

SILVER AND GOLD IN THE EARLY COMMERCIAL SYSTEM OF THE GULF OF CALIFORNIA, 1735-1767¹

La plata y el oro en el temprano sistema comercial del Golfo de California, 1735-1767

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ABSTRACT: Baja California was remote from mainland New Spain, yet the quasi-island lay on the route connecting Asia to the Americas. In 1732, Jesuits responded to donor pressure by opening Mission San José del Cabo at the Bay of San Bernabé long used occasionally by ships returning from Asia. This opened a Pandora's box, as men with ties to mercantile networks in Álamos, Compostela, and Guadalajara competed to control the new institution. The group with ties to Guadalajara dominated, founding in 1748 a mining settlement in southern Baja California, and gaining in 1753 ships to ply the Gulf. The literature views Bourbon reform in 1768 as bringing trade to the Gulf of California, but commerce by regional merchants had already by 1748 transformed the southern part of Baja California.

KEYWORDS: Manila Galleon, Trade, Manuel Ocio, Bernal de Huidobro, Fernando Rivera y Moncada, 18th Century.

RESUMEN: Baja California estaba alejada del continente de Nueva España, pero esta cuasi-isla se encontraba en la ruta que conectaba Asia con América. En 1732, los jesuitas respondieron a la presión de los donantes abriendo la Misión de San José del Cabo en la bahía de San Bernabé, utilizada desde hacía tiempo de vez en cuando por los barcos que regresaban de Asia. Esto abrió una caja de Pandora, ya que los hombres vinculados a las redes mercantiles de Álamos, Compostela y Guadalajara compitieron por controlar la nueva institución. El grupo vinculado a Guadalajara se impuso, fundando en 1748 un asentamiento minero en el sur de Baja California y obteniendo en 1753 barcos para navegar por el golfo. La historiografía considera que las reformas borbónicas de 1768 trajeron el comercio al golfo de California, pero el trato de los mercaderes regionales ya había transformado en 1748 la parte sur de Baja California.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Galeón de Manila, comercio, Manuel Ocio, Bernal de Huidobro, Fernando Rivera y Moncada, siglo XVIII.

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The research below explores the hypothesis that rival business networks in northern Pacific New Spain sought between 1735 and 1767 to wrest control from the Jesuits of institutions in the southern portion of Baja California. The opening in 1734 of a regular informal stop for the Manila galleon near Cabo San Lucas was the proximate cause of the networks' interest. The galleon anchorage at the Bay of San Bernabé offered potential opportunity for merchants on the mainland to purchase goods from and sell to Manila merchants. On the opposite side of the Gulf of California, there were many small and medium-sized mines of that exportable commodity, silver. The immediate obstacle to mercantile operations at the incipient port was exclusive Jesuit control of native land and labor in Baja California through the missions. The sparse military serving California Jesuits offered the primary means for commercial actors to infiltrate institutions on the peninsula.² As merchants consolidated 1735 to 1767 their hold on the region between Cabo San Lucas and La Paz, Jesuit missionaries lost autonomy well before King Carlos III expelled them in 1767 from the Spanish Empire.

Existing literature analyzes Baja California in isolation from the mainland and presents the peninsula as barren of opportunity so that only missionaries motivated by evangelical piety would live there.³ Farming was indeed a challenge on the rocky and arid peninsula, yet remoteness is an advantage for tax-evading trade. Researchers of Pacific contraband in the Spanish Empire acknowledge that if carried out successfully, the trade left little trace in the record.⁴ Yet profit from contraband trade is too powerful a motive to omit from analysis simply because quantitative records are not available. Mexican economic and commercial historians have developed a methodology to study business in the shadows by identifying networks based on family ties and ethnicity that link locations from which members traded with each other.⁵ The research below considers three networks with representatives on both sides of the Gulf of California vying to control the strategic Bay of San Bernabé at Mission San José del Cabo and the Bay of La Paz near the mouth of the Gulf of California. To ground the speculative discussion of motive and opportunity, quantitative data collected by Bernd Hausberger on legal silver produced at locations around the Gulf of California in the 1760s gives a sense of each location as a source of silver. The literature holds that Bourbon Reform in 1768 opened the region to trade.⁶ In contrast, the research below suggests that private for-profit actors came between 1735 and 1767 to dominate southern Baja California, with ports on or close to the China trade route.

The analysis is organized as follows: Part I provides the silver mining context around the Gulf of California. Part II traces the origin of mercantile

² Crosby pioneered research into these military families in his book *Antigua*, 1994.

³ Clavijero, *Historia*, 1970; Dunne, *Black*, 1952; León Portilla, *California*, 1995; Río, *A la*, 1990; Trejo, González and Altable (eds.), *Historia*, 2002, and Venegas, *A Natural*, 1966 (1759).

⁴ Bonialian, *Pacífico*, 2012; Valle, "'Nadie'", 2024, pp. 63-87; Yuste, *Emporios*, 2007.

⁵ Ibarra, *Mercado*, 2017; Valle, *Finanzas*, 2012, and Hausberger, "Conquista", 2007, pp. 725-778.

⁶ Altable, "Libertad", 2021, pp. 161-180, and Altable, "Real", 2016, pp. 415-456.

influence on the Jesuits through the Pious Fund for the Californias. Part III uses the archives and Jesuit primary sources to indicate that Asian goods were already by 1707 a source of supply for Jesuit California. Part IV traces by name the protagonists who vied for control of Baja California's strategic ports at Mission San José del Cabo and La Paz. Part V considers whether silver mines in Baja California, rather than a port for trade with Asia, might have been the attraction of the region for profit-motivated actors. Part V posits the lands surrounding the Gulf of California as a commercial region which emerged between 1735 and 1767.

SILVER CONTEXT

In the first half of the 18th century, Asia offered higher prices than Europe for silver, which increased the attraction of trade in the Pacific.⁷ Typically, merchants obtained mercury from the state for refining silver, which gave the state the means to ensure that silver was taxed. It is worth mentioning that the Manila galleon typically carried small quantities of mercury from Fujian, China, and the combination of using Chinese mercury while selling silver bars to a ship heading for Asia would mean that the Manila galleon offered merchants the opportunity for tax evasion on some silver from regional mines.⁸

A contemporary observer affirmed that merchants of Pacific New Spain traded silver to the galleon before it reached Acapulco. Tomás Ortiz de Landázuri was a credible commentator on contraband in northern Pacific New Spain because from 1743 to 1747, he served in Guadalajara as secretary to New Galicia's governor and married into Guadalajara's elite. In fact, Landázuri was born to a mercantile family of Panama, known as a bridge for British contraband in the Pacific.⁹ During his tenure in Guadalajara in 1746 the Manila galleon

itself unloaded in Matanchel on New Galicia's Pacific coast, rather than the typical destination of Acapulco far to the south.¹⁰ In January 1747, Landázuri stood in Matanchel with Governor Fermín de Echeverz when the Dutch crossed the Pacific from Indonesia, seeking permission to trade their wares in Mexico City (for location, see Image 1). Echeverz was like Landázuri Governor of Navarrese ethnicity and born in Panama.¹¹ The two men denied the permit—though how much cargo the Dutch had already unloaded in irregular ways remains a mystery.

By 1767 Landázuri had been promoted to serve in Madrid on the Council of the Indies. Councilor Landázuri wrote to Carlos III the following words: "In order to prevent the unloading of goods in the ports and anchorages of the Pacific, located prior to Acapulco, the Viceroy has given the order that five stamped copies be directed, etc."¹² Landázuri's July 2, 1767 assertion that the Manila galleon's goods of India and China were unloaded at 'ports and anchorages' prior to Acapulco on the Pacific coast of New Spain catches the eye. "In truth," he continued, "the entire risk of clandestine extraction of gold and silver in coin or ingots takes place in these [ports and anchorages] or on the coast, especially in the northern one." Figure 1 presents a 1746 map showing the coast north of Acapulco. The Bay of San Bernabé near Mission San José del Cabo is marked "bay of San Joseph." One hundred and eighty-five kilometers north of the Bay of San Bernabé lies the Bay of La Paz, also on the California peninsula's interior. The Islas Tres Marias lie between the California peninsula and the mainland. On the mainland roughly opposite the Bay of San Bernabé is the informal port of Matanchel, with a second anchorage at Chacala some 70 kilometers south. Though he does not mention specific ports by name, Landázuri

⁷ Flynn and Giraldez, "Cycles", 2002, pp. 392-395; Mallari, "Wreck", 1990, pp. 65-83.

