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A Muted Legacy: O'odham Encounters with the Coronado Expedition

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Abstract
Archaeological research related to the Coronado expedition of 1539–42 in southern Arizona is revealing evidence that has substantial implications for our understanding of the regional Natives, specifically the Sobaipuri O'odham. Most researchers have thought that these earliest Europeans encountered, described, and stayed among the Ópata, but new research is beginning to provide insights into the role the relatively unknown O'odham played in the outcome of this earliest period of intercultural contact. For a century now the consensus has been that the trail descended the San Pedro River in Arizona, having proceeded up the Río Sonora in Mexico. In this reconstruction, the expedition somehow avoided the Sobaipuri O'odham settlements. Yet, evidence for the route has been found farther west, and proceeds northeast through the heart of O'odham territory. Evidence of 12 Coronado expedition sites in Arizona demonstrate that the expedition trail went through areas with the most important and highest densities of Sobaipuri O'odham occupation. Marcos de Niza visited these residents and then, late in 1539 the Díaz-Zaldívar reconnaissance camped for an extended period in the area of one of the highest density distributions of Sobaipuri O'odham village sites. The Sobaipuri O'odham attacked both this place called Chichilticale and a later (1541) Spanish townsite, San Geronimo III/Suya established in their homeland. This is just one of the ways the Sobaipuri O'odham had an impact on the expedition.

Keywords Sobaipuri O'odham · Coronado Expedition · Indigenous battles · First European contact · Cíbola · Zuni · Chichilticale · San Geronimo III · Suya

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Recent archaeological findings related to the Francisco Vázquez de Coronado Expedition of 1539–42 in southern Arizona are beginning to reveal substantial implications for our understanding of regional and national history. This is the first European expedition into the American Southwest and so represents the first contact between regional Natives and these foreign disruptors and would-be conquistadors. Revelations related to the Native populations of the area, specifically the O'odham, are perhaps some of the most noteworthy. It is they, not the Ópata, who were the first in the American Southwest/Mexican Northwest to face the earliest Europeans and endure the consequences of this series of first encounters. This finding is revelatory in that the O'odham are relatively unknown nationally and internationally and most past researchers have assumed the expedition and reconnaissance passed through the Ópatería farther east (but see Bandelier (1890:133, 1929:35-36), Hodge (1895:230-231), and Undreiner 1947). This new research is beginning to provide insights into the role the O'odham played in the outcome of this earliest period of intercultural contact.

Until now understandings have been that the O'odham were unimportant in the unfolding of regional history, and in relation to the Coronado Expedition, specifically. For a century now the consensus has been that the trail descended the San Pedro River in Arizona, having proceeded up the Río Sonora in Mexico. In this reconstruction, the expedition somehow avoided the Sobaipuri O'odham settlements or interacted with these people in a nominal way, at least, that is, after Fray Marcos de Niza's reconnaissance. Yet, to the surprise of most, evidence for the route has been found farther west, in the Santa Cruz River Valley in what is now the United States (Fig. 1). This first-discovered site is at a Sobaipuri O'odham village. It is large (1 km long) and has produced evidence consistent with it being the place called San Geronimo III and Suya in the documentary record (Seymour 2022a, b, 2023a). Scholars had believed that the place that is referred to as San Geronimo III in the Suya Valley was located farther south, in Sonora, Mexico. Yet, the discovery of the *villa* (townsite) of the third placement of San Geronimo in Arizona on the Santa Cruz River near the international border, at a Sobaipuri village, demonstrates unequivocally that this encounter was impactful and persistent for the O'odham.

Coronado Expedition archaeological site distributions indicate that the route then proceeded east/northeast, continuing through the heart of Sobaipuri O'odham territory. Finding expedition sites when following along with Juan Jaramillo's (1560) account, the expedition then encountered the San Pedro River some 96.5 km (60 mi) north of the headwaters. Participants of the earlier Díaz-Zaldívar reconnaissance camped for an extended period within an area with one of the highest density distributions of Sobaipuri O'odham sites, some of which have been chronometrically dated to the Coronado era. An extensive array of Coronado-expedition period artifacts and features at this locale along the San Pedro River are of a nature, distribution, and density to be consistent with the two-month 1539–40 winter camp of Melchior Díaz at Chichilticale (Seymour 2025). This large, 1.25-km-long camp is situated at the north edge of documented Sobaipuri O'odham villages on the middle San Pedro River, consistent with the content of one of the documentary accounts. How could this not be impactful!

Evidence of 12 Coronado Expedition sites in Arizona demonstrates that the expedition trail went through areas with the most important and highest densities

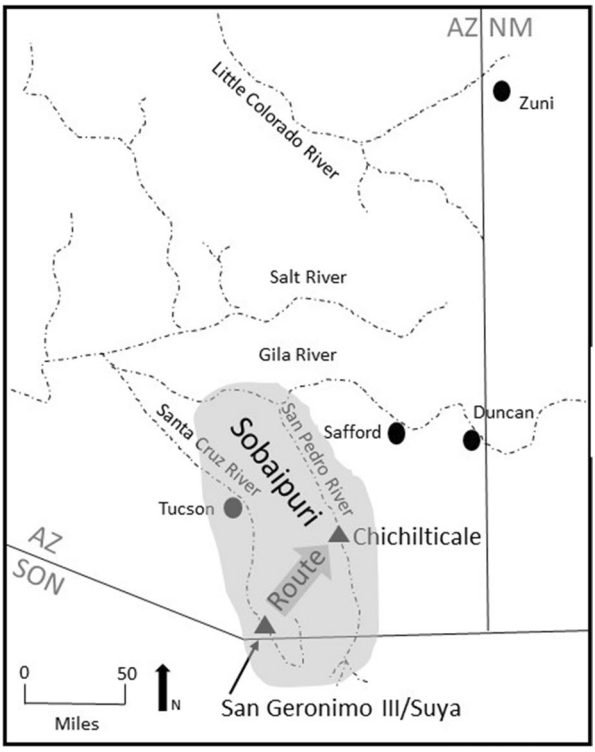

Fig. 1 General placement of the Coronado expedition route through southeastern Arizona between San Geronimo III/Suya and Chichilticale. Image by Deni Seymour

of Sobaipuri O'odham occupation as the Europeans rested at overnight camps and then established a long-term camp and a townsite (Seymour 1989, 1990, 2011a, b, 2022b). They were also seemingly greeted by the Jocome whose gifts as gestures of hospitality were undervalued (Seymour 2009a, b, 2016). As they crossed into the wilderness beyond the Sobaipuri O'odham they were told by the resident ancestral Chiricahua Apache the name attached to that place, chích'il tū hálı̨ı̨, Oak Spring, heard as Chichilticale by Nahuatl speakers (Seymour 2009a, 2023b, 2025). These understandings of Native populations at the points and times of contact rely on four decades of archaeological research in these specific areas where Coronado encampments have now been found (Seymour 1989, 1990, 2011a, b, c, 2014, 2015a, 2016, 2022a; Seymour and Sugnet 2016). Even before these Coronado expedition finds, this earlier research had substantially modified our reconstructions of the sequence and character of occupation within the Sobaipuri O'odham homeland. Among the results are chronometric dates that have established a greater temporal depth for the O'odham, Apache, and Jocome than many had argued, demonstrating a presence centuries earlier than the advent of European exploration.

Long-term cumulative field research, coupled with new translations and new interpretations of the meanings of the earliest documentary sources, have allowed a detailed rendering of a Coronado-expedition-specific research plan. Implementation of this research design led to accurate and precise predictions as to where the next Coronado expedition sites would be. The effectiveness of the predictive

model was borne out in the discovery of Coronado-period sites where the expedition encountered the San Pedro, where they crossed the river, and where a ruined roofless house was located (called *Chichilticale*, aka red house), and, thus, where Díaz's 1539–1540 winter camp would be found (Seymour 2025). The accuracy of these predictions demonstrates a depth and correctness of understanding of archaeological site distributions, landscape use, terrain variations, and river characteristics. These results are especially pertinent when knowing that before July 2020 no genuine Coronado expedition sites were known in Arizona. The ability to predict the next camp site along the trail also conveys insights into the chroniclers' meaning, especially, how Jaramillo and Díaz, but also Castañeda, Coronado, and Fray Marcos, were perceiving the landscape and its occupants (Seymour 2025).

The significant impact on the Sobaipuri O'odham at this early time is paralleled by the impact of the Sobaipuri O'odham on the expedition. This is apparent with respect to route alignments, for example, where the Spaniards went and realignments of the route that are inferred to relate to the presence and actions of the antagonistic Sobaipuri O'odham. Intercultural relations also impacted Coronado's ability to obtain much needed resources at Chichilticale in June of 1540 before entering the last long wilderness. This in turn led to the death of expedition members and also to a level of desperation that prompted the expedition to immediately attack Hawikku at Zuni/Cíbola, New Mexico for want of food. The expedition was terminated shortly after news of the late 1541 attack on the Spanish townsite of San Geronimo III (our first discovered site) by the Sobaipuri O'odham. The unwelcoming manner and hostile actions of the Sobaipuri O'odham were also likely among the reasons for the Spanish decision not to reestablish San Geronimo (IV), a new townsite, 30 leagues closer to Cíbola near Sonoita/Elgin in the heart of the Sobaipuri O'odham homeland. This research conveys new understandings of the influential role of the O'odham in shaping history. The new narrative that is unfolding extracts from the data the changing nature of *Tierra Nueva*, a portion of which would become the American Southwest, as it relates to the O'odham during the initial period of European contact.

