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# 'Requeiro huma duas e tres vezes': the confrontation between Ruy López de Villalobos and Jorge de Castro over the Maluku Islands in 1543-4

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines in detail the exchange of letters between Ruy López de Villalobos, captain general of a significant Spanish fleet, which landed on the island of Mindanao in February 1543, and the captain of the Portuguese fort on the Malukan island of Ternate, Jorge de Castro. In his letters and formal injunctions, Castro warns Villalobos not to enter the Maluku islands as these are under Portuguese jurisdiction while Villalobos attempts various arguments to justify his movements between the future Philippine islands of Mindanao, Samar and Leyte, and the northern Malukus. The exchange ceases with Castro's rotation from his post on Ternate in the late Spring of 1544 and in effect only covers the first year of Villalobos' presence in the Philippine and Malukan archipelagos. Nevertheless, the letters provide an interesting insight into how an experienced Portuguese governor dealt with a neophyte Spanish naval expeditionary at a turning point in the balance between Spanish and Portuguese power in these islands. The letters, while mediated by the intervention of legal clerks, copyists and advisors, provide a flavour of each man as an individual, palpable in the language and tone they struck.

## KEYWORDS

Philippines; *tornaviaje*; *carreira da Índia*; Malukus

## The struggle for control of the Spice Islands

In 1542, Ruy López de Villalobos, a *hidalgo* and native of Málaga who had come to the New World in 1535 to make his fortune, was appointed by the Viceroy of *la Nueva España*, Antonio de Mendoza, to lead a grand expedition to "discover" the *Islas del Poniente de la Nueva España*. These were any and all of the Pacific islands to the west of the Americas which the Spaniards believed were theirs to settle and exploit under the terms of the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) and, more contentiously, that of Zaragoza (1529). Villalobos was selected for this task after the death of Pedro de Alvarado, *adelantado* (frontier governor) of Guatemala, who had signed an agreement with Charles V in 1538 to mount two seaborne expeditions, one to the *Islas del Poniente* and another up along the northern Pacific coast of Mexico. On 4<sup>th</sup> July 1541, the veteran *conquistador* died after

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a battlefield accident at Nochistlán, Zacatecas. The battle constituted an episode in the 1540–42 Mixtón war waged to subjugate the Caxcan and Zacateca peoples of the area of North-Western Mexico denominated *Nueva Galicia* by the Spanish colonists (Vallejo García-Hevia 2008, 168–169, 502–503).

On 21<sup>st</sup> March 1541, Alvarado had written to Charles V to confirm that he had prepared two separate fleets, one under his nephew Juan de Alvarado which would sail northwards up the coast from Puerto de Navidad (Barra de Navidad in Jalisco province) in April 1541 while the other, with Ruy López de Villalobos as chief navigator, would set out from the same port for the *Islas del Poniente*, with three carracks and a galley and 300 men aboard in June. Pedro de Alvarado named Villalobos as navigator though his biography up to this point suggests little seafaring knowledge (Vallejo García-Hevia 2008, 168; Martínez Shaw 1999, 34–35, fn. 7). Indeed, his initial appointment to Alvarado's fleet may have owed something to his mother, Juana de Vargas' possible familial relationship to the viceroy's wife, Catalina de Vargas, though this is not proven (Cuevas Góngora 2016, 587). Nevertheless, in the present century, a commemorative stamp issued by the Spanish Post Office (*Correos*) in its *descubridores de Oceanía* series in July 2021, using a recent portrait by the Málaga-based seascape artist Vicente Gómez Navas, pays homage to Villalobos as the established "discoverer" of the Philippines (Vicente Gómez Navas; Sociedad Filatélica de Madrid). This recognition was his by virtue of naming Leyte, the central island of the archipelago, *Felipina* in fealty to the heir to the Spanish throne, the future Philip II. He then added the neighbouring island of Samar to the same designation. However, though he may have been garlanded by posterity, he did not achieve his mission's most important commercial and political objective.

Up to the middle of the sixteenth century, all the fleets that set sail west from the Americas had one primary purpose: to find a way of making the return voyage, the *tornaviaje*, from the *Especiería* or Spice Islands, including the islands around Mindanao, back to New Spain. Without this, any settlements or trade established in the South Seas would be worthless since the ships and their crew would be at the mercy of Portuguese "hospitality" for repatriation via the *carreira da Índia*, the route back to Europe via Goa and around the coast of Africa, then under their exclusive control (Cervera 2001, 63). The first successful return voyage was led by the Augustinian navigator, Fray Andrés de Urdaneta who departed under Miguel López de Legazpi from Puerto de Navidad in November 1564. He coursed the *tornaviaje* on board the galleon *San Pedro*, captained by Felipe de Salcedo with Rodrigo de la Isla Espinosa as pilot, and the ship docked at Puerto de Navidad in October 1565 (Brand et al. 2001, 130). Urdaneta's status meant that he was credited with the route above another captain from the Legazpi armada, Alonso de Arellano who made port 2 months earlier in August 1565 in a much lighter vessel, the patache *San Lucas*, piloted by Lope Martín. This was probably owing to accusations at the time that Arellano, and indeed Martín who was mixed-race (mulatto), deserted on the outward voyage rather than, as they reported, becoming separated from the fleet by sailing conditions (Brand 2001, 129–130; Reséndez 2021, 84, 164). Martín would lead a mutiny on the *San Gerónimo* the following year and end up marooned on the Ujelang Atoll in the Marshall Islands (Brand et al. 2001, 130–131).

Between the Magalhães-Elcano circumnavigation that reached the island of Homonhon, off Samar on 16 March 1521 and the Urdaneta voyage, there were four other documented *tornaviaje* attempts. A return voyage was undertaken in April 1522 by Gonzalo Gómez de

Espinosa on one of the still seaworthy Magalhães-Elcano vessels, the *Trinidad*, leaving the Maluku island of Tidore for New Spain 4 months after Juan Sebastián Elcano departed for Sanlúcar de Barrameda via the African route; Álvaro de Saavedra tried in 1528 and 1529, and Hernando de Grijalva in 1536 (Brand 2001, 119–123; Martínez Shaw 1999, 15–17). Villalobos dispatched the lighter 60-tonel (early modern tonnage) carrack, the *San Juan Latrán*, twice: in August 1543 under Bernardo de la Torre, originally captain of the 120-tonel *San Jorge*, and in May 1545 under Íñigo Ortiz de Retes, the *alférez general* (second-in-command) of the expedition (Brand 2001, 110; Martínez Shaw 1999, 17, 20–21, 27). In both instances, the ship was forced to turn around and this caused the ultimate failure of Villalobos' expedition.

