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THE LEGEND OF SIERRA AZUL

*with special emphasis upon the part it played in the
reconquest of New Mexico*

By JOSÉ MANUEL ESPINOSA

THE first reports of the fabulous Sierra Azul date from the middle of the seventeenth century, and both the legend and the name persisted in the frontier tradition of the region and in Spanish American geography until the nineteenth century. By all reports, Sierra Azul was another Zacatecas, or Potosí and Huancavelica combined. In the transmission of the tale, the alleged location of this lost mine often changed, and in the colonial period the place was never found. First it was believed to be somewhere in the vicinity of Zuñi, then west of Zuñi and Oraibe. But the legend was not without basis, and the search was not all fantasy. In spite of the many false elements which were added to or identified with it in the course of time, toward the end of the last century, with the opening of rich gold, silver, and quicksilver deposits throughout central Arizona, it stood revealed as literal fact, at a time when the story itself had been forgotten and no longer a factor.

* * *

From all indications some elements of the legend can be traced back to the old reports of Cárdenas, Espejo, Farfán, Escobár, Oñate, and the others who accompanied them and lived to tell the tale, modified by the exaggerations and changes of oral tradition, and confused with later accounts brought back by explorers both from New Mexico and New

Vizcaya. For Sierra Azul was persistently said to be west of Zuñi and the Hopi villages, or what is now western New Mexico, Arizona, and southern Utah—the half mythical region which these men visited in the course of their explorations; and there are traditional features of the legend itself which have much in common with these older reports of the region in question. Therefore, let us first point out how New Mexico came into history, the legendary character of its hinterland, at a later date the land of Sierra Azul, and the building up of the tradition from which the legend of Sierra Azul drew its origins.

After Cortés found and conquered the wonderful city of Mexico, and Pizarro captured a ruler who paid for his ransom a room, the size of a freight car, full of gold, men were led to believe almost anything. So while some adventurers sought in the south “another Perú”, others scoured the northern interior, hoping with reason to find “another Mexico.”

It was in this generation that New Mexico came into history. Cabeza de Vaca and Friar Marcos paved the way. Then Coronado sought wealth and fame in Cibola and Quivira, only to return to Mexico disillusioned. García López de Cárdenas, at the head of a Spanish reconnoitering corps of the Coronado expedition, traversed the whole of northern Arizona from east to west in 1540, and came back with fascinating tales of Grand Canyon and the Painted Desert,—the first Europeans to visit the region. The expedition soon became legendary, and before 1554 the historian Gómara represented Coronado as having reached the coast, where he saw ships from Cathay with prows wrought in gold and silver, thus laying the foundation for endless confusion.¹

After Coronado, New Mexico and Arizona were unvisited for four decades. These bold adventurers of the first generation of the Spanish conquest in America gained

1. This tale, often repeated after Coronado's expedition, was credulously perpetuated in the seventeenth century by Gaspar de Villagrà in his *Historia de la Nueva Mexico* (Alcalá, 1610), canto V. (English translation by Gilberto Espinosa, Quivira Society Publications, Los Angeles, 1933).

little wealth, but their heroic marches put to rest the extravagant tales of great cities in the north, and taught Europe an important lesson in American geography. After about twenty years of rainbow chasing, every reasonable rumor was run to its lair. The adventurers settled back on the established frontier.

Meanwhile rich mines, settled Indians to convert and exploit, new opportunities for farmers and ranchers, and Indian trade were the attractive forces which pulled the frontier of settlement northward from the central valley of Mexico. Mines attracted most attention, and furnished Spain with the most revenue. And in the last half of the sixteenth century the mines of northern Mexico produced quantities of silver much greater in value than the wealth obtained by Cortés and Pizarro combined. From now on, in the north, the search for lost mines to be exploited brought on a new cycle of frontier legends. The legend of Sierra Azul was a creation of the mine complex of this period.

By 1580 the northern frontier of settlement of New Spain had reached the head of the Conchos River, and from then on expeditions into the north were frequent, and explorers came back with more definite knowledge. In 1581 Fray Agustín Rodríguez led a colonizing expedition into New Mexico from Santa Bárbara, New Vizcaya. Eleven mines were found, all having great veins of silver. From three of them ore was brought to Mexico City in the following year, and one of the samples was found to be half silver.² These adventurers met Indian resistance, and in 1583 Antonio de Espejo led a rescue party of soldier-traders but arrived too late.

After the avowed purpose of his expedition had been accomplished, Espejo pushed northward in search of a lake of gold said to be in that direction. He did not find the lake so he turned westward. At Zuñi and Moqui the natives

2. Account of Felipe de Escalante and Hernando Barrando, in Pacheco and Cárdenas, *Col. Doc. Idéd.*, XV, 146-150. English translation in Herbert E. Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706* (New York, 1925), 154-157.

repeated the stories regarding a large lake farther on, and said that its shores were inhabited by people who wore gold bracelets and earrings, and who travelled in canoes carrying large balls of brass color in their prows. They also spoke of gold mines farther westward. To Espejo they gave clear signs that what they said was true. From Moqui he pushed forty-five leagues west in search of the mines until he reached the region west of Prescott, Arizona, where he found mines from which he extracted ores which he believed to be rich in silver.³ Luxán, who accompanied him, later reported that the mines were of copper, and that no traces of silver were found.⁴ Nevertheless, the expeditions of Rodríguez and Espejo, with their reports of rich mines, stirred up an enthusiasm on the northern frontier of New Spain much like that which had preceded the Coronado expedition.

But it was defense which became the primary motive for the permanent occupation of the northern borderlands. The rest of Europe had always looked with envious eyes on the Spanish monopoly in the Western Hemisphere. Every Spanish frontier in America became a danger-point. On her northernmost borders Spain suffered similar onslaughts of French, Dutch, English, and Russians in successive waves. The New Mexico salient was only partially defensive in origin, but it was foreign danger that finally nerved Spain to take the deep plunge into the distant wilderness. Beyond the Pueblos lay the Strait of Anián, whose western extremity the pirate Drake was said to have found. This, combined with new flights of fancy, encouraged by time and distance, and the fact that in the upper Río Grande lived sedentary Indians to convert and exploit, caused the frontier of settlement to jump eight hundred miles into the

3. Narrative of Antonio de Espejo, in Pacheco and Cárdenas, *op. cit.*, 101-126 and 163-189. English translation in Bolton, *op. cit.*, 163-192. For conflicting opinions as to the location of these mines see Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New Mexico* (San Francisco, 1889), 88; Bolton, *op. cit.*, 187; George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, *Luzán's Espejo Expedition* (English translation, Quivira Society Publications, Los Angeles, 1929), 108.

4. Hammond and Rey, *ibid.*

wilderness, from southern Chihuahua to the upper Río Grande.

In 1595 Juan de Oñate was awarded a contract for the conquest and settlement of New Mexico, and in 1598 he set out for the north with a large expedition. In the course of Oñate's explorations in western New Mexico in the fall of that year, Captain Marcos de Farfán was sent west from Moqui at the head of a party to find the gold fields of Arizona which Espejo had discovered. According to Farfán's diary, the Indians gave them powdered ores of different colors on several occasions along the way. At the northwest branch of the Verde River, Farfán asked to see the mine from which they obtained these ores, and he was led to a place either on the east slope of the Aquarius Range, or in the Hualpai Range.⁵ Here, about thirty or thirty-five leagues west of Moqui (the accounts differ), they found many veins rich in brown, black, water-colored, blue, and green ores. The blue ore was said to be "so blue that it is understood that some of it is enamel." They staked out claims and brought back samples and detailed reports. According to Farfán, "the said mountains are without doubt the richest in all New Spain," and "the veins are so long and wide that half of the people of New Spain can have mines there." On the return of the expedition the samples of ore brought from the west were distributed among various men of mining experience at Pueblo San Juan to be assayed, and it was declared that from one sample the assay showed eleven ounces of silver per quintal.⁶

Oñate had long projected an expedition to the South Sea, and in 1604 it finally materialized. He went over the ground covered by Espejo and Farfán. Oñate crossed the Little Colorado River, which was said to have received that name "because its channel and that whole region was as red as blood with vermilion."⁷ At a place probably farther

5. Bolton, *op. cit.*, 245.

6. Juan de Oñate's account of the discovery of the mines, 1599. (English translation in Bolton, *ibid.*, 239-249).

7. Juan Matheo Mange, *Luz de tierra incógnita en la América Septentrional y diario de las exploraciones en Sonora* (1720), part I, 125. (See appendix).

east than where Farfán did most of his prospecting, Oñate and his men, along the skirts of some very high mountains, found very good ores. From the Mojave Indians below Bill William's Fork, on the lower Colorado, they first heard news of the Lake of Copalla, to the northwest, the inhabitants of whose shores wore bracelets of gold. As they continued down the river the story was repeated. They were frequently shown silver objects, and the natives, describing as best they could, convinced the Spaniards beyond doubt that there was white and yellow metal on an island farther west. But some had grave doubts as to whether or not the yellow was gold or the white silver.⁸ On the return journey these Indians repeated their previous statements when questioned. Oñate's expedition to the South Sea, though of the greatest importance and accurately narrated, had slight effect on real knowledge of geography, its chief effect being to complicate the vagaries of the northern mystery. The reports apparently reached a limited audience. But a tradition of rich mines in the west was by now well established.

Meanwhile the rebellious pueblo of Ácoma was destroyed, and the Spanish occupation of New Mexico was thus assured. During the first half of the seventeenth century frontiersmen of the New Mexico settlements along the Upper Río Grande pierced the wilderness in all directions. Hunter, missionary, and trader, led the way. In the course of their activities they brought back reports, and even evidence, from the west, which lent plausibility to the glamorous tradition established by Oñate and those who preceded him. Inquiries led to new rumors. Then in 1626 Zárate Salmerón drew up a report on conditions in New Mexico, in which he caused further confusion of the earlier reports. Zárate Salmerón stated,⁹

8. See Bolton, *op. cit.*, 268-280, and his "Father Escobar's Relation of the Oñate expedition to California," in *The Catholic Historical Review*, V, (1919), 19-41.

9. Gerónimo Zárate Salmerón, *Relaciones de . . . Nuevo Mexico*, in *Documentos para la historia de Mexico* (3rd series, Mexico, 1856), I, 1-54. English translations by Charles F. Lummis in *Land of Sunshine: The Magazine of California and the West*, XII, (December 1899 to August 1900), and Bolton, *Spanish Explorations*, 268-280.

in the province of Zuñi are deposits of silver of so fine a blue that they use it for paint and carry it to sell to the settlements of New Mexico. I brought some stones to show, and the painters told me it was the best blue in the world, and that in this city [Mexico City] each pound of it was worth twelve pesos and that there was not a pound [to be had].

