

Chapter 2

BALBOA, MAGELLAN, AND THE MOLUCCAS

Mas he tambem razão, que no Ponente
Dhum Lusitano hum feito inda vejais,
Que de seu Rey mostrando se agrauado
Caminho ha de fazer nunca cuidado . . .
O Magelhães, no feito com verdade
Portugues, porem não na lealdade.

Columbus and Portugal

The background to European entry into the Pacific must include the ancient and never-healed rivalry between Portugal and Castile. In 1479 the Treaty of Alcaçovas liquidated the unfortunate Portuguese intervention in the Castilian succession; Portugal recognised the Spanish possession of the Canaries, but secured the other eastern Atlantic islands and an exclusive free hand along the African coast—not that this stopped interloping by other merchant adventurers, including Spaniards, though this became more hazardous after the building of the massive Portuguese fortress at El Mina (in Ghana) in 1481–2. Conflict, or at least hostility, between the two powers never quite ceased, despite dynastic marriages and the ground-rules established by the Treaties of Tordesillas in 1494 and Zaragoza in 1529, which set the geopolitical pattern in the earlier Iberian phase of Pacific history.

Whether the plans presented by Christopher Columbus in 1483–4 to the new and energetic King of Portugal, D. João II, pointed directly to Cathay and the Indies, or merely to Atlantic islands, has been, like every other aspect of his life and achievements, the occasion of intense controversy, much of it pointless in a broad view.¹ On the one hand, the trifling trade goods such as beads, mirrors, needles, and the like which, according to las Casas, Columbus demanded were hardly appropriate to commerce with the immensely rich empires of the East; on the other hand, when he did sail he carried a letter from Ferdinand and Isabella addressed to the Great Khan of Cathay.² In any case, the expert committee which D. João appointed to examine the proposal would have had no difficulty in demolishing Columbus's wild cosmography, while the would-be

Luis de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, X.138, 140—'Yet it is just to look westwards on the achievement of a Lusitanian who, feeling himself affronted by his King, took a way never before imagined . . . Magellan, truly a Portuguese in deed though not in loyalty.'

discoverer, never one to undervalue the claims of a divinely-appointed pioneer, demanded exorbitant terms. Talk of islands to be found beyond the Azores had been in the air for generations, and in Portugal the immediate result of Columbus's initiative seems to have been merely a mild flurry of interest and official support—all aid short of financial—for voyages which would have the advantage, from D. João's point of view, of being by Portuguese subjects at their own expense. Nothing came of these, but the scale of the 1486 project of Fernão Dulmo—a voyage of six months—and the phrase 'ilhas ou terra firme per costa' ('islands or a continental coast') in the royal warrant, are significant as suggesting knowledge or presumption of a trans-Atlantic mainland, and this in turn was a possible or even probable factor in the Portuguese stance on shifting the 'Line of Demarcation' at Tordesillas.³ Meanwhile, the royal resources were devoted to the more serious purpose of opening the African route to the Indies, made a certainty by Dias in 1488.

On 4 March 1483, however, the man whom D. João had written off as 'a man talkative and vainglorious . . . more fantastic with his imaginings of his Ilha Cipango than certain of what he said'⁴ (an accurate description, as far as it went) came across Lisbon bar, bringing gold and natives from 'Antilha and Cipango.' This time the result for Portugal was a diplomatic crisis. Fears that Columbus had been poaching in Guinean waters were soon dispelled, and despite some anxiety at the sight of natives who clearly were not from Africa, the Portuguese were not slow in discounting his claims to have discovered Japan or the real Indies. But obviously Castile was likely to follow up this striking success, and from the Portuguese point of view the whole balance of the globe might be upset.

The initial reaction was bellicose, the fitting out of a squadron with the implied threat of falling on any further Spanish expedition. But the Spain of 1493, flushed with the conquest of Granada, was much stronger than that of 1479, when Ferdinand and Isabella were only beginning to consolidate their grip on the joint kingdoms of Aragon and Castile, and for the moment D. João's bluff was called: he had at least served notice that his claims could not be ignored. However, the Spanish monarchs were in the happy position of being able to call the spiritual arm to their aid. By immemorial prescription, only the Papacy could authorise missions to heathen lands, and naturally such authority was normally accorded to specific rulers or religious Orders: the Bull *Pontifex Romanus* of 1455 was accorded to Prince Henry in his capacity as Governor of the Order of Christ, itself a survival from the *Reconquista* of the Peninsula. The salvation of unbelievers, obviously, might depend on secular strength, and that in turn on economic resources; mission rights, at least in the view of their recipients, carried with them as a necessary corollary rights of exploitation, and these could be best secured, perhaps only secured, by a monopoly in favour of the power behind the mission. This was the thinking behind *Pontifex Romanus*, 'the charter of Portuguese imperialism', which confirmed in the clearest terms the exclusive rights of the Crown of Portugal, and Henry as its agent, to discovery, conquest

and commerce south of Cape Bojador and as far as the Indies. The labourer in the vineyard was worthy of his hire.⁵

The Alexandrine Bulls and the Treaty of Tordesillas

Most conveniently for the Spanish cause, the spiritual arm was represented by the less than spiritual Rodrigo Borgia, who became Pope Alexander VI in August 1492. The Borgias were a Valencian family, and Alexander, already much beholden to Ferdinand and Isabella, needed their support in his efforts to create an Italian principality for his son Cesare: hence he was 'like wax' in their hands, to the extent that they could write to Columbus saying that if he thought it necessary one of the bulls would be modified.⁶ The Spanish sovereigns at this time were at Barcelona, in close touch with Rome; requirements could be sent from Spain and a bull received there in six or seven weeks. Hence the *camera apostolica* became almost an extension of the Spanish Court, which secured a rapid succession of bulls virtually liquidating Portuguese claims. The first of these, *Inter caetera*, is dated 3 May 1493 but was prepared in April, and being based on preliminary information is vague in its terms, merely granting to Spain all discoveries in the West. Much more serious for Portugal was the second *Inter caetera*, nominally dated 4 May but actually issued in June—after the Spanish sovereigns had been thoroughly briefed by Columbus. This drew the famous 'Papal Line' running from Pole to Pole 'to the west and south to be distant one hundred leagues' from any of the Azores or Cape Verdes, a definition which at first glance reflects no credit on the papal chancery's drafting, since there is a difference of nearly eight degrees of longitude between the extreme points of these groups. Beyond this line no person of whatever rank, 'even imperial and royal', was to trespass without the express permission of the 'Catholic Kings' Ferdinand and Isabella, under pain of excommunication; but the rights of any Christian prince in possession beyond the line were preserved. But Alexander VI and his legists were not so 'sloppy' (Mattingly's word) as to define an area as lying west and south of a meridian only; a latitude must also have been assumed. Vast confusion has arisen from the indiscriminate use of the phrase 'No Peace beyond the Line'; Mattingly wittily shows that this 'proverbial' saying 'suddenly bursts into full bloom' in the twentieth century! The 'Line' was latitudinal, originally perhaps that of Cape Bojador (26°N) but finally becoming fixed as the Tropic of Cancer.⁷

The last of the series, *Dudum siquidem* (26 September) was extreme: it simply swept away all rights previously granted by the Papacy and not yet taken up by actual occupation,

so as to secure to you [the Catholic Kings] all islands and mainlands whatsoever that are . . . discovered and to be discovered, are or were or seem to be . . . now recognised as being in the waters of the west or south and east and India.⁸

Moreover, without Spanish permission no person whatsoever was to enter these comprehensive regions, even for fishing. Portugal was not mentioned by name, but, though her rights had been confirmed by Sixtus IV as recently as 1481, *Dudum siquidem* most explicitly set aside all previous papal awards. Nowell may be rather too picturesque in asserting that ‘a small reconnoitering expedition’ was held to have given Spain the entire non-Christian world, while after a century of effort Portugal was left with her Atlantic islands and the African forts at Arguin and El Mina; she still had the African route, if she could exploit it quickly enough—and she was already far on the road. But even though the Portuguese may have been reasonably sure that Columbus had discovered not Asia but a New World, the line in the Atlantic was itself restrictive, and the New World might not be a barrier to Spanish westwards penetration of the Orient. Indeed, thirty years later Columbus’s son Fernando relied on *Dudum siquidem* to assert Spanish rights over everything east of the Cape of Good Hope; but by then that was no longer practical politics even for a Columbus.⁹

João II very sensibly declined to enter into a hopeless competition at Rome; he seems simply to have ignored the bulls, thus neither admitting their authority nor defying the Church. If Rome was in Ferdinand’s pocket, highly placed personages at the Spanish Court were in his, and kept him well informed of its moves. He chose a direct approach: the hasty reaction of early 1493 was succeeded by skilful negotiation, from the position of strength afforded by Portugal’s strategic situation, herself athwart the seaways from Spain to the Antilles and in possession of bases in the Azores and Madeira. The assertion *à l’outrance* of Spanish claims might well be too costly, and the second expedition of Columbus, a much larger royal investment than the first, at risk either going or returning. A proposal to delimit spheres along the latitude of the Canaries, Portugal taking all to the south, was rejected by Castile; for one thing, Columbus’s new islands lay south of this line, though the Portuguese were as yet unaware of this.¹⁰ The suggestion may however have led to the proposed longitudinal line of the second *Inter caetera*, and—with Columbus away on his second voyage—it became apparent to reasonable Spaniards that *Dudum siquidem* was not so much a trump card as a too obvious fifth ace. The compromise reached was not quite so advantageous to Portugal as the rejected latitudinal delimitation, but it gave her all she needed—at least until East and West should meet.

This extreme Spanish position once cleared out of the way, agreement was reached with surprising speed and smoothness; neither side paid any attention to Alexander’s bulls, which indeed had not even been appealed to in Spanish protests to Henry VII about the Cabot voyages. Nothing could alter the Portuguese geostrategic position, D. João had laid his ground at the Spanish Court with cunning and skill, and his diplomats were abler and better briefed than their counterparts. The main provision of the treaty signed in 1494 at Tordesillas, an obscure little town in Valladolid, was the placing of the demarcation line at a

position 370 leagues west of the Cape Verdes; and Alexander's jurisdiction was specifically set aside.¹¹

Neither the Pope's line nor the new one 'divided the world like an orange', as is so often stated;¹² it divided Atlantic zones only. After all, nobody had been to the other side of the world since the Polos and the fourteenth century missionaries—certainly nobody by sea and in an official capacity—and there was little point and less possibility of making a precise demarcation of the utterly unknown.¹³ Had there been a definite idea of extending the line in the full meridian great circle round the globe, it would not have been to Portuguese advantage to shift it too far to the west, since this might jeopardise their claims in the Orient, when they should reach it. This strengthens the presumption that they had some fore-knowledge of Brazilian lands—officially discovered by Cabral only in 1500—and were prepared to risk the East (they might well feel ahead in the race thither) in order to make certain of securing their western flank in the Atlantic. The Spanish also were content, since if Columbus were right, they were not too distant from their goal.

However, since the whole Luso-Castilian concept of zones of exploitation was predicated on eastwards and westwards voyaging to the Indies and Cathay, and obviously these voyagings could converge, the presumption grew up that the division must apply on the other side of the globe. This, as we shall see, lay at the core of Magellan's position, and when both Spaniards and Portuguese should reach the Moluccas the twain would have met and the question become acute. For the time, however, it was in abeyance.

