
Document 1648A

Friar Domingo Navarrete's description of his voyage

Original text in Spanish

Source: Fray Domingo Fernández Navarrete, O.P. *Tratados históricos, políticos, ethicos, y religiosos de la monarchía de China... con narración difusa de varios sucessos, y cosas singulares de otros reynos, y diferentes navegaciones...* (Madrid, Imprenta Real, 1676); available at BNM #R34960, and at LC.

[Tratado VII] Capitulo III — De la estada en Acapulco, y navegación hasta las Philipinas.

[p. 299]

1. Desde el año antecedente [1647] teníamos casa alquilada en Acapulco, para el tiempo de la navegación...

[4.] ... Huvo sus dificultades, sobre si passaria el Virrey al Piru en aquel Patache, ó si son él socorreria a Philipinas, de donde dos años continuos avian faltado Navios. El Pirú tampoco estava sossegado. Hizose junta; determinaron convenia mas socorrer a las Islas. Lo cierto es, que no gustaban tomasse el Gobierno el Obispo de Campeche, el qual ya avia tiempo, que estava en Mexico para este efecto. Executóse lo resuelto por la junta; tomóse el Patache por quenta de su Majestad, en treinta y seis mil reales [sic] de a ocho. En la India Oriental, no ay duda, labraran con aquella cantidad quatro Navios, mayores doblado, que dicho Patache.

5. Con esto asseguramos nuestro viage. Comencé con nuevos brios a componerse el matalotage, y hacer agua, q. es lo principal, huvo sobrada, y sin medida, solo el embarcarla me costó treinta y seis pesos. Los Negros hazen monopolio, y ha de ser lo que ellos quisieren. El Patache era pequeño; la gente, mercaderias, generos que embia el Rey, comida, agua, vino &c. tanto, que parecia imposible caber en el; de hecho se sacaron muchos fardos, por falta de lugar. El General era amigo, acomodónos lo mejor q. pudo, y fuímos, sin comparación, mas bien acomodados, que estuvimos en la primera navegación. Treinta sacerdotes nos embarcamos Domingo de Ramos ocho de Abril de 1648. Un oficial Real se me quedó con doze gallinas que le avia prestado; ningun titulo tuvo para aquello, porque nada hizo por nosotros, ni tuvimos dél, ni de sus compañeros

mínima dependencia. El P. Guardian se quedó con seis de limosna, con esso me pagó el Sermon que le prediqué día de S. Ioseph. Al embarcarnos, llegó una carta del señor Obispo Palafox a nuestro Vicario, en que dezia, como de España avia tenido nuevas, de que las Islas estavan en poder del Olandés, que reparasse en este punto. Hizose publica la nueva (no dudo tuvo gran fundamento, como se dirá adelante). Y aunque era muy bastante para desanimar a qualquiera, ninguno flaqueó un solo apice, antes intrepidos todos dicimos, nos queríamos certificar con nuestros ojos de lo que avia; bien mirado, fue genero de temeridad, a lo menos a lo humano; pero parece obrava alli N. Señor; el deseo de ir era grande, con que en nada reparavamos...

