THE MISSIONS OF NEW MEXICO, 1776

A DESCRIPTION BY

FRAY FRANCISCO ATANASIO DOMINGUEZ

WITH OTHER CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTS

TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED BY

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PUBLISHED FOR THE CULTURAL PROPERTIES REVIEW COMMITTEE
IN COOPERATION WITH THE STATE PLANNING OFFICE

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO PRESS, ALBUQUERQUE

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This publication is funded through the special revolving fund
appropriated by the 31st New Mexico State Legislature.

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Manufactured in the United States of America.
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number LC 55-12223
International Standard Book Number 0-8263-0373-0
Reprinted 1975

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to east as far as Cojnina, where we intend to go in order to strengthen the people of this nation in their good intention of becoming Christians, and in order to give the most careful and accurate report possible about the region they inhabit and the sites it may offer adapted to and convenient for settlements. Also, if no insuperable obstacle intervenes, we will proceed direct to Moqui, exploring as much as possible the country in between and the environs of Moqui in order to give information about any suitable sites there may be to which the Moqui pueblos can be moved in case of their conversion, or to establish another, or others, which may be available.

People who voluntarily accompany us, and for the sole purpose of serving God and our Sovereign, God keep him:

1. Don Juan Pedro de Cisneros, alcalde mayor of the pueblo of Zuñi. 2. Don Bernardo Miera, citizen of the Villa of Santa Fe. 3. Don Joaquín Laín, citizen of the same villa. 4. Lorenzo de Olivares, citizen of the pueblo of El Paso del Norte. 5. Andrés Muñiz, citizen of the post of Bernalillo. 6. Juan de Aguilar, citizen of the same post. 7. Antonio Lucrecio Muñiz, citizen of the post of Embudo. 8. Simón Lucero, servant of the said alcalde of Zuñi.

Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez
(rubric)

V

To Provincial Fray Isidro Murillo
Zuñi, November 25, 1776[19]

Our Very Reverend Father Minister Provincial Fray Isidro Murillo.

Most benign and my venerated father and lord:

In the letter I wrote to your Very Reverend Paternity dated July 29 of this year of 1776, I not only enclosed a literal copy of the letter the Reverend Father Fray Francisco Garcés wrote from Oraybi in Moqui to the Father Minister of this mission of Zuñi, but I also remitted to you a copy of the one concerning the same matter which the second minister of this mission, Father Fray Mariano Rosete, wrote to me, and I gave you prompt notice of the journey, and on the same twenty-ninth of July Father Fray Silvestre Vélez de Escalante and I ventured forth.

And in fact it was in accordance with the plan of it I presented to your Very Reverend Paternity in the letter mentioned, to the north-northwest of the Villa of Santa Fe, although at first we traveled nearly 100 leagues to the northwest through territory of Yutas, Payuchis, Muhuachis, and Tabeguachis. After 199 leagues, we reached the Yutas Sabuaganas, to whom we proclaimed the Gospel. The first Sabuaganas whom we saw were a little beyond the northern end of the Sierra de la Grulla and almost in 40° of latitude. They made many difficulties and tried to hinder us in the prosecution of our journey, but, praise God, all the difficulties they made were overcome without offending them.

Among them there were six Laguna [Utah lake] Indians who are called Tympanogotzis, or Tympanocuitzis, in their language. With two of these for guides, we continued our way on through the Yutas and through territory of the Comanches Yamparicas, and at the last great river that divides the Yuta

19. AGM, Historia, vol. 52, exp. 9. With this letter there is another of the same date addressed to Governor Pedro Fermín de Mendinueta and signed by both Domínguez and Vélez de Escalante. Except for the opening and closing paragraphs and an occasional minor difference in wording, these letters are almost exactly the same. Apparently it was a joint composition. In the letter to the governor they mention their weariness and the excessively cold weather, which prevented them from proceeding to Santa Fe at once. These letters, of course, summarize the account given at much greater length in their diary of the expedition, for which and for a detailed discussion of the expedition, the reader is referred to H. E. Bolton, *Pageant in the wilderness* (Salt Lake City, 1950). See also O. Maas, *Viajes de misioneros franciscanos,* and *Documentos para la historia de México,* Sér. 2, vol. 1 (Mexico, 1854).

