59r). The two Indian captives of Diego de Alcaraz were from the Culiacán area in Sinaloa.

a. Petachán] V: Petaan

traído y tenido, y las maravillas que avíamos hecho y los enfermos que avíamos curado y otras muchas cosas. Y con estos [dos] indios mandamos a otros del pueblo que juntamente fuessen y llamassen los indios que estaban por las sierras alçados, y los del Río de Petachán<sup>a</sup> donde avíamos hallado a los cristianos, y que les dixessen que viniessen a nosotros porque les queríamos hablar. E para que fuessen seguros y los otros viniessen, les dimos un calabaçon de los que nosotros traíamos en las manos que era nuestra principal insignia y muestra de gran estado. Y con éste ellos fueron y anduvieron por allí siete días, y al fin dellos vinieron y traxeron consigo tres señores, de los que estaban alçados por las sierras, que traían quinze hombres. Y nos traxeron cuentas y turquesas y plumas. Y los mensajeros nos dixeron que no avían hallado a los naturales del río donde avíamos salido porque los cristianos los avían hecho otra vez huir a los montes. Y el Melchior Díaz dixo a la lengua que de nuestra parte les hablasse a aquellos indios y les dixese como veníamos de parte de Dios que está en el çielo, y que avíamos andado por el mundo nueve<sup>b</sup> años, diziendo a toda la gente que avíamos hallado que creyessen en Dios y lo sirviessen porque era Señor de todas quantas cosas avía en el mundo, y que él dava [V:f50v] galardón y pagava a los buenos, y pena perpetua de fuego a los malos, y que quando los buenos morían los llevaba al çielo donde nunca nadie moría ni tenían hambre ni frío ni sed ni otra necesidad ninguna, sino la mayor gloria que se podría pensar, e que los que no le

b. nueve] V: muchos

a. Petachán] V: Petaan

b. nine] V: many

through all those lands we had possessed and exercised, and the wonders that we had worked and the sick people we had cured and many other things. And with these [two] Indians we commanded other Indians of the settlement<sup>1</sup> to together go and call the Indians who had taken refuge in the sierras<sup>2</sup> and those of the Río Petachán,<sup>3</sup> where we had found the Christians,<sup>3</sup> and tell them to come to us because we desired to speak to them. And so that they could go in safety and the others come forth, we gave them a very large gourd of those that we carried in our hands, which was our principal insignia and emblem of our great estate.<sup>4</sup> And taking this gourd they set out and went through the area for seven days, and at the end of them, they returned and brought with them three lords, of those who were taking refuge in the sierras, who brought along fifteen men. And they brought us beads and turquoises and plumes. And the messengers told us that they had not found the natives of the river<sup>5</sup> where we had come out because the Christians had again made them flee to the highlands. And Melchior Díaz told the interpreter to speak on our behalf to those Indians and tell them how we came on behalf of God who is in heaven, and how we had walked through the world for nine<sup>b</sup> years,<sup>6</sup> telling all the people we had found to believe in God and serve him because he was Lord of all things in the world, and that he blessed and rewarded the good, and punished the bad with perpetual fire, and that when the good died, he carried them to heaven where no one would die or be hungry or cold or thirsty or have any other need whatsoever, but rather, would have the greatest glory that one could imagine, and that those who did not

1. The native settlement of Culiacán.

2. From Culiacán north to the Río Sinaloa and beyond. Because Oviedo (613b) alone mentions native insurgency in this northernmost area of Spanish activity, he may be conflating the men's account of affairs in Sinaloa and northward with those of the region farther south, from San Miguel to Compostela (southern Sinaloa, Nayarit, and Jalisco).

3. Diego de Alcaraz and his men.

4. The men had begun to make use of the gourds in Tamaulipas (f46r, f48v).

5. The Río Petatlán (Sinaloa) and its formerly densely populated flood plain.

6. It was late April 1536; the Narváez expedition had sailed from Spain in June 1527.



querían creer ni obedecer sus mandamientos, los echava debaxo la tierra en compañía de los demonios y en gran fuego, el qual nunca se avía de acabar sino atormentallos para siempre, y que allende desto, si ellos quisiessen ser cristianos y servir a Dios nuestro Señor<sup>a</sup> de la manera que les mandássemos, que los christianos les ternían por hermanos y los tratarían muy bien, y nosotros les mandaríamos<sup>b</sup> [a los cristianos] que no les hiziessen ningún enojo ni los sacassen de sus tierras sino que fuessen grandes amigos suyos, mas que si esto no quisiessen<sup>c</sup> hazer, los christianos les tratarían muy mal y se los llevarían por esclavos a otras tierras. A esto respondieron a la lengua que ellos serían muy buenos christianos y servirían a Dios. Y preguntados en qué adoravan y sacrificavan y a quién pedían el agua para sus maizales y la salud para ellos, respondieron que a un hombre que estava en el cielo. Preguntámosles cómo se llamava. Y dixeron que Aguar, y que creían que él avía criado todo el mundo y las cosas dél. Tornámosles a preguntar cómo sabían esto. Y respondieron que sus padres y abuelos se lo avían dicho, que de muchos tiempos tenían notiçia desto, y sabían que el agua y todas las buenas cosas las embiava aquél. Nosotros les diximos que aquel que ellos dezían nosotros lo llamávamos Dios y que así lo llamassen ellos y lo sirviessen y adorassen como mandávamos y ellos se hallarían muy bien dello. Respondieron que todo lo tenían muy bien entendido y que así lo harían. Y mandámosles que abaxassen<sup>d</sup> de las sierras y viniessen seguros y en paz y poblassen toda la tierra y hiziessen sus casas, y que entre ellas hiziessen una

a. nuestro Señor] V: *om.*

b. mandaríamos] Z: mandari-  
mos

c. quisiessen] Z: quiiessen

d. abaxassen] V: baxassen

a. our Lord| V: *om.*

want to believe in him or obey his commandments would be cast by him under the ground in the company of demons and into a great fire that would never cease, but rather torment them forever, and that beyond this, if they desired to be Christians and serve God our Lord<sup>a</sup> in the manner in which we commanded them, that the Christians would take them as brothers and treat them very well, and we would order them [the Christians] not to provoke them or take them out of their lands, but rather to be their great friends, but that if they did not want to do this, the Christians would treat them very badly and carry them off as slaves to other lands.<sup>1</sup> To this they responded to the interpreter that they would be very good Christians and serve God. And when asked to what they gave reverence and made sacrifices and whom they asked for water for their maize fields and health for themselves, they responded that it was to a man who was in the sky. We asked them what his name was. And they said it was Aguar, and that they believed that he had created the whole world and all the things in it. We again asked them how they knew this. And they responded that their fathers and grandfathers had told it to them, that for a long time they had known about this, and they knew that that man sent water and all good things. We told them that the one to whom they referred we called God, and that thus they should call him and serve and adore him as we commanded and they would be well served by it. They responded that they understood everything very well and that thus they would do it. And we ordered them to come down from the sierras and to come forward confidently and in peace, and populate the land and put up their houses and in the midst of them make one

1. This speech, which gave the Indians the choice between accepting Castilian rule or submitting to war and destruction, is the *requerimiento*, of which the reading on all conquest expeditions was mandated by law in November 1526.

para Dios y pusiessen a la entrada una cruz como la que allí teníamos, y que quando viniessen allí los christianos, los saliessen a resçebir con las cruces en las manos, sin los arcos y sin armas, y los llevassen a sus casas, y les [V:f51r] diessen de comer de lo que tenían, y por esta manera [los cristianos] no les harían mal antes serían sus amigos. Y ellos dixeron que así lo harían como nosotros lo mandávamos. Y el capitán les dio mantas y los trató muy bien, y assí se bolvieron llevando los dos que estavan cativos y avían ido por mensajeros. Esto pasó en presençia del escrivano que allí tenían y otros muchos testigos.

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo treinta y seis: De cómo hezimos hazer iglesias en aquella tierra.

b. pleito omenaje] Z: pleito-omenaje

c. nuestro Señor] V: *om.*

d. lo] Z: la

<sup>a</sup>Como los indios se bolvieron, todos los de aquella provinçia que eran amigos de los cristianos, como tuvieron notiçia de nosotros, nos vinieron a ver. Y nos traxeron cuentas y plumas. Y nosotros les mandamos que hiziessen iglesias y pusiessen cruces en ellas, porque hasta entonçes no las avían hecho. E hezimos traer los hijos de los prinçipales señores y bautizarlos. Y luego el capitán hizo pleito omenaje<sup>b</sup> a Dios de no hazer ni consentir hazer entrada ninguna ni tomar esclavo por la tierra y gente que nosotros avíamos assegurado, y que esto guardaría y compliría hasta que Su Magestad y el governador Nuño de Guzmán o el visorey en su nombre proveyessen en lo que más fuesse serviçio de Dios nuestro Señor<sup>c</sup> y de Su Magestad. Y después de bautizados los niños, nos partimos para la villa de San Miguel, donde como fuimos llegados vinieron indios que nos dixeron como mucha gente baxava de las sierras y poblavan en lo<sup>d</sup> llano y hazían iglesias y cruces y todo lo que les avíamos mandado. Y cada

for God and put a cross at the entrance, like the one we had there, and that when Christians came there, to come out and receive them with the crosses in their hands, without their bows and without weapons, and take them to their houses and give them whatever they had to eat, and in this way they [the Christians] would not do them harm but rather would be their friends. And they said that thus they would do it as we commanded it. And the captain<sup>1</sup> gave them robes and treated them very well, and thus they returned, taking the two who were captives and who had gone as messengers. This occurred in the presence of the notary they had there and many other witnesses.<sup>2</sup>

a. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter thirty-six: Of how we had churches built in that land.

<sup>3</sup>When the Indians returned,<sup>3</sup> all those of that province<sup>4</sup> who were friends<sup>5</sup> of the Christians, since they had news of us, came to see us. And they brought us beads and plumes. And we commanded them to build churches and put crosses in them, because until then they had not made them. And we had them bring the children of the most important lords and baptize them.<sup>6</sup> And afterward, the captain made a solemn oath to God to neither make nor consent to making any incursion nor to take slaves in that land or among people whom we had secured, and that this he would uphold and fulfill until His Majesty and the governor Nuño de Guzmán or the viceroy<sup>7</sup> in his name acted to comply with what would best serve God our Lord<sup>c</sup> and His Majesty. And after the children had been baptized, we departed for the *villa* of San Miguel,<sup>8</sup> where, when we arrived, Indians came who told us how many people were coming down from the sierras and populating the plain and making churches and crosses and doing everything we had commanded them. And each

c. our Lord] V: *om.*

1. Melchior Díaz.

2. The notary and witnesses legally certified the pact made with the natives. This occurred at the native settlement of Culiacán (f61v).

3. The three native lords and fifteen other Indians from the sierras where they had taken refuge and whom the two captive Indians of Culiacán had brought down on the order of Melchior Díaz (f61r–v).

4. Culiacán.

5. Allies or slaves of the Spaniards settled at Culiacán.

6. *hijos*. Probably only male children; the baptism of the sons of native lords was a common religious intervention

in the earliest peaceful contacts between Europeans and Indians in the Indies.

7. Antonio de Mendoza, first viceroy of New Spain (1535–50).

8. Mentioned earlier (f59r), San Miguel was located two leagues (eight leagues; Oviedo 613a) beyond the native settlement of Culiacán, where Cabeza de Vaca and his companions had resettled the natives of the region at Melchior Díaz's request (f61v–f62v).

<p>a. poblado] Z: poblada</p> <p>b. lo] Z: lo lo</p> <p>c. estaban] Z: estanan</p> <p>d. a de poner esto] V: lo a de poner</p> <p>e. ancho] Z: ancha</p> <p>f. aver] Z: aner</p>	<p>día teníamos nuevas de como esto se iba haciendo y cumpliendo más enteramente. E passados quinze días que allí avíamos estado, llegó Alcaraz con los christianos que avían ido en aquella entrada. Y contaron al capitán como eran baxados de las sierras los indios, y avían poblado<sup>a</sup> en lo<sup>b</sup> llano y avían hallado pueblos con mucha gente que de primero estaban despoblados y desiertos, y que los [V:f51v] indios les salieron a reçibir con cruces en las manos y los llevaron a sus casas y les dieron de lo que tenían. Y dormieron con ellos allí aquella noche. Espantados de tal novedad, y de que los indios les dixerón como estaban<sup>c</sup> ya asegurados, mandó que no les hiziessen mal y así se despidieron.</p> <p>Dios nuestro Señor por su infinita misericordia quiera que en los días de Vuestra Magestad y debaxo de vuestro poder y señorío, estas gentes vengan a ser verdaderamente y con entera voluntad sujetas al verdadero Señor que las crió y redimió. Lo qual tenemos por çierto que assí será, y que Vuestra Magestad a de ser el que a de poner esto<sup>d</sup> en effeto, que no será tan diffiçil de hazer, porque dos mil leguas que anduvimos por tierra y por la mar en las barcas, y otros diez meses que después de salidos de cativos sin parar anduvimos por la tierra, no hallamos sacrificios ni idolatría. En este tiempo travessamos de una mar a otra, y por la notiçia que con mucha diligenciã alcançamos, [venimos] a entender [que] de una costa a la otra por lo más ancho<sup>e</sup> puede aver<sup>f</sup> dozientas leguas. Y alcançamos a entender que en la costa del [Mar del] Sur ay perlas y mucha</p>
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day we received news of how this was being most fully carried out and accomplished.<sup>1</sup> And after we had been there fifteen days,<sup>2</sup> Alcaraz arrived with the Christians who had gone on that raid. And they told the captain<sup>3</sup> how the Indians were down from the sierras and had populated the plain, and they had found populous villages that earlier were abandoned and deserted, and that the Indians came out to receive them with crosses in their hands and took them to their houses and shared with them what they had. And they slept with them there that night. Astonished by such a new development and by what the Indians told them about how they were now secured, he ordered that they do them no harm and thus they took leave.

May God our Lord in his infinite mercy grant, in all the days of Your Majesty and under your authority and dominion, that these people come and be truly and with complete devotion subject to the true Lord who created and redeemed them. And we hold it for certain that it will be so, and that Your Majesty will be the one who is to put this into effect, that it will not be so difficult to do, because in the two thousand leagues<sup>4</sup> that we traveled by land and through the sea on the rafts and another ten months<sup>5</sup> that we went through the land<sup>6</sup> without stopping once we were no longer captives, we found neither sacrifices nor idolatry. In this period we crossed from one sea to the other,<sup>7</sup> and by the information that with very great effort we acquired, [we came] to understand [that] from one coast to the other at its widest point, the distance may be two hundred leagues.<sup>8</sup> And we came to know that on the coast of the South [Sea] there are pearls and many

1. Oviedo (613a) ends here his account of the four men's journey.

2. At the *villa* of San Miguel de Culiacán, for two weeks (1 May–15 May) in 1536.

3. Melchior Díaz.

4. This estimate of the distance traveled comprehends the entire course of the men's journey from the Florida Cape to San Miguel de Culiacán in Sinaloa.

5. Roughly from midsummer 1535 to May 1536.

6. From the coastal areas of southeastern Texas through Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and Coahuila into southwestern Texas along the Rio Grande, through Chihuahua, Sonora,

and Sinaloa to San Miguel de Culiacán.

7. From the North Sea (Gulf of Mexico) to the South Sea (Gulf of California).

8. Some 600 miles (approximately 990 kilometers), a considerable underestimation of the breadth of North America at the latitudes at which the four Narváez survivors crossed it.

riqueza y que todo lo mejor y más rico está cerca della.

En la villa de Sant Miguel estuvimos hasta quinze días del mes de mayo, y la causa de detenernos allí tanto fue porque de allí hasta la ciudad de Compostela, donde el governador Nuño de Guzmán residía, ay çien leguas y todas son despobladas y de enemigos. Y ovieron de ir con nosotros gente con que ivan veinte de cavallo que nos acompañaron hasta quarenta leguas. Y de allí adelante venieron con nosotros seis cristianos que traían quinientos indios hechos esclavos. Y llegados en Compostela, el governador nos reçibió muy bien y de lo que tenía nos dio de vestir, lo qual yo por muchos días no pude traer, ni podíamos dormir sino en el suelo. Y passados diez o doze días, partimos para México. Y por todo el camino<sup>a</sup> fuimos bien tratados de los cristianos. Y muchos nos salían a ver por los caminos y davan graçias a Dios nuestro Señor<sup>b</sup> de avernos librado de tantos peligros. [V:f52r] Llegamos a México domingo, un día antes de la bíspera de Santiago, donde del visorey y del Marqués del Valle fuimos muy bien tratados y con mucho plazer reçibidos. Y nos dieron de vestir y offresçieron todo lo que tenían, y el día de Santiago hubo fiesta y juego de cañas y toros.

a. camino] Z: cami

b. nuestro Señor] V: om.

c. ] Z: om. V: Capítulo treinta y siete: De lo que aconteció quando me quise venir.

d. tormenta] Z: tormenmenta

<sup>c</sup>Después que descansamos en México dos meses, yo me quise venir en estos reinos. Y yendo a embarcar en el mes de octubre, vino una tormenta<sup>d</sup> que dio con el navío al través y se perdió. Y visto esto, acordé de dexar passar el invierno porque en aquellas partes es muy rezió tiempo para navegar en

riches and that all the best and richest things are near it.

We were in the *villa* of San Miguel until the fifteenth of May, and the reason for stopping there so long was that from there to the city of Compostela<sup>1</sup> where the governor Nuño de Guzmán resided, the distance is one hundred leagues, and all are deserted and in enemy hands.<sup>2</sup> And it was necessary that we travel in the company of others among whom were twenty horsemen who accompanied us as far as forty leagues.<sup>3</sup> And from there onward six Christians, who brought with them five hundred Indian slaves, came with us. And having arrived in Compostela, the governor received us very well and from the provisions he had gave us some clothes, which I was unable to wear for many days, nor were we able to sleep but on the ground. And after ten or twelve days had passed, we left for Mexico.<sup>4</sup> And along the entire road we were well treated by the Christians. And many came out to see us along the roads and gave thanks to God our Lord<sup>b</sup> for having delivered us from so many dangers. We arrived in [the city of] Mexico on Sunday, one day before the eve of Saint James, where we were very well treated and received with much pleasure by the viceroy<sup>5</sup> and the marqués del Valle.<sup>6</sup> And they gave us clothes to wear and offered everything they had, and on the day of Saint James<sup>7</sup> there were fiestas and *juegos de cañas*<sup>8</sup> and bullfights.

b. our Lord] V: *om.*

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter thirty-seven: Of what occurred when I attempted to come [here, i.e., to Castile].

<sup>c</sup>After we rested in Mexico for two months,<sup>9</sup> I attempted to come to these kingdoms.<sup>10</sup> And going to embark<sup>11</sup> in the month of October, there came a storm that capsized the ship and it was lost. And having seen this, I decided to let the winter pass, because in those parts it is a very harsh season in which to navigate.<sup>12</sup>

1. In 1536, the capital of Nueva Galicia, located in present-day Jalisco.

2. The Indians of southern Sinaloa, Nayarit, and Jalisco had abandoned their agricultural communities and were making war on the Spanish invaders.

3. *hasta quarenta leguas*. The Spanish cavalry accompanied the men either forty leagues from San Miguel or to within forty leagues of Compostela.

4. México-Tenochtitlán, capital of New Spain and former seat of the Aztec confederation, which fell to Hernán Cortés in 1521.

5. Antonio de Mendoza.

6. Hernán Cortés, titled by the emperor in 1528.

7. 25 July; the Sunday before was 23 July 1536.

8. Jousts in which teams of horsemen, riding at full speed, hurled wooden lances called *cañas* at one another.

9. Approximately August and September 1536, during which time the three Castilians prepared the Joint Report for the emperor and the Audiencia of Santo Domingo.

10. The kingdoms of Spain: Castile, Aragon, and Navarre.

11. From Veracruz.

12. See (f3v–f5v) on the severity of the winter weather in the Caribbean.



- él. Y después de passado el invierno, por Quaresma nos partimos de México Andrés Dorantes y yo para la Vera Cruz para nos embarcar. Y allí estuvimos esperando tiempo hasta Domingo<sup>a</sup> de Ramos que nos embarcamos, y estuvimos embarcados más de quinze días por falta de tiempo. Y el navío en que estábamos hazía mucha agua. Yo me salí dél y me passé a otro<sup>b</sup> de los que estaban para venir, y Dorantes se quedó en aquél. Y a diez días del mes de abril, partimos del puerto<sup>c</sup> tres navíos y navegamos juntos çiento y çinquenta leguas. Y por el camino los dos navíos hazían mucha agua, y una noche nos perdimos de su conserva, porque los pilotos y maestros, según después paresció, no osaron passar adelante con sus navíos y bolvieron de través<sup>d</sup> al puerto do avían partido sin darnos cuenta dello ni saber más dellos. Y nosotros seguimos nuestro viaje. Y a quatro días de mayo, llegamos al puerto de la Havana que es en la isla de Cuba, adonde estuvimos esperando los otros dos navíos, creyendo que vernían, hasta dos días de junio que partimos de allí con mucho temor [V:f52v] de topar con franceses que avía pocos días que avían tomado allí tres navíos nuestros. Y llegados sobre la isla de la Belmuda, nos tomó una tormenta que suele tomar a todos los que por allí passan, la qual es conforme a<sup>e</sup> la gente que dizen que en ella anda, y toda una noche nos tuvimos por perdidos. Y plugo a Dios que venida la mañana cessó la tormenta y seguimos nuestro camino. A cabo de veinte y nueve días que partimos de la Havana, avíamos andado mil y çien leguas que dizen que ay de allí hasta el pueblo de los Açores,
- a. Domingo] Z: domido
- b. otro] V: otros
- c. puerto] Z: puerto
- d. de través] V: otra vez
- e. a] Z: como

b. another] V: others

And after the winter had passed, during Lent<sup>1</sup> Andrés Dorantes and I departed from [the city of] Mexico for Veracruz to embark. And we were there waiting for a wind until Palm Sunday when we embarked, and we waited aboard more than fifteen days for lack of wind. And the ship we were in took on much water. I left the ship and went to another<sup>b</sup> of those that were about to leave, and Dorantes remained in that one.<sup>2</sup> And on the tenth of April we departed from the port in three ships and we sailed together one hundred and fifty leagues. And en route two of the ships took on much water, and one night we lost their company, because the pilots and helmsmen, according to what we later found out, did not dare to go on ahead with their ships and returned back to the port from which they had departed without our realizing it or being informed about them. And we continued our journey. And on the fourth of May we arrived at the port of Havana, which is on the island of Cuba, where we were waiting for the other two ships,<sup>3</sup> believing that they would come, until the second day of June when we departed from there with much fear of encountering French ships, since it had been only a few days since they had taken three of our ships there. And arriving in the vicinity of the island of Bermuda, we were caught in a storm that usually overtakes all those who pass through there, which agrees with what the people who frequent that island say, and for one entire night we believed we were doomed. But it pleased God that, come the morning, the storm ceased and we followed our course. And at the end of twenty-nine days since we had departed from Havana, we had gone one thousand and one hundred leagues, which they say is the distance from there to the outpost at the Azores,

1. Spring 1537.

2. They were to travel in a three-ship convoy loaded with gold and silver (f64r, f65r).

3. The arrival of Cabeza de Vaca's ship at Havana, loaded with gold and silver and having lost the other two members of its convoy, is recorded in a 31 May 1537 letter from Juan Velázquez to the Casa de la Contratación (CDU 6:22–23).

a. conoçimos] V: conosciamos

y passando otro día por la isla que dizen del Cuervo, dimos con un navío de françeses. A ora de mediodía nos començó a seguir con una caravela que traía tomada de portugueses. Y nos dieron caça. Y aquella tarde vimos otras nueve velas, y estaban tan lexos que no podimos conosçer si eran portugueses o de aquellos mesmos que nos seguían. Y quando anocheçió, estava el françes a tiro de lombarda de nuestro navío, y, desque fue escuro, hurtamos la derota por desviarnos dél. Y como iva tan junto de nosotros nos vio y tiró la vía de nosotros, y esto hezimos tres o quatro vezes. Y él nos pudiera tomar si quisiera sino que lo dexava para la mañana. Plugo a Dios que quando amanesció nos hallamos el françés y nosotros juntos y çercados de las nueve velas que he dicho que a la tarde antes avíamos visto, las quales conoçimos<sup>a</sup> ser de la armada de Portugal. Y di gracias a nuestro Señor por averme escapado de los trabajos de la tierra y peligros de la mar. Y el françés, como conosció ser el armada de Portugal, soltó la caravela que traía tomada, que venía cargada de negros, la qual [el navío françés] traía consigo para que creyésemos que eran portugueses y la esperássemos. Y quando [el navío françés] la soltó, dixo al maestre y piloto della que nosotros éramos françeses y de su conserva. Y como dixo esto, metió sesenta remos en su navío. Y así a remo y a vela se començó a ir, y andava tanto que no se puede creer. Y la caravella que soltó se fue al galeón. Y dixo al capitán que el nuestro navío y el otro eran de franceses. Y como nuestro [V:f53r] navío arribó al galeón, y como toda

and continuing the following day to the island that they call Corvo, we confronted a French ship.<sup>1</sup> At the hour of midday, it began to follow us with a Portuguese caravel<sup>2</sup> it had taken. And they pursued us.<sup>3</sup> And that afternoon we saw another nine sails, and they were so far away that we could not determine if they were Portuguese or of those same ones that were following us. And when night fell the French ship was the distance of a cannon shot from our ship, and as soon as it was dark, we changed our course in order to get away from it. And since it was sailing so close to us, it saw what we had done and cut off our path, and we did this three or four times. And it could have taken us if it wanted, but it left the task for the morning. It pleased God that, when morning came, we and the French ship found ourselves together and very near the nine ships that I said we had seen the previous afternoon, which we recognized as belonging to the Portuguese armada. And I gave thanks to God for having escaped from the hardships of the land and the perils of the sea. And the French ship, when it recognized the Portuguese armada, released the caravel that it held captive, which was coming loaded with black people, which it [the French ship] carried with it to make us believe that they were [both] Portuguese ships so that we would wait for them. And when it [the French ship] released it [the Portuguese caravel], it told the helmsman and the pilot of it that we were French and part of its convoy. And having said this, it put out sixty oars from the ship. And thus by oar and sail it set out, and it went so fast it is not to be believed. And the [Portuguese] caravel that it released went to the galleon.<sup>4</sup> And it told its captain that our ship and the other one were French. And when our ship approached the galleon, and since the entire

1. French pirates menaced the Spanish ship on which Cabeza de Vaca was traveling and attempted to make both the Spanish ship and the Portuguese slave ship they had already captured think that the other was foe, not friend.

2. A Portuguese slave ship, as described below (f64v).

3. The French corsair, bringing the Portuguese caravel that it had captured earlier, began to pursue the ship on which Cabeza de Vaca was traveling.

4. The commanding ship of the Portuguese armada. "Galeón"

is confusing, because Cabeza de Vaca uses it to refer to both the French corsair as well as the flagship of the Portuguese armada.

a. vido] V: via

b. Ca un] V: can

c. perde] V: perdio

d. pois] V: pos

e. apartades] V: apartedes

la armada vido<sup>a</sup> que íbamos sobre ellos, teniendo por çierto que éramos françeses, se pusieron a punto de guerra y vinieron sobre nosotros. Y llegados çerca, les salvamos. Conosçido que éramos amigos, se hallaron burlados por avérseles escapado aquel cosario con aver dicho que éramos françeses y de su compañía, y assí fueron quatro caravelas trás él. Y llegado a nosotros el galeón, después de averles saludado, nos preguntó el capitán, Diego de Silveira, que de dónde veníamos y qué mercadería traíamos. Y le respondimos que veníamos de la Nueva España, y que traíamos plata y oro. Y preguntónos qué tanto sería. El maestro le dixo que traería trezientos mil castellanos. Respondió el capitán: «*Boa fe que venís muito ricos, pero trazedes muy ruin navio y muito ruin artilleria! O fi de puta! Ca un<sup>b</sup> arrenegado françes y que bon bocado perde<sup>c</sup>, bota Deus! Ora sus pois<sup>d</sup> vos avedes escapado, seguime y non vos apartades<sup>e</sup> de mi que con ayuda de Deus eu vos porné en Castela.*» Y dende a poco bolvieron las caravelas que avían seguido tras el françés, porque les paresçió que andava mucho y por no dexar el armada que iva en guarda de tres naos que venían cargadas de espeçería. Y assí llegamos a la isla Terçera donde estuvimos reposando quinze días tomando refresco y esperando otra nao que venía cargada de la India que era de la conserva de las tres naos que traía el armada. Y passados los quinze días, nos partimos de allí con el armada, y llegamos al puerto de Lisbona a nueve de agosto, bíspera de señor Sant

armada saw that we were coming at them, taking it for certain that we were French, they readied themselves for war and came at us. And arriving near one another, we saluted them. Recognizing that we were friends, they realized that they had been tricked into allowing that corsair to escape by having said that we were French and in their company, and thus four caravels went after it. And when the galleon arrived to us, after having saluted them, the captain, Diego de Silveira, asked us where we were coming from and what cargo we carried. And we responded that we were coming from New Spain, and that we were carrying silver and gold. And he asked us how much. The helmsman told him that we were carrying about three hundred thousand *castellanos*.<sup>1</sup> The captain responded [in Portuguese]: “You certainly come with great riches, but you bring a very bad ship and very bad artillery! Son of a bitch, there’s that renegade French ship and what a good mouthful she’s lost! Now then, since you’ve escaped, follow me and don’t get separated from me, for with the help of God, I’ll get you to Castile.” And a little while later the caravels that had pursued the French ship returned because it seemed to them that it was getting away from them and because they did not want to leave the armada, which was going as escort to three ships that were coming loaded with spices.<sup>2</sup> And thus we arrived at the island of Terceira where we rested for fifteen days, taking on new provisions and waiting for another ship that was coming loaded from India, which was part of the convoy of the three ships that the armada was bringing. And when fifteen days had passed, we departed from there with the armada, and we arrived at the port of Lisbon on the ninth of August, the eve of Saint

1. Treasure from the Indies was expressed in *pesos*. The *castellano*, or *peso de oro*, was 450–490 *maravedis* worth of gold and silver.

2. Coming from India, this armada may have been carrying cargoes of pepper from India’s Malabar coast, cinnamon from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and the “luxury spices” of cloves, nutmeg, and mace from the islands of eastern Indonesia.

a. Llorente] V: Laurencio

Llorente,<sup>a</sup> año de mil y quinientos y treinta y siete años. Y porque es assí la verdad como arriba en esta relación digo, lo firmé de mi nombre.

Cabeça de Vaca.

b. de donde esto] V: donde este

(Estava firmado de su nombre y con el escudo de sus armas la relación de donde esto<sup>b</sup> se sacó.)

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Capítulo treinta y ocho: De lo que sucedió a los demás que entraron en las Indias.

d. E] V: *om.*

<sup>c</sup>[V:f53v] E<sup>d</sup> pues he hecho relación de todo lo susodicho en el viaje y entrada y salida de la tierra hasta bolver a estos reinos, quiero assimesmo hazer memoria y relación de lo que hizieron los navíos y la gente que en ellos quedó, de lo qual no he hecho memoria en lo dicho atrás, porque nunca tuvimos notiçia de ellos hasta después de salidos que hallamos mucha gente dellos en la Nueva España, y otros acá en Castilla, de quien supimos el successo y todo el fin dello, de qué manera passó.

Después que dexamos los tres navíos (porque el otro era ya perdido en la costa brava), los quales quedavan a mucho peligro, y quedavan en ellos hasta çien personas con pocos mantenimientos, entre los quales quedavan diez mugeres casadas. Y una dellas avía dicho al governador muchas cosas que le acaesçieron en el viaje antes que le suçediessen. Y ésta le dixo quando entrava por la tierra que no entrasse, porque ella creía que él, ni ninguno de los que con él ivan, no saldrían de la tierra, y que si alguno saliesse, que haría Dios por él muy grandes milagros, pero que<sup>e</sup> creía que fuessen pocos los que escapassen o no ningunos. Y el governador entonçes le respondió

e. que] V: *om.*

a. Llorente] V: Laurencio

Lawrence<sup>a</sup> in the year 1537. And because the truth is thus as I tell it above in this account, I signed it with my name.

Cabeza de Vaca.

(The account from which this was taken was signed with his name and appeared with his coat of arms.)<sup>1</sup>

c. ] Z: *om.* V: Chapter thirty-eight: Of what happened to the rest of those who had come to the Indies.

“And since I have made an account of all that is mentioned above about my journey and arrival and departure from the land until returning to these kingdoms, I want as well to make a record and account of what the ships and the people who remained in them did, which I have not recorded in what I have told above because we did not have news of them until after we returned, when we found many of them in New Spain and others here in Castile, from whom we learned about the outcome and the entire end of it, in what manner it occurred.<sup>2</sup>

After we left the three ships (because the other one had been lost on the rugged coast),<sup>3</sup> which remained in grave danger, there remained in them with few provisions about one hundred persons, among whom were ten married women. And one of them had told the governor many things that happened to him on the journey before they took place. And this woman told him when he entered the land that he should not go inland because she believed that neither he nor any one of those who went with him would escape from the land, and that if one of them were to come out, God would perform great miracles through him, but that she believed that those who escaped would be few or none at all. And the governor then responded to her

1. The publisher’s note, verifying the authenticity of the manuscript by attesting to the fact that it bore Cabeza de Vaca’s signature and coat of arms. Although a sixteenth-century variant manuscript of Cabeza de Vaca’s *Florida* account exists in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna (Nieto Nuño), an authenticated manuscript bearing Cabeza de Vaca’s signature and coat of arms has not been discovered.

2. Cabeza de Vaca here refers back to what occurred after he departed from the ships near present-day Tampa Bay, Florida, with Narváez and his

party of three hundred men on 1 May 1528 (f8v).

3. Cabeza de Vaca states that this final entry in his *relación* includes only those things that occurred on the ships after his departure. He nevertheless adds two episodes—the loss of a ship on the Florida coast and the incident that occurred between Narváez and a woman on the expedition who spoke of the predictions of the Muslim woman (*mora*) from Hornachos—that had occurred before he and the others left on the overland expedition and that he more logically should have told near the beginning of his narrative (f8v).



que él, y todos los que con él entravan, ivan a pelear y conquistar muchas y muy estrañas gentes y tierras, y que tenía por muy cierto que conquistándolos avían de morir muchos, pero aquellos que quedassen serían de buena ventura y quedarían muy ricos por la notiçia que él tenía de la riqueza que en aquella tierra avía. Y díxole, más que le rogava que ella le dixesse las cosas que avía dicho passadas y presentes, [que le dijese] quién se las avía dicho. Ella le respondió y dixo que en Castilla una mora de Hornachos se lo avía dicho (lo qual, antes que partiésemos de Castilla, nos lo avía a nosotros dicho), y nos avía succedido todo el viage de la misma manera que ella nos avía dicho. Y después de aver dexado el governador por su teniente y capitán de todos los navíos y gente que allí dexava a Carvallo, [V:f54r] natural de Cuenca de Huete, nosotros nos partimos de ellos, dexándoles el governador mandado que luego en todas maneras se recogiesen todos a los navíos y siguiessen su viaje derecho la vía del Pánuco, y yendo siempre costeano la costa y buscando lo mejor que ellos pudiesen el puerto para que, en hallándolo, parassen en él y nos esperassen. En aquel tiempo que ellos se recogían en los navíos, dizen que aquellas personas que allí estavan vieron y oyeron todos muy claramente como aquella muger dixo a las otras, que pues sus maridos entravan por la tierra adentro, y ponían sus personas en tan gran peligro, no hiziessen en ninguna manera cuenta dellos, y que luego mirassen con quién se avían de casar porque ella assí lo avía de hazer.

that he and all those who entered with him were going to fight and conquer many and very strange peoples and lands, and that he held it for very certain that in conquering them, many would die, but those who remained would be of good fortune and would end up very rich, according to the information that he had about the wealth that there was in that land. And he said to her, that more than he entreated her to tell him the things that she had said about deeds past and present, [to tell him] who had told them to her. She replied to him and said that in Castile a Moorish woman from Hornachos<sup>1</sup> had told it to her (which account she had told us before we departed from Castile), and the entire voyage had occurred to us in the same manner that she had told us. And after the governor had left Caravallo, a native of Cuenca de Huete, as his lieutenant and captain of all the ships and people that he left there,<sup>2</sup> we departed from them, the governor leaving them instructed later and by every possible means to gather the ships together and pursue their journey, following directly along the route to the [Río] Pánuco and always going along the coast and seeking the port as best they could, and upon finding it, to stop in it and wait for us.<sup>3</sup> During that time that they gathered themselves into the ships, they say that those people who were there saw and heard—all of them very clearly—how that woman said to the other women that since their husbands were entering inland and were putting themselves in such great peril, they should not count in any way on them, and that they should look to see whom they might marry, because she planned so to do it.

1. Hornachos, in Badajoz, Extremadura, was well known throughout the sixteenth century for its almost exclusively Morisco population.

2. Near Tampa Bay, Florida. Narváez had left Caravallo in charge of the three remaining ships and a hundred persons (including ten women) on 1 May 1528 (f8v).

3. Caravallo had been instructed to stay close to the coast, heading north and west along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico in search of the Río de las Palmas and evidently also the settlement of Santisteban del Puerto on the Río Pánuco.

- Y assi lo hizo que ella y las demás se casaron y amançebaron con los que quedaron en los navíos. Y después de partidos de allí, los navíos hizieron vela y siguieron su viage, y no hallaron el puerto adelante y bolvieron atrás. Y cinco leguas más baxo<sup>a</sup> de donde avíamos desembarcado, hallaron el puerto que entrava siete o ocho leguas la tierra adentro, y era el mismo que nosotros avíamos descubierto, adonde hallamos las caxas de Castilla, que atrás se a dicho, adó estavan los cuerpos de los hombres muertos, los quales eran cristianos. Y en este puerto y esta costa anduvieron los tres navíos, y el otro que vino de la Havana y el vergantín, buscándonos çerca de un año. Y como no nos hallaron, fuéronse a la Nueva España. Este puerto<sup>b</sup> es el mejor del mundo y entra en<sup>c</sup> la tierra adentro siete o ocho leguas. Y tiene seis braças a la entrada, y çerca de tierra tiene çinco. Y es lama el suelo dél. Y no ay mar dentro ni tormenta brava, que como los navíos que cabrán en él son muchos. Tiene muy gran cantidad de pescados.<sup>d</sup> Está çien leguas de la Havana que es un pueblo de cristianos en Cuba, y está a norte sur con este pueblo. Y aquí reinan las brisas siempre. Y van y vienen de una parte a otra en quatro días, porque los navíos van y vienen a quartel. [V:f54v]
- a. baxo] V: abaxo
- b. puerto] V: puerto que dezimos
- c. en] V: om.
- d. pescados] V: pescado
- e. quiénes] V: quién
- E pues he dado relación de los navíos, será bien que diga quiénes<sup>e</sup> son y de qué lugar de estos reinos los que nuestro Señor fue servido de escapar destos trabajos. El primero es Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, natural de Salamanca, hijo del

b. port] V: port of which we speak

And thus it happened that she and the rest of the women married and lived with<sup>1</sup> the men who remained on the ships. And after leaving from there, the ships set sail and continued their voyage, and they found no port ahead, and they turned back. And five leagues below where we had disembarked, they found the port that entered seven or eight leagues inland, and it was the same one that we had discovered, where we found the crates from Castile that have previously been mentioned, in which were the bodies of the dead men, who were Christians.<sup>2</sup> And into this port and along this coast went the three ships and the other one that came from Havana and the brigantine, looking for us for nearly a year. And since they did not find us, they went on to New Spain. This port<sup>b3</sup> is the best in the world, and it enters inland seven or eight leagues. And it is six fathoms deep at the entrance, and five near land. And its bottom is of soft, fine sand. And there is no tide nor any fierce storm that enters it, and thus many ships will fit in it. It has a great quantity of fish. It lies one hundred leagues from Havana, which is a settlement of Christians in Cuba, and it lies in a line north to south with this town. And here breezes are always blowing. And ships come and go from one place to the other in four days, because they come and go a quarter of the crew always rowing.<sup>4</sup>

And since I have given an account of the ships, it is appropriate that I mention those whom our Lord was served to allow to escape from these sufferings, and the places in these kingdoms from which they come. The first is Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, a native of Salamanca, son of

1. *amançebaron*.

2. The ships sailed north from the site where the overland contingent had set out, which was five leagues north of the mouth of Tampa Bay. Unable to find the bay and port formed by the mouth of the Río de las Palmas or the Río Pánuco that they had expected to be no more than fifteen leagues distant, they turned back, sailing south beyond the point where the overland expedition had disembarked, and continued on into Old Tampa Bay, where Narváez's exploratory land missions had found the crates containing the corpses (f7r).

3. Tampa Bay.

4. *a quartel*. Covarrubias (890b) defined *quartel* as a military term referring to the division of the corps into four companies. "Bogar a quarteles" refers to turns at rowing, by which some oarsmen row while others rest, alternating in the course of the voyage.

dotor Castillo y de doña Aldonça Maldonado. El segundo es Andrés Dorantes, hijo de Pablo Dorantes, natural de Béjar y vezino de Gibraleón. El terçero es Álvar Núñez Cabeça de Vaca, hijo de Françisco de Vera y nieto de Pedro de Vera, el que ganó a [Gran] Canaria, y su madre se llamava doña Teresa Cabeça de Vaca, natural de Xerez de la Frontera. El quarto se llama Estevanico; es negro alárabe, natural de Azamor.

a. ] Z: *om.* V: *Deo gracias*

<sup>a</sup>

b. Fin] V: *om.*

Fin<sup>b</sup>

c. Fue impresso . . . dos años.]  
V: [V:f64v] Impresso en  
Valladolid, por Francisco  
Fernández de Córdoba. Año de  
mil y quinientos y cinquenta y  
cinco años.

Fue impresso el presente tratado en la magnífica, noble, y antiquíssima çiudad de Zamora, por los honrrados varones Agustín de Paz y Juan Picardo, compañeros impressores de libros, vezinos de la dicha çiudad. A costa y espensas del virtuoso varón Juan Pedro Musetti, mercader de libros, vezino de Medina del Campo. Acabóse en seis días del mes de octubre. Año del nascimiento de nuestro Salvador Jesucristo de mil y quinientos y quarenta y dos años.<sup>c</sup>

Doctor Castillo and of Doña Aldonza Maldonado. The second is Andrés Dorantes, son of Pablo Dorantes, a native of Béjar and a resident of Gibraleón. The third is Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, son of Francisco de Vera and grandson of Pedro de Vera, the one who conquered [Gran] Canaria, and his mother was named Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca, a native of Jerez de la Frontera. The fourth is named Estevanico; he is an Arabic-speaking black man, a native of Azamor.<sup>1</sup>

a. ] Z: *om.* V: *Deo gracias*

<sup>a</sup>

b. Fine] V: *om.*

Fine<sup>b</sup>

c. The present treatise . . . forty-two.] V: [V:f64v] Printed in Valladolid, by Francisco Fernández de Córdoba. In the year fifteen hundred and fifty-five.

