
Document 1537A

Grijalva Expedition, Captain Castilla—Overview by Navarrete

Sources: Tome 15 (folios 105-118) of a manuscript compilation made by Navarrete for publication. Not printed until 1973, as a facsimile of his manuscript, by Kraus-Thomson in Liechtenstein as: Colección de documentos y manuscritos compilados por Fernández de Navarrete (32 volumes). However, the following summaries by Navarrete (borrowed largely from Galvão, see next document) had already been published by Pastor y Santos, in Appendices V and VI of his "Territorios de soberanía española en Oceanía", Madrid, 1950.

Discovery of the islands of Os-Guedes, Coroa, Pescadores and O-Acea by Hernando de Grijalva [sic]

Hernando de Grijalva, commanding a ship and a patache, departed from Acapulco in 1536 for the coast of Peru, and from there on a voyage of discovery.

Ship	Tons	Officers
Ship Santiago	120	Captain: Hernando de Grijalva ¹ Master: Esteban de Castilla ² Pilot: Martín de Acosta Boatswain: Miguel Noble ³
Patache Trinidad	90	Boatswain's mate: a man from Savoy. Captain: Fernando de Alvarado Master and pilot: Juan Martínez Boatswain: a man from Marseilles.

The tons are "toneles" [long tons], with a ratio of 5 to 6, so that 10 long tons are 12 "toneladas" [short tons], as it has been mentioned in relation with Magellan's voyage.

¹ Ed. note: He died before reaching Micronesia.

² Ed. note: Was in command as the ship sailed through Micronesia.

³ Ed. note: One of only three survivors who made an eyewitness report to Galvão (See Doc. 1537B).



A Spanish gentleman in the New World, mid 16th century. This drawing can be used to represent Hernando de Grijalva, the major-domo of Hernán Cortés, who led an unplanned expedition to the Moluccas in 1537. The gentlemen of those days wore a “colete” or bull coat over a short jacket, shirt and short riding pants. (Adapted from Guamán Poma’s graphic History of Peru, ca. 1600)

News about this voyage to the Moluccas

In 1539, Antonio Galvão was Captain of the Portuguese fortress of Ternate and, suspecting the presence of some Spaniards near the Moluccas, he carried out various investigations. The King of Tidore sent a message to him [in 1539] to inform him that at the city of Zamafo there was a Spaniard whom had been bought by his governors from the Papuans of the island of Versay¹, and that he was holding him prisoner. Galvão ransomed him for 300 ducats, and the man was brought before him. He said that his name was Miguel Noble, was 30 years old, and that he was the boatswain aboard the flagship of a fleet, whose story he related as follows.

Background of the voyage

The Governor of New Spain, Hernán Cortés, Marquis del Valle, in 1536 departed from the port of Colima², located on the southern coast of that kingdom, to explore northward, and at about 23° of latitude found an island which he named Cardona because it had many “cardos”³, where he left 60 men with food supplies and other necessities. At the time Cortés left New Spain, he left behind two completed ships at the port of Tehuantepec, the larger one of 120 tons, named **Santiago**, and the other, a patache of 90.

Once completed and supplied, they were taken by Jorge Cerón (a cousin of Alvaro de Saavedra [Cerón] who had gone to the Moluccas in 1527) to the place where Cortés was, and they found out that he had been called [to Mexico] by the new Viceroy, Don Antonio de Mendoza.

When Cortés disembarked at Acapulco, he wrote to the Emperor, entrusting the letter to Jorge Cerón. He appointed his majordomo⁴, Hernando de Grijalva, captain of both naos; he was about 40 years old. As captain of the small one (the patache), he appointed a gentleman named Alvarado, who was 26 years old more or less.

1 Ed. note: As will be said below, although the ship was deliberately run aground on the coast of New Guinea, the three survivors were taken by native traders to their own island.

2 Ed. note: This port of the Colima province was probably Manzanillo.

3 Ed. note: This word either means thistle or artichoke. They could have been cactus-like plants. Mazatlan and the tip of Baja California are both at 23°. It is possible that the word Cardona was soon corrupted to California by chart-makers.

