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TRANSLATORS' INTRODUCTION

Europeans received their first accounts of the New World from reports by Columbus to his royal sponsors, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. The first of Columbus's letters appeared within a few weeks of his return to Spain in March 1493, first in the original Spanish, then in a widely disseminated Latin translation. He and his companions on his subsequent three voyages provided further accounts over the next few years, and soon other explorers contributed to the body of first-hand information about the Caribbean. But only in 1516 did the first synthetic description of the New World appear: Peter Martyr's *Decades*, based on reports from and interviews with explorers. As Europeans explored beyond the West Indies to the mainland in the 1510s and the interior of Mexico in the 1520s, the flow of new information turned into a flood. In the 1520s, for example, Hernán Cortés published his accounts of his conquest of the Mexica Empire; the illiterate Francisco Pizarro had to let his companions send written reports to Spain in order to describe the conquest of the Inca Empire in the 1530s. Peter Martyr eventually expanded his original three volumes to eight by 1530. In 1526, the conquistador Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés published the first comprehensive

description of the Indies as far as then known: the brief *De la natural hystoria de las Indias* (or *Sumario*). Oviedo spent the rest of his life expanding his *Sumario* and adding an account of the discovery and conquest in the enormous *Historia general de las Indias*, which numbered nineteen books at the time of its publication in 1535 and described the Caribbean and adjacent mainland. He revised and enlarged it steadily until his death in 1557. Except for book 20, which appeared that year, the rest of the fifty books of the *Historia general* remained unpublished until the 1850s in an edition based on the four volumes of the manuscript Oviedo deposited in a monastery in Seville in 1549. Bartolomé de las Casas likewise worked for many years on a general history of the New World, *Historia de las Indias*. Although he did not publish it in his lifetime, many contemporary and later historians had access to the manuscript. Interest in the New World prompted a flood of specialized publications in the 1550s: Pedro de Cieza de León's *Primera parte de la crónica del Perú* (1553, 1554, 1555); Agustín de Zárate's *Historia del descubrimiento y conquista del Perú* (1555); las Casas's *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de la Indias* (1552); as well as the republication in 1555 of Cabeza de Vaca's

Relación y comentarios del gobernador Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1542).¹

This profusion of publications suggests a strong need on the part of Europeans for a universal history of their explorations in the whole of the New World, not just the Caribbean, as well as an account of its natural history. Such a volume would supply all information available when the European thirst for conquest moved into a phase of stabilization, colonization, and exploitation. We can see the appeal of such a universal history in a letter that accompanied a shipment of recent accounts of the Indies that the bishop of Palencia sent to Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria and future emperor, in 1554. The bishop recommends above all else an account that included everything the archduke wanted to know about “the great navigations and discoveries that the Spanish have made in these times, and of the many lands and riches that the Crown of Spain has acquired . . . and of the variety of temples in those lands, especially Peru, and how the reality differs to everything that the ancients wrote about the earth’s zones, especially the Torrid Zone, and about the strength of Peru, and of the difficulties . . . of navigation, and of the religions of the peoples in those parts.”² The bishop must have been referring to a recent work by Francisco López de Gómara, *The General History of the Indies*.

Gómara lived from 1511 to 1563 or shortly before. His biography depends almost entirely on a few facts he happens to mention in his works, usually negative comments by other chroniclers, scattered references in legal actions, and passing mentions in letters of contemporaries. He came from the village of Gómara in the Castilian province of Soria, where he received a humanist education and achieved the degree of *bachiller*. In 1528 or 1529, he met Cortés, and, after

that, he likely went to Italy as a protégé of García de Loaysa y Mendoza, bishop of Osma, in the court of Charles V, who traveled to Bologna in 1530 for his imperial coronation. At any rate, 1531 found Gómara in Rome, and he spent most of the next fifteen years in Italy where he met scholars and diplomats such as Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Olaus Magnus, and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza. Gómara lived as a chaplain at the Real Colegio Mayor de San Clemente de los Españoles in Bologna, where he was ordained in October 1535. In 1541, he joined Charles V’s expedition to Algiers. There his acquaintance with Cortés, who served in Charles’s army, developed into a close association that continued with Cortés’s son Martin after his father’s death in 1547. Occasional references put Gómara in Valladolid from the 1540s until 1552.³

In the 1540s and following the model of Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*, Gómara began to write biographies of Cortés and the Barbarossa brothers, the notorious corsairs. During the same period, he also composed the *Annals of the Emperor Charles V*. To his life of Cortés and conquest of Mexico, for which his patron provided documents and eyewitness information, Gómara added a comprehensive general description of the New World, as well as its exploration and conquest to date. In 1552 he published that work as *La istoria de las Indias y conquista de Mexico*

¹ For surveys of the first century of writing about the New World, see Sauer, *Early Spanish Main*, 37–39; Delgado-Gómez, *Spanish Historical Writing about the New World*; Merrim, “The First Fifty Years of Hispanic New World Historiography,” 101–42; and Ross, “Historians of the Conquest and Colonization of the New World.” See our bibliography for modern editions of the sixteenth-century authors mentioned here.

² Qtd. in Fernández Álvarez, *La España del Emperador Carlos V*, 736.

³ For the biographical data and attempts to flesh it out, see Merriman in the introduction to his translation of Gómara, *Annals of the Emperor Charles V*, ix–xiii; Wagner, “Francisco López de Gómara and His Works,” 264–82; Lewis, “Humanistic Historiography of Francisco López de Gómara (1511–1559)” ; and Lacroix’s intro. to his edition of Gómara’s *Historia general*. For a rich analysis of the Humanist and courtly context, but skeptical of the connection with Cortés, see Jiménez, *Francisco López de Gómara*. Martínez Martínez, “Francisco López de Gómara y Hernán Cortés,” 267–302, throws new light on the historian’s relations with Cortés and his family; she also successfully discounts las Casas’s identification of Gómara as Cortés’s chaplain. She followed up this article with another that studies Gómara’s petition to take the habit of the Order of Alcántara in 1543; “Francisco López de Gómara y la Orden de Alcántara,” 151–76. The Council of the Orders granted his petition, but no evidence confirms that he took the habit. Bartolomé Martínez, *Francisco López de Gómara*, has recently summarized the evidence for Gómara’s biography and reviews his books and their reception.