Background

Some of the modern-day descendants of the people encountered by the Coronado Expedition in what is now Arizona, including Fray Marcos de Niza and Melchior Díaz, both in the year that preceded Coronado's entry, currently reside at the Wa:k O'odham community at San Xavier del Bac and in other locations on and off the modern Tohono O'odham Nation. Historically, the O'odham were characterized by many different communities with a range of different lifeways (Seymour 2011a, 2014, 2015a, 2022a; Seymour et al. 2021). Extensive archaeological, ethnographic, and ethnohistoric research along with oral historic documentation have shown that the Sobaipuri were actually a subset of the Akimel or River O'odham, also known as the Pima, although they are not recognized as such today owing to modern political subdivisions (Seymour et al. 2021; also see Fontana 1993; Seymour 2022a). In recent times their community was subsumed by the Tohono O'odham Nation.

The Tohono O'odham, meaning Desert People, had a different occupational pattern than the River People. As one of several elders within the Wa:k community said regarding the Sobaipuri ancestors and her community:

> they will be sort of Akimel O'odham, like the Salt River People that are called Akimel O'odham because they live along the river. And somebody had mentioned, many, many years ago that that we were part of, we should have been part of being called the Akimel People because the Santa Cruz River runs by our village. So, I don't know how we ended up being... they just included us with the Tohono O'odham (Geraldine Encinas, archived interview video 11/1/2017; Seymour 2018, 2021; Seymour et al. 2021).

The Sobaipuri O'odham were riverside farmers who mastered irrigation agriculture, which allowed them to reside in one place for years. Their infrastructural improvements of canals and fields tethered them to certain segments of a river where water was reliably on the surface, places that were not marshy, but had a sufficiently wide floodplain to farm the bottomlands (Seymour 2011a, 2020a; Seymour and Rodriguez 2020). Their villages were situated with a consistency that allows for predictions as to their placement, regularly choosing locations with the most reliable perennial surface water (Seymour 2011a, b, 2014, 2020a, b, 2022a; Seymour and Rodriguez 2020). Their communities consisted of one village or clusters of village sites along specific river valley segments.

These riverside farmers occupied permanent year-round settlements constituted of planned and formal housing arrangements. Households consisted of two closely spaced domed, elongated structures, made of flexible branches that were covered with reed mats and insulated with mud, augmented with sand and gravel. Their formally laid-out villages (variously referred to as rancherías and pueblos in the historic period; see Seymour 2011a, 2022a for a discussion of the distinction) occupied mainly the terrace margins, sometimes the elevated portions of old floodplains, of all the main rivers and tributaries in what is now southeastern Arizona and portions of northwestern Sonora (Seymour 2011a, 2022a). Thus, it is no wonder that the Coronado Expedition passed through their villages, tapped their resources, and attempted to save their souls while compelling their labor. There were no denser populations, more permanent settlements, reliable water sources, and productive fields along this portion of the route than was found within the Sobaipuri O'odham homeland.

These people were some of the best warriors in the region, despite later historical and modern characterization of them as peaceful and docile. This idealized cultural conception is likely a result of colonialism (Seymour 2023a). In the earliest of historic times, both during the era in which the Coronado Expedition entered the region and again when Father Kino visited in the 1690s, the Sobaipuri were known as fierce warriors. They were so fierce, in fact, that the Apache and their allies sued for peace at two presidios after a consequential battle in 1698, wherein over 70% of the attacking force was killed. As a condition of surrender, they demanded that the Spaniards protect them against the Sobaipuri (Seymour 2014). Both the historical record and oral historic information from O'odham community members indicate that the name Sobaipuri derives from a similar sounding O'odham term that relates to their fierceness or enemy-like nature, having lived on the frontier with the enemy

(Seymour 2014, 2018). This traditional knowledge rings true, both with respect to aspects of the historical record, and also in light of the outcome of two battles now recorded on Coronado Expedition sites, as is discussed below.

When my research began, in the mid-1980s, only a handful of Sobaipuri O'odham sites were known (see Harlan and Seymour 2017:175, 186n2; Seymour 2011a, 2022a:6). After four decades of research on the Sobaipuri O'odham I have now documented over 110 Sobaipuri O'odham sites on the major rivers and their tributaries in southeastern Arizona. These sites have been mapped and described and chronometric samples have been collected and analyzed from most of them (Seymour 1990, 2011a, b, c, 2015a, 2022a, c; Seymour and Sugnet 2016). Excavations have taken place at some of them so as to understand more about their lifeway, culture, and the temporal span of the manifestation archaeologists refer to as Sobaipuri (Seymour 1990, 2011a, c, d, 2014, 2022a; Seymour and Sugnet 2016).

The Wa:k O'odham community became involved in the Sobaipuri O'odham research effort beginning in 2007. Once this program was initiated, community members contributed information while I shared archaeological, historical, and ethnographic data with them. The resulting research group, variably referred to as the Sobaipuri O'odham Heritage Research Project and the Wa:k O'odham Ethnographic Team, has been operating for almost two decades. This program combines information from a variety of sources to understand and share the early story of the Sobaipuri. As team and Wa:k community member David Tenario (March 26, 2024) stated:

> For us it's really important to reconnect to our past, because it was almost lost. Speaking with other community members there's a sense of pride now for bringing it back. And they want to hear more from us, so we're going to continue with our research.

The other team member, Wa:k O'odham elder Tony Burrell (January 27, 2024), commented:

> Without Deni's research we would not have known about a lot of this. Some people in our community knew their connection to the Sobaipuri, but many community members did not. Our Sobaipuri heritage was almost lost.

Yet, until this current discovery of portions of the Coronado route, the earliest record of and first impactful contact with Europeans was not part of the story. In a statement specific to the Coronado expedition research and the Suya site, Burrell (January 6, 2023) stated:

> Being here means a lot to me, being here where the Sobaipuri O'odham lived, and where they have always lived. And they were here before the Spaniards came.
>
> I've been out here a lot of times and every time I hear it, I pick up something new. I'm glad that these young people came out here, the elders. And it's great to see people from our community. As I mentioned our history was almost lost, and rather than read about it, is to come out here and see what it looked

> like, and feel what the weather is like, and see how people, our ancestors lived out here and how they felt.

With regard to the on-going Coronado expedition research San Xavier District Chairman Austin Nunez (April 14, 2022) commented:

> I believe now that we have an opportunity to put forth the proper history because now, we have a voice in how the history will be written. Because in the beginning, we never had a say, it was all one-sided. And in this case, it was purely from the Spaniards and what they wrote about. And, of course, it was their views and didn't include our views, so we need to change all of that."

Former Chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation, Ned Norris, Jr. (April 14, 2002) recognized the value of this research to the Nation as a whole:

> The O'odham piece of what you've discovered here, I think is very…, it's exciting for me to hear you say that, but then how willing, are your peers willing to accept that. We, the O'odham, have to understand that with that comes a responsibility, comes an obligation. We are going to need to make sure that our current day membership and the membership yet to come know and understand that. We're going to get critics. You already have your critics. You've already identified who they are and they are going to do what they can to try and discredit what you have been able to determine.

Nothing truer has been stated than Norris' final comment. Nonetheless, the O'odham are fully engaged in this research because it changes the story that can be told of the region and their heritage in such a fundamental way.

Contemporaneous with the Hernando de Soto expedition in the Southeast, the Coronado Expedition was led north into *Tierra Nueva* in 1540 by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado y Luján. The year before, Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza sent Fray Marcos de Niza on a reconnaissance, during which he passed through Sobaipuri O'odham territory in April and early May of 1539. Esteban led the way, following hundreds of Native guides, including Sobaipuri O'odham from the San Pedro, days in advance of Fray Marcos. A sizable number of Native porters accompanied Fray Marcos, and many Sobaipuri O'odham from the Chichilticale area escorted him to Cíbola/Zuni.

Melchior Díaz, *alcalde mayor* of San Miguel de Culiacán was sent north by Viceroy Mendoza to verify the findings of Fray Marcos' reconnaissance. He, with Captain Juan de Zaldívar and 16 horsemen, moved north on November 17, 1539 (Flint and Flint 2005:235; compare to Flint and Flint 2019:85). Later both Zaldívar and Castañeda told us that this reconnaissance was stopped at Chichilticale because of excessive cold and heavy snow farther along the route (see Flint 2002:253–254; Flint and Flint 2005:391). They arrived at Chichilticale in mid-December 1539 and stayed within O'odham territory for around two months. The large Coronado Expedition encampment recently discovered along the San Pedro River is consistent with expectations for a two-month stay and so is inferred to be Diaz's 1539–40 winter camp at Chichilticale (Seymour 2025). As Díaz and Zaldívar returned south they brought news of hostile residents, few exploitable resources, and insufficiently dense populations from which to extract tribute and labor. Nonetheless, even without this

critical knowledge of the north, 29-year-old Francisco Vázquez, now known as Coronado, had already set out. With him were nearly 367 Europeans and 1,300 to 2,000 Indigenous Mexican warriors (Flint and Flint 2019:3, 128). There were also support people, including slaves, interpreters, guides, and domestic servants forming an expeditionary force of around 2,800 participants (Flint and Flint 2019:143, 154, 231, 250). Coronado advanced with about 50 to 75 horsemen and 30 footmen along with assistants and *Indios Amigos*, forming a company of perhaps several hundred. The main body of the expedition set out within 15 days, but ultimately followed months behind with more than a thousand horses and mules as well as thousands of cattle, pigs, sheep, and rams.

