Rock Art as Propaganda: Spanish and Native Inscriptions In the Bolsón de Mapimí, Northern Mexico

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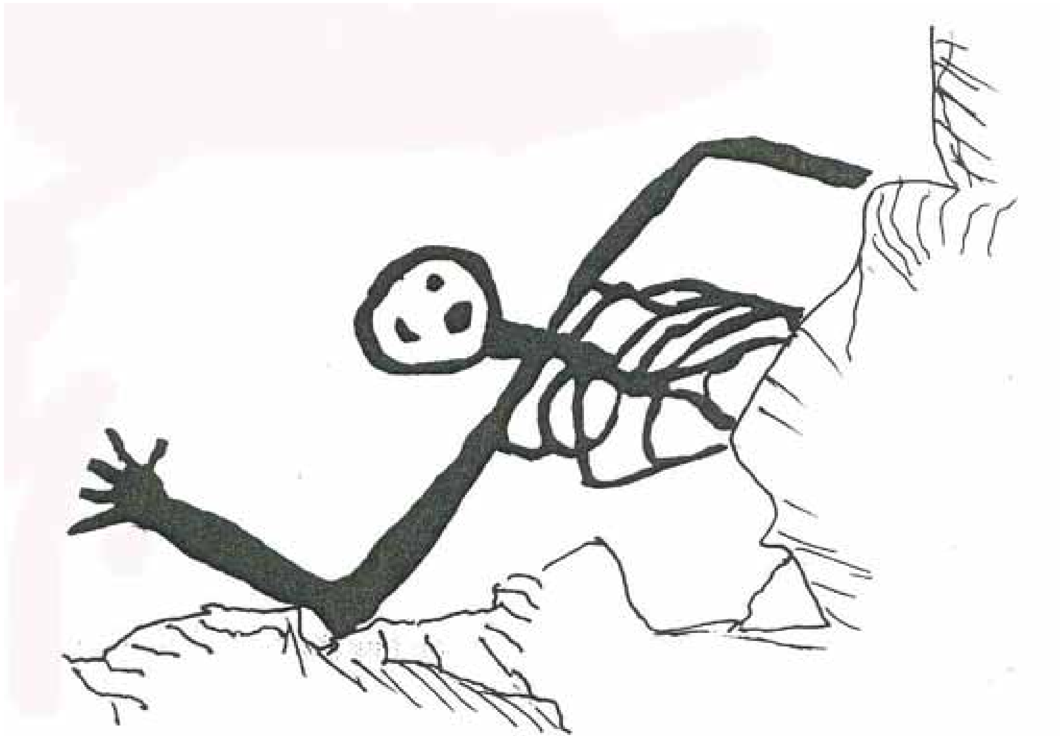

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Abstract

Eighteenth-century Spanish inscriptions and Native American rock art juxtaposed at isolated water sources in the Bolsón de Mapimí of northern Mexico were apparently used as competing propaganda in the centuries-long war between the colonial power and the native insurgents. Ethnohistoric sources identify and trace the careers of the Spanish officers named in these inscriptions. The broad historical context suggests that the native artists were at first indigenous northern Mexico people, followed by intrusive Apaches and perhaps Comanches. By the time these paintings were made, both warring parties were using them to record their presence in the region and their superiority in battle, whether through words or pictures.

Introduction

Rock art is usually attributed to hunting and gathering people of the prehistoric past who relied upon symbolic rather than literal means of communication. In the late eighteenth century, in the Bolsón de Mapimí of north-central Mexico, the war between hostile native guerrillas and Spanish military forces promoted the use of rock art as a form of propaganda, a contest between words and picture-writing that emphasized victory and minimized defeat. Here, in the *Despoblado* or depopulated zone that the Spaniards thought unfit for human occupation, battles of tragic proportions were fought, at first by enemies from totally alien cultures and at the end by warriors who may have become more alike than they were different. This conflict was immortalized in art at isolated water holes or springs, oases in the desert that now bear Spanish names - Altares, San José de las Piedras, Piedritas, Acatita la Grande or San Antonio de los Alamos - but that were first and foremost the lifeblood of the native insurgency (Figure 1). The inscriptions described here can be precisely dated to 1781, 1783, and 1784 but most of the native pictographs can only be broadly attributed to the proto-historic and historic picture- writing tradition with influences from European artistic conventions.

One of the most frustrating aspects of frontier warfare must have been communication - between scouts and the soldiers that depended upon them, between soldiers in the field and their commanders, between the commanders and their political overlords, and between the opponents on the battleground. The Apaches, and presumably their kindred, were heirs to an elaborate smoke signal system (Nelson 1936:216) - described in detail by a Spanish observer (Cortés 1989:74-75) - that relayed simple messages over long distances, but the Spaniards relied upon the written or spoken word, carried by messengers on horseback. As a result, treaties forged by one provincial government

were often abrogated by another, allies tuned into opponents through cases of mistaken identity, and many a life lost for lack of early warning systems or accurate assessments of the strength of the enemy. Nowhere was communication more difficult than in the Bolsón de Mapimí, in the great waterless mountainous expanse of northern Mexico that the Spaniards called the *Seno Mexicano* (Berroterán 1748; Ugalde 1788a; Daniel 1955).

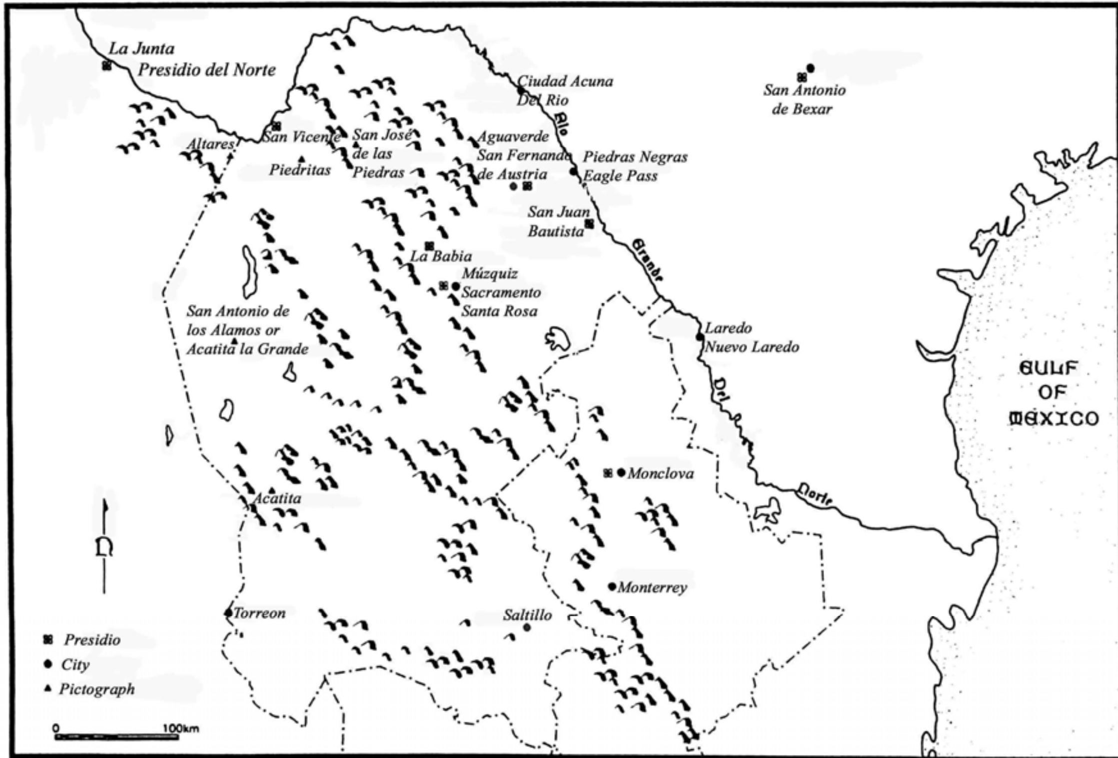


Figure 1. Map of the Bolsón de Mapimí showing points of interest, ca 1780.