Out of a confused notion of all these various accounts evolved the legend of Sierra Azul. Gran Quivira and Gran Teguayó date from the same period. All of these legends represented a region which continued to be half mythical and rarely frequented, and very little ever came of them, so they merely persisted in popular tradition to be believed or dismissed as one liked. Trade, stock raising, agriculture, the spreading of the faith, and the ever present Indian danger were the most immediate concern of New Mexicans.

The lack of knowledge of the geography of the region in question for so long a time was not for lack of enterprise. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries all of Arizona north of the Gila was controlled by warlike Apaches. They had no fixed abodes then, and roamed through the whole wild chaos of mountains, excluding other tribes from the country by their incursions. The region was uninhabited except by the Apaches and their northern relatives, the present Navajos, when they swept through from time to time on hunting and predatory expeditions. The region around the mouth of the Colorado River was not really well explored until after Kino's time.¹⁰

From south and southwest, as the northern frontier of New Spain advanced, expansion stopped in Pimería Alta. Here was a mountain barrier infested with hostile Apaches. From the south Arizona was unvisited after 1540 until the

10. "For two centuries [after Coronado], though the narratives were extant and occasionally repeated with approximate accuracy, and though now and then an official report showed a fair knowledge of the facts in certain circles, no map within my knowledge—except Padre Kino's and a few others on the region of Pimería Alta up to the Gila—throws any light on the geography of Arizona and New Mexico, or makes any considerable approach to the general cartographic results that might have been reached by a fairly intelligent use of the Coronado narratives alone." (Bancroft, *op. cit.*, 69).

advent of Father Kino, and after his death for more than twenty years no Spaniard is known to have entered Arizona from that direction. The approach to Arizona by way of New Mexico was the logical one. But here the settlers were practically confined to the valley of the upper Río Grande. They were hemmed in on the west by Apaches and Navajos. This small isolated colony, with a population of about 2,800 at the time of the Pueblo revolt of 1680, constantly faced the Indian danger on the fringe of every settlement, and only held out as long as the pueblo Indians remained loyal. Naturally, the region west of Zuñi was not often frequented. Until well into the eighteenth century, then, all knowledge of central Arizona was confined to the reports of a handful of explorers, and this meager knowledge was directly available to only a very few. The general knowledge of the region was based on hearsay. The geography of Arizona was vague and muddled during all those years, and distance relationships remained confused and inaccurate.¹¹ Besides, Arizona with its colossal canyons, wierdly painted deserts, petrified forests, craters, and many other marvels of nature, was a wonderland hard to comprehend.

We first hear of Sierra Azul, as such, on the very limited evidence contained in a memorial of Domínguez de Mendoza, *maestre de campo* in Peñalosa's time, and an alleged member of the fictitious Peñalosa expedition to Gran Quivira in 1662. This memorial states that Peñalosa, governor and captain general of New Mexico from 1661 to

11. Alexander von Humboldt, writing of this region in the nineteenth century. (*Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, Paris, 1811-1812; English translation by John Black, London, 1814, I, v-vi), states: "In the part of New Spain situated to the north of the parallel of 24°, in the provinces called *Internas* (in New Mexico, in the government of Cohahuila, and in the intendency of New Biscay) the geographer is reduced to form combinations from the journals of routes. The sea being at a great distance from the most inhabited part of these countries, he has no means to connect together places situated in the interior of a vast continent, with points on the coast a little better known. Hence, beyond the city of Durango, we wander as it were in a desert, notwithstanding the show of manuscript maps. There are not more resources to be found than Major Rennel possessed for drawing up maps of the interior of Africa."

1664, planned with some care an expedition to the "Serro del Azul, the ores of which have been assayed and are known to be rich in gold and silver," but that the expedition was never made due to Apache wars and other obstacles.¹²

Peñalosa himself may have invented the name for the alleged place. As for its location we are not told. It is merely listed in the same sentence with "el reyno de los Tejas," and "Gran Quivira," as a place Peñalosa had heard about from a Jemes Indian. Peñalosa visited the provinces of Zuñi and Moqui in 1662, and made at least one expedition into the country of the Coninas and Cruzados Indians west of Oraibe.¹³ If this evidence is at all trustworthy, for Peñalosa was a liar, it is quite probable, in view of the later history of Sierra Azul, that he had in mind the region between Zuñi and Moqui, or the region west of the Moqui villages. With knowledge of old or recent reports of gold to the west of his province, the sight of the strange and multi-colored peaks of the Painted Desert, or hearsay about that region, might easily have fired his imagination.

From the time of Peñalosa to the expulsion of the Spaniards from New Mexico in the bloody Indian revolt of 1680, Sierra Azul figures only vaguely. In 1678 Peñalosa, then in Paris, having been discharged by the Spanish government, offered the King of France to effect the conquest of Quivira and Teguayó, which he said were fabulously rich in precious metals, and with which he claimed to be familiar through expeditions made to those regions during his governorship of New Mexico. Probably he also featured the attractions of the Sierra Azul, but aside from the accompanying map which refers to Peñalosa, we have no information.

12. Cesareo Fernández Duro, *Diego de Peñalosa y su descubrimiento del reino de Quivira* (Madrid, 1882), 49. Briefer mention in Bancroft, *op. cit.*, 168, and Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History* (Cedar Rapids, 1911-14, 5v.), I, 347.

13. Charles W. Hackett, "New Light on Don Diego de Peñalosa: Proof that he never made an expedition from Santa Fe to Quivira and the Mississippi River in 1662," in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, VI, (December, 1919), 322-323, 332-333.

After 1680 New Mexico was unvisited, except for a few unsuccessful punitive expeditions, until the reconquest in the time of Vargas. In 1686 Governor Cruzate gathered evidence about some vermilion from an alleged quicksilver mine in the north, and on his entry into New Mexico in 1689 samples were brought back, but they showed no signs of quicksilver.¹⁴

At about this same time Father Alonso de Posadas, former custodio of the New Mexico missions, drew up for the King a report concerning New Mexico in which he wrote of "Sierra Azul . . . so famed for its wealth, because its ores have been assayed many times, but never possessed because of our negligence and timidity." According to Posadas, Sierra Azul lay one hundred leagues southwest of Santa Fé, and fifty leagues north of Sonora. He also speaks of another place, on the Colorado River, where it was said that there were metals containing quicksilver.¹⁵

In 1689, the legend appeared in its most exaggerated form. A certain Toribio de Huerta laid a memorial before King Charles II, in which he volunteered at his own expense to restore New Mexico to its former allegiance if his Majesty would grant him in return a marquisate over the land from El Paso to Taos, and temporary authority in Sinaloa and Sonora. He claimed to be one of the first conquerors of New Mexico, Sinaloa and Sonora, and the discoverer of the kingdom of Gran Quivira, which he said was composed of four kings and an emperor. He added that he had served the Spanish king for forty years in these parts, during which more than thirty towns and mining camps had been

14. Domingo Jironza Petriz de Cruzate to the viceroy of Mexico, the Count of Galve, Mexico City, December 1, 1691. (General Archive of the Nation, Mexico City, *Historia*, tomo 37, hereinafter referred to by A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37. See appendix).

15. Alonso de Posadas, *Informe a S. M. sobre las tierras de Nuevo Mejico, Quivira y Teguayo* (c. 1686), in *Doc. Hist. Mex.*, *op. cit.*, 220, 221, 224. This report was made in reply to a royal order of 1678 which alluded to projects of exploring Quivira and Teguayó, and to conflicting reports on geography and the wealth of these and other distant regions, calling for an investigation. (Baneroff, *op. cit.*, 166).

settled, and many churches and convents built, in all of which he was one of the principal leaders.¹⁶

Huerta's interest was clearly stated in the memorial. His chief aim was the saving of apostate souls, but between Zuñi and Moqui was located "a place called Sierra Azul, more than two hundred leagues long and full of silver." Nearby was "another mine of quicksilver," "the Cerro Colorado, by which the entire realm and the rest of the provinces and kingdoms discovered might be supplied."¹⁷ This was obviously a fabricated version of Peñalosa's account, plus the older tradition of rich mines west of Zuñi. The new element which now entered the story, namely, quicksilver, was based on reported vermilion mines near Zuñi, and cinabar mines west of Moqui. This carried special significance, for at this time a cheaper source of quicksilver was greatly in demand.

This story struck the fancy of the king and his counselors. Huerta's honesty was not questioned, and his proposal was accepted by royal cédula on September 13, 1689.¹⁸ Galve, viceroy of New Spain, was ordered by the king to make an investigation into the alleged existence of these rich mines, particularly those said to contain quicksilver, and to render every possible aid in the matter. The royal decree advised that, without bringing about the subjection of New Mexico first, it was vain to discuss the advantages which might accrue from developing the quicksilver mines which Huerta declared that he had discovered between Zuñi and Moqui.¹⁹ Huerta said that he would take with him on the expedition 500 infantry men, 1,000 horses, 2,000 cattle, and 6,000

16. Copy of the petition made by Don Toribio de Huerta, filed in the secretarial office of the Council of the Indies; royal decree to the Count of Galve, Madrid, September 13, 1689. (Both in A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37; excerpts in P. Otto Maas, *Misiones de Nuevo Mejico, Documentos del archivo general de Indias (Sevilla) publicadas por primera vez y anotadas* (Madrid, 1929), 142-145).

17. *Ibid.* In the later records the place of the quicksilver mines is usually referred to as Cerro Colorado, whereas Sierra Azul refers either to the gold and silver mines alone, or to the whole range of mountains including the quicksilver deposits.

18. Royal decree to the Count of Galve, Madrid, September 13, 1689, *op. cit.*

19. *Ibid.*

sheep.²⁰ Yet the royal *cédula* ordered that 200 pesos be given to him by the Treasury of the Council of the Indies, and 400 pesos by the royal treasury of Vera Cruz, in order to help him, "since he is now short of funds."²¹ This pretentious expedition did not materialize. As a result, the authorities in Mexico City became skeptical, interest waned, and the project was shelved—but not forgotten.

