

# Winter of the Metal People

## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

This is a true story. Its foundation is in the few known Spanish chronicles, but this book goes further by filling the gaps in the historical record that resulted from Pueblo Indians not recording their perspective. This book presents both sides for the Coronado expedition and the Tiguex War.

This second edition is in response to concerns of serious readers of history that the first edition did not include references for the book's years of research. At the end of this edition are endnotes with references to sources, historical background for this relatively unknown period in the Southwest, and explanations of unfamiliar terms and conditions in the sixteenth century.

It struck me in my research how different our traditionalist history would be if over the past five centuries native people of the Americas had written their perspective alongside that of Europeans.

To simulate this, I have blended the recitation of dates and events of a history book with the drama of a historical novel, while also keeping the reliability of historical facts. It was the only way to bring to life the unrecorded Pueblo Indian experience.

Certain techniques such as dialogue normally associated with the novel form have been used, but not at the expense of historical integrity. Quotations are either word for word from documents, paraphrased from what was recorded, or can be logically presumed about what an individual had to have said or thought at the time.

A history written by Indians would elevate this book's Xauían, Bigotes, and Turk to a pantheon of heroes. As an example, an exhibit at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque referred to Turk in the following way: "We [Puebloans] were able to find a man to steer [Coronado's expeditionaries] to Kansas to search for gold and riches, but they soon realized that these could not be found, so they killed our friend." Instead of being heroes, Spanish records and traditionalist history depict these three indigenous patriots as treacherous villains.

The actual names are not known for two Indians whom Spaniards referred to as Bigotes and Turk. As for Xauían, when he is remembered at all, he's almost always referred to with the incongruous nickname the Spanish gave him of Juan Alemán, which translates to *John the German*. Other Indian characters are composites made necessary by the lack of records from both Puebloans and Spaniards, but Puebloan names are authentic for the period. The Spaniards' deliberate gaps in the record of events are filled with plausible narrative.

All Spaniards and other Europeans in the book actually accompanied Coronado, and what they did and said are based on what can be gleaned from Spanish chronicles, with every expedition member having actually lived the role in which he or she is portrayed. Many details do not exist in the best-known and usual source, George Parker Winship's translation of Castañeda's *The Journey of Coronado*, which is problematic for its Eurocentrism, omissions, and mistakes. Therefore, additional details are included from other sources and from testimonies by expedition members in the 1544 investigation of war crime charges brought against Coronado in Mexico City.

The efforts of Xauían, the Tiwa from the pueblo known as Ghufoor; Bigotes, a leader of Pecos; and Turk, a captive Pawnee from the Great Plains, are three major reasons the Coronado

expedition failed to establish a foothold in the American Southwest. Those men, plus the Indian leaders in the 1541–42 guerrilla warfare represented by the composite character of Poquis, frustrated the Spaniards' first conquest effort in the American Southwest.

—Dennis Herrick  
Tiguex Province near Albuquerque, 2017

## PROLOGUE

Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza, Spain's administrator in Mexico City, won the king's permission in 1540 to explore north of Mexico. He decided Spanish conquest should be more restrained than in previous expeditions.

Despite his opulent lifestyle, Mendoza was more enlightened than most Spaniards in the "New Spain" of the Americas. He also was coming under pressure to be less rapacious for the following reasons:

- \* Citizens of Spain, gradually being made aware of the atrocities being committed by colonists and conquistadors across the ocean, were appalled at the deaths of millions of Indians through disease and violence in such a short period.

- \* Spain's king, Carlos I, who also ruled as Holy Roman Emperor Carlos V, still wanted the New World's gold but wanted it taken with less brutality.

- \* Pope Paul III declared in 1537 that the Indians were humans who had souls. He declared as a point of Catholic doctrine that they should not be enslaved or dealt with violently.

- \* Bartolomé de las Casas, a Dominican friar, had worked tirelessly in defense of Indian rights and for their peaceful conversion to Catholicism. By the 1530s, he had become a man to be reckoned with because of friends in the king's court and in the Vatican.

In this context, Mendoza set out to determine the truth of rumors that great wealth could be found to the north, where Friar Marcos de Niza reported discovering what he termed Cibola.

Viceroy Mendoza launched a two-pronged invasion into the unknown land north of Mexico, sending enough force to conquer if necessary. For the first time, however, he also issued orders that Indians were to be treated humanely.

By water went Hernando de Alarcón. He would sail a fleet of ships up the Sea of Cortés, now known as the Gulf of California, to the turbulent mouth of the Colorado River, which Spaniards then called the *Río de Tizon*. Alarcón then proceeded up the river in boats, passing between what would become the states of Arizona and California.

By land, Mendoza sent a twenty-nine-year-old named Francisco Vázquez de Coronado with almost four hundred European men-at-arms and about two thousand Mexican Indian allies, mostly Aztec and Tarascan warriors. The expedition took thousands of horses, mules, cattle, and sheep. They would travel up the Mexican coast, cross the Sierra Madre Mountains, and head up the valley of the San Pedro River.