⁸ Schottenhammer, "Transpacific", 2019, pp. 159-194.

⁹ He married Josef de la Sierra: Javier Barrientos Grandon, "Tomás Ortiz de Landázuri y Arriaga", in: Real Academia de la Historia, *Historia Hispánica*, <<https://bit.ly/3JhhqaY>>. On the Dutch, see Pinzón, "Expedición", 2019, pp. 197-222 and Gerhard, "A Dutch", 1954, pp. 221-226.

¹⁰ Ascensión Baeza Martín, "Pedro Cebrián y Agustín", in: Real Academia de la Historia, *Historia Hispánica*, <<https://bit.ly/473Z6eO>>.

¹¹ Governed New Galicia 1743-51; nephew to Agustín de Echeverz and Francisca de Valdés y Urdiñola, Marqueses de San Miguel de Aguayo with the largest estate in northern New Spain, 11 million acres in Coahuila and New Vizcaya. Agustín was brother to Antonio who was father to Fermín, see: Alfredo Castillero Calvo, "Echeverz", in: Real Academia de la Historia, *Historia Hispánica*, <<https://bit.ly/47Bs7OW>>. Vargas, *Formación*, 1992, pp. 28-61.

¹² Bancroft Library (BL), f. Manuscripts, ZE-1, c. 10, f. 864.

Image 1

Mouth of Gulf of California in Padre Fernando Consag's 1746 Map



Source: "Seno de Californias y su costa oriental nuevamente descubierta y registrada desde el Cabo de las Virgenes hasta su término que es el Rio Colorado por el Padre Fernando Consag, 1746", Archivo General de Indias (AGI), f. MP-México, leg. 576, <<https://pares.buquesdas20/catalogo/show/21533?m=>>>.

confirms that gold and silver did slip out in an untaxed manner from ports “prior to Acapulco” in New Spain’s Pacific.

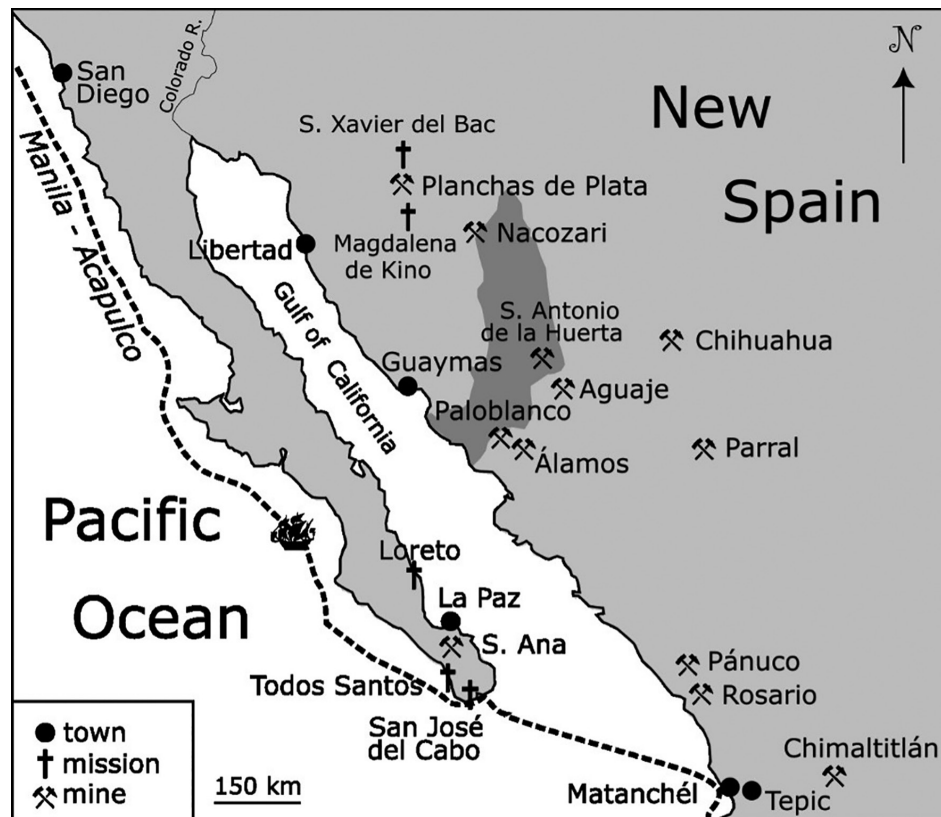
It is a maxim in the study of New Spain that those who profited from mines were not miners themselves, but rather suppliers to mines, known as *aviadores*. The leading men of Guadalajara were such *aviadores* of mines in New Galicia, and the southern half of Sinaloa was until 1733 part of the same province.¹³ Merchants of Álamos tended to finance mines to the north in Ostimuri (shaded region in Map 1), and some in Álamos had ties to Guadalajara, as well.¹⁴ Mining required mercury, salt, gun-

powder, iron, candles, horses and mules, and wage goods such as tobacco, mezcal, corn and wheat, meat, and clothing. Hacendados in New Galicia raised sugar and mezcal on their own haciendas. From Mexico City, they sourced mercury delivered from Spain’s Almaden mine. Guadalajara’s men had ties to the Pacific, as shown in the birthplace of Landázuri and Echeverz of Panama. There were rumors they sourced supplemental mercury from mines of Huancavelica (Peru) illicitly as well as from Manila.¹⁵

Opposite the southern tip of Baja California lay New Galicia, with the primary informal port

Map 1

Region Served by Potential Maritime Trade from New Galicia



Source: own elaboration.

¹³ Río, *Aplicación*, 1995, pp. 25-33.

¹⁴ For example, Josef de Amezola in 1718 supplied mines at Aguaje in Sonora. In 1740, the Alcalde Ordinario Francisco de Amezola served Governor Aysa in Guadalajara. BL, f. Manuscritos, ZE 1, c. 5; Archivo Histórico Municipal de Parral (AHMP), f. Colonial, secc. Justicia, s. Embargos, desembargos y remates de propiedades, c. 2. exp. 38; León, *Minas*, 2020, pp. 36 and 79.

¹⁵ In 1685, the Manila galleon docked at the port of Chacala, which raises the possibility of contraband trade with Asia on behalf of Alonso Dávalos y Bracamonte who dominated the port and obtained in 1690 the title of Conde de Miravalle. In 1703, the Conde de Miravalle was fined for having cargo on a ship that traded with between New Spain and Peru. Duggan, “Redes”, 2023, pp. 86, 102 and 111.

being Matanchel. New Galicia included enormous mines in its interior such as Zacatecas, but small to medium mines near the Pacific coast are more likely to have had motive and opportunity to evade taxes on a small scale, and these are listed

in Table 1. While no data on silver mining output is yet published for the 1735-1760 period, for the period 1761-1767 Hausberger used records of taxes paid on silver to estimate output of silver and gold.¹⁶ The table excludes Bolaños, which lay in

Table 1

Small to Medium Silver Mines in New Galicia, 1761-1767

Mine	State 2025	7 yr gold	7 yr silver	Silver per yr
Guachinango	Jalisco		\$ 764 042	\$ 109 149
Etzatlán (Izatlán)	Jalisco	343	\$ 581 647	\$ 83 092
Tenamachi	Nayarit (Tepic)	1 261	\$ 515 548	\$ 73 650
San Pedro Analco	Jalisco (Tequila)		\$ 259 887	\$ 37 127
Ostotipaquillo	Jalisco		\$ 169 152	\$ 24 165
San Joaquín	Jalisco		\$ 138 190	\$ 19 741
Ocotiqui	Jalisco (Tequila)		\$ 71 248	\$ 10 178
Copala	Jalisco		\$ 50 663	\$ 7 238
Tolapa	Jalisco	4 961	\$ 48 316	\$ 6 902
Mascota	Jalisco		\$ 35 168	\$ 5 024
Guajacatlán	Jalisco		\$ 35 072	\$ 5 010
Xalpa	Jalisco		\$ 27 775	\$ 3 968
Tatepusco	Jalisco		\$ 20 369	\$ 2 910
San Rafael	Jalisco (Sayula)		\$ 11 487	\$ 1 641
Mota	Jalisco		\$ 10 426	\$ 1 489
Zapotlán el Grande	Jalisco		\$ 8 885	\$ 1 269
Amatlán	Nayarit		\$ 6 598	\$ 943
Tequepexpa	Nayarit		\$ 3 635	\$ 519
Cuyután	Nayarit	2 373	\$ 87	\$ 12
Concepción	Jalisco	231	\$	\$
Ocanagua	Jalisco (Etzatlán)	110	\$	\$
Annual Silver			\$2 758 195	\$394 028

Source: Hausberger, *Nueva*, 1997, appendix 3. Note that the Spanish silver dollar was the 18th century globe's anchor currency. When the US formed late in the century, the US dollar was backed by the Spanish silver dollar.

