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## Document 1565H

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# Legazpi—Second memorandum by Fr. Urdaneta about the planned route, dated Mexico 1561

*Sources: AGI 1-1-1/23, n° 15; Col. de Navarrete, t. 17, doc 2; Col. Ultramar ii, doc. 17, pp. 119-138; summarized in B&R 2:84-87.*

## Summary by Robertson

Mexico, 1561.—Urdaneta, in a second memorandum to the King, points out the greater advantages of Acapulco as a port, than those possessed by the port of Navidad. It has a more healthy location than the latter, is nearer Mexico City, and supplies can be taken there more easily. The lack of necessities, “such as wine, oil, etc., from Spain” and its unhealthy location have debarred workmen from going to the port of Navidad; hence the completion of the vessels has been retarded, and about a year must pass yet before they will be finished.” It is of great advantage that the port whence the men embark be healthy... because if they embark from an unhealthy land, many fall sick before embarking, and many die afterwards while at sea... The port of Acapulco appears to have a good location, so that a dockyard might lie fitted up there, where vessels can be built, and may there take and discharge their cargoes; for it is one of the foremost ports in the discovery of the Indies—large, safe, very healthy, and with a supply of good water. It abounds in fish; and at a distance of 5 or 6 leagues there is an abundance of wood for the futtock-timbers of the vessels, and, some distance farther, of wood for decks and sheathing, and pines for masts and yards.” Further, the district about this port is reasonably well populated. Urdaneta says that if material for making the artillery be sent from Spain, and good workmen, the artillery can be made in New Spain; as well as anchors. “In this land there is copper in abundance, from which artillery can be made” which only needs to be refined. The Augustinian makes some interesting observations regarding social and economic conditions in Mexico, and suggests that it would be very advantageous to compel many youths who are growing up in vagabondage to learn trades, “especially the mestizos, mulattoes, and free negroes.” Weapons,

ammunition, and defensive armor must be sent from Spain for this expedition. Urdaneta requests that hemp-seed be sent, in order that ropes may be made in New Spain. He tells of a plant, *pita* [agave], growing in this country which can be used as a substitute for hemp, and many plants of it must be planted near the ports. The pitch, tar, and resin, the instruments and charts for navigation, etc., must be sent hither from Spain. They need good workmen. The King is requested to allow them to make use of any workmen in the other provinces of "these parts of the Indies", paying them their just wages; likewise to take what things they need, paying the just price. It is advised that the necessary trees for shipbuilding be planted near the ports, and that ranches be established nearby to supply food.

The second section of this document treats of the navigation to the Western Islands; and Urdaneta maps out various routes which should be followed, according to the time of the year when the fleet shall have to do primarily with New Guinea as the objective point of the expedition, the Philippines being considered as only secondary thereto.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of the **Ladrones** and their inhabitants, Urdaneta says: "The islands of the Ladrones are many, and thirteen of them are said to be inhabited. The inhabitants are naked and poor. They eat rice, have many cocoa palms, and use salt. They fish with hooks made from tortoise-shell, being destitute of articles made of iron. They place a counterweight in one end of their canoes, and rig on them lateen-like sails made of palm-mats. It is quite important to explore this island [i.e. Guam] thoroughly, or any of the others, in order to discover and ascertain accurately the navigation that has been made up to that point, and their distance from the Moluccas and the Philippine Islands. Those islands are somewhat less than 370 leagues from Botaha<sup>2</sup>." The "modern maps that have come to this New Spain" are in his opinion incorrect, as certain coasts are drawn more extensive than is actually the case. Calms must be avoided and the trade winds caught, in order to facilitate navigation. The errors of former expeditions must be avoided, as well as a protracted stay at the Philippines "both because of the worms that infest that sea, which bore through and destroy the vessels, and because the Portuguese might learn of us during this time and much harm might result thereby." Besides, Spaniards as well as natives cannot be depended upon to keep the peace. By leaving New Spain before the beginning of October 1562, much expense and the idleness of the ships will be avoided. In case land be discovered within Spain's demarcation, Urdaneta requests the King to provide for its colonization by supplying a captain and some of the people and religious—or even that the general himself remain there, "if the natives thereof beg that some Spaniards remain among them." He asks the King to ascertain the truth of the report that the French have discovered a westward route "between the Land of the Cod-fish and the land north of it." If it be true then trade might be carried on more economically from Spain directly west than by way of New Spain, and the fleets will be better provided with men and equipment.

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1 Ed. note: See below for full translation of this whole section.

2 Ed. note: Another name for Guam on some maps.

## Navigation plan, by Fr. Urdaneta

The navigation which, with God's help, I think should be made from this New Spain to the west, should be at the beginning of October of this year of 1561, or not later than the beginning of November. If we could get away by that time, we would sail to the W 1/4 SW [W by S] for 600 leagues until reaching the latitude of 14° and 1/2 N, and from this point due west in search of **San Bartolomé** which will be found between 14° and 14° and 1/2 of latitude.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary to try and sight this island and anchor there to find out if it is inhabited, and in what part of it is the watering place, as it is very important that there should be fresh water in this island, even though it be uninhabited, because it is 690 leagues, more or less, closer to New Spain than either the Moluccas or the Philippines.<sup>2</sup> Here water and wood could be taken on the outward voyage as well as on the return voyage, if the return course cannot be otherwise. If the island in question could be settled, it would surely be of much benefit as a port-of-call, even if it be settled by delinquent men who deserve death or permanent exile.

