
Document 1522E

Elcano's voyage—Return of the ship Victoria to Spain

Sources: Alvo, Pigafetta, and other primary sources. As summarized by Navarrete, iv, pp. 85-97.

The ship Victoria under the command of Juan Sebastian de Elcano returning from the Moluccas bound for Spain¹

This nao left Tidore on 21 December 1521 with 60 crewmen, including 13 Indians from that island. They went to Mare Island where they took on wood. They left it the same day heading SSW toward Motil, from where they continued on the same heading to Maquian, and from there SW by the other islands that are recorded² as far as Latalata.

From Latalata SW 1/4 W as far as the island called Lumutola³; west of it is another called Sulan⁴, both islands being surrounded by many shoals. From there they headed south toward an island called Buro, and in the middle of these three, there is another called Tenado. East of Buro there is a very big island called Ambon where they make

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- 1 Ed. note: There has been a running controversy between Spanish historians as to the correct spelling of Elcano, or del Cano. The interested readers can consult a 100-page book about this matter by Nicolás Soraluze: "Defensa del apellido familiar de Juan Sebastian del Cano" (San Sebastián, 1881).
 - 2 Ed. note: By Alvo as Quayoa (Kayoa today), Laboan, Bachian. From Pigafetta's sketch maps, we can deduce that the **Victoria** went by the islands whose modern names are Laigama, Siku, Gumorka, Gafi, and Twali Bezar.
 - 3 Ed. note: Lisamatoela today.
 - 4 Ed. note: Soela Besi today.

many cotton clothes, and between it and Buro there are some islets to watch out for, and for this reason one must pass on the east side of the island of Buro.¹

The latitudes of these islands are: Lumutola 1°45'S, Tenado 2°30', Buro 3°, whose latitude was obserbed on 27 December, being on the south side of this island which is located with respect to Bachian NE 1/4 N—SW 1/4 W, and it is 194° in longitude.

On the 28th, they were in the vicinity of Buro, and that of Bidia which lied eastward of it.

On the 29th, they were in 3°51' [S] latitude directly abreast of the island of Ambon.

On the 30th, they had a good breeze.

On the 31st, they were ENE—WSW with the island of Ambon distant some 12 leagues.

[1522. January]

On 1 January they were in latitude 4°45'.

On the 2nd, in 5°30' and the heading was SW.

On the 3rd, they headed SSW as far as 6°15' in latitude, then they veered to NW.

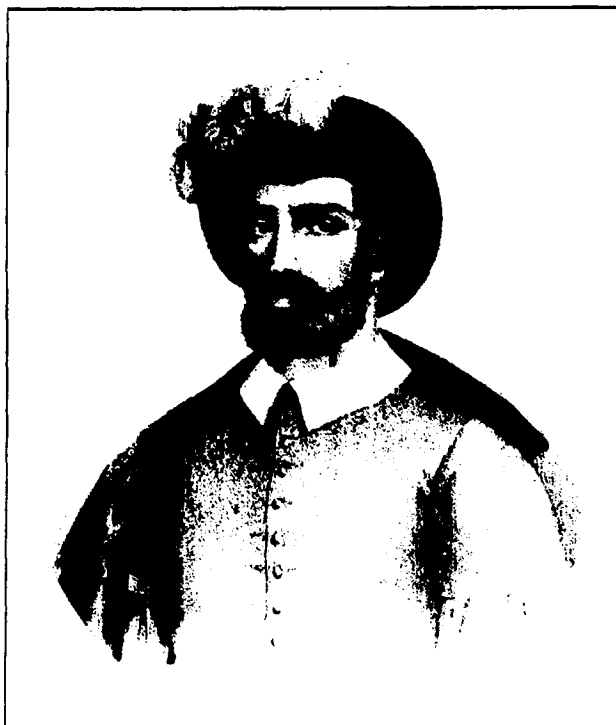
On the 4th, they continued NW and they were in 5°45'.

On the 5th, in 6°14'.

On the 6th, in 7°02'.

On the 7th, in 7°30', and the heading was SW.

On the 8th, in 8°07' with the same heading. On this 8th day, they saw a few islands running east to west; they passed between two of them whose names are Maluco [sic] and Aliquirá [sic].² Between them are two smaller ones, inhabited, which once the strait is entered bear to starboard. This strait is located with respect to Buro E 1/4 NE—



Portrait of Captain Juan Sebastian Elcano.

A shrewd sailor who rose to become the leader of the Magellan Expedition after the latter's death at Mactan Island. (From a lithograph by J. Donon, in "Historia de la Marina Real Española", Madrid, 1854)

1 Ed. note: According to Pigafetta, they then headed SW by W to Solor, Adoenara, Lomblen, and east to Alor Island where they spent some time, before touching at Timor.

2 Ed. note: These two seem to correspond to Lomblen and Adoenata.

W 1/4 SW, something like 50 leagues, and they were covered with stormy weather from the south. And having sailed along them they anchored at the last one, called Malua¹, which is in 8°20' S. The others are called Liaman, Maumana, Cisi, Aliquira, Bona, Maluco, Ponon [=Pantar?] and Bera [=Wetar?].