¹⁶ Hausberger, *Nueva*, 1997, appendix 3.

front of Chimaltitlán (see Map 1), on the grounds that its production of \$650 000 per year in silver would have inspired careful oversight by the state. Table 1 illustrates that the top five largest of the middling mines close to the Gulf of California were Guachinango, Etzatlán, Tenamachi, San Pedro Analco, and Ostotipaquillo. This last produced roughly \$24 000 per year, while Guachinango produced about \$100 000 per year. Over seven years the state collected taxes on \$2.7 million in silver produced at such middling New Galician mines, or about \$400 000 per year (see Table 1).¹⁷

Table 2 illustrates that Sinaloa mines (running from Rosario to Álamos) produced another \$363 000 of silver per year, of which one-third (\$122 889) came from Pánuco which lies 79 km inland from Mazatlán. Continuing north, Álamos on the border between Sonora and Sinaloa produced about \$142 000 per year in silver, while mines in Sonora produced annually about \$70 000 in silver per year. For Álamos, 72% of the silver taxed was refined by means of mercury, while in the mines listed as “Sonora” used no mercury for refining silver, indicating that they used methods other than

Table 2

Silver Mines in Sinaloa, 1761-1767

Mine	State 2025	7-yr gold	7-yr silver	Silver per year
Pánuco	Sinaloa	1 002	\$853 226	\$121 889
Rosario	Sinaloa	7 787	\$423 682	\$ 60 526
Paloblanco	Sinaloa		\$370 290	\$ 52 899
Real de las Plomosas	Sinaloa		\$261 581	\$ 37 369
Cosalá	Sinaloa	-	\$256 522	\$ 36 646
Sinaloa	Sinaloa	2 826	\$205 129	\$ 29 304
Culiacán	Sinaloa	12 072	\$ 80 539	\$ 11 506
Copala	Sinaloa	-	\$ 73 559	\$ 10 508
Cajón	Sinaloa	-	\$ 13 417	\$ 1 917
San Miguel (Mezquitil)	Sinaloa		\$ 4 735	\$ 676
Silla	Sinaloa		\$ 978	\$ 140
Coronilla	Sinaloa	2 996	\$ 72	\$ 10
Fuerte de Montesclaros	Sinaloa		\$ 16	\$ 2
Annual Silver Total			\$ 2 543 746	\$ 363 392

Fuente: Hausberger, *Nueva*, 1997, appendix 3.

¹⁷ In 2014 historian Antonio Ibarra analyzed output of small mines which paid taxes in Guadalajara, a group that overlaps with those shown in Table 1. Ibarra found that they produced 110 000 in pesos of silver per year between 1783 and 1810. This included the tiny Baja California mines, Ibarra, “Poca”, 2014, p. 123.

the patio process. “Sonora” may refer to the regions north of Ostimuri such as the Pimería Baja and the Pimería Alta. In the 1760s, mines in “Sonora” produced mostly gold, rather than silver.

If we limit this discussion to silver, the mines of Table 1 and Table 2, as well as Álamos and the generic “Sonora”, scattered around the Gulf of California paid taxes on close to \$1 million per year of silver, or about 10% of the total produced in New Spain each year. Baja California itself included mines, but data for 1761-67 indicates that Baja California produced only \$1 400 per year. In contrast, Álamos produced one hundred times more! One of the mines in Baja California was, “El Realito de Oro,” and yet the tax records make no mention of gold. This confirms that something is missing from the record for southern Baja California, but not the extent of discrepancy. In 1753, one Baja California miner argued that his mines were substantial enough to merit the status of ‘villa.’¹⁸ Unrefined, he produced 1 137 marks of silver from three mines near El Triunfo. Once the silver was refined, there were only 2 074.5 ounces. Given 8 ounces in a mark, the refined ore weighed only 259 marks, which would retail for \$2 201.5, which is only one-third more than the \$1 400 of Hausberger’s estimates from taxes paid. The takeaway is that even when incentive to exaggerate existed, silver output of southern Baja California was small.¹⁹ This supports the argument here that battles to control southern Baja California revolved around other commercial opportunities, such as potential trade of New Galicia’s mines with the Manila galleon.

THE JESUITS AND THE PIOUS FUND FOR THE CALIFORNIAS

Since 1696, merchants had hidden influence on Jesuit evangelism in Baja California through donations to the Pious Fund for the Californias. Each \$10 000 donation would be invested with a merchant who would pay interest of \$500 per year, enough to sustain a missionary and his

congregation.²⁰ In 1697, Juan María Salvatierra founded the first permanent mission in the Californias at Loreto opposite Álamos in Sonora. The Portuguese Esteban Rodríguez Lorenzo accompanied Father Salvatierra, and Rodríguez would captain the presidio at Loreto from 1701 until his death in 1746. Between 1696 and 1701, the top donation of \$20 000 came from Juan Caballero y Ocio of Querétaro, while a second important donor was Alonso Dávalos y Bracamonte, Conde de Miravalle. Though the Conde de Miravalle donated to the Fund only \$1 000, he gave early and provided substantial material aid directly from his family seat in Compostela (Nayarit). For example, ships for the Jesuit missions were built at Chacala, the Conde de Miravalle’s port, and he put his loyalists into Presidio Loreto.²¹

In 1702, there was a shortfall in financing, putting the Jesuit settlement of the Californias at risk. Father Juan de Ugarte stepped in to manage the fund, and from that year until 1741, the Marqués de Villapiente (José de la Puente y Peña) and his sister Gertrudis were the major donors. Little is known of the source of Villapiente’s wealth, beyond his silver shop in Mexico City. He donated to Jesuits in Japan, China, the Philippines and the East Indies, which suggests an interest in the China trade, whose mirror image is silver exports from New Spain.²²

From 1718, the Marqués pressured the Jesuits to open missions directly on the route of the Manila galleon.²³ In 1710, the War of the Spanish Succession brought Bourbon Philip V to power, and his ministers restricted Pacific trade such that 1718 to 1734 Chinese silks were banned from the galleon’s cargo.²⁴ The donor’s pressure for missions on the galleon route raises the possibility that he sought to evade the ban. Whatever his motive, between 1720 and 1733, the Marqués de Villapiente would donate \$40 000 to establish four missions in the southern part of Baja California: Mission Dolores halfway between Loreto and La Paz, the short-lived Mission Pilar at La Paz, Mission Santiago at Bahía de las Palmas, and Mission San José del Cabo (see Map 2). In 1733, his sister María Rosa de la Peña donated

²⁰ Muñoz, *Bajo*, 2018; Velázquez, *Fondo*, 1985.

²¹ Duggan, “Redes”, 2023, pp. 75-124.

²² Duggan, “Redes”, 2023, p. 117; Sanchiz “Titulo”, 2009, pp. 135-150.

²³ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 89-101.

²⁴ Bonialian, *Pacífico*, 2012, pp. 73, 118 and 128.

¹⁸ Manuel Ocio, discussed below.

¹⁹ Value of mark from León, *Minas*, 2020, pp. 17, 44 and 80. Ounces per mark from Moreyra, “Técnica”, 1945, pp. 347-369.

the \$10 000 necessary to establish Mission Santa Rosa at Todos Santos, on the Pacific side of the southern peninsula.

