

## The Site of the First Mass in the Philippines: A Reexamination of the Evidence



There is a controversy regarding the site of the first Mass ever celebrated on Philippine soil. Pigafetta tells us that it was held on Easter Sunday, the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1521, on an island called "Mazaua." Two native chieftains were in attendance: the rajah of Mazaua and the rajah of Butuan. After the Mass the party went up a little hill and planted a wooden cross upon its summit. The subject of controversy is the identity of this place which Pigafetta calls "Mazaua." There are two conflicting claims as to its identity: one school of thought points to the little island south of Leyte which in the maps is called Limasawa; the other school rejects that claim and points instead to the beach called Masao at the mouth of the Agusan River in northern Mindanao, near what was then the village (now the city) of Butuan.

In this paper we shall try to reexamine and reassess the evidence for these two claims. And we shall begin with the Butuan tradition.

### *I. The Butuan Tradition*

The Butuan claim rests upon a tradition that was almost unanimous and unbroken for three centuries, namely the 17th, the 18th and the 19th. On the strength of that tradition and embodying it, a monument was erected in 1872 near the mouth of the Agusan River at a spot that was then within the municipal boundaries of Butuan, but which today belongs to the separate municipality of Magallanes, named after Ferdinand Magellan. The monument was a brick pillar on which was a marble slab that contained an inscription which might be translated as follows:

To the Immortal Magellan: the People of Butuan with their Parish Priest and the Spaniards resident therein, to commemorate his arrival

and the celebration of the First Mass on this site on the 8th of April 1521. Erected in 1872, under the District Governor Jose Ma. Carvallo.<sup>1</sup>

The monument was erected apparently at the instigation of the parish priest of Butuan, who at the time was a Spanish friar of the Order of Augustinian Recollects. The date given for the first Mass (8 April 1521) may be an obvious error, or it may be a clumsy and anachronistic attempt to translate the original date in terms of the Gregorian calendar. In any case, that monument is a testimonial to the tradition that remained vigorous until the end of the 19th century, namely, that Magellan and his expedition landed at Butuan and celebrated there the first Mass ever offered on Philippine soil.<sup>2</sup>

### *The 17th Century*

The Butuan tradition was already in possession by the middle of the 17th century: so much so that it was accepted without question by two Jesuit historians who otherwise were quite careful of their facts.

One of these historians was Father Francisco Colin S.J. (1592-1660) whose *Labor evangelica* was first published in Madrid in 1663, three years after his death. The work was reissued 240 years later in a magnificent three-volume edition annotated by Father Pablo Pastells S.J. (Madrid, 1903). Here is Colin's account of Magellan's arrival and of the first Mass:

At the end of three months and twelve days during which they traversed 4,000 leagues, having crossed the Equator a second time, they climbed up to 15 degrees North latitude where they came upon two islands which they named Las Velas [the Sails]. At 12 degrees North they came upon the Ladrones Islands. A few days later they

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<sup>1</sup>AL IMMORTAL / MAGALLANES / EL PUEBLO DE BUTUAN CON SU CURA PARROCO / Y ESPANOLÉS / EN EL RESIDENTES / PARA CONMEMORAR SU ARRIBO Y / CELEBRACION / DE LA PRIMERA MISA / EN ESTE SITIO / EL DIA 8 DE ABRIL DE 1521 / ERIGIDO EN 1872 SIENDO GOVERNADOR / DEL DISTRITO / D. JOSE MARIA CARVALLO.

<sup>2</sup>The monument was a brick pillar some four meters high with angular sides. The marble slab with the inscription is thus described: "la inscripcion esta hecha con letras de oro sobre una lapida de marmol de Italia. — *El archipelago filipino* (Washington 1900) I, 129f. — On the subsequent history of this monument, see the end of this article.

saw the island of Ibabao [Samar] in this Archipelago. But the first island they touched at was Humunu, a small uninhabited island near Guiuan Point .... To that and other islets they gave the name of Buenas Senas [Good Omens] but to the entire Archipelago they gave the name San Lazaro, being the Saturday of Saint Lazarus' Sunday in Lent of the year 1521.

On Easter Day, in the territory of Butuan, the first Mass ever offered in these parts was celebrated and a cross planted. Magellan then took formal possession of the Islands in the name of the Emperor and of the Crown of Castille.

The man who gave the most signal service to our men was the chief of Dimasaua [sic], relative of the chief of Butuan and of that of Zebu, whither he led the armada, which entered that harbor at noon on the 7th of April, the Octave of Easter.<sup>3</sup>

Colin had obviously read some authentic accounts of Magellan's voyage, for his narration is accurate up to the landing in Homonhon. (He spells it Humunu, as does Pigafetta.) After that, Colin's account becomes vague. He abruptly brings Magellan to Butuan without explaining how he got there. Then he brings him to Limasawa (which he misspells Dimasaua), and from there the account becomes again accurate and detailed. The important thing in Colin's account as far as our present purpose is concerned, is the fact that he represents the first Mass, as well as the solemn planting of the cross and the formal taking possession of the Islands in the name of the Crown of Castile, as having taken place at Butuan on Easter Sunday of 1521.

The other Jesuit writer of the mid-17th century was Father Francisco Combés S.J. (1620-1665) who, like Colin, had lived and worked as a missionary in the Philippines, and whose *Historia de Mindanao y Jolo* was printed in Madrid in 1667, two years after the author's death and five years after Colin's work was published. Combés *History of Mindanao* was also reissued 230 years afterwards in a handsome edition edited by Wenceslao Retana assisted by Father Pastells. In his account of Magellan's voyage, Combés gives a somewhat different version of the route taken by the Discoverer. Here is his account:

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<sup>3</sup>F. Colin, *Labor evangelica: ministerios apostolicos de los obreros de la Compañia de Jesus . . . en las islas Filipinas*, Lib. I, cap. xxii (in the Pastells edition, I, 144). (Translation mine.)

The first time that the royal standards of the Faith were seen to fly in this island (of Mindanao) was when the Archipelago was first discovered by the Admiral Alonso (sic) de Magallanes. He followed a new and difficult route [across the Pacific], entering by the Strait of Siargao, formed by that island and that of Leyte, and landing at the island of Limasaua which is at the entrance of that Strait. Amazed by the novelty and strangeness of the [Spanish] nation and the ships, the barbarians of that island welcomed them and gave them good refreshments.