Coronado left Culiacán, then at the edge of Spanish settlement, on April 22, 1540 (Flint and Flint 2005:254). The failed expedition into *Tierra Nueva* withdrew in April 1542. There were lasting effects for both the Spaniards and the Sobaipuri O'odham.

Encounters with the O'odham

The discovery of the first Coronado expedition site in Arizona anchored the expedition's route in geographic space. This first site had been the long-sought-after linchpin that would allow more precisely focused interpretation of documentary content, which in turn, would allow on-the-ground hypothesis testing regarding encampment placement along various route options. This procedure has resulted in the discovery of 12 Coronado expedition sites in Arizona so far, most within the former territory of the Sobaipuri O'odham. This also allowed us to check and then rule out other route options, which is always an important part of the process. While archaeological evidence is demonstrating that there was more than one route, the evidence is found only along narrow corridors of each of these route possibilities, allowing us to rule out several other alternatives. Equally important, the ability to place the townsite of San Geronimo III along the southernmost reaches of the Arizona portion of the Santa Cruz River not far from Nogales clarified that there were far-reaching implications for earlier-than-considered contact between Europeans and O'odham. This section discusses these encounters up to and including the final battle at San Geronimo III in late 1541 that was a contributing factor in the termination of the expedition. Later encounters, including with the Francisco de Ibarra expedition, are reserved for another article.

Earliest Pre-Coronado Encounters: Cortés, Cabeza de Vaca, and Los Corazones

The townsite of San Geronimo III at Suya is much further north and west than most scholars have thought, which prompts consideration of a northwestward shift of the place called Los Corazones (aka San Gerónimo de los Corazones, or San Geronimo I) in Sonora, Mexico. This would situate it within or near O'odham territory. While Los Corazones has not been identified archaeologically, its league distance relative to San Geronimo III is known from the documents (50 leagues or 150 mi [240 km];

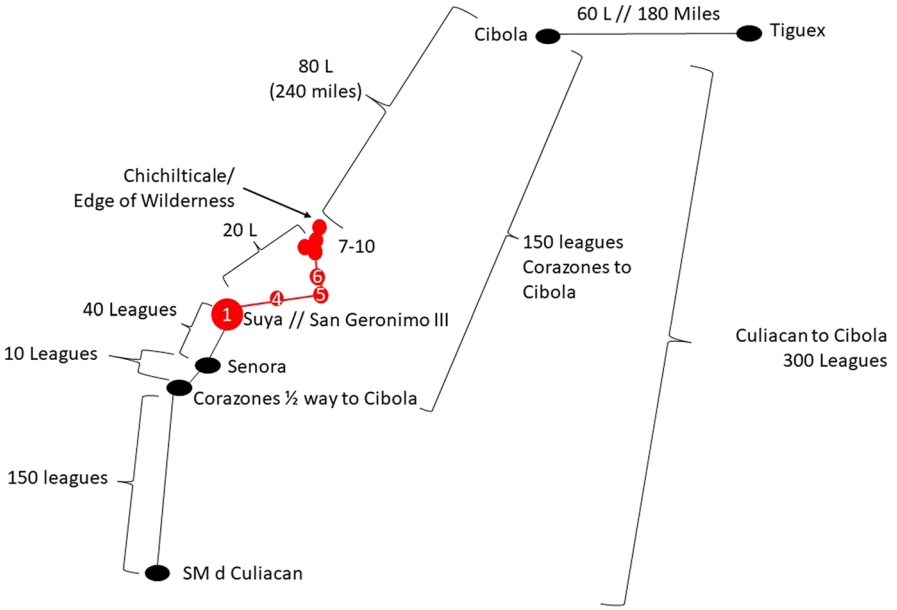

Fig. 2 The documentary record provides impressively accurate league distances. Carefully analyzed, these were used as one of many lines of evidence to locate additional expedition camp sites, including Chichilticale. Image by Deni Seymour

Fig. 2). The general distance of Los Corazones to the coast is also known to have been five days (or about 17 leagues, 50 or so mi [80 km]; Coronado to the Viceroy, 1540; Flint and Flint 2005:255). Customarily, Los Corazones has been placed in the Ures area of Río Sonora Valley, but the league distance from Ures to the coast is too great (100 mi [160 km]) to accommodate documentary content without either manipulation of the league-to-mile ratios or assuming a longer distance traversed each day than occurred along most other portions of the trail. Knowing these two distance factors allows us to tentatively triangulate the potential location of Corazones, and when we do it falls in or at the boundary of O'odham distribution as it is inferred to have been at this time.

Cabeza de Vaca

Los Corazones is important to this issue of O'odham contact because it was visited by Álvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca's party, demonstrating European visitation in this northern zone no later than 1536. Cabeza de Vaca, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, Andrés Dorantes, and his Black Moorish slave, Esteban de Dorantes, were the sole survivors of the Pánfilo de Narváez expedition that shipwrecked in 1528 in Florida. We are told Corazones [hearts] received this name by the Spaniards at this time:

> In the town where the emeralds were presented to us the people gave Dorantes over six hundred open hearts of deer. They ever keep a good supply of them

> for food, and we called the place Pueblo de los Corazones (Hodge and Lewis 1990[1907]:108).

Later, there is an intersection of the routes of Cabeza de Vaca and the Coronado Expedition. In 1540 the Coronado Expedition went to this place and they were told about the earlier visitors: "They arrived at the province which Cabeza de Vaca had named Corazones [hearts] because there [the Indians] offered [Cabeza de Vaca and his companions] many animal hearts" (Castañeda in Flint and Flint 2005:393).

At a minimum, because as was noted, Los Corazones is farther north and west than previously thought, then Cabeza de Vaca was closer to Arizona in the American Southwest than once assumed (potentially just 60 or so mi [100 km] from the current international border). This places them in or near O'odham territory when at or just north of Los Corazones. Consequently, European contact and impact among the O'odham seems to have occurred much earlier than previously considered by most researchers. Moreover, this pivotal moment in history was among the O'odham rather than or in addition to the Ópata, as most modern researchers have thought.

This reconstruction also suggests that Cabeza de Vaca may have stayed farther north for a longer period of time than most scholars think today. And he likely went much farther west, while still north, than many have thought. Most scholars believe that Cabeza de Vaca turned west from the Río Grande and went directly to Paquime/Casas Grandes. But with this new evidence, it seems all the more likely they went through or near El Paso, crossed Southern New Mexico or Northern Sonora, and may have ended up in southeastern Arizona, perhaps even at what would become San Geronimo III. Regardless, since he was naked with no Spanish material culture his presence is not likely to be seen.

Cortés' Ships

But even more intriguing, by 1536 the Corazones area had already been accessed by Europeans. Importantly, in 1536, when Cabeza de Vaca's group was delayed in the Corazones area by high water, they encountered a Native with a horseshoe nail and sword-belt buckle necklace. They were told the following story:

> We were in this town three days. A day's journey farther was another town, at which the rain fell heavily while we were there, and the river became so swollen we could not cross it, which detained us fifteen days. In this time Castillo saw the buckle of a sword-belt on the neck of an Indian and stitched to it the nail of a horseshoe. He took them, and we asked the [N]ative what they were: he answered that they came from heaven. We questioned him further, as to who had brought them thence: they all responded that certain men who wore beards like us had come from heaven and arrived at that river, bringing horses, lances, and swords, and that they had lanced two Indians. In a manner of the utmost indifference we could feign, we asked them what had become of those men. They answered us that they had gone to sea putting their lances beneath the water, and going themselves also under the water; afterwards that

> they were seen on the surface going towards the sunset (Hodge and Lewis 1990[1907]:109).

This provides evidence that even earlier than Cabeza de Vaca, Europeans had probed farther north than previously considered. They would have also been within range of the coast of the South Sea. It is known that Hernán Cortés settled a colony at the southern tip of Baja California in 1535. Prior to this, however, he sent ships north on two different occasions through what is now called the Sea of Cortés or Gulf of California, then called the South Sea.

Cortés outfitted two ships in 1532, which under the command of Captain Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, sailed north from Acapulco. When Mendoza attempted to obtain fresh water, he was refused entry into the port of Jalisco by Nuño de Guzmán, a competitor who had extended his slaving exploits somewhat to the north. The vessels continued north along the coast and then part of the crew mutinied. Mendoza relinquished one of the vessels to them which then turned south, but it was soon forced to put into shore for water where the Natives attacked them. All but two of the mutineers were killed. The two survivors reached one of Guzmán's outposts. Mendoza continued north, but no further information is known about the fate of this vessel, and it is assumed that he and his men were killed by Natives (Moriarty 1965).

Cortés sent out two more ships in late 1533 commanded by Captain Diego de Becerra and Hernando de Grijalva. The vessels soon became separated near Colima, and Becerra continued north while Grijalva turned south. It is thought that Grijalva was unable to endure Becerra's haughty attitude and temper. Becerra's crew mutinied, killing the captain and wounding most of the officers, so the extent of his northward exploration is not known. Fortún Ximénez de Bertandoña who had led the mutiny, unloaded all the wounded and left them with three friars, and the crew sailed off to the northwest. After returning to its home port the following statement was made by the 18 survivors:

> The survivors told a most exciting story about the discovery of a new land. After leaving the wounded behind, they said, they had sailed to the northwest. According to the story, a few days of good travel brought the ship within sight of a strange coast and they followed it, landing here and there, until they came upon a good harbor. Here they anchored and for some days explored the area. Presumably, this harbor was north of Cape Pulmo on the Baja Peninsula. The sailors told of discovering pearls, but how this came about is not recorded. Quite possibly they had made contact with the local Indians and had actually traded for pearls. They further reported that the Indians had become angry and had killed Ximénez and most of the mutineers. The few survivors had then set sail and returned to the mainland port, landing on the coast of Nueva Galicia (Moriarty 1965).