The present treatise was printed in the magnificent, noble, and very ancient city of Zamora, by the honorable gentlemen Augustín de Paz and Juan Picardo, associates and printers of books, residents of the said city. At the cost and expenditure of the virtuous gentleman Juan Pedro Musetti, book merchant, resident of Medina del Campo. It was finished on the sixth day of the month of October in the year after the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, fifteen hundred and forty-two.<sup>c2</sup>

1. Azemmour, a city on the northwestern coast of Africa, located at the mouth of the Oum er Rbia River in the province of Doukkala in the kingdom of Morocco, was held by the Portuguese from 1508 (Leo Africanus 125, 126n303).

2. There are four known surviving copies of this original edition: one in the British Library, another in the John Carter Brown Library, a third in the New York Public Library, and a fourth in the Mary Coats Burnett Library of Texas Christian University, Fort Worth.



## Appendix: 1555 Edition License to Print



El Rey:

a. Cabeça] V: cabçça

Por quanto por parte de vos, el governador Álvar Núñez Cabeça<sup>a</sup> de Vaca, vezino de la ciudad de Sevilla, nos hezistes relación, diziendo que vos aviades compuesto un libro intitulado *Relación de lo que acaesció en las Indias* en el armada de que vos ívades por governador, y que assimesmo aviades hecho componer otro, intitulado *Comentarios*, que tratan de las condiciones de la tierra y costumbres de la gente della. Lo qual era obra muy provechosa para las personas que avían de passar aquellas partes. Y porque el un libro y el otro era todo una misma cosa, y convenía que de los dos se hiziesse un volumen, nos suplicastes os diéssemos licencia y facultad, para que por diez o doze años los pudiéssedes imprimir y vender, atento el provecho y utilidad que dello se seguía, o como la nuestra merced fuesse. Lo qual visto por los del nuestro Consejo, juntamente con los dichos libros que de suso se haze mención, fue acordado que devíamos mandar dar esta nuestra cédula en la dicha razón. Por la cual vos damos licencia y facultad, para que por tiempo de diez años primeros siguientes, que se cuenten del día de la fecha desta nuestra cédula en adelante, vos o quien vuestro poder oviere, podáis imprimir y vender en estos nuestros reinos los dichos libros que de suso se haze mención, ambos en un volumen, siendo primeramente tassado el molde dellos por los del nuestro Consejo, y poniéndose esta nuestra cédula con la dicha tassa al principio del dicho libro, y no en otra manera. Y mandamos que durante el dicho tiempo de los dichos diez años ninguna persona lo pueda imprimir ni vender, sin tener el dicho vuestro poder so pena que pierda la impresión que assí hiziere y vendiere, y los moldes y aparejos con que lo hiziere, y más incurra en pena de diez mil maravedís,<sup>b</sup> los quales sean repartidos, la tercia parte para la persona que lo acusare, y la otra tercia parte para el juez que lo sentenciare, y la otra tercia parte para la nuestra Cámara. Y mandamos a todas y qualesquier nuestras justicias, y a cada una en su jurisdicción que guarden, cumplan y executen esta dicha nuestra cédula, y lo en ella contenido y contra el tenor y forma della no vayan ni passen, ni consientan ir ni passar por alguna manera, so pena de la nuestra merced, y de diez mil maravedís para la nuestra Cámara, a cada uno que lo contrario hiziere. Fecha en la villa de Valladolid a veinte y un días del mes de março de mil y quinientos<sup>c</sup> y cinquenta y cinco años.

b. maravedís] V: maravedios

c. quinientos] V: quinientos

La Princesa.

Por mandado de Su Magestad, Su Alteza en su nombre.

Francisco de Ledesma.

1. The address of Cabeza de Vaca as governor evidently referred to his former title of governor of the province of Río de la Plata, granted by the crown in 1540 and rescinded in 1551 as a result of the sentence issued against him by the Council of the Indies because of his conduct in office. The confusing reference to Cabeza de Vaca as governor in connection with his account of Governor Narváez's *Florida* expedition is apparently the crown's conflation of Cabeza de Vaca's first voyage to the Indies as treasurer under Narváez with his second one to Río de la Plata as governor.

2. To the degree that Pero Hernández's *Commentaries*, an apology and defense of Cabeza de Vaca's governorship of the province of Río de la Plata, included "customs of the people and conditions of the land," it pertained to the band across South America from the twenty-sixth to the thirty-sixth parallel, including the area of today's southern Brazil, southern Paraguay, Uruguay, and northern Argentina.

3. The Infanta Juana (1535–73), daughter of Charles V and Isabel of Portugal and married in 1552 to João III of Portugal, acting as regent for her brother, Prince Philip.

4. From 1543 to 1556, Philip served as regent of Spain in the absence of his father, Charles V; on 16 January 1556, Charles V renounced the crown of Castile and León, together with the kingdom of Navarre and the viceroalties of the Indies, in favor of his son (Lynch 56–57, 107–08).

5. Interim secretary in the Council of War within the Council of the Indies since 1548 (Schäfer, *El Consejo Real* 1:77, 369, 412).

### The King:

Inasmuch as you, on your own behalf, Governor Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, resident of the city of Seville, have informed us that you had composed a book entitled *The Account of What Occurred in the Indies* about the expedition on which you went as governor,<sup>1</sup> and likewise had had another composed, entitled *Commentaries*, which treats the conditions of the land and the customs of its people.<sup>2</sup> The aforementioned was an effort very beneficial to the persons who were to pass through those places. And because the one book and the other were on the same subject, and it was advisable that the two should be put into one volume, you petitioned us to give you license and authorization to print and sell them for ten or twelve years, in consideration of the benefit and utility that was being derived from them, or as our judgment mandated. This matter having been examined by the members of our Council, together with the said books of which mention is made above, it was agreed that we should order that this our warrant be given in the stated case. For which we give you license and authorization, for the period of the next ten years, which shall be counted onward from the day of the date of this our warrant, that you or whoever has your power of attorney, may print and sell in these our kingdoms the said books of which mention is made above, both in one volume, the typesetting of them first being valued by our Council, and putting this our warrant with the said valuation at the beginning of the said book, and not in any other manner. And we order that during the said time of the said ten years, no person may print or sell it without having your said power of attorney under the penalty of losing whatever printing he might have made and sold, and the body of printing type and equipment with which he made it, and in addition, of incurring a fine of ten thousand *maravedís*, which are to be apportioned, one third to the person who accused him, and another third to the judge who sentenced him, and the other third to our Council. And we order any and all of our courts of justice and each one in its jurisdiction to uphold, fulfill, and carry out this our said warrant and that which is contained in it, and that they neither deviate from, nor overlook, nor consent to the deviation from or omission of its literal content and form, and that each one who might do to the contrary be fined, under the penalty of whatever amount our judgment decrees as well as ten thousand *maravedís* for our Council. Declared in the *villa* of Valladolid on the twenty-first day of the month of March in the year fifteen hundred and fifty-five.

### The Princess.<sup>3</sup>

By order of His Majesty,<sup>4</sup> Her Highness on his behalf.  
Francisco de Ledesma.<sup>5</sup>

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1542 publication in the city of Zamora, which in the seventeenth century was home to the most eminent of the houses of Cabeza de Vaca.

#### 1. THE NAME OF ÁLVAR NÚÑEZ CABEZA DE VACA

Recalling one of his visits with Cabeza de Vaca at court in 1547, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés in his *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (2:202a [bk. 23, chap. 15]) referred to the *adelantado*, then under indictment for the conduct of his governance of Río de la Plata, as a “buen caballero y natural de Jerez de la Frontera.” Upon discussing in the *Apologética historia sumaria* (1:651 [chap. 124]) Cabeza de Vaca’s *Florida* sojourn for its mine of information about the native peoples who inhabited the lands to the north of New Spain, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas likewise referred to Álvar Núñez as “un caballero natural de Jerez de la Frontera” (see Adorno, “The Discursive Encounter” 220–27). These comments by two of Cabeza de Vaca’s most famous contemporaries are of interest on two counts. First, the phrase “natural de Jerez de la Frontera” echoes directly Cabeza de Vaca’s description of himself in the published *relación*, reminding us that both authors were relying on it as well as, in Oviedo’s case, on personal encounters with the *adelantado*. Second, both writers recognized Cabeza de Vaca as a *caballero*, that is, as a member of the untitled, middle-ranking nobility of Castile. Oviedo also often referred to Cabeza de Vaca as an *hidalgo*, an “hijo de bien,” according to the *Siete partidas* (Castile 1:f71r [pt. 2, tit. 21, law 2]). Although the traditional knightly warrior class of *caballeros* ranked higher than the mostly urban-based *hidalgos*, the terms designating these two grades of nobility were commonly used interchangeably in the sixteenth century, as Oviedo’s usage indicates (Haliczer 23, 269–70; Pike 27).

The name of Cabeza de Vaca is found in the chronicles of the Castilian monarchs from the thirteenth century onward, and we invoke its history in order to better understand its resonance for the sixteenth-century Álvar Núñez. In his day there was considerable liberty to choose among the surnames of one’s progenitors, and as adults, individuals sometimes changed their names, motivated by the desire to recall the great deeds of a particular ancestor or to seek some material advantage of inheritance (Sancho de Sopránis, “Datos” 99). The example that comes to mind for readers of Spanish Americana is El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616), who in 1563 changed his name from Gómez Suárez de Figueroa to Gómez Suárez de la Vega, which he used briefly before taking the name of Garcilaso de la Vega; the latter name honored the memory of his father, Garcilaso Sebastián de la Vega (c. 1505–59), and evoked the life at arms and letters of his father’s second cousin, the Toledan poet Garcilaso de la Vega (c. 1501–36)

(Varner 225–26; Solano 93). Such, however, was not the case of Cabeza de Vaca, who sustained and celebrated his illustrious birth name throughout his life.

The name Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca belonged to the progenitor of the Jerez de la Frontera house of Cabeza de Vaca (late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries), who had distinguished himself in the service of King Juan II (1406–54) of Castile. The name also belonged to the founder's grandson, who inherited the Cabeza de Vaca *mayorazgo* (entailed estate) founded in the late 1450s and went on to establish another before 1467 (Pellicer f33r, f34v). Our Álvar Núñez's mother, Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca, was the niece of this second Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, who was the firstborn son (*primogénito*) of his parents. Since Doña Teresa's father was the second son, her descent was predictably excluded from *mayorazgo* inheritance, because the right of succession was traditionally vested in the firstborn son of the holder (Haliczer 270). Naming her own son Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca allowed Doña Teresa to honor the primogeniture of the house (which she could not claim) and evoke its obvious prestige; her choice of Cabeza de Vaca as the surname for her male child would have been advantageous because, as we will see, the Cabeza de Vaca line was a long and prestigious one.

At the same time, Cabeza de Vaca's paternal descent from the Vera line of conquerors provided a connection to the noble Mendozas, through the marriage of Cabeza de Vaca's paternal great-grandmother Doña María de Vera to Diego Gómez de Mendoza, a union that produced Cabeza de Vaca's grandfather Pedro de Vera Mendoza. Sancho de Sopranis ("La familia" 263–64) concluded that this was a secondary branch of the Mendoza line, too distant to provide great prestige, yet close enough for Cabeza de Vaca to legitimately use the Mendoza device on his personal coat of arms.

In our subject's first appearances in the documentary record in 1503 and 1506, he is called "Álvar Núñez" and "Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca," respectively (Gil, "Notas" 53, 55; Sancho de Sopranis, "Notas" 228). Since Álvar Núñez's male descent (*varonía*) was Vera, the choice of his mother's surname probably corresponded to the common and long-held practice of naming second sons by the matronymic (Sancho de Sopranis, "La familia" 270; Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 95). If this was the custom followed by Doña Teresa and her husband, Don Francisco de Vera, it would support Sancho de Sopranis's argument ("Datos" 80) about the rank order of Álvar Núñez among the offspring of his parents, namely, that he was the third child (but the first son) born to Francisco de Vera and Teresa Cabeza de Vaca after their daughters Doña Violante de Vera and Doña María de Vera. Sancho de Sopranis ("Datos" 78) posited that the order in which the children's names

appeared in their mother's will probably corresponded to the order of their birth. By that criterion, Doña Violante de Vera was the firstborn of the family, followed by Doña María (Mencía in the transcription of the will), then Álvar Núñez, who was followed by Hernando, Doña Ana (referred to in the will as "la moza"), and Juan. The son Martín is inexplicably excluded from the will as transcribed by Sancho de Soprani ("Datos" 101).

## 2. CABEZA DE VACA'S NOBLE FOREBEARS

### 2.A. *The Cabeza de Vacas*

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's lineage can be traced back thirteen generations to the year 1200 to Inés Pérez Cabeza de Vaca, the first person known through "authentic writings and legal instruments" to bear the name (Pellicer f6r-v). The house of Cabeza de Vaca was a noble and sometimes prominent one during the period of the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries. Here we take up the known and less well known accounts and consider their contents as well as the sources on which they were based. These sources allow us to trace Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's forebears back to the beginning of the thirteenth century, to dismiss the fabulous tale of the shepherd Martín Alhaja as the origin of the line, and to locate our principal subject in relation to various prominent personages of the house of Cabeza de Vaca.

2.A.1. *Pellicer's Genealogía (1652)*. Our framework for the house of Cabeza de Vaca and its descent is provided by the *Genealogía de la noble y antigua casa de Cabeza de Vaca* (Madrid, 1652), written by José Pellicer de Ossau Salas y Tovar. Pellicer was a historian famed for his knowledge of letters, antiquities, and genealogy. A prolific author of more than two hundred works, he held the title of chronicler of Castile and of Aragon from 1629 and 1637, respectively. In 1640, he was appointed to the exalted position of chief chronicler (*cronista mayor*) of Aragon, filling the vacancy left by the death of Bartolomé Juan Leonardo de Argensola (1562–1631). At that time, Pellicer was also named official examiner of the histories and chronicles of all the kingdoms ruled by the Aragonese crown (*Enciclopedia* 30:7, 43:149). We find that in keeping with the importance of the positions he occupied, Pellicer exercised a truly modern critical spirit in the genealogical study that concerns us. He based his work on written sources—published works, archival and public documents—and, as we will see, corrected the claims of contemporary printed works he found to be in error.

Smith was among the first nineteenth-century scholars of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *relación* to be aware of José Pellicer's genealogical work,

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Smith was among the first nineteenth-century scholars of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *relación* to be aware of José Pellicer's genealogical work,

but T. W. Field's reference to the deceased Smith's consideration of it is necessarily vague. Field obviously did not have direct access to the work, and his comments on it have misguided subsequent potential readers. In the appendix to the 1871 posthumous publication of Smith's translation of the *relación*, Field (Smith, *Relation* 233–34) referred to the “Genealogía de la noble y antigua [*sic*] de Cabeza de Vaca” without identifying its author and claimed that the work contained eight hypotheses for the origin of the name forwarded by the same number of learned antiquarians. As we discuss below, Field's “eight hypotheses” are in fact the eight historical personages whom Pellicer identified as constituting the lineal descent of the eight generations of the house's original succession.

The documentary record Pellicer cited on the Cabeza de Vacas is still consulted by twentieth-century genealogical investigators; in his work on Cabeza de Vaca's genealogy, Sancho de Sopranis made only one significant correction to Pellicer's assessment of the house of Cabeza de Vaca of Jerez de la Frontera, as we will see below. Pellicer's work, however, has received undue criticism from twentieth-century historians of heraldry who have arbitrarily dismissed some of his major claims while failing to appreciate his reasoned and documented rejection of the legendary origin of the line, that is, the tale of the shepherd Martín Alhaja (see García Carraffa and García Carraffa 86–89). Recent Cabeza de Vaca scholars have tended to dismiss Pellicer's work without consulting it. For example, Pupo-Walker (*Naufragios* 26n37) referred to the work by an incorrect title, calling it a flawed “*Cronología de la noble y antigua familia de Cabeza de Vaca* (Madrid, 1652) [*sic*]” and adding, “apparently it is a document of very uneven quality” [al parecer se trata de un documento de valor muy desigual]. On the contrary, Pellicer's work is well documented and cogently argued. His handling of the Martín Alhaja tale is a case in point. We turn now to the legend of the shepherd, still the most popular (though erroneous) explanation today for the origin of the Cabeza de Vaca line.

2.A.2. *The Legendary Shepherd Martín Alhaja*. On Smith's behalf, Field forwarded the popular legend about the humble shepherd Martín Alhaja and the Christian triumph in the year 1212 at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa that he understood to be Smith's assessment of the origin of the Cabeza de Vaca line (Smith, *Relation* 233–34). As Field noted, Henri Ternaux-Compans (1–4) had earlier presented this tale in introducing his French translation of Pero Hernández's *Comentarios* on Cabeza de Vaca's governorship of Río de la Plata in volume 6 of his *Voyages, relations et mémoires . . . de l'Amérique* (Paris, 1837). The legend has been repeated with great frequency from Ternaux-Compans and Smith/Field onward; even twentieth-century

heraldic historians and Cabeza de Vaca scholars repeat if not endorse it (see García Carraffa and García Carraffa 82, 91; Fernández 25, 36n2; Favata and Fernández, *Relación* x–xi; Favata and Fernández, *The Account* 12; Pupo-Walker, *Naufraios* 26n37).

The relevant event was the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, the culmination of an international campaign launched as a crusade by Alfonso VIII of Castile (1158–1214), Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, archbishop of Toledo (c. 1175–1247), and Pope Innocent III (1196–1216) against the threat of the Almohades from North Africa. Yet the international forces from north of the Pyrenees that gathered in Toledo in 1212 abandoned the effort, and the triumph of the Christians at Las Navas on 16 July 1212 was the result of the combined effort of the Hispanic forces of Castile, León, Navarre, and Catalonia (MacKay 44–46). Crossing the strait from North Africa, Mohammed an-Nasir pursued a course from Seville through Jaén to Baeza high in the Sierra Morena and from there to the peaks of Las Navas in order to take control of the mountain passes and obstruct the transit of the Christians to the south. The chronicles tell that when the Christians arrived at the foot of the mount called Las Navas de Tolosa on 12 July 1212, a shepherd showed them the route to the top that allowed them to initiate the decisive battle against the Almohades (Martínez, *Historia* 1:93). The victory definitively broke the strength of the Almohades and inclined the balance of power in favor of the Christians (MacKay 44). A decisive moment in Christian Spain's struggle against the Muslims, it stopped the Muslims' forward march and secured for the Christians the Sierra Morena, which was the gateway to the Andalusian plain.

Searching for the origin of the Martín Alhaja tale, we find the most currently accessible early modern source in Sebastián de Covarrubias Horozco's *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* of 1611. Covarrubias included his brief genealogical essay on the Cabeza de Vacas in the *v consonante* section of his dictionary under the entry for *vaca*. As Pellicer (f3v) later pointed out, "Vaca" and "Cabeza de Vaca" had the same value and referred to the same name and lineage. Covarrubias (989a) insisted upon the prominence of such houses as the Vaca de Castros and the Cabeza de Vacas, calling the latter "the name of very prominent caballeros." He then cited the legend of the shepherd Martín Alhaja, noting that in Cuenca there currently existed (in 1611) certain properties and a fountain named for him.

In Covarrubias's account, Alhaja presented himself in 1212 to King Alfonso VIII of Castile (1158–1214) (not King Alfonso IX of León [1188–1230], as Covarrubias stated). Kings Alfonso, Pedro II of Aragon (1196–1213), and Sancho VII of Navarre (1194–1234) had gathered to fight the Muslim enemy but found themselves cut off by their adversary in the vicinity of Castro Ferral in the Sierra Morena. The story goes that Alhaja offered to show them

a passage through the mountains where his herd grazed, thus allowing them to outmaneuver the Muslims. Alhaja was said to have pointed the way for the safe passage of the armies of Castile, Aragon, and Navarre with a cow's skull, licked clean by wolves several days previously.

Although Covarrubias did not mention the name of the battle, Ternaux-Compans (2), followed by Field in Smith (*Relation* 234), identified the event as the Christian triumph at Las Navas de Tolosa on 16 July 1212. In Ternaux-Compans's (2) account, it was King Sancho of Navarre who ennobled Alhaja. However, given the site of the battle in Jaén, Andalusia, in the kingdom of Castile, as well as the subsequent prominence of the Cabeza de Vacas in that kingdom, Alfonso VIII of Castile would have been the most plausible protagonist in conveying such honors if in fact they had been conferred.

Despite the repetition of the legend to this day, José Pellicer put it to rest in 1652 when he offered a critical analysis of the legend and its origin. Pellicer (f3r) attributed the tale to Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés in his "Catálogo de los reyes de Castilla." This was probably a reference to Oviedo's *Catálogo real de Castilla, y de todos los reyes de las Españas e de Nápoles y Secilia e de los reyes y señores de las Casas de Francia, Austria, Holanda y Borgoña . . .*, created at the urging of King Ferdinand around 1505 and completed around 1532; the autograph manuscript is housed in the library at the monastery of San Lorenzo del Escorial and consists of 451 folios (Turner 7). One of its versions may have been a source for Gonzalo Argote de Molina's (1548–98) *Historia de la nobleza de Andalucía* of 1588 (Turner 7); Pellicer (f3r) faulted Argote de Molina for accepting and repeating Oviedo's dubious version of the origin of the Cabeza de Vaca line.

Pellicer (f3r) rejected the Martín Alhaja story as the source of the name Cabeza de Vaca, declaring that it was neither possible nor verisimilar, because the "archbishop Don Rodrigo," that is, the archbishop of Toledo, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, later known for his historical writings as "El Toledano," had been present on the occasion, and he interpreted the event differently. In his *De rebus Hispaniae (Rerum in Hispania gestarum Chronicon*, usually referred to as the *Historia Gothica*; Sánchez Alonso 1:135), Don Rodrigo told of an unnamed shepherd, to whom he assigned a providential role, but he made no reference whatsoever to the use of a cow's skull as a sign. Pellicer went on to cite other historical sources that told of the intervention of such a shepherd. Pellicer (f3r) noted that according to the *Primera crónica general* a man looking like a shepherd but who was "surely a messenger from God" urged swift passage. Additionally, Pellicer (f3r-v) called on the authority of the "very scrupulous Juan de Mariana," who wrote that some participants, moved by the fact that the shepherd (who did not appear again) had shown them the way, believed him to have been an angel. Since this shepherd was not



seen again, Pellicer (f3v) asked, how could it be that four hundred years later Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo knew his name and those of his descendants?

The logic of Pellicer's rhetorical question seems undeniable. Yet given the continued currency of the Martín Alhaja tale regarding Cabeza de Vaca, it will be useful to look directly at Pellicer's sources. We have confirmed Pellicer's versions of the accounts of Juan de Mariana as well as the *Primera crónica general*, for which the Alfonsine compilers used El Toledano's account of the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa as their principal source, thus giving us direct access to Don Rodrigo's eyewitness account (Menéndez Pidal et al. 1:xxxvii, lxx, 2:cxcviii–cxcix). Chapters 1016 and 1017 of the *Primera crónica general* narrate the events leading to the shepherd's intervention, obviously translating Don Rodrigo's (El Toledano's) Latin text or copying from a Castilian version of it and beginning the specific section by stating "and the archbishop says" [et dize ell arçobispo]. Since the text continues in a first-person plural voice, it is clear that the compilers transcribed the eyewitness-participant Don Rodrigo's account, which we paraphrase as follows.

Having lost the Castro Ferral, the Christian armies were left only with the option of ascending through the Losa pass, famous for its narrowness and the danger to men and beasts of falling from its heights. Many felt the perils of doing so were so great that the Christians had no choice but to retreat. To this, King Alfonso (VIII) of Castile made a valiant speech, declaring that they must go forward.

The archbishop continued:

And since the advice of the noble king Don Alfonso of Castile weighed more heavily than that of the others, thus the omnipotent God, through whose spiritual grace the matter was put in order, then sent the king Don Alfonso a man of the pueblo, very rustic in dress and in his person, who had for a long time grazed livestock and hunted rabbits and hares in those mountains; and this shepherd showed the king Don Alfonso the most entirely swift route by which to climb the side of that mountain, and he even advised him not to veer away or hide from the sight of the enemies, because seeing the approaching Christian armies while not being able to hamper or stop them or do them any harm would have a good effect on the Muslims and thus we could come to the place appropriate for battle. (Menéndez Pidal et al. 2:698b [chap. 1016])

The Alfonsine history then cited Don Rodrigo's account of the shepherd's truthfulness ("[s]obre la razón daquel pastor cuenta aquí la estoria et diz"), telling how Don Diego de Faro and Don Garci Romero de Aragón were sent ahead, and verified that the shepherd had been correct in stating that they could ascend to the peak and defend it successfully.

In Don Rodrigo's words, "[a]nd by the grace of God, all was done thus, because that man who had come to the king Don Alfonso, as a messenger of

God who discerns the frailties of the world, was found to have told the truth entirely and absolutely” (Menéndez Pidal et al. 2:698b–99a [chap. 1017]). There the matter is left, as the *Primera crónica general* (chaps. 1018–20) goes on to narrate the successful ascent of the Christian army and its subsequent victory over the Almohad enemy.

The Alfonsine text emphasizes that the archbishop Don Rodrigo, “who was in this battle and who dictated this account, to acquit himself with elegant reason says . . . in his person”:

If I wished to tell the great deeds that each one of these great princes did and the counsel they offered, I would not be able to do it; either my hand would tire writing or I would err in the tally or diminish [their deeds] in the explanation; . . . for all desired to end in victory and gain eternal honor and glory or, if necessary, to die and earn the crowns of martyrs. . . . And thus it seems that God did everything and brought it to a conclusion. (Menéndez Pidal et al. 2:703b [chap. 1020])

As Pellicer declared, we find that neither the archbishop Rodrigo’s eyewitness account nor the *Primera crónica general* made any mention of a special sign used by the rustic shepherd, nor do they identify him by name or in any other way except as a “messenger of God.”

In his *Historia general de España* (1592, 1601), Juan de Mariana echoed the basic El Toledano/Alfonsine account. The Jesuit historian (Mariana 337 [bk. 11, chap. 24]) made a brief mention of the mysterious shepherd, and like the medieval chroniclers of the event he framed the humble shepherd’s intervention as divine:

The help of God and the saints was effective in keeping intact the matters that were almost completely lost. A certain rustic, who had great knowledge of those areas because of having grazed his herds in them for a long time (some, moved because he had shown them the path and was not seen again, thought him to be an angel), promised the kings that if they trusted him, the entire army and its people would come to scale the highest of the mountain peaks, thanks to the paths that he knew.

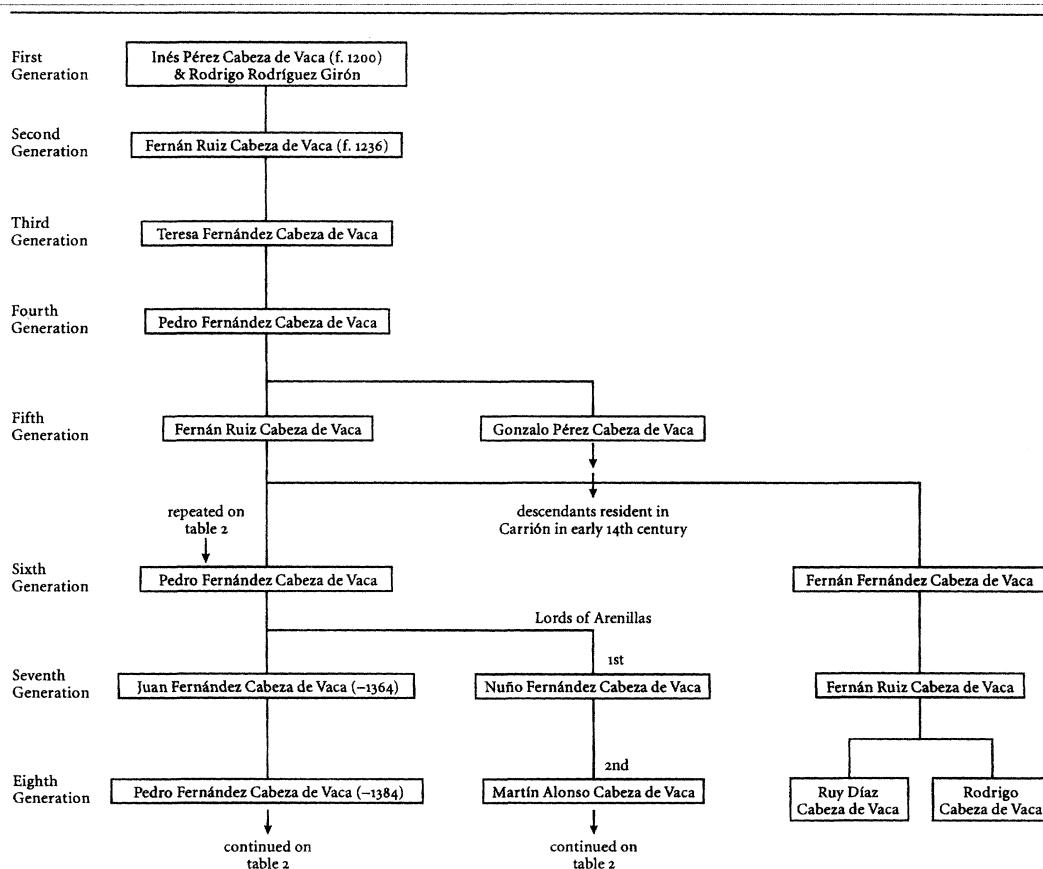
From El Toledano to Alfonso’s *Primera crónica general* to Juan de Mariana to Pellicer’s critical overview, the tradition of the anonymity of the shepherd would thus seem to be conclusive. Yet the alternate tradition that began with Oviedo, continued with Argote de Molina, and was probably picked up from him by Covarrubias has proven to be more powerful, despite being unsubstantiated.

2.A.3. *The Eight Founding Generations.* Pellicer’s genealogy constructs fourteen generations from the origin of the Cabeza de Vaca lineage to the generation of our Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. Pellicer structured the work by

setting forth the eight successive generations that founded the line (f6r–f18r) and then going on to outline the descent of the eighteen houses of Cabeza de Vaca spawned in Castile and Aragon by the eight founding generations and designated according to the rank of *señores* or *caballeros* (f18v–f67v). Pellicer cited as the founder of the Cabeza de Vaca line Inés Pérez Cabeza de Vaca (“lady of this house and lineage in the year 1200” [f6r–v]) and concludes the original succession with Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca (deceased in 1384 [f15v]), the main representative of the eighth generation of the line (see table 1).

Table 1. The eight founding generations of the House of Cabeza de Vaca

Pellicer (f3v) found his earliest reference to the Cabeza de Vaca name in the bishop of Oviedo Don Pelayo’s early-twelfth-century historical compilation that concluded with a chronicle of the reigns in León (1065–1109) and Castile



\*Table does not show complete descendency.

(1072–1109) of Alfonso VI, with whose tenure Castilian hegemony began (Sánchez Alonso 1:119, 123). Pellicer found there mention of two caballeros named Álvaro Vaca and his brother Gómez Vaca (“Vaca and Cabeza de Vaca being the same name,” according to Pellicer) in relation to an event that occurred in 1099. Although Pellicer emphasized that this occurred 115 years before the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, the thrust of his argument was to establish the great age and prestige of the line in “the nobiliaries of classical authors that pass from hand to hand” as well as in the latest printed works. He declared, “It can be affirmed that this lineage, since very long ago, has been made up of prominent caballeros of the kingdom” (f4r–v). He likewise noted that Jerónimo de Zurita proved “with irrefutable evidence” that the lineage also included *ricos hombres*, that is, grandees, the peers of the high nobility of Castile (f4v).

Although Doña Inés Pérez Cabeza de Vaca (the personage Pellicer identified as the founder of the house) remains a marginal figure, her son Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, the primogenitor of the second generation (see table 1), played a role in one of the singular events in the reconquest of Spain. Though Pellicer (f3r–v) criticized Argote de Molina for accepting Oviedo’s account of the beginning of the Cabeza de Vaca line according to the Martín Alhaja legend, he nevertheless acknowledged the value of Argote’s citation of Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, who, twenty-four years after the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, accompanied Fernando III of Castile and León in 1236 when “the caballeros of the frontier” won Córdoba. Following Pellicer, the genealogist and chronicler of Castile and the Indies, Luis de Salazar y Castro (1658–1734) (qtd. in García Carraffa and García Carraffa 83–86), disputed the identity of Inés Pérez Cabeza de Vaca in her union with Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón as the founders of the house but agreed with Pellicer (f7v) in identifying the primogeniture of the succeeding generation with Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca. Pellicer (f8r) documented the deeds of Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca with El Toledano’s *Rerum in Hispania gestarum Chronicon*, the *cuarta parte* of Alfonso X’s *Primera crónica general*, and Argote de Molina’s history of Andalusian nobility.

We find substantial reference to “Don Fernant Rroyz Cabeça de Uaca” not in the *cuarta parte* of the Alfonsine chronicle but rather in the modern edition’s *segunda parte*, devoted to the reign of Fernando III (called “el Santo” after his sanctification in 1671), who ruled Castile and then Castile and León in the years 1217–52 and 1230–52, respectively (Martínez, *Historia* 1:96). This portion of the chronicle received its final form during the reign of Alfonso X’s son Sancho IV in 1289 or shortly afterward; the principal source for the pertinent chapters (numbered 1046 and 1047) is El Toledano’s *Rerum in*

*Hispania gestarum Chronicon* (Menéndez Pidal et al. 1:xix, xxxiv, lxix–lxx, 2:ccii–cciii).

We review here the events in which Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca participated. He appears in the chapter of the *Primera crónica general* that narrates Fernando III's conquest of Córdoba. As Christian caballeros laid siege to Córdoba in January 1236, messengers were sent to inform the king, who was in Benavente at the time. He determined to go to Córdoba at all costs, and, as his troops were gathered from all parts of Castile, León, and Extremadura, he made his way to Córdoba via Ciudad Rodrigo, Alcántara, and Guadiana and from there to Medellín and on to Magazela and Bienquerencia and then to Dos Hermanas and Daralbazar. The narrator of the history pauses here to note that only some thirty caballeros were with the king on this occasion: “among those who went with him, one was Don Fernando Rroyz Cabeça de Uaca, and the other Don Diego López de Uayas, who was an *escudero* at the time, and another was Martín Gonçález de Mijancas, and another, Sancho López d’Aellos and another, Don Johan Arias Mexía, and others of whom we do not know the names with certainty” (Menéndez Pidal et al. 2:731a [chap. 1046]).

This important episode culminated in the Christian victory over the Muslims of Córdoba on the day of Saints Peter and Paul, 29 June 1236. Córdoba, “royal city and the mother of the other cities of Andalusia” and “patrician of cities,” as the *Primera crónica general* (Menéndez Pidal et al. 2:729b, 733b [chap. 1046]) called it, was definitively won for the Christians. Its great mosque was converted into a Christian temple, and the bells of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, once stolen by Almanzor and used in the mosque as lamps, were returned to the Santiago cathedral, where their ringing gave pilgrims great joy, “praising the saints and the king Don Fernando and blessing him, exhorting God to preserve and sustain him” (Menéndez Pidal et al. 2:734b [chap. 1047]).

The historical account of Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca's participation in the conquest of Córdoba thus identifies the Cabeza de Vaca name with one of the major military offensives and one of the most celebrated monarchs of medieval Christian Spain. Fernando III is credited over all the other kings of Castile for making the most transcendent gains in recovering Spanish territory from the Muslims in the shortest period of time (Martínez, *Historia* 1:96–97); his conquest of Córdoba, along with those of Murcia (1241–44) and Seville (1248), resulted in the Muslim kingdom of Granada's declaration of vassalage to Castile.

A genealogist slightly earlier than Pellicer likewise signaled the importance of Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca in the early history of the Cabeza de Vaca line. Not to be confused with Pero Mejía (1497–1551, the imperial

chronicler of Charles V and the author of the enormously popular *Silva de varia lección* [1540]), Pedro Mejía de Ovando published his genealogical treatise, the *Primera parte de los quatro libros de la Ovandina*, in Lima in 1621. The work was edited and published in 1915 in the *Colección de libros y documentos referentes a la historia de América*; the only known copy of the original seventeenth-century edition of it is preserved at the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid (Mejía de Ovando, *La Ovandina* xviii).

Of some notoriety, Mejía de Ovando never succeeded in publishing the *segunda parte* of his work, because the first was condemned by the Inquisition in Lima for allegedly falsifying the history of *converso* families. According to his enemies, Mejía de Ovando alternated falsified genealogies of socially ambitious families with those of the most noble houses of Spain (Mejía de Ovando, *La Ovandina* x). Brought to our attention by Gandía (*Historia crítica* 213), the work sets forth the prominence of the Cabeza de Vaca name as well as several points of pertinent information.

After devoting the first forty-five chapters of book 1 to a general discussion of nobility, Mejía de Ovando initiated his genealogical discussion in book 1, chapter 46, with the house of Borja; Francisco de Borja y Aragón, the prince of Esquilache, was viceroy of Peru at the time. The Cabeza de Vacas appear in book 2, chapter 4 (“De la genealogía y descendencia de la casa de los Manueles”), to which the single volume published in 1915 does not extend. We transcribe the reference to Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca directly from the Real Academia copy of the 1621 publication (Mejía de Ovando, *Primera parte* f251r [bk. 2, chap. 4]):

Fue assí mismo Doña Juana Cabeça de Vaca, muger de Gómez de Carrión, decendiente de Fernán Ruyz Cabeça de Vaca, ricohombre de Castilla, en tiempo del Rey D. Fernando el Santo, como lo dize su Corónica, y del repartimiento de Sevilla, año de 1253, cuyos decendientes viven en Alcaraz, Xerez de la Frontera y Zamora, como parece del mayorazgo que dexó Nuño Fernández Cabeça de Vaca, Procurador general de la ciudad de Zamora, a quien el Rey D. Juan el II embió con Alonso Tenorio, Adelantado de Caçorla, a requerir a los Reyes de Nauarra y Aragón, que no entrassen de guerra en Castilla. Son las armas deste linage y casa de Cabeça de Vaca, una cabeça de buey roja en campo de oro: aunque otros traen quinze jaqueles, y por orla seys cabeças de Vaca: pero todos son de una misma familia.

[There was, likewise, Doña Juana Cabeza de Vaca, the wife of Gómez de Carrión, descendant of Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, *ricohombre* of Castile (in the time of the king Don Fernando [III], “el Santo,” as it says in his chronicle, and the granting of properties in Seville in the year 1253), whose descendants live in Alcaraz, Jerez de la Frontera, and Zamora, as is apparent

from the entailed estate that was left by Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, general advocate of the city of Zamora, whom the king Don Juan II sent with Alonso Tenorio, *adelantado* of Cazorla, to demand of the kings of Navarre and Aragon that they not invade Castile. The arms of this lineage and house of Cabeza de Vaca are the head of an ox, in red, on a field of gold; although others use the device of fifteen squares and, as a border, six heads of cows, but all are of one same family.]

Apart from providing further evidence of the recognition of Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca as one of the founders of the Cabeza de Vaca lineage, Mejía de Ovando's account also indicates that notable houses in the sixteenth century included those of both Zamora and Jerez de la Frontera. We will see below that the Zamora house was older and more distinguished but that the Jerez de la Frontera house in its time also achieved certain prominence. Following chronicle sources, both Mejía de Ovando (*Primera parte* f251r [bk. 2, chap. 4]) and Pellicer (f3v) cited Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca's participation in the distribution of formerly Muslim properties to Christian conquerors (*repartimiento*) in Seville in 1253. Pellicer noted that the Cabeza de Vaca lineage included *ricos hombres*, but he did not attribute that status explicitly to Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca as Mejía de Ovando did here. The existence of grandees in the Cabeza de Vaca line of Castile has been disputed by modern genealogists (García Carraffa and García Carraffa 86), and one of the grandees so identified by Pellicer (f28v) was in fact Aragonese. (We consider the Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca of King Juan II's time mentioned by Mejía de Ovando and the Cabeza de Vaca coat of arms below [secs. 2.A.6 and 2.C, respectively].)

Like other prominent genealogists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (*Libro* 1:26–28), Pellicer used as basic sources not only the chronicles but also the *Libro del Becerro*, that is, *El libro becerro de las merindades de Castilla*, the register book of property and privileges of property holders in the eighteen districts (*merindades*) into which northern Castile, from the Cantabrian Sea to the Río Duero, was divided during the low Middle Ages (García de Valdeavellano 510–11). These districts were characterized by their autonomous right to elect their own lord (normally, from among the members of a single lineage), who in turn exercised authority over the inhabitants of the jurisdiction and swore to respect their rights, all under the broad jurisdiction of the king (García de Valdeavellano 522; Haliczzer 270).

The *Libro* was the result of requests from the hidalgos of Old Castile to King Pedro I of Castile to convert the autonomous jurisdictions (*behetrías* or *merindades*) into *tierras solariegas*, that is, lands whose inhabitants would

owe no obligation whatsoever to the monarch. The objective of the petitions presented at the Cortes in Valladolid in 1351 was to seek the king's agreement to cede two of his rights over their jurisdictions: the administration of justice and the payment of a certain tribute (the *martiniega*, a payment collected on the day of Saint Martin [*Libro* 1:21]). Although the transformation of *behetrías* into *tierras solariegas* did not take place, the survey (*pesquisa*) of the nobility's holdings in the eighteen districts did occur (*Libro* 1:24). It resulted in the book, completed in 1352 in the early days of the reign of King Pedro I, that was kept in the king's chambers and used in the settlement of disputes (*Libro* 1:24, 101).

According to Pellicer (f5r), the *Libro del Becerro* outlined the lands and privileges that the lords of the lineage of Cabeza de Vaca held during the period of the *behetrías*. Relying heavily on this source, Pellicer (f5r) stated that his work followed the original document and that he had consulted it at the Royal Archives in Simancas. (The royal repository at Simancas had been established in 1544 under the supervision of the emperor Charles's secretary Francisco de los Cobos [Keniston 275–78].) The 1352 manuscript, still conserved today in the Royal Archives in Simancas (Patronato Real 515), is the ultimate source of a total of twenty-seven codices of the *Becerro*, twenty-three of which have survived (*Libro* 1:35–36). A recently published critical edition allows us to verify Pellicer's claims regarding the Cabeza de Vaca lineage.

Our examination of the mid-fourteenth-century *El libro becerro de las merindades de Castilla* reveals that the Cabeza de Vacas were well established in Old Castile in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries and were clustered north of the Río Duero, in fact, north of Valladolid. The *Libro del Becerro* mentions six male Cabeza de Vacas and one female with landholdings in eight of the eighteen autonomous districts (*merindades*). These landed individuals and their heirs were contemporaneous with the reigns of Alfonso XI of Castile (1312–50) and his son, Pedro I (1350–69). Upon coordinating them with Pellicer's genealogy, we discover that they cluster in the seventh and eighth of Pellicer's successive generations of the Cabeza de Vaca lineage and include the foundation of the house of Cabeza de Vaca of highest rank, that of the lords of the house of Arenillas (the Zamora house of Cabeza de Vaca; see table 1, seventh generation).