While at Limasaua, enjoying rest and good treatment, they heard of the River of Butuan, whose chieftain was more powerful. His reputation attracted our men thither to see for themselves or be disillusioned, their curiosity sharpened by the fact that the place was nearby. The barbarian [chief] lived up to our men's expectations, providing them with the food they needed .... Magellan contented himself with having them do reverence to the cross which is erected upon a hillock as a sign to future generations of their alliance .... The solemnity with which the cross was erected and the deep piety shown by the Spaniards, and by the natives following the example of the Spaniards, engendered great respect for the cross.

Not finding in Butuan the facilities required by the ships, they returned to Limasaua to seek further advice in planning their future route. The Prince of Limasaua told them of the three most powerful nations among the Pintados [Visayans], namely those of Caraga, Samar, and Zebu. The nearness of Zebu, the facilities of its port, and the more developed social structure (being more monarchical) aroused everyone's desire to go thither. Thus, guided by the chief of Limasaua, passing between Bool and Leyte and close to the Camotes Islands, they entered the harbor of Cebu by the Mandawe entrance on the 7th of April 1521, having departed from Limasaua on the first day of that month.<sup>4</sup>

For our present purpose, the main point in that account is that Magellan landed at Butuan and there planted the cross in a solemn ceremony. Combés does not mention the first Mass. What he mentions are the other two events which, from Pigafetta's account, had occurred on the same day as the first Mass, namely the planting of the cross and

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<sup>4</sup>F. Combes, *Historia de Mindanao y Jolo*, Lib. II, cap. i (in the Retana-Pastells edition, pp. 76ff.). (Translation mine.)

the formal claiming of the Archipelago on behalf of the Castilian Crown. These events, says Combés, took place at Butuan.

There are features of Combés's narrative which subsequent writers would take over, and in some cases distort. Combé's pictures Magellan as entering Philippine waters through the Strait of Siargao (or of Surigao).

*Colin and Combés Compared.* — It is to be noted that both Colin and Combés picture Magellan as visiting both Butuan and Limasawa. In Colin's account, Magellan went first to Butuan, then to Limasawa and from thence to Cebu. Combés, on the other hand, mentions two visits to Limasawa: in his version, Magellan visits Limasawa first; from there he goes to Butuan; then he returns to Limasawa and thence to Cebu.

Both Colin and Combés agree that it was from Limasawa and with the help of Limasawa's chieftain that the Magellan expedition went to Cebu. Both Colin and Combés also agree that Magellan arrived in Cebu on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 1521: that is to say, on the Octave of Easter, or one week after the first Mass which — in this tradition — was supposed to have been celebrated at Butuan.

Both Colin and Combés were to exercise a strong influence over subsequent writers. An example of the quick and wide diffusion of Colin's influence is the following. In 1698 (thirty-five years after Colin's work had appeared in Madrid) there issued from the press in Naples a multi-volume work (subsequently reprinted several times in several places) entitles *Giro del Mondo* (A Voyage Around the World). It was written by the Calabrian, Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, who had visited many places, including the Philippines. Of the first Mass on Philippine soil he says:

On Whit Sunday the first Mass was said on the land of Butuan, a cross erected and possession taken in the name of the most invincible Charles 5th. The lord of Oimasaua (sic), kinsman of the king of Butuan and to him of Cebu, was assisting to Magellan, for he brought the ships into that port on the 7th of April. Before Mass was said on Whit Sunday, the lord and the king of Cebu were baptized, and by their means, many men of note and others to the number of 500, and after dinner the queen with 300 more.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Gemelli Careri, *A Voyage to the Philippines* (Filipiniana Book Guild, Manila 1963), p. 115. (From his Book II, Chapter 8).

Careri has obviously confused two distinct events: one event was the first Mass (which he places at Butuan); the other event was the baptism of the rajah of Cebu. Careri is also confused regarding dates. Neither event took place on "Whitsunday"; the first Mass occurred on Easter Sunday, the baptism in Cebu took place two weeks later.<sup>6</sup> But the important point at the moment is the fact that Careri may have read (or misread) Colin: note his misspelling of the word for Limasawa. Alternatively, Careri and Colin were using the same source.

As for Combés, he too is constantly being quoted by subsequent writers who either cite him by name or merely take over his material without attribution. One of those who cite him by name is the 18th century Augustinian scholar, fray Joaquin Martinez de Zuñiga (1760-1818) who wrote a history of the Philippines which was promptly translated into English, and whose other work, the *Estadismo*, we shall quote below. One of Combés' statements which was repeated oftenest by subsequent writers was his remark that the Strait of Siargao lies "between" that island and Leyte, and that the island of Limasawa is "at the mouth" or "entrance" of that Strait. A glance at the map will show that that statement was not altogether accurate.

### *The 18th Century*

One passage in Colin which seems to have been misunderstood, and which may have misled some later writers, occurs in an early section of his book in which he describes the island of Mindanao:

After that of Manila, the island of Mindanao is the largest in size and the best in qualities among the islands of this Philippine Archipelago. Upon these two largest islands, the other islands depend for protection and security. Mindanao takes its name from the principal Province or Kingdom in it, and this is so called from its many lakes: for *danao* in the language most widely used in these islands means "lake"; whence, "Maguindanao", the place and the dwellers of lakes . . . .

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<sup>6</sup>The English translator of Careri was mistaken in translating Easter as "Whit Sunday" which properly means the Octave of Easter. The first Mass was celebrated at "Masaua" on Easter Sunday; Magellan arrived in Cebu on the Octave, of Easter (Whitsunday); the Cebuanos were baptized the following Sunday.

The first Province that faces the sea from across New Spain [Mexico] is that of Caraga, which begins at the Cape of San Agustin and stretches some fifty leagues to the point of Surigao in the north-east; and from there the coastline stretches westward some fifteen leagues to the river of Butuan, noteworthy in the history of these Islands, not so much for its gold and other good qualities as for the fact that it was one of the first places where the Discoverer, the Illustrious Hemando de Magallanes, landed and was accorded good treatment . . . <sup>7</sup>

Colin does *not* say that Magellan first sighted the Cape of San Agustin and then sailed northwards along the Pacific coast of Mindanao, rounded Surigao point, and then sailed westward to Butuan. Indeed in another place (as we have seen) he said explicitly that Magellan entered Philippine waters farther north, namely, near Samar, landing first at Homonhon. But careless readers, seeing Colin's description of eastern Mindanao, coupled with Combés's statement that Magellan had "entered" Philippine waters through Siargao Strait, jumped to the conclusion that Magellan must have come by the southern route as later explorers did. This mistake became quite widespread in the 18th and 19th centuries.