In Malua they found pepper, a long kind and a round kind. The long one comes from a plant similar to ivy, which sticks to trees, the fruit being stuck to the trunk, and the leaf is like that of the mulberry. The plant of the round pepper is almost the same as the other, but the fruit grows in ears like that of corn. All the fields are full of these plants.²

They left Malua and headed south to the island of Timor. On the north side of this island, there is a section of coast running east to west for something like 10 leagues. It was the land closest to them, and it is in 9°. It is located with respect to Buro NE 1/4 N—SW 1/4 S, and is found in longitude 197°45'. They sailed along this stretch of coast from east to west until they came to the town of Queru³, and they continued as far as that of Mambay; the coast between these two towns runs NE 1/4 N—SW 1/4 S. They anchored at Mambay next to a port which is called Batutara.⁴

The island of Timor is a big one with many towns. In it there is a very good sandalwood, ginger, much gold, and it has many people sick with buboes. Here there was a dispute among some of the crew, who secretly fled from the nao. Two of them stayed ashore; they were the ship's boy named Martin de Ayamonte [N° 190], and Bartolomé de Saldaña [N° 202], a soldier who had been a page of Captain Luis de Mendoza. They took on board some white sandalwood and a lot of cinnamon. On 5 February, the latitude was observed at 9°24'S.

They left Mambay, and on 8 February they observed the latitude of 9°10'S when they were abreast of the western tip of Timor, which is laid out ENE—WSW with respect to its eastern cape.

On the 9th, they observed the latitude of 9°35' while being near the more offshore cape of the island, where the coast turns SW and S.

On the 10th, they observed 9°28', and the cape of the whole island bore south.

On the 11th, they observed 9°35', and there was a breeze.

On the 12th, the breeze continued, and they found themselves with little difference from where they were on the previous day.

On the 13th, they observed 10°32', while they were near two islands that are located ESE—WNW [sic] with respect to the western cape of Timor.⁵ From this point, they took their departure for the Cape of Good Hope, heading SW, and on this day they lost sight of the island of Timor.

1 Ed. note: Alor today.

2 Ed. note: These notes about pepper come from the historians Herrera and Oviedo, both secondary sources.

3 Ed. note: This appears to be at or near Dili today.

4 Ed. note: At or near Atambua today.

5 Ed. note: The two islands in question lie SW of that cape.

On the 1st day of March, in latitude $26^{\circ}20'S$ they were following a heading of WSW.

On the 9th, in latitude $35^{\circ}52'S$ the WNW wind failed them; they layed to with all sails furled until the 14th when, a little after noon, they made sail westward with very little wind.

On the 16th, in latitude $36^{\circ}38'S$ they reduced to the foresail, and in the morning, raised the main-sail heading S $1/4$ SW.

On the 18th, in latitude $37^{\circ}35'$, as it is said in Alvo's logbook: "*While taking the sun's elevation, we saw a very high island¹ and went to it to anchor, and we were unable to make it. We lowered sails and waited out until the morning, when the wind was westerly. We made another tack to the north with the lower sails. That was on the 19th, and we were unable to take the sun's elevation that day. We were E—W with the island and it is in 38° S. It appears to be uninhabited and does not have any trees at all; it is about 6 leagues in circumference.*"



Amsterdam Island, discovered by the ship Victoria in 1522. Captain Elcano in the ship Victoria bumped into this island in the Indian Ocean on 18 March 1522. (From J. Commelin's "Voyagien naer de Oost-Indien", 1646)

¹ This is Amsterdam Island which is in the latitude given by Alvo (38° S) and at 84° longitude E of Cádiz (78° E of Greenwich) according to the map drawn by Commander of the Royal (Spanish) Navy José de Espinosa.