(*The History of the Indies and the Conquest of Mexico*), which comprises a general description of the Indies in part one (the subject of the present volume) and the life of Cortés and the conquest of Mexico in part two. Subsequent editions used the title *Historia general de las Indias* (*General History of the Indies*), the title commonly used to refer to the work. Gómara's other works did not see publication until modern times.⁴

Evidently Gómara timed the publication of his history of the Indies in a bid for the vacancy left by the death of the royal chronicler Pedro Mexia in 1551. He spent the next years following the court and getting friends and acquaintances to recommend him for the open position and other favors. At the same time, he also revised his *General History* and continued with his other writings. In the mid-1550s, he lived in Flanders where Prince Philip (King Philip II from 1556) had taken up residence (1555–1559). In 1554, new editions of *The General History of the Indies* appeared in Antwerp, though we do not know whether Gómara made any contribution to them. Here the aging author suffered a debilitating illness that alarmed his friends. In a letter of 1558, one acquaintance, Mauricio de la Cuadra, described a chance encounter with Gómara in the Antwerp bourse. This, his only surviving physical characterization, sadly shows him in a miserable state: Gómara “limped about in a hellish mood, wearing a bizarre costume, looking like one exhumed or vomited by monsters.”⁵ Back in Soria by the end of 1559 Gómara made his testament. By 1563, he was dead.

The *Historia general de las Indias* proved instantly popular and went through multiple editions in Gómara's lifetime: originally in 1552 (Zaragoza: Agustín Millán); twice in 1553 (Zaragoza: Miguel de Capila; Medina del Campo: Guillermo de Millis);

three times in 1554 (an expanded and corrected edition in Zaragoza by Miguel de Capila, printed by Pedro de Bernuz; and in Antwerp a version derived from the 1552 Zaragoza edition by Martín Nucio and another by Juan Bellerio and Juan Steelsio, printed by Juan Lacio). All of the Spanish editions included both parts of the history: *General History of the Indies* and *The Conquest of Mexico*, though each had its own foliation. The Antwerp publishers produced the two parts separately in the newly popular roman type that allowed smaller and cheaper volumes and served the Castilian court in Flanders and England.⁶ The 1554 Zaragoza edition had significant changes to the text, especially the removal of many passages that describe what the Spanish considered the immoral behavior of native peoples (a reprint of the same edition appeared in 1555). An Italian translation by Agustino de Cravaliz appeared in 1556, as did, in 1569, a French translation of the Italian (the first part only) by Martin Fumée in 1569. Both were reprinted multiple times through the end of the century, including a summary of the second part by Fumée in 1584 and a complete translation into French of part two by Guillaume Le Breton in 1588. Only the second part, treating Cortés's conquest of Mexico, appeared in English (1578), though in a mutilated form. The present volume is the first translation into English of the first part.⁷

⁶ Martos, “El público de Martín Nucio,” 113; Beardsley Jr., “Spanish Printers and the Classics,” 25–35. Beardsley discusses the reasons for the shift of the bulk of printing books in Spanish from Spain to the Netherlands in the 1540s and emphasizes the growing preference for roman type at a time when Spanish presses continued to use gothic; the shift caught “Spanish printers with their fonts down” (30)! For the common practice of publishers/booksellers having another press print the books they sold, which resulted in numerous identical editions, except for the publisher's imprint, see *Netherlandish Books*, 1:xxii.

⁷ See the bibliography for complete publication information. For a summary of the early modern printing history of Gómara's two-part work, see Sabin, *Bibliotheca Americana*, 305–312; Wagner, *Spanish Southwest*, 1:50–89; the bibliographical supplement by Newbury in Delgado-Gómez, *Spanish Historical Writing about the New World*, 124; and Jiménez, *Escribir historias*, 305–323. Eden translated a few chapters or parts of chapters from the first part, adding his own comments (chaps. 6–11, 13–15, 17–18, 37, 39, 45, 98, 217, 220–21), in *Decades of the Newe*

⁴ The chronicles of the Barbarossas exist in two manuscript versions published as *Crónica de los corsarios Barbarroja* and *Guerras de mar del emperador Carlos V*. Gómara also prepared a Latin version of the life of his patron that may survive in the anonymous manuscript “De rebus gestis Ferdinandi Cortesii,” available in Elena Pellús Pérez's *Sobre las hazañas* (in our bibliography under López de Gómara, Francisco. *De Rebus Gestis Ferdinandi Cortesii*).

⁵ Mauricio de la Cuadra to Jerónimo de Zurita, Antwerp, July 8, 1558, qtd. in Jiménez de la Espada, *De un curioso percance*, 9–10.

The Crown of Castile suppressed *The History of the Indies* in 1553 and 1566 (lifted in 1749) and in 1572 ordered an inspection of Gómaras papers related to the book in the possession of his heirs. The decrees do not explain the reason for the suppression but do specify as “inconvenient the sale, reading, and publication” of the book. And so the fact that more editions appeared subsequently in Spanish realms—and that Nucio obtained royal permission for his edition—has puzzled scholars. Perhaps the crown responded to complaints of persons who felt dishonored by Gómaras accounts of their actions; perhaps the suppression concerned only unauthorized printings, perhaps Gómaras negative descriptions of certain features of imperial policy embarrassed the crown, or perhaps his vision of empire (to which we return shortly) did not suit the vision of the Council of the Indies, the agency in charge of all aspects of the Spanish New World.⁸

Gómaras work remained the most accessible comprehensive treatment of the history of the European conquest and the native peoples, geography, flora, and fauna until José de Acosta published his *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* in 1590 (translated from the Latin edition of 1589) and Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas his *Historia general de los hechos de los Castellanos en las Islas i Tierra Firme del Mar Oceano* at the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁹ Gómaras work constituted one of the authoritative texts that historians such as Herrera consulted as they composed their histories, and copies of the *Historia*

general de las Indias show up in inventories of books shipped to the Americas in 1600 and 1606.¹⁰ Even Gómaras detractors, such as Bartolomé de las Casas and Bernal Díaz del Castillo, depended on him for the structure and content of their own works.¹¹

The modern printing history in Spanish of Gómaras *Historia general de las Indias* begins in the middle of the eighteenth century with Andrés González de Barcia’s edition in volume 2 of his *Historiadores primitivos de las Indias Occidentales* (1749). In 1852 Enrique de Vedia edited it for the series Biblioteca de autores españoles; this edition defines all modern versions of Gómaras history. Vedia claimed to present the original edition of 1552 (xv), but with modernized spellings; in fact it derives from Millis’s edition (Medina del Campo, 1553). All twentieth-century editions follow this 1553 edition, either directly or through Vedia, correcting some errors, but keeping others, as well as introducing new ones. Therefore, a critical shortcoming of all modern editions beginning with Vedia’s (which modern scholars typically cite) results from the fact that they originate not from any of Gómaras manuscripts (of which none survives), or from the original 1552 edition in Zaragoza, but from the 1553 edition in Medina del Campo. None of them accounts for the major changes made in the 1554 edition.¹² In order to produce a modern

Worldle. Thomas Nicholas translated the second part of Gómaras history as *Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the West India*. See also Simpson’s translation in *Cortés*. Yoseph Ha-Kohen worked on a Hebrew adaptation of both parts between 1556 to 1568; nine manuscripts in various conditions of preservation survive. Moshe Lazar edited the last for publication in 2002 (*Sefer ha-Indiñah ha-badashah ve-sefer Fernando Qortēs*, 1553; *History of New India and Mexico* [1553]).

