
Document 1606A

Second Quirós expedition—Narrative by Quirós, as edited by Zaragoza

Sources: MN ms. 951; Royal Palace ms. 1686; published by Justo Zaragoza in 1876 (I:192-402) and badly translated by Markham in 1904 (I:261 et seq. See also sources for Doc. 1596D).

Introduction

Pedro Fernández de Quirós (whose family name in Portuguese was Queiros) left the port of Callao in Peru on 21 December 1605, intent on pursuing the discoveries made with Mendaña in 1595-96. After his previous voyage, he had left Lima (17 April 1598) to go to Spain, thence to Rome where he spent almost 2 years (September 1600 to April 1602) before he got the support of Pope Clement VIII. After another year spent at the Spanish Court, he finally obtained permission for a second expedition, on 31 March 1603. He arrived back at Callao in March 1605 and immediately began the preparations for his new expedition.

All of the above events are described in a manuscript diary written by Quirós himself, including the aftermath, a long 7-year stay at the Court of Spain (1607-1614) during which he tried anew to get approval for a third expedition to settle the Austral Lands.

Quirós' fleet consisted at first of a flagship, the **San Pedro y San Pablo**, an *almiranta*, the **San Pedro**, and a launch or patache called **Los Tres Reyes**. In April 1606, the ships reached the archipelago now called the New Hebrides or Vanuatu. At the beginning of June, the flagship became separated from the rest of the fleet which made their separate way to Manila, after discovering Torres Strait.

As for the flagship, it made a return voyage to New Spain, in three stages: from 10°20'S (and 18 June council meeting) to 38°N (20 August) heading from NE to N (although the winds and currents made that an average heading of N by E); then eastward along the 38° parallel until the land of California was sighted; and, finally, the coasting down to the port of Navidad, reached on 20 or 21 October, and to Acapulco, which the flagship entered on 23 November 1606.

The flagship had crossed the equator on 2 July. The only land sighted between the equator and California was seen on 8 July in the afternoon. It was a small island,

situated at about 3°30'N, which they skirted on the east side during the following night. It was baptized **Buen Viaje**. This island can only correspond to the Makin atoll, whose main part is Butaritari. The land first sighted was probably the SW corner of the atoll.

There are three eyewitness accounts of the return voyage; all have been published: by Quirós himself, as dictated to his secretary, Belmonte Bermudez, and published by Zaragoza; by the Pilot Major, Gaspar González de Leza, also published by Zaragoza; and by a Franciscan friar, Fray Martín de Munilla, published by Fr. Kelly. Naturally, the most useful narrative, as far as the possible identification of Buen Viage, is that of the pilot.

There is also a worthwhile secondary account, that of Fray Juan de Torquemada, contained in his book "Monarquía Indiana" of 1614. This man was Provincial of the Franciscans at Mexico and probably heard the story direct from many of the eyewitnesses, specially the three members of his Order who were aboard the flagship: Fr. Munilla, Fr. Vascones, and Br. González. However, Torquemada makes no mention of the island of Buen Viage in the manuscript which I have seen (BNM ms. 2995, folios 533+).

Original narrative of Quirós

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Al fin todos fueron de parecer que se fuese en demanda del puerto de Acapulco, y lo firmaron de sus nombres á diez y ocho de Junio [de 1606].

Al punto el capitan ordenó á los pilotos que fuesen navegando del Nordeste al Norte, si el tiempo diese lugar; mas que si de la parte del Sur, en que estábamos, se hallase alguna isla, se procurase surgir en ella para se hacer una lancha y nuevo acuerdo, en orden á ser Dios y Su Magestad más servidos; y en caso que no se hallase, se fuese siguiendo la referida derrota hasta poner la nao en altura de trece grados y medio, parte del Norte y paralelo de la isla de Guahan en los Ladrones, camino que llevan las naos de Acapulco á Filipinas, para que allí, conforme á la disposición de la gente, tiempos, nao y bastimentos, se hiciese último acuerdo y se tomase resolución de la derrota que se havia de seguir para buscar puerto amigo.

Cap. LXXIII.—Cuéntase cómo de dos grandes aguaceros se cogió cantidad de agua; y cómo doblada la equinoccial se descubrió una isla, y la junta y último acuerdo, y lo demás de derrotas y alturas hasta cierto punto.

Con el viento Sueste, que ya habia quebrado su furia, se fué navegando hasta vispera de San Juan Bautista. Este día fué Dios servido darnos un grande aguacero, del cual, con veinte y ocho sábanas tendidas por toda la nao, se cogieron esta y otra vez trescientas botijas de agua; remedio puro de nuestra necesidad y gran consuelo de toda la gente.

Con algunos pocos contrastes y algunas calmas, la proa al Norte, llegamos á la equinoccial á dos de Julio. Esta noche fué marcada la aguja, y se halló que tenia de variacion cuarta y media á la parte del Nordeste; cosa notable teniendo en la Bahía siete grados y siendo casi un mismo meridiano, y la distancia tan corta.

Con el viento Sur y Sudueste el más del tiempo Leste fuimos navegando hasta ocho de Julio. Este dia se vió una isla de hasta seis leguas de boj; y porque hasta aquí no se habia encontrado tierra alguna ni bajo, ni otra cosa que impidiese nuestro camino, se le puso por nombre Buen Viaje; su altura son tres grados y medio parte del Norte. Acordóse de no ir á ella por no ser ya á proposito y por el riesgo de ser baja. Deste paraje para más altura tuvimos algunos aguaceros, en especial uno de que hinchieron de agua todas las vasijas que en la nao habia vacías, y toda ella se bebió sin hacer el menor daño, ni se corrompió jamás. En suma, los aguaceros, despues de Dios, nos dieron las vidas.