4 Ed. note: Better said, his adjutant or aide-de-camp.

Narrative of the voyage

1536.—Once the ships had been loaded at Acapulco with food supplies and the rest which was to be taken as relief supplies for Francisco Pizarro¹, they departed that port during Easter week [probably April] of the said year of 1536, bound for Peru, where they were being sent. As pilot of Grijalva's ship was a Portuguese from Porto, Martín de Acosta², who was over 40 years old; as master, Esteban de Castilla, a Genoese from a place called San Pedro de Roncasado, residing in Seville, and of about the same age as the pilot, and as boatswain, a savoyard from Villefranche de Nice, who had been raised in Spain from childhood³. The master and pilot of Alvarado's ship was Juan Martínez, from Biscay, and a man from Marseilles was boatswain.

After 40 days [in May 1536], they arrived at a city of Peru called Manta, which was on the line.⁴ From there they went to Tumbes and to then Paita, which was the port for the city of San Miguel (de Piura)⁵, where the Spaniards were [settled]. There they unloaded and sent a message to Francisco Pizarro, Governor of Peru, who was at the city of Jauja. They awaited an answer for three months [i.e. until August] and, having received the letters, without taking on any merchandise and only with the Chumbo or lead ballast they had taken in new Spain, they made sail, carrying with them a man of gold and a woman of silver that Pizarro was sending to Cortés as a gift.⁶

At 200 leagues from the coast, the Captain announced that he wished to go on a voyage of discovery⁷, which all resented because they were badly supplied with rigging, cables and provisions. Nevertheless, they obeyed, and headed north until they reached 4° latitude N. From there, they went south as far as 5° S, and heading WNW they reached 7°N, returning south again until they reached 13° S of the line. From there they went to the Line, from there they headed WNW until they reached 24° N, without seeing

1 Ed. note: Pastor y Santos has quoted two sources to the effect that the ships were loaded with many arquebuses, soldiers, crossbows, lances, 17 horses, 60 coats-of-mail, ordnance, many white cloths, tapestries, silk cushions, ornaments to say mass, and many other articles.

2 Ed. note: Therefore, his true name must have been Martín da Costa.

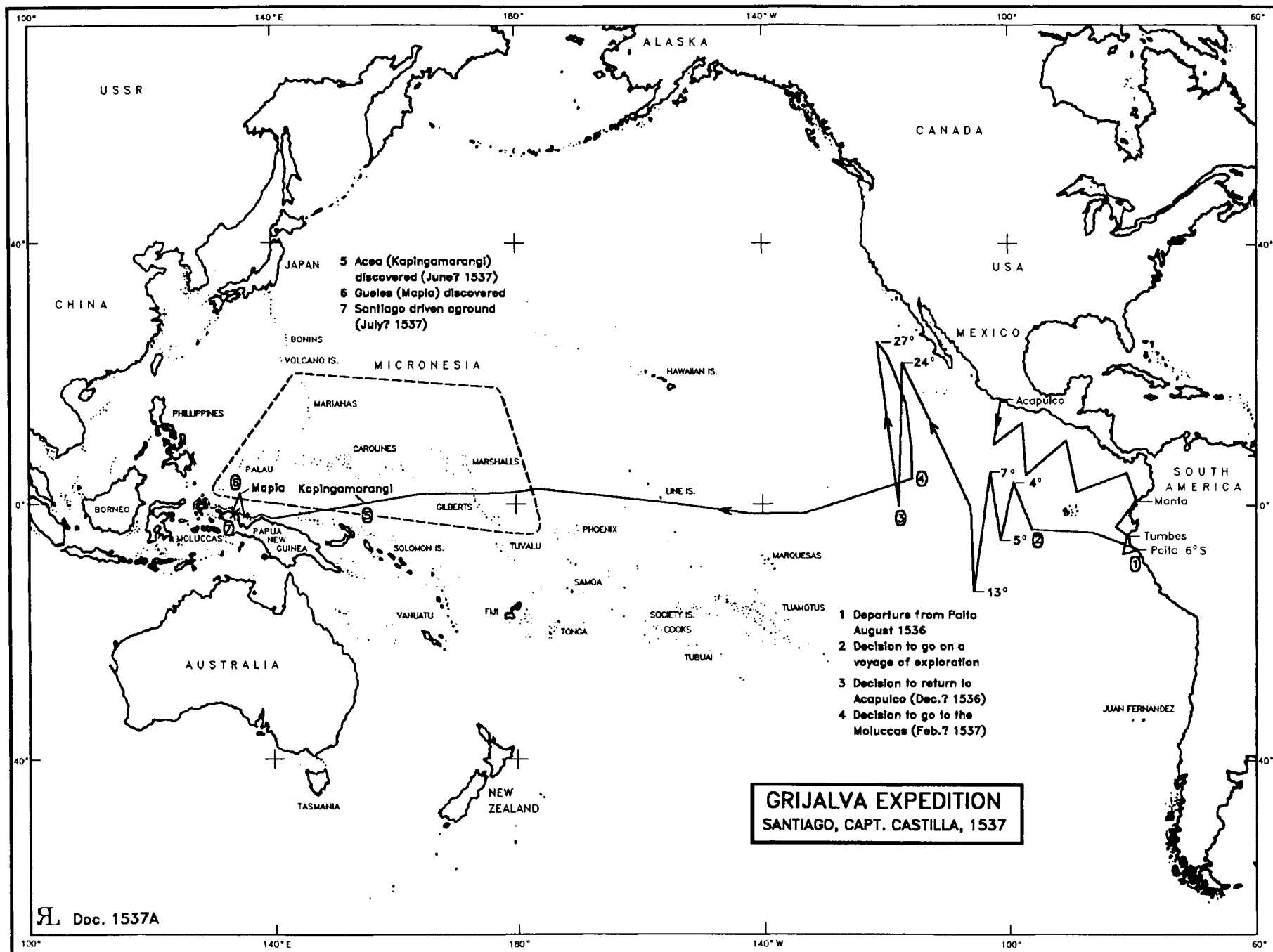
3 Ed. note: So, Miguel Noble, our narrator, gave his birthplace as Villefranche-sur-mer, between Nice and Monte Carlo.

