

Pulling Back The Curtain On Ferdinand Magellan's Final Act To Reveal A Mutineer's Revolutionary Feat: 'What Goes Around, Comes Around!'

What goes around comes around. And there is a circular justice that haunts the fate of Ferdinand Magellan, the man whose fleet, the Armada de Moluccas, was the first to circumvent the world. Only the ship *Victoria* under the command of the veteran Basque navigator, Juan Sebastian Elcano, a mutineer who was forced to work by Magellan in irons while he labored the winter at Port Julian, made it back to Seville. Only eighteen European men survived, including the Magellan loyalist and chronicler Antonio Pigafetta. Their perilous journey lasted just short of three full years. The man who had his mutineering captains murdered on deck, executed by a servant and their dead remains drawn and quartered to rot in spikes implanted on a sandy beach, Ferdinand Magellan was hacked to death in the harbor of Mactan in the Filipino archipelago. His crew watching the battle from deeper waters but just offshore due to the low tide did not come to aid their besieged captain-general and many believe that their inaction to help him was a *de facto* mutiny where the misdeed was not in their commission but rather in what they omitted to do. Magellan's scorn for the native fighters of his enemies and his need to impress his firepower and brutality upon the rulers of his island allies, caused his gruesome demise. His overconfidence, his rashness, his obstinance, his need to go it alone to impress those he calculated to dupe, subjugate, and rule, led to his inglorious death and the ignobility of his men's fatal betrayal.

The Pacific Sojourn After Passage Through the South American Strait:

Magellan's progress northward after escaping the South American strait was fast. The strong trade winds of the mighty Pacific speedily push them over an astounding distance so much so that his fleet reached the Equator on February 13, 1521. Nonetheless, the usually resolute captain-general became despondent and angry. He tossed his useless maps overboard, exclaiming that, "With the pardon of the cartographers, the Moluccas are not to be found at the appointed place." His men were dying from scurvy, and his fresh drinking water supplies were near exhaustion. The fleet needed to find a safe haven soon, fresh provisions and potable water were needed if they would survive the ordeal of crossing the infinity of the Pacific. Also, Magellan was stymied by his own illogic miscalculation concerning the true distance to the Spice Islands and Asia; and, the armada had already exceeded the projected total size of the ocean by the time they reached the equatorial divide; the extra distance also discounted the claim of Spain that those precious islands lay within their territory. Magellan knew that every league westward they sailed without finding the prized islands meant that the true positioning of the islands was more likely squarely in Portuguese territory according to the Treaty of Tordesillas. He not only could not claim them for Spain but his clause for two newly discovered islands for his own person in his royal contract also meant nothing out of the Spanish domain. Not to mention that Magellan himself might be held culpable for the failings of the mission especially when and if the renegade ship *San Antonio* made it back to Seville. What he chose to do at key latitudes helps decipher how his intentions evolved. Magellan did not turn westward to *run down the parallel* to the Spice Islands, which he knew lay on the Equator, and on the early morning of March 6, 1521, *Victoria's* lookout heard a welcoming cry from the crow's nest 60 feet above its upper deck: *Tierra! Tierra!* The sailors were overjoyed, many were exhausted, starving, sick but the prospect of land was a shocking deliverance of hope. As the vestige of islands with their tall cliffs became more distinct in the morning light, Magellan climbed partway to the

lookout perch above to glimpse their salvation himself; he subsequently rewarded the sharp-eyed lookout with 100 ducats. The men had endured a 98 day, seven-thousand-mile trek, before they sighted the archipelago of the volcanic Marianas—approximately 3,000 miles west of the Hawaiian Islands. Pigafetta wrote: ‘One of these islands was larger and higher than the other two. The Captain-General wished to touch at the largest of these islands to get refreshments of provisions.’ Albo’s pilot log, adds that: “We saw many small sailboats approaching us, and they were going so fast they seemed to fly.” The small boats were the highly maneuverable outriggers that were designed and manned by the Polynesian tribe called the Chamorros. The canoes or *praos*, had a unique design where the prow and stern were interchangeable and with a versatile lateen sail, they could reach twenty knots and could travel close to the wind without having to ‘come about’ to tack a change in their heading. The indigenous people of Guam, surrounded the Armada of the Moluccas with a welcoming party of hundreds of small outrigger *praos* as the ships entered a deep, bluish lagoon, encircling the ships. “Fearing nothing, they got aboard, and there were so many of them, especially in the flagship, that some of our men asked the captain to have them thrown out,” sailor Ginés de Mafra wrote. The *Indios*, as the Spanish referred to all Pacific tribes, started to steal everything they could, as most of the sailors were too weak to stop the pilfering. Crockery, rigging, ropes, weapons, and especially any metal fitting, especially iron, were boldly lifted. The sailors found strength, mustered a defense and a fracas broke out and there were injuries on both sides. There was a stabbing of an Indian and with that ‘a mob of barbarians’ jumped overboard to man their *proas* and they attacked the ship by fighting with sticks, and the sailors cast arrows at the attackers. Then from across the azure waters of the lagoon, more *praos* rowed to the flagship carrying fresh food for the starving sailors. The fighting stopped but as soon as the repast was over, some of the Chamorros took to fighting again. Magellan intervened, ordering his men to stop from throwing arrows and the Indians put down their clubs and long sticks. Bartering resumed, with the Europeans trading beads and glass trinkets from Seville for coconuts and fish aplenty. Magellan’s softer touch worked but the Indians at the end, stole his personal skiff. Pigafetta records that the captain-general was ‘much irritated.’ Insulted, he was not going to let the Indians get away with his dinghy, and the next morning he and forty men took two longboats to the shore. They rampaged, burning many canoes and almost fifty dwellings, mostly wooden huts covered with fig leaves. With their crossbows, they killed seven villagers. The Chamorros stood stunned by the attack, and those wounded by the sharp bolts and arrows resorted to pulling them out of their flesh before sorrowfully bleeding out. The Europeans held their fiery assault, and when the small skiff of Magellan was procured the invaders retreated back to their ships. The deaths sparked compassion by the Europeans and peace ensued. It was soon discovered that the natives were people without serious arms or dangerous weapons. The long sticks with a fishbone attached at one end the men carried about were mostly used as tools for catching flying fish at sea.