The Setting

In terms of modern political units, the Bolsón de Mapimí occupies the border between the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Coahuila, south of the Big Bend of the Rio Grande that marks their boundaries with Texas. During the Spanish Colonial period, these states, then Nueva Vizcaya, Coahuila, and Texas, were subsumed under a larger governmental entity called the *Provincias Internas.*

Topographically, the Bolsón is part of the Mexican basin and range geographic province, a high tilting plateau marked by numerous closed drainage basins, once playa lakes, encircled by outliers of the Sierra Madre Oriental on the east and the Sierra Madre Occidental on the west. The Bolsón is also part of the great Chihuahuan Desert, a biotic zone most notable for the diversity and resiliency of its plant and animal species. Potable water is usually to be found only in the piedmont where

springs tap mountain aquifers or in *tinajas* (potholes) that capture and retain rainfall. In times of exceptional precipitation, the dry lakes of the Bolsón fill, transforming their environs into a temporary marshland that inevitably reverts to vast expanses of untenanted caliche.

The arid lands of northern Mexico are one of the more poorly studied areas of the New World despite the preservation of a wealth of archeological materials and a complex body of rock art, both petroglyphs and pictographs. Despite the rugged mountainous terrain, the lack of potable water, and the vast desiccated expanses of desert floor, a long record of prehistoric occupation is reflected in rock shelter deposits. And, it is here that the bloody conflict between indigenous people and their colonial adversaries - Spanish, Mexican, or Anglo-American - was played to its final conclusion. With the single exception of the remembrances of Cabeza de Vaca, whose route across northern Mexico and Texas is still ambiguous, the ethnohistoric record is dominated by military, religious, and civil authorities whose primary interest was cessation of hostilities, whether through extermination or negotiation. The post-contact rock art adds another dimension to ethnohistory and archeology by helping identify travel routes, campsites, battlefields, and even some of the players.

Natives of the Bolsón and Spanish Pacification

In 1546, the first great silver strike in the "Gran Chichimeca" of northern Mexico produced a mining boom that impelled the Spanish frontier northward (Alessio Robles 1978). The influx of miners, missionaries, ranchers, farmers, merchants, and soldiers triggered hostilities that lasted for centuries (Starnes 1971, Jones 1988). The Spanish line advanced up the Central Plateau of Mexico to Durango where it split into two prongs to bypass the inhospitable lands and intractable natives of the *seno* or *bolsa de tierra* now called the Bolsón de Mapimí (Berroterán 1748). Eventually, one avenue led west from Parral, Chihuahua, and El Paso to New Mexico (Daniel 1955:63); the other proceeded to Saltillo, San Juan Bautista, and into Texas. The Bolsón de Mapimí was then, as it is now, sparsely populated by a hardy breed of people well adapted to survival in the desert, and it was their survival techniques that permitted them to convert this inhospitable land into a refuge and stronghold. Group after group sought the fastness of the Bolsón; no sooner was one exterminated than another arrived, leading Berroterán (1748:17) to liken them to "*las olas del mar, acabando una se sigue otra*" (the waves of the ocean, one leaves, another follows). Daniel (1955:2) visualized "... the Despoblado of Spanish days as a great funnel, open at the top, through which successive waves of nomadic Indians poured to raid the Spanish towns and ranches on its edges and as far south as Zacatecas." Morfi (1935:213) was more graphic in his

description of the "mouth that spews forth barbarous and cruel nations" ("que siempre ha sido la boca que vomita naciones bárbaras y crueles").

Daniel (1955:35) counted 200 nations that inhabited or took refuge in the desert but the first and foremost, the Tobosos, were legendary for their ferocity, tenacity, and mobility. They set the pattern that was to characterize the next 200 years of warfare between the Spanish (and later Mexican) colonial power and the native insurgency. The Tobosos were described as nomadic hunters and gatherers, notable for their stamina and their resistance to the rigors of their harsh environment.

> And yet they [the Tobosos) are great endurers of hunger and thirst, and other inclemencies of the weather to which they are subject through their exposure to a very cold temperature, as they use no other dress than that granted them by nature. They have no settlement, nor community cultivation or planting of the land, for which reasons it has never been possible to make offensive war upon them, nor to enter in pursuit of them in their country except very cautiously for a short distance, and that only a few times, and with little advantage. (Sierra Osorio 1683:221)

Their way of life was anathema to the Spanish chroniclers who gave a number of excuses for their inability to pacify the region:

> The latter region [country of the barbarous and rebellious Indians], while it is supremely rough and almost impenetrable to the Spaniards by reason of its underbrush, is no less dry, and in the whole of it there is not known to be a single river, creek or spring, its inhabitants sustaining themselves on it, more like wild beasts than as rational beings, by drinking filthy and corrupt water from some few lagoons, and the pools that the rain leaves for a while in the hollows of the rocks. When these fail they sustain themselves with the juice of wild fruits, roots, and the bark of plants and trees (Sierra Osorio 1683: 221).

In 1683, ex-governor Lope de Sierra Osorio (1683: 220) reported that Nueva Vizcaya was lost or in imminent danger of being lost "by reason of the uprising of 100 nations which contain uncounted numbers of very bellicose and warlike Indians. Twelve of these nations, comprised under the name Tobosos, are so desperate and valiant that they take or give no quarter, and they make slaves of all the women and children whom they capture." He repeated a recommendation first made in 1667 by then-Governor Antonio de Oca Sarmiento (Hackett 1926: 191), asking that a line of presidios be established to block exits from Toboso country to the reduced and settled areas of Nueva Vizcaya. Thus began the

fruitless attempts of the Spaniards to counteract mobile guerillas by building stationary fortifications.

Ten years later, under the pressures of displacement and disease, composite bands were being formed from the remnants of decimated ethnic groups, introducing new elements into the struggle for the Provincias Internas (Griffen 1969:40). The Tobosos had been "consumed by time and war" (Escorza 1693:235), and now made up less than a fourth of the hostiles lodged in the Bolsón. The difficulties the Spaniards encountered were described by Marin (1693: 393) who listed 85 tribes that lived in the area between La Junta and Durango in 1693. The steep mountainous terrain was ideal for ambush, one of the favorite guerrilla strategies used to harry travelers and confiscate their goods. Reportedly, the ambush parties lay in wait at narrow passes where maneuvering and escape were difficult "as is their custom, being painted and varnished the same color as the earth, and generally covered with sacaton (which is the grass which the country produces in abundance)" (Marin 1693: 397). Similar tactics were employed in their raids on ranches and "by their swift flight they take refuge and ambuscade themselves in the roughest parts of the mountains, and make it impossible to punish their thefts" (Marin 1693: 397).

Marin recommended a number of responses, ranging from pacification and settlement of the less warlike tribes to total extermination of the composite Cocoyomes-Tobosos. Under Marin's plan, the more pacific groups would be forced to resettle within sight of the presidios by mobile squads of soldiers who would seek them at "the sites and locations of their habitations (These are not permanent, for they live in the open like beasts, obtaining their food by hunting, and much of the time living on loathsome reptilian animals)" (Marin 1693: 401).

Although less than 100 Toboso warriors were left alive at this time, Marin credited them with being "the most pernicious and malevolent", apparently because their success in plundering the ranches and settled communities incited other groups to raid and rebellion. Their counterparts, the Cocoyomes, were frustrating Spanish attempts at pacification by negotiating for peace while they practiced war, leading General Retana to also advocate extermination. Again, the Spaniards faced the obstacle of containing guerrilla warfare in a hostile environment.

