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978-1-108-01334-5 - The Travels of Pedro de Cieza de Leon, A.D. 1532-50: Contained in the First Part of his Chronicle of Peru

Pedro de Cieza de Leon

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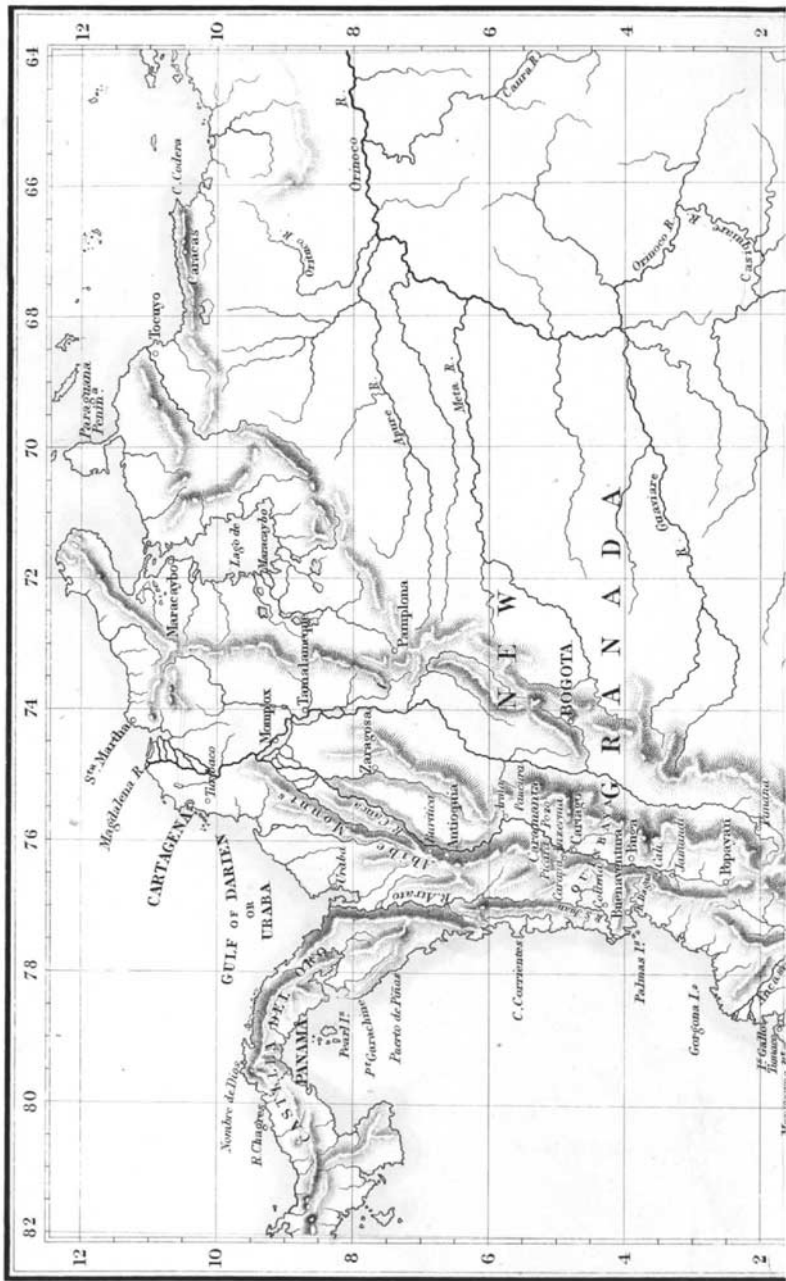
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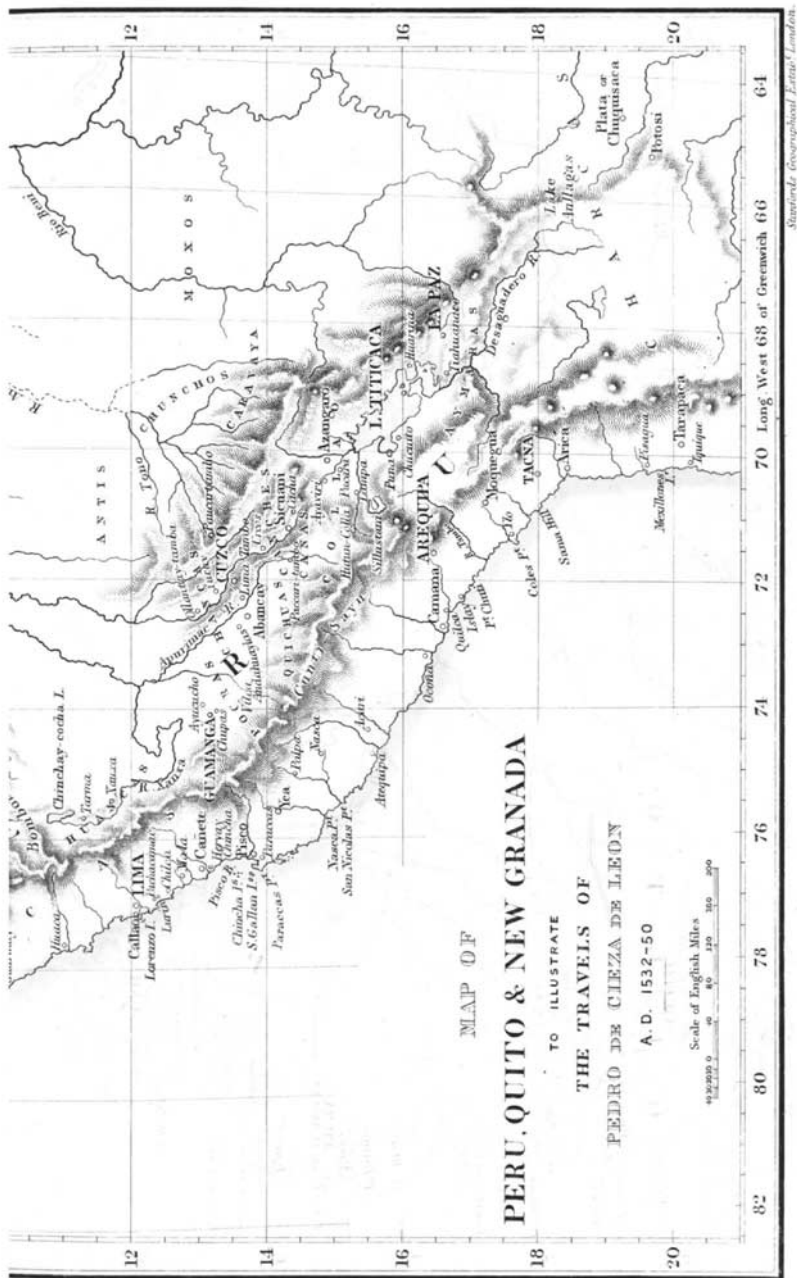
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A.D. 1532-50,

