

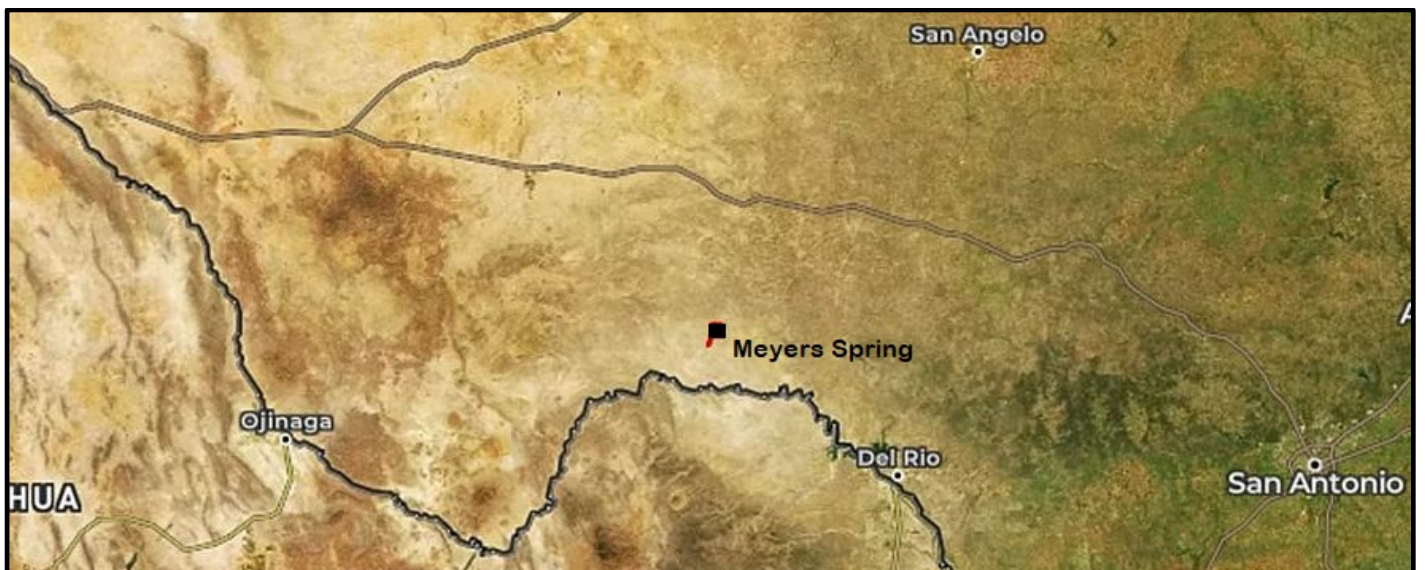
Camp Meyers Spring (41TE9) Conquistador

Tom Ashmore, C.A. Maedgen
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Introduction

A small pictographic image on the vast 100-foot story wall of Meyers Spring in the Lower Pecos region of Texas, near the Rio Grande River, is very likely an overlooked depiction of the first contact between Lower Pecos Indians and sixteenth century Spanish Conquistadors.



The depiction is not very large and has been overlooked over the years, probably most viewers assuming it is depicting an Indian warrior due to the shield being held. However, there are multiple aspects of this image that do not match for any Indian tribe and do match for the Conquistadors.



3D image of wall created by Shumla Alexandria Project and presented on sketchfab.com

What first brought this to light was a high resolution rendering of the pictograph by a specialized fabrication company working with the landowner to create a laser cutting of the pictograph for a replica in steel. In order to do this some of the fuzzy outlines needed to be defined better for the laser cutting. It was this newly defined rendering that brought out the details that were needed to realize the likely intentions of the artist in describing an event to be documented.



