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Inventory of the Possessions of don Diego de Vargas for his Last Will and Testament (1704).

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Author

Craddock, Jerry R

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“Inventory of the Possessions of
don Diego de Vargas Zapata Luján Ponce de León,
Marqués de la Nava de Barcinas, Governor of New Mexico,
Drawn up for his Last Will and Testament (1704).
What is, or was, all that Stuff?”

Paper read for the panel
“The Hispanic Southwest from Juan de Oñate to the Nineteenth Century:
Perspectives on Language, Material Culture, and Personal Memoirs,”
convened at the Annual ACMRS Conference:
Translatio, or the Transmission of Culture,
12 - 14 February, 2004, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

Jerry R. Craddock
University of California, Berkeley
Visiting Professor, ACMRS, Spring 2004

Updated: 5/27/2023; 7/13/2023

For some time I have been engaged in promoting the publication of the documents of the Hispanic Southwest in their original language, under the auspices of the Cíbola Project, administered by the Research Center for Romance Studies, University of California, Berkeley. A prospectus and description of the Project can be consulted at the Research Center’s web page https://escholarship.org/uc/rcrs_ias_ucb. In addition to preparing editions of the greatest philological rigor I could achieve, and providing them with extensive commentaries, I have from time to time analyzed the existing publications in the field, primarily involving translations into English. The historical literature on the Hispanic Southwest has been almost entirely dependent on such translations, since so few of the documents have been published in Spanish. I have striven to document just how much is lost in translation, even when the translations are well done, and have revealed the frequent and often gross misinterpretations one finds in some of them. Such editions of the Spanish texts as exist are by and large woefully inadequate, except those prepared by the participants in the Cíbola Project.

I have no hesitation in affirming that the recently completed series of volumes on Diego de Vargas, under the leadership of John L. Kessel, professor emeritus of the University of New Mexico, is the most important publication to date in the entire history of the Hispanic Southwest (the bibliographical information is provided in the list of references in the handout). Nevertheless it shares the common shortcoming of most work in the field, i.e., documents are primarily published in English translation. Only in the first volume did the Spanish texts accompany the translations in the printed volume; microfiche editions of the Spanish texts were issued for the first three volumes. A CD-ROM edition of the Spanish texts of the complete series has been announced as in preparation. In a recent paper (Craddock 2003) I demonstrated that the transcriptions of the Spanish texts were not all they should be from the point of view of the philologist.

One chief goal of the Cíbola Project is to allow the reader of its editions to verify the transcriptions by including facsimile reproductions of the original documents. In such circumstances the damage done by errors of transcription is minimal, since the facsimiles permit immediate perception of mistakes. The same may be said of translations, which are also included in the editions of the Cíbola Project when feasible; in the presence not only of the Spanish text in transcription, but also of the original in photographic facsimile, the accuracy of the English versions can be put constantly to the test of convenient verification. Now the members of the Vargas project could render yet another immense boon to scholarship by publishing not just their transcriptions, but reproductions of the originals as well. In any case, the Vargas documents need to appear in Spanish and in facsimile; until they do, the Vargas Project will have to be viewed as incomplete.

The inventory of the possessions of Vargas carried out in 1704, the document that provided the basis for this presentation, offers a rich field for the student of material culture of the early 18th century. So far as I know, it has been little studied for this aspect of its contents; what has attracted attention is the catalogue of Vargas's library that occupies a considerable portion of the inventory (Adams 1944). With the publication of the final volume of the Vargas Project, this inventory is now available, but only in translation (Kessell 2002:235-243, 245-249), though some useful notes are provided. It is the purpose of this paper to document, with a few notable examples, how far short the translation falls of giving readers an adequate idea of the content of the original.

First of all, let me list just a few of the intriguing words and expressions that I have found in the inventory, placed alongside the translations provided by the Vargas Project team.

f1v6 tixeras de harria = tijeras de arria	Kessell at al. 2002:236 "teamster's scissors"
f1v9 aResseses = arriceses	Kessell at al. 2002:236 "buckles for stirrup leathers"
f1v20 reuezillo = rebecillo	Kessell at al. 2002:236 "shrubby cinquefoil"
f1v22 picote	Kessell at al. 2002:236 "goat-hair cloth"
f1v31 chapaneco	Kessell at al. 2002:236 "fine cotton cloth"
f1v33 frazadillas congas	Kessell at al. 2002:237 "yellowish brown saddle blankets"