The Treaty contained a provision for determining the line within ten months, by a joint expedition—Portuguese pilots in Spanish ships and vice versa—which should sail due west from the Cape Verdes for 370 leagues 'measured as the said parties shall agree'. This would surely have been a most interestingly acrimonious enterprise, but quite impracticable even with the best of good will on both sides, and it quietly lapsed. Nowell draws attention to a probably more significant point; Tordesillas confirmed Alcaçovas, but to make assurance doubly sure D. João secured a supplementary agreement binding Spain not to send or allow any ship to Africa south of Cape Bojador for three years. The inwardness of this is made patent by two dates: the Catholic Kings ratified Tordesillas on 2 July 1494; Vasco da Gama cleared the Tagus on 8 July 1497.

'a peak in Darien'

For the time being, then, the rivals were busily engaged in staking out claims in opposite directions. Westwards, the twenty years after Columbus's first landfall saw the small beginnings of empire in the Caribbean, based on Española, where after a number of false starts Bartolomé Columbus founded Santo Domingo, now Ciudad Trujillo: this first European city in the New World dates from 1496. The economy of these first colonies had a very narrow basis: range cattle and swine for local subsistence and for provisioning further voyages, cane-sugar and gold

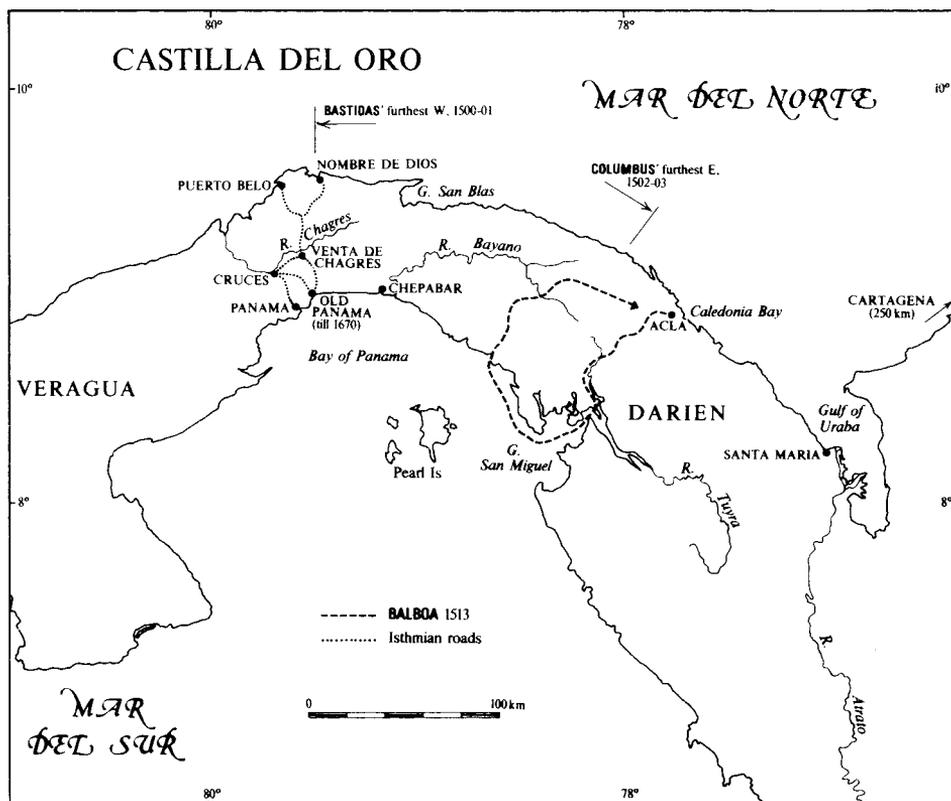


Figure 2. CASTILLA DEL ORO. Adapted from maps in G. Mack, *The Land Divided* (New York 1944) and C. O. Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main* (Berkeley 1966).

for export, the latter procured by ruthlessly forcing the helpless natives to work scattered deposits. Depopulation set in with frightful rapidity; the resources, human or mineral, of any one small area were soon used up, and the only answer was slave-raiding and the extension of this literally robber exploitation.¹⁴

Apart from this spur to expansion, there were of course the lure of riches just over the horizon, the lure of fame, the continuing lure of a way to the Orient. The outlines of Middle America, on its Atlantic flank, were taking shape: the great embayments of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico could be discerned. There was as yet no real reason to suppose that a continuous land barrier existed, and to Columbus and many others these waters must lead on to not-too-distant Cathay and Cipangu: 'The problem at this time [c. 1497] was to find the passage to the south of [Ptolemy's Golden] Chersonese—that used by Marco Polo—which led from the Atlantic to the *Indian Ocean*'¹⁵; there was as yet no idea that a third ocean was inset between these two.

We need not linger over the details of the voyages by which these shores were revealed, replete as they are with adventure and intrigue, false hopes and golden

rewards, suffering and daring. In 1498, on his third voyage, Columbus realised that the coast over against Trinidad was continental, though he assumed as a matter of course that it was Asia, if not indeed the Terrestrial Paradise. By the very first years of the new century the South American coast, *Tierra Firme*, was known from the eastern angle of Brazil to the Gulf of Darien, and valued for its wealth in pearls; Vicente Yañez Pinzon, brother of Columbus's captain, had been at the mouth of the Amazon, or perhaps more probably the Orinoco, and thought it was the Ganges.¹⁶ The fourth and last voyage of Columbus in 1502–4 is particularly significant, though a sad last act in a life so strangely compounded of obsession and of heroic resolution. By this time not only da Gama but also Cabral had reached India and returned to Lisbon, so that

As for Spain, unless some drastic and decisive operation were mounted, she had no choice but to recognise that in the race for . . . the Indies she had been defeated by her rival. A possible solution was to accede to the importunities of the Admiral and allow him to stake all on one more venture . . . the arrival of the Portuguese in India proper . . . must be countered at all cost.

Hence Columbus should take Arabic interpreters, were they available (they were not), and in case he should actually meet the Portuguese in the Orient he 'was . . . provided with a passport addressed not to that shadowy potentate, the Great Khan, but to Vasco da Gama himself.'¹⁷

Columbus made the coast of Honduras near the modern Trujillo, meeting with a large canoe carrying a varied cargo of fine textiles and metal goods—the first hint, not understood, of the rich mainland cultures. The coast turned south at the significantly named *Cabo Gracias a Dios*, and by Christmas Day 1502 Columbus was off the site of the present town of Colon,¹⁸ at the northern entrance to the Panama Canal. In this region, Veragua, soon known as *Castilla del Oro*, 'Golden Castile', he spent some months; and here he would seem to have heard of a great sea on the other side of the mountains; but the strait or passage which must be there eluded him. . . . Somehow he managed to convince himself that the unlettered Indians knew they were but ten or twenty days' sail from the Ganges. . . .

Before and after this voyage, other explorers, coming from the west, reached the Isthmian region; fever-ridden harbours were receiving names destined to figure in the geostrategic projects of the Maritime Powers when Panama should become a great node of Spanish inter-oceanic traffic. So Bastidas and *la Cosa* in 1500 had named *Cartagena* and reached the site of *Nombre de Dios*, itself so named nine years later by Nicuesa, who also built a small fort at *Puerto Bello*; in 1504 *La Cosa* and Vespucci had explored the Gulf of *Uraba*, the southwards continuation of that of Darien, and had found the *Atrato River*. There was no way through, but there was gold enough to confirm Columbus's thrilling reports of *Castilla del Oro*.

Formal settlement of Tierra Firme began in 1509, when Alonso de Ojeda and Diego de Nicuesa were granted rights to colonise from the Gulf of Venezuela to the Atrato and from that river to Cabo Gracias a Dios respectively. The history of these first settlements is one of unmitigated violence and rapine, fear and petty intrigue; poor, nasty, and brutish. The first and only effective joint action of Ojeda and Nicuesa was the burning of an Indian village (and its inhabitants) near Cartagena, where la Cosa was killed by a poisoned arrow. In a few months only some sixty of Ojeda's 300 men, and a similar number of Nicuesa's 785, survived.

The first settlement, San Sebastian, was held for a time by Francisco Pizarro, later of Peruvian fame, Ojeda having returned to Española to bring succours with his partner Fernandez de Enciso, a judge of that island; but food was short and here too arrows were poisoned. In 1510 the survivors founded Santa Maria de la Antigua del Darien, west of the Gulf of Uraba, now lost in the jungle but until its supersession by Panama City in 1519 a sufficient base:¹⁹ a fort and some tens of hutments, but at least located where food could be found and where the local Indians, unfortunately for them, did not know the use of poisoned arrows. Meanwhile Nicuesa had mismanaged everything; he and his wretched survivors were brought to Darien, where he was ill-advised enough to try to assert an authority already damned by his own incompetence.²⁰

And here Vasco Nuñez de Balboa steps on to the stage of history, traditionally out of a provision barrel and accompanied by his dog Leoncico. It may indeed have been by his advice (he had been with Bastidas in 1500) that the new site was chosen. Balboa had failed to make good in Española, and had stowed away on one of Enciso's ships; probably assisted by the local knowledge gained with Bastidas, he soon came to the fore in the despondent community, riddled with feuds and fevers, of Darien. Resolution, decision, daring were common form among the *conquistadores*, though lacking in Nicuesa and Enciso; but Balboa had other assets, among them a fundamental fair-mindedness which was not so common among them. He had also the intelligence to see that the utterly indiscriminate terrorism hitherto exercised on the Indians was worse than useless. He was probably not the 'verray parfit, gentil knight' of his more romantic admirers—he was not very likely to have long survived had he been such; the case arising, he could be as ruthless as any. But he supplemented acts of ferocity with acts of generosity and even camaraderie. Enciso was too pettily legalistic, Nicuesa too pettily arrogant, to hold sway over the toughened survivors who made up the Darien town's meeting; the former was soon stripped of all authority, the latter sent off 'home' in a leaky brigantine, to meet an unknown but doubtless horrible end. Balboa remained in command, by the suffrage of his peers.

A compound of battle, terrorism, gifts, marriage with a chief's daughter, and (reasonably) honest alliances enabled Balboa not only to retain but to expand a tiny empire in the swamps and jungles of Darien. To the new bureaucrats

of Española, to the Court in Spain (and despite a provisional legitimation by Columbus's son, Diego Colon, as Viceroy of Española) his was a usurped power. Its real base was his hold over the colonists, and in face of royal censure, and sapped by local personal discontents, that might well prove but a sandy foundation. As early as possible—in April 1511—Balboa had taken the essential precaution of sending to the Spanish Court as much gold as he could; but Enciso went with it, and was soon busy in intrigue. In January 1513 Balboa received two letters: one was his royal appointment as temporary captain and governor of Darien; the other, later in date, was news from his own agent that Enciso had so poisoned the royal counsels that his fall was prepared. More gold, and yet more, was the only possible answer; and that meant more forays into the interior.

