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Legazpi—Secondary account of the voyage by Fr. Medina

Sources: Fr. Juan de Medina, O.S.A. Historia de la Orden de S. Agustín de estas Islas Filipinas, Manila, 1893; translated in B&R 23:121-142, 175-179.

History of the Augustinian Order in the Philippine Islands, by Fray Juan de Medina, O.S.A.

History of the events of the order of our great father St. Augustine in these Philippine Islands, from the time of their discovery and colonization by the Spaniards, with information regarding memorable occurrences. Composed by the venerable Father, Fray Juan de Medina¹, a native of Sevilla, formerly minister to the villages of Ibahay, Aclán, Dumangas, Passi, and Panay, vicar-provincial of that island, and prior of the convent of Santo Niño de Cebú. Written by his own hand in the year 1630. The annals of the religious of the order of our father St. Augustine in the Philippine Islands from the time of their discovery and colonization by the Spaniards by order and command of Don Felipe II, King and sovereign of the Spains.

Summary of Chapter 3.

[For the voyage the Augustinian provincial, with the concurrence of the other religious, selected the missionaries who were to be “the foundation stones upon which that church was to be established”: the prior, Andrés de Urdaneta; Martín Rada, “the most eminent man in the astrology of that time”, who proved of great aid to Urdaneta in scientific lines; Diego Herrera, who was to spend “all his life in the Philippines, with great temporal and spiritual gain, until at last, he lost his life in the year of 1576, when he was drowned”; Andrés de Aguirre who was also to spend all the rest of his life in the islands, making two voyages to Spain in their interest; Lorenzo Jiménez, “who died

1 Ed. note: Fr. Medina was a missionary in the Visayas Region of the Philippines from 1610 to 1635 when he obtained permission to go back to Spain, but he died at sea.

while waiting at the port of Navidad to embark"; and Pedro de Gamboa. When all was about in readiness to sail, the viceroy Luis de Velasco died. In eulogizing him, Esteban de Salazar says: "Of his virtue and valor, and his Christian spirit, we cannot speak in sufficiently fitting terms, for he was the light and model of all goodness and for all Christian princes. Although he lived amid the treasures of the Indians, so many years, he kept his soul so noble and so uncorrupted, and his hands so continent, that he died poor." Notwithstanding the death of the viceroy, preparations went on. Legazpi, on arriving at port, took inventory of his men, and found that, counting soldiers, sailors, and servants, they amounted to more than 400.¹ There were two pataches and two galleons. The flagship was the **San Pedro**, of about 400 tons' burthen; the *almiranta* was called **San Pablo** and was under the command of Mateo del Saz. In this vessel embarked Fathers Diego Herrera and Pedro de Gamboa; the others sailed in the flagship. "A grandson of the general, named Felipe de Salcedo, a lad of 16, also embarked. He afterward attained great prominence in the islands, and is therefore given special mention here." A native, Pedro Pacheco, brought from the islands on the return of the survivors of the Villalobos expedition, was also taken as interpreter.² The two pataches were under the command of Alonso de Arellano and Juan de la Isla. After Legazpi had given his instructions to the officers, the fleet set sail on 21 November 1564, the men all having invoked the blessing of God upon their voyage.]

Chapter 4—Of the voyage made by our religious to the Western Islands.

Great undertakings are wont never to lack their obstacles, which although they do not fail to unnerve those of feeble intellect, yet seem to serve only as spurs to the lofty-minded, to make them not abandon what is undertaken; and these latter show greater courage, when Fortune shows herself most contrary. And the devil, when he divines that any work is on foot that may be for the service of the Lord unless he can hinder it, at the very least manages to impede it, and does his utmost to render it of none effect. Thus in this departure, they did not fail to have their misfortunes, but having conquered these by their courageous souls, they continued their voyage. For four days they had ploughed the waters of the sea, when the general thought it best to open His Majesty's despatch and read the instructions given him, and find the route that he was ordered to take. The instructions were given him under lock and seal, and he was ordered not to open them, until he had sailed at least 100 leagues. For the opening of the instructions, he had all the men of account in the fleet assembled; they found that, in accordance with His Majesty's decree, they were ordered to go straight to the islands, now called Philippines. When they were reached, a portion of the army and the religious were to remain there, while Father Urdaneta, with the other portion of the fleet, was to return in order to establish the route, until then unknown, as this was the object and

1 Ed. note: The official count was 380.

2 Ed. note: This interpreter was Moluccan, possibly a half-breed.

chief purpose of His Majesty Father Urdaneta was extremely sorry at this, for he had always been given to understand that his opinion would be followed on this voyage. But it was certainly considered best by the Audiencia; for, besides their fulfilling in it His Majesty's will, they observed that the voyage to New Guinea embraced many things, and Father Urdaneta could not discover so quickly the return voyage from the Philippines to New Spain—and this was the chief aim of that expedition, and the object of greatest importance that was sought.