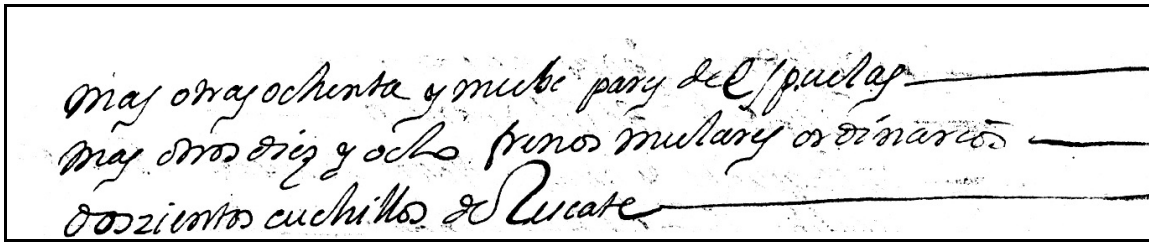
There are many more similarly unusual items, unusual at least for me, and I dare say most of my listeners. For their part, the translations have relatively little chance of leading one to the Spanish words in the absence of the Spanish text, though the entry for *buckle* in the Appleton/Cuyás bilingual dictionary did reveal to me the existence of *arricés*. In general, though the translators occasionally leave Spanish words untranslated, e.g., Kessell et al. 2002:236 "muskets with patilla locks" for f1r18 "escopetas con llaues de patilla," they are mentioned only sporadically in the explanatory notes, even when the objects they designate are described at some length. Nor do any of the items that attracted my attention find a place in the "glossary" of the

volume (Kessell et al. 2002:267-268). This fact leaves one at a complete loss with regard to finding out how the translators arrived at the versions they provide.

In the examples I will look at more closely, I present in the handout a facsimile of a portion of the original document, followed by my own paleographic transcription. Then I reproduce corresponding portion of the translation published in Kessel et al. 2002, with other illustrative items when appropriate.

Example 1 demonstrates a trivial but nevertheless significant point. Evidently a line was omitted from the transcription of the document and this omission is reflected in the translation. The presence of the facsimile of the original would have rendered the omission relatively innocuous, indeed, probably would have prevented it, since presumably at some stage in the preparation of the volume, some editor or proofreader would have noticed the discrepancy.

f1r29 line omitted



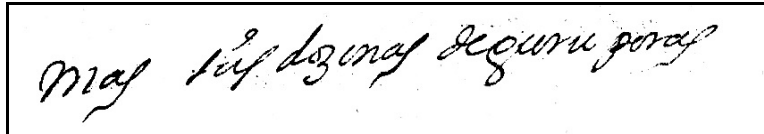
mas otras ochenta y nueve pares de espuelas
mas otros diez y ocho frenos mulares ordinarios
doscientos cuchillos de rescate

Kessell et al. 2002:236

Another 89 pairs of spurs
200 trade knives

Example 2 illustrates both the formal and semantic richness that is lost in translation. The inventory contains the curious variant *gurupera* of *grupera*, derived from *grupa* ‘hind quarters’. One might actually divine that ‘rump covering’ corresponds to *grupera*, but no amount of imagination would lead to the variant form with the anaptyctic vowel in the first syllable. From the point of view of the meaning, the academic definition points to an object something much more practical and useful than does the expression ‘rump covering’, rather suggestive of a drapery designed to preserve equine modesty.

f2r12 guruperas



mas seis dozenas de guruperas

DRAE CD-ROM, s.v. grupera:

1. f. Almohadilla que se pone detrás del borrén trasero en las sillas de montar, sobre los lomos de la caballería, para colocar encima la maleta u otros efectos que ha de llevar a la grupa.

DRAE CD-ROM, s.v. gurupera:

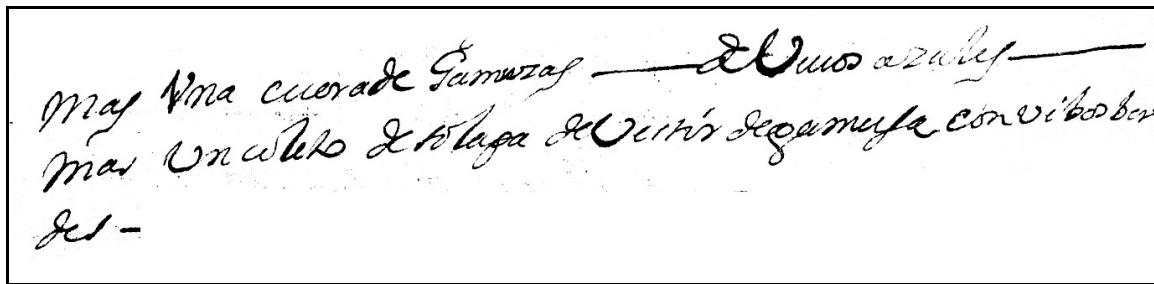
1. f. grupera.