> The most opportune time to wage war upon them is in the rainy season, as water is then easily found everywhere for the soldiers and horses. The hardest and most difficult time is in the dry season, as all parts are then dry and sterile, and water is not to be found except at long distances, hence the soldiery experiences great suffering (Marin 1693: 401).

Morfi (1935:193-194; see also Griffen 1969:74) later documented the demise of the Tobosos ".. we saw many caves which we were assured had been the dwellings of the Toboso Indians, a barbarous nation that no longer exists" and ".. the Tobosos, a barbarous and cruel nation, which the famous captain Berroterán finished off, and which was succeeded by the one we generally call Apaches."

In 1728, Francisco Alvarez y Barreiro accompanied Brigadier Don Pedro de Rivera on an inspection of the Provincias Internas. His general map of 1728 illustrates the fate of the indigenous people caught between the Spanish movement north and the Apache movement south (Wheat 1957:83). The Bolsón is described as "*tierra havitado de los Indios ennemigos, Cocoyames, azoclames, tripas blancas, Zizimbres, y otras naciones quasi extinguidas*" (land inhabited by the hostile Indians, Cocoyames, azoclames, tripas blancas, Zizimbres, and other nations that are nearly extinct). The Natage Apaches are shown immediately north of the Rio Grande and west of the Rio de natages (presumably the Pecos River), and their kinsmen, the "Apaches Pharaones" apparently held sway east and north of the Natages.

The loss of yet another indigenous group is confirmed in 1729. When José de Berroterán, captain of the presidio San Francisco de los Conchos, was sent across the Rio Grande on a punitive and exploratory mission in 1729, his orders specified that he was to treat kindly with the peaceful Cibolos, friends of the Spanish *("que se acasso se Encontarse en perssequzion de la Marcha, con los Indios de nazion Zibolos, a estos no se les haga daño ninguna por ser afectos a los espanoles, antes se sean agassajados y acariziados")*. The veteran captain of San Juan Bautista, Don Joseph Antonio de Ecay Múzquiz (1729:7), responded that he had never heard of such a nation ("*en todos los años que ha Sirbo, por estos paisses; no lo se, ni he oido, haia semejante nazion de Indios*"). The Rio Grande for 50 leagues above San Juan Bautista was reportedly occupied by fierce and hostile Apaches, Jumanos, and Pelones (Weddle 1968:300). Although some of the early inhabitants may have survived along the Rio Grande and Conchos River, the Greater Bolsón was taken over by Apaches Griffen 1969: 100-101) who soon dominated the region (Lafora 1967: 81, 197-200; Morfi 1935: 364-368).

The map made by the engineer Nicolas Lafora (1967) from his firsthand experiences gained during the 1767 Marqés de Rubí inspection of the frontier also shows Apaches on the Rio Grande. More specifically, the Natages and Mescaleros were placed east and west of the Pecos River respectively, the Lipans farther east in what is now south Texas. The Bolsón, south of the Rio Grande, is described as "tierra despoblada donde se abrigan los Yndios enemigos y Apostatas de las Missones y de ella salen a hostilisas a la Nueva Vizcaya, y Coahuila (unpopulated land that shelters the enemy Indians and mission apostates and from which they

launch hostilities against Nueva Vizcaya and Coahuila). Rubí's recommendations for a new line of presidios were implemented in 1771 with the appointment of Hugo Oconor, former governor of Texas and commander at Presidio de San Sabá as *comandante inspector* (Daniel 1955:233; Vigness 1967).

Oconor's approach to the Apache problem in the Bolsón was twofold: he vigorously prosecuted several campaigns against the hostiles with ambiguous results while moving three established presidios - Santa Rosa to Agua Verde, Monclova to Monclova Viejo, and San Sabá to San Vicente - closer to the Rio Grande and establishing a fourth, San Antonio Bucareli de la Babia, as a stopgap northwest of Santa Rosa (Christiansen 1963). Nuestra Senora de Belen y Santiago de Amarillas, commonly called Presidio del Norte (de la Junta de los Rios), founded in 1759 and abandoned in 1766 when its garrison removed to Julimes, was restored to its original location at the confluence of the Conchos River and the Rio Grande (Castañeda 1939:231-232). Oconor retired from the frontier in 1776 when Teodoro de Croix was made the first commander general of the northern provinces (Thomas 1941).

In an attempt to overhaul the defensive and offensive capabilities of the Provincias Internas, Croix restructured the defensive line by pulling these same presidios back from the Rio Grande, founding fortified towns that ringed the Bolsón, establishing a more mobile cavalry, and campaigning against the Indians on their home grounds whenever he could avoid the most recent royal edict against harming the native peoples. Croix' comment on the Bolsón de Mapimí, however, is not unlike those voiced by his predecessors over the previous century: "Into this vast gulf composed of the most devious labyrinth of steep mountain ranges, from the time of the Conquest of Nueva Vizcaya until 1732, 85 different Indian nations have successively come in and been eliminated" (Daniel 1955:258).

When raiding intensified, Juan de Ugalde, governor of Coahuila, led four campaigns into the northern Bolsón between 1779 and 1783. With the majority of the soldiers in the field, the settlements of Coahuila were vulnerable to Apache attacks that inflicted severe property damage and considerable loss of life. Disagreements over this military focus caused Croix to remove Ugalde from his post in 1783, shortly before he, Croix, was promoted and reassigned to Peru.

Command passed to Brigadier Felipe de Neve who launched a major offensive against the Apaches in Sonora in the spring of 1784, the same year that at least one and perhaps two of the most complex inscriptions were painted at San Antonio de los Alamos. Neve's unexpected death in August of 1784 elevated the newly arrived Joseph Antonio Rengel to the commandancy until a triumvirate of officers,

including Rengel, Brigadier Jacobo Ugarte y Loyola, and Juan de Ugalde, the "stormy petrel" (John 1975:708), was formed in 1786.

Natural disasters plagued the Spanish populace in 1785, beginning with a drought that lasted at least two years; in this the *año de la hambre* or year of hunger, epidemics raged, the fields were abandoned, and food was in short supply, but the hostiles were quiet (Daniel 1955:275). Ugalde's return to the Provincias Internas as one of three newly appointed military commanders came just as raiding resumed in earnest. In July of 1786, a group of Mescaleros penetrated deep into Mexico, inciting a retaliatory campaign by Ugalde in 1787, followed by a series of expeditions that penetrated deep into modern-day Texas, as far as the canyon of the Nueces River where the town and county of Uvalde bear corrupted versions of his name. Ugalde's policy of military strength and his ability to turn the Lipans and Mescaleros against each other met with considerable success, but it was political intrigue that again removed him from office in 1790.

Through the end of the eighteenth and into the beginning of the nineteenth century, Spanish policy emphasized pacification of the Apaches, alternating between negotiation and force, until revolution rent the fabric of their military structure. The Mexican government spent decades petitioning the United States for redress from the raiders that descended on the settlements of the northern states from bases on the Red River. On the other side of the Rio Grande, the U.S. Military tried to contain Kickapoo and Apache hostiles who attacked Texas from villages under the protection of Santa Rosa (Músquiz). In 1881, the last military expedition against the guerrillas of the Bolsón de Mapimí utilized, like so many that came before, a three-pronged approach, following the old trails, camping at the same waterholes, and meeting the same reward – futility (Flores 1882). Although organized military action against them ceased, Apache raids into New Mexico were reported in the 1920s and 1930s and, according to one of the last of Geronimo's Chiricahuas, the Broncos, as they came to be called, were still in the mountains of Chihuahua in 1958 (Simmons 1994).

