

The representations of San Francisco (California): a portable harbor in the fragile geography of the North Pacific

Las representaciones de San Francisco (California): un puerto portátil en la frágil geografía del Pacífico Norte

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ABSTRACT

San Francisco bay first appeared in chronicles and navigation charts two centuries before being officially discovered. The news of the existence of a great shelter to the north of New Spain encouraged diverse expeditions and brought back mythical images in literature and cartography. This mysterious enclave that maps glided stealthily was looked for unsuccessfully by a number of seafarers. Systematic advances to take control of the Pacific during the period known as the Enlightenment dispelled the obscurity to which the territory had been submitted and did shed light on the harbor that had been hidden for so long. The expeditions of the 18th century finally banished the last frontier of the New Spanish Great North and from that period onward an image of San Francisco that exceeded its own legend was created.

KEY WORDS: San Francisco. Representation. Cartography. Expeditions during the Enlightenment. Borderland.

RESUMEN

La bahía de San Francisco apareció en las crónicas y en las cartas de marear desde dos siglos antes de ser descubierta. La noticia de la existencia de un gran refugio en el Septentrión Novohispano alentó expediciones y recreó mitos en la literatura y en la cartografía. Sucesivas navegaciones buscaron sin éxito el misterioso enclave que los mapas deslizaban sigilosamente. El avance sistemático por el control del Pacífico, ya en el siglo de la Razón, disipó las brumas y dio luz al puerto que tanto tiempo había permanecido escondido. Las expediciones ilustradas terminaron por desterrar la última frontera del Gran Norte, elaborándose desde entonces una nueva imagen de San Francisco que superaría su propia leyenda.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: San Francisco. Representación. Cartografía. Expediciones ilustradas. Frontera.

Facing the immensity and the unknown, there is no bigger border than our mind, nor is there any larger limit than that of our retina. And it's there, where the horizon's profile mixes itself with the celestial dome, and the peaks mimic each other in blue undertones, that the imagination raises the limits and men mark the edge of what is known. It's in this elusive fringe where perfection dilutes itself in the maps, where

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colors blur away into a large white, where chimeric animals and large emblems rule, to cover or overlap with the emptiness.

It is likely that there was no other border with greater extension – and longer-lasting in time – as the one settled – more and more – in the north of Nueva España. Embraced in its coast line by successive explorations the interior of America's Northeast was the last geographical recognition undertaking and, therefore, the last area from where myths were to be banished. However, fables and misteries were not always harbored in the interior of a vast and unknown space. Sometimes, the same line, firmly drawn in successive maps, could present arcane places for the human eye for centuries. And what could still be more disconcerting, is how legend preceded reality, how geography moulded itself to it, and how this, perenially, reworks its utopic condition.

Since the dawn of the Spanish colonization, the geographical myths envolved and stimulated exploration and discovery campaigns. Cabeza de Vaca and his men brought news of the legendary Siete Ciudades which, in the Colombine sailing maps, pushed the gold seekers and the chasers of dreams to unknown lands. Thus, it is not strange that in 1539, the Franciscan priest Marcos de Niza, thought he had arrived t the imaginary Cibola. However, it is also curious how the seraph, convinced of being at the doors of another aztec empire, remembered his fouding saint to name those extraordinary domains: “Vista la disposición de la ciudad, paresciome llamar aquella tierra el nuevo reino de San Francisco” (MORA, 1992, p. 158). Only more than two centuries later did Juan Manuel de Ayala cross the Golden Gate and revealed to the world the grand San Francisco bay; also several centuries separated that figment from the utopic *Summer of Love* in 1967 and, even so, San Francisco already resonated in the imaginary places' cosmos.

The Bending of the Boundaries

Fray Marcos ended his life in Mexico city, ignored by the royal officers, and discredited by the posterior expeditioners,¹ his “new kingdom” falling in to forgetfulness. However, the chimeric cities that the priest thought to have discovered, ended up becoming part of the extensive Northeast. The península of California would

¹ Vázquez de Coronado wrote to the Emperador 20 October 1541 that “desde que llegué a la provincia de Cibola [...] visto que no había ninguna cosa de las que Fray Marcos dijo, he procurado descubrir esta tierra...” (MORA, 1992, p. 26).

soon gain a legendary name,² and its island status would be constantly pictured (POLK, 1991). The sailors, on their part, incessantly explored the northern coasts without managing to find the also legendary Paso del Noroeste (PIMENTEL, 2003, p. 111-143). Everything that was situated in the unknown North became wonderful. Thus the seven Ciudades of Cibola or the Gran Quivira spread through the maps along with the more accurate delimitations. Slowly, through expeditions, these myths would change their cartographical positioning and corner themselves more and more behind the the Pacific's coast line. Many cartographers and printers in the 1500s placed names and urban icons, with great certainty, where only myth existed. In a premonitory fashion, the sleepy Quivira that Paolo Forlani drew at the end of a bay (image 1),³ with time, became the superb San Francisco known to us today. But, before the opening of the Golden Gate, the seraphic name made popular in those coasts, came closer and closer to being the port that it gave its name to.

Imagen 1 - Detalle del mapa de Forlani (c.1565)



Those reports of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and of fray Marcos de Niza made viceroy Antonio de Mendoza decide to organize successive exploration trips to the Northeast. Along with the Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's expeditions –by land– and Hernando de Alarcón –by the Bermejo sea up to the Colorado river–, the viceroy

² As so many other geographical places, the name California comes from a name transference that holds in itself an interesting metaphor. In the book of riding *Las Sergas de Esplandián* (1510), Calafia was the queen of a kingdom of black amazons, rich in gold and strange beasts.

³ FORLANI, Paolo. *Universale Descrittione di tutta la terra conosciuta fin qui*, c.1565.

planned to examine the Californian coast line. With the objective of mapping the coast line, he appointed the Portuguese pilot Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo to run the expedition. On board the *San Salvador* and accompanied by the *Victoria*, Cabrillo left in 27 June of 1542 to the north of the Californian peninsula christening the numerous capes and bays that they saw. In that first trip in Alta California they had the opportunity of registering the geographical features that conditioned posterior trips:⁴ the Mendocino cape, Sierra Nevada, and the Santa Bárbara canal or the Punta de los Pinos, soon known as Punta de los Reyes, near the North of San Francisco. There are many calculation errors in the latitudes presented in Cabrillo's maps, and there were many different interpretations, then and now, on the great bay that Juan Páez described in his navigation journal. Through him we know that in the 16th of November of 1542, Rodríguez Cabrillo boat dawned over

[...] una ensenada grande que venia de vuelta, que parecía haber puerto é rio, y anduvieron barloventeando este dicho día y la noche, y el viernes siguiente hasta que vieron que ni había río, ni abrigo ninguno, y para tomar posesión echaron ancla en 45 brazas, no osaron ir á tierra por la mucha mar que había; estaba esta ensenada en 39º largos, y toda ella es tan llena de pinos hasta la mar, pusieronle nombre la bahía de los Pinos (CABRILLO, 1934, p. 38-39).

