

The Seekers of El Dorado

Submission IV

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The Origins of El Dorado

Over the centuries, the mythical El Dorado has earned seven additional names in locations across thousands of miles, encompassing South, Meso, and North America: Cibola, Antillia, Manoa, Quiviera, Paititi, Land of the Golden Man, and Land of the Golden Serpent. Coronado, Vaca de Cabeza, Pizarro and many others have all been involved in the search; Sir Walter Raleigh was just one addition to the ever-growing club [1]. The theory as to why Raleigh failed just like all the others is because of three reasons: they were looking for one city, they failed to see and understand a metaphor was probably being used, and they did not consider the fact they may have been deceived by the Indians, to keep them moving to the next terrain so that no conquest would happen.

The discovery of the New World and the insatiable quest for gold and silver rushed the emerging Spanish empire to a pinnacle of wealth and power beyond anyone's comprehension. South America's ultimate wealth was realized in silver and the exploitation of human souls as "worker slaves". In the beginning (1492-1620), however, it was an insane search for "gold, gold, and more gold". This thirst was lodged in the belief of a mythical deposit of gold in amounts beyond imagination. In the interior of South America, southwest of Peru, a mountain of silver was actually found, which fanned the flames of hope that gold in the same quantities might also be discovered in Brazil or Venezuela.

The expeditions and searches carried out did produce huge quantities of the “magic” golden metal. The stories related to large deposits having been found in the interior remote areas kept growing and growing, finally to the point of becoming mythical and outrageous, too good to be true, but too tempting to resist---for both the English and the Spanish, which heated an already enflamed rivalry. The most tempting and irresistible story was of a legendary city built entirely out of gold, the city of El Dorado.

The ancient village of Zuni north of Mexico was mistaken for the city of gold because Fray Marcos de Niza saw Zuni from afar in 1539, and mistook the sunset on adobe walls---containing bits of silica---as being the golden glimmer he and others were so eager to find [2]. If gold is as common as clay, it’s logical to assume it was as frequently used for building material; the natives all insisted on buildings built entirely of gold. And gold was obviously common to both the Incan empire and Spanish conquistadors. Literally, many tons of gold were produced from El Dorado before complete conquest was achieved, and many tons of gold still remain to be produced from the mines today [3].

The second reason El Dorado was never found is because all hunters for it took the Natives literally when they described it; the “Seven **Cities** of Gold” was possibly a metaphor, which was used to describe the seven vast gold mines beneath Victorio Peak, north of Las Cruces in New Mexico [4]. Lying deep within a very rich, gold-bearing belt---which spans hundreds of miles---located in Peru and Brazil is the claimed real El Dorado, another vast set of gold mines,

which surprisingly did consist of seven cities. Unfortunately, this remote jungle area was infested with blood-thirsty, head-hunting Jivaro Indians, and---real or metaphor---this eventually led to El Dorado's conquest [5].

When the Spanish first arrived in the New World, they were greeted with “mixed emotions”; if they were not taken for gods, they were taken for enemies. If you sense a potential threat coming towards your home, you make sure all your people’s valuables, such as tons of gold, are well-hidden until the threat has passed. You also regale them with golden dreams realized “just over that mountain range” or “just across that dessert”, **away** from you, until it’s safe.

Sadly, the natives did not realize the Spanish, and eventually the English, were there to stay. Hence El Dorado seekers had already conquered El Dorado, with the native’s own help, and did not know it. This is because one of the most sought after commodities the explorers had that the natives wanted was guns, and one of the most sought after commodities natives had that the explorers wanted (aside from food and riches) was girls and labor.

As a result of this, people just kept coming and coming, and all ended up with dismal failures and disasters for their reports, such as Sir Walter Raleigh. Sir Walter Raleigh was just one more of the explorers who met defeat in the quest of wealth and fame, searching for El Dorado. He was released from the Tower of London in 1616 only because he promised to deliver El Dorado’s gold as payment (a bribe) for his second expedition; not only did he not find it, out of greed he attacked the Spanish outpost at San Thomé against orders. His son

Walter (“Watt”) was killed, and he was arrested again upon his return. The outraged Spanish ambassador, Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, demanded that King James reinstate Raleigh's death sentence, and his wish was granted [6].