Villalobos, it seems, was primarily neither a soldier nor a sailor though there are contradictory contemporary reports of his seafaring expertise. His father, a Leonese hidalgo, had been granted lands in Málaga in 1489 as the Nazarid caliphate of Granada gradually fell to Castile and became a prominent administrator in the area (Cuevas Góngora 2016, 576–583). Born Rodrigo de Villalobos between 1506 and 1509, there are no further extant records of his existence until he arrived in Mexico as Ruy López de Villalobos in the suite of the newly appointed viceroy Mendoza, having sold properties inherited from his father before embarkation, presumably in order to finance enterprises in the New World. On that voyage, at least one of his two brothers accompanied him (Cuevas Góngora 2016, 593). Soon after, he married the *criolla* Juana de Ircio, granddaughter of the *conquistador* Leonel de Cervantes, and they had two or more children. He undertook significant legal administrative duties as *alguacil mayor de México* (chief law officer) and *visitador* (circuit justice) for the province of Acapulco, evidence perhaps of legal training before emigrating, and also took part in the Mixtón campaign in *Nueva Galicia* that saw the death of Alvarado (Cuevas Góngora 2016, 586–589). The original agreement between Alvarado and Charles V signed in 1538, then amended to include a stake for Mendoza, was assigned to Villalobos who, though he lacked the wealth of Alvarado and the noble status of Mendoza, still managed to pay for the *San Juan Latrán*, the small carrack later chosen to essay the *tornaviaje*. This vessel was one of four carracks that set out in a fleet of six, along with a galliot and a bergantine and Villalobos practically liquidated his own and his wife's fortunes in the purchase (Cuevas Góngora 2016, 590).

His expedition reached Mindanao in February 1543 but by September 1544 his much-reduced forces had moved south to the Malukus and he died on the south Maluku island of Ambon in April 1546. He was no more than 40 years of age and he left his family considerably less well off in the wake of the failure of his enterprise. His voyage had failed, his company was disbanded and obliged to accept Portuguese carriage back to Europe or service with Portugal in the East. According to the Augustinian Fray Sebastián de Trastierra, one of the eight clergy accompanying the expedition, and one who survived to live a long life afterwards, Villalobos died of a broken heart:

fue la enfermedad de la pena que recibio de no haber podido efetuar lo que su magestad deseava que era ganar aquellas islas y hazer aquel descubrimiento. (Cuevas Góngora 2016, 590)

The fact that this declaration is included in a legal case, a *probanza*, advanced in Mexico by Villalobos' son, also Ruy, known as *el mozo*, in 1582 to claim income owed separately to his

father and his maternal grandfather, Pedro de Ircio, casts a sceptical light on this comment. It is all but certain that Villalobos, like many of his expedition colleagues, died of malaria contracted while on Moro on the north Malukan island of Halmahera. Though by his own written admission he was forbidden to enter the Maluku because they lay within the Portuguese demarcation established in the Pacific under the Treaty of Zaragoza, he ended up there anyway under the excuse of hunger and the need for provisions (Escalante Alvarado 1999, 122–123). On existing evidence, however, it seems reasonable to suggest that while Villalobos presented himself as fully compliant with the stated instruction of Charles V not to enter the north Maluku in all his written affidavits, he was, at the same time, actively assuring his officers and crew that the opposite was his actual intention (Escalante Alvarado 1999, 117–119; Martínez Shaw 1999, 22–23).

When his stay on Moro in the kingdom of Geilolo and later on the island of Tidore had not achieved a Spanish foothold on the Maluku, he was presented with two statements by royal officials appointed to his expedition and two of his captains contesting the agreement he was about to reach with the Portuguese viceroyalty in October 1545. In the second of these there appears to be a recognition that the true objective of the voyage was indeed to take the Maluku. Three of Charles V's officials, the *contador* (judge/legal officer) Jorge Nieto, the *veedor* (military commander/overseer) Onofrio de Arevalo and the writer of the most comprehensive of the three extant accounts of his expedition, the factor García de Escalante Alvarado, plus the captains Alonso Manrique and Pedro Ortiz de la Torre, the *maese de campo*, accuse him of deliberately targeting the Maluku, perhaps to indemnify themselves against future imperial retribution. This internal exchange of *requerimientos* (formal requests or injunctions) took place in October 1545 when Villalobos' forces had moved from Moro to Tidore, cheek by jowl with and inimical to Portuguese-governed Ternate. The remainder of his expedition had definitively settled in the Maluku in September 1544 because they could not provision themselves on Mindanao or on nearby islands, largely owing to Portuguese encouragement of local non-compliance. Initially the governor at Ternate from the Autumn of 1544, the Madeiran, Jordão de Freitas had been content to allow the Spaniards to harvest and sell cloves on Tidore. He even suggested an alliance against the kingdom of Geilolo but Villalobos refused this offer, having been hospitably received on Moro. The situation then altered with the arrival of Fernão de Sousa Távora from Goa on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1545. At the head of a sizeable armada, he presented Villalobos with a much starker offer. Those of his men who wished to could enlist as soldiers on Ternate and fight against the Sultans of Tidore and Geilolo along with their Portuguese comrades, the rest, especially the royal officials and noble officers, would be shipped back to Lisbon via the *carreira da Índia*, with full honours rendered. The royal officials, less realistic than Villalobos and convinced that one of their carracks would eventually make it back to New Spain to request aid from the viceroy, objected formally to such an agreement on the basis of their obligation to both Tidore and Geilolo for hospitality provided and loyalty to the mission entrusted to them by the emperor.

An evidently interested party, García de Escalante Alvarado reproduced the exchange in his account of the voyage:

En nombre de todos los caballeros y soldados de este campo, o la mayor parte de ellos, decimos que, respondiendo a un escrito que por parte de Vuestra Merced nos fue presentado en respuesta de un requerimiento que por nuestra parte le fue hecho.

Cuanto a la primera causa que dice, que trae mandado de Su Majestad para no entrar en MALUCO ni en cosa que toque al Serenísimo Rey de Portugal, decimos que es verdad y que así estamos prestos para lo cumplir como buenos y leales vasallos de Su Majestad que no quieren quebrantar su mandato en ninguna cosa [...] (Escalante Alvarado 1999, 115–116).