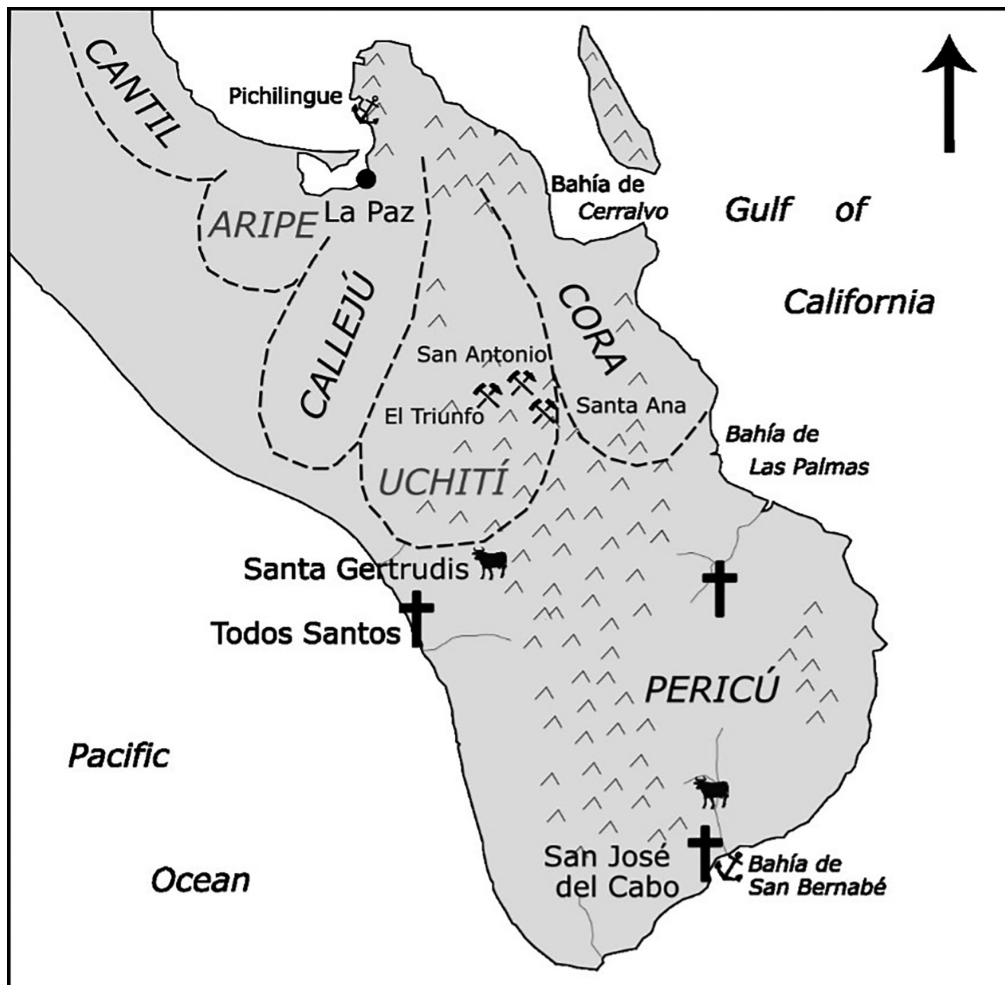
Many have argued that the Jesuits had total control over Baja California, with the implication being that the King had none. It is true that there was little royal oversight of missionaries in Baja California, nonetheless donors held sway over Jesuit activities. Donations to the Jesuits gave merchants allies to promote ends that the King of Spain would not prioritize.

ASIAN GOODS BY WAY OF ACAPULCO

Even before the 1730 opening of Mission San José del Cabo, Asian goods arrived in Baja California by water from Acapulco. Between 1707 and 1718, two Portuguese named Jorge and Francisco Rodríguez delivered goods from Acapulco to the Jesuits.²⁵ In 1720 Father Jaime Bravo sailed from Acapulco to the Bay of La Paz on the ship which Jesuit Superior Juan de Ugarte built in California, *El Triunfo de la Cruz*. The crew included Filipinos and Chinese

Map 2

The South in 1756



Source: own elaboration.

²⁵ AHMP, f. Colonial, secc. Justicia, s. Embargos, desembargos y remates de propiedades, c. 2, exp. 38.

mariners, probably recruited from the galleon in Acapulco. Bravo carried gifts for the Pericú of the islands, financed by the Marqués de Villapiente.²⁶ The Pericú inhabited the Bay of San Bernabé and their seagoing craft enabled them to occupy the islands between the Bay of La Paz and Cabo San Lucas. In 1714, the Manila galleon's men anchored at the Bay of San Bernabé and came on shore among the Pericú to rest and refit, a resting place where the English pirate Lord Clipperton attacked them.

The international incidents of 1714 may explain why in 1730 there were both blond-haired and mulatto people at a Pericú village called Yene-ca, near San José del Cabo.²⁷ In 1730, Jesuit Nicolás Tamaral founded mission San José del Cabo on the Gulf-side of southern Baja California, where a stream emptied into the galleon's anchorage at the bay of San Bernabé, reminding us of the centuries of cultural interaction through pearl-diving, galleon stops, and piracy at this location. The Pericú were independent people of the sea, and resisted Jesuit sedentary living by means of agriculture. Even so, by December of 1730, Tamaral had baptized over eight hundred and in 1731 the congregation harvested grains at three rancho locations (San José, La Soledad and Santa Rosa) and were also raising hundreds of sheep and cattle.

In early 1734, the Manila galleon *N.S. del Pilar de Zaragoza* made anchor in the Bay of San Bernabé to obtain relief at the new mission for those on-board suffering from scurvy and beriberi. They recovered at Mission San José with the aid of fresh water, fresh food, and the Guaycura congregation's harvest of pitahaya (dragon fruit) which counteracted the deficiencies suffered on the four-month journey. There were typically hundreds of people on board a galleon. By October 1734, the Pericú rebelled. They killed Jesuits Nicolás Tamaral at San José, Lorenzo Carranco at Santiago, and the Compostela soldier Manuel Andrés Romero in charge at La Paz. Captain Rodríguez came from Loreto to put eight rebels to death. In January 1735, the next galleon arrived unaware of uprising and sent thirteen men to seek aid at Mission San José del Cabo. Armed men numbering 600 under Pericú Gerónimo killed the thirteen, and

then the water-adept Pericú swarmed the galleon. This remarkable episode came to an end when the galleon's crew realized that these were not Christians from Mission San José.²⁸

RIVALS FOR CONTROL OF PORTS IN SOUTHERN BAJA CALIFORNIA

The 1734 Pericú rebellion compelled the Jesuits to invite civil actors to the remote peninsula to put down revolt, a break with the independence that had characterized the first thirty-seven years of California's religious settlement. The Jesuit call for military aid offered to those with profit in mind an opportunity to gain a toehold in southern Baja California, as discussed below.

Compostela Faction and La Paz

The first group to heed the call were thirty-two men of Compostela in New Galicia. Recall that men of Compostela loyal to the Conde de Miravalle had from 1697-1701 dominated Presidio Loreto. In 1720, Father Jaime Bravo founded Mission Nuestra Señora del Pilar in La Paz, among the Guaycura on the mainland, an ethnic group distinct from the Pericú on the islands in the bay. Bravo's efforts to have settle at one mission the five subgroups of the Guaycura (Cantil, Aripe, Callejú, Uchití, and Cora) undermined the careful distribution of the bay's marine resources, and the mission failed to thrive (see Map 2). Father Jaime supplemented the resources at La Paz with harvests from Mission Todos Santos, which was in a fertile oasis on the Pacific side of the peninsula opposite La Paz. In 1721, the Pericú from the islands killed Guaycura converts at La Paz while the missionary was away at Todos Santos, and when Commander Rodríguez of Loreto went after them, they nearly killed him, too, with a deep arrow wound. By 1733, Guaycura converts of La Paz relocated to Todos Santos, leaving at the Bay of La Paz one soldier from Compostela on New Galicia's coast, Manuel Andrés Romero.²⁹ In 1734, when the Pericú of the southern

²⁶ Bravo, Ugarte, Guillén and León Portilla, *Testimonios*, 1970, p. 26.

²⁷ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 110-111.

²⁸ Dunne, *Black*, 1968, pp. 245-279.