The quicksilver part of the story was well known among the fugitives from New Mexico, most of whom were now living in the El Paso district, others scattered throughout New Spain as far south as Mexico City itself. They told of a fine red pigment obtained by traders, Indians and Spaniards, at Oraibe, the farthest of the Moqui villages, and traded throughout New Mexico as paint and for medicinal purposes. It was believed by many to contain quicksilver, and was said by Indians to come from a mountain west of a "large river" some twelve leagues west of Oraibe,²² evidently the Little Colorado River. As this more definite information drifted into Mexico City and into government circles, apparently from trustworthy sources, there was revived interest in the forgotten Huerta project. The new data definitely substantiated a part of Huerta's account, and in so doing lent more authority to the whole. In Mexico City the authorities became interested, Huerta's documents were carefully re-examined, and new evidence was sought. In the spring of 1691 the viceroy sent a dispatch with instructions to Vargas, the newly appointed governor at El Paso, ordering a careful investigation into the matter.²³ The right to make an expedition to Sierra Azul was still Huerta's by royal decree, but this was ignored as he was now in Spain without funds.²⁴

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. See below.

23. The Count of Galve to Diego de Vargas, Mexico City, May 27, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

24. The royal fiscal, Benito de Noboa Salgado, to the Count of Galve, Mexico City, November 24, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

It was not Sierra Azul, but rather the contiguous quicksilver mines, now so inextricably bound up with the Sierra Azul legend, which now attracted the attention of the authorities. During these years the quicksilver question was always an important one. Conditions in Europe made commerce on the sea precarious, yet Mexican silver mines, to be worked, were dependent upon the quicksilver supply from Spain, Carinthia, and Perú. It was being obtained at great cost and tremendous risk. A supply near at hand, without entailing the dangers of sea transportation, would be an invaluable acquisition. Now at last there was an all-important reason for reconquering New Mexico to be added to the ever present and valid desire to save apostate souls, and a real leader had just taken command at El Paso.

Don Diego de Vargas took possession of the government at El Paso on February 22, 1691.²⁵ For various reasons he showed unusual energy and decision of character in formulating plans. As in the case of his predecessors he had been selected as governor and captain general with special reference to the reconquest of the lost province. He had recognized qualities of leadership,²⁶ and was a man of great wealth. Vargas was also young and ambitious, and visions of glory and wealth to be gained in the north flitted before him. He hoped that should he succeed in recapturing the lost province, where so many others had failed, such a feat would merit royal favor and justify asking for recognition in the form of new titles and higher appointment.²⁷ These ideas occupied his mind. Full of enthusiasm he planned to reconquer New Mexico immediately and at his own expense. At the outset he asked only that besides the

25. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, April 19, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, toma 37, and published in Maas, *op. cit.*, 122-123).

26. "Restauración del Nuevo Mexico por Don Diego de Vargas Zapata," ascribed to a religious of the province of the Santo Evangelio. A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 2. See also Irving S. Leonard, *The Mercurio Volante of Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora* (Quivira Society Publications, Los Angeles, 1932), 31.

27. Diego de Vargas to the king, Zacatecas, May 16, 1693. (A. G. I., Sevilla, *Audiencia de Guadalajara*, legajo no. 139).

soldiers stationed at the presidio at El Paso, he be aided with an additional contingent of fifty more soldiers in order that El Paso might not be left defenseless. His great wealth warranted his enthusiastic offer.

Vargas was apparently ignorant of the fact that the two thousand inhabitants of the El Paso settlements were fighting against starvation and costly Indian raids, and were in no condition to extend the existing frontier of settlement at this time. His first act, then, on his arrival at El Paso, was to muster the available forces in the district. An official was sent about proclaiming the governor's plans, and at the beat of the war drum people rallied to the squares, and estimates were made of their military strength. Vargas was soon disappointed to find that most of the soldiers of the presidio were without even swords or leather jackets. There were only one hundred and thirty-two horses, and the soldiers and settlers of El Paso and the four pueblos and missions could not gather two hundred horses and mules among them. There were about twenty-five mules in the district. There were barely a thousand christianized Indians counting both men and women. It is doubtful if Vargas could have mustered together three hundred armed men including Indian allies.²⁸ The other obstacles already alluded to soon presented themselves, and for almost a year and a half internal problems rendered useless any attempt to extend the existing frontier of settlement. Vargas' plan to reconquer New Mexico without delay was quickly shattered.

Outside of a few forays against the Apaches,²⁹ whose raids were continuous, the economic problem occupied the new governor during his first six months at El Paso. The river was swollen by snows melting down from the mountains of Colorado and New Mexico, causing it to shift its course from the main irrigation ditch. For two months he assisted in the repair of the ditches for irrigating the fields.

28. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, April 19, 1691, *op. cit.*

29. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, March 30, 1692. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

These ditches were essential to save the little wheat and corn which could be raised in May and June. Food was scarce. There was such a lack of supplies that unless flour were obtained from Parral the people would be obliged to live on tortillas made from the little corn that remained until the next harvest. There were no cattle, and the 600 sheep in the vicinity were mostly scattered about in various missions and custodias.³⁰

Vargas made every attempt to obtain horses and mules as well as cattle. One hundred fanegas of wheat were being cultivated. It was hoped that after the planting season, in the middle of October, the Indians and other residents might gather their crops and leave for the villa of Santa Fé. This would be the most severe time of the year. The Indians would be in their houses due to the cold weather, and not scattered in the fields and on the chase. It would be easier to deal with them under such conditions.³¹ But if Vargas were to change camps before the crops were gathered El Paso would be left helpless, as it was the most northern outpost, was surrounded by hostile Indians, and did not have the protection of New Vizcaya and its many presidios. So he merely made the plea that were the presidio of El Paso to be transferred to Santa Fé, fifty more soldiers would naturally be needed to take their place. No aid was asked from other presidios, nor financial support from the viceroy. He only asked for the obvious. Otherwise El Paso, unprotected during the absence of its garrison, would be inviting destruction.

Next to the question of food supplies, the Indian problem was Vargas' greatest concern. In the vicinity of El Paso the Sumas, the ranchería of Mansos under their captain who was called "El Chiquito," and the Apaches of the Sierra de Gila were the greatest trouble makers. Horse stealing and cattle rustling were their great pastime. All

30. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, April 19, 1691, *op. cit.*

31. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, June 20, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

were in communication with the Mansos, who had left when the presidio was established at El Paso in 1683, but who had since been converted through the efforts of the custodio, Father Francisco de Vargas, and settled near the church of San Francisco de los Mansos, eight or nine leagues from El Paso. The Apaches often visited them in groups of two, four, and six, and it was quite customary for them to intermarry, as was also the case with the Sumas.³² The Sumas of Guadalupe and Ojito were the scourge of the entire region.³³ These three Indian nations were a constant danger to the El Paso settlements.

The government of New Spain was at this time interested in more immediate frontier problems. Before attempting to extend the northern frontier the existing one must be made safe. The Treasury Committee (Junta de Hacienda) in Mexico City politely answered Governor Vargas that the time was not propitious for the reconquest of Santa Fé.³⁴ The problem which was confronting the government was the war against Indian conspiracies in New Vizcaya and Sinaloa. Soon Vargas himself was to be drawn into that war, delaying the entry for a whole year. In the minds of those who were directing things at the capital the reconquest of New Mexico was important, to be sure, but it was merely a part of a larger program involving the whole northern frontier. When other more immediate obstacles were overcome attention would be turned to the phase in which Vargas was interested. But Vargas had been appointed especially to reconquer Santa Fé and that idea was foremost in his mind. It was natural that he failed to see the frontier problem in its broader aspect.

The Indian wars in New Vizcaya, Sonora and Sinaloa were not unknown at El Paso. During his first days there Vargas had received letters from the missionaries at Chín-

32. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, August 14, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37. Partially published in Maas, *op. cit.*, 130-133).

33. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, March 30, 1692, *op. cit.*

34. Report of the Treasury Committee, Mexico City, August 3, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

apa asking for help to pacify the hostile Jocomes, Janos and Sumas in Sonora and Sinaloa. The Seris, Cocomataques, Sobas, and Pimas had already been pacified. The demands were small. Fathers Marcos de Loyola and Juan María de Salvatierra had been working among the Indians at Chínapa for seven years. Father Marcos de Loyola was now asking the governor of New Mexico for one or two Manso Indians from El Paso.³⁵ These had authority over the Janos and Jocomes. Two Spanish-speaking Mansos might be used to advantage on embassies of peace to negotiate with the enemy.³⁶ On March 20, six Mansos with provisions and beasts of burden were on their way to Chínapa.³⁷

On April 16, 1691, Juan Fernández de la Fuente, captain of the presidio at Janos, notified Governor Vargas of the arrival of the six Mansos. With their assistance it was discovered that the Apaches of the Sierra de Gila, confederates of the Janos, Jocomes, Pimas, Sobas, and Sumas, were the trouble makers. It was they who in the last two weeks had carried off at least one hundred beasts. Only a month before they had taken part in an ambush attack upon the pueblo of Bacuachito,³⁸ in the jurisdiction of Father Marcos de Loyola. Here sixteen persons were killed, eleven were carried off as prisoners, and the priest's house set fire to and demolished. Drastic action was necessary. A relentless offensive war carried into the heart of the enemy territory appeared to be the only solution. "La guerra dura hace la paz segura," wrote Fernández. But the Mansos were unable to negotiate with the uncompromising Apaches, and the plan to use them as mediators was abandoned.³⁹

35. The Manso Indians lived in the region around El Paso. They had been pacified in the middle seventeenth century, and although frequently identified with Apache disturbances throughout the rest of the century, they lived in relative peace with their Spanish neighbors.

36. Father Marcos de Loyola's letter was written February 6, the other February 8. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

37. Diego de Vargas' journal, El Paso, March 20, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

38. Also written Bacuechit, Aquache.

39. Juan Fernandez de la Fuente to Diego de Vargas, Janos, April 16, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37, and published in Maas, *op. cit.*, 126-128. Most of the correspondence of importance on this question was published in Maas, 123-133).

Fernández now proposed to Governor Vargas a union of the forces of Sonora, Sinaloa, and El Paso, in order to enter the Sierra de Gila and crush the Apaches in a decisive battle. At the same time Fernández wrote a similar letter directly to the viceroy. Vargas balked at such a plan. He not only lacked horses and provisions, but was surrounded by enemies himself. Besides it would delay his expedition into New Mexico. The Sierra de Gila was seventy leagues from El Paso, and thirty leagues off the road to Santa Fé.⁴⁰

At this time, like a thunderbolt out of the sky, a courier arrived at El Paso with the letter from the viceroy in Mexico City.⁴¹ It read as follows:

Señor don Diego de Vargas Zapata y Luján:

From the accounts of persons who have lived there, I am told that in the revolted province of New Mexico is located the province of Moqui, and that at a distance of twelve leagues from there, toward the *rio grande*, there is a range of mountains, one of the most prominent in those parts, in which is found a metallic substance or earth containing vermilion. This is used by the Indians to paint themselves with, and by all the people, especially the Spanish women, to preserve the complexion. It is also used by those suffering from smallpox in order to cover their scars.