Already in 1511 there had been the picturesque incident when the son of an Indian chief had scattered, as mere trifles, the golden artefacts the Spaniards had collected and in return for alliance had promised to lead them against his father's enemies across the mountains, where there was much more gold—and a great sea. Early in September 1513 Balboa sailed with some 200 men to the narrowest part of the Isthmus, and set out on the arduous journey from Acla, another of the little lost towns (recently rediscovered) of Darien. On 25 or 27 September, alone, he looked down on the great waters of the ocean. The solemnity of the occasion was recognised—the conquistadores were always self-conscious of their Place in History. So a cairn was built, and the names of all Spaniards present—now, through sickness, no more than 67—were recorded. On the 29th Balboa himself waded into the salt water of the Gulf of San Miguel—he had to wait hours for the tide to come up—banner in hand, and formally took possession of the Mar del Sur, and all its lands.²¹

The rest is anticlimax. Balboa returned to Darien, laden with gold and pearls—as he himself said, 'with more gold than health', but with little or no loss of life—in January 1514; at the end of June arrived his replacement, Pedro Arias de Avila (Pedrarias), one of the few historical figures who has found no historical defender. Balboa remained in the administration, in the subordinate role of Adelantado del Mar del Sur—a title surely of honour to posterity, but of rankling jealousy to Pedrarias. Balboa's vision had immediately envisaged navigation on the South Sea; his energy compelled him to a tremendous effort of organisation which (at great cost in Indian life) transported marine stores, anchors, tackle, even timber, from Acla across the jungles, swampy where not mountainous, of what by his efforts was known and forever known as *the* Isthmus. He occupied the Pearl Islands in the Bay of Panama, and sailed for a hundred miles or so to the south—already there were rumours, derived from the Indians of San Miguel, of the richer kingdoms which Pizarro was to seize. The four little ships were his undoing: his plans—to golden lands in the south? to the Spice Islands? to Cathay?—were enough to inflame the never-sleeping jealousy, disguised in smooth cordiality, of Pedrarias. Arrested by Francisco Pizarro, a fit instrument

for such work, Balboa was tried on trumped-up charges, and beheaded at Acla. His achievement, but for the immortal priority of the South Sea,²² died with him; under Pedrarias his even-handed good order amongst Spaniards was replaced by legalistic tyranny, his relative humanity amongst Indians by the most savage exploitation and devastation. The humanist Peter Martyr, reporting from Spain to the Pope, summed it up: ‘no other thing was acted saue to kill, and be killed, to slaughter, and be slaughtered.’²³

Meanwhile, far away on the other side of the South Sea, these very years of Balboa’s agonies and endurances saw the Lusian rival make good his bid. In 1511 the great Afonso de Albuquerque took Malacca; a gallant part in the action was played by a young officer, Fernão de Magalhães. From his new base Albuquerque sent Antonio de Abreu and Francisco Serrão on the great voyage which first put the true Indies firmly—if as yet somewhat erratically—on the map of the world. The fleet coasted right along the northern coasts of Sumatra, Java, and the lesser islands further east, reaching Ceram and Amboyna. Serrão was wrecked near Banda, but made his way in native craft to Ternate in the Moluccas, the Spice Islands themselves, where he remained to attain a very influential position in local politics. His position was ambiguous: was he a loyal Portuguese subject, or a freelance playing his own hand, the first precursor of the Rajah Brookes of the Orient? Indubitably he was a close friend of Magellan, who had saved his life in a Malay ambush at Malacca; and this friendship played some part in the conception of Castile’s real countermove to the Portuguese advance, a move which became, probably by accident rather than design, the first circumnavigation of the globe.

Magellan: the man and his motives

Magellan was born of the minor Portuguese nobility, probably about 1480 and probably at Oporto.²⁴ After service as a page in the household of Queen Leonor, he went East with the great fleet of Francisco de Almeida, first Viceroy of India, in 1505, and saw much action. He took part in the decisive naval battle off Diu in 1509, when the Egypto-Gujerati counter-offensive was shattered;²⁵ he was probably with Albuquerque in the first assault on Goa in 1510, and certainly at Malacca both in 1509, when he rescued Francisco Serrão, and for the successful siege of 1511. He is now thought not to have been on de Abreu’s Indies voyage, but would have heard all about its results. From the scattered notices of his life before 1517, we have the impression of a man short in stature but impressive, gallant and resourceful in action, at once realistically calculating and daring, capable both of generosity and violence, independent in temper, secretive and over-taciturn, and very dogged as to his rights. His whole life shows him as a tough leader, driving men hard because driven by his own daemon. Even as a junior officer, he was capable of dissenting in open council from the terrible Albuquerque.

Magellan was back in Portugal in time to take part in the capture of Azamor in Morocco in 1513; here he was wounded in the leg, so that he limped ever after, and was promoted to *quadrilheiro mor*, an officer in charge of the disposition of booty. The post was an invidious one, and Magellan was soon involved in unfounded charges of misappropriation. He did not help his case by returning to Portugal without leave, and demanding a token increase in stipend. The King, D. Manuel, sent him back to face the charges; these were dropped and his name cleared, but Magellan's demands for further recognition of his services both in the Indies and Morocco were very brusquely refused: there is no doubt that D. Manuel, never noted for generosity towards his servants, was prejudiced against Magellan, who in turn was clearly not a man to swallow insult, even from his sovereign, with any patience. This petty squabble, endlessly paralleled in Renaissance courts, had global consequences, for Magellan determined to transfer his services to Castile—'What mighty contests rise from trivial things'!

It is of course possible that there were deeper reasons, and some authors have thought that Magellan must have broached to D. Manuel plans for a westwards voyage to the Indies:²⁶ few proposals could have been less welcome, and Magellan would surely have realised this in advance. Quite apart from any prudential reluctance to trespass across the Tordesillas line, this would have been a ridiculous waste of effort for Portugal, already in firm possession of the African route, and indeed completely contrary to her interests: why open new and less controllable doors? The eventual discovery of the Southwest Passage was highly unwelcome to the Portuguese, who must have read with no displeasure of the hardships and horrors of the Straits and the Ocean passage. Lagôa sums up: although the elements for Magellan's enterprise were collected while he was in the East, the idea of executing it was formed after his quarrel with D. Manuel. By this time 'to go to the Moluccas for the Portuguese Crown, after de Abreu's voyage, would be an inglorious feat', and a man of Magellan's temper could hardly reconcile himself to a life of inaction, the normal result of a prince's displeasure. Lagôa goes on to say that 'the failure of Juan de Solis, coinciding with the affront inflicted on Magellan, called his attention to the momentous problem whose solution besides honour and riches, would provide him with the only way to revenge the royal insult.'²⁷ This seems the fairest summing-up of the question of motive.

From about 1514, then, the grand design must have been forming in Magellan's mind. How far he was influenced by the reports of his friend Serrão's position of influence, almost independence, in the Moluccas, and the letters exchanged between them, must be doubtful. According to Barros, Serrão wrote to Magellan that he had found a new world, greatly exaggerating the distance between Malacca and the Moluccas in order to inflate his own achievement (this of course would tend to place the Moluccas in the Spanish zone), and his papers, examined after his death by the Portuguese commander in the Moluccas, included a letter from Magellan saying that 'if it were God's pleasure, he would

soon be with him; and if it were not by way of Portugal, it would be by way of Castile, for his affairs were tending that way.²⁸ Lagôa inclines to discount the importance of Serrão's influence: a factor but not as important as the tradition suggests. In any case, by 1516 Magellan knew what he wanted to do; and it could be done only by renouncing his natural allegiance.

In judging this transfer of loyalty, it must be remembered that there was a constant interchange of personnel, especially perhaps of those engaged in maritime affairs, between Spain, Portugal, and other countries; Juan de Solis, for example, was probably also a Portuguese, and served Castile and France as well as his own country.²⁹ There was already a group of Lusian exiles in Spain; Magellan married into the family of one of them, Diogo Barbosa. For many men of position loyalty was as much personal to their prince as national, and repudiation of an ungrateful sovereign may well have been deemed (except by that sovereign) merely somewhat censurable rather than really disreputable; more in doubtful taste than actually treasonable. So great was the interchange of services in the Peninsula that it seems safe to assume that Magellan's real offence was his titanic success, without which not so much would have been made of his defection; although paradoxically, this contributes to the modern tendency to condonation.³⁰

In October 1517 Magellan went to Seville and formally naturalised himself as a subject of Carlos I (the Emperor Charles V); he was joined in December by Ruy Faleiro, a man of repute as a cosmographer but of somewhat unbalanced mind. Magellan and Faleiro had sincerely convinced themselves that the Moluccas lay within the Spanish sphere, assuming the Tordesillas line to be carried on round the globe; and indeed a number of Portuguese who remained loyal to their Crown were either doubtful of Lusian rights or of the same belief, whence some embarrassment for D. João III's envoys at the Badajoz conference which met to consider the new situation created by Magellan's voyage.³¹ By way of insurance D. Manuel obtained a new Bull, *Praecelsae devotionis* (1514), from Pope Leo IX, who had been gratified by the gift of a performing elephant sent back by Albuquerque; this confirmed *Romanus Pontifex* and in very sweeping terms gave Portugal rights to any heathen lands wheresoever which were reached by sailing eastwards, in effect restricting the Tordesillas line to the Atlantic.³²

The officials of the Casa de Contratacion, the royal agency busily organising the Antillean Indies from Seville, were mostly unimpressed by Magellan's promise that he could lead them to the Spice Islands without trespassing on Portuguese preserves; but one of them, Juan de Aranda, took Magellan and Faleiro more seriously. Aranda had the ear of the immensely powerful Juan de Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos and the head of the Casa; but, to Faleiro's fury, he drove a hard bargain for his good offices, insisting on an eighth of any profits that might accrue to the pair. Support was also received from Cristobal de Haro, a member of a Burgos merchant family who had worked with the Fuggers in financing the pepper trade, but had broken with D. Manuel over the latter's insistence on a crown monopoly and general tough dealing with the German