That port was sought in successive trips, but there was no sure identification of it: for many it was the small bay that was sheltered by the Punta de los Reyes, for others – with great certainty- Monterrey.⁵ Despite some affirmations of this, we can not certainly state that Cabrillo's expedition found the actual San Francisco. What we believe was certain was that he must have sailed in front of its coast, whether through fog or at night, and the Golden gate remained hidden from the eyes of the sailors of the *San Salvador*. But what fascinates us even more, is how early the rumor of a great port lost in the Californian Northeast appears. In this precise manner, as the *puerto perdido* (HANNA, 1979), some authors posteriorly named the unknown position where Francis Drake harboured thirty years later.

Rodríguez Cabrillo's expedition was able to expand the geographical knowledge and put in the maps the coast line that was then called Alta California. However, in the end of the XVI century, the Monarchy's overseas objectives in the

⁴ Facing the usual variability of latitudes and names of the capes and bays of Alta California, the only cartographical certainty would be the Sierra Nevada. In the famous *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570) by Abraham Ortelius, for example, the sierra of Cabrillo will not see confirmed its truthfulness being accompanied by the mythical siete ciudades.

⁵ Robert Mayer identifies this port with the estuary that shelters Punta de los Reyes; on the other hand, Darek Hayes does it with the bay of Monterrey. This report supports itself with the depth measurements conducted by Cabrillo, aving possibly been done on the underwater canyon of Monterrey (HAYES, 2007, p. 18).

Eastern Pacific, were concentrated in the occupation of the Phillipines; a campaign that was confirmed by the discovery of the return trip by Andrés de Urdaneta (1565) and the establishment of the Manila-Acapulco route (1568) thanks to the Manila galleon. From that time, the Northeast gained a new protagonism for the Spanish Crown: the preservation of such an important trade route. And since the control of the Californian fringe, was merely virtual, the authorities could fear that the coast became a hideout for enemy ships, with a clear restlessness, that would disturb the Philippino comercial circuit. Those suspicions were confirmed with the appearance of the pirates Francis Drake (1578) and Tomas Cavendish (1587).

The news of the presence of the pirate Drake in the Spanish coast worried the viceregal powers from Perú to Nueva España. The *Golden Hind* went up the Pacific, leaving behind a trail of attacks and sackings in Spanish ports and ships. In its attempt to escape the Spanish authorities, the pirate ship went back to California seeking the Northeast Pass, hoping to be able thus to reach England. The correct latitude that Drake reached is unknown, but he had to go back due to the bad weather and return to land, for more than one month, to dry dock his ship somewhere in the Eastern coast. In the 17th of June 1579 he found a sandy bay surrounded by cliffs that he found to be adequate for shelter and hiding in face of the Spanish search.

For a long time the exact location of the port where Captian Drake anchored has been controversial (HANNA, 1979, p. 137-347). Several places have been proposed successively as the spot where the *Golden Hind* anchored and Captain Drake placed “un gran poste en el que clavó una moneda de seis peniques”,⁶ dedicating that land to the queen of England,. The majority of the investigators suppose that the place was the small bay just below Punta de los Reyes, today called Drakes Bay, surrounded by cliffs and inhabited by the Miwok Indians. The same place where, sixteen years later the Spanish sailor Sebastián Rodríguez de Cermeño, captain of the galleon *San Agustín*, baptized as port of San Francisco. Other authors suggest that he might have harboured a little further North, –in the Bahía de Bodega–, or a little further South – in Bolinas–, but always close to –but not crossing – the entrance of the actual San Francisco bay. In any case, Drake’s men remained there until the 23rd of July.

Narrations that soon followed his return to England, accounted for that stop. However, shadows, once again, fell on the exact location of the strategic harbour in Alta California. Everything points in the direction that the pirate used and worked on navigation charts that he obtained in his pillaging of the Spanish pilot Alonso Sánchez

⁶ John Drake, 1584. Archivo General de Indias (en adelante AGI), Patronato, 266, 49, f 49.

Colchero.⁷ The trace of said documents was lost, when Drake delivered them to the Queen of England (KELSEY, 2002, p. 224). The more immediate versions of the trip only detail the trip towards the North, profusely abundant in diverging coordinates for the location of the bay. The maps of the expedition published in the following years, don't fit or share the latitudes collected in the lists and reports. Possibly the Saxon authorities, facing the Spanish harassment, secretly decided on a disconcerting campaign, through the propagation of false and contradictory spatial information. As such, one should not find it strange that the German geographer Gerard Mercator wrote to the Dutch cartographer Abraham Ortelius, complaining, on the one hand that the English officials "hid the route followed by Drake" and on the other, that there were "dando a conocer versiones contrarias sobre la derrota tomada y las zonas visitadas" (KELSEY, 2002, p. 226).

The news of the itinerary and the port baptized as *Drake*, in the land that he called New Albion, spread rapidly throughout European courts, and printers soon replied to the cartographical demands with the printing of the findings in the new maps. British propaganda machinery started to function and, in the beginning of the the 1580s, the dutch man Nicola van Sype recorded the first map with the circumnavigation route of the vice admiral. In it appeared, for the first time, the name New Albion, in a clear vindication of Anglo sovereignty,⁸ and the top of the mariner in an unknown Northwestern port (image 2).⁹

⁷ Alonso Sánchez Colchero was the pilot of the boat Nuestra Señora de la Concepción when Drake pillaged it in the peruvian coast in the beginning of 1579. Sánchez Colchero, 15 April 1579. AGI, Patronato, 266, 16. (KELSEY, 2002, p. 197-220).

⁸ Nueva Albión remember the latin name of great Britain—Albion—collected among others by Ptolomeo and Plinio el Viejo.

⁹ SYPE, Nicola van. *La herdike enterprise fait par le Seigneur Draeck D'Avoir circuit toute la Terre* (1581)

Imagen 2 - Detalle del mapa de van Sype (c.1581)



Soon after, the famed Jodocus Hondius, printed, in 1595, a world map with Drake's voyages, and the posterior Cavendish's, consecrating the New albion name to Alta California and exaggerating a generous bay as the harbor of the pirate (image 3).¹⁰

Image 3 – Detail of Hondius' world map (1595)



¹⁰ HONDIUS, Jodocus. *Totius Expeditionis Nauticae descriptio D. Franc. Draci* (1595)

According to him, and given the importance of having a refuge in the high American Pacific, the printer inserted a note in which he highlights the *Portus Novae Albionis* (image 4). Such representation can come from the materials that came from the expedition, even though it doesn't solve the questions about the placement of the cove. So the ambiguous and imprecise image has only fed the controversies and research of those that wanted to place the lost port in a different area close to San Francisco, inclusively in the same bay.¹¹

Image 4 – composition with Hondius' note and current locations.



¹¹ For a more detailed study of the port's representation in the Hondius vignette see Hanna (1979, p. 271-295); Kelsey (2002, p. 234-237).