⁸ Wagner, *Spanish Southwest* 1:82–87; Lewis, “Humanistic Historiography,” 317–29, with translations of sections of the decrees; Jiménez, *Escribir historias*, 291–303, 311–64; Roa-de-la-Carrera, *Histories of Infamy*, 55–64.

⁹ Acosta, *De natvra novi orbis* and *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*; Herrera y Tordesillas, *Historia general*; for a recent edition, see Domingo’s.

¹⁰ Leonard, *Books of the Brave*, 253, 296.

¹¹ Díaz del Castillo, *Conquest of New Spain*; for a modern Spanish edition, see Barbón Rodríguez, ed., *Historia verdadera*. For a summary of the contemporary criticism of Gómaras history, including the royal prohibitions, see Roa-de-la-Carrera, *Histories of Infamy*, 55–64.

¹² For complete publication facts see the bibliography. For the occasional errors in Millis’s 1553 edition, reproduced in modern editions, see nn. 53, 855, 863, 1178, 1216. At n. 1725, all modern editions after Barcia follow the Spanish 1553 editions in omitting a mention of lions; the 1552 and 1554/54 Spanish editions and the 1553 Antwerp editions include it. At n. 1347, Barcia introduced an error adopted in all modern editions. In a few cases, Vedia introduced an error not in Barcia’s edition but then followed by subsequent editions: nn. 377, 458, 575, 576, 890, 891, 1063, 1209, 1216, 1347, 1378, 1389, 1453, 1464, 1488, 1694, 1722, 1724, 1756, 1761, 1805, 1846, 1884. See also nn. 345, 376, 657, 855, 863, 875, 911, 1091, 1488, 1847, 1852 for Barcia’s use of the 1553 Zaragoza edition and Vedia’s of the 1553 Medina del Campo edition. In one instance, all modern editions follow the 1554/1555 edition: n. 1390. Vedia’s version

scholarly edition of the Spanish text, a research team at the Centre de Recherches sur l'Amérique Espagnole Coloniale, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris III, worked for more than twenty years on a new critical edition of the original Spanish of the *Historia general de las Indias*, which appeared after we completed our project.¹³

GÓMARA'S PLAN FOR THE WORK

The *Historia general de las Indias* begins with eleven chapters situating the New World into the cosmography inherited from antiquity, then undergoing rapid change to accommodate new discoveries.¹⁴ The long chapter 12 describes a circuit of the Americas in the manner of a pilot guide, giving distances from point to point and tracing the coast from Iceland, Greenland, and Labrador in the northern Atlantic southward to

appeared again as the *Historia general* in the series *Viajes Clásicos* (see under *Historia general de las Indias*, 1922), slightly more modernized and with a few notes by Dantín Cereceda; then as the first volume of *Historia general de las Indias*, "*Hispania Vitrix*," with a text more thoroughly modernized by Guibelalde and intro. by Aguilera. All these share an error not followed in other modern editions (at our n. 1880). Lacroix edited yet another version as *Historia general*, which claims to present the 1552 edition, though, in fact, depends on Vedia's (Lacroix modernized the text rather less than the 1954 Iberia edition). We know nothing about the digital edition in the Colección Carrascalejo de la Jara. The most recent edition, *Historia general* (Linkgua ediciones), follows Lacroix's Ayacucho edition without crediting him; see the changes and errors below at nn. 96, 144, 166, 192, 231, 410, 417, 418, 531, 542, 558, 579, 595, 735, 739, 779, 792, 824, 1156, 1169, 1312, 1373, 1540, 1603, 1773, 1801, 1861, 1896, 1900, 1923. Occasionally the Linkgua edition introduces further errors (nn. 269, 647, 737, 824, 1004, 1171).

In 2015, the Biblioteca Saavedra Fajardo de Pensamiento Político Hispánico (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) published an online transcription by Miñarro of Steelsio's edition (Antwerp, 1554). We have not examined this transcription.

For the most recent edition of part 2 on the conquest of Mexico, see Gómara, *Historia de la conquista de México*, ed. by Cabañas.

¹³ Mustapha, "Apuntes," 261–70. On the need for proper editions of colonial texts, see Arellano Ayuso, "Problemas en la edición y anotación," 45–74.

¹⁴ Jiménez, *Escribir historias*, 189–211.

the Strait of Magellan and then turning northward up the Pacific coast as far as modern California. Thus Gómara follows classical geographers such as Ptolemy in placing a physical after a theoretical description of the world.¹⁵ The history then recounts Christopher Columbus's voyages (chaps. 13–25; hereafter in our introduction, all parenthetical references to other chapters in this book are indicated by numerals). After that appear ten chapters describing the conquest of Hispaniola, its flora and fauna, and the native people and their customs. Chapter 36 pauses to glorify the Spanish role in the discoveries, and then the history begins a survey of discoveries via the clockwise circuit of the Americas established in chapter 12; each identified region includes discovery, exploration, and conquest, then flora and fauna, and, finally, native populations and customs. Gómara notably eschews a chronological survey in favor of a geographical organization (cf. 38):¹⁶ the Atlantic coast of North America (37–43); Florida, the Greater Antilles, and the coast of the Gulf of Mexico (44–51; Gómara justifies his very brief description of the conquest of Mexico here by referring the reader to the second part of his book); then the Caribbean coast of Central America from the Yucatán Peninsula to the Gulf of Urabá, including Balboa's discovery of the Pacific (52–68); the Caribbean and eastern coast of South America (69–90); and Magellan's voyage (through the strait and all the way to the Moluccas; 91–107). The section on the voyage to the Spice Islands includes much discussion of the spice trade and the commercial rivalry between Spain and Portugal, and so it complements the world map and the opening chapters in situating the New World within the world as a whole vis-à-vis Europe. Then Gómara devotes a large section of his history to the discovery and conquest of Peru: the first rumors about the Inca Empire and Pizarro's expeditions (108–111); how Pizarro capitalized on the rivalry between Atahualpa and Huáscar (112–18); the character of the Inca Empire (119–22); the completion of the

¹⁵ Mustapha, "Apuntes," 266–67.