One of the major historians who made this error (and who in turn influenced later writers) was the Augustinian; fray Juan de la Concepcion (1724-1787) whose 14-volume *History of the Philippines* was published in Manila shortly after his death. Here is what fray Juan says about Magellan's coming and about the first Mass in the Islands:

The General left the islands which he called las Velas latinas or the Archipelago of San Lazaro — a name which they still retain, although they have also added the name of Marianas Islands. It is said that this was the Celebes of antiquity, although I do not think this opinion is solidly founded. They sailed 300 leagues westward, discovered many islands with abundant supplies. Magellan had with

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<sup>7</sup>Colin, *Labor evangelica*, Lib. I, cap. x (Pastells ed., I, 40). (Translation mine.)—A possible reason for this mistake is the fact that there are two capes named after Saint Augustine: one on the coast of South America (mentioned in Albo's log), and the other in Mindanao. The fact that Magellan's expedition had sighted the one may have given rise to the belief that it was the other Cape San Agustin (in Mindanao) which they had sighted.

him a native Indian who understood their language, which was a great help. They first saw Cape San Agustin at the southern tip of the large island of Mindanao. They sailed along the coast of the province of Caraga, entered the strait of Siargao which is formed by the Banajao Point and the island of Leyte, and they landed at the island of Limasawa which is at the entrance of the strait .... With the good reception given them by the natives of Limasawa, they rested and recovered from past sufferings. There, Magellan heard of the River of Butuan, whose datu or chieftain was more powerful. He decided to go to the mouth of that river, being led thither by the hopes aroused by its fame. The chieftain [of Butuan] lived up to those hopes. He sent a boat with ten men to inquire what kind of ships, of men, etc. Magellan replied through the interpreter that they were vassals of the great and powerful King of Castile; that all they sought was peace and free trade; that they desired to buy food supplies at a fair price. The chieftain replied that he did not have enough to supply so large an expedition, but that he would bring what he could. They brought on board 4 pigs, 3 goats, and a supply of rice. It was Easter Sunday. The General ordered the construction on land of a shelter made of branches. Then he ordered all his men to disembark to hear Mass, which was celebrated with great devotion by all, thanking God for His blessings. And this was the first Mass ever offered in these Islands. He then ordered a large cross to be set up on a hill.<sup>8</sup>

Certain phrases in the foregoing account are reminiscent of Combés and Colin; yet fray Juan has misread his sources. He has mixed up several things. First, he seems to think that the islands called "Las Velas" and the Marianas Islands and the Archipelago of San Lazaro were all one and the same thing. Second, he has misconstrued Magellan's route, depicting him as sighting the southeastern tip of Mindanao and sailing northwards along the Pacific coast of this island, and then entering by the Siargao Strait into Limasawa "which is at the entrance of that strait."

In the late 18th and in the 19th century, we find writers (including some who were otherwise careful in their scholarship) who repeat fray Juan de la Concepcion's error that the "Archipelago of San Lazaro" was another name for the Marianas Islands. But even more often

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<sup>8</sup>Juan de la Concepcion, *Historia general de Philipinas* (14 vols., Manila 1788-1792) I, 95ff. (Translation mine.)



repeated was fray Juan's reconstruction of Magellan's route. For instance, we find the following passage in Robert MacMicking's *Recollections* (first published in London in 1851); "Coasting along the shores of Caraga, the ships anchored off Limasawa where Magallanes was well received by the natives ...."<sup>9</sup>

### *The 19th Century*

Towards the end of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th, one of the important writers who accepted the Butuan tradition was the Augustinian, fray Joaquin Martinez de Zuñiga (1760-1818), whose *Historia de Filipinas* was published in Sampaloc in 1803. His other work, a description of his travels around the Islands, remained in manuscript for nearly a century, until Retana brought it out in a two-volume edition in 1893.<sup>10</sup> In this latter work, fray Joaquin has this to say:

On Easter Sunday of the year 1521 Magellan was in Butuan. He ordered the sacrifice of the Mass to be celebrated ashore, and he planted a cross on a hillock near the beach. The natives were present at these ceremonies, and they also witnessed the taking of possession of the land in the name of the Crown of Castile. These rites over, Magellan proceeded to Cebu where they killed him.<sup>11</sup>

By the 19th century, the Butuan tradition was taken for granted, and we find it mentioned in writer after writer, each copying from the previous, and being in turn copied by those who came after. Among the many who could be cited as mentioning the first Mass in Butuan is the Englishman, John Foreman:

On the 16th of March 1521 the Ladrones Islands were reached .... After a bloody combat ... the fleet continued its course westward. Coasting along the North of the Island of Mindanao they arrived at the mouth of the Butuan River, where they were supplied with

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<sup>9</sup>Robert MacMicking, *Recollections of Manila and the Philippines* (London 1851; Filipiniana Book Guild edition, Manila 1967) p. 2 (Emphasis added.)

<sup>10</sup>J. Martfnez de Zuñiga, *Estadismo de las islas Filipinas, o mis viajes par este pais*, ed. W. E. Retana (2 vols., Madrid 1893).

<sup>11</sup>*Estadismo*, ed. Retana, II, 74. (Translation mine.)

provisions by the chief. It was Easter Week on this shore the first Mass was celebrated in the Philippines.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, in copying what previous authors had written, some subsequent writers copied not only the essence of the Butuan tradition but also a good deal of the erroneous details that were peripheral to that tradition. The accumulated errors of three centuries may be found illustrated in the work of a Dominican friar, whose two-volume treatise on the friars was published at Santo Tomas in Manila in 1901. Here is his account of the coming of Magellan and the first Mass:

After many days of good sailing, he caught sight of the Marianas Islands which he named the Archipelago of San Lazaro, having discovered them on the Saturday of Passion Sunday (7 March 1521). A little later he came to Philippine territory where the Spaniards were well received by the natives at Punta Guiguan to the east of Samar; and passing later through the Strait of Surigao, they dropped anchor at Limasagua, whose chieftain came aboard and was entertained by Magellan. The latter, on Easter Sunday, disembarked at Butuan, a town in the island of Mindanao, where the first Mass in the Philippines was celebrated. He returned to Limasagua; and learning of the importance of Cebu, he proceeded thither; following the coast between Samar and Leyte and passing by the Camotes, he arrived in Cebu on 7 April 1521.<sup>13</sup>

The misstatements in that short passage are numerous, not the least of which is the almost incredible notion that Magellan had sailed from "Limasagua" (sic) to Cebu by coasting between Samar and Leyte! The good friar had not only not checked on original sources: he had not even bothered to look at a map!