6. El Domingo de Ramos comimos en el Patache, lo que nuestra casera nos embió...

...Salimos del Puerto muy alegres, y con ser la tierra que dexavamos por popa, bien alta, la perdimos de vista aquella tarde. Ocho dias paramos esperando viento. El calor que hazia con aquella calma, era mas que ordinario. El día de Resurreccion se dixo una Missa; no tenia el Patache comodidad, ni capacidad para celebrar aquel Altissimo Misterio con que fue aquella la primera, y la ultima; Rosario, Lethanias, Te Deum al amanecer, jamas faltaron. Iuntaronse otros exercicios, y platicas espirituales. Entrónos el viento aquel día, y nos duró, sin amainar un instante, veinte y quatro dias. Las mares que herían por el costado al Patachuelo, eran grandes, y gruessas, causavan en él, y en nosotros todos grande inquietud. El General, que era muy practico en aquel viage, dezia, que eran unas corrientes que venian de las Californias. Y aunque tratando despues [p. 302] de este punto con persona, que se tiene por muy perita en el Arte Nautica, niega poder ser así. No obstante, yo digo lo que oí, a quien lo entendia, y me confirmo en ello, por la mala salida que dió el dicho, a lo que en contra de su parecer se le opuso. Lo que se vaciava en el Patache de botijas, y tinajas, luego se echava al mar; caxones de vizcocho, y gallineros, se quemavan en el fogon, para irnos desahogando un poco. De pie, aun casi no cabiamos. Debaxo de cubierta nadie pudo vivir, por ir todo ocupado del sustento, y generos que se llevavan. Todos iban al ayre, Sol, y Luna. Nosotros teníamos el Alcaçar, que era no pequeño alivio, la camara era muy pequeña, pero tambien aliviava mucho. A las ochocientas leguas dexamos a la parte del Norte la Isla de San Bartolome [Taongi], no la vimos; es, dize pequeña, y desamparada de todo. Otros ocho dias tuvimos de calma muerta. Los marineros, y soldados se echavan al mar, para refrescarse, sucedio a vezes bolver apresurados al Patache, por librarse de los Tiburones, que se descubrian. Un caso muy extraordinario, y al parecer milagroso, nos sucedió; baxaron un día por agua, para dar ración a todos, quando subieron arriva, muchos, y yo entre ellos notamos, que volvían blancos, como un papel, atribuimoslo al demasiado calor que ay debaxo de escotilla. Ellos disimularon, sin dar a entender cosa alguna de novedad, avia baxado con otros el Capitan de Infanteria Fulano Belastain, desembarcados supimos, como al ir a mirar con la vela el agua que tenia una pipa, dieron con una de polvora, donde se apagó la vela, sin pegar fuego. A la verdad, parece increíble, y es cosa constante, que si huviera pegado, sin darnos lugar a dezir Iesus, bolaríamos todos por el ayre, y acabaramos la vida. Ya que nosotros no velamos, velan

los Angeles de nuestra Guardia, y solícitos nos acuden en las necesidades. Cierto que quando lo referían, aun libres ya del mar, se nos estremecian las carnes.

7. Otro suceso hubo tambien particular, pero no de peligro alguno. El Piloto era Portugues, Fulano Antunez, perito sin duda en su oficio, hazia sus quantas cada día, y apuntava las leguas de cada singladura, conforme su fantasia, navegando de Leste a Oeste, no ay otro medio para ajustarlas. Es punto que ha desvelado a muchos, y no falta quien oy se desvele, para hallarse fixo en este rumbo de navegación; pero pienso, que en vano. Algunos, que dormian mas que el Piloto, alargavanse en las leguas, con que dieron en dezir, que avíamos passado las Islas de los Ladrones (oy [1676] se llaman Marianas) hubo porfías, y apuestas, el Piloto se enfadó, y juró, que hasta el Domingo siguiente por la mañana, no se avían de ver. Todos lo tuvieron por arrogancia Portuguesa. Llegose el Domingo, que era el de la Santísima Trinidad, y al salir el Sol embió gente al tope, y dixo: Oy antes de las ocho, hemos de ver las Islas de los Ladrones. Fue cosa rara, a media hora que passó, comenzó a dar voces el de arriba, diziendo: Tierra, tierra por la popa [sic].¹ Pasmados quedaron todos, y con mucha razon. Aquella tarde descubrieron quatro velas desde el tope. Causaron gran miedo. Fue engaño del Grumete. Una embarcacion pequeña nos aproó, esperamosla para tomar el refresco que traería, a trueque de clavos, y hierro viejo, que es lo que buscan aquellos Isleños. A las Ave Marias se nos desapareció por la popa. Como fue aquello, y quien venia en ella, se escrivira en otra ocasión. A tres dias despues, sobrevinieron unas grandes calmas, a que se siguió una valiente tormenta. Calaron masteleros, y el General quería se cortassen los arboles. Contradixolo el Contramaestre, que era gran hombre de mar, con la fuerza del viento mudamos del rumbo que llevavamos. Iba la proa al embocadero de San Bernardino, y tomamos la derrota para la Nueva Segovia. Vista la tierra de las Islas, la ibamos costeando, víamos a la parte de tierra Islotes, Farellones, y algunos Arrecifes. El Piloto dió su orden al Timonel, y echóse a dormir un poco. Ibanse descubriendo nuevas Islas, y Islotes por la proa, y el General mandava guiñar el Timonel para tierra. [p. 303] De repente subió arriba el escrivano del Navio, y dixo: Baxo por proa. Cambiaron el timon, y montamosle milagrosamente, roçando casi con él el Patache. Despertó el Piloto al ruido, enojóse cruelmente, sobravale razon, pues no se avía guardado el orden que él avía dado. Apartóse de la tierra, hasta ponerse en catorze grados y medio. De aquel modo llegamos seguros la Vigilia de San Juan a Casigura de Baler. Día siguiente fue gente a tierra aunque tarde, en que fue culpado el General.