Four of the fabled lost cities are claimed to be located in Southern Ecuador, with three in Northern Peru (the sites are kept unknown to the general public today to prevent looting) [7], and others claim Brazil or Venezuela as their home. However, all 300+-year-old maps show El Dorado (Antillia, Manoa, etc.) to be located in the New Mexico/Texas/Oklahoma/Kansas area, as illustrated below and on the following page. Gold and silver was found there as well, providing “proof” for the claims. Hollywood has even been bold enough to suggest the city of gold is hidden within the vicinity of Mount Rushmore [8].



Full Title: (Composite of) A new map of North America, with the West India Islands. (with) A particular map of Baffin and Hudson's Bay. (with) The passage by land to California discovered by Father Eusebius Francis Kino, a Jesuit, between the years 1692 and 1701, before which and for a considerable time since California has always been described in all charts & maps as an island. Divided according to the Preliminary Articles of Peace, signed at Versailles, 20 Jan. 1783, wherein are particularly distinguished the United States and the several provinces, governments &c. which compose the British Dominions, laid down according to the latest surveys, and corrected from the original materials of Governor Pownall, Member of Parliament, London.
Published by Laurie & Whittle, No. 53, Fleet Street, 12th May, 1794.

tional Treasure: Book of Secrets” was so kind to mention, with a slave named Esteban (Estevancio).

Esteban, Cabeza de Vaca, Captain Andres Dorantes, and one other man had survived a brutal shipwreck in Florida in 1528. They were part of a very ill-fated attempt by one Panfilo de Narvaez to colonize the World, starting in Cuba with the plan of sailing directly across the Gulf of Mexico and arriving at their newly-acquired substantial territory near the mouth of the Rio de los Palmas (Soto la Marina). But they had severely underestimated how strong the Gulf Stream current was, and they were carried off course to Florida, where they sank [9].

The surviving colonists became the first Europeans to encounter many of the native groups living in the interior while making their way across much of North America [10]. After wandering throughout the land for eight years (see map below), the four men found some of their fellow Spaniards in May 1536, and relayed to them the rumors they had come across during their wanderings, of seven great cities of gold [11]. The rest, as they, say, is history.



The route of Estevanico and Cabeza de Vaca across America
<http://www.geographicus.com/blog/tag/estevanico/>

Fray Marcos de Niza was sent by the new Spanish Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza to search for the city of gold on March 7, 1539. It was an expedition of fifteen men---Niza, Esteban, Captains Diaz and Saldibar, and eleven other men---setting out from Culican in Mexico, and reaching the border of the Colorado Desert. The glowing reports of multiple cities of gold from friendly Indians encouraged the men, but the glamor and splendor quickly wilted. The desert conditions demoralized the men and their supplies quickly dwindled. Not only that, when they reached Hawikuh, the first of the seven fabled Zuni cities, it turned out to be just a tiny unimposing Indian village of farmers [12] . The golden glitter they had seen was just silica-laced adobe of the Zuni houses; Niza, fearing the wrath and shame his failure would cause, lied and claimed he had seen Cibola.

As a side note, Esteban had become so wealthy and revered among the Indians, one cannot help but wonder that his alleged death---at the hands of those same Indians who worshipped him as a healer---was faked to gain him freedom, and trick Niza into retreating before realizing Esteban might be playing a joke on him, since they were having issues as to who was in charge of the expedition [13].

Niza's rose-colored, or should I say **gold**-colored, reports did not seem too far-fetched after the tons of wealth found and taken from the conquered Aztec and Incan empires. On February 23, 1540, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado began his own ill-fated search. He spoke of seven cities of Cibola, but

only six can be identified today: Hawikuh (Niza's city), Kechipauan, Kwakina, Halona, Matsaki, and Kiakima [14]. Niza searched for just one city, but Coronado was looking for seven. If seven cities are powerful and wealthy enough, they could stand alone as their own empire, an empire Coronado was more than eager to conquer for himself as much as for his country.

He set out with 1,000 men from Compostela in Mexico on April 22, 1540, but only had ten left on July 7, 1542. They captured Hawikuh and drove the Zuni Indians to Towa Yalanne, but found no gold [15]. They did find food, however, which, one man wrote, "We needed a great deal more than gold or silver" [16]. Not wanting to let this fiasco ruin his career, he covered his tracks by writing his most famous work, "*The Journey of Coronado 1540-1542*". His skin was saved, but on August 3, 1542, he severely criticized Fray Marcos Niza with a not-encouraging letter [17].