¹⁶ Cf. Mustapha, "Géographie et humanisme," 431–42. For the "metageographical" context, including substantial analysis of Gómara's description of the geography of the New World, see Padrón, *Spacious Word*.

conquest by Pizarro and the increasing rivalry among the conquistadores, culminating in civil war among the Spaniards (123–50); and the crown’s issuance of new laws that spawned a new round of civil war (151–90). Gómara then pauses for a moral appraisal of the Spaniards’ behavior before describing the natural history of Peru (191–96). After that, he resumes his geographical circuit up the Pacific coast of Central and North America and treats the American Southwest (197–215, including Europe’s first illustration of a bison). The history draws to an end with miscellaneous topics such as the nature of the native peoples, the organization of the Council of the Indies, the identification of Plato’s Atlantis with the New World, and the Canary Islands; it concludes with a chapter praising the Spaniards for their achievement (216–25).

The geographical rather than chronological organization does create awkward repetition as Gómara himself recognized (108); for example, he breaks up the story of Diego de Nicuesa’s conquests among three chapters (56, 57, and 59). But as Monique Mustapha observed, the repetition enhances the sense of a continuous process of conquest that the Spanish alone perpetually renewed and controlled. The world map printed in the 1552 and 1553 editions serves to show the global scale of the Spanish enterprise.¹⁷

No early modern historian matches Gómara in the remarkably comprehensive and global presentation of what he considers a great Spanish achievement. As Nora Edith Jiménez has remarked, Gómara’s history makes him “one of the most important historians of the epoch of Charles V . . . and at the same time one of the most original and most complete.”¹⁸

GÓMARA’S SOURCES

For his early chapters on cosmography, Gómara depended on an erudite familiarity with classical and biblical literature, and he refers copiously to those sources. He also consulted Olaus Magnus on geographical matters.¹⁹ His treatment of sources changes

¹⁷ Mustapha, “Géographie et humanisme,” 431–42; “Apuntes,” 266–67.

¹⁸ Jiménez, *Escribir historias*, 15.

¹⁹ Jiménez, *Escribir historias*, 202–5. For Gómara and Olaus

when he comes to the discoveries, conquests, and descriptions of the land and people. In accordance with contemporary practice, except for a very few instances when he mentions a conversation with someone, Gómara rarely identifies a source; at most, he might write “some say.” He did not have first-hand knowledge of the New World, but, residing in Valladolid and Seville, Gómara belonged to a network of intellectuals, conquistadores, officials, and clerics with interest in the Indies, notably Cortés and his family.²⁰ For example, he engaged in the debate over possible locations for a canal joining the Atlantic and Pacific oceans (104), and he spoke about the Badajoz-Elvas Conference with one of Spain’s negotiators there, Pero Ruiz de Villegas (100), and with Dr Beltrán concerning the deliberations leading to the New Laws (151). As we note in the proper places, he certainly spoke with many like Cortés on their return from the Indies. His report of Orellana’s boasting about his discoveries in the Amazon, for instance, makes it sound as if Gómara heard the proud explorer in person (89). He also had access to the archives of the Council of the Indies and of the court that enabled him to use the official field reports (*relaciones*) sent to Spain by conquistadores, imperial officials, captains and pilots, and clerics. He remarks at the end of chapter 12 that he had access to the royal cartographers and their work.²¹

Magnus, see nn. 106, 155, 168.

²⁰ Martínez Martínez, “Francisco López de Gómara y Hernán Cortés,” 289–90.

²¹ In particular, he used the *padrón real*, the official and secret register of the latest cartographic information of Spanish navigators, constantly updated in the Casa de la Contratación in Seville, which administered all aspects of Spanish activity in the Indies; see Sandman, “Spanish Nautical Cartography,” 1107–1130. Many unofficial maps of the New World circulated as well, but even the official ones had problems of accuracy, completeness, and consistency, as becomes obvious from Gómara’s distances and latitudes, esp. in chap. 12 (at the end of which he refers approvingly to “the charts of the cosmographers of the king”). Oviedo, whom Gómara sometimes follows, complained repeatedly of the state of cartographic knowledge and frequently corrects the *padrón real* itself, using his own observations and other maps and globes. See Carrillo, “The *Historia General y Natural de las Indias*,” 336–38.

Gómara also drew from formal historical accounts. At the beginning of his work, he specifically mentions Peter Martyr, Oviedo, and Cortés as historians, and he says that others—whom he does not name—published accounts of individual expeditions. Often we can identify which account he uses, and we provide appropriate references in our notes. He had access to the unpublished sections of Oviedo's history; in fact, las Casas complained that Gómara took everything from Oviedo "and added a lot of indecencies."²² For the section on Peru, Gómara could have consulted, in addition to Oviedo's books 43–49, Francisco de Jerez's *Verdadera relación de la conquista del Perú* and the anonymous *La conquista del Perú*, both published in 1534. In Seville, he might have seen the manuscript of Pedro de Cieza de León's *Crónicas del Perú*, and he certainly consulted Agustín de Zárate's *Historia del descubrimiento y conquista de la provincia del Peru*. Like Zárate, Gómara also used an anonymous account of the events in Peru from the appointment of Viceroy Blasco Núñez Vela in 1543 through Gonzalo Pizarro's Grand Rebellion of 1544–1548, as well as President Pedro de la Gasca's tenure of 1547–1550.²³ Never one merely to abstract or summarize, Gómara always reworked his sources to fit his own synthetic narrative and elegant style.²⁴ In some instances, he mentions very specific facts that survive in no other source.²⁵

²² *Historia*, 3.160. In fact, much does not come from Oviedo. For example, the geographical circuit in chap. 12 does not follow Oviedo's and has different coordinates and distances. Moreover, when he does work from Oviedo, Gómara recasts the information to fit his own narrative goals; see Roa-de-la-Carrera, *Histories of Infamy*, 144.