In the *Libro del Becerro* we find notice of the brother of Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca (the fifth generation foundational figure in Pellicer's succession of generations; see table 1), Gonzalo Pérez Cabeza de Vaca, who had heirs established in the district of Carrión in the early fourteenth century representing the houses of Tovar and Cabeza de Vaca through matrilineal descent (*Libro* 1:343, 346; Pellicer f10r). Pellicer's seventh foundational



generation, consisting of the siblings Juan Fernández Cabeza de Vaca and Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca and their first cousin Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, also appears in the *Libro del Becerro* (see table 1). Juan Fernández Cabeza de Vaca was a great military man who died in 1364 in the battle of Guadix and appeared “in the chronicle of Don Pedro I in the thirteenth year of his reign” (Pellicer f12v–f13v). Juan Fernández’s nine holdings were spread over five of the districts and clustered in Carrión (*Libro* 1:201, 284, 338, 338–39, 343, 347, 350, 389, 2:68).

Juan Fernández’s brother, the secondborn Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, “primogenitor of the lords of Arenillas,” also held property in Carrión; his children were cited as holding his *solariego* in the bishopric of León (*Libro* 1:353). While Juan Fernández and Nuño Fernández were the offspring of the firstborn Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, their first cousin Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, “a great caballero of the reign of Alfonso XI,” was listed for three holdings (Pellicer f12r; *Libro* 1:165, 389, 2:260), all inherited by his sons, Ruy Díaz Cabeza de Vaca and Rodrigo Cabeza de Vaca.

Ruy Díaz Cabeza de Vaca was another great military man, “so often cited in the chronicle of the king Don Pedro,” and, as we will see (sec. 2.A.7), the object of one of Pellicer’s celebratory vignettes (Pellicer f12v, f21v–f23r). Ruy Díaz’s eight separate holdings were spread over six of the *merindad* districts (*Libro* 1:164, 165, 201, 276, 350, 352, 386, 2:260); five were *solariego* holdings, that is, their inhabitants had been settled there from elsewhere by their lord (García de Valdeavellano 522). Both Ruy Díaz and his second cousin Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca were members of the eighth and final founding generation of the Cabeza de Vaca line in Pellicer’s *Genealogía* (see table 1); Pedro Fernández, who died in 1384, was the eighth generation’s founding figure (Pellicer f15r). Pedro Fernández’s four holdings were found in three districts (*Libro* 1:201, 350, 352, 2:318).

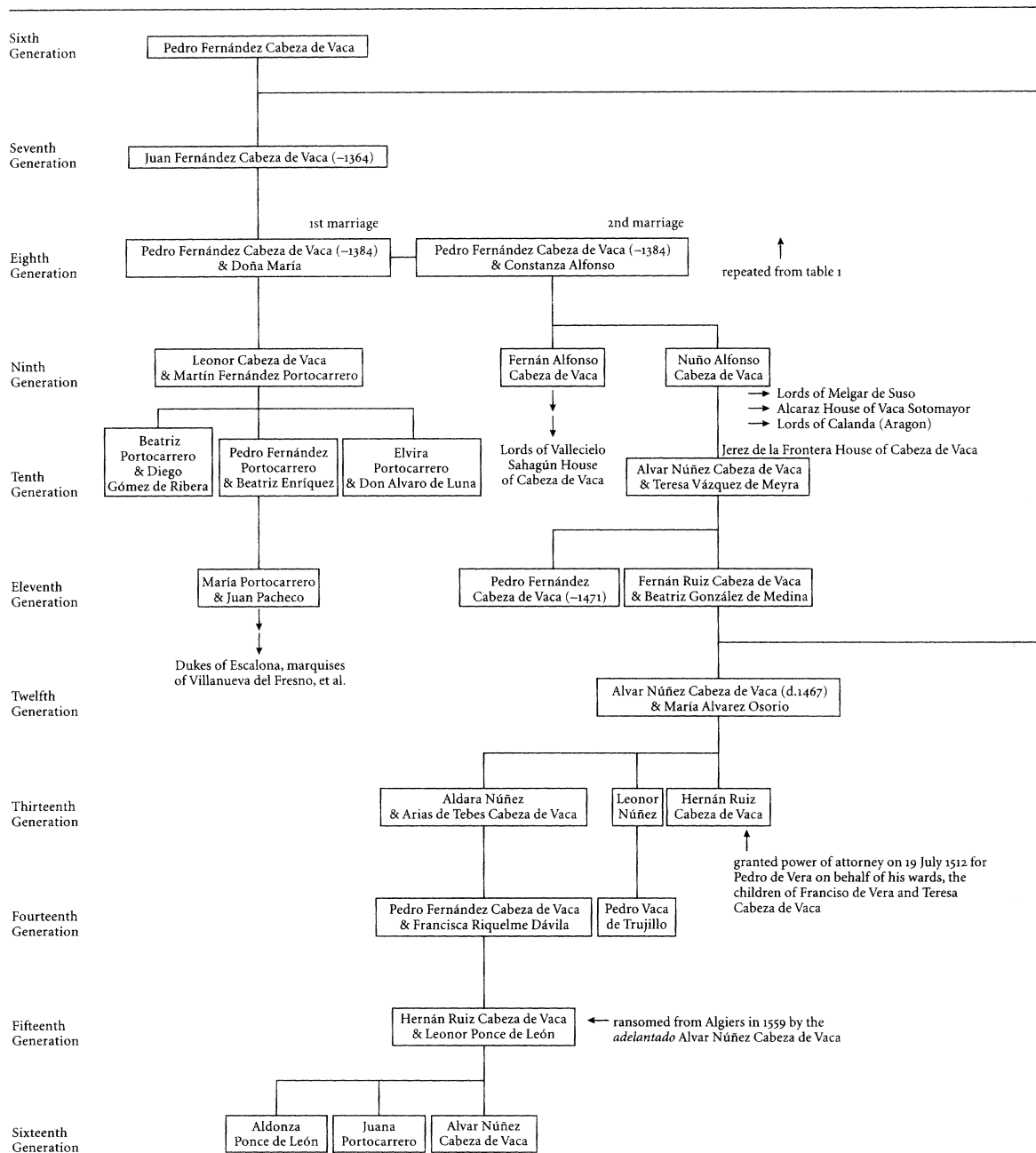
2.A.4. *Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca’s First Marriage.* As we saw earlier, Mejía de Ovando attributed the Jerez de la Frontera house to the distant foundational figure Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, who was in fact the second successive holder of the Cabeza de Vaca primogeniture in Pellicer’s genealogical scheme. Pellicer identified the specific source of the Jerez de la Frontera line with the eighth primogenitor in this succession, Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, master of the military Order of Santiago who “succeeded to the house and dominion and vassals of his parents and grandparents and was one of the greatest supporters that the king Don Pedro ever had” (Pellicer f15r). Thus, while Mejía de Ovando had correctly identified the ultimate origin of the Jerez de la Frontera line with Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca during the reign of Fernando III (1217–52), Pellicer pointed to the specific

foundation, a full century later, by Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, who served the king Don Pedro I (1350–69).

The eighth generational founder, Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, married twice (see table 2). This fact is significant because it helps us locate the relative rank of the house of Cabeza de Vaca in Jerez de la Frontera with respect to those of other locales. While the heirs of Pedro Fernández's first marriage became titled grandees (*señores* and *ricos hombres*), the descendants of his second marriage (which is pertinent to our study of the *adelantado* Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca) produced lines only of middle-ranking, *caballero* nobility. Specifically, Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca's union with his first wife, Doña María, produced a daughter, Leonor Cabeza de Vaca, who married Martín Fernández Portocarrero (Pellicer f16r). Their firstborn son, Pedro Fernández Portocarrero, married Beatriz Enríquez, from which union issued María Portocarrero, the fifth holder of the *mayorazgo* of Villanueva de Fresno and Moguer (Pellicer f16v). María Portocarrero's marriage to Juan Pacheco, the marquis of Villena, master of Santiago and duke of Escalona, yielded offspring that carried the titles of the dukes of Escalona, the marquises of Villanueva del Fresno, the counts of Montijo and Fuenteidueña, the marquises of Valde-Ravano, the marquises of Alameda, the counts of the Puebla del Maestre, the marquises of Batares, and the counts of the Puebla of Montealvan (Pellicer f16v). These families descending from Pedro Fernández Portocarrero constituted the titled nobility that issued from his grandfather Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, the eighth and last primogenitor of the original Cabeza de Vaca succession.

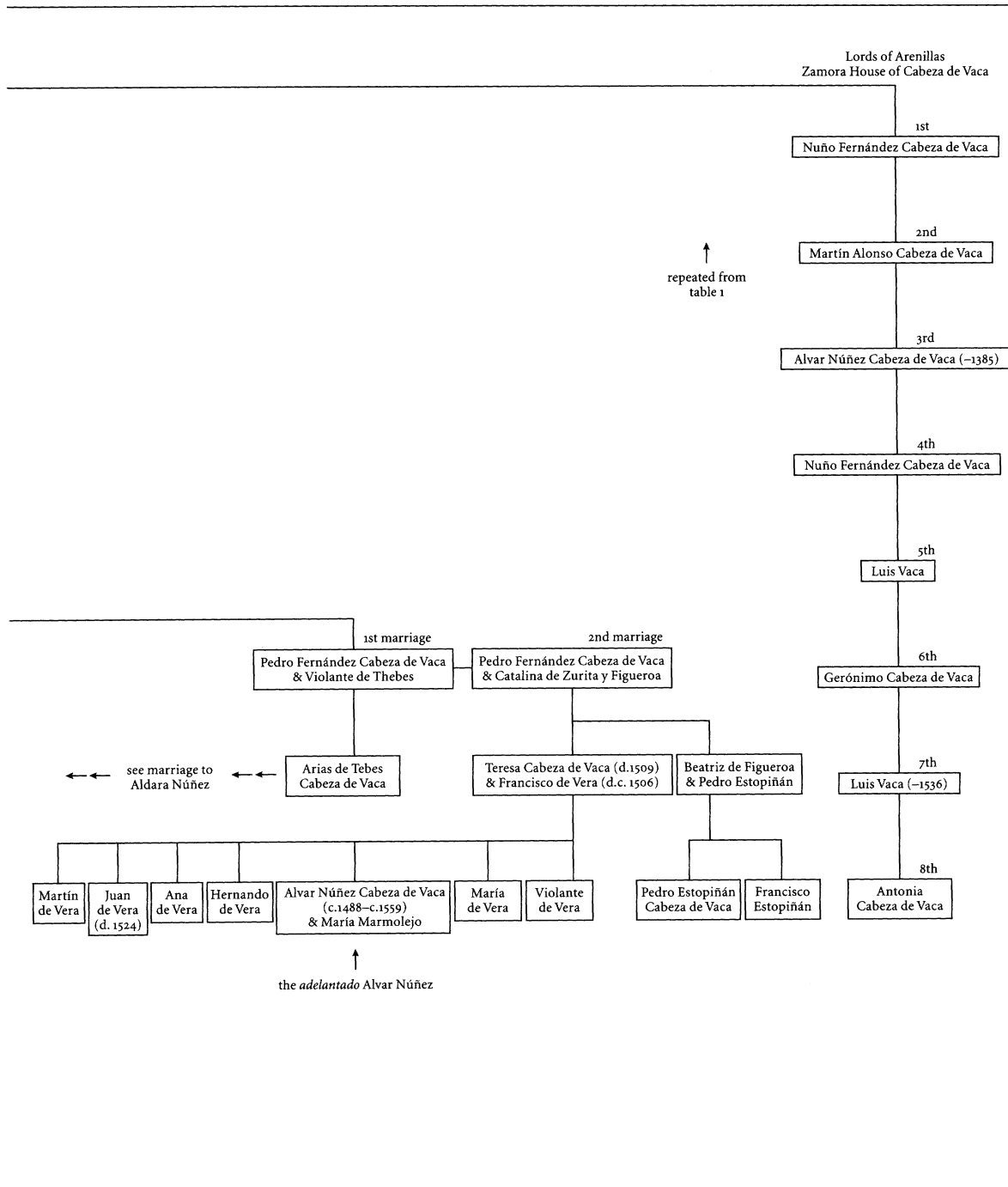
Parenthetically, we note here that Pedro Fernández Portocarrero's sister Beatriz (see table 2, tenth generation), not discussed by Pellicer, is mentioned by Pupo-Walker (*Naufragios* 23–24n29), who cited Avalle-Arce's edition of Oviedo's *Quinquagenas* or *Las memorias* to show the aristocratic character of the *adelantado* Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's family. As we will see, the Cabeza de Vacas mentioned by Oviedo and discussed by Pupo-Walker are removed by four generations from our Álvaro Núñez and come from different blood lines.

In the "third part of the three *Quinquagenas*," Oviedo (*Las memorias* 399) sought to collect the notices of "illustrious men and women of Spain written about in different times and treatises." In a section whose poetic epigraph celebrates the deeds and recalls the verses of a frontier ballad (*romance fronterizo*) that narrated the death of the *adelantado mayor* (high military commander) of Andalusia, Diego Gómez de Ribera, Oviedo (*Las memorias* 573–74) celebrated Gómez de Ribera's deeds and reviewed the inscriptions of the "mausoleums and magnificent tombs" in the Carthusian monastery of Las Cuevas in Seville. After describing the inscription on the



\*Table does not show complete descendency.

Table 2. Generations six through fifteen of the House of Cabeza de Vaca



*adelantado mayor*'s tomb, Oviedo (*Las memorias* 578) remarked on that of Gómez de Ribera's wife, Doña Beatriz Portocarrero, who was identified in her burial inscription as the daughter of the "illustrious lord and lady, Martín Fernández Puertocarrero, lord of Moguer, and Doña Leonor Cabeza de Vaca, his wife" (see table 2, ninth generation). Oviedo (*Las memorias* 574) noted that Gómez de Ribera's death was commemorated in Juan de Mena's *Las trescientas* (*Laberinto de fortuna* [1444]) in stanza 190 (Mena 143).

*Las trescientas* likewise appears in a reference to the husband of Doña Elvira Portocarrero, Pedro Fernández Portocarrero, and Beatriz Portocarrero's other sister (Mena 174). Pellicer (f16r) mentioned that Elvira Portocarrero was the first wife of Don Álvaro de Luna, the lord high constable (*condestable*) of Castile and royal favorite of Juan II (see table 2, tenth generation). Don Álvaro de Luna was the virtual ruler of Castile from 1420 until his beheading in 1453 (Elliott, *Imperial Spain* 18), and his fall resulted from the marriage he arranged for Juan II to Isabel of Portugal, who became his most powerful enemy. Pellicer (f16v) pointed out that Doña Elvira and Don Álvaro were buried in a chapel in the cathedral of Toledo but that the statues constructed for their burial had been destroyed by the followers of the Infante Don Enrique (later Enrique IV of Castile [1454–74]) (Mena 174n2113), "about which the famous poet Juan de Mena laments in some verses upon which the Greek commander remarked in his *Comentarios* to *Las trescientas*."

Pellicer here refers explicitly, as Oviedo had done implicitly, to Hernán Núñez's edition of Mena's masterpiece, *Laberinto de fortuna*, commonly called *Las trescientas* in reference to the approximate number of stanzas contained in the manuscript. The "Greek commander" was the commander of the Order of Santiago and humanist scholar Hernán Núñez de Guzmán (c. 1475–1553), who in Seville in 1499 published an edition of Mena's work with his own extensive commentaries, entitled *Glosa de Las trescientas, acompañada de un estudio acerca de la vida del autor y de la intención que le movió a escribir y del título de la obra* (*Enciclopedia* 39:147). Oviedo and later Pellicer could have consulted any number of editions of the Núñez text, which became a classic by virtue of its publication thirteen times (ten editions by 1540) in Spain in the sixteenth century (Cummins in Mena 48).

As the grandchildren of the eighth generational founder, Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, Pedro Fernández Portocarrero and his sisters, Beatriz and Elvira, who were indirectly celebrated after their deaths thanks to the historical fame (or notoriety) of their husbands, were remote from the *adelantado* Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. The *adelantado*'s great-great-grandfather (also named Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and founder of the Jerez de la Frontera house of Cabeza de Vaca) was, like the Portocarreros, a grandchild of Pedro

Fernández Cabeza de Vaca but descended from his grandfather's second marriage.

2.A.5. *Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca's Second Marriage: The House of Cabeza de Vaca in Jerez de la Frontera.* Unlike his first marriage, Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca's second nuptials, to Doña Constanza Alfonso (Pellicer f17r), produced lines only of middle-ranking nobles of the *caballero* class, including the house of Cabeza de Vaca in Jerez de la Frontera (see table 2). Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca and Constanza Alfonso had at least two children: the firstborn Fernán Alfonso Cabeza de Vaca, "progenitor of the lords of Vallecielo and the house of Sahagún and others of very noble caballeros," and the *segundogénito* Nuño Alfonso Cabeza de Vaca, "from whom descend the lords of Melgar de Suso, the houses of Vaca Sotomayor in Alcaraz and Cabeza de Vaca in Jerez and in Aragon, that of the lords of Calanda" (Pellicer f17r). The founder of the house of Cabeza de Vaca in Jerez de la Frontera, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, was the son of Nuño Alfonso Cabeza de Vaca, "as the patronymic Núñez indicates with great clarity," according to Pellicer (f32v).

The founder of the Jerez de la Frontera line of Cabeza de Vacas was the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's great-great-grandfather. This earliest Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca of the Jerez de la Frontera line had served as captain (*patrón*) of one of the Castilian galleys in a spectacular sea victory over the Muslims of Tunis and Tremecen at Gibraltar that resulted in the capture of eight Muslim galleys at the beginning of the reign of Juan II of Castile (1406–54) (Pérez de Guzmán 289a [año 1407, chap. 28]). Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, who succeeded to the primogeniture of the Jerez de la Frontera house, was our Álvar Núñez's great-grandfather. The *adelantado's* grandfather was Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca's secondborn son, Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, who bore the name of the eighth generational founder of the house of Cabeza de Vaca in honor of his own great-great-grandfather (Pellicer f34v) (see table 2, eighth generation and twelfth generation).

Whereas Pellicer (f35r–v) detailed Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca's probably embittered self-exile to Portugal and assumed that the woman he married while there, Doña Violante de Thebes, was the mother of our Álvar Núñez's mother, Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca, Sancho de Sopránis ("Datos" 76–77) has proven that Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, the second son of Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca and alderman (*veinticuatro*) of Seville, was married twice. While his first wife was the Portuguese Doña Violante de Thebes, he subsequently married Doña Catalina de Zurita y Figueroa, who was the daughter of Diego Fernández de Zurita, chief steward (*maestresala*)

of King Juan II of Castile who served as the king's ambassador to Granada (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 78n8; Sancho de Sopranis, "Notas" 217).

Our Álar Núñez's maternal grandmother was thus not the Portuguese Doña Violante de Thebes but rather the Castilian Doña Catalina de Zurita y Figueroa, who nevertheless brought to the family novelty of another sort. After her first husband, Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, died, Doña Catalina married her grandchildren's paternal grandfather, the widowed Pedro de Vera Mendoza, whose first wife had been Francisco de Vera and Teresa Cabeza de Vaca's children's paternal grandmother, Doña Beatriz Camacho or de Hinajosa (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 79; Sancho de Sopranis, "La familia" 272). In this manner, Doña Catalina de Zurita y Figueroa became the stepmother of her son-in-law Francisco de Vera and the stepgrandmother of her grandchildren Álar Núñez and his siblings (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 70–71, 81).

Sancho de Sopranis ("Notas" 217, 223) observed that Cabeza de Vaca's mother, Doña Teresa, was frequently listed in the documentary record as Teresa de Zurita rather than as Teresa Cabeza de Vaca, and we find her identified by the surname Zurita not only in the title of her last will and testament (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 100) but also in two documents in which Álar Núñez identified his mother as Teresa de Zurita. One is his 28 April 1506 request in Seville for a temporary trustee (*curador ad litem*) (Gil, "Notas" 53); the other is his 4 August 1524 transfer of the estate of his deceased brother Juan to their sister María (Sancho de Sopranis, "Notas" 238). Further confirmation comes in a statement of 12 February 1517, in which Álar Núñez and his brother Hernando de Vera named their grandmother ("Doña Catalina de çorita, nuestra aguela") as they acknowledged receipt of a certain sum of money on goods or properties belonging to them as their grandmother's heirs (Sancho de Sopranis, "Notas" 237).

2.A.6. *The House of Cabeza de Vaca in Zamora.* As we saw above, in 1621 Mejía de Ovando (*Primera parte* f251r [bk. 2, chap. 4]) identified Alcaraz, Jerez de la Frontera, and Zamora as the locations of the principal houses of Cabeza de Vaca. He also called attention to Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca (fourth lord of Arenillas), the fifteenth-century advocate (*procurador general*) of the city of Zamora and ambassador of Juan II of Castile on one crucial occasion to the kings of Navarre and Aragon. Since Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca was the official advocate of Zamora for some period during the reign of Juan II (1406–54), and since in Mejía de Ovando's day (early seventeenth century) the Cabeza de Vacas continued to be prominent in Zamora as well as Jerez de la Frontera and Alcaraz, Álar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's 1542 publication of his work in Zamora might be explained by familial ties and the presence

of someone who could be trusted to supervise the printing in Cabeza de Vaca's absence. Before considering the house of Cabeza de Vaca in Zamora and its possible dealings with the Jerez de la Frontera house in the sixteenth century, we turn to the discussion of the origins of both as described by the genealogists Mejía de Ovando and José Pellicer.

As noted above, the succession of the original eight generations of the Cabeza de Vaca line produced two types of descent, the titled nobility (*señores* and *ricos hombres*) and the middle- and lower-ranking nobility (*caballeros* and *hidalgos*) in the eighteen houses in Castile and Aragon, plus occasional branches in the Indies, that constituted the legacy of the “ancient and noble house of Cabeza de Vaca” (Pellicer f68r–v, f95v–f96v). In contrast to the Zamora house of Cabeza de Vaca, whose founder, Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca (first lord of Arenillas), was a son of the primogenitor of the sixth original generation (Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca) and whose descendants included members of the titled nobility, the house of Cabeza de Vaca of Jerez de la Frontera was founded by Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, a grandson of the eighth generational founder of the original succession (also named Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca), and its descent consisted of untitled members of the middle- and lower-ranking nobility (see table 2, tenth generation). The Zamora house was the first that Pellicer (f18r) presented, under the title “Casa de los Señores del Estado de Arenillas, que se incorporó por casamiento en la de los Marqueses de Flores-Dávila”; the Jerez de la Frontera house was presented sixth and was the first to be identified as consisting of untitled nobility of middle rank: “Casa de los caballeros del apellido de Cabeça de Vaca, en la ciudad de Xerez de la Frontera” (Pellicer f32v).

The Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca who founded the house of the “lords of the estate of Arenillas” and who was the first lord of Arenillas (Pellicer f18r) was the great-grandfather of the already-mentioned Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, “second of this name in this line,” who was the fourth lord of “la villa y estado de Arenillas” and the *procurador* of Zamora in the time of Juan II (Pellicer f18v, f19r) (see table 1, seventh generation, and table 2, seventh generation and tenth generation). At the request of this second Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, on 20 November 1417, in Valladolid, King Juan II founded for Nuño Fernández the entailed estate (*mayorazgo*) of “the *villas* and places of Arenillas, Villacreces, Villalaco, near Sahagún, and the houses of the city of Zamora” (Pellicer f19r).

From Fernán Pérez de Guzmán's (377a [año 1419, chap. 1]) listing of prominent personages and supporters of the king in his *Crónica del rey Don Juan II*, it seems that Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca was one of the many members of the middle- and lower-ranking aristocracy of the kingdom



(“otros muchos Caballeros é Hijosdalgo del Reyno”) collectively referred to in the chronicle. Nuño Fernández’s name may have been subsumed under that of “don Alonso Tenorio, Adelantado de Caçorla,” with whom Mejía de Ovando (qtd. in Gandía, *Historia crítica* 213) associated Nuño Fernández in citing a diplomatic mission the two undertook to enjoin the kings of Navarre and Aragon to desist from their plan to invade Castile. Since Pérez de Guzmán spoke of the *procuradores* of the cities and *villas* of the realm collectively when he mentioned the king’s meetings with them, Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca is likely to be included in the collective reference: “Alonso Tenorio, Notario del Reyno de Toledo, y el Doctor Fernán González de Ávila, de su Consejo, é dos procuradores” (Pérez de Guzmán 453a [año 1429, chap. 5]).

Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca is mentioned explicitly in Pérez de Guzmán’s chronicle only on a few occasions, such as when in 1410 a squire of his (who is not named) fought valiantly and expelled the Muslims from the cupola of the tower of the city of León (Pérez de Guzmán 329b [año 1410, chap. 30]). Studying Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca’s participation in the war in Andalusia and the conquest of Antequera in 1410 (undertaken on behalf of Juan II by his uncle, the Infante Don Fernando), Pellicer (f18v) culled references to Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca from Pérez de Guzmán’s entries for that year to the effect that Nuño Fernández’s squire (*escudero*) was one of the first to enter Antequera by force of arms. Pellicer (f19r) also cited Nuño Fernández’s 1429 diplomatic mission to Aragon, “being official advocate (*procurador*) of the council of commissioners (*Cortes*) of Zamora.”

The Zamoran *procurador* Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca was the generational contemporary of the founder of the Jerez de la Frontera house, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (our Álvar Núñez’s great-great-grandfather), who in turn may have been named in honor of Nuño Fernández’s illustrious father, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the third lord of the estate of Arenillas, who died in 1385 in the battle of Aljubarrota (Pellicer f18r) (see table 2, tenth generation). Pérez de Guzmán’s chronicle reveals that Nuño Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, fourth lord of the house of Arenillas, and Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, founder of the Jerez de la Frontera house, were in fact contemporaries; both served Juan II of Castile, the former in an ambassadorial, the latter in a military capacity.

When we compare subsequent generations of the houses of Cabeza de Vaca of Zamora and Jerez de la Frontera, we discover that in the Arenillas line Luis Vaca, “seventh lord of the estate of Arenillas and the last male of this line,” who died in 1536 (Pellicer f20v), had as his contemporary in the Jerez de la Frontera house Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca, our Álvar Núñez’s mother, who died in 1509 (see table 2, thirteenth generation). Luis Vaca had

a solitary heir, his daughter, Antonia Cabeza de Vaca, the “eighth holder of the estate of Arenillas” (Pellicer f21r). She may have been the family link to Cabeza de Vaca’s publication of his *relación* in Zamora in 1542. Given her position as head of the *mayorazgo*, Doña Antonia was likely to have been resident in Zamora even though her husband, Diego de Zúñiga, the lord of Flores-Dávila, served at some point as ambassador to France (Pellicer f21r).

The genealogical and historical antecedents that point to a possible relationship between the heirs of the houses of Cabeza de Vaca in Jerez de la Frontera and Zamora suggest that the publication of Cabeza de Vaca’s *relación* in Zamora may have been the most logical choice. Whereas Seville may seem to have been the most convenient site of publication, as Wagner (“Álvar Núñez” 10) supposed, Zamora gains in plausibility when we consider the presence there of a house of Cabeza de Vaca with prominent members contemporaneous with the survivor of the Narváez expedition.

In addition, Cabeza de Vaca may have wanted to keep his almost-published work away from inquisitive eyes in Seville, just as he demurred from sharing his earlier *relación* with competitors at court at the end of 1537. As the Gentleman of Elvas (Clayton, Knight, and Moore 1:48) observed, Cabeza de Vaca, on behalf of himself and Andrés Dorantes, “had sworn not to divulge certain things which they had seen, lest some person might beg for it beforehand.” Under the present circumstances, Cabeza de Vaca may instead have wanted to insure the integrity and originality of his account from being preempted by potential plagiarizers. In this way, the long-held view inspired by Wagner (“Álvar Núñez” 9–10), that Cabeza de Vaca “had nothing to do with the publication” and that therefore the edition was pirated, is open to serious question (see chap. 12, sec. 3.E). Furthermore, the trusted Pedro Estopiñán, who in 1537 gathered testimony for the *probanza* documenting Pedro de Vera’s services (and therefore Cabeza de Vaca’s merits), could not supervise the publication, though Seville would have been the convenient site, because he accompanied his first cousin on the expedition to Río de la Plata.

2.A.7. *Illustrious Members of the House of Cabeza de Vaca.* As we have seen, the “noble and ancient house of Cabeza de Vaca,” as Pellicer called it, had a long and illustrious history that began with the recorded military deeds of the caballero Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca during the reign of Fernando III of Castile rather than with the rustic shepherd whom time and tradition came to identify as “Martín Alhaja.” Yet it seems ironically appropriate that the legendary Martín Alhaja and the historical Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca equally associate the Cabeza de Vaca name with crucial achievements in the Castilian conquest of Muslim Spain. In memory and with the passage

of time, the qualitative difference between them must have blurred as the patriotic significance of both came to override questions of historical accuracy. Nevertheless, the foundations of the Cabeza de Vaca house rest firmly in history, as the chroniclers of medieval Castile and the genealogists of early modern times confirm.

The oldest branches of the Cabeza de Vaca family, well established in northern Spain by the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, were augmented in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries by other houses established in the south. If the distinguished Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca had already become prominent for his participation in the thirteenth-century struggle against the Muslims in Córdoba and Seville, the establishment of the Cabeza de Vaca house in Andalusia in the early fifteenth century led not surprisingly to its members' participation in affairs in the Canary Islands, the Mediterranean, and the Indies.

Although the untitled nobility of the house of Cabeza de Vaca in Jerez de la Frontera was younger than its counterpart in Zamora, it seems to have been recognized on a par with it by some observers, such as Mejía de Ovando, after the turn of the seventeenth century. The unanswerable question is the degree to which this notoriety was based on a perception of the importance of sixteenth-century military and civil leadership in the Indies. Given the fact that Mejía de Ovando lived and worked in Lima, he may be cited for an Indies bias in this regard. Yet the distinguished historian and genealogist José Pellicer reserved a very select place for the governor and *adelantado* Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca as one of just six historical figures he singled out for high praise as exemplars of Castilian history.

Looking back from the seventeenth century on the Cabeza de Vaca lineage, Pellicer selected a small group of figures whom he honored with laudatory vignettes that reflect the no longer regional but now national and imperial participation and prominence of the Cabeza de Vaca line. We can appreciate the significance of Pellicer's inclusion of the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca among these noble figures from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries whom he considered exemplars of noble conduct by examining not only the personages he depicted but also the literary forms he chose.

Ruy Díaz Cabeza de Vaca, for example, was honored with a "memoria" for his service to Pedro I of Castile, as the chronicles of that monarch's reign proclaimed, just as his father, Fernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, had served Alfonso XI (Pellicer f12r–v). Those figures deserving special praise, however, were the subjects of a literary piece known as an "elogio," the discourse of praise in wide use in humanistic letters of the Renaissance and of considerable importance in Spain (*Diccionario de literatura* 249). Manuel de Vega Cabeza de Vaca, Luis Cabeza de Vaca, and our *adelantado* Álvar Núñez Cabeza de

Vaca were so honored. We close this discussion of the Cabeza de Vaca line by describing briefly the deeds of the two men Pellicer considered to be our Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's exemplary peers.

Manuel de Vega Cabeza de Vaca played a central role in the August 1558 invasion of Algiers ("la jornada de Árgel"), which, unfortunately, resulted in disaster; it occasioned in 1559 the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez's ransom of his second cousin's son Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, who had fallen captive in the debacle. We will discuss this late episode in Cabeza de Vaca's life below (sec. 10.A).

Luis Cabeza de Vaca was a descendant of the lords of the estate of Escalares, Benescalera, and Algarrovo and was matrilineally descended from the house of Cabeza de Vaca. Elected tutor to the future emperor Charles V because of his great learning, he was highly esteemed and applauded, wrote Pellicer (f54r), in the states of Flanders; to Luis Cabeza de Vaca, Pellicer added, Charles owed his learning and education. Luis Cabeza de Vaca was elected bishop of the Canary Islands in 1523, where he served until 1537, when he was appointed bishop of Plasencia, where he served until 1550. In that year he was elected archbishop of Santiago de Compostela but declined the post. Holding the title of count of Pernia, he died on 12 December 1550 at the age of eighty-five (Pellicer f54r; Keniston 26; Avalle-Arce in Oviedo, *Las memorias* 169m183). Pupo-Walker (*Naufragios* 24n32) cited Schäfer's (*El Consejo Real* 1:44) investigations of the creation of the Council of the Indies to signal the importance of this sixteenth-century personage. Schäfer revealed that the *maestro* Luis Cabeza de Vaca, bishop of the Canary Islands, along with Dr. Gonzalo Maldonado, the bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo from 1525, and probably Pietro Martire d'Anghiera were named the original councilors of the new Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies, founded on 8 March 1523, according to the recent investigations of Demetrio Ramos ("El problema" 38).

We treat Pellicer's tribute to the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, which was based on his study of the 1555 edition of Cabeza de Vaca's *relación*, in detail elsewhere (see chap. 13, sec. 16).

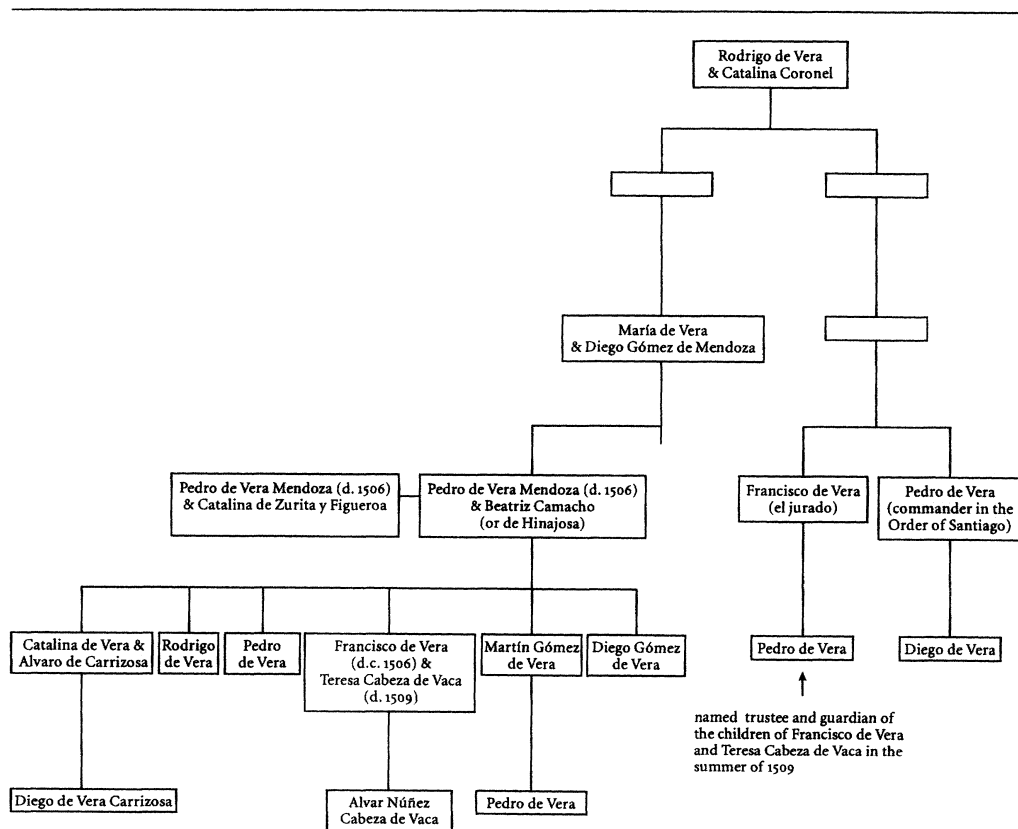
## 2.B. *The Veras*

If the Cabeza de Vacas of the fifteenth century were known as civil administrators, the Veras were remembered as military commanders. Cabeza de Vaca appealed to the latter tradition when he sought, in 1537, to persuade the emperor that he was worthy of a contract to undertake a major project of military conquest and civil settlement. Although regrettably we do not have the genealogical outline of the Vera lineage that Cabeza de Vaca took with

him to Río de la Plata, and we have been able to refer to Alonso López de Haro's *Árbol de los Vera* (Milan, 1636) only as cited by Sancho de Soprani, we know that Cabeza de Vaca counted as his highest credential the record of his grandfather Pedro de Vera Mendoza, who had served the emperor's grandparents Ferdinand and Isabel not only in the conquest of the island of Gran Canaria but also in the conquest of Granada. Because of his importance in presenting Cabeza de Vaca's case to the emperor, we explore here the outlines of Pedro de Vera's royal service, framing it with a brief profile of Don Pedro's father, Diego Gómez de Mendoza (see table 3).

Table 3. Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's Vera genealogy

As a notary public, Diego Gómez occupied the lowest social stratum of the professional class in urban Spain in the late fifteenth century (Sancho



\*Table does not show complete descendency.

de Sopranis, “La familia” 268; Pike 93). Nevertheless, it was one of the most important community functions since, as Ruth Pike (93) observed, “[t]he legalistic sense of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century called for the notarization of all important acts in both private and public life. This whole mass of documentation, from marriage contracts and powers of attorney to official ordinances and petitions, was drawn up by notaries who were experts in legal formulas and terminology.” The notary’s principal functions included “drawing up and notarizing public contracts, but since Spanish trials and investigations were mostly written affairs, a considerable amount of time was spent preparing trial transcripts” (Pike 94–95). As we will see, most of what we have learned about Cabeza de Vaca’s life—from early age to nearly the time of his death—comes precisely from notarized legal documents, including an enormous archive of transcribed trial records. That his paternal great-grandfather had been a notary public in Jerez de la Frontera comes as an ironically appropriate datum in Cabeza de Vaca’s life story.

Diego Gómez also served as chief constable (*alguacil mayor*) and councilor (*regidor*) and was named to the coveted post of inspector of weights and measures (*fiel ejecutor*) for the purpose of performing the difficult task of bringing to agreement the two existent inspectors. His military service consisted of being chief standard bearer (*alférez mayor*) when the local troops went out on campaigns (Sancho de Sopranis, “La familia” 268–69). With respect to the surname Mendoza, Sancho de Sopranis (“La familia” 263, 267) noted that it seemed to have been used in reference to Gómez by genealogists starting in the sixteenth century but that it never appeared in any document during his lifetime that Sancho de Sopranis had seen.

What Pedro de Vera failed to inherit from his father as *méritos*, he attempted to make up through his own services (*servicios*). Pedro de Vera was described by the Castilian writer Juan Sedeño in his *Suma de varones ilustres* (1551) as “a noble man, expert in battles on land as on the sea” (qtd. in Durán y Lerchundi 2:673). The son of Diego Gómez de Mendoza and Doña María de Vera, Pedro de Vera Mendoza was the *segundogénito* of the family; he married twice. His first wife was Doña Beatriz Camacho, sometimes called Doña Beatriz de Hinajosa, and his second, already mentioned (sec. 2.A.5), was Doña Catalina de Zurita y Figueroa, the maternal grandmother of the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 79; Sancho de Sopranis, “La familia” 272–73). Apart from conquering and serving as military governor of Gran Canaria, Pedro de Vera served at various times as *alcalde* (municipal justice) (Haliczer 269) of Jimena, Arcos, and Cádiz, was second in command in the Ponce faction in the intestine wars between the houses of Medina Sidonia (Guzmán) and Arcos (Ponce), and was

purveyor and supplier of the royal army in the war of Granada, which ended with victory for Ferdinand and Isabel (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 74).

The Castilian conquest of the Canary Islands was carried out from 1478 to 1496, and it took a full six years to subdue the island of Gran Canaria. Pedro de Vera, who took over the conquest begun by Juan de Rejón, brought Gran Canaria to submission within three years of his appointment in 1480 as military governor (Fernández-Armesto 205, 208, 212). As a boy, Cabeza de Vaca came to know his grandfather when Don Pedro returned to Jerez de la Frontera and assumed a position on the city council (*veinticuatro*); he died in Jerez in 1506 (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 81). It may have been his unexpected death that occasioned the need for the 16 April 1506 grant of the burial vault in the Convento de Santo Domingo el Real to his heirs. The granting instrument states: "each one of us individually and together jointly as heirs of the governor Pedro de Vera know and acknowledge that . . . he selected for his burial place [the principal chapel of the monastery of Santo Domingo el Real] and that he wanted and intended his children and heirs and grandchildren and descendants and great-grandchildren to be buried there" (Sancho de Sopranis, "Notas" 228).

Most significant from Cabeza de Vaca's perspective, as noted in the *relación*, was his grandfather's career as a conqueror and military governor. Mosén Diego de Valera's *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, written around 1487–88 (Mata Carriazo in Valera x, cxxxii–cxxxiii), is the only chronicle account of Pedro de Vera's conquest of Gran Canaria that was contemporaneous with the events it described. Valera (108–14 [chap. 37]) devoted a full chapter to "the things that were done in Gran Canaria after the king and queen our lord and lady sent Pedro de Vera, *veinticuatro* of Jerez, there to govern it." Valera described Vera as a councilor of Jerez (*veinticuatro*) and a valiant caballero, "because of which it seemed to them [Ferdinand and Isabel] that he was appropriate for the task they gave him." In that encounter, Pedro de Vera killed the chief of the island in hand-to-hand combat. This native lord had been considered "the most valiant warrior and the chief of the entire island" before he was "killed by the hand of the governor" (Valera 108 [chap. 37]).

According to Valera (111 [chap. 37]), Pedro de Vera built a fort at Galdar and left it under the administrative command of one of his sons as *alcalde*. The young commander was not likely to have been Cabeza de Vaca's father, Francisco de Vera, but rather one of his uncles, such as the *primogénito* Diego Gómez de Vera, who was a famous captain in the Canaries and in Granada, or Martín Gómez de Vera, who was also known for his career as a military captain (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 75, 81). Aided by the unnamed son in a signal battle waged on the high peaks of the island, Pedro de Vera ascended on foot because it was impossible to take horses into the underbrush, which

was so thick “it was a wonder to see” (Valera 112 [chap. 37]). After a number of reversals, the Canarians were defeated and agreed to submit to Christian indoctrination. Valera (114 [chap. 37]) concluded his account by recalling that some 140 Canarians were taken by Vera to the conquest of the island of Tenerife and that he ordered those remaining on Gran Canaria, about one hundred, to be sent to Spain as slaves. Both groups (approximately 240 persons) were sent to Castile as slaves of war; Valera (114 [chap. 37]) concluded, “and thus the conquest, with its many hardships and dangers, ended.”

According to Fernández-Armesto’s (208–10) analysis, Pedro de Vera’s conquest of Gran Canaria overcame the difficulties of the superior fighting and defense of the Canarians by exploiting the internal divisions that existed among the chiefdoms. Unlike the occasional raids (*entradas*) that Castilian militia made on the low-lying areas where foodstuffs could be obtained, the strategies Vera instituted in 1480 were more successful. After earning a major victory due to the miscalculation by the Canarians, who had been enticed down onto the plain, Vera exploited the divisions among rival factions in successive campaigns.