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nation from the Comanche and other nations on the north and northeast, and which we named San Buenaventura, we found ourselves in 41° 19′ of latitude, the highest to which we ascended during the whole journey.

After crossing this last river, we traveled west, quarter west-southwest, and at 316 leagues from the Villa of Santa Fe we reached the great valley and lake of the Tympanocuitzis, which we named Nuestra Señora de la Merced because we arrived there on the day of this advocation of the Most Pure Virgin [September 23]. Here we found the most docile and affable nation of all that have been known in these regions. We proclaimed the Gospel to them with such happy results that they are awaiting Spaniards and religious so that they may become Christians. They accepted all our proposals with pleasure, and in proof of their sincerity they gave us a sign on a piece of chamois in order that we might show it to the lord governor, and they gave us two Indians to come here with us. One of them returned because of an unexpected contingency, after having traveled with us more than 40 leagues from his land, and the other went on and has come here with us. This has sweetened the inevitable bitter things that so long a journey offers, because we have now assured the safety of this soul.

The said valley is on the west side of an extensive sierra that comes from the northeast and the land of the Yamparicas and in latitude 40° 49′. Five rivers, which enter a great lake abounding in fish, which is in the center of the valley, water it. Around it dwell the Tympanocuitzis and another nation whom we were unable to see. This valley is so spacious, with such good land and beautiful proportions, that in it alone a province like New Mexico can be established and can be maintained there well supplied with every kind of grain and cattle, as your Very Reverend Paternity will see at more length in the Diary which I will remit in due course. The Sabuaganas call these Indians Come-Pescado (Fish Eaters), and it is true that they have good fish.

From the Valley and Lake of Nuestra Señora de la Merced of the Tympanocuitzis, we took our route toward Monterey, traveling south, and mostly to the southwest. We encountered many people of the same docility and simplicity as the Lagunas. We preached to them as well as the fortuitous difference in the language permitted, and they all received the Gospel with pleasure. These Indians whom we discovered beyond the Lagunas generally have as thick and dense a beard as the Spaniards. Most frequently they remove it, and some wear it so long that they look like Capuchin Fathers or Bethlehemites. In addition to this distinction from all the rest, the cartilage of their noses is pierced, and they wear a little bone through the hole. They resemble the Spaniards in their physiognomy. They use the language of the Lagunas. It is a widespread and numerous nation. The last of them whom we saw and instructed as much as possible became so fond of us that when they took leave of us, they burst into tears, and until we lost them from sight we heard their tender sobs and lamentations. The special name of these Indians is Tyrangapui in their language, and the valley in which they live, which is very extensive, is in 39° 35′ of latitude.

From these Yutas Barbones [full-bearded] (we call them this because they use the Yuta language, although with noticeable difference) we proceeded to the southwest toward Monterey, and after six days' journey we found ourselves already with very little food, for although the Lord Governor supplied us with sufficient for the whole journey, it was necessary for us to use a great deal among the Yutas, especially among the Sabuaganas. And therefore, although we killed two buffaloes and bought a fardel of very good dried fish at the lake, it failed us at the critical time. Besides this, there was a heavy snowfall, with almost intolerable cold. For these and other reasons which your

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Very Reverend Paternity will see in the Diary, we considered our reaching Monterey unattainable for now, and so from 38° and minutes of latitude we took a new route for the Río Grande de Cojnina, Moqui, and Zuñi.

Beyond the Barbones Indians we found other nations, and all so wild and cowardly that we had great difficulty in getting them to come near us so that we might instruct them, in so far as the difference in language permitted, through the Laguna and the interpreter. Among those nearest the Río Grande there are some who now sow maize and calabashes. They are called Parussis and they are the farthest north, at 37° and minutes of latitude. The climate of the territory they inhabit is more hot than cold, according to what we experienced.

