

Juan Antonio de Mendoza y González, 1727

MAPPA DELA OBSCURACION DELA TIERRA INEL ECLYPSE DE SOL*

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DURING THE LATE seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the scientific Enlightenment in progress in Europe reached New Spain. Although generally not considered among the great scientists of the viceroyalty, Juan Antonio de Mendoza y González of Puebla de los Angeles was a competent mathematician and physicist, and held various ecclesiastical, educational, and civil posts, including that of accountant for the quicksilver monopoly, the latter of import due to its use in the amalgamation process for silver extraction. As did his contemporaries, he applied his knowledge and astronomical observations to practical matters, and this resulted in a number of pamphlets relative to comets, astronomical ephemera, and a treatise on engineering. His ten-page *Spherographia de la Obscuracion de la Tierra, en el Eclypse de Sol de 22 de Marzo de 1727. Methodo de Observarle, y de corregir los Reloxes.*, printed in Mexico by Joseph Bernardo de Hogal, to facilitate calculation of the extent of the solar eclipse of 22 March 1727, provides information relative to methods of determining longitude by measurement of the eclipse and, thereby, regulation of clocks, as well as the nature of astronomical instruments. Although not of the level of the works of Edmund Halley or Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora, the treatise demonstrates the expertise of its author as an astronomer and mathematician.

To illustrate the path of the eclipse, the curious *Mappa dela Obscuracion* was appended. It was the practice for authors to contract such illustrations as they wished to include in their works, and evidently Mendoza y González followed this custom, giving the task of engraving the map to another resident of Puebla, Perea. This is the earliest registered work of the engraver, and may well be his first, for its crude and imperfect form is especially reflected in the failure to produce a mirror image for proper printing from the plate in the case of *P(uerto) Rico, Habana, Mérida, Guadalax(ar)a*, and *P(uerto) de la Na(vidad)*, as well as unnecessary inversion of numerous other place names. Notwithstanding its complete failure to delineate precise landforms, the *Mappa dela Obscuracion* achieves its purpose as a base for charting the solar eclipse, and is unique as the first celestial chart and only map showing California as an island engraved and printed in the Americas.

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Mappa dela Obscuracion dela Tierra Inel Eclypse de Sol, de XXII. de Março, | de MDCCXXVII delineada porel Contador D. Juan Antonio de Mendoza | Y Gonzalez para la Obseruasion delongitud. [Engraved, 18.7 x 28.2 cm.]

*MAP OF THE DARKENING OF THE LAND IN THE SOLAR ECLIPSE OF 21 MARCH 1727

Map courtesy of Glen McLaughlin.

Mapa de la Observacion de la Tierra en el T. obispo de Sol, de XXXII. de Marco,
de MDCCXXVII. delineada por el Contador D. Juan Antonio de Mendoza.
Y Gonzalez para la Observacion de la longitud.