Once this island of San Bartolomé has been sighted and water and wood been taken, the course set from there should be W by S until 1° and 1/2 have been lost, i.e. down to 13°, and from there run due west in search of the island of **Botaha**, which is one of the Ladrões.<sup>3</sup> By staying on the latitude of 13°, it cannot be missed. There would be about 330 leagues from San Bartolomé to this island.<sup>4</sup> The Ladrões are numerous; they say that 13 of them are inhabited. The inhabitants are naked and poor; they eat rice, and have many coconut palms and salt. They fish with hooks made of tortoise-shells and they go wild for anything made of iron. They come sailing aboard canoes that have a counterweight to one side and are fitted with mat sails shaped like lateen sails.

It would be very important to survey this island or any one of the others, in order to study the route followed up to that time, and how distant they are from the Moluccas and the Philippines, because in the matter of San Bartolomé an error could be made by encountering another island at the same latitude but farther east. Eleven of the 13 inhabited islands are from Botalia [sic] toward the north.<sup>5</sup>

From the Ladrões Islands to go in search of the Philippines, one must sail W by S until reaching 11°, or something less, and once at that latitude run on a due west heading until encountering the islands in question. There would be just under 370 leagues between the island of Botaha to these.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Ed. note: Urdaneta had already visited Taongi with the Loaysa expedition in 1526.

2 Ed. note: In 1561, the known islands called the Philippine Islands by the Spanish consisted in just the Visayas.

3 Ed. note: This is Guam, then erroneously referred to on public maps as Baham, Botaha, Botalia, hence Botalid and Volid, and other misprints.

4 Ed. note: The actual distance is over 400 leagues, or 24° of longitude.

5 Ed. note: Urdaneta got this information from Gonzalo de Vigo. Then and now, not all of the northern Marianas were inhabited on a regular basis.

6 Ed. note: His distance is over-estimated, as there are about 330 leagues.

If, however, we will not be able to leave New Spain until after the 10th of November, and not later than the 20th of January, or a few days later, we will have to adopt another course, by running SW directly in search of New Guinea, until we get to a latitude of 25°, or 30° of latitude south of the equinoctial, if at first we do not meet with its coast, because if that coast does extend toward the antarctic pole, or toward the Strait of Magellan, and it is hoped it does, although the coastline may not extend that far in the E by S direction, which is the trend of the coast discovered so far, but runs to SE instead, then we would meet with it before we get to 30°. I am of the opinion that such a coast, as laid down on the modern charts that have come to this New Spain, exceeds by more than 100 leagues the limit that has been discovered. Be that as it may, if it runs SE from the last cape that was discovered, we are bound to run into its eastern part before reaching 30°. If, by sailing as far as 30°, as I have said, we do not reach the said coast of New Guinea, then, weather permitting, we would run due west for 200 leagues, or more, and if we still do not reach it within these 200 leagues, from that 30° point, we would run WNW in order to reach the said last cape that has been discovered, which is in 5°, according to the narrative and sketch map which I have of the said coast.<sup>1</sup>

Depending on which part of the said coast of New Guinea we find and the time we find it, weather permitting, we would follow the coast and survey it for as long as we wish, provided that we try and arrive at the Philippines not later than the beginning of November 1562. It seems that if we were to leave the port of Acapulco not later than the 20th of January, or before, as I have said, with the favorable fresh breezes that we would then have we could cross the equinoctial in a few days; this is what we must aim to do as we should not cross it during the equinox<sup>2</sup> because at such a time some great calms are usually encountered below the equinoctial, something that is to be avoided. So, while sailing south of the equinoctial at the time period in question, we would have ample time to discover the said coast of New Guinea, and many other islands there might be.

If, however, we cannot leave the coast of New Spain during the whole month of January to go by the southern route, as I have said, we would wait until the month of March, or later, until we get weather good enough for a voyage by the Arctic, or northern, route, by following the coast of New Spain that runs WNW, and weather permitting, although we may have to sail at some distance from the coast, we would sail until we get to a latitude of 34° or more, where we should try and examine the country along the coast discovered by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo.<sup>3</sup> After having taken whatever necessary from that coast, and having spoken with the Indians, even if only by sign language,

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- 1 Ed. note: This document, now lost, was probably the one cited by a couple of old catalogues (See B&R 53:242) whose title (translated) was: "Geographic table of the South Sea, with all the voyages and sailing directions discovered until then." It contained many small maps.
  - 2 Ed. note: Before 1582, they were still using the Julian calendar by which the spring equinox occurred on about 11 March.
  - 3 Ed. note: There exists a narrative of this voyage of discovery of the northwest coast (1542-43) by Juan Paez in Col. de Indias, t. 14, pp. 165+.

about a "big water" which they had mentioned to Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo as existing inland beyond that place, we should go in search of it by following the coast to see what it is, as this water could be a sea [lying] beyond some headland where this land ends. We would already have learned by sign language if it is salt or fresh water, and if God wills that we might discover what it is, we would then turn to W by S until reaching 37°, or 35°, and from there we would run due west, discovering what there is between this land and that of China, until getting near the islands of Japan, unless we should meet first with something of such importance that we are satisfied with it. From there, we should direct our course to the Philippine Islands, without going any further westward.