In none of the nations mentioned did we find any information whatsoever about the Spaniards of Monterey. Before we reached the Río Grande, and among the Parussis, our food supply ran out completely. We were unable to obtain a guide among all these people, and therefore we suffered many deviations from our route, delay, and such hunger that many days we ate grass seeds, tuna [prickly pear] cake, *nopal chico* [another variety of prickly pear], and finally six horses from those we had been using. We reached the Río Grande in 36 and more than a half degrees, having come down before as far as a full 36½°. We did not find a ford here, and so we traveled upstream, with great difficulty because the terrain is almost impassable, until we found a ford in 36° 55′ of latitude.

A little more than 8 leagues after we crossed the river, we found a ranchería of Yutas Payuchis, of the most western ones, but as cowardly and wild as the Indians mentioned on the other side. We spent two days urging them to approach us to see whether we might buy some supplies from them and have them give us information about Cojnina and Moqui, but they hardly saw us before they returned to the crag where they were with great speed. They gave the information we were seeking to the Laguna and the interpreter and the marks of the road that led to Moqui and of the one that went to the Cojninas, whom they said were far in the interior gathering piñón. We took the road to Cojnina through very good terrain.

We went down to 35° through Cojnina territory. We found a small, but beautiful, farm, and a rancho of these Indians, but we did not see any of them. Perhaps they were in the nearby sierra gathering piñón. On the said farm, which has several springs of good water to irrigate it, they had sown maize, frijol, watermelons, melons, and calabashes this year, for there were remains of all these. In addition to the huts

SIGNATURE OF BERNARDO DE MIERA Y PACHECO

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made of palisades, there was a small house well made of stone and mud. [In these and in subterranean granaries were][20] the baskets *(cuévanos)* and other utensils of these Indians.

From here we went toward Moqui. We traveled by extensive plains on which the herds of cattle and horses of Moqui graze, and after three days, which was on the sixteenth of this November, we reached Oraybi, where we were well received, although the populace detained us for a short time at the entrance to the pueblo. We went to all the pueblos. We preached the Gospel to all, and none of them is willing to receive it. The brevity of this letter and the scarcity of time does not permit me to inform your Very Reverend Paternity of all that happened in Moqui, especially in Gualpi, but your Very Reverend Paternity will see it all in the Diary.

The Navajos and Yutas have killed, captured, and robbed the Moquis, and they are now at war with them. We had such bad weather at Moqui that it was impossible to make observations of latitude either by day or by night.

Finally, we reached this mission of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Zuñi on the twenty-fourth day of this month, having traveled in the whole journey nearly 600 Spanish leagues. From the lake to near the Río Colorado there is an extremely beautiful road, and entirely free from enemies. With regard to Monterey, according to what we observed and through all the land we traveled from the lake, it is possible to travel safely with a very small force.

This is the substance of what happened on our journey and what I can tell your Very Reverend Paternity for now with the necessary brevity. May Heaven prosper your life for many years to my honor. Mission of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Zuñi and November 25, 1776.

Our Very Reverend Father Provincial, Your Very Reverend Paternity's least subject and most favored son who loves and respects you kisses your hands.

Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez
(rubric)

VI

To Provincial Fray Isidro Murillo
El Paso, May 21, 1777[21]

Our Very Reverend Father Minister Provincial Fray Isidro Murillo:

In my letter of June 10 of last year, 1776, I informed your Very Reverend Paternity about everything that then seemed necessary to me, and I also advised you that only the three missions of Laguna, Acoma, and Zuñi remained for me to visit. Their visitation has now been made as of the month of December of the same year. And although your Very Reverend Paternity has replied to my aforesaid letter of June 10 in one dated August 9, giving me the instructions I must observe with regard to setting fees and to recording accurately the missing baptismal entries by making use of the citizens to find out from them with method and subtlety the day, month, and year when their children, relatives, or acquaintances were baptized, I say that I am unable to carry out such an order for various reasons. Sometimes because, generally speaking, the people of this kingdom are so simple that they do not even know the day on which they were born; or else their malice is so great that they will misrepresent matters in such a way that they raise a lot of confused gossip, out of which it costs a good deal to get at the truth. Moreover, these same people have seen the complete entries used to stuff the windows. And finally, a number of alcaldes and lieutenants of the pueblos have removed the parish books from some missions, and their leaves have been used to

20. Supplied from the letter to the governor mentioned in n. 19 *supra*.

21. BNM, leg. 10, no. 42.

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