
Document 1521J

Magellan & Espinosa—Account by António Brito, Portuguese Governor of the Moluccas

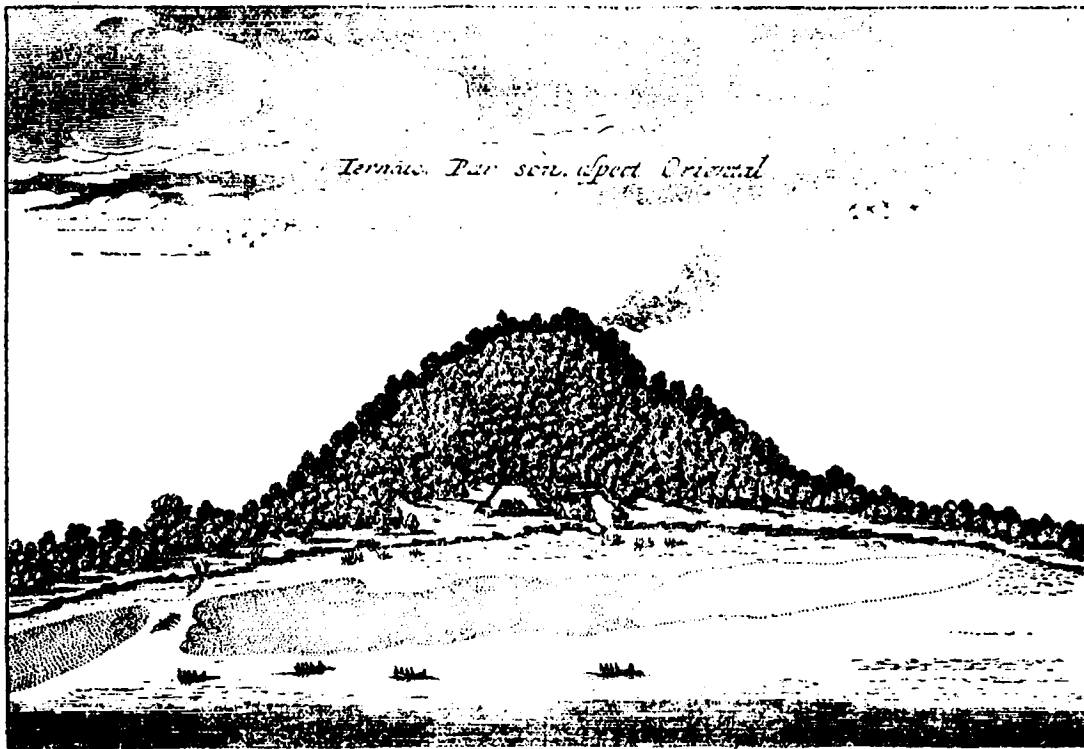
*Sources: António Brito, Portuguese governor of the Moluccas from 1522 to 1525, seized the **Trinidad** and Espinosa's crew when they turned back to the Moluccas, at the end of an unsuccessful attempt at reaching Panama. Brito wrote a letter to King John III of Portugal on 3 May 1523 in which he narrated the voyages made by Magellan and by Espinosa, evidently based on the captured records and his interrogations of the surviving crew members. This letter, in Portuguese, is found in the Torre do Tombo Archives in Lisbon: Gaveta 18, Maço 2, Doc. n° 25. This fragmentary letter has been published, in the original Portuguese, in Academia das Ciências de Lisboa (ACL)'s *Alguns documentos do Arquivo nacional da Torre do Tombo, acerca das navegações e conquistas portuguesas* (Lisbon, 1892), pp. 464-470. Juan Bautista Muñoz, has transcribed this manuscript and his notes are found in the Muñoz Collection in the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid. Martín F. de Navarrete has translated Muñoz' text into Spanish and published it in his *Colección de los viajes*, vol. iv, pp. 305-311. I have translated the latter text into English.¹*

Letter from Antonio Brito to the King of Portugal about some events in the Indies and those about Magellan's voyage