In a convoluted argument, the ship's company accept that their incursion into Geilolo (Moro) may have been justified as the Sultan declared himself to be a vassal of Charles V and they express gratitude for the hospitality extended to them by him:

[...] ni se permite en ley divina y humana que con ingratitud se paguen semejantes obras como de este Rey hemos recibido, que verdaderamente fueron tales que muchos podrían decir el día de hoy que si no son muertos es por haberles dado la vida dicho Rey de GILOLO. [...]. (Escalante Alvarado 1999, 117)

By the by, they appear to suggest that Villalobos assured them, with his authority as navigator (*cosmógrafo*), that the clove-producing islands then known as *Maluco*, Ternate and Tidore, lay rightfully within the Spanish demarcation:

Y pues esto consta claro ser así y estas tierras no están averiguadas ni sabidas que sean del Serenísimo Señor Rey de Portugal, antes, por lo que hemos oído a Vuestra Merced, que entiende la cosmografía y a otros muchos, son y pertenecen a Su Majestad. (Escalante Alvarado 1999, 117–118)

Such an observation is backed up in a letter written by Gaspar Mélio, factor in Ternate until 1543, to João III in which he asserts that Villalobos was chosen to lead the expedition because he was good at mathematics and navigation:

E huma das cousas, segundo tenho entendido, porque o Dom Amtonyo de Mendonça mamdou este Rui Lopes qua, mais que a outra pesoa, foy por ser omem que entemde e sabe matamatica, e que lhe poderya escrever e mandar certa enfformação do que descobryse. E elle se deu muito a tomar altura por toda a parte, omde amdou, e a fazer largos roteiros diso, e a tomar ho eclise da lua e do sol, sobyndo-se para yso nos mais alltos momtes que podia, e tem asentado comsiguo que todo este acepeliguoo de Maluco e da demarcação d'El-Rey de Castella [...]. (Pinto et al. Forthcoming, 225-27; 226: 454)

Mélio seems convinced that the central objective of the expedition was to use cosmography to prove that the Malukus indeed fell within the Spanish demarcation, an impossibility as he notes further on. This may account for the “casual” arrival of Villalobos’ expedition in Geilolo when perhaps the need to acquire provisions was not quite as extreme as Escalante Alvarado intimates or Villalobos claims in his official interactions with the Portuguese, though they did experience periods of severe hardship before this (Hoyos Hattori 2017, 15–19). Indeed, a 1549 account by Cosme de Torres, who left Villalobos’s company in 1546 to remain on Ambon with St. Francis Xavier and would later follow him to Japan, offers a couple of sentences on the decision to leave Mindanao for Geilolo which are telling:

E forçados da necessidade, contra vontade do todos nos partimos, & chegamos a Maluco, onde estivemos perto de dous anos. Donde finalmente polo parecer dos padres que aly estávamos, & de alguns fidalgos, nos averiguamos com o capitão dos Portugueses,

desconfiando de poder tornar a Nova Espanha, que nos trouxesse para estas partes da Índia, da qual terra partindo, viemos por huma ilha de Amboyna, em a qual achei o Padre M. Francisco. (*Cartas de Évora*, 4 v in Hoyos Hattori 2017, 9, 20–22)

Valencian by birth, once Torres joined the Jesuit order he became absorbed into a view of expansion into Asia that accepted Portuguese hegemony in the Pacific. This was formalised in 1540 in an agreement between João III and the Jesuits in which he charged them with evangelising the nations and territories of the Portuguese East (Hoyos Hattori 2017, 24; Corrêa Monteiro 2006, 65–71). Thus, it is politic of him to evince reluctance on the part of the educated and status-bearing members of Villalobos' expedition to encroach on Portuguese territory where Escalante Alvarado does not record dissent, rather a certain amount of chaos in the endless search for provisions in and around Mindanao. On the other hand, Escalante Alvarado's account of the failed enterprise, dated August 1<sup>st</sup> 1548 in Lisbon and addressed to the emperor, needs to ensure that any blame for the mistakes made, even if they were not always avoidable, falls on the shoulders of the deceased captain general and not the high-ranking survivors. There may be some undercurrent here also regarding Villalobos' perceived inferior social status, whatever his preferment at the viceregal court. Defending the reputations of the survivors who effectively capitulated to the Portuguese, however, is perhaps the main reason for the extended explanation Escalante Alvarado provides of the objections raised by the royal officials on Tidore in October 1545 and why they conducted their disagreement with Villalobos in such a formal fashion.

Their central argument appears to be a defence of Geilolo: vassals of Charles V, ie the Spaniards, should not attack other, albeit self-declared, vassals such as the people of Geilolo, or their allies in Tidore, at least not until there is agreement between *Su Majestad* (Spain) and *Su Alteza* (Portugal) as to which of the Malukus belong to whom:

Y hasta que esto no esté determinado por Su Majestad y Su Alteza no es bien que los que son vasallos de Su Majestad sean destruidos ni perturbados por otros mismos vasallos de Su Majestad. (Escalante Alvarado 1999, 118)

Villalobos' ultimate and rather terse response is that no commitments were entered into by him either to support Geilolo or to go to war against Geilolo. He assured the Portuguese in September 1545 that he had observed a policy of strict neutrality on the islands which is some considerable way from what was actually happening (Escalante Alvarado 1999, 119–120; Martínez Shaw 1999, 20–21). He then signed an agreement with Sousa and Freitas on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1545 denying any deliberate or aggressive desire to enter the Malukus other than the need for provisions and accepting Portuguese help to leave Tidore as soon as possible (Pinto et al., *Forthcoming*, 232–233). While waiting to join the *carreira da Índia*, he and his men then joined the Portuguese in attacking both Tidore and Geilolo.

The slipperiness of Villalobos is evident in his interactions with Jorge de Castro, captain of Ternate when Villalobos made land in February 1543 off Mindanao. It makes Castro's initial reaction to the advent of the Spaniards more reasonable than might at first glance seem merited. Castro was captain of the fortress of Ternate from 1539 to 1544. He lived a much longer and more illustrious life than Villalobos, as an honoured *fidalgo* in the service of the *Estado da Índia*. The *fidalgo* designation in Portugal denoted greater proximity to the higher nobility than the Spanish *hidalgo*, an all-encompassing category the lowest

rungs of which take in the type of impecunious and uneducated rural gentry satirised in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*. The factor and chief provost in Ternate in these years, Gabriel Rebelo, appears to observe this distinction when he describes Villalobos as a "pessoa de muita autoridade, ainda que não de tanta fidalguia, segundo os seos" (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 443–444, 443). Gaspar Mélio, in spite of his suspicions regarding Villalobos' true purpose in the Malukus, considers him to be a "boa pessoa" while casting doubt on the reliability of Castro's successor, Jordão de Freitas for agreeing that Villalobos could take and sell cloves from the neighbouring island of Tidore and indeed sell them to the Portuguese (Escalante Alvarado [1999](#), 73; Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 225–227, 225).

When he was well over the age of 80, Jorge de Castro was executed on orders sent from Lisbon to the viceroy António Moniz Barreto for his surrender of the fort of Chalé (Chaul, modern Chaliyam) to the Zamorin of Calicut (modern Kozikhode) on the Malabar coast in November 1571. This constituted the first colonial capitulation to Indian forces since the appointment of Afonso de Albuquerque, the inaugural viceroy, in 1505 and an example was duly made of Castro. It was not the first disaster to befall Castro. In 1550, he was heavily defeated by the king of Candea (Kandy, Sri Lanka), Jayaweera Astana when he attempted to take the city of Kandy, the ancient capital of the island, after the king defaulted on a peace agreement Castro had brokered between Kandy and the king of Cota (Kotte) (Couto [1781](#), 169–179). Castro lost 400 men with many others wounded and was only saved from outright rout when Kotte came to his assistance.