In particular, the capture and conversion in February 1482 of one of the most prominent lords, Tenesor Semidan, better known by his baptismal name of Don Fernando Guanar teme, resulted in the capitulation and surrender of his compatriots. Yet the conquest was not easily won; according to Fernández-Armesto (209),

[i]nnocent natives were burnt to death in reprisal for the loss of Spanish soldiers. Supplies and livestock were seized to deny them to the enemy. Gradually, coerced by these tactics, or persuaded by the eloquence of [their lord] Don Fernando [Guanar teme], the natives surrendered. Some abandoned hope and ended their struggle by self-immolation, flinging themselves from terrible heights, chillingly described by Spanish chronicles. . . . Apart from rebels who continued to roam the mountain tops for a few years, without inflicting any serious damage, the entire island was held to have submitted by the summer of 1483.

In their own time, the conquests of Gran Canaria, La Palma, and Tenerife were represented as extensions of Iberian expansion in the Mediterranean and Africa and were described by chroniclers of the period in the same chivalric language; Valera’s account of Pedro de Vera’s successful challenge to a formidable native lord seems to be devised, Fernández-Armesto (208) suggests, for its effect as a “knightly or Homeric encounter.”

At the same time, Pedro de Vera, who served as governor of the island of Gran Canaria from 1480 to 1491, received grants in land and labor services



as wartime rewards and sold captives as slaves despite the royal mandate of 1480 (“El Pacto del Real de Las Palmas”) against enslaving Canary Islanders. In 1483 Vera brought Canarians to Spain by trickery and sold them as war captives in the slave markets of Andalusia, ignoring the royal ban against enslaving baptized and converted natives “as though they were [war] captives” (Rumeu de Armas 59–61; Durán y Lerchundi 2:676–77). In 1488, he was able to use the pretext of the uprising of the natives of Gomera against the Spanish to capture them and thus to inaugurate the authorized sale of slaves from the Canaries. By a royal decree of 4 March 1489, he was ordered to suppress the rebellion (Rumeu de Armas 68–69). Vera and the infamous Beatriz de Bobadilla, the mother of Fernán Peraza, who was murdered by the islanders, divided as the booty of war the women, youths, and children of Gomera; even the wages of mercenary soldiers were paid in slaves (Rumeu de Armas 68). Although the Spanish governor of Ibiza opposed slaving, the crown condemned the rebellious natives and lifted the embargo against taking slaves, authorizing their sale on 23 July 1489 (Rumeu de Armas 69).

On 27 August 1490, the crown decreed that all enslaved female Gomerans (“who were Christian before or at the time their husbands committed the said crimes”) were to be liberated; the bishops of Málaga and the Canaries, who had protested the enslavement, were charged with carrying out the order (Rumeu de Armas 70–71). Both Vera and “La Bobadilla” were ordered to place in escrow considerable sums of money to compensate those Castilians who had purchased Canarian slaves in good faith. Vera complied and deposited 500,000 *maravedís*, at the same time seeking and receiving from the crown immunity from being charged by individual claims. Despite this royal favor, disgruntled slaveholders filed expensive private suits against him (Rumeu de Armas 73).

The number of slaves Vera and Beatriz de Bobadilla were responsible for exporting to Andalusia and the Levant in the late 1480s and the beginning of the following decade was considerable; one of Pedro de Vera’s single sales to Seville numbered 360 slaves, and his distribution network extended over five important centers: Jerez de la Frontera, Palos, Seville, Valencia, and Ibiza (Mercer 224; Rumeu de Armas 72). During 1490–91, the chancellery of Ferdinand and Isabel expedited a staggering 150 documents (reproduced in Rumeu de Armas 241–68) to the cities of Andalusia to enforce the liberation and return of the Gomerans to their native land. On 21 March 1493, Ferdinand charged the authorities of the kingdom of Aragon to participate in making an inventory of the Gomeran slaves brought to Spain by Pedro de Vera and Beatriz de Bobadilla (Rumeu de Armas 72, 75–76).

Despite the ban against enslaving Canary Islanders, it is not surprising that they were present in the days of Cabeza de Vaca’s childhood in Jerez

de la Frontera. According to Bishop (7n6), the “last document” of AGI Justicia 1131 contains testimony by Bartolomé de Lobatón, the *alcalde* of Jerez de la Frontera, to the effect that the household of Pedro de Vera that Cabeza de Vaca knew as a child was served by Canarian slaves. Since we have discovered that Bartolomé de Lobatón had earlier been a witness to the proceeding in Jerez de la Frontera of 5 July 1509, in which Álvar Núñez and his brother Hernando de Vera requested a legal trustee to replace their deceased mother, it is clear that Lobatón was familiar with the Vera/Cabeza de Vaca households when its offspring were young (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 234). In the “Relación sacada de la probanza hecha por parte del gobernador Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca” (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 8a, f580r) of late 1551 to early 1552, Lobatón testified to having known Cabeza de Vaca’s grandfather and father as being among the most prominent caballeros of the city, councilors of Jerez de la Frontera (*veinticuatro*) and “very Christian” [muy cristianísimos].

The conquest of Gran Canaria is but one part of Pedro de Vera’s story. For Cabeza de Vaca, it seems to have been his grandfather’s proudest achievement, the one triumph he could point to in the pursuit of his own self-interest in the *relación*. He must also have presented at court at the end of 1537 the *probanza* he had authorized just a few months earlier upon his arrival from the Indies. This testimony presented another dimension of Pedro de Vera’s military service: the Catholic Kings’ failure to provide for Don Pedro de Vera and his company’s needs in the missions on which they sent him, followed by their indifference to acknowledging or rewarding the gains he made on their behalf. In the course of offering this interpretation of Pedro de Vera’s life, the *interrogatorio* prepared by Cabeza de Vaca or his cousin Pedro Estopiñán as well as the testimony of nine witnesses set forth the outlines of military life on the frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain in the latter part of the fifteenth century. Although the events deemed relevant by Cabeza de Vaca in 1537 limit the range of information on his grandfather’s activities available to us, they nevertheless reveal the deeds that Pedro de Vera’s heir thought should not be forgotten.

The *interrogatorio* and its respondents sought to demonstrate the great confidence the Catholic Kings expressed in Pedro de Vera by commissioning him to undertake the conquest of Gran Canaria; despite published chronicles’ reports to the contrary, the witnesses also testified that the governor and his men had suffered extraordinary hardships because provisions and reinforcements could arrive only by sea and were extremely slow in doing so. Pedro de Vera’s responsibilities and sacrifices in the war of the conquest of Granada were likewise outlined. Yet perhaps the most startling account is how, when the duke of Medina Sidonia lay siege to the *villa* of Jimena,

which was ruled by the duke's archrival and Vera's employer, Rodrigo Ponce de León, the count of Arcos, Vera as *alcalde* was forced to escape to the sea and seek help from the Muslim commander of Málaga.

Serving as an unlikely ally against the aggression of the powerful Andalusian noble, the Muslim lord provided wheat needed to sustain the inhabitants of Jimena in exchange for Vera's securing this loan by leaving two of his sons as hostages. Cabeza de Vaca's *interrogatorio* identified one of the sons as his father, Francisco de Vera, and four of the nine witnesses verified it; only three witnesses named the other brother, two citing Diego (Gómez) de Vera (the *primogénito*) and one, Pedro de Vera (Sancho de Soprani, *Documentos* 18, 20, 25, 27, 29; Sancho de Soprani, "Notas" 208). Finally, the *probanza* cited Vera's successful raids (*entradas*) on the Muslim cities of Larache and Fadala in northwestern Africa and his success in taking Muslim captives.

All this service to the Catholic Kings, the witnesses confirmed, was neither supported nor remunerated nor rewarded; thus Pedro de Vera died poor, with no estate to leave to his heirs (Sancho de Soprani, *Documentos* 2–3). Overall, the point was clearly made: Pedro de Vera had had to sell private lands and possessions to carry the royal conquest of Gran Canaria to completion; as *alcalde* of Jimena he had had to leave his sons hostages to a Muslim lord in order to defend the Catholic Kings' interest in the city against the aggression of the duke of Medina Sidonia. In the conquest of Granada he had gained much wealth and booty for his king but was not rewarded for his services (Sancho de Soprani, *Documentos* 9, 11, 12). As we will see below, Pedro de Vera's military experience in the service of the Castilian monarchy on land and sea was typical among the caballeros of Andalusia of his time.

Cabeza de Vaca's father, Francisco de Vera, is the object of the tenth question in the 1537 *probanza*, and all respondents affirmed that, as the question stated, they knew him to be a "caballero hijodalgo" and councilman of the city of Jerez de la Frontera (Sancho de Soprani, *Documentos* 18). In his "elogio" to the *adelantado* Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, José Pellicer (f35v) described Francisco de Vera as a knight of the Order of Santiago, a councilman of Jerez de la Frontera, and one of the caballeros who carried the royal canopy in the formal procession that Ferdinand and Isabel made in entering Jerez de la Frontera in 1476. Sancho de Soprani ("Datos" 75) verified the latter two distinctions, giving the year of the Catholic Kings' entrance into Jerez as 1477. He did not present evidence, however, for Francisco de Vera as being a knight of Santiago, and for lack of evidence it seems unlikely that Cabeza de Vaca's father achieved that honor.

Francisco de Vera took part in the military actions in Granada and in the skirmishes that characterized life along the Christian frontier in southern Spain. If he failed to participate in the conquest of Gran Canaria, it was

no doubt because he stayed at home to manage the family's economic affairs, which his father, Pedro de Vera, had apparently jeopardized by certain clauses in the contract (*capitulación*) he signed with the monarchs before embarking on the conquest of Gran Canaria as well as by selling certain lands granted him for service in conquests (*caballerías*) and other possessions to finance the continuation of the war (Sancho de Soprani, "Datos" 75; Sancho de Soprani, *Documentos* 11). Francisco de Vera's older brothers, the firstborn, Diego Gómez de Vera, and the secondborn, Martín Gómez de Vera, participated in the Canarian conquest (Sancho de Soprani, "Datos" 75, 85). Meanwhile, Francisco de Vera occupied a seat on the city council of Jerez de la Frontera from approximately 1482 to 1503, according to Sancho de Soprani's ("Notas" 208–09) estimate. Francisco de Vera was deceased by 1506 and was buried in the Vera family vault in the monastery of Santo Domingo in Jerez de la Frontera, according to inferences gleaned from Doña Teresa's will of 1 August 1509 about her own planned interment there (Sancho de Soprani, "Datos" 76, 76n6, 100).

The focal point of the family's historical honor was the burial site that Pedro de Vera obtained in the Dominican monastery of Santo Domingo el Real in Jerez de la Frontera. Interred there by 16 March 1506, the date on which his heirs pledged an endowment for the chapel's upkeep, Pedro de Vera was entombed in the royal chapel graced by the coats of arms of the Castilian crown and those of the families of Vera and Mendoza. He had purchased the chapel with a pledge to donate 10,000 *maravedís* annually, granted to him by Don Rodrigo Ponce de León, marquis of Cádiz and count of Arcos, on 12 October 1474 (Sancho de Soprani, *Documentos* 33–34; Durán y Lerchundi 1:149). The additional pledge of Vera's heirs in the amount of 50,000 *maravedís* confirms its importance to the family honor. The count of Arcos was considered, as Sancho de Soprani (*Documentos* 33) observed, Vera's "great friend and protector."

It is not surprising that Vera would have served one of the great lords of Andalusia, but what is of interest is that his grandsons, particularly Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, would later spend many years in the service of the house of Arcos's archrival, the house of Medina Sidonia. This apparent shift in the family's loyalty is explained by the fact that, although the feuds between the Ponces and the Guzmáns rocked Seville in the late fifteenth century, the house of Medina Sidonia (the Guzmáns) had triumphed over the house of Arcos (the Ponces) by the opening years of the sixteenth century. With the support of Ferdinand, to whom the Guzmáns were now linked by marriage, as we will see below (sec. 5), the house of Medina Sidonia dominated the powerful city government, and its members were "the real masters of Seville"

(Pike 30). The shift in Cabeza de Vaca family service followed the shift in the regional balance of political power.

The period spanned by the actions of the grandfather Pedro de Vera and those attributed to his grandson Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, that is, from roughly 1485 to 1545, embraces Castile's entire history in the Canaries and the Indies to that date as well as the end of the Muslim era in Spain and the establishment of Castile's transatlantic empire. During this period, the crown's official position on enslavement of conquered peoples developed from the legalization to the abolition altogether of Indian slavery when Charles V promulgated the New Laws ("Leyes y ordenanças nuevamente hechas por Su Magestad para la gobernación de las Indias y buen tratamiento y conservación de los indios") on 20 November 1542. Pedro de Vera's attitude, however, was unequivocal. When in 1488 Don Juan Frías, bishop of the Canaries, urged Vera not to take from the just-defeated island of Gomera the hundreds of native women and children he and his men had captured, Vera responded that enslaving the Gomerans was justified because they "were not Christian but the children of infidels and traitors who had murdered their lord." Thus the chronicler Fray Juan de Abreu Galindo (bk. 2, chap. 29, qtd. in Zavala, "Las conquistas" 48–49), who finished his *Historia de la conquista de las siete islas de Gran Canaria* around 1632 (Hardisson y Pizarroso 35), characterized Vera's position in the debate of more than a century earlier.

The model of the military commander presented by Pedro de Vera runs contrary to most of Cabeza de Vaca's experiences in North America, according to the *relación*, but, as we will see later, it bears a resemblance to the accusations against, if not the conduct of, Cabeza de Vaca's governorship of Río de la Plata (see below, sec. 9.A). Although he advocated peaceful conversion as the "path most certain" in the 1542 *relación* (f57v), Cabeza de Vaca would later defend the enslavement of Indians taken in war in the Gran Chaco. Thus it would be an exaggeration to portray Cabeza de Vaca as unmitigatedly pro-Indian. Like his grandfather with respect to the native Canary Islanders, he insisted that the wars waged against the Indians of the Gran Chaco in South America were just.

Cabeza de Vaca's tribute to his grandfather at the conclusion of his *relación* testifies to the political and affective continuity he saw with Pedro de Vera. While we cannot assess the degree of personal sentiment inherent in Cabeza de Vaca's tribute, we can appreciate his acknowledgment of values held in common by his particular social class across three crucial generations of military conquerors. Fernández-Armesto's (212–17) characterization of the main currents of conceptual continuity between the conquests of Granada, the Canaries, and the Indies paints in broad strokes the character of this commonality.

Referring to the Spanish empire as a “world of feudal pretension” rather than the actual exercise of feudalism, Fernández-Armesto (216) described jurisdictional relations as being expressed in the language of lordship and vassalage, which “assumed the alienation of jurisdiction from the crown.” Likewise, the “*hidalgos* who lorded it over small colonists in the islands or called the natives their ‘vassals’ in the New World, did not see things from the royal perspective.” Finally, “the disposal of substantial rewards of the conquests in patronage forms a link between the peninsular conquests, the Canaries and the New World and distinguishes them collectively from the monarchs’ inherited patrimony, which was, by universal agreement albeit not in unwavering practice, inalienable” (Fernández-Armesto 216–17). Even though Cabeza de Vaca consistently expressed in writing his firm allegiance to the crown and a personal sense of obligation to the emperor, the ideal of ruling in a far-flung and autonomous domain over a society of social inferiors was the vision to which both he and his enemies claimed—in varying ways—that he subscribed.

When he took official possession of a province on the South American mainland on 21 or 22 November 1541, he named this first mainland site that he claimed in the name of the crown “the province of Vera” (Serrano y Sanz 2:10 [sec. 16]); he must have fully expected that it would be merely the first in a series of acts of taking formal possession that would link him to the conquest tradition to which he was heir. As we will see below (sec. 8), Cabeza de Vaca’s fate in the Gran Chaco of Paraguay was quite different from that of his grandfather Pedro de Vera in the Canaries.

### 2.c. Cabeza de Vaca’s Coat of Arms

When the publishers of Cabeza de Vaca’s 1542 *relación* wished to authenticate it as the work of its author, they added their own note after Cabeza de Vaca’s statement (“And because the truth is thus as I tell it above in this account, I signed it with my name”): “The account from which this was taken was signed with his name and appeared with his coat of arms” [Estava firmado de su nombre y con el escudo de sus armas la relación de donde esto se sacó] (f65v). Yet the only coat of arms reproduced in the 1542 edition was the imperial arms of Charles V, placed on the title page to indicate that the work was dedicated to the emperor in the same way that the identical example on the title page of Florián de Ocampo’s *Las quatro partes de la “Crónica de España”* (Zamora, 1541) had acknowledged the same destinataire (see vol. 3, fig. 10).

Cabeza de Vaca’s coat of arms was mentioned three times in the criminal charges lodged against him by the Council of the Indies on 20 February 1546

(AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f1r–f3r; Rodríguez Carrión 103, 105): charge 7 accused him of using a metal shield on which a “cabeza de vaca” was sculpted and used as a form of communication, by which Cabeza de Vaca allegedly and unjustly extracted goods from the Indians, who presumably recognized it as the governor’s symbol of power and authority; charge 26 alleged that he took the king’s arms off a ship and replaced them with his own; charge 29 declared that he had his own device “sculpted” or superimposed on that of the monarch.

The emblazoned standard Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was accused by his enemies of hoisting up his ship’s mast was drawn by hand and included in the document bundle entitled “Informaciones hechas en el Río de la Plata a petición de los oficiales reales contra el gobernador Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca,” collected during 1544–45 (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 6a, f314–f462). Removed from its original site, this coat of arms is preserved in the Archivo General de Indias’s “Mapas y Planos” designation (AGI, Mapas y Planos, Buenos Aires 220, rollo 10) (fig. 1). According to Sancho de Soprani (“Datos” 94n35), during the criminal proceedings on 11 July 1546, Alonso Cabrera, Felipe de Cáceres, and Garci Venegas testified to the effect that they recognized Cabeza de Vaca’s heraldic device, and “they presented a copy and drawing that reproduced the arms that the said Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca used and carried painted on the sail of the ship in which he traveled and navigated this river of Iriquay [*sic*].” Sancho de Soprani (“Datos” 94n35) stated that the coat of arms he discussed was the one published by Bishop (facing 279). Most recently, it has been reproduced by Rodríguez Carrión (5) and Pupo-Walker (*Naufraios* facing 224).

Whether prior to Sancho de Soprani’s investigation or failing to consult it afterward, scholars have considered this bit of heraldry to be fanciful, made up by ignorant, low-born partisans of Domingo Martínez de Irala who sought yet another means to discredit the governor and *adelantado*. Despite the fact that Bishop (facing 279) discredited the cow heads on the shield as being “not a part of Cabeza de Vaca’s proper device,” we will see that the motif was a central identifying feature of nearly any likely version of the Cabeza de Vaca coat of arms Álvar Núñez might have used.

An interest in the coat of arms that Cabeza de Vaca’s enemies claimed he used instead of the king’s in Río de la Plata in the 1540s led Sancho de Soprani (“Datos” 93–94) to examine the document distributing the estate of Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca or de Zurita. He sought to determine if Doña Teresa’s last will and testament could shed light on whether the coat of arms was bogus or authentic, and he concluded that “the correctness of the disputed arms could not be greater” (Sancho de Soprani, “Datos” 96).

Figure 1. Cabeza de Vaca's coat of arms as drawn in the 1544–45 documentation gathered for the 1546 suit filed against him as governor of Río de la Plata (AGI, Mapas y Planos, Buenos Aires 220, rollo 10). Courtesy of Spain's Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Archivo General de Indias, which holds the original, and Appleton and Lange. Reproduced from Morris Bishop, *The Odyssey of Cabeza de Vaca* facing 279, 1933, copyright Appleton and Lange.



The four quadrants of the shield are decorated with the symbols, reading from the viewer's vantage point diagonally from upper left to lower right, then from upper right to lower left, of the houses of Vera, Mendoza, Cabeza de Vaca, and Figueroa, respectively. The four rows of marten fur that symbolize the house of Vera take priority in the upper-left-hand quadrant; their corresponding member is the striped triangles and "Ave María" of



the Mendoza shield that appear in the lower-right-hand quadrant. This order puts in their proper places the devices that corresponded to the *adelantado*'s paternal grandfather's surnames (Vera Mendoza), who was so named in contrast to Mendoza Vera, presumably used by the holder of the primogeniture (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 95).

Reading from upper right to lower left and representing Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's maternal heritage, the device of Cabeza de Vaca found in the upper-right-hand quadrant consists of seven checkerboard squares; it is complemented by the lower-left-hand quadrant adorned with five fig leaves to symbolize the houses whose root is the morpheme *fig*, according to Sancho de Sopranis ("Datos" 95). While the checkerboard device represents Cabeza de Vaca's mother's first surname (that of her father, Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca), the latter design represents Doña Teresa's mother (Cabeza de Vaca's maternal grandmother), Catalina de Zurita y Figueroa, and honors her descent from the house of Figueroa (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 95).

Sancho de Sopranis ("Datos" 97, 99) argued that Cabeza de Vaca here used the motif of the Figueras instead of the Zuritas in order to honor his aunt Beatriz Cabeza de Vaca or de Figueroa, who was like a "second mother" to him and his siblings after the death of her sister, their mother, Doña Teresa, in 1509. (As we will see, it was from Doña Beatriz's home that Cabeza de Vaca departed in 1511 to serve at arms in Italy.) In memory of her mother, Doña Catalina de Zurita y Figueroa, Álvaro Núñez's aunt called herself Beatriz de Figueroa, honoring thereby her maternal grandmother, Mencía Suárez de Figueroa o de Moscoso (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 98). Doña Beatriz's children did the same, so that Álvaro Núñez's first cousin and supporter in Río de la Plata, the primogenitor Pedro Estopiñán Cabeza de Vaca, was often called Pedro Estopiñán de Figueroa (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 98).

With respect to Cabeza de Vaca's Mendoza heritage, the evidence is somewhat contradictory. In 1943 Sancho de Sopranis cited an eighteenth-century document from the archive of the marquis of Casa Vargas that placed the arms of the Veras and the Mendozas side by side in the royal chapel of the Jerez convent of Santo Domingo el Real and asserted that Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was a Mendoza through the paternal line, being the grandson of Pedro de Vera, the great-grandson of Diego de Mendoza, the great-great-grandson of Gonzalo de la Vega y Mendoza, and the great-great-great-grandson of Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (1365–1404), owner of the estates of Mendoza, Hita, and Buitrago, majordomo of the king, and chief admiral (*almirante mayor*) of Castile (qtd. in Sancho de Sopranis, *Documentos* 37). In 1946, Sancho de Sopranis observed that Pedro de Vera's father, Diego Gómez, was often cited in the municipal proceedings of Jerez de la Frontera as a notary and justice (*alguacil*) but was never referred to

by the surname Mendoza (Sancho de Sopranis, “La familia” 263–64, 269–70); Sancho de Sopranis suspected that the connection was to a minor branch of the Mendozas or—without greater proof—that “de Mendoza” was an “officious addition” made by sixteenth-century and later writers, particularly genealogists of the illustrious houses of Jerez de la Frontera, whose assertions seemed to be confirmed by the coats of arms placed on the springings of the arch of the royal chapel in Santo Domingo el Real that was capped by the coat of arms of the kings of Castile. By 1947, however, Sancho de Sopranis (“Datos” 95) was convinced that Pedro de Vera’s second surname was Mendoza, “as is well known,” and described the arms attributed to Cabeza de Vaca in the Council of the Indies’ suit against him as authentic, “not only because they consisted of well-known surnames but also being, with certainty, those of the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca.”

It stands to reason that this coat of arms was taken as authentic—both by Cabeza de Vaca and by others—at the time. Further evidence included in Cabeza de Vaca’s testimony as well as that of his enemies suggests that this was the case. In appealing his sentence on 6 April 1551, Cabeza de Vaca (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f67v) spoke of how he used a coat of arms with the head of a cow as a signal to the Indians that the messenger bearing it was acting on the governor’s behalf. He declared that this verification was needed so that the Indians would not be deceived by rogues who claimed they were acting in his name. Thus he defended the use of the heraldic device that had been the source of the seventh criminal charge against him. Likewise, as already observed, on 11 July 1546, Alonso Cabrera, Felipe de Cáceres, and Garci Venegas testified that the coat of arms (as described by Sancho de Sopranis and reproduced by Bishop) was the one that Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca had painted on the sail of the ship in which he traveled and navigated the rivers of the province (qtd. in Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 94n35). Clearly, the object of the dispute in Cabeza de Vaca’s trial was not the authenticity of the heraldic symbols he used but rather the appropriateness of the use of his own device. His enemies pointed to the device to illustrate their charges against him for extortion from the Indians and, more importantly, treason against the king.

Drawn by hand in the formal documentation of the evidence brought against Cabeza de Vaca, the heraldic banner must have lent credence to the accusers, who claimed that Cabeza de Vaca used his standard to place himself above the king. Charge 28 states: “he called himself king and [declared,] ‘I am the prince and lord of this land’ ” (Rodríguez Carrión 105). If the tribunal in the Council of the Indies recognized the heraldic devices as presented in the testimony as correct and appropriate to Cabeza de Vaca, and if the witnesses testified that this was the symbol the governor used, the coat of arms may

have helped, in the way that graphic circumstantial evidence often does, to lead to his conviction. We examine below (sec. 9.A) the criminal charges filed against Cabeza de Vaca for his governorship, as well as his sentence and subsequent vindication.

Apart from the infamous suit, we find three versions of Cabeza de Vaca coats of arms likewise described in the seventeenth century. In 1611 Covarrubias (989a) asserted that the king of Castile dubbed the shadowy Martín Alhaja a knight (see above, sec. 2.A.2), giving him a device of seven red squares on a field of gold with a border of six white cow heads on a field of blue. Although his knowledge of the alleged heraldry of the thirteenth-century Martín Alhaja was necessarily uncertain, Covarrubias had no doubt frequently seen current, late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century representations of the Cabeza de Vaca coat of arms. In 1621 Pedro Mejía de Ovando (*Primera parte* f251r [bk. 2, chap. 4]) described two variations of the arms of the lineage and house of Cabeza de Vaca, noting that “all are of one same family.” One device consisted of “the head of an ox, in red, on a field of gold,” while the other was a “device of fifteen squares and, as a border, six heads of cows.” Mejía de Ovando’s second description corresponded exactly to the one given by Covarrubias a decade earlier. Both coats of arms are mentioned and illustrated in García Carraffa and García Carraffa (91–92, pl. 5). In 1652, José Pellicer (f33v) described the arms of the lineage as “the head of a cow on a field of green above squares of gold and red, with a border of crosses” (that is, *aspas*, intersecting bars that differ from the “true cross” in not being at right angles). “These are the arms,” Pellicer (f33v) said, that were used in his day by “the caballeros of this name in Jerez [de la Frontera]”; they would be similar to the shield appearing on Pellicer’s title page (fig. 2).

Pellicer (f4r) also explained that the most ancient device of the Cabeza de Vacas consisted of squares of gold and red, because the lineage had its male descent from the Cisneros line, for whom the checkerboard design had been its earliest device. This checkerboard was surrounded by a border of six white cow heads on a blue field. Pellicer (f4r) went on to discuss other variations, one of which used exclusively the cow heads, another of which employed the checkerboard design surrounded by a border containing bovine heads, and yet another used a flowered cross (*cruz floreada*) of gold on a red field above the squares of the checkerboard pattern. The principle demonstrated by Pellicer is described by Sancho de Soprani (“Datos” 99), namely, that nobles exercised some latitude in the design and use of heraldic devices and that heraldic laws were not strictly enforced.

Cabeza de Vaca’s personal coat of arms, as preserved in the criminal charges brought against him, combined, as noted, the symbols of the houses

Figure 2. A seventeenth-century coat of arms of the House of Cabeza de Vaca as depicted on the title page of José Pellicer de Ossau Salas y Tovar's *Genealogía de la noble y antigua casa de Cabeza de Vaca* (Madrid, 1652). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.



of Vera, Mendoza, Cabeza de Vaca, and Figueroa that made up his lineage. It is of interest to know that the arms of the houses of his patrilineal descent, Vera and Mendoza, were in evidence until the first half of the eighteenth century in the main chapel of the Convento de Santo Domingo el Real in Jerez de la Frontera where Pedro de Vera Mendoza and his descendants (including, presumably, Cabeza de Vaca) were buried. Sancho de Sopranis (*Documentos* 36) cited early-seventeenth-century conventual histories and related documents that made note of the arms of Castile and those of a particular family, the descendants of the conqueror of Gran Canaria, that graced the main chapel. As late as 1717, when the *Memorias históricas del Real Convento de Santo Domingo de Xerez* was compiled, the burial there of Pedro de Vera Mendoza and his heirs was evidenced by “the coat of arms of Vera and Mendoza that today can be seen on the two springings of the principal arch of the main chapel along with the royal arms of Castile that

are on the keystone of said arch” (qtd. in Sancho de Sopranis, *Documentos* 36). The arms were removed in 1750, and subsequent modifications have erased the visual heritage of the royal chapel of Santo Domingo that housed the tombs of the *conquistador de Gran Canaria* Pedro de Vera Mendoza and his descendants (Sancho de Sopranis, *Documentos* 37).

### 3. LIFE IN JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA (1480S TO 1509)

In 1255 Alfonso X captured Jerez de la Frontera from the Muslims, and, as we have seen, in the fifteenth century it was home to the houses of Cabeza de Vaca and Vera from which the future *adelantado* Álvaro Núñez descended. Cabeza de Vaca was known in his day as being from Jerez de la Frontera and almost certainly had been born there, as Oviedo and Las Casas indicated and as Sancho de Sopranis’s researches have confirmed. As mentioned above, both of Cabeza de Vaca’s grandfathers, as well as his father, served on the municipal council of Jerez. Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca had served on its council of thirteen (Pellicer f35r), and Pedro de Vera Mendoza, in his last years, had served on the expanded council of twenty-four (Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 81). Cabeza de Vaca’s father, Francisco de Vera, served on the council of twenty-four, from at least August 1482 to May 1503 (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 209). His interventions in the actions of the city council as one of its members are recorded in the *libros de cabildo*, and he was particularly active in the successive years from 1490 to 1496 (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 208–10).

Life in Jerez de la Frontera from the 1480s through 1509, that is, from the earliest possible years of Cabeza de Vaca’s birth through the death of his second parent, was characterized by military incursions by land and sea from this frontier city into lands held by Muslims and, until 1492, into the neighboring Nasrid kingdom of Granada (Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 75). For Cabeza de Vaca’s grandparents and parents, the period was marked and divided by the fall of the kingdom of Granada in 1492; for those of his own generation, the signal event of 1492 occurred in October, and its impact would be felt only when he and his peers reached adulthood and set their sights on the islands and mainlands to the west.

Negotiating the Christian/Muslim frontier was a task of seeking economic advantage and controlling the limited and sporadic warfare that occasionally broke the peace that was the common objective of all; although the Christians sought to defeat the Muslims and win land and booty, they also knew and respected this traditional enemy and tended to abide by the agreements of surrender when the enemy turned over its defeated towns and strongholds (MacKay 45–46, 214–15). Numerous types of intermediaries mediated both

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sides of the frontier, with special judges (*alcaldes entre cristianos y moros*) and investigators (*rastreros*) assigned to restore and keep the peace. *Alfaques* (officials assigned the task of locating and exchanging captives) were immune to frontier hostilities and traveled freely in the fulfillment of their obligations (MacKay 215). For caballeros from Jerez de la Frontera, these forays served as a steady source of income (MacKay 214; Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 75).

The maritime frontier of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic was the second one important to the family of Cabeza de Vaca. The raids Pedro de Vera carried out along the northwestern coast of Africa were typical of the time. Referred to in the 1537 *probanza* as “the raids in the land of Moors of very great benefit, especially those of Fadala and Larache” that Vera executed “in service to God and king,” such missions were means of producing income when land in Andalusia devoted to cattle grazing took up increasingly large portions of territory and drove men seeking economic advantage to the coast and ultimately to America (MacKay 183–84). From Cádiz, which was a frequent base of operations for military men of the region like Pedro de Vera, the proximity of the Portuguese, the contact with them in Mina de Oro and on the African coast with sailors from Cádiz and Portugal, the proximity of Morocco, and the natural setting of Cádiz all conspired to make the maritime orientation common (Sancho de Sopranis, *Documentos* 12). When the Castilian monarchs were otherwise occupied, minor expeditions and raids into Muslim-held territories in northern Africa helped to sustain men such as Pedro de Vera, who had been celebrated in the sixteenth century as being “expert in battles on sea as on land.”

Commerce in Castile in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was characterized by the sale of raw materials abroad in exchange for manufactured goods. While wool was the most important of these exports, Andalusia produced and sold abroad such products as olive oil, the wines of Jerez, fruit, tuna from the fishing waters of the south, mercury from the mines of Almadén, and leather (MacKay 186, 187). Cabeza de Vaca’s *tío político*, that is, his uncle by marriage to his mother’s sister, Beatriz Cabeza de Vaca or Figueroa, was the *comendador* Pedro Estopiñán, the conqueror of Melilla (Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 87). Serving during long years the ducal house of Medina Sidonia both at arms and in financial administration, Estopiñán made personal commercial exports to Flanders, selling the wines produced from his vineyards at Parpalana to increase the income of his own house, according to a document docketed in the register of Sebastián Gaytán, public notary of Jerez de la Frontera in 1509, and discovered and quoted by Sancho de Sopranis (“Datos” 89). The ducal house of Medina Sidonia, like others

of Spain, possessed its own ships and engaged in international trade off the northern and southern shores of Castile; the duke's administrators (no doubt including Pedro Estopiñán) customarily dealt directly with foreign merchants and prepared the ducal ships for their voyages (MacKay 194). It was probably through these contacts that Estopiñán was able to engage in his own commercial exports.

Had families such as the Veras, Estopiñáns, and Cabeza de Vacas traditionally been engaged in commerce rather than military life, they would have been well positioned to take advantage of the licenses granted by the crown around 1504 to export goods and manufactures to the Indies; the qualifications consisted of being "residents of Seville and well established" [vecinos de Sevilla y (que) tuviesen en ella bienes raíces], according to Herrera y Tordesillas (3:76 [dec. 1, bk. 6, chap. 16]), which meant having been married and lived in Seville, Cádiz, or Jerez for the previous fifteen or twenty years.

The economic situation of the region put the control of vast lands in the hands of the titled aristocracy and commercial enterprise in those of the Genoese (MacKay 183–88, 194–95). As a result, these families dedicated by tradition to the military vocation found themselves rich in historical reputation but relatively poor in material means (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 86–91). Pedro de Vera's burial in Santo Domingo el Real, made possible by an annuity granted him by the marquis of Cádiz, Rodrigo Ponce de León, nevertheless had to be supplemented by an additional endowment put together by his heirs (Sancho de Sopranis, *Documentos* 33). The last will and testament of Francisco de Vera's widow, Doña Teresa de Cabeza de Vaca (de Zurita), reveals the modesty of Álvaro Núñez's parents' means (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 100–02). Recalling that neither his paternal and maternal grandfathers nor his father succeeded to the primogenitures of their respective generations, we can appreciate the situation in which Cabeza de Vaca found himself as he reached adulthood and planned to make his livelihood as a conqueror. When in 1537 he sought to underscore the lack of royal reward to the most illustrious of his immediate ancestors, Pedro de Vera, Cabeza de Vaca revealed the plight of his caballero lineage, a situation that had consequences similar to that of the urban-based hidalgo that the author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* would immortalize a few decades later. For men at arms, however, the Indies offered a significant outlet, and Cabeza de Vaca began his military training in Spain and Italy early. In order to situate the major events of his military career in the course of his life, we consider the time of his birth and the circumstances of his childhood and youth.



## 4. DEDUCING CABEZA DE VACA'S BIRTH DATE (1485–92)

The attempt to determine Cabeza de Vaca's date of birth opens a window on the legal intricacies of domestic life of the *caballero* class of middle-ranking nobility, to which he belonged through both paternal and maternal descent. The deaths of Cabeza de Vaca's father by 1506 and his mother in 1509, before the age of his legal majority (twenty-five years), occasioned the need for legal representation, which was critical for exercising the privileges and obligations of his status as eldest son (although third child). Álvar Núñez and his siblings' orphanhood produced documents that offer a glimpse of Cabeza de Vaca's early years, as we will see below.

Cabeza de Vaca's date of birth has been the object of much speculation. Some have placed it as late as 1500, but the evidence for this assertion has not been produced. Others have made an estimate of nearly twenty years earlier, suggesting the date of 1481. On the basis of published documents available for consultation, it is impossible to set an exact year. Thanks to the available evidence, however, we can calculate that Cabeza de Vaca was born between the years 1485 and 1492. This assessment diverges slightly from that of Bishop (8), who, with access to documentation similar to that which we cite here, set the period as 1487–94. Bishop based his opinion on a *curatela* assignment of 1512, about which he remarked that a trustee (unnamed by Bishop) was assigned to "Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, two younger brothers and one younger sister." The only document from the year 1512 that we have been able to examine, published by Sancho de Soprani ("Notas" 236–37), establishes a power of attorney to be granted to Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca by the children's guardian and trustee, Pedro de Vera. Pedro de Vera is identified as Francisco de Vera's children's uncle (*tío cuarto*, as we will demonstrate below) in a 14 August 1509 document that names Don Pedro guardian (*tutor*) of Cabeza de Vaca's younger brothers, Juan de Vera and Martín de Vera, "menores de doce años" (Sancho de Soprani, "Notas" 226, 235–36). Based on the document unknown to us that he had at hand, Bishop judged that Álvar Núñez was at least sixteen years of age and possibly older in 1512 and therefore set the range of potential birth years as 1487–94.

Other scholars have variously cited documentary records that would indicate that Cabeza de Vaca was born in 1500 (Gandía, *Historia de la conquista* 218), between mid-1492 and mid-1495 (Sancho de Soprani, "Notas" 223, 228–39), and, most recently, around 1488 (Gil, "Notas" 54). Enrique de Gandía supported his assertion about a birth date of 1500 by citing Cabeza de Vaca's testimony of 3 September 1548 in Valladolid in an "Información de cómo el hijo de Pedro de Orantes sirvió algún tiempo," in which Cabeza de Vaca was reported to have declared himself to be forty-eight years of age, thus making

his date of birth the year 1500. Yet this evidence is dubious, because Gandía transcribed this testimony from a document whose location he did not reveal and then added (*Historia de la conquista* 218): “[w]e find this age confirmed by other testimonies the citation of which is not pertinent here.” Bishop (8n9) dismissed Gandía’s claim decades ago for lack of documentary evidence. Gandía’s assertion is disproved outright by our reading of a document published by Sancho de Sopranis (“Notas” 238–39) in 1963. On 4 August 1524, Cabeza de Vaca made a grant assigning the possessions of his deceased brother Juan de Vera to their sister Doña María de Vera; the fact that he did so in his own name reveals that he was of the age of legal majority. Had he not been at least twenty-five years of age in 1524, he could not have exercised this legal prerogative independently.

Sancho de Sopranis conducted research regarding Cabeza de Vaca’s birth date as part of his successful effort to establish Jerez de la Frontera as the birthplace of the *adelantado*, using circumstantial evidence to show that Cabeza de Vaca’s parents resided in Jerez de la Frontera during at least the last twenty years of their lives. Sancho de Sopranis (*Documentos*, “Datos,” “Notas”) published a series of documents from the Archivo de Protocolos de Jerez de la Frontera as well as from the archives of the Jerez town council (*cabildo*) that offer abundant evidence of the family’s *jerezano* origins. These documents allow us to establish several pertinent facts regarding the early years of Cabeza de Vaca’s life and to offer a better estimate of the possible years of his birth, correcting Sancho de Sopranis’s own deduction along the way.

On the basis of the discovery and publication of documents concerning the guardianship of Cabeza de Vaca and his siblings, Sancho de Sopranis (“Notas” 223) placed Cabeza de Vaca’s birth date between 1492 and 1495. To do so, he relied on two documents: a 16 April 1506 letter of donation of the burial vault in the Convento de Santo Domingo el Real in Jerez de la Frontera to the heirs of Pedro de Vera Mendoza, petitioned by Cabeza de Vaca’s widowed mother, Doña Teresa, and the other daughters-in-law of the conqueror of Gran Canaria (“Notas” 228–33); and Álvaro Núñez and his brother Hernando de Vera’s request for a legal guardian (specifically, a trustee or *curador*) on 5 July 1509 (“Notas” 233–35), following the death of their mother in that year. As we show below, the information contained in these two documents provides the basis for setting Cabeza de Vaca’s birth date not between 1492 and 1495, as Sancho de Sopranis concluded, but between 1485 and 1492.

In her petition, reproduced in the 1506 letter of donation, Teresa Cabeza de Vaca referred to her children “Álvar Núñez, Hernando de Vera, Juan de Vera, Doña Violante, Doña María, and Doña Ana, my sons and daughters with

the said Francisco de Vera, *veinticuatro*, God rest his soul,” and identified herself as their *tutora* and *guardadora* (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 228). The order in which the names are listed both in this document and in the 1509 *curatela* appointment suggests that Álvar Núñez was the first son of the family even though he was not the firstborn child. As mentioned above (sec. 1), the probation of Doña Teresa’s last will and testament on 1 August 1509 suggests that Álvar Núñez was the third of the children born, since his name appeared after those of Doña Violante de Vera and Doña María de Vera. Yet as the first male child, Álvar Núñez succeeded to his widowed mother’s estate (Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 100–02).

The use of two terms to represent Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca’s legal custodianship (*tutora*, *guardadora*) of her children in the 16 April 1506 letter of donation is significant. Sancho de Sopranis (“Notas” 223) had made the error of treating the two designations as synonymous, which led him to erroneously deduce that Cabeza de Vaca was born between 1492 and 1495. Yet the expression “*tutora y guardadora*” [tutor and guardian] was applied not only to Doña Teresa but also to her two widowed sisters-in-law. Since Álvar Núñez’s father, Francisco de Vera, had been his parents’ third son (Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 74), it is highly unlikely that all of Álvar Núñez’s twelve cousins plus himself would be the ages (under fourteen for boys, under twelve for girls) requiring *tutela* guardianship.

The probability that at least some of them were over fourteen years, and therefore that the terms *tutora* and *guardadora* carried different meanings, is borne out by Juan Gil’s (“Notas” 53–54) recent publication of a 28 April 1506 document. Dated only twelve days after the just-cited grant of the burial place of Pedro de Vera to his heirs, the 28 April letter reveals that the use of the Latin term (*tutora*) and the Castilian (*guardadora*) actually referred to two complementary but distinct categories of legal guardianship (*tutela* and *curatela*) in describing Cabeza de Vaca’s mother and his aunts as legal guardians of their respective children. Gil’s document reveals furthermore that the young Álvar Núñez was more than fourteen years of age in the year 1506. Álvar Núñez declared under oath on 28 April 1506 that he was “of the age of eighteen years and less than twenty-five years” (Gil, “Notas” 23). Whether he was literally correct in declaring his age to be eighteen, his statement clearly reveals that he was of an age requiring *curatela*, not *tutela*, custodianship.