Rock Art as Propaganda in the War for Control of the Chichimec Sea

The site that best illustrates the use of rock art as propaganda in the unremitting war between native insurgents and colonial Spain is San Antonio de los Alamos, an oasis in the middle of the Bolsón frequented by thirsty travelers, no matter what their mission (see Figure 1). From a distance, the verdant green of the cottonwood trees that give this site its name advertises the presence of permanent water. A spring rising in the foothills of a small mountain range, Sierra San Antonio, trickles through a narrow cleft with precipitous walls that could be easily guarded by

sentries. Now dammed, the stream serves the *rancho* that nestles in the canyon mouth.

Guardians of the Canyon

Flanking the entrance to the canyon, looming over the narrow defile, are several oversized red paintings of recent vintage - - an Ayn Randian scene of men climbing a mountain, the life-size figure of a priest, a horned human face, a sun face, an outline of a dancer in profile, and a skeleton emerging from the rock (Figure 2, see title page). Cárdenas (1978) described one of these paintings as an eagle carrying a snake, the symbol of the Aztec empire adopted by the Mexican republic, but rock decay and erosion have rendered it almost unintelligible. The outlined dancer is a common theme in the Puebloan art of the southwestern U.S. The horned head and sun symbol are common Comanche themes, leading Cárdenas to assume that the site was generally attributable to those latecomers to the region. These paintings do seem to be very recent and very Europeanized, but their position guarding the opening to the canyon sends a clear territorial message.

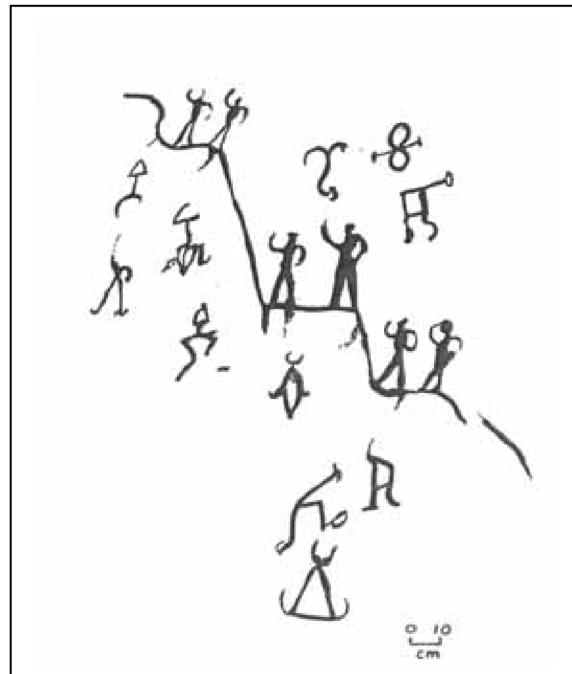


Figure 2. Guardians to the entrance to the canyon at the entrance to the canyon and spring at San Antonio de los Alamos or Acatita la Grande. Above) men on a mountain? And cattle brands? Below) horned head and sun face; an outlined dancer (photo enhanced) and a priest-like figure which had a mirror image that has deteriorated almost beyond recognition.

Jinetes sin Cabezas or Headless Horsemen

The second area of interest is inside the canyon where smooth bedrock walls rise above the stream. There, about 90 small horsemen in multi-colored Spanish official regalia prance across the wall; all but a few of them are headless (Figure 3). Cárdenas (n.d.,1978), who first described this cavalcade as *Jinetes sin Cabezas* (headless horsemen), suggests that it manifests sympathetic magic and constitutes a form of social protest. In the context of the other paintings at this site, it may also serve as a warning to the Spanish troops that used the ranch as a staging ground for campaigns into the Bolsón (Nelson 1936: Map). The horsemen's clothing is, however, far too elaborate for simple soldiers fighting in the desert. The scene may be putting a new slant on some actual event but the message is clearly decapitation and death clothed in the garb of official Spain.

Figure 3. Various headless horsemen. The paint has been blurred by exposure to the elements, especially rain. Note the emphasis on clothing and the depiction of what appears to be a military post.

Medusa's Lair

Between these two scenes - the monstrous guardians of the canyon mouth and the miniature horsemen overlooking the stream - are the clearest examples of the juxtaposition of Spanish inscriptions and native rock art. The smoke-blackened ceiling of a small rock shelter, a mere cleft in the limestone cliff, is covered with negative hand and arm prints, outlined in white (Figure 4). To the observer standing beneath them, the uneasy sensation is one of writhing piles of human appendages. The negative impression of a long rifle confirms the historic age of some of these images; the Spanish names indicate the appeal it still exerts. It is difficult to convey the ambience of unrest or anxiety that haunts this site but this intangible yet ominous sensation must have been even more oppressive to untutored Spanish soldiers, laboring under their own superstitious belief in the works and ways of devils and demons.

Figure 4. Writhing arms on ceiling of alcove; negative image of flintlock rifle, possibly an American long rifle dating between 1780 and 1840; Medusa-like face at far end of cave above a natural ledge "throne"; strange Cat-in-the-Hat image on lower wall, hence the pink cast to the bedrock, "leaping" from the floor level, its body following the natural curve of the wall, and extending white clawed hands.

The Battle of Sierra de la Rinconada

At the entrance to this grotto, where the exterior wall is illuminated by the desert sunshine, an anonymous inscription can be seen as the Spanish counterpart of the headless horsemen pictographs (Figure 5, below).

el Cap.^{n} Dn Josef Ven-
tura Moreno con los Oficia-
les, Tne. Menchaca yden Cor
tes, y Alf^{s} Pacheco, y las tropas
de Coahuila: Atacó una nu-
merosa gandulada de Yn-
dios, matando 3, y muchos
eridos, en la Sierra de la
Rinconada, y quitó toda
la Cavallada Mulada, y todo
el Pillage, quedando eridos
Tne. Cortés, y dos Soldados
en 6 de Marzo
1784 (or 1786).

Translated it reads:

Captain Don Josef Ventura Moreno with officers Lt. Menchaca and Cortés and Ensign (or 2nd Lt.) Pacheco, and the Coahuila troops: attacked a numerous group of hostile Indians, killing 3 and wounding many, in the Sierra de la Rinconada, taking all the mule train and all the pillage, leaving Lt. Cortés and two soldiers wounded. March 6, 1784 (or 1786)

The inscription is so vivid and clear that at first glance it seems exceedingly modern, although why a prankster would travel hours across the uninhabited desert to concoct a forgery that few will ever see taxes the imagination. However, there are several proofs that this inscription is authentic. The writing material is red ocher, identical to that used in the numerous native pictographs at the site. The orthography and vocabulary are clearly of eighteenth century usage. The word *gandul* or *gandulada* is of Arabic derivation, and originally designated members of a particular military group among the Moors of Africa and Granada (Real Academia Espanola 1925). It later came to mean vagabond or idler but, in northern Mexico, generically referred to roving hostile Indians or *indios bárbaros*. More importantly, the officers, Ventura Moreno, Menchaca, Cortés and Pacheco, figured in the larger frontier military and political scene.

Don José Ventura Moreno

Captain Don José Ventura Moreno was listed as a lieutenant of a small squad of dragoons from the Regimiento de España in 1777 (Morfi 1967:411). He was a senior adjutant in the same regiment in 1779 and a captain by the time he served with Ugalde on his 1781-1783 campaigns into the Bolsón de Mapimí (Starnes 1971: 51; Ugalde 1783: 212). Ugalde singled him out for some of the more dangerous missions, noting that Ventura narrowly escaped death during the final confrontation of the last campaign when a bullet lodged in his musket sheath and his horse's ear was pierced by an arrow (Starnes 1971: 62). His name favors a 1784 interpretation of the inscription date, as Ventura Moreno does not appear with Ugalde in the 1787 campaign where presumably an experienced captain would have been most welcome.

