

Memorial of Pedro Calderón y Henríquez

Recommending Monterey as a Port for the Philippine Galleons With a View to Preventing Russian Encroachment in California

Translation, Introduction and Notes by HENRY R. WAGNER

INTRODUCTION

THE administration of the custom house in Acapulco in the middle of the eighteenth century appears to have been of the most corrupt character. José de Gálvez, the *visitador*, made an investigation of it and arrested some of the royal officials. Sometime in December 1766, new regulations were issued to assist in the dispatch of goods at Acapulco on the forthcoming arrival of the Manila galleon. The galleon was the *San Carlos Borromeo* referred to in the memorial of Calderón y Henríquez. Apparently, not only more effective vigilance was to be used in the unloading and evaluation of the goods, but also some additional duties were authorized, probably the same as those put into effect in Vera Cruz at the same time. These were far from excessive, but the trade was already overburdened with fiscal exaction and the high rate of interest and insurance.

The government in Spain did not need any information about the movements of the Russians. From their ambassador in Russia they had already received information on the subject, and besides, the printed work which Calderón said he had seen no doubt was available and probably had been available to them for a long time. The account of Captain Vitus Bering's polar expedition was published in the third volume of Gerhard Friedrich Müller's *Sammlung Russischer Geshichte* (St. Petersburg, 1758). This work was issued in English by Thomas Jefferys, in London in 1761; and, translated from the original German into French, it was published in Amsterdam, in two volumes, in 1766. Georg Wilhelm Steller, a German scientist, accompanied the second expedition of Bering and is generally supposed to have been the author of the account published by Müller. He was on the *St. Paul* with Alexei Chirikof, the man who discovered the Northwest Coast. Bering, himself, apparently saw and named only Mount St. Elias. Several maps of the expedition had been published by 1768, one having been issued in St. Petersburg in 1758. This map was copied by Jefferys in his book in 1761, and Jacques Bellin also copied it in his *Carte Reduite* of 1766. Even earlier, in 1750,

an account of these discoveries had been published by Joseph Nicolas Delisle, in Paris.

The sketch map which Calderón attached to his memorial is a unique performance, a real cartographical curiosity. It will be noticed that on the map the route of the galleon is shown as passing through the middle of the Mariana Islands to the port of Monterey. If this was the route at that time it had been much changed from the earlier days. This is questionable, however, especially as Calderón says that the pilots on that course were still using the map made by a Carmelite friar who had accompanied Sebastián Vizcaino. Probably Calderón merely indicated on the map the route that he himself proposed should be used. The friar was Antonio de la Ascensión, and the map which he made seems to have been a combination product of himself and Francisco de Bolaños, the chief pilot of the Vizcaino expedition. It was usually known as the Bolaños *derrotero*. Calderón, with more accuracy than usually attained by Spanish writers, recounts the efforts to have Monterey settled as a port after the Vizcaino expedition.

The Philippines, when Calderón left them, probably in 1766 or 1767, were in a parlous state. Manila had been captured in 1762 by the English, who exacted a tremendous ransom from the city. This must have interfered seriously with commerce, and it is no wonder that Calderón talked about losing the Islands. Roda y Arrieta, to whom the communication was addressed, was a member of the Council of the Indies, probably the president at the time.

It is a somewhat academic question whether Calderón's memorial had any effect in promoting the occupation of Upper California by the Spaniards in 1769. The memorial is dated April 14, and already on January 23 an order had been dispatched to the Marqués de Croix, the viceroy in New Spain, to direct the government of [Lower] California to be on the watch for Russian attempts to found settlements on the coast. It was in May that Gálvez announced to the viceroy that he had decided on an expedition to establish a presidio at Monterey. Apparently the Spaniards were acting on information received before Calderón presented his memorial. I still maintain the opinion that the occupation of Monterey was due not so much to the Russian advance as to the fear of English entrance into the South Sea. Even Calderón, who makes no mention of English efforts in this direction, evidently dreaded the colonial ambitions of England.

The statistical account appended by Calderón is omitted as it is mainly another statement of what is contained in the body of the memorial.