Coronado's search for the seven cities of Cibola, and Hernando De Soto's quest to find the Gilded (Golden) Man (see image on following page). Maps depicting Antillia as a real place (see maps on page 10)---and tales of "the natives going out on holidays to gather rubies and diamonds to hang on their children's coats and to stick in their caps"---finally got the English involved in the hunt [18], who would not tolerate themselves outdone by their Spanish rivals.



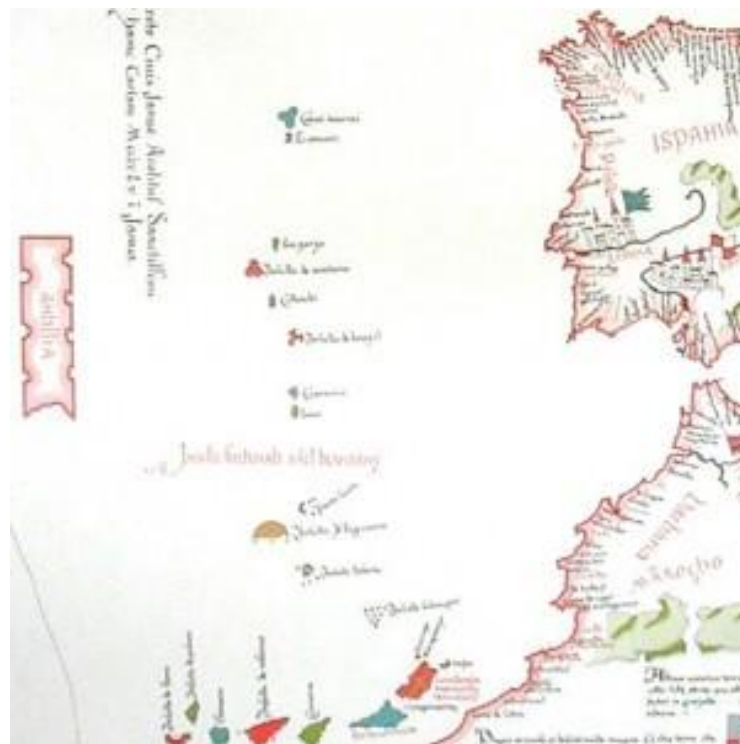
The legendary "Golden Man" being sprayed with gold dust [19]

Theodor De Bry. "Grand Voyages: Early Expeditions to the New World, Vol. VIII", 1599.
Theodor De Bry Engraving, Jacques Le Moyne Painting



Ancient map of Manoa

Theodor De Bry. "Grand Voyages: Early Expeditions to the New World, Vol. VIII", 1599.
Theodor De Bry Engraving, Jacques Le Moyne Painting



Pareto, 1455. Antilla appears on the far left on this map. Spain and Morocco are on the right.
<http://wapedia.mobi/en/Antillia>

Sir Walter Raleigh's Quest for El Dorado

In February 1595, Sir Walter Raleigh made his first voyage to Guiana. Raleigh went there with the expectation that the Orinoco River contained more gold than all of Peru and Mexico combined, that the Orinoco was where El Dorado was located. Here was to be found, according to his Spanish informants, "more riches than any other place in the world, upon a lake of salt water 200 leagues long" [20]. On this large lake, Raleigh reported that a great prince dwelled there, and it was reported by the Spanish that he was ritualistically covered with powdered gold from head to foot, and accordingly he was named "El Dorado" meaning "The Gilded (Golden) One" [21] (see image on p. 9).