²³ Lewis, "Humanistic Historiography," 119–22; for Gómara's use of Zárate, cf. n. 1164. See also Jerez, *Verdadera relación*. Gómara and Zárate used the version of the anonymous *Relación de las cosas acaecidas* that survives in a copy in Paris (Grieve has edited the anonymous *Relación*) and that continues the original account (probably by Zárate's nephew Polo Ondegardo, which stopped at the end of 1547) through the Battle of Jaquijahuana in April 1548 and the end of Gasca's tenure at the beginning of 1550. This period corresponds to Gómara's chaps. 154–91, 195.

²⁴ Bénat-Tachot, "La *Historia general de las Indias*," 75–95; Jiménez, *Escribir historias*, 268–87. In general, for Gómara's sources, see Ramos Pérez, *Ximénez*, 109–19, 145–73; and Lewis, "Humanistic Historiography," 103–25.

²⁵ Chap. 91: a letter by Bernaldo of Aremenia, information

GÓMARA'S VIEW OF CHRISTIAN IMPERIAL CONQUEST

The importance of Gómara's *Historia general de las Indias* depends on not only its popularity in the sixteenth century but also its contributions to our modern understanding of the conquest and its historiography. In a language born of humanistic rhetorical training, packed with erudition, and aimed at elevating Spanish to the prestige of Latin, Gómara provides a fascinating description of a world completely new to Europeans and a vivid, fast-moving narrative of European engagements with it. He describes the process, institutions, and ideology of conquest, recounts the deeds and misdeeds of its agents (conquistadores, settlers, clerics, and officials), and illuminates the disconnect between imperial policy and the Spaniards who implemented—or violated—it.²⁶ He includes the native response and describes, sometimes with horror, the natives' character and customary idolatry and cannibalism (57, 218, e.g.). Yet whatever repugnance he registers, he often offsets with sympathy for the indios given the outrageous treatment the Spaniards subjected them to (54, 60, 61, 66, 68, 93, 196; for our use of the term *indio* see below, "Our Translation"). Its portrayal of the two-way character of the conquest has made Gómara's history a fertile inspiration for the historiographical shift at the end of the twentieth century in characterizing the story of conquistadores and indios as an encounter—and not exclusively a conquest.²⁷ Especially in the last generation, scholars

not in other writers (e.g., the slave woman), and general hostility toward the Portuguese; chap. 97 on the name of Serrano's ship; chap. 98 on Peralfonso; chap. 102 on Raxamira; chap. 108 on Luque named Lord of Taboga (n. 971). In general, for Spanish and Portuguese affairs in the Spice Islands, Gómara used a manuscript of António Galvão's history of discoveries not published until 1563; see n. 934. Roa-de-la-Carrera, *Histories of Infamy*, 161, cites the stories of exchange that Gómara did not get from Pigafetta, Martyr, or Maximilian.

²⁶ Jiménez, *Escribir historias*, 221–31, points out that Gómara's only critique of the emperor concerns his failure to understand the character of the men who conquered in his name (226).

²⁷ See, e.g., the essays in Greenblatt's *New World Encounters*.

have scrutinized this historical document in order to illuminate a host of problems related to the discovery—or “invention”—of the New World and its effect on the Old.²⁸

Gómara created a type of history that drew on classical antecedents to treat with accuracy and style a topic that was new to Europeans, as it depended on a variety of sources, including the published and unpublished works of Peter Martyr, Oviedo, and las Casas, as well as the relaciones of the conquistadores themselves. The genre lived after him but in tandem with more focused accounts written by participants in the conquest who claimed a superior truth derived from their position as eyewitnesses (for one, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, whose *True History of the Conquest of New Spain* [finished in 1568 but not published until 1632] corrected Gómara’s flawed account of Cortés). A particularly fascinating feature of the history, as we note above, concerns the way that Gómara tried to adjust the cosmography that Early Modern Europeans inherited from antiquity and the Middle Ages to accommodate a hitherto unknown world and its people.²⁹ He similarly inserted the New World into the seamless whole of the Spanish Empire in Europe and the Mediterranean and made its discovery and conquest not only an epochal event for Europe but also a critical feature of Charles’s universal rule. So in his dedication to Charles V, Gómara writes,

Most sovereign lord: the discovery of the Indies represents the greatest event since the creation of the world, excepting the incarnation and death of its creator. . . . Never has any nation extended its customs, language, and arms as has Spain, nor has it carried its arms so far by sea and land. . . . Many wise and Christian men say that God willed that your vassals discover the Indies in your time so

²⁸ See the works cited in n. 1. We highlight a few of these interpretive approaches in this part of our introduction; others appear as appropriate in our notes to particular sections. Because of its Eurocentric view, Gómara’s history does not contribute to the opposite perspective of how native populations viewed the conquest; cf. Roa-de-la-Carrera, “Francisco López de Gómara and *La conquista de México*,” 35–49.

²⁹ Roa-de-la-Carrera, *Histories of Infamy*, 84–95. In general, see Randles, “Classical Models of World Geography.”

that you might convert them to his holy law. The conquests of the Indies began after the conquest of the Moors, because the Spanish always make war against the infidels. The pope authorized the conquest and conversion, and you took literally your motto, *Plus ultra*, signaling your lordship of the New World.

Thus Gómara’s historiographical standpoint played a role in justifying the conquest—not in theoretical or religious terms (for which, at the end of the history, he directed the reader’s attention to Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda’s work), but in practical terms as an exchange of goods and services: gold, pearls, and the like for the Spaniards in return for Christianity, morality, and good government for the native peoples.³⁰ At every turn, Gómara shows us the marvelous people, customs, plants, animals, and geography of the Indies. He makes us the constant companion of the conquistadores struggling against peoples and places sometimes more hostile to them than marvelous. In general, he expects us to applaud the project of civilizing the natives and converting them into Christian subjects of the Spanish crown. Yet he does not disguise the violence and injustice in that project when the conquerors sought their own advantage, not that of the Christian empire. But, he points out, God has also punished the conquerors and settlers for their excesses (41, 118, 225; note that Gómara considers conquest and settlement a single process), in particular conquerors who came for immediate enrichment and not to establish permanent settlements (45–46). In sum, as Cristián A. Roa-de-la-Carrera has shown, Gómara worked at once to present to his Spanish audience the astonishing wonder of the New World and to explain why the self-serving lawlessness of those conquering in the emperor’s name sometimes frustrated his paternal authority.³¹

GÓMARA’S LANGUAGE

Gómara wrote this book the better part of five centuries ago, and his language reflects the linguistic

³⁰ Roa-de-la-Carrera, “La historia de las Indias,” 69–86, and *Histories of Infamy*, chap. 3.