Yet fray Valentin was merely following (down to the misspelling of Limasagua and Guiguan) the account in two works of the historian, Jose Montero y Vidal, whose *El Archipelago filipino* had appeared in Madrid in 1886, followed a year later by his three-volume *Historia general de Filipinas*. In both works, the well-known historian had

<sup>12</sup>John Foreman, *The Philippine Islands* (New York 1899) p. 22.

<sup>13</sup>Valentin Morales y Martin, *Ensayo de una sintesis de los trabajos realizados por las corporaciones religiosas españolas de Filipinas* (2 vols., Manila 1901) I, 161-162. (Translation mine.)

Magellan sailing to Cebu from "Limasagua", following the incredible route between Leyte and Samar.<sup>14</sup> By that route Magellan should have ended up in the Bicol Peninsula, not in Cebu.

But, shorn of these peripheral errors, the essence of the Butuan tradition was accepted by even otherwise careful scholars at the end of the 19th and the early decades of the 20th century. Retana certainly accepted the Butuan tradition. In his edition of Martinez de Zuñiga's *Estadismo* in 1893, he made no adverse comment on the mention of the first Mass in Butuan. Not only that, but Retana himself supplied the following information in an Appendix:

Butuan (corregimiento de). — Antiguo nombre de la provincia de Caraga. Esta tieno fue la primera que Magallanes incorporó a la Corona de Espana. En el pueblo de Butuan se celebró la primera Misa que se rezó en Filipinas.<sup>15</sup>

When Retana published that in 1893, the Butuan tradition was already very well entrenched. Two decades earlier, in 1872, the provincial and municipal authorities, together with the Spanish Augustinian Recollect missionaries of Butuan, had erected the monument of which mention was made earlier in his article. That monument was not only a witness of the Butuan tradition, but it also was accepted in turn as confirmatory evidence for that tradition's veracity. The Jesuit scientists of the Manila Observatory, in compiling their two-volume work, *El archipelago filipino* (published in Washington in 1900) mentioned that monument and did not question the tradition which it represented.<sup>16</sup>

As late as the 1920's the textbook in Philippine History in use at the Ateneo de Manila accepted the Butuan tradition, although it took care to correct previous authors' mistakes concerning the Marianas Islands and other mistakes:

Magellan sailed on and reached the southern ocean on November 27 with only three vessels. He sailed a northerly and later a north-

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<sup>14</sup>Jose Montero y Vidal, *Historia general de Filipinas* (3 vols., Madrid 1887) I, 15; to his *El Archipelago filipino y las islas Marianas, Carolinas y Palaos* (Madrid 1886) pp. -12.

<sup>15</sup>*Estadismo*, ed. Retana, II, 364.

<sup>16</sup>*El Archipelago filipino* (2 vols., Washington 1900) I, 129f; cf. I, 244f and I, 375f.

westerly course .... Finally they made port in the islands of the "Lateen Sails" or "the Ladrones", for the natives robbed them of whatever they could find in the ships, which they had been allowed to board. In the 17th century these islands took the name of "Marianas." On March 16th they descried the island of Samar and to the southeast that of Homonhon, Malhon or Jomonhol, all which names it bears at present. Here they stopped and were well received by the inhabitants who offered them abundant provisions.

In Limasawa, the chief, named Banca, made himself the friend of the voyagers and received from the admiral the title of prince. From Limasagua the voyagers sailed to the coast of Butuan. A cross was planted on a little promontory near the seashore, on the left side as one enters the Agusan river. There the first Mass said on Philippine soil was celebrated. A simple monument stands as a record of this important event.<sup>17</sup>

It is obvious that that passage accepts not only the Butuan tradition but specifically the testimony of the Butuan monument regarding the site of the first Mass on Philippine soil.

## *II. The Shift in Opinion*

How then did the shift in opinion — from Butuan to Limasawa — come about? How was the Butuan tradition — so well entrenched for three centuries — finally dislodged? Some recent defenders of the Butuan tradition have blamed the shift of opinion on two Americans, namely Emma Blair and James Alexander Robertson, whose 55-volume collection of documents on the Philippine Islands was published in Cleveland from 1903 to 1909. But the "blame" (if blame it is) does not rest alone upon Blair and Robertson. They indeed contributed enormously to the shift in opinion but the man initially responsible for the shift seems to have been a Spanish Jesuit scholar. Father Pablo Pastells S.J. A word about the career of this remarkable man may not be out of place before we proceed.

Pablo Pastells was born in 1846 in Figueras, in the province of Gerona, Spain. At 15 he entered the Condlar Seminary in Barcelona

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<sup>17</sup>Jose Burniol S.J., *A History of the Philippines for class use*, trans. by Thomas A. Becker (Manila, E. C. McCuflough & Co. Inc., 1912), pp. 26-29. (The book is printed in both English and Spanish on opposite pages.)

which at the time was directed by the Jesuits, and eventually, at the age of 20, he entered the Jesuit novitiate in Spain and later did further studies in France. He was ordained a priest in 1871, and five years later came to the Philippines (1875), where, after a brief stay in Manila, he was assigned as a missionary to Mindanao. He served on the Pacific coast (Bislig, Caraga, Cateel) and took part in an expedition in 1884 that explored the Agusan River to its sources. In 1887 he was transferred to the northern coast of Mindanao, with headquarters at Jasaan in Misamis Oriental. The following year he was recalled to Manila and was appointed Superior of the entire Jesuit Mission in the Philippines, a post which he occupied for six years (1888-1893). It was after he left the Philippines and returned to Barcelona that he did his most notable work as a scholar. He collected an enormous amount of documents from the *Archivo de Indias* in Seville and from other sources. He also had at his disposal the magnificent Philippine library of the Tabacalera (Compañía General de Tabacos de Filipinas) in Barcelona. Pastells' published works included (a) his three-volume edition of Colin (Madrid 1903); (b) his three-volume *History of the Jesuit Missions in the Philippines in the 19th Century* (Barcelona 1916-17); and (c) his *History of the Jesuits in Paraguay* (Madrid 1912). He had earlier collaborated with Retana in the latter's edition of Combes (Madrid 1897).<sup>18</sup>

The shift in opinion from Butuan to Limasawa was due to a rediscovery and a more attentive study of two primary sources on the subject: namely, Pigafetta's account and Albo's log. What the effect of that study was may be seen in the change in Pastell's thinking.