Adam and Eve may have committed original sin by eating the forbidden fruit, but their God given sexual drives populated the Earth. To sailors long isolated at sea, the females were a siren call that their nature could not forgo. Pigafetta was fascinated by them: “These people live in liberty and according to their will...the women go naked, except when they cover their nature with a thin bark, pliable like paper, which grows between the tree and the bark of the palm. They are beautiful and delicate, and whiter than the men, and have hair loose and flowing, very black and long, down to the earth. They do not go to work in their fields nor stir from their houses, making cloth and baskets of palm leaves.” He spent considerable time ashore as well as many other crew members, and the

violence and clashes of the initial encounter between the two cultures evolved rapidly into more enjoyable encounters. He goes on to describe their huts and their domestic life, as well as their addictive habit of chewing betel leaves and nuts which stained their teeth, becoming brown, then red and eventually black. The Europeans remained only three days, but other Spanish who later visited and stayed on, discovered a society that was matriarchal and devoted to ancestor worship, and females were central in the Chamorros' society; the men whose bellicosity had threatened Magellan's sailors along with the flagrant robberies, and provoked his vengeful raid, were acting out theatrical rituals to project their ferocity. They largely played at warfare, and the hierarchy was horizontal with no defined leader. On March 9, 1521, as the armada prepared to sail away, hundreds of canoes took to the water, and although they tried to lure the sailors with gifts of more provisions, the generosity was a feign; they threw stones and pebbles from their canoes, as they skillfully sped and darted about quite close to the moving, much larger sailing ships. They were angry, insulted and betrayed by the fleet's premature departure; Pigafetta describes the women grieving from the loss of the island men killed in the earlier mayhem, crying, and pulling out tufts of their black hair. Odd timing perhaps coming only after the European killers were leaving them too after bedding them down for several nights. To be fair, the individuals affected were most likely different people and the Chamorros were an isolated culture who Pigafetta thought 'saw themselves as the only people in the whole world.' Magellan and Pigafetta thought their robberies were ingrained by the islanders communal living, they thought that the newcomers' belongings belong to one and all. The captain-general christened the three islands as the *Islas de los Ladrones*—the 'Island of Thieves.' The fleet veered into the open sea. Magellan sailed westward, looking out to finding a more promising destination, an island whose society, commerce and resources were more suited to his requirements. Their positioning was almost 13 and one-half degrees in latitude north of the Equator. Not to beat a dead horse, but the Europeans knew that the Spice Islands were directly on the equatorial line.

On March 16, 1521, the sharp-eyed lookout spied on the summits of mountains on the island of Samar. It is the third largest island in the Philippine archipelago where there are over three thousand islands and most are tiny spots that extend directly south of Japan and north of Borneo. For over five hundred years, the Chinese had established trading networks between mainland Asia and these islands. Later Arab merchants also profitably trafficked with the island natives. The islanders, especially those who engaged directly in brisk commerce, were literate and had absorbed and adopted many of the cultural influences of the foreign mainlanders. China though, by the time of the Spanish fleet's visit, had turned inward, and the fleet of Magellan sailed into a power vacuum, left by the Chinese retreat, who more and more kept to themselves, following the Confucian mindset of eschewing interactions with foreigners. Fortuitously, Magellan arrived at a time where he could claim the Philippine archipelago for Spain when Chinese colonization had ended after just one generation of contact. European maps did not chart any of the Philippine archipelago and an account of the Chinese enterprise in the Philippines never made it back to Europe so nothing about the islands was known to Magellan, nor of their recent colonization by the Chinese. He found no safe harbor at Samar with its tall cliffs and inhospitable shoreline, so he headed for the small but nearby island of Suluan where the fleet dropped anchor but only for several short hours before sailing on to find safe anchorage in an oasis island with a dense and fragrance rain forest, palm trees with coconuts; it was Homonhon Island, and the next day, on Monday March 18, a native boat with nine men approached, a few ornately dressed, and they