After they had understood, then, His Majesty's will, by the instructions that were read in their presence, all obeyed them as loyal vassals, and in pursuance thereof, began to lay their course, which with so certain a beginning as that of obedience and the sacrifice of their own wills, already promised a prosperous end. They changed their course, descending to the nineteenth [rather 9th] degree, in which lie the islands of Los Reyes and Corales.¹ From this point they began to take a direct course to the Philippines. In order to do this, an order was issued to steer west by south, and all the fleet was ordered to do the same, and, as far as possible, not to separate from the flagship. But should the vessels be separated by any storm, they were given to understand that they were to follow the said route, until they made some of the islands of the Philippines, where they would all meet. Upon this they again invoked the most sweet name of Jesus, and sailed with favorable breezes until they reached the 9th degree; and then the commander again called an assembly to discuss the voyage. There they took the latitude [sic], and all the pilots disagreed by as much as a point of the compass, some of them making it 200 leagues more than the others; and they could agree on neither the latitude nor the daily runs.

Father Urdaneta asserted that the Corales Islands had already been passed, and that they were farther on their journey. Accordingly he gave orders to make the 10th degree and sail toward the Arrecifes and Matalotes Islands² which are very much farther. They sailed along this course until January 9, when they discovered **land**. They went closer to it and saw a small island [Mejit], which was seemingly about 3 leagues in circumference. It was covered with trees and coconut palms, but as it was surrounded by reefs, they could not anchor at it. They sailed about the island, and spied a settlement situated among some palms, and some Indians on the shore. But they were likewise unable to anchor there, for, on casting their anchor, they found more than 15 [rather 150] fathoms of water.

Finally a small boat was lowered, which contained Father Urdaneta, together with the Master-of-camp, Captain Juan de la Isla, and Felipe Salcedo. They reported on their return that those people were friendly, well disposed, and gentle; that they had no manner of weapon, either defensive or offensive; that they were clad in reed mats, very fine and well finished; and that the island contained many excellent fruits, fish, Castilian fowl, and millet. They reported also that the Indians were fully bearded. On this ac-

1 Ed. note: The Wotje and Likiep of Villalobos.

2 Ed. note: The Ulithi and Fais of Villalobos.

count those islands were called **Barbudos**. They did not stop at these islands, or at any of the others that they sighted afterward, where, certainly, our religious would leave portions of their hearts, melted with fire and love for their fellow creatures, to all of whom they would desire to give a portion of the light that they carried, so that those peoples might be withdrawn from their dense darkness. But since now they could do no more, they would commend them to God, so that by His goodness He might open the door for them which He was now about to open to the other islands, for those people had been redeemed no less than the others. In short they continued to pass those islands, obedient to the orders that they must not stop until they should reach the Philippines. At those islands it was better ordained that the seminary should be established, so that from that point the light and instruction might spread to the shores of other islands. Without any doubt the Philippines are the best suited for this purpose, as they are near great China, and not far from Japan, Siam, and Cambodia, while even the land of India is said to be within sight; and the islands are surrounded by an infinite number of other islands, inhabited by immense multitudes of people.

The fleet set sail and left those islands of the Barbudos and now [i.e. in 1630] the route to the Philippines passes very far from them. Next day they sighted another **island**, which seemed of vast extent. But when they had arrived nearer, they found some small barren islands, stretching north and south, to which they gave the name **Placeres** [Ailuk].

In the afternoon another **island** [Jemo], upon which lived many birds, was sighted, and they named it after the birds. From this point they continued to discover islands and barren islets, all of them in the latitude of 10° [Wotho and Ujelang] and they gave various names to them.

Here Fr. Urdaneta ordered the vessels to ascend to the 13th degree, so that by running westward and turning their course to the southwest, until they reached 12-1/2 degrees, they might reach the Philippines.

On Saturday, January 22, the **Ladrones Islands** were discovered, so called because their inhabitants are robbers, to as great an extent as possible. They are very different from the natives of the other islands, whose goodness is such, that they do not know what it is to steal. And if I admit that there are many robbers [in the Philippines] they have become so since the Spaniards have governed them; for the natives learn our bad habits better than our good ones. Hence they are quite expert in all the vices of the Spaniards, but dull and ignorant in their virtues. In this is seen the bias of their disposition, and that they are much more inclined to evil than to good.