Kessel et al. 2002:237

6 dozen leather rump coverings

Example 3 provides a case of misinterpretation that at first glance is quite understandable. In isolation the phrases “vivos azules” and “vivos verdes” do indeed suggest translations like ‘brilliant flashes of blue, green’. However, if the *cuera* were actually described as of a vivid blue, and the *coleta* as of a vivid green, the grammatical construction would probably have favored singular forms, i.e., “de un vivo azul, de un vivo verde,” and the adjective *vivo* would just as likely have followed the color nouns. However, one is spared from imagining the spectacle of Vargas parading about, doubtless with stunning effect, in a bright blue cuirasse or in a bright green vest—I am not certain how easy it would be to induce such colorings into buckskin garments—by the fact that *vivo* occurs as a noun, with meanings completely appropriate to the present context, i.e., ‘fringe, border’.

f2r13-14 vivos (vivos, vibos)



mas vna cuera de gamuzas de vivos azules
 mas vn colete de solapa de vestir de gamusa con vibos berdes

DRAE CD-ROM, s.v. *vivo*:

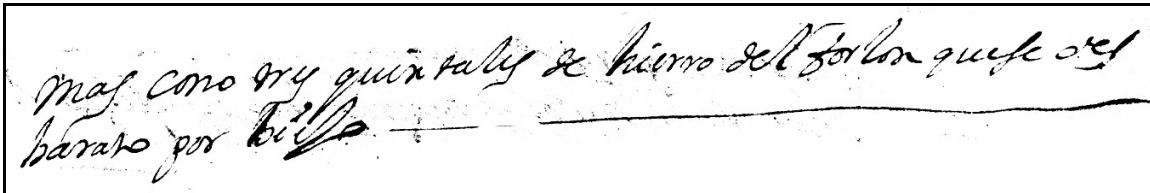
- 26. m. Borde, canto u orilla de alguna cosa.
- 27. Filete, cordoncillo o trencilla que se pone por adorno en los bordes o en las costuras de las prendas de vestir.

Kessel et al. 2002:237

1 bright blue buckskin cuera
 1 double-breasted buckskin soldier's vest, bright green

Example 4 exemplifies the delightful rarities one often finds in the documents of the Hispanic Southwest. The notion of a “four-seated coach” will hardly arouse any great interest in the reader, but what a surprise the original contains, with its *forlón*, a word totally new to me when I came across it, and new to the native speakers of Spanish I have questioned. The inventory contains a second instance of the word at fol. 5v29.

f2r29 forlón



ma
s

co[m]o tres quintales de hierro del forlon que se desbarato por biejo

DRAE CD-ROM, s.v.

1. m. Especie de coche antiguo de caballos de cuatro asientos, sin estribos, cerrado con puertecillas, colgada la caja sobre correones y puesta entre dos varas de madera.

Kessel et al. 2002:237

About 3 quintals of iron from the four-seated coach that was dismantled because it was old²³

Kessel et al. 2002:246

23. Vargas’s coach was four-seated. The cab, enclosed by small doors and without steps, rode on large leather straps mounted between two wooden shafts. DA

The form in the *Diccionario de autoridades* is a variant with a high vowel in the first syllable, *furlón*; the latter is also found in the modern dictionary, but, oddly enough, the entries for the two variants contain no cross references to each other, while the definition originally given under *furlón* now appears, only slightly modified, under *forlón*. Corominas and Pascual have little to say about this very strange word; I note with great satisfaction that the attestation of *forlón* in the inventory antedates the earliest attestations known to the etymologists.

Diccionario de autoridades:

FURLON. f. m. Especie de coche de quatro asientos, sin estribos, cerrado con puertecillas, asentada la caja sobre correones, y puesta entre dos varas de madera. Lat. *Clau-
sa rheda*. PRAGM. DE TRAG. año 1723. num. 10. Para evitar el exceso que se ha experimentado en el abuso de los coches, caríozas, estufas, literas, *furlónes* y caléfas.

DRAE CD-ROM, s.v. *furlón*:

1. m. Cierta tipo de coche antiguo.