The chronicler Diogo de Couto, who grew up with a relative by marriage of Dona Filipa, Castro's wife and the widow of another colonial *fidalgo*, Jorge de Sousa, offers a detailed account of the siege of the fortress of Chalé by the Zamorin of Calicut, then the most powerful Indian ruler on the Malabar coast and the only potentate not at peace with the Portuguese (Couto [1786a](#): 458–485; 460–461). Castro appears to have been in situ as captain of Chalé on several occasions and had acquired a benign reputation:

o mais velho fidalgo, prudente e de maior conselho que havia na India, o qual pelas muitas vezes que estava naquella Fortaleza por Capitão lhe chamavam o Çamori, e os mais Reys da costa Pai [...]. (Couto [1786a](#): 459–460)

The Zamorin laid siege to the fort with an armada of 100,000 men at the end of June, when the Portuguese fleet could not set sail from Goa because of the prevailing winds. He bombarded the fortress and sealed off the bay, his intention being to starve the Portuguese garrison into submission. Between August and September, the Portuguese in Cochin made attempts to get food and medicine into Chalé by sea but this proved very difficult. A major assault, led by Diogo de Sousa, was launched on September 30<sup>th</sup> during which the Portuguese suffered significant losses but managed to get about 2 weeks' worth of provisions, with everyone on half rations, ashore (Couto [1786a](#): 479–485). Then the Portuguese fleet retreated, leaving Castro in his devastated fortress. It was obvious to those leading the relief raid that Castro's position was perilous but equally unthinkable that he be left to his fate. However, by early November, Castro had no choice but to cede the fort and save his people as further relief from Goa could not depart until the beginning of November and they were desperate. He and his *fidalgos* agreed to surrender themselves into the safekeeping of the Rajah of Tanur with whom Castro had good relations. The Zamorin's forces then razed the fort to the ground (Couto [1786b](#), 6–9).



Castro retired to Cochin where he had also been captain on and off for many years. In September 1572 or more likely 1573, an order arrived from Sebastião I decreeing his execution for having surrendered the fortress (Couto 1786b, 216–219). In his 1805 history, Baltasar de Chermont indicates that Castro was executed between 1574 and 1576 though this seems a bit late given Couto's assertion that Castro was executed at the end of that same September in Goa (Chermont 1805, 156). Many among the *fidalgúia* who had served with Castro considered this judgement disproportionate. Poignantly and somewhat shamefully, the following year orders arrived from Lisbon to honour Castro and finance a voyage for himself and his wife to the metropolitan capital. Couto offers a disillusioned aperçu on the treatment of all those serving in India: “o homen que na India viver muito, não escapará destas dous cousas, ou de pobre ou deshonorado” (Couto 1786b, 218).

The late eighteenth-century historian, Damião António de Lemos Faria e Castro agreed with Couto's disappointment in the administration's treatment of Castro (Faria e Castro 1800, 337–338). At the same time, the legend of an aged Castro opting to surrender on the basis of his, now young and beautiful, wife's pleas began to take shape in his account: “se deixou vencer das lagrimas da sua formosa, e moça mulher” (Faria e Castro 1800, 284). Couto, on the other hand, reports merely that Dona Fillipa was a widow when she married Castro. He had taken a vote of his *fidalgos* on the proposal to abandon the fortress and the decision was, if not unanimous, agreed by the majority. The distress experienced by his wife and the other ladies in the fortress was not the dominant factor (Couto 1786b, 8). It is possible that this framing of the defeat at Chale as giving in to feminine tears affected perceptions of his time in Ternate. Chermont, for example, impugns Castro's governorship of Ternate by suggesting that his pride and avarice caused renewed unrest, in contrast to the more emollient and humane style of his predecessor, the evangelist António Galvão, captain from 1536 to 1539, who had punished Portuguese outrages and reached agreements with the local rulers (Chermont 1805, 143). In contrast, Galvão, who died in Lisbon in 1557, confines himself to the observation, in his *Tratado dos Descobrimentos antigos e modernos feitos até a era de 1550*, that the arrival of Villalobos caused his successor a great deal of trouble (Pinto et al. Forthcoming, 463). In contradiction of Chermont, the sixteenth-century historian Gaspar Correa, in his *Lendas da Índia*, first published in 1864, notes Castro's efforts to deal with the threat posed by Villalobos, including coercing local rulers into refusing to sell provisions to the Spaniards, but suggests that any discord was fomented by the policies of Jordão de Freitas (Correa 1864, 419–423, 450).

### The exchange of letters

Henry Stanley, in his translated edition of Antonio de Morga's history published in Mexico in 1609, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, cites the exchange between Castro and Villalobos in his Appendix V, and comments that there is no documentation to suggest a formal Portuguese protest when Miguel López de Legazpi went ashore on Samar in February 1565 and began to appropriate the Philippine islands using a combination of pacts and force (Stanley 1867, 391–402; 396; Morga 1609). Perhaps they bowed to an inevitable eventuality, given the Spanish empire's greater resources, one foreseen quite clearly by Jorge de Castro in a letter he wrote to João III on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1544. In June 1543, Castro was given to believe there was an armada of up to 1,200 men on Mindanao and attempted to send a message to

the Portuguese captain in Malacca and the viceroy in Goa. When Belchor de Sequeira, whom he had sent to catch the spice fleet on its way to Goa at the island of Banda, failed to dock in time, Castro had to make his own extensive arrangements. Over 3 months, he reinforced the defensive walls of the fort of São João Bautista, which was then only 20 years old, enlisted all the available able-bodied men and women, Portuguese, slaves and locals, to play their part in the construction work and built up 3 months' supplies of food in case of siege. Nine months later, when the Spanish threat was proven to be less severe, partly because of his own efforts in turning the locals on Mindanao and neighbouring islands against the Spaniards, he gave the king a long account of these actions and made the following plea:

me detreminarey com ele, como poder, e entemder sua temçam, que bem descuberta esta. Porque, enquamto de Vosa Alteza nam vir recado que quer que esta terra seja d'outrem senhoreada, pela obrygaçam que tenho de seu capitão desta fortaleza, farey todo posivel polo não comsemtir fazer a nymgem, e com protestaçam; que como entemder que faço o que devo, como bom e leal vasalo e portuges, posto que a vontade de Vosa Alteza errei, emquamto a dele nam sey mais çerto, farey o que digo; e se comprir, depois, pagar-se meu erro com me Vosa Alteza mamdar cortar a cabeça, o terey em estremada homra e merçe, com tamto que por mym se nam diga que os regnos de Vosa Alteza e de Portugal perderam ho qilate do nome que sempre teveram, pois ate gora se nam pode menos dizer da casa de Momsamto. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 179–182, 182)

Castro's declaration that he will gladly pay with his head if he has in any way misunderstood his Highness's intentions regarding the defence of Ternate and the Malukus from Spanish incursion is more than poignant, given his beheading 30 years later in Goa under Sebastião I, a politically naïve and impulsive ruler, unlike his grandfather, the overly cautious João III, who died in 1557. In this letter, Castro is quietly confident that the intentions of Villalobos are both nefarious and plain to see. He has good reason to be suspicious.

