

2. Colonization and Settlement in Guatemala (representing the majority of his time in the Americas)

The invasion and colonization of Guatemala consists of the majority of Cabrillo's settled life, however, at the expense of the Indigenous peoples and lands the Spanish occupied. The primary sources that deal with this time period such as the original documents which demonstrate Juan Rodríguez (Cabrillo) was of the original invaders, settlers, and encomenderos are found in the Libro Viejo. Before the Libro Viejo and the original documents contained therein were made public, which was only recently, the primary source outside of Las Casas was from the Spanish historian Antonio de Remesal who gave a detailed account of the colonization of Guatemala. Cabrillo's presence in Guatemala was also reconfirmed by his grandson, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo de Medrano, who testified in 1561 on behalf of Bernal Díaz del Castillo. Cabrillo de Medrano's testimony certifies Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo's presence in Guatemala, as well as the close connections the first conquistadors maintained throughout the colonial period.

The Life of a Conquistador

Most historians have painted a rather dramatic, romantic and heroicized version of Cabrillo's life which focuses primarily upon the expedition to California and his credentials as a literate and educated person. However, if our sources are correct and he came to the Americas in 1519 with Pánfilo de Narvaéz (probably at a young age of 19) and died in 1543 (24 years later) he had spent the majority of his life as a conquistador, not as a seafarer. The invasion and colonization of Guatemala by Pedro de Alvarado and Cabrillo in 1528 is also the starting point in Cabrillo's life as a full time encomendero who exploited native labor and resources from which he attained some kind of wealth. The sources presented in this research come primarily from Spanish accounts and histories which of course is only one side of this story. Indigenous as well as African accounts of the invasion and colonization of the Americas provide other versions of these stories. Questions such as; how did indigenous peoples respond to these events? What would accounts by Indigenous and African peoples and laborers say about the encomienda system of forced native labor? About Cabrillo as an encomendero? And many more questions which are essentially left out of this one sided description of history.

There is little description or dialogue from his contemporaries surrounding Cabrillo's life, however, Cabrillo as a self-styled conquistador and encomendero shared many similar experiences and goals as those of his contemporaries. Comparisons are easily made between such people as Christopher Columbus, Hernan Cortéz and Pedro de Alvarado. For one, they all, at one time or another were engaged in the same invasion, such as at the Battle of Tenochtitlan where all three played gradient and varied roles. The aftermath of this military victory for the Spanish in turn affected how and where each of these persons lives would lead, which uncoincidentally, involved leading an expedition to the mythical California. Appended to this table of contents is a preliminary study concerning the relationship between these four figures, as well as bringing to light other issues which remain neglected in these histories.

A. Original acts of settlement and colonization documented in 1528

- a. Actas de Cabildo (10, 20, 42, 94) List of Citizens of Santiago de Guatemala and gives the date of March 20, 1528 as its original founding date, however, the city was moved a few times from Almolonga valley to the Valle del Boca where it was destroyed in 1541 during the earthquake Cabrillo recorded.
- b. Reparto de Solares (188) List of encomenderos and encomiendas including those held by Cabrillo (in Guatemala, he also held others in Honduras such as Teota and Cotela which are referred to in the document, Meritos y Services de Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, confirming his activity there.)
- c. Apéndice 1 (206): Lists of Encomenderos in the Boca del Valle a La Ciudad.

Source:

Libro Viejo de la fundación de Guatemala y papeles relativos a D. Pedro de Alvarado, prologue by Jorge García Granados. Biblioteca "Goathemala," vol. 12. Guatemala: Sociedad de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala, 1934.

B. Spanish and Indigenous Accounts of the Invasion and Colonization of Guatemala

- a. The two letters of Pedro de Alvarado, the only first-hand Spanish accounts of the invasion of Guatemala written during this time period, however others such as Francisco Ocelote would later provide testimony that would add to this story, 23-47. See section 3, (C) for the original facsimile copies of these letters.
- b. The brother of Pedro de Alvarado, Jorge de Alvarado also wrote a letter, however after the initial invasion. Both letters express the desire of these Spaniards to not only present their side of the story, but also to paint themselves in the best light in their appeals for favor of the king, 55-59.
- c. Bernal Díaz del Castillo wrote an account as well, however, he did not participate in the invasion and colonization directly. Another English translation is provided in Mackie, however, this is the most recent.
- d. The K/Caqchikel and Tzultijil Maya accounts provides an indigenous perspective of the invasion, which is quite rare for many of these events, 103-118.