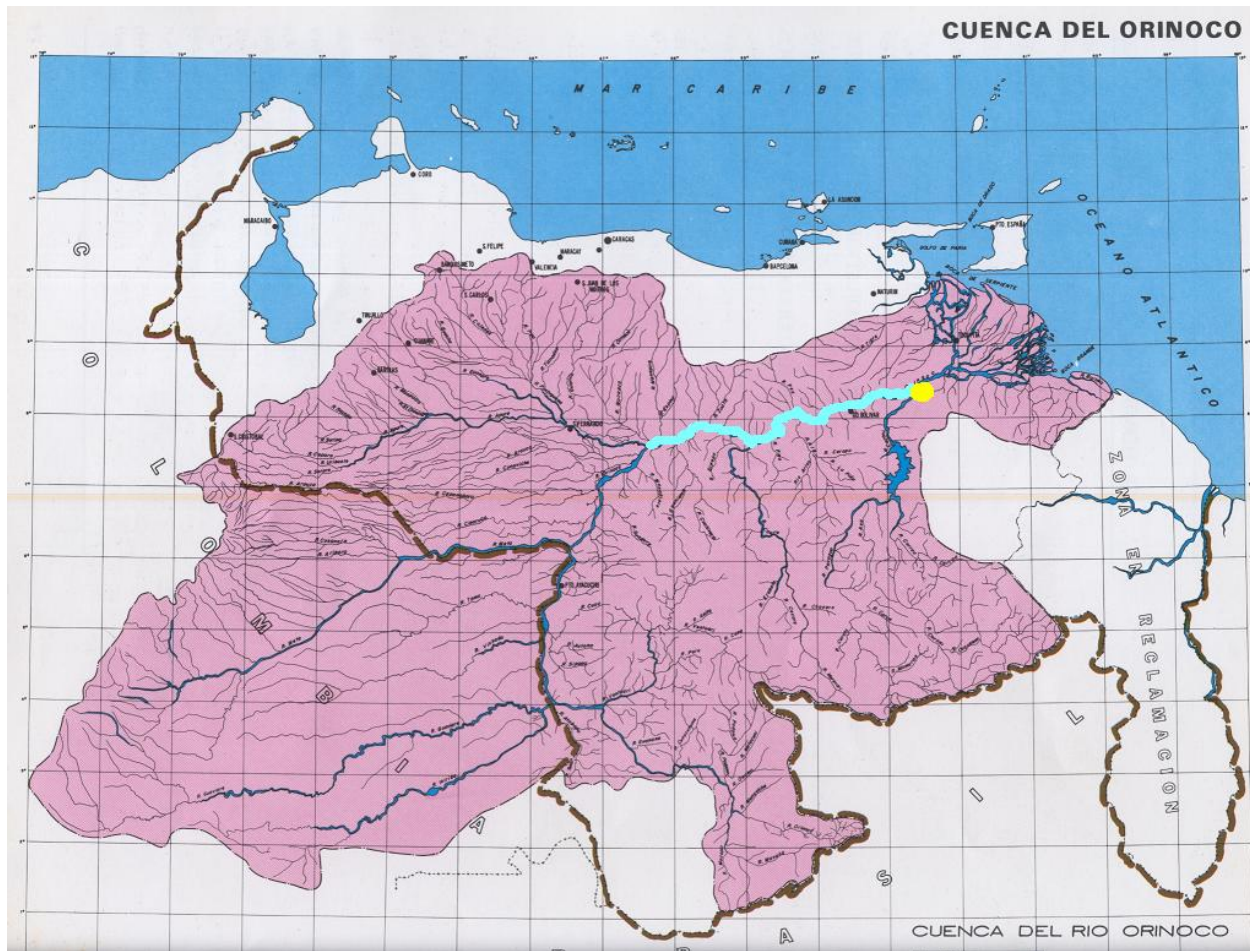
He stopped at Trinidad along the way and obliterated the Spanish harbor at Port of Spain, sacking the town and capturing Don Antonio de Barrio, the Spanish governor. Barrio was a veteran soldier and himself had made many expeditions up the Orinoco. Gaining additional vessels from Barrio, and with a crew over 100, Raleigh set off up the river [22].

Raleigh's first expedition gained him new and greater fame than he had ever attained before with his authorship of the widely-read "Discover of the Empire of Guiana". Some of his critics claimed his reporting was pure fantasy, especially his reports of the existence of a tribe of headless Indians and the discovery of Amazonian women [23]. The nations of these warrior women, Raleigh claimed, were on the south side of the river, in the provinces of Topago on the mouth of the river [24].

Raleigh, after returning to England from his first voyage to the Orinoco, proffered that the empirical city of Manoa and the mythical lake upon the “laguna parima, Rupunnuni or Dorado” was located near the Rio Branco at two degrees North and one degree 45 minutes South. The Indians claimed it was a 20-day journey from the mouth of the “Orenoquen” (sic) [25].