Only 17 years previously, in 1526, the expedition entrusted to Fray García Jofre de Loaysa had arrived from New Spain with the express intention of taking over the Malukus. Loaysa, who died on 30<sup>th</sup> July of that year before his ships reached Mindanao, had been designated *Capitán General de la Armada y Capitán General, Gobernador y Justicia Mayor del Maluco* in a clear signal of Spanish designs on the lucrative clove-producing islands (Ortuño Sánchez-Pedreño 2003, 224–226; 221). The Portuguese eventually prevailed and were further assured of their dominion in the area by the Treaty of Zaragoza under the terms of which Charles V surrendered his claim on the Malukus to João III in return for the very significant sum of 350,000 ducats (Parker 2019, 207; Tracy 2002, 116–117). Without accurate measurement of longitude, calculation of where the line of demarcation in the Pacific between what belonged to Spain and what was Portuguese actually lay was reliant on measurements of leagues travelled from the American Pacific coast to the Indies. Yet these figures were highly variable given that ships were frequently blown off course. Most Spanish and some Portuguese cartographers were suspicious of the assumption that the Malukus and the archipelago around Mindanao sat within the Portuguese demarcation. Because of this, Portuguese tenure on the islands was open to challenge from Spanish incursion. Ironically, Andrés de Urdaneta was among the minority of Iberian cosmographers who disagreed, holding that neither the Malukus nor the Philippines fell within

Spanish territory. Posterity and accurate determination of longitude would prove him right. Even so, from the seventeenth-century onwards, with Portugal's influence on the wane, the islands became the pawn of the Spanish empire and the Dutch East India Company which recognised no agreements between the Iberian powers (Brand 2001, 111–112; Cervera 2001, 60–61, 77; Cerezo Martínez 1994, 540). In 1543, however, Jorge de Castro confronted Villalobos as soon as he had his defensive arrangements in place on Ternate for very sound strategic reasons.

In August 1543, his emissary António de Almeida made the voyage north to Sarangani island with a personal letter for Villalobos and an injunction (*requerimiento*) instructing him to leave the area as it was Portuguese territory. In an act of appropriation, Villalobos had dubbed Sarangani *Isla Antonia* in honour of the viceroy Antonio de Mendoza and named Mindanao, his first landfall on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1543, *Cesarea Karoli* in honour of the emperor (Escalante Alvarado 1999, 43–44). Almeida arrived on 7<sup>th</sup> August and was welcomed courteously. Escalante Alvarado reports that Almeida was informed that though Villalobos had been expressly forbidden to enter “las islas del clavo, que se dicen Maluco,” he and his expedition were there under the emperor's express command to demonstrate that the rest of the islands were his, “que mostrásemos que todos las demás teníamos que estaban dentro de la demarcación de Su Majestad” (Escalante Alvarado 1999: 50–51). Castro pointed out in his letter and his injunction that the island of Mindanao and those surrounding it fell within Portuguese jurisdiction, insisted that they leave and offered hospitality and assistance with their departure, to which the Spaniards, understandably, gave little credence. While Almeida and his party were there, Villalobos would not let any of them within sight of his ships. This, perhaps more than Villalobos' refusal to recognise his jurisdiction over Mindanao and the surrounding archipelago, gave Castro cause for deep concern, as he noted in his second injunction, in September 1453 (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 142).

In his opening letter, written in Ternate on 20<sup>th</sup> July, Castro is polished and careful to explain his position in detail: he cannot understand how vassals of the emperor could knowingly venture into lands under the command of his Serene Highness of Portugal unless they had been subject to misadventure; and the violence he has been informed that they perpetrated on the locals must be owing to their great need of sustenance. He then makes an offer to assist them with provisions that appears to be more fulsome than Escalante Alvarado's dismissal of it would infer:

se sua vimda a estas partes foy por algum casso furtuyto como creyo que serya ao qual emcomemdey que se por derrotamento de viagem esa armada ahy fose aportada e se a guera que por essas ylhas amda fazemdo era por alguuma necessidade de mamtimentos semdo vosas mercees gemte evassalos do Emperador e que por seu mamdado hiaes a outra parte vos ajude e favoreça com a gemte da terra e vos faça dar todolos mantimentos que necessarios forem segundo a calidade da terra pera o que leva cartas e recado meu pera o proprio Rey de Mymdanao e allguns regedores de lugares pera que tudo deem e vemdam a Vossa Merce por seu dinheiro e que se as mercadorias que Sennhor trazees forem defferentes do trato da tera que nem por yso vos leyxem de dar todo ho necessario porque eu me obrigo a tudo lhes pagar e satisffazer [...]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 107–108)

Villalobos begins his letter of reply, dated 15<sup>th</sup> August 1543, with conventional flattery of the person of Castro while blaming the locals (*yndios*) for lying to Castro with regard to their treatment by his men:

Heme holgado tamto con la carta de Vuestra Merced que no llo puedo emcareecer por poderme offerecer all servicio de una perssona de tamta calidade y tan nombrada como Vuestra Merced es y que tamto nestas partes y en todo el mumdo merece ser tenydo mas a parte esta ganancia que por el conociemto de Vuestra Merced me viene me agravio mucho de que una perssona tan valerosa dee credito a yndios especiall avemdolos tratado tamto y conociendolos por memtirosos [. . .]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 108)

Such finesse is rare in Villalobos' communications and, as the exchange of letters progresses, his rhetorical skill deteriorates, either because he no longer permitted his legal officials to couch his communications in appropriately florid expression or because those involved were distracted by hunger. In this missive, Villalobos goes on to explain that he has come under orders from the emperor to explore only those *islas del Poniente* that fall under his jurisdiction and has no intention of coming to the Malukus unless it were to take the opportunity to kiss Castro's hands, a conventional compliment which seems in hindsight to drip with sarcasm (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 109). He refuses the offer of provisions made by Castro and reiterates his contention that Sarangani and the islands around it are in the emperor's demarcation and not that of the king of Portugal even though he and his men, according to Escalante Alvarado, are in dire need at this point (Escalante Alvarado 1999, 51). He avers that his expedition is soon to leave Sarangani island for another recently "discovered" by his galliot which is further away. By this, he probably means Mindanao to which he had sent an expedition which was to return empty-handed.