Steel fabrication after detailed rendering (Production Manufacturing, El Paso, TX)

The first item in the image that jumps out at the viewer is the item being held in the left hand. The item in the left hand closely resembles the Spanish matchlock Harquebus, also known as the Arquebus or Hackbut. These were common with the Spanish Conquistadors during their exploration of the North American Southwest. The harquebus was invented in Spain in the mid-15th century and used up to the late 17th Century. ¹ The effective range was 100 meters. The gun stock in the pictograph indicates this is one of the

oldest of the Harquebus designs, matching the late 16th Century. It was shorter and lighter than the early European design at around 46 inches. Current replicas fire a .57 lead ball. ²



Spanish Foot Soldier Carrying Harquebus
Engraving by Cesare Vecellio, 1590



16th Century Harquebus with similarities to the pictograph

One archeologist referencing the image in a 1938 overview of the panel of pictographs believed it might be a club or rabbit stick. ³ However, rabbit sticks were not carried with a shield and they were only around 1.5 feet in length, whereas the object in hand is at least 3.5 feet long.

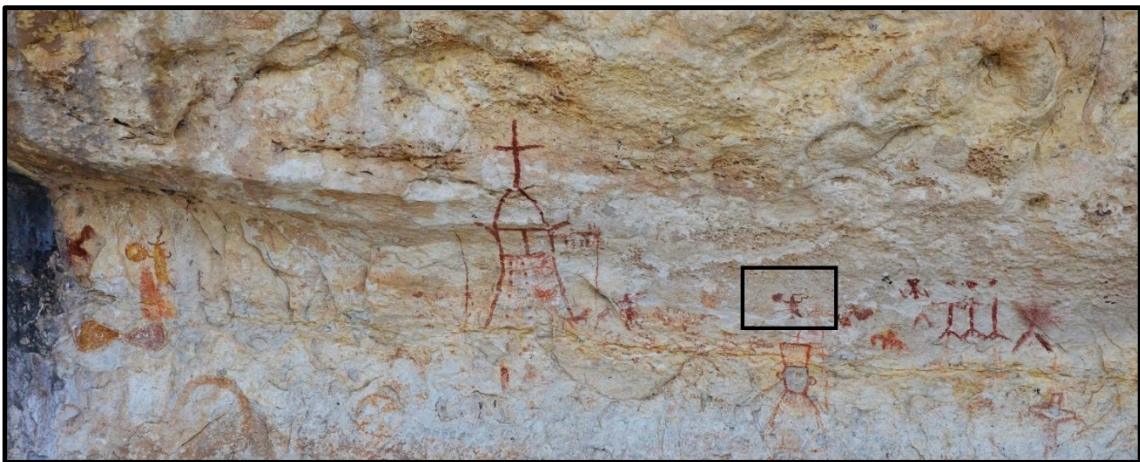


Hopi Rabbit Stick (Penn Museum)

Additionally, there is a depiction on the same wall of an actual rabbit hunt with a rabbit stick. This one has also been overlooked, located just above the more famous picture of a Spanish priest and mission. It clearly shows an Indian getting ready to throw a rabbit stick and a throw net in his other hand. This can be used to clearly define the difference in the two images.