Calderón, during his term of office in the Philippines, had made several reports of considerable interest. In 1741 he had urged the occupation of Monterey and in 1750 the abandonment of Guam. He also urged

the resumption of direct trade between Spain and the Islands. The first ship from Cadiz arrived in October 1766. The *San Carlos* to which he refers in his memorial took goods shipped by the Augustinians. Speaking of the system under which the Manila trade was then carried on, Calderón referred to the difficult regulations and the impossibility of complying with them. The literal observance of them was impossible, and the viceroy frequently tacitly or openly permitted shipments of silver to the Philippines in excess of the legal quantity.

The manuscript of Calderón translated here is among the documents presented to the California Historical Society a few years ago by Mr. Templeton Crocker. He had purchased it from Maggs Brothers, of London, in whose catalogue, *Bibliotheca Americana* (No. 1), 1922, it appeared as No. 851.

THE MEMORIAL

Most Illustrious Sir:

Lest I be classed among those particularly devoted to the Philippine Islands, I did not dwell on the unhappy state in which I left them, and in which they still continue, until the news came about what happened in Acapulco to the frigate *San Carlos*—the lack of a fair,¹ with consequent loss by reason of confiscation, and the blows which have entirely ruined that commerce and cut off the flow and continuity of business.² For this reason I have decided to set forth the urgent necessity of arranging this trade on some possible footing and under such reasonable regulations as the Islands themselves have previously requested. As proof of this necessity and the practical impossibility of continuing under the latest regulations, I accompany this with a supplementary document. At the same time I propose other cases deserving immediate remedy so that the existing state [of trade] will not completely come to an end.

As I know practically how important it is to keep those dominions and how much I can contribute to that end, I am taking the liberty of molesting your attention so that you will consider seriously the points which I touch upon in the aforesaid representation and deign to cooperate by looking at them with the attentive consideration that disorders of such gravity and business of such importance demand.

Among the points which I present I include information about the discovery of the Russians which I obtained in Manila and from the diary of Captain Bering, who in 1728 [1725] was dispatched by Count Apraxin, admiral of Russia, with sailors and instructions to traverse Siberia and to take there the necessary tools to build a frigate in Kamchatka, a port of theirs in the South Sea of Tartary, in order to make discoveries in Spanish America. Following the coast of Tartary, although he reached 67½° of latitude, he returned without proceeding further. In 1741, Mr. Steller,

an academician of St. Petersburg, was dispatched to continue the discovery. A statement was printed in the *Gazette* of 1743 that he had explored the coast of America above California and had observed that with a short land portage one could go through to the sea which extended to Europe.

Since, however, I made that representation, a work translated from Russian into French, printed in Paris last year in two octavo volumes, has reached my hands. This treats of all these discoveries and has a map displaying them which I have sketched on the accompanying paper, to which I have added the relation of the islands [Aleutians] to the Philippines and the course of the galleons from them, so that you may better understand it all and the dangers which menace all America if they [the Russians] come to fortify and settle a port in California. This they will do without doubt because they believe that the territory from 52° to 60° which they explored is more fertile than that of Tartary and very well forested, from which they draw the conclusion that it is likely to be mineral producing.³ What I have understood is that they were assisted by the English in their efforts to determine whether in these parts a passage to Hudson's Bay or some navigable river could be found on which to settle.⁴ If they sail down, as they will, to 44° on the same coast, they will find a very copious river which discharges the *Porras*, which are like very long reeds with a bulb at the end and which are looked for all along that coast and serve the *galeon de Balisa* as an indication of the proximity of land.⁵ By this river they can have access to New Mexico or the lakes along the course of the St. Lawrence River, both of which are of the greatest importance.

It will be perceived that they proceed with great caution, as this map does not show the coast of America, although the book describes its qualities and its inhabitants, who, it says, have the same appearance and customs as the Tartars, and states that it is not more than two and a half degrees, that is, twenty-five leagues, from the last of the Kuril Islands.⁶ From Kamchatka it is distant thirty-seven degrees of longitude, or, taking ten leagues as one degree, 370 leagues. The implication of this is obvious.