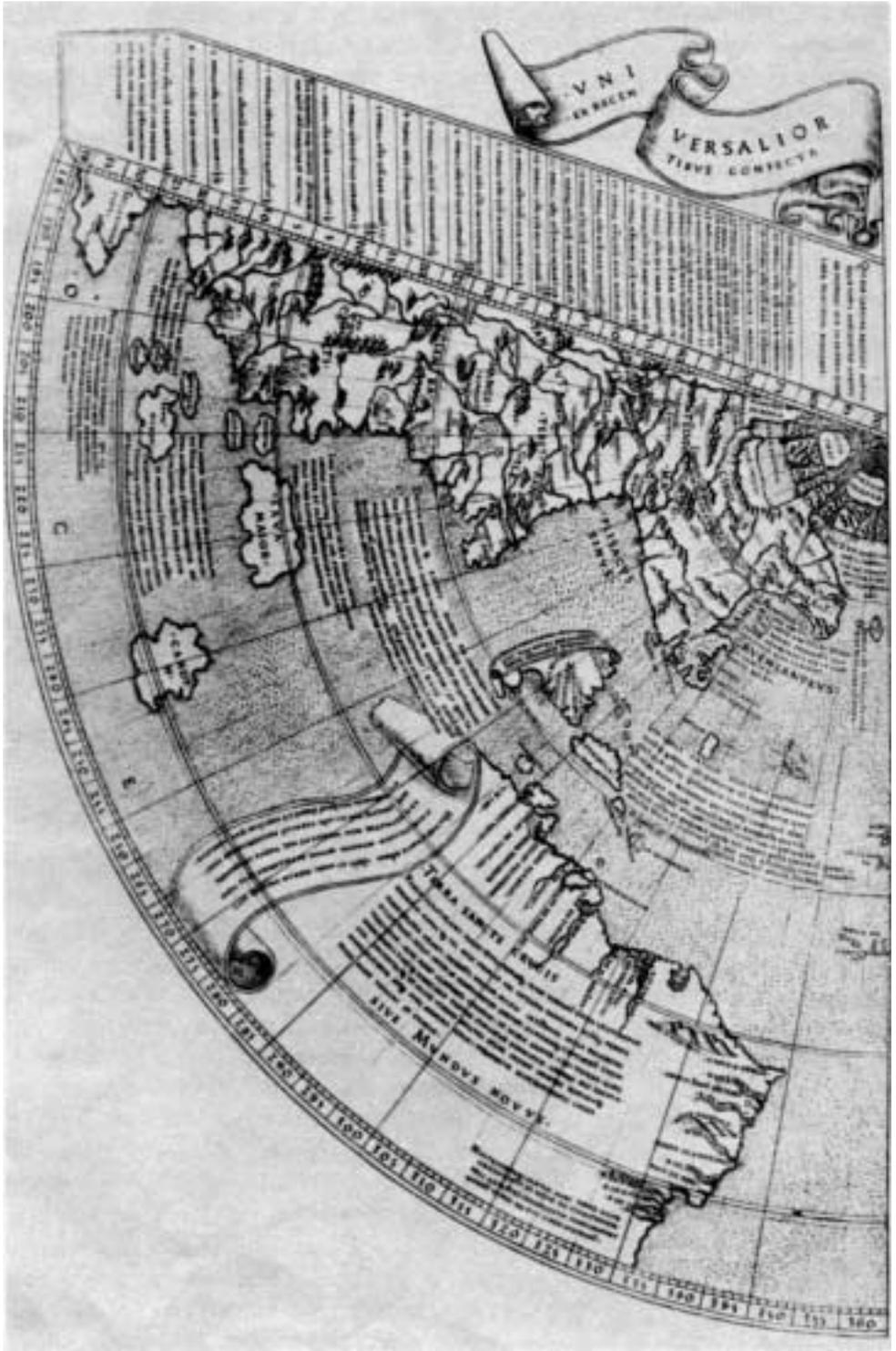
investors, and more personal grievances. Haro was apparently behind a small Portuguese expedition under João de Lisboa and Estevão Frois which between 1511 and 1514 reached the La Plata estuary or even perhaps the Gulf of San Matias in 42°S, and according to the manuscript *Newen Zeytung auss Pressilandt* in the Fugger archives, thought itself to have been only 600 leagues from Malacca; this is probably the source of the strait in 45°S shown on Schöner's map of 1515.³³ Haro came to Spain in 1516 and immediately allied himself with Fonseca. The joint efforts of the group secured the royal *Capitulacion* issued on 22 March 1518: the design, foreshadowed by Vespucci and the Solis voyage of 1515–16, was not for a circumnavigation but for a Southwest Passage to the Moluccas; and another possible objective in Magellan's mind was the gold of Tarshish and Ophir, identified with the Lequeos—the Ryukyu Islands—already known to the Portuguese, having been visited by Jorge de Mascarenhas in 1517.³⁴ Whether it *originally* included a circumnavigation may be left open, but on the whole is very doubtful, although, according to Pigafetta, Magellan had decided on this route before his death. *Pace* Morison, it would not make sense for a Portuguese defector to Castile to return through the Portuguese zone, against the tenor of his instructions; but, as Magellan's rashness on the day of his death suggests, hubris may already have set in.³⁵

The voyage: background and preparations

Amerigo Vespucci, who on his three or four voyages was never in command, indirectly gained (though many would say he had not earned) the honour of having his name bestowed on the New World, since it was through the publication of his letters, most notably by Waldseemüller in 1507, that
 all Europe recognised America for what it was, a new continent
 and a barrier between Europe and Asia. To everyone except
 the Portuguese it was an unwelcome barrier.³⁶

The recognition of course was not automatic and universal; it is fair to say that in 1504 Columbus's conviction that he was only a couple of weeks from the Ganges might be scouted, but also that it had some respectable authority behind it and was quite widely accepted by disinterested parties, such as Italian geographers; and a similar concept retained acceptance by a much interested party—the Castilians—at least as late as the Badajoz conference in 1524. Nevertheless the concept of a continental barrier increasingly took hold.

The contrast is strikingly shown by the maps of Contarini and Ruysch (1506 and 1508) and Stobnicza-Waldseemüller (1507). In Ruysch's map (Plate V) from the 1508 edition of Ptolemy, Greenland and 'Terra Nova' (Newfoundland) form part of an eastwards peninsula of Asia, separated from 'Terra sancte crvcis sive Mvndvs novvs' (Venezuela-Brazil) by a wide sea with only a few islands, the most notable being '[E]spagnola' and a misshapen Cuba, with an inscription attached to the latter indicating that Spanish ships had reached it; on this map Polo's Zaiton (in Fukien) is only eighteen degrees of longitude beyond the



latter, and between them is another inscription suggesting, rather doubtfully, that ‘spagnola’ may be Cipangu. Beside this elegant map, Stobnicza’s inset on Waldseemüller’s world map is crude (Plate VI); but it shows an (American) continent continuous from 50°N to the bottom edge of the map in 40°S; the western ‘coasts’ of this land-mass are shown diagrammatically, as not known but intelligently inferred; Cipangu lies nearer to this land than to Asia. Yet the older concept lingered on: in the planisphere of Franciscus Monachus (1529) we have the Spanish version: America is a vast projection from southeast Asia (with a guessed-at strait somewhere in central America) and the Indian and Pacific Oceans are one.³⁷

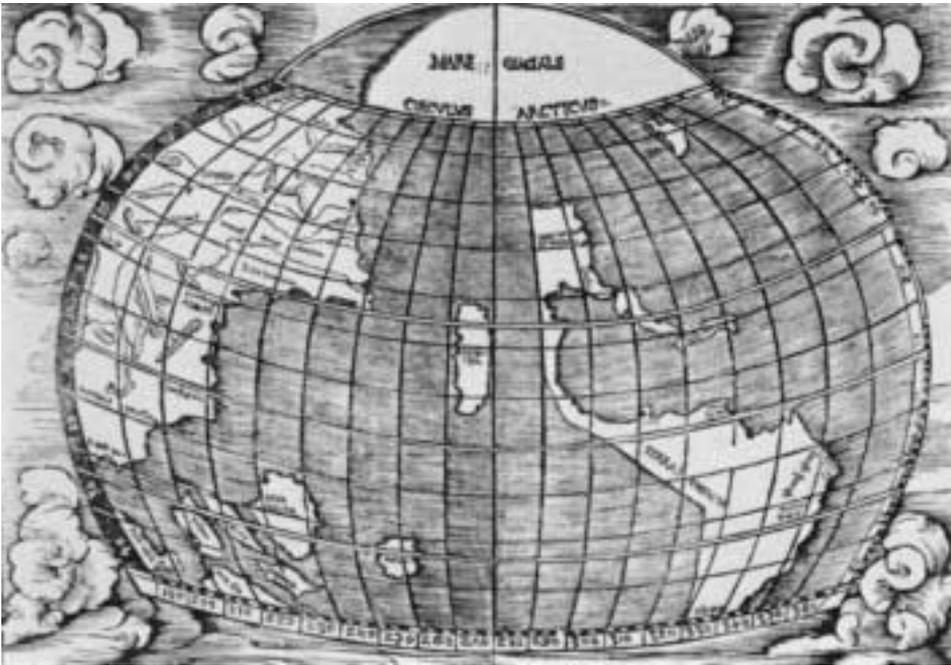


Plate VI. THE AMERICAN INDIES: STOBNICZA 1512. Copied from an inset on Waldseemüller’s world map of 1507, from J. Fischer and F. von Wieser (eds.), *Die Älteste Karte mit den Namen Amerika* (Innsbruck 1903). NLA.

◀ Plate V. THE COLUMBAN INDIES: RUYSCHE 1508. The inscription to the left of the island corresponding to Cuba is obscure, owing to a superfluity of abbreviations, but says in effect that as Marco Polo states that ‘Sipangu’ is ‘1500 miliaribus’ east of Zaiton (Ch’uan-chou in Fukien), Ruysch dare not insert it on the map under that name, since the position so indicated is occupied by islands found by the Spaniards; very oddly, it is then suggested that ‘Sipangu’ and ‘Spagnola’ may be the same since the letters forming the two words are the same. (I am indebted to Mr R. W. Barnes of the Department of Classics, Australian National University, for help with this difficult text; but the responsibility for the interpretation is in the last resort mine.) From *Universalior Cogniti Orbis Tabula*, reproduced in A. E. Nordenskiöld, *Facsimile Atlas* (Stockholm 1889). NLA.

How far the barrier extended north and south was unknown, nor whether any through passages existed; by 1518 there had been several probes in both directions. Unless Vicente Yañez Pinzon's cruise of 1499 along the coast of Venezuela, and possibly of northern Brazil, be counted, the first of these probes to go in a southerly direction was that of the Portuguese Nuño Manuel, with Vespucci, in 1501–2. How far south this expedition reached is a matter of dispute; Vespucci claimed 52°S, though somewhere between 20 and 32° is more favoured.³⁸ But at any rate it found no passage, and Vespucci's last voyage, in 1503–4, did not get so far. Indeed, however much Vespucci and Haro might be interested in a Southwest Passage, their then master D. Manuel can have been concerned only with the exploration of the trans-Atlantic lands due to him by Tordesillas.

Proposed expeditions under Pinzon—with Vespucci, now again in Spanish service—in 1506 and by Vespucci in 1508 lapsed or were diverted as a result of Portuguese protests, and Vespucci became head of the Casa de Contratación's school for pilots. It was becoming clear, however, that the coast of the new continent trended far beyond the Tordesillas limit. The last voyages of significance before Magellan's were those of Frois and of Juan de Solis in 1515–16; this had definite instructions to find a way to the Mar del Sur and thence to Castilla del Oro. Near the modern Montevideo, which he calculated to be (as it was) well on the Spanish side of the Tordesillas line, Solis took possession of the country for Castile, and sailed up the La Plata estuary, the freshwater 'Mar Dulce', far enough to be assured that it was a great river and no passage. Here he was eaten by cannibals, and the expedition returned to Spain in disarray. But the idea of a strait was 'in the air' and Magellan's proposal well timed.³⁹

When he sailed, then, Magellan knew that he would have to go beyond 30°S to avoid Portuguese waters, and that any passage lay far beyond that—perhaps about 50°S, possibly even twenty or more degrees further still.

Magellan's troubles were but beginning: at first the Casa de Contratación took hardly the issue of the capitulation over its head, but when briskly called to order by royal letters was generally co-operative. The erratic Faleiro was a constant source of troubles, and there was a marked reluctance all round—no least amongst the putative crews—to engage in the enterprise. And all the time the Portuguese were doing their best to sabotage a venture which was against their country's material interests and also—Magellan's breach with D. Manuel being notorious—damaging to their *amour propre* as Portuguese, and to that of their Prince—factors which weighed greatly in the Renaissance world.