By the end of the XVI century, the undetermined place where Drake and his men “permanecieron durante un mes y medio, haciendo acopio de madera y agua, carenando igualmente el barco”,¹² had been converted to legend as well as becoming a diplomatic problem. The Spanish Crown felt its Pacific’s exclusivity threatened and had to carry out a consolidation and defence campaign of its positions in the Ocean, the strategy consisted of exploring and demarcating the coast line, improving the maps to prevent accidents and shipwrecks; to search for a bay or harbour to provide for the travellers in the galleons with water and food in the event of a long trip, and to find an appropriate place in the coast to build a garrison for refuge and defence. In the mind of archbishop-viceoy Pedro Moya de Contreras there was the need to establish a port in Alta California for the safeguard of comercial ships.¹³ Thus, the navigation of Francisco Gali (1583-1586) was authorized, replaced after his death by Pedro de Unamuno, who completed the journey in 1587 without great geographical results due to the weather conditions. To hold the western coast of the Pacific continued to be a priority issue for the monarchy: to preserve the Phillipino trade facing the threat of the aggressive British policy, demanded in the first instance the domination of California. For this, viceoy Velasco ordered the experienced sailor Sebastián Rodríguez Cermeño to lead a new exploration expedition to the Northern coast.

Cermeño sailed aboard the galleon *San Agustín* from the port of Manila, in July of 1595, towards North America. He reached land at 42° N, from where he followed the coast to the south arriving at the Mendocino cape. He continued his meridional trip until “se descubrió una punta de tierra alta que descubría una ensenada grande” and “el dicho navío dio fondo en la dicha bahía y puerto [donde] havia muchos fuegos cerca de la mar y dentro de tierra de mucha arboleda de Pinos por donde se entiende ser y estar poblada de jente”.¹⁴ Cermeño and his crew arrived, in all likelihood, to Punta de los Reyes, and docked to the south of it, in what is known today as Drake’s bay, probably called before de los Pinos. However, due to Historical misfortune, that bay would take as its name the leitmotiv of the great Californian Enterprise, San Francisco: on the fifth of November, the captain disembarked, and “en nombre del rey nuestro señor tomava posesión de la tierra e puerto al qual le pusso por nombre la baya de San Francisco que la bautizó el reverendo padre fray Francisco de la Concepción de la horden de San Francisco de los descalços”.

Being in that port, “puerto y baya de Sant Francisco questa en treinta e ocho grados e dos tercios”, Cermeño came into contact with the aborigenes and had the

¹² John Drake, 1584. AGI, Patronato, 266, 49, f 49.

¹³ Letter by Arzobispo Virrey to the Rey, 22 January 1585. AGI, México, 336B.

¹⁴ AGI, México, 23, 50, 3.

opportunity to explore the river thanks to a small boat that they took. They made a stop “es tierra que se dara en ella cualquiera semilla que se sembrare porque ay arboleda de avellana, bellotas, madroños, hierbas olorosas como Castilla y asi mismo ay [agua dulce]”.¹⁵ Thanks to that small boat, called the *San Buenaventura*– they were able to leave in the eighth of December, “la vaya y puerto de San Francisco, que por otro nombre se llama vaya grade”, since the *San Agustín* had been destroyed by a storm. Rodríguez de Cermeño marked once again a point in the coast line, a port that would vanish from the maps. However he had just named what would be the great pearl of the Pacific.

Since Cermeño’s expedition, the San Francisco bay became heard of by half the world. Cartography would progressively echo that find and the name appeared written next to Quivira, New Albion or the Mendocino cape. However, these images warn us of a dimension that we had missed. In 1593, two years before the naming of San Francisco, in Amberes, the cartographer and printer Cornelius de Jode edited the collection *Speculum Orbis Terrae*. Among those, one of the most baffling ones is the one corresponding to the Kingdom of Quivira (BURDEN, 1996, p. 106). South of the Mendocino cape, Hidden again in the estuary of a river, the legendary city was placed, and at its noon already appears a San Francisco cape. (image 5).¹⁶ So the Spanish boats that sailed the North American Pacific coast line, filled it with Christian names. Many of them passed on to the Spanish and European cartography, sometimes confusing names and events, sometimes duplicating them, since the different captains didn’t always know or respect the previous baptisms.¹⁷ The imprecise or wrong measurements, together with vague and generic descriptions, were the base for this confusing process. Thus occurred in the bay of los Pinos, for example. Recognized by Rodríguez Cabrillo on the 16th of November of 1542, and located around 39° N, being rebaptized by Cermeño as San Francisco.

¹⁵ Report of the events in the trip of captain Rodríguez Cermeño to discover the Mendocino cape. AGI, México, 27, 18, 1.

¹⁶ Jode, Cornelius de. “Quivirae Regnu cum aliis versus Borea” in *Speculum Orbis Terrae* (1593).

¹⁷ Vizcaíno tells of the existence of another port of San Francisco much further south in the *Relazió del viaje y derrotero* of the ships that went to discover the Acapulco port led by general Sebastián Vizcaíno, México, 1602. AGI, Mapas y Planos, Libros Manuscritos, 40, f 54v.

Image 5 – detail of the Kingdom of Quivira by Cornelius de Jode (1593).



Representation and Memory

Until then, the expeditions sent from Manila didn't achieve the foreseen results, in their attempts from the East. So the crown opted for sending, in the beginning of the XVII century, a new expedition from Nueva España, composed of low draft boats that could securely manoeuvre in those tricky coasts. Sebastián Vizcaíno was elected to command the new discovery Enterprise taking three boats under his orders: the *San Diego*, the *Santo Tomás* and the frigate *Tres Reyes*, with sailed from the Acapulco port on the 5th of May of 1602. With Southeastern winds, the small group went up the Mexican coast towards the Northeast seeking the California peninsula.

The preparations were very thorough and the objectives were exclusively the exploration of the Northeast. Some news of a great port hidden in California would turn the viceroy's head, the count of Monterey, since in his instructions to Vizcaíno he constantly reiterates that the recognition of as many ports and bays as found in the crossing should be made. However, the dispositions are very detailed in explaining that if

entráreis en alguna gran bahía que tuviese muchas leguas y en ellas muchas bocas de esteros que, para solo reconocerla, fuere menester mucho tiempo, os ordeno y mando que en ninguna bahía que entréis hagáis más de reconocer la entrada y algún puerto abrigado en que haya agua y leña y con la lancha daréis una vista, sin gastar más tiempo del que el capitán Gerónimo Martínez, cosmógrafo y piloto, hubiere menester para la demarcación de la boca y entrada de la dicha bahía y puerto que en ella hallaréis, y, habiéndose hecho esto con los demás reconocimientos forzosos, seguiréis vuestro viaje sin gastar tiempo en casos semejantes, procurando tenerlo siempre para lo principal.¹⁸

This warning could be have been clearer because in the *Actas de las Juntas* compiled by the captains, pilots and cosmographers of the expeditions some strange references are seen. In the 18th of December, in the port of Monterey, Sebastián Vizcaíno will appear saying that, following his Majesty's orders, he arrived "hasta este dicho paraje sin dejar de ver ningún puerto, ni bahía, ni ensenada, ni islas que fuesen de consideración para lo que se pretende".¹⁹ He continues his elocution by explaining that the illnesses that his men suffer of, make it hard to "cumplir toda la orden que el auto dice, y descubrir *la ensenada de las Californias*".²⁰

Everything points to a myth or a strange rumor, still in the XVII century, to be pushing the expedition to a hidden "ensenada de las Californias". However, the legend had taken shape and had become a matter of State. Vizcaíno's entreprise should, before all "cumplir la orden secreta de que se entren en la ensenada de California".²¹ For that he would necessarily need supplies and to recover health, because the entrance in the Access to the cove would not be an easy task, "la nao [*Santo Tomás*] es vieja y de poca fuerza, y para poder entrar y descubrir dicha ensenada de las Californias, conforme el auto dice".²² There were then, among the commanders, voices that advocated the presentation of that refuge in Monterey to the monarch as "buen puerto y en tan buena altura para lo que se pretende de la navegacion de las naos de las islas Filipinas", since they lacked the resources and people necessary to continue with the order of "entrar en la boca de las Californias". Thus, in the 29th of December, the *Santo Tomás* returned to Mexico, carrying the letters written by Vizcaíno to the Audiencia, expressing in them the said lackings justifying his return, and notifying the port of Monterey as a possible

¹⁸ Instructions and orders given to Sebastián Vizcaíno for the discovery of the ports, bays and coves of the mar del Sur, México 31 Ma 1602. AGI, Guadalajara, 133, f 3.