Shortly after Queen Elizabeth’s death, Raleigh was condemned to the Tower of London on December 9, 1603, on charges of treason against King James. He was spared just by the skin of his teeth, because he was able to impress and charm the king with his defense conduct. Left to languish in the tower for over twelve years, he was released on March 19, 1616 for a second expedition to find Manoa, only on the condition that all gold found would be given to the king as payment for his release (a.k.a. a bribe) and that Raleigh would not harm or attack any Spaniards during his search [26].

On June 12, 1617, the Guiana fleet attempted to sail from Plymouth, but were trapped due to storms for two months off the coast of Ireland. They were finally able to set out on August 19, and arrived at the Cayenne River harbor on November 14. Raleigh then sent five ships up the Orinoco River, under the command of his nephew George, his son Walter (Watt), and the expedition leader Lawrence Keymis. On January 2, 1618, the three surviving ships attacked the Spanish port of San Thomé (Ciudad Guayana), where Raleigh’s son was killed [27] (see map on following page for the Guiana Fleet expeditions).



San Thomé (Ciudad Guayana) is marked in yellow, and the Keymis launches up the river are marked in aqua.

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Image:Cuenca_del_Orinoco.png

Three launches were eventually sent further up the Orinoco under George Raleigh's command. They travelled 300 miles upstream, but no gold or silver was discovered. After an occupation of twenty-nine days, San Thomé was burnt to the ground and the expedition returned to the river mouth. During this time Keymis was visibly and steadily losing his nerve. On February 13, after Raleigh berated him on the failure of the expedition and the death of Watt, Keymis committed suicide [28].

His men now refused to follow him any further. In the last week of March the rest of his fleet deserted, leaving Raleigh in the *Destiny*, alone off Nevis with a mutinous crew on his hands. They sailed north towards Newfoundland, then across the Atlantic to Kinsale County Cork, Ireland, where a number of the company took the opportunity to melt away from Raleigh. With the remnants of his men, Raleigh was forced to return to England to face the consequences [29].

The tragedy of it is that Raleigh's second attempt to discover El Dorado almost became a reality. In the nineteenth century, one of the largest gold deposits in the world was discovered near the location Raleigh had predicted [30] (see map on p. 10, Ancient Map of Manoa). But this would come far, far too late to help him now. At the demand of the Spanish ambassador Diego Sarmiento de Acuña---and the personal dislike of King James---for his failures in South America, and disobeying direct orders from the king, Raleigh's death sentence was reinstated. On October 29, 1618, at the age of 66, Raleigh was put to the axe [31].

“This was a mighty harsh cup of broth to drink for the charismatic Sir Walter Raleigh, but it must be remembered that he was Elizabeth's most favored, and it was also Elizabeth who signed the death warrant for Mary Queen of Scots, King James' mother.” – Fred L. Willard

Conclusion

Raleigh's dream may have died, but the legend of El Dorado lives on, because of men like him, who came before and after. The myth of the Fountain

of Youth, sought after by Ponce de León, has become as well known as the myth of El Dorado. This is because, according to the legend, when a new ruler is chosen, he is bathed in gold and said to become a god. It was said whoever bathed in the Fountain of Youth was healed of all sickness and injury, and those who drank it became young again. It's not hard to see how the Fountain of Youth and the city of El Dorado grew to such mythical proportions, some five hundred years later, the stories are still recounted and expeditions to trace their locations are still taking place.

This was a quest of global proportions, representing which power--- Spain, England, or France---would be the empire to succeed. Sir Walter Raleigh, Hernando de Soto, Ponce de León, Hernon Cortez, Vazques de Coronado, Vaca de Cabeza, Franco Pizarro, Marcos de Niza---all these men have become forever interwoven with El Dorado. As long as El Dorado is remembered, so will they. So in a way, they really did secure what they most dreamed of: eternal fame, glory, immortality, and riches beyond anyone's imagination.

