

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast. Edited by Patricia Galloway.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8w87w6nb>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 23(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Lewis, James A.

Publication Date

1999

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

and suffixes, which depend upon the shared common geography of the speaker and listener. SPACE and TIME are so intimately connected that they are coded in a single set of suffixes which contains both categories equally. There can not, therefore, be any fixed translation of a Bella Coola PROPOSITION owing to the possible SPACE-TIME alternation of the deictic suffixes. Meaning is established by knowing the SPACE-TIME in which the utterance is made. Davis and Saunders also treat patterns of relativisation, which is accomplished by the affixation of a deictic prefix to an EVENT, possession, and the usage of deictic suffixes as PARTICIPANTS. This last matter is particularly complicated, and the authors are to be commended for their clear exposition of the syntactic rules which determine when the suffixes so employed can and can not surface phonetically. The chapter concludes with a useful summary of the possible morphological expressions of the PARTICIPANT, and Davis and Saunders note that, owing to the multifaceted usage of the deictic affixes, morphology alone can not distinguish between PARTICIPANT and PROPOSITION; discourse context must determine semantic content.

Chapter 4 treats complex clauses, which are formed by juxtaposition. In Bella Coola, the degree of semantic integration between PROPOSITIONS can be varied, three levels of peripherality being available. The construction of juxtaposed PROPOSITIONS, then, can be manipulated to indicate FOCUS, CONSEQUENCE, "cause" and "effect," CONTINGENCY, and so forth. Davis and Saunders complete the chapter with a description of the complex rules for the indication of co-reference, the syntax of negation, and the semantic force of a host of affixes and coordinating particles.

In a short review such as this, it is impossible to document fully the marvelous service which Davis and Saunders have provided in this volume. A careful reader will learn much more about the exquisite subtlety of Bella Coola syntactic and semantic structure than is normally possible in a traditional grammar, especially in the case of discourse configurational languages. I note, however, that it is somewhat inconvenient for the reader to be required to leaf frequently through the pages of a given chapter in order to compare cross-referenced examples; repetition of previously cited examples would not have cost significant space. There are a tolerable number of typographic errors, nearly all of which are self-correcting, and one or two cited references are missing from the appended bibliography. This is a very important work.

Joseph F. Eska

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University

The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and "Discovery" in the Southeast. Edited by Patricia Galloway. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 544 pages. \$60.00 cloth.

The 1492 quincentennial celebration has inspired North American scholars to reexamine the earliest European contacts with the continental United States. In the Southeast, this has meant renewed interest in Hernando de Soto and other Spanish explorers. While such a reexamination was long overdue and coming

anyway, centennial money has sponsored far more studies of the Soto expedition than would have been possible at other times. Patricia Galloway has collected the fruits of much of this new research into the distant past in the form of nineteen essays, many of which were first written for the 1991 meeting of the Mississippi Historical Society. Her authors come from many different academic disciplines and include most of the individuals in the forefront of revising the old truths about Soto's Spaniards. However, there are some puzzling omissions in the list of authors, most notably historians such as Paul E. Hoffman and Eugene Lyon, whose seminal works most students consult when working on this period.

Galloway organizes her contributors' essays around four general topics—analysis of the written sources of the Soto expedition, new thoughts on the route and actual conduct of the expedition, the impact of the Spanish invasion on Native American societies, and the effects of the expedition on Euro-American history. Ida Altman, Martin Malcolm Elbl, Ivana Elbl, Lee Dowling, David Henige, and Galloway herself all pen studies about the surviving narratives of the expedition. There are four traditional sources—those written by Hernández de Biedma, Rodrigo Ranjel, the Gentleman of Elvas, and Garcilaso de la Vega. Yet so controversial are the veracity and reliability of each of these four basic works that some would argue that it would be best not to use any of them. Critics claim that these narratives are all copies of originals, edited and changed by unknown hands over the centuries, either derived from each other or, worse, simply historical fiction. To ignore them, however, would be to close up shop since they are virtually all that scholars have to study the Soto *entrada*. The question then remains: what historical information, if any, can be extracted from these four documents? There is no consensus on the answer to this question among the scholars mentioned above, except a grudging admission that the Biedma account might have some use.