¹⁹ Acts written by the scribe Diego de Santiago of the Juntas done by the captains, pilots and cosmographer during the navigation of Sebastián Vizcaíno to California, 1602. AGI, México, 372, f 11.

²⁰ AGI, México, 372, f 11. The writing is ours.

²¹ AGI, México, 372, f 12.

²² AGI, México, 372, f 13.

port for the Maila galleons. Vizcaíno and the rest of the expedition continued in their route to the North (MATHES, 1973, p. 66-67).

Departing from Monterey on the night of the third to the fourth of January of 1603, continued the coastal reconnaissance. That day they passed the Puntas de los Pinos and del Año Nuevo and arrived to the place that Cermeño had baptized as San Francisco. As the winds were favourable, Vizcaíno next ordered to follow North, without stopping to explore the bay or search for the remains of the previous visit. However, he renamed the protrusion that had been known til then as de los Pinos, dedicating it to his ship and calling it Punta de los Reyes (MATHES, 1973, p. 67). It seems that this was the only name that Vizcaíno tried to change, calling in his trip “puerto de Don Gaspar” to the place where the *San Agustín* docked.²³

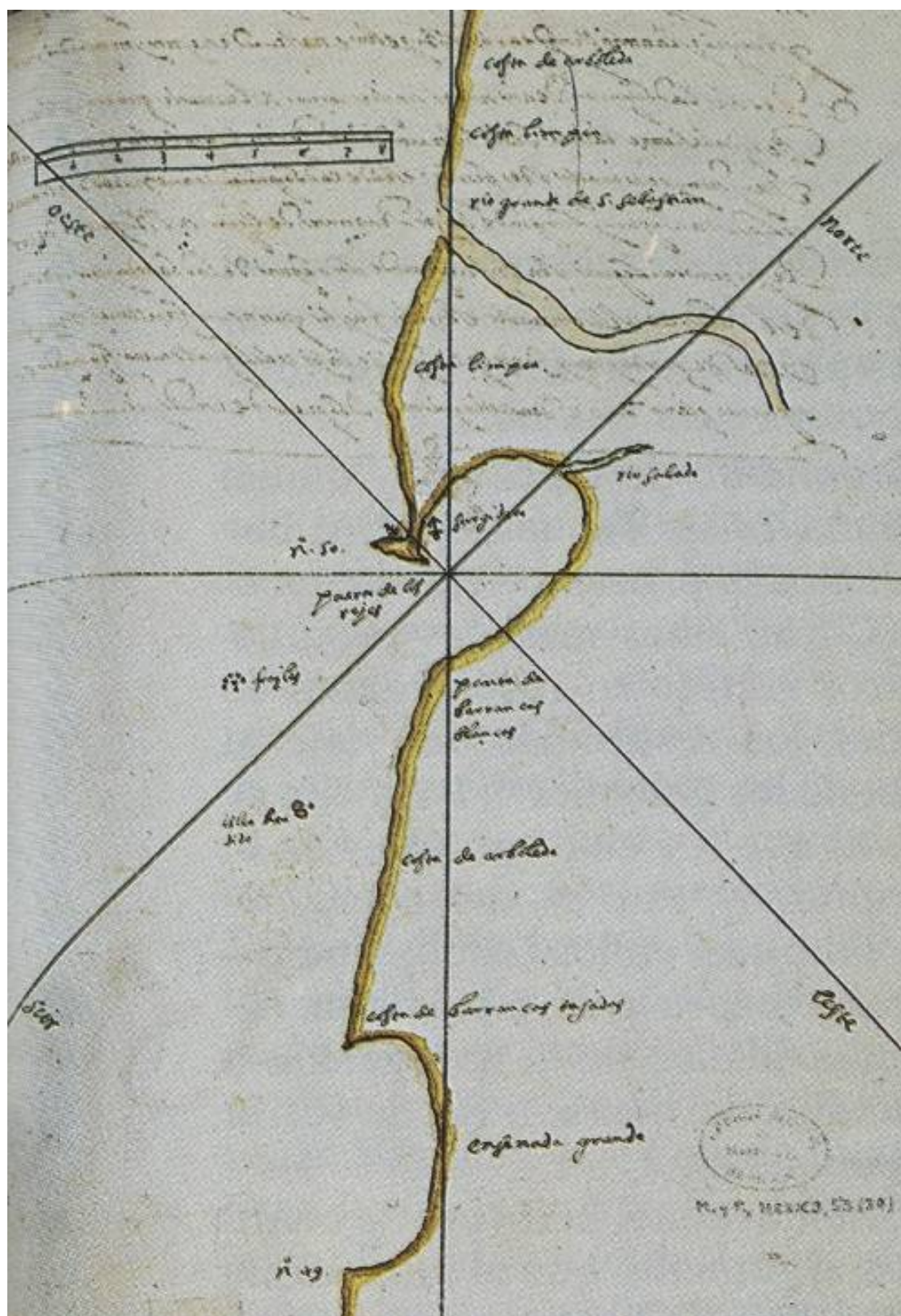
The golden Gate and its bay, maybe that “ensenada de las Californias”, were again unmentioned in the documents. It is unknown if the night or the frequent morning fog hid the Access to the port in the midst of the “ensenada grande” that Enrico Martínez describes in his maps (image 6).²⁴ It is quite likely to believe that the careful navigation that the ships had to undertake, dodging and registering the cliffs, - known as the Frailes- and the island placed directly in front of the mouth of the bay.²⁵

²³ Relación del viaje y derrotero... AGI, Mapas y Planos, Libros Manuscritos, 40, f 57v. clear gesture of dedication of that port to the viceroy don Gaspar de Zúñiga. (MATHES, 1973, p. 67) goes over this document and believes that the name was assigned in the end of the XVIII century, in Gaspar de Portolá's expedition.

²⁴ Completando la Relación del viaje y derrotero... Enrico Martínez illustrated in 33 plates the sketches of the coastal lines and ports that the expedition passed. AGI, MP, Libros manuscritos, 40.

²⁵ Relación del viaje y derrotero... AGI, Mapas y Planos, Libros Manuscritos, 40, f 58.