I wrote from Banda the news which I found there about the Spanish² and I sent letters to a certain Pedro de Lorosa³ who went off with them. I left Banda on 2 May 1522, to see if I could seize from them the nao [i.e. the **Trinidad**] that left in second place, as the other [i.e. the **Victoria**] **has already left three months ago.**

I arrived at Tidore on 13 May 1522. The Spanish had been there and had loaded two of the five naos that had left Spain and I learned that the first one had departed four months ago. The second one left one and a half months ago; she did not go with the

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- 1 Muñoz' transcript, however, may be an abridged Spanish version of the original Portuguese text.
 - 2 Ed. note: This may be the letter Brito wrote to the King on 11 Feb 1523, in Torre do Tombo's Gaveta 18, Maço 6, Doc. 9 (See Mitchell's *Elcano*, 1958, p. 75).
 - 3 Ed. note: Lorosa had been with Francisco Serrão in Ternate. At that point, Brito already knew that he had gone off with Espinosa. When the **Trinidad** returned to Ternate, Brito had Lorosa decapitated as a traitor.



The eastern side of Ternate in a 16th-century engraving.

other because she sprang a leak when they were just about ready to go. She was unloaded and repaired. I found five Spaniards [there], one of them a factor with merchandise, another a gunner. With the factor Rui Gaguio, I sent word to the King [of Tidore] to deliver the Spaniards to me, the artillery and the property, and to ask him why, as the Portuguese had discovered that [place] some time ago already, he had admitted the Spanish. He answered that he had admitted them as merchants and more by fear than willingly. The next day he sent me three Spaniards and a little merchandise. I already had another [Spaniard] with me from the time I left Banda, as he had gone there to reconnoiter the place and to trade. The last one was then absent, at Moro¹ Island 60 leagues from the Moluccas.

The next day, the King came to see me. He re-iterated his allegiance to Your Highness and excused himself for the deed, all of which can be used as proof against the Spanish themselves. He was asked to make a deposition so as to oblige him always, because I certify to him that these Spaniards will be delivered to Your power, as if they were Christians and vassals of yours.

1 Ed. note: Often used for Morotai Island.



A more modern view of Ternate, looking south toward Tidore. (From Guillemard's book *"The Life of Ferdinand Magellan"*, 1891)

I found the whole land full of tin crosses, some of silver, showing a crucifix on one side and Our Lady on the other. They were selling bombards¹, arquebuses², crossbows, swords, spears and [gun-] powder. The crosses which I have just mentioned to Your Highness were all bought by me; they had been selling them with full knowledge of what they were.

After I had been there two days, there came a bastard son of the King of Ternate to take me to his island. He is its present ruler on behalf of the heir, an 8- to 9-year old child whose father died 7 to 8 months before my arrival. This island is the biggest and main one of the Moluccas, where Francisco Serrão³ had always resided and also Don Tristan de Meneses when he came here. Later on, his mother, who is the actual regent, also came. They swore allegiance to Your Highness. I did not mention the subject of the fort, as I wish to see all the islands first. Having now seen them, it appears that it must be done in this island as it is larger than Tidore and Tidore has no harbor.

1 Ed. note: Ancient thick pieces of ordnance of the carronade type.

2 Ed. note: Smaller pieces of ordnance, called *espingardas*, which were heavy muskets.

3 Ed. note: A former friend of Magellan when both were together in Malacca.

Being ashore, the people suffered, and after two months, out of the 200 men I had brought with me, I was left with 50 healthy ones (about 50 died); with so few people, the fort was started.

On 20 October 1522, I received notice that a nao was cruising behind these islands. I thought that they might be Spaniards. After all, they had taken that route [to the east]. I sent three ships to bring her in to me, and they did so, and with her 24 Spaniards.¹ They said that, not wanting to go back the way they had come, as it would be such a long voyage, they had resolved to go to the Darien². They found scarce winds because they had not known how to use the monsoon, and they went as far north as 40 degrees. According to their account, they had made 900 leagues when they turned back. When they left, they had 54 men; 30 died³ when in 40 degrees. An inventory was made of the property belonging to the King of Spain, and the letters and the astrolabes were taken.⁴

The unloading of the nao was begun. She was old and leaking much; after eight days, she opened up and they lost 40 bars of cloves.⁵ The wood served for the fortress and her rigging for some other ships.