In the case where we do not follow the western coast of New Spain, as stated above, we would go up as far as the latitude of 37°, and from there run west, as stated, until reaching the meridian of the Island of Botaha, which is one of the Ladrones, and from there we would make our way to the said Ladrones Islands, so as not to get lost, and from there go in search of the Philippines. Or else, we could go from the said point at 30° plus, [directly] in search of the Philippines. One way or another, our voyage would thus end up there.

I have planned these routes this way, so that, in case we cannot depart at the beginning of November [the correct time] at which to depart from New Spain, when leaving late from here, we would not get there with enough time to comply with what Y.M. orders us to do, and prepare ourselves for the return, because it is convenient that with the first winds suitable to go from there to here we should leave without waiting for the steady winds (good to sail here) to have established themselves. The reason for this is that such winds have always been found to last but little time. So, we must depart from there [early], so as to be on this side [i.e. east] of the Ladrones, if at all possible, by the time the favorable winds begin; we should not wait in the ports of the Philippines for [the beginning of] the favorable winds, which are the *vendavals*, even if we have to make the first part of this voyage by brute force. If we do otherwise, the same thing could happen to us that has happened in the past voyages; for instance, by getting there late, we might have to wait for one year, which would be a great inconvenience, not only on account of the many worms found in those island seas that cause ships to be lost, but also because in the interim the Portuguese might find out about us, of which some harm could come to us. The same could happen if we stay too long among the natives of those islands, as they are with a bad disposition, and our Spanish too, wherever they go and stay for a while, friendship usually lasts but for a little time. Although we should normally avoid all the disadvantages that can cause any harm, the more reason to do so during this voyage.

If there should be a reason to wait in New Spain until the beginning of October of the year of 1562, that too would be inconvenient. For one thing, the ships lose much by being so long idle, and for another, the costs would greatly increase. To avoid all of these things, and to take advantage of the time to explore the above-mentioned coasts, it would be convenient to sail as soon as the ships are ready to sail, unless Y.M. wishes to order otherwise.



In case we find during this voyage some good land, already discovered or that we might discover, provided that it is outside the pawn<sup>1</sup> and that its natives should ask for some Spanish to stay with them, it will be necessary for Y.M. to be pleased to order if you would be served that some captain with some men and religious stay in that land, or if it should be fitting for the General himself to stay with the necessary men, so that the will of your Majesty be complied with in everything.

At this New Spain, we have heard that the French have discovered a passage to the sea west of this New Spain between the land of the Cod-fish and that which extends toward the north; after entering the western sea at 60° or more, they [apparently] sailed W by S as far as down as 50° and found a true ocean by which to sail easily to China, to the Spice Islands, Peru, and New Spain, and everywhere else that one can sail to in that western sea; that on their return to France, they followed the north coast of Florida and that they found an exit toward the sea of Spain and France by a lower latitude than they had left it, given that there were no more than 40° or so where they went in, and not more than 50°. Because Captain Pedro Melendez has some understanding of what happened, according to the news we have received here, and because he will make a report to Y.M., I will say no more than it would be very important to discover if this is true from Spain, and if it is, and a passage is found as they say, and the land is inhabited, they should try and make a settlement at the narrowest point of that strait, or at the place that appears to be the most important, so that the ships going from Spain to the west, and from the west to Spain, could make a stopover there; from that place, they could hinder all the foreigners wanting to sail through that strait to the western ocean, given that it would evidently be possible to sail directly from Spain to China, and the Moluccas, and the other parts of that western ocean. Also, many expenses could be saved by not having the spice trade managed from this New Spain or anywhere else, in addition to having the ships better equipped with men and anything else that is necessary.

In order to carry out the above said, it is necessary to send someone who is a person experienced in business at sea and ashore, zealous in the service of God and of your Majesty. From what I have heard here about General Pedro Melendez, he could be safely entrusted with this business, but another with greater ability [would do], although this business would come out alright as he has the ability for it. I beg Y.M., regarding this matter as well as the other things mentioned in this report and memorandum of mine, to please receive my offer of service to the best of my weak forces; although the Viceroy, Don Luis de Velasco, has ordered me to make a report to Y.M. about a few things that I thought appropriate regarding these discoveries, the zeal of the service of God and of your Royal Majesty has given me cause to deal with it. If anything in this report may be found convenient for your royal service to have ordered, although the Viceroy, Don Luis de Velasco endeavors to provide for this business with much care, still Y.M. may be pleased to give him some orders.

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1 Ed. note: He refers to the contract or conditional sale made with the King of Portugal.