
Document 1527F

Loaysa and Saavedra—Some additional details by Oviedo

Source: Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo's Historia, Lib. XX, Cap. XXX. The following details were not reported by Urdaneta earlier. However, Oviedo's informants were the same Urdaneta, and Martin de Islares; both had been members of Loaysa's crew.

Chapter XXX — How it was learned that the galleon named Sancta María del Parral had been lost ... and how the galleon of Captain Saavedra was once again made ready in the Moluccas to return to New Spain...

At the time Captain Alvaro de Saavedra passed by the islands of the Celebes, the Indians brought to him two Christians to find out if he wanted to ransom them. They were Galicians from the galleon named **Sancta María del Parral**, whose captain was Don Jorge Manrique. This ship was one of those of the fleet which Commander Fray García de **Loaysa** brought to the Spiceries, and this galleon was lost at the island of Senguín [Sarangani], which is about 70 leagues from the Moluccas. Captain Saavedra ransomed them in exchange for gold and brought them to the Moluccas. One of them was named Romay, and the other Sánchez. After a few days spent in the Moluccas, it was learned from them how they had been lost. When Captain Hernando de la Torre heard the story, he had Romay arrested. As for Sánchez, he fled to the Portuguese. At about that time, a letter was received from the islands of the Celebes from a Flemish¹ named William, relating how they had been lost. In his letter he condemned these two Galicians. On account of this letter, and other clues, a few blows with a rope whip were applied to Romay, and finally he confessed as to how they had arrived at Visaya [i.e. Bislig], and there they sent the boat ashore and it was taken by the Indians who killed all those aboard. From there, those who were left went away and anchored at another island. While they were anchored there, these Galicians and others from the galleon

1 Ed. note: No doubt a Flemish soldier who had been a crew member aboard the Parral.

plotted to kill the captain and other persons, and indeed they did so. As for the said Captain Don Jorge Manrique, his brother Don Diego, and Francisco de Benavides, the naval treasurer, they were thrown overboard while still alive, after having been pierced with lances aboard ship. From there, they made their way without captain nor pilot, as the latter had died, and drove the nao sideways unto the island of Sanguín [Sarangani], where the Indians fought with them and killed most of them. The rest they made prisoners and sold them throughout those islands.

In view of his confession, he was sentenced to be dragged, and having been dragged, was dismembered into four parts; thus the sentence was complied with and carried out.

Once again they made the galleon [Florida] ready and they left for New Spain [1529]. Because the last time Captain Saavedra had tried to place himself under northern latitudes, thinking he would find winds favorable to go to New Spain, and he did not find them, it had been proposed many times [by others] that he ought to try and place himself under southern latitudes, as far as 20 or 30 degrees, and from there possibly find good winds, but Saavedra always disagreed. Thus they left during the month of January of 1529...

[Epilogue]

[Oviedo] learned all of this from Urdaneta in person, during many talks he had with him... This captain [Alvarado] had agreed to accept him in the service of his king and because he had much experience about those parts of the Moluccas where he has spent some time, and because he is a man who is very knowledgeable about sea and land matters. He also accepted that other gentleman Martin de Islares, whom I have mentioned earlier. Both of them were here at the fort of this city of Santo Domingo in the island of Hispaniola, which is in my charge, and they were questioned and wrote down what is said here, this past year of 1539.

From here they continued their way to the Mainland with the said Lieutenant-Governor, who was going directly to the port of Honduras, and from there would make his way to his place of government in Guatemala. From there, the same Lieutenant-Governor wrote to me, saying that he had already had some ships built to go or send to the Spice Islands, and he praised the person and experience of this Captain Urdaneta and Martin de Islares, because both are men of action with noble abilities.

After Urdaneta had reached the Court in Castile¹, Captain Fernando de la Torre himself arrived there with a few gentlemen from those who had been in the Moluccas. They informed the Emperor our Lord, and his Royal Council, about everything that is said here, and he found Himself well served by all of them and ordered that they be rewarded for their services...

The reader may recollect that, out of the fleet of seven ships with which Captain Frey García de Loaysa sailed for the Spice Islands, we know the outcome for four of them, as follows:

¹ Ed. note: At Valladolid in February 1537.

The nao **Sancti Spiritus** was lost at the mouth of the Strait, at the Cape of Eleven Thousand Virgins.

The other nao which reached a port in New Spain, aboard which was the priest Don Juan [Areizaga], called **Sanctiago**, whose captain was Santiago de Guevara.

The other ship we know about was the flagship, named **Sancta María de la Victoria**, and it only reached the Moluccas and the island of Tidore, where the Spanish built their fortress.

The fourth ship was lost there, near the Moluccas; its name was the **Sancta María del Parral**, whose captain was Jorge de Manrique.

About the other ships, it is not known where, their whereabouts, not how they were lost, given that the clues as to their misfortune can be gathered and suspected from what is known about the others, as mentioned briefly above. That is the truth, whatever we may think of the Portuguese who occupy those islands of the Moluccas and of Spices that fall within the limits of the conquest by Spain and belong to her kings. We should not blame them (interlopers as they are) for the loss of the other ships given that we do not know what happened to them. Look, it is a very long voyage, with all sorts of people aboard with intentions good or bad. It is not because they are on the same ship that they all conform to what a good conscience and loyalty to the King and neighbor would dictate. See what happened to the sinner who killed Don Jorge Manrique and to the other Galicians. The same thing has happened many times to many others who, in spite of trust, have been murdered by their very own companions. Take, for example, the untimely ends of Simón de Alcazaba¹ and of Captain Iñiguez de Carquizano. There is a popular proverb that describes this: "The loyal man does not live any longer than the traitor has decided."

1 Ed. note: Alcazaba led an expedition of two ships sent to the Moluccas in 1535 and he was killed by his own men in the Strait. On the way back, one ship was lost on the coast of Brazil and the other one went to Hispaniola before returning to Seville.



Hernan Cortés, the conqueror of Mexico. *He was mandated by the Emperor Charles V to send the first American expedition to the Moluccas. He appointed his cousin Saavedra to lead that expedition in 1527. The title of Marquis del Valle (de Oaxaca) was conferred upon him in July 1529.*