CONTAINED IN THE
First Part of his Chronicle of Peru.

TRANSLATED AND EDITED,
WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION,
BY
CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM, F.S.A., F.R.G.S.,

AUTHOR OF "CUZCO AND LIMA," "TRAVELS IN PERU AND INDIA," AND A
"QUICHUA GRAMMAR AND DICTIONARY."

LONDON:
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INTRODUCTION.

THE work of Pedro de Cieza de Leon is, in many respects, one of the most remarkable literary productions of the age of Spanish conquest in America. Written by a man who had passed his life in the camp from early boyhood, it is conceived on a plan which would have done credit to the most thoughtful scholar, and is executed with care, judgment, and fidelity. But before examining the work itself, I will give some account of its author—of whom, however, little is known, beyond what can be gathered from his own incidental statements in the course of his narrative.

Cieza de Leon is believed to have been born in the year 1519 in the city of Seville, where he passed the first fourteen years of his life. It has been conjectured that his father was a native of Leon,¹ in the north of Spain, but absolutely nothing is known of his parentage.

In 1532, at the extraordinarily early age of fourteen, young Pedro embarked at Seville, and set out to seek his fortunes in the New World. At that time scarcely a year elapsed without seeing an expedition fitted out,

¹ Don Pascual de Gayangos is inclined to this opinion.

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to undertake some new discovery or conquest. Seville and Cadiz were crowded with adventurers, all eagerly seeking for a passage to that marvellous land beyond the setting sun. It was, indeed, a time of wild excitement. Every ship that returned from the Indies might, and not a few did, bring tidings of the discovery of new and powerful empires before undreamt of. People of all ages and of every grade in society flocked to the sea ports, and took ship for the Indies ; excited beyond control by the accounts of those inexhaustible riches and fabulous glories, which penetrated to every village in Spain. Among the leaders of these expeditions there were some honourable knights, with courteous manners and cultivated minds, such as Diego de Alvarado, Garcilasso de la Vega, and Lorenzo de Aldana.¹ But the majority were either coarse and avaricious adventurers, or disappointed courtiers, like that young scamp Alonzo Enriquez de Guzman, whom I introduced to the notice of the HAKLUYT SOCIETY in 1862. Cieza de Leon, at the time of his embarkation, was a mere boy, too young to be classed under any of these heads. His character was destined to be formed in a rough and savage school, and it is most remarkable that so fine a fellow as our author really was, should have been produced amidst the horrors of the Spanish American conquest. Humane, generous, full of noble sympathies, observant, and methodical ; he was bred amidst scenes of cruelty, pillage, and wanton destruction, which were calculated to produce a far different character. Considering the circumstances in which he was placed from

¹ See notes at pages 157 and 123.

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early boyhood, his book is certainly a most extraordinary, as well as an inestimable result of his labours and military services.

It does not appear in what fleet our boy soldier set out from Spain; but judging from the date, and from the company in which we find him immediately on landing in America, I consider it more than probable that he sailed from his native land in one of the ships which formed the expeditionary fleet of Don Pedro de Heredia.

Heredia, who had already served with distinction on the coast of Tierra Firme, had obtained a grant of the government of all the country, between the river Magdalena and the gulf of Darien, from Charles V. He was a native of Madrid, where, having had his nostrils slit in a street brawl, he had killed three of the men who had treated him with this indignity. Forced to leave his native country, he took refuge in San Domingo, and a relation had interest enough to get him appointed as lieutenant to Garcia de Lerma, in an expedition to Santa Martha; whence he returned to Spain. He was a man of considerable ability, judgment, and determination, was respected by his own followers, and had already had some experience in Indian warfare. His lieutenant was Francisco de Cesar, one of the most dashing officers of the time.¹

Heredia's expedition, which consisted of one galleon and two caravels, carrying in all about a hundred men,

¹ Cesar had been with Sebastian Cabot, in his expedition to the mouth of the Rio de la Plata; and joined Heredia at the island of Puerto Rico. See page 47, and note.

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sailed from Cadiz in the end of 1532. They first touched at San Domingo, where Heredia took on board more recruits, forty-seven horses, and some leathern cuirasses, which had been prepared as a protection against the poisoned arrows of the Indians. On the 14th of January 1533 the expedition entered the bay of Carthagena,¹ on the main land of South America, where the disembarkation of the Spaniards was bravely contested by the natives. In no part of Spanish America did the Indians more resolutely defend their homes, than along the coast of the Tierra Firme, as it was called ; and young Cieza de Leon saw some very rough service on his first landing in the new world. Eventually Heredia succeeded in founding the city of Carthagena, of which he was the first governor, and in establishing a firm footing in the surrounding country : and for some three or four years the future author continued to serve under him. In 1535 Cieza de Leon accompanied Heredia's brother Alonzo to the gulf of Darien or Uraba, where a settlement was formed called San Sebastian de Buena Vista.

Meanwhile, a judge, named Pedro Vadillo, was sent to Carthagena to examine into the proceedings of Heredia, with full powers from the *Audiencia* of San Domingo ; and he threw the governor into prison. His violent proceedings were disapproved in Spain, and another lawyer was sent out to sit in judgment on the judge. The licentiate Vadillo, who seems to

¹ Herrera says that Heredia gave the name of Carthagena to the bay ; but in reality the place had already received that name, either from Ojeda or Bastidas.

