
Document 1568H

Mendaña expedition—Narrative of a Franciscan friar

Sources: BN Paris Ms. #ESP325, folios 174-183; translated in Amherst & Thomson, vol. 2, pp. 1, 208-209, and edited by me.

Note: There were 4 Franciscans aboard the two ships. Fr. Kelly thinks that this narrative was written by one of them who was aboard the flagship. Amherst & Thomson are wrong in assuming that it may have been written by one of the soldiers.

Original text found in Paris

Relación breve de lo sucedido en el viage que hizo Alvaro de Mendaña en la demanda de la Nueva Guinea la qual ya estava descubierta por Iñigo Ortiz de Retes que fue con Villalobos, de la tierra de la Nueva España, el año de 1544.—

El año de 1567 por mandado del licenciado Lopez García de Castro del concejo de su Magestad y governador de los reinos del piru [sic] y presidente del audiencia de los reies se armaron dos navios de mediano porte en los quales nos embarcamos ciento y veinte hombres, la mitad marineros y gente de la mar y la otra soldados sin [contar] la gente de servicio y los demas (?) con quatro pilotos y el mas principal dellos era (?) herman Gallego y por general desta armada Alvaro de Mendaña sobrino del presidente un mancebo de veinte y cinco años y por maese de campo y almirante Pedro de Ortega, valencino, alguacil mayor de Panama, natural de Guadalcanal. Fuemos con (?) nosotros quatro frailes de la orden del Señor San francisco.

Salimos del puerto del Callao de Lima y de la ciudad de los Reyes miercoles diez (del mez) y ocho a desinueue de noviembre mill y qui[n]jien[ta] y sesenta y siete años y anduvimos barloventando...

...

[Folio 180] El piloto Hernan Gallego es un hombre muy esperto en este oficio y que le respondió que el lo travajaría todo lo posible mas que no se escusava meterse al norte porque no se podian hallar temporales sino en passando el equinoccial y metiendose al norte y siendo mas de fuerza avia de dar en costa de nueva españa y ansi fuemos navegando por el nordeste al norte y siempre a barlovento y los [diez y] siete de setiembre

por la mañana vimos tierra por barlovento y nos hallamos dos leguas deles y dixo el piloto que som los baxos de San [Barto]Lome y no los pudimos tomar y ansi vimos otros bajos los quales estaban a sotavento.

Avia muchos corrientes y saltando el maese de campo y algunos soldados en una ysleta vieron homios(?)¹ en un montezillo apartados unos de otros y hallaron algunos huevos (?) y gallinas y entre ellas algunas alhajas no se hallaron [:] se hallo un escoplo que primero avia sido lima por donde se sospecha que en esta ysla [h]an estado españoles y avien[do] da(n)do a la vela y navegado dos leguas vimos una vela aunque no vimos el caxa y deseosos de saber della nos tuvimos a la bolin(g)a y ansi lo perdimos de vista y venimos nuestro viaje hasta ponernos en altura de veinte y un grados y vimos una ysla despoblada la qual nombramos la ysla de San Francisco.

Tiene alrededor muchos arrecifes. Esto fue vispera días de San Francisco por el mes de octubre y asi navegamos hasta treinta grados y ...

Translation of the above text

Brief account of what occurred during the voyage made by Alvaro de Mendaña in quest of New Guinea which had already been discovered by Iñigo Ortiz de Retes who sailed with Villalobos from the land of New Spain in the year of 1544.—

In the year of 1567, by order of the Licentiate Lope García de Castro, of the Council of His Majesty and Governor of the Kingdoms of Peru and President of the Audiencia of Los Reyes [i.e. Lima], two ships of average tonnage were outfitted and we embarked aboard them, 120 men, half seamen and sailors and half soldiers, not counting the servants and the others, with 4 pilots, the most senior of them being Hernán Gallego, and as General of this fleet Alvaro de Mendaña, nephew of the President, a young man of 25 years of age, and as Master-of-Camp and Admiral Pedro de Ortega², from Valencia, chief constable of Panama, born in Guadalcanal. There came with us 4 friars of the Order of St. Francis.

We departed from the port of Callao of Lima and from the City of the Kings on Wednesday [night] 18th to 19th of November 1567 and sailed to windward...

[Folio 180] The pilot, Hernán Gallego, a man who is very expert in his field, replied to him [i.e. Mendaña] that he would try to do the best he could [to go east] but that he made no excuse for steering north because there could not be any storms except in crossing the equinoctial line and, by going the northern route he had necessarily to come upon the coast of New Spain. Thus we steered anywhere from NE to N, always to windward.

1 Ed. note: Word written over. Amherst & Thomson think it might be "uraios"; it is possibly "chozas" which means huts.

2 Ed. note: The real "admiral" in charge of the *almiranta* Todos los Santos was soon to become Pedro Sarmiento.

[Discovery of Namu]

On the morning of the 7th [rather 17th] of September in the morning, we saw land to windward and we found ourselves 2 leagues from them. The pilot said that they are the shoals of San Bartolomé. We could not touch at them and thus we saw other shoals which were to leeward. There were many currents. The Master-of-Camp and a few soldiers landed on an islet and saw huts (?) in a small wooded area separated from one another and they found some eggs¹ and hens. Among them no jewels were found.² A chisel was found which had previously been a file³, from which it was suspected that Spaniards had been at this island.

Having set sail and sailed 2 leagues, we saw a sail, although we did not see the hull. Desirous of knowing about it, we tacked and thus we lost sight of it.

[Discovery of Wake]

We pursued our voyage until we reached the latitude of 21° and we saw an uninhabited island which we named the Island of San Francisco. There are many reefs around it. This was on the eve of St. Francis Day in the month of October, and so we sailed as far as 30°...⁴

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- 1 Ed. note: Amherst & Thomson have translated this as "fresh food" instead; the manuscript is hard to decipher. That may be read as "fresh eggs".
 - 2 Ed. note: The word "no" is evident in the manuscript. The word "alhajas" could also be translated as "(pricey) furniture".
 - 3 Ed. note: And not a nail, as Amherst & Thomson have translated.
 - 4 Ed. note: At the end of the manuscript, it is said that about 40 men had died by the time they reached the port of Navidad. The *almiranta*, minus her pilots, crawled into port on 25 February 1569.