
Document 1542F

Villalobos—Summary of the accounts by the Augustinian Fathers aboard, by Fr. Aganduru Moriz

Sources: Manuscript entitled "Historia general de las Islas Occidentales á la Asia adyacentes, llamadas Philipinas" written by Father Rodrigo de San Miguel, Recollect, whose civilian name was Rodrigo de Aganduru Moriz. He died in 1626, leaving the manuscript unfinished; the parts extant treat mainly about the Magellan and Villalobos expeditions, and the early history of the Moluccas. The manuscript was found in the library of Mariano de Zabalburu. It was only published at Madrid in 1882, as Vol. 78 and part of Vol. 79 of the Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España, edited by Navarrete et al. The part about Villalobos is from Book 9, chapters 2-4 of the manuscript.

Historical notes about Fr. Aganduru Moriz

Blair and Robertson, in their monumental series on the Philippine Islands (Vol. 21, pp. 116-117) give the following notes. Rodrigo de Aganduru Moriz (in religion, Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel) was born in Valladolid—or, according to some authorities, in Orio of Guipuzcoa—in 1584, and entered the discalced Augustinian order at the age of 14 years. Joining the Philippine mission in 1606, he ministered to the natives in various districts of Luzon with great acceptance, employing his poetical talents in teaching the Christian faith to the Indians. In 1614 he went to Spain for more missionaries, returning to the islands in 1617-18. Again voyaging to Europe (1622), he went, via India and Persia, to Rome, where he arrived in 1626. Declining the Pope's offer to make him a bishop and patriarch in the Indies, he planned a mission to Chaldea; but he died at Orio, while en route to Madrid, December 26, 1626. He left several manuscript works, mainly historical, among which was the *Historia general de las islas occidentales á la Asia adyacentes, llamadas Philipinas*; this was published in *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España*, tomes lxxviii and lxxix (Madrid, 1882), but it was apparently left unfinished by the author, the part that is extant treating mainly of the early explorations by Magalhães and Villalobos, and of the history of the Moluccas.

In the Archivo General de Indias, Seville, is the following letter from Felipe IV to a brother of Fray Rodrigo:

"The King.

*It has been learned in the Council of the Indies that Father Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel, a discalced Augustinian religious, who is said to be a brother of your Grace, brought from the Indies a general history of the Philippine Islands, **compiled with great care, as, in order to write it, he had examined the archives and authentic memoirs of those regions**; that it has been lately our Lord's pleasure to take Father Fray Rodrigo, who has died in Vizcaya; and that your Grace was given two of his books, specially the above history. And inasmuch as that work would be very important for what is written on the general history of the said islands, by order of His Majesty, the matter having been discussed with the Father Provincial of the said order, in which the latter has declared that the said history is in possession of Your Grace; the Council has directed me to write to your Grace, in its name, that it would be greatly to the service of His Majesty for your Grace to send me the said history for the said purpose. And if your Grace wish remuneration for it, or that it be returned after having used it for the said purpose, your Grace will advise me of what you desire in this matter, so that those gentlemen may know it, and so that the adviseable measures may be taken.*

May God preserve your Grace, as I desire.

Madrid, May 17th, 1637.

Antonio Gonzalez de Legardo.

*[P.S.] On the receipt of this letter, I beg your Grace to advise me immediately, for the Council anxiously awaits a reply because of the history. "*¹

The Augustinian story of the Villalobos expedition

[Chapter 2, p. 422] "The fleet already lacked water and the pilots could not find the islands which they were to have met 15 days before, so the rations were cut and they suffered from thirst on account of the heat of the climate; they were like good Spaniards putting up with labors. For some days the fleet had been sailing along 9 degrees (on the right course, as it were) and finally, on Christmas Day they discovered the last islands of **Los Reyes** that are in 9 degrees North latitude. They are low-lying and small, and did not show signs that they could have water, so the fleet passed them by and on 26 December in the morning, it discovered 12 islands together and many of them linked at low tide by land so that we could call these linked islands one island with many bushes, but with deep valleys that the sea bathes. The fleet tacked back and forth to see if water and some anchorage could be found; the people were suffering because for many days now the water ration had been less than a quart, even for someone sailing and under

- 1 Ed. note: The manuscript was obviously turned over to the Crown but, no doubt due to its incomplete character, it was not ordered printed, and ended up in the personal library of one of the Council members or its secretaries. This narrative can be considered a primary account as the author quotes directly from reports made by the 4 Augustinian friars who were aboard the flagship of Villalobos. Since Aganduru had access to the original 1543 accounts, the story reproduced here can be considered more accurate even than Father Santiesteban's letter of 1547 (Doc. 1542C).

so much heat as it were along 9 degrees or so, whereby, although it was Christmas it was like a summer heat wave in Spain, they did not have enough even to moisten their lips with.”