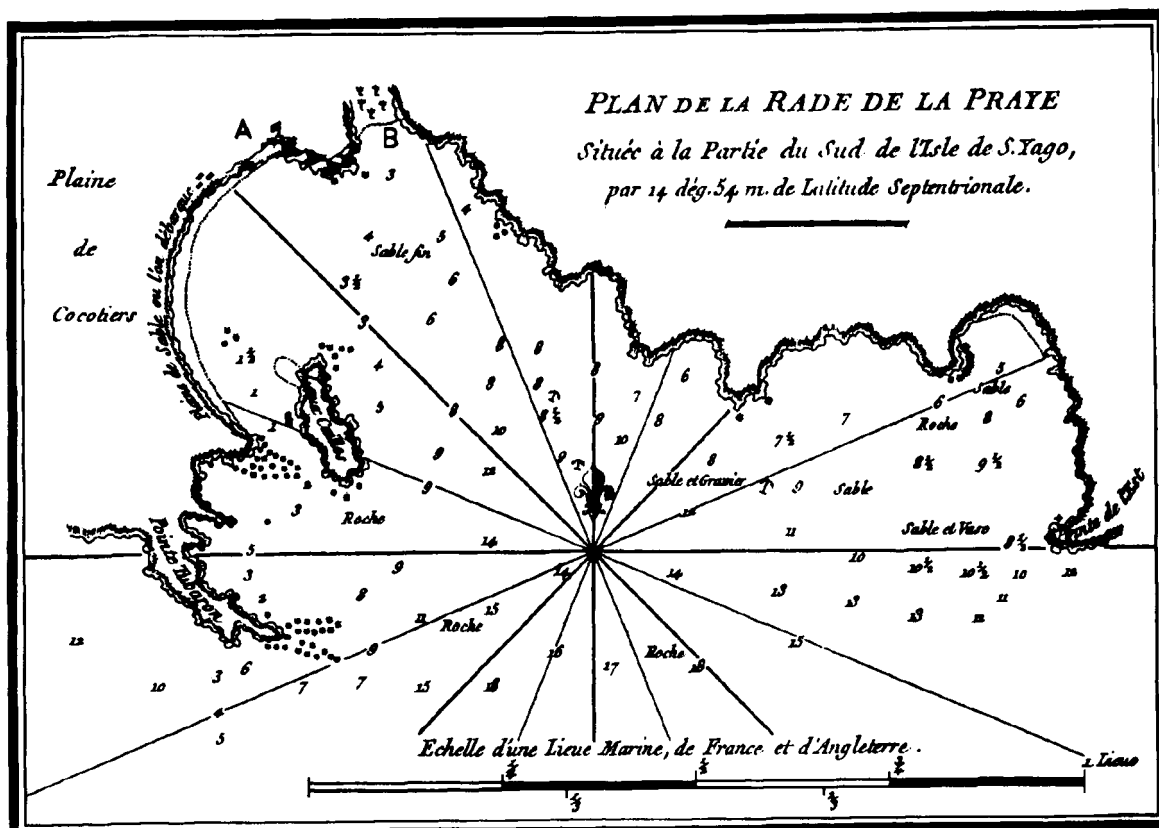
[To summarize part of the story: They went as far south as the 40th parallel and stayed near it for two more months, before heading northwestward toward the Cape of Good Hope. On 8 May, when they expected to see it, they saw land at 33° S but found out they were east of it by 160 leagues. All their food, except rice was gone by that time, as the meat they had taken on board at Timor had not been salted and had become rotten. Some sailors wanted to sail to Portuguese Mozambique, but the majority opted for going to Spain without delay.

On the 16th, they sighted the Cape of Good Hope and changed course to WSW. Between the 7th and 8th of June, they crossed the equator at 10° W of Greenwich, i.e. south of Liberia. They followed the African coast from Guinea Bissau (today) to Cape Verde (Senegal) which they reached on the 1st of July. On that day, they took another vote to decide whether they should go to the Portuguese colony of the Cape Verde Islands to buy food; the starving majority voted in favor. A total of 21 people (12 Europeans and 9 Indians from Tidore) had already died by that time. On the 8th, at 14°47' they sighted the island of Santiago.]

On the 9 July 1522, says Alvo's logbook: "*We anchored in the port of Rio Grande and were received very well. We were given as much food as we wanted, and this day was a Wednesday, but they had it to be a Thursday, and thus we thought that we ourselves had made a mistake of one day.*¹ *We stayed until Sunday evening and set sail for fear of bad weather and crossed the port. In the morning, we sent the boat ashore to buy more rice that we needed, while we tacked back and forth until it returned.*"

The nao was leaking badly. During the voyage a few sailors had died. Among those remaining few could work the pumps, as most of them were sick. They wished to buy bread, meat and a few negro slaves to work the pumps, and, because they had no money, they thought of paying with cloves. To that effect, they had taken three quintals [300

1 Ed. note: The pilots had made no error. Because they had followed the sun around the world (the first time in history that this had been done), each day would be a little longer than the previous one, so that anyone reckoning the time by the calendar would have lost a total of 24 hours. Although this time trick was soon understood for what it was, the Spanish would continue for many centuries to apply the Madrid calendar as they travelled westward to Mexico and onward to Micronesia and the Philippines, whereas the Portuguese would do the same while they sailed eastward. That is why the day of the week was always one day apart when the two nationalities met in the Moluccas... Later on, after the Gregorian calendar came into use in 1582, and before England adopted it in 1752, the discrepancy for the English and the Dutch was larger by 11 or 12 days. It remained so for the Russians when they began to explore the Pacific, because Russia did not abandon the Julian calendar until 1917.



