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## Document 1521B1

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# Magellan's voyage—Primary account by Pigafetta—the Italian manuscript

*Source: Italian manuscript L103 Sup. in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, as edited by Carlo Amoretti in 1800 and translated by Pinkerton in Vol. 11 of his Voyages.<sup>1</sup>*

### Departure from the Strait, and thence to the Death of Captain Magellan...

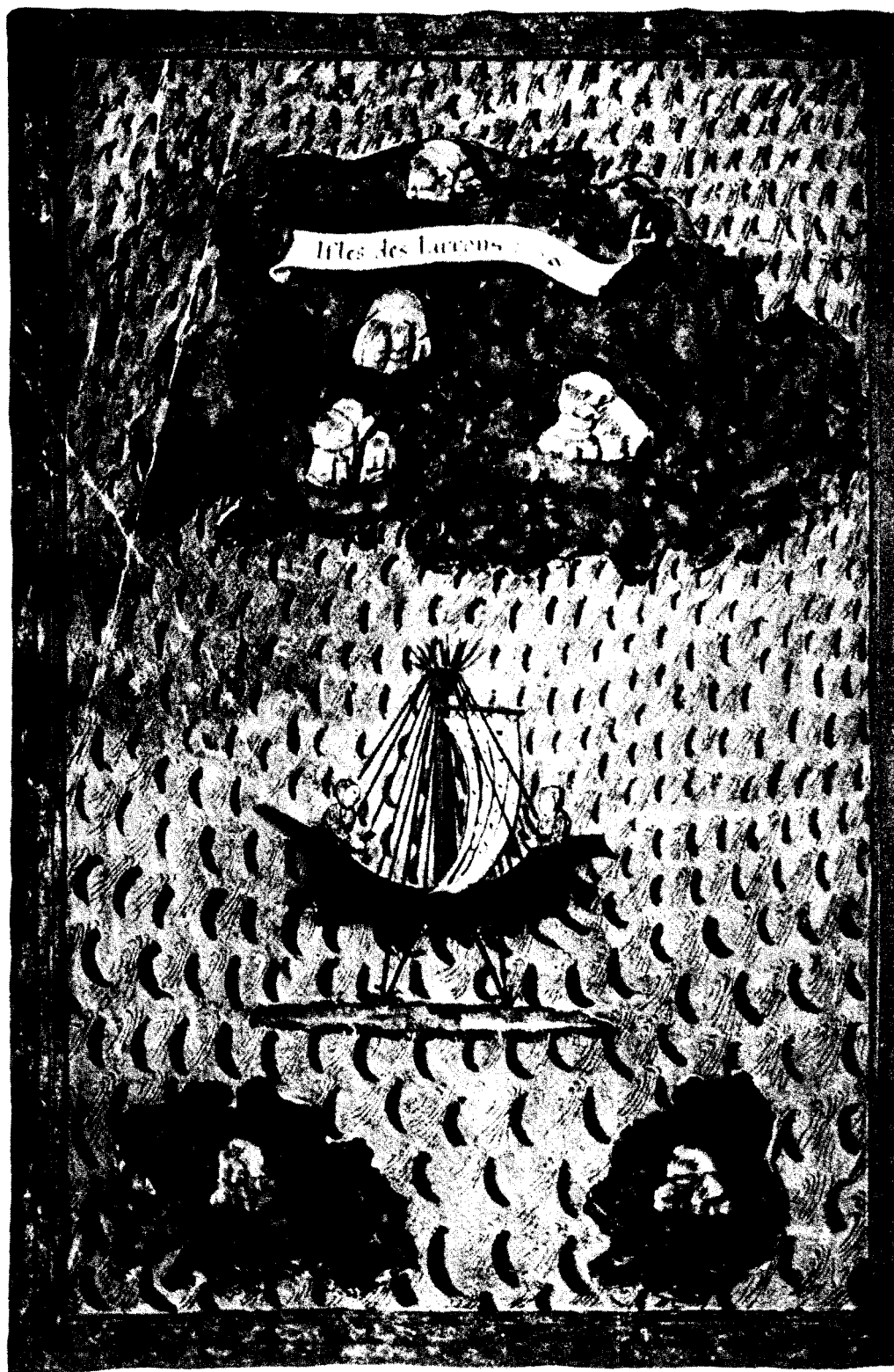
On Wednesday, 28th November, we left the strait, and entered the ocean to which we afterwards gave the denomination of Pacific, and in which we sailed the space of three months and twenty days, without taking any fresh provisions. The biscuit we were eating no longer deserved the name of bread; it was nothing but dust, and worms which had consumed the substance; and what is more, it smelled intolerably, being impregnated with the urine of mice. The water we were obliged to drink was equally putrid and offensive. We were even so far reduced, that we might not die of hunger, to eat pieces of the leather with which the main-yard was covered to prevent it from wearing the rope. These pieces of leather, constantly exposed to the water, sun, and wind, were so hard that they required being soaked four or five days in the sea in order to render them supple; after this we broiled them to eat. Frequently indeed we were obliged to subsist on saw-dust, and even mice, a food so disgusting, were sought after with such avidity that they sold for half a ducat a piece.