Either of these 1532 or 1533 voyages may have sailed sufficiently north to result in contact with the residents of the Corazones area. Observation of the sword-belt buckle and nail by Cabeza de Vaca's party in all likelihood involved Cortés' sailors, perhaps explaining the circumstances under which the two Natives were lanced. The implication is that there was a skirmish between the Spaniards and Natives and that

these clearly prized metal items might have been battle trophies. The connection between these events relies on the assumption that voyages up the coastline were not common events and that we have records of the expeditions that did occur. These assumptions may be reasonable given that such trips were costly, involved considerable resources and time to organize, and required official authority.

Jaramillo's description of the arroyo and place called Los Corazones matches characteristics known for certain O'odham groups. He states:

> At this pueblo of Los Corazones is an arroyo used for irrigation, [and it is] a tierra caliente [hot lowlands]. They have their dwellings, which are several huts. After setting up poles very much in the manner of ovens, though much larger, they cover them with mats (Flint and Flint 2005:512).

Corazones was 150 leagues from Culiacan (Flint and Flint 2005:497), as was another unnamed place where the housing was described very differently. In the Viceroy's letter to the King, Díaz commented:

> that the people he found along [his] route have no permanent townsite except in one valley which is a hundred and fifty leagues from Culiacán. It is well settled, and [the people there] have buildings with flat roofs. And [he says] that there are many people along the trail, but that they are not suited to any other use besides making them Christians (as if this were [of] small [importance]) (Flint and Flint 2005:238).

As I have noted elsewhere, there is a fundamental difference between people who built rectangular housing with flat roofs and those with an elongated outline and domed superstructure covered with mats, as those described by Jaramillo (Seymour 2011d, 2014). Importantly, the close proximity of these two ways of building houses suggests that Corazones was at or near a culture area boundary, with O'odham to the north and west and another group with flat-roofed houses to the south or east.

Castañeda described the people of Señora (10 leagues, 30 mi [48 km] from Corazones) and Suya (50 leagues from Corazones) in a way that is consistent with what we know about the O'odham (as will be described in a future article):

> The people [of San Geronimo III] are of the same social level as those of Señora and they are the same as all the rest of the people who are found as far as the unsettled region beginning at Chichilticale, with regard to clothing, language, habits, and customs (Flint and Flint 2005:416).

The people said to be similar do not include those of the Corazones area, but rather they seem to begin at Señora. If this is not an oversight or error in the statement itself, then it may be that these Natives at Los Corazones were different and just south or east of the O'odham, by about three to four leagues (9–12 mi [14–19 km]). In such case, they were likely Ópata or Mayo. Nonetheless, this event would have, at a minimum, bordered O'odham territory.

Initial Hospitality in *Arizona*

Some of the earliest documents relating to what would become Arizona (the northern portion of O'odham territory) specifically provide a basis for inferring initial encounters were on their surface benign. Fray Marcos described a rather pleasant trip north wherein it seems he spent time interacting with the Natives who, although not named, were O'odham, coming away with a positive perspective of the area and its people:

> I entered the valley very heavily settled by people. There, at the first pueblo, many men and women came out to meet came out to me with food… (Flint and Flint 2005:71).

> I traveled through this valley for three days. Its [N]atives made all of the celebrations and demonstrations of joy they could for me (Flint and Flint 2005:72).

Marcos stated that he was careful not to cross any lines, not taking too much from them:

> They brought me much game (deer, rabbits, and quail) and corn and pinole, all in great abundance. They offered me many turquoises, hides, very lovely gourd bowls, and other things. I took none of this because I had made it a habit of behaving this way once I entered the land where [the Natives] had not heard of us [European] (Flint and Flint 2005:71).

The hospitality extended to these first European visitors and their Native entourage in early 1539 by the O'odham relates to a general mode of receiving visitors throughout the Southwest. Visitors followed an established way of approaching which involved sending someone ahead, sometimes with crosses, as Fray Marcos did with Esteban, and Díaz did thereafter (see passages in Flint and Flint 2005:68, 69, 235). The messenger would convey the friendly intent of the visit while announcing the impending arrival of foreigners. In many instances during the mission period, beginning in 1691 in Arizona, the hosts would go out to meet the visitors, such as they did with Padre Eusebio Kino, with trays of food and water (Bolton 1919:207, 245, 255, 256, 257, 279, 311; Seymour 2011a). From the descriptions, it seems they likely did this with Fray Marcos, and also with Esteban who was days before him.

The very first encounter seems to be one of genuine curiosity and gracious hospitality (Seymour 2023a). Esteban was joyously received, and 300 O'odham men, as well as some women, from the San Pedro River settlements went north with him to Cíbola. Another 30 insisted on joining Fray Marcos as he went north, after a couple of weeks of congenial interaction in their villages.

Within a few weeks of travel, however, this joyous cavalcade disintegrated into a nightmare. Esteban's insistence on trespassing at Hawikku was met with strong A:shiwi (Zuni) resistance. His fateful decision thereafter resulted in his death and potentially the death of some of the Sobaipuri O'odham men who accompanied him, although Coronado's letter implies that only Esteban was killed (see Flint and Flint 2005:262). Marcos, however, conveyed Native testimony that survivors played dead until dark, under

those who had been killed, when they escaped (Flint and Flint 2005:75). Fray Marcos also felt his life was threatened as the Sobaipuri O'odham returned in haste and panic. He was saved only by the dispersal of gifts and also shrewd avoidance of Sobaipuri O'odham villages as he hurried south.This distribution of gifts has important implications for the occurrence of Coronado-period artifacts in Sobaipuri sites along the San Pedro River and among people with whom they interacted.

We also must consider that these first interactions between Esteban and the O'odham might have been different from what is conveyed. It is possible that the 300 men went with him to ensure that the A:shiwi understood the circumstances of the visit and to escort them through their territory, all the while keeping an eye on the foreigners. Coronado stated that Esteban had killed O'odham women (Flint and Flint 2005:262). It is doubtful 300 principles would have gone with Esteban to Cíbola if he had killed Sobaipuri O'odham women while still in the villages. This makes it likely that these women were killed along the way to Cíbola, the Sobaipuri men gradually becoming aware that the women had disappeared. A ruse of the Sobaipuri being attacked with so many killed would send the visiting friar and his group away and allow the Sobaipuri to preserve their honor. Such a strategy would at the same time safeguard against Spanish retaliation as they reneged on their offer to introduce him to the A:shiwi after realizing their women had been killed or when learning of the visitor's violent character from the A:shiwi.

Fray Marcos' Trail

An implication of these new data is that if Esteban really did guide Fray Marcos along the Cabeza de Vaca route, and then Marcos guided the Coronado expedition north on a portion of the same route in this part of the country, then Cabeza de Vaca's group may have gone through our Santa Cruz Valley site (the Sobaipuri village at what later became San Geronimo III) on their way southwest to Los Corazones. This also means Cabeza de Vaca's party was in O'odham territory, as noted. This is a lot of "ifs," especially given that following a route does not necessarily mean walking the exact same footpath. The "if" part of this is accentuated by the fact that later accounts indicate there were several trails that could have been taken. Moreover, our archaeological data are beginning to suggest the trail diverged at Chichilticale (Seymour 2025), and perhaps elsewhere as well. Additionally, Fray Marcos makes it clear that many people along his route had not seen Christians, which if true, would indicate different routes were taken. Still, this latter point is not definitive because Cabeza de Vaca and his men were not seen as Christians by the local Natives because they were naked, kind, and did not have the weapons and material culture of the European Christians. This is made clear in Cabeza de Vaca's account:

> They [the Indians with Cabeza de Vaca] were willing to do nothing until they had gone with us and delivered us into the hands of other Indians, as had been the custom; for, if they returned without doing so, they were afraid they should die, and, going with us, they feared neither Christians nor lances. Our countrymen became jealous at this, and caused their interpreter to tell the Indians that we were of them, and for a long time we had been lost; that they were the lords

> of the land who must be obeyed and served, while we were persons of mean condition and small force. The Indians cared little or nothing for what was told them; and conversing among themselves said the Christians lied: that we had come whence the sun rises, and they whence it goes down; we healed the sick, they killed the sound; that we had come naked and barefooted, while they had arrived in clothing and on horses with lances; that we were not covetous of anything, but all that was given to us we directly turned to give, remaining with nothing; that the others had the only purpose to rob whomsoever they found, bestowing nothing on any one [sic] (Hodge and Lewis 1990[1907]:114).

> In this way they spoke of all matters respecting us, which they enhanced by contrast with matters concerning the others, delivering their response through the interpreter of the Spaniards....Even to the last, I could not convince the Indians that we were of the Christians; and only with great effort and solicitation we got them to go back to their residences. We ordered them to put away apprehension, establish their towns, plant and cultivate the soil (Hodge and Lewis 1990[1907]:114-115).