A veinte y tres de Julio ordenó el capitan á lo pilotos que dijese la altura en que se hallaban, y las leguas que á su parecer estaban de Filipinas y de la costa de la Nueva España, y que determinadamente declarasen á cuál de las dos partes se habia de poner la proa de aquella nao.

Cuanto á la altura dijeron ser de tres¹ grados y un tercio: que estaban á Leste de Manila setecientas y ochenta leguas; de la costa de la Nueva España novecientas leguas al Sudueste della, y que á Manila no se podia ir por ser los vientos vendavales en aquel tiempo muchos y muy contrarios, por lo que eran de parecer se fuese en demanda de la costa de la Nueva España y puerto de Acapulco.

Pareciendo al capitan que el mayor servicio que al presente podia hacer á Su Magestad era la salvacion de aquella nao, ganar tiempo, excusarle los gastos que se le podrian hacer en Manila, y los sueldos de un año de toda la gente, y que por estar tan á barlovento del meridiano del Japon no habia viento que le pudiese impedir el subir á más altura ó allegarse á la costa; que la nao estaba con fuerzas, con agua y bizcocho muy bastante y toda la gente sana, y dos indios de aquellas tierras que podrian declarar; y que si él muriese en aquel golfo, la gente ya empeñada procuraria llevar la nao y ser Su Magestad informado de lo descubierto y prometido, y estaba obligado á escoger el menor de los dos inconvenientes presentes; y así ordenó a los pilotos que fuesen en demanda de la costa de la Nueva España y puerto de Acapulco, y que cada dia le diesen cuenta de la derrota que seguian y la altura en que se hallasen; y les dijo que el que más sufriese y más útil fuese, seria digno de premio.

¹ Ed. note: Transcription error for "trece".

Translation of the above text, by R. Lévesque

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In the end, they were all of the opinion to go in search of the port of Acapulco, and they signed it with their names on 18 June [1606].

At this point the captain ordered the pilots to sail on headings from NE to E, if the wind permitted it; but if, on the south side [of the equator] in which we were, they found some island, they were to anchor there in order to make a launch and a new agreement, for the better service of God and his Majesty; and, if none were found, they were to follow the said course until the ship was placed at the latitude of 13° and 1/2 on the north side and the parallel of the island of Guahan in the Ladrões, on the route followed by the Acapulco-Manila galleons, so that there, depending on the condition of the men, of the weather, of the ship and supplies, they would make a final agreement and take a decision about the course to follow to reach a friendly port.

Chap. 73.—Mention of two big showers during which much water was collected; how an island was discovered after they crossed the equator; the meeting and final agreement, and mention of the courses and latitudes until a certain position.

With a SW wind whose fury had by now abated, we sailed until the eve of St. John the Baptist Day [i.e. 23 June]. On this day God was served to give us a big shower out of which, with 28 blankets spread out all over the ship, 300 jars of water were collected, on this and on another occasion; it was a real solution to our problem and a great consolation for all the people.

With a few variable winds and some calm periods, heading north, we arrived at the equator on 2 July. That night the compass needle was checked for variation and it was found that it pulled to NE by 1-1/2 points [i.e. 17°]; a remarkable thing, given that at the Bay [of Santa Cruz] it was 7° and the two positions were almost on the same meridian, and the distance so short.¹

With the wind S and SE most of the time we sailed E [sic]² until 8 July.

[Discovery of Butaritari Island]

On this day an island was sighted, up to 6 leagues in circumference; and because no land or shoal had been encountered up to that time, nor anything else that would have blocked our navigation, it was given the name of **Buen Viage** [Good Voyage]. Its latitude is 3° and 1/2 on the north side.

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- 1 Ed. note: In 1600, navigators still believed that the lines of equal magnetic variations were somehow parallel to meridian lines from pole to pole, and remained fixed with time, neither of which was true.
 - 2 Ed. note: Actually, they headed N and NE during these early days of July (See Doc. 1606B).

It was decided not to go to it because it was not yet timely and on account of the risk [involved in] it being low-lying. From this vicinity to a higher latitude we got some showers, specially one that filled with water all the jars that had been empty aboard the ship, all of which was consumed without the slightest harm; it never became putrid. All in all, the showers, after God, kept us alive.

On 23 July, the captain ordered the pilots to give the latitude in which they found themselves, and the leagues which they thought we were from the Philippines and from the coast of New Spain, and that they should definitely state which was the better direction toward which the bow of the ship should be pointed.

With regard to the latitude, they said that it was 3 [error for 13] degrees and 1/3; that they were East of Manila by 780 leagues and 900 leagues SW of the coast of New Spain; that it was then impossible to go to Manila on account of the *vendavals* which were frequent and contrary during that season; hence, they were of the opinion that we should go in search of the coast of New Spain and the port of Acapulco.

After it seemed to the captain that the better service that he could render his Majesty at that time was the salvation of that ship, the saving of time and the costs that would be made in Manila and the salaries for one [more] year for all the men, and given that they were to windward of the meridian of Japan there was no wind to impede them in gaining a higher latitude or in getting nearer the coast; that the ship was full strength, with water and biscuit quite enough and all the men healthy, plus two Indians from those lands¹ who could make statements; that if he were to die in that wide sea² the men were duty-bound to take the ship [there] and inform his Majesty about what had been discovered and seen to be promising, and he was obliged to choose the least of the two difficulties under consideration; hence, he ordered the pilots to go in search of the coast of New Spain and the port of Acapulco, and that each day they were to report to him the course they followed and the latitude in which they found themselves; and he told them that he who suffered the most and was the most useful would be worthy of a reward.

1 Ed. note: From Melanesia.

2 Ed. note: Quirós was then very sick and forced to remain in bed.