Endnotes

- [1] John Hemming, *The Search for El Dorado. Handbook of Latin American Studies, Vol. 42*. Item #RE802606.1978. First published by Michael Joseph Ltd 52 Bedford Square, London WCI. p. 5-195. Until his first Guiana Voyage in 1595, America was wholly in Raleigh's imagination. Charles Nicholl, *The Creature in The Map: A Journey to El Dorado. Handbook of Latin American Studies, Vol. 58*. Item # BI98010554. Originally published in Great Britain by Jonathan Cape. New York: William and Morrow Company, Inc. 1995: p. 26. In addition Stan Grist, "The Real El Dorado: Finally Rediscovered!!!" (<http://www.stangrist.com/eldorado.htm>). Accessed November 19, 2009. Hereafter cited as Stan Grist, "The Real El Dorado".
- [2] Jay Miller, "The Seven Cities of Gold." January 11, 2003. *Southern New Mexico Travel and Tourist Information*. (<http://www.southernnewmexico.com/Articles/GeneralInterest/TheSevenCitiesofGold.html>). Accessed November 19, 2009. Hereafter as Jay Miller, "The Seven Cities of Gold."
- [3] Stan Grist, "The Real El Dorado"
- [4] John Silver, "The Myth of El Dorado". *Handbook of Latin American Studies, Vol. 56*. Item #BI93016443. *History Workshop Journals, Vol. 34*. Oxford Journals. 1992: p. 1. In addition "Despite the continuation of literal belief, from the seventeenth century El Dorado was increasingly claimed by literature and science and consigned to the realm of symbolism". Jay Miller, "The Seven Cities of Gold."
- [5] Stan Grist, "The Real El Dorado"
- [6] Mark Nicholls and Penry Williams, "Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554-1618)". In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: September, 2004. Online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman, January 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23039>. Accessed, November 23, 2009. Hereafter to be cited as Mark Nicholls, Penry Williams, "Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554-1618)".
- [7] Stan Grist, "The Real El Dorado": Lying deep within a very rich, gold-bearing belt---which spans hundreds of miles---located in Peru and Brazil is the supposed real El Dorado, a vast set of gold mines, which does consist of seven cities.

- [8] “National Treasure: Book of Secrets”, starring Nicholas Cage, Justin Bartha, Diane Kruger John Voight. Directed by Jon Turteltaub. Produced by Jerry Bruckheimer. Premiered December 17, 2007 in New York City. 124 min.
- [9] Alvar Nuñez Cabeza De Vaca, *The Journey of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza De Vaca, 1542*. Translated by Fanny Bandelier. New York: A.S. Barnes & Company. 1905: p. v – xxii. Hereafter to be cited as *The Journey of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza De Vaca*. In addition Kevin James Brown, “Cibola: A Tale of Estebanico, Coronodo, and the Seven Cities of Gold”. <http://www.geographicus.com/blog/tag/seven-cities-of-gold>. Released September 28, 2009. Accessed November 18, 2009. Hereafter to be cited as Kevin James Brown, “Cibola: A Tale of Estebanico, Coronodo, and the Seven Cities of Gold”.
- [10] *The Journey of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza De Vaca*: p. v – xxii. In addition Kevin James Brown, “Cibola: A Tale of Estebanico, Coronodo, and the Seven Cities of Gold”.
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- [12] Cleve Hallenbeck, *The Journey of Fray Marcos de Niza*. Illus. and decorations by José Cisneros. Connecticut: Greenwood Press. Originally published in 1949. Reprinted in 1973. p. v - 103
- [13] Kevin James Brown, “Cibola: A Tale of Estebanico, Coronodo, and the Seven Cities of Gold”.
- [14] Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, *The Journey of Coronado, 1540-1542, from the City of Mexico to the Grand Canon of the Colorado and the Buffalo Plains of Texas, Kansas, and Nebraska As told by himself and his followers*. Translated and edited by George Parker Winship. New York: Al-lerton Book Co. 1904: p. v - xi
- [15] Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, *The Journey of Coronado, 1540-1542*. p. v - xi
- [16] Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains*. Blaisdell Publishing Company. Massachusetts: Waltham. 1931: p. 102.
- [17] Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, *The Journey of Coronado, 1540-1542*. p. v – xi