It is said that this metal is heavier than lead, and so liquid and greasy that it goes through the leather pack saddles and the back cloths of the pack animals on which it is carried, and that when handled it leaves red and white stains, with the result that it has been commonly held to be quicksilver. It is well known by fact and by tradition that there is such an abundance of this mineral in that range of mountains that it is found in liquid form in small lakes

40. Diego de Vargas to Juan Fernandez de la Fuente, El Paso, April 29, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

41. The Count of Galve to Diego de Vargas, Mexico City, May 27, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37, and published in Maas, *op. cit.*, 133-134). The famous quicksilver mine of Huancavelica (Monte Nieto), in Perú, was found by the Spaniards under just such circumstances. When Spaniards began work there, there was already a large hole dug out by the Incas to get out *limpe* or vermilion, which the Indians used for paint. (Pedro Aguado y Bleye, *Manual de historia de España*, Madrid, 1929, 2v., II, 226). For a careful study of the different minerals used by the Hopi for painting, their source, content, etc., see Esther M. Munson, *Aboriginal Economic Geography of the Hopi* (M.A. thesis, University of California, 1933), 95-106.

and pools. If it is possible to ascertain the truth of these reports without too much trouble, cost or risk, this question should not be taken lightly, but seriously looked into, if sufficient testimony warrants it, for these quicksilver deposits would greatly help the common cause of the entire kingdom, and the extension of the royal service and the royal power.

For these reasons, I have deemed it well to impart to you this knowledge, that you may obtain more definite information from the oldest, most respectable, and most intelligent persons in your government, and that you may find out about the problems, difficulties and costs which would be involved in an expedition to the above mentioned mountain range, as well as the length of the range and the ways of getting to it. Also that you may obtain definite information as to the composition of those metals, and find out if anyone has actually extracted quicksilver from them. As I understand it, some mine operators have done this, and have used quicksilver in working the silver mines of the country.

In gathering this information always seek clarity and the greatest detail. Father José de Spínola can help you in examining the above mentioned metallic substance. He is a Peruvian creole and is said to be an authority on such matters. Notify me of all that may come of this, and be made known to you, in order that from what is contained in your *autos* and *diligencias*, I may pursue that policy which will redound to the greatest service of the kingdom.

May God spare you many years. Mexico, May 27, 1691.

THE COUNT OF GÁLVE
(rubric)

The revival of interest in Sierra Azul could not have occurred at a more opportune time. Vargas immediately took advantage of this unforeseen enthusiasm at the capital to further his own plans. A fruitful investigation into the matter, if done immediately, might cause the viceroy to refuse to listen to Fuente at this time. He might not have to go to the aid of Fuente after all, and the entry into New Mexico would not be delayed. Vargas received the letter on August first, and in compliance with the viceregal orders he immediately carried out his instructions. The investigation

lasted from the third to the twelfth of August.⁴² For almost two weeks Vargas was seen traveling about the El Paso district searching for information. The story was well known among the older people in the colony, and many interesting accounts were gathered.

Father José de Spínola was found at the convent of San Lorenzo, the *real* of San Lorenzo, two leagues from El Paso. He said that he had heard of the metallic liquid mentioned in the viceroy's letter from various sources, and that if the description were true it was undoubtedly quicksilver. Some eleven years before, at a chance gathering at which Fathers Francisco de Vargas and Juan Muñoz de Castro were also present, he heard the story of the pool of quicksilver from Father Nicolás de Echevarría, to whom, when living in the province of Moqui, where he lived for many years, one day an Indian told the following story :

Having gone hunting into the region and mountain referred to by the viceroy, he came upon a pool at the foot of a cliff, and on dipping his hands into it, thinking it was a pool of drinking water, the liquid rolled from his hands. The Indian observed that the supposed water not only slipped from his hands as though it were alive, but was thick, like corn-flour gruel. For this reason Father Echevarría believed the substance to be quicksilver.

Vargas returned to El Paso to question Father Vargas, the ecclesiastical judge and custodian of the New Mexico missions. Father Vargas had seen the earth or metal spoken of by the viceroy, at the pueblo of Sia, and said that it was liquid and greasy, as the viceroy described it, and left a blue or bluish lustre when handled. His curiosity aroused, he had asked the Indians where they obtained it, and they said that they brought it from Zuñi and Moqui. He had heard some persons say that it contained quicksilver.

42. The statements of three missionary fathers and nine other individuals familiar with the region were recorded in Vargas' journal, El Paso, August 3 to 12, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37. The statements of three of the informants; namely, Father José de Spínola, Father Francisco de Vargas, and Captain Antonio Jorge, were published in Maas, *op. cit.*, 134-139).

Father Vargas' version of the story about the pool of quicksilver differed only in the description of the pool, and uncertainty as to whether the place referred to was near Picurís or Moqui. According to him the pool was found at the foot of some mountains, at a place where the supposed water was dripping down the edge of a cliff into a hollow, basin-like rock.

On the following day, August 4, Vargas questioned Father Muñoz de Castro at Isleta. He said that the gathering at which Father Echevarría told his story took place at El Paso in 1680. His version was as follows :

In the province of Moqui such pure quicksilver was to be found that, in the hollow of a certain rock or cave, there was a pool in which it was found in liquid form. It dripped down into the pool from the surrounding rocks, which were all of this metallic substance, extremely heavy, and the color of red hematite. Father Muñoz de Castro further added that the liquid was so greasy that it stuck to one's hands, and stained the clothing and saddle bags in which it was gathered.

On August 8, Vargas called before him Sergeant Major Juan Lucero de Godoy, and a certain Antonio de Cisneros. Lucero confirmed all of the statements in the viceroy's letter with the exception of the two about the existence of small lakes or pools of quicksilver. He knew no one ever to have worked the mines, which he said were located in a high mountain in a range east of a large river, and close by that river, some twelve leagues west of Oraibe, the farthest of the Moqui villages. Antonio de Cisneros told him that the Indians of the province of Moqui said that it took them from morning till noon to climb to the mines, the descent being made the same evening. He had heard many times in New Mexico that the vermilion referred to was a metal rich in quicksilver, and his uncle, who lived in the City of Mexico, often asked his father for some of this red earth for use in painting. Lucero described the road to the mine as rough and stony, and as passing through the lands of the hostile

Apaches. It would be a protracted and difficult journey, and would require at least 150 Spaniards and an equal number of Indian soldiery. He gave elaborate figures on the cost of such an expedition, and the supplies necessary, as did the other military men later questioned.

Antonio de Cisnesos was born in the village of Zuñi, and spent much of his youth there. Here it was that he learned from the Indians how and where they obtained this red ochre or cinnabar called *almagre*.⁴³ They said that they dug it from a mountain west of Moqui, he did not know how many leagues, in a region infested with Apaches and other hostile and rebellious Indians, and that it took half a day to climb to the mine and half a day to descend. They told him that the mountain was very large, and that they had dug out a cave from which they took it. They used this earth to paint themselves with, and he had also observed that it was used by the women, Spanish as well as Indian, for this purpose. He had seen some of this earth, and it had all the qualities as described by the viceroy; it was heavy, liquid, greasy, and left a scarlet stain. The Indians traded it throughout New Mexico, and it soaked through the buckskin bags in which they carried it. He did not know whether or not it contained quicksilver.

On August 9, Vargas questioned Sergeant Major Bartolomé Gomez Robledo, and Captains Juan Luíz Luján, José Tellez Jirón, and Fernando Durán y Chávez. Robledo said that on many occasions he had seen and held in his hands this earth called *almagre* all over New Mexico by Spaniards and Indians alike. It was liquid, greasy, and unusually

43. *Almagre* is merely red ochre, an earthy iron oxide, usually red (hematite) or yellow (limonite), plentiful in northwestern New Mexico and the Hopi country. Vermilion, on the other hand, is powdered cinnabar, red or scarlet in color, and contains quicksilver. Cinnabar is the only important ore of mercury, and is found at all quicksilver mines. There are numerous quicksilver deposits in Arizona; the principal ones are located in Yavapai, Maricopa, and Yuma counties. (See Carl Lausen and E. D. Gardner, *Quicksilver (Mercury) Resources of Arizona*, Arizona Bureau of Mines, Bulletin No. 122 (Tucson, 1927). In the seventeenth century the terms vermilion and cinnabar were used synonymously. In the above records *almagre* and vermilion are used interchangeably, thus the term *almagre* as used in these records has a broader meaning, and applies to all of these different ores.

heavy, and when handled it left stains which even hot water could not remove for several weeks. It was used in the snowing season as a remedy for eye trouble, by smearing it on. In the time of General Luís de Guzmán his father went as visitador to the provinces of Zuñi and Moqui, and brought back some small pack saddles full of this earth. Each pack saddle was so heavy that he could hardly lift it, and the red earth soaked clear through everything—pack saddle and back cloths, and even left stains on the back of the he-mule on which it was carried which were not completely removed until the rainy season.

Robledo also spoke of a certain Jacinto Muñoz de Moraga, who went to Sonora from New Mexico in the time of Governor Otermin, who always pointed out that the people of New Mexico did not have to search for silver mines, but merely should make use of the quicksilver mines from which this red earth was obtained. This same informant, Robledo, had a cousin named Bartolomé Romero, killed by Indians at Taos at the time of the Pueblo Revolt, who had an encomienda in the vicinity of Oraibe, to which he journeyed each year to collect what was due. Romero said that he had been to the mountain where the mine was located, had seen the mine, and had brought *almagre* from it. He said that the mine had not been greatly worked, the Indians having merely dug out a cave-like pit. The Indians said that it was located in such a dry region that they had to take their drinking water with them in gourds whenever they went there.

Robledo believed that the place was some fourteen or fifteen leagues from Oraibe, in the direction of the Western Sea. The place could be reached most easily by way of El Paso directly to Ácoma and Zuñi, without going to Santa Fé, a distance of some one hundred and seventy-five leagues, or a five days journey with pack animals. He described the road as passable, with a few water holes, and plenty of wood and pasture land, and the region of the mine the battling ground of hostile Indians, and surrounded by Apaches.

One hundred armed men, and from six to eight hundred Indians, with the necessary equipment, including mules and horses, would be necessary. The expedition, including a complete reconnaissance of the region, would take about eight months.

