
Document 1596B

Letter from Doctor Morga to the King, dated Manila 6 July 1596

Sources: B1. AGI 67-6-18; translated in B&R 9:263-273. B2. Morga's Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas, various editions, and manuscript in BN Madrid #2995.

B1. News of the second Mendaña expedition

Sire:

At the close of the past year '95, I wrote to your Majesty via Malacca, giving a full account of some affairs of this place. The duplicate of that letter accompanies this one, and I refer you to the same.

...

At the beginning of this year, a galleon arrived at these islands from Peru, and later a small frigate in its convoy, wherein it appears that Adelantado Alvaro de Mendaña had set out from Peru in April of last year to discover the western islands in the South Sea. This he did not succeed in doing, and lost his flagship and afterward another frigate. He formed a settlement on another island near New Guinea, where the men quarreled among themselves, and the said *adelantado* died with many of his people. His wife inherited that settlement, and arrived at these islands in great need and after many hardships, where she married Don Fernando [rather Francisco] de Castro, cousin of the governor, and returned to Peru with her ship. I am sending your Majesty the report of the matter which has been received, and an account of their voyage and adventures, which are therein stated at greater length.

...

May our Lord preserve for many years the royal person of your Majesty, as is necessary to Christendom and your Majesty's servants.

Manila, 6 July 1596.

Dr. Antonio de Morga

B2. Report by Morga on the Mendaña expedition (published version)

In April of the year 1595, *adelantado* Alvaro de Mendaña de Neira sailed from Calao de Lima in Peru, to colonize the Solomon Islands, which he had discovered many years before [i.e. 1568] in the South Sea, the main one of which he had called San Cristobal. He took four ships, two large ones—a flagship [San Jerónimo] and an *almiranta* [Santa Isabel]—a frigate [Santa Catalina], and a galliot [San Felipe], with 400 men in all. He was also accompanied by his wife, Doña Isabel Barreto and his three brothers-in-law. On the way he discovered other islands at which he did not stop; but not finding those which he had previously discovered, and as his *almiranta* had been lost,¹ he anchored with the other ships at an island near New Guinea, inhabited by negroes, to which he gave the name of Santa Cruz.² There he settled—little to the satisfaction of his men.

The *adelantado*, two of his brothers-in-law, and many of his people died there. Doña Isabel Barreto abandoned the colony, on account of sickness and want, and embarked the survivors aboard her flagship, frigate, and galliot. But while they were sailing toward the Philippines the frigate and galliot disappeared in another direction. The flagship³ entered the Butuan River in the island of Mindanao, and reached Manila after great want and suffering. There Doña Isabel Barreto married Don Francisco de Castro, and returned to New Spain in his ship, the **San Jerónimo** in the year of '96. The events of this voyage have only been lightly touched upon here, so that it seems fitting to reproduce literally the relation, to which Don Pedro Fernando [i.e. Fernández] de Quirós, chief pilot on this voyage, affixed his signature, which is as follows.

Relation of the voyage of *adelantado* Alvaro de Mendaña de Neira for the discovery of the Solomon Islands [addressed to Dr. Morga].

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- 1 Ed. note: See the article by Jim Allen and Roger C. Green entitled "Mendaña 1595 and the Fate of the Lost 'Almiranta': An Archaeological Investigation" in JPH 7:73-91. Proof has been found that this ship continued westward, found San Cristobal Island and founded a "lost" colony at Pamua on its north coast.
 - 2 Ed. note: Ndeni Island today.
 - 3 Ed. note: Error for galliot. As for the frigate, it was never heard of again.

On Friday, the 9th of the month of April 1595, *adelantado* Alvaro de Mendaña set sail with his fleet for the pacification and settlement of the western islands in the South Sea, sailing from the port of Callao de Lima, which lies in 12-1/2° south latitude. Laying his course toward the valleys of Santa, Trujillo, and Saña, and collecting men and provisions, he went to Paita. There he took in water and numbered his forces, which amounted to about four hundred persons. Then with his four vessels, two large and two small, he left the said port, which is 5 degrees higher than the former port, and directed his course WSW in search of the islands that he had discovered.

He took Pedro Merino Manrique as Master-of-camp; his brother-in-law, Lope de la Vega, as admiral; and Pedro Fernandez de Quirós as chief pilot.¹ Following the above-mentioned course he sailed to the latitude of 9-1/2°, whence he sailed SW by W to 14°, where he changed his course to NW by W.² On Friday, the 21st of the month of July, having reached a latitude of just over 10°, we sighted an island to which the General gave the name of Madalena.³

...
[Stay at Santa Cruz Island]

The people of this island are black. They have small single-masted canoes for use about their villages; and some very large ones to use in the open sea. On Sunday, 8 October, the *adelantado* had the Master-of-camp stabbed. Tomas de Ampuero was also killed in the same way. Lieutenant Juan de Buitrago was beheaded; and the *adelantado* intended to have two others, friends of the Master-of-camp, killed, but was restrained therefrom at our request. The cause of this was notorious, for these men tried to induce the *adelantado* to leave the land and abandon it. There must have been other reasons unknown to me; what I saw was much dissoluteness and shamelessness, and a great deal of improper conduct. On 18 October, after a total eclipse of the moon on the 17th, the *adelantado* died; on 2 November, Don Lorenzo, his brother-in-law, who had succeeded him as Captain-general; the priest Antonio de Serpa, seven or eight days before; and on 8 November the vicar, Juan de Espinosa. Disease was rampant among our men and many died for lack of care, and the want of an apothecary and doctor. The men begged the Governess Doña Ysabel Barreto to take them out of the country.

