

Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, Citizen of Guatemala and Native of Palma del Río: New Sources from the Sixteenth Century

By Wendy Kramer

Introduction

New technology affords new opportunities as well as new situations to historians engaged in archival research.¹ Frequently today, exciting findings are encountered in digital format, often online, in isolation in front of a screen, and not in some timeless archive reading room, leafing through a bundle of ancient manuscripts. So it has been with this recent research that I have been conducting, and last year, the news of my discovery of some documents in which Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo declared himself a native of Palma de Micer Gilio, modern-day Palma del Río in Cordoba, Spain, generated considerable interest—the international press and digital media reported it worldwide.² This particular item was considered newsworthy not only in California but throughout Latin America, Spain and Portugal.³

Since the early 1980s, when I was based in Seville and carrying out research at the General Archive of the Indies (hereafter the AGI),⁴ I have been assembling biographical data on the first generation of conquistador-*encomenderos* who accompanied Pedro de Alvarado and his brothers to Guatemala in the 1520s and 1530s, sent there by Hernán Cortés from Mexico.⁵ Recently, I renewed efforts

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to complete these social histories, working with the early Cabildo books housed in the Hispanic Society of America in New York City.⁶ Sources like the Cabildo books record detailed chronological information on a town's inhabitants and their participation in town affairs.

Working alphabetically I reached the letter "C" and the name of the legal representative, the *Procurador* of Guatemala, appointed in 1531, a Gabriel de Cabrera.⁷ While doing a random online search on the AGI website, I came across five or more separate documents mentioning criminal activity aboard the ship on which Cabrera was carrying gold to the Spanish Crown.⁸ The investigation on the ship concerned gold that he transported from Guatemala overland to Veracruz, Mexico and from there by ship to Seville, Spain.⁹ As the Procurador, a royal agent, Cabrera had been commissioned to journey back to Spain in 1531-1532 with what was actually the first shipment of gold sent since initial contact and conquest. First contact occurred in 1524 between the Maya-Pipil of Mesoamerica and the European conquistadors, led by the ambitious, heartless, and relentless captain and military leader, Pedro de Alvarado.

Reading the online digitized documents about the case and the proceedings concerned with appearance of witnesses and their questioning, I was surprised to learn that Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo was a passenger on the ship, travelling to Spain with some other citizens of Guatemala.¹⁰ Along with the passengers and crew, Cabrillo was interrogated about a theft, and asked to testify about what he witnessed on the ship.

I offer additional background on my areas of research and prior acquaintance with Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo to contextualize the circumstances of this finding.¹¹ Cabrillo was a conquistador and an encomendero of Guatemala, and although he held a large *encomienda*, it was his prominent position heading the expedition of discovery to the Pacific Coast of California in 1542 that distinguished him as an important historical figure.¹² While conducting research in the AGI in the early 1980s on the encomenderos of Guatemala, I met historian Harry Kelsey, who was doing research for his detailed book on the life of Cabrillo. So Cabrillo had been a topic of interest for a long time and I was certainly intrigued that, unlike most of the conquerors of Guatemala, his place of birth and country of origin had not been ascertained. Modern historians turned up insubstantial evidence for his logical place of birth--Spain but the similarly insubstantial evidence for his alleged birthplace, Portugal, meant that the issue was unresolved.¹³

Antonio de Herrera, royal historian of Spain, sixty years after Cabrillo's death, published that the captain of the *San Salvador* was "Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo Portugues."¹⁴ Herrera's source for this designation was not given and since then no one has verified his claim that Cabrillo was Portuguese. This pronouncement,

made much later, was apparently not credited by the Costa Rican diplomat and historian, Manuel María de Peralta (1847-1930), who in a book of sixteenth century documents from the Spanish archives that he edited and published almost 300 years later in 1883, referenced Cabrillo in the following way: "Before [Sir Francis] Drake, only a distinguished Spanish sailor, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, had ventured into such high latitudes on the western coast of North America, in a voyage of reconnaissance of the California coastline commissioned by the Viceroy of Mexico don Antonio de Mendoza, in whose honor Cape Mendocino received its name (1542)."¹⁵

Harry Kelsey, writing in 1986, noted that Cabrillo's own family and offspring and those who knew him in Santiago de Guatemala, never mentioned that he was Portuguese. This is remarkable because in the conquest of New Spain, the largest group of foreigners were the Portuguese conquistadors, and information of this type was not generally concealed.¹⁶ Among the documentation submitted to the Crown in the sixteenth century by conquistadors and their descendants to prove their services in the conquest, place of birth is frequently mentioned either by them or by their witnesses.¹⁷

In the first Guatemalan Cabildo book, there is record in March and April 1528 of "Domingo Portugués" who was granted a house plot, and "Juan Alvares, Portugués" who was given agricultural land.¹⁸ The list of deceased persons' estates in Guatemala for the years 1536 and 1537 includes reference to an "Andrés Jorge, Portugués" and an "Álvaro Gonzales, Portugués," the latter recorded as being from the Kingdom of Portugal from a place called Freixo de Espada à Cinta.¹⁹

Gabriel Cabrera, Procurador of Guatemala, and Robbery on Board the *San Juan*

The new sources that have recently come to light address some of the errors and lacunae in the historiography of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, particularly from the period of the 1530s and 1540s. At present, there is little controversy concerning the circumstances of Cabrillo's participation in the conquest of Mexico under Hernán Cortés nor his journey to Guatemala under Pedro de Alvarado in 1524. Cabrillo first engaged in farming and ranching in Guatemala on lands and encomiendas granted to him by Alvarado in the late 1520s. He probably received permission to look for gold in streams near to his encomienda in 1529.²⁰ The success of Cabrillo and his partner Diego Sanchez de Ortega in certain mining operations no doubt led to his decision to return to Spain to marry Diego's sister Beatríz Sánchez de Ortega in Seville, Spain. This trip has been alluded to in several documents but little or no documentation had been located to do with his activities while

in Seville, until now.²¹ The documents examined here give us some new insight into his activities after he left Guatemala in the summer of 1531 to seek the first available ship to Spain that was departing from the port of Veracruz.²²

More than five documents in the *Justicia* section of the AGI contain materials that pertain to the criminal investigation aboard the ship *San Juan*, which commenced in November 1531 in the first port of call, Havana.²³ The investigation was concerned with the theft of gold bars that the Procurador of Guatemala was transporting to deliver to the Spanish Crown, as the Crown's share of this first shipment of gold.²⁴

Throughout the protracted proceedings in Havana, Tenerife, Cádiz, and Seville, Cabrillo and other fellow passengers from Guatemala, as well as sailors and crew, were asked to testify on numerous occasions. Like the other witnesses, Cabrillo was sworn in and answered all questions under oath while the official scribes dutifully recorded all of his responses verbatim. Three documents in particular provide five different examples of Cabrillo's testimony in which it was recorded that his full name was Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo and that he was a native of Palma de Micer Gilio. Cabrillo also gave testimony elsewhere in the same case, and also in a power of attorney, under the names: "Juan Rodríguez," "Juan Rodríguez, merchant," and Juan Rodríguez, squire."²⁵ There are at least nine statements from him within these official documents housed in the AGI.

In addition to Procurador Cabrera and Cabrillo (from Palma de Micer Gilio), the following citizens of Guatemala also travelled to Spain from Veracruz on the *San Juan*: Juan Ortega (from Madragal and a servant of the Governor of Guatemala); Eugenio de Moscoso (from Ciudad Real) and his servant Juan Borgoñon (from Burgundy); and Diego Sánchez de Santiago (from Jerez de la Frontera).²⁶ These men were called upon to give testimony as the case dragged on through the different ports of call, then in Spain and eventually back in Guatemala.

The expedition had travelled overland to Mexico from Guatemala, crossing rivers and rough roads for more than 200 leagues. While they were waiting for the ship to depart, Cabrillo and Cabrera spent several days together in Veracruz buying provisions for the journey.²⁷ The Procurador had with him two large boxes containing gold samples for the Crown as well as another box with his own gold and precious items. In addition, he was carrying formal documents and letters from Spanish citizens, the Royal Officials and the Cabildo.

Cabrillo and others testified that he personally was put in charge of safeguarding a suitcase with official papers and jewels for the Procurador while they were on the *San Juan*. He also testified that he had met Cabrera some twelve to thirteen years before in Cuba, and although Cabrillo did not seem to share quarters on the ship nor eat his meals with him (like the other citizen of Guatemala,

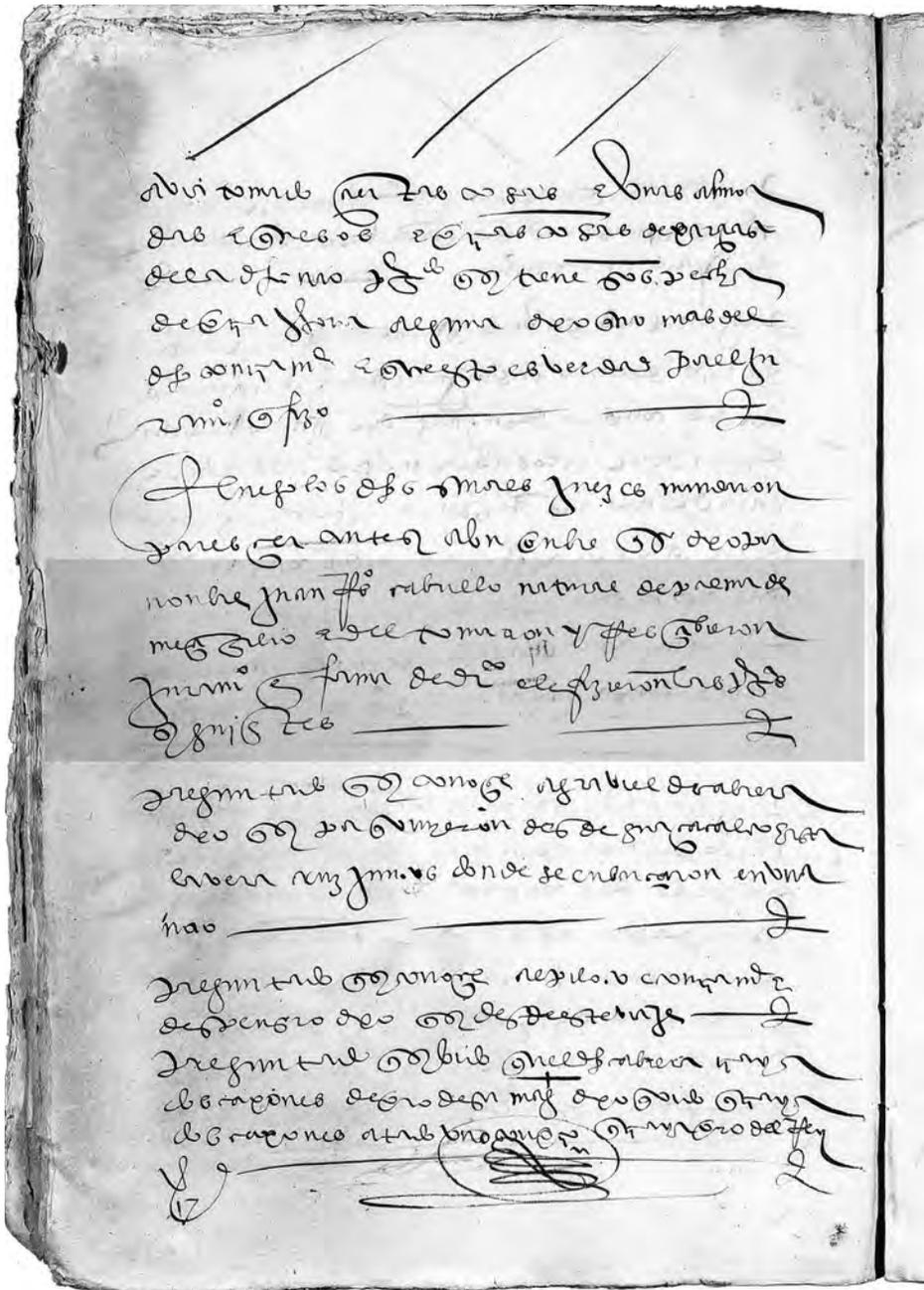
Eugenio de Moscoso), it was obvious that they shared a cordial relationship and a bond of trust. In his testimony Cabrillo noted that Cabrera and Moscoso were actually travelling together on the ship as partners.²⁸

