

# *THROUGH SPANISH EYES: SPANISH VOYAGES TO ALASKA, 1774-1792.*

BY WALLACE M. OLSON. (HERITAGE RESEARCH, LIMITED EDITION, 2002). AUKE BAY, ALASKA. SOFT COVER, ISBN 0-9659009-1-6, \$60.00, PLUS POSTAGE. 576PP. 8 CHARTS, ANNOTATIONS, BIBLIO., TOPICAL INDEX.

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*Through Spanish Eyes: Spanish Voyages to Alaska, 1774-1792* (576 pages) is a long overdue translation and synthesis of the accounts of Spanish exploration in Alaska. Thanks to Dr. Olson's commendable work, those of us involved with the anthropology and history of Alaska must no longer resort to poorly reproduced manuscripts or sketchy translations to research this little understood chapter of our state's history.

Spanish interest in the north Pacific Coast extends at least as far back as the early sixteenth century. Following the conquest of Mexico, Hernan Cortes outfitted several ill-fated expeditions to search northward along the Pacific coast for riches, a coastal route to the Spice Islands (Moluccas Islands, Indonesia), and the ever elusive Northwest Passage (Strait of Anián) through North America. As early as 1524, Cortes was preparing three ships for Pacific exploration [4th Letter of Relacion, 1524, Pagden 2001:320-321], and in 1525 the ships were at the port of Zacatula (250 miles north of Acapulco) "prepared to embark on a voyage of exploration along those [Pacific] coasts [5th Letter of Relacion, 1525, Pagden 2001:320-321]." Shortly before their belated departure in 1527, and much to the consternation of Cortes, King Charles redirected the expedition (led by Alvaro Saavedra Ceron) to the Moluccas in search of survivors from the Magellan voyage. Two of the ships were reported lost at sea north of the Marshall Islands. Subsequent Pacific voyages by Spain during the 16th and 17th centuries were dedicated largely to the Manila-Galleon trade between Acapulco, Peru, and the Philippines. Sporadic expeditions, however, continued to ply the waters northward to Baja and California. In 1769, California became a colonial province of the Spanish Empire, although Spain claimed a divine right to all lands along the Pacific Coast of North America under the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas. Despite her claim, Spain was aware of British, American, and Russian trade along the North Pacific Coast during the late 18th century. It was in the context of these emerging empires competing for lands along the north Pacific coast that Spain sent late 18th century expeditions northward. Following the 1789

Nootka incident with the British, which nearly brought the nations to war, Spain eventually limited her control to lands below 42 degrees north.

*Through Spanish Eyes* provides details of the eight documented Spanish voyages that extended into Alaska during the late 18th century. These include voyages in the years 1774 (Juan Perez), 1775 (Bruno de Hezeta, Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra), 1778 (Esteban Martinez, Gonzalo Lopez de Haro), 1779 (Ignacio Arteaga, Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra), 1790 (Salvador Fidalgo), 1791 (Alejandro Malaspina, Jose Bustamente y Guerra), and 1792 (Jacinto Caamano). By 1790-1791, voyages had extended up the coast as far as Kodiak Island, English Bay, and Prince William Sound. Don Antonio Maria Bucareli y Ursua, Viceroy of New Spain 1771-1779, was directly responsible for the first three voyages, and for humanitarian policies towards Natives that influenced subsequent voyages. Some of the voyages are documented through journal entries by more than one person. *Through Spanish Eyes* includes translations of a number of parallel journal entries. These complimentary selections, along with commentary by the author, provide for a more complete picture. In addition to translations, the book sets the stage with background information on the archaeology, linguistics, and anthropological understanding of the Northwest. It concludes with a chapter on Spanish withdrawal from the region, an extensive bibliography, and 10 appendices. The latter include sections on Spanish measurements, Spanish naval ranks, biographies, Northwest Coast artifacts in the Museo de America, an illustration of a Spanish Pedrero (swivel gun), Spanish place names from the 1779 and 1788 expeditions, vocabularies collected on the 1788 expedition, ships engaged in the fur trade from 1785-1791, and one page from Tadeo Haenke's transcription of a Tlingit Song of Peace at Port Mulgrave in 1791. In addition to the book, the publisher sells a complimentary chart (24 x 18.5 inches) of the Bucarelli Bay area reproduced from the atlas which accompanies the journal of La Perouse (1799).

Professor Olson, has prepared a well-organized, detailed monograph that will be a welcome addition to the bookshelves of anthropologists and historians interested in Spain's voyages along the northern Pacific coast.

*Through Spanish Eyes* (\$60) and the complimentary chart (\$7.50) may be ordered from Heritage Research, Box 210961, Auke Bay, Alaska 99821 or by contacting the author directly (phone/fax 907-789-3311; e-mail [wmolson@ptialaska.net](mailto:wmolson@ptialaska.net)). Shipping costs for the book are \$2.68 for media rate. Priority mail rates vary according to the distance from Juneau.