With an advance group so he could travel faster, Coronado entered today's southeast Arizona about twenty miles southwest of present-day Bisbee. The main force with livestock was weeks behind him. The Spaniards would arrive in what is now the U.S. almost half a century before the first English colonists would land at Roanoke, Virginia, and eighty years before the Pilgrims reached Plymouth Rock.

Alarcón's intent was to ferry goods to resupply Coronado. Alarcón soon learned that Coronado's destination of Cibola in today's New Mexico was forty days travel across a forbidding desert landscape and thus too far for resupply.

Although Alarcón wouldn't find out until later, Coronado had already attacked the first town of Cibolans, who are known today as Zuni Indians. Alarcon was surprised that it took only a few days for news of an attack against Hawikku to travel 360 miles to near today's

Yuma, Arizona.

Alarcón had greeted and left the Colorado River Indians in peace. Coronado would embroil the Indians near and along the Rio Grande in a merciless war near present-day Albuquerque, New Mexico.

No one could know then that Coronado would do nothing of note for the rest of his short life. But he would win fame with this single invasion. History has forgotten the names of all but one of the Natives he would wage war against, even though history has remembered him.

Coronado has become a heroic figure to many present-day Americans who know almost nothing about the man—and what they do know is more myth than fact.

As for the Puebloans who Coronado fought in America's first named Indian war, this is the first time their story has been told.

## PART I — INVASION June to September 1540

An excerpt from the orders of January 6, 1540, by Spanish Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza appointing Francisco Vázquez de Coronado to lead the first armed expedition north of Mexico:

*“God, our Lord, had been pleased that there be discovered in our times such great lands [to the north], where His Holy Name might be known and worshipped and His Holy Faith and Catholic Church enlarged and our royal patrimony increased. ...[The viceroy] would send ecclesiastics...to go to the aforesaid lands to preach and proclaim the Holy Gospel and to attract and convert the natives to the brotherhood of the Catholic Church. And then they would recognize and take us as their king and natural lord. ...We name you*

*once again as captain general of the company which is now on its way. ...to reconnoiter and pacify lands and new provinces. ...to attract its natives to the knowledge of our Holy Catholic Faith and to place it under our royal crown. ...You may protect and defend those [lands] in our royal name, and their natives so that harm is not done to them nor any other abuse.”*

1

Hundreds of miles from the approaching invasion and a few days travel east from Hawikku, a village of Zuni trading partners, a young Tiwa warrior named Poquis relaxed on a high ridge overlooking the valley of the desert river. He knew it in his language as Big River.

From his vantage point, black boulders lay jumbled down a long ridge overlooking Big River, which flowed in curves between its cottonwood-lined banks through the desert.

Poquis wore a cotton loincloth he had woven, tied at each hip with tassels. A short deerskin shirt covered his torso. His mate, Panpahlu, had made his deerskin moccasins that reached to the knees to protect against cactus spines and shrubs. He had wound a dark blue cotton band around his head. It held two eagle feathers in his shoulder-length black hair.

Father Sun warmed Poquis with its life force as he listened to the old priest, Turshán, chanting prayers of their ancient religion among the rocks below. Poquis lay halfway down the ridge's east slope. On the other side, an expanse of bunch-grass prairie extended west as far as a man could walk in two days before fragmenting among cliffs and mesas. He turned his face to the east toward forested peaks of mountains beyond the river.

Poquis, four other warriors, and the Tiwa priest had walked for a day to reach this unusual place. Here, religious images were pecked with pointed stones into the black boulders. Along the top of the ridge were six cones of burned rock opening into the inner world from which the

ancestors had emerged. The sacred cones rose high above the river valley.

Turshán's cry of alarm snapped Poquis's reverie. Even as Poquis leaped to his feet, he heard a club thud against the priest's head. Poquis had not realized four men from the wandering tribes of the desert and mountains had crept forward. Now he could see them below where they gathered around the prostrate Tiwa priest. Poquis snatched his stone-headed club from his cotton-sash belt. He bounded down the boulders and dropped into their midst with a shout. He struck one man in the head with his club, but the remaining three swarmed around him. One gave a shocking blow with his club to Poquis's back. Poquis grabbed the nearest enemy and pulled him down. Each fought for advantage as they rolled down the desert slope in puffs of dust. The other two ran after them in a rage. Poquis leaped to his feet still holding his club and faced the three enemies.

They began circling him like wolves. One brandished a wood club and the other a black obsidian knife. The third man, who had lost his weapon in the tumble down the slope, looked for a chance to grab Poquis. The enemies shouted threats at Poquis as they maneuvered around him. Poquis turned, nowhere to go, parrying the thrusts of their weapons with his club.

