

Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe: The Last Mission of the Californias and Theater of Conflicts, 1795-1840

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Discovery and Exploration of the Valle De Guadalupe

Expansion of the California missions following the expulsion of the Society of Jesus was possible due to a concordat signed on 7 April 1772 by Franciscan Fray Rafael Verger of the Colegio de San Fernando de México, and Dominican Fray Juan Pedro de Iriarte y Larnaga, procurator of the Dominican province of New Spain. This accord established two religious jurisdictions, that of the Franciscans in Nueva or Alta California and of the Dominicans in Antigua or Baja California. Franciscan Fray Francisco Palóu relinquished the administration of the ex-Jesuit missions and that of San Fernando de Velicatá so that Fray Junípero Serra could devote himself to the expansion of Alta California foundations. On 12 May 1773, Dominican Father Procurator Fray Vicente Mora arrived at Nuestra Señora de Loreto with eighteen Dominicans to join ten missionaries who had arrived on 14 October of the previous year, and during the following two months the transfer of the missions was concluded. On his journey to San Diego Bay, Palóu established the dividing line between the jurisdictions of the two religious orders, the first division of the Californias, at Arroyo San Juan Bautista (San Miguel) on 17 August.

As was the case with the Franciscans, the Dominicans also were desirous of founding new missions in the region known as La Frontera, between Velicatá and San Diego Bay, and thus Father Mora began the ad-

vance toward San Diego with the founding of Mission Nuestra Señora del Santísimo Rosario de Viñadaco in July 1774. In August of 1775 the founding of Santo Domingo de la Frontera provided access to the little-known mountain region of the north, and in that year Ensign José Velázquez explored the area beyond that visited by Jesuit Father Wenceslaus Linck in 1766, and reached the Colorado River in search of a supply route from the Pacific to the Gulf of California.

This move to establish communications with the mainland through Sonora was followed in 1780 by the founding of San Vicente Ferrer, and establishment there of a small detachment of 25-35 soldiers from the presidio of Loreto, the Destacamento de La Frontera, to protect the northern zone from attack by hostile Indians. Nevertheless, this hope for communication with Sonora tragically evaporated with the massacre of Franciscan friars Tomás Hermenegildo Garcés, Juan Díaz, Juan Antonio Barreneche, and Matías Moreno, as well as Captain Fernando de Rivera y Moncada and 42 colonists in route to Alta California, at La Purísima Concepción and San Pedro y San Pablo Bicuñer at the confluence of the Gila and Colorado rivers during the Yuma uprising of 17 July 1781, effectively closing the region to travelers from New Spain.

Following lengthy campaigns against the Yumas, in April 1785, Lieutenant Pedro Fagés, together with Velázquez, led an expedition from San Vicente, through the Sierra de Juárez and Valle de la Trinidad

to the Cocopa rancherías of the Colorado River Delta, and then returned to San Diego in search of a route that would bypass that briefly established by Rivera y Moncada four years earlier. During the same year, the father minister of San Vicente, Fray Luis Sales, explored to the north to Arroyo San Juan Bautista and established the first site of Mission San Miguel de la Frontera, which he founded on 28 March 1787. The following year, Sales transferred his mission to the southern bank of Arroyo de San Juan Bautista, some sixty miles south of the Franciscan mission of San Diego de Alcalá.

In 1791, Fray Crisóstomo Gómez, president of the Dominican missions, requested aid from Viceroy Juan Vicente Güemes Pacheco y Padilla, Conde de Revilla Gígedo, for the reestablishment of the Colorado River missions. In reply, in 1793, José Joaquín de Arrillaga, interim governor of the Californias, was ordered to provide assistance in the founding of three missions. The first of these was to be located at a site in the mountains between El Rosario and Santo Domingo. From May to October Arrillaga explored the region, discovered an appropriate site authorized for the new mission in January 1794, and on 27 April Fray Cayetano Pallás founded San Pedro Mártir de Verona among the Kiliwa.

Following the establishment of a base in the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir, in October 1794 Sergeant José Manuel Ruiz and Fray Tomás Valdellón explored the Llano del Alamo in the southern Sierra de Juárez in search of second mission site and the ranchería of Jaca-tobojol was discovered. As a result, Governor Diego Borica ordered new operations for the appropriate establishment of the new Mission Santa Catarina Virgen y Mártir in March 1795, and Arrillaga, lieutenant governor in Loreto, named Ensign Ildefonso Bernal and Ruiz to continue exploration. This expedition left the garrison at San Vicente on 18 October 1795, traveling up the Arroyo de San Vicente to Santa Catarina, and from there northward to the Valle de San Rafael

and thence westward to the Valle de San Marcos, later to be the site of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. From there they proceeded to Mission San Miguel, and then, on 27 October followed the established coastal route to Mission Santo Tomás de Aquino. Although no new suggestions for missions were made, Bernal noted the open hostility of several Indian groups encountered during this short reconnaissance.