Map of the port of Praya at Santiago I., Cape Verde Islands. *This is the likely place where the Victoria sought relief, as mentioned by Alvo the pilot. The letter A indicates the site of the Portuguese fort, and B the watering place.*

pounds] of cloves in the boat. We continue with the entry of the 14th in Alvo's logbook: "We sent the boat ashore for more rice and it came back at noon. It went back again and we waited until night came and it did not return. We waited until the next day, and it never returned. Then we came back nearer the port to see what was going on, and a launch came over, and we were told to give ourselves up, that we would be sent [to Portugal] aboard the nao that comes from the Indies, and that they would place their people in our nao, that the officials had so ordered. We in turn asked them to send back our people with the boat, and they told us that they would bring back the answer from the

*officials. We told them that we would make another tack to wait [for the answer. However,] we made another tack and set all sails and fled with only 22 men, counting the sick and the healthy. That happened on Tuesday 15 July. On the 14th, I took the sun's elevation, and this port is at 15°10' [latitude N]."*¹

They reached the area of the Azores in August and on 4 September they sighted Cape San Vicente. On 6 September 1522, they arrived at Sanlúcar de Barrameda, which they had left some 3 years less 14 days earlier, having sailed, by their reckoning, 14,000 leagues.²

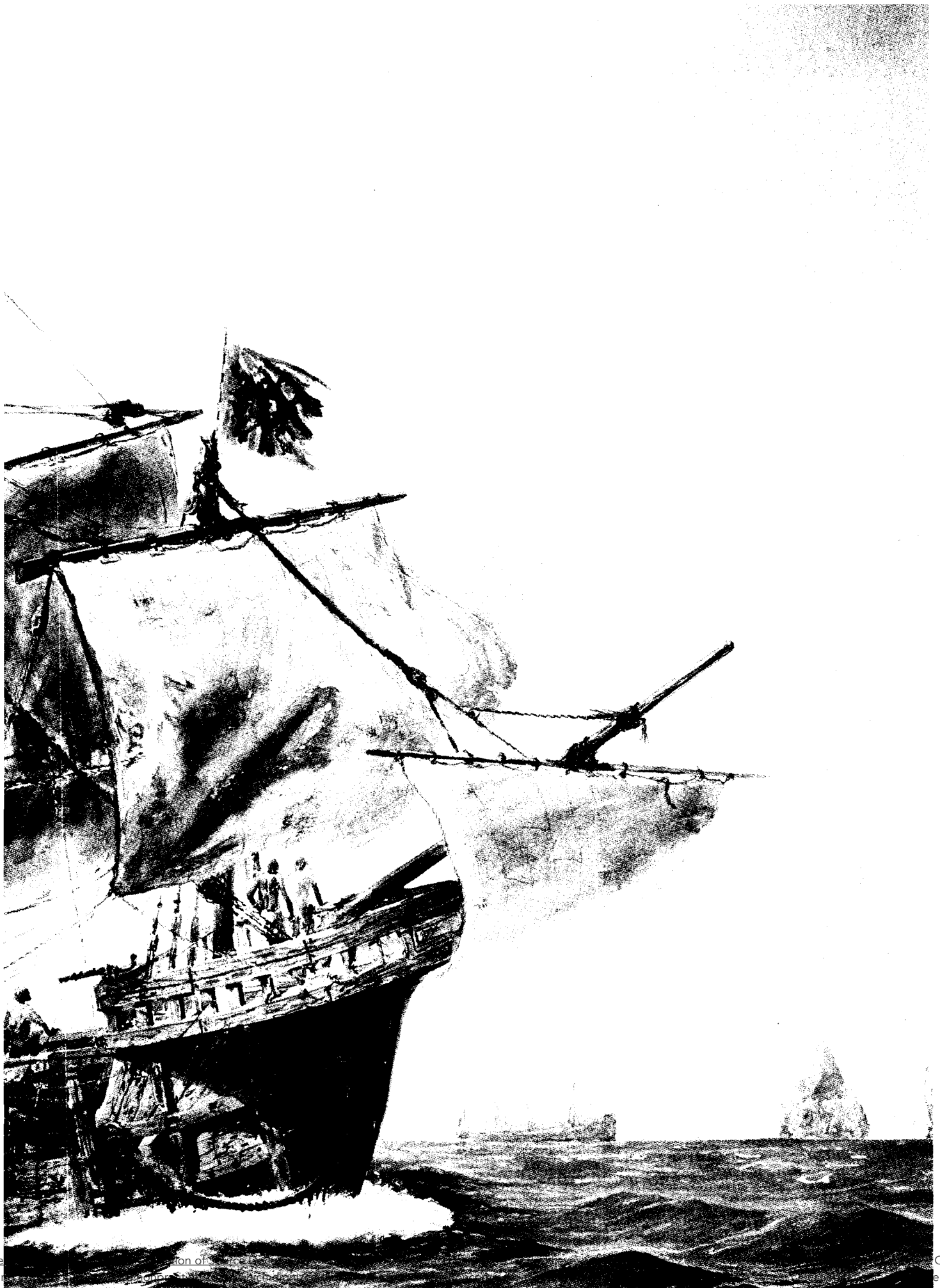
Between the Moluccas and Sanlúcar, a total of 15 individuals of the crew of the nao had died, not counting the two who deserted at the island of Timor, nor the 12 left at Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands. They 18 survivors were all skinny and in a bad state of health when they arrived at the port. Captain Juan Sebastian de Elcano had completed his voyage with them. Many of the 13 Indians from Tidore had also perished aboard the nao. From among the Indians who survived³ and wished to meet the Emperor and see these kingdoms, there was a sharp one. The first thing he did was to ask how many reales was worth 1 ducat, how many maravedis in 1 real, and how much pepper was given for 1 maravedi, as he went from store to store enquiring about the price of spices. This was the reason why this man never returned to his country, although the other Indians were repatriated.⁴