Cabrillo and others testified that the boxes laden with the Crown's gold were tied up and sewn, using native cloth and wrapped in deer skin and with floating devices attached to them, so that in case the ship capsized the contents might survive. Most surprisingly, the Procurador also brought on board a so-called *tigre* (tiger) for whose freight he paid 10 pesos. History has not revealed the fate of this Central American jaguar, but it was probably one of the first large wild cats taken to Spain from the New World.²⁹

Some of the crew members were, no doubt, rough types, and the Procurador later described them as "*hijos de muchas madres*" (sons of many mothers). He had an altercation with the boatswain, Pedro de Ochoa, a few days after they set sail from Veracruz; the Procurador was not satisfied with the location Ochoa had stored the two boxes containing the Crown's gold. Later, as the case became more complicated after arrival in Spain and the intervention of the officials from the House of Trade (*Casa de Contratación*), Cabrera as Procurador, in turn, had to defend himself from accusations that he had not properly supervised the items for which he was responsible, and that he had taken much better care of his own valuables. He defended himself partly by saying that he was at the mercy of the ship's crew, and had no reason initially to suspect any malfeasance on their part and in addition he was practically unconscious from sea sickness during the voyage.³⁰

The theft was discovered shortly after the ship docked in San Cristóbal de la Havana. Cabrillo testified that it was while he was on shore that someone came and notified him that one of the boxes had been broken open and that some of the contents had been removed.³¹ Seven bars of gold went missing from one of the Crown's boxes, totalling some 1,000 pesos in value. On November 9, 1531, a senior officer from the island of Cuba began an investigation into the theft. All boxes were opened and searched and passengers and crew gave testimony about what they had seen and heard. The finger was pointed at the boatswain, Pedro de Ochoa. Apparently, it was well-known on the ship that Ochoa had previously been accused of being a thief and of having "bad hands" (*malas manos*).³²

There is some interesting eyewitness testimony about the actual sequence of events of the theft, which took place late at night by candlelight. There is also vehement dialogue among several of the implicated crew members that is cited verbatim, with statements such as "for the love of God" and "shut up" and "I will kill you if you say anything." Ochoa was strung up and tortured with "jugs of wáter," which must be similar to modern-day water boarding, and some 20 jugs



Cabrillo's testimony in Cádiz on the 12th of February 1532, in which he states that he is a native (natural) of Palma de Micer Gilio. Image courtesy of the AGI, Justicia, 1159, N.5, img. 92.

of water were poured down his throat to help extract a confession. When none was forthcoming, they used another form of torture, which is referred to as "fire

torture.” Another crew mate was whipped to get a statement. Then the suspected crew members were imprisoned on board the ship with orders to deliver them to officials at the House of Trade in Seville.³³

The *San Juan* continued its journey docking next in the Canary Islands, sometime in mid January 1532. Judges from the Apellate Court in Santa Cruz de Tenerife were asked by the Guatemalan Procurador Cabrera to intervene, and the prisoners were taken on land and jailed. The ship docked and the sails, lowered and removed, were placed on land by order of the Municipal Officer in Santa Cruz while an investigation took place.

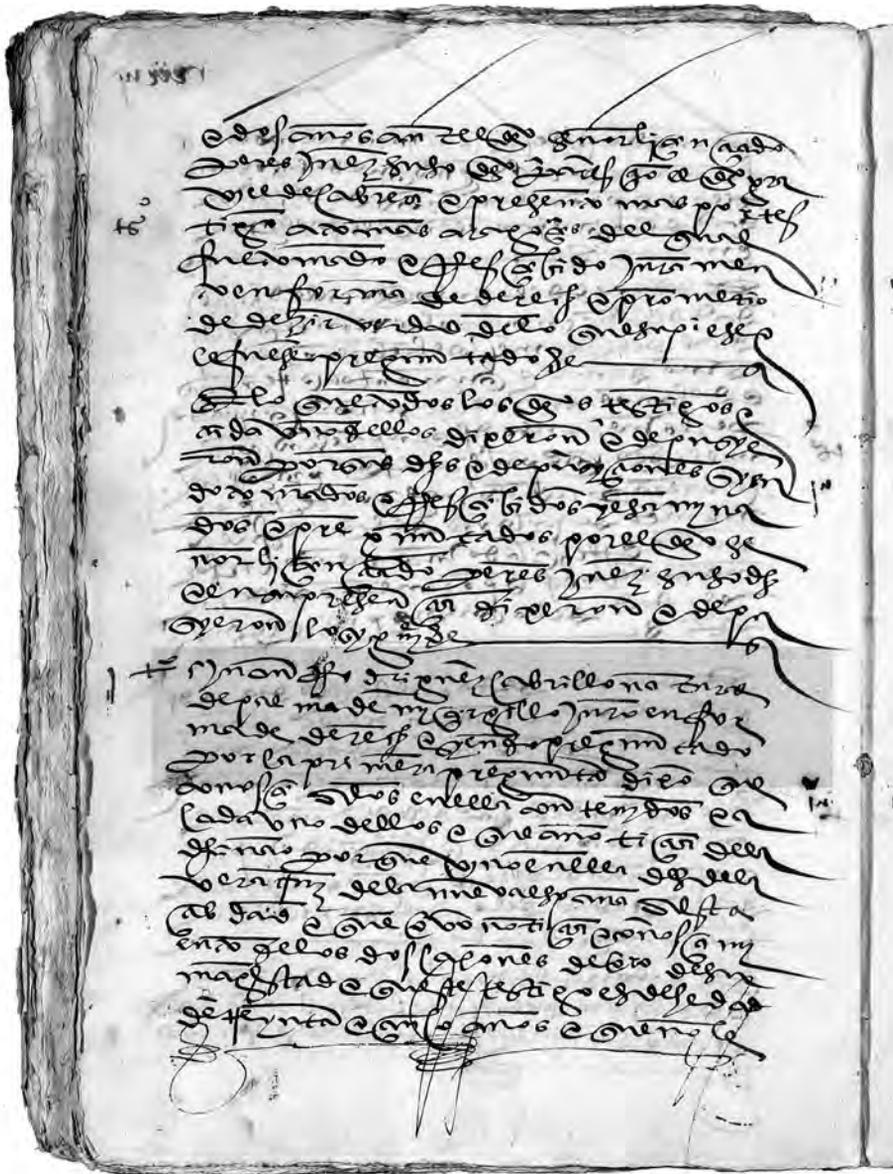
Cabrillo and the other passengers and crew must have been exhausted by the voyage without end, and likely there were additional expenses being incurred with the long delay. While docked in Tenerife, Cabrillo borrowed some money from one of the crew, Juanes Celain, to purchase provisions, and as security against the loan he gave him a small gold bar, a transaction examined below.³⁴

The master and part-owner of the ship, Blas Gallego, successfully pled his case to the authorities that he had a duty to take his ship with its gold, other merchandise and crew to Seville, and present everything in front of the House of Trade, since the judicial authorities in Tenerife did not have jurisdiction. Reflecting that winter was upon them, and bad weather and seasonal storms could put the ship at risk in the event of further delay, the judges in Tenerife decided to let them leave.

The *San Juan* reached Cádiz at the beginning of February, and immediately bailiffs came on board and took the prisoners to the public jail. Officials from the House of Trade in Cádiz took over the criminal investigation. All passengers and crew members were detained and not allowed to leave the ship on pain of death and loss of all their property. The judges ordered all passengers to disembark without any of their belongings. Each one was searched before being allowed to leave the ship and ordered to give testimony about the case. The master and pilot of the ship, Blas Gallego, was also taken off to jail.³⁵

Cabrillo had given his first brief deposition in Havana on the 9th of November in which he only stated his name as “Juan Rodríguez” and what he had observed on the ship. In Cádiz on the 12th of February 1532, he, Eugenio de Moscoso, and Juan de Ortega, respectively, were asked to state where they were from, and where they were born, and to answer a detailed list of questions about the circumstances of the missing gold. “Then the Lord judges ordered that there appear before them a man whose name was Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, native (*natural*) of Palma de Micer Gilio and they received testimony from him by rule of law and they asked him the following questions.”³⁶

A similar list of questions was asked of some of the same witnesses later the



Cabrillo's testimony in Cádiz, 22nd of February 1532, in which he states that he is a native of Palma de Micer Gilio and that he came on the ship [the San Juan] from Veracruz and that he is thirty-five years old. Image courtesy of AGI, Justicia, 706, N.4, img. 500.

same month by Cabrera, and the answers were compiled in an affidavit that would serve as a record or a perpetual memory of the matter.³⁷ Once again Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, Eugenio de Moscoso, Diego Sánchez de Santiago, and others, all say where they were born and where they currently resided.³⁸ Cabrillo was

the first witness: “Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, native of Palma de Micer Gilio said that he can testify ... because he saw what happened ... and this witness also came from Guatemala ... and that is the truth...”