During the following month of July, Arrillaga traveled from Loreto to San Vicente to take personal command of exploration. On 21 July 1796 he entered the mountains from San Vicente, reached the Sierra de Juárez and the Llano del Alamo, and then returned through the Valle de la Trinidad to San Vicente eight days later. From Santo Domingo on 5 August, Arrillaga again entered the mountains, reached Mission San Pedro Mártir the following day, and on 22 August continued to La Encantada, to the northeast toward San Felipe, from there northward along the foothills, westward to Valle de la Trinidad, and returned to San Vicente on the 31st of the same month. Following a brief rest, on 11 September the expedition left for the north from San Vicente, along the foothills to La Grulla, and from there continued through the mountains, passing El Alamo, to the Sierra de Juárez. Following Arroyo de Agua Caliente to the eastward, Arrillaga descended to Laguna Salada, and, after visiting the Cocopa rancherías, he returned westward to Laguna Hanson. On 23 September he arrived at the Arroyo de San Rafael, following it downward to the Valle de San Rafael, en route to the Pacific coast. On 25 September, he headed west-northwesterly to reach the Valle de San Marcos, where he experienced heavy fog the following morning, and thence followed the arroyo downward to a pine stand used for lumber by the missionaries of San Miguel de la Frontera. Arrillaga then headed westward through San Marcos, which he described as a wide valley with extensive pastures appropriate for grazing of cattle that were used for this purpose by Mission San Miguel. On 17 September the expedition reached the Ensenada de

Todos Santos, and, the following day ended its labors at Santo Tomás.

The final phase of exploration of La Frontera to be carried out by Arrillaga began on 14 October from San Vicente, through the mountains to the Colorado River, continuing northward along the foothills to the Borrego area, and from there, southwesterly to San Diego, reaching that mission on 17 November. Although these expeditions in 1795-1796 permitted the establishment of a second mountain mission, Santa Catarina, by friars José Loriente and Tomás Valdellón on 12 November 1797, they also clearly demonstrated the difficulty of crossing the rugged and vacant territory between the escarpment of San Pedro Mártir and the immense Colorado desert which, inhabited by hostile Yumans, made it even more inhospitable. Thus, the missions were restricted to the Pacific slope, and the desired overland route was abandoned, delaying the development of La Frontera.

Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de la Frontera

Expansion of the missions was further reduced as a result of the Mexican Wars of Independence from 1810 to 1821, the growth of liberalism and anticlericalism with the establishment of the Mexican Republic in 1824, and the expulsion of Spaniards decreed in 1829. Although the majority of Dominicans in Baja California were European-born, these events did not have great repercussions, due to the isolation of the region from the center of the nation. In 1817, following some flooding at San Miguel, Fray Tomás de Ahumada reestablished his mission at a site located to the north known as El Descanso (San Miguel la Nueva), and in 1830, Fray Caballero, native of Jerez de la Frontera in Spain, who arrived at the peninsula in 1814 to serve at Santa Rosalía de Mulegé and had accompanied Governor José María Echeandía and Fray Tomás Mancilla to La Frontera in 1825, built an adobe church at the site. Caballero was resident missionary at Santo

Domingo from 1827 to 1834, and, having succeeded Fray Domingo Luna in the post of provincial vicar and president of the missions in 1832, had converted that mission into the administrative center of the Dominican establishments.

Following the founding of San Miguel la Nueva, the Valle de San Marcos flourished as a cattle raising center and attracted several civilian colonists. On 25 June 1834, at the site called Ojá Cuñúrr (Painted Rock), a rock with notable stylized pictographs, Caballero founded Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, building a church with a choir and two altars, and a residence with refectory, storerooms, and shops within a quadrangle. As resident minister and provincial vicar, Caballero also converted this new foundation to the administrative center of the peninsula. The valley held a high Indian population of some 400 souls of the Diegueño group, Kwatl Kumiyai subgroup, in the rancherías of Agua Escondida, San José, Rincón de los Encinos, and San Antonio de Nicuárr. Further, Caballero was assisted by Jatñil of the Mishkwish subgroup and captain of the Cañón de Nejí, who had formed an alliance with the frontier garrison, and whose followers worked in construction as well as the movement of herds of cattle from Santa Catarina and other locations to Guadalupe and San Miguel for greater protection from raids by hostile Kiliwa.