At present, it is not known how Marcos de Niza fits into these route inferences. In any event, Esteban and he seem to have been the first Europeans to go through the area substantially north of the current international line. Based on available data, they were the first to reach Chichilticale. They interacted with the Sobaipuri O'odham for several days before entering the final wilderness. If current readings are accurate, Fray Marcos traveled among the San Pedro Sobaipuri O'odham for more than eight days and then rested for three days before traveling four more days (Flint and Flint 2005:72–73), either beyond or still within Sobaipuri O'odham village distribution. His side trip to find the South Sea of unknown distance and time, was also likely through O'odham territory, as were his travels prior to the four-day *despoblado*.

As trail companions, the scale and intensity of interaction between Fray Marcos and Esteban, on the one hand, and the Sobaipuri, on the other, may have been even greater than a simple visit implies. Furthermore, the inappropriate actions by Esteban that led to his death at Zuni (both the murder of O'odham women and the refusal to respect the rules for entry of their hosts) likely infuriated the Sobaipuri O'odham, as vaguely conveyed in Fray Marcos's account. As discussed below, the reception given Díaz just months later is also likely explained by these events, as might the response to Hernando de Alarcon's voyages up the Gila River which likely brought him in contact with the O'odham, perhaps in the Casa Grande area, as well as with other groups.

This early encounter with the Sobaipuri O'odham by Fray Marcos can be confirmed from documentary content now that the location of Chichilticale and this portion of the trail is known (Seymour 2025). Yet, archaeological sites of this first reconnaissance sent north by Viceroy Mendoza, have yet to be identified or isolated. Castañeda's statement, however, implies that the site recorded and inferred to be Chichilticale on the San Pedro River is likely one of the locations Marcos de Niza and presumably Esteban stayed: "He [Esteban] got so far ahead of the friars that when they reached Chichilticale, which is [at] the beginning of the unsettled land, he

was already in Cíbola" (Castañeda in Flint and Flint 2005:388). And "Chichilticale was so called because the friars [sic] found in this region a house that was in other times populated by people who split from Cíbola" (my translation; see Castañeda 1560; for transcription see Flint and Flint 2005:473). These passages indicate that Fray Marcos saw the ruined roofless house even though he himself did not mention it in the surviving report. If he did stay there, this might explain the chronometric date consistent with the Coronado expedition from a Sobaipuri house amid Spanish features and artifacts. While Marcos did not say the locals built a structure here for him, there are many instances where he explicitly stated that the Natives built housing for him (e.g., Flint and Flint 2005:73, 83). As I have previously noted, the lack of a specific statement about something does not indicate its absence (Seymour and Rodriguez 2020).

As expected, however, use of this location by the later reconnaissance under Díaz's oversight, and at other potential camp sites down trail by divisions of the expedition have obscured the lighter footprint left by the friar and the Black Moor. Their presence would have been too similar to distinguish until the trails diverged. This is one reason the assumption has been that evidence of Marcos's camps will not likely be discernable or distinguishable. He was barefoot, presumably only with his habit of gray closely woven woolen cloth (see passage in Flint and Flint 2005:71), although he had writing and baptismal materials and perhaps visual images to assist in his apostolic mission. He had a knife to "cut the cords on the leather trunks of clothing and trade items I was taking along, which until then I had not touched or given anything of to anyone" (Flint and Flint 2005:74).

Marcos also had a "great multitude of [N]atives from what is now western Mexico" (Flint and Flint 2019:83). In contrast to the 40 or 50 horsemen offered to Andrés Dorantes by the Viceroy (Flint and Flint 2019:83), it is thought that Fray Marcos did not have horses and mules for transport, but rather he employed Native porters, servants, interpreters (Hallenbeck 1949:7) and guides. Some assume that he had an armed escort (Chavez 1968:9) while others state explicitly he did not (Flint and Flint 2019:82, 83). In either case, we might see Marcos' trail in the hunting points, trinkets, and metal debris left behind and the impressions of their camping areas created by the "great multitude of [N]atives" (Flint and Flint 2005:67) who accompanied him. Currently I am assessing whether evidence of a Spanish-period camp found further north might be indicative of this earlier reconnaissance that took a different route north, after an inferred split at Chichilticale. This site produced a chronometric date consistent with the Coronado expedition, along with suggestive features and metal Spanish-period artifacts. These new data provide hope that sites of this earliest European presence in the spring of 1539 can be found. For now, however, Chichilticale, where Fray Marcos stayed, has been documented, placing him at a specific point in time in southeastern Arizona. We also now understand what Fray Marcos meant when Castañeda described the ruined roofless house and also who the Natives were that Díaz was referencing when he stated he was in or at a pueblo (see Seymour 2025).

Diaz's 1539–40 Winter Camp

The full implications of this important encounter between this first reconnaissance by Esteban and Fray Marcos and the Sobaipuri O'odham were not visible until a few months later when in December 1539 Melchior Díaz encamped at Chichilticale in the middle of Sobaipuri territory. Díaz, Captain Zaldívar, and around 16 horsemen were sent north by the Viceroy from Culiacan on a reconnaissance to verify Fray Marcos' observations. Archaeological evidence confirms that they journeyed as far as the San Pedro River in southeastern Arizona (Seymour 2025). After traveling several days through various O'odham communities, they encamped at Chichilticale for about two months in the winter of 1539–40 (Flint and Flint 2005:391). While at Chichilticale, Díaz wrote a letter (Díaz quoted in Mendoza 1540) that was conveyed by Zaldívar and three horsemen to Mendoza on March 20, 1540 (Flint and Flint 2005:235, 2019:85). While this letter has been lost, Mendoza quoted some of its content in a letter to the King (Viceroy to the King, April 17, 1540).

Díaz's statements were clearly penned in his Chichilticale encampment, as indicated when he wrote: "the people of this pueblo" (Flint and Flint 2005:238), referring to the residents of the area. The way Díaz phrased another passage, which indicates Chichilticale was at the edge of the *despoblado*, also that tells us he wrote from Chichilticale: "it is impossible to cross the unsettled region there is between here and Cíbola because of the excessive snow and cold there is" (my translation; for transcription see Flint and Flint 2005:239).

Notably, when Díaz wrote "the people of this pueblo" he meant he was encamped either at or near an occupied village. They were in or adjacent to a Sobaipuri O'odham village, which also means they were in the valley, adjacent to the river. This is apparent from both the documentary and archaeological records. The only place this far east in southeastern Arizona that was occupied by villagers at this time was along the San Pedro River, and these villagers were the Sobaipuri O'odham (Seymour 2025). Village-based agriculturalists, which in this area at this time are limited to the Sobaipuri O'odham, would have been understood as "settled" by the Spaniards. Díaz recognized the permanency of these residential sites. We know from archaeological studies that Díaz meant that he was near a Sobaipuri O'odham village. With this passage, Díaz was acknowledging that these were the permanent villages with irrigation and productive fields Marcos de Niza described:

> which is so [heavily] populated by splendid people and so [well] supplied with food that it is enough to feed more than three hundred horses. Everything is irrigated and it is as a garden. The neighborhoods [or pueblos] are half a league and a quarter of league apart (my translation; see Niza 1539; for transcription see Flint and Flint 2005:84).

The last sentence by Fray Marcos quoted above was referencing the placement of Sobaipuri O'odham villages along the river and within this middle San Pedro River segment. Along each reach or segment of the San Pedro River, numerous Sobaipuri archaeological sites of different ages are densely arrayed where surface river water could be reliably accessed for household use and irrigation. Within a five mile stretch in the vicinity of Chichilticale there are around two dozen Sobaipuri

habitation sites (the count varies depending on how river segments are differentiated), but only a few were occupied at any one time. Marcos was commenting on occupied villages in this area, and these were situated 0.75–1.50 mi (1–2.5 km) from one another. They were neighborhoods [barrios] in the larger community formed along this river segment, something I have discussed at length elsewhere (Seymour 2011a, 2022a).

This middle San Pedro occupational segment bordered by their canals and fields is separated from the next community/site cluster by 25 mi (40 km) or so with no Sobaipuri occupation at that time. This break relates to the presence of marshes or, alternatively, many miles of dry riverbed, where the water flowed beneath the surface for much of the year, before surfacing once again, making habitation possible (see discussion in Seymour and Rodriguez 2020). The next down-stream habitation area is represented by a 1 mi (1.6 km) stretch where 11 Sobaipuri sites have been recorded, although perhaps only one or two were occupied at any one time (Seymour 2022a).

Through the decades and centuries, Sobaipuri residents would shift along a specific river segment where they had invested in canals and fields. Occasionally, after a political dispute or social fracture, or perhaps when their canals and fields had washed out, they might move many miles north or south to another river segment with reliable surface water, as has been reported in the documentary record (Seymour 2011a, 2022a). This settlement pattern is predictable through time and is visible on all of southeastern Arizona's rivers. The spacing of villages noted by Marcos indicates that he was describing the character of Sobaipuri village placement within each of these river segments, rather than distributions along the river as a whole, although as he proceeded downstream to the north, he would have been aware of large stretches of the river without settlement. When he stated "I traveled through this valley" for so many days, he was likely referencing these different river segments (subsegments of the San Pedro Valley), rather than different river valleys.