In order to forestall the dangers which threaten, it is necessary that remedy be applied from the Philippines, because it is almost impossible to do so from Mexico as the viceroy has no ship on the whole extent of the coast under his government. Those who explored the coast from Acapulco to Cape Mendocino in 41° in 1602 said that they had sailed more than eight hundred leagues, and although this is the noblest part of America it was entirely deserted. The exploration took place by order of the Conde de Monte Rey, at that time viceroy, with two frigates and a long boat, and with a Carmelite as cosmographer,⁷ with the commis-

sion to examine closely the whole coast and look for a port appropriate for stops of the Philippine galleons. They declared that the one named Monte Rey in 37° fulfilled the conditions, as it was easy of entrance and exit, there was a river of good water and a pine forest more than two leagues in extent near by, and many very tractable people well clothed in seal skins there. These affirmed that inland there were many large towns and indicated by signs that there was much gold and silver. In view of this account a *cédula* was dispatched in 1606 ordering this port to be settled without regard to the cost to the royal treasury. This *cédula* found the Marqués de Montesclaros as viceroy, and he declared that it would be more advantageous to discover the Isla Rica de Plata in the middle of the ocean, which no one has seen up to the present time. Although later, in 1608 and 1609, *cédulas* to the same effect were issued, nothing has been done about it.⁸ The survey of the coast of California made by the Carmelite has been found so exact by the pilots of the Philippines that they have had no hesitancy in using it when they have found it necessary to approach land.⁹

From the Philippines three hundred men of all trades can be conveyed on a frigate which can be built there, or bought at slight cost, with all the nails, locks, tools, and everything necessary to found a town at once, and with twenty-five Indians from the shipyard at Cavite to build brigantines such as those they build there for commerce with the islands and voyages to China and Java, with the suitable artillery, rigging, cables, sails, pitch, and everything else necessary for their provision, muskets, powder, balls, and other necessaries. What cannot be found in the Islands can be brought from China and Batavia. With some soldiers and missionaries a great spiritual and temporal conquest can be effected.

If another presidio is established on the Colorado River at the end of the Gulf of California, one can easily cross the land as set forth in a *cédula* of 1745.¹⁰ From the port [Monterey] it will be easy, with two brigantines, to take possession of the coast up to 52° and thus prevent the Russians from moving farther south. Besides, the port would serve as a stop for the galleons from the Philippines. From there they take forty days to reach Acapulco. During that voyage the deaths and sicknesses occur that are recorded in forty logs which I have examined. With such a port the population would be notably increased and it would be the principal basis for reducing the settlements of people who live around it [to Christianity]. The rivers begin there, while on the other hand the whole point or sharp triangle of California from Cabo de San Lucas in 23° to the end of the gulf in 33° has no rivers. For this reason it is considered to be thinly populated although rich in metals.

These presidios and settlements can be established without more expense to the royal treasury than what will be necessary at the beginning.

For their preservation, administration and garrison I will propose a scheme without cost to the royal treasury or to the public. Likewise I will propose a plan for the development of the Philippines and the cultivation of the cinnamon¹¹ in the forest more than thirty leagues long on Mindanao, and I will write out my method. But the first and most pressing thing is the regulation of the commerce which has to serve as the basis for everything, for without that nothing can be effected nor can these islands be sustained.

If what is set forth above is worthy of attention and it should be deemed advisable for me to formulate a plan divided into topics showing those most noteworthy and in need of prompt remedy in order to prevent the loss of the Philippines, and likewise those which relate to California, I will do so. I will spare no labor and will put after everything injurious the corresponding remedy, provided the secretaries and accounting offices of the Indies aid me by furnishing the information and papers which I indicate. With an account of what I saw and experienced in the twenty-five years that I was judge in that *audiencia*, and the twelve years that I served as senior adviser of war and judge of accounts of the royal officials, I will do this, as it is advisable for me to give authentic proofs of my proposals. After these are examined and all have been duly considered, what is most advisable can intelligently be discarded, changed, or added.