The new mission, located in a protected and temperate valley at an altitude of 300 meters above sea level, held extensive pastures of 41 *sitios* (71,935 hectares) for livestock as well as sandy soil from the bed of the Guadalupe River for the cultivation of grain. High livestock production also influenced the development of ranches at Santa Teresa, Vallecitos, Jesús María, Soledad de la Grulla, Cueros de Venado, and El Aguajito. Some 200 hectares under irrigation from a canal were planted with grain, and another canal was constructed to provide water for stables and irrigation of a three-hectare mission garden where vegetables, grapes, pears, and apricots were grown. Also,

proximity to the Bahía de Todos Santos permitted occasional commerce with foreign merchant ships that anchored there, and the mission was involved in sea otter hunting under the direction of rancher José Luciano Espinosa and a group of hunters.

On 7 November 1835, on recognizing the isolated location of the peninsula of California and the role of the missions in retention of Mexican culture in it, the federal government modified the decree of 17 August 1833, excluding the region from secularization until such time as the currently serving missionaries would retire or die, and prohibiting their replacement. Although a law of 19 September 1836 established the diocese of Ambas Californias and transferred the properties of the Pious Fund to it, secular clergy were not sent to the peninsula. Caballero administered not only his own mission, but also that of San Miguel la Nueva that had no resident minister due to a lack of personnel, and also carried out appropriate visitations of the other functioning Dominican establishments. On 18 April 1834, he visited Mission Santa Rosalía de Mulegé, on 4 December 1835, that of Todos Santos, mission San Ignacio on 29 May, and Santo Domingo on 9 June 1836, again visiting the latter on 27 February 1838, and that of Loreto toward the end of that year. San Ignacio was again visited on 12 December 1839, as was Santa Rosalía on 2 January 1840.

Notwithstanding its successful beginning, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe shared with its neighboring mission, Santa Catarina, the constant threat of attack by hostile groups of Yumas and Kiliwas from the desert areas to the east. In 1836 a squad under sergeants Narciso Franco and Estanislao Armenta, comprising soldiers Domingo Sáez, Anselmo Tapia and corporal Orantes, was sent to the mission. The following year, in March 1837, sergeant Narciso Franco of the Destacamento de La Frontera received orders from his commander, Lieutenant José Antonio Garraleta, to carry out the execution of two Diegueño captains, Cartucho and Pedro Pablo, who had

murdered several civilian colonists during a revolt of 200 of their followers against the presidio and ex-mission of San Diego. This caused resentment among other groups, and two prisoners who escaped from San Miguel were able to raise a force of 400 warriors who, in mid-December of 1837, attacked the mission. Although they only found sergeant Estanislao Armenta with five soldiers, along with Sáez, Tapia, and Orantes, in the garrison, a surprise cavalry attack with muskets and sabers by the mission troop caused heavy losses among the rebels, and the survivors fled. Aid from Jatñil, allied with Second Lieutenant Macedonio González, was used against the rebel Diegueños, and following another attack by Kiliwas and Cocopas on the mission in October 1839, a force of 1,000 men led against them at Santa Catarina caused their retreat.

A second assault on Santa Catarina in early 1840 brought the destruction of the mission, and Nicuárr, captain of Rincón de los Encinos and San Antonio, went out with a troop to pursue the attackers. However, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe remained relatively defenseless, and in February 1840, Jatñil, who had settled at El Descanso, arrived at the mission with a group of armed men, supposedly to end the forced baptisms of the residents of Nejí. Corporal Orantes was struck down and murdered by the men, but one of the colonists, José Luciano Espinosa, was able to escape while Jatñil murdered Francisco and José Antonio, neophytes from San Miguel. Father Caballero was able to hide, and Garraleta, unaware of events, was conducting maneuvers with seventeen soldiers a few kilometers away, and Jatñil with his rebels was able to escape.

With the destruction of Santa Catarina and the revolt of a presumed ally, Caballero abandoned his mission, along with those of El Descanso, San Miguel, and Santa Catarina. He left behind the herd of 4,915 head of cattle that later were to be sent to the south under the charge of sergeant Francisco Gastélum and Juan de Dios de Ocio, and set out for San Ignacio. A short time

later, Garraleta and the majority of troops also abandoned La Frontera, although Fray Tomás Mansilla continued administering Santo Domingo until August 1850. Fray Caballero died under mysterious circumstances in Loreto following drinking of his customary chocolate on the morning of 3 August 1840.

Abandonment of the four northernmost Dominican foundations in 1840 presaged the complete collapse of the mission system. As the Dominican missionaries retired or died without replacement, many of the ex-neophytes of La Frontera returned to their ancient cultures, and other groups diminished due to contagious diseases to which they had no natural resistance. The secular clergy was not found to occupy the planned isolated and unpopulated parishes, and by 1855 the great enterprise begun by Juan María de Salvatierra, S.J., in 1697 ceased.

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