The unarmed warrior managed to grab Poquis from behind. Poquis spun out of the man's grasp as another enemy leaped forward and swung a club, missing him. Poquis dodged his three circling opponents, keeping them at bay with swings of his club. Knife-Wielder reached in, quick as a rattlesnake's strike, and slashed Poquis's left side below his shirt. Poquis felt warm blood running down his side and leg. The unarmed warrior grabbed him again from behind, and Head-Pounder lunged toward him with his club raised. But the attacker jerked to a stop at the sound of arrows whizzing past the group. Poquis wrested himself free. All three enemy warriors jumped apart as more arrows flew toward them like diving hawks.

Poquis looked up to see his friend Ishpanyan and the other three in the priest's guard shooting arrows as they scrambled down the rocky hillside toward them. The enemies fled toward the river and rock-cliff mountains in the distance, zigzagging to avoid the arrows. Poquis watched them go while clutching his side to stop the knife wound's bleeding.

Ishpanyan ran to Poquis. He pulled off Poquis's headband to stop the flow of blood. He pressed it onto the cut, which was shallow but longer than a man's hand.

The others stayed higher by the unconscious priest, yelling taunts as the enemy ran out of arrow range. They would wait before striking their bows against the enemy warrior Poquis had slain. They would let Poquis strike first, forming their brotherhood for an honor dance upon return to their Tiwa village of Ghufloor in the Tigux homeland.

## 2

Two months before Alarcón's ships reached the *Río de Tizon*, Coronado was already plodding up a desert river valley with his advance force of seventy-five lancers on horseback, thirty men on foot with arquebus muskets, crossbows, and swords, and hundreds of Mexican Indian warriors. The main force was traveling many weeks behind.

The advance force's leading men emerged from a cloud of sand. A strong, hot wind shifted from behind and blew from the side, clearing the air so they could come into view. A fifteen-year-old boy was riding a borrowed brown horse and carrying the staff from which fluttered a large banner. Beardless, unlike most, he wore a cotton shirt with his sweltering, thick elk-hide jacket lying in front of him across his saddle. He also wore striped brown cotton pants puffed out on his thighs with tight pantlegs. He couldn't stop coughing.

The banner pictured Viceroy Mendoza's coat of arms on one side and an image of the



Virgin Mary and Christ child on the other.

Francisco Vázquez de Coronado turned his gray horse toward the boy and pulled alongside. His metal armor carried on a pack mule behind him glowed yellow with a coating of gold leaf, which proclaimed his wealth and influence in being named captain general of this first foray into the unknown lands north of Mexico in 1540.

“Are you well, Alonso?” Coronado’s brow wrinkled with his concern. The boy had been his page in Mexico, where Coronado had ruled as governor of the Province of New Galacia. Alonso Álvarez had become like a much a younger brother to him—at least as much as a peasant boy could be. Coronado had appointed Alonso the expedition’s standard-bearer.

The boy hacked some more before he could catch his breath to reply in Castilian Spanish. “Yes, my lord. The dust is out of my lungs now.” He swept his hand to his mouth and coughed six more times.

Coronado laughed and batted sand out of his long and pointed black goatee.

Alonso shifted in his saddle and raised his banner a little higher. He looked forward across the desert that rolled on as far as he could see toward mountains blue in the distance. “How much farther must we go?”

“We are at the edge of the wilderness. Captains Melchior Díaz and Juan de Zaldívar spent last winter at an Indian ruin our Aztec friends call Chichilticale. The captains said it is two or three days travel from here. No man knows how much farther it is to Cíbola. Not even Friar Marcos is sure, even though he said he was there last year.”

“How many times has he gotten us lost already, my lord, guiding us this far? I am starting to wonder if he ever saw the Seven Cities as he says.”

Coronado wiped the sweat from his forehead with a cloth he carried for that purpose in the

early summer heat. “We will see.” He pulled his horse’s reins to the side to return more to the vanguard’s center and looked back at Alonso. “I have been wondering the same thing,” he said before riding off.

Coronado had pushed this advance force ahead of the main expedition because he was eager to find the Seven Cities of Cibola. The expeditionaries’ naiveté had already elevated the reported Indian towns to being the fabled Seven Cities of Antilia sprung from centuries of Spanish legend, which would be rich in China’s silks, spices, porcelain, and dyes.

He and many others had staked their families’ fortunes on the reports Friar Marcos had brought back a year earlier. The friar was said to have reported there were Indian cities shining with gold in the sunlight, just like Coronado’s armor. Windows were made of silver. There were natives with riches beyond belief, so plentiful that they could, as forced laborers, serve the *encomienda* estates that could make their Spanish owners even richer than those who brought back gold and silver.

Such incredible riches had already been found in conquering the Aztecs at Mexico City and in the war still going on against Incas in Peru. Why not to the north as well?

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