²⁹ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 107-109 and 113.

tip and the islands in the bay rebelled, they killed Romero. In response, the group of men from Compostela arrived immediately thereafter. Certainly they came for vengeance for their slain comrade, but they probably also hoped to solidify Compostela's control of the Bay of La Paz.³⁰

Sonora Faction

If so, Viceroy Juan Antonio Vizarrón y Eguiarreta trumped these locals, when in 1736 he sent Manuel de Huidobro, Governor of Sonora y Sinaloa, to put down the uprising in Baja California.³¹ Archbishop of Mexico City Juan Antonio Vizarrón y Eguiarreta served as viceroy 1734 to 1740.³² Vizarrón was Navarrese, like the contemporary Governor of New Galicia Echeverz and his advisor Landázuri. Viceroy Vizarrón's predecessor and protector Juan de Acuña y Bejarano (Marqués de Casafuerte) had created the province of Sonora y Sinaloa in 1733, installing Huidobro as governor.

Actors in Sonora had a long-standing interest in southern Baja California. Between 1697 and 1723, the Alcalde Mayor of Álamos, Andrés de Rezabal, hired Pericú at the Bahía de las Palmas (see Map 2) to dive for pearls along the southern coast of Baja California. In the year 1713, the Pericú captured a New Galician pearling vessel and kept its captain among them for a year, before he was rescued by Rezabal's crew.³³ The story suggests that the Pericú had a closer relationship to Rezabal in Sonora than to inhabitants of New Galicia though the latter was opposite southern Baja California.

In 1720 silver deposits were identified slightly to the north of the Pericú cove near Santiago in the land of the Uchití subgroup of the Guaycura (see Map 1).³⁴ In 1722, Father Ignacio María Piccolo

founded Mission Santiago de los Apóstoles inland among the Cora subgroup of the Guaycura. Andrés de Rezabal of Álamos lent his pearlers' canoes to the Santiago startup operation, illustrating how closely this mission was tied to a commercial actor at its roots.³⁵ The attempt to establish agriculture failed, and disease spread. In 1723, a storm knocked the beams of a partially constructed church onto the Cora inside, and the rage of the people against Jesuit Piccolo caused him to leave for months. When Piccolo returned, he relocated Mission Santiago further south near the Bahía de las Palmas among a different people, the Pericú. These men were the divers for Rezabal's pearling operation, based at the same Bahía de las Palmas. Piccolo may have felt safer with Rezabal's allies nearby, but the ability of the Pericú to obtain the goods Spaniards offered by diving for pearls, without giving up their ties to the sea, meant that the agricultural labor of mission life would always be a hard sell.

While the 1722 founding of Mission Santiago in Pericú territory tended to shift control of the Pericú's labor away from Rezabal's control and into Jesuit hands, Manuel de Huidobro reasserted Sonora's control of the region in 1736. Huidobro did not at first crush the rebels but rather attempted to establish an alliance with them. Huidobro had replaced Rezabal as the strong man of Álamos and perhaps he hoped to employ the Pericú divers to seek pearls, as Rezabal had done. The opportunity to trade with foreign or Spanish ships by means of Pericú vessels at the Bay of San Bernabé could not have escaped him. Only when Huidobro's efforts to negotiate with the Pericú failed, did he crush them in 1737. Huidobro returned to Sonora, where he set off rebellion in 1740 by undermining the Jesuit social contract with the Yaqui so that he could promote silver mining by his allies. In both Sonora and Baja California, Huidobro antagonized Jesuits and promoted for-profit activity.

Huidobro left in Baja California a new institution, Presidio San José, next to Mission San José at the Bay of San Bernabé. The first commander Huidobro appointed to the new southern Presidio was Bernardo Rodríguez de Larrea. Bernardo's father Esteban Rodríguez was the long-time

³⁰ Barco, *Natural*, 1980, p. 108. Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, 116. AGN, f. Californias, vol. 80, ff. 34-37.

³¹ Dunne, *Black*, 1968, pp. 275-276.

³² Fernando Rodríguez de la Torre, "Vizarrón", in: Real Academia de la Historia, *Historia Hispánica*, <<https://bit.ly/4qp-gYZ8>> and Ascensión Baeza Martín, "Acuña", in: Real Academia de la Historia, *Historia Hispánica*, <<https://bit.ly/3L0VIZy>>.

³³ Bravo, Ugarte, Guillén and León Portilla, *Testimonios*, 1970, pp. 53-57; Dunne, *Black*, 1968, pp. 158-159; Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, p. 93.

³⁴ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, p. 102; Bravo, Ugarte, Guillén and León Portilla, *Testimonios*, 1970, pp. 47-48.

³⁵ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, p. 105.

commander of Presidio Loreto, so the appointment of his son Bernardo implied deference to Presidio San José's commander. Esteban Rodríguez had not always been at peace with working with the Jesuits. In 1704, Rodríguez quit command of Loreto, heading for Sonora on the opposite side of the Gulf. In 1705, he met there María de Larrea Jiménez, whom he married in 1707. The Jesuits reached out to persuade Rodríguez to return to command. The historian Harry Crosby surmised that Rodríguez departed Loreto in 1704 due to lack of opportunity to either move up in the ranks or to engage in mercantile activity, and perhaps negotiations for his return to the peninsula included some concessions on the latter point. After marriage in 1707, Esteban and María lived in Loreto, where Rodríguez served as commander until his death in 1746. Her surname raises the possibility that she was kin to Basque Juan Bautista de Larea, who governed Sonora from 1698-1703, or to his uncle the silver merchant Domingo de Larrea, who in the 1680s was likely active at Álamos, and was in 1696 a donor to the Jesuit Pious Fund.³⁶ It is possible that Esteban Rodríguez' marriage to María de Larrea transformed him into a trusted member of a Basque mercantile network. Between 1707 and 1718, two Portuguese with the Rodríguez surname supplied from Acapulco both Loreto and the Sonoran coast. Returning to 1736, by appointing Esteban's son Bernardo Rodríguez commander of the Presidio at San José del Cabo, with control over the Bay of San Bernabé, Huidobro may have tied the leading *contrabandistas* of the California peninsula to his own commercial schemes.

Yet once the southern presidio was a *fait accompli*, Huidobro changed the commander of Presidio San José to Pedro Antonio Álvarez de Acevedo.³⁷ Huidobro and Álvarez were confirmed anti-Jesuits and in Sonora schemed to get Yaqui out of Jesuit jurisdiction and into labor at silver mines. The clash between pro-commercial actors and missionaries originated in the communal nature of the political

economy that Jesuits installed among the Seri, O'dham and Yaqui of Sonora, and among the Cochimi, Guaycura and Pericú in the California peninsula.³⁸ Following Spain's 1680 Law of the Indies, the lands of those baptized could not be taken from them. The Jesuit-managed communities would sell agricultural goods and labor for a price, but put limits on just how much native labor to miners private actors could utilize, which was a particularly strong issue in Sonora due to its silver deposits. For example, in Sonora the Jesuit Diego González instructed his Yaqui congregation to ignore an order from miner Álvarez de Acevedo that the Yaqui village of Potam supply twenty men per week to work his mines at Real de San Antonio de Padua and Tetuachi.³⁹ Jesuit restrictions on for-profit exploitation put them on a collision course with Sonora y Sinaloa's elite—and with the Viceroy. Indeed, this anti-Jesuit and pro-commercial mentality is something Huidobro and Álvarez shared with Viceroy Vizarrón, who was himself in a dispute with the Jesuits to end their tax-exempt status.

By founding the Presidio de San José at Mission San José del Cabo, Huidobro established an institution that could transition the Bay of San Bernabé from Jesuit to secular control. Commander Álvarez de Acevedo instigated conflict with the missionaries at Santiago over his use of Rancho el Salto on the land of their congregation.⁴⁰ El Salto was the name of a stream flowing into Bahía de las Palmas, the location in southeastern Baja California where fifteen years earlier Andrés de Rezabal based his pearling operations. The new commander Álvarez likely intended to hire the same Pericú community as divers.⁴¹ When the Yaqui in Sonora rebelled *en masse* in 1740, Huidobro and Álvarez' efforts to limit Jesuit jurisdiction on the mainland lost favor among policymakers in Mexico City. This affected Baja California because in 1740, Presidio de San José was demoted to Squadron of the South, and by 1741 Jesuit complaints resulted in Álvarez

³⁶ Torre Villar, *Textos*, 2017, p. 307; Luque, *Financiación*, 1994, p. 9; Huerta, "Redes", 2007, p. 107; Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 254, 306-307 and 504; Huerta, "Comerciantes", 2003, pp. 17-40; Escamilla, *Intereses*, 2011, pp. 47-50.