I also will propose the method I consider advisable to open direct commerce by way of the Cape of Good Hope with somewhat more profit than the merchants of Cadiz at present are experiencing, noting that the vessel arrives in Manila in August and leaves in January. I further note that in the Islands there is nothing with which to load her, for sugar, indigo in jars in the form of mud, sugar wood, or campeche wood are bulky goods which do not pay on long voyages and have a better market in India itself. To take goods from China and the Gulf of Bengal means a delay of a year. As commerce in Manila is quiescent, 20% premium is charged on money, 10% on the freight of heavy clothing and 6% on the fine kind, or 8% on the average, plus 5% commission — a total of 33%. The shipper, besides, has to make something, and although the profit be only 10%, the total amounts to 43%. To this must be added the fact that from Cadiz to Manila accounts are not settled in cash for less than a 40% premium. The English charge only 18% for China, as I found in the English frigate on which I came. The result is that the Cadiz merchants bring Chinese clothing at 65% higher cost than the English. Note that with the good methods the English employ in the trade, the English captain assured me that only six frigates of forty guns each which return from China each year pay in duties at

the London custom house more than two million pesos, of which I have an itemized account.

May God preserve you for many years. Madrid, April 14, 1768.

Most Illustrious Sir

Your most submissive and obliged servant
kisses your hands.

PEDRO CALDERÓN Y HENRÍQUEZ

Illustrious Señor D. Manuel de Roda y Arrieta

NOTES

1. The galleons usually sold their cargoes at meetings of sellers and buyers called *ferias*, or fairs, at Acapulco.

2. The *San Carlos Borromeo* arrived at Acapulco early in 1767, just in time to run into the new regulations established by the visitador, José de Gálvez. More rigorous control, confiscations for violation of the regulations, and new duties were imposed.

3. Chirikof, in command of the *St. Paul*, reached the coast at about $55\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ of latitude, near Chatham Entrance. He sailed north to about 60° and then west. Bering, himself, in the *St. Peter*, got no farther west than Kayak Island from where he saw Mount St. Elias.

4. I do not believe there is any evidence that the English assisted the Russians in this enterprise.

5. The *Porras*, really kelp, together with floating weeds, indicated that land was near. The river was the Santa Inez of the Vizcaino expedition, which I identified in my *Spanish Voyages* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1929), pp. 255, 407, as Mad River which then flowed into Humboldt Bay. The Santa Inez was supposed to be in about 43° . A *Balisa* or *Valiza* was a buoy or beacon to mark a port.

6. By the last of the Kuriles probably Unalaska or the Shumagin Group was meant. Unalaska lies in $166\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ W. longitude, and Chatham Sound in 133° , or a difference of some thirty-three degrees of longitude.

7. Fr. Antonio de la Ascensión, whose account was published in my *Spanish Voyages* (Chapter XI) from the original diary in the Ayer collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

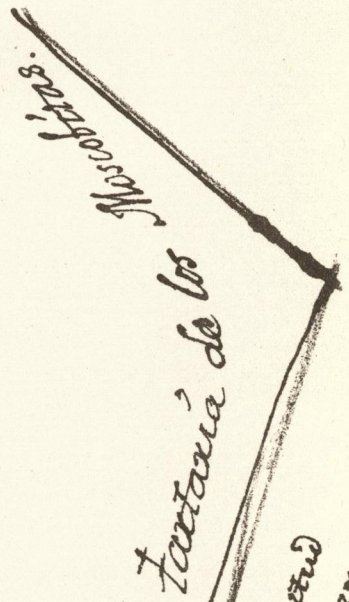
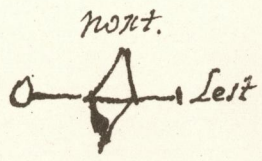
8. See my *Spanish Voyages* (Chapter XII) for a full account of these proceedings.

9. The map, of course, was the one usually called the Bolaños *derrotero*.

10. Probably Calderón means the *cédula* of December 4, 1747, by which a presidio was to be established on the Gila River as a basis for entry into California overland.

11. Cinnamon, or *Canela* as the Spaniards called it, was one of the earliest exports from the Islands. It may have been cassia and not true cinnamon.

