

*Translation–Narrative of Gerónimo de la Cruz [1611]*<sup>50</sup>

[fol. 67r] The Relation that I, Geronimo de la Cruz, make to the *adelantado* Don Juan de Oñate, former Governor and Captain General of the Provinces of New Mexico, of what I saw with my own eyes. The following is certain and true, and I tell it thus:

With the Field Commander [*Maestre de Campo*] and Governor Juan de Tegeda<sup>51</sup> in Havana wishing that [we] set foot [there], twenty-three years ago, I left with a small ship [*nao*] loaded with supplies for the soldiers who are in the garrison [*presidio*] of La Florida. Once arrived, we went to the presidio. The Captain Vicente Gonzales of Portuguese nationality and recipient of the Order of the Holy Spirit, under whose charge were the soldiers of the presidio, received notice that at three hundred leagues from the presidio in the mouth of a wide river the English were building a fort with many people and ships.<sup>52</sup> And this news had already spread from here [La Florida] to Havana, and so by order from the Field Commander Tegeda, Captain Vicente Gonzales left the presidio to see and to ascertain what the English were doing. And it is a certain and known fact that the English have come three times to this river, entering into it because they know the great quantity of riches that the Indians of those lands possess.<sup>53</sup> And at the same time it is known and a certain fact that the French have come one time with a quantity of people.<sup>54</sup> At this important news Captain Vicente Gonzales and thirty soldiers, fourteen sailors, and four cabin boys left from La Florida in a frigate [*fragata*] with eight

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<sup>50</sup> Gerónimo de la Cruz to Juan de Oñate, [1611], Colección de documentos pertenecientes a la Historia eclesiástica y civil de América formada por D. Juan Diez de la Calle, Oficial segundo de la Secretaría de Nueva España, MSS 3048, fols. 67–69, Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, Spain. In translating the document, I have sought to maintain as much as possible the form of Cruz's sentences but have replaced his occasional periods and commas with punctuation according to modern English usage. I have also divided his text into paragraphs. Clarifications in English and original Spanish terms (in italics) are shown in brackets. A number of the insertions of original Spanish text conserve the unmodified "c" that Cruz often used, so what might have been commonly spelled "*poblaçones*" was in fact written "*poblacones*" in the original text.

<sup>51</sup> Juan de Tejada was governor of Cuba, 1589–93, but he arrived in Havana in July 1587 with orders to supervise improvements to the fortifications for the strategic port, work that he continued while governor. "Bautista Antonelli: El arquitecto militar del Caribe," Los Antonelli: Arquitectos de Gatteo, Gatteo 1547–Madrid 1616, <http://www.provincia.fc.it/cultura/antonelli/esp/StoriaAttivita/BattistaAntonelli.html>, accessed Jan. 21, 2014; de la Fuente, *Havana and the Atlantic*, 74–75.

<sup>52</sup> For background on Vicente González, see Hoffman, *North Carolina Historical Review* 63: 199–223.

<sup>53</sup> The English did make three visits to Roanoke. The first exploratory visit in 1584 was followed by two unsuccessful attempts at colonization in 1585 and 1587. For the fullest discussion of Spanish efforts to respond to these and other threats to the Atlantic coast of North America, see Hoffman, *Spain and the Roanoke Voyages*.

<sup>54</sup> In 1582 the governor of Saint Augustine believed that French interlopers might be in the vicinity of today's Charleston, South Carolina. Hoffman, *North Carolina Historical Review* 63: 204.

[fol. 67v] oars and supplied with all that was necessary to be able to defend ourselves and see what the English were doing.<sup>55</sup>

It took us seventeen days to arrive at the mouth of the river. This river mouth is about a quarter of a league wide, more or less, and has the best entrance that I have seen, and it has twenty fathoms [*brazas*] of depth and further upriver to fifteen and sixteen fathoms, which seemed to me to be the very river of Sevilla in its similarity.<sup>56</sup>

Once arrived, then, as I was saying, in this mouth of this wide river, we saw that the English had already left from there, and we saw the ground turned up about eighteen inches [*media vara*] high, where we saw they had left a quantity of old shoes and some shabby and torn clothes.<sup>57</sup> Seeing that the English were gone, and seeming to him that the river was so fine and the land so good and so temperate, which is neither cold nor hot, the Captain said to the soldiers and sailors that since they were there, that he wanted to

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<sup>55</sup> Sometime around 1617 Franciscan historian Luís Gerónimo de Oré described "thirty soldiers and sailors in a bark [*barco luengo*]." Although Oré did not participate in the expedition, his account is likely based on the log of its commander, Captain Vicente González. Unfortunately, the log has since been lost. Oré, *Relación histórica de la Florida*, 1: 78, translated in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2: 804.

