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## Document 1542E

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# Villalobos—Narrative of Juan Gaytan

*Sources: Giovanni Battista Ramusio, Delle Navigationi et viaggi, Vol. I, Venice, 1550, fol. 375 verso et sequitur. E. W. Dahlgren, Were the Hawaiian Islands Visited by the Spaniards Before Their Discovery by Captain Cook in 1778? Stockholm, 1916, pp. 28-33.*

## Dahlgren's opinion of the sailor Juan Gaytan and his account

Having, in our account of the history of the exploration of the Pacific Ocean, so far sought in vain for any trace of knowledge of the Hawaiian Islands, we now come to the person who is nowadays [i.e. 1916] generally pointed out as their first discoverer, Juan Gaytano or Gaytan.

This man belonged to the crews on the squadron of six ships which, under the command of Ruy Lopez de Villalobos, sailed away in 1542 from Mexico to take possession of the islands of the west which in the course of this expedition are first spoken of under the name which they have since retained, the Philippines. Juan Gaytan, however, had no very high command in the fleet: he was not the captain of any of the ships; nor is he mentioned among the pilots who, before the start, bound themselves by oath to perform their duties; nor is he mentioned in any other account of the voyage except his own, but we find his name, Juan Gaytan, in the list of 144 Spaniards who were still alive in 1546, when Villalobos' people, after the total loss of the expedition, were sent home by the Portuguese from the Moluccas.<sup>1</sup> If, therefore, the Hawaiian Islands were really discovered in 1542, there is at least no justification whatever for tacking the discovery to the name of a person who, among the 370 participants in the voyage, held no higher position than perhaps the subordinate one of a master or boatswain.

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<sup>1</sup> Ed. note: He is listed by Escalante as one of the survivors of the Villalobos expedition who did not stay behind at Ternate. His name is listed immediately after that of pilot Francisco Ruiz, from which it could perhaps be inferred that he was a pilot's apprentice.

When La Pérouse put forward the hypothesis of the Spanish discoverer of Hawaii, he had not access to any other account of Villalobos' expedition than that which was published under the name of Juan Gaetano in Italian in Ramusio's well-known collection of voyages.<sup>1</sup> If, when La Pérouse wrote these words, he had known Gaytan's account in its entirety, he would probably have suppressed or modified his reflections. Before we proceed to examine these reflections, we will give a complete translation of that part of Gaytan's account which deals with the ocean voyage:

*We left Porto Santo, where we had arrived after we had left the harbor of Natività (situated in 20° on All Saints' Day, 1542, and we sailed on this sea for about 30 days, mostly W and WSW. At the end of this time, when, according to my estimate, we had sailed about 900 leagues, we discovered a number of islands—after the others which we had previously seen—to which we gave the name of **Isole delli Re** [i.e. Islands of the Kings], which are inhabited by miserable and naked men, who have no other clothing except a piece of stuff, that is the kind of trousers with which they cover their private parts. On these islands we found off the coast coral and on land fowls of the same kind as in Castile, and fruits of the cocoa-palm and the bread-fruit tree. But we saw neither gold nor silver, nor anything else of value. Before we reached these islands we had discovered in the sea some uninhabited islands, namely San Thomaso, which lies 180 leagues from New Spain, and Rocha Partida, which lies more than 200 leagues further to the west than the former. After we had sailed further from this island more than 200 leagues, we took soundings and found a depth of seven fathoms, and in 13° or 14° we saw no land, although we suspected that we were near the island of San Bartolomeo, of which little is known. And from there we came to the islands already mentioned, Isole delli Re, which lie on 9, 10 and 11 degrees North latitude. From here we sailed 18 to 20 leagues and found islands, to which we gave the name of **delli Coralli** [i.e. Coral Is.]; they are situated on 9 or 10 degrees, more or less, also North latitude; and here we took in water and wood and found people of the same kind as on Isole delli Re. After we had left this place, we sailed WSW about 50 leagues and found other islands, to which, as they seemed green and beautiful, we gave the name of **li Giardini** [i.e. Garden Is.]; they lie about the same latitude as the said li Coralli, and we saw palms and other trees, but we did not cast anchor. Sailing hence in the same direction, namely to the west, about 280 leagues, we found a little island which received the name of **Matelotes** [Sailors' Islands]<sup>2</sup> and which is situated in the same latitude as those previously named, that is 9 to 10 degrees. When we sought shelter under this island, but without going ashore, we saw that it was covered with palms and inhabited by people, who gave us some fish and cocoa-nuts. While we were sailing from here in the same direction 30 leagues, we found another island, which received the name of **Isole de los Arezifes***

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- 1 Ed. note: Dahlgren has demonstrated that La Pérouse used a summary of this account made by Abbé Prévost. La Pérouse foolishly assumed that Ramusio/Gaytan had made a transcription error in recording the latitudes of Los Corales/Jardines as 9° and 11°, instead of 19° and 21° respectively.
  - 2 Ed. note: Note that Ramusio italianized the Portuguese/Spanish form of Matalotes to the French/Italian form of Matelotes.