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have been better fitted for a soldier than for a judge, resolved to perform some service, or make some discovery in the interval, the importance of which, in a military point of view, should secure oblivion for his misconduct as a lawyer. He, therefore, organised a force of four hundred Spaniards at San Sebastian de Uraba, and, setting out early in 1538, crossed the mountains of Abibe, and advanced up the valley of the Cauca.

Cieza de Leon, then in his nineteenth year, accompanied Vadillo in this bold adventure as a private soldier. It was now upwards of five years since he first landed in the new world, the whole of which time had been spent by him in severe and dangerous service in the province of Carthagená. At an age when most boys are at school, this lad had been sharing in all the hardships and perils of seasoned veterans; and even then he was gifted with powers of observation far beyond his years, as is proved by his very interesting account of the Indians of Uraba.¹ Amongst other things he tells us that the women of Uraba are the prettiest and most loveable of any that he had seen in the Indies.

The expedition of Vadillo was one of those desperate undertakings which, common as they were in the history of those times, still fill us with astonishment. Young Cieza de Leon took his share in the dangers and privations which were encountered, and which none but men endowed with extraordinary bravery and fortitude could have overcome.

After marching over a low forest covered plain, the

¹ See pages 35 to 40.

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explorers had to cross the mountains of Abibe, “where the roads were assuredly most difficult and wearisome, while the roots were such that they entangled the feet of both men and horses. At the highest part of the mountains there was a very laborious ascent, and a still more dangerous descent on the other side.” At this point many of the horses fell over the precipices and were dashed to pieces, and even some of the men were killed, while others were so much injured that they were left behind in the forests, awaiting their deaths in great misery. On one occasion our young soldier was posted as a sentry on the banks of a stream whence some kind of centipede dropped from a branch, and bit him in the neck. He adds that he passed the most painful and wearisome night he ever experienced in his life. At length Vadillo’s gallant little band completed their march over the terrible mountains of Abibe, and entered the pleasant valleys ruled by the cacique Nutibara. Thence the bold licentiate marched up the valley of the Cauca.

In this march the Spaniards suffered terribly from want of proper food, the difficulties of the road, and the constant attacks of the Indians. They clamoured for a retreat to the coast, but this did not suit the views of Vadillo, who knew that imprisonment probably awaited him at Carthagena; and, when the discontent of his men became formidable, he drew his sword and rushed alone into the woods, crying out that, let who would go back, he should press on till he met with better fortune. The troops were ashamed to desert him, and eventually they reached Cali, in

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the upper part of the Cauca valley. Here at length he was abandoned by all his followers, and went on almost alone to Popayan, whence he returned to Spain.¹

The followers of Vadillo joined those of Lorenzo de Aldana,² who was then governing Popayan for Pizarro, and many of them returned down the valley of the Cauca again with an officer named Jorge de Robledo, who was commissioned to conquer and settle the country discovered by Vadillo. Among this number was our author, who witnessed the subjugation of the cannibal tribes of the Cauca, the foundation of several so-called cities, and the perpetration of much cruelty. He received a *repartimiento* of Indians in the province of Arma, for his services. Robledo returned to Spain, and came back with the title of marshal, and the grant of the government of a country with ill-defined limits, in 1546. The fierce and unscrupulous Sebastian de Belalcazar was then governor of Popayan. He claimed the territory which Robledo had occupied, and when that officer refused to retire, he surprised him at a place called Picara on the 1st of October, 1546, took him prisoner, and hung him, in spite of the entreaties of the unfortunate knight to be beheaded like a gentleman.³ The cannibal Indians are said to have eaten the body. Cieza de Leon, who had served under Robledo for several years, makes the following remark on his death, in recapitulating the fate which overtook all the conquerors who were

¹ *Acosta, Descubrimiento de la Nueva Granada*, cap. xiv, p. 251.

² See note p. 123.

³ See p. 79, and note.