To understand the important distinctions between guardianship (*tutela*) and trusteeship (*curatela*) made in referring to Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca and her widowed sisters-in-law as legal custodians of their own children, we turn to the *Siete partidas* (1256–63), the standard and authoritative legal source in the sixteenth-century Hispanic world. As the great project of legal

codification conceived by Fernando III of Castile (1217–52) and compiled under the direction of his son Alfonso X, “el Sabio” (1252–84), with whose name the *Partidas* are usually associated, the code stands midway between the *Forum Judicum* of the seventh century and the civil code of the nineteenth as a landmark of Castilian and world law (Scott, *Las siete partidas* xlix–li). Title 16 of the *Sexta partida* spells out “how orphans and the goods they inherit should be protected after the death of their parents” (Castile 3:f102v). The institution for boys under the age of fourteen (“menor de catorce años”) and girls under the age of twelve (“menor de doce años”) was the *tutela* (guardianship) (Castile 3:f102v [pt. 6, tit. 16, law 1]). The institution for boys age fourteen to twenty-five and girls age twelve to twenty-five (twenty-five being the age of legal majority for both sexes) was the *curatela* or *curaduría* (trusteeship) (Castile 3:f107r [pt. 6, tit. 16, laws 12–13]).

Given this information, the use of two terms to describe Doña Teresa’s relationship to her children (Álvar Núñez, Hernando, Juan, Violante, María, Ana, and Martín, who is not named in the document as transcribed) in 1506 shows that she was guardian (*tutora*) to some of them and trustee (here using the Castilian term *guardadora* instead of the Latinate *curadora*) to others. In 1506 Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca served as the young Álvar Núñez’s trustee (*guardadora* or *curadora*), which meant that he, being at least fourteen years of age (and possibly as old as age eighteen), could not have been born later than 1492.

The next document in the published record, the *curatela* assignment of July 1509, in which Álvar Núñez and his brother Hernando de Vera were assigned a trustee (*curador*), declares that at that time Álvar Núñez and Hernando de Vera were “more than fourteen and less than twenty-five years of age” (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 234). Their mother, Doña Teresa, had died in 1509, which we deduce from the distribution of her modest estate at the beginning of August of that year (Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 100–02). The fact that Álvar Núñez still required a trustee when his mother died in 1509 reveals that he was *at most* twenty-four years old at that time and could therefore not have been born prior to 1485. Together, the documents of 1506 and 1509 establish the limits of the period (1485–92) in which Cabeza de Vaca could have been born.

The trusteeship assignment was made in the conventional way; if the surviving parent had not provided for the *curaduría* in his or her will, “the nearest relative” was commonly assigned (Castile 3:f102v [pt. 6, tit. 16, law 2]). In this case the choice was based on a closer affective than consanguineous relationship, because the person designated, Pedro de Vera, was the third cousin (*primo tercero*) of the boys’ father (see table 3). According to the genealogical tree of the Veras, reproduced by Sancho de Sopranis (*Documentos*

39; Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 221n13) from Alonso López de Haro’s *Árbol de los Vera* (Milan, 1636), this Pedro de Vera was the boys’ *tío cuarto*, separated from the relationship of *tío carnal* by three degrees. (Probably without taking into account Sancho de Sopranis’s considerable evidence, Gil [“Notas” 53] identified this Pedro de Vera simply as Álvar Núñez’s cousin.) The common ancestors, Rodrigo de Vera and Catalina Coronel, were, respectively, the great-great-grandparents (*tatarabuelos*) of the guardian and trustee Pedro de Vera and the great-great-great-grandparents (*cuartos abuelos*) of his wards, Álvar Núñez and his siblings (see table 3).

As Sancho de Sopranis (*Documentos* 37–41; Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 74; Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 219) has indicated, there were several Francisco de Veras and Pedro de Veras living in Jerez at the same time. Sancho de Sopranis (“Notas” 220) identified two men named Pedro de Vera as Álvar Núñez’s first cousins (*primos hermanos*); they were sons, respectively, of Álvar Núñez’s *tíos carnales* Rodrigo de Vera and Martín de Vera, neither of whom fit the description given in the boys’ legal petition as “Pedro de Vera, son of Francisco de Vera, son-in-law of Roldán, resident of the city” of Jerez de la Frontera (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 234). That description pertained to the Pedro de Vera who was the son of Francisco de Vera *el jurado* (common councilman, as opposed to *veinticuatro*, alderman) (Pike 23) and a nephew of the Pedro de Vera who was a commander in the Order of Santiago; the latter two were second cousins (*primos segundos*) of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s grandfather Pedro de Vera Mendoza, the conqueror of the Canaries (Sancho de Sopranis, *Documentos* 39; Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 221n13) (see table 3).

The act constituting Álvar Núñez and Hernando de Vera’s trusteeship declared that they had appeared before the chief municipal justice (*alcalde mayor*) of Jerez de la Frontera on 5 July 1509 and asked that such an assignment be made because they were “older than fourteen years of age and less than twenty-five and thus being less than the age required by law to possess and administer their estates” (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 233–34). They were asked whom they would like to have so assigned, and they named Pedro de Vera, who was, as we have seen, their *tío cuarto*. On 7 July 1509, the latter formally accepted the assignment as trustee of Álvar Núñez and his brother Hernando de Vera and swore to fulfill the obligations of the office (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 234). As we have indicated, this Pedro de Vera was also named *tutor* to Álvar Núñez’s younger brothers Juan and Martín in their *tutela* assignment of 14 August 1509; in that document, Pedro de Vera was described as *tutor* to Juan and Martín while being identified as “trustee of their other brothers” [*curador de otros sus hermanos*] (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 236). On 19 July 1512, the guardian and trustee Pedro de

Vera granted a power of attorney to Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca on behalf of his wards (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 236–37). As we will see below (sec. 10.A), at the end of his life Cabeza de Vaca ransomed the great-nephew of this elder Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca from Algiers.

We are now ready to consider other issues pertinent to the age and birth date of Cabeza de Vaca revealed in the 28 April 1506 document from the Archivo de Protocolos de Sevilla (Gil, “Notas” 53–54). This notarial action stated that Cabeza de Vaca, “son of the deceased Francisco de Vera, God rest his soul, and Doña Theresa de Zorita, his wife,” reported that he was “eighteen years of age and less than twenty-five” and that he requested a *curador ad litem* because he wished to file charges against persons who owed money to his father’s estate and was underage to act on his own behalf (Gil, “Notas” 53–54). He requested that Martín Gil, *escudero* and resident of Jerez de la Frontera, be so named; Martín Gil accepted and swore that he would fulfill the obligations of the office. Both this 28 April 1506 document and the one of 16 April 1506 show that the now fatherless Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, at least age fourteen, was the ward of a trustee. In the 16 April letter, the trustee was his still-living mother. Why, then, did he request, ten days later, that Martín Gil be named his trustee when, as we know, his mother lived until 1509?

The answer lies in the type of trusteeship Cabeza de Vaca sought and received. The post of *curador ad litem* was designed as a kind of temporary or alternate trusteeship. According to the *Sexta partida* (Castile 3:f107r [pt. 6, tit. 16, law 13]), if the permanent trustee was unable to serve as legal representative due to illness, absence, or other extenuating circumstances, a temporary *curador* could be substituted. Since Cabeza de Vaca’s notarial action was recorded in Seville, it is clear that Martín Gil, although himself resident of Jerez de la Frontera, was to represent the young man’s legal interests in whatever charges or complaints Cabeza de Vaca wished to bring in Seville “against some person or persons who do or may owe him debts and some things that are to be given and paid” (Gil, “Notas” 53). Thus, while Cabeza de Vaca’s mother served as his trustee at home in Jerez de la Frontera, Martín Gil represented him as *curador ad litem* in Seville. Both the site of this notarial action (Seville) and its cause (to represent the young Álvar Núñez in civil actions) indicate why Cabeza de Vaca would have sought and gained an additional trustee during the lifetime of his mother.

Summing up our discussion thus far, we note that the 28 April 1506 document published by Juan Gil in 1990 corroborates rather than contradicts the one of 16 April 1506 published by Sancho de Sopranis in 1963. We inferred from the 16 April letter of donation that Álvar Núñez, the eldest son (but not the eldest child) of Don Francisco de Vera and Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca,

was beyond the age of fourteen at the time; the notarial action of twelve days later, stating that Cabeza de Vaca was “eighteen years old but younger than twenty-five,” confirms the fact. Furthermore, Sancho de Sopranis’s documents clearly show that it was not Cabeza de Vaca’s father who died in 1509, as Juan Gil (“Notas” 53) claims. Francisco de Vera was already deceased in 1506 (“Francisco de Vera, que Dios haya”) (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 228). As we have seen, it was Cabeza de Vaca’s mother who died in 1509, and it was her estate that was probated on 1 August of that year (Sancho de Sopranis, “Datos” 100–02).

Juan Gil’s discovery and publication of the 28 April 1506 curatorial document brings us closer than any previous attempt to establish the year of Cabeza de Vaca’s birth. Sancho de Sopranis had misattributed to Cabeza de Vaca an age of less than fourteen years in 1506 when he interpreted as synonymous the terms *tutora* and *guardadora* in the 16 April 1506 letter of donation. Torres Ramírez (19) recently reiterated Sancho de Sopranis’s claim. While Juan Gil’s documentary discovery is to be credited for the accurate deduction about Cabeza de Vaca’s age in 1506 of more than fourteen years, Gil himself made a small error when he asserted that Sancho de Sopranis had been mistaken in identifying the age of fourteen years as the age limit of a minor for a trusteeship (*curatela*) (Gil, “Notas” 53). On the contrary, as we have seen, the age of fourteen was precisely the beginning of the age range of trusteeship set for boys in the *Siete partidas* and applied in the sixteenth century.

There is only one remaining query regarding the testimony about Cabeza de Vaca’s legal designation as an adolescent minor. Since the legal category defined as *curatela* in the Alfonsine code corresponded to males from fourteen to twenty-five years of age, and Cabeza de Vaca testified to his age in those terms in the 5 July 1509 *curatela* statement, it is of interest that he had declared his age on 28 April 1506 to be precisely “eighteen and not yet twenty-five” (Gil, “Notas” 53). It is likely that this locution was of the type whose meaning was “I am eighteen years old, that is, not yet the age of legal majority” (literally, “not yet twenty-five years of age”). Another young Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca gives a similar, relevant example.

In a settlement of a lien on a property in Jerez de la Frontera on 30 September 1557, this Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, son of Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca (the ransomed captive to whom we will later return), accepted payment of a lien, declaring that he was not yet the age of legal majority, “being somewhat less than twenty-five years of age and *more than twenty-two*” (USLC, Kraus Collection f2v, our emphasis). Like Cabeza de Vaca’s remark in 1506, this one by another Álvar Núñez in 1557 suggests that older minors might have attempted to represent their chronological age with some

specificity while at the same time acknowledging the legal formula pertaining to twenty-five years of age as that of legal majority.

Thus, the statement made by the future *adelantado* Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca in 1506 likely reflects his reckoning of his age—eighteen years—in that year. In the case that the phrase (“qu’es de hedad de diez e ocho años”) in the 28 April 1506 document is correctly stated, Cabeza de Vaca would have been born around 1488, which is Juan Gil’s (“Notas” 54) assertion (recently repeated by Pupo-Walker [*Naufragios* 25n35]). Although we would seek further corroborative evidence before accepting the precise birth date of 1488, the evidence Gil presents falls within the range of years (1485–92) that we have established above. Thus we can conclude that Cabeza de Vaca was definitely between thirty-five and forty-two years of age—and possibly just about thirty-nine or forty—when in 1527 he embarked on the Pánfilo de Narváez expedition to *Florida*, bearing the documents of the office of royal treasurer.

#### 5. SERVICE TO FOUR DUKES OF MEDINA SIDONIA (1503 TO 1527)

In considering Cabeza de Vaca’s service to the dukes of Medina Sidonia we have drawn our information concerning the ducal house itself from Pedro de Medina’s *Crónica de los muy excelentes señores duques de Medina Sidonia, condes de Niebla, marqueses de Cazaza en África, señores de la noble villa de Sanlúcar de Barrameda, etc.*, completed in 1561. We supplement this work with pertinent details from Pietro Martire d’Anghiera’s 1530 *Epistolario* as well as published documentary evidence. Medina himself claimed in the prologue to his *Crónica* (21) that among the written sources he used in his account were documents in the ducal archives. Medina said further that for part of his *Crónica* he included his own recollections of fifty years of life in the house of Medina Sidonia, where he claimed his parents had also resided. Medina would have been witness to all the years Cabeza de Vaca spent in ducal service. As we will see below, he knew Cabeza de Vaca from his service under the dukes and testified to that effect in Cabeza de Vaca’s favor in the *probanzas* the *adelantado* submitted to the Council of the Indies sometime before 1551.

Pedro de Medina (*Crónica* 219–21 [bk. 6, chap. 5]) transcribed into his *Crónica* the document by which Juan II of Castile established the ducal house of Medina Sidonia on 17 February 1445 as one of a number of privileges he granted to the sixth lord of Sanlúcar, third count of Niebla, Juan Alonso de Guzmán, for his service to the crown in the Castilian king’s war with the king of Navarre. Medina (*Crónica* 206 [bk. 6, chap. 3]) claimed that though the ducal house of Medina Sidonia was not the first ever to be formed by



specificity while at the same time acknowledging the legal formula pertaining to twenty-five years of age as that of legal majority.

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a king of Castile, it was still the oldest one surviving in his day, having been formed before those of Arévalo, Alba, and Medinaceli. Cabeza de Vaca entered the house of Medina Sidonia at least by 1503 (between eleven and eighteen years of age), and, as we will see below, he served under the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth dukes of the house during a period of nearly twenty-five years.

Cabeza de Vaca's years of service to the dukes of Medina Sidonia coincide with a complex period of Andalusia's history, marked by the full recovery of Castilian territory from the Muslims and Castile's expansion into northern Africa during the reigns of Ferdinand and Isabel and that of their grandson Charles. Since the fifteenth century, great lords like the dukes of Medina Sidonia had provided ships for expeditions aimed not only at trade but also at privateering against Moorish shipping and the coastal towns of Granada and North Africa (Pike 31). With respect to the crown, Ferdinand's African policy was limited to seizing and fortifying key points along the North African coast, but this thin coastal occupation proved to be disastrous. By 1529, according to Elliott (*Imperial Spain* 53), the Barbarossas had recaptured the Peñón de Árgel, thus laying the foundation for an Algerian state under Turkish dominion and providing a strategic base for corsair attacks against Spanish navigation along its vital Mediterranean routes. By 1541, when Charles sent an expedition against Algiers, it ended in disaster (Elliott, *Imperial Spain* 53). The full consequences of the tentative actions taken by Ferdinand along the North African coast, in which men of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's generation participated, would be realized by his late adulthood when in 1559 he ransomed Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca from Algiers.

According to Gil ("Notas" 55), Cabeza de Vaca was listed in 1503 among the "Cavalleros de Jerez" and was supported by the duke that year for a sum of 15,000 ducats, as account books in the Archivo Ducal de Medina Sidonia indicate. Thus, the date of 1513 as the earliest mention of Cabeza de Vaca's service to the duke (Maura, *Arte* 14) must be revised; he began to serve in the ducal house of Medina Sidonia a full decade earlier. Maura (*Arte* 14) and Gil ("Notas" 55) both cited the 1513 account books of the ducal palace because they listed Cabeza de Vaca at that time as a page of the duke. We learn from documents in the ducal archives (Maura, *Arte* 31–33) that other members of Cabeza de Vaca's family, such as his cousin Francisco Estopiñán and his brother Juan de Vera, were also attached to the duke's court.

Cabeza de Vaca evidently entered into ducal service in the house of Medina Sidonia under Juan de Guzmán (1464–1507), third duke of the house during the period 1492–1507. Though Juan de Guzmán's father, Enrique de Guzmán (d. 1492; second duke of Medina Sidonia, 1468–92), had officially recognized Ferdinand and Isabel as the legitimate heirs to the throne of Castile in

1473 (CDIE 21:553–62), the Andalusian aristocracy maintained a high degree of independence during this period that brought Muslim dominion in southern Spain to an end. According to Pedro de Medina (*Crónica* 312–13 [bk. 9, chap. 1]), Isabel had long attempted to convince Enrique de Guzmán to allow Gibraltar to pass into the royal possession. When Enrique died, the Catholic Kings moved to seize Gibraltar, successfully doing so in 1501–02 and causing animosity between themselves and the ducal house of Medina Sidonia.

Whereas Juan de Guzmán's independence from the crown was disagreeable for the Catholic Kings with respect to Gibraltar, it was favorable regarding his (and ultimately their) designs on northern Africa. Only a few years before Cabeza de Vaca came into the duke of Medina Sidonia's service, the *comendador* Pedro Estopiñán (Cabeza de Vaca's *tío político*, married to Doña Beatriz de Zurita or Figueroa) took possession of the city and stronghold of Melilla on the northern coast of Africa under Juan de Guzmán's order in 1496 after Ferdinand had determined the crown's conquest of it to be undesirable because of the potential expenses of having to protect it (Medina, *Crónica* 317–21 [bk. 9, chaps. 2–3]). Medina (*Crónica* 319 [bk. 9, chap. 2]) claimed that Estopiñán departed from Sanlúcar in September 1496, and a few documents pertaining to the conquest and maintenance of Melilla that span the period between 18 October 1497 and 13 December 1500 have been published in CDIE (36:468–88).

Pedro de Medina (*Crónica* 321–22 [bk. 9, chap. 4]) remarked that the Castilian crown followed the duke of Medina Sidonia's example of African conquest, capturing "Mazalquivir and Orán and Tripol and Bogía and One [*sic*] and la Goleta"; these events occurred between 1508 and 1510 (see below, sec. 5.E). During the time after Cabeza de Vaca entered the house of Medina Sidonia, Juan de Guzmán extended his own African conquest to Cazaza under the command of Gonzalo Mariño de Ribera (Medina, *Crónica* 321–22 [bk. 9, chap. 4]), Guzmán's brother-in-law by his second wife, Leonor de Guzmán y Zúñiga (CDIE 36:497); the duke had made his brother-in-law *alcalde* of Melilla sometime prior to this conquest of Cazaza, and his expedition set out for Cazaza from Melilla. Ferdinand and Isabel granted concessions to Juan de Guzmán for the conquest of Cazaza on 4 October 1504 (CDIE 36:489–92). The conquest of northern Africa that his employer pursued must not have been foreign to the young Cabeza de Vaca, because, as we have discussed above (sec. 2.B), his paternal grandfather had made successful raids against Larache and Fadala on the northwestern coast of Africa on behalf of the Catholic Kings.

The next three dukes of Medina Sidonia must have been a few years younger than Cabeza de Vaca when he entered into ducal service. All were sons of Juan de Guzmán. The first, Enrique, was the son of Juan de Guzmán's first wife, Isabel de Velasco. The second, Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, and the third, Juan Alonso de Guzmán, were the sons of Juan de Guzmán's second wife, Leonor de Guzmán y Zúñiga, mentioned above. Apparently in an effort to assure the independence of the house of Medina Sidonia by joining it to the holdings of the count of Ureña, Juan de Guzmán made arrangements prior to his death in 1507 for the marriage of his heir, Enrique de Guzmán, to María de Archidona, daughter of the count of Ureña, Juan Téllez Girón; he likewise arranged the marriage of Mencía de Guzmán, one of his daughters by Isabel Velasco, to the count's son, Pedro Girón (Medina, *Crónica* 325–26 [bk. 9, chap. 6]). Pedro de Medina claimed that at the time these arrangements were made, Pedro Girón was an adult (i.e., twenty-five or older), Mencía de Guzmán was sixteen, María de Archidona was fifteen, and Enrique de Guzmán was eleven.

After Queen Isabel died (26 November 1504) and Philip and Juana had come to Castile to govern, Juan de Guzmán went to the court at Valladolid to pledge allegiance to the crown and to negotiate the return of Gibraltar to the house of Medina Sidonia. According to Medina (*Crónica* 323–24 [bk. 9, chap. 5]), Philip and Juana granted Guzmán permission to take the city peacefully or by force if it resisted. Medina stated further that Guzmán learned of Philip's death (25 September 1506) upon his arrival in Seville as he returned from court. The king's death apparently caused the people of Gibraltar to reject the crown's concession to Guzmán, and thus Guzmán sent his young son Enrique, under the care of his tutor, to lay siege to the city (Medina, *Crónica* 324 [bk. 9, chap. 5]). Martire d'Anghiera (*Epistolario* 2:153–54 [bk. 18, letter 317]) identified this tutor as Pedro Girón in a letter of 22 November 1506. Medina (*Crónica* 325 [bk. 9, chap. 5]) said that Juan de Guzmán was forced to abandon the unsuccessful siege during the winter of 1506–07. In July 1507, Juan de Guzmán died, leaving Pedro Girón as the custodian of the heir to the ducal house, Enrique de Guzmán, fourth duke of Medina Sidonia. Despite Juan de Guzmán's provisions for division of the treasure he had left in the *villa* of Niebla between his eldest son and his second wife, Leonor de Guzmán, Medina (*Crónica* 338 [bk. 10, chap. 5]) claimed it was public knowledge that the young duke's guardian, Pedro Girón, had carried off this treasure.

Following Philip's death, King Ferdinand returned from Italy to rule Castile, and this once again engendered problems between the house of Medina Sidonia and the crown. Pedro Girón, who was evidently developing his own designs on the ducal house, refused Ferdinand's orders given to

him at the Cortes held in Burgos in 1508 to relinquish to the crown his guardianship over Enrique de Guzmán (Medina, *Crónica* 331–32 [bk. 10, chap. 1]; Anghiera, *Epistolario* 2:248 [bk. 21, letter 392]). Ferdinand refused to recognize the marriage of Enrique to Pedro Girón's sister, María de Archidona, since he wished to limit the powers of the house of Medina Sidonia by solidly allying it to the crown by marrying Enrique to his granddaughter, Ana of Aragon. Finally, when the royal family came to Seville later in 1508, Pedro Girón kidnapped Enrique from their place of residence in the city and carried him off to Portugal, where he remained until 1513. Ferdinand had the ancient *villa* of Niebla, loyal to Girón, sacked for refusing to obey his orders (Medina, *Crónica* 332–36 [bk. 10, chaps. 2–3]; Anghiera, *Epistolario* 2:268–70 [bk. 21, letters 406, 407]). As we will see below, Cabeza de Vaca was absent from the ducal house at least during the period from August 1511 until perhaps sometime in 1513, but he evidently returned to witness events, according to the hearsay testimony of others, pertinent to an emerging problem of ducal succession in the house of Medina Sidonia.

Pedro Girón finally returned to Castile in 1513, after his father and other nobles had smoothed things over with Ferdinand. The heir to the ducal house of Medina Sidonia, Enrique de Guzmán, who had come back to Andalusia with Girón, died that same year. Ferdinand no doubt received the news of Enrique's death with certain satisfaction, since it distanced Girón from the affairs of the house of Medina Sidonia by ending his supervision of Enrique as well as breaking one of the links between the families of the count of Ureña and the duke of Medina Sidonia. Additionally, it again made possible the realization of Ferdinand's wish to link the ducal house of Medina Sidonia to the royal family. Though we have not discovered a document explicitly stating he did so, Ferdinand evidently realized his objective through arrangement of the marriage of his granddaughter, Ana of Aragon, to the next duke of Medina Sidonia (the fifth), Alonso Pérez de Guzmán.

The fact that Alonso Pérez had not reached the age of majority and was a ward of his mother, Leonor de Guzmán y Zúñiga, when Enrique de Guzmán died must have been a key factor that led Pedro Girón to attempt to take the house of Medina Sidonia by force after Enrique's death, as Pietro Martire d'Anghiera (*Epistolario* 3:109 [bk. 26, letter 518]) recorded that he attempted to do in a letter of 20 March 1513. Martire stated that Girón claimed Leonor de Guzmán's two sons (Enrique's half brothers) were not legitimate heirs to the house of Medina Sidonia and that Medina Sidonia should go instead to his own wife, Mencía de Guzmán (Enrique's full sister). Pedro de Medina (*Crónica* 338–39 [bk. 10, chap. 5]) described how Girón took possession of the castle of Medina, and he explained that Girón left the castle only following the arrival in Medina of both the emissary of King Ferdinand and

Girón's own father; the former threatened attack on the city by Ferdinand's armies, and the latter came to dissuade his son from continuing his efforts. Pedro de Medina said he personally saw carts carrying away the supplies and munitions that Girón had brought to the castle for thirty days in succession when Girón finally withdrew from the city.

Leonor de Guzmán took possession of the holdings of the house of Medina Sidonia in April 1513. Powers of attorney pertaining to these matters and embedded in the record of Per Afán de Ribera's 10 May formal act of possession of the African stronghold of Cazaza in her name for her son Alonso Pérez are dated 6 April and 8 April 1513 (CDIE 36:493–99). Pedro de Medina (*Crónica* 340 [bk. 10, chap. 6]) stated that Leonor de Guzmán took her family first to Medina, where the inhabitants of the jurisdiction of the house of Medina Sidonia came to recognize Alonso Pérez as the legitimate possessor of the house of Medina Sidonia, and then to Seville.

Pedro de Medina (*Crónica* 340 [bk. 10, chap. 6]) claimed further that because it was rumored that Pedro Girón would again attempt to take the city of Medina, Gonzalo Mariño (Leonor's brother) came to protect it in the year 1515. Pietro Martire d'Anghiera (*Epistolario* 3:220 [bk. 29, letter 567]) claimed on 25 February 1516, shortly after Ferdinand's death on 23 January 1516, that Pedro Girón had formed an army to attack the duke, possessor of Medina Sidonia, and his brother, because he did not see them as the legitimate heirs to the house, and that Girón was also laying siege to Gibraltar.

Pedro de Medina (*Crónica* 340–41 [bk. 10, chap. 6]) explained that after Leonor de Guzmán's death, Alonso Pérez de Guzmán was left to rule but that he was unable to do so, because he was "doltish from birth and incapable of ruling a realm, not knowing how to write, or sign his name or anything else, nor did he have the mental capability of knowing how, and that he did and said things of no sense." Medina (*Crónica* 342–43 [bk. 11, chap. 1]) said that because of Alonso Pérez's deficiencies, his younger brother Juan Alonso de Guzmán had taken responsibility for the house of Medina Sidonia and that having two dukes had caused great confusion among the subjects of Medina Sidonia. Martire's mention of Girón's attack on both the duke and his brother was evidently an allusion to the dual governance by the two brothers at the time (i.e., Juan Alonso's governance in Alonso Pérez's stead).

According to Medina, this situation was finally resolved in 1518, when the issue was brought before King Charles and the house was assigned officially to Juan Alonso, then age twenty-two, as the sixth duke of Medina Sidonia. Medina stated further that Juan Alonso was married to Ferdinand's granddaughter, Ana of Aragon, and that shortly thereafter she gave birth to Juan Claro de Guzmán, to whose widow Medina's 1561 *Crónica* was

dedicated. Medina (*Crónica* 365 [bk. 11, chap. 12]) stated that Juan Claro, son of Juan Alonso de Guzmán and Ana of Aragon, died in January 1556 at age thirty-seven, from which we may deduce that he was born in 1518 or 1519. Medina (*Crónica* 344 [bk. 11, chap. 1]) said that Alonso Pérez lived three years or somewhat more after the house of Medina Sidonia had been officially transferred to his brother Juan Alonso and that during this entire time Juan Alonso always treated Alonso Pérez with great respect as his older brother, even though “he did and said things as a man who had lost his wits.”

Medina never suggested at any point in his *Crónica* that Alonso Pérez had himself ever been married to Ana of Aragon or that he was still in control of the house of Medina Sidonia at the time the Comunero revolt began in 1520. This contradicts Pietro Martire d’Anghiera’s (*Epistolario* 4:84–85 [bk. 33, letter 695]) 8 November 1520 statement that the duchess of Medina Sidonia, “the granddaughter of the Catholic King Ferdinand,” was maintaining her loyalty to Seville in the face of the Comunero revolt and that he had heard nothing about “her husband, who is incapable and a complete fool.” On 20 April 1521, Martire d’Anghiera (*Epistolario* 4:151 [bk. 34, letter 719]) explained that when he spoke of the duke of Medina Sidonia he was speaking really of the duchess, the granddaughter of Ferdinand, who was “the husband of her husband,” because the duke was “one of the most renowned idiots.”

#### 5.A. *Witness to Marital Impotence*

In 1519, according to documentation Gil (“Notas” 55) cited from the Archivo de Protocolos de Sevilla, Cabeza de Vaca was listed as a *camarero*, or steward, of the duke, apparently either Alonso Pérez de Guzmán or his brother Juan Alonso. As we will see below, Cabeza de Vaca must have returned to the ducal house of Medina Sidonia near the time of Enrique de Guzmán’s death in 1513. We have given the lengthy account of the succession of the dukes of Medina Sidonia to contextualize a most unusual legal testimony, pertaining to the ducal house in which Cabeza de Vaca’s hearsay testimony appears, to which we alluded above; it has recently been published twice by Maura (*Arte* 31–33; *Naufragios* 22–24), and we cite from the first publication, which contains some testimony not reproduced in the second.

The statements for the case in which Cabeza de Vaca’s name was invoked were ostensibly collected in early 1532, when Cabeza de Vaca was presumed long dead. He was, in fact, somewhere on the Texas coast acting as a merchant among native groups between coastal and inland regions and seeking the means by which to make his way somehow to the Spanish settlement at Pánuco. Juan Francisco Maura located the documentation in the Archivo Ducal de Medina Sidonia and transcribed portions of the testimony given

in the proceedings (*legajo* 937) concerning the annulment of the marriage of the duke and duchess of Medina Sidonia, Don Alonso de Guzmán and Doña Ana de Aragón, and validation of Doña Ana's marriage to the duke Juan Alonso de Guzmán. The proceedings were concluded by 19 March 1532, on which date the archbishop of Seville, Don Alonso Manrique, offered his formal opinion to the papal delegate, Pedro León, *notario apostólico* (Maura, *Arte* 31). By this time Juan Alonso's brother Alonso Pérez must have been dead, and Juan Claro, Juan Alonso's son by Ana of Aragon, would have been approximately fourteen years old.

The basis for the annulment was to be the sexual impotence of Alonso Pérez, but the most notable aspect of the testimony as Maura presented it is that some four witnesses made assertions not about what they had witnessed but instead about what they claimed the now-presumed-dead Cabeza de Vaca had told them at the time he had served the duke in his palace (evidently during the years between 1513 and 1527). Maura does not communicate the final disposition on the case, but he cited its testimony to attribute a "picaresque" element to Cabeza de Vaca's life ("refleja la dimensión pícaro de Álvar Núñez en su juventud") (Maura, *Arte* 31). Cabeza de Vaca's acquisition of the information he possessed concerning this investigation, whose end was apparently to affirm the legitimacy of Ana of Aragon's marriage to Juan Alonso de Guzmán on the basis of Alonso Pérez's impotence, was hardly a matter of picaresque detail. It would have been intentionally collected by the attendants of the ducal house, perhaps at the order of Juan Alonso de Guzmán himself, for its pertinence to the succession of perhaps the most powerful noble house in the kingdom of Castile after the royal house itself.

In 1532, the witness Francisco Estopiñán, Cabeza de Vaca's *primo hermano* (Sancho de Sopranis, "Datos" 85), attributed to the long-departed Cabeza de Vaca remarks about Alonso Pérez's sexual behavior (and lack of it), qualifying his testimony by saying that he himself was not at the home of the duke and duchess at the time: "[i]t had happened in the time he has stated, and he thinks Álvar Núñez is dead. At this time, the witness himself [Francisco Estopiñán] was away from the home of these lords" [(h)abía pasado el tiempo que tiene dicho, y cree que es muerto Álvar Núñez. En este tiempo el testigo (Francisco Estopiñán) estaba fuera de casa de estos señores] (Maura, *Arte* 32). The witness Juan de Lasarte gave even more sizzling testimony; he claimed to have been told by Cabeza de Vaca and Íñigo de Guzmán certain things that they had seen, and about Cabeza de Vaca he said, "Álvar Núñez died in the Indies, and he [Íñigo de Guzmán] does not remember when he told it to him" [Álvar Núñez fue muerto en las Indias y no recuerda cuando se lo dijo] (Maura, *Arte* 32). Only one witness



of those cited, Juan Manuel Olando, claimed that he had participated with Cabeza de Vaca in the events he described, namely, bringing to the married duke two or three women who attempted but failed to arouse him. Olando likewise testified that even Cabeza de Vaca's brother Juan de Vera thought him to be deceased ("así mismo cree que es ya difunto") (Maura, *Arte* 33). Among the laws ruling marriage in the Alfonsine code, "De los casamientos" (Castile 2:fiur [pt. 4, tit. 2, law 17]), impotence was a just cause to prohibit or dissolve marriage: "[t]he twelfth thing that is an obstruction to marriage or that undoes it if it is already formalized, is when a man is of such a frigid nature that he cannot lie with the woman" [(1)a xii cosa que embarga el casamiento, o le desfaze si es fecho, es quando el ome ha tan fría natura que non puede yazer con la muger].

From the portions of testimony Maura published, the absent Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca seems to have been used as the principal witness in defense of the dissolution of the feeble-minded duke's marriage. Although other members of his family were attached to the ducal court, Cabeza de Vaca seems to have served as a convenient source of hearsay evidence. The fragmentary nature of Maura's reporting on this testimony, his failure to give any statement on why this suit was not carried out until sometime between 1527 and 1532, and the curious nature of the reported testimony (at one point even including quoted speech, particularly uncharacteristic of this sort of legal testimony) have given us cause to believe that it has been at least decontextualized and perhaps modified or even partially invented.

If the testimony is indeed legitimate, Cabeza de Vaca most likely made the observations that others reported in about 1532 between 1513 and 1519, when he may have been anywhere from twenty-one to thirty-four years of age and perhaps already married (see below). The duke Alonso Pérez's mental and physical deficiencies seem to have been widely known, and Cabeza de Vaca's observation of this man, who was probably a few years his junior, in order to determine whether this heir to the ducal house of Medina Sidonia would be able to procreate and thereby assure the continuance of his lineage would fall easily within the boundaries of Cabeza de Vaca's service to the ducal house.

When we consider Pedro de Medina's and Pietro Martire's historical characterizations of Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, Maura's discussion of observations attributed to Cabeza de Vaca about the duke is misleading; Maura implied that Alonso Pérez de Guzmán was a normal individual (that is, in possession of his mental faculties) who did not suffer from impotence but simply had considerably less sexual interest in women than in his male personal attendants. With respect to Cabeza de Vaca, the testimony attributed to him concerning the duke is completely devoid of the notions

of voyeurism and latent homosexuality that Maura seems to attribute to the caballero from Jerez. By decontextualizing his citation of fragments of uncertain validity from the impotency investigation and introducing them by citing Cabeza de Vaca's mention in the *relación* of the homosexual practices of Indians of the Texas coast (characterizing Cabeza de Vaca on this point by a "somewhat dubious ingenuousness"), Maura (*Arte* 30) distorted the character and content of this not uncommon legal proceeding.

#### 5.B. Cabeza de Vaca's Marriage to María Marmolejo

Cabeza de Vaca's marriage, which dates at least from 1520 (Gil, "Notas" 56), is a subject about which little information is available. Morris Bishop (10) could not identify Cabeza de Vaca's wife by name, even though her husband made reference to her in the litigation concerning his governorship of Río de la Plata. There, referenced by Bishop (10) as "Arch. Ind., Justicia 1131, 8A, also 1131 last document," the *adelantado* claimed that she had become destitute, defending his honor and supporting herself during his successive journeys to the Indies.

Juan Gil ("Notas" 56) revealed her name to be María Marmolejo, the daughter of García Marmolejo and Isabel de Herrera. Gil ("Notas" 57) discovered in the Archivo de Protocolos de Sevilla the record of a suit she filed in 1520 to defend her rights to a paternal inheritance; the documentation indicates that she was married to Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca at the time. When the final division of wealth was made in 1525, she was awarded only a modest sum (Gil, "Notas" 57). Gil ("Notas" 58) suggested that Cabeza de Vaca's marriage offered a key to why he participated in defeating the frustrated Comunero uprising in Seville that was openly directed against the *conversos*, first, because the Marmolejos were a *converso* family, and second, because Cabeza de Vaca loyally served the house of Medina Sidonia, which had protected the *conversos* and whose intervention spared them and defeated the rival house of Arcos, which had promoted the insurgency. Haliczzer (183) considered that the "nominally pro-Comunero rising" in Seville on 16 September 1520 was but another episode in the rivalry between the houses of Medina Sidonia and Arcos with little popular support. Yet according to Pike (103), the attack on the *conversos* in the would-be uprising led by Juan de Figueroa was real; the immediate goal was to oust *conversos* from the city government and then stimulate the populace to attack them and destroy their property. A group of *converso* businessmen took this threat seriously and called on the Sevillian authorities to defend them; the duke of Medina Sidonia's timely intervention stemmed the revolt. The hostility toward anti-*converso* sentiment in influential segments of the population in

which *conversos* were well represented helps explain the defeat (Pike 103). We consider the topic of Cabeza de Vaca's service to the crown against the Comunero revolt below (sec. 5.D).

Cabeza de Vaca's service to the ducal house of Medina Sidonia continued through the mid-1520s. In the document of 4 August 1524 by which Álvaro Núñez transferred his brother Juan de Vera's estate to their sister Doña María (Sancho de Sopranis, "Notas" 238), the future *adelantado* described himself as *camarero* to "the illustrious and very magnificent lord the duke of Medina Sidonia." A year later, an order of 10 June 1525 from the duke to one of his employees to reimburse Cabeza de Vaca for fabric (black silk-satin) purchased by the latter on the duke's behalf in Valladolid reveals that Cabeza de Vaca continued in the duke's service through that time (Maura, *Arte* 15). By that date, Cabeza de Vaca had a manservant of his own, representing, according to Gil ("Notas" 55), an ascent in his social importance. It was perhaps in that year that Cabeza de Vaca first made the acquaintance of Pánfilo de Narváez, who, as we discuss elsewhere (chap. 1, secs. 1–2), came to Toledo from Cuba in 1525. By February 1527 Cabeza de Vaca had evidently left the service of Juan Alonso de Guzmán, as he prepared to depart for the lands of the Río de las Palmas and *Florida*.

The scattered details of Cabeza de Vaca's service in the ducal house of Medina Sidonia document his presence there at various moments and for uncertain periods of time between 1503 and 1527, when he departed for the Indies. References in his 1542 *relación* and the testimony he organized around 1551 in connection with the suit brought against him by the Council of the Indies document his military service for the house of Medina Sidonia on behalf of the crown prior to his departure for the Indies.

#### 5.C. *Military Service in Italy (1511 to 1513)*

When Cabeza de Vaca (f42v) commented on the warfare skills of the Indians who inhabited the coastal regions of Texas from the island of Malhado to near the Río Grande, he observed, "They are all warlike people, and they have as much cunning to protect themselves from their enemies as they would have if they had been raised in Italy and in continuous war." According to testimony given on Cabeza de Vaca's behalf in the trial concerning his governorship of Río de la Plata (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 8a, f559r–f582v), several witnesses cited his wartime service in Italy, including his participation in the battle of Ravenna of 11 April 1512. Afterward, he appeared in the battle at Bologna and the siege of the lands and fortress of the duke of Ferrara. As a reward, he was made *alférez* (royal standard bearer) of the city of Gaeta, near Naples (Bishop 9).

Additional testimony pertaining to the Río de la Plata suits reveals that in 1520 Cabeza de Vaca participated in the recovery of the Alcázar of Seville, which had been taken by the Comuneros under the command of Juan de Figueroa on 16 September 1520 (Bishop 9); Cabeza de Vaca was given the guardianship of one of the gates of the city (Osario) in compensation for his service (Bishop 10). Next, according to the *información* he prepared for his defense before the Council of the Indies regarding Río de la Plata, he participated in the capture of Tordesillas and the battle of Villalar, which definitively defeated the Comunero rebellion. He also found himself in the battle of Puente de la Reina, in Navarre, in the first of the wars occasioned by the rivalry of Charles I of Spain and Francis I of France; he added that he had participated “in everything else that occurred until His Majesty arrived from Flanders,” evidently referring to the emperor Charles’s return to Spain in July 1522. This account is cited by Torres Ramírez (24–25), who did not designate its archival identification.

These few questions from his *probanzas* reveal the full spectrum of military action that Cabeza de Vaca as a Castilian man at arms could expect to see in the years that spanned Ferdinand’s North African campaigns and his defense and expansion of Aragonese territories in Italy as well as the first years of the reign of the new king from Flanders, soon to be Holy Roman emperor, who faced the domestic challenge of the Comuneros in Spain and the rivalry with France abroad. As part of Ferdinand’s effort to protect Aragonese possessions in Italy and contain the French (Elliott, *Imperial Spain* 138), Cabeza de Vaca sailed with Alonso de Carvajal to Naples, which had been newly reconquered from the French by Ferdinand in 1504 and had been governed since 1509 by the viceroy Ramón de Cardona under the jurisdiction of the Council of Aragon (Elliott, *Imperial Spain* 132). The objective was to aid Pope Julius II’s forces against the aggression of the French, commanded by Gaston de Foix, the duke of Nemours (Gandía, *De la Torre* 103). The pope battled the French for the possession of Bologna, the fleet of Don Pedro Navarro left its coastal African campaign to go to Italy, and Cardona laid siege to Bologna. The battle against the French took place on 4 February 1512 and produced Cardona’s retreat; on 11 April 1512 the French defeated the Spanish at the great battle of Ravenna (Gandía, *De la Torre* 104–05). As the testimony will indicate, Cabeza de Vaca fought in both these major battles.

As already suggested, the Comunero revolt did not penetrate deeply into Andalusia. This was so primarily because the aristocracy was dominant in municipal politics throughout the area and because the region was concerned above all with preserving Granada for the Christians in the face of Morisco hostility and defending the southern coast against North African incursions that plagued Andalusia at the time (Haliczzer 183). The

Comunero question was viewed in Andalusia as a Castilian problem, far removed from the urgent need to maintain Christian unity and avoid at all costs destabilizing that situation with intestine struggles. Apart from the defeat of Juan de Figueroa in Seville by the forces of the duke of Medina Sidonia, Cabeza de Vaca was sent by the duke to court at Valladolid, where he arrived in time to witness the taking of Tordesillas on 5 December 1520 (Gandía, *De la Torre* 114; Haliczzer 189). Afterward, he followed the imperial forces to Villalar, where the Comuneros were definitively defeated on 23 April 1521 (Gandía, *De la Torre* 114; Haliczzer 204).

From the available testimony, it seems that Cabeza de Vaca participated in the military confrontations but not in the political debates. The closed city council of royal appointment, so egregious to the Comuneros, who proposed the transformation of oligarchical city government into a junta that included parish representatives (Haliczer 205), was exactly the model Cabeza de Vaca took to the Indies with his royal appointment as city councilman for the first municipality to be established in *Florida* (see below, sec. 6). The Comunero quests for the diminution of central control and the precedence of local needs over national ones (Haliczer 205) were certainly challenges the aristocratic *adelantado* was unprepared to address when he carried his royal appointment as governor to Río de la Plata. Indeed, a “Comunero” motif—of uncertain origin and possibly invented—appears in some accounts of Cabeza de Vaca’s humiliating return from Asunción to Castile. Gandía (*Historia de la conquista* 203n52) declared that the caravel on which Cabeza de Vaca traveled was called *Comuneros*, stating that Groussac was the first to reveal the name but had failed to give his source. Gandía then cited a “list of those who came in the caravel *Comuneros*” [lista de los que vinieron en la caravela *Comuneros*] and likewise omitted giving his own source.