according to Magellan seemed 'welcoming and reasonable.' He gave them gifts of red caps, combs, mirrors, bells and other trinkets and they gave the sailors coconuts, bananas which looked like long figs to the Europeans, a jar of fermented palm wine and fresh fish. For about one week, the Filipino hosts and European guests reveled in amiable congeniality. Pigafetta wrote: "We took great pleasure with them, because they were merry and conversable." Magellan was encouraged when he showed the natives his specimens of the desired spices including clove and nutmeg and they were recognizable to the islanders. He understood their efforts to identify to him where the exotic spices grew and how they themselves acquired them. He did not understand much, but he comprehended that such trade and exchange existed with the Moluccan Spice Islands. Enthused by his discovery, he ordered a salute by cannonade but the roar terrified the visitors who 'tried to leap from the ship into the sea.' Magellan tried to calm the panic-stricken guests, reassuring them to remain onboard, but their overreaction to the firepower assured the captain-general that his armory not only impressed his hosts, but if 'push came to shove' he could yield absolute power over them. On Monday March 25, 1521, the fleet weighed anchor and as they were heading out of the harbor on a southwest course, Pigafetta, while fishing in a light rain, slipped falling overboard and had to be rescued from drowning. The next night, an island was spotted by its proliferation of lit campfires. The next morning as they approached the island, they were greeted by a boat crewed by a small group of eight warriors. Amazingly, when Magellan's slave Enrique spoke to them in his native Malay dialect, the islanders understood and spoke back to him in a similar tongue. He as a boy had been captured by Sumatran slave traders and sold to Magellan at Malacca. He was close to his home after a chain of circumstances that took him across Africa and Europe in the decade he had served Magellan. After an exchange of gifts, the islanders paddled away only to return two hours later with two large boats full of men and their king. Enrique conversed with the king from the flagship and some of his men boarded the ship. Magellan functioned as a gracious host and when the men returned to the two *balanghai* boats, the royal entourage headed back to shore. They soon 'proffered a large gold bar and basketful of ginger.' Magellan, not to appear avaricious for the precious metal, politely refused the tribute, thinking he did not want the king to gauge their intense desire for such treasure. He calculated that if the islanders had valuable resources and he hid from them his true interest, he could gain leverage in future bartering. He was also wary from painful experience, suspect of the sincerity of welcoming rituals, as they masked the possibility of calculated future treachery.

On Good Friday, 1521, Enrique went to shore on the island of Limasawa, ignorant that he was stepping ashore on a trading center that Chinese junks had been calling at for five centuries. Pearls, cotton, bees wax, coconuts, sweet potatoes, tortoise shells, betel nuts and woven leaf mats were traded for lead fishing sinkers, porcelain, and other well-crafted items. The islanders had a history of engaging in fair commerce that was orderly and honest. They were hospitable and at the request of Enrique, their ruler Rajah Kolumba, sent fish and rice in large porcelain jars, and with eight of his men he also boarded the *Trinity*. Magellan reciprocated, 'he gave the king a garment of red and yellow cloth made in the Turkish fashion, and a fine red cap.' The food was spread out and through his slave acting as an interpreter, Magellan emphasized that they had come to Limasawa as friends and not enemies. The encounter was friendly and as such it was a stark about-face from how the captain-general had viewed earlier pagans who he killed, kidnaped, and converted to Catholicism as if his cultural superiority allowed such subjugation. He impressed the king with his tale of their voyage and how they had found the crucial strait to penetrate the Americas to this vast

and magnanimous sea and he showed him his compass and nautical charts. They made a strong declaration of amity by becoming blood brothers in a ritual ceremony called the *casicasi*, according to *de Mafra*, the two leaders, 'both cut their chests and the blood was poured in a vessel and mixed together with wine, and each of them drank one half of it.' Perhaps Magellan realized that this trading kingdom resembled what his friend Francisco Serrao wrote to him in letters from the Spice Islands years earlier when he had entrenched himself as a *rajah*, getting rich from the clove trade in the exotic East, and ignoring orders by his Portuguese king to return home. Magellan could not resist impressing his royal host by firing an arquebus but the loud noise, smoke, and fire, frightened the entourage. He also put on a demonstration of European armor, and the king, after seeing the protective metal garb ward off sword and dagger blows, was speechless and he felt that what he had witnessed was almost a divinely bestowed power. No mortal could survive the onslaught of blows without the magical metal shell that clanked when struck. Magellan emphasized to the king that 'one of those armed men was worth one hundred of his own men.' The king agreed, and Magellan was satisfied to read into this acquiescence that the leader understood that the Europeans were better as an ally than as a foe. Both Spain and Portugal depended on gunpowder and the Armada de Molucca was equipped with an armory, and it was Magellan's belief in its invincibility that would lead to his undoing. Pigafetta also impressed the Filipino king and his entourage when he wrote down words in their native language of familiar objects from their phonetic pronunciation and they were astonished that the spoken tongue could be such transcribed to paper.

Easter mass was celebrated with the king and his islanders who barely comprehended the rite's meaning but they were immersed in it spiritually although they were not allowed to take holy communion but the king did kiss the cross. The ships fired a barrage during the Eucharist when the body of Christ was elevated by the priest and then after a fencing demonstration, Magellan presented the king with a gift of a cross, depicting Christ's crucifixion complete with 'nails and the crown [of thorns]' that would he stated would serve as a talisman to safeguard the islanders. Magellan proposed that his men erect a larger cross 'on the summit of the highest mountain.' The king was appreciative of the gift and had no idea that the captain-general was appropriating the island kingdom for the 'Spanish' cause. To further the bond, he proposed that if the king had any enemies, he would take the fight to them. The king listened and then identified two island neighbors who were foes but it was 'not the season to go there.' Magellan persisted in his goal to wage war for the king, which was not at all in his mandate from King Charles of Spain. He was to go directly to the Spice Islands and there was no mandate for conquest or for religious conversion, he was to find the passageway through the Americas, prove that the Spice Islands laid in Spanish waters, and return with the ship's holds laden with clove and nutmeg. Magellan perhaps, after marooning Cartagena and the priest, saw his fate as a fugitive who could never return to Spain with honor, and it was to secure his own future in a new world that his efforts were directed.