After ten to twelve days, I took down the declarations of the captain and of the master. They said that the ship owners of this fleet were the Bishop of Burgos and Cristóbal de Haro.⁶

1 Ed. note: Some of them died soon thereafter, as only 18 were reported officially as having survived the ordeal, plus 3 others from the factory in Tidore. See Doc. 1522A & 1522B5.

2 Ed. note: The Isthmus of Panama

3 Ed. note: See Document 1522B5 for the list of the dead. They did not die in 40° but near the Marianas and between the Marianas and the Moluccas.

4 Ed. note: The letters referred to above were probably the letters that Magellan had brought with him aboard the *Trinidad*, among them being the letters written between 1513 and 1515 by his friend Francisco Serrão (written Serrano in Spanish) when he lived in the Moluccas between 1512 and 1521. Brito had already found Magellan's letters in the effects left by Serrão and sent those to Portugal. The so-called papers probably included Magellan's own logbook (now lost) and the log, almanach, etc. left by the royal pilot and cosmographer Andrés de San Martín who was among those who succumbed in the Great Massacre of Cebu. We get confirmation here that the Magellan Expedition had been using astrolabes, and not merely quadrants, cross-staff or some other less accurate instruments for determining the sun's elevation. Hence, a good pilot in a pacific sea could easily have gotten readings within 1 degree of accuracy, and the accuracy of the latitude depended heavily upon the data found in their almanachs. Apparently, Magellan's pilots had been provided with the *Liber directionum* of Regiomontanus as an almanach. Also the tables of Abraham Zacuto, the famous Jewish astronomer, whose figures for the inclination of the ecliptic had become generally adopted, had been lent by San Martín to Elcano who used them on the *Victoria's* homebound voyage.

5 Ed. note: Also written "bahars". Navarrete says that a "bar" held 5 large Spanish quintals, which were of 100 pounds each, so that 40 bars were a total of $40 \times 5 \times 100 = 20,000$ lbs. or 10 short tons.

6 Ed. note: According to source documents in AGI Seville, the Crown (through the Bishop as President of the Council of the Indies) paid for 77% and Haro for 23% of the total costs. See Doc. 1519E.

Here is [a narrative of] the voyage they made from Spain to the Moluccas.

After they left Seville, they made a stopover in the Canary Islands, [etc.]...

After they found themselves out of the strait into the high seas, they steered straight for the line on account of the intense cold they were experiencing, and when they were in 32 degrees they took the direction WNW; along that heading they ran 1600 leagues. Here they found two uninhabited islands, 200 leagues apart; and along the same course they crossed the line and went to 12 degrees on the north side. From there, they steered westward 500 leagues and hit some islands in which they found many savage people. So many of them entered the naos that when they tried to tack back, they could no longer throw them out of the naos except by using lances upon them. They killed many savages, and these savages just laughed thinking it was just some kind of enjoyment.