Seven contributors (Curt Lamar, Ignacio Avellaneda, Robert S. Weddle, Ross Hassig, Jack D. Elliott Jr., Ann F. Ramenofsky, and Galloway) focus articles on specific actions by the Spaniards in the expedition. Several of these studies note how important Soto's Peruvian experience was in guiding his interaction with Southeastern tribes. Others discuss old but critical issues such as the distance of the Spanish league, impact of European diseases, location of sixteenth-century roads, and general Spanish problems in orienting themselves on land in a strange environment. Each of these studies has some surprising twists to challenge common assumptions about the *entrada*. For example, many have concluded that Soto's men infected Native societies with a myriad of diseases which were fatal to groups with few natural immunities. It may well be, however, that the longevity and isolation of Soto's travels to the Southeast meant that few, if any, pathogens accompanied the Europeans. In almost every case, these authors caution against assuming too much about present knowledge of where the Spaniards traveled, what they did, and whom they encountered from 1539–1543.

The smallest grouping of contributors (Galloway, Jay K. Johnson, and Charles Hudson) examine the impact of the Soto expedition upon Native American societies, although many of the essays located elsewhere in this collection also address this topic. With the exception of Hudson, these authors also express caution about overestimating the importance of the Soto *entrada*.

It may well be that these early Spaniards had no significant influence on Native American societies except for those unfortunate souls who lived immediately in the path of the marauding soldiers.

The final topic attracting the attention of six contributors (Ralph H. Vigil, Lawrence J. Goodman, John R. Wunder, Juan Bautista de Avallé-Arce, José Rabasa, and Galloway) was Soto and his impact upon European history. Here, these early Spaniards influenced events in a minor but interesting way. The Spaniard's treatment of Southeastern tribes figured prominently in the European debate over justice and legitimacy in the Spanish expansion into the New World. Several Spanish chroniclers knew and disliked Soto and his friends, using their actions as an example of what Christian men should not do. While Soto and his expedition have often received gentle and romanticized treatment from North American scholars, they faced much harsher verdicts from contemporaries back home.

In the aggregate, these essays illustrate some fascinating historiographic shifts. Charles Hudson, an anthropologist at the University of Georgia, is the person most responsible for the new studies on Soto, most recently in his *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando De Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997). For Hudson, Soto's *entrada* was one of the key events of the sixteenth century in the American Southeast. Hudson led the attack on the standard account about Soto, John Swanton's famous *Final Report of the United States De Soto Expedition Commission* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939) sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute. He criticized Swanton's biases, his scholarship, and his misreading of sources. Now, at the end of the century, Hudson has become the new Swanton—it is his biases, scholarship, and misreading of sources that many of these contributors to Galloway's tome are anxious to note and revise. The major difference between the Swanton and Hudson is that the latter is still alive, active in scholarship, and able to respond to his numerous critics.

It is difficult to conjecture where Soto scholarship will go next. Certainly the possibility of more information on the expedition is there. There were more than 250 known survivors of the expedition and many more individuals indirectly involved at one point or another in the affair. A high percentage of Soto's followers were literate, and at various points later in life, it is likely that many of these persons and their heirs petitioned the crown for favors and listed their services to the king and God. The three-year march throughout the Southeastern United States would figure in some of these requests. Archeology also will have some, indeed the most important, contributions to make. With only one probable Soto camp located, researchers need more indisputable *entrada* sites. Because there is so much fame to come from finding one or more spots, they will surely appear down the road. However, with whatever new information that does emerge, only the bravest of souls and thickest of hides will venture to interpret the meaning of Soto's meanderings in American history. The critics' arrows will remain ever sharp and poised to strike down such foolhardy scholars.

James A. Lewis

Western Carolina University