Castro responded on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1543, with a letter and a second injunction. In the opening paragraph of his letter, ornate and laudatory as ever, he expresses sympathy for Villalobos' apparently poor treatment by the locals who were denying them food and, while restating his willingness to be of the smallest assistance to such a great lord, takes the opportunity to intimate that the familial relationship between João III and Charles V, that of a brother and a sister married to a sister and a brother, should not impinge on the negotiation before them regarding sovereignty over Mindanao and its surrounding islands:

Ihe tenho tamto amor e acatamento e tamtos dessejos de o servir como he rezam e com este alvoroço me parece ter conversado Sua Merce muyto tempo e me ey por muy obrigado a seu serviço de que nunca me negarey pera em todo fazer o que me mamdar como hum dos mais pequenos e mayores servydores que Vossa Merce them e isto eu como Dom Jorge de Castro servidor do Sennhor Ruy Lopez de Vilha Lobos porque doutra maneira Vossa Merce como capitão generall da sacra cezarea magestade do Emperador e eu como capitão e governador d'El Rey nosso sennhor nesta tera sobre o que nos pareceer que toqua ao serviço e estado de nossos primcepees cada hum he obrigado dizer e fazer livre e yssemtamente o que emtemdeer que he obrigado sem nesta parte mostrar lembrança de nenhum outro divido parentesco nem amizade [. . .]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 111)

Unctuousness apart, it is rather striking that Castro chooses not to address Villalobos using the honorific "dom," even though he recognises his military rank as captain general of the expedition to the *islas del poniente*. In the next paragraph, however, he does employ the honorific for Antonio de Mendoza, the viceroy of New Spain, underlining the distinction he appears keen to establish between his and Villalobos' degree of nobility. It may also be that he does not know enough about Villalobos to ascertain his societal status. It is in this paragraph that he addresses Villalobos more directly on the matter of his presence in the islands around Mindanao. He accuses Villalobos of being like the thief in

felt-soled shoes who tries to sneak into his neighbour's house. He further explains that Villalobos' claim that only the clove-producing islands are forbidden to him by the emperor is a gross misunderstanding of the provisions of the Treaty of Zaragoza which award all the Malukus plus the islands around Mindanao to the Portuguese. In his first injunction to Villalobos, in August 1543, Castro underlines this by insisting that the two monarchs agreed not to revisit the provisions of the Zaragoza treaty for a period of 30 years (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 137). What he does not mention and may not know is that though the agreement could be revoked at any time this could only be effected if Charles reimbursed the Portuguese crown. He never attempted to do this, even though Villalobos' stated mission to colonise Mindanao and its surrounding islands was more or less in direct contravention of the 1529 accord. In the *requerimiento* written and presented to Castro on his behalf by the royal treasurer, Matias de Alvarado, on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1544 in Ternate, Villalobos attempts to undermine all aspects of this agreement by arguing that the term of the agreement had already expired and that the rights to the lands and their produce always remained the property of the emperor in any case (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 200, 202).

Beyond legalities, the most important practical justification Castro puts forward in support of Portuguese dominion in and around Mindanao is the fact that the island lies on the Portuguese sailing route from Malacca to the Malukus. Therefore, it makes no sense that it would be considered to be within the Spanish demarcation. Following this statement of what he views as the obvious, he finds Villalobos' assertion that he would be delighted to accept Castro's offer of provisions but must decline as he is leaving soon for another island troubling and contradictory. He points out that he therefore cannot dispatch provisions as they would have to be sent in ships which might not arrive before Villalobos has moved his company on. It is for reasons of speed and urgency that Castro has had his second letter and injunction conveyed to Villalobos in coracoras, rowed vessels that are not susceptible to changes in wind strength or direction but, by the same token, far too small to transport cargo in appreciable quantities. Notwithstanding, he states that he would be more than willing to provision Villalobos if only he would disclose his intended location, at the king's and his own personal expense if necessary:

digo Sennhor em verdade que cada vez que me fizer sabedor que deles tem necessidade e em que lugar ho acharam sera provydo na melhor maneyra que eu poder asy com mamtimentos como com tudo ho que tener necesydade asy dos almazeens e feitoria d'El Rey nosso senhor como de minha propia fazenda e pessoa [. . .]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 113)

Castro must know from his first emissary, António d'Almeida's assessment that Villalobos is in serious trouble. His excuse for not providing provisions is crafty as is his insistence on knowing Villalobos' next move in exchange for sustenance.

Villalobos' reply is much shorter and more direct, written on Sarangani on 12<sup>th</sup> September. He receives Castro's accusation that he is trying to sneak into Portuguese territory as a personal affront and couches this in very simple language:

que como Ruy Lopes de Vilha Lobos no merezco a Vuestra Merced que de my tall piemsse porque estoy tan satishecho de la voluntad que temgo de servir a Vuestra Merced que se me haze muy gran agravio en pemssar de my tall cosa [. . .]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 114)

He goes on to explain that he is only responding to Castro's letter for form's sake, because Castro sent it to him, and he will reply to the *requerimiento* more fully. At this point, he appears exasperated and unwilling to engage in courtly forms of expression more than is strictly necessary:

pues me replican temgo de respomder lo que esta claro porque ausemtes y presentes vean y conozcan quan cimceramente digo y ago lo que Su Magestad me mamdee y my respuesta a parte. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 114)

He denies that he and his men are in extreme need of provisions, though this is almost certainly a falsehood at this point, and finishes with a barb directed at Castro. He reports that Almeida had told him that the post at Ternate was beneath Castro's dignity and he hopes the king will move him soon to a more appropriate captaincy.

On 14<sup>th</sup> January 1544, the sea captain James Lobo, who had been in the service of Portugal in Maluku for 5 years, wrote to Villalobos after hearing reports of two of Villalobos' ships anchored off Moro. He also sent an injunction. In his letter, Lobo makes the face-saving suggestion that perhaps Villalobos is on Moro either because he was blown off course or in dire need of provisions and offers, as Castro did, to help him in any way he can while reiterating that he has no legal right to be there. Villalobos' very brief response to the letter, written on 15<sup>th</sup> January misspells or hispanicises James as Gemes and later mistakes it for Joan. He explains that they were indeed blown off course as they returned to Mindanao, presumably from their attempt to reach the south Maluku island of Banda, and that he has no idea where his other ships are. However, he did not want to inconvenience either Dom Jorge or any other (Portuguese) gentleman with news of his arrival, but he will write to Dom Jorge in due course and therefore is keeping his letter to Lobo brief. His reply to the injunction Lobo sent him is hardly more extensive. He says very little other than declaring more or less that his business is with Castro and giving the impression that he is above communicating further with Lobo, no matter how worthy a *hidalgo* and sea captain he may be (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 162). According to Escalante Alvarado, the move to the port of Zamafo on Halmahera was deliberate even if the information that Villalobos did not know where half his ships were was accurate as they had been variously sent in search of provisions or dispatched to New Spain over the months since Castro had sent September letter (Escalante Alvarado [1999](#), 54–56).