Image 6 - Sketch of Punta de los Reyes by Enrico Martínez (1603)



The results of the expedition of Sebastián Vizcaíno were very important. All the exterior coast of California was marked up to the Mendocino cape, besides having discovered the Monterey port, that became, later, a permanent objective of the colonizing desires of the Spanish monarchy in the Northeast, after the reports of the expedition magnifying its qualities. As for the discoveries of the *Tres Reyes* frigate, the reports of its crew led to the belief in the existence of an Anian Strait, located in the Santa Ines river, east of Mendocino. In the years following Vizcaíno's expedition, and after the veto of the viceroy the Marquis of Montesclaros on the occupation of Monterey, the Spanish action in the Pacific was reduced – with the exception of the Manila galleon – to the California gulf with an almost exclusive purpose: the exploitation of its pearls.

The cartography of the XVII and XVIII centuries reflected the recent discoveries, even though, despite the diaries of the expeditioners, the geomythology took possession of the coast situated to the North of the Mendocino cape. Greatly due to the memoirs of fray Antonio de la Ascensión, Carmelite priest who defended the veracity of the Northeast pass and the insularity of California. For the delight and greater fascination on the San Francisco port, the priest assured that in it “se perdió una nao de China que venía con orden de descubrir esta costa” –referring to the shipwreck of the *San Agustín*–and that “hoy día allí hay mucha cera y loza que el navío traía”.²⁶ From then on, and until its definitive discovery, the intermittent port would share maps with the erroneous California island, and would rival in them - depending on their origin – with Drake's docking location and New Albion.

²⁶ Relación breve de California... por Fray Antonio de la Ascensión, México 12 October 1620. Biblioteca Nacional de España, ms 3042, f 21-35, §12.

Image 7 – Detail of California by Henry Briggs (1625)



The European cartographers confused by the diverging reports, in great part due to the diplomatic strategies used, spread during almost two centuries conflicting images of California. Since 1625, with the printing of the map *The North part of America*, by Henry Briggs, versions that drew California as a great island in the Pacific started to proliferate. It is noticeable the confusion of locations in this map already, showing “P^o Sr Francisco Draco” above Punta de los Reyes (image 7),²⁷ as repeated in popular and reedited maps such as the one by Jansson in 1670 (image 8),²⁸ or the known manuscript by Vinckeboons (c. 1650, image 9).²⁹ On his part, the well known printer Nicolas Sanson varied the placement of Puerto de Francisco Drake several times, positioning it definitively in 1657 to the south of Monterey (image 10).³⁰

²⁷ Briggs, Henry. *The North part of America* (1625).

²⁸ Jansson, Jan. *America Septentrionalis* (1670).

²⁹ Vinckeboons, Joan. [Ínsula de California] (c. 1650).

³⁰ Nicolas Sanson in the map of *Audience de Guadalajara Nouveau Mexique, Californie, etc* (c.1657) represents the port of Drake to the South of Monterey. Years before, in the map of *L’Amerique* (1650) he had drawn it on the Punta de los Reyes. The 1657 version was the one that appeared in the edition of the *Encyclopaedia* of 1770.

Imagen 8 – The island of California by Jansson (1670)



Imagen 9 – California Map by Vinckeboons (c. 1650)



Imagen 10 – Maps by Nicolas Sanson, 1650 y 1657.



With time, the holy seraphs replaced the pirates in the Pacific. In the mid XVIII century it was common to find in all types of maps the port or Punta de San Francisco near Punta de los Reyes (HAYES, 2007, p. 30-35). Perhaps the best example of this is the *Carte Generale de Decouvertes de l'Amiral de Fonte et autres navigateurs Espagnols, Anglois et Russes*, of 1752, inserted in the *Encyclopedie* by Diderot, in which the existence of the mythic Mar del Oeste was certain (image 11).³¹ In a persistent manner, the rivalry between both names, and the tacit recognition that it implied, is demonstrated in the *Chart of North and South America* in 1768, published by the distinguished British editor Thomas Jefferys. Under the name of *New Albion* comes the explanation that “So named by Sr. Francis Drake to whom the Country was surrendered by the King in 1578” (one year before Drake’s visit). In the face of the questions about its name, specifying the name Port Sr. Francis Drake writing “not St. Francisco” (image 12).³²

³¹ Vaugondy, Robert de. *Carte Generale de Decouvertes de l'Amiral de Fonte et autres navigateurs Espagnols, Anglois et Russes* (1752).

³² Jefferys, Thomas. *Chart of North and South America* (1768).

Image 11 – Detail of the map in the Encyclopaedia of 1755



Image 12 – Map by Thomas Jefferys (1768)



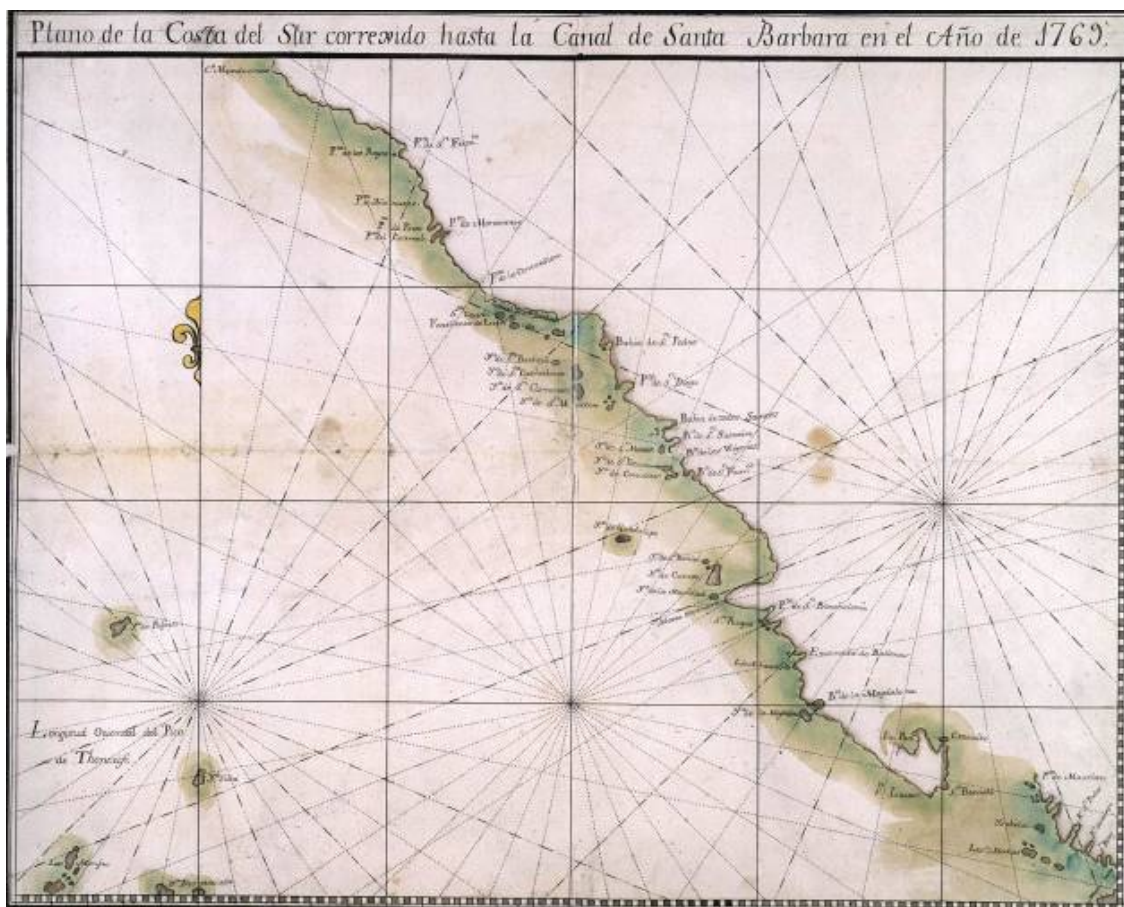
On the other hand there are very few written references of the port until well into the XVIII century. In the Spanish manual for the navigation of the Pacific, the *Navegación especulativa y práctica* (MANILA, 1734) by admiral José González Cabrera Bueno, there is a mention of the “buen abrigo” of San Francisco in the chapter dedicated to the trio between the Mendocino cape and Acapulco:

[...] à 38 grados y medio donde haze la tierra, una Punta mediana dividida de la Costa, que parece desde lejos Isla, y se llama Punta de los Reyès, la qual haze un Morro taxado, y de la parte del Norte de ella, haze buen abrigo para todos vientos, y está en altura de 38 grados y medio, que llaman de S. Francisco, para viento Sur, y Sueste, se à de Surgir en el remate de la Playa que haze un rincón de la parte del Sudueste, y de la parte del Nordeste, están tres Barrancas blancas muy cerca de la mar, y enfrente de la de en medio, entra un Estero de la mar que tiene buena entrada, sin rebentazon alguna; entrado en ella, hallarán Indios amigos, y con facilidad se hará agua dulce. al Sursudueste de este Puerto estan seis, o siete Farallones blancos pequeños, unos más que otros, [...] aquí fue donde se perdió el Navio S. Agustín año de 1595, viniendo haziendo el descubrimiento, y la causa de perderse, mas fue de quien governaba que fuerza de tiempo (CABRERA BUENO, 1970, p. 302-303).

This book was converted into the “único Norte” –in the words of the engineer Miguel Constanzó– when the Spanish authorities restarted the exploration trips, as a reply to the agressions by Russians and other into North American territories. To that effect the port maintained its secular silence. When the *Plano de la Costa del Sur Correxido hasta la Canal de Santa Bárbara en el Año de 1769* plan was drawn (image 13),³³ only a few months before the great finding, the name San Francisco was still given to the dock harboured in the Punta de los Reyes, where the *San Agustín* had stopped. The seraphic patronage of this estuary would soon be taken by a great bay a few miles to the south.

³³ [no author]. *Plano de la Costa del Sur Correxido hasta la Canal de Santa Bárbara en el Año de 1769*.

Image 13 – Map of the Californian Northeast (1769)



The “Invention” of San Francisco

The presence of the visitor José de Gálvez to the Northeast was essential for the organization of the expeditions (two maritime and two by land) that had as a main objective the occupation of one of the ports recommended by Vizcaíno in the beginning of the XVII century: San Diego and Monterrey. The arrival at first didn't present many problems, since San Diego was easily identified. On the other hand, the same thing didn't happen with Monterrey, because of the scarce and equivocal signals with which it was described. This circumstance caused the land trip, led by Gaspar de Portolá, to restart their march to the North, thinking they could find the true Monterey bay, or if not, the bay of San Francisco of Cermeño.

But what they found were other landmarks that they readily identified as “la Punta de los Reyes y Farallones del Puerto de San Francisco”—following the descriptions of the Cabrera Bueno's manual—, which showed that the sought for Monterey had been left behind. So they used the journey for the reconnaissance of the area arriving “al remate

del primer Estero, y reconocido el Terreno, que se havia de seguir para llegar á la Punta de los Reyes, interrumpido con nuevos Esteros, escaso de Pastos y de Leña, [...] El Comandante con parecer de sus Oficiales, resolvió la retirada” (CONSTANZÓ, 1984b, p. 45-46). Before the governor Portolá and his committee a party of explorers was sent that “se vieron atajados por inmensos Esteros, que se internan extraordinariamente en la Tierra”. Their journey lasted three days and it is not known if they managed to explore the Golden Gate, doubtlessly an important matter, but that shouldn't take our attention from the deed that on the 31st of October of 1769 the explorers managed:

Divisamos desde la cumbre una Bahía Grande formada por una punta de tierra que salía mucho la Mar áfuera y parecia Isla, aserca de lo qual se engañaron muchos en la tarde antecedente. Mar afuera como el Oesnoroste respecto á nosotros, desde el mismo sitio al Sudueste de la misma punta, se divisavan siete Farrallones blancos de diversa Magnitud. Siguiendo la Bahía por el lado Norte, se distinguían unas barrancas blancas, y tirando así al Nordeste se behía la boca de un Estero que parecua internarse la tierra adentro (CONSTANZÓ, 1984a, p. 106-107).

On the 1st of November an advanced group led by Sergeant José Ortega arrived at the top of a hill and saw before them a great extension of water. The expedition had just discovered the imposing bay of San Francisco. In the first moments they weren't aware of the magnitude of their find; the explorers going by a calculation error on the old measurements, identified it automatically as the Cermeño bay: “Consultamos a vista de estas señas ál Derrotero del Piloto Bueno, y benimos en Conocimiento de que lo que teniamos á la vista era sín duda el Puerto de San Francisco dictamen á que adherieron los mas por la Conformidad de las Señas que dá el mismo Piloto en su derrotero, a las que estavamos observando”. Cabrera had placed the port at 38 and a half degrees, and they were one degree lower. Constanzó solved this by saying that they had experimented “que todas sus Latitudes en quanto descubre de esta Costa y sus Puertos, pecan por crecidas” (CONSTANZÓ, 1984a, p. 107). The port that they had just reached would be much more transcendent to the crown's wishes than what the Monterey bay could ever have been.

This initial confusión was recorded by Miguel Constanzó in the handwritten map that he produced in October of 1770, using inclusively older maps³⁴. In it San Francisco appears wrongly to the North of Punta de los Reyes. In quite an unusual way the map was redone and printed in Madrid by the royal cosmographer Tomás López the next year, incorporating already the new profile of the bay and a sketch of its discovered entry – with

³⁴ CONSTANZÓ, Miguel. *Carta reducida del Oceano Asiatico nombrado por los navegantes Mar del Sur...* (1770).

great likelihood – in November of 1770 by a group of soldiers led by Sergeant Pedro Fages (FAGES, 1984, p. 181). However the map separates two different features, on the one hand, the “Puerto de San Francisco” protected by the Punta de los Reyes; on the other, the “Estero de San Francisco” that would name the great bay (image 14).³⁵ The locations and representations of the great port would still remain for some time in the spectral domain.

Image 14 – Detail of San Francisco in the map by Tomás López (1771).



