

Winter of the Metal People

The Tiguex War

by DENNIS HERRICK

HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

1492 — Christopher Columbus sails into the Caribbean and encounters the New World

1511 — A Dominican priest, Antonio de Montesinos, is the first to speak out against the genocide and forced labor of the natives of the Americas

1512 — The Spanish crown passes the Laws of Burgos calling for humane treatment of the New World's natives, but the laws are ignored and difficult to enforce

1521 — Hernán Cortés conquers the Triple Alliance of the Mexicas (better known today as Aztecs) in Mexico

1532 — Francisco Pizzaro captures and executes Inca ruler Atawallpa, leading to forty years of warfare in Peru

1533 — Taino leader Enrique (also known as Enriquillo)¹ of present-day Dominican Republic is the only native leader able to bring Spaniards to negotiation; King Carlos signs a peace treaty after fourteen years of rebellion

1537 — Álvaro Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, one of four survivors of the 1528 invasion of Florida, along with a black slave named Esteban de Dorantes, returns to Mexico after walking across the continent; Cabeza de Vaca reports rich Indian cities to the north of Mexico

1539 — Sent to find the Indian cities Cabeza de Vaca had heard about, Franciscan Friar Marcos de Niza reports the death of black explorer Esteban de Dorantes at what he calls Cíbola, which turns out to be the Zuni village of Hawikku in today's New Mexico

1540 — Coronado expedition leaves Mexico in search of the Seven Cities of Cíbola, which Spanish imagination has elevated to the fabled rich Seven Cities of Antilia, or simply the Seven Cities

1540 — Coronado attacks and conquers the Zuni village of Hawikku on July 7

1540 — Coronado's camp-master² arrives in Tiguex Province north of present-day Albuquerque and commandeers Tiwa pueblo of Ghufloor for expedition headquarters, renaming it Coofor

1540 — Coronado launches Tiguex War against Tiwa Indians in late December, resulting in Spaniards conquering a village the Spaniards call Arenal; Indians are burned alive at the stake and all Arenal's defenders are killed

1541 — Siege of fortified Tiwa pueblo of Moho ends after about eighty days when Tiwas abandon pueblo on about March 27 with great loss of Indian life

1541 — Coronado expedition leaves Tiguex Province in late April on trek across the Great Plains in search of the reported rich land of Quivira, which turns out to be only buffalo hunting tribes in Kansas

1541 — Expedition forces attack Pecos Pueblo just before Coronado returns; expedition moves back into Tiguex Province headquarters at Coofor; Tiwas hiding in the mountains conduct guerilla warfare against expedition's forces

1541 — Coronado receives a head injury in fall from his horse on December 27; he decides to return the expedition to Mexico

1542 — Expedition departs Tiguex Province in early April, leaving behind Franciscan Friar Juan de Padilla and Franciscan Brother Luis de Úbeda

1542 — Dominican priest Bartolomé de las Casas begins writing *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, a book which horrifies the royal court and Spanish populace about the genocidal actions against Indians by conquistadors and colonists since 1492

1544 — Coronado is investigated in Mexico City on charges that include violating the king and viceroy's orders by waging unjustified war against the Pueblo Indians; Coronado is acquitted, but his camp-master is convicted in a subsequent trial in Spain for the expedition's cruelties against the Indians

Twentieth Century — Books by leading American historians—led by George P. Hammond, A. Grove Day and Herbert E. Bolton—characterize the Pueblo tribes as heathen, perfidious and savage while they rationalize Spanish atrocities, thereby popularizing the “mild and gentle” Coronado myth³

One of the great shortcomings in the early history of the western hemisphere is our lack of a record of what the Indians thought If we only knew what he said and thought about our ancestors, we probably would hang our heads in shame.

— Historian Herbert E. Bolton⁴

PART I: AN INDIAN WORLD

When considering the 400-year war for control of North America, few people consider the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico. Instead, the imagination is stirred by hunter-warrior tribes such as the Pequot, the Six Nations of the Iroquois, the Creek Confederacy, the Shawnee, Ottawa, Cherokee, Sauk, Ojibwa, the Great Plains horse tribes, the Seminole, Ute and Apache.

The Europeans, and later the Americans, encountered and subdued five hundred of these autonomous native nations⁵ in one of the great confrontations between two races.