Pastells had collaborated with Retana in a new edition of Combés. Retana (as we have seen) had accepted the Butuan tradition in his edition of Martínez de Zuñiga in 1893. In their joint edition of Combés of 1897, neither Retana nor Pastells showed any sign of change of opinion. They accepted the Butuan tradition as if they were not aware of any contrary opinion.

Meanwhile, however, Pastells was preparing his own edition of Francisco Colin's *Labor evangélica*, which was eventually published in three volumes in Madrid in 1903. While preparing that edition, Pastells

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<sup>18</sup>Salvador Scdo S.J., *Rdo. Padre Pablo Pastells S.J.: notas Biograficas* (Barcelona 1933).

had occasion to restudy both Pigafetta and Albo, and it was then that he realized that the three-century Butuan tradition had been erroneous. Colin, of course (as we have seen earlier) had contributed materially to the strengthening of that tradition by stating that the first Mass had been celebrated at Butuan. To that statement Pastells appended a footnote:

Magellan did not go to Butuan. Rather, from the island of Limasawa he proceeded directly to Cebu. In that island he had dealings with Rajah Siagu, chieftain of Butuan; and this would explain the author's [i.e. Colin's] error. See the "Voyage" of Pigafetta and the diary of Albo, both of whom were eyewitnesses.<sup>19</sup>

We have spoken of the "rediscovery" of Pigafetta's account and of Albo's log. The word "rediscovery" is not unwarranted. Although these works had been published earlier and were available in the great libraries, they were not well known to many people at the time. Or those who knew of these works may not have studied them with the attention that they deserved. This may explain how such a well-read scholar and bibliographer like Retana did not seem to take them into consideration when preparing his editions of Martinez de Zúñiga and of Combés.

How little known Pigafetta's work was may be illustrated from the experience of Rizal. Rizal apparently had not known of Pigafetta's work until he came across the Italian text in the British Museum. To "Plaridel" (Marcelo H. del Pilar) who was in Spain, Rizal wrote from London on 4 February 1889:

See to it that someone there should learn Italian, because I have here some manuscripts in Italian that deal with the first coming of the Spaniards to the Philippines. They were written by one of Magellan's companions. As I have no time to translate them myself, being busy about many things, it would be good if one of our countrymen should translate the work into Tagalog or Spanish, so that the situation of our people in 1520 may become known. Italian is easy to learn. By the Ahn method it can be learned in one month. I am now learning Dutch.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Colin, *Labor evangelica*, ed. Pastells, I, 40, nota 2. (Translation mine)

<sup>20</sup>*Epistolario Rizalino* (Manila 1931)11, 117-118. (Translation mine.)

It seems dear from that passage that Rizal had not previously known of Pigafetta's work and that he took it for granted that the other Filipinos in Spain knew nothing of it.

A fact such as this makes us realize what a great service to Philippine scholars was made by James A. Robertson when he reproduced the Italian text of Pigafetta's account, together with an English translation. Robertson's work came out in a limited three-volume edition published in Cleveland in 1906. But it was given wider circulation when it was incorporated into the larger series, comprising volumes 33 and 34 of Blair and Robertson's *The Philippine Islands*.

Pastell's footnote on Colin, therefore, and the inclusion of the Pigafetta account in the Blair and Robertson series must be considered the main reasons for the shift in scholarly opinion regarding the site of the first Mass. Among the Philippine scholars of the early 20th century who rejected the Butuan tradition in favor of Limasawa were Trinidad Pardo de Tavera and Jayme de Veyra.<sup>21</sup> The Limasawa opinion has been generally accepted since then, although there are still today a small but vigorous group determined to push the Butuan claim.<sup>22</sup>

### III. *The Evidence for Limasawa*

We now come to the evidence in favor of Limasawa. The evidence may be outlined as follows:

1. The evidence of Albo's Log-Book
2. The evidence of Pigafetta
  - (a) Pigafetta's testimony regarding the route;
  - (b) The evidence of Pigafetta's map;
  - (c) The two native kings;
  - (d) The seven days at "Mazaua";
  - (e) An argument from omission.
3. Summary of the evidence of Albo and Pigafetta.
4. Confirmatory evidence from the Legazpi expedition.

<sup>21</sup>On Jayme de Veyra and Pardo de Tavera, see the end of the present article, below.

<sup>22</sup>The arguments in favor of the Butuan tradition and the method of approach used by the defenders of that tradition may be seen exemplified in a mimeographed book but in hard covers entitled 1521 (LI)MASAWA? by Mofo Busa Sanchez (Butuan 1977) 315 pages. "Mazaua" is identified with the shore area near Butuan, namely "Masao."

### 1. *The Evidence of Albo's Log-Book*

Francisco Albo joined the Magellan expedition as a pilot (*"contra-maestre"*) in Magellan's flagship "Trinidad". He was one of the eighteen survivors who returned with Sebastian Elcano on the "Victoria" after having circumnavigated the world. Albo began keeping his own diary — merely only a log-book — on the voyage out, while they were sailing southward in the Atlantic along the coast of South America, off Brazil. His account of their entry into Philippine waters (or, as it was then called, the archipelago of San Lazaro) . . . may be reduced to the following points:

1. On the 16th of March (1521) as they sailed in a westerly course from the Ladrones, they saw land towards the northwest; but owing to many shallow places they did not approach it. They found later that its name was Yunagan.

2. They went instead that same day southwards to another small island named Suluan, and there they anchored. There they saw some canoes but these fled at the Spaniards's approach. This island was at 9 and two-thirds degrees North latitude.

3. Departing from those two islands, they sailed westward to an uninhabited island of "Gada" where they took in a supply of wood and water. The sea around that island was free from shallows. (Albo does not give the latitude of this island, but from Pigafetta's testimony, this seems to be the "Acquada" or Homonhon, at 10 degrees North latitude.)

4. From that island they sailed westwards towards a large island named Seilani which was inhabited and was known to have gold. (Seilani — or, as Pigafetta calls it, "Ceylon" — was the island of Leyte. See below, on Pigafetta's map.)

5. Sailing southwards along the coast of that large island of Seilani, they turned southwest to a small island called "Mazava". That island is also at a latitude of 9 and two-thirds degrees North.

6. The people of that island of Mazava were very good. There the Spaniards planted a cross upon a mountain-top, and from there they were shown three islands to the west and southwest, where they were told there was much gold. "They showed us how the gold was gathered, which came in small pieces like peas and lentils."



7. From Mazava they sailed northwards again towards Seilani. They followed the coast of Seilani in a northwesterly direction, ascending up to 10 degrees of latitude where they saw three small islands.

