
Documents 1596E

Mendaña & Quirós—Did Quirós really discover Pohnpei in 1595?

E1. A Paris manuscript confirms Quirós' narrative

Source: BN Paris #Esp 324, folios 121v-122v. It is a summary, in Spanish, of the narrative by Quirós.

Note: There is another manuscript, in French, in BN Paris, mss. français 5561, folios 5-11, mentioned by Fr. Kelly (Calendar of Documents, p. 163).

The second voyage of Alvaro de Mendaña.

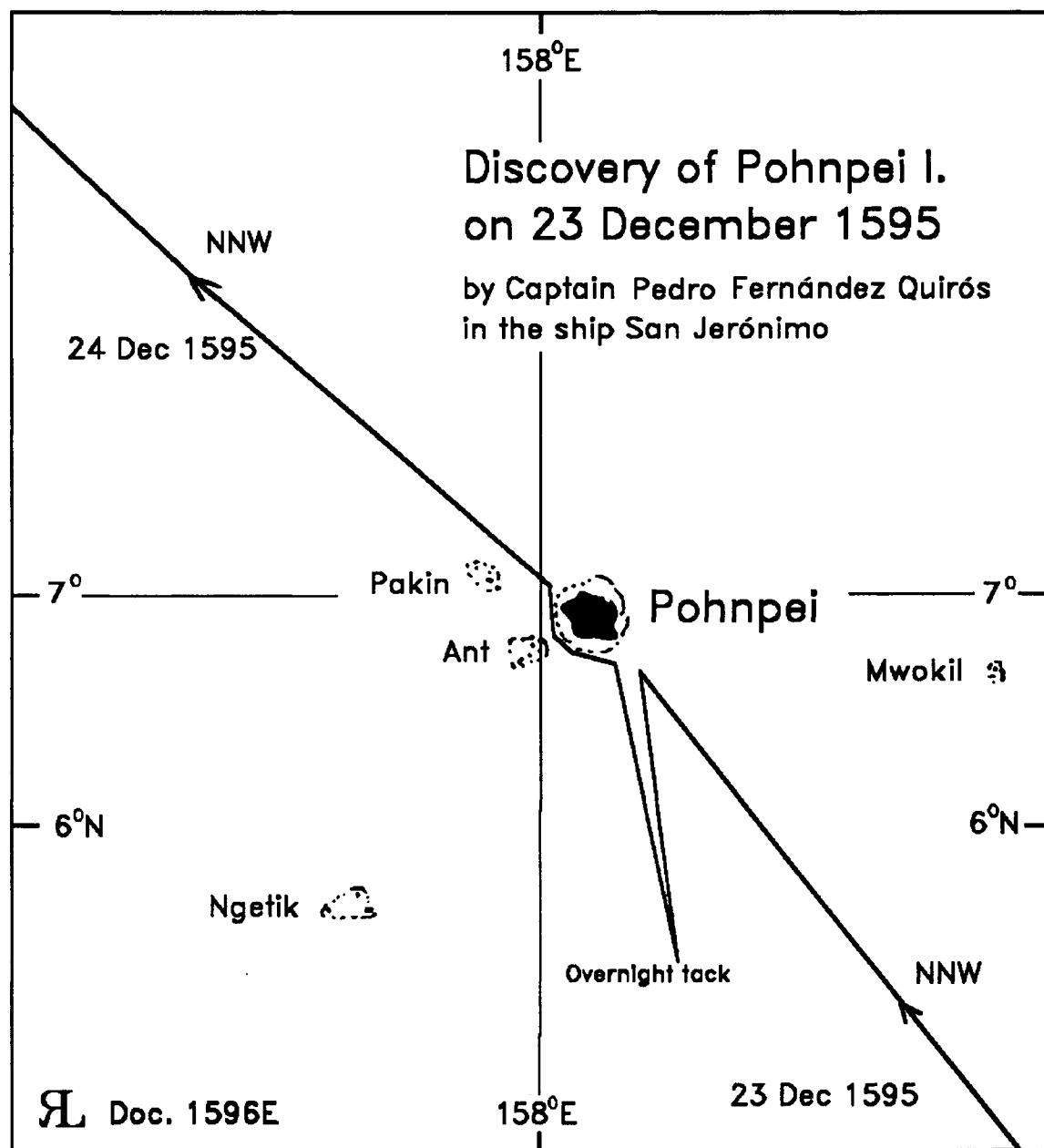
[Fol 121v]