³⁷ Some said that Huidobro and Acevedo were kin. Navarro, *Sublevación*, 1966, pp. 25 and 48.

³⁸ Río, *Aplicación*, 1995, p. 36; Duggan, "Laws", 2005, p. 349.

³⁹ Navarro, *Sublevación*, 1966, pp. 25 and 48; Sheridan, *Empire*, 1999, pp. 123-25 and Hu-DeHart, *Missionaries*, 1981, pp. 58-104.

⁴⁰ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, p. 123.

⁴¹ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, p. 326; Rodríguez and León Portilla, *Descripción*, 1974, p. 12.

being demoted to serve under the aging Esteban Rodríguez at Loreto. Huidobro's effort to control strategic Cabo San Lucas from Sonora had failed.

Guadalajara Faction Triumphant

An opportunity for mercantile interests in Guadalajara to assert their control over the strategic mouth of the Gulf of California emerged on January 7, 1740 when King Philip V decreed that due to war between Spain and Britain since 1739, the people of Guadalajara should "make all suitable efforts to prevent any sudden and violent attack whatsoever which the enemy may try, taking advantage of any means as may offer itself to you to resist, and inflicting an exemplary punishment".⁴² In effect, the King invited and authorized New Galicia to defend its coasts.

Governor Francisco de Aysa y Gracián (Marqués del Castillo de Aysa) viewed the King's call to defend New Galicia's Pacific coasts as an opportunity to gain royal favor. Aysa had amassed a fortune at Bolaños between 1714 and 1724. This Aragonese returned to Spain in 1727 to purchase the title Marqués, and on May 4, 1728 returned to New Galicia accompanied by Francisco Sánchez Leñero.⁴³ Francisco was the father of Gabriel, and both were active in the 1720s in mercantile circles in both Mexico City and Guadalajara, where the Sánchez Leñero would by the 1740s have Hacienda Santa Lucía just outside Guadalajara on the road to the Gulf of California at Matanchel.⁴⁴ From 1735 to 1743, the Marqués del Castillo de Aysa was governor. Aysa mobilized 12 000 people to defend New Galicia's coast, 4 000 Spaniards and 8 000 African and Indian men. The closest the sentinels came to apprehending a British warship was a sighting on July 15, 1741 of a ship with sails heading for the Tres Marias islands (between Cabo San Lucas and Matanchel, see Image 1).⁴⁵ On June 8, 1743, King Philip expressed shock at the amount of money spent to guard the coast!

By then, the Navarrese Echeverz had succeeded Aysa as Governor of New Galicia, and in 1744 he replied to King Philip V that the Crown spent nothing, instead the funds had been donated "by various individuals of this jurisdiction" for the pressing needs of the situation. At mid-18th century, a presidio of 50 men cost \$20 000 for a year, which suggests that the 4 000 Spaniards alone would have cost over a million per year! Even assuming the 8 000 African and Indian watchmen received only a quarter of that amount for food, the entire operation may have cost over \$2 million per year and apparently endured for two years (May 1740 to mid-1742). These estimates may be too large, but they do explain the King's shock at the magnitude of New Galicia's response.

The Guadalajara elite had put the King in their debt, and they would ask for non-financial recompense. In 1736, slabs of native silver weighing over a ton had been discovered on the surface at Planchas de Plata on the Sonora side of the Colorado River, and eight years later in 1743 Guadalajara's elite proposed to the King that he provide two ships to protect vessels and traders between Matanchel and the Colorado River.⁴⁶ The ships plying the Gulf of California would protect the region from European rivals, but also protect commercial actors from Indian rebels on islands and coast.⁴⁷ Aysa's proposal mentioned the benefits to Sonora of goods from New Galicia's ranches, but mariners had testified to Aysa in 1742 that they sailed not only between Matanchel and Sonora, but also between Acapulco and Matanchel. The subtext of Guadalajara's elite was probably to supply both New Galician goods (such as mezcal and sugar) but also Asian goods (for example cottons and iron) to the mining regions. Aysa presented the lands on both sides of the Gulf of California as one region, with Matanchel as its port, and Guadalajara as its commercial nerve center.⁴⁸ The region of the Aysa proposal is roughly that of Map 1.

Conventional wisdom is that the Aysa proposal for maritime commerce in the Gulf of California had no effect until 1768 when José de Gálvez used it as a blueprint for the Naval Department of

⁴² In BL, f. Manuscripts, ZE 1, c. 5; Pinzón, "Patrullajes", 2017, pp. 66-93.

⁴³ AGI, f. Contratación, leg. 5476, n. 36.

⁴⁴ Mota, *Élites*, 2018, pp. 350-362; Olveda, *Oligarquía*, 1991, pp. 205-263.

⁴⁵ BL, f. Manuscripts, ZE-1 c. 5, folder 0349.

⁴⁶ On Planchas de Plata, see Garate, *Juan*, 2003, pp. 159-69; Pinzón, "Patrullajes", 2017, pp. 66-93.

⁴⁷ Vidargas, *Navegación*, 1982, pp. 46-47.

⁴⁸ Vidargas, *Navegación*, 1982, pp. 36, 48.

San Blas.⁴⁹ Yet the Aysa proposal did have an impact in the 1740s. On November 13, 1744, The King decreed a settler town be established in Baja California, which gave legitimacy to commercial actors to break the Jesuit monopoly of a region that acted as a bridge between New Galicia and trade with Asia.⁵⁰

In 1741, Command of the Squadron of the South changed. At first it seemed the Sonora faction had regained control. Command returned to Rodríguez family influence through his son-in-law Lieutenant Pedro Riva Salazar. Riva Salazar was born around 1700, probably in Sonora, to Juan de la Riva Salazar, himself born in 17th century El Parral, the mining center whose heyday was passing to Álamos by 1683.⁵¹ Presidio and Mission Loreto are located opposite Álamos. Juan de la Riva Salazar in 1721 provided supplies to Jesuit Juan de Ugarte when he sailed *El Triunfo de la Cruz* from Loreto to the Colorado River. This provisioning suggests that Riva Salazar had ranches that permitted him to supply miners in Sonora, such that return payments in raw silver or gold concentrated in his hands. His son Pedro was married by 1732 to the daughter of Captain Estéban Rodríguez of Loreto, and by 1733 don Pedro served at Presidio Loreto. If the merchant Juan de la Riva wanted to control maritime trade in the Gulf of California, putting his son in charge of the Jesuit ship with a family tie to Esteban Rodríguez would have been opportune. Indeed, in 1739, Captain Rodríguez assigned to Pedro de la Riva the task of bringing food by sea from Guaymas in Sonora to Loreto in Baja California. This hints that Esteban Rodríguez and Pedro de la Riva were already business partners when in 1741 the Loreto commander made his son-in-law head of the Squadron of the South, in charge of Baja California's anchorages opposite New Galicia and along the China trade route.⁵² In 1741, men of Loreto and Álamos controlled strategic southern Baja California.

Soon Riva's own allegiances shifted from Sonora to Guadalajara. In 1743, Riva was a widower, and traveled to the mainland. There María Isabel Carrera del Valle López Portillo, of Tepic married him.⁵³ Her marriage to Riva shifted power over Baja California towards New Galicia. Francisco López Portillo Camberas, oidor in the Audiencia of Guadalajara from 1747 to 1764, presented the couple with a painting of the Virgin of the Apocalypse by Miguel Cabrera as a wedding gift.⁵⁴ Thus armed with an alliance with Guadalajara and Tepic's power-brokers, Pedro de la Riva returned to the California peninsula in 1747 to carry out brutal military operations precisely where a soldier had in 1720 identified silver deposits. Lieutenant Riva captured 20 Uchití children, shipped them to Loreto, and had them distributed to missions as orphans. He then ordered his men to shoot fifteen Uchití prisoners, presumably the children's parents. Riva then expropriated Rancho Santa Rosa along the stream to Mission San José del Cabo as his own.⁵⁵ In 1748, the Jesuits relocated the La Paz congregation to Todos Santos, in effect leaving that bay as a private port opposite New Galicia in the hands of Pedro de la Riva. Since the Pericú had killed the friars at Santiago and San Jose del Cabo in 1734, those missions must have depended on Riva's men for protection.