Magellan announced his intention to leave the next morning, telling the king that despite the generous provisions provided to them, they needed to forage for more food. The king advised them to travel to the friendly island of Cebu and provided Magellan with two local pilots to guide their navigation. He also requested that Magellan not leave immediately but 'for the love of him to wait two days until he should have his rice harvested' and he asked that some of the crew members be recruited for the collection so that it could be finished in two days. It turned out to be a profitable

delay for Magellan who when trading and bartering with the natives pulled off a ruse that got them a fortune of gold. Magellan realized that the islanders had no sense of the true value of coins minted by Spain and a native would desire a cheap knife or trinket instead of a high value coin. Also, a crew member who went ashore for fresh water and when he came back with a proposition by a local for a heavy gold crown for 'six strings of glass beads' Magellan nixed the transaction. Again, Magellan established a ruse because he did not want the islanders to understand just how valuable they treasured precious metals. The charade worked and the sailors soon traded 'pound for pound' iron for gold.

The fleet resumed its journey but the reefs were so numerous that even the local pilots feared the submerged dangers might be their undoing. To summarize what Albo wrote in his log: the 'lovely scenery' concealed many shoals as they threaded through various island realms that were mesmerizing in their exotic nature and distinct wildlife including flying foxes, fruit eating bats that Pigafetta claimed were as large as eagles. Dodging hazards, they finally entered 'a channel between two islands, one of which is called Mactan and the other Cebu, and although parts of it was so crowded with shoals that a canoe sent ahead to guide them through the undersea maze often refused to go ahead, they eventually 'turned west by a middle channel and reached the city of Cebu.' They greeted the port with a salute of gunfire, and King Humabon sent food to the visitors but he made it clear that he expected the customary tribute to the port to be paid. Magellan rebuffed the solicitation and after a Siam merchant counseled the king that the Portuguese from his experience could be menacing, the king waived the port duty after pondering the dilemma for one day. There was the usual rituals that signified friendship including an exchange of gifts, banqueting, blood brother rites, mock combat, and a display of military prowess, and of course, there was the intercourse between the sailors whose long isolation at sea forced them into celibacy and the females whose naturalistic sexuality was a startlingly pleasurable and desired experience. King Humabon, impressed by the European expedition, pled to provide tribute to King Charles as Magellan once again claimed an island kingdom for Spain. Magellan after only a week, on April 14, 1521, staged a theatrical ceremony where after the firing of cannons, he dressed in all white, sat next to the king and his wife in chairs covered in red velvet, on a dais hung with festive banners, and the Portuguese commander, with a growing sense of omnipotence, bestowed the Christian names of Charles and Joanna on the royal couple. Christlike, he baptized and cured an ill man who to the astonishment of the natives, had at least a momentary revival. According to Pigafetta: 'before the week had gone, all the persons of the island and some from the other islands, were baptized.' He also wrongly claims that the islanders destroyed their shrines; what they understood about their baptism is not known, but they maintained their sacrificial rituals to their many wood-carved idols and polytheism gods.

Again, Magellan proposed that he would ally himself with his new royal friends, King Charles and Queen Joanna, and fight on their behalf against any who opposed their control over the neighboring isles. On the adjacent isle of Mactan, there was two kings with separate domains, Sula sent his son tribute but the other king, Lapulapu refused. Sula, when learning that, he asked Humabon and Magellan for a boatload of fighters to punish the resisting king. Magellan planned an attack and refused any assistance from Humabon, seeing it as an opportunity to show his new ally just how brave the 'lions of Spain' fought. The proposed combat was more courageous than wise and all onboard argued against it seeing the fight as a needless battle that for Spain and its fleet would

yield little fruit. Magellan calculated the risks differently, and Juan Serrano as well as many voices of the crew directly challenged his judgment 'and from this he lost a lot of authority.' Pigafetta recalled how they all begged the captain-general not to go, especially without local help but he refused the wiser counsel in the mistaken belief that plate armor and gunpowder were an insurmountable obstacle that one hundred opposing warriors could not overcome. Pigafetta describes the attack plan: 'In the first hours of April 27, at midnight, sixty of us set out armed with corselets and helmets.' They were followed by King Humabon with his men paddling and sailing twenty or thirty smaller boats. The Mactan harbor, five miles away, was entered three hours before dawn, and Magellan had a threateningly worded ultimatum sent to Lapulapu to pay tribute and homage to them and King Humabon or 'otherwise they should wait to see how lances wounded.' The response from Lapulapu revealed a trickery that Magellan easily decoded. The Mactan king said that they too had lances of bamboo and wooden pikes hardened with fire but asked that they put off the battle until morning light when his forces would get more men as reinforcements. Magellan held off the enticement to attack immediately and have his fighters fall into the opponent's tactically dug pits and trenches in the blackness of night. At dawn, the tide was low, and the attacking boats could not come closer than one-half mile to the beach because of the many barely submerged reefs blocking access to the shore. Almost fifty men had to wade arduously through waist-deep surf in metal armor, while eleven others huddled on boats of King Humabon while *Trinidad*, *Concepcion* and *Victoria* stayed farther back, so distant that their cannon fire was out-of-range. Magellan consigned his allies and reinforcements, and his artillery cover, to passive spectators.

