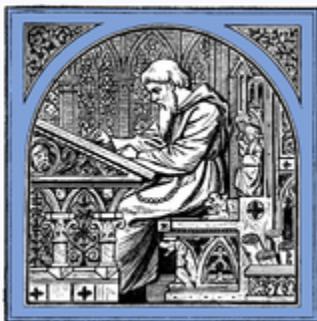


Catholic Encyclopedia (1913) — Alonso de Ojeda

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Explorer; b. at Cuenca, Spain, about 1466; d. on the island of Santo Domingo, about 1508. He came of an impoverished noble family, but had the good fortune to start his career in the household of the Dukes of Medina Sidonia. He early gained the patronage of Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos and later Patriarch of the Indies, who made it possible for Ojeda to accompany Columbus in his second voyage to the New World. Ojeda distinguished himself there by his daring in battle with the natives, towards whom, however, he was unduly harsh and vindictive. He returned to Spain in 1496. After three years he again journeyed to the New World with three vessels on his own account, accompanied by the cosmographer Juan de La Cosa and Amerigo Vespucci. In a little over three weeks he sighted the mainland near the mouth of the Orinoco, and after landing on Trinidad and at other places, discovered a harbour which he called Venezuela (little Venice), from its resemblance to the bay of Venice. After some further exploration, he made his way to the island of Hispaniola, where he was not received cordially, because it was thought that he was infringing upon the exploring privileges of Columbus. On his return to Spain in 1500, he took with him many captives whom he sold as slaves. Having still influential friends at home, he was able to fit out a new expedition, which left Cadiz in 1502 and made a landing on the American continent at a place which he named Santa Cruz. There he established a colony which did not last long because of the improvidence of his

companions and their extreme cruelty towards the Indians. Chafing under his leadership, these companions turned against him and sent him back a prisoner to Spain, accusing him of having appropriated the royal revenues. He was tried and sentenced to pay a heavy fine. Upon his appeal, however, he was acquitted of all culpability, but was now reduced to poverty.

In some way or other he made his way back to Hispaniola, where his former associate Cosa also was. There he conceived the idea of establishing colonies on the mainland between Cabo de Vela and the Golfo de Uraba, and after some time spent in petitioning the Government, finally the two comrades obtained the necessary permission. He went back to Spain and organized his third and last expedition, only after great effort. Among the persons who embarked in his four vessels was Pizarro, the future conqueror of Peru. Cortes, who was later to dominate Mexico, would have been among the soldiers of fortune engaged in this adventure, had not a sudden illness prevented him from sailing. When he reached his destination, Ojeda found the natives very hostile; they attacked his force and slew every man except Ojeda and one other. The two escaped to the shore, where they were succoured by those whom he had left in charge of the ships. Not yet despairing, he founded a new colony at San Sebastian. It soon became necessary for him to proceed to Hispaniola to obtain supplies for the settlement, in charge of which he left Pizarro. He was shipwrecked on the way, and only after suffering great

privations did he finally reach Santo Domingo, where he died.

Pizarro y Orellana, *Var. ilustr. d. Nuevo-Mundo* (1639).

J.D.M. FORD

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