*[Reef Is.]. This island is about 25 leagues in circumference. We saw there many human dwellings and many palm groves; and from there we sailed WSW, without landing. After we had sailed about 140 leagues, we discovered the island which is called Migindanao.*

It must be admitted that this account is distinguished neither by precision nor by clearness: much of the information, such as the distance between Santo Tomas and Roca Partida and the number of the days on the voyage, are so plainly incorrect that they must have arisen through errors of writing or printing. If, however, we compare this document with La Pérouse's version, several noticeable variations occur. In the first place, the course was not so unchangeably west as he supposed. Before they had reached *Isole delli Re*, they supposed they were in the neighborhood of *San Bartolomé* in 13°-14°; and if, as La Pérouse supposes, the latitude of the first islands was put 10 degrees too much to the south, then either the same mistake must be ascribed to the latitude statements for all the other islands to the west thereof—and where then can there be found a place for them to the west and in the neighborhood of Hawaii?—or the distance figures must be extremely faulty. As for La Pérouse's other arguments it can only be a coincidence that the distance (900 leagues) from Mexico to Los Reyes [i.e. Wotje] agrees with the real distance to Hawaii—if we add together all Gaytan's distances we get as the distance between Mexico and Mindanao 1420 leagues, which falls short of the real distance by more than 800 leagues<sup>1</sup>, but which shows that Gaytan placed Los Reyes nearer the Asiatic side than the American, while the relationship is the reverse in the case of Hawaii—and what Gaytan says of the natural features of the islands, their products and inhabitants suits the Carolines as well as, if not better than, the Hawaiian Islands; that he has not a word about the high mountains and the volcanoes which are so characteristic of the latter islands speaks strongly against their alleged identity with Los Reyes.

For the consideration of these conditions we have a far greater amount of material at our disposal than was the case in La Pérouse's time. Besides Juan Gaytan's account, we have at least four narratives of Villalobos' expedition, two of which consist of official reports made by participants in the expedition to the Viceroy of Mexico, Don Antonio de Mendoza: one, by the friar Jeronimo Santisteban, is dated Cochin in India, 22 January 1547; the second, which is more detailed, has as its author one of the officers of Villalobos, Garcia de Escalante A., dated Lisbon 1 August 1548. Another participant in the expedition, Father Cosme de Torres, gave some short, but by no means unimportant, notes on it in a letter to Ignatius de Loyola from Goa, 25 January 1549.<sup>2</sup> Finally, too, the account for which we are indebted to Antonio Galvão must be included among the original sources, as its author, a sometime Governor of the Moluccas (1536-40), evidently derived his information from the Portuguese authorities there. Though

1 Ed. note: However, most Spanish pilots had similarly underestimated that distance by 25%.

2 The original text of this letter, in Portuguese, was published by H. Haas, *Geschichte des Christentums in Japan*, II, Tokyo 1904, pp. 355-360. Cosmo de Torres afterwards did much important work as a missionary in Japan, where he died in 1570.

his work came out in Portuguese as early as 1563, and in an English translation in 1601, it was not until quite close to our time that it has become generally accessible through the edition produced by the Hakluyt Society, in 1862.

With the help of all these sources I shall attempt to give a reconstructed picture of Villalobos' voyage, in order thereby to show whether there is any ground for the discovery ascribed to Juan Gaytan.

All our sources agree in stating that the expedition sailed on 1 November 1542 from a harbor in the neighborhood of La Navidad (19°10' N lat.), which Gaytan calls Porto Santo<sup>1</sup>, but two of the other descriptions call Puerto de Juan Gallego. After having sailed westwards 180 leagues in 8 days they saw "a little uninhabited island" (according to Santisteban), which they supposed to be the same as that discovered by Hernando Grijalva in 1533, and to which Grijalva had given the name of Santo Tomas. But probably this supposition was incorrect: the land they saw was quite certainly the little island, likewise discovered by Grijalva, Los Innocentes, now San Benedicto.

