
Document 1592F

The voyage of Jaque de los Rios in 1592

Sources: Ternaux-Compans, Archive des voyages, tome 1, pp. 249-250; reproduced by Henri Bernard, "Les Iles Mariannes, Carolines et Palau", in Monumenta Nipponica, N° 6, 1943, pp. 177-178.

Note: This narrative is considered bogus or apocryphal.

Narrative of Cristobal de Jaque de los Rios Mancaned

I embarked (at Acapulco) on 18 March (1592).¹ At the end of eight days [sic], the pilot recognized the archipelago of the Barbudos, so called because the inhabitants wear long beards. We continued sailing toward the west by the great gulf [sic] of Espiritu Santo, which is 1,800 leagues in width. At the end of one month, we were abreast of New Guinea, a very big island entirely populated with negroes, at which the ships going to the Philippines never touch. All those who navigate in the South Sea are very surprised to meet negroes in an island so far away from their country of origin.

At the end of 39 days of navigation, we arrived at the Islands of the Sails, more commonly known as the Ladrões. Our pilot did not wish to land. The natives of these islands station on top of the highest mountains some sentinels who warn them of the approach of Spanish ships. They go and meet them in some *vireyes*², a type of small craft, to sell them rice, bananas, coconuts, pineapples and fish. They are paid for them with iron, which they use to build their *vireyes*; they do not want to accept either gold or silver, and they do not know those metals.

These islanders are generally fat and rather white. The women use beauty spots, as in Spain, to enhance the whiteness of their skin. Both sexes believe that they can embellish themselves a lot by tracing all sorts of drawings upon their faces and upon various parts of their bodies (tattooing).

1 Ed. note: If so, it must have been aboard the San Felipe which had made the voyage from the Philippines at the end of 1591. This ship arrived at the Philippines at the end of May 1592.

2 Ed. note: A term usually reserved for Philippine canoes.

When the young people of both sexes have reached the age of fifteen, they are forced to marry; up to that age, they have the right to enter the house of married men and, when they have left their stick at the door, the husband does not dare come in. The virgins wear, to distinguish themselves, a red string around their waist.

The inhabitants of these islands worship the sun, the moon and the stars. They are great thieves, they run and swim so well that they go from one island to another, even though they may be separated by four or five leagues.

This archipelago is distant 300 leagues from that of the Philippines. I have covered this distance in 15 days...