Another detailed list of questions was presented in Cádiz, similar to the one above but not identical. It is dated the 22nd of February and this time Cabrillo’s testimony reads as follows, “Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo native of Palma de Micer Gilio was sworn in according to law, and when asked the first question he replied that he knew all the parties referred to in the question and that he knew about the aforesaid ship because he came in that ship from Veracruz, New Spain to this city [Cádiz]. And that he also knew about the two crates of His Majesty’s gold and that this witness is thirty-five years old...”³⁹ Cabrillo does not consistently record his age as thirty-five; he elsewhere testifies that he is “around thirty years old”. This lack of precision about one’s own age was not unusual at that time.⁴⁰

The testimony presented in these criminal proceedings is long and complex, and of interest. It is not within the purview of this article to examine all the evidence given in answer to the long lists of questions put to Cabrillo and the other witnesses, some lists are more than thirty questions long. The point of presenting these archival sources is to focus on Cabrillo and his movements, and to present this evidence that contains personal declarations by Cabrillo that he was from the town called Palma de Micer Gilio, whose modern name is Palma del Río, in the province of Cordoba.

Cabrillo’s Arrival and Activities while in Spain

In February 1532, though still involved as a witness in the ongoing and arduous legal investigation in Cádiz, Cabrillo began to engage in his own pressing pursuits during what was intended to be just a short stay back in Spain. The documents show that foremost in his mind was the return of a piece of gold that he had given to Juanes de Celain as security for repayment of a loan that he took out to purchase provisions while the boat was docked in Tenerife.⁴¹ On the 22nd of February, Cabrillo made a formal demand for the return of his gold pledging to repay the loan as agreed. The act was registered as follows:

In the very noble ... city of Cádiz, on this Thursday, February the 22nd of the year ... fifteen thirty-two, before the noble Licentiate Juan Pérez, Lieutenant Judge at the House of Trade of the Indies ... located and found in this city of Cádiz, and in the presence of myself, Alonso de Medina, Public Scribe of the registry of the aforementioned city and scribe to their Majesties, and in the presence of the undersigned

scribes, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo did present himself and say that he was a native of Palma de Micer Gilio, and he did say that he had given and did give a bar of gold weighing nineteen karats, as a pledge to Juanes de Celain, a sailor who came on the ship of Blas Gallego, a resident of Seville, which came from the Indies in New Spain.⁴²

The process was more complicated than anticipated. Celain, who was also a part owner of the ship, was terminally ill and bedridden, staying in a house “near to the fortress” in the city of Cádiz.⁴³ The scribe went to his bedside that same day to inform him of the pending case and Celain testified that he had given the bar of gold and other items to the ship’s master, Blas Gallego, for safekeeping. Meanwhile Gallego, who had been taken prisoner and was being detained in Cádiz for questioning, testified that he had given his own gold and that of Cabrillo as well as other items of value that had been pledged by other passengers and sailors, to another man, Rodrigo Álvarez, who he had instructed to carry it to Seville.

Eventually it transpired that the gold belonging to Cabrillo had been taken to the House of Trade in Seville. Subsequent to these proceedings in Cádiz, Cabrillo requested a sworn, public statement regarding all that had been established so far, so it could stand as “proof and testimony of the truth of the matter,” which was signed by the Lieutenant Judge and the registered Public Scribe in Cádiz.

This series of events generated a wealth of documentary evidence about Cabrillo.⁴⁴ Left with no other recourse to retrieve the pledged gold, Cabrillo himself then headed to Seville from Cádiz and on Wednesday the 13th of March 1532, he executed a power of attorney. Although the main documentary source for this information from the AGI contains a certified copy of the power of attorney, the original of this document is located in the *Archivo Histórico Provincial de Sevilla* (hereafter, the AHPS), and thus becomes one of the few examples of Cabrillo’s signature.⁴⁵ Curiously, in the original housed in the AHPS, the profession of “merchant” shows clearly after his name but it is crossed out in the certified copy, housed in the AGI.

The power of attorney was executed on La Calle de Gradadas (The Street of The Steps) near the cathedral in front of the public scribe and other scribes who served as witnesses. In it Cabrillo appointed Alonso Sánchez de Ortega as his legal representative.⁴⁶ Sánchez de Ortega, a merchant and citizen of Seville from the parish of Santa María (*Collación de Santa María*), would soon be Cabrillo’s father-in-law. He was also the father of Cabrillo’s business partner in Guatemala, Diego Sánchez de Ortega. This is apparently the first documentary evidence that shows a direct relationship between Cabrillo and his future father-in-law. Understandably, for a transaction as important as this one, Cabrillo needed a person in whom he could place the utmost trust. Although the power of attorney used only the



Plaza Mayor or Main Square of Palma del Río showing the City Hall, 2016. Photo by Rafael Morales.

name “Juan Rodríguez” it is without equivocation Cabillo because he appoints his future father-in-law as attorney, and the matter for which he entrusts him is the collection of his gold for the return of which presented a deposition in the name of Juan Rodríguez Cabillo, native of Palma de Micer Gilio, just a few pages before in the same document.

The power of attorney stated that Alonso Sánchez de Ortega was authorized to pay Cabillo’s debt on his behalf in return for the bar of gold weighing forty-three gold pesos and that he should retrieve it from either Blas Gallego, the master of the ship that came from New Spain, or from the officials of the House of Trade in Seville. This document also contains additional information, previously unknown, about Cabillo’s wife Beatriz Sánchez de Ortega’s family and their place of residence and the likely parish in which Juan and Beatriz married--the parish (*collación*) of Santa María that corresponds today to the parish of El Sagrario, which is the main cathedral in Seville.⁴⁷

In addition, it appears that Sánchez de Ortega was required by the House of Trade to show proof that Cabillo had properly registered his gold when he boarded the ship in Veracruz. Thus on March 22, 1532, he presented the following proof of registration.

I, Juan de Heguibar, scribe to the ... Catholic Majesties, and their Notary Public at court ... and officer in charge of the records at the

House of Trade of the Indies ... in Seville; on behalf of the very noble gentleman, Juan Lopez de Recalde, your Majesties Accountant, I hereby declare and swear ... that in the Registry, where the records for lots of gold ... are recorded which were brought from the Indies ... this year of 1532 on the ship called *San Juan*, whose master is Blas Gallego, the following is written: Registration by Juan Rodríguez, that he has in his possession one thousand and five hundred gold *pesos de minas*, which he is transporting at his own risk. Signed Juan Rodríguez, 1,500 pesos. In the margin of the entry, the following is written: I, Juan Rodríguez, am carrying this.⁴⁸

This documentary material, copied in duplicate and triplicate, provides unanticipated factual information about Cabrillo's wealth at this time. Harry Kelsey wrote in his biography of Cabrillo that with his partner Diego Sánchez de Ortega, their mines and lucrative encomiendas had made them both wealthy men and that Cabrillo received between 500 and 700 pesos de minas a year, which was a huge sum.⁴⁹ Kelsey noted that it was difficult to know just how rich Cabrillo was but he was rich enough to carry 1,500 pesos in gold to spend in Spain for his marriage and business enterprises with his new father-in-law.⁵⁰

Shortly after proving that the gold was properly registered, on the 27th of March 1532, the formalities were concluded and Sánchez de Ortega paid the outstanding debt and collected the small gold bar in his future son-in-law's name. Perhaps Cabrillo himself could not be present at this time because he was giving testimony, again, for the hapless Guatemalan Procurador Cabrera who was appealing a sentence passed by the House of Trade in Seville for items of gold and jewels that they had embargoed, alleging that the Procurador had not properly registered them when he was in Mexico.

It is curious that Cabrillo stated in this testimony that he was "Juan Rodríguez, squire."⁵¹ The purpose of his testimony, however, was to bolster the Procurador's contention that he was trustworthy and held in great esteem in Guatemala by Pedro de Alvarado and the Cabildo. Perhaps for this reason Juan Rodríguez omitted the "merchant" label he gave himself shortly afterwards in the power of attorney, and the "Cabrillo" surname that he used a week before in Cádiz when he was desperate to get his gold back. As the circumstances had changed, he might have sought to elevate himself somewhat socially, and lend additional credibility as a witness for the Procurador, by highlighting his military status.⁵²

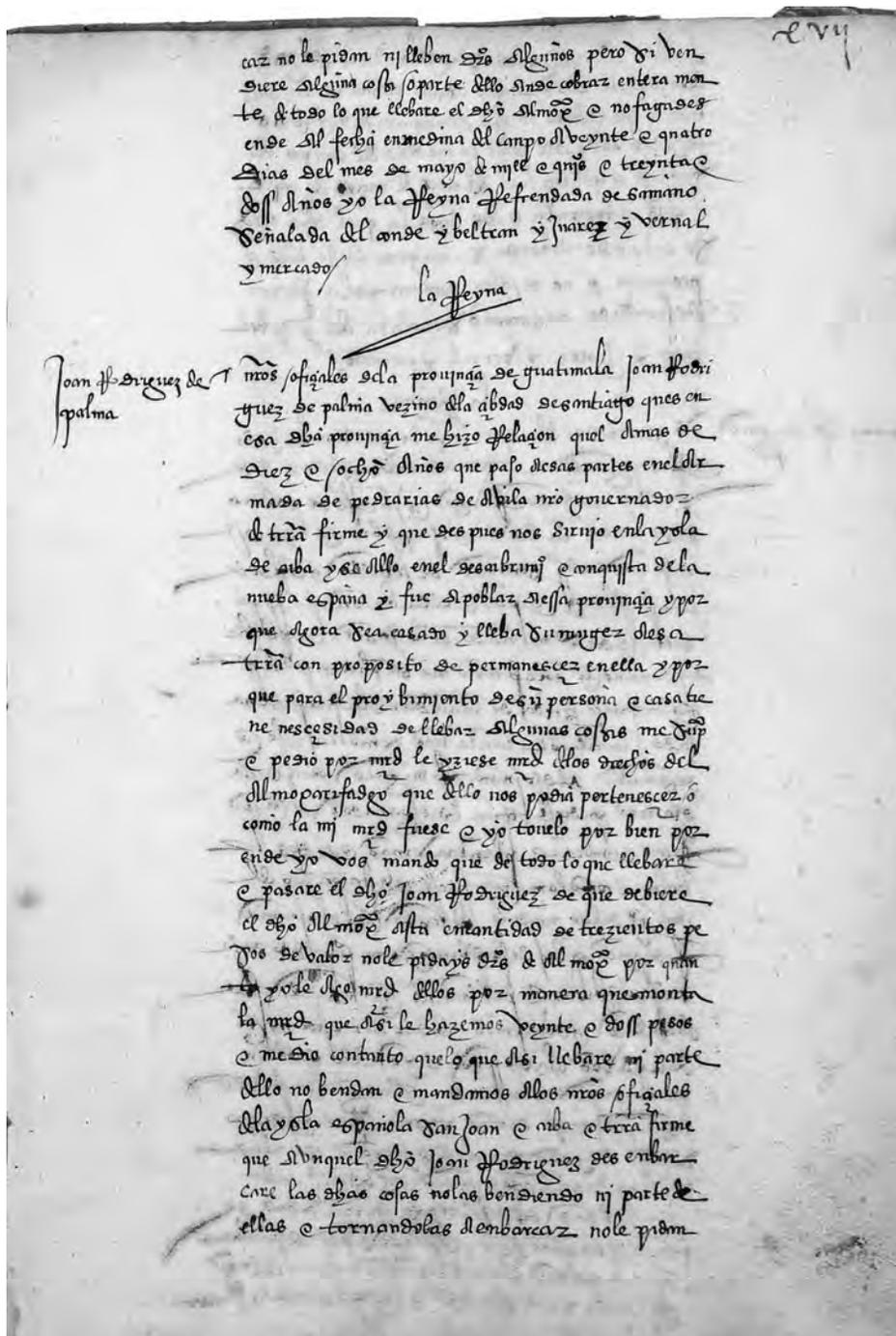
Cabrillo does not mention his birthplace in this testimony but neither does the other witness from Guatemala, Eugenio de Moscoso, so it is likely this was not one of the questions put to them by the scribe. They both state, however, that