Captain Luján was as well acquainted with this *almagre* as Robledo. He had handled it, and he described it in the same manner. He was with his friend the Maestre de Campo Francisco Gómez Robledo, the father of Sergeant Major Robledo, when the latter went as visitador to Moqui, and he repeated the story told by the younger Robledo. He did not see the mine, but his friend the visitador did. It was located in a round mountain surrounded by vast plains, a day's journey west of Moqui. And when it rained more than three arquebus shots round about it became entirely red with water from the *almagre*, from which it was believed that the mine was plenteous. The region was described as all hostile territory, occupied either by Apaches or Coninas. His description of the road, and his estimate of the equipment necessary were virtually the same as Robledo's, with the exception that he believed that one hundred armed soldiers and only one hundred Indian allies would be sufficient, and that the entire expedition should not take more than five months. He knew nothing of the existence of pools of quicksilver.

Captain Téllez Jirón had also been in the provinces of Zuñi and Moqui, and once had brought back a pack animal loaded with *almagre*. It was very heavy, and he noticed that it soaked the saddle bags, and stained everything including the back of the pack animal itself. He said that there were two kinds of vermilion with which the Indians painted themselves, one yellow, from the province of Zuñi, and the other red. He had heard that the vermilion mine mentioned was located twelve leagues west of the province of Moqui, in the lands of the hostile Apaches and Navajos. The distance from El Paso to Oraibe was over two hundred leagues, and on the way pasture land, wood, and water were

not lacking. He had heard of the location of the mine from men who had been there in the years 1648 to 1650. To make the entry seventy soldiers, well armed and with horses, and three or four hundred Indian allies, would be necessary, and the expedition would take five or six months. He suggested that Sergeant Major Juan Lucero be called, for the latter had often made the journey and brought back samples of this red earth to his father. Lucero had been questioned the day before."

Captain Durán y Chávez had seen the ore under discussion, and repeated that it was well known in New Mexico, although he did not know where the mine was located, other than that it was brought from Moqui. He described this red earth as being liquid, greasy, and so heavy that a man could scarcely lift a tierce. He said that he knew that this *almagre* contained quicksilver, because his grandmother once told him that a certain Father Jerónimo de Pedraza, who knew much about medicine, and was a good doctor, mixed it in ointments that required it. And that when she asked him why he put in this *almagre*, the religious answered that he did so because it contained very fine quicksilver. He also knew Father Echevarría's story but confused Moqui and Picurís, using both interchangeably. He believed that one hundred and fifty armed men and three hundred Indian allies, with the necessary equipment, including horses and mules, and three hundred head of cattle besides the other food supplies, would be necessary, and that the expedition would take about six months, including a stay and the return.

On August 11, Captains Roque Madrid and Juan de Dios Lucero de Godoy were questioned. Captain Roque Madrid had seen this red earth, called *almagre* in New Mexico, and said that it had all of the characteristics described by his Excellency. From what both Spaniards and natives of the pueblo of Oraibe often told him, the lode from which

44. Vargas' journal, El Paso, August 8 and 11, 1691, in A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37.

this earth was obtained was at the top of a large rock twelve or fourteen leagues west of Moqui. This large rock was on the west side of a large river, and the waters of this river continually beat against it in its course. He once brought specimens of this earth on a pack animal from Oraibe in a large buckskin bag, and this inside a cowhide, yet it soaked through these and the pack saddle as well. He said that it was used in Santa Fé for various purposes.

He had travelled over the road from Isleta to Moqui, and was of the opinion that Oraibe was from one hundred and seventy to one hundred and eighty leagues from El Paso. Pasture land and wood were plentiful, but water was scarce, and the region was infested with hostile Apaches. He believed that one hundred and fifty to two hundred Spaniards and at least one hundred Indian warriors would be needed to carry out the expedition, which if carefully carried out would take five to six months.

Captain Juan de Dios Lucero de Godoy had spent six months in Oraibe. There he had obtained some of this *almagre*, as it was called by the Spanish inhabitants of New Mexico. His description of its qualities was essentially the same as that of Captain Roque Madrid. From his uncles Francisco Gómez and Bartolomé Romero, and from Indians, he had heard that the *almagre* was obtained from a mountain, along the base of which ran a river, located in a region a day's journey west of Oraibe. These Indians also said that two days' journey from there, there was another river which was very large, and which the Moqui Indians did not cross because of its great size and because they could not swim.

He suggested the same route as that suggested by Captain Roque Madrid: namely, El Paso to Isleta, and from there to Oraibe. His description of the region to the west and its native inhabitants was also practically the same, with the additional comment that there was one bad stretch which was quite rocky, and so rough that it bruised and pared off the horses' hooves. He estimated that one hundred soldiers and two hundred Indians, with horses and

pack mules, and the necessary provisions for at least a four months' journey would be necessary.

Captain Antonio Jorge had also once resided in the provinces of Zuñi and Moqui, having lived at the Moqui pueblo of Oraibe, and at Alona, in Zuñi, as assistant alcalde mayor to his father, of the same name, who was three times alcalde mayor in these provinces in the time of governors Don Fernando de Villanueva, Don Juan de Miranda, and Don Juan de Medrano. He said that according to the Indians this *almagre* was obtained from a mine in a mountain a six days' journey west of Oraibe. The qualities of this earth he described as did the others, and he said that it was bartered by the Indians, who brought it to the markets at Taos and Pecos, and other villages of the custodia. He knew nothing of the alleged pools of quicksilver. He estimated that one hundred and fifty Spanish soldiers and one hundred Indian allies, with the necessary equipment—substantially the same as enumerated by Captain Roque Madrid, would be necessary, and the journey to the land of the Coninas, where the mine was located, would take four months and a half.

Information was received before witnesses from twelve former residents of New Mexico, three religious and nine well-known lay residents. This was considered sufficient. Eleven verified the statement that the red earth mentioned by the viceroy was from the province of Moqui. Five said that the mine was between twelve and fifteen leagues west of Oraibe, two others said that was a day's journey, and one other a six days' journey west of Oraibe. Five verified the "large river" of the viceroy's letter as between twelve and fifteen leagues west of Oraibe, one referring to it by name as the Coninas River. Four knew the story of the alleged pools of quicksilver, and apparently believed in it, and an equal number believed that this red earth or *almagre* contained quicksilver.⁴⁵ All described the *almagre* as heavy,

45. Native quicksilver, or mercury, occurs in small fluid globules in gangue rock cavities, and has been found in the Dome Rock Mountains and the southwestern part of the Plomosa Mountains in Yuma County, Arizona. (See Howland Bancroft, "Reconnaissance of the Ore Deposits in Northern Yuma County, Arizona," in U. S. Geological Survey, *Bulletin* 451 (Washington, 1911).

liquid, greasy, and leaving a scarlet lustre when handled, which combined with the other information led Vargas to believe that it contained quicksilver.

But again a fly in the ointment. On August 14, 1691, before he had time to answer the viceroy's letter, Vargas was notified that the proposal of Captain Fernández of the presidio of Janos had been accepted.⁴⁶ The problems of the northern frontier were to be solved through co-operation. Vargas was to go to the aid of Fernández. When the Janos, Sumas, hostile Pímas, and other hostile Indians on the frontier of Sonora were pacified, then Sonora and Sinloa would go to the aid of the governor at El Paso that he in turn might finish his war, which would be effected by the former inhabitants of New Mexico reoccupying their haciendas in and around Santa Fé.⁴⁷

Vargas was greatly disappointed. His latest plan had been to make the entry in October.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, on August 26 the results of the Sierra Azul investigation were sent post haste to the viceroy. After stating that the investigation confirmed everything contained in the viceroy's letter of May 27, Vargas wrote:

Two things must be accomplished, first, the reduction of the apostate peoples who are allied in said province, and secondly, to find out about this mine, and if it exists to send your Excellency one or two loads of said metal in order that it be carefully assayed. It would seem that in order not to lose any of it, and that its full value content be examined, and be prevented from soaking into the bags and passing through the pack saddles and back cloths, since the quicksilver is so liquid, it could be put into some strong tin flasks . . .

I had had plenty of experience in metallurgical matters, and I assure you that it will give me great joy if your Excellency has the good fortune of finding this mine, for which purpose you may examine the statements gathered in

46. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, August 14, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

47. Report of the royal fiscal, Mexico City, July, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

48. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, August 14, 1691, *op. cit.*

your Excellency's service. With no other objective than that it be obtained promptly, I will expose myself to danger by going with the people that your Excellency wills to designate to augment this company of fifty men.

Your Excellency may be confident that I will do all in my power to discover the mine, making inquiries of the Indians, winning them over, regaling them, and doing everything possible. I will take great pride in performing this service for his Majesty as the instrument of your Excellency, who is the moving force. And if it should be God's will to give me luck in finding this hidden treasure, it would be due to your Excellency alone that such a benefit be made known to all this new world. It will bring enormous additions to the royal fifth in profits from metals, for although these may be great, fine silver ores are not discovered and worked for lack of quicksilver. . .

I leave to your Greatness' judgment and decision the arrangement of the measures you decide to apply, and then I will return them to you without accepting for my camp the crust of a single broken biscuit. For I shall take necessary and sufficient provisions not only for myself and my family, but also for the army, and the religious who go as chaplains, and as apostolic missionaries to convert the Indians, and with the authority of your support to better accredit and assure his Majesty's intentions in the pardon which he offers them, and his desire that they return to the yoke of our Holy Faith.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, at El Paso, the governor of New Mexico complained vigorously. If he were to send aid to Captain Fernández his own kingdom would be at stake for lack of protection. El Paso was not only the bulwark of New Mexico, it was also the safeguard of the frontier settlements of New Vizcaya. Letters were sent to the governor of New Vizcaya and to Fernández declaring the impossibility of his aiding in any such project. Then came the orders from the viceroy and Vargas had to submit. Still saturated with visions of wealth in Sierra Azul and renown in the reconquest of Santa Fé, but complying with the orders of his

49. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, August 26, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

superior, he resigned himself. A hasty note was written to Fernández which read:

His Excellency orders that I suspend my entry into New Mexico in order that aid be given where it is more necessary. I will be ready on October tenth. Advise me where you wish me to join you that we may attack at the most strategic point.⁵⁰

A month later Vargas wrote in a longer letter to the viceroy:

Every governor should be able to govern his own lands, and an inferior, as is Captain Fuente, subject to his governor, should not be permitted to make decisions. His Majesty has placed a governor in Sinaloa for that purpose. . . . Solely with the desire to serve God and his Royal Majesty, and without bothering anyone else, I desire to win back to the faith the natives of Santa Fé. They are of greater consequence, since they have been left unpunished and, as apostates, continue to live in sin. It grieves me to learn that a fantastic project has upset my plans. . . . In blind obedience, however, I shall carry out your orders. . . . I will go myself at the head of my company with one hundred Indians.⁵¹

