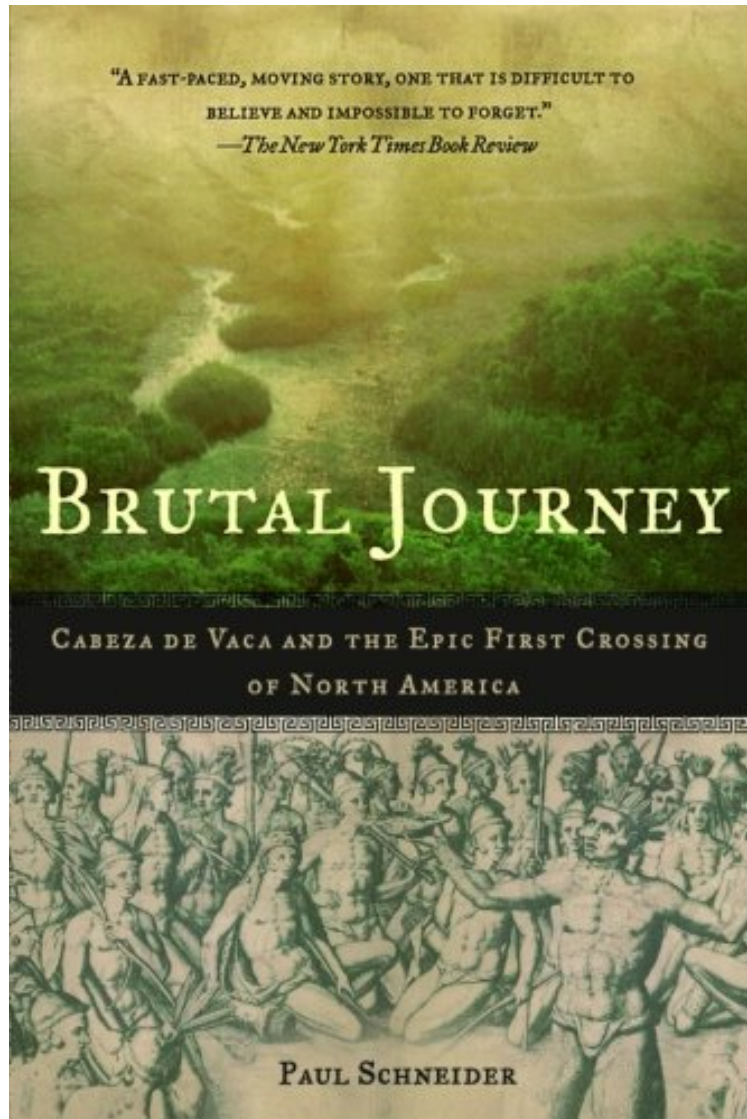


[Read download] Brutal Journey: Cabeza de Vaca and the Epic First Crossing of North America

Brutal Journey: Cabeza de Vaca and the Epic First Crossing of North America

Paul Schneider

audiobook / *ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#349848 in Books Holt Paperbacks 2007-05-01 2007-05-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.50 x .3 x 5.50l, 1.10 #File Name: 0805083200384 pages | File size: 24.Mb

Paul Schneider : Brutal Journey: Cabeza de Vaca and the Epic First Crossing of North America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Brutal Journey: Cabeza de Vaca and the Epic First Crossing of North America:

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Great Reading for the Armchair Explorer By Bill Emblom This is a story you want to read about as an armchair explorer. You certainly wouldn't want to live it. It is a tale of suffering.

Starvation, torture, cannibalism, slavery, and dealing with various Indian tribes in addition to endurance survivors didn't realize they were capable of all were factors that had to be dealt with in this trip from Florida across the Gulf of Mexico, down the southeast coast of Texas and into Mexico. The author uses Cabeza de Vaca's journal as his primary source for his information, and admits that guesses have to be made at times in determining what may have occurred. Cabeza de Vaca's account of the trip was written some years following the trip in an attempt to acquire recognition and favors from the king of Spain and the public for his suffering, so this must be taken into account as well in determining how factual the account is. Of close to 400 people who started out on this trip only four survived. In addition to Cabeza de Vaca the only survivors were three others named Dorantes, Castillo, and a black Moroccan named Esteban. There are many excellent books involving exploration, especially those of Samuel Eliot Morison, and this one by author Paul Schneider provides us with a neglected subject regarding North American exploration.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. US history from 1528By CokabuThis is a fascinating historical account of the first Spanish landfall at Tampa Bay, and of the few survivors who walked all the way to Mexico from there! I've read this before from the library, but enjoy it so much I wanted to my own personal copy.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Good commentaryBy ReaderThis is an engaging commentary on Ivar Nez Cabeza de Vaca's account of his eight years of wandering in North America at the dawn of the European presence. I am grateful to the author for digesting so much of the available research and producing this book for the general reader. It does not take the place of the account itself, however, which ought to be read in its entirety.

Not fiction, it is the true story of the Cabeza de Vaca's unplanned early-16th-century prolonged confrontation with nature, at times without so much as a stitch of clothing, without the foggiest idea of where he was, really, except in a land where contact with natives was generally treacherous and deadly and only rarely peaceful. The Spanish title of his story is *Naufragios* (Shipwrecks). Of some 300 hundred in the original party, only four survived, not counting one and possibly a very few others who remained with native Americans, never to return. The account makes it clear how improbable the return of even those four was.