...

1 Ed. note: An obvious typographical error for "proa".

Translation

Sources: A synopsis is given in B&R 37: 285-290. A full translation was made by Churchill, which has since been re-edited by John Cummins and published by the Hakluyt Society in 1962 (see Bibliography).

Notes: The title page of Fray Navarrete's work can be translated as: "Historical, political, ethical, and religious treatises on the monarchy of China... accompanied by a diffuse narrative of various events and singular things in other kingdoms, and various voyages..." Domingo Fernández Navarrete was born in Peñafiel in the diocese of Palencia on 8 December 1635. He studied at the college of Valladolid and became a teacher of philosophy there until he joined a missionary band of Dominicans. In the Philippines, he taught at the newly-created university of Santo Tomás. In 1658, he went to China from where he was expelled in 1665. He returned to Europe, and, in 1677, became bishop of Hispaniola Island. He died in 1689.

Synopsis by James A. Robertson.

Sixth Treatise on the voyages and navigations made by the author of this book.

[Chapter i relates the voyage from Spain to New Spain, in 1646, the ocean trip to Vera Cruz lasting 60 days. Thence journeying toward Mexico City (chapter ii), they reached the Dominican hospice of San Jacinto de Tacuba, outside the city walls. The last land journey, the one to Acapulco, was undertaken on 3 November 1647. In chapter iii Navarrete gives a description of Acapulco. Its houses are all low, "the best ones built of mud, and all thatched with straw. Notwithstanding, for ours they demanded from us 400 pieces-of-eight. This seems incredible; but for me, who paid the money, it is more than certain... The port is the best and safest in the world, as was daily asserted by those persons who had seen many other ports. Of all that I have seen, and those have not been few, there is not one that can equal it. The fort is excellent, and has a battery of 12 first-class pieces, so that it is impossible for any [enemy] ship to enter the port without being sent to the bottom. The climate is infernal, in accordance with the name that it bears."¹ After much delay a patache was finally secured which was going to carry the usual supplies to the Philippines, the religious (30 in number) embarking on 8 April 1648. The usual discomforts of the voyage were experienced, but the patache at last anchored at Lampon.]

Translation of the original text quoted above.

Treatise VI, Chapter III — About the stay at Acapulco, and the voyage to the Philippines.

1. Since the preceding year [1647] we had rented a house in Acapulco, to await the time of the voyage...

1 Near the end of the preceding chapter, our author states that the name Acapulco "means, in the language of that country, 'mouth of hell.'"

[While he was waiting for the galleon to arrive from the Philippines, in March 1648, a patache [i.e. the Buen Jesús] came in from Realejo [then in Panama, but now in Nicaragua] to take the Viceroy of New Spain to Peru where he had been transferred.]

[4.] ... There were difficulties, as to whether the Viceroy would go to Peru in that patache, or whether he would send help to the Philippines in it, given that two full years had passed without any ship coming from there. Peru was not at peace either. A council meeting was called; they decided that it would be proper to send help to the Islands. The truth is, that they did not relish the thought that the Bishop of Campeche would take over the government; this bishop has been in Mexico for some time waiting for this to happen. What the council had decided was carried out. The patache was acquired on behalf of His Majesty for the sum of 36,000 pieces-of-eight. In the East Indies, there is no doubt that this sum would be sufficient to purchase four ships, twice the size of the said patache.