Castro then writes to Villalobos on January 18<sup>th</sup> 1544, his worst fear having come to pass, with a third injunction. His suspicions are backed up in a letter sent by the factor at the fort of Ternate, Jerónimo Pires Cotão to João III on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1544. Based on intelligence from a Portuguese mariner who deserted from Villalobos' company, he assures the king that the expedition had only one focus. Whatever may have been bandied about on board regarding trade with China and the Ryukyu islands south of Japan out of Mindanao, the real objective was to take over the Malukus: “*não vem pera outra parte senão pera estas ylhas tamto que chegaram a Mindanao despacharam hum navyo pera a Nova Espanha a dar recado a huma armada que se estavam fazendo prestes*” (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 193). A letter to the king from Hairun Jamilu, sultan of Ternate, written on 18<sup>th</sup> February underlies the state of trepidation at Ternate where there was constant expectation of the Spring arrival of a larger armada from New Spain (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 188). Bernardo de la Torre had indeed departed Sarangani on 4<sup>th</sup> August

1543 for New Spain on the *San Juan Latrán* but returned having sailed for 750 leagues without coming close to finding the *tornaviaje* in August of the following year, reaching Leyte after Villalobos had moved on to Geilolo (Escalante Alvarado 1999, 50, 150; Martínez Shaw 1999, 20).

In his letter, Castro accuses Villalobos of having allied himself with the Sultan of Geilolo against the Portuguese and frames his outrage in terms of a Christian nation such as Spain allying itself with a Muslim ruler against another Christian nation:

e ainda com tudo isto eu ho descullpava parecemdo me que alguuma estreya necesydade lho causarya e que aquelas palavras seryam de cortesia que no oblygan a la persona posto que por cima de tudo ouve em extremo por estranho gemte christãa e tam comjumta com amydade dos portugeses como he a gemte da sacra cezarea magestade do Emperador amtepor a toda esta rezam e a nossa ley de Christo a amizade dos mouros e a sua perversa e erada seyta de Maffoma [. . .]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 117)

The rulers of the Malukus and indeed many of the better off and more advanced inhabitants of the islands around Mindanao were Muslim though most of the peoples over whom they reigned were not. Though he does not state this explicitly, the offence caused by Villalobos is tantamount to that of siding with Suleiman I, arch-rival of European Christendom and a constant threat to the Portuguese in the Straits of Hormuz. Castro further reminds Villalobos of the discord between Spaniards and Portuguese in the Malukus before the signing of the Treaty of Zaragoza, the implication being that a return to such poor relations would further destabilise the foothold Christendom had established in the East. That conflict started in late October 1526 when Martín Íñiguez de Carquizano, captain general of the late García Jofre de Loaysa's expedition, arrived off the same port of Zamafo on Moro that Villalobos was to reach almost 20 years later and instigated alliances with the Muslim Sultans of Geilolo and Tidore against the Portuguese. In confirmation of this religious framing of the conflict, when Villalobos eventually capitulates, the wording of the agreement he signs with Jordão de Freitas and Fernão de Sousa alludes to the avoidance of war between Christians beset by enemy Muslims as a significant justification for the settlement of differences: "porque se escusem guerras e escamdalos antre cristãos especial[mente] estamdo amtre mouros imiguos de nossa santa fe catolica" (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 232). Castro offers Villalobos the option of coming to Ternate if he has taken shelter on Moro out of need because, in this manner, he would demonstrate his honest intentions. If he does not wish to do this, he should leave the Malukus forthwith:

vymdo se pera esta fortaleza se necesydade o causa amdar por estas partes o que fazemdo o mostrara sua lympha temçam como ja me tem stprito e nam o quemdo asy fazer lhe peço por merce que totalmemte se saya e faça sayr toda sua gemte e armada fora destas ylhas e de todo este arcepeligo [. . .]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 118)

Villalobos responded to this missive on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1544 with a letter that is very brief and seems to be somewhat incoherent, betraying the enormous physical and existential strain he and his men have been under since they arrived in Mindanao in February of the previous year. Since he still had hopes of aid from New Spain, as the *San Juan Letrán* had not yet returned, his stance remains defiant:

porque con esta hazese mas que naturalmemte de hordinario vemos hazer mas quamdo viene el postrero exame de las cossas ande tomar los hombres por remedio lo que en otro tyempo huyera con todas fuerças y esto aparte de lo que cada uno quiere su vida por lo que toca no temtar a Dios se deve em semejantes tiempos hazer y ponerse amtes a lo que nuestro señor en los negocios detreminare que al postrer fyn que de la postrera necesydad se via ya padecer [...]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 119)

He states that he is entirely innocent in his coming to Moro and that there are matters that should not be discussed in letters which are public documents. It is perfectly possible that here he is referring to the ways in which the Portuguese contrived to discourage the locals from selling provisions to the Spaniards. Almost in an echo of this comment, Escalante Alvarado remarks with regard to these first, difficult weeks in Geilolo that “las cosas ocultas no es lícito afirmarlas” (Escalante Alvarado 58–59). Villalobos was effectively left with no option but to ally himself with Geilolo and Tidore, and Escalante Alvarado provides an extended account of all that developed between these three players up to the arrival of Jordão de Freitas in the late Autumn of 1544 from Lisbon (Alvarado 1999, 60–72). Like Castro, Freitas was an experienced colonial administrator and *fidalgo* for whom the posting would have constituted an honour, whatever Villalobos’ view on the matter. As noted above, Freitas was less belligerent than Castro and showed leniency to the Spaniards in an attempt to overcome both Geilolo and Tidore. However, a year later, his policy of Spanish appeasement was summarily overruled by Fernão de Sousa and Villalobos obliged to capitulate.