Importantly, Díaz, like those following him, was differentiating these Sobaipuri villagers from those Natives encountered within the unsettled areas, or *despoblados*. A few months later Coronado mentioned the "Indians of Chichilticale" (Flint and Flint 2005:256; Hammond and Rey 1940:165), but rather than the Sobaipuri O'odham, Coronado may have been referring to the hunter-gatherers who told them the name of the area: Chichilticale, which indicates they were Apache (see above). These were people whose lifeway was very different from the River People (Akimel O'odham, Sobaipuri). As Castañeda wrote, they lived: "in rancherías, without permanent habitations. They live by hunting" (my translation; see Castañeda 1560; for transcription see Flint and Flint 2005:473). Clearly, there was more than one cultural group occupying the zone referred to as Chichilticale.

The use of the term "pueblo" by Díaz did not mean this was a pueblo like those occupied by Puebloan groups further north. Sobaipuri O'odham pueblos or villages, were not multistoried adobe or stone compounds of the northern American Southwest. Rather, Díaz's statement conveys that he viewed these people as settled villagers, not as mobile hunter-gatherers, like others they had encountered nearby. Sobaipuri settlements had a formal layout with paired houses arranged in rows, which likely also contributed to Díaz's understanding that these were pueblos/villages rather than rancherías, as were occupied by the mobile peoples of surrounding areas.

The Spaniards would have had intensive contact with the resident Sobaipuri O'odham who lived nearby. The winter encampment spread for 1.25 km across four steep landforms, which produced 500 metal Spanish artifacts and evidence of the ruined roofless house (Seymour 2025). This area was at the north end of a river segment with some of the densest evidence of Sobaipuri O'odham sites on the river and in the region, and so this area easily matches Fray Marcos' description. Placed adjacent to a marsh, there would have been plenty of pasture and water for their livestock. They would have been sufficiently distant from the Native villages to avoid unwanted contact. The Spaniards did, however, likely travel throughout the valley asking about Cíbola, as indicated by statements that they had asked for information from many who had been there. In fact, according to Tony Burrell and Felicia Nunez, the word Cíbola may derive from an O'odham word which means "whirlwind".

A Cold Reception

In his letter quoted by the Viceroy, Díaz reported that they were met with lukewarmness and the residents showed them mean faces. Díaz was aware that a messenger had come from Cíbola telling the Sobaipuri O'odham that the Spaniards were not special and that they knew they could be killed because they had killed Esteban themselves and they had his bones. They urged the Sobaipuri O'odham to do the same or the A:shiwi would come and carry out the deed themselves:

> those from Cíbola told those of this [Sobaipuri] pueblo and its vicinity that if some Christians came that they should not have anything to do with them and that they should kill them because they were mortal and that they knew it because they had the bones of the one who had gone there and that if they did not dare, to send them a message because they would come to do it right. I believe that this has happened like this and that they have spoken with them based on the lukewarmness with which they received us and the mean face that they have shown us (my translation; Viceroy to the King, April 17, 1540; for transcription see Flint and Flint 2005:241).

This demonstrates a strong opinion against the Europeans, even at this early date. Even when Esteban arrived near Cíbola/Zuni, he sent a messenger ahead with a gourd "in the same way he was always accustomed to send it in advance, in order that [the [N]atives] might know he was coming. The gourd had some rows of bells and two feathers on it; one white and one red" (Flint and Flint 2005:73). Seeing these bells, the A:shiwi principle refused their entry:

> When the messengers arrived at Cíbola before the person whom the Lord has placed there as principal, they gave him the gourd [that Esteban was carrying]. When the principal took it in his hands and saw the bells, he flung it to the ground with much wrath and anger. And he told the messengers that they must leave immediately. He said that he was acquainted with who those people were. He told the messengers to tell them not to enter the *cuidad*. He said instead that if they tried to enter, the people of Cíbola would kill them all.

> The messengers returned and told Esteban what had transpired. Esteban told them that was nothing [to worry about], that those who exhibited anger customarily welcomed him best. Thus he continued his travel until he reached the *cuidad* of Cíbola. There he found a group of people who did not permit him to go inside. They put him in a large building which is outside the *cuidad*. They immediately took away from him all the trade goods and turquoises and other things he was carrying. [These] he had obtained from Indians along the trail (Flint and Flint 2005:74).

Seemingly embedded in these actions is the implication that the A:shiwi had already heard about the Europeans, likely from word of mouth with Native groups to the south. The bells they recognized were not likely West Mexican copper bells, but rather, copper bells imported from or in the style of Europe, either Clarksdale hawk bells or copper sheet horse harness and *anquera* bells, both of which have been found on Coronado sites. How news travels! Then, in late 1539 the A:shiwi knew the Europeans were among the Sobaipuri O'odham again, which prompted them to send the messenger.

Sobaipuri reluctance to interact and the hostility shown to Díaz and what was likely a 100- or 150-person entourage, was soon manifested in an all-out attack. Although not recorded in the documents, archaeological evidence of the battle is apparent on each of the four landforms that characterize the winter encampment. This fight that likely occurred in late January or early February 1540, sent members of this second Spanish reconnaissance south with bad news, although efforts were made to keep this quiet. Evidence for this attack consists of a dozen clearly identifiable projectile points, including an iron bolthead and arrow, atlatl, and spear heads, as well as fragmentary items that may be additional point tips (Fig. 3; Seymour 2024a, b, 2025). These were clustered in certain areas along the landform edges; clustering commonly occurs in battlefield situations when the threat emerges from one direction (Seymour 2014, 2015b). Knife, dagger, and sword tips and blades were also recovered, as were lead, iron, and stone shot (Seymour 2025).

The documents are mostly silent on this battle, but a hint about the outcome may be provided in a statement made in a June 1540 letter from Hernán Cortés to King Carlos V. In this letter Cortés stated that 12 of the horsemen who had gone with Díaz had died (Cortés 1540; see transcription in Flint and Flint 2005:246, 250). While this surely reflects Cortés' jealousy and competition for the honor of leading the expedition, the evidence found across the Chichilticale landforms indicates that there could be a basis in truth and these men may have died during this battle on the San Pedro River. The absence of any other statements about this in the documentary record could be a result of the effective policy of secrecy regarding expedition matters (see for example, Bolton 1990[1949]:51; Reff 1991:640, 644; also text in Flint and Flint 2005:391). Certainly, an attack might not be mentioned overtly or even known by expedition chroniclers.

Coronado's 1540 Route Through Sobaipuri O'odham Territory

While this attack did not halt the expedition that was already underway, it did seem to influence the way Coronado himself approached this famous region of Chichilticale

Fig. 3 A representative sample of the full range of Coronado-expedition-related projectile point types found at Chichiltic-ale and San Geronimo III/Suya. Image by Deni Seymour

four months later, in June of 1540. Coronado and his advance guard (including Jaramillo) arrived in the Chichilticale area, having presumably taken the same or closely similar route as Marcos and Díaz through the western portion of the Sobaipuri O'odham homeland. Coronado can definitely be placed along this portion of the San Pedro River because he specifically mentioned Chichilticale, for example, stating: "when I reached Chichilticale" and the "Indians of Chichilticale" (Flint and Flint 2005:255, 256; Hammond and Rey 1940:165). From this we know that Coronado crossed into the wilderness at one of the most densely occupied locations in southern Arizona at that time, within Sobaipuri O'odham territory. The size of the expedition and the repeated waves of people, horses, and livestock trudging through the landscape would have had a substantial effect on local populations, the environment, and water resources. But importantly, neither Coronado nor Jaramillo mentioned encountering the Sobaipuri O'odham (nor does Castañeda with the main body of the expedition. They do mention speaking to Natives about the name of the place and about distance traveled to the coast, but these people could have been Jocome or Apache.) Their silence may speak volumes, especially in light of Diaz's experience and archaeological evidence of the battle.

This series of events, including Diaz's cold reception by the Sobaipuri O'odham, was probably the reason why Coronado and Jaramillo did not mention encountering or visiting with settled people in this area on their way through Sobaipuri O'odham territory into the wilderness. Based on where the trail seems to have crossed and headed to the northeast, it is likely that in June of 1540 (and perhaps later in the fall of 1540) the Europeans crossed the San Pedro River almost immediately to avoid these villages. An archaeological site, inferred to be their camp was near the crossing (research is still underway), apparently situated so they were not required to pass by the occupied Sobaipuri villages. The hostility of locals may also be why Tobar guided the residents of San Geronimo north to the Tiguex Province via another

route, that presumably bypassed the Sobaipuri settlements (Seymour 2023c), that is, if the Tobar route through the San Bernadino Valley can be explained by this transfer. (Again, research is still underway).

Current data on the trajectory of the trails indicate that they crossed within 3 mi (4.8 km) of encountering the San Pedro, that is, as soon as they were able, given a marsh in the area at that time. I have previously suggested that they crossed farther south to avoid the Sobaipuri O'odham settlements to the north, because at that time no archaeological data were available for the Coronado expedition to guide interpretations (Seymour 2009a, 2011a). Now, however, there is evidence for a quick crossing and that this crossing occurred farther north. The trail seemingly followed by Coronado and Jaramillo bisects dense areas of Sobaipuri O'odham occupation, but they managed to cross in a place where there were no occupied villages at the time, avoiding potentially difficult encounters with the occupants. Another option is that the Sobaipuri O'odham moved away temporarily so as to avoid encounter, as they did after the 1698 battle in which they prevailed against the Apache and their allies but moved to avoid additional conflict (Seymour 2014).