Elcano and the most senior men of his expedition later went to Valladolid, with the permission of the Emperor, to present the natives and products from those faraway islands, the gifts and offerings of their kings, and above all [some samples of] the precious spices brought by the Spanish by a route different from that of the Portuguese, something which had been the main objective of the enterprise so happily concluded. The Emperor received them with much grace and attention, saw and examined with satisfaction everything presented, rewarded everyone with generosity, distinguishing the leaders with honors. The nation applauded them and her poets celebrated these new argonauts...

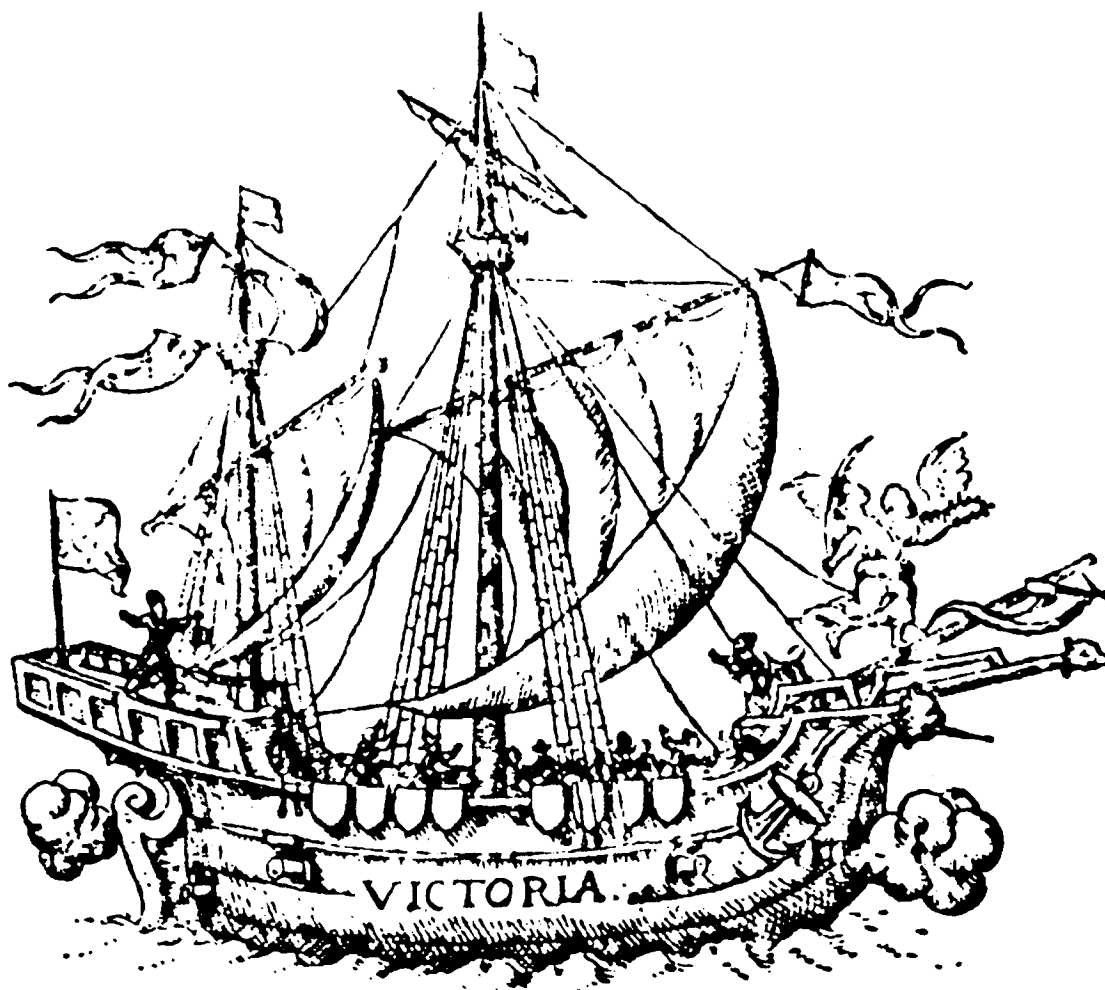
(Overleaf) **The ship Victoria, Captain Elcano, passing near Cape St. Vincent on the last leg of the first voyage around the world.** (Painting by G. Aledo, Museo Naval, Madrid)