Father Urdaneta said mass in these Ladrones Islands, and gave their inhabitants to understand, as well as he could, the purpose of his coming, making use likewise of the interpreter Pacheco. Possession was taken of those islands for the King, our sovereign, with all the solemnities of law. The natives expressed great satisfaction with everything; for, as they are by nature robbers, they assured the Spaniards, in order to commit their depredations better. And not few were the jests that our Spaniards endured from that people, all out of respect for the General, who with his goodness, bore

it all, claiming in this wise to win the hearts of those islanders better than with arms. For if the natives were exasperated they would receive tardily the blessings that were intended for them.

This island of the Ladrones [i.e. Guam] where the Spaniards anchored is a lofty, mountainous land, with its coasts fringed with thick coconut groves, and other cool and shady trees. The natives of the islands eat **rice**, which is the chief food of all the islands. At times, when I consider how many people use rice as bread, I think that three-fourths of the world are sustained on this kind of food. These Ladrones Islands number thirteen, and extend north and south. As they were the first islands of which the General took possession,¹ His Majesty granted them to Melchor López de Legazpi, only son of the General, giving him the title of *Adelantado* [Lieutenant Governor]. These Indians go naked. Both men and women are fine sailors and swimmers, for they are accustomed to jump from their little boats after fish, and to catch and eat them raw.² Their boats are very narrow, and have only a counterweight at the opposite end, where they carry their sail. The sail is lateen, and woven from palms. In these craft do they venture forth intrepidly through those seas, from island to island, so that one would think that they had a treaty with wind and water. The ships en route to the Philippines pass through these islands, at different latitudes at various times. So many boats go out to meet them, that they quite surround the ships. The natives try to trade water and the products of their islands for iron, the substance that they esteem most; but, if they are able to steal the iron, without giving anything for it, they do so. It is necessary to aim an arquebus (which they fear greatly) at them in order to get the article returned. And to induce them to leave the ships free, there is no better method than to fire the arquebus in the air, the reverberations of which cause them to hide, fear, and vanish.³

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Chapter 5—Of the discovery of these islands.

They continued their voyage toward the west, until the 13th of the above month, on which day land was sighted at eight o'clock in the morning. That point marks the beginning of the Philippine Islands, which name was given to all these islands, in the year 1542, by Ruy López de Villalobos.

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- 1 Ed. note: He had taken possession of the Marshalls before this. Here is an example of the manner in which some historical facts become distorted, slightly at first.
 - 2 Ed. note: The natives were probably just biting their fish to kill them, not to eat them on the spot.
 - 3 Ed. note: Fr. Medina was himself an eyewitness to similar events in 1610 when he passed by the Ladrones (See Doc. 1610A).

Chapter 10—How Father Urdaneta discovered the return route to New Spain.

Now were preparations for the sailing well advanced, and the season was already well forward, and the Governor had all that was yet lacking concluded without any delay. He assigned the men for the voyage, and as commander of the ship **San Pedro**, chose his grandson Felipe de Salcedo, a youth of tender years, but possessed of great courage and valor. He subordinated him in all things to the advice of Father Urdaneta; the latter was the one who had been expressly ordered by His Majesty, to discover the [return] route, hitherto unknown to everybody. For company and counsel, Father Urdaneta took Father Fray Andrés Aguirre with him. They set sail June 1, 1565. The voyage was prosperous and better than those made now, which are so full of hardships and dangers, as will be seen in the proper place. Father Urdaneta took charge of the ship, for as soon as they had left Sugbú Cebu], the pilot and master of the ship died.¹ Even to this circumstance can one ascribe its good fortune, as a ship governed by so great a religious. Setting sail, then, with the *vendaval*² within a short time they reached the outside of the *embocadero* [entrance/exit, or San Bernardino Strait].

The ships sailing from Manila [ca. 1630] do not do this, and are much delayed, because they must run a greater distance within the channel and among more islands. This is not the least danger of the vessels in sailing from the bay of Manila. They need the *brisa* or east wind; but when the shoals of Silay are reached, they need the *vendaval*. But, when they sail, they usually go at the height of the *vendaval*, and many times the ships encounter great danger, and lose their anchors and are even wrecked. This does not happen in Sugbú. But they leave port with the *vendaval*, and get clear of the islands, and in less than 20 hours reach the Spanish Sea. They pursue their course with the same *vendaval*, which brings them to the Ladrones Islands. At this point navigation is difficult, for east winds prevail here, which take vessels going to New Spain by the bow. Hence, it is necessary to present the side of the vessel to their fury, and to look for north winds. Thus they go forging their way until they reach 30, 36, or 40 degrees, and one has gone as high as 50 degrees. There northwest and north winds are generally blowing, and with these they descend to the coast of New Spain. In those latitudes great cold is suffered. By the above account the difficulty of this voyage will be realized, for in sailing from Sugbú, which lies in 12 degrees, or from Manila, in 13 degrees, to Acapulco, in 17 degrees, a deviation so disproportional as ascending to 34 or 40 degrees is made. On account of this difference in temperatures, very many of the crew fall sick, die, and endure very great hardship, since the voyages are necessarily long; hence we can say that they make the voyage twice over.