I was a little disappointed to find no explanation in this book for something that has always puzzled me in Cabeza de Vaca's story: How exactly were the pickly pears harvested and eaten? Schneider writes, "Pickly pears that size have trunks like trees, thorns like hyperdermic needles. The fruits themselves are covered with barbed peach fuzz that is almost worse than the thorns. But no one cared: everybody's skin was too tough, and the pulpy, juicy, bittersweet taste was too delicious to be bothered by such a minor annoyance." (p. 251) Even though everybody's skin was tough, I am puzzled. This plant has a splendid defense against the harvesting of its fruit. The same part of the story calls this time the happiest and most convivial of times, because stomachs, usually empty, were then filled with the fruit. But there is nothing quite like that barbed peach fuzz to impinge on anybody's happiness. Tiny barbed thorns of that type work themselves well into the skin and are very irritating. Schneider mentions sticks used to beat paths into the thorny mazes, but this is the only utensil mentioned. Cabeza de Vaca himself simply does not go into the details; he does not say that everybody's skin was too tough. Even the tough-skinned would eventually want to use some kind of tool, it seems to me. The Indians ate this fruit in season every year. This is not to doubt the account at all, simply to say that, all in all, something remains to be explained here.

There are, of course, other unanswered questions. Obviously, to deal with all in detail would have required a much longer book. How exactly were the boats made in which the Narvaez group fled westward from Florida? (This business of boat construction arises in some other exploration accounts. Many years later, for example, a missionary group under Eusebio Kino improvised construction of boats to cross the Gulf of California to Baja California and back.) This is much more easily said than done, of course, and leaves us wondering how it was accomplished. We are told that bellows were made of animal skin to improvise a forge for melting down metal. Sails were sewn from shirts. Pitch was collected from pines. And all this was accomplished by men nearly starving, continually falling sick, and threatened by hostiles. They did it to save their lives, and I do not deny that, under that impulse, it can be done; but I do wonder if anybody has ever tried to duplicate the feat after the fashion of Thor Heyerdahl and to document the attempt, just to shed some light on the subject.

I appreciated the author's quotation from Cervantes prefacing the bibliography. I took it as a note of humility, one refreshing because a little unusual and therefore not pro-forma, one putting the whole writing enterprise into perspective, which seems especially called for in a book on this subject. Recently I was telling somebody about Cabeza de Vaca, and she asked if he took notes during his wanderings. I realized how far I had failed to convey the nature of the story and had to explain that much of the time he was totally lost and had absolutely nothing with him, not even clothes to wear, so there was hardly any question of taking notes.

"Schneider's thorough research and vivid writing create a fast-paced, moving story, one that is difficult to believe and impossible to forget." *The New York Times Book Review*

A gripping survival epic, *Brutal Journey* tells the story of an army of would-be conquerors, bound for glory, who landed in Florida in 1528. But only four of the four hundred would survive: eight years and some five thousand miles later, three Spaniards and a black Moroccan wandered out of the wilderness to the north of the Rio Grande and into Cortes's gold-drenched Mexico. The survivors of the Narvez expedition brought nothing back other than their story, but what a tale it was. They had become killers and cannibals, torturers and torture victims, slavers and enslaved. They became faith healers, arms dealers, canoe thieves, spider

eaters. They became, in other words, whatever it took to stay alive.

From Publishers Weekly Despite his failure to suppress the rebellious Cortés in Mexico, would-be conquistador Pánfilo de Narváez was given another chance by the king of Spain, who awarded him governorship over the entire Gulf Coast of the modern United States. But Narváez's luck was no better this time: the expedition, which arrived in 1528, was a complete disaster. Out of the 400 men who went ashore in Florida, only four made it to Mexico eight years later, long after Narváez himself was lost at sea in a makeshift boat. Schneider (*The Adirondacks*) has only two firsthand documents to work with, but he ably combines the raw narrative with a wealth of secondary research to create a vivid tale filled with gripping scenes, as when natives lead the starving Spanish forces into a swamp ambush. Though primarily concerned with the Spaniards' experiences, Schneider also provides well-rounded portrayals of the indigenous cultures they came in contact with among them tribes that came to regard the handful of survivors as magical healers who could raise the dead. The ethnographic balance takes a thrilling adventure and turns it into an engrossing case study of early European colonialism gone epically wrong. Illus., map. (May 5) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Schneider presents would-be conquistador Cabeza de Vaca's incredible survival story. The treasurer of an attempted conquest of Florida in 1528, de Vaca was one of four remnants of the disastrous Narváez expedition and wrote a memoir about his ordeal. Working off that central document, Schneider seamlessly fixes it to contextual sources (archaeology; records of the ensuing de Soto and Coronado expeditions) to render a perceptive sense of the country the fugitive Spaniards traveled through and the Indians they encountered. Under the theme of inverted expectations, Schneider relates the Spaniards' incremental descent from violently self-assured superiority over Indians, to dependence, and, finally, enslavement for the last of the living. That one of them, Esteban, already a slave, helped lead the band to Mexico, and received re-enslavement for his pains, enhances Schneider's excellent development of cultural self-perceptions. Equally able in his dramatizations of the privations and brutalities suffusing this extraordinary tale, Schneider scores big with fans of historical (mis)adventure. Gilbert Taylor Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved. *Brutal Journey* is a wonderfully rich account of an incredible cross-country journey of survival. Paul Schneider's beautifully crafted book takes us to another time in another world, a place of native American shamans, Spanish conquistadors, and unbelievable determination. Best of all, it really happened. Jerald T. Milanich, Ph.D., archaeologist at the Florida Museum of Natural History and author of *Florida Indians from Ancient Times to the Present*