Awaiting them in the rising heat of the tropical early light, was an assembled force of 'more than fifteen hundred men.' The captain-general undeterred formed his small band into two, with twenty-five men in each division. The islanders whopped and hollered and then struck Magellan's fighting units on their two flanks and in a frontal assault. Magellan's men fired their crossbows and muskets to keep the attackers at bay but from a distance the arrows and darts bounced off or barely penetrated the natives' wooden shields. Outnumbered, soon the enemy was 'jumping hither and thither', never standing stationary, running helter-skelter while bombarding the Spaniards with a barrage of stones, muddy sand, arrows, and pointed bamboo stakes. They only aimed at their opponents' exposed thighs and bare legs knowing that the body armor was impenetrable. Magellan, seeing the situation deteriorating, resorted to sending some fighters to burn a few village huts. The fiery conflagration, instead of terrifying the natives into surrender, infuriated them, and they cut off two of the arsonists and killed them. Magellan, still trying to wade ashore, was struck in one leg with an arrow causing a deep wound. He ordered his men to stop firing and to orderly retreat but some in the chaos kept firing while others just turned and fled, leaving the captain-general trapped behind with just a handful of men. The unruly fallback saw every man trying to save themselves with many panicked individuals being followed through the knee-deep water by a mob of angry attackers who hurled spears, again and again, at the desperate men trying to withdraw to the safety of the boats. Not one of the eleven Spaniards who looked on with King Humabon and his natives ventured forth to assist their crewmates. Was their hesitation to rush to the fight to save their beleaguered captain-general just another mutiny? Magellan, who was dressed in the most ornate armor due to his high rank, was targeted and his feathered helmet was knocked off his head at least twice. Pigafetta casts his hero's death as a brave stand lasting against the onslaught for almost an hour. He affords him a martyr's death, fighting on, personally killing at least one attacker with his

lance and refusing to join in the retreat until his men had made it back to the awaiting boats to safety. The truth is most likely far uglier, for the enemy hurled themselves upon him stabbing his wounded body with pointed spears and cut him deeply on his leg by a blow wielded by a fierce fighter swinging a large sword; in a frenzy of hate his lifeless body, face down, was hacked to pieces. Pigafetta describes the butchery and death like an altar boy solemnly extinguishing a lit candle after a spiritual funeral mass: ‘...that caused the captain to fall face downward, when immediately they rushed upon him with iron and bamboo spears, and with their cutlasses, *until they killed our mirror, our comfort, and our true guide.*’

Soon after but much too late, only the Cebuans came to Magellan’s aid or to recover his body but only tissue fragments were found afloat in the lingering eddies of bloodied water for his disassembled body was taken by the victors as ghoulish memorabilia. The hacked pieces of his body drifted in the surf to the beach where the Mactan warriors collected them for keep. Requests to recover the parts of the gory corpse were rebuffed despite the offering of substantial booty. That afternoon, his loyalists urged Humabon to request the remains of not only their captain-general but the eight other fallen soldiers but Lapulapu who saw them as invaders and murderous intruders sent a message that he would not give up any of the remains ‘for all the riches in the world.’ Not even one piece of his mauled and punctured armor was recovered. Pigafetta, always a nobleman saw the horror of the unfolding of events in a more glorious light, blamed the inaction of his reinforcements to the tides that kept the largest ships a bay, but what about the longboats that easily could have rescued or aided Magellan’s isolated band of fighters during the battle especially after several hours of fighting. No, this was a *de facto* mutiny in poor disguise that let the Mactan warriors do the dirty work. Even his loyalists argued that his misguided quest for glory courted death and squandered lives and his ‘madcap foolishness’ angered them. His misjudgment was not an aberration but a derivative of his bipolar disorder and his desire for a goal that he hid from them. For his belligerent conduct, his display of military prowess, his omnipotent delusions, his allegiance and alliance with local kings and his eagerness to go to battle for them served his new goal of gaining suzerainty and hegemony over what he hoped to become a personal fiefdom. In the eyes of many in his crew, his misguided quest was quixotic, but instead it was a risky ploy for an aim that they did not understand. The tactics were needed for Magellan to put his plan for local control into effect and they were not going home. Magellan was not slain ‘in the service of the King of Spain by native Filipinos’ on April 27, 1521 as is chiseled on one side of the memorial obelisk that is dedicated to the European perspective today in Mactan harbor, he died pursuing a goal to find a haven and riches to protect himself from the reach of that same authority that he knew would see his actions as treason against their interests and the Spaniards that they had trusted to his leadership.

On Wednesday May 1, 1521, Humabon through Enrique invited the leaders of the armada as well as the rank-and-file crew to a feast ashore; almost thirty men or a quarter of the whole contingency, mostly officers went ashore to fill their stomachs and get drunk on palm wine. The king wanted to present them with a gift of jewels to carry back home to King Charles of Spain. Their number included the astronomer, San Martin, Father Valderrama---and Duarte Barbosa, Magellan’s brother-in-law and Juan Serrano, the Castilian captain, both of whom had been installed by vote as a team to replace Magellan as fleet admiral. The election maintained a balance of power between the Portuguese and Spaniards. Pigafetta stayed behind on board *Trinity*, recovering from a forehead