Vargas was restless. On this same day he wrote another rambling and incoherent letter to the viceroy in which he told of one Diego de Hinojos, who had been at the quicksilver mine in Sierra Azul, and another interesting tale told to a certain Don Fernando de Chávez by his grandfather. Hinojos said that the mine was fifteen leagues west of Oraibe on the west side of a large river, thus substantiating previous evidence. According to Chávez, at one time while a grave was being dug for a burial near Santa Fé a large quantity of quicksilver was unearthed. So much was found that an investigation was made, and it was found that in an adjoining grave was buried a prominent woman of the villa who had so much of this red earth on her face and

50. Diego de Vargas to Fernández de la Fuente, El Paso, September 9, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

51. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, October 4, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

body that the quicksilver or greasy matter contained in it had leaked out into the pit where it was found. And in case the viceroy might suddenly change his mind, and order an entry into New Mexico, Vargas added :

I repeat, your Excellency, that I shall take the risk at any cost to find the said mine, and dispose of the apprehension about these stories, all of which appear so wonderful.⁵²

By the end of November, 1691, the Indian wars in Sonora and Sinaloa had quieted down. The government of New Spain was now willing to focus its attention upon the reconquest of New Mexico. Official preparations were definitely under way. The viceroy was still undecided as to whether it would be practical to send an expedition to the Sierra Azul before reconquering Santa Fé. On November 22, the royal fiscal was ordered to make a careful investigation of the evidence at hand.⁵³ The Huerta documents and Vargas' reports were re-examined. The latter, which were the most recent, attested to the existence of quicksilver in the Cerro Colorado, and there were also reports that there was gold in nearby Sierra Azul. The royal fiscal showed coolness in the whole matter. Although since early times many sacks of this red earth in question had been brought to New Mexico, and many spoke of its advantages, no one had yet assured by experiment that it was quicksilver. Everything remained conjecture. It would be a great price for the discovery of an error, and even were the stories true it would be necessary to double expenses to repopulate and defend a new mining area. He advised that Santa Fé be re-occupied first; from there as a base Sierra Azul and Cerro Colorado could easily be reconnoitered.⁵⁴

A correspondence in this regard was carried on with several of the former governors of New Mexico residing in

52. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, October 4, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

53. Viceregal decree, the Count of Galve to the royal fiscal, Mexico City, November 22, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

54. Report of the royal fiscal, Mexico City, November 24, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

the City of Mexico. Cruzate said that he had once made a careful investigation of the whole matter, and had sent his findings to the viceroy in a report of May 12, 1686, accompanied with maps. Later, in August of 1689, when he made an entry into New Mexico, he made it a point to bring back some of this vermilion earth. It was assayed by a competent assayer, and nothing was found that could be regarded in any way as quicksilver, "unless he might have lacked, as essential for the extraction, some indispensable and necessary ingredient that was not at hand."⁵⁵

Otermín argued in favor of an expedition into the Moqui region before attempting to regain Santa Fé. He said that all of the Spanish conquerors since Cortés had made their conquests incidental to their principal purpose, the search for gold and silver. Besides, he added, those who were driven out of New Mexico were not anxious to return to the struggles and difficulties of 1680. He proposed an entry into the Moqui country in search of the mines. If successful the conquest of the Indians would be easy, for the rapid settlement of the mining region would follow. He fortified his argument by stating that Sergeant Major Diego del Castillo, for five years *alcalde mayor* in the province of Moqui, had been to the Sierra Azul, and not only extracted quicksilver from the mines there, but "brought a blue stone from the Sierra Azul all veined with gold," as a sample. Otermín added that Castillo was the only Spaniard who had ever been to the mines, and that the others learned about it from him. He said that Castillo was also the one who told of the Indian who drank a thick liquid from a pool, thinking it was water, only to have it pass right through him and come out from another direction—a version of the story of the alleged pool or lake of quicksilver. Otermín's plan was discarded as impractical.⁵⁶

55. Domingo Jironza Petriz de Cruzate to the Count of Galve, Mexico City, December 1, 1691, *op. cit.*

56. Antonio de Otermín to the Count of Galve, Mexico City, December 28, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37, and an abridgement published in Maas, *op. cit.*, 145-147).

In the meantime Vargas found great difficulty in attempting to gather together at El Paso the former inhabitants of New Mexico. Since the uprising of 1680 they were living in Nueva Vizcaya, Sonora and Sinaloa as well as in the El Paso district. There were those at San Buenaventura, Las Cruces, Casas Grandes, and Janos. Many were living under royal protection. Some were enlisted in the garrisons at Conchos, Janos, Cuencamé, and Gallo. Others were working in the mines and on haciendas.⁵⁷ These people were fairly well off and were not desirous of starting life anew in a hostile wilderness. Many of them had lost their fortunes there. Due to these difficulties the Treasury Committee in Mexico City ordered that the news be spread in the regions specified by the governor of New Mexico, to the effect that those persons who wished to populate the region would be rewarded with favors and lands, and would be considered *hidalgos*.⁵⁸ This had little effect, for it was not unusual to grant pioneer settlers such favors.

In March, 1692, Vargas made a preliminary excursion into New Mexico northeastward across the Hueco Mountains, and deep into the "Sierra Negra" in the heart of the Mescalero Apache country, half the distance from El Paso to the Río Salado. The purpose of the expedition was to search for the salt beds and watering places of the Apaches. Their raids into the El Paso district had been continuous. It was Vargas' plan to defeat them by removing their essential bases, especially these valuable salt beds hidden beyond the mountains. The expedition was a complete success. Thirteen large salinas were located, and samples of salt were sent to the viceroy. In his letter Vargas added :

I send this little sack, but only wish, your Excellency, that it were from the vermilion mine, which is rich in quicksilver, and which, as report has it, is in the province of

57. Report of the royal fiscal, Mexico City, November 26, 1691; Juan Isidor de Pardiñas, governor of New Vizcaya, to the Count of Galve, Parral, November 23, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

58. Report of the treasury committee, Mexico City, December 4, 1691. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

Zuñi in a mountain near the river and camp of the Conina Apaches. . . .⁵⁹

Also measures were taken better to protect the settlements of Indian allies from the inroads of the Apaches. The Sumas at Guadalupe were removed to a place near Socorro, where they would have better protection, and where a church was soon built. This place was two leagues from Socorro and seven leagues from El Paso. Here mission San Diego was built. By the end of March there were about 300 christianized Sumas living at the new mission. They had been peacefully subdued chiefly through the efforts of Father Antonio Guerra.⁶⁰

Another task was the granting of official possession of the missions built in the El Paso district to the missionaries. No mention of any such act could be found in the archives of the custodia. In the latter part of May, Vargas officially gave over the missions to the Franciscan Fathers that they might plant grain and carry on their missionary work free from outside interference. Of these missions two had already been built during the administration of Vargas: Nuestra Señora de la Concepción del Socorro, and the one being erected for the Sumas in honor of San Diego.⁶¹

No mention of any such act could be found in the archives of the custodian. In the latter part of May, Vargas officially granted to the Franciscan Fathers possession of the churches, convents, and sufficient surrounding lands for planting, without specifying any definite limits. Then the custodio asked for the definite assignment of lands to the Indians under the charge of the missionaries, and copies of the records attesting to such grants. This Vargas refused, fearing that it might bring on boundary disputes and ill feeling between the Indians and their Spanish neighbors.

59. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, April 7, 1692. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

60. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, March 30, 1692; report of the royal fiscal, Mexico City, May 21, 1692. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

61. Vargas' journal, May, *passim*, 1692. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37. The most important documents were published in Maas, *op. cit.*, 155-164).

The result was a dispute with the ecclesiastical authorities. The litigation dragged on until August 8, 1692.⁶²

Vargas was now ready to make final preparations for the reconquest of New Mexico. On April 17 he had written to the viceroy that with what provisions and equipment he had he would send the first squadron into New Mexico on July 12.⁶³ A week earlier, by viceregal orders, he had notified the governor and lieutenant governor of New Vizcaya that he prepare the former inhabitants of New Mexico in that province for the impending expedition. Similar notifications had been sent to the *alcaldes mayores* and other ministers of justice in New Vizcaya, to the *alcalde mayor* of Sonora, to his own lieutenant general and captain general at Casas Grandes, and to the officials at San Buenaventura, where twenty or thirty former residents of New Mexico were living.⁶⁴

In spite of many attractive inducements the former New Mexicans living in New Vizcaya continued to ignore the royal orders. Vargas again wrote to Governor Pardiñas that he order these people to get ready. He now added that he would furnish munitions, arms, and food for those in need.⁶⁵ His inability to arouse their interest angered and surprised him. The viceroy finally sent a dispatch to El Paso stating that all those former residents of New Mexico who refused to return to Santa Fé would be considered unworthy for royal service.⁶⁶

Due to the lack of available settlers willing to leave the El Paso region Vargas stressed the necessity of more soldiers. With fifty men added to his forces he could go

62. The most important documents on this question may be found in Maas, *op. cit.*, 165-185.

63. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, April 17, 1692. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

64. Diego de Vargas to the Count of Galve, El Paso, April 9, 1692. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

65. Diego de Vargas to Juan Isidro de Pardiñas, El Paso, April 9, 1692. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

66. Report of the royal fiscal, Mexico City, May 22, 1692. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

directly to Santa Fé, defeat the Indians there, and then reconquer all New Mexico. The additional fifty soldiers were essential. Otherwise the undertaking was to be made at Vargas' own expense, without any cost to the viceroy other than the soldiers asked for. On May 28, 1692, all of the demands were granted by the Treasury Committee at Mexico City. The additional soldiers were to be sent up from Parral."

As for Sierra Azul, the royal fiscal proposed on January 5 that after the reconquest of Santa Fé a few pass on to the Moqui country and obtain twelve loads of ore, one-half blue and one-half red, in order that it be taken to Mexico City to be assayed. At the meeting of the Treasury Committee of May 28, it was resolved that after Vargas reconquered Santa Fé, "he should inquire into the matter, using his own discretion."

It is evident that the initiative in emphasizing the Sierra Azul investigation came principally from Vargas, as a means of furthering his own desire to reconquer New Mexico at an early date and reap the rewards.⁶⁸ But Vargas

67. Report of the treasury committee, Mexico City, May 28, 1692. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37).