Nor was it all, our greatest misfortune was being attacked by a malady in which the gums swelled so as to hide the teeth, as well in the upper as the lower jaw, whence those affected thus were incapable of chewing their food. Nineteen<sup>2</sup> of our number died of

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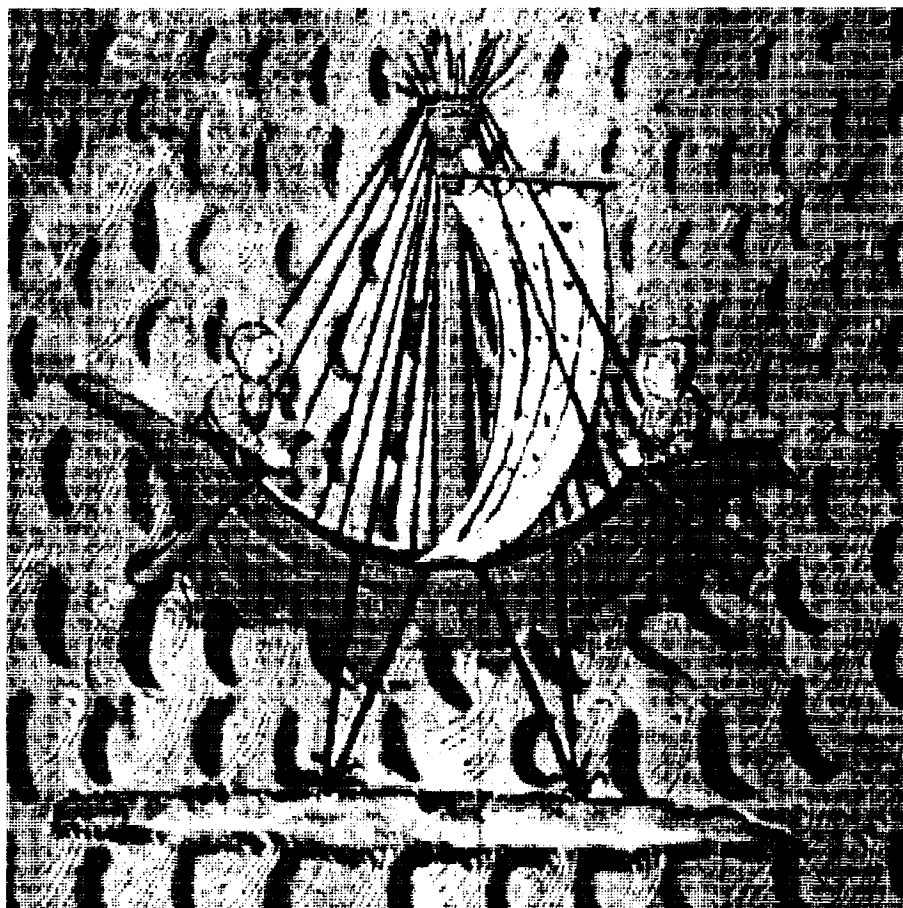
1 There are other English translations of the Ambrosian manuscript, notably by Lord Stanley of Alderley (Hakluyt Society, 1874), F. H. H. Guillemard (London, 1890) and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland, 1906), but the above text by Pinkerton is more technically correct and its older style is interesting.

2 Ed. note: Exact number not given in the French manuscripts. Navarrete (iv, p. 54) says that, according to a document in AGI Seville, only 11 men died of scurvy during the passage from the Strait to the Ladrones. Therefore, the 8 others would have been either South American Indians or have died after leaving Guam.