Two years later, the same Fages, accompanied by fray Juan Crespi, conducted the first thorough exploration of San Francisco, on the orders of viceroy Bucareli, with the objective of populating the territory. The new expedition left Monterey on the 20th of March of 1772 and followed the same route that Fages took two years before. Crespi recorded the Golden gate in his diary—thus baptized by John C. Frémont in 1846—, some of the rivers that entered in the bay and the islands of Yerbabuena, Alcatraz and Ángel. The observations collected during the route were the base of the first private map of San Francisco, of which there are numerous versions, and that maintain the geographical errors, specifically the confusión of the great estuary with Drake’s bay (image 15).³⁶

³⁵ LÓPEZ, Tomás. *Carta reducida del Oceano Asiatico o Mar del Sur...* (1771).

³⁶ CRESPI, Juan. *Mapa de lo substancial de la Famoso Puerto y Río de San Francisco* (1772).

Image 15 – map by the priest Crespi (1772)



The incessant arrival of news about the natural qualities of the great port increased the desire of viceroy Bucareli to occupy and fortify it. A new exploration was conducted in 1774 to determine the place where the mission of San Francisco should be built. Fernando Rivera y Moncada, the new governor, and fray Francisco Palou reached the Golden Gate. They selected a place near the current Palo Alto to erect the mission, and another not very far to build a fort. But the most interesting thing of the expedition was that they discovered that the entrance of the port that they were in had no relation with Punta de los Reyes, and that, as a consequence, the immense bay explored up to then was an unknown and distinct place of the one considered and collected in the books and maps as San Francisco. The Mallorcan Franciscan priest described in thorough report the findings that would transform the image of the new port, paying attention to the nautical details of depth at the mouth of the estuary, since the supplying of the new misión of San Francisco would be done by the San Blas boats (PALOU, 1857). The description was known by captain of the ship *San Carlos*, Juan Manuel de Ayala, selected by the viceroy to explore the port and continue his plan in the following year.

From that moment the new San Francisco port was incorporated, with an anxious desire to show results, to the cartography of the time. The sailing charts placed it

North of Monterey, although, as frequently done, with new discoveries were annexed to images of the past which, as fossils in movement, kept being reproduced in maps. The resulting chart of the maritime trip by Juan Pérez to the North of California in 1774, produced by José de Cañizares, would continue making echo of the exaggerated descriptions of Vizcaíno, drawing a large and cozy port in Monterey. A little higher, a longbay of San Francisco preceded by the cliffs, is recreated as the new port (image 16).³⁷

Imagen 16 – Detail of the map by José de Cañizares (1774)



On the 21st of March of 1775 Juan Manuel de Ayala left from San Blas on the ship *San Carlos* heading to San Francisco.³⁸ On the 5th of August the ship arrived at the mouth of the bay. The strength of the currents that entered and exited the Golden Gate stopped him from entering until a few days later. Once inside, and having made contact with the Miwok Indians on the shores, Ayala y Cañizares –who accompanied him as a pilot – started the exploration of a great cove situated in the NE, which they baptized of San

³⁷ CAÑIZARES, José de. Reduced map of the Asian ocean or south sea that contains the coast of California (1774).

³⁸ Navigation diary made by frigate lieutenant of the Real Armada and captain of the ship of his Majesty named *San Carlos*, don Juan Manuel de Ayala from the port of San Blas, 1775. AGI, Estado, 38.

Carlos, even though they couldn't reach to its end because of unfavourable weather. The expedition spent several days exploring the rest of the area. Cañizares had received from the captain the orders to explore and map the interior of the port. Thus was examined the San Pablo bay, a large island which they named Los Angeles, -with good ports – and another, further in, which Ayala baptized with the name los Alcatraces, because of the abundance of these animals that he found there, but arid and steep that there was no even a port for the boats. Later they would try to reach other smaller coves, but the currents, frequently, stopped their advances. On the 15th of August, started the exploration of the port again, which was the main goal of their trip to San Francisco. José de Cañizares was sent by Ayala in three occasions to explore all places and map the área. His work was recognized as the first precise map of the San Francisco bay and there was an interesting report that he delivered to Ayala (image 17).³⁹

³⁹ Cañizares, José de. *Plano del puerto de San Francisco registrado por el paquebot San Carlos* (1775).

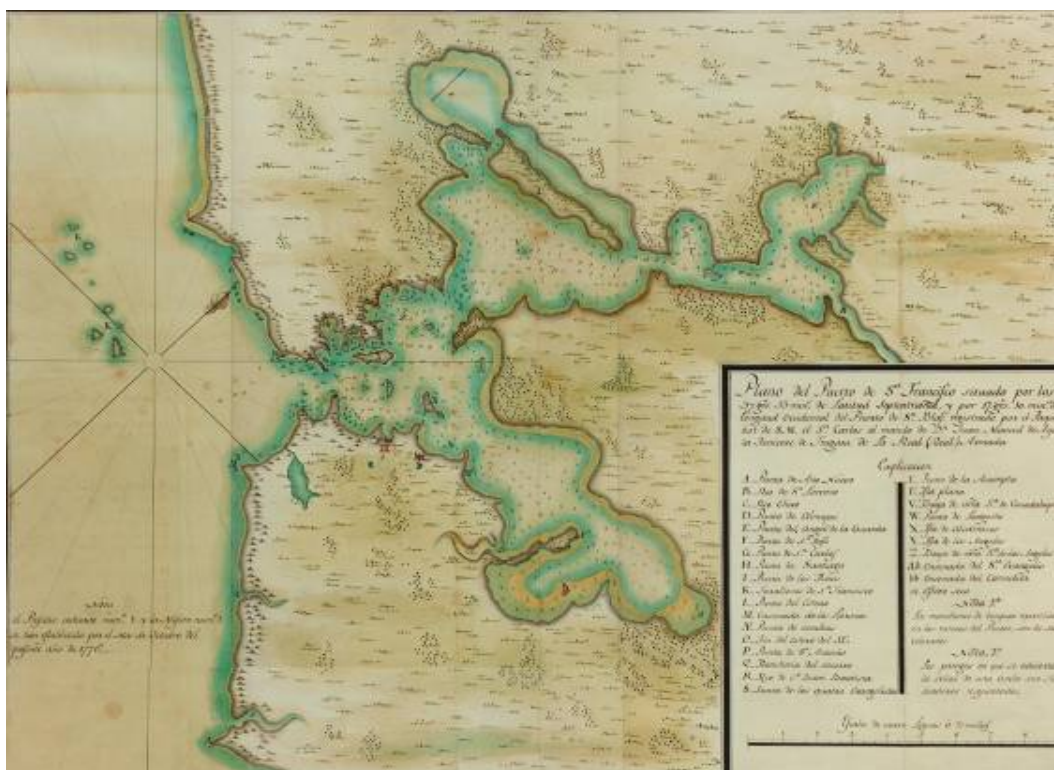
Image 17 – Map of the San Francisco port by José de Cañizares (1775).