Source:

Restall, Mathew and Florine Asselbergs. *Invading Guatemala: Spanish, Nahua, and Maya Accounts of the Conquest Wars*. Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park, PA, 2007: 74-75, 83-93, 104-105, 108-111

C. The primary Spanish historical source documenting the early colonial history of the Spanish in Guatemala and other parts of Central America.

a. Capitulo III, IV (83-86): Juan Rodríguez is mentioned as one of the “Nombres de los primeros vecinos de la ciudad de Santiago”. However, he was in the second-round titled “Hácese escribir por vecino con otros caballeros.”

b. Capitulo XVI (111-113): “Desde qué tiempo hay al primer libro del cabildo”: 111. Juan Rodríguez was made a citizen on March 18th, 1528.

Source:

Remesal, Fray Antonio de. *Historia General de Las Indias Occidentales Y Particular De La Gobernación De Chiapa Y Guatemala*. Madrid: Atlas, 1964.

D. Testimony by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo de Medrano, the son of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo for the “Merits and Services/Meritos y Servicios de Bernal Díaz del Castillo.” This source confirms Cabrillo’s presence in Guatemala as a citizen and encomendero, of whom his son at the time of this probanza, attests to his holding encomiendas inherited from his father. (649-50).

Source:

Díaz del Castillo, Bernal. *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España*. Introducción y Notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas. 8th ed. Editorial Porrúa, S.A.: Mexico, 1970. Apendice, pp. 649-50.

E. This work is by far the most complete concerning the conquest era in Guatemala of which Cabrillo played a major role, considering his initiation to settle there. As is visible in the map (c), like every location, it was occupied by indigenous peoples. Comparisons between map (b) and map (c) as well as map (e) will demonstrate the relationship between the location of *encomiendas* and the indigenous peoples and places which were subjected to Spanish colonization.

a. The Introduction to this study has been provided, pgs. 1-23.

b. Map of Pedro de Alvarado’s and Cabrillo’s route in the conquest of Guatemala.

c. Map of ethnolinguistic groups at the time of contact.

- d. An example of an encomienda grant. Facsimile "Titles to Encomienda Granted by Adelanto don Pedro de Alvarado to Don Cristobal de la Cueva", November/December, 1530.
- e. Map: Encomienda "Towns in the Jurisdiction of Santiago de Guatemala, 1524-1548"
- f. Appendix A, which is a table of the encomiendas around Santiago from the map (e).
- g. A quote from the Probanza de Ignacio de Bobadilla, 1572 describing the conditions of the encomiendas however after Cabrillo's death.
- h. Table 4.1 of Jorge de Alvarado's Repartimiento General which includes Juan Rodríguez as one of the benefactors.
- i. Table 8.1 of Pedro de Alvarado's Last Encomienda Grants, 1539-1540. Cabrillo is one of the chief benefactors of his encomienda grants.
- j. The Tasación de Atitlán, 1537 is a general taxation/tribute list which each encomienda regulated.
- k. Some examples of Titles to Encomiendas, of which Cabrillo would also have had, except for the many times they weren't granted "legally."
- l. Finally, I have attached the glossary to this study which could be helpful for young students to grasp the concepts, both legal and social of the Spanish worldview.

Source:

Kramer, Wendy. *Dividing the Spoils: Encomienda Politics in Early Colonial Guatemala 1524-1544*. Westview Press: Oxford, 1994.

F. Facsimile copy of the Title to the Encomiendas of Tacuba and Jumaitepeque granted to Cabrillo.

Source:

Lagoa, Visconde de. *João Rodrigues Cabrilho*. Agencia Geral Do Ultramar: Lisboa, 1958.

G. Contains an illustration of the eruption of Jojocta, the volcano outside the city of Santiago de Guatemala, in 1542.

Source:

Duvalé, Ángel de Altolaguirre y. *Descubrimiento Y Conquista de México*. Madrid: Salvat Editores: 1954.

H. Depiction of the city of Coban which was Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo's most valuable and profitable encomienda, however, it was located within the territory of Tecosistlan/Tezulutlan, or as the Spanish called it, "tierra de guerra," a Land of War because the indigenous peoples refused to accept the terms of colonialism and conversion. The region was later used as an experimental ground for Las Casas peaceful evangelization and conversion to Christianity, thus renamed by the Dominicans, Verapaz or True Peace.

Source:

Saint-Lu, André. *La Vera Paz: Espirit Evangélique et Colonisation*. Paris: Centre de Recherches Hispaniques, 1968.

I. The indigenous geographic understanding of the Americas was extensive and the relationships they developed through trade, such as Cacao which was effectively their own form of universal exchange.

a. Map showing the indigenous distribution of Cacao/Chocolate in pre-invasion Mesoamerica. Pp. 86

b. Map displaying the areas of Cacao tribute in southern Guatemala and El Salvador. Pp. 90

Source:

Bergmann, John F. "The Distribution of Cacao Cultivation in Pre-Columbian America," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 59(1), Mar. 1969: 85-96.