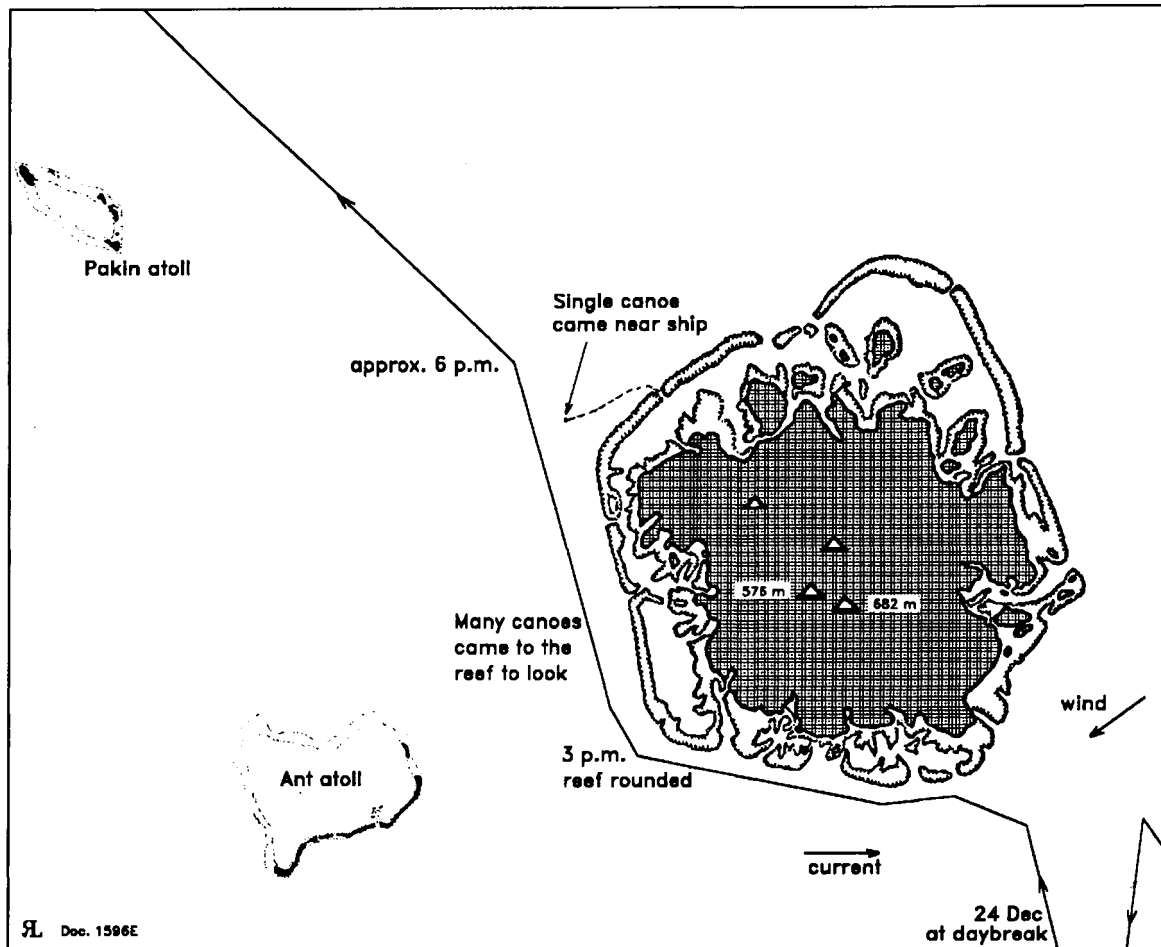
On 11 April 1595 the *adelantado* Alvaro de Mendaña embarked at Callao of Lima with his wife Isabel Barreto, and with Pedro Fernández de Quirós as Captain and Chief Pilot, with four vessels and 378 men...