Morris Bishop and Enrique de Gandía were the first to use the material Cabeza de Vaca presented for the trial concerning his governorship of Río de la Plata and thus illuminate the years of Cabeza de Vaca’s pre-1527 military service in Spain and abroad. Both Bishop and Gandía examined the Archivo General de Indias testimony by various witnesses; Bishop’s *The Odyssey of Cabeza de Vaca* appeared in 1933, and Gandía announced in his 1932 *Historia de la conquista del Río de la Plata y del Paraguay* (213) that he had collected material on Cabeza de Vaca’s time in Italy; it subsequently appeared in his *De la Torre del Oro a las Indias* (1935).

We have transcribed and examined one of these sources (the one used and cited by Bishop 9–10) in detail: the “Relación sacada de la probanza hecha por parte del gobernador Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca en el pleito que trata con el licenciado Ágreda, fiscal de Su Magestad en el Real Consejo

de Indias” (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 8a, f559r–f582v). Since the testimonies are copied out and separated from the *probanzas* of which they originally formed a part, no dates are given for either the original *probanzas* or the *relación* into which their testimony is collected. However, the *probanzas* from which the *relación* was constructed were gathered between 1546 and 1552, according to the docketing of the Archivo General de Indias (Justicia 1131, pieza 22a, f1207r–f1401v), and they pertain to Cabeza de Vaca’s defense of his governorship of Río de la Plata. The docketing of this specific *relación* reveals that it was taken in late 1551 or early 1552 as part of his new appeal, after being sentenced on 18 March 1551 (see below, sec. 9.B). This is evident from the fact that the name of the prosecuting attorney is given as Ágreda. Martín Ruiz de Ágreda became the chief prosecuting attorney (variously called *fiscal*, *procurador fiscal*, or *promotor fiscal*) of the Council of the Indies on 13 June 1551 after a succession of acting *fiscales* (Santander, Rabanal, Verástegui) served after the death on 8 November 1550 of the *fiscal* Juan de Villalobos, who had originally prosecuted Cabeza de Vaca’s case in 1546. Ágreda served as *fiscal* until 26 May 1558 (Schäfer, *El Consejo Real* 1:366–67).

The *relación* assembled from the *probanzas* differs from the *probanza* format inasmuch as in a *probanza* a witness responds in private to an entire list of questions; there are seventy-six, for example, in the particular *interrogatorio* transcribed by Serrano y Sanz (2:109–35) for one of Cabeza de Vaca’s *probanzas* of 1546. The *relación* examined here reassembles the testimony taken in 1551; its organizing principle is no longer the witness but rather the question itself. Thus, this *relación*, which testifies to Cabeza de Vaca’s experience at arms in Italy and Spain prior to 1527, culls from a single *probanza* — or, most likely, from several — the answers given by various witnesses on the question of the *adelantado*’s pre-1527 military service. What is preserved is the witness’s actual testimony but not the date or place it was taken nor the home or profession of the witness or the general information about him given “as the law disposes,” according to the customary royal decree (Serrano y Sanz 2:105).

This type of *relación*, which constituted part of the official documentation, was obviously prepared to facilitate the coherent and assimilable presentation of information to the judges. J. H. Parry (*The Audiencia* 157–59) studied such judicial procedures in detail, and his account suggests that the *relator*, as an officer of the court, would have produced the type of written summary represented by the *relación* under consideration. The *relator*’s responsibilities were to see that the *interrogatorio* complied with the rules of evidence and contained neither material that was irrelevant nor questions that were considered leading (“preguntas sugestivas”) or otherwise inadmissible. The *relator* also presented the case for its first hearing before

the judges and the advocates of both parties. The first stage of the hearing was a summary by the *relator* of the questions of fact at issue. At the conclusion of the proceedings, the *relator* often provided a written summary with references and signed by himself and the respective advocates; with this “summary of fact before them” the judges proceeded to give judgment (Parry, *The Audiencia* 160).

The synthetic *relación* before us here was a judicial implement of the first type, summarizing the testimony on the major points made on the defendant’s behalf. With respect to the case concerning Cabeza de Vaca’s governorship of Río de la Plata, the testimonies regarding his earlier career would have served to elicit responses about his long and devoted service to the emperor and affirm his devotion to the security and well-being of the Spanish kingdoms in order to weaken the credibility of the criminal charges made against him. Of the twenty-two questions asked in AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 8a, folios 559–82, fragments of which are reproduced in Gandía (*De la Torre* 99–103, 109–13), we synthesize those relevant to the task:

Does the witness know whether Cabeza de Vaca as governor of Río de la Plata faithfully carried out the duties of his office, dispensing justice to all—Spaniards and Indians alike—in peace and tranquillity? (f560v, fourth question)

Does the witness know whether Cabeza de Vaca served His Majesty in the province of *Florida* where he had gone as treasurer and *alguacil mayor* and whether after the expedition was lost, with three other companions he was lost in the deserts and uninhabited lands, eating grasses and roots, going barefoot as when he was born and as a slave to the Indians for some ten years before coming to Nueva Galicia and Nueva España, traveling two thousand leagues in His Majesty’s service? (f561r–v, fifth question)

In addition to the said services and travails that Cabeza de Vaca endured in *Florida* and Río de la Plata, does the witness know whether he had earlier served His Majesty in Italy in the time of Don Ramón de Cardona and in these kingdoms of Spain at the time of the insurgency [the Comunero revolt]? (f561v–f562r, sixth question)

The testimony of five respondents is given to the fourth question: Fray Alonso Bautista, Fray Luis de Jerrezuelo, Fray Pedro Fernández, Álvaro de Colombres, and Pedro Estopiñán Cabeza de Vaca. From their answers, it is clear that Fray Pedro Fernández went to Río de la Plata on Cabeza de Vaca’s ship and was present there throughout the tenure of Cabeza de Vaca’s governance (f561r). Álvaro de Colombres was also present in Río de la Plata (f561r), as was Pedro Estopiñán, a most important witness on Cabeza de Vaca’s behalf who said he could vouch for Cabeza de Vaca’s

good governance but, no doubt to maintain his own credibility, made clear that he was speaking only for the time he had been with the *adelantado* (f561r).

The fifth question, about the *Florida* expedition, stepped back in time to a decade and a half earlier; in 1551, Cabeza de Vaca's remarkable experience had been known for almost fifteen years. Pedro Estopiñán testified that he had witnessed the armada's departure for *Florida* in 1527, that he knew that Cabeza de Vaca was lost for ten or eleven years, and that he believed him to have served the king very well on that mission (f561v). Four other witnesses—Fray Pedro Fernández, Alonso Cantero, Fray Luis Jerrezuelo, and Francisco Manosalvas—all attested to having heard about the expedition and Cabeza de Vaca's survival and the services he performed (f561v). No one disputed Cabeza de Vaca's claim, expressed in the *interrogatorio* (f561r), to have been appointed *alguacil mayor* of *Florida*. Evidently, by 1551 his friendly witnesses did not know, had forgotten, or overlooked the fact that this key position had been granted, as was customary, to the *adelantado* of the expedition, Pánfilo de Narváez (see below, sec. 6).

The sixth question of those compiled in 1551 required a much greater reach back in time and a search for witnesses who could respond about events that occurred between twenty-five and thirty-five years earlier. Of the trio of questions cited here, it would have been the most difficult and, in some ways, the most significant "character reference" of all. Fray Luis de Jerrezuelo did not go that far back in his response but rather testified that he considered Cabeza de Vaca's peregrinations and the deeds that God worked through him to have been miracles (f562r). Pedro Estopiñán, Luis Vázquez, Alonso Fernández de Benítez, Francisco Ortiz Viñatezo, Fray García de Lara, Francisco López Manuel, and Rodrigo de León all testified to Cabeza de Vaca's service in Italy. Most of these witnesses mentioned the Comunero insurgency in a vague manner, and only Pero López de Palacios Rubios de Biviero testified directly to it.

Pedro Estopiñán and Luis Vázquez testified that they had seen Cabeza de Vaca "leave the house of the mother of this witness" and "depart from this city," respectively, to go to Italy in 1511 in the service of King Ferdinand (f562r). (This testimony confirms Sancho de Sopranis's assertion that Cabeza de Vaca and his siblings moved to the home of their *tía carnal*, Pedro Estopiñán's mother, Doña Beatriz Cabeza de Vaca, after the death of their own mother in 1509 ["Datos" 90, 97; "Notas" 217–18].) Estopiñán had heard many persons say that Cabeza de Vaca had served during the tenure of Don Ramón de Cardona, and that he especially heard the captain Bartolomé de Sierra say that Cabeza de Vaca had served faithfully in the battle of Ravenna (f562r). Vázquez declared that he had seen Cabeza de Vaca return from Italy and



that he learned about his experiences there at the time of the Comunero revolt (f562r).

The remaining five witnesses testified to having served in Italy and to having been with him there. Alonso Fernández de Benítez was with Cabeza de Vaca under the command of Captain Bartolomé de Sierra (f562r); Francisco Ortiz gave the same testimony, adding that he and Cabeza de Vaca had gone to Italy together (f562v). They must have traveled to Italy as part of the company of Captain Alonso de Carabazal (Carvajal), who was mentioned by the witness Fray García de Lara as having been Cabeza de Vaca's commander (f562v). The Franciscan Fray García was with Ferdinand's forces and in Cabeza de Vaca's company when they took Naples, and they were likewise together in the attack on Bologna and the fortress of the duke of Ferrara. Although Fray García returned to Spain before Cabeza de Vaca did, he had it on good authority that Cabeza de Vaca spent a long time in Italy in the service of the Catholic Kings (f562v). Francisco López Manuel, who was stationed in Lombardy, estimated that the time Cabeza de Vaca spent serving in Italy was "two years, more or less" (f562v). Rodrigo de León (f563r) testified that he was in Naples in 1512 when Cabeza de Vaca arrived "very battered" [muy destrozado] from the battle at Ravenna. León also testified that Cabeza de Vaca was appointed *alférez* (standard bearer, lieutenant) of the city of Gaeta "in the service of His Majesty and of the Catholic Kings."

Together, these testimonies offer a significant glimpse of Cabeza de Vaca's service in Italy. In the approximately two years' time he spent there, he took part in a number of military actions, served with honor, and was recognized with the appointment as *alférez* of Gaeta before returning to Spain. From the records of the Archivo Ducal de Medina Sidonia, we learn that he returned to Castile to the service of the duke (either Alonso Pérez or Juan Alonso de Guzmán). A decade later he participated in the suppression of the Comunero rebellion in the duke's service.

#### 5.D. *Military Service in Castile (1520 to 1521)*

Pero López de Palacios Rubios testified to Cabeza de Vaca's royal service of 1521 (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 8a, f562v–f563r). Palacios Rubios recalled that he had been in the city of Seville in 1521, "in the time of the Comuneros" [en tiempo de las comunidades], when Juan de Figueroa took the Alcázar; immediately afterward, the caballeros of the house of Medina Sidonia, among them Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, battled the fort and won it, imprisoning Figueroa, liberating the Alcázar, and leaving it under the command of Don Juan de Portugal. Ever since that time, said Palacios

Rubios, Cabeza de Vaca had served the king well and loyally in all matters. He did not know if Cabeza de Vaca had ever been properly rewarded (one of the *interrogatorio*'s questions), but he asserted that Cabeza de Vaca invested great sums of money in the Río de la Plata enterprise and that he carried great debts as a result (f563r).

Gandía (*De la Torre* 111–12) presented additional testimony on Cabeza de Vaca's service in the Comunero rebellion. Pedro de Medina, the *alcalde* of the houses of the duke of Medina Sidonia whose 1561 account we have been considering above, replied to the question about whether "the said Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was with the other caballeros and servants of the duke of Medina who assisted in routing Juan de Figueroa from the *alcázar* and capturing him" by stating that Cabeza de Vaca had done so and that he was a steward of the duke at the time (Gandía, *De la Torre* 111). Alonso de Carvajal and Francisco de la Corona, *jurado* (councilman), gave the same testimony (Gandía, *De la Torre* 113). The latter two also testified to Cabeza de Vaca's being appointed to the tenancy of one of the gates of the city, that of Osario, and that he defended and protected it until the city was restored to peace.

Pietro Martire d'Anghiera (*Epistolario* 4:56 [bk. 33, letter 686]) stated in a letter of 13 September 1520 that Pedro Girón was involved in the Comunero activities in Seville and that he had hoped by this means to carry to an end his attempts to acquire the duchy of Medina Sidonia. Martire d'Anghiera (*Epistolario* 4:84–85 [bk. 33, letter 695]) alluded to the rivalry between the dukes of Medina Sidonia, faithful to the crown, and Arcos, on the side of the Comuneros, and their competition for the city of Seville. As we mentioned above, Martire had attributed the maintenance of Andalusia's loyalty to the monarchy to Ferdinand's granddaughter Ana of Aragon, whom he implied was at that time married to Alonso Pérez de Guzmán. In his 1561 *Crónica*, Pedro de Medina (*Crónica* 344–48 [bk. 11, chaps. 2–3]) gave the somewhat different account that Juan Alonso de Guzmán had already succeeded to the title of duke of Medina Sidonia and that he and his caballeros had rescued the Alcázar from the Comuneros, protecting Seville and maintaining Andalusian loyalty to the crown until the emperor returned.

Cabeza de Vaca's subsequent series of questions in his 1550s *probanzas* produced the witnesses' affirmation of the following assertions (Gandía, *De la Torre* 112–13): Cabeza de Vaca was sent to the court at Valladolid on a mission from the duke of Medina Sidonia, and he was present at the liberation of Tordesillas on 20 December 1520 by the king's favorite, Fadrique Enríquez, "with the said lord governors, the admiral, and other grandees," according to the testimony of Pedro de Medina, Alonso de Carvajal, and Francisco de la Corona. Next, Cabeza de Vaca assisted "the said governors

in everything that pertained to His Majesty's service," and he was with them and assisted in the defeat of Juan de Padilla and his followers in Villalar; this was the final defeat of the Comuneros on 23 April 1521.

In book 33 of his *Epistolario* (4:3–118), Martire d'Anghiera made numerous references to Pedro Girón's involvement with the Comuneros first as a military captain between October and December 1520, then engaging in a dispute with the military captain Juan de Padilla, and finally leaving the Comunero cause in early 1521. Pedro de Medina (*Crónica* 346–48 [bk. 11, chap. 3]) stated that Juan Alonso de Guzmán sent his brother Pedro (the third son of Leonor de Guzmán), the count of Olivares, to Castile with a contingent of two hundred cavalry and two thousand infantry to aid the crown in fighting the Comuneros. Cabeza de Vaca was no doubt among them.

Overall, Cabeza de Vaca's military, administrative, and diplomatic career from 1511 to 1521 is presented as a distinguished record of devoted service. As testimony gathered by Gandía (*De la Torre* 113) and repeated by Pupo-Walker (*Naufragios* 29) indicates, Cabeza de Vaca moved in increasingly high circles; Francisco de la Corona testified, "The said Cabeza de Vaca always went about with the said lord governors [of Castile] and found himself with them in the battle that occurred in Puente de la Reina in Navarre against the French, and in everything else that transpired until His Majesty came from Flanders." Bishop (9–10) confirmed that the duke of Medina Sidonia not only named Cabeza de Vaca guardian of the gate of Osario in Seville but also often sent him as his representative to the royal court.

Among his efforts in Italy and Spain, his participation at arms against the Comunero rebellion stands out, for this insurrection constituted a year-long threat to the stability of the Spanish state at a time when Castilian troops were elsewhere occupied and the Castilian treasury, drained by Charles's demands abroad, could not sustain the effort required (Haliczer 4, 231). Although the September 1520 liberation of the Alcázar of Seville in which Cabeza de Vaca participated was less consequential as a defeat of the Comuneros than significant as the triumph of the ducal house of Medina Sidonia over that of Arcos, the participation of both on the side of the crown against the Comuneros a year later, when the threat of a genuinely popular movement on 10 March 1521 brought both houses together in an effort to defend aristocratic control of the city, contributed to the rebels' definitive defeat (Haliczer 183–84, 204–05). In general, the cities of the south in Andalusia did not participate in the demands against the crown made by the commercial middle class of the cities of northern Castile. In the south, governance and politics were still in the hands of the aristocracy, and loyalty to the crown on the part of the Andalusian nobility of all levels—including the middle ranks occupied by the Cabeza de Vaca family—was well demonstrated (Haliczer 204–05). In

this respect, the “gentleman from Jerez” and his compatriots were typical of the emperor’s Andalusian supporters.

5.E. *Djerba Campaign (1510, 1520) Contacts*

During the time he spent in Italy, Cabeza de Vaca would have had direct contact with soldiers who had participated in the 1510 expedition to Djerba, and he may also have met, during the time he spent fighting against the Comuneros in Castile in 1520–21, some of those who had participated in the successful capture of the island in 1520. In the same way Cabeza de Vaca compared the military prowess of the Indians of the Texas coast to that of the Italians, he compared the distribution of the native dwellings that he saw in the northwestern part of the Florida Peninsula to that of the dwellings of “the Gelves” (f11v). (We present in chapter 4, section 10 both our argument that this reference signaled, beyond any doubt, the island of Djerba off the coast of modern-day Tunisia and our discussion of the significance of the reference.)

There is no evidence to suggest that Cabeza de Vaca himself had firsthand knowledge of the layout of the island’s dwellings through involvement in either of two Spanish attempts, in 1510 and 1520, to capture this island from the Muslims, particularly since there is no reference to such participation in the *probanza* testimony he collected after his return from Río de la Plata. Although the Djerba campaigns do not pertain directly to Cabeza de Vaca’s own activities, we here consider briefly the details of the 1510 and 1520 Spanish attacks on the island in order to explain how he learned about the island’s topography as well as to put his reference to Djerba in its historical context, specifically as it applies to his knowledge about Castilian conquests on the coast of northern Africa. The facts suggest that the expedition that carried Cabeza de Vaca to Italy in August 1511 was formed largely by soldiers who had been planning to accompany King Ferdinand on an expedition of conquest to northern Africa, and this may have been the place Cabeza de Vaca had originally intended to go when the expedition was redirected to Italy.

Cabeza de Vaca’s first exposure to Spanish conquest on the northern coast of Africa was most likely related to Juan de Guzmán’s capture of Melilla (1496) and Cazaza (1504) during Cabeza de Vaca’s earliest years in the duke’s service. As we saw above, Cabeza de Vaca’s cousin Pedro Estopiñán testified that he had seen Cabeza de Vaca leave the house of his mother, that is, Álvar Núñez’s aunt Beatriz Cabeza de Vaca, for Italy in 1511. The fact that Francisco Ortiz claimed to have gone to Italy with Cabeza de Vaca suggests that the latter did indeed travel directly from Spain to Italy in 1511 and had probably been in the service of the ducal house of Medina Sidonia from at least 1503

until that time. Estopiñán's reflection on his cousin's service in Italy seems to suggest that going to Italy had been Cabeza de Vaca's intention from the time he departed from Jerez de la Frontera. The leader and some of the soldiers of a disastrous expedition to the island of Djerba also traveled to Italy in 1511, and it was almost certainly from them that Cabeza de Vaca learned, after he arrived in Italy, about the form of habitation of the island to which he referred almost thirty years later in writing the account of his *Florida* experience.

Between the years 1508 and 1510 Pedro Navarro made various trips between the southern coast of Spain and the northern coast of Africa, carrying out successful conquests at Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera, the Portuguese garrison at Arcilla, Mozalquivir, Oran, Bujía, and Tripoli during the course of two separate expeditions. With the advent of the conquest of Tripoli, Ferdinand, who was then ruling Castile, sent additional forces to aid Navarro under the command of the heir to the ducal house of Alba, García de Toledo. Once García de Toledo arrived, Navarro directed his forces to the island of Djerba. A substantial portion of Navarro's soldiers, including García de Toledo, disembarked on one of the last days of August 1510 and were massacred by the inhabitants of the island after having made a fatiguing march inland from the shore. Both Pietro Martire d'Anghiera (*Epistolario* 2:334 [bk. 23, letter 445]) and Alonso de Santa Cruz (1:43 [pt. 1, chap. 12]) claimed that nearly four thousand Christians died on Djerba. Navarro, who had not disembarked, successfully returned with the survivors of the expedition to Tripoli, where he left Diego de Vera—likely a relative of Cabeza de Vaca—in charge. Navarro was in Capri when he received orders from Ferdinand to go to Italy; he left approximately fifteen hundred surviving soldiers of the failed attack on Djerba at Gaeta in 1511.

Our summary of the events described above is taken from Heros's (106–69) nineteenth-century biography of Pedro Navarro. Citing Martire d'Anghiera's (*Epistolario* 2:349 [bk. 24, letter 451]) letter of 15 March 1511, Heros (166–67) explained that while Navarro was attacking Djerba, Ferdinand was organizing a large expedition on the southern coast of Spain that he intended personally to take to conquer strongholds on the African coasts; events in Italy involving the French eventually prohibited him from doing so. In a letter of 8 June 1511, Martire d'Anghiera (*Epistolario* 2:357 [bk. 24, letter 455]) recorded that the troops that Ferdinand had organized to go to North Africa were instead sent to Italy. According to Heros (168), at the beginning of August 1511, Ferdinand sent three thousand soldiers of those he had intended to take to the northern coast of Africa to Italy; these men embarked at Málaga for Naples under the command of Alonso de Carvajal, whom Fray García de Lara mentioned in his testimony for Cabeza de Vaca's

*probanza* (sec. 5.c). Cabeza de Vaca, Francisco Ortiz, and Fray García de Lara were obviously among these soldiers who, perhaps having planned originally to go to the African coast, were rerouted to Italy. Heros (169) claimed that Carvajal and his men arrived at Gaeta at the same time as Pedro Navarro and his Djerba survivors. The combined group set out for Bologna under the command of the viceroy of Naples, Ramón de Cardona. Fresh from the Djerba disaster, Navarro's soldiers must have related their misfortunes to the men who had come to Italy from Spain with Carvajal.

A second expedition to Djerba was successfully completed under Hugo de Moncada and Diego de Vera in the spring of 1520. On 24 June 1520, the emperor acknowledged receipt of a letter from Moncada dated 11 May 1520, from Djerba, confirming the capture of the island (CDIE 24:283–85). From Brussels, on 29 July of that same year, the emperor informed the viceroy of Sicily that Diego de Vera had already disembarked in Cartagena, Spain, with the cavalry of the Djerba expedition (CDIE 24:289–90). Santa Cruz (1:349 [pt. 2, chap. 33]) recorded that while Diego de Vera refused to come to the aid of the governors of Castile in opposition to the Comuneros, about half of his returning soldiers went to each side of the dispute. Martire d'Anghiera (*Epistolario* 4:77 [bk. 33, letter 691]) recorded the presence of the Djerba cavalry of the 1520 expedition near Valladolid on 3 October 1520; twenty days later he recorded that the constable of Castile had been successful in convincing some of the Djerba cavalry to fight the Comuneros for the crown and that Pedro Girón had persuaded others to fight for the Comuneros against the crown (Anghiera, *Epistolario* 4:80 [bk. 33, letter 693]). Though Cabeza de Vaca might have had the opportunity to meet some of the veterans of the 1520 expedition to Djerba after their return to Castile and before the final defeat of the Comuneros in 1521, the ones of the 1510 expedition most likely provided the specific geographical information that formed the basis of his comments about the island in his *relación*.

Diego de Vera played a prominent leadership role in both expeditions and might have been his source. Although Cabeza de Vaca's uncle (*tío carnal*), Diego Gómez de Vera, was referred to simply as "Diego de Vera" in the 1537 *probanza*, he was already deceased by 1506 (see Sancho de Sopranis, "Notas" 228). A more likely candidate is the first cousin of the Pedro de Vera who was the *tío cuarto* of Álvar Núñez and his siblings and who served as their trustee and guardian in 1509 and afterward. Pedro's cousin Diego de Vera was the son of the second cousin of Álvar Núñez's grandfather Pedro de Vera Mendoza, also named Pedro de Vera, who was a commander in the Order of Santiago (Sancho de Sopranis, *Documentos* 39) (see table 3, fifth generation). While in 1511 Cabeza de Vaca was setting out on his first military expedition abroad, his *tío cuarto* Diego de Vera would likely have been at the height and

maturity of his military career in the 1510s–20s. Diego de Vera was named in his father's will of 28 January 1479 (Sancho de Sopranis, *Documentos* 40n1), and if the son had been in his early twenties at the time, he would have been in his fifties to early sixties during the period of the Djerba expeditions.

#### 6. APPOINTMENT TO THE NARVÁEZ EXPEDITION (1527)

The success or recognition of Cabeza de Vaca's soldiering in Italy and Andalusia no doubt helped lead to his appointment in 1527 as treasurer of the Pánfilo de Narváez expedition. Although we have no information about the potential personal relationships among members of the house of the lords of Escalares and those of the caballeros of Jerez, the prominence of Luis Cabeza de Vaca as one of the officials of the Council of the Indies in the early 1520s may also have favored Cabeza de Vaca's royal appointment (see above, sec. 2.A.7).

Cabeza de Vaca was evidently in Valladolid when the commission of royal treasurer of the Narváez expedition was granted to him on 15 February 1527. The expedition had been authorized on 11 December 1526 in Granada when Francisco de los Cobos, acting on the emperor's behalf as royal secretary of the Councils of Castile and of the Indies, granted Pánfilo de Narváez the governorship of Río de las Palmas and *Florida*. According to Santa Cruz (2:280–81 [pt. 3, chap. 50]), the emperor departed from Granada on 10 December 1526 (the day before Narváez received his patent) and arrived in Valladolid on 14 January 1527; the court was convened there on 11 February. On the 15th Cabeza de Vaca received his grant as royal treasurer in the lands Narváez had been granted permission to conquer and govern.

Contrary to common supposition, a copy of the instructions to Cabeza de Vaca is not to be found in *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía* (CDI 14:265–69). Davenport (27:127n7) erred on this point; that reference corresponds to a transcription of an undesignated copy of the instructions prepared for the factor of the Narváez expedition, which was the position granted to Alonso (Diego) de Solís (see chap. 1, sec. 6.B).

The documents concerning Cabeza de Vaca's appointment form part of the *capitulaciones* for the Narváez expedition found in the *Libro de la Florida de capitulaciones y asiento de gobernadores y generales y adelantamiento . . . desde el año de 1527 hasta el año de 1578* in the Archivo General de Indias (AGI, Casa de la Contratación 3309, 32-4-29/35, f33v–f37v). They have never been published in Spanish but are available in photostats in the John B. Stetson Collection of Florida History at the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida, and in microfilms of the

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Stetson photostats at the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California, where we consulted them. We have also consulted, at the New-York Historical Society, Buckingham Smith's unpublished, handwritten transcription of the main portion of the pertinent material (Smith Collection, North America mss. 121–27), the formal instructions to Cabeza de Vaca (f34v–f37v of the Casa de la Contratación document [3309] cited above). According to Smith's notation, he made his transcription on 1 March 1856 at the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid from Muñoz's eighteenth-century transcription of the document. Smith's (*Relation* 218–23) English translation of the instructions was subsequently published, so the particulars of the responsibilities assigned to Cabeza de Vaca as royal treasurer of the Narváez expedition have long been known.

The covering letter of appointment (f33v–f34v) to Cabeza de Vaca that precedes the instructions to the post, however, has not been discussed. Also dated 15 February 1527 at Valladolid, it precedes the well-known instructions in the archival document. The novelty of this letter of appointment is that it reveals the annual salary to be granted to Cabeza de Vaca, a sum of 130,000 *maravedís* (f34r, f34v). To get an approximate sense of the relative meaning of this level of compensation, it can be noted that Narváez was to receive nearly twice that amount, consisting of an annual salary of 150,000 *maravedís* as governor and an additional 100,000 *maravedís* as captain general.

While the difference between the salaries was significant, the conditions of their payment were more so: Narváez was to be paid the annual total of 250,000 *maravedís* for the rest of his life, which was the term of his contract as governor and captain general, and he was granted the right to pass on his salaried position as *alguacil mayor* and unsalaried title of *adelantado* in perpetuity (Vas Mingo 235). As royal treasurer, Cabeza de Vaca was to receive his salary of 130,000 *maravedís* for the term of his appointment, “from the day you set sail from the port of Sanlúcar for as long as you hold the office” (AGI, Casa de la Contratación 3309, 32-4-29/35, f34r). There were no hereditary benefits here; Cabeza de Vaca was to serve as treasurer for such time as the king saw fit (“quanto nuestra merced y voluntad fuere”) (f33v).

The other affirmation that can be made, thanks to Cabeza de Vaca's letter of appointment as treasurer, is to confirm once more that he did not hold the title and appointment of *alguacil mayor* on the Narváez expedition. Contrary to Cabeza de Vaca's claims in the *relación* (f3r) and *probanzas* (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 8a, f561r), repeated by modern scholars such as Bishop (26) and Pupo-Walker (*Naufragios* 24, 181–82), it was not he but rather Narváez who was granted that title in perpetuity (for himself and his heirs), as the *capitulaciones* with Narváez (Vas Mingo 235) clearly state and as we have noted. Furthermore, for the tenancy of each of the three forts that he was

to build at his own cost, Narváez would receive an annual salary of 60,000 *maravedís*.

Cabeza de Vaca's responsibilities as royal treasurer, spelled out in the instructions translated by Smith, included a list of predictable duties: Cabeza de Vaca was to be the collector of royal revenues, the most important source of which was the *quinto*, the portion exacted (usually one fifth) by the crown of all income accrued (Lockhart and Schwartz 74). In addition, he was to keep accounts of all transactions whereby other persons had taken the *quinto real* on the king's behalf and of all other things owed the king as well as of fines to be exacted (AGI, Casa de la Contratación 3309, 32-4-29/35, f35r). He was furthermore to collect all royal income that came from the land in question, including the king's portion of "slaves, base gold [*guanín*], pearls, precious stones, and whatever other things that belong to us," as well as the 5 percent tax on gold and silver melted down, the income from the salt works, the 7.5 percent duty (*almojarifazgo*) on all goods imported, and all fines; he was to pay the royal officials their salaries (f35v–f36r; see Smith, *Relation* 219).

Reporting to the emperor was an integral part of Cabeza de Vaca's duties, the principal of which was that "every time you write to us and send us gold, or even when not sending it, you are to make a particular account of all our gold and goods held in your power, so that we may be informed of everything" (f36r). Furthermore, Cabeza de Vaca was to send the emperor reports on the progress of gold melting, that is, to inform him of the quantity of gold sent to be melted and the amount of pure gold recovered afterward. He was to give this accounting not only for the king's portion but the entire production, "the reporting of which must come very long and in great detail" [la qual relación a de venir muy larga y particularizada] (f36v).

The accounting of the weight of gold sent for melting or purification and the weight of the gold extracted was critical information; Las Casas (*Historia* 2:343 [bk. 2, chap. 42]) described the low yields of pure gold extracted from the material that contained it on the island of Española, where the gold was found in placers, that is, "waste of weathering and erosion of mountains collected in stream channels, occasionally as a residuum in decayed mantle of bedrock. . . . The so-called mines were submerged bars (the meaning of the name 'placer'), under water or alluvium" (Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main* 197–98). By 1527, the gold phase in the Caribbean Islands was mostly over, having ended around 1515 (Haring 261–62; Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main* 197–98; Lockhart and Schwartz 74–75; Parry, *The Spanish Seaborne Empire* 120). Nevertheless, despite the lack of success in finding gold in the previous decade, the instructions to Cabeza de Vaca on this point indicate that the hope and expectation of finding gold continued to be considerable.

Ironically, the one responsibility not related directly to fiscal matters or mineral extraction was the one that became the most important in Cabeza de Vaca's particular case. This was the provision, cited at the beginning of this discussion, that required him to inform the emperor "extensively and particularly of every matter," that is, of how the king's orders were executed and obeyed, how the natives were treated and the king's instructions regarding them observed, what progress the Indians made in becoming Christians, and "many other things of our service" (AGI, Casa de la Contratación 3309, 32-4-29/35, f36r-v; Smith, *Relation* 221).

Prior to embarking for the Indies, Cabeza de Vaca was to present his royal provision to the officials of the Casa de la Contratación in Seville, from whom he was to request an account of any notices pertaining to the particularities of the land and the fulfillment of his duties as they might deem appropriate (f34v). Likewise (f37r), he was to deposit 2,000 ducats with the royal treasury in Seville as security and "bond of proper conduct in office" (Bishop 26). A ducat was a gold coin of "23 $\frac{3}{4}$  carats fine," equivalent to 375 *maravedís* (Hemming 519). In relation to the annual salary that he was to be paid of 130,000 *maravedís*, the deposit of securities in the amount of 2,000 ducats meant that he was required to deposit (or invest) 750,000 *maravedís*, the equivalent of more than five and a half years' expected salary, in order to exercise the office of royal treasurer.

This arrangement was typical. According to C. H. Haring (298, 300), treasury officials (*factor*, or business manager, *veedor*, or inspector of mines and assay offices, *contador*, or comptroller, and *tesorero*, or treasurer) characteristically had to furnish bond for themselves and their deputies, as any one of them "might be held responsible in full for the default of any of his associates." In addition, royal officials were not to absent themselves from their province without permission from the king, and they were prohibited from engaging in trade, fitting out ships, and operating mines, sugar mills, or pearl fisheries directly or through intermediaries, "on pain of loss of office and forfeiture of their property" (Haring 299–300).

Given the large investment made in order to acquire their positions, the incentive for such officers was surely the hope of good performance that would merit future royal reward in the form of higher positions. Lockhart and Schwartz (103–04) throw light on this career path as one of considerable mobility and various ladders of promotion. They describe the royal officials as immigrants of a special kind who, like international merchants, identified themselves and their fortunes with the Indies at the same time as they were part of an international network with interests and connections in Spain.

Moving from site to site during their careers, these royal officials were a unifying force in the Indies; advancements in provincial positions sometimes

led to promotion to administrative positions in the Council of the Indies at the Castilian court (Lockhart and Schwartz 104). Royal service was made additionally attractive by the possibility of providing for one's heirs; Narváez's titles as *adelantado* and *alguacil mayor* of *Florida*, for example, were contractually granted to him for two lifetimes. For such reasons, the advantages of royal appointment were thought to outweigh the heavy investment; if the royal officers were not legally at liberty to exploit local resources, they were nevertheless part of an administrative elite (with de facto economic opportunities) that spanned both sides of the Atlantic.

Finally, a feature common to the instructions to royal officials was the provision that they exercise coordinate authority, as is exemplified by the instructions prepared for the factor of the Narváez expedition (CDI 14:268). Because mutual oversight was a critical concept of royal governance, much in evidence in Cabeza de Vaca's *relación* and in Pero Hernández's *Comentarios*, we cite the pertinent provision (AGI, Casa de la Contratación 3309, 32-4-29/35, f36v-f37r; Smith, *Relation* 221-22):

Again, although the offices of our Governor and Captain-general, Treasurer, Comptroller, and Factor of the land are separate in regard to everything that appertains to their duties, yet as respects our interests, the good and increase of our royal rents, the well peopling and pacification of that land and the Provinces, each should concern himself with what appertains to the duties of the rest, and to that end, you should communicate and converse upon all the topics of our service in your charge, or of others' concernment, with the Governor and Captain of said land and Provinces, and with the officers thereof, coming together with them in the manner and form we require, that you all unitedly may see and consult as to what in each case should be done, as much for that occasion as our service, and to report whatsoever else shall appear.

As it turns out, Cabeza de Vaca (f7v-f9v, f19v-f20r) claimed in the *relación* that there was considerable disagreement between the governor and himself as a royal official. In all accounts (friendly and hostile) of his experience later as governor of Río de la Plata, it was his conflict with the royal treasury officials that led to his ruin (see below, sec. 8; chap. 12, sec. 6.D). Apparently, this shared sphere of authority between royal officials and the higher-ranking governor produced—throughout the early period of Spain's dominion in America—frequent disputes and misunderstandings in governance; controverted instructions, fiscal matters such as extraordinary expenditures, and favoritism to friends and relatives were commonly cited problems among those who attempted to execute the crown's coordinate authority (Haring 300).

The last royal provision that Cabeza de Vaca carried to the Indies was a grant (unmentioned by previous scholars) for his appointment as *regidor*, or councilor, of the first municipality to be established and populated in the new land (AGI, Casa de la Contratación 3309, 32-4-29/35, f37v–f38v). This privilege entitled him to a seat “with voice and vote” [con voz y voto] in the municipal corporation (Haring 162, 164). Although in the earliest days the *regidores* were chosen by the *adelantado* (Columbus was empowered, on his second voyage, to name municipal officers), from 1523 Charles V sought to regulate the manner of establishing new settlements. Cabeza de Vaca and several of his colleagues received direct royal appointments, which Charles exercised notably in 1518–19 and later in 1526. On the latter occasion, the monarch named *regidores perpetuos* to several Cuban towns, thus overturning the customary term of office of the *regidor* of one year and probably selling the lifelong privilege for a fee, as would become standard crown practice for certain municipal offices (Parry, *The Audiencia* 142; Haring 164–65). According to Wright (89), Pánfilo de Narváez was named *regidor perpetuo* of San Salvador de Bayamo on the island of Cuba by King Charles on 12 December 1518.

Although the grant to Cabeza de Vaca did not include the phrase “*regidor perpetuo*,” neither did it indicate that the term of his office was confined to any set period of time. He was to serve at the king’s pleasure, for however long that might turn out to be (“es nuestra merced y voluntad que agora y de aqui adelante quanto nuestra merced y voluntad fuere seays nuestro regidor del primer pueblo que en la dicha tierra se hiziere y poblare”) (AGI, Casa de la Contratación 3309, 32-4-29/35, f37v). In this respect, Cabeza de Vaca’s and Andrés Dorantes’s appointments as *regidores* by the emperor were atypical in relation to the earliest practices but part of the new trend set by the emperor. Somewhat later, a decree of 1554 suggests that by that date, the right to appoint *regidores* was typically reserved to the crown, which sold the posts and no longer delegated the responsibility of appointment to its representatives in the Indies who had granted them previously (Parry, *The Audiencia* 33, 141–42). There is no indication in the letters of appointment to Cabeza de Vaca or Dorantes that they had purchased the *regimiento* grants from the crown; in addition to Cabeza de Vaca and Dorantes, ten other members of the Narváez expedition received such grants.

The office of *regidor* was a powerful one. Its provision in 1527 to members of the Narváez expedition was based on developments established twenty years earlier when, in 1507, the fourteen towns of Española sought and obtained the privileges of municipal corporation; as in Castile, the chartered towns were virtually autonomous units (Parry, *The Audiencia* 32; Nader 213–23). Furthermore, the municipal council (*cabildo*) functioned in the Indies

as it did in Spain; composed of the “locally powerful to the descending hierarchies which reached out of the city into the countryside to rule it and draw from it the city’s sustenance” (Lockhart and Schwartz 66), the city’s *regidores* sat in the seat of municipal power. Serving under the presidency of the local governor, the *regidores* formed the governing body of the municipality; they were virtually irremovable, and they operated in secret. They had the right to elect annually two municipal judges (*alcaldes ordinarios*), subject to the governor’s approval (Parry, *The Audiencia* 33). The city was, as Lockhart and Schwartz (66) emphasize, the “general framework of Spanish life,” and to participate in its rule was a privilege of no small stakes.

With the rank of royal treasurer and a grant to be a *regidor* of the first city established, Cabeza de Vaca left for the Indies, no doubt fully confident of finding “another Mexico” and living up to the Vera family tradition of conquest and military governance. When his cousin (*primo hermano*) Pedro Estopiñán Cabeza de Vaca saw him off as the armada departed for “the lands and provinces of *Florida*” (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 8a, f561v), Estopiñán could not have imagined the disasters and adventures that lay ahead. Nor could he fathom how he would later become a part of his cousin’s equally dramatic second sojourn in the Indies, in the Gran Chaco of South America.

#### 7. IN SPAIN SEEKING A ROYAL COMMISSION (1537 TO 1540)

Cabeza de Vaca’s first notice of affairs in Río de la Plata came even before he reached Lisbon on 9 August 1537. According to his *relación* (f64r–f65r), upon sailing from Havana, his ship arrived at the Azores on 1 July 1537, escaped from the threat of a French corsair, and came under the protection of a Portuguese armada commanded by Diego de Silveira; subsequently, Cabeza de Vaca (f65r) continued, the Spanish and Portuguese ships went to Terceira and waited there for fifteen days before departing for Lisbon. During the same month of July, Don Pedro de Mendoza and his company, returning to Spain from Río de la Plata, arrived at the Azores and also stopped at Terceira. Cabeza de Vaca would have learned there about the troubles in Río de la Plata; correspondence between the officials of the Casa de la Contratación at Seville and the empress, starting with a letter written just four days after Cabeza de Vaca arrived at Lisbon, reveals that he followed the route home just taken by surviving members of the Mendoza party.

On 13 August 1537, the officials of the Casa de la Contratación at Seville notified the empress that they would soon dispatch four ships being readied at Sanlúcar de Barrameda for Río de la Plata, and that (Felipe de) Cáceres, the comptroller of Río de la Plata who had arrived in Lisbon, was now writing

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a report about the unfortunate outcome that had befallen Mendoza and his company on that conquest. They added that the *adelantado* Pedro de Alvarado had also come from Terceira to Lisbon on the same ship as Cáceres and that both were planning to go directly to the court (Muñoz Collection, A/108, f56v).

In a letter to the empress five days later (18 August 1537), the Casa de la Contratación informed her that Don Pedro de Mendoza had died of hunger on his ship in the Azores on the feast day of Saint Ann (Muñoz Collection, A/108, f57r), which would have been 26 July. We learn from the empress at Valladolid writing to the Casa de la Contratación on 12 September 1537 (Muñoz Collection, A/108, f58r) that two merchants from Seville, Martín de Orduña and Domingo de Zornoza, were preparing certain ships for sailing to Río de la Plata under the command of Alonso Cabrera. When they were nearly ready, news arrived of the governor Pedro de Mendoza's death, and preparations were halted. The empress commanded them now to go forward, since Mendoza had left Juan de Ayolas as his successor in Río de la Plata. The officials at the Casa de la Contratación so notified the merchants, who finished outfitting the ships, which then sailed for South America with Alonso Cabrera as captain (Muñoz Collection, A/108, f58r).

In this manner, news of the first crisis in Río de la Plata reached Spain just as Cabeza de Vaca was returning from *Florida*. The royal cosmographer, Alonso de Santa Cruz, registered the temporal coincidence of these events in his chronicle, placing immediately after the long chapter devoted to Cabeza de Vaca's account of the Narváez expedition to *Florida* (Santa Cruz 3:479–86 [pt. 5, chap. 41]) the account of Pedro de Mendoza's failed expedition and Alonso Cabrera's appointment as royal inspector of mines (*veedor*) to return to Río de la Plata with authorization for Juan de Ayolas to serve as its governor (Santa Cruz 3:486–89 [pt. 5, chap. 42]).