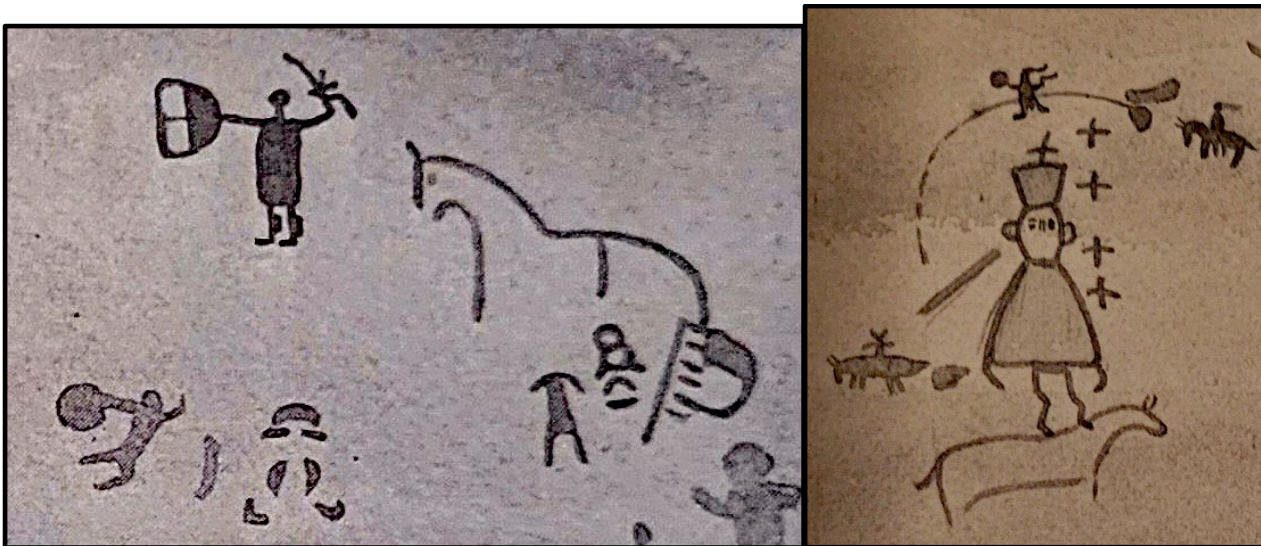


Indian with rabbit stick and throw net



Location Of Indian With Rabbit Stick

Forrest Kirkland also included both of these images in his rock art depictions of the Meyers Spring wall, but did not attempt to interpret the images. A second rabbit stick hunt pictograph is in the Kirkland depiction right below the Conquistador. That one is now severely faded on the wall due to weathering over the years. ⁴



Forest Kirkland Depictions

The second item in the pictograph image that stands out are the boots. Whoever made this drawing went to the trouble of including this detail. These loose type boots are not what Indians wore. They wore tight leather legging-type boots or just moccasins. But the boots in the image are the type of boots worn by the Spanish Conquistadors, as shown in the example image below. Additionally, the full length outfit in the pictograph depiction was not common to the male Indian, especially in war fighting mode. However, as can be seen in the Conquistador rendering it was a common type of outfit for the Conquistador.



Spanish Conquistador depiction

Although shields were something carried by certain Indian tribes, they were also a known defensive weapon carried by Conquistador cavaliers (horsemen). Conquistador cavaliers used an ‘adarga,’ which was a hard leather shield originally created by the Moors and frequently used by the Conquistadores in the Americas.⁵ The adarga was made in two pieces, similar to the pictograph depiction also representing two pieces.



16th Century Adarga, front and rear (Metropolitan Museum of Art) Conquistador Cavalier with Adarga

The pictograph appears to be a representation of two different types of soldiers in one depiction. The harquebusier were the men who carried the harquebus, but the cavaliers were the ones who carried the adarga.

The pictograph also shows something on top of the head. This is probably an attempt to depict the Conquistador Morion comb helmet. The object in the pictograph flares out somewhat and appears to be trying to depict the ‘comb’ on top of the helmet. However, it could also be representing feathers on top of a helmet, similar to the c. 1590 engraving above.



Spanish Conquistador Morion Comb Helmet (c. 17th century) (Wikipedia)

Another important and related item on the pictograph wall is a depiction of a horse beside the Conquistador. Note that it is painted in the same pigment. The exaggerated neck is a solid indication that this is intended to be a horse. The snout may have been spalled off slightly. At this period in the Trans-Pecos Indian homeland the horse was probably a completely new sight and would have been worthy of being included in a depiction story.