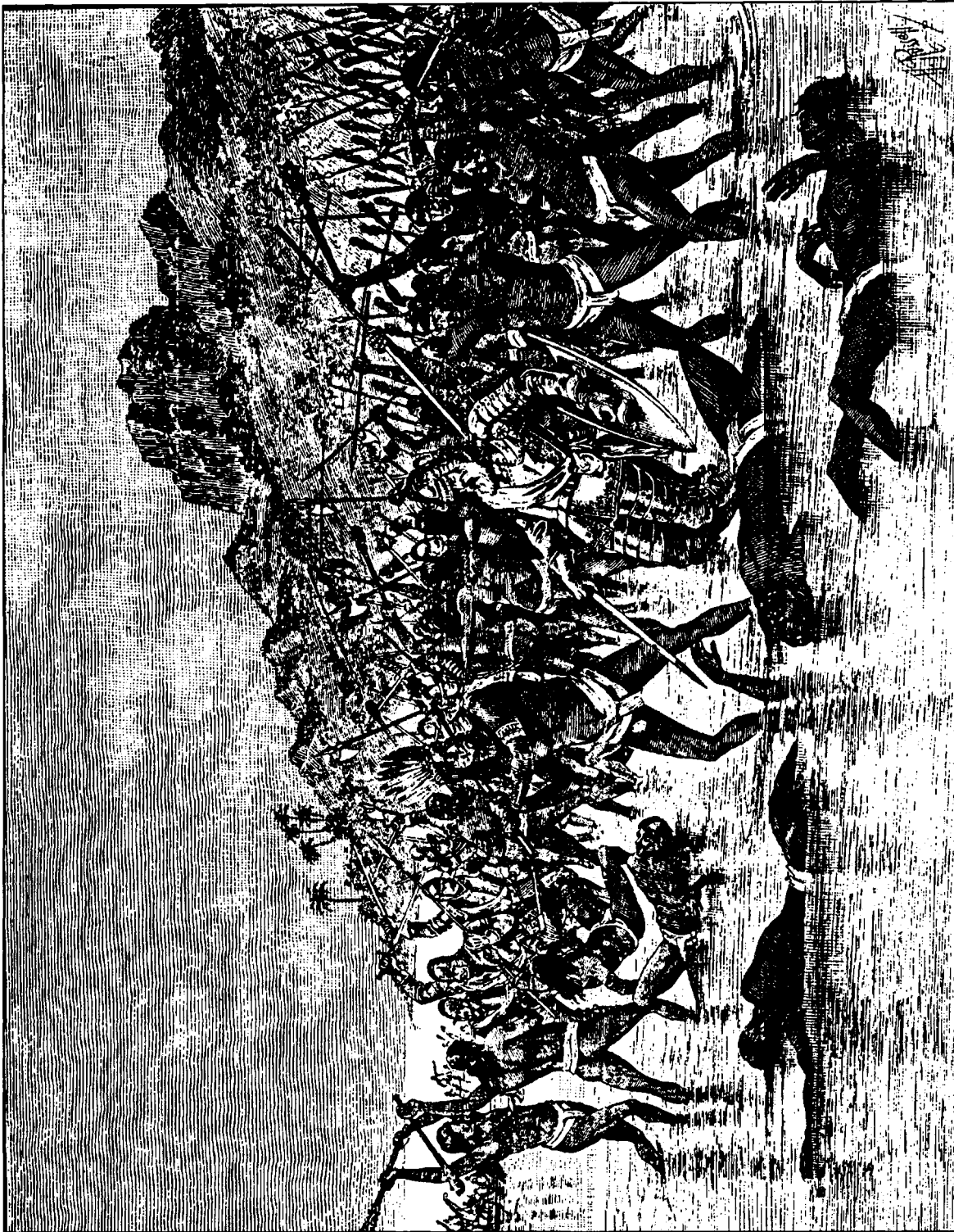
Always following their route westward, except when they were taking the sun to find out where they were since they were then steering one point off the said course, until they came to an island they called "the first one". It is in 12 degrees north.

Right away, through many islands, they came to one called Mazaba [i.e. Limasawa] which is in 9 degrees. The King of Mazaba took them to another island called Zubó [i.e. Cebu] which was big, where he [i.e. Magellan] stayed for about one month, and he made most of the people and the King Christians. The King of Zubó sent for the Kings of the other islands to come to him, and two of them not having wanted to come, later when Magellan learned of it, he decided to go and engage them in a fight, and went to an island called Mathá [i.e. Mactan]. He put one hamlet on fire, and not happy with this he headed for a big populated place, where fighting with the savages, the latter killed him, one of his servants and five Spaniards. As for the rest, when they saw the captain dead, they withdrew to the boats.