In the autumn of 1537, Cabeza de Vaca's attention was not yet focused on Río de la Plata but rather on *Florida*. In his eagerness to present himself at court with a convincing dossier about the value of his inherited merits and his Narváez expedition services, he set his cousin Pedro Estopiñán to the task of preparing, in his name, a *probanza* about the services of Cabeza de Vaca's paternal grandfather (who had become Pedro Estopiñán's stepgrandfather by his grandmother Catalina de Zurita's second marriage to the conqueror of Gran Canaria; see above, sec. 2.A.5). This was the heretofore unstudied *probanza* opened in Jerez de la Frontera on 31 October 1537 and published in 1943 by Sancho de Sopranis. Gathering testimony at this belated date about his grandfather's and father's services to the Catholic Kings, Cabeza de Vaca no doubt took it with him when he went to meet the emperor at the end of that year. As we examine in detail elsewhere (chap. 12, sec. 2.E),



Cabeza de Vaca presented himself at court in Valladolid sometime between 8 November and 24 December 1537.

Frustrated in his desire to gain the *adelantamiento* for *Florida* (which the emperor had granted to Hernando de Soto on 20 April 1537 as Cabeza de Vaca was leaving Mexico for Spain), Álvar Núñez eventually accepted a conditional appointment for the same post in the province of Río de la Plata. Since understanding the subsequent events of his life depends on knowing about events in Río de la Plata, we pause to outline them here, taking into account the promise of wealth that the interior of South America seemed to hold out to explorers and conquistadors in the 1530s and 1540s.

Alonso Cabrera, who returned to Río de la Plata in the autumn of 1537 with provisions to succor the Mendoza expedition settlers now under the command of Juan de Ayolas, would become one of Cabeza de Vaca's archenemies. Cabrera helped arrest Cabeza de Vaca in Río de la Plata in 1544 and escorted the imprisoned governor on the ship that carried him home. Cabrera suffered a shocking death, told with satisfaction in the *Comentarios* by Pero Hernández (Serrano y Sanz 1:367 [chap. 84]; Domínguez 262 [chap. 84]), who implied thereby a divine and just retribution to this evildoer: "Alonso Cabrera, the supervisor . . . lost his reason, and in a fit of frenzy he killed his wife at Loxa."

Cabrera had been a member of the original Pedro de Mendoza expedition to Río de la Plata in 1535 that had set out with twelve hundred men, "all very distinguished" [*toda gente muy lucida*], according to Santa Cruz (3:487 [pt. 5, chap. 42]), in hopes of discovering "the wealth of that land and river" about which he had learned after Sebastián Cabot's armada sailed to the Río de la Plata in 1530. In point of fact, the Pedro de Mendoza expedition had been conceived not to explore but rather to settle and exploit resources; the *capitulaciones* were designed to encourage the settlement of a stable population (Vas Mingo 292–93). With eleven ships, between twelve and fifteen hundred men and women, a hundred horses, and a great amount of livestock, its size made it comparable only to Columbus's 1493 voyage, Ovando's of 1502, and Pedrarias Dávila's of 1514 (Parry, *The Discovery* 252).

Anarchy, the starvation of hundreds of men, and the possible loss of Juan de Ayolas (sent inland from Asunción in search of riches to the north) had led Mendoza to return to Spain; he was buried at sea after his death in the Azores. Arriving at court after that same crossing in 1537 to give the report of these events, Cabrera, as noted, obtained appointment as inspector of mines of Río de la Plata. With two ships under his command, he loaded the supplies that Mendoza had left in Seville upon embarkation in 1535. Cabrera

carried a royal provision that would make Juan de Ayolas governor, and if he did not return from the expedition he was on, the title would go to the person empowered by Ayolas to act in his stead (Santa Cruz 3:489 [pt. 5, chap. 42]).

Meanwhile, in the region of Río de la Plata, Ayolas had left Domingo Martínez de Irala in charge of two vessels in the land of the Payaguas upon departing in search of the fabled gold to be found in or above the Gran Chaco; Irala was stationed at the port of Candelaria on the Río Paraguay, according to his own account (Serrano y Sanz 2:381–82; also transcribed by Swigart 148–55). Instead of waiting as ordered at Candelaria while Ayolas was absent, Irala traveled between Candelaria and Asunción several times. According to Irala's account (Serrano y Sanz 2:384), on 19 June 1539 Francisco Ruiz and Alonso Cabrera brought him the royal provision, obtained in Spain by Cabrera in late 1537, concerning the succession of Pedro de Mendoza. Since Ayolas had not reappeared, Irala requested and was granted full powers to act on Ayolas's behalf as his lieutenant governor (Serrano y Sanz 2:384). Three years later, Domingo Martínez de Irala challenged Cabeza de Vaca's leadership of Río de la Plata and won.

By the beginning of 1540, news of Ayolas's possible death reached Spain. Representatives of the province came to court from Río de la Plata to give notice of the hardships there and to seek help and reinforcements "before all perished," according to Hernández in the *Comentarios* (Serrano y Sanz 1:157 [chap. 1]). According to the *interrogatorio* prepared for Cabeza de Vaca's *probanzas* and the testimony of several witnesses, these officials had been the royal comptroller of Río de la Plata, Felipe de Cáceres, and the pilot, Antonio López (Serrano y Sanz 2:110, 137, 194, 223). According to Oviedo (*Historia* 2:198a [bk. 23, chap. 14]), they had been Cáceres and the notary and advocate of the province, Martín de Orúe. ("Castro" is a mistranscription or misprint for "Cáceres" in the Real Academia edition of Oviedo's *Historia*.)

On 18 March 1540, a royal contract was made with Cabeza de Vaca for the governorship of the province of Río de la Plata and the *adelantamiento* of all new lands he might discover, conquer, and settle (Vas Mingo 362–66). The appointment was conditional. Ayolas would be made governor if he were still alive; if not, the office would go to Cabeza de Vaca. On 2 December 1540, as Cabeza de Vaca recalled in his "Relación general" (Serrano y Sanz 2:3 [sec. 1]; AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 21a, f1184–f1206), he set sail from Cádiz with "four ships, four hundred men and forty-six stallions and mares," bound for South America. Cabeza de Vaca's intervention in Río de la Plata cannot be understood without a fuller account of Spanish exploration into the heart of South America and the pursuit of "the lords of precious metals."

## 8. IN RÍO DE LA PLATA (1541 TO 1545)

8. A. *The Sierra de la Plata and “Los Señores del Metal”*

The portion of the South American interior known today as the Gran Chaco was an immense lowland alluvial plain, an arid subtropical region of low forests and savannas traversed by only two rivers. Bounded by the Andes mountains on the west and the Paraguay and Paraná Rivers on the east, the Río Salado of Argentina on the south and the plains (Llanos de Chiquitos) and swamps (Bañados de Izozog) of Bolivia on the north, the Gran Chaco covers some 280,000 square miles (approximately 730,000 square kilometers), more than half of which lie in present-day Argentina, one third in Paraguay, and the remaining section to the north in Bolivia (“South America,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 27:701ab). From 1508 onward, Europeans knew it as an area of immense deserts and forests to be crossed in order to reach, in the interior of the selva, a mysterious sierra and a country wealthy in gold and silver (Gandía, *Historia crítica* 161).

The Franciscan friar Bernardo de Armenta registered the persistent conviction about the wealth of the area in a letter to the emperor as late as October 1544, six months after Cabeza de Vaca’s imprisonment (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 15a, f930r–f934r; Swigart 121–28). One of Cabeza de Vaca’s most notorious adversaries, Armenta assured His Majesty that he had been informed by many sources that Cabeza de Vaca had gone very near the land of metal and great quantities of gold and silver, that through that land lay “the road most certain” to obtain it, and that he himself had seen Indians with great sheets of silver. Had Cabeza de Vaca been a more able leader and less avaricious, Armenta speculated, the emperor would already have been sent a shipload of precious metals.

The “country rich in gold and silver” would turn out to be the Inca empire, and the “Sierra de la Plata,” the Cerro de Potosí and the mining district of the province the Spanish named Charcas in the eastern highlands of today’s Bolivia (Bakewell 9). The “lords of metal” [los señores del metal], as Alonso Cabrera referred to them in the *requerimiento* he presented to Irala in Buenos Aires on 10 April 1541, as recorded by Irala in his *relación* upon abandoning that port, were the Carcaraes Indians, who lived beyond the Gran Chaco (Serrano y Sanz 2:371). Juan de Ayolas had been sent out by Mendoza on 14 October 1537 “to discover this river [the Paraguay] and to see with his own eyes where there might be metal or the mines from which to extract it,” said Irala (Serrano y Sanz 2:381). Ayolas met his death, killed by Payaguas Indians, on his return from the land of the Chanes Indians, where he and his allies had made war on the Carcaraes and other nations. According to an Indian interpreter who had been enslaved by the Payaguas,

Ayolas and his men had found “large settlements enclosed by walls of wood and others of clay” where there was “much silver and gold and sheep of the kind they have in Peru” (Oviedo, *Historia* 2:200b [bk. 23, chap. 14]).

Ayolas and his men had been merely the latest seekers of mineral wealth in the Chaco when Cabeza de Vaca arrived in Asunción. The Europeans’ first notice of it had come in 1508, when Nuño and Cristóbal de Haro coasted Brazil and heard about the lands across the desert and in the jungle. Vasco Núñez de Balboa learned about this wealthy land in 1511 in Panama, which from his location lay to the south, off the southern sea. From then on the news of great wealth in South America spread rapidly; Gandía (*Historia crítica* 155, 172–73) documented the instances. The most startling occurrence, however, was the trek made on foot from the Puerto de los Patos on the Brazilian coast to the mines of Charcas by shipwrecked victims of the Juan Díaz de Solís expedition.

The Solís expedition, which had been inspired by the Haro voyage of 1513–14, discovered the Río de la Plata in January or February 1516 (Gandía, *Historia crítica* 155–56, 173–74). Solís and the members of his party who had gone ashore and marched inland were attacked and murdered. According to Oviedo (*Historia* 2:168a–69a [bk. 23, chap. 1]), the problem was the pilot Solís’s complete lack of experience in military matters. Oviedo recalled the old saying about a young man’s need to learn the military arts and noted, however, that this indifference to their acquisition was not uncommon; Solís “has not been the only one lost in the Indies because of imprudence and greed.” Naming them, says Oviedo (*Historia* 2:169a [bk. 23, chap. 1]), would be unnecessary, “for the reader will find their names throughout this *General History*.”

The story of the Solís expedition survivors, that is, Alejo García and his four shipwrecked companions, was known by natives who remembered the incident and reported it to Domingo de Irala in 1540, according to the latter’s own account (Serrano y Sanz 2:386) and to Cabeza de Vaca when he explored the Gran Chaco in search of Ayolas in 1543, as he reported in his “Relación general” (Serrano y Sanz 2:43–44 [sec. 68]). The German soldier of fortune Ulrich Schmidel who accompanied Irala in 1537 told the same story in the account he published twelve years after the Hernández *Comentarios* of 1555, evidently to refute Hernández’s account and defend Domingo de Irala (Domínguez xvii, 27–28).

Guided by Guaraní Indians and accompanied by four other Europeans, Alejo García, a Portuguese, had left the Puerto de los Patos on the Brazilian coast and crossed the virgin selva all the way to the mines of Charcas. Although Gandía (*Historia crítica* 161) claimed that García and his men were killed by Indians at the Río Paraguay upon their return and that only

a few of their Indian allies made it back to the Puerto de los Patos with samples of gold, neither Irala (Serrano y Sanz 2:381), Cabeza de Vaca in his “Relación general” (Serrano y Sanz 2:48 [sec. 76]), nor Pero Hernández in the *Comentarios* (Serrano y Sanz 1:276–77 [chap. 50]) made clear whether García himself returned to the coast or whether it was one of his slaves who arrived back at Santa Catalina with “a certain quantity of metal.” According to Irala (Serrano y Sanz 2:381), in 1537 Ayolas had come upon one of García’s former slaves among the Payaguas Indians at the Río Paraguay, and the slave offered to guide him to the mines. In the *Comentarios*, Pero Hernández (Serrano y Sanz 1:276–77 [chap. 50]) stated that many Guaraníes who accompanied García and his men remained in the interior; much could be learned from these natives, said Hernández, about what García had done and what was to be found in that much-sought-after land.

After García’s unsuccessful search for fortune in the early 1520s, two rival expeditions pursuing the fabled wealth of the South American interior met on the Río Paraná in 1527. The expedition of the Genoese (naturalized Venetian) Sebastián Cabot, as well as that of Diego García de Moguer, had been granted royal patents to sail to the Moluccas (Spice Islands) (Gandía, *Historia crítica* 160, 162). Both got only as far as the Río de la Plata, although Cabot was commanding a voyage for the crown of Castile that was supposed to follow Magellan around the world (Morison, *The European Discovery* 1:221–22). Defeated by the immensity of the Gran Chaco and the hardships it occasioned, both Cabot and García de Moguer returned to Spain empty-handed (Gandía, *Historia crítica* 162). As Oviedo (*Historia* 2:177b [bk. 23, chap. 4]) commented, Cabot and his men returned to Spain in mid-1530, “greedily desiring what they had not found and longing for what they had not seen.” Although Oviedo (*Historia* 2:169b [bk. 23, chap. 2]) admired Cabot greatly as a cosmographer, “for making a universal map of the entire earth either on a plane or a sphere” (obviously a reference to Cabot’s 1544 *Mappemonde*), he remarked dryly that “it was one thing to point a quadrant or astrolabe but quite another to govern and rule men.”

The successful route to the wealth of South America, however, was not the cross-continental route from the Brazilian coast but rather the South Sea route from Panama down the western coast of South America. Francisco Pizarro signed his royal contract for that pursuit on 26 July 1529. Somewhat later, on 3 December 1530, the Portuguese expedition of Martín Alonso de Souza sailed from Lisbon; de Souza carried among his men Enrique Montes, the Solís shipwreck survivor who had remained at Puerto de los Patos, received the gold García’s slaves brought out of the Gran Chaco from Potosí, and subsequently showed it to Cabot (Gandía, *Historia crítica* 190, 196). Although it seemed impossible that the king of Portugal could have

sanctioned it, reflected Oviedo (*Historia* 2:188a [bk. 23, chap. 10]), de Souza's armada had as its objective to trespass into Spanish territory and travel up the Río de la Plata.

Near the port of Cananéia on the Brazilian coast, on 12 August 1531, de Souza found Francisco de Chaves, who offered to bring to them, in ten months' time, four hundred slaves laden with gold and silver. This offer seemed to confirm the reports about great wealth brought back by Cabot and García de Moguer (Gandía, *Historia crítica* 191). However, the de Souza expedition ended in disaster and returned to Brazil to settle at the port of Saint Vincent; such were the just deserts, inferred Oviedo (*Historia* 2:188a [bk. 23, chap. 10]), of those who "dared to intrude in the house of another." On 16 November 1532, Francisco Pizarro captured Atahualpa at Cajamarca, and shortly thereafter the Inca prince offered his ransom; the first ship carrying the conquistadors' portion arrived at Seville on 5 December 1533, and Hernando Pizarro disembarked there with the king's share on 9 January 1534 (Hemming 47–48, 88–89). Altogether, according to Gandía (*Historia crítica* 190–91, 195), the news that came back to Spain about the wealth of Peru, the information brought back by de Souza's expedition, and the fabulous ransom of Atahualpa all converged to inspire the 1535 expedition of Pedro de Mendoza.

Mendoza signed his contract with the crown for the conquest of Río de la Plata on 21 May 1534, just five months after the arrival of Atahualpa's treasure (Vas Mingo 290–94). With Mendoza's mission to conquer and settle the province of Río de la Plata there arose the classic conflict between the imperial goal of the settlement of a stable population in a new land and the private, entrepreneurial aim of gaining great wealth. One of Mendoza's mandated goals was to defend the line of demarcation established by the treaty of Tordesillas, thus preventing further Portuguese intrusion into Spanish territory aimed at the mines of ancient Peru (Vas Mingo 290, 292; Gandía, *Historia crítica* 191, 197). His hope, however, was to find great new treasures and to imprison some new Atahualpa. Provisions were made for such an occurrence in the *capitulaciones* signed at Toledo, stipulating how such a lord's treasures were to be divided between the crown, the *adelantado* Mendoza, and the conquistadors under the various conditions of that lord's being captured alive, killed in battle, or executed afterward for some cause (Vas Mingo 292; Gandía, *Historia crítica* 191, 199). The very same provision would be repeated in Cabeza de Vaca's *capitulaciones* of 1540 (Vas Mingo 365), which reveals that expectations of great wealth continued to thrive.

Oviedo (*Historia* 2:181a–84b [bk. 23, chap. 6]) narrated an account of the unfortunate Pedro de Mendoza expedition, observing that the outcome of

“Don Pedro and those who followed him was a greater loss than the previous ones, because many more people suffered and they experienced the same hardships or even greater ones.” It would not be necessary, said Oviedo (*Historia* 2:181b [bk. 23, chap. 6]), to explain the route that this armada took or other particulars, or even to describe that great Río de la Plata, which was, after all, “improperly named, for never in it has silver been found or even seen, nor is it known to the present day whether any exists there.”

Pedro de Mendoza left Sanlúcar de Barrameda on 24 August 1535; given the failures of Solís and Cabot, his goal was to settle in the area of the Río de la Plata so that past mistakes could be avoided (Oviedo, *Historia* 2:181a [bk. 23, chap. 6]). Mendoza founded Buenos Aires at the beginning of 1536, but after the battle of Corpus Christi, in which he suffered heavy losses and the new settlement was burned, the settlers’ ranks were significantly depleted (Gandía, *Historia crítica* 191). In mid-October 1536, Don Pedro’s majordomo, Juan de Ayolas, decided to go inland. Heading up the Río Paraguay, he wrecked the caravel *La Concepción* and was reduced to traveling in a brigantine that had belonged to Diego García de Moguer. Passing the place where later Juan de Salazar would establish the fort of Asunción, he went to the land of the Payaguas Indians, founded the port of Candelaria, and came upon a former slave of the Solís expedition, survivor Alejo García, who guided him into the Gran Chaco, according to Irala’s account (Serrano y Sanz 2:381; Gandía, *Historia crítica* 192). On 12 February 1537, Ayolas departed from Candelaria with 130 men, leaving Domingo de Irala in command of two brigantines to await him, according to Irala (Serrano y Sanz 2:382).

While Ayolas advanced toward the mines of the Carcaraes, Mendoza, covered with wounds, named Ayolas his lieutenant governor and departed for Spain. As previously mentioned, Mendoza died aboard his ship near the island of Terceira on 26 July 1537 (Muñoz Collection, A/108, f57r). Oviedo (*Historia* 2:184b [bk. 23, chap. 6]) concluded his account by suggesting somewhat caustically that Mendoza’s burial at sea was appropriate to those who vainly hoped for “a tomb even greater than that of King Mausolus, which historians name as one of the seven wonders of the world” (also qtd. in Gandía, *Historia crítica* 193).

In a letter to the emperor from Paraguay on 1 March 1545, Domingo de Irala himself told of Ayolas’s fate and acknowledged the early date at which he learned it. Sent by Mendoza in search of Ayolas, Juan de Salazar de Espinosa arrived at Candelaria and met Irala on 23 June 1537; they made a brief search for Ayolas and then gave up, according to Irala (Serrano y Sanz 2:382). On 19 June 1539, Irala was officially made lieutenant governor to Ayolas thanks to the royal provision brought by Alonso Cabrera; in early 1540 Irala learned of Ayolas’s death (Serrano y Sanz 2:384–86). All 136 men were lost in the Gran

Chaco, none of them ever communicating with Irala's men; the only notice of them was from Indians, interviewed in early 1540 by Irala and in 1543 by Cabeza de Vaca.

In 1543, Domingo de Irala accompanied Cabeza de Vaca up the Río Paraguay, and on 23 December 1543, Captain Hernando de Ribera departed from Puerto de los Reyes up the Paraguay to the Laguna de los Carcaraes; Ribera returned to Puerto de los Reyes at the end of January 1544, according to Pero Hernández's account as well as his own (Serrano y Sanz 1:322 [chap. 68], 335 [chap. 72], 370). Ribera (Serrano y Sanz 1:372–73) brought back news of the Inca's virgins of the sun, which he and his men understood to be references to Amazons; they heard as well about a very great lake that the Indians called the "house of the sun" because the solar deity was thought to dwell there. This was a reference to Lake Titicaca and its celebrated Temple of the Sun (Gandía, *Historia crítica* 208). Thus, the information obtained by Hernando de Ribera, as well as others such as Francisco de Chaves and Juan de Salazar, concerned the Inca empire, not El Dorado, as many have supposed (Gandía, *Historia crítica* 208–10, 216). When at last Irala crossed the Gran Chaco in 1548, he learned that Peru had already been discovered and conquered. Thus ended the quest for the "Sierra de la Plata" that had begun forty years earlier, of which Cabeza de Vaca's expedition and governorship of Río de la Plata had been the penultimate chapter.

#### 8.B. *Expedition and Governorship: An Overview*

With respect to his disastrous experience in Río de la Plata, it may be argued that Cabeza de Vaca once again found himself in a situation that failed to correspond to his expectations—expectations generated under different circumstances during rapidly changing times. Just as he and his fellows returning to New Spain from the wilderness of *Florida* in 1537 had to come to grips with the end of the period of freewheeling entrepreneurship on the American mainland and the beginning of viceregal administration, so too his appointment in 1540 to the exalted titles of *adelantado* and governor came at a time when the power and privilege therein promised were harder than ever to achieve.

The title of *adelantado* gave Cabeza de Vaca supreme powers as judicial and military ruler in the new lands he might discover without being subject to any other authority (Mejía de Ovando, *La Ovandina* 219–20 [chap. 28]). Unlike Pánfilo de Narváez, who set out in 1527 as *adelantado* of *Florida* to conquer and rule an area previously claimed but uninhabited by Spanish settlers at the time (see chap. 15, secs. 10–11), Cabeza de Vaca in 1540 was appointed to succeed a possibly deceased governor of Río de la Plata. His title



of *adelantado* meant little to conquistadors and soldiers already established in the area who jealously guarded the prerogatives they had claimed for themselves.

In 1540 as in 1537, Cabeza de Vaca learned that the stakes of the game of governance in the Indies continued to evolve. Given the situation of previous conquest and settlement in the province of Río de la Plata, he was subject to a rude awakening regarding local affairs. The interpretations of his leadership there would distill into two major positions: accusations against him for the arrogance of his rule (*vis-à-vis* the settlers' previously established patterns of economic exploitation) versus his own claims of attempting to enforce royal laws and decrees established for better governance in the Indies.

8.B.1. *Oviedo on Cabeza de Vaca's Governorship.* For the overview of Cabeza de Vaca's governance we rely on Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's account, written between the end of 1547 and early 1549 (*Historia* 2:207b–08a [bk. 23, chap. 16]). We supplement it with information from Cabeza de Vaca's "Relación general," submitted to the Council of the Indies in December 1545. Oviedo (*Historia* 2:166b [bk. 22, chap. 3]) warned his readers that his view of the governance of Río de la Plata was an especially stern one but that its truths were such that any man who did not fear eternal damnation need have no fear of the ink of his lines: "although their crimes be silenced here, in the other life they will be remembered with more than words." Thereupon Oviedo (*Historia* 2:188a–208b [bk. 23, chaps. 11–16]) offered his accounts of the expeditions of Solís, Cabot, Pedro de Mendoza, Juan de Ayolas, and Martín Alonso de Souza before arriving at his far more detailed account of Cabeza de Vaca's tenure in office.

Oviedo received the account of Cabeza de Vaca's governorship that he used as his principal source from its author, the notary and advocate for Río de la Plata, Martín de Orúe. When Oviedo (*Historia* 2:207b–08a [bk. 23, chap. 16]) was at court at Aranda del Duero in October 1547, he met with Garci Venegas, who examined Orúe's *relación* and vouched for its accuracy. (The royal treasurer Garci Venegas was one of the officials who had arrested Cabeza de Vaca in Asunción in 1544 and, like Alonso Cabrera, had been one of the governor's escorts on the voyage home.) Oviedo (*Historia* 2:208a [bk. 23, chap. 16]) understood that this account represented the views of Cabeza de Vaca's enemies, because Orúe had come to court as advocate for the province of Río de la Plata when Cabeza de Vaca was brought back to Spain as a prisoner in 1545. Orúe's personal enmity toward the governor was no doubt occasioned in part by Cabeza de Vaca's suspension of Orúe's duties as provincial notary (*escribano de la provincia*) (Serrano y Sanz 2:62 [sec. 96]).

Oviedo met personally not only Garci Venegas in 1547 but also, on two occasions, Cabeza de Vaca. The first meeting occurred when Oviedo visited the court of Prince Philip in Madrid in 1547. Oviedo had arrived in Spain in November 1546 (Pérez de Tudela Bueso cxxxvii; Ramos, *Ximénez* 35) and was at Philip's court in 1547 when he discussed with Cabeza de Vaca matters pertaining to *Florida* (*Historia* 3:614 [bk. 35, chap. 7 title]). At that time Cabeza de Vaca had spent several months as a prisoner of the court. When Philip moved the court from Madrid to Monzón, Oviedo was obliged to follow to Aranda del Duero, where both the Council of Castile and the Council of the Indies were convening (Amador de los Ríos lxxii; Pérez de Tudela Bueso cxxxvii). Cabeza de Vaca was forced to make the same trip and there, before the Council of the Indies, successfully appealed his court arrest. Freed to his bondsman, Hernando de Somonte, on 7 September 1547 (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f72r), Cabeza de Vaca was now entitled to consider "the kingdom for his jail" [el reyno por cárcel]. On this second occasion, at Aranda del Duero, Oviedo and Cabeza de Vaca again conversed, this time about his Río de la Plata experience.

Oviedo (*Historia* 2:208ab [bk. 23, chap. 16]) recalled that the Council of the Indies heard witnesses on Cabeza de Vaca's governorship and that most were his enemies. Oviedo said he told Cabeza de Vaca about the testimony; the former *adelantado* recommended to him several favorable witnesses, and Oviedo said that both Cabeza de Vaca and they contested vigorously the mutiny and his imprisonment. Despite the fact that these witnesses defended Cabeza de Vaca on several points, Oviedo decided to leave his account as he had rendered it ("pero al fin en lo que esto ha parado es lo que está dicho"). Oviedo wrote these recollections of his autumn 1547 meeting with Cabeza de Vaca in January 1549, just as Juan de Sanabria was being sent to Río de la Plata as its new governor (*Historia* 2:208ab [bk. 23, chap. 16]). Sanabria's *capitulaciones* had been granted on 22 July 1547 (Vas Mingo 380–85).

At the end of 1547, Oviedo fled the cold weather of Aranda del Duero for Seville, where he spent the end of the year and part of early 1548 (Amador de los Ríos lxxii; Pérez de Tudela Bueso cxxxvii; Ramos, *Ximénez* 35). Although Amador de los Ríos (lxxii–lxxiii) claimed that upon arriving in Seville Oviedo set to the task of studying and arranging the accounts of *Florida* and Río de la Plata that Cabeza de Vaca had given him in Madrid, he probably exaggerated Oviedo's preoccupation. It is clear from Oviedo's account in the *Historia* that he confined himself mostly to adding chapter 7 to the already written book 35 on the Narváez expedition. With regard to the governorship of Río de la Plata, Oviedo merely added to his rewriting of Orúe's account the note, mentioned above, that Cabeza de Vaca's witnesses' testimony acquitted him of certain charges; Oviedo did not explain which ones. In both cases,

he relied very little on the protagonist Cabeza de Vaca's accounts, preferring the Joint Report to Cabeza de Vaca's "segunda relación" on *Florida* and letting the account of the *adelantado*'s enemies stand on the affairs of Río de la Plata.

Nevertheless, Oviedo was not unsympathetic to Cabeza de Vaca. Oviedo (*Historia* 2:188a [bk. 23, chap. 11]) opened his account of Cabeza de Vaca's governorship of Río de la Plata by telling the reader that Cabeza de Vaca had been one of the three Christians who survived the Narváez expedition, "performing miracles, as will be told in book 35, and by some great and glorious miracle and thing never heard, these three and a black man came out with their lives." He went on to tell how the emperor and the Council of the Indies heard Cabeza de Vaca, and His Majesty gave him the title of *adelantado* and made him captain general of the government of Río de la Plata, which was "also known as the Paranaguazú and its tributaries." Everything had started off well; Oviedo praised Cabeza de Vaca for not losing a single man in the five-month overland journey of four hundred leagues from Santa Catalina to Asunción, and he acknowledged Cabeza de Vaca's skill and experience that gave the people of Asunción high hopes about his governance. With God's help, Oviedo (*Historia* 2:189ab [bk. 23, chap. 11]) declared, a man of such background and industry was quite capable of learning the secrets of the land, converting the Indians, and relieving the Spaniards of their past sufferings.

Although Oviedo devoted two full chapters to Cabeza de Vaca's governance, he made it clear that his detailed account of events in the province of Río de la Plata, from Pedro de Mendoza's return to Spain in 1537 to Cabeza de Vaca's arrival in Asunción in 1542, helped to explain the situation that the "fine gentleman and native of Jerez de la Frontera" faced as the new governor. Oviedo (*Historia* 2:187b [bk. 23, chap. 9], 189a [bk. 23, chap. 11]) emphasized that Domingo Martínez de Irala was responsible for the loss of Juan de Ayolas and his men; he narrated in detail how Irala learned definitively about Ayolas's death when he went upriver to search for him (in 1540) and how Irala made war on Indian groups and planned to continue the conquest (Oviedo, *Historia* 2:199–202 [bk. 23, chap. 14]).

The title of *adelantado*, however, displeased Oviedo (*Historia* 2:189b–90b [bk. 23, chap. 11]), "because in truth such an honor and title is a bad omen in the Indies" and often brings its holders to a sad end. Meditating on the fate of such *adelantados* as Bartolomé Columbus, Diego Velázquez, Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Francisco de Garay, Hernando de Soto, Pánfilo de Narváez, and Pedro de Mendoza, Oviedo concluded his reflections with the *adelantado* Cabeza de Vaca, observing that the Spaniards revolted

against him and arrested him and brought him as a prisoner to court. There, “worn out and poor he continues to seek justice against his enemies. It is a great pity to hear him and learn about all that he has suffered in the Indies.” Thus, concluded Oviedo (*Historia* 2:190b [bk. 23, chap. 11]), “it seems to me sufficient to have named the *adelantados* whom I have mentioned in order to persuade all men of understanding to avoid holding such a title.”

8.B.2. *Cabeza de Vaca's Itinerary (1540 to 1545)*. After departing from Cádiz on 2 December 1540 and traveling to the Canaries and then on to Cape Verde, Cabeza de Vaca and his expedition arrived at the island of Santa Catalina off the coast of Brazil on 29 March 1541. They remained there for eight months. While there, the Franciscan friars Bernardo de Armenta and Antonio de Lebrón, who were living on the coast nearby, joined the expedition. Cabeza de Vaca ordered Felipe de Cáceres to take a caravel to the Río de la Plata to investigate the route by boat up the Río de la Plata and into the Río Paraguay to Asunción; Cáceres went and returned without success due to the difficulty of navigating the river in winter (Serrano y Sanz 2:5 [sec. 6]). Shortly afterward seven or eight men in flight from Río de la Plata arrived in a small boat and informed Cabeza de Vaca about Ayolas's death (Serrano y Sanz 2:5–6 [secs. 6–7]). He took his force onto the mainland for the winter to a province he named “Vera” in honor of his paternal ancestral lineage. He sent Pedro Dorantes, the royally appointed inspector of mines (misidentified by Oviedo as “the factor Duarte”), inland exploring; upon his return with a good report of a land he called Campo, Cabeza de Vaca sent 250 to 300 men up the Río Iguazú and later, with Francisco Chaves, others downriver on the Paraná, against the better judgment of the inspector, Pedro Dorantes (Oviedo, *Historia* 2:202a–04a [bk. 23, chap. 15]).

Continuing to the city of Asunción on the Río Paraguay and notifying Domingo de Irala in advance of his arrival, Cabeza de Vaca was received there by Irala on 11 March 1542 (Serrano y Sanz 2:18 [sec. 29]). According to Oviedo (*Historia* 2:204b–05a [bk. 23, chaps. 15–16]), Cabeza de Vaca was properly recognized as governor, but he immediately displeased the settlers, not only those who were already there but those who came with him. The reason Oviedo gave was that Cabeza de Vaca moved against the friendly Guaraníes Indians and earned their enmity. In Oviedo's (*Historia* 2:206ab [bk. 23, chap. 16]) account, Cabeza de Vaca took a number of offensive and punitive actions against the natives, and he cited “the negligence of the said governor Cabeza de Vaca in his government,” which neither served to sustain the settlers nor allowed them to continue their conquests.

For this reason, according to Oviedo (*Historia* 2:206b [bk. 23, chap. 16]), the friars decided to travel to Spain to inform the court of Cabeza de Vaca's

actions, but Cabeza de Vaca had them followed and stopped before they reached the coast. He defended his actions in the “Relación general” (Serrano y Sanz 2:40–41 [secs. 63, 64]), claiming that their intended trip was part of the friars’ and royal officials’ conspiracy against him to obstruct his conquest. Next he arrested the royal officials but soon released and reinstated two of them. He decided to continue exploration into the Gran Chaco. According to his own account (Serrano y Sanz 2:43 [sec. 68]), Cabeza de Vaca departed from Asunción on 8 September 1543 and went up the Río Paraguay in pursuit of Puerto de los Reyes, so named, according to Oviedo (*Historia* 2:207a [bk. 23, chap. 16]), by Irala when he discovered it on that date (6 January) some years previously.

Cabeza de Vaca (Serrano y Sanz 2:45 [secs. 70, 71]) arrived at the port on 8 November 1543 and took possession of it in the name of the king, making Irala his second-in-command (*maestre de campo*), responsible for administering justice, pacifying the land, and overseeing the good treatment of the natives. On exploring farther inland for nine days under great hardship and learning from some Guaraníes in an isolated settlement that the “señores de metal” were still some twenty days’ journey ahead, Cabeza de Vaca said he decided to turn back to Puerto de los Reyes with the approval of the royal officials (Serrano y Sanz 2:49 [sec. 76]). According to Oviedo (*Historia* 2:207a [bk. 23, chap. 16]), this had been done against the will of one and all.

Here the Amazons legend reappears: the expeditionaries understood from their informants that there existed a band of women archers who made war on the Indians of the area. The Spaniards then attacked the natives, killing many inhabitants of an island in the river that contained nine hundred dwellings; those who escaped death were taken as slaves (Oviedo, *Historia* 2:207a [bk. 23, chap. 16]). Oviedo (*Historia* 2:207b [bk. 23, chap. 16]) quickly concluded his account with the expedition’s return to Asunción, where the royal officials—Venegas, Cáceres, Pedro Dorantes, and Cabrera—arrested the governor to the general approval of the company.

Cabeza de Vaca provides us with a different version and further details about subsequent events. In his account, it was not he who decided to halt the search for gold and return to Asunción; rather, he complied with a mandate (*requerimiento*) placed upon him by the royal officials. That is, after some months at the Puerto de los Reyes, he responded reluctantly to the *requerimiento* of the comptroller, Felipe de Cáceres, to return with the sick company to Asunción (Serrano y Sanz 2:57 [sec. 90]). They departed from Puerto de los Reyes on 28 March 1544 and arrived in Asunción on 8 April 1544 (Serrano y Sanz 2:58 [secs. 91, 93]). There Cabeza de Vaca was arrested by the royal officials and their supporters on 25 April 1544 (Serrano y Sanz 2:60 [sec. 95]);

he was imprisoned for eleven months. He refused to designate Domingo de Irala as his lieutenant governor as the royal officials demanded; he named instead Juan de Salazar de Espinosa to the post (Serrano y Sanz 2:65 [sec. 101], 71 [sec. 108], 78 [sec. 118]).

Cabeza de Vaca was boarded on ship on 8 March 1545 for the return to Spain; some days later, his recently named lieutenant governor, Salazar, his cousin Pedro Estopiñán, and his provincial secretary, Pero Hernández, were arrested and put aboard with him, according to the *Comentarios* (Serrano y Sanz 1:361 [chap. 83], 364 [chap. 84]). Traveling under the command and guard of the royal treasurer, Garci Venegas, and the inspector of mines, Alonso Cabrera, they arrived, according to Cabeza de Vaca, at the island Terceira in the Azores on 16 July 1545 (Serrano y Sanz 2:88 [sec. 130], 92 [sec. 136], 96 [sec. 143]). Oviedo (*Historia* 2:207b [bk. 23, chap. 16]) correctly reported that Cabeza de Vaca escaped his captors under the pretext of going ashore to recover from the sea journey; then, individually, “each one came to court and the governor did the same.”

Cabeza de Vaca wrote to the emperor from Terceira on 24 July 1545 (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 15a, f943r–f944r, transcribed by Swigart 184–89), notifying His Majesty that, due to events on board ship during the crossing, he now considered it best to travel apart from the company of the royal officials and proceed alone with all due haste to court to make his report. In a letter Juan de Salazar wrote to the emperor from Lisbon on 22 September 1545 (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 15a, f967r–v; Swigart 190–91), he explained that Cabeza de Vaca had left immediately from Terceira to get to court to give an account as soon as possible, “as by now he will have done,” while he, Salazar, without means to accompany him, had subsequently found passage to Lisbon.

Muñoz (Muñoz Collection, A/111, f103r–f108v) extracted letters of the Casa de la Contratación for 1545, giving notice of the arrival of ships and passengers, including Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (Real Academia de la Historia 2:136 [entry 1221.1]). We have consulted his transcriptions in the Real Academia de la Historia for further information. A report from the Casa de la Contratación to the crown, dated 2 September 1545 (Muñoz Collection, A/111, f104v–f105r), informed the emperor:

a small ship has arrived from Río de la Plata, carrying Alonso Cabrera, inspector of mines, García Venegas, deputy treasurer, Gonzalo de Acosta, royal pilot, and twenty-four or twenty-five others. They were bringing as prisoner the governor Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca to present before the Council [of the Indies] with certain reports and charges against him; the royal officials of that province sent him as a prisoner. The first land after leaving there at which they stopped to take refreshment was the island

Terceira. Others aboard the ship took off the governor, who did not want to travel with them [i.e., the royal officials], and he came in another caravel to Cádiz.

The report goes on to say that Cabeza de Vaca wrote to the Casa de la Contratación, presumably immediately upon arrival at Cádiz, asking that Cabrera, Venegas, and others be arrested, but the authorities decided against doing so. They informed themselves of what happened in Río de la Plata after Don Pedro de Mendoza went there (in 1535) and after Cabeza de Vaca arrived (in 1541). Just as they refused to arrest the crown officials as the governor requested, they likewise declined to fully accept the reports of either the royal officials or Martín de Orúe, provincial notary, “because they all come lined up against the governor” (Muñoz Collection, A/111, f104v–f105r).

According to Pero Hernández in the *Comentarios* (Serrano y Sanz 1:366–67 [chap. 84]) and the 7 September 1547 testimony in Madrid of Juan de Salazar on behalf of Cabeza de Vaca in his suit against the royal officials (qtd. in Gandía, *Historia de la conquista* 215n87, 218n90; Rodríguez Carrión 188), Cabrera and his colleagues sought to gather documentation for the suit against Cabeza de Vaca and get to court as quickly as possible with the charges; they arrived some eight to ten days before the governor and accused him of having gone to the king of Portugal to reveal the secrets of the newly explored lands.

Regarding the dates of these arrivals, Cabrera and Venegas traveled in separate ships, according to Salazar (qtd. in Gandía, *Historia de la conquista* 217) and Pero Hernández (Serrano y Sanz 1:367 [chap. 84]), and arrived in Seville after the middle of August. According to Bishop (275n8), who cited an unspecified document in AGI Justicia 1131, the crews of the ships were officially examined on 27 August 1545. Thus, Cabeza de Vaca, disembarking in Cádiz, arrived several days later than Cabrera and Venegas. As early as 7 September 1545, we find Pero Hernández giving a deposition in Madrid regarding affairs in Río de la Plata (qtd. in Gandía, *Historia de la conquista* 219n94). Since Hernández had made the leg of the journey from Terceira to Cádiz in the caravel with Cabeza de Vaca, we can deduce that the governor arrived in Spain around the first of September, which was the date approximated by Thomas W. Field (Smith, *Relation* 249) upon completing Buckingham Smith’s posthumous work. Bishop (275n9) noted that Smith had copied the Casa de la Contratación report of 2 September 1545, which we have transcribed here. Given the above information, we can deduce that Cabeza de Vaca, like Pero Hernández, was in Madrid by the end of the first week of September 1545.

## 9. RETURN TO SPAIN, TRIAL, AND VINDICATION (1545 TO 1555)

Cabeza de Vaca spent the following months preparing his case, and he submitted the “Relación general” of his governorship to the Council of the Indies, as mentioned, on 7 December 1545. (This document has been transcribed and published by Serrano y Sanz 2:1–98 and recently by Rodríguez Carrión 109–48.) He granted his power of attorney to the advocate (*procurador*) Alonso de San Juan, who would represent him throughout the legal proceedings. Cabeza de Vaca was imprisoned under orders of the Council of the Indies in February 1546 (Torres Ramírez 138), and he petitioned repeatedly to be placed under house arrest. His petition was granted and his bond of 1,000 ducats accepted on 19 April 1546. It was decreed therein that “a house of the court should be assigned as his prison” (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f38r, f39v; Rodríguez Carrión 108). Accordingly, he was removed to the home of Mencía Álvarez, his bond having been guaranteed by Pedro de Portillo and Hernando de Somonte. Five months later, in September 1546, he petitioned successfully to be considered “a prisoner of the court” [se le dé la corte por cárcel] (Torres Ramírez 138–39). A year later, on 7 September 1547, he successfully appealed this confinement; following the court to Aranda del Duero with his bondsman, Hernando de Somonte, he was freed on a one-thousand-ducat bond. The Council of the Indies granted him the right to have the “kingdom as his prison” on the stipulation that he was bound to appear at court, if summoned, on a thirty-day notice (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f71r, f72r).

Thus, instead of languishing long in prison after being brought back to Spain in September 1545, Cabeza de Vaca was incarcerated in the public jail in Madrid after his indictment for only three months (February–April 1546), at which time he was released on bond and lived under house arrest for a few more months (April–September) before being released to detention at court. After a year of confinement to the court (which meant following it to wherever it convened), this sanction was lifted in September 1547, allowing him to move about with complete freedom, although he was still accountable to the court and required to appear before it on a thirty-day notice.