- 1 Ed. note: The number 22 must include 3 Indians from Tidore, because one man, [the French sailor] Esteban Villon [N° 182] died on 5 August, and there were 18 Europeans who arrived back at Sanlúcar. The names of the people who returned and died aboard the returning **Victoria** is kept in AGI: *Estante 3, cajón 1, legajo 1, doc. 15* entitled: "*Armadas de la guarda de las Indias, etc.*" Twelve crewmen [and 1 Indian] were left behind in Santiago and were later repatriated by a Portuguese ship.
- 2 Ed. note: At 4 miles to a Spanish league, this represents a run of 56,000 miles. Pigafetta says the total was 14,460 leagues.
- 3 Ed. note: About 3 or 4 in number.
- 4 Herrera, *Década 3, lib. 4, cap. 4*. The text that follows is from Navarrete's prologue, page lxix and following.







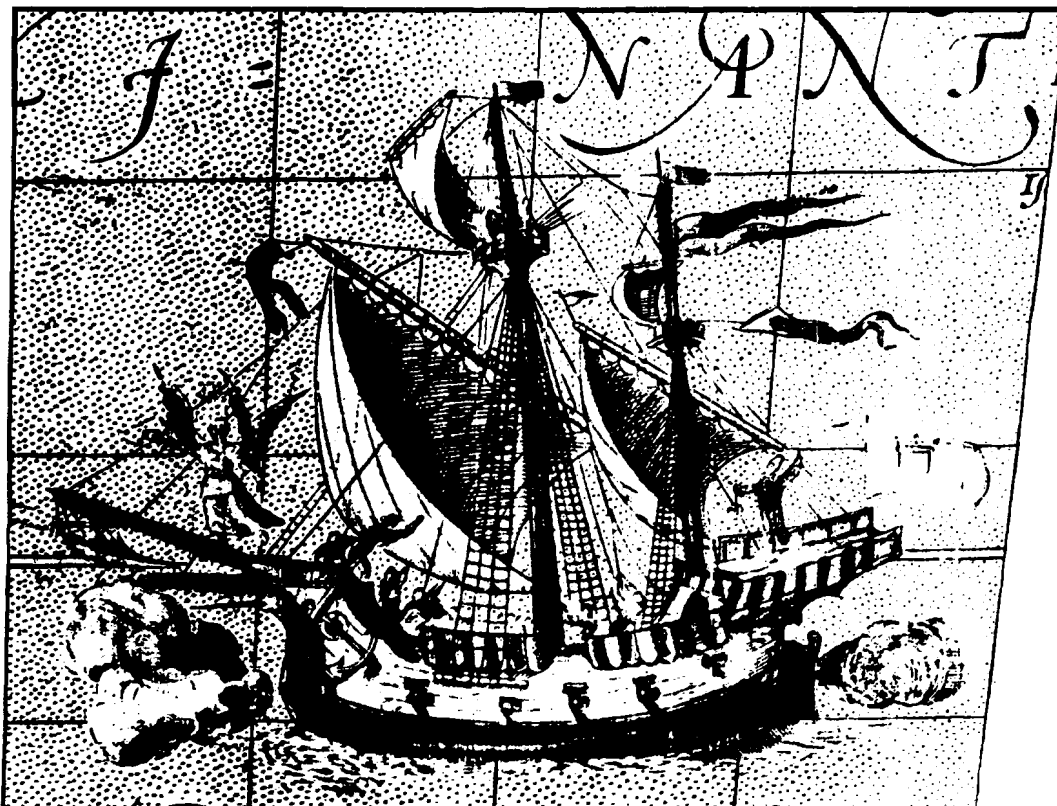


The good ship Victoria at the end of her epic journey. Her figurehead has been reproduced as a monument near the "pelota" court in Guetaria, in Guipúzcoa, about 7 km from Zarauz, the port where she had been built in 1515. The fate of the Victoria has been made known by the chronicler Oviedo. She was sold for 106,274 Maravedis and made two voyages to Hispaniola, then she disappeared on the second return voyage without any trace. Her remains lie somewhere on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.