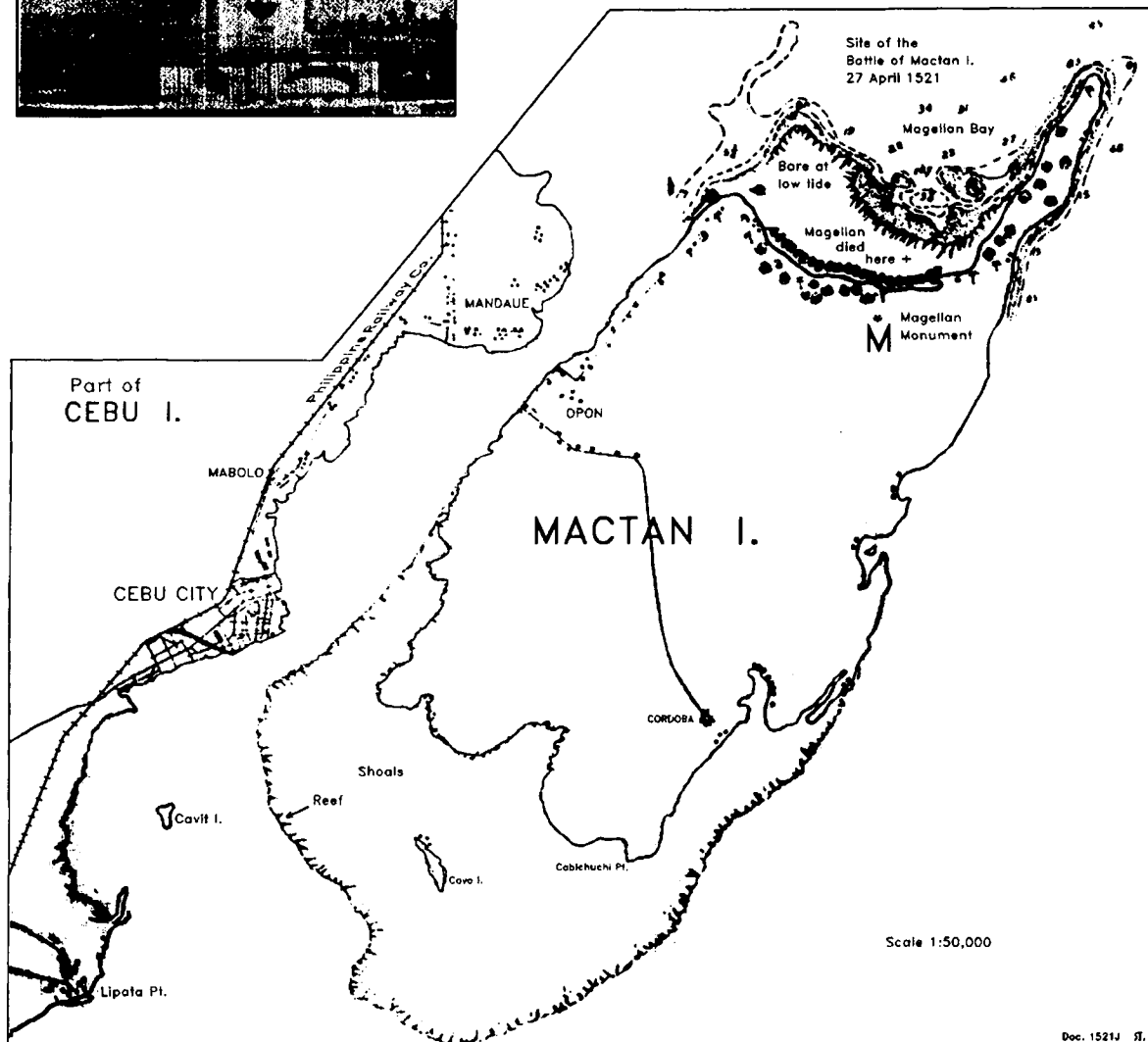
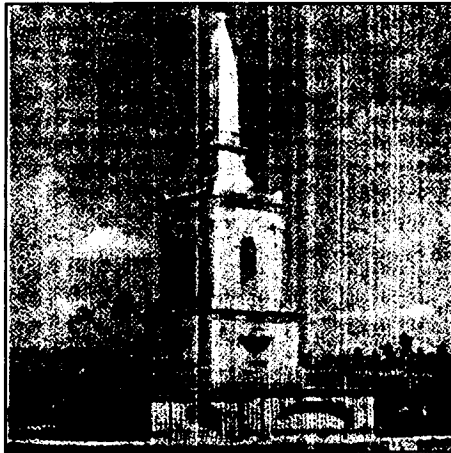
[etc. etc...]