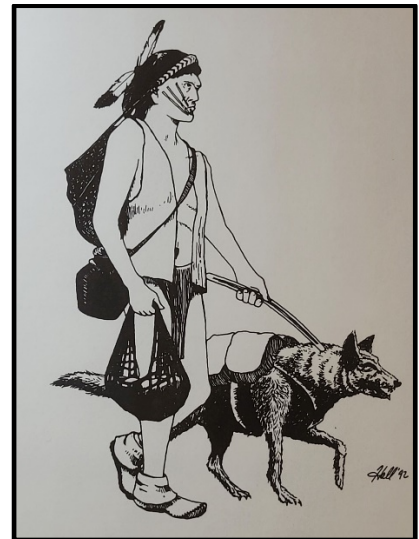


Horse depiction next to Conquistador

Jumano: The Trans-Pecos Indians



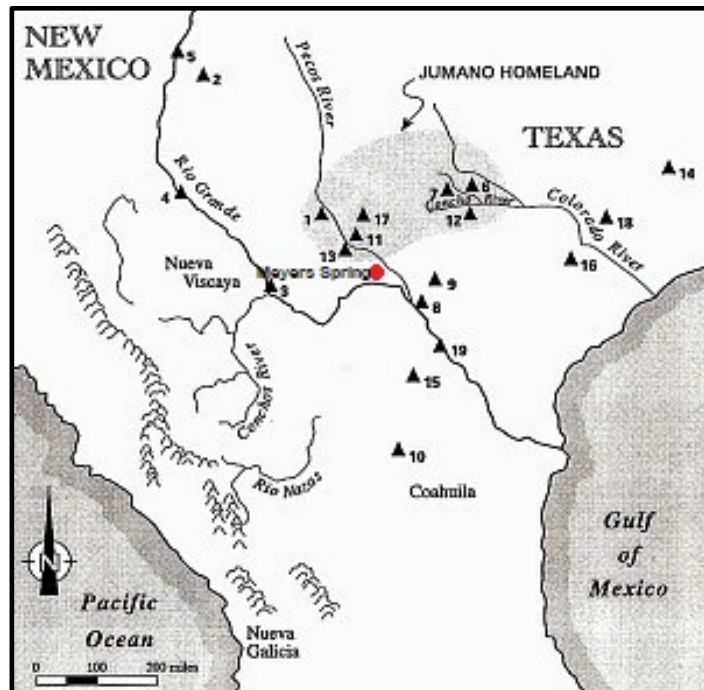
Jumano Indians hunting bison (Artist Feather Radhas)



Jumano Trader c. 1580 (Artist Andrew Hall)

The Jumano were mentioned by name in Spanish documents beginning in 1583 and continuing until around 1750. The written record shows that they were mobile hunter-gatherers in the Trans-Pecos region who frequently moved and often traveled great distances. ⁶ They followed and hunted the bison herds and were traders with regions far and wide from their home territory.

The main Jumano home nation area covered territory from the Rio Grande River, east of current Del Rio, to the area beyond Presidio on the river to the west. Their northern border was to the north of the confluence of the Concho and Colorado Rivers on the east and the Pecos River to the west. Meyers Spring sits right in the middle of this region.

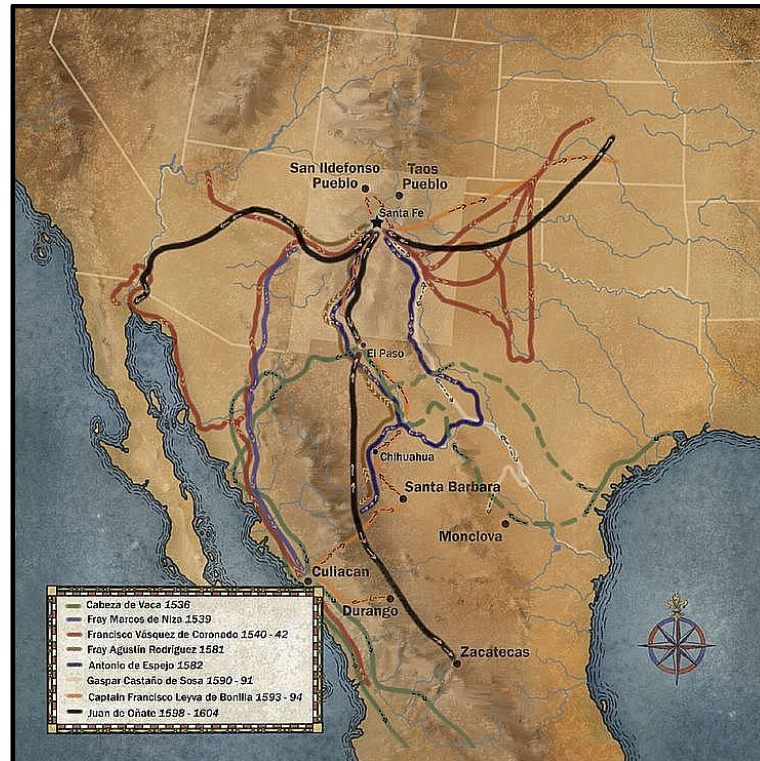


A map of the original homeland of the Jumano Indians based on early encounters with Spanish explorers.
(Image courtesy of Texas Beyond History)