4 Ed. note: A town that still exists north of Quayaquil and SW of Quito, in today's Ecuador.

5 Ed. note: Paita is still the port for Piura. Early in the 20th century, the two were linked by a railroad.

6 Ed. note: Pastor y Santos says that they probably were two idols that Pizarro had found along the path of conquest. This Peruvian treasure ended up in New Guinea, as we shall see.

7 Ed. note: This voyage of discovery was toward the coast of California which Grijalva hoped to discover above the 23° already discovered by Cortés.



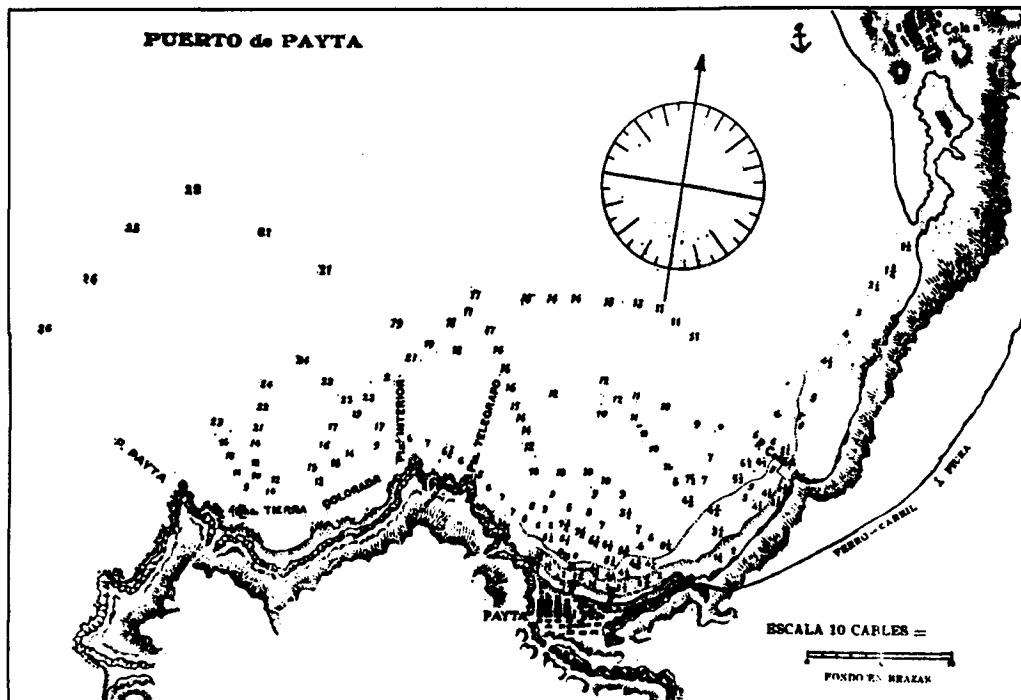
any land, and because they needed water they returned to the Line, where they got some (from the rains).