Teniente Cortés

Apparently, Lt. Cortés quite handily survived the wound he received at Sierra de la Rinconada as he was serving with Ugalde in Santa Rosa (Musquiz) in 1787 (Nelson 1940:456; Ugalde 1788a:237). In fact, that year he was back at San Antonio de los Alamos (Ugalde 1788b: 398) for the start of Ugalde's next campaign into the *Decantado Seno del Bolsón de Mapimí* (Ugalde 1788a: 57). Nelson (1940:456) inexplicably refers to him as José but Ugalde's inventory of military goods from that period clearly identifies him as Juan Cortés, an official at "Babia" where he was lieutenant and *comandante* of the presidial company (Ugalde 1788b: 237). Ugalde (1788a: 354, 394) described Cortés as capable of dealing with the Apaches because he was an "*oficial bastante estimacion entre ellos*" (an officer held in high esteem by them). Juan Antonio Cortés went on to become commander of the Presidio at La Bahía (Castañeda 1942:180; O'Connor 1966:39), moving out of the conflict in the Bolsón into troubles of his own. In 1791, while commander, Cortés was charged with smuggling goods into Texas, but never tried (Benavides 1989:229; Faulk 1964:48). According to Cortés, La Bahía was the poorest settlement in the entire province, the church in desperate need of a new roof and bells which he wanted to cast from old brass cannons (Castañeda 1942:180; O'Connor 1966:52-54). Perhaps this poverty contributed to his forcible retirement from the military in 1797 due to shortfalls in his accounts at La Bahía (Benavides 1989:230; Castañeda 1942:209; Faulk 1964:48-49; Jackson 1986:471). He still, however, received an annual salary of 1000 pesos in his retirement.

Alférez Pacheco

Alférez Pacheco is probably Leandro Martínez Pacheco, brother of the better-known Raphael, former commander of Presidio San Agustin, first presidial captain at La Babia, and soon to be governor of Texas (1786-1790). In the primary sources, the brothers are generally referred

to by their matronym Pacheco, and only rarely by their patronym Martínez (Castañeda 1939:91; Morfi 1935: 183, 251). Leandro was a subaltern, under Captain Ventura Moreno and Lieutenant Menchaca, in Ugalde's third campaign into the Bolsón in 1782 (Ugalde 1783:220; Starnes 1971:51). By 1788, he had been promoted to the rank of commander at Agua Verde (Benavides 1989:640; Castañeda 1939:89; Ugalde 1788b: passim). Overshadowed by his flamboyant brother, Leandro is best known as one of the defenders who staved off military attempts to remove Rafael from his post as commander at Presidio San Agustín de Ahumada in 1764 (Bolton 1970:370-371; Castañeda 1939: 92). Leandro, who was ill at the time, stood guard until the building was fired, whereupon he was carried to safety by other collaborators while his brother made good his escape through a secret door in the chimney. Ironically, Leandro's brother Rafael was arrested by José Menchaca's father, Luis, who apparently treated his supposed prisoner with much leniency, an approach that served the Menchacas in good stead once Martínez Pacheco became governor (Jackson 1986: 321-322).

Teniente Menchaca

Lt. Menchaca of the Sierra de la Rinconada was the first child of Luis Antonio Menchaca and Ignacia Nuñes Morillo, born in San Antonio (Béxar) in 1746, and christened Joseph Nicolás de la Santísima Trinidad (Chabot 1937:104; Morfi 1967: 405). There were a number of José or Joseph Menchacas in Texas in the latter half of the eighteenth century, including the lieutenant, his grandfather Francisco who, according to Chabot (1937:102), was also known as Joseph Antonio, his uncle José Félix, and perhaps four or five cousins, all named Joseph. This has led to considerable confusion, especially between uncle José Félix and José or Josef the nephew. [1]

The Menchacas were an illustrious military family listed among the first settlers of San Antonio (Poyo 1991: 53; Ramsdell 1959:113; Tsarks1974:322) with large land holdings in what is now South Texas (Jackson 1986; Thonhoff 1992: 33). Their Rancho de San Francisco was the largest private ranch in Texas in the 1760s, and by 1779 the patriarch of the family, Luis Antonio, was the province's most affluent citizen (Jackson 1986:189). In their military capacity, the Menchacas were one of only two families to hold private ownership of the Governor's Palace, the home of the first presidial captains on Military Plaza in San Antonio (Ramsdell 1959:113).[2]

José Menchaca's military career spanned 30 years. In 1771, he was commissioned as an *alférez*, equivalent to an ensign or second lieutenant

[2] Ramsdell also states that Luis Menchaca's son, José Menchaca, was once governor of Texas (see also Jackson 1986:202n). In fact, it was Luis' brother, José Félix, who was temporarily appointed to that office (Croix to Cabello, 1780).

at Béxar where his father was captain (Benavides 1989:652). In 1776, fresh from his promotion to First Lieutenant (Chabot 1937:104; Morfi 1967:405), Josef Menchaca, as he signed himself, was on the muster of the company of cavalry at Presidio San Antonio de Béxar and an officer in charge of 20 men at the newly constructed fort at Cibolo Creek (Jackson 1986: 189; Thonhoff 1992:71). In 1778, he, Lt. Antonio Treviño, and 22 soldiers rode with the famous negotiator Athanase de Mèzierés on his peace-making expedition to the frontier nations (John 1975: 512); the next year, he and his men escorted the Tonkawas from Béxar to the Colorado River after their visit to de Mèzierés and Governor Cabello (John 1975:549-550).

According to Chabot (1937:104), in 1780 José and his father, Captain Luis Menchaca, "became implicated in unfortunate circumstances, and an investigation was ordered...in consequence of which it was indispensable that Lieut. José Menchaca leave the Presidio of San Antonio owing to his 'fatal conduct'." It appears that the Menchacas received illegal contraband – slaves, tobacco, French fabrics – in exchange for cattle raised on their ranch south of San Antonio (Benavides 1989:653; Tsarks 1974:328fn). As but one action in a long simmering feud between Governor Domingo Cabello y Robles and the Menchacas (father, uncle, and sons), José was charged with six abuses, ranging from failure to file reports to adultery with his servant's wife, and banished to Presidio de San Juan Bautista (Jackson 1986:215). José's legal problems apparently didn't keep him out of the saddle - in June, this "old hand with the Apaches" was sent out first to chastise Lipan horse thieves and then in pursuit of Comanche raiders (John 1975:616-618). He was still in San Antonio in 1781 (October 30), when a detachment of 32 men from Béxar under his command dislodged a considerable number of Lipans in the vicinity of Arroyo del Cibolo by threat and the Indians turned over 30 horses stolen at San Fernando (Thonhoff 1992:63).

By the fall of 1782, Menchaca was one of seven officers, including José Ventura Moreno, in Coahuila with Ugalde on his most extensive campaign, one that reached well into the northern Bolsón in search of Apache encampments (Starnes 1971:51, 1972). After his service with Ugalde on the early campaigns and Ugalde's dismissal, Menchaca was appointed *comandante* of the presidial company of Agua Verde (Benavides 1989:653), by then moved to San Fernando de Austria, from whence he apparently carried on the war in the Bolsón, although the battle of the Sierra de la Rinconada is not specifically mentioned in any of the sources consulted. A short time later, however, in the autumn of 1786, Lt. Menchaca and 175 of the *tropas de Coahuila,* serving as escorts for 226 bison-hunting Mescaleros, repulsed the attack of some 300 Comanches (John 1975:728; Menchaca 1787: 380-382). This confrontation achieved lasting fame and is recounted by several historians (Daniel 1955:282; Nelson 1936:203), perhaps because it

illustrates the vicissitudes in the relationship between Spanish policy and native people. The peripatetic traveler, Pedro Vial, had succeeded in negotiating peace with the Comanches, including the very chiefs who led this group, earlier that year in San Antonio (Castañeda 1942: Loomis and Nasitir 1967: 267). Against the better judgement of the tribal elders, young warriors precipitated this conflict by firing upon Menchaca's troops during an attempt to steal their horses. The soldiers fired back, two chiefs were killed, the battle ended, and the two sides parted after burying the ill-fated dead.