Riva was widower again by 1747, and relocated to Chimaltitlán, a mining village in New Galicia just behind Bolaños. The fact that he was back on the rolls of Presidio Loreto by 1751 raises the intriguing possibility that he brought silver from Chimaltitlán to the Baja California peninsula as part of a trading scheme, but this is only an unproven suspicion. Riva lost out that year on the possibility of promotion to the contested position of Captain of Presidio Loreto, a setback for his Tepic/Guadalajara faction. He then took a third wife, María Teresa de Liñán y Mejía, of the silver

⁴⁹ Pinzón, "Patrullajes", 2017, pp. 91-92.

⁵⁰ Vidargas, *Navegación*, 1982, p. 55; Royal Cedula of 1744 is in the University of Arizona Institutional Repository (UAIR), 040-00548, originally in AGN, f. Misiones, leg. 0022; the Royal Cedula of 1719 is in AGI, f. Guadalajara, leg. 233.

⁵¹ Cramaussel, "Poblar", 2012, pp. 18, 27 and 43.

⁵² In the 1740s, a third daughter Josefa Rodríguez de Larrea married Cristobal Gutierrez y Góngora, Alcalde de Tepic and skipper of the Jesuit supply ship, Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 308-309 and 312.

⁵³ His first wife died in 1738, the second may have been kin to Francisco del Valle, owner of mines San Sebastián de las Plomosas and El Rosario; Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, p. 313; León, *Minas*, 2020, p. 96.

⁵⁴ Sanchiz and Gayol, "Pedro Rivas Salazar", in: Seminario de Genealogía Mexicana, *Geneanet*, <https://bit.ly/47idDCm>, consulted: October, 2025; Mark A. Burkholder, "Francisco de López Portillo", in: Real Academia de la Historia, *História Hispánica*, <<https://bit.ly/4org6Bk>>.

⁵⁵ On the atrocities, see Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, p. 316.

mine Santa Bárbara de las Mojarras in New Galicia. In the 1730 decade, the financier of the Santa Bárbara mine was Eugenio Francisco de Castro, who in 1740 as Guadalajara oidor had developed with Aysa the proposal to open trade between Acapulco and the Colorado River.⁵⁶ The support of the *aviador* of the Santa Bárbara de las Mojarras mine for Aysa's plan, coupled with Riva's marriage into Santa Bárbara's elite a few years later, raises the possibility that those who controlled small mines in New Galicia put untaxed silver into maritime trade by way of ships used to supply Jesuit operations—which the military and not the Jesuits effectively controlled. By 1753, Riva served as Alcalde of Santa María del Oro de Tequepexpa, and since this mine belonged to Francisco de Aysa 1720-1741, his role reinforces the possibility that Riva carried forth Aysa's vision for regional trade. This mine close to the coast appears in Table 1 as producing only 600 pesos of silver, but that estimate is inferred from the taxes paid on silver produced at the mine. The location close to the Pacific, coupled with Riva's connections to Baja California and experience with ships raises the unproven possibility that the mines produced additional silver which may have evaded taxes through maritime transport into the Pacific.⁵⁷

With Riva on the mainland, a second son-in-law of Esteban Rodríguez, Manuel Ocio, established civil settlement in California by opening in 1748 mines near Cerralvo Bay (see Figure 3).⁵⁸ Some have wondered if Manuel was related to the largest early donor, Juan Caballero y Ocio, but both men's origins are too obscure to settle the issue. Ocio served 1734 in Baja California's records, serving as a soldier to put down the Pericú rebellion. In 1736, Ocio married his commander's daughter Rosalía Rodríguez de Larrea. Ocio then left Baja California to spend the years 1741-1744 pearl fishing at Isla Tiburón off Sonora's coast. In 1744, Ocio stunned Guadalajara's merchants by bringing eleven arrobas of pearls to sell there. Ocio clearly had ties to Sonora, Guadalajara and Loreto by 1744.

⁵⁶ From 1730 to 1740, Castro supplied Ostotipaquillo, San Pedro Analco, Santa Bárbara, Tequepexpa, Guajacatlán, Etzatlán and Copala, see León, *Minas*, 2020, pp. 38, 44, 79, 109 and 141.

⁵⁷ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 314 and 514. León, *Minas*, 2020, p. 96.

⁵⁸ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 321-322.

Between 1745 and 1750, Ocio partnered with Guadalajara merchant Juan Sánchez Leñero to collect the tithe on pearlers in the Gulf. This puts Ocio in a commercial partnership with the family that traveled from Spain with the Marqués del Castillo de Aysa to Guadalajara. His role collecting taxes on pearlers suggests that Ocio was sailing or sending vessels between Matanchel and the Colorado River 1745-1750, putting into practice with the Sánchez Leñeros a piece of the Aysa plan.⁵⁹

King Philip's 1744 response to Aysa's 1743 proposal had called for civil settlement in California, and by 1748, Ocio fostered mining by bringing men and supplies to the bay of Cerralvo from the mainland. He and his men dug mining pits on Cerro de San Pedro. Half the silver harvested in early years was smelted by fire alone, and half was refined by the patio process with mercury.⁶⁰ In 1751, Ocio opened mines at El Triunfo. The Uchiti killed one of Ocio's employees, yet nonetheless in 1753, there were twenty-two families and 200 workers at the settlement, which included a small gold mine, el Realito de Oro.⁶¹ In 1756, Ocio opened the silver mine at San Antonio. By 1763, he had enough mercury to refine virtually all his silver.⁶²

To increase his income, Manuel de Ocio partnered with a second Guadalajara merchant Antonio Ignacio de Mena to supply goods to the mining community.⁶³ Mena was *aviador* of Etzatlán, one of the top mines in New Galicia (see Table 1). This merchant was likely kin to Manuel de Mena who served as notary when Aysa was governor of New Galicia promoting trade in the Gulf of California, and in 1738 was lieutenant governor to Huidobro in Sonora and Sinaloa during the conflicts between Jesuits and miners. Ocio owned at least one vessel, with which he brought goods from Matanchel to the Bay of Cerralvo. His prices were high, which he attributed to the trouble of ferrying goods, while others pointed

⁵⁹ On pearls, see Barco, *Natural*, 1980, pp. 259-260. In 1761, Juan Alfonso would marry María Manuela Marín del Valle, daughter of Tepic merchant Miguel Marín del Valle, Mota, *Élites*, 2018, pp. 352-354; Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, p. 324.

⁶⁰ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, p. 352.

⁶¹ Francisco de Abaurrea y Oteiza and Juan Antonio Ruiz de la Mota reasoned on behalf of Ocio to virrey Revillagigedo, 1753 in AGN, General de Parte, v. 39, exp. 144, ff. 101v-106r. Barco, *Natural*, 1980, p. 277; Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, p. 354.

⁶² AGN, f. General de Parte, vol. 30, exp. 144.

⁶³ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 353-355.

to the market power Ocio held through near monopoly on supply to the quasi-island.⁶⁴

In 1753, Ocio petitioned Viceroy Juan Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas, Conde de Revillagigedo, for the right to a covered ship and several smaller vessels to sail between New Galicia and his mines in Baja California. Recall that Guadalajara's oidor Francisco López Portillo gave a gift to Pedro de la Riva at his wedding in Tepic, perhaps a sign of interest in controlling the peninsula given Riva's tie to Presidio Loreto. In 1753, when Ocio petitioned for vessels, López Portillo threw his support behind the request.