9. A. *Criminal Charges and Defense (1546)*

The approximate three and a half years of Cabeza de Vaca’s leadership, from the embarkation from Cádiz on 2 December 1540 to his imprisonment in Asunción on 25 April 1544, produced an extraordinary series of complaints and charges against him. These complaints were distilled into thirty-four criminal charges made by the Council of the Indies and led to a harsh sen-



tence that was ultimately rescinded. As Bishop (280–81) explained, Cabeza de Vaca's governorship led not to one lawsuit but to four: (1) the criminal action brought against Cabeza de Vaca for misconduct in office by the prosecuting attorney of the Council of the Indies, Juan de Villalobos, who was succeeded by three interim prosecutors and then Martín Ruiz de Ágreda, before the case was settled; (2) a criminal action by the council's prosecutor, Villalobos, against two of Cabeza de Vaca's enemies, the royal officials of Río de la Plata, Alonso Cabrera and Garci Venegas, for aggressions against the governor; (3) the suit against Cabeza de Vaca by Martín de Orduña, who alleged himself to be the heir of Juan de Ayolas and thereby claimed the rights to suzerainty over Río de la Plata; and (4) the suit of Villalobos and Cabeza de Vaca against the notary public of Río de la Plata, Martín de Orúe, for offenses against Cabeza de Vaca and the king.

The criminal charges filed by the council's prosecuting attorney against Cabeza de Vaca on 20 February 1546 included a great number concerning abuse and destruction of the Indian populations, to which we will return later, as well as robbing the inhabitants of the Canary Islands on the voyage out to Río de la Plata, sacking two merchant ships in the Cape Verde Islands, and abandoning thirteen Christians on the march from Santa Catalina to Asunción. Villalobos further charged that Cabeza de Vaca prohibited—to all but himself and his servants—any trading activity with the Indians. Cabeza de Vaca was also accused of confiscating the property of his men without compensating them; interfering in private contracts; confiscating the property of the dead; failing to bring adequate supplies to Paraguay; raising his own coat of arms in place of the king's; proclaiming himself king; declaring, "I am the prince and master in this land!"; interpreting royal regulations about taxation to his own advantage; and prohibiting the royal officials from communicating with the emperor. The charges are recorded in the Archivo General de Indias (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f1r–f3r), summarized by Bishop (176–77), and newly transcribed by Rodríguez Carrión (101–06). On the same day, 20 February 1546, Cabeza de Vaca, "being a prisoner in the royal jail of this court," responded to the thirty-four charges (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f6r–f14r).

During the spring and summer of 1546, when Cabeza de Vaca was no longer incarcerated but living under house arrest at the Álvarez residence in Madrid, he had testimony gathered for his defense, according to the conventional guidelines set forth in a *cédula real*, or royal letter of instruction, of 26 June 1546 to "all the *corregidores*, assistants, governors, *alcaldes*, and other judges and justices in all the cities and places of these our kingdoms and dominions" (Serrano y Sanz 2:105). This *cédula real* (Serrano y Sanz 2:105–07, 153–56) informed its recipients that the *licenciado* Juan de Villalobos, the

chief prosecuting attorney of the Council of the Indies, had filed a suit against Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca for “certain things of which our aforementioned chief prosecutor has accused him.”

The procedure to be followed was that Álvar Núñez was given 120 days to prepare his *probanzas*. Thus, the justices of local jurisdictions were instructed to subpoena all witnesses who might be named and called on Cabeza de Vaca’s behalf if an empowered representative of Cabeza de Vaca appeared before them within the designated four-month period and requested a hearing. The local justice officials were to receive the oath of the witnesses and take their testimony secretly, in the presence only of two notaries public, one named by the plaintiff, the other by the defendant. The presiding officer was to obtain from each witness his name, place of residence, relationship if any to either of the parties, and other general questions “as the law disposes,” as well as the specific questions (contained in the *interrogatorio*) presented on behalf of Cabeza de Vaca (Serrano y Sanz 2:105–06).

If the witness stated that he knew the contents of any particular question, he was to be asked how he knew; if he declared that he considered its contents to be true, that is, if he took the word of another on the matter, he was to be asked how and why he believed it to be so. Regarding the question to which he replied as having “heard it said,” he was to explain by whom, how, and when this had occurred. This was to be done so that each witness would give sufficient reason for his assertions or dispositions. Their declarations were to be written out in a clean copy, signed by the justice and the notary, and then closed and sealed in the official manner so that they could be given to the party representing Cabeza de Vaca and presented before the Council of the Indies. It was the defendant’s right to submit such testimony as long as he paid the accustomed fees for the privilege of doing so. If the prosecutor Villalobos failed to put in place a notary representing the Council of the Indies within three days of the justice’s notification, the *probanza* was to be carried out before Cabeza de Vaca’s notary alone (Serrano y Sanz 2:106–07).

Four days after Prince Philip signed the royal directive on behalf of his father the emperor, the royal notary Juan de Cueva informed the *licenciado* Villalobos on 30 June 1546 of Cabeza de Vaca’s intention to have *probanzas* prepared in his defense; Cueva notified Villalobos that he could swear in and examine the witnesses presented by Cabeza de Vaca and name a notary public to represent the council at the *probanza* hearings. Villalobos quickly responded that he would name *escribanos* in all the places that Cabeza de Vaca wished to take *probanzas*. On 2 July 1546 Cabeza de Vaca declared before Juan de Cueva that the *probanza* he had prepared was to be taken in Córdoba, Écija, Jaén, Seville, Antequera, Baeza, Cádiz, Arjonilla, Linares,

Toledo, Málaga, La Rambla, El Coronil, Vélez Málaga, Utrera, Jerez, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Andújar, and “other places in these kingdoms” (Serrano y Sanz 2:107–08, 175–76).

Transcribed and published by Serrano y Sanz in 1906, some of these *probanzas* were taken, respectively, on 26 June 1546 in Madrid (2:213–81); on 10 July in Andújar (2:151–69); on 20 July in Santiponce outside Seville (2:173–91; AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 22a, f1263–f1275); on 28 July in Jerez de la Frontera (2:101–51); and on 7 August in Seville (2:191–212; AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 22a, f1276–f1307). It should be recalled that the unpublished “Relación sacada de la probanza . . .” (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 8a, f559–f582) that we examined above with respect to Cabeza de Vaca’s early military service in Europe (sec. 5.c) is based not on these 1546 *probanzas* but rather on those gathered in late 1551 and early 1552 for Cabeza de Vaca’s appeal of sentence regarding his governorship of Río de la Plata.

Among other actions Cabeza de Vaca took in 1546–47 in order to gain support for his case, he withdrew a charge he had lodged against the royal factor, Pedro Dorantes, declaring that the latter “was not at fault in my seizure nor for its consequences, neither did it stand him in hand to prevent it.” Cabeza de Vaca therefore requested that Pedro Dorantes not “be proceeded against for the reason foregoing,” either on account of Cabeza de Vaca’s original petition or for any other reason (Smith, *Relation* 231). Despite such actions and the *probanzas* he gathered in 1546–47, the Council of the Indies found far more persuasive the mass of testimony presented against him when at last it decided the case in 1551.

#### 9.B. *The Sentence (1551) and Its Reduction (1552)*

On 18 March 1551, Cabeza de Vaca was found guilty and condemned to be stripped of all the titles that had been conferred on him, banned in perpetuity from the Indies, banished to the penal colony of Oran on the Barbary Coast (now Algeria) for five years, where he was to serve the emperor with his arms and horse at his own expense, and be liable to suits for damages by any party claiming to have suffered loss due to his governance (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f64r; Rodríguez Carrión 149–50). The sentence was signed by the six councilors of the Indies at Valladolid on 18 March 1551. Smith (*Relation* 250–51) translated the sentence but omitted the clause about perpetual banishment from the Indies under pain of death.

Confined to the court once again after his sentencing, Cabeza de Vaca immediately appealed the sentence. On 6 April 1551 his advocate, Alonso de San Juan, filed an appeal signed by himself and Cabeza de Vaca (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f66r–f69r). Five days later, on 11 April 1551, Cabeza de Vaca

petitioned to be released from court detention (“alzar la carcelería que me está puesta”) so that he could support himself and seek justice (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f70r; Smith, *Relation* 231–32). Although he was released from the court by paying a bond on the day he presented his appeal (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f71r), the Council of the Indies, meeting at Valladolid on 15 May 1551, denied his petition to lift the sentence (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f70r–v).

Despite the Council of the Indies’ pronouncement of sentence against him on 18 March 1551, Cabeza de Vaca exercised at court the prerogatives of a gentleman. This is revealed by Sancho de Sopranis’s (“Notas” 239) discovery of a 19 August 1551 power of attorney granted by Diego de Vera de Carrizosa to his cousin Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and two others to represent Vera de Carrizosa in any suits and business he might have at court. He referred to the three as advocates (*procuradores de causas*) and residents in the court of His Majesty. In defiance of the recent sentence, Vera de Carrizosa referred to Álvar Núñez as “the *adelantado*.” Diego de Vera de Carrizosa was evidently the son of Cabeza de Vaca’s aunt Catalina de Vera, who is named as the wife of Álvaro de Carrizosa in the burial vault donation document of 16 April 1506; Sancho de Sopranis likewise identified this man as Cabeza de Vaca’s cousin (Sancho de Sopranis, “Notas” 213, 228) (see table 3, sixth generation). Although convicted of high crimes, Cabeza de Vaca seems to have been perceived to be eligible—at least by his cousin—to exercise the office of advocate and legal representative at court. Diego de Vera seems not to have considered Cabeza de Vaca’s present circumstances as an insurmountable obstacle to the exercise of his influence at court.

On 22 November 1551, Cabeza de Vaca petitioned the court at Valladolid to reopen his case (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f76r). On 25 November, the Council of the Indies agreed to do so and gave the defense and the prosecution fifty days to bring forth new evidence (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f76v). In December, the recently appointed prosecuting attorney, Martín Ruiz de Ágreda, petitioned to extend the period from 50 to 120 days, and the petition was granted (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f77r).

Cabeza de Vaca again set about to have *probanzas* taken. At least three of them are found in the Archivo General de Indias (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 22a, f1348–f1401) and were taken at Santiponce, Jerez de la Frontera, and Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Bishop (287) made reference to *probanzas* that Cabeza de Vaca presented on 25 November 1551; these testimonies, Bishop said, proved “nothing new except the esteem in which he was held in his native city, and the present destitution of himself and his wife.” Yet this “nothing new” bore considerable weight. When the council revoked principal parts of the sentence against Cabeza de Vaca in August 1552, it acknowledged “taking into

account the new *probanzas* taken before us” [attentas las nuevas probanzas ante nos hechas] (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f88r). One of these new bodies of evidence we know as the “Relación sacada de la probanza hecha por parte del gobernador Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca en el pleito que trata con el licenciado Ágreda, fiscal de Su Magestad en el Real Consejo de Indias” (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 8a, f559r–f582v), the contents of which we discussed above (secs. 5.C–D). This extensive *relación* bearing testimony from some nineteen witnesses clearly constituted a major entry in the appeal.

More than a year after the March 1551 disposition, Cabeza de Vaca’s sentence was sharply reduced on 23 August 1552 (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f88r). His perpetual banishment from the Indies was altered to include only the jurisdiction of Río de la Plata, and he was relieved from the obligation of the five-year tour of military duty in Oran. We transcribe here the relevant portion of the decree from the original AGI document; the reader should be advised that Rodríguez Carrión’s (151) recent transcription is flawed. The councilors declared that

the condemnation of perpetual banishment from the Indies made by our said sentence be and be understood to refer to the governance and provinces of Río de la Plata and nowhere else and, with regard to our said sentence condemning the said Álvar Núñez to service in Oran with his arms and horse at his own cost for five years, that, taking into account the new *probanzas* taken before us and presented by the defendant in his appeal, we should and we do revoke the said sentence with regard to the said condemnation to such service.

[la condenación de destierro perpetuo de todas las dichas Indias hecha por la dicha nuestra sentencia sea y se entienda de toda la gobernación y provincias del Río de la Plata y no demás, y con que en quanto por la dicha nuestra sentencia condenamos al dicho Álvar Núñez en servicio de Orán con sus armas y caballo a su costa por tiempo de cinco años que, attentas las nuevas probanzas ante nos hechas y presentadas por el susodicho en este grado de suplicación, debemos revocar y revocamos la dicha sentencia en quanto a la dicha condenación del dicho servicio.]

Gandía (*Historia de la conquista* 218) noted that the date when the suits were definitively concluded in Madrid was 23 August 1552, but he did not cite the documents or their contents; Bishop (287) erroneously gave the date as 23 August 1551 but correctly identified its central provisions.

Despite these “important alleviations,” as Bishop (287) called them, the provisions of the original sentence of 1551 that continued in force were the privation of his titles of office for Río de la Plata (“perpetual privation of

said office of governor and Adelantado of the Provinces of said Río de la Plata and of right of action which he claims to have of said government” [Smith, *Relation* 250–51]) as well as his liability for court costs and, more significantly, any civil suits that might be brought against him by persons whom he allegedly harmed in the course of his governance.

Pero Hernández’s remarks at the conclusion of the *Comentarios* suggest that Cabeza de Vaca considered himself exonerated by this outcome. Hernández observed that after eight full years (March 1544–August 1552) of being imprisoned or detained at court (this was not strictly true, as we have shown), the governor was set free and discharged from obligation (“libre y quitto”) (Serrano y Sanz 1:367 [chap. 84]). In the *Siete partidas*, the legal term *quitto*, from medieval juridical Latin, *quiuis*, Latin *quietus*, referred to being exempted from the payment of debt (Castile 3:floor [pt. 5, tit. 14, law 9]). Thus, this description of Cabeza de Vaca’s status implied his being relieved from fulfilling the obligations that had been placed upon him in the original sentence.

After the main obligations of Cabeza de Vaca’s sentence were dismissed in 1552, he remained at court to seek reimbursement for his lost estate in Río de la Plata (Torres Ramírez 141). He also served during this time as Jerez de la Frontera’s representative and advocate at court. On 8 December 1552, he petitioned the municipal council of Jerez for compensation still owed him for services rendered at court on the city’s behalf; after receiving partial compensation at an earlier date, he had agreed—the remainder of the compensation owed him being slight—to forgive the debt and serve *pro bono publico*. He now wished to receive the outstanding remuneration, and the council agreed to his request. This document was transcribed by Sancho de Sopranis (“Notas” 239–40).

What seems most significant in Cabeza de Vaca’s now-successful defense is that, as time moved attention away from the heated controversy over his actions as governor and *adelantado* of Río de la Plata, his respectable social status and background and the personal influence he seems to have exercised locally in Jerez de la Frontera and at court came to the fore. In addition, he seems to have been held in respect as a man of professional competence and experience—attributes to which both Oviedo and Las Casas attested. Even though Oviedo presented in the *Historia de las Indias* the notary Martín Orúe’s version of Cabeza de Vaca’s governance in Río de la Plata and acknowledged that it represented the viewpoint of the *adelantado*’s enemies, Oviedo did not condemn Cabeza de Vaca but seems to have found him personally sympathetic. It is significant that Oviedo, highly critical of the actions even of men whom he greatly respected, did not fault Cabeza de Vaca as he did other expedition commanders to Río de la Plata, such as

Sebastián Cabot and Don Pedro de Mendoza. Yet the question of professional competence and expertise had been of little use in Cabeza de Vaca's self-defense against criminal charges in 1546. By 1552, however, with time to exert his influence and that of his supporters while he kept alive the appeals of his humiliating sentence, Cabeza de Vaca managed to restore his good name if not vindicate his record as governor of Río de la Plata.

In this light, it is no surprise that Cabeza de Vaca continued his legal battle even after his sentence was vastly reduced. On 23 November 1552, he requested and received a *traslado* (official transcript) of the *probanza* made about his service to the king against the Comunero revolt (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f89r). On 9 January 1553, he sought official copies of additional documentation (AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 1a, f90r). In 1554, he presented a petition for the restitution of wealth confiscated by Domingo de Irala and the royal officials of Río de la Plata at the time of his arrest (Torres Ramírez 141). Bishop (288) cited another attempt by Cabeza de Vaca, on 29 August 1555, for the right to see documents pertinent to his case. Finally, on 8 November 1555, he protested allowing the officials of Río de la Plata to see the transcript of an accusation he had made against them; this, according to Bishop (288), is the "last document in the corded bundles" of Justicia 1130.

With this intervention, the litigation over Cabeza de Vaca's governorship of Río de la Plata came to an end. It was not, however, to be the end of his self-advocacy. These pursuits were carried forward that same year with the publication of his *Relación y comentarios*; the royal license to print had been granted on 21 March 1555. It indicated that he was then a resident (*vecino*) of Seville (V:fiv).

### 9.c. *The 1555 Proem: Portrait of a Life at Court*

Cabeza de Vaca's proem to Pero Hernández's *Comentarios* is dedicated to the Infante Don Carlos (1545–68), grandson of the emperor and son of Prince Philip and Doña María Manuela, Philip's first, short-lived wife, who was the daughter of João II of Portugal (Keniston 290; Martínez, *Historia* 2:28). The Infante Don Carlos's childhood coincided with Cabeza de Vaca's years at court (1546–50s). Later, Philip had his son swear fealty as heir to the throne before the Cortes of Toledo and in 1567 named him president of the Royal Council. After Don Carlos's attempt to flee to the Low Countries, his father had him sequestered in his own residence, where the young victim of royal inbreeding died at the age of twenty-three (Martínez, *Historia* 2:32). Don Carlos's only sibling to live through adulthood was his half brother, who became Philip III, the son of Philip's fourth wife, Ana of Austria, born ten years after Don Carlos's death. At the time of the publication

of Cabeza de Vaca's dedication to the young prince, Don Carlos was ten years old.

The 1555 proem reveals a great deal about Cabeza de Vaca after the conclusion of his Indies career and offers insight into his outlook after his imprisonment, trial, and the revocation of the sentence regarding his governorship of Río de la Plata. This prefatory statement holds great interest, and although readers such as Pupo-Walker (*Naufragios* 72n181) have claimed without demonstration that its style and argumentation suggest it to be the work of Pero Hernández, the passion of the piece reveals it to be distinctively the work of Cabeza de Vaca. While he may have had editorial assistance in its execution, in concept it rings utterly true to the depth of sentiment expressed on that other singular occasion when he directly addressed the emperor, in the dedication of his *relación* of 1542. Here the engagement is equally intense and urgent, even though its explicit destinataire is the emperor's grandson. Whereas in 1542 Cabeza de Vaca made a desperate plea for the royal recognition of his services, here he offers heartfelt thanks and reveals his overwhelming relief for the salvation of his good name. As a personal statement, this proem offers substantial evidence to counter the commonplace view that Cabeza de Vaca ended his life under the full weight of failure. As we will see, Bishop's (290) assertion that Cabeza de Vaca died "in obscurity, shame, and the conviction of failure," often repeated by other scholars (e.g., Pastor 190–212; Pupo-Walker, *Naufragios* 38–41), is not supported by the various pieces of evidence that lead us to the opposite conclusion.

On the whole, this short composition offers a vivid demonstration of Cabeza de Vaca's intimate relationship with the life of the royal court during the previous decade. Since 1546, when he spent a year with "the court for his prison," through the mid-1550s, the caballero from Jerez de la Frontera and former *adelantado* and governor of Río de la Plata seems to have been at his ease there. He presents himself as friend and admirer of the court's most learned men, particularly the infante's tutor and majordomo, Don Antonio de Rojas y Velasco, and the young Don Carlos's teacher, Honorato Juan (Serrano y Sanz 1:150 [proem]). Cabeza de Vaca extols the nobility and virtue of Rojas y Velasco and the lineage and learning of Honorato Juan, later bishop of Osma (1564–66). Cabeza de Vaca also reveals his contact with the learned guests at court when he says of Honorato Juan that "all the truly learned men of this time—Italians, Germans, Frenchmen, Flemings, Englishmen, and Spaniards—have borne witness to his very singular genius," his deep knowledge of Greek and Latin authors, moral and natural philosophy, and the mathematical disciplines (Serrano y Sanz 1:150–51 [proem]).



Honorato Juan was best known as a humanist scholar who had spent the 1520s in Louvain studying with Juan Luis Vives and around 1540 came to the Castilian court as a member of the emperor's royal council and gentleman-in-waiting ("gentilhombre de su Cámara"); he accompanied the emperor on the disastrous expedition to Algiers in 1541 and in 1542 became the teacher of Prince Philip (*Diccionario de historia* 417). Juan was celebrated for his classical learning, which Cabeza de Vaca extols in detail, and his praise for Juan's mathematical talent is also accurate; Honorato Juan had taught Philip mathematics and architecture while Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda instructed the future Philip II in geography and history.

Honorato Juan would have shared two interests with Sepúlveda: their common devotion to the classics and historical interest in the Indies. Apart from his probable conversations with Sepúlveda, Honorato Juan's fascination with the Indies is revealed by his possession of Francisco López de Gómara's papers after the historian's death. (Don Carlos, as Juan's universal heir, may have been responsible for depositing them in his father's library at the monastery of San Lorenzo del Escorial) (Wagner, "The First Lost Letter" 672; *Diccionario de historia* 418). If Juan was interested in Gómara's work, there is no doubt that he and Cabeza de Vaca would have conversed at great length about the Indies, which the latter knew from north to south. The Indies must have been the spark that ignited their amicable relationship.

Yet the exchange must have been mutual, because Cabeza de Vaca (Serano y Sanz 1:151 [proem]) declared that Honorato Juan wrote and spoke about the various branches of learning "as if he had learned them in the time of the ancients," imitating their style in ways that only authors of those times could achieve. According to Cabeza de Vaca, the *maestro* elaborated matters with such "clarity and acuteness" [llaneza y perspicuidad] that those who heard him and learned from him mastered them with ease; of pleasant and useful conversation, he was prudent in all his dealings, allowing the substance of his learning to guide him without ever being pedantic ("usa de la substancia de las letras sin que ellas parezcan").

If the praise Cabeza de Vaca lavished on Honorato Juan seems hyperbolic, it was not unique; many of the famous men of the day, such as Sepúlveda and the historian Juan Paez de Castro among many others, did likewise (*Diccionario de historia* 417–18). It should be remembered, however, that Honorato Juan's privileged position at court as counselor, gentleman-in-waiting, and teacher made him an effective conduit to the monarch and that a compliment to Juan's accomplishments was in fact a solicitous gesture of homage to his lord. Such was the case for the former *adelantado* of Río de la Plata.

Cabeza de Vaca's release from the main obligations of his sentence was not only the key fact of the final period of his life but also the cause of the outlook we witness in the 1555 proem. Despite the enmity of his detractors, the good offices of the emperor through his ministers had restored his good name and reputation:

And even when envy should seek to impede and obstruct this necessary work, the clear virtue and merits of such princes will defend us, God giving us the peace, calm, and tranquillity that is abundantly granted in times of good kings.

[Y aunque la invidia trabaje de impedir y estoruar esta tan deuida y necessaria obra, la clara virtud y merescimientos de tales príncipes nos defenderá dándonos Dios la paz, sosiego y tranquilidad que en tiempos de los buenos reyes abundantísimamente suele dar.] (Serrano y Sanz 1:152–53 [proem])

Whereas Cabeza de Vaca (Serrano y Sanz 1:152 [proem]) reduced the immense problems of his governorship of Río de la Plata to envy (the envy that impedes and obstructs the fulfillment of the divine mission of evangelization), he observed that it could be remedied by the virtue and merit of princes, “God giving us the peace, calm, and tranquillity that is abundantly granted in times of good kings.” The *abundantísimamente* is clearly a personal testimony; Cabeza de Vaca had benefited from the magnanimity and generosity of the prince (or his highest council in his name); he had been spared by king and court from defeat by his enemies.

Apart from the possibly expeditious aims of his praise for Honorato Juan, his celebration of this prominent court figure reorients his most cherished values. Through his homage to the prince's tutor, Cabeza de Vaca puts himself on the side of those known for the wisdom of their learning: the ability to teach, to make the arcane intelligible, and to deal with others, “letting the substance of his learning guide him” without ever letting pedantry dominate. The picture of courtly, Christian virtue that Cabeza de Vaca paints here is of particular interest because it is tied to letters rather than to arms and as such stands in contrast to his 1542 dedication to the emperor. In celebrating humanist learning rather than military leadership the Cabeza de Vaca who in 1537 still dreamed of following in his grandfather's footsteps presents the opposite view in 1555. His professions now reflect not his unrealized hopes for triumph in *Florida* or Río de la Plata but rather his real achievement in North America: the knowledge of places and peoples. Above all, Cabeza de Vaca reveals his adherence to the values of chivalric conduct, virtue, and reason—the values found at court, he implies through his silences as well as his utterances, in its men of learning, not its military commanders, its

politicians, or its diplomats. By these means, Cabeza de Vaca implicitly rejects as violent, greedy, and dishonorable the men who had betrayed him in the Indies, particularly the bitter military and political rivals who ruined his opportunities for distinguished governance in Río de la Plata.

Cabeza de Vaca's reflections on the Indies—its lands, its peoples, and its conquerors—constitute the other important theme of this proem. In 1555, Cabeza de Vaca's conviction about the meaning of the Indies to Spain was unshaken. By the grace and mercy of God, Spain and Spaniards had been made "the ministers and participants in that divine enterprise of singular worth"—the discovery of so many and such new provinces, superabundant in all the gifts of nature, and of innumerable settlements and peoples. The ministers of the gospel worked with great diligence and zeal to save souls, always attempting to teach as ones elected by God to be the "executors and instruments of the preaching of the gospel in the entire Occident, where extending the kingdom of the gospel expands their kingdoms and dominions, titles, and fame" (Serrano y Sanz 1:152 [proem]).

Two points may be made here. First, the wondrous world of the Indies—its peoples, customs, landscapes, and resources—still held its magic for the veteran of thousands of leagues of exploration and hardship that never resulted in the riches of gold and silver so commonly sought. For Cabeza de Vaca, the Indies was still a key factor in Spain's greatness. The second point is that, despite the animosity that some of the priests in Río de la Plata held for him, and in spite of slim evidence of successful evangelization there, Cabeza de Vaca maintained his faith in the evangelizing mission. On this issue, the peaceful peoples whom he and his companions had encountered in North America (and who, he claimed, were disposed toward Christianity) must have persisted in his memory. Despite his earlier call for peaceful evangelization, it is clear that to the last Cabeza de Vaca saw the relationship between religion and empire within the ideological perspective common in his time by which the expansion of the kingdom of the gospel justified extending the temporal domain of Castile and its kingdoms.

Whether he truly had enduring confidence in Spain's mission or simply clung to his conviction because he had given his life to it, Cabeza de Vaca ended his disastrous governorship and his entire Indies career apparently spared of bitterness and immune to defeat. While Cabeza de Vaca foresaw a bright future for the young prince Don Carlos as king in the security and strength of his kingdoms, he presented an honorable prospect for himself, his criminal sentence greatly reduced and enjoying the fraternity of life at court. All that remained was to insure, beyond his own days, the continued glorification of his good name. Hence, he published the work to

which his eloquent dedication to Don Carlos serves as preface (see chap. 12, sec. 6.F).

#### 10. CABEZA DE VACA'S FINAL YEARS (1555 TO C. 1559)

In the spring of 1555, the royal authorization to print the *Relación y comentarios* listed Cabeza de Vaca as a resident of Seville (V:fiv). Between that time and 1559, he reestablished his official residence in Jerez de la Frontera in the district of San Salvador (Sancho de Soprani, "Notas" 240). In 1559, he cosponsored the ransom payment of a relative, Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, who was being held captive by the king of Algiers after being captured in an expedition against the Ottoman Turk. Transcribed by Sancho de Soprani ("Notas" 240–41), the ransom agreement was drawn up in Jerez de la Frontera and signed by Cabeza de Vaca and Pedro Sierra Granado, as "residents (*vecinos*) of the very noble and very loyal city of Jerez de la Frontera," on 13 March 1559.

##### 10. A. *The Ransom of Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca (1559)*

This order for ransom payment is the latest document known to date in which Cabeza de Vaca appears. It requested that Simón Dino, steward of the king of Algiers, make the payment (which was not to exceed 130 ducats of gold) on behalf of Cabeza de Vaca and Sierra Granado and deliver the captive Hernán Ruiz to the shores of the kingdom of Castile. In the same register, a notation dated 19 May 1559 named Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca as the guarantor who was putting up the bond for the amount of the ransom: "el cual estando presente otorga la dicha fianza y se obligó" (Sancho de Soprani, "Notas" 241).

This ransom agreement has three implications, the first of which is to demonstrate the longevity of Cabeza de Vaca against the commonplaces about his supposedly earlier death and the likelihood that he would eventually die in his native Jerez de la Frontera. The second is to contradict the notion, likewise still repeated, that he died in an impoverished state; the third is to provide him an opportunity for the magnanimity and nobility of action that his station in life would demand of him. We can imagine that he might have responded gladly, eager to give evidence of his enjoyment of that status after his vindication by the crown. The only surprising aspect of this important document is that it has gone unnoticed by even the most recent Cabeza de Vaca scholars, despite its being in print in the widely circulated *Revista de Indias* since 1963. Since the social significance of the ransom is the most subtle of the three points, we outline the circumstances of the

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expedition that occasioned it and set in profile the recipient of Cabeza de Vaca's largesse.

We discover this Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca in José de Pellicer's *Genealogía de la noble y antigua casa de Cabeza de Vaca* (1652); Hernán Ruiz was noted for having participated in "la jornada de Árgel," having fallen captive to the Turks and granting his last will and testament on 6 October 1559 (Pellicer f36v). Citing the same testamentary document, Sancho de Sopránis ("Notas" 215n7) independently corroborated the accuracy of Pellicer's statement, thus confirming once more the scrupulous nature of the seventeenth-century genealogist's research. "La jornada de Árgel" was Pellicer's shorthand for a well-known military action of grave consequences in which the Cabeza de Vacas figured prominently. As discussed above (sec. 2.A.7), Pellicer (f49v) had singled out Don Manuel de Vega Cabeza de Vaca as the subject of one of the handful of celebratory pieces ("elogios") that grace his work; Pellicer memorialized Vega's membership on the war council of Flanders and his performance as second in command of the fateful expedition ("maestre de campo general en la jornada de Árgel").

This invasion of Algiers was a significant event (and a disastrous failure) in the history of Spain's struggle against the Turk in northwestern Africa at the end of the decade of the 1550s. The mission was organized not by the crown but rather by Count Martín de Alcaudete, who took the initiative to commit the aggression. The Council of Castile authorized him to levy troops partly on his own estates in Andalusia; nobles from Granada and volunteers from La Mancha—thousands of untrained new recruits—joined the expedition. By taking time to instruct his inexperienced forces on the Barbary Coast in Oran, the count inadvertently gave the North Africans time to prepare a counterattack. When in August 1558 he led his expedition against the Turks at Mostaganem, located twelve leagues east of Oran, his forces were easily defeated. On 26 August 1558, his army was attacked and overwhelmed by forces from Algiers and native troops; in a devastating rout, twelve thousand Spanish troops were captured, and the houses of Algiers were consequently filled with new Christian slaves (Braudel, *The Mediterranean* 2:972; Braudel, "Les espagnols" 369–70).

Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca was taken captive as a result of that defeat, and he is described in the 13 March 1559 authorization of ransom payment as being a tall man and aged ("alto de cuerpo, viejo") (Sancho de Sopránis, "Notas" 240). As a member of the "house of the caballeros of the name of Cabeza de Vaca in the city of Jerez de la Frontera" in Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's time, this Hernán Ruiz was prominent as the current holder of one of the two Cabeza de Vaca entailed estates of Jerez de la Frontera. In fact, the *adelantado* Álvaro Núñez's ransom payment for his cousin gave him

the opportunity to be magnanimous to a member of the Jerez line that had succeeded—as Álvar Núñez’s family had not—to the clan’s *mayorazgo* (see table 2, fourteenth generation and fifteenth generation).

Pellicer (f36r–v) gave the information that this Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca was the son of Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca and Doña Francisca Riquelme Dávila and that he married Doña Leonor Ponce de León; his children were Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Doña Juana Portocarrero, and Doña Aldonza Ponce de León. Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca succeeded to the inheritance of his house, that is, to the *mayorazgo* founded by his maternal great-grandfather Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and described in the latter’s will of 19 November 1467 as the “tower and pasture lands of la Gigonza” (Pellicer f34v, f35r).

The fifteenth-century Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and benefactor of Hernán Ruiz was the grandson of the Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca who had been the progenitor of the line and founder of the house of Cabeza de Vaca in Jerez de la Frontera (see table 2, tenth generation and twelfth generation). The *mayorazgo* in question passed from the Álvar Núñez deceased around 1467 to his son, Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, who had no heirs; from this Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca the *mayorazgo* went to his sister Aldara Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s son Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, who was the father of the Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca ransomed by the *adelantado* (f35r, f36r).

As to the relationship between the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez and the Algerian captive Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, Álvar Núñez’s mother, Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca, was a first cousin (*prima hermana*) to the siblings Aldara Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (the captive Hernán Ruiz’s grandmother) and Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca (Hernán Ruiz’s great-uncle) (see table 2, thirteenth generation). The *adelantado* Álvar Núñez and the heir to the *mayorazgo*, Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca (Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca’s father), were *primos segundos*, or second cousins (see table 2, fourteenth generation); Sancho de Sopranis (“Notas” 215n7) identified them simply as “cousins.” The Algerian captive Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca was thus the great-nephew of the Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca who had inherited the *mayorazgos* of both his father (the second Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca) and his own great-uncle, the bishop of León, Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca (f35r). Producing no heirs, this elder Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca had bequeathed the two *mayorazgos* to the sons of his two sisters, that is, to Pedro Vaca de Trujillo, the son of Leonor Núñez, and to Pedro Fernández Cabeza de Vaca, who was the son of Aldara Núñez and the father of the ransomed captive.

As mentioned above, the elder Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca, who was the great-uncle of the ransomed captive, a city councilman (*veinticuatro*)

of Seville, successor to both the Cabeza de Vaca *mayorazgos*, and the *primo hermano* of Álvar Núñez's mother, Doña Teresa Cabeza de Vaca or de Zurita, played a role in Cabeza de Vaca's youth. He had vouched for the young Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's identity when the latter presented himself in Seville on 28 April 1506 at "eighteen years of age" to request a *curador ad litem* (Gil, "Notas" 54). This same "Hernand Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca" had been granted a power of attorney to represent the deceased Doña Teresa's minor children on behalf of their guardian and trustee, Pedro de Vera, in Jerez de la Frontera on 19 July 1512 (Sancho de Sopranis, "Notas" 236–37; see above, sec. 4). Several decades later, the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez must have found ransoming the great-nephew of the powerful man who had been among his protectors in his youth a source of honor and personal gratification.

The ransom payment document suggests one lingering doubt. Was it in fact the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca who provided for the Algerian ransom of Hernán Ruiz Cabeza de Vaca? We know that the ransomed Hernán Ruiz also had a son, mentioned above, named Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca who might have done the deed (see table 2, sixteenth generation). The ransom document does not identify Cabeza de Vaca by the title *adelantado*, which had commonly appeared in documents of the years 1551 and 1552 (Sancho de Sopranis, "Notas" 239–40). Sancho de Sopranis ("Notas" 215n7) argued that the *adelantado* was the protagonist of this action and that Hernán Ruiz's son Álvar Núñez was still a legal minor and underage to independently post ransom for his father. We have discovered that this was indeed the case, thanks to the document, cited earlier and found in the Hans P. Kraus Collection of the Library of Congress, that settled a lien on a property in which Hernán Ruiz's son Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, "somewhat less than twenty-five years and older than twenty-two" [algo menor de veynte cinco años y mayor de veynte dos], acquired the right to the lien (USLC, Kraus Collection f2v; see above, sec. 4). Since as of the date of that legal action, 30 September 1557, this young Álvar Núñez was more than two years away from the age of legal majority, he could not have acted on his own behalf a little more than a year and a half later to ransom his father. Since there is no trustee (*curador*) named in the document where it would necessarily have appeared, we can safely deduce that it was the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca who ransomed the cousin whose great-uncle had served as a surrogate trustee for Cabeza de Vaca in his youth.

#### 10.B. Possible Burial at Santo Domingo el Real in Jerez de la Frontera

Given such glimpses into the latter years of Cabeza de Vaca's life, the popular notion that the *adelantado* Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca died "penniless, old,



and broken-hearted,” as Bishop (290) claimed, can no longer be sustained. Gandía (*Historia de la conquista* 218–19) implicitly refuted it, then later (*De la Torre* 121–23) accepted it; Pupo-Walker (*Naufragios* 38, 41) cited Gandía’s second study and repeated its erroneous conclusions. Gandía’s (*Historia de la conquista* 218) earlier impulse had been correct; he had been right to insist that Cabeza de Vaca was unlikely to have been as poor as he and his supporters claimed. This had been done, as was common in cases of advocacy, to dramatize the plight of his case. Naturally, when Cabeza de Vaca left Asunción in chains, his personal effects had been the only things the royal officials could confiscate from him and take back to the Casa de la Contratación in Seville (“Testimonio de entrega de los bienes secuestrados del gobernador Cabeza de Vaca para enviarlos a la Contratación,” Asunción, 4 March 1545; AGI, Justicia 1131, pieza 6a, f383r–f386r; Gandía, *Historia de la conquista* 218). These modest possessions obviously did not reveal the extent of his actual wealth.

According to a declaration Gandía (*Historia de la conquista* 218) cited in his earlier study, given by the *adelantado*’s first cousin Pedro Estopiñán Cabeza de Vaca in Jerez de la Frontera on 19 April 1554, Cabeza de Vaca had land and real estate in Asunción (“dos pares de casas e ciertas roças de tierras”) among many other properties; in testimony taken for his *probanza* against Garci Venegas, Cabeza de Vaca’s witnesses testified that the royal officials confiscated his properties worth “a hundred thousand ducats in that land.” In 1554, according to Torres Ramírez (141), Cabeza de Vaca presented a petition that was accepted by the Council of the Indies, claiming the restitution of properties and goods confiscated by Domingo Martínez de Irala and the royal officials when they had imprisoned him in Asunción in 1544; the claim was for a total of 100,000 *castellanos*, that is, the worth of six brigantines, four light rivergoing crafts, two houses, some fields, various horses, “the fillies that have been born,” and an assemblage of domestic goods. We do not know the fate of his bid for restitution of the fortune lost in Río de la Plata or whether he received any income from properties held there; however, the claim itself is significant insofar as it suggests the size of Cabeza de Vaca’s estate.

Pupo-Walker’s (*Naufragios* 40) recent repetition of Gandía’s (*De la Torre* 122–23) later assertion that Cabeza de Vaca was likely to have died in poverty in Valladolid between 1556 and 1559 can thus be dismissed. This supposition had resulted from two sources cited by Gandía (*De la Torre* 122–23): a *cédula real* granted to Cabeza de Vaca on 15 September 1556 in which allusion was made to an illness he suffered, and a remark by Alonso Gómez de Santoya in his *Verdadera relación de lo que le sucedió al gobernador Jaime Rasquin* (composed c. 1560), which declared that Cabeza de Vaca died in Valladolid

(“murió en Valladolid harto pobre caballero”) (qtd. in Gandía, *De la Torre* 123). From the documentary evidence provided decades ago by Sancho de Sopranis but fully exploited only now, it is clear that Cabeza de Vaca was alive and active in the late winter and early spring of 1559, and, unless he was at Valladolid at the time of his demise, he probably succumbed in his natal city and place of official residence, Jerez de la Frontera.

In the end, although the questions of Cabeza de Vaca’s actual date of death and site of burial remain open, circumstantial evidence suggests that he was buried in the family vault in the Real Convento de Santo Domingo in Jerez de la Frontera (see above, secs. 2.B–C). His grandfather Pedro de Vera was interred there, according to an agreement of 16 March 1506 by which his son Martín and daughters-in-law Doña Inés de Villavicencio and Beatriz de Fuentes pledged an endowment for the decoration and maintenance of his tomb on behalf of the governor’s heirs (“conjuntos herederos”) (Sancho de Sopranis, *Documentos* 32–33). Since Cabeza de Vaca’s parents’ generation actively contributed to the chapel’s upkeep and since in all likelihood he died in Jerez de la Frontera or would have been transported there had his death occurred elsewhere, it stands to reason that the monastery’s principal chapel would have been his final resting place. Although confirming evidence to this effect has not been located, all the factors point to this end, which would have been appropriate to his station and lineage.

#### 11. FINAL COMMENT: LIFE AND LINEAGE

Just as Cabeza de Vaca observed in his remarks to the emperor in the 1542 *relación* that he expected that his services would have been sufficient to speak for themselves, so too we can imagine him saying, at the end of his Indies career, that he would have expected that Pero Hernández’s *Comentarios* and particularly his own proem to Don Carlos would have been sufficient to set the historical record. By that late date, he had clearly learned that no services were adequate to “speak for themselves” (certainly not against the powerful voices of his enemies), but what he could not know was that the revelations contained in his testimony and substantial historical evidence would be ignored in favor of the creation of a tragic, romantic figure in the twentieth century.

This erroneous portrait was apparently prefigured by an account of around 1560, if indeed the Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca cited by Alonso Gómez de Santoya (qtd. in Gandía, *De la Torre* 123) was the *adelantado* and not a contemporary of the same name. Yet more substantially persuasive as accurately reflecting the view of Cabeza de Vaca during his last years and throughout the early modern period are the dozens of sixteenth- and

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seventeenth-century reflections on Cabeza de Vaca that establish his multifaceted and positive historical reputation (see chap. 13, secs. 16, 18). Pellicer's great tribute to Cabeza de Vaca in his 1652 "elogio" is also convincing. There were heroes enough to single out in the Cabeza de Vaca line without adding Álvar Núñez to the pantheon if his honor were seen as dubious; on the contrary, the prestigious and extremely critical *cronista mayor* of the kingdoms ruled by Aragon saw him as a modern exemplar of the tradition that began with thirteenth-century Castilian caballeros who helped take back southern Spain from the Muslims.

All in all, the final assessment of Cabeza de Vaca's personal historical experience cannot be made to depend on an accounting of his financial and real estate holdings (even if it were possible to reconstruct them) but rather on the incalculable factors of honor and prestige difficult to measure but impossible to ignore. In addition to Cabeza de Vaca's experience in Castilian endeavors in Andalusia, Italy, the Mediterranean, and the Americas, our treatment of his lineage has attempted to elucidate the irretrievable world of sixteenth-century Spanish values and the ancestral virtue to which the Castilian caballero paid homage. He honored those values precisely because they were the best insurance against the vicissitudes of fate that Cabeza de Vaca (fv) acknowledged in the most subtle passage of prose that we may credit to him: "beyond the particular advantage that anyone can secure for himself, there is a very great disparity not caused by the shortcoming of any one of them, but only by fortune, or more certainly through no fault of one's own, but only by the will and judgment of God."

As a motto of the sixteenth-century Castilian caballero, this acknowledgment of forces beyond one's control and not attributable to one's personal shortcomings makes ancestral historical reputation an unshakable article of faith. Demonstrating one's possession of such inherent nobility required social recognition; Cabeza de Vaca's testimony about the company of good men at court he knew for their noble lineage, virtuous conduct, and the wisdom with which they handled their learning served as his final public printed word—and his final proof—of the personal honor and social status that he enjoyed in the last years of his life.