They were sailing with calm periods alternating with squalls, and the main mast broke; they had to repair it with two spars. Already five or six months had passed¹, and for lack of provisions and water, the captain ordered to turn back to New Spain. Deviating to the N, and many times to NW, they went in search of land as far as 27° N, where they met with many sudden squalls, cold and snow. Sailing NE, they found winds from the NW and WNW, but as they were going forward they were gradually losing latitude from 27°, until they were at about 4°.

They were already lacking food, so that the daily ration was cut down to six ounces of bread and almost nothing of water. When the Captain saw that the men could not work, and that he had no food to give them, he called a meeting of the council, and all voted in favor of diverting to the Moluccas, except the pilot, who voted against, then became sick, and died. He was followed by many more. The Captain himself suffered from pain in the legs, and within 30 or 40 days he died.² During his illness, they sailed W in search of the Moluccas, always near the Line, without deviating from it by more than one or two degrees on either side; the winds were tail winds, with some squalls. They carried on that way for 3 or 4 months, without ever sighting any land.³

When the captain died, they replaced him and the pilot by the master [i.e. Castilla]. When it had already been 10 months less 6 days [i.e. June 1537] that they had been involved in such labors, they saw some **islands**, which they called **Los Papuas** (according to that narrative, the Portuguese presumed that it was the Island which they call that of Don Jorge de Meneses [i.e. New Guinea], because he had spent one winter there when he discovered the Moluccas, from which they were distant 200 leagues). He said they could not touch there, because the wind died down. They turned back to the N

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- 1 Ed. note: Too short a period. More likely, this period did not elapse until they had come back down to 4° (see below). It was then either January or February 1537.
 - 2 Ed. note: Pastor y Santos points out that on page 397 of Tome XX of the same manuscript collection by Navarrete, in a narrative of Villalobos' voyage, it is said that Captain Grijalva was killed by his crew, but this is unlikely; the narrator probably had Captain Manrique in mind. The narrative in question is Escalante's account of Villalobos' voyage (See also Colección ... de Indias, vol. V, pp. 153-158, Doc. 1542B in this volume).
 - 3 Ed. note: It was then anywhere from April to June, probably May, 1537.



and anchored at an island called **Quaxoax** [=Coroa], called **Bafa** by the Portuguese¹; they stayed there two days and, on account of having lost an anchor, they made sail.

Some 50 or 60 leagues further west, they saw **Meumcum** Island, which the Portuguese called Aguada de Limón de Brixti². They sailed for 7 to 8 days through those islands, where most of the men died, and the rest moved about on all fours. For this reason, they decided to run the nao aground upon the coast. Before doing so, they threw overboard two iron carronades³ and some other guns they had, and they ran aground between two islands inside a bay into which flowed a river with fresh water, in which *fustas* and brigs could sail; the name of this port is called **Lavaum**.⁴

As many as 20 white men and 10 slaves disembarked, but on account of advanced illness they later died⁵. The best material was taken out, specially the gold and the sil-

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- 1 Ed. note: Transcription error, as Galvão says Bufu, not Bafa.
 - 2 Ed. note: All place names are likely garbled. This one is no exception, except that I can recognize it for Aguada (i.e. watering place) de Simón de Brito.
 - 3 Ed. note: Weak as they were, the guns were probably jettisoned right through the port holes.
 - 4 Ed. note: Further on, this name is transcribed Savaym, or Savaum. Andrew Sharp is of the opinion that the site of this shipwreck is at the Schouten Islands lying across the mouth of Geelvink Bay in western New Guinea. In fact, the Schouten Islands are made up of Mysory [=Meonsum, Meosnum or Miosnum], Korido [=Coroa] and Biak. The latter island is the same as Wiak or Versay, on account of its port called Versiya or Warsai. By the same token, Bufu = Nufor.
 - 5 Ed. note: The number of survivors at this point was 12 men (see below).

ver, a quantity of 3 or 4 cruzados¹. They placed two falconets aboard the boat and as many as 12 men determined to go to the Moluccas. During the two or three days that they spent preparing the boat, they never saw either man or beast ashore.