8. From there they sailed westwards some ten leagues, and there they saw three islets, where they dropped anchor for the night. In the morning they sailed southwest some 12 leagues, down to a latitude of 10 and one-third degree. There they entered a channel between two islands, one of which was called "Matan" and the other "Subu".

9. They sailed down that channel and then turned westward and anchored at the town (*la villa*) of Subu where they stayed many days and obtained provisions and entered into a peace-pact with the local king.

10. The town of Subu was on an east-west direction with the islands of Suluan and Mazava. But between Mazava and Subu, there were so many shallows that the boats could not go westward directly but had to go (as they did) in a round-about way.<sup>23</sup>

Such is Albo's testimony. The island that he calls Gada seems to be the *acquada* of Pigafetta, namely the island of Homonhon where they took in supplies of water and wood. The large island of Seilani which they coasted is the island of Leyte. Coasting southwards along the eastern coast of that island, then turning southwest they came upon a small island named, Mazava, which lies at a latitude of 9 and two-thirds degrees North.

That fits the location of the small island of Limasawa, south of Leyte. The island's southern tip is at 9° 54' N.

It is to be noted that Albo does not mention the first Mass, but only the planting of the cross upon a mountain-top from which could be seen three islands to the west and southwest. This also fits the southern end of Limasawa. It does not fit the coast of Butuan from

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<sup>23</sup>"Diario ó derotero del viage de Magallanes desde el cabo de S. Agustín en el Brazil hasta el regreso a Espana de la nao Victoria, escrito por Frandisco Albo", Document no. xxii in *Colección de viages y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los Españoles desde fines del siglo XV*, ed. Martín Fernández de Navarrete (reprinted Buenos Aires 1945, 5 vols.) IV, 191-225. (Note that the Cape San Agustín mentioned in Albo's title is on the American coast and not the same as the Cape San Agustín at the southeastern tip of Mindanao. Could this similarity of names have contributed to the confusion of some authors, referred to above?)

which no islands could be seen to the south or the southwest, but only towards the north.

## 2. The Evidence from Pigafetta

The most complete account of the Magellan expedition is that by Antonio Pigafetta entitled *Primo viaggio intorno al mondo* (First Voyage Around the World). Like Albo, he was a member of the expedition and was therefore an eyewitness of the principal events which he describes, including the first Mass in what is now known as the Philippine Archipelago, but which Magellan called the Islands of Saint Lazarus. Of Pigafetta's work there are two excellent English translations, one by Robertson (from the Italian) and another by Skelton (from the French).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Antonio Pigafetta was among the eighteen survivors who returned to Spain with Eicano aboard the "Victoria". Pigafetta tried to interest Charles V of Spain in his account of the voyage. When no interest was shown, he returned to Italy and there wrote a fuller account from his day-to-day notes, which he entitled *Primo viaggio intorno al mondo*. His plans for publication failed. But a French translation (in summary form) appeared in Paris in 1525, and in Italian (retranslated from the French) in 1536. Ramusio included Pigafetta's account in his *Delle navigationi et viaggi* which first appeared in Venice in 1550 and was reprinted many times thereafter. Peter Martyr (Pietro Martire d'Anghiera) included Pigafetta's account in his own collection, which was translated into English and published in London in 1555. Several manuscripts of Pigafetta's work exist, of which the one considered most authentic is the Ambrosian codex in Milan. That manuscript was published in its Italian text in 1894. What James Alexander Robertson did, however, was remarkable. Instead of merely translating from the printed text of 1894, Robertson went back to the original manuscript and reprinted the Ambrosian codex, together with his translation. Robertson's work appeared in a limited edition in three volumes at Cleveland in 1906. (See Charles E. Nowell, *Magellan's Voyage Around the World: Three Contemporary Accounts*, Northeastern University Press, Evanston, 1962.) — (Some of the above-mentioned works and editions, but not all, are mentioned in the Bemardo-Verzosa Philippine Retrospective National Bibliography, 1523-1699 [Manila 1974] nos. 5, 12, 18, 19, 31, 82, 177, 208.) — Robertson's English translation was incorporated in Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*, vols. 33 and 34. It has been reproduced by Nowell (op. cit.). Previously it had also been reprinted by the Filipinana Book Guild (Manila 1969) in Vol. XIV of their series. — Robertson's translation was from the Italian codex in Milan. An entirely different translation is that of R. A. Skelton, translated from the French of the Nancy codex which is now at Yale. A facsimile edition of that codex with the translation has been published by Yale University Press in two volumes (New Haven 1969).

The pertinent section in Pigafetta's account is that part in which he narrates the events from the 16th of March 1521 when they first sighted the islands of the Philippine Group, up to the 7th of April when the expedition landed at Cebu. That was a period of approximately three weeks. (We have reproduced this entire section in Appendix B, below, from Robertson's translation. It corresponds to chapters 16 to 20 in the Skelton translation.)

In examining the evidence from Pigafetta, we shall consider five points: (a) Pigafetta's testimony as regards the route taken by the expedition from the Pacific Ocean to Cebu; (b) The evidence of Pigafetta's map; (c) The presence of two native kings; (d) The events of the seven days at the island of "Mazaua"; (e) An argument from omission.

### *(a) Pigafetta's Testimony Regarding the Route*

The route taken by the Magellan expedition may be reconstructed if we follow Pigafetta's account day by day. Here is a summary of his account.<sup>25</sup>

1. *Saturday, 16 March 1521.* — Magellan's expedition sighted a "high land" named "Zamal" which was some 300 leagues westward of the Ladrones (now the Marianas) Islands.

2. *Sunday, March 17.* — "The following day" after sighting Zamal Island, they landed on "another island which was uninhabited" and which lay "to the right" of the above-mentioned island of "Zamal." (To the "right" here would mean on their starboard going south or southwest.) There they set up two tents for the sick members of the crew and had a sow killed for them. The name of this island was "Humunu" (Homonhon). This island was located at 10 degrees North latitude.

3. On that same day (*Sunday, 17 March*) Magellan named the entire archipelago the "Islands of Saint Lazarus", the reason being that it was the Sunday in the Lenten season when the Gospel assigned for the Mass and the liturgical Office was the eleventh chapter of St. John, which tells of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

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<sup>25</sup>The dates given here are as given by Pigafetta. Modern attempts to transpose the dates to modern usage are anachronistic, as there was then no International Date Line and the Gregorian Calendar had not yet been introduced.

4. *Monday, 18 March.* — In the afternoon of their second day on that island, they saw a boat coming towards them with nine men in it. A exchange of gifts was effected. Magellan asked for food supplies, and the men went away, promising to bring rice and other supplies in “four days.”