But among the first to be encountered were the tribes that lived in terraced towns near or along the Rio Grande. The Spaniards who met them in the mid-1500s called them *Pueblos*,⁶ the Spanish word for towns, to distinguish them from the nomadic tribes.

Unlike woodlands and plains tribes, the Pueblos specialized in defensive warfare. Though they quarreled among themselves occasionally, their main concern was the security of their stone or adobe fortress towns, which were built as multi-story apartment buildings with interior courtyards.

As primarily farmers, traders and artists, Pueblo Indians seem an unlikely citizenry to go to war against European arms.

However, it was Pueblo Indians who resisted Europeans in America's first named Indian war—the Tiguex War. (In the original Spanish, Tiguex was pronounced as TEE-wesh.⁷) Later they drove the Spaniards out of their country for twelve years in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, which remains one of the most significant Indian victories on the North

American continent. Today the Pueblos still live in many of the same towns where the Spaniards found them. Some of their towns date back seven hundred to a thousand years, from north of Santa Fe to the area around Albuquerque and more than a hundred miles to the west.

The present-day New Mexico cities of Albuquerque, Corrales, Rio Rancho, Placitas and Bernalillo are in the heart of the old Tiguex Province. The Spaniards named the province from the plural word for members of one Pueblo tribe, the Tigua (TEE-wa), spelled today as Tiwa.⁸

Even though it was the continent's first named Indian war, the Tiguex War is the least known.

No book has ever been published about it. Such a book has become possible today because of the discovery and translation of additional original documents in recent years—primarily by historians Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint—and modern research in archaeology, anthropology and history.

The Tiguex War occurred in the winter of 1540-41 during a Spanish mission⁹ of armed reconnaissance and conquest of the Southwest led by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado.¹⁰

That expedition resulted in European discovery of the Grand Canyon and Colorado River, the California coast, the Rocky Mountains, the Rio Grande, and the Great Plains. As for the Tiguex War, many historians have relegated it to just a distraction during one of the most sweeping explorations of western America.

For example, in Herbert E. Bolton's 1949 hagiography of Coronado titled *Coronado: Knight of Pueblos and Plains*, only twenty of the volume's 493 pages are

devoted to the Tiguex War. Pedro de Castañeda's eyewitness account, *The Journey of Coronado*, covers the conflict in twelve pages. The *Encyclopedia of Native American Wars & Warfare* devotes a single paragraph to the Tiguex War.

And what little we have known has been dictated by Spanish chroniclers putting themselves in the best light and the Indians in the worst light—a classic example of victors writing the history.

When American historians wrote books about the Coronado expedition during the quadricentennial decade of the 1940s, they did so from their own Eurocentric perspective and unconditional acceptance of self-glorifying Spanish accounts.

Until far into the 1900s, Native Americans were often depicted in a condescending and stereotypical manner—their religion labeled a cult, their culture condemned as uncivilized, their behavior branded as savage and duplicitous, and their place in history dismissed as a curiosity but irrelevant. American historians accepted Coronado's insistence that he was forced to defend himself against what he called barbaric Indians while conducting himself with compassion and honor.

Coronado's myth of benevolence persists in large part today, especially in the Southwest, where some of the most ruthless conquistadors are honored with statues, buildings and street names.¹¹

To reach the truth, it is necessary to recognize what Spaniards did not report, what they understated or glossed over, and what they perceived and reported inaccurately. For example, when at least a hundred European expeditionaries and more than a thousand Mexican Indian allies attacked about two hundred Zuni warriors at Hawikku, which Coronado's men then called Cíbola, the result was described as a

Spanish military victory. However, there were no women or children present because Zunis, seeing the approach of a massive armed force, evacuated most of their population to the top of a mesa miles away. The warriors “defeated” at Hawikku were volunteers putting themselves in harm’s way to delay the expedition so women, children and the elderly could be escorted to safety. Most military strategists would concede the Zunis accomplished the most important mission—to protect their people from invaders. So, who really won the battle of Hawikku/Cíbola?

Later, the expedition besieged the Tiwa stronghold of Moho for nearly three months, unable to overrun it until its Indian defenders ran out of water. Was that a Spanish victory? Or was it a successful Indian tactic to tie down the entire expedition so the rest of the Tiwa nation could survive a precarious winter in a mountain sanctuary?