Villalobos lands at Likiep and takes possession of the Marshall Islands on 1 January 1543.

[Chapter 3, p. 446] After giving some details about the sailing directions left to the pilots by Andrés de Urdaneta, he continues: “Let us return to the fleet which now came to an anchor next to one of the islands. The flagship anchored first and sent the boat ashore with 30 armed men to look for water and learn what land it was. It returned soon with the news that there were many palm trees, that they had seen some houses and the people had abandoned them and fled aboard some canoes to other islands. The next day [i.e. 27 December 1542], Captain Bernardo de la Torre went ashore to take on water and behind him the General. They saw many proas, in which the Indians were fleeing with their households and families, and he was sorry to see that; he ordered that all the people should come ashore and take refreshments. However, before all those things [took place], he issued a proclamation forbidding anyone to cut palm trees. The whole heart of those over one fathom [tall] is a delicious food, tasting like the artichoke and even better but not so healthy. In order to enjoy these palmettos (as we have given them such a name overhere)¹ one must cut the palm tree to get at the *palmito* [heart of palm] so that the palm tree is no longer useful. Therefore, because the property of the Indians [only] consists of palm trees and because the soldiers like *palmitos*, the General proclaimed that, on the pain of death, no-one was to cut any palm tree.”

“The ships took on water here, but much work was involved as it comes from wells. On this occasion, a crossbow-man had gone into a bush to kill some hen from the many that were there in a wild condition and able to fly not a short distance, when he saw an Indian woman. They surrounded the thicket and proceeded to beat the bush as for a general hunt and they came up with 18 Indian women. They were spoken to by signs, as no-one could understand their language, but they did not respond except by crying and shouting, pulling out their hair, abusing their faces and chests. The General gave them some clothes, pieces of textile, glass beads and a few curiosities from Europe and with them they lost the fear they had. After this, he let them go and they went away very contented. They were well-proportioned people and pretty, but badly-clothed and ill-mannered.”

“At this island, General Ruy Lopez de Villalobos fell suddenly so sick that he was on the point of dying. For this reason, they were detained a few days until he improved. A few soldiers took this opportunity of the sickness of the General, about 13 or 14 of them, and one night they went to a palm grove at a point of the island and they knocked down 3 or 4 palm trees and took the *palmitos*. The General, who was somewhat better, heard about it and received such grief that as a result he became worse. Later he

¹ Ed. note: The Spanish called them “palmitos” in the Philippines.

sent an express order to Captain Bernardo de la Torre for him to execute the proclamation upon the transgressors and then to garrot them. The captain then had the more guilty ones caught and, the investigation completed, ordered them to confess. On the other hand, he begged Father Prior [Jerónimo] de Santiesteban to go and placate the General. Having pressured him a lot about this matter, the most that he got out of him was that the execution should be suspended until they had come to another land; so, they were placed in irons and were handed over to their respective captains so that the latter would forever hold them to account for this.”

“Possession of these islands was taken, with much solemnity, for our King and Lord Charles V, emperor of Germany and forever august Cesar.¹ Because some good [pieces of] coral had been found², they were named **Islas de Corales** [Coral Islands]. This act took place on the first day of January 1543.³ The island where they had anchored they named **San Esteban** [St. Stephen], because they had anchored there on his day. These islands are situated north[west]-southeast with respect to Los Reyes, and there are 24 leagues between them.”⁴

“The order was then given that everyone should be ready to make sail on the day of the Kings. At the time of saying mass during the dawn watch and, the General having gathered the leading persons of the fleet, he proposed to them, as something that the Viceroy had entrusted to him the most, following the instructions His Catholic Majesty gave to Pedro Alvarado in case he went on a voyage of discovery to the west, he should not go to the Moluccas which had been pawned to the King of Portugal, and that, because he was a loyal vassal of His Catholic Majesty, he wished to be first in executing the Royal Orders, and not just go where it was prohibited but not even go to within many leagues of the demarcation [line] of the King of Portugal. He asked them to tell him their opinion about the directions to the part and site where they should settle and plant the Royal [fort] so that their Divine and human Majesties would be served. Everyone deferred to what Martin de Islares had to say as a practical person who had been in those parts before and knew where the Moluccas were placed; he then informed them that he did not find another land more appropriate nor richer than the island of Mindanao, that, although it was not very far from the Moluccas, it was a sure thing that it lied within the demarcation of Spain, something that the Portuguese involved did not deny, and that it was not so close to Ternate either as there were many leagues of sea in between, and that by making a settlement in Manigua⁵, the Portuguese would be even farther away. All agreed with this opinion and all the religious of the order of St. Augustine aboard having said mass, with most of the people having confessed them-