<sup>56</sup> Here the combination of details strongly suggests that Cruz is describing the entrance to the Chesapeake even if some elements are a bit confused. The mouth of the Chesapeake Bay is more accurately about ten miles, or about three and a half leagues, wide, but the entrance to the James River, just inside the Chesapeake Bay, is about a mile (that is, roughly a third of a league) wide and, according to the map of Augustine Herrman, had a depth of nineteen fathoms in 1670. Herrman's map also indicates that the James River reached depths of only seven or eight fathoms within two miles of its mouth. The Chesapeake, on the other hand, had depths of twenty fathoms as far north as the mouth of the Patuxent River. It seems, then, that Cruz is relating some details particular to the James River and other details associated with the larger bay into which the James empties. Given his status as a soldier, it is not hard to imagine Cruz having some responsibility for taking measurements or at least overhearing them. Similarly, it is not hard to understand why someone unfamiliar with navigation would be disoriented and so misidentify the actual channels he was describing. Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2: 805; Edward C. Papenfuse and Joseph M. Coale III, *The Maryland State Archives Atlas of Historical Maps of Maryland, 1608–1908* (Baltimore, 2003), 16–21. A digital copy of this map is available at "Charts and Maps Used by the Early Settlers of Maryland," Oct. 13, 2004, <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/educ/exhibits/html/mpt.html>.

<sup>57</sup> It is difficult to interpret the reference to the mound of earth, but it might have been the result of nearby English or Indians' efforts to scavenge from the abandoned colony. The fact that only scraps of shoes and clothing were visible suggests that the English or Indians had removed everything of value already. Of course, there is a bigger interpretive problem. If Cruz is in fact recalling his visit to Roanoke, he has clearly misremembered the timing. Oré's much fuller history of the expedition, which is itself probably a summary of the account of Captain Vicente González, makes very clear that the Spaniards discovered the English colony only after they had explored the Chesapeake Bay and were voyaging south. Oré, *Relación histórica de la Florida*, 1: 78–82.

continue up the river to see that good land and to see if we could see the people who inhabited it.

And because our captain's idea seemed so good to us, by common sentiment we gave sail and oar to our fragata. And I took the tiller,<sup>58</sup> steering it with difficulty, though, because this river rises and falls and so it was capable of making us run aground and [fol. 68r] be stuck.<sup>59</sup> And when it rose we returned to sailing and rowing on our way up our river, sometimes between very fresh and lovely groves. And at the head [of the bay], taking a sighting of the stars we found we had traveled forty-five leagues, and these we covered in fifteen days because in some parts the current detained us until the force of the rising [current] carried us to the head [of the bay].<sup>60</sup>

At the head of the bay we ran into twenty-two canoes of three or four fathoms and larger in which came a great quantity of naked Indians with bows and arrows and war clubs [*macanas*].<sup>61</sup> The bows seemed to be of brazilwood [*de brasil*], and the people seemed very well disposed, and they made signs. Those that I saw in the canoes and on land wear their hair down to their shoulders and cover their private parts with animal skins. It seemed there were more than thirty thousand Indians, and I am not exaggerating, all with earrings [*orejeras o carcillos*] that shone greatly in the sunlight.

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<sup>58</sup> Such nautical skill as steering might suggest that the Cruz who authored this relation did not come from the landlocked communities of Brihuega, Spain, and Puebla in New Spain. Nonetheless, his voyages to New Spain, Havana, and the Chesapeake would have exposed him to maritime life. For a parallel example, note that John Smith turned another set of landlubbers into sailors on his 1607 voyage to the head of the Chesapeake Bay. See Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580–1631)* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1986), 1: 149.

<sup>59</sup> In his reference to the rise and fall of the river, Cruz is apparently referring to the tides of the Chesapeake Bay.

<sup>60</sup> Depending on the conversion factor, 45 leagues could equal roughly 110 to 200 miles. The length of the bay is roughly 200 miles. Cruz recalls a total travel time of seventeen days from Saint Augustine to "the mouth of the river" of the Chesapeake Bay and then another fifteen days to "the head." This rate of travel compares very closely with Oré's account, which mentions a departure from Saint Augustine at the end of May and an arrival at the head of the Chesapeake Bay on the Feast of Saint John on June 24. Oré, *Relación histórica de la Florida*, 1: 78, 80–81; for a translation, see Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2: 804, 809. Cruz's details on travel times also resemble those of the later voyage of John Smith and his crew of twelve, who spent "not above 12 daies" carefully exploring the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay before they reached the Patapsco River, about thirty miles south of the head of the bay. The more direct second voyage reached the head of the bay and the mouth of the Susquehanna River in less than five days. Barbour, *Complete Works*, 1: 226 (quotation), 230–31.

<sup>61</sup> In 1546 an English sailor was on a ship blown by a storm into the Chesapeake, where he and his crewmates met "over thirty canoes in each of which were fifteen to twenty persons with bows and arrows." The two groups cautiously exchanged marten skins for knives, fishhooks, and shirts. Lewis and Loomie, *Spanish Jesuit Mission in Virginia*, 13.