- [18] Henry Eldridge Bourne, Elbert Jay Benton. *A History of the United States*. 1913. Originally Published by the University of California. Revised edition published by D.C. Heath and Company in 1921. p. 21. In addition “The ‘thirst for gold’ represented an economic as well as moral distortion: Desire for riches and not for that ‘real wealth’ produced by ‘agricultural industry’.” John Silver, “The Myth of El Dorado”: p. 3.
- [19] John Silver, “The Myth of El Dorado”: “Though there had been earlier searches for lands believed to be rich in gold, the Venezuelan historian Demetrio Ramos Perez has made a strong case for dating the first rumors of a golden king just prior to Pizarro's expedition of 1541, which was shortly followed by an equally disastrous one led by Sebastian de Benalcazar. Both conquistadores led their expeditions northwards from Peru, seeking an Indian king whose body was said to be powdered in fine gold-dust every morning. Whatever the origins or veracity of these reports, they fuelled belief in a third, still richer Indian empire after Mexico and Peru, which was also mixed up with the Spanish explorers' anxiety that the Incas had escaped with the greater share of their gold, and that Atahualpa's ransom (his weight in gold) was only the tip of a vast iceberg.” p. 1.
- [20] Sir Walter Raleigh, *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana, with a Relation of the Great and Golden City of Manoa (Which the Spaniards Call El Dorado), ETC.* 1596. Edited by Sir Robert H. Schomburgk and re-released by the Hakluyt Society. New York: Burt Franklin. 1970: p.13. Hereafter to be cited as “Raleigh 1595”.
- [21] Raleigh 1595, p. xlix citing Humbolt’s Personal Narrative, Vol. 5, p. 814.
- [22] Christopher Smith, “Sir Walter Raleigh, Part 12: The Search for El Dorado”. <http://www.britannia.com/bios/raleigh/eldorado.html>. Accessed November 16, 2009.
- [23] Raleigh 1595, p. xlix.
- [24] “Sir Walter Raleigh (1554-1618): The Discovery of Guiana, 1595”. *Modern History Sourcebook*. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1595raleigh-guiana.html>. Accessed November 23, 2009.
- [25] Raleigh, 1595, p. lii.
- [26] Raleigh Trevelyan, *Sir Walter Raleigh*. 2004, p. 370-468. New York: Henry Holt and Company. Originally published by Allen Lane in Great Bri-

- tain, 2002. p. 456-553. In addition Mark Nicholls and Penry Williams, "Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554-1618)". In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: September, 2004. Online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman, January 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23039>. Accessed, November 23, 2009. Hereafter to be cited as Trevelyan, *Sir Walter Raleigh*.
- [27] Trevelyan, *Sir Walter Raleigh*, p. 468-506. In addition Mark Nicholls, Penry Williams, "Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554-1618)".
- [28] Trevelyan, *Sir Walter Raleigh*, p. 489-522. In addition Mark Nicholls, Penry Williams, "Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554-1618)".
- [29] **The Judgment:** "But since you have been found guilty of these horrible treasons: you shall be had from hence to the place where you came (the tower) and from thence you shall be drawn upon a hurdle through the open streets to the place of execution, there to be hanged and cut down alive, and your Body shall be opened, your Heart and Bowels plucked out, and your privy members cut off and thrown in a fire before your eyes; then your head shall be stricken off from your Body, and your Body shall be divided into four Quarters, to be disposed of at the King's pleasure and God have mercy on your soul". John Shirly, *The Life of the Valiant & Learned Sir Walter Raleigh, Knight. With His Tryal at Winchester*. London. Printed by J.D. for Benjamin Shirley, and Richard Tonson, under the dial of St. Dunstons Church in Fleetstreet, and under Grays-Inn Gate next Grays-Inn Lane. 1677: p.169, 176 (Hereafter to be cited as Shirly, 1677). In addition Trevelyan, *Sir Walter Raleigh*, p. 506-538; Mark Nicholls, Penry Williams, "Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554-1618)".
- [30] "Sir Walter Raleigh: Biography, Timeline & Facts About the Famous Explorer, Explorations, and Voyages in the Age of Exploration". <http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/sir-walter-raleigh.htm>. Accessed November 18, 2009.
- [31] **The Execution:** "The proclamation being made that all man should have the scaffold, he prepared himself for Death, giving away his Hat and wrought Night-Cap and some money to such as he knew that stood near him: After taking his leave of the Lord of Arundel, he thanked him for his company.
- "Then putting off his Gown and Doublet, He called to the Headsman to shew him his Ax---'I pray Thee Let me see it, Dost Thou Think that I am afraid of it?' and having it in his hands 'This is a sharp Medicine, but it is a Physician for all Disease.'

“When asked which side he wished to rest his head on the cutting block he said ‘So the Heart be right, it is no matter which way the Head Lieth’. Shirly, 1677: 236-237. In addition Trevelyan, *Sir Walter Raleigh*: p. 522-554.

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