68. Both Vargas and government officials in Mexico City apparently had hopes that there might be some truth in the stories about Sierra Azul and Cerro Colorado. A cheaper source of quicksilver for working the mines of New Spain was greatly in demand at the moment. But it cannot be said that Sierra Azul was the hidden motive for the reconquest, as one author has stated. This is sufficiently brought out from the official standpoint in the report of the finance committee, Mexico City, May 28, 1692 (*op. cit.*). And it had no appeal to the popular imagination, nor did Vargas attempt to use it as an argument to attract a following. Popular tradition was glutted with such tales. The story was emphasized by Vargas in official circles as an additional incentive to reconquer New Mexico, above all to keep the whole question of the reconquest in the limelight in Mexico City, at a time when there were other more immediate problems of defense and social and economic disorder, and thus prevent further delay. The significance of Sierra Azul in this connection lies in the definite part it played as a factor in hastening the reconquest, the carrying out of a frontier policy continuous since the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, during this critical period. Besides the many problems facing the government of New Spain already alluded to, there was much question, at the time, as to the strategic value of reoccupying New Mexico in the face of more immediate Indian hostility in New Vizcaya, Sonora, and Sinaloa. (See the opinions of Juan de Retana and Juan Bautista Esconza, March 15, 1692, in "Opinions of the Captains of New Vizcaya given in fulfilment of an order by his Excellency the Count of Galve, viceroy of New Spain, concerning the reconquest of New Mexico as proposed by the governor and captain general of El Paso and the province of New Mexico, sent by the governor and captain general of New Vizcaya

had royal orders to learn more about Huerta's story, and on his first entry into New Mexico, August 21 to December 20, 1692, he led an expedition to the Moqui villages, where inquiries were made. He examined a Zuñi Indian named Pedro, who was at one time a servant of Father José de Espeleta, the latter for thirty years a missionary among the Moquis prior to his martyrdom at their hands in 1680.

This Indian said the mines of Sierra Azul and Cerro Colorado were ten days travel from Aguatubi, in a high and steep mountain difficult of access. That it took a day or two to go up and get the ochre out of the earth, having to descend into a deep pit, and that there was no water there. He said that the vein was large and solid, and sometimes changed its color. The Indians used this earth to paint themselves, and also for the preservation of their skin, for it kept it smooth and soft and obliterated marks of the smallpox. The road from the Moqui villages was bad, and water was scarce, the first watering place being ten leagues from Aguatubi. A river lay in the route, the banks of which were so steep that horses could not be taken down them, but must be left on the east side; and it was necessary to pass through the country of the warlike Coninas.⁶⁹

After learning the distance to the place and the difficulties to be encountered in reaching it, Vargas decided to give up the expedition. Specimens of red earth from the alleged quicksilver mines were obtained at Jongopovi and brought away for the viceroy.⁷⁰ Oraibe, the westernmost of the Moqui villages, was not visited, although only nine leagues further on, because the horses were tired and in no

69. W. W. H. Davis, *The Spanish Conquest of New Mexico* (Doylestown, Pa., 1869), 369-370.

70. Diego de Vargas to the King, Zacatecas, May 16, 1693, *op. cit.*

to his Excellency, 1692," and the report of the royal fiscal, Mexico City, August 14, 1692. Both in A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 37). After Vargas' successful campaign of 1692, the permanent reoccupation of New Mexico was assured, in spite of the subsequent discovery that the red earth from Sierra Azul did not contain quicksilver. It was a question of defending the northern frontier settlements from hostile Indians. After the abandonment of Texas by the Spanish in 1693, the New Mexico salient was potentially important for defense against the French as well, besides being a vigorous outpost of Spanish civilization.

condition to go any further. In his journal Vargas expressed the hope that "it should be found that the red ochre earth contains quicksilver and alloy enough to pay all costs."⁷¹ But when the red earth was finally examined in Mexico City, it was discovered that it contained no quicksilver.⁷² Thus did the viceregal investigation of 1691 come to an end. The legend of Sierra Azul was not forgotten, but it again became dormant.

Mange, who relates in his *Lúz de Tierra Incógnita* his long journeys on horseback with Father Kino in Pimería Alta, often speaks of "the Sierra Azul, rich in ores of silver and gold." He distinguishes it from reported quicksilver deposits northwest of Casas Grandes of which he also speaks.⁷³ In the winter of 1697, at an Indian camp twelve leagues west of Casas Grandes named San Andrés, Kino and Mange, and their men, saw a youth daubed with a very fine red paint that looked like vermilion. They asked where it was from, and he pointed to the northwest saying that it was brought from a place five days' journey in that direction, toward the Colorado River. Mange writes:

. . . and then he brought a ball of it, very red, wrapped in buckskins, very heavy, and so liquid and oily that the buckskins in which he brought it were very heavy. It appeared to me from what I have read in the philosophy of Barba's *De re metallica*, that it is quicksilver . . . asking special questions of the youth, he said that on breaking up this red metal which they brought to paint themselves with, thick, white, watery drops come out, the color of a lead ball. . . . That on picking it up it slips through one's fingers because of its fineness, and pools of it were made on the ground. And that gathering the equivalent of what fits in the hollow of a hat, it could not be lifted because it was so heavy. . . .⁷⁴

71. Vargas' journal, November 29, 1692. (English translation in Twitchell, *Leading Facts*, IV, 341, and in his *Old Santa Fé, The Story of New Mexico's Ancient Capital* (Santa Fé, 1925), 111.

72. Viceregal order, the Count of Galve to Diego de Vargas, Mexico City, April 18, 1693. (A. G. N., *Historia*, tomo 38).

73. Mange, *op. cit.*, 290.

74. *Ibid.*, 285-286.

In 1699, on one of their many journeys, Kino and Mange found on the edge of the Gila River, fifteen leagues east of its confluence with the Colorado, a piece of red, volatile metal, which they believed to have been washed down by the current from the vicinity of Sierra Azul.⁷⁵ When they reached the Verde River (Kino's *Río Azul*), Mange writes that the guides told them that it was given that name because it passed through a mountain which had stones veined in green, blue, and other colors. Mange adds the comment that this might be the Sierra Azul, which as tradition had it was full of gold and silver, and from which much metal of unusual purity had already been extracted by the inhabitants of New Mexico in the early period. But, he says, the region was later abandoned, "and years having passed, there only remains the story of Sierra Azul, rich in silver, without anyone at the present time having any knowledge of its whereabouts."⁷⁶ At the end of his account of this expedition Mange says that it would be well to investigate whether or not the rumored quicksilver mines and the gold and silver mines of Sierra Azul were one and the same.

Kino, the professor, did not believe in the rumors about a "lake of quicksilver," and other such imaginary tales.⁷⁷ But Velarde, the successor of Kino at the latter's mission at Dolores, wrote in 1716:

Attempts have also been made to investigate what the Pimas themselves say, who pointing out about one hundred leagues to the north of the Moqui, assure us that there is in that place a small tank or pool, of thick water of the color of silver, which moves much and is heavy and which upon being picked up goes through the hands; and that there is much red soil around there. These signs indicate quicksilver, whether the story is true or not. Who knows? Who would affirm it or disagree with it? This is true, that the natives of New Mexico claim that there is a quicksilver mine around there, although they do not know just where, nor which

75. *Ibid.*, 303-306.

76. *Ibid.*, 306. Mange believed that Sierra Azul was west of the Little Colorado River, about fifteen leagues west of Oraibe. (*Ibid.*, 125-126).

77. Constantino Bayle, *Historia de los descubrimientos y colonización de los padres de la compañía de Jesus en la Baja California* (Madrid, 1933), 75.

nation has the product which in New Spain is valued so highly.

It is also true that the Cocomaricopas bring from a distance some balls of reddish earth, which appears to be vermilion, with which they paint themselves, and it would not be difficult to obtain some of this. These things should not appear strange to anyone, for if so far away and in such remote places there should be found the said mine, the people of the place would help the missionaries and men of commerce, and lead them both to that which each desires.⁷⁸

By the middle of the eighteenth century the Sierra Azul was generally placed somewhere in what is now central Arizona, between the Moqui villages, the Gila and the Colorado. The Bolas de Plata episode of 1736 focused the eyes of many on Arizona. From contemporary documents we find that this discovery was soon identified with legendary treasures of the same general region.⁷⁹ In 1740 a small party of Frenchmen came to New Mexico by way of Jicarilla and Taos, and the first thing that they asked for was the whereabouts of Sierra Azul. We learn this from Father Juan Miguel Menchero, who in 1744 described Sierra Azul as follows:

It is called Sierra Azul because the earth, rocks, and the whole region is blue, with green, red, yellow, and scarlet veins. . . and at the top there is a rock about two varas long and a vara and a half wide which shines and looks exactly like gold. There is a tradition that this mountain is the richest in all New Spain. . . Sierra Azul is four days' journey from Moqui, and the road is rough and dry. . . The nation which inhabits the Sierra Azul is called that of the Coninas Apaches. . .⁸⁰

Either Father Menchero knew his history unusually well, or the tradition was still strong. Anyone who has visited the country in question will immediately dare to say that Menchero's description, combined with the earlier

78. Luís Velarde's *Relación*, 1716 (Wyllys' translation). See appendix.

79. Bayle, *op. cit.*, 153.

80. Juan M. Menchero, *Relación de la Sierra Azul*, 1744, in *Documentos para la historia de Nuevo Mexico*, 11 (manuscript in Bancroft Library, University of California).

Vargas reports and Mange's figures, presents an exact description of Sunset Crater, in the San Francisco mountains fifty miles southwest of Oraibe.⁸¹

The glowing reports about Sierra Azul sent back by Father Carlos Delgado and the other missionaries who visited the Moqui villages in 1742 and 1745, were mostly Franciscan missionary propaganda to reawaken interest in the Northern Mystery in the face of the danger of having to surrender the Moqui field to the Jesuits.⁸² With danger of rivalry ended by royal decree on November 23, 1745, no more attention was given to the Moquis for some thirty years.

On his return from the California coast to Sonora in 1774, just after opening the first land route between these two provinces, Captain Juan Bautista de Anza paused to give his men a short rest below Yuma.

The pause gave them time to make observations. He remarks in his diary that, since he had travelled beyond the Colorado River much farther than any of his predecessors had "even thought of going," he might comment on some old geographical notions. Wherever he had been, he said, he had inquired of the natives about Sierra Azul, and the Laguna de Azogue told of by Mange, "but even taking their existence for granted," he had found no ground for thinking that either of the tales could be verified. The hard-headed captain was not disposed to perpetuate such myths, even though his revered father believed in them.⁸³

Nevertheless, the legend persisted. In 1780, in official correspondence concerning the desirability of opening a safe road from Santa Fé to Sonora, was mentioned among other things the opportunity it would offer to verify the reported discovery of mines of virgin quicksilver in that region, "that the missionary of Zuñi, F. Silvestre Velez Escalante confirmed this information, vowing that he had even held some

81. But there are no gold, silver, or quicksilver mines in this vicinity. They are all west, southwest, and south of Prescott. Nothing other than small quantities of copper ore has been found in the San Francisco Mountains.