Five ships were allotted to the voyage: *San Antonio*, 120 tons, 31 metres long, 9.8 in the beam; *Trinidad*, 110; *Concepcion*, 90; *Victoria*, 85; *Santiago*, 75.⁴⁰ They were old and the worse for wear—the Portuguese factor or consul at Seville, Sebastião Alvares, said that he would not risk sailing to the Canaries in them,⁴¹ but Magellan threw himself with tremendous energy into the task of refitting at royal expense through the Casa; but by 1519 funds were running short, and

Cristobal de Haro had to put up one-fifth of the cost—which he was repaid, with no profit or interest, eighteen years later.⁴²

Recruitment was the worst problem: there were plenty of Portuguese agents to spread alarmist stories. D. Carlos had wished for all-Spanish crews, with Portuguese limited to at most the five pilots and a few boys; he had to accept twenty-four, and in the event perhaps forty sailed, some enlisted as Spaniards. This amounted to one out of six in the total complement of 237 men, and even so Magellan, almost on the eve of sailing, had to fill up with aliens: about thirty Italians, a score of Frenchmen, Flemings, Germans, Levantines, nondescript mixed-bloods, and one Englishman, the master-gunner Andrew of Bristol, who died in the Pacific.⁴³ With Portuguese pilots, and staff officers unavoidably but dangerously mixed between Portuguese and Spaniards, there was material enough for the seditions and dissensions of the voyage, though both nations contributed both to Magellan's supporters and to his deserters and mutineers.

Repeated efforts were made by the Portuguese, especially Sebastião Alvares, to re-seduce Magellan from his new allegiance; Alvares pointed out the dangers, 'as many as the Wheel of St Catharine', stressed Castilian suspicions of Magellan (which he had done much to manufacture), and held out rewards, at one point flattering himself that he was very close to success. But quite apart from Magellan's position as a man of honour pledged to his new and more generous Lord, on which Lagôa lays much stress, it is not very likely that an intelligent man of the Renaissance would put so much trust in princes. Alvares had more success in stirring up discord in general, and in particular a waterfront riot over the false allegation that Magellan had displayed Portuguese ensigns on the *Trinidad*. This was in October 1518; Magellan's firm appeal to the King greatly strengthened his hand with unco-operative local officials; and the too-obvious Portuguese anxiety to disrupt the expedition was counter-productive, indicating that a Spanish presence in or control of the Spice Islands would indeed be profitable.

Although Ruy Faleiro's vanity and bad temper must have been most detrimental to the project, his prestige as a scientific expert had played a large part in its acceptance, and in mid-1519 Magellan still considered him, in Lagôa's phrase, as his 'colleague in the high command', whereas had he been really mad, as is so often stated, the Captain-General would have been anxious to get rid of him. Faleiro's supersession in July 1519, however, seems not to have been due to his mental instability, much exaggerated by Sebastião Alvares after failing to lure him back into the Lusian fold. Some were sceptical of Faleiro's boasted cosmography, which others attributed to the promptings of a familiar daemon, and altogether he must have seemed less stable and safe than the impressive Magellan. Above all, it must have seemed much wiser to have a Castilian next to or alongside Magellan, rather than two Portuguese at the top; the machinations of Alvares had stimulated not unnatural doubts and apprehensions among the royal advisers.

Faleiro, then, was excluded by the Casa, being soothed by the promise of

taking charge of a follow-up expedition; perhaps also he feared to put to the test his unorthodox methods—to determine longitude by isogonal lines—in utterly unknown regions, although Magellan himself insisted that he should be given Faleiro's book of pilotage before acquiescing in his replacement as chief pilot by Andrés de San Martín. It was only after Magellan's departure that Ruy Faleiro became really insane.⁴⁴

The critical appointment of Juan de Cartagena, Fonseca's man—his nephew or perhaps bastard—as *Veedor-general* and captain of the third ship was definitely a reinsurance against Portuguese predominance in the command. The office of *Veedor-general* might best be described as a super-supercargo, charged to look after the royal financial interests, and such an appointment was a perfectly normal procedure; but a royal *cédula* of 10 May 1518 is explicit:

it is convenient that there should be a third with the said Portuguese, in case of death or in case the said Portuguese should not follow the route which they should to complete the voyage which is to be made and perchance the affairs of our service should not come to a good end.

This has been held to indicate that Cartagena was in effect a commissar, or at least a spy, with secret powers, or a second in command—that is the whole point of the *cedula*—and his actions suggest that in his own view he was joint commander. In addition to the ordinary functions of a *veedor*, he was to advise on colonisation and to be *alcalde*, or governor, of the first fort to be constructed. But his own instructions of 6 April 1519, in Lagôa's words, 'were not of a type to allow any intervention in the functions of the Captain-General, being limited to giving him powers to control the commercial side of the enterprise.'⁴⁵

On the other hand, *any* officer was given the right to report in writing, uncensored, on the conduct of the expedition, so that the chief might be called to account on return; such a *residencia*, or post-mortem, on a governor's actions was normal in Spanish colonial practice, though in this case somewhat pointed towards Magellan. But had Cartagena been given any powers beyond this, he could hardly have failed to appeal to them at his trial at Puerto San Julian, at least for the record, even if the immediate verdict might be a foregone conclusion. In Lagôa's view, the King may have considered giving Cartagena such powers, but desisted lest Magellan should be impelled to accept Portuguese offers by such a mark of no-confidence. Obviously the likelihood of a serious rift in the command was great, in fact the worst weakness of the expedition.

Final instructions were based on standard Iberian practice for long voyages. Magellan was not to take any risks by going ashore himself, but to send officers and take hostages. No arms, axes, or iron were to be sold to natives. No native women were to be touched, and cards and dice were banned—a counsel of perfection going beyond the Portuguese model, which allowed play for low stakes. All these, except the provision already noted for independent reporting,

were fairly normal for contemporary expeditions, if not normally followed with exactitude. One other directive was most important: on no account should Magellan infringe on the Portuguese zone. According to las Casas, directly reporting (but forty years later) his own talk with Magellan, if he failed to find the Southwest Passage the Captain-General would take the African route—or perhaps a more daring plan, predicated on the quasi-Ptolemaic map of Lopo Homem (1519), which prolongs the coast south of Brazil in a great Antarctic sweep to join up with Cathay, thus reconciling Ptolemy's closed Indian Ocean with da Gama's discovery: the ocean is still closed but it takes in both the Atlantic and the Indian.⁴⁶ Such an immense navigation along the coasts of an unknown Terra Australis would certainly have given Magellan good reason to conceal his plans from his officers; but this reticence was a major provocation to the mutiny which could have wrecked his whole project.

After two postponements, all obstacles being at last overcome, the fleet dropped down the Guadalquivir from Seville in early August, and after final victualling at San Lucar de Barrameda cleared the estuary on 20 September 1519, Magellan flying his flag on the *Trinidad*.

The voyage south

Friction began early, after the Cape Verdes had been passed; probably following Portuguese *roteiros*, Magellan kept on a southerly course instead of striking across the Atlantic, and this may well have alarmed the Spanish officers: was the Captain-General luring them into Portuguese waters? Juan de Cartagena was plainly insolent and insubordinate, garbling and then omitting the regulation evening greetings to the commander, and at a suitable opportunity Magellan deprived him of his captaincy of the *San Antonio* and put him under arrest. So matters stood as the fleet passed across to Brazil and, in January 1520, explored the La Plata estuary. Hopes were raised by this great opening, but there was no passage either here or in the Gulf of San Matias further south, and on 31 March Magellan reached Puerto San Julian, in 49°20'S, where he decided to winter. Here, faced with a long wait on reduced rations in a cold climate, discontent broke into open mutiny, and an officers' mutiny at that.

Representations, more or less mutinous, demanding a return were very common from crews wintering in high latitudes. Magellan succeeded in talking down the desire of the seamen to turn back, partly by pointing out that things would be much easier in the spring and that wood, water, fish and birds were plentiful, so that rations could be supplemented; partly by an appeal to pride; most of all, perhaps, by driving leadership: he himself was determined to find a passage, as far south as 75° if need be, or to die. The sedition of the officers was far more serious.

At Easter,⁴⁷ only one of the captains—Magellan's cousin Alvaro de Mesquita, now in command of the *San Antonio*—accepted his invitation to Mass and a feast on the flagship. During the night the conspirators, led by Juan de Cartagena

and Gaspar de Quesada, took over the *San Antonio*, *Victoria*, and *Concepcion*. Next morning there were negotiations, probably of doubtful sincerity on either part; Magellan sent a small party with concealed arms to the *Victoria*, ostensibly to arrange a conference; her captain Luis de Mendoza was stabbed without warning, and the ship seized, to join with the loyal *Trinidad* and *Santiago* in blocking the harbour mouth. At night the *San Antonio* made a feeble attempt to break out, but the swift retaking of the *Victoria* had taken the heart out of the mutineers. After their surrender Alvaro de Mesquita presided over a court, which sentenced forty men to death, including Juan Sebastian del Cano, whom the rebels had put in command of the *San Antonio*. Obviously this sentence on well over a sixth of the complement was a formality; in the event only Quesada was beheaded and quartered, as was the body of Mendoza. Juan de Cartagena was not executed, probably because of his royal commission, but sentenced (perhaps after a second attempt to stir up revolt) to be marooned.

There can be no doubt at all that Magellan had contributed very greatly to the outbreak by his overbearing manner, secretiveness, and partiality for Portuguese officers. That said, and considering the stakes, he can hardly be blamed for meeting rebellion with ruthlessness and little scruple. Mutiny was a constant nightmare of exploring captains until well into the eighteenth century; and unless the commander struck at once and hard, the voyage was doomed; a century later Richard Hawkins was to write

By this and the like experience, remembering and knowing, that, if once I consented to turne but one foote backe, I should overthrow my Voyage, and loose my reputation, I resolved rather to loose my life, than to giue eare to prejudiciall Counsell . . . for I haue not seene, that any man haue yeilded therevnto, but presently [immediately] they haue returned home.⁴⁸

It was in effect on suspicion of projected mutiny that Drake executed Thomas Doughty in this very Puerto San Julian; and here his people found the remains of what they took to be a gibbet 'with men's bones underneath it', a grim memento of the bloody Eastertide nearly sixty years earlier.⁴⁹

During the winter the little *Santiago* was lost on a reconnaissance to the south, but the crew was able to make its way back to San Julian; contact was made with the inhabitants, to the delight of Pigafetta (who had the instincts of an anthropologist) and the tale of the Patagonian ('big feet') giants was launched on its long history. Perhaps fearing the results of long inaction in this port of evil memories, Magellan took the four remaining ships to sea in late August, leaving behind Juan de Cartagena and an accomplice, with wine and some bags of biscuit.

Ten degrees farther south the fleet spent two months at the Rio Santa Cruz, taking on wood, water, and fish. With spring, they put to sea again, and four days later, in about 52°30'S, they saw on 21 October, St Ursula's Day, a cape which they named for her Eleven Thousand Virgins, and beyond it 'certain inlets of the sea . . . which had the appearance of a strait.'