Corominas and Pascual 1980-1991, s.v.:

FORLÓN, ant., 'especie de coche sin estribos, colgada la caja sobre correones y puesta entre dos varas de madera', origen desconocido. 1.^a doc.: *furlón*, 1723, pragmática citada por *Aut.*; *forlón*, h. 1800, Moratín, Jovellanos, en Pagés; Acad. ya 1817. 30

Falta en *Aut.* y Terr. Parece haber ej. del cat. *forló* con el mismo significado en el S. XVIII (Ag.; pero falta en el vocabulario de los oficios de transporte, de Amades, BDC XXII). Nadie ha estudiado el origen del vocablo ni veo nada análogo en otros idiomas. Ingl. *furlong* o *furlough*, 40

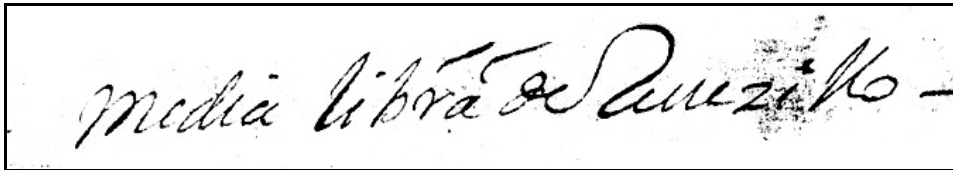
fr. *forlonger* 'prolongar' (con su derivado *forlonge*) y fr. *frelon* 'abejorro' (dial. *forlon*), 'brusco', así como el it. *furlano*, *furlana* (o *forl-*) 'friulano', 'especie de danza', tienen significados demasiado 45

Example 5, my last, involves a lexical problem I have not yet been able to solve to my satisfaction. To begin with, I am not certain whether the translation “shrubby cinquefoil” involves a conjecture on the part of the translators or a misreading on the part of the Vargas Project transcribers. The translators provide in an endnote a reference to Cobos 1983, though without, as is their habit, mentioning the word. However, the word in Cobos is *rosillo*, sufficiently different from *reuesillo* to arouse serious doubts about the identification that the translators have proposed.

I have been unable to document *reuesillo* in any lexical source I have consulted, including Santamaría 1959, taking into account all the normal graphic possibilities: *rebec-*, *rebes-*, *rebez-*, *revec-*, *reves-*, and *revez-*, . Only one new source came to my aid, Boyd-Bowman’s very useful CD-ROM (Harris and O’Neill 2003). Four examples of the word appeared in this data base, and though this source provides no definitions, the two examples close in time to the inventory allow one to observe that *reuesillo* has to do with silk and that its quantities appear as weights (*libras*) rather than lengths (*varas*), in agreement with the item in our inventory: “media libra de reuesillo.”

The translators of the Vargas Project show no doubt or hesitation in their identification of *reuesillo* with New Mexican *rosillo*. In the presence of a facsimile of the original and an accurate transcription of it, I am certain they would have had to be more cautious. As it is, readers of the translation of the inventory are provided with an apparently important datum involving textile manufacture in New Mexico, i.e., the use of a dye extracted from the shrubby cinquefoil, though the datum in question may be entirely spurious.

f1v20 reuezillo



media libra de reuezillo

Kessell et al. 2002:236, 246

1/2 pound of shrubby cinquefoil¹⁸

18. Shrubby cinquefoil was used to make a yellow dye. Rubén Cobos, *A Dictionary of New Mexico and Southern Colorado Spanish* (Santa Fe, 1983), 151.

Cobos 1983 s.v. *rosillo*

rosillo, *m.* [<Sp. *rosillo*] bot., Shrubby cinquefoil used in early New Mexico in the making of yellow dye; *adj.*, of a bay or sorrel color.

DRAE CD-ROM no relevant form found.

Boyd-Bowman (Harris and O'Neill 2003) s.v.

[1641 Nueva Vizcaya (México)] 5 onças de rebesillo de seda [AHP 18, 1437A]

[1712 Nueva Vizcaya (México)] 6 libras y 12 onzas de rrevesillo de zeda a 9 pesos libra [AHP 169, 288B]

AHP = Archivo de Hidalgo del Parral, Chihuahua, México. Microfilmado en 333 rollos por Micro Photo, Inc. de Cleveland. El Archivo abarca los años 1631-1823.

The foregoing is only the merest foretaste of the remarkable quantity of rare and curious words and expressions in the inventory, perhaps only rare and curious to us at a distance of almost exactly three centuries (the third centenary of the inventory will occur next April 20), and not to Vargas's contemporaries. A critical annotated edition is an urgent necessity and I hope if circumstances permit to bring one out in the not too distant future.