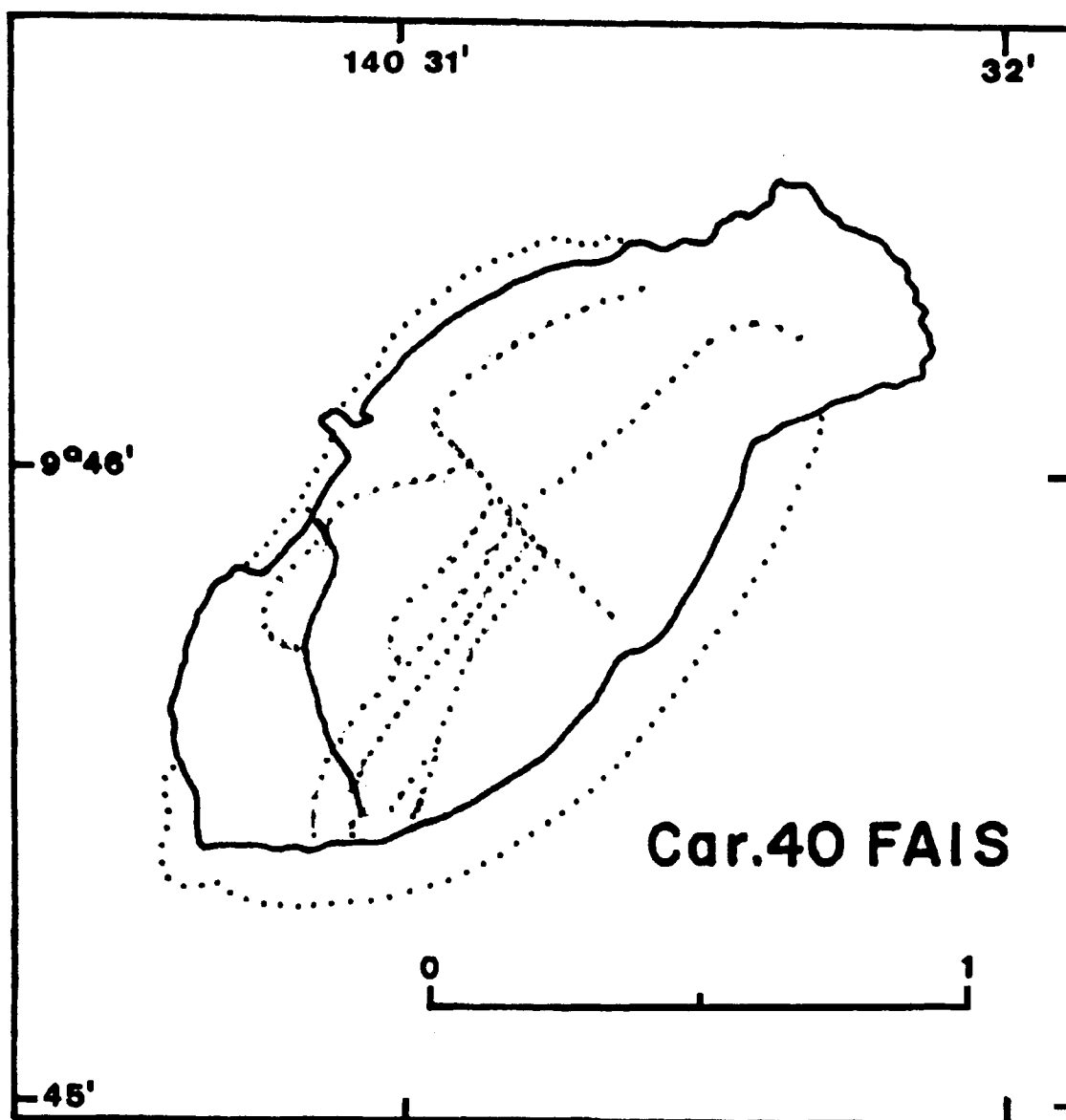
1 Ed. note: Charles I of Spain was also Charles V of Austria (as the Spanish say), that is, he was Holy Roman Emperor.