San Geronimo III

The location of the first discovered and largest of 12 sites now known in Arizona is generally agreed upon to be the place named San Geronimo III in the Suya Valley by experts who have visited the site, observed the excavated features, seen the artifacts, and have familiarized themselves with the relevant documentary content. Its position in the Santa Cruz Valley near Nogales was unexpected, because most have anticipated that the expedition route north of the international line in Arizona intersected with the San Pedro River at its headwaters or shortly below (exceptions include Oblasser 1939, Sauer 1932, and Steen 1939, who thought the route went north down the Santa Cruz River Valley and Winship 1896[1990] who thought the route could be along either the San Pedro or Santa Cruz). Moreover, as noted, San Geronimo III was inferred by most researchers to be further south (except see Di Peso 1974; Hodge and Lewis 1990[1907]:371; Sanchez and White 2014:10; Schroeder 1955:282; Undreiner 1947), as was noted above.

The place referred to as San Geronimo III, sometimes called Los Corazones in the documents in error, was in three different places. Because it moved twice it is not uncommon for the chroniclers to use the wrong name (or to transfer the Corazones part of the name to the later townsites) when referring to a specific settlement, and so it is important to consider the chronological order of places mentioned when assessing events and distances. The first location was called Los Corazones, while San Geronimo II was in the Señora Valley and was sometimes referenced simply as Señora. The final and northernmost location was in the Suya Valley and is referred to as San Geronimo III or sometimes just Suya.

San Geronimo III is in the Santa Cruz Valley and was positioned at and near an important long-occupied Sobaipuri O'odham village. San Geronimo III or Suya was intended as a permanent settlement that would serve as the anchor for Spanish activity in *Tierra Nueva*. Although the official contract from the King has not been identified,

the settlement is referenced as a town (*villa*) repeatedly in the documents by Viceroy Mendoza, Coronado, Casteñada, Jaramillo, an anonymous writer, and the Audiencia (see Flint 2002; Flint and Flint 2005:392, 394, 406, 416, 431, 447, 472). The viceroy commented that the goal of the expedition was "for the pacification and settlement of the newly discovered land" (Flint and Flint 2005:235). The townsite was protected by armed men, as all outposts were at the time, and it seems that its purpose was to support and supply the expeditionary elements farther north, and to serve as a stop-over location between north and south. Thus, in addition to being an incipient settlement, this townsite extracted resources and labor from the surrounding indigenous community.

The Coronado-era site is exceptionally large, covering a 1-km-long and 600-m-wide area along the river, with six lookout stations which are spatially separated from the main part of the townsite. The abundance and diversity of artifacts present indicate this was more than an overnight or short-term camp. The quantity of metal artifacts alone—more than a couple thousand associated with this component—indicate a longer-term presence than a simple encampment. This interpretation seems even more apparent now in seeing the contrast between this site and Díaz's camp at Chichilticale. These artifacts also indicate a wide range of activities and their clustering in discrete locations is inferred to represent where structures related to the households of each of the Spaniards were located. Excavations undertaken indicate that these structures included oversized Sobaipuri O'odham structures and Spanish-style stone-and-adobe walled rectangular structures. Another circular type of feature with adobe-and-stone walls and a hardened floor may be storage facilities similar to those found at the time in Central Mexico. These features, while still under investigation, might confirm one of the reasons for the uprising of the local population, which was that the Spaniards imposed too heavy a tribute. Chronometric dates obtained from each of these structures are consistent with the Coronado expedition.

The town was attacked by the resident Sobaipuri O'odham, as is made clear from the archaeological record and documentary sources. Some of the Coronado expedition accounts convey that the Natives rose up and killed most of the people who were settled there because of the abuse rendered on them. This mistreatment and exploitation included raping girls and women, taking more than two shares of the resources, and cutting off body parts for infractions assessed by Captain Diego de Alcaraz (Flint 2002:110, 145; Flint and Flint 2005:427; Hammond and Rey 1928:168–169). This several-month contact was impactful in many ways that are only now beginning to be understood.

Archaeological evidence of this battle includes widespread burning and destruction of the incipient structures, the number and diversity of battle-related artifacts, including crossbow bolt heads, lead musket and pistol shot, green obsidian blade flakes from the margins of *macuahuitls*, matchlock and wheellock parts, dagger and sword fragments, as well as two bronze cannons (one of which exploded during the battle, judging from its condition and placement relative to the other battle evidence) and many points (metal arrow, spear, and atlatl heads) that qualify as *armas de la tierra* mentioned in the muster role for most of the rank-and-file and nonprofessional Spanish participants (Seymour 2023a, 2024a, b). Most of these cluster together with stone Sobaipuri arrowheads along an arroyo which is thought now to be the center of a pitched battle, but they are found in other areas of the site, including in

three of the lookout stations. Three Spaniards plus the captain were killed along with many of their slaves, domestic servants, and presumably *Indios Amigos*, totaling 100 people according to documentary sources. No Sobaipuri O'odham were killed.

With news of the destruction of their anchor townsite, the expedition ultimately ended. As the people of Suya escaped south to San Miguel de Culiacán and others fled north with news of the devastation (e.g., Hammond and Rey 1928:163, 168; Tello 1891:438), the Sobaipuri O'odham undoubtedly celebrated their new freedom, though certainly keeping a watchful eye for further intrusions.

Gallego's Revengeful Rampage

A final event that is chronologically related to the withdrawal of the expedition in early 1542 would also have had a substantial impact on local O'odham populations. Captain Juan Gallego fought his way through the *tierra de guerra* (war zone) as he moved north from San Miguel de Culiacán with supplies and reinforcements, including his own men and survivors of the Suya uprising. Throughout this 200-league [965 km] stretch (the entire distance between San Miguel de Culiacán and Suya; Fig. 4) Natives were in a state of war and rebellion, although Castañeda said they had formerly been friendly towards the Spaniards (Flint and Flint 2005:431). Here it is important to point out that the Flints (2005:688n567) state "Hammond and Rey (1940:277) mistakenly attribute the 200 leagues to the *tierra de guerra*." Yet, my calculations of the distance from San Miguel de Culiacán is 200 leagues, suggesting that the entire area was in revolt. Hammond and Rey were not mistaken, but rather, perhaps in an effort to adjust league distances to fit a Río Sonora route, the Flints have misinterpreted this passage and the distances traveled. Hammond and Rey (1940:277) state: "He traveled 200 leagues over unfriendly country and among people in revolt, people who formerly were on friendly terms with the Spaniards." This seems more in line with what was meant.

Gallego and his 22 men had encounters with the enemy (local Native villagers) almost every day. He left the baggage and *Indios Amigos* behind with two-thirds of the force, while six or seven Spaniards forced their way into their villages, killing and destroying and setting houses on fire. We are told that they came upon villagers so suddenly, with such quickness and boldness, that the residents did not have a chance to rally, but those with warning fled. They killed and captured all the people they caught. This is especially true in the Suya area where they killed and hung a "large number of people" to punish them for the rebellion (Castañeda in Flint and Flint 2005:431). Gallego did not lose any men and only one soldier was wounded, in the eye by an Indian he was stripping who was almost dead (Winship 1990:73–74).

During this revenge rampage Gallego did not reach the San Pedro River. Importantly, when Gallego met Coronado and members of the expedition retreating to the south in April or May of 1542 they were down trail of Chichilticale. Coronado and the expedition "left Chichilticale, [and] Juan Gallego reached the expedition during the second day's travel" (Flint and Flint 2005:428; Winship 1990:69–70). This indicates that Suya was the northernmost place Gallego ravaged on his north-bound journey. It was here, during that intra-expedition encounter, and before reversing and continuing south, that discussion ensued about possibly establishing a new townsite,