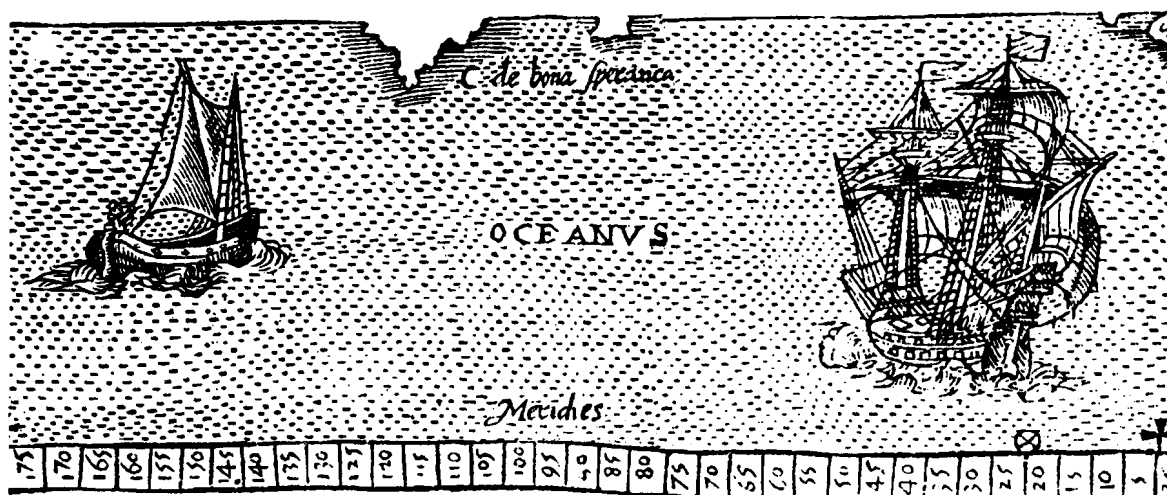
(Facing page:) The Victoria. (From Tome 6 of Armando Melón y Ruiz de Gorgejuela's "Magallanes y la primera vuelta al mundo", Barcelona, 1952)



The Victoria was glorified as the most famous ship ever. This is taken from a woodcut in L. Hulsius' book *"Sammlung von Schiffahrten"* (Nuremberg, 1603); it was copied by Henry Stevens in his book *"Johann Schöner"* (London, 1888). The caption shown around the figure reads: "(De Magell. navi)—Prima ego velivolis ambivi cursibus orbem. Magellane novo te duce ducta freto. Ambivi, meritoque vocor Victoria; sunt mi Vela alae, precium gloria; pugna, mare" which says something like: "Out of Magellan's ships, I was the first one to sail in both hemispheres of the earth... I doubly deserve the name Victory; my sails are like wings, etc."



The Victoria was first eulogied by Ortelius on a 1589 map.



The ship Victoria in the Indian Ocean. As it appears on a map by Robert Thorne (See full reproduction in Doc. 1525)

AN ODE TO JUAN SEBASTIAN ELCANO

Por tierra y por mar profundo,
Con imán y derrotero,
Un Vascongado el primero,
Dió la vuelta a todo el mundo.

(From Couch. **Arte de navegar**)

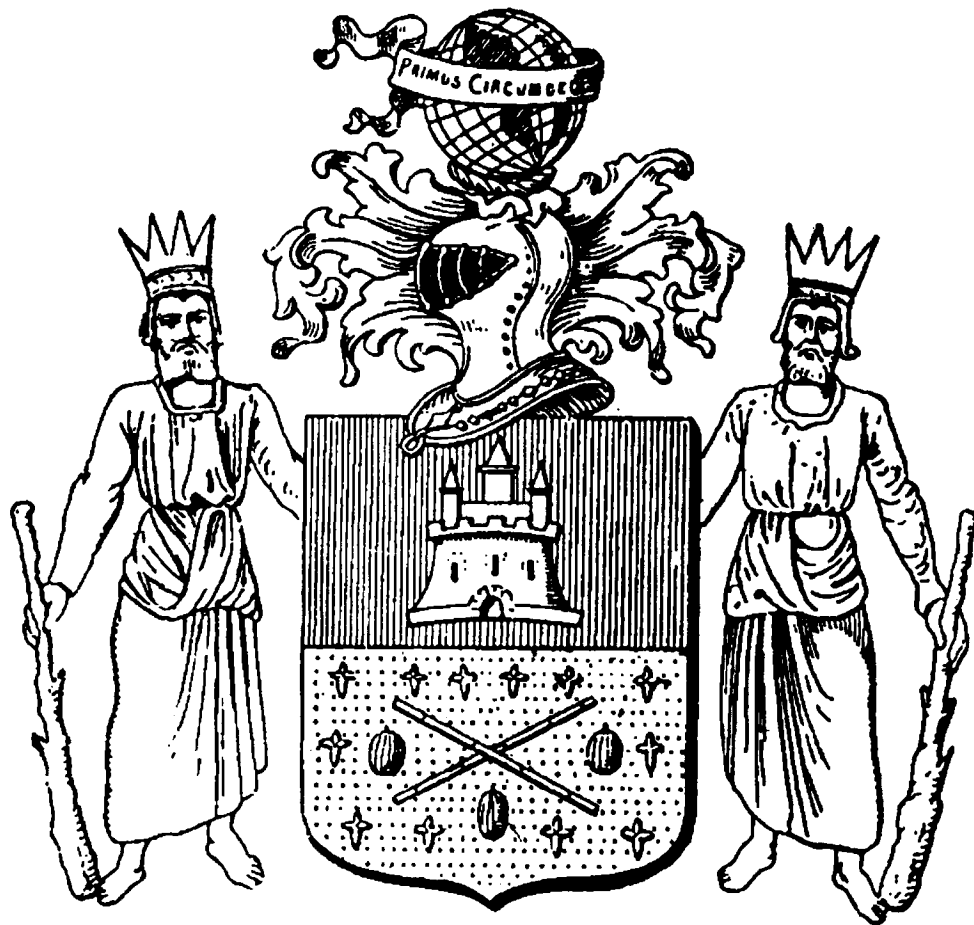
Through many a land and ocean,
With compass and astrolabe,
A Basque sailor named Elcan'
Was the first man round the globe.