The Battle of Mactan Island, 27 April 1521. *The men of chief Lapulapu attack Magellan and a small band of Spaniards. Pigafetta says: "Crossbowmen were shooting from afar"... and those fighting "had water up to their knees". Seven Europeans died on the spot, along with 4 native allies from Cebu, and 15 enemies. Another European died from his wounds 4 days later.*



The death of Magellan, on Saturday 27 April 1521. Pigafetta says: "These people... threw themselves upon him with their hardened spears and with those javelins, so much so that they killed the mirror, the light, the comfort and our true guide."



Map of Mactan Island where Magellan was killed. Note the location (M) of the Magellan Monument (see inset). (Adapted from the book: *"Celebración del cuarto centenario del descubrimiento de Filipinas por Fernando de Magallanes, 1521-1921"*, Manila, 1921, p. 18)

The property left with the Spanish at Tidore was 1,125 quintals¹ and 32 pounds of copper and 2,000 pounds of quick-silver, and two quintals of iron and three bombards with iron stock, one being a porthole-type [carronade] and two mortar-type, and 14 iron culverins², without any chambers, and three iron anvils, of the type that can be fitted with a *fugareo*³ and another large one, 9 crossbows, 12 arquebuses, 32 breast plates, 11 throat pieces, 3 helmets, 4 anchors, 53 iron bars, 6 iron culverins, 2 iron falconets, 2 large iron bombards with 4 chambers and 1,275 quintals of cloves...

With Don García I have sent 17 Spaniards for them to pay what they owe⁴ to Jorge de Albuquerque, so that the Captain Major of the Indies can send them [onward], in accordance with what Your Highness ordered me to do in the instruction. They are: Gonzalo Gomez de Espinosa, captain, Juan de Campos, the factor who had remained with the property in Tidore, Alfonso de Costa who had gone to see about trading with Banda, Luis de Molino, Diego Diaz, Diego Martin, Leon Pancaldo, pilot of the nao, Juan Ruiz⁵, Ginés de Mafra⁶, Juan Novoro⁷, S. Remo, Amaló⁸, Francisco de Ayamonte, Luis de Veas⁹, Segredo¹⁰, Master Otans¹¹, Anton Moreno.

Four have been left here: 1° the master of the nao named Juan Bautista, who is the most knowledgeable of all of them, and has sailed in naos belonging to Your Highness; he was the one who commanded and to whom after the death of Magellan is due the credit for having brought his fleet to the Moluccas; 2° the clerk, a good sailor and pilot; 3° the boatswain; and 4° a carpenter with what is necessary to repair this ship with which I am sending them by way of Borneo, from where there are 100 leagues to Malacca, a route regularly taken by many junks. By way of Banda, it is necessary to wait for the monsoons, and it takes one and a half years to take a message [through] there and get a reply. By this other route, they will be able to come here from Malacca in one month. Apart from that, Borneo is one of the richest islands to be found in these parts, where there is much gold, camphor, and a very good trade to be had in many parts... Simon de Abras¹² goes as captain [of the ship].

1 Ed. note: Of cloves (see below for a repetition).

2 Ed. note: According to the original inventory, the *Trinidad* was carrying 14 mounted guns at the departure from Spain.