they are residents of Santiago de Guatemala, which seems to be the purpose of the proceedings. Cabrillo declared again that he had known Cabrera for over twelve years, as the two men had both served in Cuba, and also that he was a conquistador of Guatemala and that he had been there for more than eight years, which would place him there at the time of the first conquering expedition in 1524, led by Pedro de Alvarado.⁵³ In addition Cabrillo stated that he personally saw the ships that were built by Pedro de Alvarado, and that when he left he was "building more." All of this testimony from Juan Rodríguez "escudero" lined up with known facts about Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, and with what he testified elsewhere.

It is likely that sometime after these depositions, perhaps in the month of April 1532, Cabrillo and Beatriz Sánchez de Ortega were married, which was the main reason Cabrillo was in Seville.⁵⁴ Beginning in early May there is evidence of renewed activity that had a positive outcome for Cabrillo; there were five Royal Decrees addressed to the authorities in Guatemala in which favors and exemptions were granted to a "Juan Rodríguez de Palma," citizen of Guatemala. Cabrillo, therefore, had another name by which he was identified by the Royal Officials in Spain, "Juan Rodríguez from (de) Palma." These decrees stated that Rodríguez de Palma was currently in Seville, and had just married, and was returning to Guatemala with his new wife. Two Royal Decrees were issued on the 9th of May 1532; in the first one Cabrillo was granted a license to take back some six pounds of engraved silver or silverware for his personal use.⁵⁵ The second one was an exemption from the customs tax (*almojarifazgo*) that was normally charged for goods going back and forth to and from the Indies. This particular decree provides more information about his services to the Crown:

Juan Rodríguez de Palma, citizen of Guatemala, you have informed us that you journeyed to those parts more than eighteen years ago [1514] in the armada of Pedrarias de Ávila, our Governor of Tierra Firme, and that afterwards you served in the Island of Cuba, and that then you took part in the discovery and conquest of New Spain, and then you went to populate that province [Guatemala] and that now you have married and you are taking your wife with you to that land with the intention of staying there permanently ... we therefore grant you...⁵⁶

On the 24th of May another round of Royal Decrees were dispatched by the Crown in Cabrillo's name. In three separate edicts, Juan Rodríguez de Palma was granted the exemption on the customs tax again, and the information about his military career was repeated there, and he was also given a license to take back to Guatemala two Black slaves, one male and one female.⁵⁷ The third edict



Royal Decree in which it is stated that Juan Rodríguez de Palma, citizen of Guatemala, left [Spain] 18 years ago in the armada of Pedrarias de Ávila to Tierra Firme and then served in Cuba, New Spain, and in Guatemala. Image courtesy of AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, img. 41.

was a concession for a piece of land in Guatemala, in the valley of Tianguecillo.

In addition, among the edicts drawn up on May 24 in Medina del Campo and signed by the Queen, there were three in the name of a "Juana Rodríguez." According to these three decrees, Juan Rodríguez de Palma intended to take his cousin, "Juana Rodríguez, native of Seville," back to Guatemala to marry a "Diego Sánchez," no doubt referring to his brother-in-law.⁵⁸ In the decrees granted to Juana Rodríguez, in addition to an exemption from the customs tax, and (as a result of her intention to marry Diego Sánchez) a license to take three pounds of engraved silver for her personal use, the the third one stated: "As [we have been informed] that Juan Rodríguez de Palma, your cousin is taking you to that province [Guatemala] so that you will marry Diego Sánchez de Sevilla, you have asked that we grant you a similar piece of land to the one we have indicated for Juan Rodríguez..."⁵⁹ This is the first and the last that we hear about cousin Juana Rodríguez. At the time of his death in 1540, Diego Sánchez was not married and had no legitimate offspring, and his *encomienda* was inherited by his brother-in-law, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo.⁶⁰

It is probable that over the next few months Cabrillo was caught up in gathering supplies and preparing for his return to Guatemala. On August 5, 1532, there is a record in the AHPS of another power of attorney, signed by him, in which he named as his representative an Italian merchant, Antonio de Luisi, from Perugia, to convey and transport to New Spain "all the engraved silver and the slaves" that the Crown had granted him, in accordance with the two royal decrees. Power was granted as well to Luisi to collect all monies owed to Cabrillo and to provide a receipt in his name for the return of these items. Cabrillo also gave him authority to settle any of his disputes in front of justices, of all jurisdictions, and as a guarantee he committed his worldly goods in favor of Luisi.⁶¹

On the same day Cabrillo, registered again as a "merchant," acknowledged in a letter of recognition that he had an outstanding debt to Antonio de Luisi for a loan of 55,500 maravedis. He promised to pay back the money within one year's time or else pay double the amount. Juan Rodríguez's signature can be found at the bottom of this document. These two documents concerning his business affairs with Luisi were signed on the same day, and perhaps the power of attorney served as part of the guarantee of repayment of the loan.⁶²

The Guatemalan Procurador needed Cabrillo again, because nine days after he signed the power of attorney for Luisi, on August 14, 1532, he gave another deposition. This document is in the AGI, and once more a Juan Rodríguez, "merchant," gave testimony in Seville for Cabrera about how they travelled from Guatemala to Veracruz and then by ship to Cádiz.⁶³

The record diminishes after this flurry of legal activity in Seville. The next

notice of Cabrillo is in a letter written from Mexico by Jorge de Alvarado to the Cabildo in Guatemala, probably sent in early December 1532. Jorge, a resident of Mexico, was one of the captains who had been appointed at different times by his brother Pedro, to lead campaigns in Guatemala.⁶⁴ Jorge reported that a man named Santiago had just arrived on a ship that had capsized near the port of San Juan de Ulúa and had brought news about the event and also about the success of the negotiations of the Procurador Cabrera in front of the Crown, and that the dispatches are being sent, "by way of Panama, with Juan Rodríguez."⁶⁵

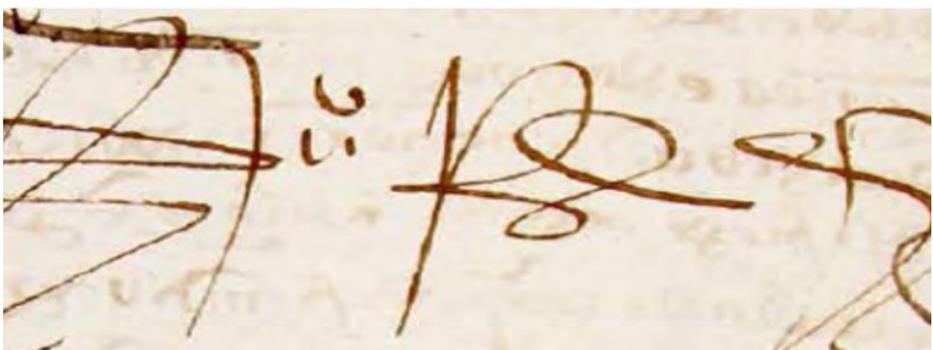
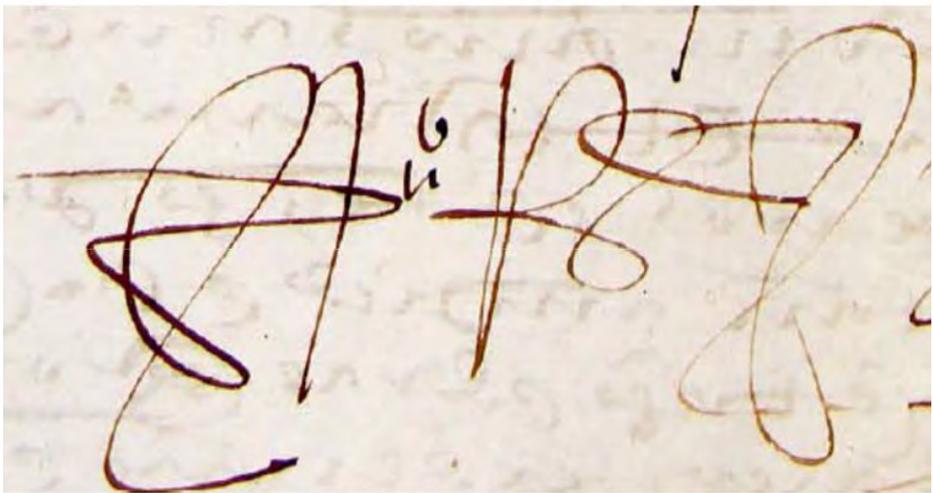
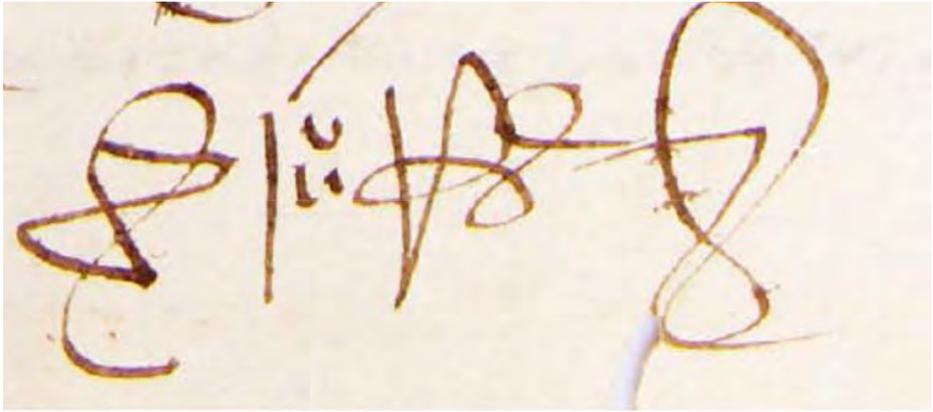
Jorge de Alvarado added that since the matter was of great importance he had hired a messenger to rush the news to Guatemala so that they could take advantage of the "oro al diezmo" before the next smelting of gold at Christmas time. This refers to the concession granted to the citizens of Guatemala of only having to pay one tenth in taxes to the Crown on any future gold that they mined. Shortly afterwards on March 5, 1533, in a letter from Pedro de Alvarado, written in the Puerto de Fonseca where he was getting ready to depart for Peru, Alvarado notified them that Juan Rodríguez had just arrived at that port with the original copy of the Crown's decrees and that he was sending them on to the Cabildo.⁶⁶