(Translated by R. Lévesque)

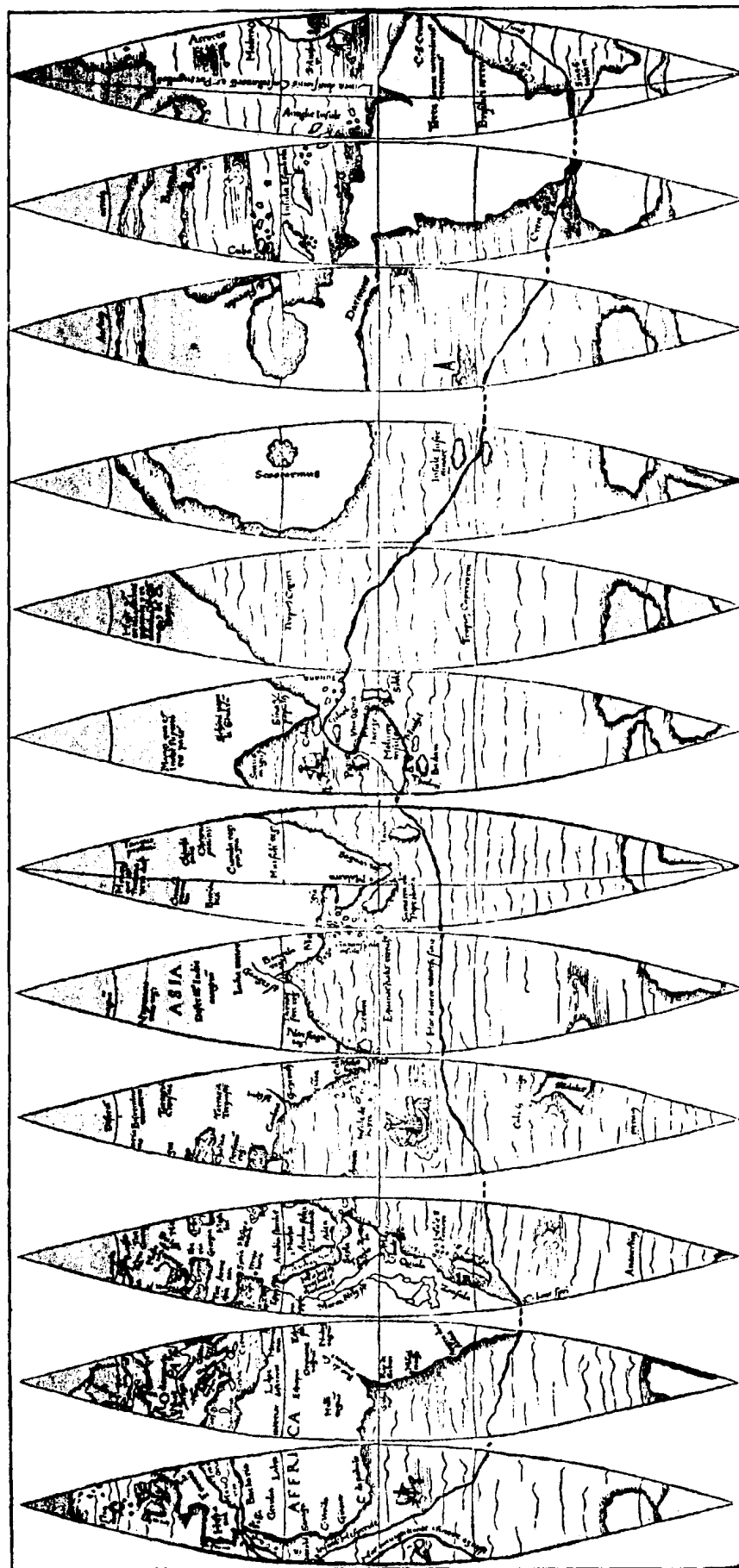


Statue of Elcano at Guetaria, his birthplace, before 1936.

In 1936, it was moved to the Paseo Nuevo in San Sebastian. (From Koelliker's book: "Die erste erdumseglung", 1908.



Actual coat-of-arms granted Elcano by Emperor Charles V. It consists of a gold castle on a red field, and below this two cinnamon sticks in saltire proper, three nutmegs and twelve cloves. As supporters, two native kings crowned, each holding in the outer hand a spice-branch proper. Above the castle is a helmet surmounted by a globe bearing the motto: "Primus circumdedisti me". (From Guillemard's "The Life of Magellan", 1891)



Schöner's Globe of 1523 with the track of Magellan's ships. (From Johan Schöner's "De nuper sub Castiliae". Original in Ch. H. Kalbfleisch Collection, N.Y.)