2 Ed. note: It had come up as they raised one anchor.

3 Ed. note: By consulting a perpetual calendar, it can be determined that 1 January 1543 was a Monday.

4 Ed. note: Likiep is indeed NW of Wotje, but less than 20 leagues from it.

5 Ed. note: Could this be Massawa or Limasawa Island?



Fais Island discovered by Villalobos on 21 January 1543. Some canoes came out of the town on the south side and hailed the five remaining ships of the fleet with the salutation: "Buenos dias, Matalotes" which means "Hello, comrades", while making the sign of the cross with their hands. The sailors aboard named the island Matalotes but the Augustinian friars named it San Ildefonso in honor of the Spanish saint from Toledo whose day was near. The following prayer from their missal must have been recited by them: "Sancti Ildefonsi Confessoris tui atque Pontificis, quæsumus, Domine, annua solemnitas pietati tuæ nos reddat acceptos: ut per hæc piæ placationis officia, & illum beata retributio comitetur, & nobis gratiæ tuæ dona conciliet. Per Dominum nostrum..."

selves and taken communion, they set sail that same day of the Kings at 3 in the afternoon.”

“That night they headed west and all day Sunday until Monday [8 January] in the morning when they discovered other islands, small but very full of palm trees and well shaded. These islands are at a latitude of 10 degrees; although they were heading due west, on account of the eastward variation of the needle, they had risen by one degree. They are located at 50 leagues from the Coral Islands E—W with them.”¹

[Chapter 4, page 449] They then took their departure heading west, and they were jumped by a violent storm during which they suffered much, although without any mishap, and then the narrative continues [page 450]: “On Thursday night the wind increased. [From] 18 January, they headed west until Sunday [21] at noon, [and made] 37 leagues. At 2 in the afternoon, an island was discovered. It was small, very attractive and fresh-looking, full of beautiful palm trees. They approached it and a few proas came out from it and, upon arriving at the fleet they hailed it saying: “Good day, sailors” (sailors in Portuguese is the same as comrade in Spanish) and they were making the sign of the cross with their hands. It was never possible to find out who would have taught these Indians that salutation, because this island is so isolated and far from the trade routes with the other lands that it seemed that it did not communicate with anybody. They could not anchor because the bottom was bad. There is a town on the southern coast. The island is called **Isla de los Matalotes** [i.e. Fais]²; it was [re-]named **San Ildefonso**, as it was discovered and the fleet arrived here on that day.³ It is in 10 degrees and a quarter North of the line.⁴ It is a high island, pointed, uneven, with black rocks and with cliffs on the eastern side.”

“The fleet proceeded onward and on the following Wednesday [24 January 1543] discovered an island [i.e. Ulithi] which would be 30 leagues in circumference. It has many reefs and shoals. Here the flagship almost got shipwrecked and if the squalls had not thrown her out to sea she would have ended up in pieces, because she was such a poor sailer and worse to steer. A few proas came up to the fleet, but, as the ones did not understand the others they were unable to give direction to the island they were searching for, nor were they of any help. They headed west from this Reef Island, which is in 10 degrees of north latitude, and sailed for 85 leagues until the following Tuesday [error for Saturday] when they were in 9° plus. They made another daily run of 20 leagues to the west, and they covered 85 leagues until the following Tuesday noon [30 January] when they were at 9° plus. They made another daily run of 20 leagues to the west, and on Thursday 1st of February [1543], they discovered Mindanao.”

1 Ed. note: Wotho is indeed exactly 10° N and exactly 50 leagues (3° of longitude) from Likiep.

2 Ed. note: The only town on Fais is still located on the south coast and is called Choichoi.

3 Ed. note: The sailors called it Sailors' islands but the priests, as usual, wanted to pick the name of the daily saint. If they first sighted the island on Sunday 21 January, they probably cruised about it for the whole of Monday 22nd, because, on the one hand, the feast day of St. Ildefonso was Tuesday 23 January, and on the other hand, they could not have taken more than one day to cover the 1° or about 17 leagues separating Fais from Ulithi.

4 Ed. note: Fais is at 9°45' so that the estimate, carried from noon, was only 30' in error.