5. There were two springs of water on that island of Homonhon. Also they saw there some indications that there was gold in these islands. Consequently Magellan renamed the island and called it the “Watering Place of Good Omen” (*Acquada la di bouni segnialli*).

6. *Friday, 22 March.* — At noon the natives returned. This time they were in two boats, and they brought food supplies.

7. Magellan’s expedition stayed eight days at Homonhon: from Sunday, 17 March, to the Monday of the following week, 25 March.

8. *Monday, 25 March.* — In the afternoon, the expedition weighed anchor and left the island of Homonhon. In the ecclesiastical calendar, this day (25 March) was the feast-day of the Incarnation, also called the feast of the Annunciation and therefore “Our Lady’s Day.” On this day, as they were about to weigh anchor, an accident happened to Pigafetta: he fell into the water but was rescued. He attributed his narrow escape from death as a grace obtained through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary on her feast-day.

9. The route taken by the expedition after leaving Homonhon was “toward the west southwest, between four islands: namely, Cenalo, Hiunanghan, Ibusson and Albarien.” Very probably “Cenalo” is a misspelling in the Italian manuscript for what Pigafetta in his map calls “Ceilon” and Albo calls “Seilani”: namely the island of Leyte. “Hiunanghan” (a misspelling of Hinunangan) seemed to Pigafetta to be a separate island, but it is actually on the mainland of Leyte (i.e. “Ceylon”). On the other hand, Hibuson (Pigafetta’s Ibusson) is an island east of Leyte’s southern tip.

Thus, it is easy to see what Pigafetta meant by sailing “toward the west southwest” past those islands. They left Homonhon sailing westward towards Leyte, then followed the Leyte coast southward, passing between the island of Hibuson on their portside and Hiunangan Bay on their starboard, and then continued southward, then turning westward to “Mazaua”.

10. *Thursday, 28 March.* — In the morning of Holy Thursday, 28 March, they anchored off an island where the previous night they had

seen a light or a bonfire. That island “lies in a latitude of nine and two-thirds towards the Arctic Pole [i.e. North] and in a longitude of one hundred and sixty-two degrees from the line of demarcation.”<sup>26</sup> It is twenty-five leagues from the Acquada, and is called Mazaua”.

11. They remained seven days on Mazaua Island. What they did during those seven days, we shall discuss in a separate section below, entitled “Seven Days at Mazaua.”

12. *Thursday, 4 April.* — They left Mazaua, bound for Cebu. They were guided thither by the king of Mazaua who sailed in his own boat. Their route took them past five “islands”: namely: “Ceylon, Bohol, Canighan, Baibai, and Gatighan.”

Pigafetta thought that Ceylon and Baibai were separate islands. Actually they were parts of the same island of Leyte. “Canighan” (Canigao in our maps) is an island off the sothwestern tip of Leyte. They sailed from Mazaua west by northwest into the Canigao Channel, with Bohol Island to port and Leyte and Canigao Islands to starboard. Then they sailed northwards along the Leyte coast, past Baibai to “Gatighan”. The identity of Gatighan is not certain. But we are told that it was twenty leagues from Mazaua and fifteen leagues from “Subu” (Cebu).

13. At Gatighan, they sailed westward to the three islands of the Camotes Group, namely, Poro, Pasihan and Ponson. (Pigafetta calls them “Polo, Ticobon, and Pozon.”) Here the Spanish ships stopped to allow the king of Mazaua to catch up with them, since the Spanish ships were much faster than the native *balanghai* — a thing that excited the admiration of the king of Mazaua.

14. From the Camotes Islands they sailed [southwestward] towards “Zubu”.

15. *Sunday, 7 April.* — At noon on Sunday, the 7th of April, they entered the harbor of “Zubu” (Cebu). It had taken them three days to negotiate the journey from Mazaua northwards to the Camotes Islands and then southwards to Cebu.

That is the route of the Magellan expedition as described by Pigafetta. It coincides substantially and in most details with the route

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<sup>26</sup>By the line of demarcation Pigafetta was referring to that drawn at the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) giving to Spain all newly discovered lands west, and to Portugal east, of a line drawn 370 leagues west of the Azores and Cape Verde Islands.

as described in Albo's log. In that route, the southernmost point reached before getting to Cebu was Mazaua, situated at nine and two-thirds degrees North latitude.

The question may now be asked: Could this "Mazaua" have been Butuan? Or more precisely, could it have been the "Masao" beach in the Agusan River delta, near Butuan?

To answer that let us look at Pigafetta's map, and consider the confirmatory evidence regarding the two kings.

### *(b) The evidence of Pigafetta's Maps*

Both the Ambrosian and the Nancy codices of Pigafetta's narrative are illustrated with maps, or more precisely, diagrams or sketches. Pigafetta was no cartographer and his maps had probably no value as navigational charts. But they are extremely useful in helping to identify the islands which he mentions in the narrative, and they help to establish the relative positions (and even the relative sizes) of those islands.

One such map (Blair and Robertson, Vol. 33) shows the Irge island of Samar (in the map it is spelt Zzamal), and the smaller islands of Suluan, Abarien, Hiunangan, and "Humunu" (Homonhon), which is also described as "*Aguada ly boni segnaly*."

A second map (BR 33) is really a double map. One map shows the island of Mindanao or Maguindanao (the map spells it *Mamgdanao*). It shows on the northern shore a deep indentation which is recognizably Panguil Bay. To the west of that is "Cippit". To the extreme east, bordering on the Pacific, are Butuan, Calagan, and Benasan (spelt in the map Butuam, Calagam, Benasam). The other map shows the southern tip of Zamboanga, the island of Basilan, and the Sulu archipelago.

A third map (BR 33) is the one most pertinent to our present investigation, because it shows the island of Mazaua (the map spells it Mazzana) in relation to the "islands" of "Ceilon" and "Baibai" (i.e. Leyte) and to those of Bohol, Gatighan and the three islands of the Camotes Group (in the map called Polon, Pozon and Ticobon) <sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup>In the Nancy codex this map is on fol. 35v and is reproduced opposite page 73 of Skelton's translation (Yale 1969).

We have reproduced these maps in these pages. Note that they are all drawn facing South, i.e. with the South at the top of the page, probably because Pigafetta first encountered some of these islands while they were sailing southwards from Samar.

From a comparison of these maps, the following inferences seem justified:

1. Mazaua (Mazzana in the map) is a small island which lies off the southwestern tip of the larger island of Ceilon (Southern Leyte), and is to the east of the island of Bohol. It lies near the passage between Bohol and the western coast of "Ceilon" (Leyte).