Mention of Cabrillo turns up again in the documents two years later. He was in Guatemala in April 1535 providing testimony along with Eugenio de Moscoso and Diego Sánchez de Santiago for the Procurador. As part of the ongoing appeal process, Cabrera had a document drawn up in Guatemala to explain the procedures on board the ships, when one is transporting gold and jewels--no doubt in an attempt to clear his name. One can well understand why Cabrillo and the other witnesses mustered only terse replies to many of this new round of questions, stating, "I have already answered this question in my testimony in Castile, to do with this very same matter."⁶⁷

Land in the Tianguecillo granted to Juan Rodríguez de Palma

Among the privileges that "Juan Rodríguez de Palma" sought from the Crown and received while he was in Spain, was a specific grant for a league of land in the valley of Tianguecillo.⁶⁸ This grant was dated the 24th of May 1532. While of general interest for studies of Spanish landholding patterns in Guatemala during the early colonial period, its particular significance for present purposes is that it furnishes further evidence that Juan Rodríguez de Palma and Juan Rodríguez (and therefore Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo) were one and the same person.

While in Spain, Cabrillo requested the land as a reward and in repayment for his services, both for him and for his heirs. In the royal decree it states that the league should begin near to the first stream after the bridge on the right hand



Three examples of Cabrillo's signature from the records of the Notarial Archive. Image courtesy of Archivo Histórico Provincial de Sevilla, Sección Protocolos Notariales. Signaturas: 6685-P and Signatura: 42-P.

side going towards a pine forest, and that it be measured in a square, beginning from the stream going forward, so that he could bring his livestock there, clear

the land, plant crops and have a vineyard and other trees. The same day his cousin, Juana Rodríguez, asked for a similar grant of land.⁶⁹ And four months later, Eugenio de Moscoso, fellow shipmate and resident (*vecino*) of Santiago, requested a league of land in the same valley, specifying that it should be next to “the one that Juan Rodríguez had asked for” and that he also wished to plant trees and have a vineyard, and that his children could inherit it after his death.⁷⁰

The Tianguecillo, which means small market in Nahuatl, was near the town of Chimaltenango and early on it was recognized as a desirable area for farming with rivers and natural springs nearby, open plains for raising livestock, and an abundance of maize.⁷¹ In 1527, the Cabildo members deliberated at length over that site and the valley of Almolonga when they were choosing a place to found their city.⁷² What was also appealing about the Tianguecillo for some of the members was its location in an open area, with better access to the Indigenous villages and provinces where many of them held towns in encomienda or hoped to in the near future.⁷³ Although they ended up founding Santiago elsewhere, the city considered the fertile valley of the Tianguecillo part of their communal land. Nonetheless, Spanish citizens continued to seek rights to use the lands for their livestock and as agricultural land.

In the second Libro de Cabildo there are several references to the Tianguecillo. For example, a temporary license, but not ownership, was given to Baltasar de Mendoza in January 1532, to place his herd of sheep in “the Tianguecillo near to Chimaltenango, by the source of the natural spring, as long as this did not violate the rights of the natives nor of any other person.”⁷⁴ The exact conditions regarding the use of these uncultivated lands, however, became a matter of escalating dispute because in September 1535, the Governor and the Cabildo members stated:

These lands on the plains of Tianguecillo had been set aside some time ago by the city as public lands for grazing their livestock but notwithstanding this some people had bought the lands, alleging that they had belonged to the natives before the war, and taking both possession and ownership of them, something which they cannot do, because the natives lost those lands because of warfare and rebellion. Henceforth, they decreed anew that these uncultivated lands that stretch from the Tianguecillo to this city some five leagues around it and in all directions should belong to the city. And they ordered that no natives should occupy these lands nor should any person buy them from the natives, on pain of losing the moneys paid to purchase them.⁷⁵

Although the documents do not include when Cabrillo got back to Santiago

de Guatemala to establish his household with his new wife Beatríz, it was likely around the middle of 1533 and that he presented his land grant to the Cabildo not long afterwards.⁷⁶ There is ample evidence, however, that Cabrillo was not, in fact, given land in the Tianguecillo but rather in the Panchoy Valley.⁷⁷ It is possible that, despite the royal concession, the land in the Tianguecillo was not ceded to him due to the city's claim that it was their communal lands or perhaps because Cabrillo changed his mind about the desirability of that parcel of land.

It turned out that Cabrillo's tenure of the land in Panchoy was also not straightforward as it came under scrutiny after the destruction of Santiago de Guatemala by flooding and mudslide in September 1541, when it was decided to designate Panchoy as the site of the new city. Once again, because of dire and unusual circumstances, Cabrillo's affairs became complicated and a paper trail of documents was generated, serving well the purposes of both confirming his identity and tracing the history of this land grant, which stayed in his family long after his death.

In his seminal study of the city of Santiago de Guatemala, historian Christopher Lutz noted that there was discussion in October 1541 about moving the recently devastated city to either the Tianguecillo or to the nearby Panchoy Valley. Panchoy was closer to where prominent residents had their wheat farms and cattle ranches, and the desire for continuity and less disruption was no doubt a determining factor. The Crown officials, meanwhile, wrote that the Bishop was behind the movement to have the city moved to the less desirable site of the Tianguecillo, in order to be near to encomienda towns held by him and a close relative.⁷⁸

The third Libro de Cabildo recorded two acts in 1542 and one in 1543 regarding Cabrillo's league of land in the Tianguecillo, which was granted in Spain to "Juan Rodríguez de Palma."⁷⁹ It is important to note that he is only referred to in the three Cabildo books that cover the years from 1524-1553 as "Juan Rodríguez." Nevertheless, as all the documentation here has to do with the league of land in the Tianguecillo, and references specifically the royal provision of May 1532 granted as a result of Cabrillo's efforts in Spain, and also includes mention of his wife Beatríz, there is little doubt whose land grant is under discussion.

On June 12, 1542, it was noted in Cabildo that Cabrillo and his wife had a league of land in the Panchoy, and that because the city was now being moved there, this land and land held by other residents was greatly needed and had to be taken for the new city.⁸⁰ It was also stated that since this land grant in Panchoy was given to Cabrillo by the governor of the province, by virtue of a decree from the Crown, that in respect for this decree, his wife should take the league of land in the Tianguecillo (as specified in the aforesaid decree), and surrender the one they had in the Panchoy Valley. Beatríz was informed that if she was not in



Cabrillo's landing in 1542 as re-enacted and filmed in San Diego, August 2016, by the National Park Service.

agreement with the exchange of land she would be given 300 pesos and nothing else, and that she must surrender the land. Eleven days later, Cabrillo's wife was notified that the said league of land would be measured and given to her.⁸¹

Despite the specific directives of 1542 with regard to the land, a year later in June 1543, and after the news of the death of Cabrillo had reached the city, the Cabildo records show that they were still notifying his wife to leave the land in Panchoy. The authorities were instructed to notify "Beatríz de Ortega" that she would be given the league in the Tianguecillo, and that it would be measured by trustworthy people within the next ten days.⁸² The moving of the city had given rise to conflicts over land ownership among the Spaniards, and it appears that residents like Beatríz were not giving up without a struggle.

As a result of the documentation that surfaced in the AGI and in the Cabildo books about the Cabrillo family's disputed land grant, it occurred to me that there might be additional records in the Guatemalan archive.⁸³ My search this time, however, would not be for Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, for whom I had already looked in the 1980s (as had Harry Kelsey), but instead for Juan Rodríguez de Palma. It is possible that no one searching for Cabrillo had ever made that connection, and perhaps it is not a surprise that in the *Archivo General de Centro América* (hereafter AGCA), in the old card catalogue, there is record of three documents under the name of Juan Rodríguez de Palma, all concerning the league of land in the Tianguecillo.⁸⁴

Of particular interest is an original Royal Decree that was dispatched to Guatemala from Spain in October 1546, and is presently preserved in a bound book in the AGCA with other early royal provisions. This decree ordered that the original decree of May 24, 1532, be respected and that the Cabrillo family be given the land as ordered, but in the Tianguecillo and not elsewhere. It also stated that the land close to the new city (in Panchoy) must be relinquished, and that it had been granted "against the tenor of the aforementioned decree" and in detriment to the new city. Again, the person in question in the new decree is "Juan Rodríguez de Palma."⁸⁵

This name occurs only in documentation emanating from the Crown and was not used by Cabrillo personally during his lifetime or by officials writing up documents in Guatemala, and certainly not by his family after his death. Numerous disputes took place after his death over rights to encomiendas, battles that were fought by his widow and his children, and the name used most often by them was Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo.⁸⁶ According to the originals (and copies) of the 1532 and the 1546 Royal Decrees for the league of land in the Tianguecillo, in which Cabrillo is called Juan Rodríguez de Palma, there is little doubt that Beatríz (and their sons) knew about this name that was derived from a place name, and was used in those important decrees. Beatríz, a native of Seville would have known that the "de Palma" referred to the town of Palma de Micer Gilio, modern-day Palma del Río in Cordoba, Spain.⁸⁷

The documents presented here concerning the controversy over this land grant show that Juan Rodríguez "from Palma" is the same person as the Juan Rodríguez registered in the Guatemalan Cabildo books, granted the same league of land in the Tianguecillo and married to the same woman. It is of interest that documentation about this land grant was found in archives so far afield—in Seville, New York City, and in Guatemala City. It is unusual to be able to trace events and people from the sixteenth century so seamlessly among disparate unpublished manuscript sources located in archives in three countries.