In 1787, still commander at San Fernando de Austria, Menchaca was again with Ugalde in Coahuila. There, he witnessed a religious ceremony and *mitote* (celebration) conducted by Apaches during a diplomatic mission to Santa Rosa, and his account remains one of the few that provides details of such a ritual event (Nelson 1940:454-456; Ugalde 1788a:181-185). In May 1798, Menchaca and 121 men were dispatched from Presidio de Agua Verde to the San Sabá River canyon, a favored rendezvous of marauding Comanches, to meet with their chiefs and demand the return of stolen property (Weddle 1964:190). Severely outnumbered and outclassed, Menchaca retired to San Fernando without inciting conflict, much to the relief of Spanish officialdom (Castañeda 1942:120).

A marriage certificate was issued to Joseph Menchaca and Maria Encarnación Rodríguez, February 18, 1800, in Chihuahua (Chabot 1937:105; see also Benavides 1989:653). This union produced two daughters, Gertrudis and María Josefa. Following his retirement in 1801, the Menchacas apparently lived in San Antonio where José inherited and then sold the building now known as the Governor's Palace, a dwelling that had been in the family since 1763 when his father, Luis, was commander of the presidio (Ramsdell 1959:113).[1] He also disposed of his interest in the family ranch, inherited from his brother Luis, who died in 1803 (Menchaca 1803). A deed dated 1805 describes one José Menchaca as a Captain of Cavalry (retired) in the presidio of Agua Verde and resident in the Villa of San Fernando (Béxar) (Chabot 1937:105). In 1806, however, Menchaca was again called into service to explore the area west of San Antonio with the intent of expanding settlement into that area (Castañeda 1942:319).

In March of 1811, Menchaca, back in Coahuila and again at San Fernando de Austria, is described as an "Hispanic Texan in exile" (Almaráz 1971: 122). Despite his early sympathy for the revolution, Menchaca aided the royalist governor Salcedo against Hidalgo's rebellious forces (Castañeda 1950:25-26). Menchaca's support for the royalist cause was especially important because he "was not only highly respected by all the commanders of the northern outposts but he also enjoyed the confidence of the Lipan-Apaches and could easily enlist more than a

thousand braves for the enterprise" (Castañeda 1950:26). However, by the fall of 1811, this "highly respected old Indian fighter" (Schwarz 1985:4) had again changed his allegiance (Chipman 1992:234; Schwarz 1985:4, 8-9; Jackson 1986:533-535) and, by February of 1812, had been tried and found guilty of fomenting an abortive insurrection in San Antonio (Almaráz 1971:134). According to various sources, he was executed for treason by Salcedo (Walker 1963: 466 fn); captured, beheaded, and his head impaled on a pike at the Alamo (Castañeda 1950:98); or killed in the battle of Medina (Simons and Hoyt 1984:158; Webb 1952, Vol. 2:172) [a fate that actually befell his nephew Miguel Menchaca (Menchaca 1937; Schwarz 1985:129)]. But, in his memoirs, Antonio Menchaca states that José Menchaca was imprisoned in Chihuahua where he died, still in chains, in 1820 (Menchaca 1937:130, see also Walker 1963: 466fn).

The Combatants

The anonymous *tropos de Coahuila* were part of the army of the Provincias Internas whose roster showed 2,840 officers and soldiers in 1783 and 3,200 in 1787 (Moorhead 1968:88; 1975:92). Of those, only 375 were stationed in the four presidios of Coahuila, including Agua Verde (San Fernando de Austria), presumably the base of the contingent involved in the battle of Sierra de la Rinconada. To the right and a few feet below the inscription *140 soldados* is written in the same red pigment and handwriting, providing a possible count of the Spanish participants. The composition of these troops probably mirrored that described for the October 1786 encounter with the Comanches when Menchaca's 175 soldiers were drawn from companies attached to the presidios of Monclova, Rio Grande, Agua Verde, and Bavia [sic]; the Volante (flying or mobile) Brigade from Saltillo; and Indian auxiliaries (Menchaca 1787:380). Another inscription, painted next to the account of the battle of Sierra de Rinconada, notes the contribution of military personnel from Presidio del Norte.

The *ganduls* of Sierra de la Rinconada were most probably Mescalero Apaches. Despite Menchaca's skirmish with Comanche forces in 1786, the Apaches were the common enemy, firmly entrenched in the Bolsón (Daniel 1955; Moorhead 1968; Jones 1988; John 1991), thus the object of most of Ugalde's military maneuvering during both his tours of duty.

The Sierra de la Rinconada is difficult to identify. The peculiar boomerang configuration of the small mountain range that harbors San Antonio de los Alamos does in fact form a corner – *rincon or rinconada* – but there is no archival evidence that it was ever called by that name. *The Gazetteer's Guide to the Chihuahua Desert Region* (Henrickson and Straw 1976) lists 79 modern place names that include variations on

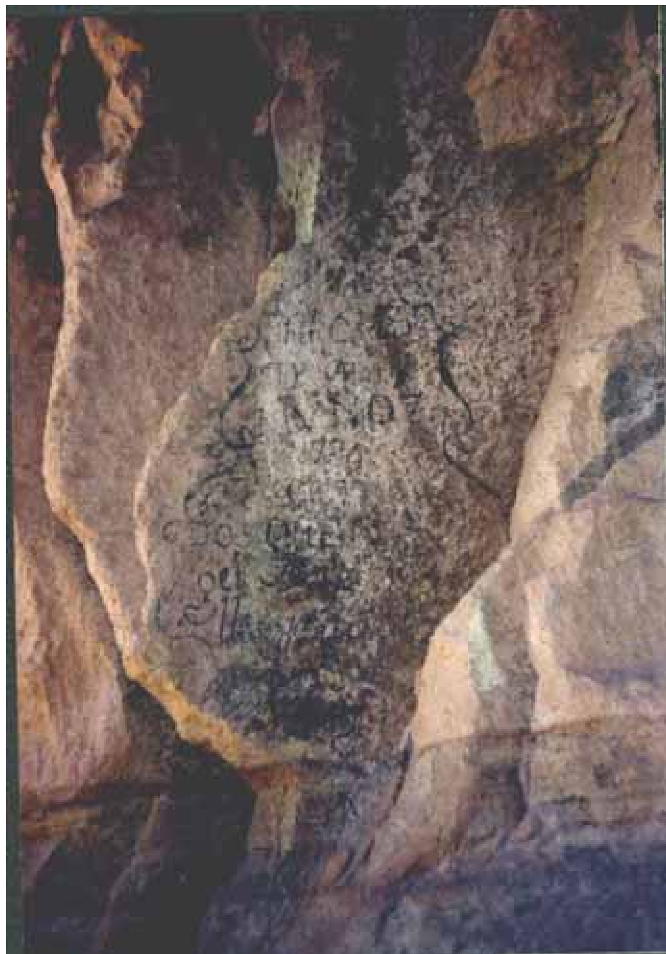
rincón or rinconada of which only one, the Arroyo La Rinconada, is within a few miles of San Antonio de los Alamos. The only sierra that still bears the name Rinconada is an outlier of the Sierra Madre northwest of Monterrey, adjacent to the Monclova highway.