Villalobos responded separately to the three *requerimientos* sent by Castro and to that of Lobos. In these exchanges, the tenor of the four Portuguese documents is uniformly formal and detailed and the list of accusations and demands is consistent throughout. The injunctions reflect the statements made in Castro and Lobos’ accompanying letters but elaborate on them at greater length and with many more rhetorical flourishes appropriate to a formal legal instrument. With the full range of skills in his gubernatorial retinue at his behest in Ternate, Castro is able to produce sophisticated, factual and, given the scale of the threat he perceived from the Spaniards, measured documents. Villalobos, on the other hand, appears on occasion to struggle with form, style and register. This seems surprising for someone who had held relatively senior legal office in New Spain and who probably studied law in his native land. Even more than in the exchange of letters between the two leaders, over the course of which Villalobos dispenses with his initial diplomacy then seems to lose his grip on coherence, the sequence of injunctions from Castro and replies from Villalobos reveal a dialogue between a seasoned and urbane colonial administrator whose register does not vary and the leader of an expedition isolated from the paraphernalia of state who comes across as a parvenu adventurer, sometimes desperate, sometimes irascible and prone to vent his frustration in sarcasm. In his reply to Castro’s third injunction, Villalobos cites basic physical need as the justification for his arrival in Moro and deploys the Biblical example of the thief who steals out of hunger, with the gloss that “la necesidad carece de ley” (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 166). Then he attempts to turn the tables on Castro, accusing him not only of not taking the opportunity to succour the needy but of preventing others from doing so as well: “quanto maior culpa terna ell que no solo nosocore a la necesidad mas bosqua maneras y formas pera que ell que la socoria opodia socorer no lo yziese” (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 166). After this, he presents a long, not entirely coherent and inelegantly expressed list of complaints relating to



Portuguese behaviour towards his company while on Moro with the further excuse that he would, in any case, be unable to leave the island until May as the weather would not be favourable (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 167).

With signature sarcasm, in a text which is for the most part couched in a register lower than that employed by Castro, in places significantly so, and is not a formal injunction, Villalobos still chooses to mirror the legal formula employed in Castro's first two injunctions, requiring Villalobos to leave the area around Mindanao. In the September 1543 instrument, Castro conveys the instruction thus:

requeiro huma duas e tres vezes e quantas com direito poso e devo fazer ao dito senhor Ruy Lopez de Vilhalobos capitam geral da gente e armada de Sua Magestade que ele se saya da dita ylha de Mindanao e de todo este arcepelaguo destas ilhas e nelas nam faça mais dano algum nem asente em nenhuma delas [. . .]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 143)

Using this rhetoric, Villalobos then has what can only be described as the effrontery to request Castro to keep the peace between Spaniards and Portuguese on Moro. His argument is that any actions undertaken by Castro's forces must be construed as deliberate and therefore culpable while similar activities entered into by his own company must be seen as involuntary and therefore blameless as they are acting out of dire need:

requiero al señor don Jorge de Castro una y dos y tres veces y quantas de derecho devo de parte de Su Magestad y dell muy poderoso señor Rey de Portuguall garde las pazes y amistades que entre Su Magestad y Alteza estan y non dee lugar a nyngun rompimiento pues lo suyo sera de voluntad y lo noestro forçoso[. . .]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 167)

Matias de Alvarado was dispatched to Ternate in March 1544 with a long injunction which lists at length the many and pernicious lengths the Portuguese went to in order to ensure that Villalobos could not provision his expedition. He offers a challenge to Spanish hegemony on the Malukus, as mentioned already, by suggesting that the agreement between João III and Charles V has expired and the Malukus therefore have reverted to Spanish dominion. Legally, it is an outrageous challenge, but it demonstrates that for the first time, despite the long expiation on the struggle to find or buy provender, Villalobos feels somewhat more secure in his position and this enables him to require Castro to return those Spaniards who remained after previous Spanish expeditions, those of Magalhães, Loaysa and Grijalba are cited, and artillery belonging to the Spaniards to him forthwith (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 202). However, Villalobos is still the same sardonic individual and, whatever Alvarado's moderating influence on his expression, there seems to be at least one more barb for Castro contained in the text. In a particularly convoluted passage dealing with the exploits of Castro's envoy Belchor Fernandez in denying the Spaniards provisions after delivering the September 1543 injunction and letter, Villalobos appears, if this is not a transcription error, to describe Castro as "Su Magestad dell dicho señor don Jorge" (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 198).

In reply, Castro adopts the same style and directs himself to Villalobos in the third person on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1544. He informs him that almost all the remaining Spaniards in Ternate have left via India and accuses him, in the first explicit intimation from Castro of a class distinction between himself and the Spanish *hidalgo*, of listening to information provided "per pessoas tam plebeas e vulgares que seryam de muy pouquo credito" (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 204). He quite

rightly accuses Villalobos of pleading hunger on the one hand and obedience to the emperor's instruction not to enter the Malukus on the other, all the while insisting that the agreement between the king and emperor has now expired and therefore Spain has recovered any rights it previously had to the islands: "que parecem as tais palavras mostrar antes soperioridade que a necesydade que diz" (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 204). He resolves to comment no further on the matter as it would be beneath his dignity. Assuring Villalobos that there is plenty of food available to him in Cagi on Halmahera, he warns him not to think of coming into Ternate and returns to the felt-soled shoes analogy he employed in his letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1543:

que peço muito por merce ao dito senhor Ruy Lopez e lho requeiro da parte do senhor emperador e dell rey noso senhor que nam mande nem consynta que pessoa de sua armada va e se estenda por estas ylhas soffreguanhas e anexas a esta fortaleza com achaque de comprar mantimentos porque seryam grandes çapatos de feltro com que se ordenaryam muitos danos e deserviço dell rey noso senhor [. . .]. (Pinto et al. [Forthcoming](#), 205)

Even in this final exchange between the two men, Villalobos is all bluster, inconsistency and grievance, and far less polished than Castro. The fact was, with no armada coming from New Spain to enable him to take over the Malukus or even settle parts of Mindanao, Samar and Leyte, he must have known he would eventually be obliged to accept the failure of his enterprise and the consequent ruination of his family's prospects and fortune back in New Spain. On the American continent, even in the culture of constant, reckless expansion into ever more inhospitable indigenous territories, at least there was always the possibility of retreat and reinforcement. The fact that the entire success of Villalobos' expedition was dependant on a single achievement that had eluded more established and seasoned navigators than he, finding the *tornaviaje*, left his expedition from the outset in a highly parlous state. Who is to say if a more experienced commander and cosmographer would have fulfilled the ambition of the avaricious Pedro de Alvarado and provided Charles V with the income stream from the *galeón de Manila*, plying its trade between Acapulco and Manila, a couple of decades earlier than Urdaneta's successful return voyage?

Instead, Ruy López de Villalobos, eldest son of a minor Aragonese noble, fell victim to the curse of the Indies identified by Couto. He died in Ambon on Good Friday 1546, destined never to see his family again but attended at his deathbed by no less than the Navarrese Francisco Jasso de Azpilcueta y Xavier, the Portuguese Crown's Jesuit Apostle of the East (Martínez Shaw [1999](#), 24). He had no inkling that he would, after all, be remembered as the "discoverer" of the Philippines. At least in this he got the better of the *fidalgo* of the king's household, Jorge de Castro whose several accomplishments were tarnished by historians eager to apply to his last act in office the age-old stereotype of a befuddled old man led by the nose into dishonour by a histrionic but beautiful young wife.

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