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- 1 Ed. note: This is incorrect as Pilot Major Rodriguez and the master died after the ship had passed California. Also, Pilot's Mate Espinosa did a good job of navigating.
 - 2 Ed. note: The *vendavales* were tradewinds; with reference to Spain, they were winter winds from the south and southwest quarter.

In passing, will be declared how deserving of thanks from their state were our religious, and what great service they performed for their two Majesties—the divine and the human—in discovering, with so much toil, this course, which had been impossible hitherto. In addition, not less were their exploits in the islands, in planting the faith therein. Many religious, moved by their zeal, have made these journeys two or three times. Many men died on this voyage, chiefly for lack of proper nourishment.¹ And reason shows how little they must have taken, since no land would give it to them; for, at the best, they could then only get fowls, swine, and rice (which was their chief food) from the Indians. Thus the entire weight of the voyage was loaded upon the shoulders of our Argonaut, who made it; and he so carried himself that he shirked no toil, although of an advanced age. Every day he cast the lead, took observations, and did everything that seemed adviseable for that course. Hence it was God's will that he reached the Port of Navidad on October 3, after a voyage of four months and three days.² On arriving at port, he made the chart, showing all their routes, winds, points, and capes—so completely, that even today [ca. 1630] his chart is followed without any additions. For I believe that that chart included everything to be comprehended in that very wide gulf, which is, without doubt, the greatest known.

From there he went to Mexico. His return caused not a little wonder in that kingdom, and he was considered as an extraordinary man; for he, invested with the habit, had discovered what so many and so notable men had failed in, and could not accomplish. It was an undertaking that God had reserved for our holy order. Father Fray Andrés de Urdaneta remained but a short time in Mexico, for he found a vessel about to sail to Spain, and he took passage thereon, together with his companion, Father Fray Andrés de Aguirre. He arrived in Spain safely, where he informed His Majesty fully of all that he had done in his service, in obedience to his order; and also of the state of affairs in Philippines, and the necessity for their succor, if the undertaking was to be continued. His Majesty granted him audience with great kindness, and considered himself well served in all that had been accomplished. He gave orders that Father Fray Andrés and his companion should be supplied with all necessities while they remained at court.

Father Urdaneta settled all matters pertaining to these islands very carefully and satisfactorily. When everything was concluded, he requested leave of the members of the Council to return to New Spain, where he desired to finish his days in peace. The Council asked him to wait a while, so that after His Majesty had concluded affairs in Flanders, with which he was very busy, he could hear him at leisure and remunerate his great labors. Father Urdaneta replied that his object in coming to court was only to inform His Majesty of what had been ordered him, and he was sure that in the services that he had performed after he became a religious (reward for which he wished from God alone) he had no other aim than to obey his superiors, and at the same time to serve His

1 Ed. note: The author of these lines may have had a premonition that he himself would leave his bones somewhere in that sea five years later.

2 Ed. note: In fact, they went further to Acapulco and arrived there on the 8th.

Majesty for the alms and favors that he had granted to the Augustinian order in the Indies. Finally, they had to grant him this permission, although first His Majesty granted him audience very willingly, and showed himself as capable in those matters as in all others of his kingdom and seigniory. Thereupon, the two fathers, Fray Andrés de Urdaneta and Fray Andrés de Aguirre, took passage for New Spain, where they arrived in good health, after much wandering and shipwreck. Father Urdaneta lived after this, until June 23, 1568, when our Lord was pleased to take him, to reward him, as is believed, with His eternal rest. At his death he was 70 years old, less a few months. He wore the habit for 15 years, which we believe were a great merit; for he was ever an austere religious, very poor, very humble, and beyond belief obedient things which in Heaven he will have found well gained.

Father Fray Andrés de Aguirre, Father Urdaneta's companion in his wanderings and labors, remained in the province of Mexico until the year 1580, when he returned to the Philippines, moved by great and powerful reasons, namely, sentiments of holiness and the increase of those provinces. He was made provincial, and as we shall see later, he went again to Spain, where after negotiating all that he wished with His Majesty, he returned to Mexico. Here he despatched all the affairs with which he was charged, and settled down to a life of rest. But in the year 1593, he thought he was not employing well in a life of rest the health that God had given him, and therefore returned to Philippines, where he served our Lord for the rest of his days, until he died, to enter upon the joy of eternity.