³¹ Roa-de-la-Carrera, *Histories of Infamy*.

features of his time. The orthography still followed the prescriptions of King Afonso X the Wise, who reigned in the thirteenth century. Afonso X invited Jews, Christians, and Muslims to his court and formed the Toledo School of Translators, who took on the daunting task of translating valuable Latin and Arabic texts into the vernacular language of Castile. Up to that moment, Latin had served as the language of culture and erudition, but now, through this intellectual endeavor, the Castilian vernacular became the language of science, literature, law, and diplomacy. Castilian Spanish also spread throughout a large geographic area as a result of internal developments and external expansion.³² Despite many dialectal variations in the Iberian Peninsula, the Toledan norm enjoyed more prestige than the others. Typically, among languages of the world, the dialectal variation spoken at the seat of power possesses repute. The marriage of the Catholic Monarchs Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469 contributed to the expansion of the Castilian variety into the Kingdom of Aragon, and thus it spread throughout most of the Iberian Peninsula. Another important reason for the spread of the Castilian variety has to do with the presence and expansion of the printing press, which helped in standardizing spelling.³³ Two main linguistic norms competed with each other at the time: the norm of Toledo (which was later replaced by Madrid, when Philip II moved the Spanish Court to that city in 1561) and the norm of Seville.³⁴

³² Aguilar, *El español a través de los tiempos*.

³³ Eberenz, *El español en el otoño de la edad media*.

³⁴ When the humanist scholar Antonio de Nebrija published the first Spanish grammar in 1492, it was the first published grammar of any Romance language. Not until 1713 did the newly founded Royal Spanish Academy, the institution that regulates the Spanish language, take upon itself the cause of orthography based upon its belief, reflected in its motto, that Spanish “limpia, fija y da esplendor” (purifies, fixes, and gives magnificence). Between 1726 and 1739, the Royal Academy published its first dictionary, the *Diccionario de autoridades* (6 vols.). The *Orthographia*, published in 1741, compiled the Academy’s rules for the orthography of the Spanish language. In 1771, the Academy published its first edition of the *Gramática* (Spanish Grammar).

The online “dictionary of dictionaries” of the Real Academia Española, the *Nuevo tesoro lexicográfico de la*

During the course of Gómaras life, then, Spanish went through phonetic, syntactic, and morphological changes that would not be resolved for another century. Given that linguistic flux, the orthography of Gómaras work lacks consistency and vacillates between two or more renditions of certain phonetic sounds. In our translation, we adjust Gómaras spellings and add accents to conform to modern orthography.³⁵

OUR TRANSLATION

This translation serves all those interested in any aspect of the European discovery and conquest of the Americas and the European mode of thinking about them. It also benefits teachers of the discovery and conquest of the New World at all undergraduate and (in an academic world of increasingly limited foreign-language skills) graduate levels. We intend for this English translation of a major sixteenth-century historical work to serve the needs of scholars of history and historiography, literature, anthropology, geography, and religion who cannot access the original Spanish text. Even scholars who do read Spanish will find our translation and modern critical edition beneficial because they usually have to work with defective modern versions that derive from only one of the several sixteenth-century editions this popular account went through.³⁶ We have prepared substantial and critical annotations that will provide access to variant readings and to passages added to or removed from the successive editions of the 1550s. Moreover, some scholars may not understand certain aspects of Gómaras sixteenth-century Castilian, which, for example, uses the subjunctive and sequence of tenses in ways that Modern Spanish does not.

We wish to produce a readable and idiomatic modern English translation of a usually clear, smoothly

lengua Española (abbreviated *NTLLE*) gives access to the work of such lexicographers as Nebrija and Sebastián de Covarrubias, all editions of the *Diccionario de autoridades* up to the 21st edition of the *Diccionario de la lengua española*, and early modern dictionaries of Spanish in other languages such as English (Percival, 1591; Stevens, 1706).

³⁵ For a linguistic analysis of Gómaras language, see Helmer, “Algunas anotaciones.”

³⁶ As noted in n. 13, such a critical edition has now appeared.

flowing Spanish original. In most cases, we found straightforward English equivalents for Gómara's statements simply by following his syntax and grammatical structure; in several areas, however, we have departed from the original in the interest of clarity. Thus we supply nouns in place of substantive pronouns (*estas* becomes "those women," *los suyos* "their private parts") and chains of ambiguous pronouns. We recast his participial phrases and passive constructions as finite active statements. We have simplified some of his doublings: for example, where Gómara writes in chapter 188 that Gasca "presidió como presidente a todas las causas y negocios de gobernación," we translate simply, "he presided over all the affairs of government" rather than "he presided as president over all the cases and dealings of government."³⁷ We supply punctuation and break up long and complex sentences. We have also divided his chapter-length paragraphs into shorter paragraphs when a change of topic calls for it. Where Gómara shifts between present and past tenses within a given section, even within a sentence, we have usually chosen a single tense. Where lexical choices do not line up (where English lacks a precise equivalent for the meaning or usage of a given word or phrase), we explain that problem in a note: for example, Gómara uses the phrase *en or con su camisa* ("with her shirt") to refer to a woman who is menstruating.³⁸ Unusual words that appear only once we explain in notes; otherwise we explain them in the glossary. Faced with an utterly obscure expression, we did have recourse to the first Italian and French translations but usually found that the sixteenth-century translators did not understand what Gómara meant and inserted new material or simply omitted the suspect passage. In such cases we discuss our solution in a note.³⁹

³⁷ According to Andrades Moreno, "La importancia de los binomios," 401–14, binomials—which he analyzes in a legal context—refer to "a sequence of two words belonging to the same grammatical category and joined by a copulative or disjunctive coordinating conjunction." For more on doublings or binomials, see Andrades Moreno and Viorica Codita, "Locuciones prepositivas."

³⁸ See nn. 459, 1798.

³⁹ E.g., nn. 118, 135, 1004, 1188, 1804.