The voyage: the Straits and the Ocean—Mactan

Mooring inside the new cape, possibly on the southern shores of the embayment, Magellan sent on the *San Antonio* and *Concepcion* to reconnoitre; a great storm came on the night of their departure, and it was feared that they had been lost, until they were seen approaching, guns firing and crews cheering as they drew near. They had passed the First Narrows—well named Angostura de la Esperanza—and found a great opening, narrowing at the further end but then widening out again, and obviously running far into the land. This was no La Plata or Mar Dulce; the indications were for a true passage, and the fleet pressed on.

The chronology of the passage is confused. At one point Magellan sought counsel in writing of his officers, professing (from one's general impression of his character, most disingenuously) that he was always open to advice; so far as is known, only Andrés de San Martín replied, though on this or another occasion Estevão Gomes (or Esteban Gomez), a Portuguese disgruntled at not receiving command of a ship, objected to continuing the voyage: now that a passage had been discovered, it would be better to return to Spain and come out again with a better-found expedition. As Zweig says,

From the logical, the objective outlook, Gomez's proposal to return forthwith to enjoy the honours they had won was eminently sound. Had it been accepted, the commander and nearly two hundred other members of the expedition who were foredoomed to perish, would have got home safely.⁵⁰

Once again Zweig invokes the prerogative of a genius: 'who wishes to act heroically, must act unreasonably.' But even discounting his intense egoism, Magellan was not unreasonable in finding the proposal utterly unacceptable: anything would be better than returning with his task half-done, his promises half-fulfilled, to face all over again the frustrations, intrigues, and hazards of resurrecting the project. It is likely that Magellan's conciliatory gesture was only *pro forma*; it is now that he is said to have declared 'in a most composed manner' that he would go on even if they had to eat the leather from the yards. According to Pigafetta, the Captain-General knew of a hidden strait from a map by Martin Behaim which he had seen in Portuguese archives; and it is largely on this that Nunn and Nowell base their view that Magellan thought of South America not as a new continent but as a southerly extension from Asia, and the Mar del Sur as Ptolemy's Sinus Magnus. Whatever the truth on this point, it seems impossible that a passage shown by Behaim along the Tropic of Capricorn should be 'The strait which Magellan sought for and thought he found': an error of nearly 30° in *latitude* is too much by far. Even if he had seen a map by or based on Behaim, it would have represented the knowledge of the 1490s, and by 1520 Vespucci and Solis had exploded it. It is true that the conviction that Columbus had found not Asia but *Mundus Novus* was not as yet universal, but it was already general, and apart from this reference by Pigafetta, there is little or no evidence that Magellan was much influenced by Behaim. It seems more

likely that, as Lagôa argues, he was confusing Behaim with that other Nurnberg cosmographer Schöner, whose globes and maps were far more in accord with the general knowledge and opinion of the time.⁵¹

At the head of Broad Reach there is a fork: Magellan went up the southwestern channel (between Brunswick Peninsula and Dawson Island) with the *Trinidad* and *Victoria*, sending the other two ships to explore the branch to the southeast. Many smokes were seen on the land to the left, hence named Tierra del Fuego, and the broad sounds and open desolate country of the eastern shores of the passage were replaced by narrow fiords walled in by densely forested and snow-capped mountains; but despite the notorious difficulties of navigation in narrow waters liable to sudden squalls from the side-valleys, the passage—some 600 km, the length of the English Channel—seems to have been a fairly smooth one. At the ‘River of Sardines’, rather more than halfway through, Magellan stopped to take in wood and water; but the other two ships had not rejoined, and he



Plate VII. MAGELLAN IN THE STRAITS: THE HEROIC IMAGE. The hero is shown steering (apparently backwards, since Tierra del Fuego is to starboard of the ship) between the Land of Giants and the Land of Fire; the Patagonian giant using an arrow as an emetic is mentioned by Pigafetta and became a standard item in Magellanic iconography (cf. Plate XX); the roc is obviously a stray from Madagascar. From Theodore de Bry, *America*, Part IV (1594), by permission of the Trustees of The British Library.

turned back to look for them. He found only the *Concepcion*; the *San Antonio* was missing; in fact, Estevão Gomes had seized her and deserted.⁵² Giving her up for lost, the fleet returned to what Magellan now knew to be the main channel, since while at the River of Sardines he had

sent a boat well provided with men and victuals to find the cape of the other sea. They took three days going and returning, and told us that they had found the cape and the great open sea; at which the Captain-General, for the joy he had, began to weep, and named that cape Cape of Desire [Cabo Deseado, close to the modern Cape Pilar], as a thing much desired and long-time sought.

The channel was narrow but deep, the flood stronger than the ebb: there could no longer be any doubt that the Passage was found.

On 28 November they passed the Cape of Desire, and now other tears, not of joy, were to be shed:

we entered into the pacific sea where we stayed three months and twenty days without taking on victuals or other refreshments, and we ate only old biscuit turned to powder all full of worms and stinking with the odour of the urine the Rats had made on it, after eating the good part. And we drank putrid yellow water. We also ate the hides of cattle which were very hard because of the sun, rain, and wind. And we left them four or five days in the sea, then put them for a little while over the coals. And so we ate them. Also rats which cost half a crown each one. And even so we could not find enough of them.⁵³

And Pigafetta goes on to describe the worst horror of all, the scurvy. But the sea was well named the Pacific, for they met with no storms.

During the whole traverse to Guam, they saw only two small uninhabited islands. The generally accepted version of Magellan's route takes him up the Chilean coast to about 32 or 34°S (so as to reach warmer climes as quickly as possible) and thence across the Ocean in a generally west-northwesterly direction, borne on by the Southeast Trades. The two islands seen, San Pablo and Los Tiburones ('The Sharks') are generally identified respectively with Pukapuka, Fangahina, or Angatau, outliers of the Tuamotus, and Caroline, Vostock, or Flint in the Line Islands. G. E. Nunn, however, puts forward a closely argued but unconvincing case for a track right up the South American coast to about 10°S, thence northwest to the area of Cipangu (which he holds to be a main objective of Magellan's) as shown on Waldseemüller's map of 1507—that is, a large rectangular island extending from Baja California to about 8°N. Not finding this island, Magellan gave up the search and meeting with favourable winds—the southern limb of the Northeast Trades—he struck west, in accordance with the principles of latitude sailing. On this view the two islands would be Clipperton and Clarion (in the Revillagigedos), about 10 and 19°N respectively—surely

much too large a difference from the 16–19°S for San Pablo and the 9–14°S for Tiburones given by Pigafetta, Francisco Albo, and the ‘Genoese pilot’, the three recorders who were actually on the voyage. The main basis of Nunn’s argument is that the pilot Albo, who alone gives a coherent sequence of positions, consistently falsified his results after Magellan’s death (but what is the force of this?) so as to make sure that the Spice Islands would be shown in the Spanish half of the world. Much of Nunn’s argument seems circular.⁵⁴

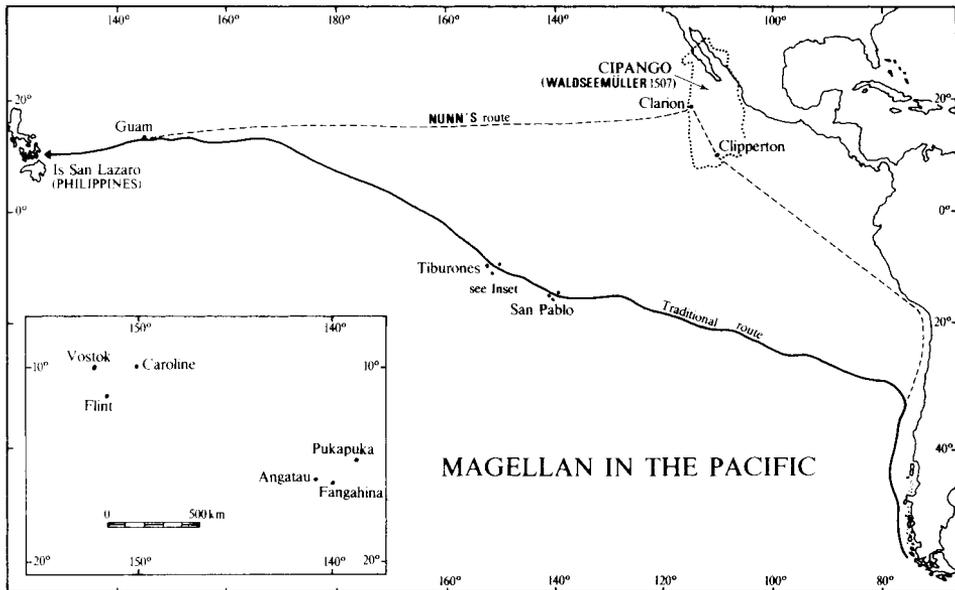


Figure 3. MAGELLAN IN THE PACIFIC. Adapted from map by G. E. Nunn, *Geographical Review* 24, 1934, 616.

The ‘incidental remark’ by Pigafetta about Cipangu on which Nunn relies is so extremely vague and confused that nothing can be safely built upon it. The fact that Magellan saw only two islands before Guam is certainly rather surprising, but by no means so extraordinary a phenomenon as Nunn asserts: in the relevant longitudes (that is as far west as 160°W, where the traditional track enters an island-free zone), the island screens are arranged *en echelon*, and Magellan was passing along them, not athwart. Schouten and Le Maire in 1616 saw only four islands east of 160°W, all in the Tuamotus and all within four days; Byron in 1765, in a course close to the traditional track of Magellan in these longitudes, saw five, again all in the Tuamotus and again all so close together as hardly to count as more than two; the ship of Magellan’s immediate successor Loaysa met with one island only. Nunn arrives at his course largely, if not mainly, by correcting for compass declination; but it appears from Pigafetta—in a less dubious reference than that to Cipangu—that Magellan did insist on his

pilots adjusting for declination, and a further correction would be gratuitous and misleading. The Nunn route is materially longer—by nearly 2800 km—than the traditional one, and it seems highly unlikely that Magellan, already very short of provisions and with one mutiny and one probably presumed desertion behind him, would have risked setting his pilots such a course, especially when he had found favourable winds in the Southeast Trades—that would have been an open invitation to further discontents. It seems also gratuitous to labour the suspicious precision of Albo's latitudes and the discrepancies between his and other accounts for San Pablo and Los Tiburones (only three to five degrees) while at the same time insisting that all the early authorities were either deceivers or deceived to the tune of 25 to 30 degrees. Why should Pigafetta, an Italian and a Knight of Rhodes, join in the deception? and while he was by no means a professional, he could surely tell the difference between 10 or 20° *south* and 10 or 20° *north*—in January! Nunn's paper is an elegant essay in deduction, but there seem to be too many interdependent variables for it to carry conviction. Nor, given the Spanish clinging to a Ptolemaic view of the world, the complete and natural uncertainty as to the width of the gap between Asia and Castilla del Oro, and the genuine doubt as to the position of the Spice Islands relative to an extension of the Tordesillas line around the globe, can one see any very compelling reason for the falsification.