Conclusion

Documentary sources uncovered in the last twelve months establish that when Cabrillo was away from Guatemala between 1531-1533, he gave sworn testimony on numerous occasions, and appeared before Crown authorities to ask for rewards, and that in most instances he was identified as either Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, native of Palma de Micer Gilio or as simply Juan Rodríguez de Palma. There is abundant evidence to confirm that Cabrillo was a native son of the city of Palma del Río. It is my hope that I have provided a convincing answer to what

Harry Kelsey called the most intriguing question about Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo: Where was he born?⁸⁸

The earliest documented usage of his surname Cabrillo is February 1532, while in Cádiz. Prior to this time, and throughout the rest of his life, in documentation drawn up in Guatemala, he was known predominantly as Juan Rodríguez, a common name both in Spain and in Portugal. Without the additional information that he was also known as “de Palma” it was challenging to locate him in the archives, and as a result documentation in the AGCA and in the AGI was overlooked. No one had previously made the connection that Juan Rodríguez de Palma was another name for Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo.

The particular context of the depositions, in which Cabrillo stated his full name and where he was born, is his personal testimony, under oath in front of Spanish officials, after a fraught series of events whose first act in Havana culminated in the brutal and prolonged torture of crew members from the *San Juan*, suspected of stealing gold. Shortly afterwards in Cádiz, in a determined effort to get his own gold back from the authorities at the House of Trade, Cabrillo once again stated his full name and said he was from Palma de Micer Gilio; these were not moments for invention and glossing over the truth. Rather, it is persuasive that Cabrillo provided this additional information because he was forced by the circumstances and had no other choice.

Other arresting details about Cabrillo’s life have emerged from these sources. Cabrillo first left Spain in 1514 in the armada of Pedrarias de Ávila (Pedro Arias de Ávila) and he only returned to Spain once, after eighteen years, and that was the eventful voyage outlined above. He carried with him to Spain over 1,500 *pesos de oro*, a large amount of gold to have accumulated, no doubt some of it belonging to his brother-in-law. The reasons for enduring the harrowing journey by sea was to marry Beatriz Sánchez de Ortega and to bring back to Guatemala his cousin Juana to marry his brother-in-law, and no doubt establish business ties with Alonso Sánchez de Ortega. Juana Rodríguez disappeared from the records after 1532, but the documents brought her to attention briefly, and confirmed that Cabrillo had close family ties in Seville. Beatriz and her father have been identified as from the parish of Santa María in Seville, and these details will help inform later research on the Sánchez de Ortega family.

Cabrillo formed a relationship in Seville with an Italian merchant from Perugia, borrowing sums of money from him and giving him power of attorney to oversee the return of some of Cabrillo’s household goods to Guatemala via Mexico, while Cabrillo himself purposefully travelled back to Guatemala via Panama. Probably his intention was to meet first with the Governor of Guatemala, Pedro de Alvarado, as he did in the Puerto de Fonseca. Cabrillo testified that Alvarado



San Salvador in full sail during the San Diego Parade of Ships, Festival of Sail, September 2, 2016. Photo by Maggie Walton.

was building ships the last time he saw him before his departure for Spain, and after Cabrillo's return he too was occupied in building ships for many years.

Cabrillo also petitioned for a plot of land in the Tianguecillo while in Spain, and as late as 1546, his heirs were still averse to claiming it, preferring instead the alternative land they had managed to obtain in the Panchoy Valley. It is not clear if Beatríz and sons ever took up the league of land that Cabrillo was originally granted, but there was certainly ongoing controversy about their agricultural land for a long time. This dispute ran parallel with the heated quarrel over Cabrillo's encomienda towns.

I hope this article has advanced the conversation about Cabrillo and reinvigorated interest in future archival research on him and his family. Historians and researchers in Seville, California, and Palma del Rio have all pondered the mystery of the "Cabrillo" part of his name. While Rodríguez was a common surname in Palma in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, no one was named Cabrillo. Recent searches in the archives for the surname Cabrillo from that period have turned up no information.

One historian, Dr. Emilio J. Navarro, shared with me some digital copies of the history journal *Ariadna*, which is published in Palma. In one of the journal

articles the word “cabrillo” appears in a document dated August 7, 1515.⁸⁹ This article was about the proceedings of the meetings of a charitable society called the Hospital of San Sebastián in Palma del Río, and was written and transcribed by the paleographer and historian from the University of Seville, Pilar Ostos Salcedo. The transcription (and my translation) of the names of the witnesses present at that meeting reads: “Bartolomé de Zamora, farmer, and Diego Rodríguez, barber, and Alfonso Gómez, *cabrillo*.”⁹⁰ In other words, the three witnesses stated their occupations after their names and one of them was a “cabrillo.” This document is housed in the Archivo Histórico de Palma del Río.⁹¹

This was the first time I had come across the word “cabrillo” in the sixteenth century that was not in the context of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo or members of his immediate family. In discussion with Dr. Ostos and Dr. Navarro, both said they had no other record of this word and had no idea what the word meant, then or now. The consensus, however, was that given the manner in which it was used, this was probably an occupation and not a surname. I have concluded that Cabrillo did not invent a word as his surname, but rather employed a known word that a contemporary of his from his hometown used in 1515 as the name of his occupation. As a final comment: whenever in his testimony Juan Rodríguez used the word “cabrillo” after his name, he also immediately followed it with “native (*natural*) of Palma de Micer Gilio.” Perhaps he was saying he was a “cabrillo” from Palma de Micer Gilio--an occupation with which he was associated in his place of birth and later started using it as a surname to distinguish himself from others with the common name of Juan Rodríguez. Cabrillo showed great skill and ambition during his long military career in the Indies. Was his ability to shift his identity and occupation part of his ingenuity and resourcefulness and proof of his powers of adaptation? Readers may draw their own conclusions.

Notes

1. I would like to thank the following people for research assistance, Mayda Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Esther González Pérez, Héctor Concohá Chet and Christopher Lutz, as well as Lisa Maldonado for providing translations for the significant historical documents and Mosa McNeilly for editing assistance.
2. “Micer Gilio” is a Spanish corruption of the Italian name “Micer Egidio.” In 1342, King Alfonso XI granted power and dominion over the town of Palma to his Genoese admiral, Egidio Bocanegra, and the “villa de Palma” passed to the noble system and stayed in the Bocanegra-Portocarrero family for many centuries. Manuel Muñoz Rojo, *Historia y Devoción de un Pueblo: Palma del Río y la Virgen de Belén* (Palma del Río: Hermandad de Nuestra Señora de Belén de Palma del Río, 2007), 71.
3. See the three articles by Peter Rowe: “Cabrillo discovery rocking the boat,” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, June 20, 2016, A1, A7; “Cabrillo mystery may be solved,” *Los Angeles Times*, September

- 17, 2015, B2; and "Scholar claims world is wrong about Cabrillo," *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, June 21, 2016, B1, B4. Spanish journalists were also interested in the story, see Pablo Ximénez de Sandoval, "España gana un conquistador," *El País*, October 10, 2015. Fernando Mexía, at the news agency "Efe," also covered the story as did other journalists in Andalucía, and the news spread to print and online newspapers internationally.
4. I initially went to Seville to carry out archival research for a long-term project on sixteenth century Guatemala, in collaboration with my colleagues historian Christopher H. Lutz and geographer W. George Lovell.
 5. For a discussion and critical reevaluation of the role of Pedro de Alvarado in the early conquest and settlement of Guatemala see, W. George Lovell, Christopher H. Lutz and Wendy Kramer, *Atemorizar la Tierra: Pedro de Alvarado y la Conquista de Guatemala, 1520-1541*, (Guatemala: F&G Editores, 2016). In addition, an analysis of these events can be found in Lovell and Lutz with Kramer and William Swezey, "*Strange Lands and Different Peoples*": *Spaniards and Indians in Colonial Guatemala*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).
 6. I am one of the editors and the lead paleographer on the transcription of the two unpublished Guatemalan Town Council books (1530-1553). Both books are presently manuscripts in preparation: *Libro Segundo de Cabildo* (1530-1541), eds. Jorge Luján Muñoz and Wendy Kramer and *Libro Tercero de Cabildo* (1541-1553), ed. Wendy Kramer. Both tomes have introductions by Christopher H. Lutz. I cite them here with reference to their Hispanic Society of America (hereafter HSA) designation as LC2 and LC3, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239). For information about the Cabildo books see: *Saqueo en el archivo: el paradero de los tesoros documentales guatemaltecos* (Antigua Guatemala: CIRMA; Guatemala: CEUR; Wellfleet, MA: PMS, 2014); and "Pillage in the Archives: The Whereabouts of Guatemalan Documentary Treasures," *Latin American Research Review* 48, No. 3 (2013), 153-167, by Wendy Kramer, W. George Lovell and Christopher H. Lutz.
 7. *Procurador--Attorney*: "One who had the legal right by delegation to act in the name of another. Representatives who defended the rights and privileges of Cabildos (both municipal and ecclesiastical), cities, and religious orders. Untitled lawyer." Lillian Ramos Wold and Ophelia Marquez, *Compilation of Colonial Spanish Terms and Document Related Phrases* (Midway City, CA: SHHAR Press, 1998), 53. Accessed on www.somosprimos.com/spanishterms/spanishterms.htm on July 20, 2016.
 8. The Crown was entitled to the "royal fifth" which meant that 20% of all metals mined in the Indies had to be shipped to them.
 9. The actual port was located in San Juan de Ulúa, which was a small barren island facing Veracruz, and served as the port of entry for New Spain. Goods were carried to Veracruz on the mainland by barge and small boats. For a thorough discussion of the two separate towns in the sixteenth century see Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaína, trans. Carla Rahn Phillips, *Spain's Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 11-12. To simplify the distinction between these two places, and in accordance with how it is often referred to in the sources, I have used the shorthand of "Veracruz" as the name of the port of embarkation.
 10. My response to inadvertently finding this information, "Oh my God. Look who was on the boat!" was first cited by the journalist, Peter Rowe. See "Cabrillo discovery rocking the boat," *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, June 20, 2016, A1, A7.
 11. The topic of my Ph.D. dissertation, which was published in book form in 1994, was the distribution of tribute, services and *encomiendas* to the conquistadores of Guatemala, from 1524-1544. Wendy Kramer, *Encomienda Politics in Early Colonial Guatemala, 1524-1544: Dividing the Spoils* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994). On page 1, I define the *encomienda* as an "institution designed to channel Indian labor and produce into Spanish hands after the conquest of an area." And I cite Charles Gibson who described the *encomienda* as "a formal grant of designated Indian families, usually the inhabitants of a town or of a cluster of towns, entrusted to the charge of a Spanish colonist, who thus became the *encomendero*." Citing Lockhart I also wrote