As explained in the previous section, we have modernized terms and personal and geographic names in the text in accordance with their current usage, if it exists; nevertheless, we honor Gómara's exhortation to his translators not to alter native terms and the names of Spaniards by including the original in a note. This exhortation becomes especially problematic where Gómara follows the general Spanish tendency to use the name of a *cacique* for his chiefdom and vice versa, as well as when he spells the same name in various ways. Thus we have given a uniform spelling to names Gómara spells inconsistently.

In order to avoid anachronistic meanings of the term "Indian," we have left it as "indio" throughout. The term acquired a legal and political meaning identifying the crown's American nations as legal minors needing protection. Castilian use of the term *indio* disguised the tremendous variety of ethnicities and social and legal statuses among indigenous peoples.⁴⁰

Our translation follows the original edition of 1552. We consulted the copy held in the Centro de Estudios de Historia de México Condumex; in general, though, we used the facsimile published by the Centro in 1978. We also consulted a microfilm of the 1552 edition provided by the John Carter Brown Library and the copy at the Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana. We have systematically compared the 1552 edition with the 1554/1555 Zaragoza edition (these are identical except for the dates of publication). We examined the copy of the 1555 edition in the Biblioteca Nacional de Lima that the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616) once owned; we have incorporated his extraordinarily interesting marginalia in our notes.⁴¹ The text changed

⁴⁰ Van Deusen, *Global Indios*, 27–29.

⁴¹ The Centro de Estudios de Historia de México not only published a facsimile of its 1552 edition but also offer it as a digital flipbook. Likewise Garcilaso's copy of the 1555 edition is available in facsimile and as a digital flipbook ed. by Franklin Pease. The Lima copy has a binding posterior to the original publication. Before the production of the current binding, someone trimmed the edges of the book and thereby cut off the extremities of the marginal notations. On the facsimile, someone traced over some of the more faded letters of the notes and drew in missing letters, often incorrectly. Pease provides an inaccurate transcription of these altered annotations at the end of the facsimile.

slightly in the intermediate editions (which we have also compared, using the scanned versions in Google Books and copies that we examined in the Lilly Library).⁴² Gómara, however, introduced a major change in 1554 when he shortened the history by eliminating an entire chapter in Latin, expunging certain descriptions of native sexual practice, and recasting the moral characterization of some of the Spaniards; this edition also included numerous illustrations, most of which have nothing to do with the text.⁴³ Although our main text follows the 1552 edition, we notice variations among the editions in our notes; at points of discrepancy, we have also compared modern Spanish editions. We also include chapter numbers, which appear only after the 1553 edition. The 1554/5 editions added much longer chapter headings than the original; we retain the original headings, which better suit the concise style of Gómara's history, though we translate the extended headings in our notes.⁴⁴

THE ANNOTATIONS

Nearly all modern editions of Gómara's *Historia general de las Indias* have introductory comments, but none has explanatory notes, except for rudimentary

notes in the *Viajes Clásicos* editions (1922, 1932, and 1941). Jorge Gurría Lacroix, who edited the Ayacucho edition (1979), stated that he would not include notes as he saw no point in clarifying one or two things and leaving many others unexplained (XXXIII). In contrast, we have tried to clarify obscure points of history, geography, prosopography, biology and botany, and language. In addition, we reference modern scholarship, preferably in English, on the various topics Gómara treats. We cite the scholarship for the identification of individuals only when standard prosopographical works (listed in the bibliography) fail to treat a given person or do so incorrectly. The first note in each chapter typically includes references to modern surveys that cover the topic of that chapter. For persons who appear in multiple chapters we include cross-references to the chapter where we give a biographical summary. We include a series of maps drawn by Erin Greb that situate all identifiable locations Gómara references; the notes indicate the degree of certainty and accuracy of these identifications.

Scholars can most conveniently cite *The General History of the Indies* by chapter number. Nevertheless, we provide in-text cross-references to several commonly cited editions in square brackets as the following examples illustrate.

- [52/3rd] refers to the right column (*columna dextra*) of the recto of folio 3 of the 1552 Zaragoza edition.
- [54/21v] refers to verso of folio 21 of the 1554/1555 Zaragoza edition.
- [BAE/160s] refers to the left column (*columna sinistra*) of page 160 of Vedia's edition in the Biblioteca de autores españoles 22 (1852); 160d refers to the right column of the same page.

For a description of this copy and a study and edition of the notes, see Rivarola, "Para la génesis." In our notes, we translate these annotations by following the Lima copy and Rivarola's edition.

⁴² The Lilly Library at Indiana University holds copies of the 1552 and both 1553 editions, Martin Nucio's Antwerp edition of 1554, and the 1555 reprint of the 1554 Zaragoza edition.

⁴³ These include the unique illustration of distinctive plants that appears after the table of contents (figure 8). Otherwise the thirty-one illustrations draw from sixteen generic scenes; many of them appear multiple times, one even four times. The colophon of the 1554/55 editions identifies the printer as Pedro Bernuz; his master, the Zaragoza printer Juan Coci, had used these illustrations for Pedro de la Vega's Spanish translation of Livy in 1520; Coci got these images from a German edition of Livy published in Mainz in 1505 (Jiménez, *Escribir historias*, 308). We identify these images in our notes and illustrate two of them (chaps. 108, 134).

⁴⁴ Agreeing with Ramírez Cabañas, who likewise preferred to use the shorter headings in his edition of Gómara's *Historia* (1:33).

FIGURE 1. The title page from the 1552 Zaragoza edition. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

From the copy in the John Carter Brown Library. The copy in Mexico differs very slightly in that a cross appears above the crown at the top and it has the publication date 1553 (nearly all the rest of the book is unchanged, including the colophon with the date 1552). According to the catalog, the copy in the Lilly Library has a facsimile title page of unspecified origin; it lacks the date at the bottom as well as the cross at the top.

The Antwerp editions of 1554 (which we do not illustrate) substitute the publisher's device for the imperial arms; Nucio's title page reads *La historia general de las Indias, y todo lo acaescido enellas dende que se ganaron hasta agora. Y la conquista de Mexico, y dela nueva España. En Anvers por Martin Nucio. Con privilegio Imperial. MDLIIII* (The general history of the Indies and all that occurred in them since their acquisition until now. And the conquest of Mexico and of New Spain. In Antwerp by Martin Nucio with imperial permission. 1554). The title page of the Bellerio edition (Antwerp, 1554) reads, *La historia general delas Indias, con todos los descubrimientos, y cosas notables que han acaescido enellas, dende que se ganaron hasta agora, escrita por Francisco Lopez de Gomara, clerigo. Añadiose de nuevo la descripcion y traza delas Indias, con una tabla alphabetica delas provincias, islas, puereos, ciudades, y nombres de conquistadores y varones principales que allá han pasado. En Anvers. Por Iuan Bellerio, ala enseña del Halcon. Año MDLIIII* (The general history of the Indies, with all the discoveries and notable things that have occurred in them since their acquisition until now, with the new addition of the description and map of the Indies, with an alphabetical table of the provinces, islands, ports, cities, and names of conquistadores and principal nobles who have gone there. In Antwerp by Juan Bellerio at the sign of the falcon). The title page of the Steelsio edition differs in no way except that it has Juan Steelsio's name and publisher's emblem instead of Bellerio's.