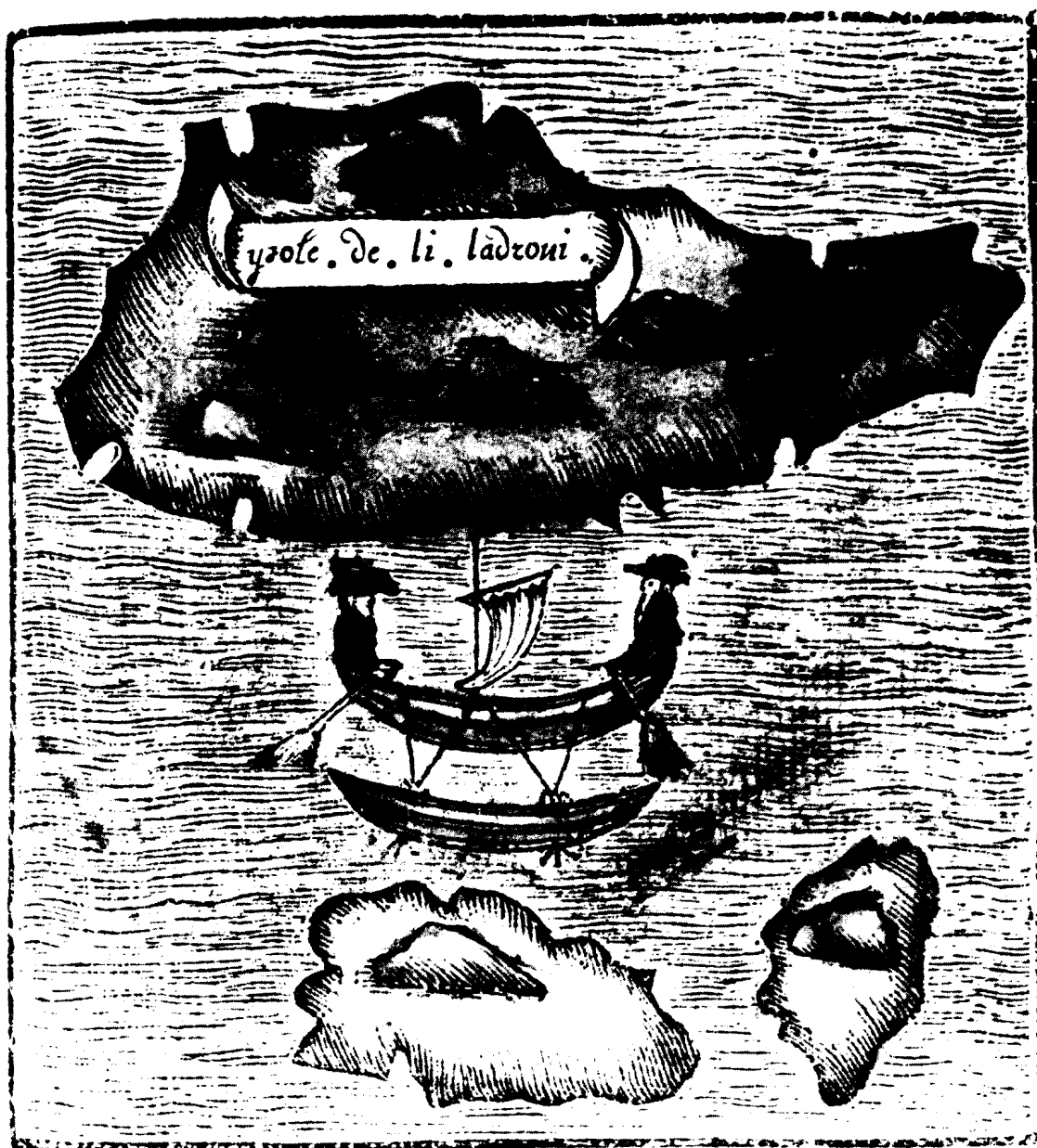


**Guam and Rota according to one of the French manuscripts. (From the Nancy/Phillipps/Beinecke manuscript)**

this complaint, among whom was the Patagonian giant, and a Brazilian, whom we had brought with us from his own country. Besides those who died, we had from twenty-five to thirty sailors ill, who suffered dreadful pains in their arms, legs, and other parts of the body; but these all of them recovered. As for myself, I cannot be too grateful to God for the continued health I enjoyed; though surrounded with sick I experienced not the slightest illness.