Plunged into the wastes of the Ocean, and however desperate the physical and moral condition of the company, obviously 'returning were as tedious as go o'er.' The long agony drew near an end, or at least an intermission, when on 6 March 1521 they sighted three islands, inhabited and promising: Guam, Rota, and perhaps Saipan. But this first contact between Europeans and Oceanians was far from happy. Magellan wished to obtain fresh supplies, but the natives came aboard and stole everything they could carry away, dexterously making off with a small boat from the *Trinidad's* stern. Going ashore with forty armed men, Magellan burned houses and boats in reprisal, killing seven men. Leaving these Islands of the Ladrões, or Robbers, on 9 March, they came a week later to a high island of considerable size: Samar.

Magellan had taken a course which brought him well north of the Moluccas, allegedly giving as a reason that food would be in short supply there, but perhaps rather on the scent of Tarshish and Ophir, thought of as in the Lequeos (Ryukyus), or with a more realistic idea than Columbus's of the location of Cipangu. On any view, he must have thought himself near Asia, and perhaps his motive was the simple and sensible desire to replenish his supplies and recuperate his crews before a possible encounter with the Portuguese in the Moluccas. The islands he had reached were obviously large and desirable; not yet christened the Philippines, they were named for the day of their discovery, the *Islas de San Lazaro*. The barrier that Vespucci had divined, the great sea that Balboa had glimpsed—both had been overcome.

Landing on a small uninhabited island, they set up tents for the sick, and two days later a canoe with nine men arrived.⁵⁵ Magellan commanded his people to wait in silence; but these men were welcoming. Trade trifles were exchanged for fruit, coconuts, and arrack, and more provisions were promised. With rest and fresh food, all took new heart; the Captain-General gave coconut-milk to the sick with his own hand. Relations with the local people remained cordial, and on 28 March, when they had moved on to another little island, they met a man who could converse with Magellan's Malayan slave Enrique: it was now certain that they had reached the confines of Asia.

The first Easter after the mutiny at Puerto San Julian was marked by an impressively solemn Mass, at which two local 'kings' kissed the Cross. They were among a people of civility, even elegance, who had justice, weights and measures, intriguing customs; Pigafetta was fascinated by such strange new things as betel-chewing and flying foxes. There was also gold. . . . Accompanied by their new friends, they moved on to the large island of Cebu, where these first favourable impressions were enhanced.

The Rajah of the island, Humabon, startled and impressed by gunnery salutes, yet wished for 'tribute', pointing out a merchant from Siam who had paid his dues. The Captain-General replied that he was servant to a great King, one greater than the King of Portugal, who paid no man tribute; war or peace was at the Rajah's choice. The Moor merchant interposed: be careful, these are the men who have conquered Calicut, Malacca, India. Doubtless reflecting on the artillery, the Rajah chose peace, accepting Spanish protection and desiring to be received into the Church of these powerful strangers. On 14 April he and his wife were baptised under the names of Don Carlos and Dona Juana, in honour of the King-Emperor and his mother; five hundred of their subjects followed them into the Faith. All this was done with great ceremony and solemnity; one wonders if Pigafetta remembered the party a few days earlier, where he had enjoyed the dancing of three girls, quite naked.

Cuius regio, eius religio—as the King, so the religion—seems to have applied as it did in contemporary Europe; once the Rajah led the way, mass conversion followed perforce. But some of the neighbouring vassal chiefs were recalcitrant, and—against his instructions—the Captain-General decided to intervene personally; if 'Don Carlos' was to be of use as a puppet king to maintain Spanish influence in the islands, he must be supported to the full. Doubtless Magellan saw the affair as a test of credibility; this was to be by no means the last time in these regions that a client was to drag a 'great and powerful friend' into disaster. Had he succeeded, Magellan might have been called many things, but we would not have heard of his lack of judgment; and the Portuguese in the East were wont to take on very heavy numerical odds against much stronger foes: as at Cannanor, as at Diu, as at Malacca, in all of which actions Magellan had served.

At midnight of 26 April 1521 the Captain-General and Humabon-Don Carlos set out with sixty Europeans and several hundred Cebuans to bring into their

joint allegiance the Rajah of Mactan, Lapulapu, now honoured as the first hero of Filipino resistance to colonialism. Next morning forty-nine men waded ashore, for Magellan, here truly and arrogantly injudicious, had asked the Rajah and his men to stay in their boats and see how Spaniards could fight. The 1500 defenders opposed them with unexpected resolution and tactical skill; musket and crossbow fire was opened at too great a range to be effective, and finally Magellan ordered a retreat. All but six or eight of his men fled; the mortars in the boats were too far away to give adequate covering fire. In the end the Captain-General, bravely covering the flight, was overborne by numbers and hacked to death. The disheartened survivors tried to ransom the body, to be told that they of Mactan would never give up such a man, such a trophy, for the wealth of the world. The last words must always be Pigafetta's simple tribute: 'so great a captain'.

The ends of the voyage: Victoria and Trinidad

Whatever discontents remained after the recuperation in the Islas de San Lazaro—and it is not likely that all shared Pigafetta's devotion to 'our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our true guide'—all must have been daunted by the loss of the Captain-General's iron leadership. They chose Juan Serrano (or Serrão) and the Portuguese Duarte Barbosa, two of Magellan's most loyal officers, as leaders, and sadly prepared to go on. Their position had been more seriously undermined than they knew, for the Rajah of Cebu (possibly incited by the interpreter Enrique, threatened with a lifetime of slavery in Spain—despite his manumission by Magellan's will) had resolved to rid himself of these dangerous but unsuccessful allies. He invited them to a feast on 1 May, at which the jewels promised for the King of Spain were to be presented. Fortunately for posterity as well as for himself, Pigafetta had been too badly wounded at Mactan to walk into the trap. Two of the twenty-nine who went ashore suspected foul play and returned; the rest, including Barbosa, were slain. At the water's edge Serrão implored with tears his bosom friend João Carvalho to save him, but the company was too shaken to act.

They sailed on, still in quest of the Spice Islands, under Carvalho. There were now only 115 men left, too few to man three ships, and the *Concepcion* was burned at Bohol. They passed across from Mindanao to Palawan, where they were well received, and found pilots who took them down the Borneo coast to the rich town of Brunei. Relations, at first friendly but suspicious on both sides, soon degenerated; men were detained ashore, including a son of Carvalho's by a Brazilian girl; there was a successful skirmish with the Rajah's praus, and semi-piratical seizures of junks for hostages; it was soon time to move on. In August they careened at an island off the north point of Borneo, and here Carvalho, a most ineffective leader, was deposed: Gonzalo Gomez de Espinosa took general command, and Juan Sebastian del Cano took over the *Victoria*. They sailed again on 27 September, and after wandering through the

Sulu archipelago and skirting the southern coast of Mindanao, at last reached the Spice Islands, anchoring on 8 November 1521 at Tidore.

Politics in the Spice Islands were highly confused by the rivalries of the Rajahs of Ternate and Tidore. Francisco Serrão had died some months earlier in mysterious circumstances,⁵⁶ but Portuguese influence was strong on Ternate, and Tidore was open to a countervailing alliance. Luckily for the newcomers the Portuguese had at the moment no ships in the islands. But they were already moving to control the clove trade, from Malacca, and had promised to build a factory: whichever nation and whichever island first secured such a base would gain commercial hegemony in the Moluccas. Hence 'the ancient feud between Ternate and Tidore was intensified in a new rivalry to secure this European support',⁵⁷ which yet had obvious dangers: the factory would also be a fort. So there were cross-currents; a week after the Spaniards arrived they were visited by a Portuguese, Afonso de Lorosa, like Serrão a freelance, who came over from Ternate. From him they learnt that, despite ostensible cordiality on both sides, the Rajah of that island mistrusted the Portuguese (as well he might) and would also be glad of Spanish friendship; but they also learnt that Lopes de Sequeira, Magellan's commander in the Malacca days and now Viceroy, had been ordered to seek out and destroy Magellan's fleet should it reach the Moluccas. Two months were spent in negotiating trade and protection agreements and in buying cloves, obtaining so many that sixty quintals had to be left behind for fear of overlading. When they were putting to sea, the *Trinidad* leaked so much that she was clearly unseaworthy. It was decided that she should be repaired and then make east for Darien—there was as yet no New Spain, and it was still thought that the Spice Islands were not far distant from the Isthmus. The *Victoria* would continue westwards for Spain. Pigafetta records the decision almost casually, but there must have been much anxious debate, and some remained behind for fear of foundering or of hunger.

Del Cano left Tidore on the last great lap of the first circumnavigation on 21 December 1521. In February the *Victoria* sailed from Timor and into the Indian Ocean, and strictly speaking out of our history. The voyage home was as agonising as the Pacific crossing had been, but Del Cano proved a worthy successor to his Captain-General,⁵⁸ rejecting pleas that they should seek succour from the Portuguese in Mozambique. As Morales Padrón remarks, Del Cano had a shipload of spices but nothing to eat, and was compelled by manifold distresses to put in to the Cape Verdes, pretending to come from America; but the secret leaked out and the Portuguese seized some of his diminished crew. Forty-seven Europeans and thirteen Malays had left Tidore; eighteen and four reached Spain, in wretched plight but with spirit enough to fire a salute as they came alongside Seville quays on 8 September 1522. Pigafetta went to Valladolid and presented to D. Carlos 'neither gold nor silver' but, amongst other things, a holograph copy of his narrative, the precious record of the greatest single voyage in all history.