La historia de las Indias.

Y conquista de Mexico.

1552.

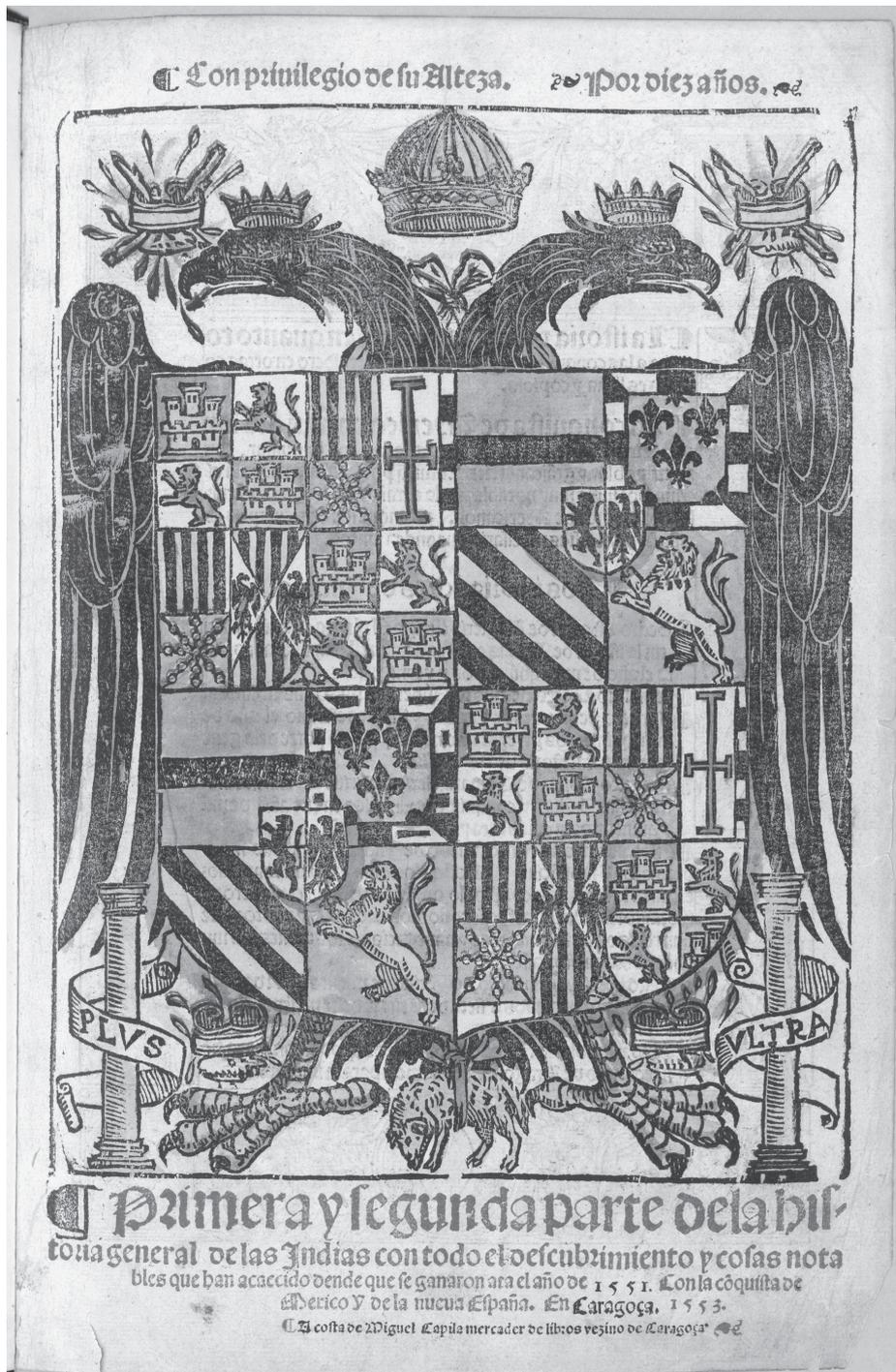


FIGURE 2. The title page from the 1553 Zaragoza edition. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

From the copy in the John Carter Brown Library. Printed in red and black, the title page for the Zaragoza edition of 1553 has the same image as the 1552 edition and added text: above, "By the permission of His Highness for ten years"; below, "First and second part of the general history of the Indies with all the discovery and remarkable things that have occurred since their acquisition until the year 1551. With the conquest of Mexico and of New Spain. In Zaragoza, 1553. At the expense of Miguel Capita, bookseller and citizen of Zaragoza."



FIGURE 3. The title page from the 1553 Medina del Campo edition. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library. From the copy at the John Carter Brown Library. The title page has a coat of arms set between the Pillars of Hercules bearing the emperor's motto *Plus Ultra* (farther beyond) and the text in red "Hispania Victrix" ("Spain the Conqueress") above; below in a mixture of red and some black, "First and second part of the general history of the Indies with all the discovery and remarkable things that have occurred since their acquisition until the year 1551. With the conquest of Mexico and of New Spain. In Medina del Campo by Guillermo de Millis, 1553."



FIGURE 4. The title page from the 1555 Zaragoza edition. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional del Perú.

From the copy with annotations by Garcilaso held in the Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, which differs from the 1554 Zaragoza edition only in the year of publication. The design includes a shield over the imperial double-headed eagle accompanied by the necklace of the Order of the Golden Fleece and the Pillars of Heracles with the imperial motto. Above the design appears, "By the permission of the prince our lord for ten years" and below, "The general history of the Indies and new world, also with the conquest of Peru and Mexico, now newly expanded and emended by the same author with a very complete table of the chapters and many illustrations that other editions do not have. Sold in Zaragoza in the house of Miguel de Zapila, bookseller, year 1555."