All agreed to embark, and by the mercy of God, we left this port on Saturday, the 18th of the said month, and sailed SW by W toward the island of San Cristobal or rather in search of it, to see whether we could find it or the *almiranta*, in accordance with the governor's orders. For two days nothing was seen; and at the request of all the men, who cried out that we were taking them to destruction, she ordered me to steer from

1 Ed. note: Quirós' real name was Queirós in Portuguese. See Albino Lapa's booklet on this "last Portuguese navigator": "Pedro Fernandes de Queirós o último navegador Português" (Lisbon, 1951).

2 Ed. note: J. S. Cummins, in his modern translation for the Hakluyt Society, says W by SW, and W by NW respectively. I do not have that part of the original text before me, so I cannot comment on which version is the correct one.

3 Ed. note: Fatuhiva in the Marquesas Islands. He went on toward the Solomon Islands.

our settlement, located in 10-1/2° of latitude, to Manila. Thence I steered NNW to avoid meeting islands on the way, since we were so ill prepared to approach any of them, with our men so sick that about fifty of them died in the course of the voyage and about forty there in the island.

[Discovery of Pohnpei]

We continued our course short of provisions, navigating five degrees south and as many north [of the Line], and meeting with many contrary winds and calms. When we reached a latitude of just over 6° N latitude, we sighted an **island**, apparently about 25 leagues in circumference, thickly wooded and inhabited by many people who resembled those of the Ladrones, and whom we saw coming toward us in canoes. From the SE to the N and then to the SW, it is surrounded by large reefs.¹ About 4 leagues west of it are some low islets.

There, although we tried, we failed to find a suitable place to anchor; for the galliot and frigate which accompanied our ship had disappeared some days before.²

[Via Rota and Guam]

From this place we continued the said course until we reached a latitude of 13-3/4°, and in the two days that we sailed west in this latitude, we sighted the islands of **Serpana** [i.e. Rota] and **Guan** in the Ladrones. We passed between the two and did not anchor there, because we had no cable for lowering and hoisting the boat. This was the 3rd of the month of January 1596. On the 14th of the same month, we sighted the Cape of Espiritu Santo, and on the 15th we anchored in the bay of Cobos.³ We reached there in such a state that only the goodness of God could have taken us that far; for human strength and resources would hardly have taken us a tenth of the way. We reached that place so dismantled and the crew so weak that we were a most piteous sight, and with only nine or ten jars of water. In this bay of Cobos the ship was repaired and the men recuperated as much as possible. On Tuesday, 2 February, we left the above port and bay, and on the 10th of the same month we anchored in the port of Cavite, etc.

Besides my desire to serve your Grace, I am moved to leave this brief relation for you, by the fact that if, perchance, God should dispose of my life, or other events should cause me or the relation that I carry to disappear, the truth may be learned from this one, which may prove a matter of great service to God and to the King our sovereign.

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- 1 Ed. note: With a punctuation different from that assigned here, this sentence can also read: "... coming toward us in canoes from the SE. From the N as far as the SW, it is surrounded by large reefs." My guess is that the ship, heading NNW, first saw the SE corner of Pohnpei, from which canoes first came, and, after they had come nearer and could see the whole coast from NE to SW, they tacked off for the night and returned to the S side in the morning. Then they skirted the western side of the island, sighting the 4 Pakin islets as they continued their course to NNW.
 - 2 Ed. note: Both of the small ships made their way separately toward the Philippines. If one draws a straight line from about 3° S (SSE of Pohnpei) to Surigao in the NE corner of Mindanao, it is possible to form the theory that the galliot went via Palau... There is no logbook extant.
 - 3 Ed. note: Referring to the bay visited by Legazpi, which was much further south. Dr. T.H. Pardo de Tavera in his *Historia del descubrimiento de las regiones australes* (Madrid, 1876) identifies this bay with the present harbor of Laguán.

Will your Grace look favorably upon my great desire to serve you, of which I shall give a better proof, if God permit me to return to this port. Will your Grace also pardon my brevity, since the fault lies in the short time at my present disposal. Moreover, since no man knows what time may bring, I beg your Grace to keep the matter secret, for on considering it well, it seems only right that nothing be said about the first islands until his Majesty be informed and order what is convenient to his service, for, as the islands occupy a position midway between Peru, New Spain, and this land, the English, on learning of them, might settle them and do much mischief in this sea.

Your Grace, I consider myself as the faithful servant of your Grace. May God our Lord preserve you for many years in great happiness and increasing prosperity, etc.

Your Grace's servant,

Pedro Fernandez de Quirós

To Doctor Antonio de Morga, Lieutenant-governor of his Majesty in the Philippines.

Extract from the original manuscript by Morga.

Venimos por nuestra derrota faltos de bastimentos, navegando, y de la parte de el Sur cinco grados, otros tantos de la parte de el Norte, allamos muchos contrastes, y calmas, y puestos en altura de seis grados largos, de la parte de el Norte, vimos una isla, q. parezió tenia veynte y cinco leguas de box, mucha arboleda y muy poblada de gente, como la de los Ladrones, q. los vimos en canoas, q. nos salieron desde el sueste, por el Norte, asta el sudueste, zercada de grandes arrecifes. Tiene al oeste de si (como quatro leguas) unas isletas bajas. No allamos a donde surgir, aunque se procuró porq. la galeota, y fragata, q. con nuestra Nao salieron, se desaparezió días avia.

De aqui venimos por la dicha derrota, asta altura de treze grados, y tres quartos, y en dos días, q. por esta altura navegamos al Oeste, tubimos vista de la Serpana, y Guan, en los Ladrones, y pasamos por entre las dos y no surgimos, por no tener cabo, con q. echar, y recojer el batel. Este día fueron 3 de el mes de Henero de 1596 años. y a 14 de el dicho mes vimos el cabo de el Espiritu Santo...