wound from a poison tipped arrow he suffered in the fight in Mactan. These new leaders pledged to avoid the risk-taking that had cost so many lives as well as to rededicate the mission to its immediate commercial acquisition of the spices. The crew of the armada was about to depart the island and with such news Humabon realized that he alone had to deal with the enmity of Lapulapu who would seek revenge against him. The death of Magellan and the debacle at Mactan also shattered the illusion of the Spaniard's invincibility and the king's island fighters resented the way some of their females were treated by the visiting sailors also. To save his own skin, Humabon schemed a final betrayal to assuage the anger of his angry neighboring chieftain and regain the fidelity and trust of his own men. Enrique was opposed to the new leadership of the fleet and after the death of his master proclaimed that he was now a free man. He knew the stipulation in Magellan's will that liberated him as well as awarding him a bequest of \$10, 000 *maravedis*. Duarte Barbosa, needing the slave's translational skills, refused to acknowledge that the slave would be set free, and reprimanded Enrique with verbal abuse until 'ire overtook his heart' and Enrique enraged, stormed off the ship. It was 'Enrique who 'secretly spoke with the master of Cebu' telling Humabon that the armada was to depart almost immediately. Pigafetta relates that Enrique, bitter and upset over Barbosa and Serrano's threats, schemed with the 'Christian King', as the now newly converted Humabon was now called, telling him, 'that , if he would follow his advice, he [Humabon] would gain all our ships and merchandise.' Satisfied about exacting his revenge, Enrique returned to the fleet, content to be docile as 'he appeared to behave better than before.' The feast was a trap and as the banquet was about to end the crew was attacked and , twenty-seven men were slaughtered by armed islanders hiding in the palm groves. The priest and the elder pilot, Juan Serrano, were taken as prisoners. When the master-of arms and pilot returned unexpectedly after going to shore, just prior to the mayhem, they told Pigafetta of a sight that they interpreted as suspicious. The priest, Father Valderrama, was led into the house by the prince's brother who had been miraculously healed at the christening ceremony by the faith-healing Magellan. For some reason, the two scurried back to the vessel fearing something sinister was occurring, and no sooner that they had raised their intuitive concern, Pigafetta wrote, they heard 'great cries and groans: 'then we quickly raised the anchors, and, firing several pieces of artillery at their houses, we approached nearer to shore.' A few desperate survivors from the massacre swam to the ship and were helped aboard. As the crew cut the cables and prepared to immediately set sail, the warriors in their boats and canoes tried to stop the ship from leaving and also, they brought Juan Serrano to the beach who implored his shipmates to rescue him so that as an old man he might enjoy his last days home with his family. The captors were intent to ransom his release for an iron gun that was brought ashore on a skiff. No sooner that they had extorted their first prize, then the warriors asked for another payment, and then another, so soon it was apparent just what their game was up to and that their words were just a pretense for more. Serrano, desperately pleaded for his friends to come to his rescue and confirmed that all the others left ashore were now dead. His desperate words fell on deaf ears for they aboard feared that they would fall victim to a massacre as well and Pigafetta felt that the inaction by Joao Carvalho was cowardice, and the ship set sail to the curses of the weeping old pilot Serrano who bitterly 'said that he prayed God at the day of his judgment he would demand the soul of his friend Joao Carvalho.'

Epilogue:

On May 6, 1521, the *San Antonio*, the renegade ship from the Armada de Molucca, returned from its cross the Atlantic trip after it was commandeered by mutineers within the Strait of Magellan; her return was a surprise and the crew had no idea that Magellan had been killed just five days earlier. Estevao Gomes and Geronimo Guerra, the two chief conspirators against Magellan, despite skillfully piloting their 55 men crew across the treacherous ocean felt nothing but trepidation upon returning to Seville. They knew that they faced a serious inquisition, disgrace, incarceration, and a possible death sentence but they consoled themselves that they had a slew of mitigating factors on their side that could release them from culpability. Magellan was not there to argue his case against them, and they hoped that his recklessness and his loyalty to Portugal had doomed him to perish over the edge of the known world. The promising news was that the sought after strait through the Americas was discovered but its extreme southern latitude and its maze-like configuration made its utility for navigation limited. They returned with no spices, no idea if the Spanish king's dream of claiming the Spice Islands for Spain had been realized by Magellan, nor did anyone know of what had happened to the rest of the armada. They had aces in their hands despite the poor cards that had been dealt to them, however. Guerra was a relative of Cristóbal de Haro, who financed the expedition and Cartegena who had been left by Magellan to die, marooned on a barren island, was the bastard son of the powerful Archbishop Fonseca. The only spokesman for Magellan was his imprisoned cousin, Alvaro de Mesquita, who the mutineers had stabbed and kept fastened in irons for the return journey. The weather-beaten *San Antonio* and its weary sailors were the only presumed survivors of the Armada de Moluccas. The deposed Captain Mesquita was not immediately released but he as well as the two co-conspirators, Gomes and Guerra were taken into custody while the rest of the returning men provided depositions to the investigators commissioned by the authorities of the Casa de Contratación. The crewmen were successful as portraying Magellan as a Portuguese opportunist who cunningly tricked the Spanish crown for his own ends. He was a murderer who tortured Spanish officers and he banished a Catholic priest and the Castilian officer Cartegena to die on a deserted, inhospitable island at Port Saint Julian. No one spoke in favor of Magellan except the loyalist Captain Mesquita.

On May 26, 1521, Archbishop Fonseca, whose son was left by Magellan to perish, after reading and distilling the damning depositions, expressed his grief, shock and dismay over what was revealed, especially the dismemberment of loyal Spaniards, clearing the mutineers of legal jeopardy although he remained suspicious of them. He in pique refused them the back pay that the Spanish Crown owed to them. The commission also revoked any further pay to Magellan's wife, Beatriz, and Fonseca had both she and her young son placed under house arrest. The archbishop was also not satisfied with the mutineer's account of why they failed to retrieve his stranded son after the *San Antonio* bolted for home. The officials had no idea that Magellan was already dead but they took measures to ensure that any promises by the Spanish king to him for land, titles and wealth were vacated by the court. Diogo Barbosa, Magellan's Portuguese father-in-law, was ordered to give up title to land the captain-general had deeded to him before he left Spain. He tried to defend his new son-in-law but his pleas were interpreted as against Spanish interests rather than an honorable defense for a family member who was not there to speak his side of the story. Suspicion inevitably fell on the version of events given by Mesquita which was so different than the exculpatory account provided by the testimonies and affidavits by the mutineers. Mesquita presented the Casa with the documents of the trial for the rebels at Port Saint Julian that he himself presided over. This may have been more damning to him because he was imprisoned for one year while the ringleaders

were released after six months and they also, unlike Mesquita, were reimbursed for their out-of-pocket travel expenses to the court. He was considered guilty of aiding and abetting the discredited Portuguese tyrant.