The Conquistador Expeditions – First Contact

There were essentially four Conquistador expeditions into the Southwestern area of North America between 1540 and 1598.⁷ This does not include the account of Cabeza de Vaca who essentially was in a survival mode and in a state of destitution throughout his journey from one Indian tribe to another and with a loss of almost all his men as he moved through what is now Texas before finding his way into Mexico. One additional expedition that was not considered a Conquistador expedition but did cross through the Lower and Trans-Pecos region in 1590 was Gaspar Castaño de Sosa.

In 1589 Castaño de Sosa, unable to obtain official permission for the expedition and fearing he would be arrested departed without permission on July 27, 1590 from Almaden (now Monclova, Coahuila), intending to settle in New Mexico. Thus, his journey had characteristics of both a flight from prosecution and an exploration. Accompanying de Sosa were the 170 Spanish inhabitants of the town, presumably including most or all of the converso settlers and his soldiers. The prospective settlers took with them a large number of livestock and carried their possessions in a slow-moving wagon train. Unlike most Conquistador expeditions, no Catholic priests accompanied this expedition. De Sosa crossed the Rio Grande River in the current Del Rio area and proceeded to move north up the Pecos River on the east side and then continued to Santa Fe.⁸



Early American Conquistador/Fray Explorers (*Antonio de Espejo route in blue*)

The Antonio de Espejo expedition was the first actual Conquistador expedition to pass through the Trans-Pecos region. In November 1582, Antonio de Espejo set out from Nueva Vizcaya, Mexico, to search for some friars who had traveled to northern New Mexico to convert the American Indians there and were rumored to have been killed.

When the Antonio de Espejo's expedition began in 1582 it included 15 soldiers and 115 horses and mules. Their initial route marched north down the Rio Conchos River to the Rio Grande River and from there followed the Rio Grande to Santa Fe. Although this route took them past southern Jumano villages along the

inhabited Rio Conchos and Rio Grande Rivers it took them far west of the Trans-Pecos region and the heart of the Jumano nation.

In the description of the travels their journal referenced using the Harquebus to either intimidate or in actual combat seven separate times. It is also notable that the journal describes all the male Indians they encountered along the way as either naked or nearly naked. This is dramatically different from the clothing depicted in the pictograph. These descriptions came from the journal of the travels by Antonio de Espejo's journalist, Diego Perez de Luxan, as they made their way past one Indian settlement after another on their way north.⁹

Espejo learned early in his expedition that the two friars had been killed by members of the Tiguex tribe in present-day north eastern New Mexico. Nevertheless, he continued on and explored the areas to the north and east. He pushed into Tiguex territory, then headed east until he reached the Pecos River for their return to Mexico. He and his men followed the Pecos River south and crossed into present-day Texas where they were welcomed in May of 1583 by three Jumano Indians out hunting. The Jumano informed Espejo the Pecos River would take them far from their destination of the Rio Conchos River and agreed to act as guides, leading them through the Trans-Pecos region and back to the Rio Grande.

From there the Jumano Indians guided him and his men along what is now Toyah Creek, through Balmorhea, and on up Limpia Canyon by the sites of present Fort Davis and Marfa and down Alamito Creek to the Rio Grande.¹⁰

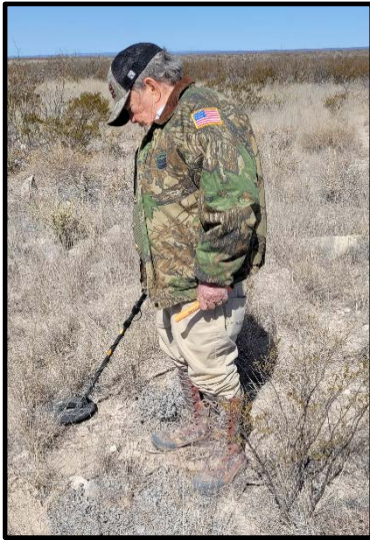
Conclusion

Both the Castano de Sosa and Antonio de Espejo expeditions carried the same weapons - indicated through their journals - and both encountered the Trans-Pecos Jumano Indians in the same general area of the Pecos River plains area, near their bison hunting grounds. However, the Espejo expedition is the accepted first-contact between Spanish Conquistador and Jumano Indians.