In the course of these three months and twenty days we traversed nearly four thousand leagues in the Ocean denominated by us Pacific, on account of our not having experienced throughout the whole of this period any of the least tempestuous weather. We did not either in this whole length of time discover any land, except two desert islands; on these we saw nothing but birds and trees, for which reason we named them *Las Islas Desdichadas* (the Unfortunate Islands). We found no bottom along their shores, and saw no fish but sharks. The two islands are two hundred leagues apart. The first lies in latitude fifteen degrees south, the second in latitude nine degrees. From the run of our ship, as estimated by the log, we traversed a space of from sixty to seventy leagues a day; and if God and his Holy Mother had not granted us a fortunate voyage,



**Another version of Pigafetta's Islands of Thieves. Guam appears above Rota on this map from the Italian manuscript. (From Ms. L103 Sup., Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan)**

we should all have perished of hunger in so vast a sea. I do not think that any one for the future will venture upon a similar voyage.

If, on leaving the straits, we had continued a western course under the same parallel, we should have made the tour of the world; and without seeing any land should have returned by Wished-for-Cape (*Il Capo Deseado*), to the cape of the Eleven Thousand Virgins, both of which are in latitude fifty-two degrees south.

The antarctic has not the same stars as the arctic pole; but here are seen two clusters of small nebulous stars, which look like small clouds, and are but little distant the one from the other. In midst of these clusters of small stars two are distinguished very large and very brilliant, but of which the motion is scarcely apparent; these indicate the antarctic pole.<sup>1</sup>

Though the needle declined somewhat from the north pole, it yet oscillated towards it, but not with equal force as in the northern hemisphere. When out at sea, the captain-general directed the course the pilots should steer, and enquired how they pointed.<sup>2</sup> They unanimously replied they bore in that direction he ordered them: he then informed them that their course was wrong, and directed them to correct the needle, because, being in the southern, it had not an equal power to designate the true north as in the northern hemisphere. When in midst of the ocean we discovered, in the west [sic], five stars of great brilliancy, in form of a cross.

We steered north-west by west till we reached the equinoctial line in one hundred and twenty-two degrees of longitude, west of the line of demarcation...

After we had crossed the line we steered west-by-north. We then ran two hundred leagues towards the west; when, changing our course again, we ran west-by-south until in the latitude of thirteen degrees north<sup>3</sup>; we trusted by this course to reach Cape Gatticara which cosmographers have placed in this latitude, but they are mistaken, this cape lying twelve degrees more towards the north. They must, however, be excused the error in their plan, as they have not like us had the advantage of visiting these parts. When we had run seventy leagues in this direction and were in latitude twelve degrees north, longitude one hundred and forty-six degrees, on Wednesday the 6th of March,

1 Translator's note: The two large and brilliant stars mentioned by Pigafetta must be gamma and beta of the Hydra Constellation.

2 Translator's note: How they *pointed* by the compass, in what direction they steered. To *correct the needle*, is to add or diminish the degrees of its variation, that the compass may point to the true north.

3 Translator's note: From these data it is that I have pointed out on the chart the run of the squadron from the strait to the Ladrone islands. I drew a line in the direction north-west by west from Cape Victory towards the equator. Afterwards, leaving the equator at one hundred and twenty-two degrees from the line of demarcation, I traced a line to meet the former, running from north-west to south-east, and forming with it an obtuse angle, where the squadron changed its course. North of the equator I drew a line running west-by-north, about eight hundred miles, to thirteen degrees of latitude north, and thence to the Ladrone islands. I am well aware that the degrees of longitude being inexact, the rest must be very uncertain; but the course traced presents no difficulty, and seems to have a foundation. The track laid down as pursued by Magellan by other geographers is purely ideal.

we discovered in the north-west a small **island**, and afterwards two others in the south-west. The first [sic] was more lofty and larger than the other two. The captain-general meant to stop at the largest to victual and refresh, but this was rendered impossible, as the islanders came on board our ships, and stole, first one thing and then another, without our being able to prevent them. They invited us to take in our sails and come on shore, and even had the address to steal the skiff which hung astern of our vessel. Exasperated at length, our captain landed with forty men, burnt forty or fifty of their houses, and several of their boats, and killed seven of the people. By acting thus he recovered his skiff, but he did not deem it prudent to stop any longer after such acts of hostility. We therefore continued our course in the same direction as before.