A half-world away, on May 2, 1521, the three ships of the fleet hurriedly weighed anchor after the massacre engineered by King Humabon. The fleet lost its newly installed leaders, Barbosa and Serrano, a priest, its astronomer, and it was rumored but never proven that a few sailors who survived the banquet killings were sold into bondage. Enrique, complicit in treachery, disappears from history. The worm-eaten *Concepción* was set aflame after all its gear and valuable supplies were transferred to the *Trinidad* and the *Victoria*. The two ships themselves badly battered after almost two years at sea and the crew numbered just 110 survivors. Carvalho is elected captain-general but the position is soon vacated as he quickly turns out to be a poor leader; Gonzalo Gómez de Espinosa captains the flagship, *Trinidad*, while Juan Sebastián Elcano commands the small *Victoria*. They know that the Moluccas are close by and they sail south toward the Equator, but for a month they wander trying to negotiate the maze of islands, shallow seas, and submerged, unseen, coral reefs. They find Borneo, Mindanao and zigzag among hundreds of tiny islands where they scout for fresh water and food; they resort to piracy but fear others who they encounter before they spend one month on the island of Palawan and they were impressed by the people and their sophisticated ruler of Brunei. They eventually leave the tropical paradise, abducting a series of local guides to pilot them toward the Spice Islands. On November 6, 1521, they sight a line of dominant volcanic mountains on the horizon according to Pigafetta, 'four lofty islands fourteen leagues to the east', they are by the observation of the perpendicular noon Sun, right on the parallel of the Equator. On November 8th, they dock at Tidore and no Portuguese are encountered because luckily their Iberian rivals do not have any ships anchored in the Moluccas at that time. They are eager to meet one Portuguese, though, the close friend of Magellan, the very man who inspired their captain-general to propose their seafaring adventure to the Spanish king, the adventurer Francisco Serrao, but they learn he died nine months earlier. He was poisoned in the inter-island feud between Tidore and Ternate, he like the rest of the Portuguese, being an ally and consul to the king of Ternate. There is an energetic exchange of gifts and heavy bartering on Tidore, and both ships traded cloth, metal, and glass and their ill-gained plunder after leaving Cebu for holds full of scented cloves.

They prepared to depart but the morning that they planned to set sail, the *Trinidad* was badly leaking water while still in the harbor and had to be repaired. The crewmen were given a choice of two challenging options that could and would decide their fate. Each man had to decide whether to wait on the island while the repairs were made, a major task that could take fifty days, and risk being recaptured by a returning Portuguese fleet or to depart now on the barely seaworthy *Victoria* which many felt was deteriorating into a death trap that easily could founder at sea. Also, the captains decided to embark on different routes home; the *Victoria* would try to sail west through hostile Portuguese waters while once refitted, the *Trinidad* would try to cross the Pacific eastward to the colony of New Spain in Mexico. Ginés de Mafra opted to stay with the flagship but Antonio Pigafetta decided to leave now, December 1st, 1521, with the smaller *Victoria* under the mutineer Elcano.

The repairs took one hundred days, on April 6, 1522, and the last voyage of the *Trinidad* loaded down with fifty tons of clove was a seven-month misadventure as they tried to head northeast

across the great expanse of the Pacific to New Spain [Mexico]. They were hit by cold, heavy seas, and many storms as they traveled into higher latitudes hoping to find strong prevailing winds heading easterly. Scurvy, a few desertions on encountered islands and death at sea forced the inexperienced Espinosa to reverse course. Thirty-seven men died and when the just twenty crewmen who were still alive, arrived at the Moluccas, their health was so weak—lame, crippled, emaciated, infested—that they could not find the strength to dock the stricken ship. A boatload of Portuguese under the command of the new Portuguese governor-general, António de Brito,----who had come to the Moluccas to capture the traitor Magellan and expel the Spaniards----were revolted from the stench when they climbed aboard. Pity for the straggling crew did not spare them from being arrested and when they recovered their health being put into forced labor. The *Trinidad* was stripped of its fittings and almost anything that was still useful and all the piloting charts, log, maps, astrolabes, sextants, weaponry were seized. When Brito perused the logbooks, he discovered proof that the navigation had been through Portuguese waters to access the Spice Islands and that the official astronomer had insidiously altered the location of geographic landmarks to obscure the fact that the Moluccas were within Portuguese territory. He seized the valuable cargo of cloves. When a storm hit the harbor, the dilapidated ship was destroyed and its planking was salvaged to go into the building of a new fort on Ternate.