In contrast, Fernando Rivera y Moncada, the Compostela native who prevailed over Riva to become Commander of Loreto in 1751, spoke against Ocio's petition. Rivera y Moncada undermined Ocio's request by testifying that everybody knew Ocio intended to use the vessels to bring goods from Acapulco to retail in the Gulf of California, not just to bring supplies from Matanchel for his mines. If we believe Rivera y Moncada, then Ocio and Mena were implementing on a smaller scale what Aysa in 1743 requested. On Oct. 26, 1753, Revillagigedo granted Ocio's request for vessels, admonishing him not to use the ship to sail to Acapulco. By 1753 Ocio would not have needed to sail to Acapulco to trade silver for Asian imports because the galleon was routinely anchoring at Cabo San Lucas. Without accounts it cannot be proven that the grant of private ships to the merchant permitted Ocio to make a fortune on trade in the Gulf of California.⁶⁵ Yet it is clear that Ocio amassed wealth between 1753 and 1766 because he paid a dowry of \$6 000 in 1767 to marry his son Antonio to Manuela de Mena, daughter of Guadalajara *aviador* Antonio Ignacio de Mena. By then, Ocio had accumulated \$60 000.⁶⁶ Between 1748 and 1771, Antonio Ignacio de Mena rose to own mines at Ostotipaquillo and even Bolaños, and his son-in-law would inherit Ocio's business

interests in southern Baja California near the international anchorage of Bay of San Bernabé.

Compostela and Loreto

Ocio's detractor Fernando Rivera y Moncada was born in Compostela as was the soldier Romero killed by Pericú in 1734. Recall that Romero had once been in charge at La Paz, and that many from Compostela came to the southern Peninsula in 1735. Rivera's wife was Theresa Dávalos, which suggests that he was distant kin to the house of the Condes de Miravalle (the Bracamonte y Dávalos family) who controlled Compostela and closely collaborated with the Jesuits in the 1690s.⁶⁷ In 1743, Compostela's residents collaborated with the Marqués de Aysa's project which suggests they favored commerce between Acapulco, New Galicia and the Colorado River.⁶⁸ Commander Rivera's antagonism to Ocio's request for maritime vessels suggests that by 1753, this Compostela faction had lost control of the international anchorage in southern Baja California. Rivera's command of Loreto suggests that Compostela men had gained command of that location opposite Álamos. According to Table 1, merchants of Álamos paid taxes on \$142 000 per year of silver, but it is possible that even more silver was produced for informal trade by way of the Gulf of California. The Compostela network is a distinct one than that emanating from either Bernal de Huidobro of Sonora or Ocio with his Guadalajara connections. Rivera's motive to speak out against Ocio's 1753 petition for ships may have been resistance to Ocio's takeover of southern Baja California's commercial opportunities at the expense of Compostelans.

A COMMERCIAL REGION EMERGES

This study began by positing that the attraction of southern Baja California to merchants was its connection to the external world, and yet the research above suggests that strong ties to Compostela, Álamos and Guadalajara also influenced the region. Pedro de la Riva and Manuel Ocio married into

⁶⁴ Gaspar Pisón y Guzmán from Andalucía was also mining in Baja California on a smaller scale than Ocio. In 1747 married Rosa Francisca de Acevedo in Tepic, and in 1756 opened the Santa Gertrudis mine in partnership with Simon Rodríguez, son of the early commander at Loreto. Juan Nicolás and José María de Estrada. Between 1763 and 1765, the Estradas imported goods from Guadalajara via Antonio Mena worth between 500 and 963 pesos. Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 365-367.

⁶⁵ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 358-359.

⁶⁶ Crosby, *Antigua*, 1994, pp. 362-363. León, *Minas*, 2020, p. 96.

⁶⁷ Duggan, "Redes", 2023, pp. 85-86, 111-112, 115 and 117.

⁶⁸ Vidargas, *Navegación*, 1982, p. 91.

the Rodríguez family of Loreto, and then later tied their families to merchants of Guadalajara. Men of Compostela once had a toehold at La Paz but by the 1750s lost control of the strategic south, and consolidated hold on Loreto opposite Álamos.⁶⁹

The waters of the Gulf of California, that 900-mile branch of the Pacific, create a commercial region by facilitating trade between New Galicia, Sonora y Sinaloa and Baja California. This is a different way to view the waterway, which otherwise appears as a road to nowhere. Eric Van Young wrote that a region is a hypothesis that flows of people, goods, and capital within are greater than its connections to the external world.⁷⁰ What is remarkable about the land surrounding the Gulf of California is that the region had two competing connections to the external world: a port that ties to Manila, in addition to Guadalajara's connections to wider imperial networks via Mexico City. In 1711, the early Jesuit Eusebio Kino named this independent space New

Navarre, and this researcher has begun to think of the three provinces surrounding the Gulf of California as a space of its own.

The Bay of San Bernabé was first land fall for galleon from Manila. For example, a December 25, 1760, letter from Captain Joseph de Eslava to the viceroy explains that the galleon *La Santísima Trinidad*, anchored at Mission San José del Cabo from December 6 to December 11. The ship obtained fresh water, yet Image 2 leaves no doubt that loading water could intersect with bustling commerce.⁷¹ Father Ignaz Tirsch painted sometime between 1762 and 1767, and Spaniards of means outnumber Pericú converts in the image. Two Spaniards arrive on horseback, alongside a Jesuit in black robes, who is perhaps the superior. In the background an African slave holds a parasol over an elite woman's head. There are two people who appear to be Asian standing next to the well-dressed couple in front looking at the viewer. The implication is that by the early

Image 2

Galleon's Arrival at Mission San Jose del Cabo, by Ignac Tirsch



Source: Ignac Tirsch, *Codex Pictoricus Mexicanos*, courtesy of National Library of the Czech Republic (Národní knihovna České republiky), f. NK ČR, sign. XVI B 18, 8r.

⁶⁹ Rivera would collaborate in opening an overland route from Loreto to San Diego, a second informal port on the China trade route in the region of Map 1. Burrus, "Rivera", 1970, pp. 682-692.

⁷⁰ Van Young, "Haciendo", 1987, pp. 255-281.

⁷¹ AGN, f. Marina, vol. 18, exp. 87, ff. 156-162.

1760s, merchants from Manila met regional mercantile actors at the Bay of San Bernabé, the juncture of the lands around the Gulf with the external world.

While this analysis has concentrated on the possibility of exporting silver, another benefit to the region of the Manila galleon was the inexpensive and high-quality items from Asia which undercut the prices of goods delivered from the mainland. In 1768, the incoming galleon provided everyday cloth such as cotton nankeens from China, elephant-print cloth, chambray from Bengal, and thick blue *bombasies* for troops and native converts from Cabo San Lucas to north of Loreto, while tobacco was intended for the troops in Sinaloa.⁷² The use of at least some silver to trade with the galleon in the pre-expulsion days of Baja California's history is confirmed by an unexpected source: an October 17, 1786 letter by then-Commander of Presidio Loreto José Joaquín de Arrillaga.⁷³ Carlos III asked Arrillaga if he thought the galleon should once again stop at San José del Cabo. Arrillaga replied that if settlers were given permission to trade with the galleon, they would certainly use untaxed silver to pay for the purchases. He also wrote that in the pre-1767 era, settlers in Baja California had purchased most of their goods from the galleon, and that after 1768, their exclusive reliance upon merchants from the mainland was ruinous. Arrillaga paints pre-1767 commerce benefiting private settlers more than the post-1768 Bourbon institutions, which contradicts the literature.⁷⁴ Arrillaga's 1786 words do not clarify how and to what extent networks on the mainland participated in the trade, but they do confirm that between 1732 and 1767 a trade in silver with the galleon had a significant impact on people of the region.

Correcting the omission of the commercial motive from Baja California's history uncovers the human ties between New Galicia and Sonora y Sinaloa that made the peninsula part of a regional economy. Commercially minded actors Pedro de la Riva, Manuel de Ocio, as well as the Rodríguez family of Loreto through their marriages and commercial contracts tied the Baja California ports on the west side of the Gulf of California to the more

populous eastern shore. Establishment of the legal civil settlement of Santa Ana in Baja California at the mouth of the Gulf was an important (if brutal) step toward integration of southern Baja California into the network's mainland. Jesuit control had in the south already been undermined well before the 1767 expulsion of the order from the Spanish Empire. In 1768, visitador José de Gálvez headed directly to southern Baja California in time to tightly watch the incoming galleon in December. Perhaps he was privy to Landázuri's 1767 alert to the king that New Spain's northern Pacific coast was the primary location for contraband trade in silver and gold.

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⁷² Altable, *Testimonios*, 2012, p. 145.

⁷³ AGN, f. Californias, vol. 75.

⁷⁴ Altable, "Real", 2021, pp. 418-419.

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