The site of San Antonio de los Alamos or Acatita la Grande became the staging area for Ugalde's next foray into the Bolsón (Ugalde 1788b: 396; Nelson 1936:Map) and was soon incorporated into the colonial empire. As late as 1881, the ranch was still notable for its experience in combating native incursions (Flores 1882). Perhaps the huge red paintings that overlook the entrance to the box canyon are attributable to that era; some of the pictographs suggest that the artist was native but others seem more European. By this time, perhaps many of the distinctions were blurred.

The Escudo of Manuel Muñoz

Immediately adjacent to this testimonial is another Spanish inscription, painted in black pigment on a flat vertical slab whose outline is followed by an elaborate border, replete with curlicues and flourishes, that encloses a text that is only partially readable (Figure 6).

Then Coron
D. Man___
Muñoz
1784
con
Jos____
gel____
llos y ___



According to various sources, Manuel Muñoz was born in Matamoros, Castile, Spain about 1730 (Los Béxareños 1984:56; 1985:133). His wife, Maria Gertrudis del Cipirán, was also a native of Castile (Chabot 1937:23) who apparently died shortly before 1795 (Los Béxareños 1984:56). He was a commissioned captain when, with 6 officers and 43 soldiers, he arrived at La Junta to establish the newly constituted Presidio del Norte in December 1759 (Castañeda 1938:229; Jones 1988: 157), just in time for the baptism of fire that marked its first year. In July 1760, 800 Apaches attacked the presidio and were repulsed by 29 Spanish soldiers who manned the stockade. Shortly thereafter, Fr. Pedro Serrano, in his general complaint about the status of missions in Nueva Vizcaya, condescended that "the captain *ad interim,* Don Manuel Muñoz, is a mere boy, without experience, and belonging to the governor's faction" (Hackett 1926:499). Experience was gained as Muñoz remained with his command through its unauthorized removal to Julimes in 1766 (Morfi 1967:393) and its return to La Junta in 1773 (Moorhead 1975:50n). In 1775, Muñoz led the Nueva Vizcaya contingent during Oconor's (1776) campaign to clear the Bolsón of Apaches but his success or failure remains unreported, overshadowed by the accounts of his contemporaries, Ugarte y Loyola and Martínez Pacheco (Daniel 1955: 245-251; Weddle 1968:336-337). His mission was to march from La Junta to the Guadalupe Mountains where his 60 men would cut off the Indians moving in front of the eastern assault mounted by Ugarte and Pacheco with the help of some 415 soldiers, volunteers, and Indian auxiliaries (Daniel 1955:246-247). Although scouts from the main force crossed Muñoz' trail near the Texas-New Mexico border, the Spanish forces never coalesced and the goals of the campaign went unfulfilled.

Muñoz remained a comandante in the presidios of the Rio Grande from 1776 to 1783 (Morfi 1967:393). In 1777, he was elevated to lieutenant colonel, achieving the rank and position cited in this inscription. He later became a full colonel and interim governor of Nueva Vizcaya. In 1779, as part of Croix' peacekeeping mission, Muñoz "captain and commandant of that division" (Thomas 1941: 125) returned to Presidio del Norte to conclude an agreement with Mescalero leaders. As part of the inducements for peace, Muñoz laid out and built a new pueblo, optimistically named Nuestra Señora de la Buena Esperanza, at del Norte but efforts to reduce the Apaches to settled life failed and the site was completely abandoned within two years (Moorhead 1968:204-105; 1975:246-250).

In 1783, Comandante General Neve reported that Lt. Colonel Muñoz had led a campaign against renegades, fugitives from the Durango prison reinforced by evil witches *(mal hechores*) and apostate Tarahumaras (Jones 1988:195). Although Muñoz succeeded in dispersing one enemy that plagued Nueva Vizcaya, the Apache menace still raged, so it is not improbable that campaigns in the Bolsón led him to San

Antonio de los Alamos in 1784. Muñoz was appointed governor of Texas in 1790, assuming the position of another veteran of the Bolsón, Rafael Martínez Pacheco (Benavides 1989:700). His tenure was marred by infirmities and by his inattention to duty (John 1975:763-765). Attempts to replace him, as he requested, were frustrated by forces beyond the control of his administrative superiors and he died in office, at the age of 70, in San Antonio in 1799.

Unfortunately, exposure to the elements has seriously degraded the lower central portion of this slab, obscuring much of the rest of the inscription. Few words end in "gel" but one possibility is the name of the newly appointed commander general, Joseph Antonio Rengel who assumed his office in 1784; this suggestion also accommodates the possible "Jos" on the preceding line. Any number of words end in "llos" and "lles". Troops from Presidio del Norte were often employed in campaigns in the Bolsón beginning with Hugo Oconor's expedition of 1775 and continuing with Ugalde until his second dismissal in 1790 (Moorhead 1968:251). In 1783, 106 soldiers were stationed at the presidio (Moorhead 1975:92).

The Unknown Soldier

The earliest inscription in this grotto is a simple statement incised into the bedrock below the description of the battle of Sierra de la Rinconada. Set within a trapezoidal outline are three lines: *El Commando/caido/1782.* Immediately beneath the last two digits of the date, the number 81 has been cut into the rock, apparently as a correction of the year. Presumably, this testimonial commemorates the death of an anonymous comrade-in-arms in 1781.

The Revolutionary Era

Within the grotto, beneath the panoply of hands and arms, a red and white pictograph is undated, but the theme is consistent with revolutionary zeal. A red heraldic eagle with outspread wings is superimposed on a white background that is configured like a flag flying from a pole of the same color. Red letters arc over the eagle: V I V A T G U E R R E R O. Other less artistic names and dates represent a military presence here in 1831 and 1890.

Discussion

Although San Antonio de los Alamos is the most dramatic example of rock art as propaganda, documentary evidence demonstrates that the native viewpoint presented by the headless horsemen is not a solitary occurrence. In 1715, the Bishop of Durango was traveling between the presidios of El Gallo and Cerro Gordo on the *Camino Real* where, at a

stop called Santo Domingo, his party narrowly averted ambush by 75 Acoclames, Cocoyomes, and Coahuilas thanks to his escort Martin de Alday of presidio El Pasaje and 35 soldiers (Berroterán 1748; Daniel 1955:143). This confrontation was apparently one among several commemorated by a series of pictographs painted on a rock over the waterhole at Acatita la Grande (Berroterán 1748; Griffen 1969:126), one of the fabled haunts of desperados over the centuries (Ecay Múzquiz 1729:8; Griffen 1969: passim).

> ... cuyo hecho caracterizado por los enemigos, se halla en el paraje de Acatita la grande, pintado su Illma. con su forlón y cocheros en la misma positura que lo observaron tirando el un cochero las mulas del cabestro, y el otro poniéndoles tapaojos, y asimismo dicho capitan y sus soldados (Berroterán 1748:172).

Roughly translated, this paragraph describes how, at Acatita la Grande, the enemies (Indians) painted a picture of the bishop, with his coach and coachmen, as they saw them - one coachman leading the mules by their halters, the other putting blinders on them. Also pictured were the captain and his soldiers.