3 Ed. note: *Fugareo* = *fogueiro*(?) in Portuguese; perhaps this is a fire pit, or some bellows.

4 Ed. note: Brito had probably imposed a fine upon them.

5 Ed. note: Or Rodriguez (the Deaf), according to Document 1522B.

6 Ed. note: After his return to Europe, this Mafra wrote or dictated a narrative entitled: *Descripción de los reinos... Libro que trata del descubrimiento y principio del estrecho que se llama de Magallanes*. The ms. was found in the National Library in Madrid by Antonio Blázquez y Delgado Aguilera, and published by him in his book: "Tres relaciones", (Madrid, 1920).

7 Ed. note: That is, Navarro, according to Document 1522B.

8 Ed. note: That is, Malvo, the Frenchman from Saint-Malo, according to Document 1522B.

9 Ed. note: Vaes, says Document 1522B.

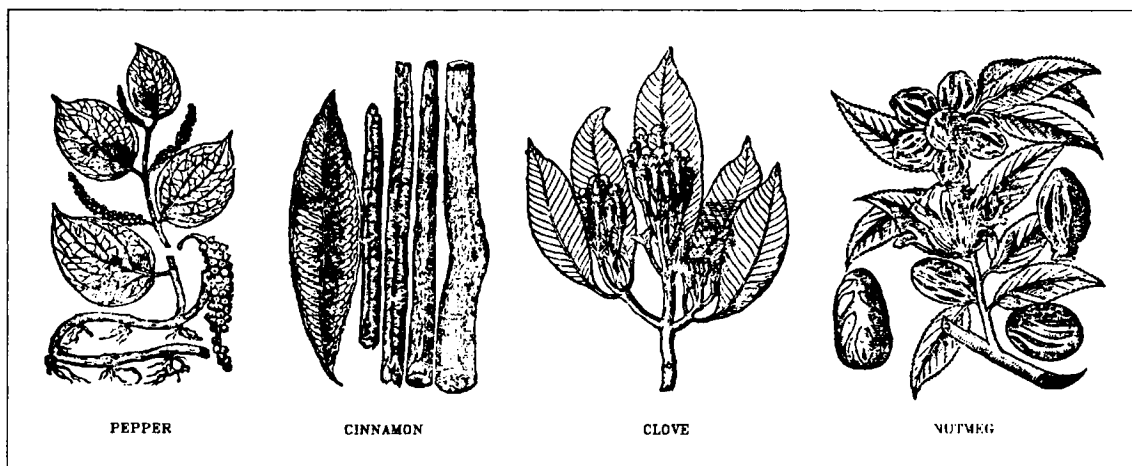
10 Ed. note: Juan de Sagredo, says Document 1522B.

11 A transcription error for Hans.

12 Ed. note: Transcription error made by Navarrete. Simão de Abreu was his correct name. See, for instance, Galvão's "Tratado dos descobrimentos" for the year 1523.

With respect to the master, the clerk and pilot, I am writing to the Captain Major to the effect that it would be for the greater service of Your Highness to have them decapitated rather than sending them overthere. I have retained them in the Moluccas, because it is a sick land, with the intention that they will die here, not daring to have them decapitated because I ignored whether Your Highness would be pleased by it or not. I am writing to Jorge de Albuquerque to have them detained in Malacca, a place which is not very salubrious either.

In this ship, I am sending to Garcia Chainho 250 quintals of cloves. In these Moluccan Islands, I will be able to gather in a year or so some 4,000 bars of cloves. Out of the copper I took from the Spanish, I coined money to pay the people... I hope to finish this fortress very soon... I have completed the whole of the wall along the shore which is 27 fathoms in length and 12 feet in width, and the donjon in two garrets... I am writing to Chainho to have him send me some tin to coin money with, because I believe that these people here will accept it better than copper, and with it I will be able to buy all the cloves.



The main spices produced in the Moluccas. (*Sketches from a 1597 English botany book*)