After sailing 3 days and 12 leagues they discovered another island, to which was given the name of La Añublada<sup>2</sup> because it was covered with cloud: here they took some wood and water, although at great risk of going aground when the anchor cables threatened to be cut by the submarine rocks. This was presumably the true Santo Tomas or Socorro<sup>3</sup>, the largest in the Revillagigedo Archipelago and the only one where it would seem to be possible to land without great difficulty; the summit, 2000 feet high, causes the formation of clouds which gained the island the name of "the cloud-capped".

Two or three days later, when they had sailed a further distance of 80 leagues, another island hove in sight: it was called Roca Partida, but as it lay to windward they could not approach it: to judge from the distance it must have been the present Clarion or Santa Rosa, not the island which on modern maps is called Roca Partida.

They were now (13 or 14 November) within the tradewind belt and probably they were led by the prevailing direction of the wind to lower the latitude pretty soon. For 55 days they sailed without sighting land, although they often fancied that they could see signs that land was near. On the night before 3 December the pilot on the flagship was warned by the lookout: he immediately commanded them to luff and cast the lead; "by the grace of God", it is added, it happened that the ship, which usually sailed badly when close-hauled, this time luffed quite smartly. The twice-repeated soundings gave on the first occasion 4 fathoms, on the second 7. The other ships were warned of the threatening danger by signals. Probably it was this successful manoeuvre that caused the name of the pilot, Gaspar Rico, to establish itself on the map of the world, where it still struggles with the name of San Bartolomé as a name of Taongi. It was only a

- 1 Ed. note: Not really (see above) as he says that they had stopped there after their departure from Natività, Italian for the Spanish Navidad, the port that Juan Gallego had discovered less than a decade before that.
- 2 Ed. note: Rather, La Nublada.
- 3 Grijalva himself describes Santo Tomas in a way which closely agrees with modern descriptions...

bank, however, on other maps rightly marked as such by the name of Baxo de Villalobos. If the supposition that they were in the neighborhood of San Bartolomé is correct, then Gaspar Rico's or Villalobos' bank is to be sought in some coral reef between that island and the other islands in the Marshall group...<sup>1</sup>

On Christmas Day 1542, land was at length seen. It was an archipelago of small, low, wooded islands. With great difficulty they succeeded in landing on one of them, for there was no anchorage to be found near the coral-bound shores. As many of the inhabitants as could fled in their canoes to another island, leaving only a few women and children hidden in the thickets. These received some small gifts and were treated well by the Spaniards, who took in water and wood but found no other useful products, except fowls, cocoa-nuts, and some other fruits.

Gaytan says that they gave the islands the name of Los Reyes<sup>2</sup>, which has a certain measure of probability as they lingered in their neighborhood, probably making attempts to land in different places, until 6 January, the day of the Three Holy Kings: it was at that time the established custom to name new discoveries after the saint of the day. But Santisteban says that they "**thought** that the islands were Los Reyes", and Galvão expressly says that they were the same islands as had been discovered by Saavedra and received that name from him.<sup>3</sup> Evidently Villalobos' people regarded the name of Los Reyes as standing for the whole group<sup>4</sup>, and they gave special names to special islands: for instance, they called that on which they had first landed Santisteban after St. Stephen's day, 26 December; some other islands were named Corales.<sup>5</sup>

Whether one accepts Galvão's supposition and, in accordance therewith, places Villalobos' Los Reyes among the Western Carolines, or follows later investigators and perhaps on better grounds, identifies them with some group among the Central Carolines<sup>6</sup>, in neither case is Gaytan's latitude, 9° to 11°, burdened with the mistake that La Pérouse thought himself able to establish, but is approximately correct. In order to disprove the hypothesis that Los Reyes is Hawaii it need only be remarked that three of the accounts cited agree in stating that the islands were **low**.

Before Villalobos arrived at Mindanao, 2 February 1543, there was further discovered a number of islands and groups of islands, which received the names of Los

1 Ed. note: Rather, this shoal has to be located a great distance (22 days of navigation or over 600 leagues) **east** of Taongi.

