
Document 1596G

Jesuits aboard the flagship San Pedro in 1596

Source: Father Pedro Chirino, S.J. Relación de las islas Filipinas, Rome 1604; translated in B&R 12:232-235.

Note: Two ships, the San Pedro and the San Pablo, left Acapulco on 6 March, but they soon lost sight of each other. The flagship carried the newly-appointed Governor, Don Francisco Tello, and the following Jesuits: Father Superior Francisco de Vera, Fathers López de la Parra, Manuel Martínez, Valerio de Ledesma, Juan de Torres, Gabriel Sánchez, Miguel Gómez, Juan de San Lucar, Francisco de Otazo, Alonso Rodríguez, Cristóbal Jiménez, Francisco de Encinas, Diego de Santiago, Leonardo Scelsi, and Bartolomé Martes.

Of other and new members of the Society who went to the islands in the year 1596. Chapter XIV.

In the fleet of this year 1595, our very reverend Father-general, Claudio Aquaviva, sent to the Philippines Father Francisco de Vera, with 24 of the Society, at the request and expense of his Majesty the Catholic King, Philip II. With all these, he reached New Spain that same year; and, in the following, he embarked at the port of Acapulco for the Philippines with 14 members of the Society, with the Governor, Don Francisco Tello.

In order that this voyage from New Spain to the Philippines may be successfully made, it should be undertaken by the middle of March, at the latest, so as to reach the Philippines before the *vendavals* or southwest [monsoon] winds of June set in, which are very tempestuous—like the north winds in New Spain which begin in September.

As these vessels left the port of Acapulco so late, upon reaching the Philippines they encountered *vendavals* which exposed them to great peril and hardship. It has happened that vessels, leaving late as did these, upon striking these *vendavals* in the Philippines, have been obliged to turn back with these winds to the Ladrone Islands, and to return thence with the *brisas* from those islands to the Philippines; then, reaching the latter, to encounter the *vendavals*, and are again driven by their force to the Ladrones.

R E L A C I O N
DE LAS ISLAS FILIPINAS
I DE LO QUE EN ELLAS
AN TRABAIADO
Los Padres de la Compañia
de IESVS.

DEL P. PEDRO CHIRINO
*de la misma Compañia Procurador
de aquellas Islas.*



EN ROMA,
Por Estevan Paulino , Año de MDCIV.
Con licencia de los Superiores.

Title page of Father Chirino's Relation of the Philippines.

The hindrance and privation thus experienced can be imagined; nor can the ship land at either islands until the months of October and November when the *vendavals* cease.

Almost the same thing befell our people that year. The *vendavals* and currents long drove them back, and, in consequence, their voyage was lengthened, and provisions ran short; the ship's stores gave out, and, that they might not lack water, they were allotted small rations, each being given but half a quart a day—a privation which at sea is keenly felt. Finally, relieved from all these hardships and torments, through the mercy of God, they arrived safely at the college in Manila on the first day of August of the same year.¹ This voyage is usually made in 70 days, but they, to their own greater merit, did not reach the islands before 130 days; and afterward they journeyed more than 100 leagues besides, by both sea and land, coasting the shore in large boats. They crossed by land the province of Camarines, all of which is occupied by the convents of the glorious Father St. Francis, where they were received and cared for according to their dire necessities; even the Father commissary of those provinces, heedless of entreaties or excuses, washed with his own hands the feet of six of our brethen, who chanced to pass by his abode. The first words with which one of those servants of the Lord received them were the following, which he uttered with loving tears: "If only there were a thousand fathers, they would all have a harvest in the Philippines." The Indians, too, who had never seen our brethen in this province, were greatly rejoiced at their arrival—not only those already baptized, but even the infidels; and they gave proof of their goodwill in the hospitality which they showed towards our fathers, in imitation of their own fathers and ministers.

This was indeed a valuable reinforcement; for, combined with that of the year before², they made a sufficient force to begin the extension of the Society throughout the islands which were assigned to it as a province, and to care for the humble souls who begged for bread and had no-one to give it to them. Father Ramon de Prado, who had succeeded to the office of Vice-provincial,³ thus obtained people to employ in this work, in conformity with his great zeal for the salvation of souls. How he did this we shall see later, each subject in its proper place.

[Filipino languages]

First, I will say that the facility with which many ministers of the Lord in the four religious orders learned the languages used in their respective missions, even so as to preach and hear confessions in them, seems a gift from Heaven. The most tardy student of them, if he apply himself moderately, spends no more than six months; and one of our brethen, Father Cosme de Flores, learned and mastered this language, so that he could preach and hear confessions, in 74 days—to the astonishment of our people, as well as of the Indians themselves. The latter, seeing this facility, say that God,

1 Ed. note: They made port at Ibalon on 3 June. Governor Tello made haste and entered Manila on 14 July.

2 Ed. note: 8 Jesuits had arrived in 1595: Fathers Alonso de Humanes, Juan del Campo, Mateo Sánchez, Juan de Ribera, Cosme de Flores, Tomás de Montoya, Juan Bosque, and Diego Sánchez.

3 Ed. note: After the death of Father Sedeño.

without doubt, bestows it upon us, recognizing their needs. In truth, these languages are not very difficult, either to learn or to pronounce—and more especially now, since there is a grammar, a vocabulary, and many writings therein. The most difficult is the language of Manila (which they call Tagalog)—which, I have already said, Father Martin Henriquez learned in three months; and in three more, he used it fluently. This was the first of the native languages that I learned, to which and to the others I shall profitably devote another chapter.