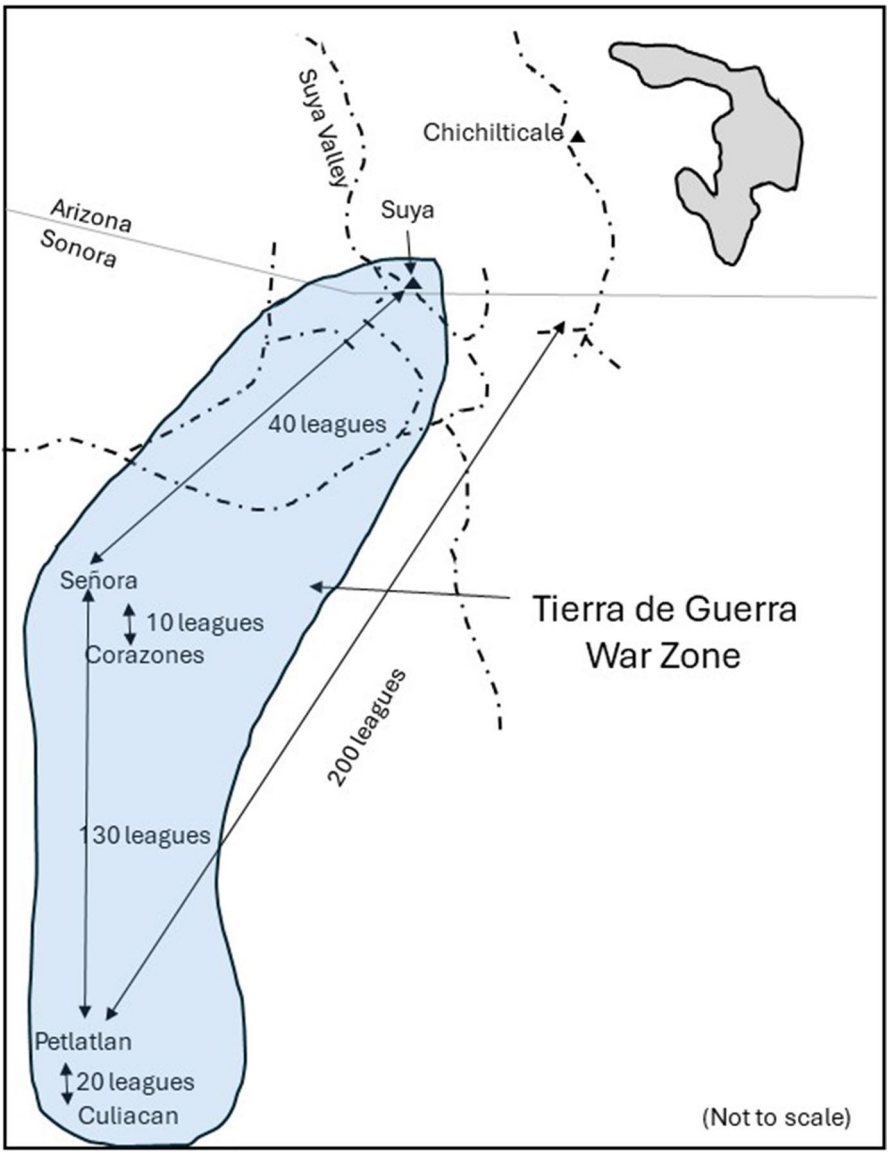

Fig. 4 This map shows the war zone or *tierra de guerra* (darkened area) where the indigenous populations had risen up against the Europeans. Image by Deni Seymour

San Geronimo IV in the vicinity (Flint and Flint 2005:428), which, depending on from where the two days is initiated, would place them in the vicinity of the Babocomari River or Sonoita Creek. The early resistance to Diaz's presence on the San Pedro and the successful uprising at Suya in the Santa Cruz Valley, both among the Sobaipuri O'odham, likely explain the final decision not to establish another foothold in the vicinity of Chichilticale, in the heart of Sobaipuri O'odham territory.

Responses to Attempted Conquest

An interesting statement is made after Castaneda's description of Gallego's revengeful rampage that could pertain to the O'odham of Suya. Castañeda discussed the rebellion that was clearly at Suya, but substituted the name Los Corazones, as sometimes occurred in his account. Earlier in the discussion he stated that he took men along with him that had come "from the town of Corazones, or rather from Suya." He then seems to repeat this error when he says that:

> These deeds were such that the soldiers will remember them as long as they live. This will be particularly true of four or five friendly Indians who left Corazones with them. They were so amazed that they thought the Spaniards more divine than human (Hammond and Rey 1940:278; Flint and Flint 2005:431).

The same confusion regarding Suya may have occurred in this quote as well, especially given the people of Los Corazones had always been friendly and reliable, even taking in Spanish survivors of the Suya attack. This then may mean that Sobaipuri O'odham residents of this Santa Cruz Valley settlement (San Geronimo III at Suya) were being referenced.

This is one of the more interesting passages that invites contemplation of the many social responses and the nature of change in the face of turmoil and abrupt disruption that encourages us to explore the factors that influence people's decisions. Responses by individuals were not always consistent with those of their community or society at large. La Malinche, a Nahua woman is widely known for contributing to the Spanish conquest as partner of Cortés. Any number of reasons have been advanced to explain what can be viewed as betraying her own people. Similarly, a domestic servant presumed to be Native during the later Ibarra expedition notified the Spaniards of an impending attack (Hammond and Rey 1928:169). So how to explain those community members who left the Santa Cruz River Valley following the Spaniards south? Castañeda conveys that "They were so amazed that they thought the Spaniards more divine than human," which at first consideration seems reasonable, given the range of expected and possible responses in their disrupted world. Even so, this explanation is not entirely satisfying and likely displays more hubris than reality. As the Coronado Expedition thrust the O'odham world into disorder, some would have considered that their basic beliefs and traditional understandings no longer made sense. This is not uncommon under traumatic circumstances in which worldview is exponentially expanded, exposing the weakness of long-held beliefs about normalcy. The shock brought on by the events of this first attempted conquest would have also exacerbated factional riffs within their communities. Those not in leadership roles or aligned with that faction may have seen their options limited within their small community, which even today causes members to seek outside alliances and alternatives (also see Seymour 2014). These four or five Natives friendly with the Spaniards would in all likelihood have been incorrigible to their neighbors. It may be more of a surprise that more than four or five discouraged community members or disgruntled misfits did not leave with these foreigners who wielded exciting ideas and coveted technologies.

Conclusion

The O'odham have been viewed as relatively unimportant in the series of events portrayed and experienced by the Coronado Expedition. They have not been seen as influential in the initial encounters with Europeans in the American Southwest. Most past researchers have placed the locations, people, and events in the Coronado expedition documentary record among the Ópata, rather than the O'odham. The O'odham were considered peripheral to the route, except perhaps along a two-day segment of the San Pedro River. This two-day trek is generally thought to be from the headwaters north, where there was question as to whether the Sobaipuri O'odham lived there since most past reconstructions erroneously have their homeland beginning near Fairbank, Arizona (but see Seymour 2022a). Thus, the history of first encounters with the O'odham was considered relatively benign.

Yet, what we are now learning from the archaeological distribution of Coronado expedition camp sites and a townsite is that the O'odham had a central position and played a pivotal role with respect to the expedition and events surrounding it. Their response to Díaz's San Pedro presence during the winter of 1539–40 did not go unnoticed. When Coronado finally passed through their territory in June of 1540 it seems that their route was changed at the San Pedro River to avoid the unwelcoming stance of the Sobaipuri O'odham and the desire to avoid another violent encounter. This prohibited Coronado from obtaining much needed food supplies, which sent them forth into the wilderness in desperation, which, in turn, influenced their subsequent decisions that had dire effects on other people including the A:shiwi at Cíbola. The ability of the Sobaipuri O'odham to repel the Spaniards at San Geronimo III in late 1541 was also significant and may have been the final decision point to end the expedition after nothing they perceived of as valuable was found at Cíbola and then Quivira, and after Coronado suffered from his second concussion of the expedition. The much earlier repelling of Díaz and the firm guidance provided by the A:shiwi (and their rejection of Esteban) represent early recognition by local indigenous leaders that the intrusion of the expedition was a serious concern.

Now that this new evidence is available, previous conclusions regarding initial Southwestern Native reactions to this expedition can be revised. An example of these past views in need of reconsideration is provided when Flint (1997:61) stated that the "relative tranquility of the expedition's sojourn in the Southwest (from a European standpoint) resulted primarily from the reluctance of [N]ative peoples of the Southwest to engage with Europeans and their formidable allies." Clearly, the earliest Coronado expedition site and battle now known in the American Southwest, represented by Díaz's 1539–40 winter encampment at Chichilticale, shows clear evidence that contradicts this notion of "relative tranquility." The evidence demonstrates a willingness to engage. The crossbow bolt heads, metal points, blades, and other battle-related items found at Chichilticale, including Sobaipuri projectile points, provide a fresh look into these earliest encounters. At the urging of the A:shiwi (Mendoza to King, 1540; Hammond and Rey 1940:160), or perhaps on their own accord, the Sobaipuri O'odham rose more than once in objection to the return of these foreigners and the long Spanish presence in their homeland. The fact that this first battle is not made obvious in

the documentary record does not negate the archaeological evidence, and in fact, the archaeological evidence may clarify the threat this attack posed to the expedition as a whole. This peril may have come from the need to maintain secrecy regarding the details of what was encountered, the precariousness of the endeavor if decisionmakers were made aware, and the need to adjust expectations that had been incorporated into the planning and the ability to successfully implement the expedition.

Their unwelcoming disposition probably explains why Coronado, Jaramillo, and Castañeda did not mention the Sobaipuri O'odham, that is, settled villagers, along the route before and at Chichilticale. It seems the Spaniards avoided them and perhaps even altered their route north in response to this opposition. This hostility may also be the reason why stores of food were not made available to Coronado, the absence of which led to considerable hardship and death in his company when crossing the final despoblado and the need to push the horses beyond their limits. In turn, this influenced the perceived urgency to attack Hawikku/Cíbola. This series of events may also explain why evidence of a detachment of the expedition under the apparent leadership of Tobar is found far to the east in the San Bernardino Valley (Seymour 2023c). The desire to avoid the Sobaipuri O'odham under conditions of increasing aggression may account for this secondary route (as may have the urge to seek out new mineral resources).

As new archaeological data are added to the evidence available surrounding this monumental expedition, it is becoming clear that the Sobaipuri O'odham played a central role in the turn of events. Two substantial battles were fought against the expedition in Arizona (and this does not include what are likely O'odham battles at and near Señora in the modern-day state of Sonora, Mexico). The first, as noted, was likely in January or February of 1540 at Chichilticale and the second in November or December of 1541 at Suya. In both instances, the Sobaipuri O'odham were victorious. In February of 1540 they chased Díaz's reconnaissance from the territory initiating the first battle between Natives and Europeans in the American Southwest. By the fall of 1541 the Sobaipuri O'odham had ruined the first attempted settlement in the American Southwest, killed its residents, and removed the foreigners from their homeland. The crossbow bolt heads and metal points, knife, dagger, and sword tips, stone arrowheads, lead shot, cannons, and more found at San Geronimo III and Chichilticale provide evidence that belies the narrative of "relative tranquility" and fear of their "formidable allies." Together, these events represent the first successful Native American uprisings in the continental United States, a legacy that until, now has been muted.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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