While following the coast with the boat, they found a town called Az or Azque, distant from Savaym [sic] 14 or 20 leagues, and there a proa came out with food. The Spanish could not come to an agreement with those in the proa, and the master with a two-hand sword killed one of the leaders, wishing to take the food they had by force. Those of the proa retreated ashore and returned with a fleet which took their boat away and took them all by the sword.

Those who survived, although sick, fled inland as best they could until they met some Indians who took the few clothes they had away from them, and leaving them naked, they took them along to the place where the nao had been lost, because those natives were not from the island where they were, but they had come there from the island of **Versay**² to trade *fissar* or colored cloths. There they remained for one and a half months, and then they went back home, treating the prisoners as well as they did their own kind.

Out of the **three who had escaped with their life**, there was a certain Miguel Noble (the same man who made this narrative) who went to the land of the Moluccas, after having been held captive for over one year, until 1539, the year he was ransomed. Another one was called Juan Camacho, a lad who was the son of Alvaro Camacho of Palos. The other was called Juan Prieto, who was a mulatto³ and whom the local people killed because he was mean and wicked.⁴ As for the other nao (or patache) [that had been] in company [with the Santiago], he said that it returned to New Spain, although he would not know where it would have ended up.

Islands discovered by Hernando de Grijalva [sic] in 1537, aboard the ship Santiago

The following details are known from the narrative made by the boatswain of the flagship, Miguel Noble, before the Governor of Ternate, Antonio Galvão, who ransomed him, and who published it in his "Tratado dos descobrimentos antigos e modernos, Feitos até a Era de 1550... Composto pelo famoso Antonio Galvão... impresso aos 15 de dezembro de 1563 annos."⁵ (it was reprinted on 17 March 1731, in West Lisbon, at the Ferreiriana print shop). He gives a few details concerning this expedition; one must give him sufficient credit. He says that two ships departed, one commanded

1 Ed. note: Galvão may have purposely reduced this estimate. He used the Portuguese word "cruzados" before, to translate the Spanish word "ducados", or ducats.