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- , 1992. *The Text and Concordance of "By Force of Arms: The Journals of don Diego de Vargas New Mexico 1691-93."* The Vargas Project microfiche series, 2. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
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Kessell, John L., Rick Hendricks, Meredith D. Dodge, and Larry D. Miller, eds. 1998. *Blood on the Boulders: The Journals of Don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico 1694-97*. Vargas series, 4. 2 vols. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

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Addendum 5/27/2023

Hough-Snee, Dexter Z. 2013. *Library, Luxury, and Loot: The Inventory of the Estate of don Diego de Vargas Zapata Luján Ponce de León, Marqués de la Nava Bracinas, Santa Fe, New Mexico –April 20, 1704*. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/40f1z38c>

Further notes on “revesillo de seda”.

Concepción Company, Universidad Autónoma de México, kindly answered a query of mine with this attestation:

Subject: Re: consultas léxicas
From: Concepción Company <company@servidor.unam.mx>
Date: Sun, March 4, 2007 7:58 pm
To: jerry_r_craddock@berkeley.edu

De *revesillo*: en Concepción Company Company, ed., *Documentos lingüísticos de la Nueva España: Altiplano-Central* (Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Ediciones del Centro de Lingüística Hispánica. Serie Documentos Lingüísticos de la Nueva España, 1. México, D.F.: UNAM, 1994) hay una documentación, de lectura clara, de 1731 (doc. No. 178, f. 208, pág. 469), dice "cuatro libras de revesillo, amarillo todo". ¿Un tipo de cordón? No lo sé. Es una carta autógrafa de un comerciante que le pide varias cosas a otro comerciante, y hay varias telas nombradas y tipos de cordón de adorno, pero también velas, ceras y otros enseres.

The word *revesillo* is amply attested in Giorgio Perissinotto, ed., *Documenting Early Life in Early Spanish California: The Santa Barbara Presidio 'Memorias y facturas' 1779-1810*. Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, 1998. The index, p. 398, lists 24 occurrences of the word, e.g. “2 libras de revesillo amarillo” (p. 66), translated as “two pounds of yellow netting”, with an evident, but dubious, association of *revesillo* with *redecilla* ‘small net (red)’, in view of the feminine gender of the latter. I suspect that *revesillo* is derived from *revés* in the meaning ‘backing of a cloth or textile’, but I have as yet been unable to document the meaning of *revesillo* successfully.

An independent association of *redecilla* with *revesillo* may explain the text cited below, kindly forwarded to me by Regina Root, College of William and Mary, from Marie François, Auburn University (edited to essentials by JRC):

From: "Marie François" <francma@auburn.edu>
Date: August 24, 2005 9:34:41 AM EDT
To: <raroot@wm.edu>

Dear Regina,

In looking over my textiles glossary, I came across a reference to "redecilla de seda," a silk stocking cap or hair net. A. Hyatt Verrill's book *Historia del Traje* (Mexico, 1947) refers to them in his discussion of changes that came with the 17th century. Here's the paragraph (p. 176):

"Menos susceptibles de mudanza radical, las mujeres conservaron sus talles en punta, sus mangas

cortas y abolladas, y sus amplias faldas, recogidas sobre otras mas angostas. Cambiaron, si, mucho en variedad de telas y guarniciones, cuellos, corbatas, paletinas, chilindrinas, escaleras de encajes, adornos de azabache, peinados a grandes masas de bucles, **redecillas de seda** y escofeitas, cornetas y bonetillos de encaje. No carecieron de gracia las invenciones posteriores a 1680, aunque exageradissimos los talles sobre faldellines apaballados, cuyo principal realce consistia en falbalas y pretintallas (grandes calados sobre fondo de otro color) . . ."
...

Regina Root <raroot@wm.edu> 07/26/05 1:58 PM

Dear Professor François,

I so enjoyed reading your essay on "Cloth and Silver: Pawning and Material Life in Mexico City at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century" in the Material Culture special issue of *The Americas*. The findings and implications are so incredibly interesting! And I must tell you that the terms and explanations offered have been incredibly useful to me in my own research as I prepare an article on fashion and popular culture.

Since you deal regularly with textiles, I am wondering if you could help me out with a query. A colleague has told me that a translation he is working on (a 1704 inventory of a New Mexican governor's possessions) mentions the following item: "media libra de reuezillo." He has documented the phrase "r. de seda," so it could have some connection to silk, but here it is measured by weight and not length. The term also appears in nineteenth-century texts, and so given your expertise I am wondering if you ever came across such a mention. I am not really sure what it might mean.

...

Best wishes, Regina

Regina A. Root

Assistant Professor of Hispanic Studies
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures
College of William and Mary

<http://raroot.people.wm.edu>

3 April 2008