...
[Fol. 122] ... Pedro Fernández de Quirós steered away from New Guinea which he thought to be in the vicinity. On the 27th of the month [of November] they were at 5° [S]. On 10 December, he found himself at the latitude of half a degree. On Tuesday 19 December, they got to 3° and 1/2 North latitude. On 23 December, one island was seen and they went toward it, without seeking a port on account of the shoals and reefs. It is inhabited, at 6° North latitude, round, 30 leagues in circumference, in the neighborhood of the Barbudos Islands. At 3 leagues to the west, it has 4 low islands and many others close to itself, all surrounded by reefs.

On Monday, 1 January 1596, there was found a latitude of 14° and on the 3rd of the same month two islands of the Ladrões were seen, one being Guan and the other Serpana. They passed between the two through a channel that is 10 leagues wide and the ship arrived in sight of Guan.

Pursuing its course to the Philippines, the ship left the Ladrone Islands behind without stopping there. It continued its way due west until 12 January when the sun was taken in 13°. On Sunday 14 January land was seen; it was the Cape of Espiritu Santo...





Close inspection of Pohnpei on 24 December 1595. *The ship San Jerónimo from Peru and the Solomon Islands, on the way to Manila, was under the naval control of Chief Pilot Quirós. He spent the whole of Christmas Eve 1595 inspecting the south and west sides of Pohnpei Island. The sad state of the rigging, the sick crew and the NE wind prevented him from going to windward.*

E2. The opinion of Navy Captain José Espinosa

Source: MN ms. 96, folios 256v-257.

Analysis by the Hydrographic Department, ca. 1800, in the handwriting of José Espinosa y Tello.

The island of San Bartholome in the New Carolines appears to be the same island as that in 6° plus of lat. N discovered by Quirós in his voyage to Manila after the death of Mendaña in the year 1596 [sic].

If one measures 80 leagues along the 14° parallel and places this distance to the E of Guahan, then draws a SSE course which, corrected for a 1/4 [i.e. 1 point] of NE compass variation, gives a difference of 1°30' E, and we get a longitude of 157°22' E of Cádiz.¹ The position of San Bartholome Island, according to **modern** observations, is in 155°E of Cádiz [i.e. 148°43' E of Greenwich] and in lat. 6°38', whereas that of Quirós is in lat. 6° plus.² Captain Burney reports this island in 6°10 lat. and 154° E of long., which is 160°17' E of Cádiz.³

E3. The opinion of Francisco Coello

Source: Francisco Coello, "El conflicto hispano-alemán", Bol. Soc. Geo. Madrid, Nov-Dec 1885, p. 296.

... All the details agree perfectly with the island called Bonebey, Puinipet or Ponapi, although its circumference is somewhat smaller [than 25-30 leagues], and its average latitude is 6°53'. Above all, the presence of the low islands west of it destroys whatever doubt; they are the small group called Andema or Ant. It has generally been believed that this island was San Bartolomé Island, but this is not said in the original documents, nor is it known how the name of Ascension Island was given to it by others.

E4. The opinion of Andrew Sharp

Source: The Discovery of the Pacific Islands, Oxford, 1969, p. 54.

The only island in the vicinity of 6 degrees north, of sufficient size to merit an estimate of being [at least] 25 leagues in circuit, with some low islets some 3 or 4 leagues to the west of it, and at such a distance to the south-east of Guam that 11 days sailing is feasible, is Ponape, the main island in the eastern Carolines... No other identification is compatible with the data.⁴

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- 1 Ed. note: That is, the intersection of this course and the 6° parallel occurs at this longitude which is equivalent to 151°05' E of Greenwich.
 - 2 Ed. note: Obviously, the "modern" San Bartolomé I. is completely different from the real one discovered in 1526, which is Taongi, in 169°E and nearly 15°N.
 - 3 Ed. note: Captain Espinosa did not identify this island located at 6° plus and between 151 and 154° E. Two islands are located within this zone: **Losap** (at about 7°N & 153°E) and **Namoluk** (at about 6°N & 153°E). They are obviously **not** feasible, because, although they lie on a direct course between Santa Cruz I. and a point 80 leagues E of Rota, the ship would have inextricably bumped into the Hall Islands **after** leaving either Losap or Namoluk. The same thing would have occurred for a course passing west of those islands, so, that leaves a course passing east of them as the only possible alternative. This points to Pohnpei, 5° further east.
 - 4 Ed. note: Sharp is wrong, however, in saying that Pohnpei had previously been discovered by Saavedra; his discovery was possible, but not probable (see discussion in Vol. 1, page 516).