Once alongside our fragata forty or fifty jumped aboard, and I do not exaggerate in this because many more jumped in because they are people who swim like fishes. Once the captain, soldiers, and sailors saw such numbers of people and that if we entered further inland that these numbers would increase, as would the great risk that it would happen that they [the crew?] would kill them [the Indians?] and exceed what their governor had sent them for, and because the supplies were running low, the captain determined to turn around. And so we turned around. And according to our astrolabe and sailing chart and what the Indians told us by signs, we were thirty leagues from that city and settlements [*poblacones*].<sup>62</sup> God knows that we all turned around with great disappointment [*con harta pena*] that we could not go there to see these settlements because the gold that we saw these Indians wearing was so beautiful and so pure and without any kind of mixture that we straightened [*enderecavamos*] [fol. 68v] those earrings [*sarcillos U oregeras*] with our fingers, which [i.e., the earrings] were very thick, and made what we wanted from them with ease.<sup>63</sup> And asking the Indians by signs where they obtained that [metal], they did not know how to explain, nor could we understand more than that they had great quantities of that [metal] and that there was no other kind of metal.<sup>64</sup> Once our return was set, we seized three of those Indians, two boys and an old man, and we placed them under the deck [*debajo de cubierta*], and we set sail. When the rest saw that we had taken those three, they separated from us without resisting us [*sin ofendernos*] nor firing a single arrow.

During our voyage, the eldest found an axe under the deck, and with it he began to chop to remove a board and get out of there. At the sound of the chopping, some of us soldiers came<sup>65</sup> and, finding the Indian chopping with the axe, they stabbed him and killed him. We brought the other two with great care and vigilance to the field marshal Tegeda in

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<sup>62</sup> John Smith described the Susquehannocks’ principal town as two days’ journey upriver from the falls that obstructed his shallop’s passage. It is not clear whether Cruz and his fellow travelers would have reached these falls or whether “the head [of the bay]” referred instead to the mouth of the Susquehanna River, further downstream. If the Natives’ settlement was at the Schultz site in today’s Pennsylvania, it would have been about forty-five miles upstream from the river’s mouth. The problem with accepting Cruz’s description, though, is that Susquehannocks had very limited access to copper before 1600. As I explain further in note 64, below, it is more likely that Cruz is recalling Indians (perhaps Powhatans) from the lower Chesapeake offering directions to their town. For Smith on the Susquehannocks, see Barbour, *Complete Works*, 1: 148–49.

<sup>63</sup> What Cruz apparently did not consider (or wish to consider) is that copper is similarly malleable.

<sup>64</sup> The prevalence of copper is difficult to corroborate in the archaeological record. Susquehannock sites on the lower Susquehanna River were occupied in the later 1500s, and some of these have large quantities of metal goods, including brass, but most of this material seems to be from the early seventeenth century, after the establishment of Jamestown to the south and New Amsterdam to the north. Kent, *Susquehanna’s Indians*, 17–21; White, “To Secure a Lasting Peace,” 188–89, 311–16. It is more likely, then, that Cruz is describing people along the James River in Virginia who did have large quantities of copper.

<sup>65</sup> In this association of “us” and “soldiers,” Cruz reveals his role in the crew.

Havana where the field marshal took them and put them in a ship [*navio de aviso*] that was in Havana. Tegeda sent them to Spain and Captain Vicente González went with them, and I don't know what happened to them, nor do I know more than that the field marshal Tegeda had a great desire to go to this river to discover this city and settlement because of the grand things that the Indians said about that land, that they are a people who wear clothes and shoes and who have so much of that gold that [fol. 69r] all of the dishes [*el servicio*] of their houses, including the baskets and the jars and all the rest, is of that metal, and they neither know of nor have any other [metal]. These Indians are so hearty [*alentados*] that I attest to your lordship that upon setting oar and sail to our frigate downstream with the current of the river, the Indians kept up with us for a long time and always went ahead. This land and river is, and we are certain of this, in the land of New Mexico and they are its provinces and what your lordship has begun to penetrate and discover.<sup>66</sup> All of which begs our Lord to grant life [to this plan] so that it comes to be and does a great service to God Our Lord and to His Majesty as this servant of your lordship desires. Your lordship's servant, Geronimo de LaCruz.

Agrees [with the original] Andres Dallo

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<sup>66</sup> This statement suggests why a document about the Atlantic coast of North America would appear in a collection of documents primarily about New Spain. Spaniards and many other Europeans believed that the distance from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean across North America was much shorter than it actually is. In addition, New Mexico's colonists believed that the eastward-flowing rivers that originated northeast of the colony emptied directly into the Atlantic Ocean rather than into the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. Hoffman, *New Andalucía*, 291–313; Enrico Martínez, Map of New Mexico and Great Plains, 1601, repr. from the AGI and published in Villagrà, *Historia de la Nueva México*, ix. The French would transpose these misconceptions only slightly when they imagined easy and short journeys between New Mexico and the Mississippi. Mapp, *Elusive West*, 156–63.