On our entering the boats to land and punish the islanders, our sick people besought us, if any of them should chance to be killed, to bring them their intestines, persuaded that they would soon effect their cure.

When our people wounded any of the islanders with their arrows, (of which weapon they had no conception), and chanced to pierce them through, the unfortunate sufferers endeavoured to draw out these arrows from their bodies, now by one end, now by another; after which they looked at them with astonishment, and sometimes died of their wounds, a circumstance that did not fail to excite our pity. Still, when they saw us about to depart, they followed us with more than a hundred canoes, and showed us fish as if disposed to sell it, but when near us they pelted us with stones, and took to flight. We sailed through the midst of them under full sail, but they avoided our vessels with much dexterity. We likewise saw in their boats, crying and tearing their hair, some women, whose husbands probably had been killed.

These people are ignorant of any law, and are guided mainly by their inclinations. They have no king, nor any chief; adore no Being or image, and go naked. Some among them have a long beard, and black hair, tied over the forehead and hanging down to the girdle. They likewise wear small hats made of palm. They are of good size and well built. Their complexion is an olive brown, but we were told they are born fair, and become dark as they increase in years. They possess the art of staining their teeth red and black, which with them is a mark of beauty. The women are pretty, of handsome shape, and less dark than the men. Their hair is very black, sleek, and hangs to the ground. They go naked like the men, except their privities [sic], which they cover with a very narrow strip of cloth, or rather of the inner bark of the palm-tree. Their whole employment is in their houses, in making mats and baskets of the leaves of the palm-tree, and in other similar works. Both men and women anoint their hair, and the whole of the body, with the oil of the cocoa-nut and *seseli*.<sup>1</sup>

These people live on birds, flying-fish, potatoes, a sort of figs half a foot long<sup>2</sup>, sugar-canes and other similar productions. Their houses are of wood covered with planks, over which leaves of their fig-trees four feet in length are spread. They have tolerably

1 Translator's note: A species of small oily grain, very common in China, the *Ruphanus oleifer sinensis*, Linn.

2 Translator's note: These figs are bananas, or the fruit of the *musa* (*musa pisang*, Linn. ).

decent rooms, with rafters and window frames; and their beds are pretty soft, being made of very fine matting of the palm-tree laid upon straw. Their only arms are a lance tipped with pointed fish-bone. The inhabitants of these islands are poor, but very dextrous, and above all at thieving; for this reason we gave the name *De los Ladrones* to the islands.<sup>1</sup>

Their chief amusement consists in sailing about with their wives in canoes similar to the gondolas of Fusine near Venice<sup>2</sup>, but they are still more narrow; all of them are painted, either black, white, or red. The sail is made of the leaves of the palm-tree sewed together, and has the shape of a latine [sic] sail. It is always placed on one side; and on the opposite side, to form an equipoise to the sail, they fasten a large wooden log, pointed at one end, with poles laid across and fixed in it, which keeps the boat steady, and admits of their sailing without apprehension; their rudder resembles a baker's shovel, that is to say, it consists of a pole fastened into a plank. They make no difference between head and stern, as they have a rudder at each end. They are excellent swimmers, and have as little fear of the sea as dolphins.

They were so astonished at the sight of us, that we had reason to believe they had never seen any other than the inhabitants of their own island.

The 16th of March, at sunrise, we found ourselves near an elevated land, three hundred leagues from the islands *De los Ladrones*. We soon discovered it to be an island. It is called **Zamal**. Behind this island is another not inhabited, and we afterwards learnt that its name is **Humunu**. Here the captain-general resolved on landing the next day to take in water in greater security, and take some rest after so long and tedious a voyage. Here likewise he caused two tents to be erected for the sick, and ordered a sow to be killed.

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1 Translator's note: They were afterwards called *Las Islas de las Velas*, from the number of sails continually passing; and in the time of Philip IV, of Spain they were called Marianas, in honor of Maria [Ana] of Austria, his Queen.

2 Translator's note: Small long gondolas extremely narrow, used between Fusine and Venice.



**This could be a portrait of Antonio Pigafetta. *Portrait of a gentleman, by* Corneille de Lyon, which could be used to represent the social companion of Magellan, Antonio Pigafetta, Knight of Rhodes, and author of the best eyewitness report of the first voyage around the world. (Oil painting on wood. Galeria D'Este, Modena, Italy.**