This book provides a historical narrative, enlightened by discoveries in science and the humanities and invigorated by plausible supposition, that humanizes Pueblo people and presents their point of view in the Tiguex War.

This book is fact, dramatized with narrative to fill out the historical record of events and people in the Tiguex War. Even though no written Indian report of the war exists, historians, archaeologists and anthropologists have discovered much of what the Spaniards omitted, distorted, downplayed or misunderstood in their accounts.

This account begins just before European contact with the Pueblo tribes with a dramatization of an event.

It was the time when Pueblo Indians lived in farming communities along the Rio Grande, created petroglyphs to honor their spirits and their way of life, prayed to kachinas instead of to saints for intercession with the Creator, and produced pottery and

weavings prized as art even then as well as today. It was still a world without Spaniards, without steel, without gunpowder, and without horses.

It was the Old Time.

¹ His native name was Guarocuya, but he was raised by missionaries and renamed Enrique. The Spaniards who fought him used the disparaging nickname of Enriquillo (“little” Enrique), as they would refer to a child or a slave. It is by that diminutive that he is usually remembered today. The largest lake in the Dominican Republic is named Lake Enriquillo in his honor.

² The Spanish term is *maestre de campo*, which is a rank equivalent to a field commander.

³ This is the characterization used by historian Herbert E. Bolton in 1949 and echoed by many other historians since.

⁴ Herbert E. Bolton to Dr. J.P. Herrington (sic), October 13, 1930, outgoing, Papers of Herbert Eugene Bolton, Bancroft Library, cited in James A. Sandos, “Junípero Serra’s Canonization and the Historical Record,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 93, No. 5 (December 1988), 1256.

⁵ Jack Leustig directed a 6.2-hour video documentary of the four centuries of warfare, which is recommended for an overview of the entire conflict with compelling photographs, computer graphics and animation. See “500 Nations: Kevin Costner Explores America’s Indian Heritage,” four-CD video set, TIG Productions in association with RCS Films & TV, Majestic Films, and Television International, 1994.

⁶ The appellation of “Pueblo Indians” was applied to about seventy autonomous villages along the Rio Grande and for several miles on each side in the sixteenth century. However, Pueblo tribes have mutually unintelligible languages and often fought each other. Present-day languages besides Tiwa are Keres, Towa, Tewa, Zuni and Hopi.

⁷ The province extended from Isleta Pueblo in the south to at least Kuaua Pueblo (Coronado State Monument) in the north, on both sides of the Rio Grande, in the area now containing the cities of Albuquerque, Corrales, Rio Rancho, Bernalillo and Placitas as well as the pueblos of Sandia and Santa Ana. Tiguex is pronounced as TEE-wesh because the Spanish “g” is pronounced as an English “w.” Thus, older references refer to the “Tigua” Indians, although modern references usually prefer the English phonetic spelling of “Tiwa.” Adolph Bandelier provided a further explanation, saying: “As for the word Tiguex, the Tiguas call themselves Ti-guan; but a woman of Isleta in my presence plainly pronounced the plural of that name Ti-guesh; ‘x’ in old Spanish records of Mexico has the ‘sh’ sound.” See Adolph Bandelier, *Final Report of Investigations Among*

the Indians of the Southwestern United States, Carried on Mainly in the Years from 1880 to 1885, Part II (Papers of the Archaeological Institute of America, 1890/1892), 223.

⁸ The Spaniards stormed Isleta Pueblo during their retreat from New Mexico in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and forced about 400 Isleta natives to accompany them south. The kidnapped natives established Ysleta del Sur near El Paso, Texas. Their descendents retain the original spelling of Tigua for their tribe.

⁹ Because Spain had been so recently unified, most of its citizens in 1540 still identified themselves by their province. Most on the Coronado expedition were from the Province of Castile and referred to themselves as Castilians. Even the Indians called them Castillos.

¹⁰ This book will follow the precedent of other English language publications that refer to Francisco Vázquez de Coronado as “Coronado,” even though he was known as Francisco Vázquez to people of his time. This English-speaking preference also applies to most Spaniards on the expedition. Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint wrote an excellent biography of Coronado and summary of the expedition at <http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails.php?fileID=466>.

¹¹ For example, some buildings on the University of New Mexico campus are named in honor of conquistadors later investigated for cruelties toward Indians.