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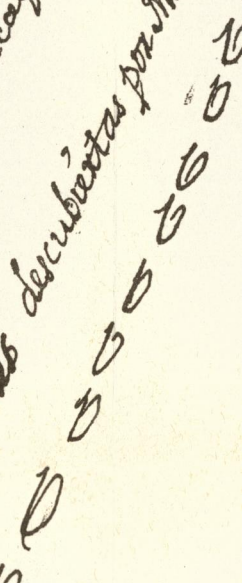
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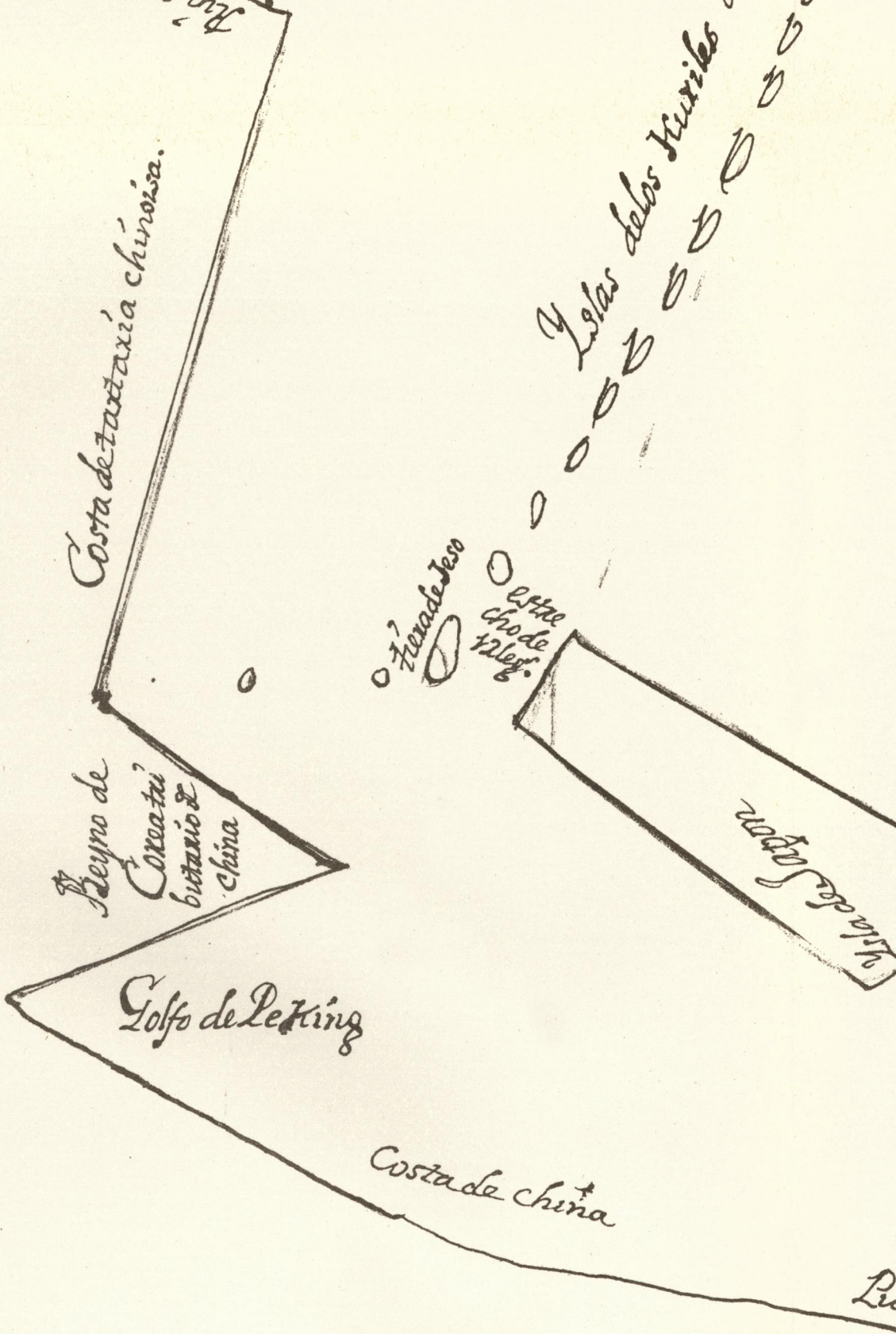
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Sketch Map Accompanying Memorial of Cal