5. With it, our voyage became firm. I began with new vigor to collect the provisions of food, and also of water, which is more important. There were plenty of them to be had, and without measure, so that just to load them all cost me 36 pesos. The negros have a [stevedoring] monopoly, and one must do their bidding. The patache was small; the people, the merchandise, the goods that the King sent along, the food, water, wine, etc. were so much that it seemed impossible to fit everything in it. In fact, they took out many bundles, for lack of space. The General was a friend;¹ so, he accommodated us as best he could, and we were certainly more comfortable than in the first voyage [from Spain to New Spain]. We thirty priests embarked on Palm Sunday, 8 April 1648.² One royal official kept the dozen chicken which I had lent to him; I had not held any receipt for them, since he did nothing for us, and we had had absolutely no dealing, either with him or with his colleagues. The Father Guardian received six [of these] chicken in alms, and these he gave to me as payment for a sermon I preached on St. Joseph's Day. At the moment of embarkation, a letter was received from the Lord Bishop Palafox addressed to our Vicar,³ in which he said that he had received news from Spain to the effect that the Islands were in the hands of the Dutch, who cruise in that neighborhood. The news was made public (I have no doubt that it had some effect, as I will mention below). Although this news was sufficient to dishearten anyone, no-one became discouraged in the least; rather, we were all intrepid, saying that we wished to ascertain the truth with our own eyes. On second thought, this attitude was somewhat foolish, looking at it from the human point of view; however, it appears that Our Lord had something to do with it. The desire to go was great, so, we did not pay attention to the news...

1 Ed. note: His name was Cristobal Romero, who had experience in the Philippines and had been detained in Mexico, according to the historian Fray Santa Cruz (see B&R 37: 81).

2 Ed. note: The names of the 30 Dominicans are given by Santa Cruz (see B&R 37: 85). Fray Felipe Pardo, who was to cause so many troubles to the Philippine government, was among them. Another soon-to-be-famous Dominican, Fray Vittorio Ricci, was also aboard.

3 Ed. note: The band leader was father Fray Juan Bautista de Morales (see B&R 37: 84).

6. On Palm Sunday, we ate aboard the patache what our housekeeper sent to us... We left the port in a very happy state and, although the land which we were leaving behind is rather high, we lost sight of it that afternoon. For eight days we were becalmed waiting for the wind. The heat which accompanied that calm weather was extraordinary. At Easter, one mass was said. There was no room aboard the patache to celebrate that supreme mystery, so that this mass was the first, and last. The rosary, the litanies, and the *Te Deum* always took place at daybreak. To those were added some exercises, and spiritual discourses. The wind found us that day, and it lasted us for 24 days straight, with no need to lower the sails one moment. The seas that struck the side of our little patache were heavy ones; they caused it some damage and in us much worry. The General, who had much practical knowledge of that voyage, was saying that the heavy seas were caused by some currents that run off the Californias. Although I later talked about this point with someone who is regarded as expert in the nautical arts, he denied that it could be so. Nevertheless, I repeat what I heard, to whomever can understand; my own understanding was confirmed by the bad outcome that befell the said General, preferring to believe the contrary opinion. Whenever some bottles, or jars, became empty, they were then thrown overboard; the [empty] biscuit crates, and the chicken coops were burned in the fire-place, in order to make us breathe a little. Even while standing, there was hardly enough room. No-one could stay below deck, because the space was all taken by the food and the goods that were carried aboard. Everybody was living in the open air, day and night. As for us, we had the quarterdeck, which was no little advantage; the cabin was very small, but that was also of some relief. After some 800 leagues, we passed the Island of San Bartolomé [Taongi] which lied north of us, but we did not see it. They say that it is a small island, deprived of everything. We had another eight days of dead calm. The sailors and soldiers would throw themselves into the sea to cool themselves. Sometimes, they would return to the patache hurriedly, to escape the sharks that were spotted. An extraordinary thing happened, one that seemed miraculous. One day, they went down to get some water, in order to give a ration to everyone. When they returned on deck, many, including myself, noticed that they had become pale like a piece of paper. We attributed this to the extreme heat below the hatch. They kept their peace, and said not one thing about this. The Captain of Infantry, a certain Belastain, had gone down with others. After we had disembarked, we learned that they had gone down with a candle to look for water stored in a barrel; as they came to one containing gun-powder, the candle went out. Truly, this seems incredible. What is certain is that, if the powder had caught fire, it would have made us fly through the air, without the time to say Jesus, and our life would have been over. Whenever we do not watch over ourselves, our guardian angels do it for us and come whenever we have a need for them. One thing for sure is that, whenever we mentioned it, although we were then away from the sea, our spines would tingle.