- that an “encomienda grant did not confer the right to own land, but went beyond the right to collect tributes, entitling the encomendero to deploy the Indians in mines or agricultural enterprises.” See my sources for this information: Charles Gibson, *Spain in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 49 and James Lockhart, *Spanish Peru, 1532-1560: A Colonial Society* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 11.
12. Although I use the shortened name “Cabrillo” in this present study, it is not the most accurate. Cabrillo and the authorities did not use it with regularity until after his death. I am employing it here as it is the most common name used for him in modern-day history books.
 13. See Kelsey’s comprehensive examination of the controversy over Cabrillo’s Portuguese origin and the many attempts by several historians to get to the truth: Harry Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo* (San Marino California: Huntington Library, 1986), 4-8, 178-179.
 14. *Ibid.*, 5. See also Harry Kelsey and Iris Engstrand, “The Pathway to California: Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo and the Building of the San Salvador,” *Mains’l Haul*, Vol 15, 1 & 2, Winter/Spring, 2009, 37.
 15. Manuel María de Peralta, *Costa-Rica, Nicaragua y Panamá en el siglo XVI; su historia y sus límites según los documentos del Archivo de Indias de Sevilla, del de Simancas, etc.* (Madrid: M. Murillo, 1883): 618, fn1. Kelsey notes that there is as yet no proof that Cabrillo actually discovered and named Cape Mendocino; see *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 173.
 16. Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 6. See Bernard Grunberg, “The Origins of the Conquistadores of Mexico City,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (May, 1994), 271-272.
 17. As noted by Murdo MacLeod, the small groups of conquistadors were all well acquainted with each other, which made it quite difficult to obscure or revise their Old World origins and the enjoyment of “turning up malicious gossip” about their comrades in arms kept these *relaciones* “reasonably honest.” See Murdo J. MacLeod, “Self-promotion: The *Relaciones de Méritos y Servicios* and their Historical and Political Interpretation,” *Colonial Latin American Historical Review*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1998), 28-29.
 18. Other notable Portuguese in Guatemala were Doctor Blas Cota from the island of Terceira in the Azores and Gómez de Alvarado, the illegitimate son of Pedro de Alvarado. See José María Vallejo García-Hevia, *Juicio a un conquistador, Pedro de Alvarado: su proceso de residencia en Guatemala (1536 - 1538)*, (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2008), 164, 224-225, 675. AGI, Audiencia de Guatemala, 52, Probanza de méritos y servicios del Doctor Blas Cota, 1549. Cota was a government official in the Azores and Pedro de Alvarado convinced him to come to Guatemala with his wife and children, promising him a position as his lieutenant (1538-1539). Carmelo Sáenz de Santa María and María del Carmen Deola de Girón, *Libro Viejo de la fundación de Guatemala* (Guatemala: Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala, 1991), 45, 53.
 19. AGI, Indiferente General, 1801, Relación de la hacienda que tiene su majestad en la provincia de Guatemala con una relación de los bienes de difuntos, 1535.
 20. Diego Sánchez de Ortega was granted license to pan for gold, presumably with his partner Cabrillo. See, Sáenz de Santa María and Deola de Girón, *Libro Viejo*, 137.
 21. Writing about Cabrillo’s time in Spain, Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 55 states: “Details do not exist, but we can imagine that Juan Rodríguez stayed in Spain for as long as a year, courting Beatríz Sánchez, visiting the scenes of his youth, and purchasing supplies to take back to his estates in Guatemala.”
 22. In testimony dated in August 1532, Cabrillo says ten months prior was when he first met crew on the ship, thus placing the time of departure of the *San Juan* sometime in October or early November, 1531: see AGI, Justicia, 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, 29 February, 1532, digital image (hereafter img.) 854 is where Cabrillo’s testimony begins and on img. 503 he testifies that the only ship ready to depart for Spain when they got to the port was Blas Gallego’s.

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23. I have identified so far at least six documents in the *Justicia* section of the AGI, comprising in total more than 1,350 pages that are concerned with this voyage of the *San Juan* in 1531-32.
24. The last Cabildo session prior to Gabriel de Cabrera's departure was in August 1531: see LC2, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 21v. Meanwhile, records from a Guatemalan account book show that on the 22nd of August 1531, the Procurador Cabrera was given approximately 5,002 pesos to take to Spain: see AGI, Indiferente General 1801, Relación de la hacienda que tiene su majestad.
25. The sources will be cited below when we look at his testimony in more detail. See note 52.
26. This Diego Sánchez de Santiago should not be confused with Cabrillo's brother-in-law Diego Sánchez de Ortega sometimes called Diego Sánchez de Sevilla. There were three men called Diego Sánchez in Guatemala at the same time. The third one was Diego Sánchez de Talavera. See Sáenz de Santa María and Deola de Girón, *Libro Viejo*, 51, 137, 141, 188, 196.
27. Eugenio de Moscoso was both a *regidor* (city councilman), and treasurer in Guatemala prior to 1532. While in Spain he was also granted favors by the Crown and arranged to take his sister and niece back to Guatemala with him, see AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 41v-42, Exención de almojarifazgo a Eugenio Moscoso, 20 July, 1532. He was also named first *alcaide* (warden) of the fortress, see AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 36v-37, Real Provisión a Eugenio Moscoso, nombrándolo alcaide de la fortaleza que se ha mandado hacer para defensa de Santiago de Guatemala, 15 July, 1532.
28. AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, imgs. 154-156.
29. *Ibid.*, imgs. 145, 157. AGI, Justicia 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación presentan información y pesquisa sobre el robo de mas de mil pesos que faltaron de unos cajones que conducía para Su Majestad Gabriel de Cabrera, que le habían entregado en Guatemala los oficiales reales, 26 January 1532, img. 94.
30. Another witness from Guatemala, Diego Sánchez de Santiago, testified that he personally did not let anyone else take charge of his own possessions on board the ship, unlike Cabrera. He added that the Procurador had left his gold and jewels in a chest, with no other safeguards, "near to the head of this witnesses' bed." AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, imgs. 145, 157. AGI, Justicia 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, img. 234.
31. AGI, Justicia 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, img. 15.
32. According to the witnesses, most of the crew considered Ochoa to be a thief. See AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, img. 159.
33. AGI, Justicia 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, imgs. 7-12.
34. AGI, Justicia, 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, imgs. 7-12. AGI, Justicia 707, N.6, Testimonio de los autos seguidos en la audiencia de la Contratación a petición de Juan de Ortega, 18 de marzo, 1532, img. 24.
35. AGI, Justicia, 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, img. 71.
36. AGI, Justicia 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, imgs. 18, 92-97. This exact testimony is repeated in AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, imgs. 365-369.
37. The term used for this type of document was from the Latin, *ad perpetuam rei memoriam*.
38. AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, img. 141. The testimony begins on the page corresponding to image 141.
39. AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, img. 500.
40. Kelsey also wrote that Cabrillo did not know his exact age: see *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 12.

41. AGI, Justicia 707, N.6, Testimonio de los autos seguidos, img. 24. The amount is described as a gold bar weighing 43 pesos and some grains and of nineteen karats. The amount Cabrillo borrowed from Celain was twenty-five ducats and sixty maravedis.
42. Ibid. One of the passengers in his testimony noted that Juanes Celain was called the master of the ship but that “he didn’t do anything” and the person who gave the orders was Blas Gallego; see AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, img. 157.
43. A witness testified that Juanes de Celain died from extreme drowsiness or torpor (*modorra*). See AGI, Justicia, 1152, N.1, R.1, Pleito fiscal con Blas Gallego y Rodrigo Alvarez, sobre el oro que trajeron de Indias por registrar, 26 March, 1533, img. 72.
44. This article is part of a larger monograph that I am presently working on that will include transcriptions and translations of documents, as well as additional facsimile pages of the original documents. Publication date will be in 2017 in association with the office of the Mayor of Palma del Río, José Antonio Ruiz Almenara.
45. Thanks go to Nancy and Robert Munson for contributing to costs related to research, reproduction and copyright of these documents from the AHPS. Researcher Esther González Pérez located three signed documents among the books of the notaries Luis Enero and Alonso de la Barrera. AHPS, Sección Protocolos Notariales. Signatura: 6685-P. Poder de Juan Rodríguez, residente en Guatemala a Alonso Sánchez Ortega. Sevilla, 13, marzo, 1532; Signatura: 42-P. Juan Rodríguez, mercader, vecino de la ciudad de Santiago en la provincia de Guatemala, otorga poder a Antonio de Luisi, 5, agosto, 1532; Signatura: 42-P. Juan Rodríguez, mercader, vecino de la ciudad de Santiago en la provincia de Guatemala, reconoce que debe pagar ciertas cantidades a Antonio de Luisi, 5, agosto, 1532.
46. It appears that the scribes preferred to set up shop close to the places with much economic and commercial activity, one of them being *la calle Gradar* near to the Cathedral. This practice probably dated back to the fourteenth century. See Pilar Ostos and María Luisa Pardo, *Documentos y notarios de Sevilla en el siglo XIV (1301-1350)*, (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2003), 21-22.
47. Personal communication with Esther González Pérez on August 4, 2016.
48. AGI, Justicia 707, N.6, Testimonio de los autos seguidos. This issue of proper registration of gold and items of value was something that further complicated the Procurador’s situation while in Spain. AGI, Justicia 822, N.3, R.1, Pleito Fiscal: Gabriel de Cabrera.
49. Kelsey notes when discussing Cabrillo’s income from his encomiendas and mines that he was made rich from these enterprises “but just how rich we do not know.” See *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 51, 54 59-60; see also pages 50-51 and 54 in *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo* for a discussion of rich gold placers near Cabrillo’s encomienda in Cobán. See also my discussion of the encomienda of Cobán in, Kramer, *Encomienda Politics*, 76, 132, 143, 155-156.
50. In comparison, Procurador Cabrera declared that he was carrying with him 2,600 pesos de oro of his own money. The total amount that the Procurador carried to deliver to the Crown was 5,000 pesos de oro. AGI, Justicia 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, imgs. 309, 500. AGI, Justicia, 1159, N.5, Los jueces oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, img. 7. One of the Crown officials in Guatemala, the Accountant Zurrilla, also noted that some 5,000 pesos had just been sent to the Crown; see AGI, Guatemala 45, Carta del contador Zurrilla, 15 September, 1531.
51. Cabrillo gave testimony on the 1st of March 1532, or shortly after, while in Seville. AGI, Justicia 822, N.3, R.1, Pleito Fiscal: Gabriel de Cabrera, imgs. 13-16.
52. Though literally the term *escudero* refers to the person who carried his master’s shield, there are several definitions of the term. See Roque Barcia, *Primer diccionario general etimológico de la lengua española*, 5 vols. (Madrid: Álvarez Hermanos, 1881), 2, p. 496. A rough translation of the Spanish is: “He who in older times used to receive a donation or a salary or simply depended

financially on a Lord or a person of distinction, and so was obliged to serve him and assist him at times and on occasions as required." The *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* (accessed August 12, 2016 on <http://www.rae.ed>), for example, gives this more distinguished definition of the title *escudero*: a rough translation again: "a man who through his blood or kinship belongs to a certain stratum of the nobility." However, judging by a reference to *escuderos* in the second *Libro de Cabildo*, and it is remarkable that Juan Rodríguez was actually a witness to this act, it would seem that the *escuderos* were men named to be responsible for military obligations for underage boys, whose fathers were absent. See LC2, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fols. 203v- 204v, Cabildo entry dated 29 August, 1541.