The strong currents and the contrary winds forced Ayala to remain in San Francisco until the 18th of December. The manouevering was very hard and laborious, but finally they were able to exit with the help of a smaller boat and a northern wind. At twelve in the morning, having passed the Golden Gate, Ayala ordered to set for Monterey, where they anchored on the 19th of September. Juan Manuel de Ayala sent a letter to the viceroy Bucareli on the 9th of November, where he smmarized the main successes of the trip and praised the qualities of San Francisco: its beautiful harmony, the abundance of drinkable water, wood and ballast, the cold climate, healthy and free of the uncomfortable mists, and the docility and affability of the numerous Indians they found. He also highlighted the remarkable work of his first pilot, José de Cañizares, who explored great part of the port due to the grave illness that had left him bed ridden, “**el que se ha portado**

en mi compañía no solo con su acostumbrada honradez, sino también manifestando una gran inteligencia en su facultad”.⁴⁰ Bucareli sent a copy to Spain of the description of the San Francisco port, signed by Ayala and Cañizares, accompanied by the map drawn by the latter.⁴¹ From this map by Cañizares many versions were extracted, some of them as gifts for diplomatic purposes (image 18).⁴² On top of the previous drawing slight modifications were incorporated, such as the mission and the fort founded there in the following year.

Image 18 – updated 1776 version of the map by Cañizares.



The building of said establishments was the result of two successive expeditions. In the following year to Ayala's trip, in 1776, captain Juan Bautista de Anza conducted a new land expedition to San Francisco. With him went father Pedro Font, who noted numerous geographical details in his diary and drew many sketches of the trip (image 19).⁴³ The objective of this trip consisted in selecting a good space for the settling of the fort which would control the new port. So a prominent place was selected in sight of the Golden Gate for the fort, and next to it the Franciscan mission. Anza returned to Nueva España and sent, soon after, lieutenant José Joaquín Moraga to start the foundations. On

⁴⁰ Ayala to Bucareli, San Blas, 9 November 1775. AGI, Estado, 20.

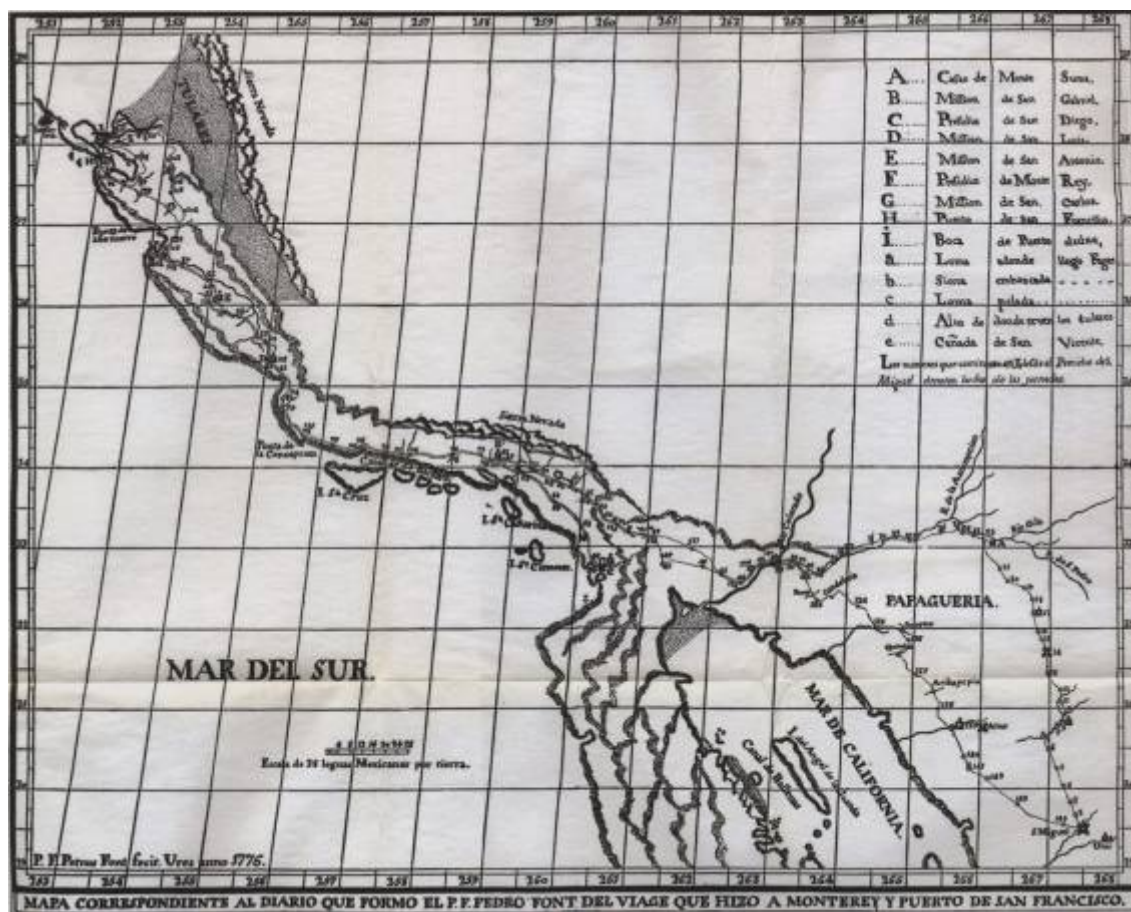
⁴¹ Bucareli to Arriaga, México, 26 November 1775. AGI, Estado, 20.

⁴² CAÑIZARES, José de. *Plano del puerto de San Francisco...* (1776).

⁴³ FONT, Pedro. *Mapa del viaje de Monterrey a San Francisco*. Diary of Fr. Pedro Font (1776).

the 17th of September of 1776, the fort was established, days later the priest Francisco Palóu devoted the misión to San Francisco de Asís.

Image 19 – Map of the trip by father Font according to his diary (1776).



The “Gran Puerto de San Francisco” (image 20),⁴⁴ as the hidden bay would afterwards be known, was definitely placed in the map for the Pride of the Spanish Crown. And even if the foreign threats kept dividing the peace of the Pacific, the dreamt of port converted itself on the necessary passing point to the North and to the Philippines.

⁴⁴ MASCARÓ, Manuel Agustín. *Mapa geográfico de una parte de la América Septentrional* (1782).

Image 20 - The “Gran Puerto de San Francisco” according to the engineer Mascará (1782).



San Francisco was the great finding that transformed the routes and navigation in the Pacific. The Myth that Fray Marcos de Niza thought to have found had become a reality. As in a dream, between the mist, Golden Gate allowed itself to be seen, fled and waited silently for its unusual ending. The pearl that the immense west had hidden for centuries, became the port and city of the American Dream. Jonathan Swift was not wrong by placing the prodigious Gulliver's travels there (image 21).⁴⁵ This land would certainly forge itself in legend, with the gold of the feverish seekers of nuggets and the desire for freedom of those who sang the *Summer of Love* and soon would go to *Castro Street*. The deconstruction of an imagined border, on the abysses of the known, ended up overcoming its own illusion. San Francisco appears today again as a port and symbolic bastion of the contemporary social conquests, drawing itself on the maps as an illusory refuge for liberties, in a world each day – paradoxically – more and more imprisoned by the “democracies”.

⁴⁵ [Sin autor]. [Costa de Norteamérica]. As seen in *Gulliver's Travel* by Jonathan Swift, on the editions of 1726-1766.

Imagen 21 - Costa de Norteamérica en los *Los viajes de Gulliver* (1726).



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