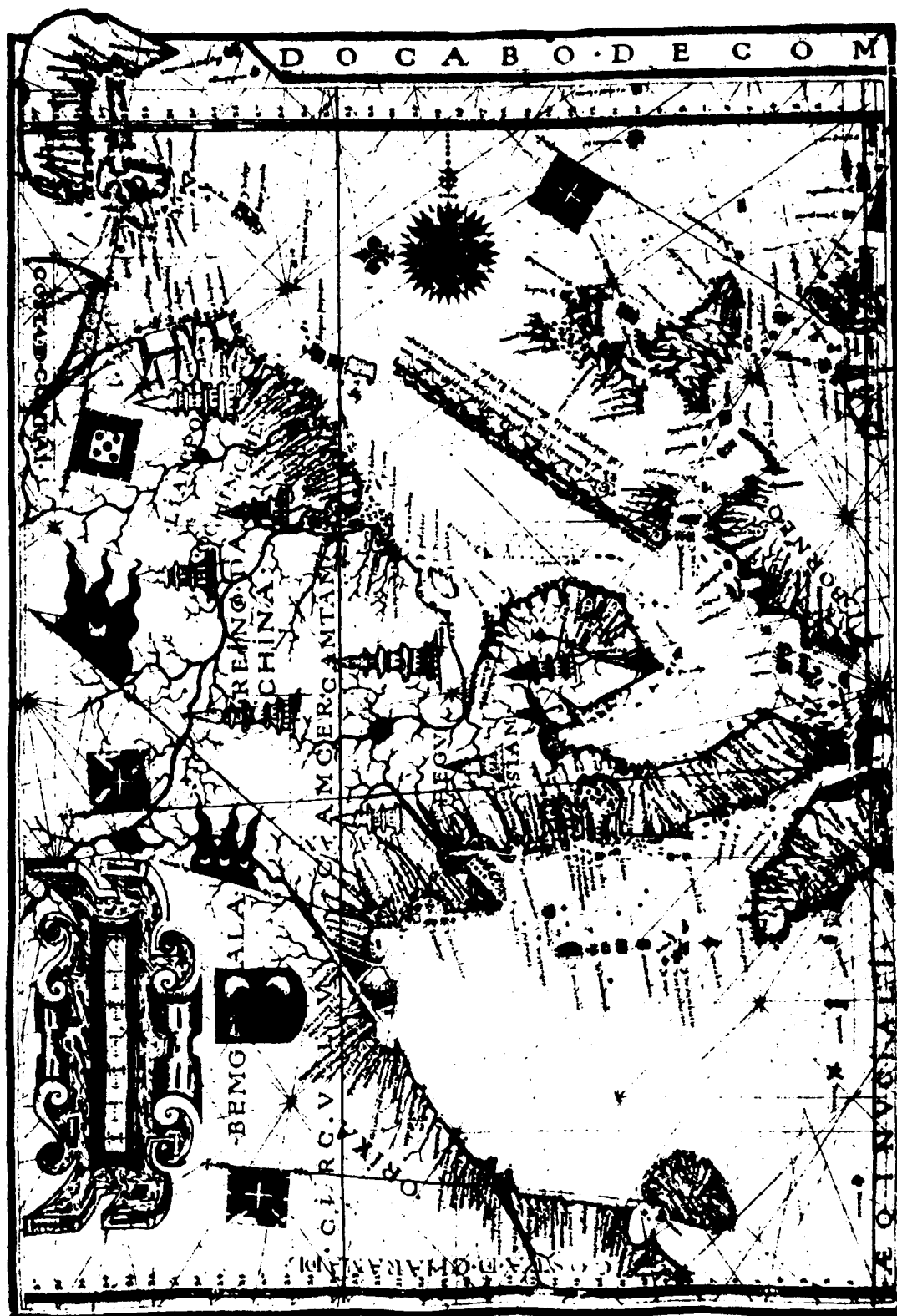
2 Ed. note: Dahlgren is not entirely correct here. They had already sighted one atoll (Wotje), which they thought might be Saavedra's Los Reyes, before they anchored at the second atoll (Likiep) which they named Los Corales, and they also named the islet on which they lived for a few days San Esteban (Likiep I).

3 Ed. note: Saavedra did apply that name to Ulithi but Galvão did not mean to locate them in the Marshalls.

4 Ed. note: There is no evidence for such a conjecture.

5 Ed. note: Not so, the group was called Corales. All of this will become clear with the next document, Doc. 1542F.

6 Ed. note: He means the Namonuito group area.



Map by Fernão Vaz Dourado, made at Goa in 1568. It shows Japan discovered by the Portuguese in 1542 or 1543 and some islands found by De la Torre south of it in 1543.