Elcano had no intention of sailing the *Victoria* toward Madagascar which was the most direct route but also patrolled by Portuguese warships. On February 11, 1522 leaving the Java Sea he battled headwinds and cold by swinging about in a great southern arc----on March 18th the *Victoria* passed the remote Amsterdam Island and then entered a zone of battering storms, at 35 degrees South the ship ‘sprang its foremast’ as at times sixty-foot rogue waves mauled the fragile ship. Keeping clear of the Portuguese as they tried to combat the harsh conditions to round the Cape of Good Hope, they landed seeking refuge and resupply in a natural harbor in South Africa. There were no people at all and no food to be found. The explorers climbed a steep hill only to be disappointed when they discovered that after multiple attempts that the cape still lay ahead of them, far to the east. Just as the cape seemed impassable the winds shifted. They doubled the cape as it was shrouded in fog and mist, Elcano had to sail close to the wind and fight through churning waters to round the invisible menacing cape on May 8th- 1522--passing it at a distance of five leagues. On May 22nd, the winds and storms abated and Elcano was able to put the weather-beaten ship on a more northerly course. They took refuge in Saldanha Bay, just north of Cape Town, the crew struggled to load wood and fresh water but they shared the bay with a Portuguese ship plying the India sea route; both, with disparate purposes merely saluted and sailed away to avoid conflict.

They sailed onward and the lives of the sailors were becoming more precarious with each passing day and when on June 8th they reached the Equator twenty-two of them had perished since rounding Africa, from starvation and illness. On Wednesday July 9, they reached the Portuguese stronghold of the Cape Verde Islands, off the coast of West Africa. For five months they ate only corn and rice with barely potable water and scurvy decimated the ranks of the pitiful crew. It was 148 days since significant resupply of fresh provisions and they had no choice but to land at Santiago, the largest of the Cape Verdean islands. They spun a fabricated tale that their Spanish ship had violated the Tordesillas Line because storms simply blew them far off course. What is true, though, was that their cover story omitted any stop at the Spice islands as well as the clove spice that their hold was carrying. The ruse worked and they traded for ‘two boat loads of rice’ and

other vital provisions. Pigafetta and Albo, the pilot, whose separate records are usually closely aligned, diverge over the recorded dates of milestones that were passed by as much as two weeks, most likely because of the wretched conditions that the men were enduring that led to sparse or late entries. What was more intriguing to Elcano was that the recorded date of Wednesday in their ship log was actually now Thursday in the Portuguese port. Mystified, they did not realize by nearly circumventing the globe to the west they had returned to the same place as the Sun and made a gain of one full day. The long trek took one day longer than what their calendar recorded. No astronomer at the time had anticipated or forecasted that this 24-hour clock change would occur. As the *Victoria* was about to leave, their misleading fable started to unwind and the Portuguese became suspicious of the vagabond ship's true identity. Four of the Indians on board traded cloves for food, and one of the Portuguese sailors of the armada had been overheard saying that their captain, Magellan, was dead and that the ship was fearful to return home to Spain. Some members of the embattled crew, after a journey of three long years, also understandably felt that surrendering to the Portuguese might be the best alternative to keep alive. At this point, the Portuguese sent a vessel to demand that Elcano surrender saying that they would send them home with a ship coming from the Indies, but the *Victoria's* officers resisted by negotiating for their jailed men in port as well as the ship's boat be first returned to them, offering to wait within the harbor while the request was considered by the Portuguese officials. They did not keep their promise to await an answer, for at the first opportunity 'they tacked and with a full sail, they 'hastily departed.' It was July 15, 1522.

Exhausted, sick, the small contingency barely could handle the sailing of the ram-shackled ship, which Elcano took on a northerly course homebound and the men had to work the pumps to flush out sea water simply to remain afloat and their hard labor paid off for on July 28, Tenerife on the Canary Islands off the African coast came into view, and then the veteran Basque navigator to avoid the opposing trade winds swung on a wide detour northwest to the Azores, hoping to resupply without being captured by the Portuguese. It was now the cargo of clove that was contraband, not necessarily the Spanish ship being there so close to the Iberian peninsula. He reconsidered as he approached these islands recalculating that the attempt was too dangerous considering their risk of capture. On September 4, 1522, they spied Cape Saint Vincent at the very southwest of Portugal and on Saturday September 6th the skeleton crew of only eighteen European men sailed toward the mouth of the Guadalquivir River from its mouth within the bay of *Sanlúcar de Barrameda*, all to the east of southwestern Portugal on the southern coast of Spain.

Elcano sent a word for a boat to help tow the dilapidated craft up the river. Nearly dead, the crew managed to maintain the pumps ahead of the water flow into the leaking hull, and the people of Seville with the news of *Victoria's* approach were excited by the prospect of the circumnavigation; she tied up at the pier on September 10, 1522. Not until 1580, almost sixty years later, did another explorer, Sir Francis Drake of England, repeat the feat. Of course, the expedition and the Spanish crown were interested more than in just prestige and despite the loss of the other ships and loss of life and that a Spanish route to the Portuguese controlled Spice Islands although doable was infeasible, the clove was of superior quality and filled 381 sacks weighing 52, 400 pounds that when sold would make the expedition profitable for the financial backers including the nearly insolvent Spanish crown. Supervised by the king's agents, the valuable cargo was unloaded and sent to the merchant brother of Cristóbal de Haro, Diego, in Antwerp for marketing. The profits were split between the Spanish King and the sponsoring de Haros. The men who had mutinied—almost the

entire returning crew-- against the Portuguese captain-general were absolved of their crimes. In the end, King Charles waived the royal duties on the personal stash of spices brought home by the individual sailors and awarded bonuses to some of the survivors who testified at an inquiry conducted by the mayor of Valladolid; Elcano received for his leadership in the unfathomable accomplishment: a knighthood, a royal pardon for his role in the mutiny against Magellan, an annual pension and an official coat of arms that glorified his maritime legacy of sailing around the world. Its motto while featuring a stylized globe:

Primus circumdedesti me—Thou first circled me.

By R. Anthony Saritelli

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