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cruel to the natives: "The marshal Don Jorge Robledo consented to allow great harm to be done to the Indians in the province of Pozo, and caused many to be killed with cross-bows and dogs. And God permitted that he should be sentenced to death in the same place, and have for his tomb the bellies of Indians."¹ Our young author joined the service of Belalcazar, on the death of Robledo.

Cieza de Leon began to write a journal of some kind, which formed the material for his future work, in the year 1541 at Cartago, in the Cauca valley, when serving under Robledo. He tells us that "as he noted the many great and strange things that are to be seen in this new world of the Indies, there came upon him a strong desire to write an account of some of them, as well those which he had seen with his own eyes, as those he had heard of from persons of good repute."² He was then twenty-two years of age, and from that time he seems to have persevered, in spite of many difficulties, in keeping a careful record of all he saw and heard. "Oftentimes," he says, "when the other soldiers were reposing, I was tiring myself by writing. Neither fatigue, nor the ruggedness of the country, nor the mountains and rivers, nor intolerable hunger and suffering, have ever been sufficient to obstruct my two duties, namely writing and following my flag and my captain without fault."³

In 1547 the President Gasca landed in Peru, and marched against Gonzalo Pizarro, who was in open rebellion at Cuzco. All loyal officers were called upon

¹ See p. 422.² Page 15.³ Page 3.

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to join the royal standard, and troops at Popayan were hurried south with this object. Cieza de Leon, now a stout young man at arms, was among them.¹ By this time he was a veteran of sixteen years service, with his intellect matured and sharpened in a rough and trying school, and every faculty on the alert. His habit of careful observation with a fixed object, and the practical life he was leading, render his remarks, on all he saw during this march, of the greatest value. Mr. Prescott says of him that "his testimony, always good, becomes for these events of more than usual value."² The reinforcements from Popayan marched by Pasto and Quito to Tumebamba, then down to the sea-shore, and along the coast to Lima, then across the Andes again, by Xauxa and Guamanga, until they joined the army of the president Gasca in the valley of Andahuaylas.

Thus Cieza de Leon had the opportunity of seeing a very extensive and varied tract of country. Nothing escaped his observation. The ruins of palaces and store-houses, the great Ynca roads, the nature of the country, the products, the natural phenomena, the method of irrigation, the traditions,—all were carefully noted down by this indefatigable and intelligent young observer. He was present at the final rout of Gonzalo Pizarro, and at the subsequent trial and execution of that chief, and of his fierce old lieutenant Carbajal.³ He afterwards went to Cuzco, and to the valleys to the eastward, and, in the year 1549, he

¹ Page 151.² *Conquest of Peru*, ii, p. 365, (note).³ Page 362.

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undertook a journey to the silver-yielding province of Charcas, with the sole object "of learning all that was worthy of notice,"¹ under the special auspices of the President Gasca himself, who supplied him with letters of introduction. In travelling over the Collao, and along the shores of lake Titicaca, he tells us that "he stopped to write all that deserved mention concerning the Indians;"² and at Tiahuanaco "he wandered over all the ruins, writing down what he saw."³ He then visited the silver mines of Porco and Potosi, and returned to Lima, by way of Arequipa and the coast. At Lima our author finished writing his notes on the 8th of September, 1550, and sailed for Spain, after having passed seventeen years of his life in the Indies.

The first part of his intended work was published at Seville in 1553; and the author died in about 1560. We may gather from his writings that he was humane and generous in his dealings with the Indians, indignant at the acts of cruelty and oppression which he was forced to witness, that he was in the habit of weighing the value of conflicting evidence in collecting his information,⁴ and that fuller reliance may be placed on his statements, than upon those of almost any other writer of the period. It is very much to be regretted that so little is known of the life of this remarkable man, beyond what he incidentally tells us himself.⁵

¹ Page 339. ² Page 364. ³ Page 376. ⁴ See p. 177.

⁵ The fullest biographical notice of Cieza de Leon is to be found in Antonio, and is as follows:—

"Petrus Cieza de Leon (patria an dumtaxat domicilio incolatave Hispalensis) tredecim fere annorum puer ad occidentales