2 Ed. note: Identifiable as Wiak or Biak Island.

3 Ed. note: As his given name indicates; "prieto" means black.

4 Ed. note: Nothing is said about the destiny of the only other survivor, Camacho.

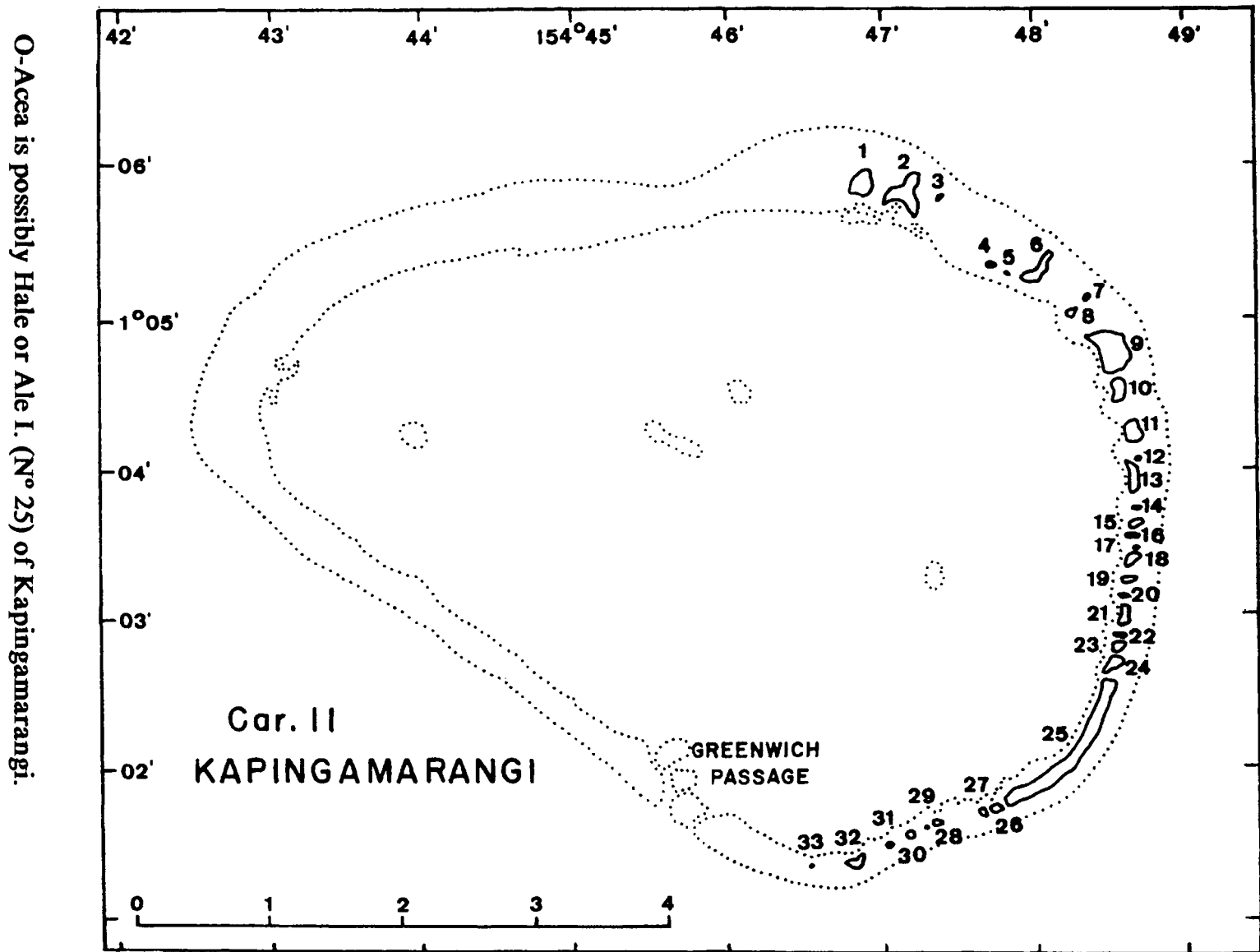
5 Ed. note: What Navarrete quotes, however, is not the title of this first edition of 1563, but that of the second of 1731.

by Fernão de Grijalva, and the other by the gentleman Alvarado, and that after having rendered assistance to Pizarro in Peru they went to the Moluccas, although, according to Spanish records, it appears that the smaller vessel, the one commanded by Fernando de Alvarado, returned to New Spain.

[Probable discovery of Kapingamarangi]

He then adds that they carried on for over 1,000 leagues without sighting any land, neither on one side of the equator nor on the other. The islands they discovered afterwards are as follows. The first one, which the natives called **O-Acea**¹ was in 2° N, and appeared to be 500 leagues more or less from the islands of cloves, that is the Moluccas.² The above details appear to fit some islands not generally shown on maps [ca. 1830s], but known to exist at 1°30'N and 175°10' E of Hierro or 160°21' E of Madrid³, forming an atoll with 15 coral islets. According to the present records, its inhabitants are of a light copper complexion, with regular features and the hair wavy, and often blond. The group is called "Matador", even though others presume it was given to them by the Spanish; this is doubtful, because before no islands by that name were known [to us]. The distance agrees well with that given by Galvão, and although the latitude is lower, the only group in the vicinity between this group and Ualan [Kosrae] is the already-mentioned [sic] reef or islet of "Indiana" [sic] which is in 3°20'N, but which is some 65 leagues further from the Moluccas.⁴