Jardines, Matalotes and Arrecifes, all situated south of 10° N; but with these we need not concern ourselves, as they fall outside the subject of this essay.<sup>1</sup> That during this part of the voyage they did not even reach so far north that the southernmost Ladrões came in sight is shown by the absolute silence observed in all the narratives of the voyage as regards that archipelago, which was previously well known to the Spaniards.

The detailed consideration that I have devoted to this enquiry must be regarded as justified, inasmuch as it was necessary to show that Juan Gaytan could not have discovered the Hawaiian Islands in 1542: but how about the same man's alleged discovery of 1555?

About Gaytan we know that he was on board the ship **San Juan**, which, under the command of Bernardo de la Torre, was to start for Mexico and ask for succor to Vilalobos after the latter had fallen into extreme distress in the Moluccas. De la Torre had with him as pilot Gaspar Rico and as second pilot Alonso Fernandez Tarifeño: thus Gaytan had not the position of a pilot in this voyage either. They sailed from Mindanao 26 August 1543; they saw various islands in about 25° N lat., one of which was a volcano which poured forth fire from several places. Of some of these islands it is said that they lay due north of the Ladrões; without doubt we have to find them in the present Volcano archipelago, possibly among the Bonin Islands. From here they steered eastward between 23° and 30° N lat. (the figures vary) and now discovered, possibly, another little uninhabited island (Marcus Island?)<sup>2</sup>; but on 18 October, when they believed themselves to have sailed 750 leagues from the point of departure, they were compelled by storms and scarcity of water to turn back to the Philippines.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Ed. note: By the way, Dahlgren proved his point that the Spaniards never discovered the Hawaiian Islands before Captain Cook.

2 Ed. note: Possibly, but unlikely, because they did not sail much farther east than the chain of islands linking Japan and the Marianas. The proof can be found on the Portuguese map by Vaz Dourado (1568) which shows two of the islands they discovered on the 1543 first return attempt (mentioned by Galvão by name; remember that the Portuguese had confiscated all their charts, etc.); such islands are shown directly south of Tokyo on whose meridian they are in fact located.

3 Bernardo de la Torre's expedition is briefly mentioned, and in ways not fully agreeing among themselves, in the above-cited narratives of Gaytan, Galvão, Escalante, and Santisteban. Only Galvão mentions the islands found by name—Malabrigo, Duas Yrmaas, Volcanes, and Forfana, names which in a short time found a place on the maps and have not altogether disappeared yet [in 1916]. Ed. note: The first two are some of the Northern Marianas, and the last in the Bonins. Vaz Dourado (see his map reproduced here) showed them too far north. His Malabrigo can be clearly seen but the other group shown can be deciphered as "Ilhas das ermanas", I think.

All that we know further about Gaytan is, that he was one of the men of Villalobos who was sent home to Europe by the Portuguese: of this voyage he himself says that he served as a pilot from the very departure from the Moluccas; that he acquired knowledge of all Portuguese sailing directions and charts, which they deliberately falsified, but that he made his own observations and prepared a more reliable chart; and that, when the Portuguese found that he knew the secrets of their navigation, they made him attractive offers, which he would not accept because he preferred to serve his imperial master. Juan Gaytan now disappears from history: no document so far known says that he took part in any expedition to the Pacific in 1555, or, that any such expedition ever took place.

It may perhaps be objected that, even if none of the known accounts speak of any discovery that can refer to Hawaii, and even if the Juan Gaytan hypothesis must be recognized as untenable, yet the old documents are not so completely preserved but that one or other voyage, one or other discovery could have taken place, without leaving any trace in the written records. Though such an objection cannot be entirely refuted, yet I believe that in this case we have complete evidence that the opposite holds good.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ed. note: Let me add part of Dahlgren's conclusion (pages 212-213): "No land that can be identified with the Hawaiian Islands is mentioned in any narrative of exploring expeditions in the Pacific Ocean in earlier times [i.e. before 1778], nor in any notice of the voyages of the Spanish galleons between the Philippines and Mexico. The allegations that those islands were discovered by Alvaro de Saavedra 1527, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza 1532, Juan Gaytan 1542 or 1555, Alvaro de Mendaña 1568, Francisco Gali 1584, are demonstrably incorrect... No historical fact proves, nor is there any sort of probability, that the Hawaiian Islands were ever visited, or even seen, by the Spaniards before their discovery by Captain Cook in 1778." Amen to that.