53. Juan Rodríguez registered as a citizen (*vecino*) of Santiago on three different occasions, in 1524, 1527 and 1528. See Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 49, citing the *Libro Viejo*.
54. Searches by myself and Esther González Pérez in Seville have so far found no trace of a marriage record for Cabrillo and Beatríz.
55. AGI Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 13v-14, Licencia a Juan Rodríguez de Palma de llevar a Guatemala doce marcos de plata labrada, May 9, 1532. A *marco* was a measurement for silver and gold; for silver one *marco* was 8 onces, half a pound. Spain's commercial ambitions were such that items of silver and gold were supposed to travel in one direction only, and that was toward Spain, therefore in 1519 it was prohibited to take to the Indies these items without special license. See Margarita García-Mauriño Mundi, *La pugna entre el Consulado de Cádiz y los jenízaros por las exportaciones a Indias (1720-1765)* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 1999), 119.
56. AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 14-14v, Exención de almojarifazgo a Juan Rodríguez de Palma, May 9, 1532. So far I have not found any information on Juan Rodríguez under either name "de Palma" or "Cabrillo" as part of Pedrarias' armada to Tierra Firme. It is possible that he was part of a group that left Panama very early on and went to Cuba: personal communication with Carmen Mena García, Seville, April 2016. Her ground-breaking and exceptional research on Pedrarias and Panama are essential reading for an understanding of Spanish conquest and settlement of this region. See: María del Carmen Mena García, *La sociedad de Panamá en el siglo XVI* (Sevilla: Excm. Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1984); *Sevilla y las flotas de Indias: la gran armada de Castilla del Oro (1513-1514)* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 1988); *Un linaje de conversos en tierras americanas: los testamentos de Pedrarias Dávila, gobernador de Castilla del Oro y Nicaragua* (León: Universidad de León, 2004); and *El oro del Darién: entradas y cabalgadas en la conquista de Tierra Firme (1509-1525)* (Sevilla: Centro de Estudios Andaluces, 2011).
57. Eugenio Moscoso also sought license to take back two Black male slaves and one White female slave: AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 49-50. Robinson Herrera discusses the acquisition and trade in African slaves in sixteenth century Guatemala. He notes that the purchase while in Spain of one or two slaves was not uncommon and that a royal license was needed to import them. These grants specified the use of slaves as household servants and not for resale; though he notes that this admonition "likely went unheeded." Robinson A. Herrera, *Natives, Europeans, and Africans in Sixteenth-Century Santiago de Guatemala* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 112-113. See page 116 where he mentions Juan Rodríguez Palma's permission to purchase one male and one female slave.
58. Cabrillo's brother-in-law is named Diego Sánchez de Sevilla in these documents. Thus in the same way that the Crown officials identified Juan Rodríguez as "Juan Rodríguez de Palma", so have they identified Diego Sánchez as being "from Seville".
59. AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 17v-18, Concesión de tierras a Juana Rodríguez, May 24, 1532.
60. The date of the encomienda grant to Cabrillo was March 31, 1540. Justicia 290, El fiscal con Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo sobre el pueblo de Cobán, 1563, fols. 1, 4. According to the laws regarding succession of encomiendas, the grant would have gone to a surviving wife or any legitimate children.

61. AHPS. Sección Protocolos Notariales. Signatura: 42-P. Juan Rodríguez, mercader, vecino de la ciudad de Santiago en la provincia de Guatemala, otorga poder a Antonio de Luisi, 5, agosto, 1532.
62. AHPS. Sección Protocolos Notariales. Signatura: 42-P. Juan Rodríguez, mercader, vecino de la ciudad de Santiago en la provincia de Guatemala, reconoce que debe pagar ciertas cantidades a Antonio de Luisi, 5, agosto, 1532.
63. AGI, Justicia, 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, imgs. 854-860.
64. Jorge's role in the conquest of Guatemala has often been overlooked. For a discussion of the important role that he played in conquest and in the distribution of encomiendas see Kramer, *Encomienda Politics*, 63-84.
65. The reference to a "Santiago" most likely refers to Diego Sánchez de Santiago. The letter from Jorge has no date but it is likely sometime after November 29, 1532, when the news got to Mexico and before the 3rd of January 1533, when the copies of the decrees were presented in Cabildo. Jorge's letter can be found in, Rafael de Arévalo, ed. *Colección de documentos antiguos del Archivo del Ayuntamiento de la Ciudad de Guatemala* (Guatemala: Imprenta de Luna, 1857), 191-192. One of the reasons Cabrera as Procurador had been sent to Spain was precisely to negotiate a reduction in the tax on gold, see LC2, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 42.
66. The letter has no year on it but must have been written in 1533. A facsimile of this letter was published in the *Libro Viejo* but the editor incorrectly transcribed the day of the month as the 23rd and not the 24th of March. This error was repeated by Kelsey, with him incorrectly adding the year as 1534. Pedro de Alvarado was not in Puerto de Fonseca at this time, having moved on to Puerto Viejo, Ecuador by March 1534. See José Antonio Villacorta, *Libro Viejo de la fundación de Guatemala, y papeles relativos a don Pedro de Alvarado*. (Guatemala, C.A.: Tipografía Nacional, 1934), 289 and Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 60, 201 fn.80. Alvarado wrote another letter dated the 10th of March 1534, in Puerto Viejo to the Governor of Panama: see AGI, Guatemala, 39, R.4, N.9, Carta de Pedro de Alvarado, gobernador de Honduras, March 10, 1534.
67. AGI, Justicia, 706, N.4, Blas Gallego contra Gabriel de Cabrera, imgs. 229-235.
68. AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 15v-16, Concesión de terreno a Juan Rodríguez de Palma, May 24, 1532.
69. AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 17v-18, Concesión de tierras a Juana Rodríguez, May 24, 1532.
70. AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.1, fols. 56-57, Concesión de tierra a Eugenio de Moscoso, September 9, 1532.
71. For a discussion of the location of the Tianguecillo see Laura E. Matthew, *Memories of Conquest: Becoming Mexicano in Colonial Guatemala* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 87. In addition, see Matthew and Sergio F. Romero for the use of Nahuatl place-names in colonial Guatemala, and the importance of Nahuatl and of the Central American dialect of that language, Pipil: "Nahuatl and Pipil in Colonial Guatemala: A Central American Counterpoint," *Ethnohistory* 59:4 (Fall 2012), 765-783.
72. Rafael de Arévalo, ed., *Libro de actas del ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Santiago de Guatemala* (Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1932), 35.
73. Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 48, notes that somewhat prophetically Hernando de Alvarado preferred the site of the Tianguecillo for the new city in 1527, instead of the area of Almolonga because of the latter's proximity to "volcanoes and sandstone, where the earth trembles greatly."
74. LC2, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 28v, on 26 January, 1532. Mendoza was a member of the town council at this time, serving as *regidor*.
75. LC2, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 84v.
76. See Kelsey, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, 56-57 who also wrote that Juan and Beatriz would have been setting up their house in Santiago in the summer of 1533.

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77. LC3, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 28, on 12 June, 1542. The Panchoy region is called "Pancan" here.
78. Christopher H. Lutz, *Santiago de Guatemala, 1541-1773: City, Caste, and the Colonial Experience* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 6-8. Kramer, *Encomienda Politics*, 167. AGI, Guatemala 45, Crown Officials to the King, October 14, 1541.
79. LC3, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fols. 28, 32, 63, on 12 and 23 June, 1542, and on 17 June, 1543.
80. Cabrillo's land was also needed for *milpas* (cornfields). LC3, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 28, on 12 June, 1542.
81. LC3, HSA (Hiersemann 418/239) fol. 32, on 23 June, 1542.
82. Spanish naming practices in the sixteenth century were not consistent. Beatríz de Ortega was the same person as Beatriz Sánchez de Ortega.
83. I would like to thank Guatemalan historian Héctor Conchoa Chet for locating these documents for me in the AGCA.
84. The card catalogue (*fichero*) in the AGCA is known to have been painstakingly developed and shaped by the dedicated archivist and Director of the Guatemalan archive, José Joaquín Pardo, who passed away in 1964.
85. AGCA, A1.2.4, Expediente 15749, legajo 2195, fol. 342, Su majestad declara nulo el reparto de tierras hecho en la persona de Juan Rodríguez Palma, tierras situadas en el Tiangues de Chimaltenango, por ser ejidos de la ciudad de Santiago, 11 October, 1546. There is a copy of this document in a Registry of the Royal Decrees in the AGI; see AGI, Guatemala, 393, L.3, fol. 29, Sobre concesión de tierra a Juan Rodríguez de Palma, October 4, 1546. The other documents to do with Rodríguez de Palma in the AGCA are certified copies of this 1546 decree, probably presented in later disputes concerning this piece of land. This is a topic for future study.
86. The documents detailing the many disputes over Cabrillo's encomienda towns are discussed in Kesley, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*.
87. The town of Palma de Micer Gilio was often referred to as just "Palma" or "la villa de Palma" in the documentation of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Palma del Río is close to Seville and references to "Palma" in Seville would at that time have meant this town and not the town Palma del Condado in Huelva nor the neighborhood of Seville with that same name; from personal correspondence in Palma del Río with the official chronicler of that city, Manuel Muñoz Rojo, April 14, 2016.
88. Kelsey begins his 1986 book with the statement that he has not given a fully conclusive answer to that intriguing question, where was Cabrillo born? See, *Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo*, first page of the Foreword.
89. Pilar Ostos Salcedo, "Documentos del Hospital de San Sebastián de Palma del Río (1509-1519)," *Ariadna, Revista de Investigación*, No. 12 (Dic. 1993), 87-88. Ostos notes that these documents concern economic and legal affairs and are the contracts between the hospital and citizens of Palma del Río and of Peñaflo, and with the administration of the hospital's properties.
90. "Bartolomé de Çamora, labrador, e Diego Rodríguez, barbero, e Alfonso Gómez, cabrillo, vezynos desta dicha villa." Professor Ostos added the capital letters, punctuation and accents, as sixteenth century script had no strict rules of grammar.
91. I am indebted to the Director of the Palma del Río Archive, Antonio León Lillo, for allowing me to consult the original document and for providing me with a scanned copy. The citation is A.M.P.R., H.S.S., leg. 44, doc.n.12, dated October 14, 1515.