The pictograph details match all the aspects of a Conquistador representation. The weapon being held matches properly the earliest period of the Harquebus and the Conquistador exploration period in the Southwestern portion of the "New" America. That, along with the additional depiction of the horse beside the Conquistador, supports this as being a Trans-Pecos picture story of the first contact between European Conquistador explorers and Indians. In our research this is the only known pictograph in Texas of this early contact of these two peoples, making it one of the most important images of early Texas history.



Tom Ashmore spent 22 years in the Air Force as a special intelligence analyst. After retiring active duty he taught intelligence skills for another 20 years for the Air Force Intelligence School at Goodfellow AFB, Texas. He headed up avocational archeological investigations for the Concho Valley and Iraan Archeological Societies and worked closely with the Texas Archeological Society over the last 15 years. He completed a book in 2019 on his Butterfield Trail investigations, 'The Butterfield Trail Through The Concho Valley And West Texas.' He is currently a member of the West Texas (formerly Iraan) Archeological Society and board member of the Southwest Federation of Archeological Societies.



C.A. Maedgen, III is a military veteran having served in Viet Nam at Da Nang in the U.S. Air Force in 1970. Prior to military service C.A. graduated from SMU in 1966 with a degree in Geology and in 1968 graduated with an MFA in Communications. After military service C.A. worked in Houston as a licensed Real Estate Broker for 10 years and in the last 30 years C.A. worked for a national chemical manufacturer as a sales and service engineer. C.A. has many hours of volunteer archeology service at Fort Chadbourne and at Fort Concho historic sites, Butterfield Trail station sites, Horse Head Crossing, Lower Pecos Rock Art sites, Lower Pecos archeology sites, and worked with Texas State University at Eagle Cave and archeological explorations for the Nature Conservancy at Independence Creek. C.A. served for over 10 years as the Region 10 Director of the Texas Archeology Society, 4 years as president of the Concho Valley Archeology Society, and past board member of the Southwest Federation of Archeology Societies. He is currently an active member of the West Texas (formerly Iraan) Archeology Society and Texas Archeological Society. Last but not least, he spent 14 plus years in cooperation with and supporting Tom Ashmore on various archeological projects.

¹ Harquebus

<https://www.britannica.com/technology/harquebus>

² 16th Century Matchlock Arquebus

<https://militaryheritage.com/musket31.htm>

<https://youtu.be/dPL5v1MbZGs>

³ Jackson, A.T., Picture-Writing Of Texas Indians, Bureau Of Research In Social Sciences, Study No. 27, University Of Texas Publication No. 3809, pp 155, March 1, 1938

⁴ Kirkland, Forrest, The Rock Art of Texas Indians, pp 112 – 117, University Of Texas Press, 1967

⁵ Adarga

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adarga>

⁶ Who were the Jumano?, Texas Beyond History

<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/trans-p/peoples/who.html>

⁷ CONQUISTADORS: Searching for gold and glory and finding something else, Bullock Museum

<https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/campfire-stories/conquistadors>

⁸ Schroeder, Matson, 'A Colony On The Move: Gaspar Castano de Sosa's Journal, 1590-1591,' School Of American Research, 1965

Castaño de Sosa, Gaspar, Texas State Historical Association

<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/castano-de-sosa-gaspar>

Temkin, Samuel, Gaspar Castaño de Sosa's "Illegal" Entrada: A Historical Revision, New Mexico Historical Review, Vol 85, 2010 <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol85/iss3/3/>

⁹ Expedition Into New Mexico Made By Antonio De Espejo 1582 – 1582, As Revealed In The Journal Of Diego Perez De Luxan, A Member Of The Party, 1929, Arno Press 1967

¹⁰ Espejo, Antonio de, Texas State Historical Association online

<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/espejo-antonio-de>