7. Another thing took place also, but not so dangerous. The Pilot was a certain Portuguese, named Antunez, who was certainly expert at his profession. He made his estimates every day, and put down the number of leagues in each [daily] run, in accordance

with his judgment, as we sailed from east to west, since there is no other method of estimating them [i.e. longitudes]. This point, that is how to tell one's position along that course of navigation, has kept many awake, and no doubt there is someone today worrying about it, but I think it is in vain. Some people, who would sleep more than the pilot, would make their leagues longer, so that they came to be saying that we had passed the Islands of the Ladrones (called today [1676] the Marianas). There were some bets, offered and accepted. The pilot became annoyed. He swore that they would not be sighted until the morning of the following Sunday. Everyone accused him of being an arrogant Portuguese. Sunday arrived (it was Trinity Sunday). When the sun arose, he sent people to the topmast, and said: "Today, before 8 o'clock, we will sight the **Ladrones Islands.**" Something unusual happened; half an hour had not passed when the man above began to shout: "Land, land ahead." We all were aghast, and rightfully so. That afternoon they sighted four sails from the top. They caused a great fear.¹ The ship's boy had made a mistake. A small craft came alongside, as we waited for it to take the refreshment that it brought us, in exchange for nails, and old iron that is what those islanders are looking for. By the time of the *Ave Maria*, we had lost sight of it behind us. **About what happened beforehand, and who had come aboard her, I will write on another occasion.**² Three days later, there came some great calms, that were followed by a great storm. They took down the topmasts. The General wished to cut the masts themselves, but the boatswain, who was a great seaman, objected to it. With the strength of the wind, we had to change our heading. We had been heading for the Strait of San Bernardino, and we now headed toward New Segovia.³ Upon sighting the land of the Islands, we were following it, going past some small islands, rocks, and some reefs. The pilot gave an order to the man at the bar, and went off to sleep a little. More islands, and islets, appeared dead ahead. That is when the General ordered to tack toward the land. Suddenly, the ship's clerk came up and said: "Shoal ahead." The rudder was moved, and the shoal miraculously avoided, as it almost grazed the patache. The noise made caused the pilot to wake up. He got cruelly vexed, much beyond reason, because his order had not been followed. The patache was taken offshore, until

1 Ed. note: The Dutch had indeed come cruising off the Marianas three years earlier (see Doc. 1645A), and the sighting implied a four-masted ship.

2 Ed. note: I searched the book as I could for a later reference to this incident, but found none. Chapter 11 contains "some things added relating to what has already been writ" but nothing more about the Guam incident, unfortunately. My guess is that the men who visited the ship on this occasion were some Chinese whose champan had jut arrived in distress at those islands. It is even possible that the ship's boy had sighted the ship from the top-mast. If so, the anchorage of Choco's champan, or large junk, would have been in Guam, or Rota, rather than in Saipan, as was later believed. The reason why Fray Navarrete postponed the narration of this incident (and later forgot) was that he may have intended to mention it in connection with his later involvement with the Chinese, at Manila and in China.

3 Ed. note: I.e. the Cagayan Province, north of Luzon Island.

the latitude of 14 degrees and a half was reached. Finally, we arrived safe on the eve of St. John's Day at Casigura de Baler. The next day some people went ashore, although late, and the General was blamed for this...

[Later on, two Filipino coastal pilots took the patache to Lampon. The passengers walked from there to Manila. Meanwhile, the prowling Dutch found the anchorage of the patache and were about to attack, but the Spanish deliberately set fire to it.]¹

¹ Ed. note: On page 459 of the original edition, the author says that he crossed the Pacific in 1646, but this is a typographical error.