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- 1 Ed. note: The prefix O is characteristic of the Polynesian language. So, we might expect that they discovered the Polynesian outlier Kapingamarangi whose latitude is over 1° N, and whose main island is still called today Hale or Ale (See N° Car. 11-25 in Bryan's Place Names). However, Portuguese also uses the article O, which means "the" in the singular, whereas the equivalent prefix in Gilbertese (supposing they were at the Gilberts) would have been Te, as in Te-acea, or Te-ase, whatever its meaning.
 - 2 Ed. note: If Noble gauged the width of the Pacific as 1,000 + 500 leagues, his estimate of the distance of Acea from the Moluccas would place them in the Gilberts, rather than with Kapingamarangi. By the same token, this Acea cannot correspond to the Asia Islands that are next to New Guinea.
 - 3 Ed. note: Navarrete means Kapingamarangi, at 154°48' E of Greenwich. Bryan does not list the name Matador, but William T. Brigham, in his "Index to the Islands of the Pacific Ocean" (Honolulu, 1900), mentions them by that name, and says that they were discovered in 1876 [sic] at 1° N and 157°05' E of Greenwich. According to Andrew Sharp, in his "Discovery of the Pacific Islands", p. 209, there were sighted for sure by Captain Mooers of the American whaler Spartan in 1825. In fact, they were also spotted by Captain Rowe of the ship John Bull that same year.
 - 4 Ed. note: This Indiana Island is a transcription error for Nukuoro, which some English maps then referred to as Dunkin Island.



The second island on the track they followed toward the coasts of New Guinea, they say they called it “**Dos Pescadores**”.¹ He does not say what latitude nor distance, and they could be the Greenwich Islands in 1°4' N, which it appears the natives call Kapinga Molang, although generally they are given the name of Piguiram or Pikiram, and they are distant 40 leagues from the previous ones.²

After touching at the islands called Haine, Apia and Seri, south of the equator, that are near the coast of the Papuans, they went back to the north side and anchored at one in 1° N they called **Coroa**. From the latter island, they returned toward the equator, and touched at the islands of **Meonsum** and **Bufu**, which are also of the Papuans. The first named was quoted with the name of Meuncum in the declaration of Miguel Noble.

[Discovery of Mapia]

They turned back toward the equator and, in 1° N, they arrived at islets called **Os-Guedes**³ which were E—W with Ternate and at 124 or 125 leagues from Moro[tai] Island, which in turn lies 40 or 50 leagues from Ternate.⁴ Galvão adds that its inhabitants were short and their hair was straight or lank, like those of the Moluccans, and that the ship [sic]⁵ continued directly to the island of Moro[tai] itself and the other Spice Islands, not being allowed to take port at them, because they did not have the permission of the Governor, something noteworthy, he says, because those living in them are fond of the Spaniards and risk their lives, their women, their children and possessions for them.

There could probably be a mistake in the names of O-Acea, Coroa and Os-Guedes that Galvão indicates were the names given by the natives to some islands. [Captain] Burney supposes, I do not know why, that the last name was given by the Spanish on account of a characteristic feature of the natives, but I do not understand which one it could be, as it does not refer to any derivative of “guedejas” [lion’s mane].

Our historian Argensola⁶ declares that Alvarado discovered the Gelles Islands, giving them equal latitude and distance to Morotai, adding only that their language differs from that of the Moluccas; he attributes wrongly the deed to Don Pedro de Alvarado [the conquistador], and adds that he discovered also the island of the Papuans, although the Portuguese historians attribute the honor of this discovery to Don Jorge de Meneses. This last thing is not correct, given that, if priority is not given to Meneses, the glory would belong to Alvaro Saavedra who visited them in 1528.

1 Ed. note: In Portuguese, this means “Of the Fishermen”, not “Two Fishermen”.

2 Ed. note: The map available to Navarrete was indeed faulty, as the two groups in question are one and the same. I note that Piguirap or Piguiram was the name given to them by Captain Lütke, ca. 1830, but he never saw them.

3 Ed. note: As we shall see (next document), Galvão, said Gueles.

4 Ed. note: According to these clues, a look at a modern map indicates that Os-Guedes would correspond very closely to Mapia, whose position is 0°57'N & 134°20'E.

5 Ed. note: There is some confusion here, because the NW part of New Guinea was visited by Noble aboard native craft almost 2 years after the shipwreck of the Santiago.

6 Ed. note: “La conquista de las islas Malucas”, Madrid, 1609.

As for the islands of Guedes or Gelles, they are obviously those of Pegan, St. David or Freewill [=Mapia], to which the given latitude and distance apply.



Another portrait of Cortés, the conqueror of Mexico. Born in Medellín, Estramadura, in 1485, he went to the New World in 1511. In 1519, he began his conquest of the Aztec empire. (Based on a painting by Velazquez. From Jules Verne's *The Exploration of the World*, f.p. 225)