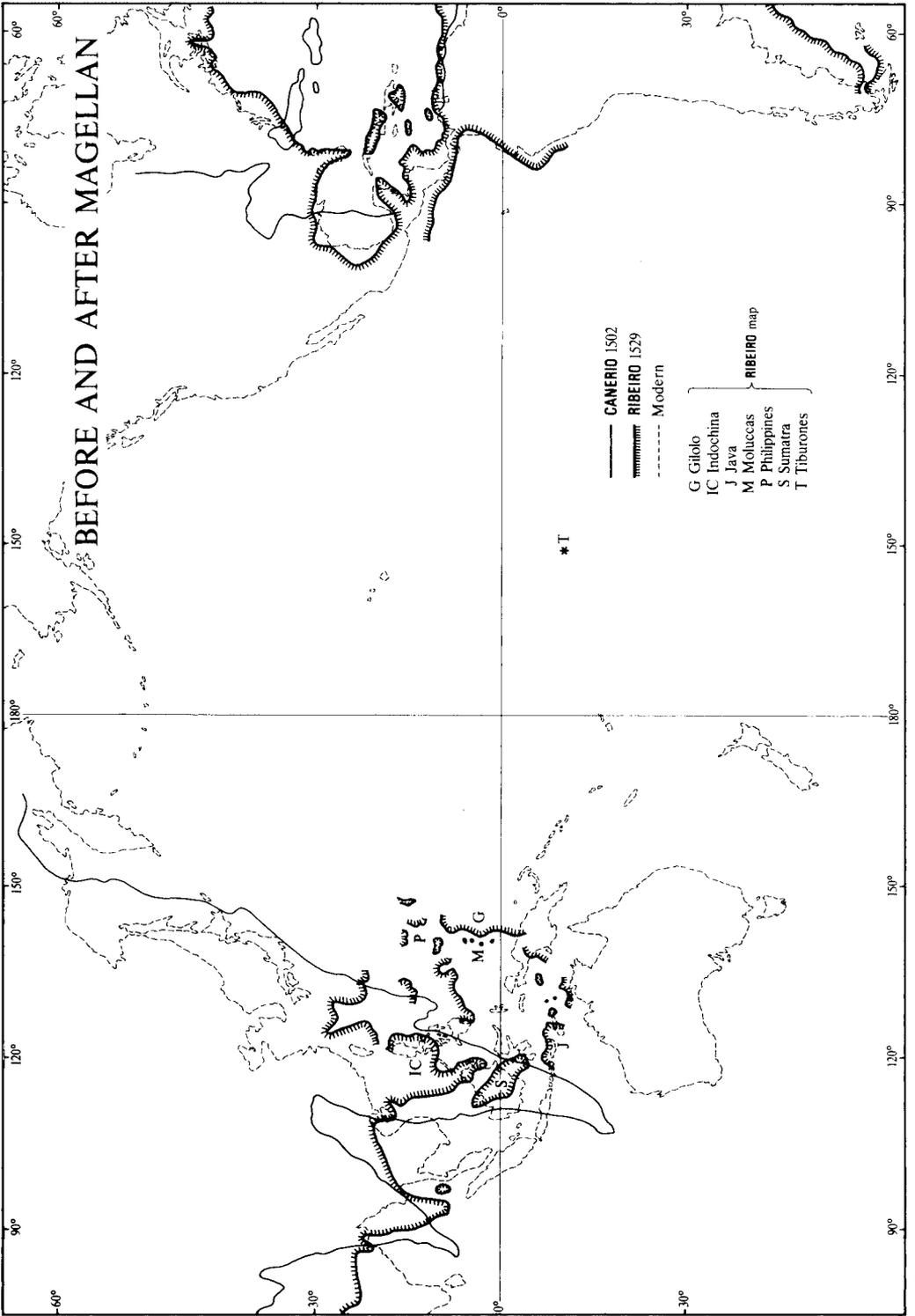
The *Trinidad* was long in the repairing, and did not leave Tidore until 6 April 1522. *Lorosa*, unfortunately for him, had thrown in his lot with the Spaniards and sailed with them; a few men were left behind in a tiny factory, the first formal European base in Indonesia, to look after the remaining trade goods and the surplus spices. They touched at some islands, including probably Agrigan in the northern Marianas, and battled on northeastwards, dead into the Trades, apparently reaching 42 or 43°N.⁵⁹ Here, cold, famished, and sick, they ran into a prolonged storm. Probably not even Magellan could or would have pushed on; there was no recourse but to return to the Spice Islands, which they reached early in November.

They returned to find that in May seven Portuguese ships under Antonio de Brito had arrived at Ternate; the little factory on Tidore had of course at once been seized. Thirty-five of the fifty-four men with whom Espinosa had left Tidore were dead, and he had no option but to throw himself upon the mercies of the Lusian rival. These were not tender; the Portuguese seem at first to have been moved to compassion by the miserable state of Espinosa's people; but they seized ship, cargo, instruments, papers and charts, refusing receipts. *Lorosa* was promptly executed and the Spaniards made prisoners, according to some accounts being put to work on building the Portuguese fort at Ternate. De Brito wrote to the new King of Portugal, D. João III, that his best service would have been to cut their heads off. He did not venture to go so far, but obviously regretted having to send them to Malacca, instead of keeping them in Ternate where the climate might kill them off. Eventually four (including Espinosa) of the forty-four reached Spain, to be denied pay for the time they were captives and hence not serving the Crown. . . . With Del Cano's eighteen, and thirteen of his company sent on from the Cape Verdes, thirty-five men in all had completed the circuit of the globe. As for the *Trinidad*, she broke up in a squall at Ternate, and her timbers were used for the fort. For the time being, the Portuguese were in undisputed possession.

Stalemate at Badajoz

Deducting all costs and losses, the spices brought back in the *Victoria*, the first shipment direct from the Spice Islands to Europe, showed a moderate profit on the outlay for the whole expedition. Del Cano came home to fame and honours, including a coat of arms charged properly with cinnamon, nutmegs and cloves, and for crest a globe with the motto *Primus circumdedisti me*; Magellan's memory had to bear the angry reproach of his countrymen, and in Spain was not enhanced by the partial evidence of Del Cano and others at the enquiry into the voyage. Nevertheless, the great achievement was not to be denied: the circling of the globe was made possible only by the forcing of the Southwest Passage.

The most immediate result of the voyage was a new Luso-Castilian diplomatic crisis. João III demanded that the *Victoria's* spices should be handed over to him, and the circumnavigators punished, since they had clearly trespassed within his



dominion; each monarch should send out a ship with competent experts to agree on the true position of the Spice Islands. D. Carlos took up this singularly impracticable suggestion, which stemmed from a neglected clause of the Treaty of Tordesillas, adding that the Pope might send a third ship as referee. All this was probably time-spinning, as was the Portuguese proposal that, pending such a procedure, neither side should send a fleet to the disputed area, which would in effect freeze a *status quo* to Portugal's advantage. In fact, both parties were secretly preparing Moluccan voyages. In the circumstances, the Junta of experts



Plate VIII. THE AMERICAS, 1540. Note Magellan's 'Unfortunate Islands' and the archaic position and rendering of 'Zipangri' (Cipangu, i.e. Japan); but the Americas are firmly seen as what they are, a 'Novvs Orbis' between the two Oceans. From the Basel edition of Ptolemy, reproduced in Nordenskiöld, *Facsimile Atlas* (Stockholm 1889). NLA.

from both sides which met in April-May 1524 on the bridge over the Caya, the boundary between the two kingdoms, with sessions in the town halls of Badajoz and Elvas, can hardly have been regarded by either side as anything but a face-saving and time-winning device.⁶⁰

◀ Figure 4. BEFORE AND AFTER MAGELLAN. Adapted from maps by E. A. Heawood, *Geographical Journal* 57, 1921, 431–46, and in A. Cortesão and A. Teixeira da Mota, *Portugaliae Monumenta Cartographica* (Lisbon 1960), I. Plates 39–40 (for Ribeiro, see *ibid.*, 82–106).

In one sense, as Nowell stresses, the Portuguese were on the defensive: there was sufficient leakage of obsolete but damaging maps, originally prepared to exaggerate the distance and hence the difficulty of the way to the Indies, and sufficient general doubt amongst the well-informed, to make Spanish claims seem plausible, though in fact the Portuguese positions were much nearer the truth than the Spanish, and the antimeridian of the Tordesillas line ($134^{\circ}40'E$) is in fact some 7° east of the Moluccas, though this could not then be known.⁶¹ The Spaniards made much play with minor discrepancies in the Portuguese

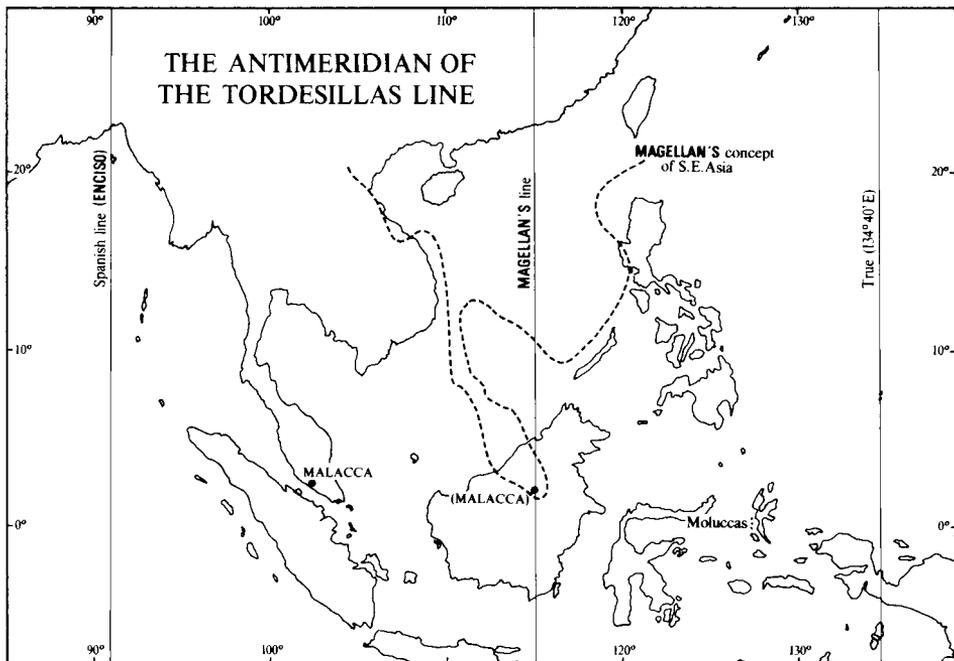


Figure 5. THE ANTIMERIDIAN OF THE TORDESILLAS LINE. Note that on various reckonings the antimeridian can be placed at 129, 131.18, or 133.21 degrees east of Greenwich. In part adapted from maps by R. A. Laguarda Trías in A. Teixeira da Mota (ed.), *A Viagem de Fernão de Magalhães e a Questão das Molucas* (Lisbon 1975), 146–9.

calculations and with the methods they proposed to fix the longitudes, which they alleged would take much too long (this would have been true had they been feasible) and to be against the spirit of the agreement for the conference. Scorn was heaped on the official Portuguese map which, very naturally, showed only a few key points between Lisbon and the Moluccas, leaving out the useful detail.

To all this, the Portuguese delegates could only stonewall and refuse to sign anything. They were strengthened in this attitude by the wild inaccuracy of the Spanish arguments, still sticking to Ptolemy and his inadequate length of an equatorial degree. Pliny, Marinus, Ptolemy, Polo, even Mandeville and King

Solomon were cited; and Fernando Colon, Columbus's illegitimate son, claimed for Castile 'all of Persia, Arabia, and India.' As Denucé says, these 'oratorical demonstrations . . . contrast singularly with the calm and knowledge of the Portuguese delegates to whom history has done justice . . .'.⁶²

Argument on such divergent bases was clearly pointless; only occupation would suffice: the race was on again, and the logistic odds were strongly in favour of Portugal. She had firm bases much nearer Ternate and Tidore than were Seville or even Panama and the petty ports just being born in New Spain;⁶³ and the way from Malacca to the Moluccas was through well-travelled seas with many points of supply. The Spanish riposte to Antonio de Brito, when it did come (below, Ch. 4), was heroic but pathetic.

Magellan's voyage, whatever his own initial beliefs, ensured the final destruction of the lingering remnants of the Ptolemaic world: the achievement is writ large on contemporary maps. Even the hapless last voyage of the *Trinidad* at least showed that the great new ocean extended indefinitely, with a vast breadth, into northern latitudes; no rehashing of Cipangu or Ptolemy's Sinus Magnus could possibly fit the new facts. There were limitations: the Passage was too difficult to be of reliable use so long as it was confined to the actual Straits of Magellan. Although while in the Straits Magellan's people had thought that they could hear the surge on a distant coast to the south, and had correctly deduced that the land to their left was insular, yet, as J. H. Parry points out, Tierra del Fuego gained 'a new lease of cartographical life' for Terra Australis,⁶⁴ the temptation to carry it on across the Mar del Sur proving irresistible to generations of cosmographers. Yet even this was a spur to new exploration. No other single voyage has ever added so much to the dimension of the world.