82. Bancroft, *op. cit.*, 364.

83. Bolton, *Outpost of Empire* (New York, 1931), 119.

of the evidence in his hands, and offered to avail himself of the information the Indians had given him and with them to look for it, provided the necessary troops be supplied him for the purpose. . .”⁸⁴ As late as 1785, and probably later, New Mexicans referred to the vicinity of the present Dátil Mountains south of Zuñi, and the country of the Gila Apaches, as the location of Sierra Azul.⁸⁵ And in the early nineteenth century Sierra Azul was a “gold brick” at the expense of a credulous Anglo.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, after three hundred years of exploration, geographical knowledge of Arizona became more exact, and by the middle of the century the legend of Sierra Azul faded out of existence. The Anglo-American invasion of the Southwest, led by men eager to find wealth, and quick to take advantage of the roads paved by several centuries of Spanish effort, resulted in the discovery of the rich mines in Arizona that were dreamed of in Spanish days but never found.

The long sporadic search for Sierra Azul was threefold in significance. It quickened the exploration of western New Mexico; it paved the way for the extension of geographical knowledge of what is now Arizona; and it hastened and assured the reconquest of the lost province of New Mexico by Vargas after many futile attempts extending over a period of twelve years. The most significant episode in the transmission of the legend of Sierra Azul in the colonial period was the part it played in the reconquest.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

I base my account on the contemporary records of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Some of these have been published. The memorial of Domínguez de Mendoza, which tells of Peñalosa's reference to Sierra Azul in the early 1660's, and Father Alonso de Posadas' *Informe á S.M. sobre las tierras de Nuevo Mejico*,

84. Alfred B. Thomas, *Forgotten Frontiers* (Norman, Okla., 1932), 180.

85. *Ibid.*, 258-262, 383.

86. Lansing B. Bloom in Bloom and Donnelly, *New Mexico History and Civics* (Albuquerque, 1933), 147.

Quivira y Teguayo, written about 1686, which comments on the location of Sierra Azul and its reported wealth, were published in Cesáreo Fernández Duro, *Diego de Peñalosa y su descubrimiento del reino de Quivira* (Madrid, 1882). Posadas' *Informe* was also printed in the collection of *Documentos para la historia de Mexico*, 3rd series, volume I. Mexico, 1856. P. Otto Maas, in his *Misiones de Nuevo Méjico, Documentos del archivo general de Indias (Sevilla) publicados por primera vez y anotados* (Madrid, 1929), has reproduced, with textual corrections, some of the documents pertaining to the viceregal investigation of Sierra Azul which took place in 1691. There are several references to Sierra Azul and Cerro Colorado, based on Vargas' letter to the viceroy, October 16, 1692; and Vargas' journal account of his expedition to Moqui in 1692, in the volume of *Documentos para la historia de Mexico* mentioned above, makes several references to Cerro Colorado and Sierra Azul.

Kino, Mange, and Velarde add considerable information. The best edition of Kino's *Favores celestiales de Jesús y de María Sma y del Gloriosísimo Apóstol de las Yndias*, written between the years 1699 and 1710, is Herbert E. Bolton's *Kino's Historical Memoir of Pimería Alta* (Cleveland, 1919, 2v.). In 1922, Kino's manuscript was again edited by F. Hernandez del Castillo, and published as volume VIII of the *Publicaciones del Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico*. Part I of Mange's *Luz de tierra incógnita en la América Septentrional y Diario de las exploraciones en Sonora*, written in 1720, was published in the collection of *Documentos para la historia de Mexico*, 4th series, volume I, Mexico, 1856. A more recent edition, complete, was published as volume X of the *Publicaciones del Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico*, in 1926. Velarde's *Relación* of 1716 was incorporated in Mange's work, and has been translated separately into English by Rufus Kay Wyllys in the *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW*, VII, ii, April, 1931. Some late eighteenth century documents referring to Sierra Azul have been published in Bolton's *Anza's California Expeditions* (Berkeley, 1930, 5v.), and Alfred B. Thomas' *Forgotten Frontiers* (Norman, Okla., 1932).

But the most important records consulted were the manuscript materials for the period 1689 to 1692. The original copies of Huerta's petition to make an expedition to Sierra Azul, the subsequent royal investigation, and the royal decree of September 13, 1689, are filed in the Archive of the Indies in Seville, and there are contemporary copies in the Archivo General in Mexico City. The documents concerning the viceregal investigation of 1691, which contain the testimony of over a dozen well known former residents of New Mexico, including Otermín and Cruzate, the journal of Vargas' first entry into New

Mexico in 1692 which records the expedition to the Hopi country for evidence, and Vargas' letter to the King, written May 16, 1693, which repeats the account of his first entry into New Mexico as recorded in his journal are all filed in both of these archives. There is a fragmentary copy of Vargas' journal in the Santa Fé Archive, in Santa Fé, New Mexico. The *Bolton Collection* in the Bancroft Library, University of California, contains transcripts of all of these documents, with the exception of the part of Vargas' journal for 1692, copied from the originals at the Archivo General in Mexico City under Bolton's direction. They are listed in his *Guide to Materials for the History of the United States in the Principal Archives of Mexico* (Washington, 1913). These documents furnished the clue to the real significance of Sierra Azul.⁸⁷

Volume II of the *Documentos para la historia de Nuevo Mexico*, Bancroft Library, contains a manuscript copy of Menchero's *Relación de la Sierra Azul, 1744*, copied from the original in the Archivo General in Mexico City, as well as other data on Sierra Azul for the years 1742 to 1745. And the manuscript *History of New Mexico* (Santa Fé, 1884), written by Samuel Ellison, at one time territorial librarian of New Mexico, which is an unfinished autobiography of the author, comments on Vargas' reference to "A quicksilver mine, situated on the west bank of the Colorado of the West."

Besides the "Peñalosa" map, there have been other maps of the little known regions beyond the northern frontiers of New Spain which show a Sierra Azul, such as Kino's own map of Lower California (1701), a Sanchez map (1757), Pfefferkorn's map (late eighteenth century), and a Kiepert map as recent as 1852. On the Kino map Sierra Azul is placed in the northeastern corner of Lower California, just below the mouth of the Colorado River. On the Sanchez and Pfefferkorn maps Sierra Azul appears in the center of a range of mountains in central Arizona. Kiepert's map shows a Sierra Azul in southern Utah. All of these maps locate the place in the same general vicinity, and in each case the legendary mountain is placed in a region little known to contemporaries.⁸⁸

87. Juan Villagutierrez y Sotomayor's *Historia de la conquista, perdida y restauracion de el Reyno y provincias de la Nueva Mexico en la America septentrional* (manuscript in the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid), also has an account of Sierra Azul in its relation to the reconquest. See Maas, *op. cit.*, xxxii, xlii.

88. Kino's map has been variously reproduced heretofore in several printed works: namely, Bancroft, *op. cit.*, 360; Herbert E. Bolton and Thomas M. Marshall, *The Colonization of North America, 1492-1783* (New York, 1929), 303; Frank C. Lockwood, *Pioneer Days in Arizona* (New York, 1932), 36. The Sanchez map referred to was printed in Charles E. Chapman, *The Founding of Spanish California* (New York, 1916), 36, and in the *New Mexico Historical Review*, VI, (April, 1931). Ignaz Pfefferkorn's map appears in the work by the same author, entitled, *Beschrei-*

The more recent bibliography of Sierra Azul consists of Davis, Bancroft, Donaldson, Twitchell, Bolton, Thomas, Leonard, and Bloom. W. W. H. Davis, in *The Spanish Conquest of New Mexico* (Doylestown, Pa., 1869), gives the most complete account of Vargas' expedition to Moqui in 1692, one of the objects of which was to obtain information about some red ochre mines in that region. Vargas' journal entries for the days spent in the Moqui country constituted Davis' only source on this point, consequently he ignored the relationship of these mines to Sierra Azul, for there the place is referred to as Cerro Colorado. H. H. Bancroft's *History of Arizona and New Mexico* (San Francisco, 1889) mentions Sierra Azul in relation to Peñalosa in the 1660's; the Huerta episode, without knowledge of its full importance, his evidence based solely on the royal cédula of September 13, 1689; the Vargas expedition to Moqui in 1692, without knowledge of its relation to the legend of Sierra Azul; in a footnote in regard to one of Mange's references, and another footnote which mentions Menchero's *Relación*; and the part it played in the rivalry between the *padres prietos* and the *padres azules*, 1742 to 1745. Bancroft dismisses the Huerta incident with the erroneous statement: "As we hear no more of the matter, we may suspect that the empresario could not support all his allegations about northern wealth."

Thomas Donaldson, *Moqui Pueblo Indians of Arizona and Pueblo Indians of New Mexico* (Washington, 1893) repeats one of the references in Davis and Bancroft in the following words: "Vargas was as interested in the discovery of certain mines of cinnabar and red ochre, reported to lie to the west of the Moqui pueblos, as he was in the recapture of the pueblos." Ralph Emerson Twitchell, in *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History* (Cedar Rapids, 1911-14, 5v.), mentions Peñalosa's visit to "Cerro Azul," and quotes from Vargas' journal for November 29, 1692, where mention is made of his having obtained samples of red earth from the alleged quicksilver mines west of Moqui. This last mentioned passage is repeated in his *Old Santa Fé, The Story of New Mexico's Ancient Capital* (Santa Fé, 1925). Bolton, in his *Kino's Historical Memoir of Pimeria Alta*, speaks of one of Mange's references to Sierra Azul in a footnote, and mentions Anza's reference to Sierra Azul in the introductory volume to his Anza volumes, published separately as *Outpost of Empire* (New York, 1931). Thomas, in his *Forgotten Frontiers*, has a note on a supposed location

bung der Landschaft Sonora samt andern merkwürdigen Nachrichten von den inneren Theilen Neu-Spaniens und Reise aus Amerika bis in Deutschland, nebst einer landkarte von Sonora (Köln, 1794-1795, 2v.). This work is now being translated into English by Theodore C. Treutlein, University of California. The Kiepert map was consulted from two copies in the map collection of the Bancroft Library, University of California (maps F-1226-1851-K41, and F-1226-1852-K4).

of Sierra Azul in the 1780's. In the introduction to his scholarly translation of Sigüenza y Góngora's *Mercurio Volante* (Los Angeles, 1932), Irving S. Leonard briefly discusses Sierra Azul as a factor in the reconquest of New Mexico, basing his discussion on some of the documents used for the present study. It is an accurate presentation of this phase of the legend. The most recent mention of Sierra Azul is the brief but balanced summary of its history by Lansing B. Bloom in Bloom and Donnelly's *New Mexico History and Civics* (Albuquerque, 1933).