Ugalde (1788b:396) seems to indicate that Acatita la Grande and San Antonio de los Alamos are but different names for the same place. At least three different places bore the name Acatita, which means *places with cane* and, by extension, water: Acatita, Acatita Bajan (now called Bajan), and Acatita la Grande. Pictographs have been painted over the spring that feeds the modern hamlet, rancho, and valley still called Acatita, north of Torreon (see Figure 1), but they are simple geometric designs that can not by any stretch of the imagination be called lively, as Griffen (1969: 126) indicates, or representational. Although the headless horsemen at San Antonio de los Alamos are on smooth rock over the waterhole and they clearly depict Spaniards dressed in regal finery, suitable for the retinue of the Bishop of Durango as described by Berroterán, the headless horsemen are not engaged in any kind of confrontation, nor do they contain many of the details provided in his account. There is no chaise or coach (*forlón*); the animals are horses, not mules; and none are wearing blinders (*tapaojos*). It is possible that these specific figures are obscured by the calcite staining which streaks across parts of the panel or lost by spalling that has disfigured other areas. Another possibility is that Berroterán was referring to one or more of the deteriorated paintings that line the cliffs along the stream course where specificity has been lost to fading and exfoliation. In general, it can be assumed that some representational art was painted here in 1715 by an indigenous Acoclame, Cocoyome, or Coahuila artist unacquainted with the conventions of Plains Indian combat autobiographies, and that most

of the other art, not described by Berroterán, postdates the famed ambush of the Bishop of Durango.

San José de las Piedras was another node in the trail system through the Bolsón and it bears what might be considered typical Plains Indian pictographs showing combat between mounted and pedestrian warriors. At least three different episodes of painting are represented: pedestrian warriors armed with shields, mounted combatants bearing lances, and bird-like images rising above it all. Early twentieth century graffiti now overlies the central panel but earlier travelers also left their mark, illustrating how quickly paint erodes in this environment. Forty-niner George Evans (1974) wrote in his diary

> May 21... found ourselves at the foot of a mountain of red rocks, out of the side of which flowed, in a weak stream, living water... Rocks that will probably weigh 200,000 tons lie in a circle around this water, and ten men could defend themselves against five hundred... I am writing these lines in a cave, the walls of which are decorated with figures representing the hunter in chase of the buffalo, the horse and the warrior, and other representations, rudely drawn and colored with dull dyes of various hues. I took up a coal and in large letters printed my name on the wall, and, however humble, I hope the passer-by will see and recognize the hand (Evans 1945:61).

Evans was doomed to disappointment - his handwriting lasted a little over 100 years. Slides taken in 1966 show his name, written in black, over the right lateral painting, but by 1995, wind had erased all traces of George Evans, Forty-niner, at San José de las Piedras. The ground is literally covered with burned rock and modern garbage, the former the residue of prehistoric use of this perennial water source, the latter demonstrating the continued importance of water in the desert. Evans (1945:62) mistook the charcoal of many fires for bituminous coal which he counted with silver as among the many riches that could be obtained here with considerable effort. The spring at San José was equally well known to veteran Spanish soldiers who stopped there en route to the old presidio of San Vicente, off the tip of the Big Bend of the Rio Grande. The last full scale Mexican military campaign against the hostile guerillas of the Bolsón in 1881 used San José de las Piedras as a base for operations (Flores 1882). Overhangs beneath the huge boulders that give this site its name have been converted to dwellings and animal pens, continuing its use into the twenty-first century.

A similar setting is found a few miles west of San José at Piedritas, another community built around a number of enormous boulders that also bear remnant rock art. One set of figures, protected by their position low on the rock under an overhang, shows a warrior and his

mount. The locals identify the animal as a mule rather than a horse but cannot tell why. Another figure, called La India, purportedly shows a woman in a long dress but exposure to the elements has blurred the paint beyond recognition.

San Antonio de los Alamos is also not the only site bearing written evidence of Juan de Ugalde's expeditions against the Apache. It appears that at least three other inscriptions were reported to Alessio Robles (1978:599) by an informant – believed now to be Luis Alberto Guajardo - who sent him a photograph of one (Figure 7) and advised him that he knew of two more by the same author. However, only the one location was given: "CAPITAN D. JVAN D VGALDE 1783" was chiseled into the face of a large rock in the Sanguijuela canyon, in the foothills of the Serranias del Burro (Alessio Robles 1978:598; Luis Lopez Elizondo, personal communication). This date attributes the inscription to Ugalde's first series of campaigns into the Bolsón, just prior to his first removal from authority (Daniel 1955: 265-266). Alessio Robles' correspondent added that Don Venustiano Carranza, the famous revolutionary general, had told him of yet-another (fourth) inscription, the one at San Antonio de los Alamos, implying that two others remain unrecorded at unspecified locations (Alessio Robles 1978:599). Coincidentally, Venustiano Carranza is commemorated at the large petroglyph site Boca de Potrerillos near Monterrey, where a freestanding rock is engraved with the proclamation "Muera el Traidor de Vera Cruz, Venustiano".

Figure 7. General Luis Alberto Guajardo, Alessio Robles' correspondent, in front of the Ugalde inscription in the Sanguijuela Canyon, taken in 1936 (photo courtesy of Luis Lopéz Elizondo)

Yet a fifth inscription, at los Altares in northeastern Coahuila, was described by Colonel Emilio Langberg in 1851 as the names of the soldiers who carried out the first campaigns against the Indians (Alessio Robles 1978:559). In Alessio Robles' estimation, these were Ugalde's forces. His troops were definitely there on January 8, 1783 ("pero hazer penetrar hasta su centro y salen por su boca y paraje de los Altares del numeso Cuerpo de Cavallada y cargas de Bastimento", Ugalde 1783:220). The faint spidery traces of these inscriptions can still be detected above panels of native petroglyphs but all that can be read is "...*issima*" and "*de Agosto de*..." implying yet another Spanish stopover at Altares. The Native American presence at this site is signaled by extensive petroglyph panels dominated by arrow point motifs, indicative of their relatively recent age. The Forty-niner Evans (1945: 70) had nothing but praise for the beauty of the site he called Altarias or Spring of the Heights, but he failed to mention any inscriptions or petroglyphs.

Figure 6. Petroglyphs at Altares are now buried by shifting gravel. Note bow and arrow in the hands of figure at frame left.

Summary and Conclusion

Although the arid and mountainous reaches of the Bolsón de Mapimí daunted the first Spanish explorers, experience taught the military commanders to emulate the guerillas that so successfully exploited its fastness by following native trails from waterhole to waterhole. As the ring of settlement grew tighter around the Bolsón, former Indian strongholds, like Acatita la Grande, became incorporated

into the safety net of military operations but the more remote reaches remained untouchable until the dawn of the twentieth century (Flores 1882). Roads ran east of the Bolsón to San Juan Bautista near modern Eagle Pass, centrally up the Valle de la Babia to San José de las Piedras and on to the old presidio of San Vicente, or circled west to reach the juncture of the Rio Grande and Conchos River at La Junta, modern Presidio-Ojinaga. Late in the period of Spanish hegemony, other military trails were established; one roughly paralleled the Rio Grande from the waterholes of Las Vacas, modern-day Ciudad Acuña, to La Junta, avoiding the waterless terrain of the interior Bolsón in favor of the rugged canyon country (Flores 1882). The historic distribution of communities in the Bolsón follows the prehistoric pattern (Taylor 1964). Scatterings of adobe houses cluster around springs and waterholes that bear the same names shown on early Spanish maps of expeditionary and military routes. Many of the *ejidos* of the central Bolsón are now almost totally abandoned, leaving a few persistent and hardy souls in hamlets composed of vacant houses. Although no attempt has been made to archeologically define the recurrence of occupation at these sites, it is unlikely that much remains to show the passage of mobile expeditionary forces, whether Native American, Spanish, or Mexican. The rock art is one feature of the cultural landscape that can be followed through the Bolsón. Maps, documents, and historical accounts have led to the recording of juxtaposed pictographs and inscriptions (or graffiti) at San Antonio de los Alamos (Arreola Pérez 1991:62- 65; Cardenas 1978), Altares (Alessio Robles 1978), and San José de los Piedras (Arreola Pérez 1991:64; Cardenas 1978). In turn, the rock art has contributed information about people and places at specific points in time as well as providing a glimpse of the psychological warfare conducted by both sides in the struggle to control the Bolsón de Mapimí.

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