2. The island of Mazaua in Pigafetta's map, therefore lies in a position roughly equivalent to the actual position of the island of Limasawa.

3. In no way can Mazaua be identified with Butuan, which is situated in another and much larger island (which we now call Mindanao), the same island in which "Calagan", "Cippit", and "Mamgdanao" are also located.

### *(c) The Two Kings*

There is confirmatory evidence in the presence of two native "kings" or rajahs at Mazaua during the Magellan visit. One was the "king" of Mazaua — who later guided the Magellan expedition to Cebu. The other was a relative ("one of his brothers" as Pigafetta says), namely the king or rajah of Butuan.

Of this latter individual, Pigafetta says that he was "the finest looking man" that he had seen in those parts. (We shall have more to say about him later.) At the moment, the relevant fact is that he was a visitor to Mazaua. His territory was Butuan, which was in another island:

That island of his was called Butuan and Calagan. When those kings wished to see one another, they both went to hunt in that island where we were.

The "island where we were" was Mazaua, where they stayed seven days. Therefore Mazaua could not have been Butuan.

(d) *Seven Days at Mazaua*

In that island of "Mazaua" — which according to both Pigafetta and Albo was situated at a latitude of nine and two-thirds degrees North — the Magellan expedition stayed a week. "We remained there seven days," says Pigafetta. What did they do during those seven days?

Was it possible (as some writers have suggested) that the expedition left Mazaua, went south to Butuan, offered Mass there, and then returned to Mazaua before proceeding to Cebu?

The answer must be sought in Pigafetta's day-by-day account of those seven days. Here is the summary of his account:

1. *Thursday, 28 March.* — In the morning they anchored near an island where they had seen a light the night before. A small boat (*boloto*) came with eight natives, to whom Magellan threw some trinkets as presents. The natives paddled away, but two hours later two larger boats (*balanghai*) came, in one of which the native king sat under an awning of mats. At Magellan's invitation some of the natives went up the Spanish ship, but the native king remained seated in his boat. An exchange of gifts was effected. In the afternoon of that day, the Spanish ships weighed anchor and came closer to shore, anchoring near the native king's village. This Thursday, 28 March, was Thursday in Holy Week: i.e. Holy Thursday.

2. *Friday, 29 March.* — "Next day. Holy Friday, " Magellan sent his slave interpreter ashore in a small boat to ask the king if he could provide the expedition with food supplies, and to say that they had come as friends and not as enemies. In reply the king himself came in a boat with six or eight men, and this time went up Magellan's ship and the two men embraced. Another exchange of gifts was made. The native king and his companions returned ashore, bringing with them two members of Magellan's expedition as guests for the night. One of the two was Pigafetta.

3. *Saturday, 30 March.* — Pigafetta and his companion had spent the previous evening feasting and drinking with the native king and his son. Pigafetta deplored the fact that, although it was Good Friday, they had to eat meat. The following morning (Saturday) Pigafetta and his companion took leave of their hosts and returned to the ships.

4. *Sunday, 31 March.* — "Early in the morning of Sunday, the last of March and Easter day," Magellan sent the priest ashore with some



men to prepare for the Mass. Later in the morning Magellan landed with some fifty men and Mass was celebrated, after which a cross was venerated. Magellan and the Spaniards returned to the ship for the noon-day meal, but in the afternoon they returned ashore to plant the cross on the summit of the highest hill. In attendance both at the Mass and at the planting of the cross were the king of Mazaua and the king of Butuan.

5. *Sunday, 31 March.* — On that same afternoon, while on the summit of the highest hill, Magellan asked the two kings which ports he should go to in order to obtain more abundant supplies of food than were available in that island. They replied that there were three ports to choose from: Ceylon, Zubu and Calagan. Of the three, Zubu was the port with the most trade. Magellan then said that he wished to go to Zubu and to depart the following morning. He asked for someone to guide him thither. The kings replied that the pilots would be available “any time.” But later that evening the king of Mazaua changed his mind and said that he would himself conduct Magellan to Zubu but that he would first have to bring the harvest in. He asked Magellan to send him men to help with the harvest.

6. *Monday, 1 April.* — Magellan sent men ashore to help with the harvest, but no work was done that day because the two kings were sleeping off their drinking bout of the night before.

7. *Tuesday, 2 April, and Wednesday, 3 April.* — Work on the harvest during the “next two days”, i.e. Tuesday and Wednesday, the 2nd and 3rd of April.

*Thursday, 4 April.* — They leave Mazaua, bound for Cebu.

“We remained there seven days,” says Pigafetta. Every day is accounted for. The Mass on Easter Sunday was celebrated on that island of Mazaua, and not in Butuan or elsewhere.

### (e) *An Argument from Omission*

If “Mazaua” were Butuan, or in the vicinity of Butuan, there is a curious omission in Pigafetta’s account which would be difficult to explain. Butuan is a riverine settlement. It is situated on the Agusan River. The beach called Masao is in the delta of that river. If the Magellan expedition were at that delta, and if the Mass were celebrated there, why is there no mention of the river?

Later on, after Magellan's death and after the Cebu debacle, the survivors of his expedition went to Mindanao and it seems, actually went to Butuan. Pigafetta describes quite vividly a trip up river to see the queen. But that was *after* Magellan's death. Forty years later, members of Legaspi's expedition visited Butuan, and the river anchorage forms a very important part of their account.

The fact that there is no mention of the river is a significant fact in Pigafetta's account of their seven-day stay at "Mazaua." We must therefore take him literally: Mazaua was an island surrounded by sea, not a river delta.

### *3. Summary of the Evidence of Albo and Pigafetta*

Taking the evidence of Albo's log-book together with that from Pigafetta's account, we may take the following points as established:

1. Magellan's expedition entered Philippine waters south of the island of Samar and dropped anchor at Homonhon where they stayed a week. Then they sailed westward towards Leyte and then southwards parallel to the eastern coast of that island and that of the adjoining island of Panaon. Rounding the southern tip of the latter, they anchored off the eastern shore of a small island called Mazaua. There they stayed a week, during which on Easter Sunday they celebrated Mass and planted the cross on the summit of the highest hill.

2. The island of Mazaua lies at a latitude of nine and two-thirds degrees North. Its position (south of Leyte) and its latitude correspond to the position and latitude of the island of Limasawa, whose southern tip lies at 9 degrees and 54 minutes North.

3. From Mazaua the expedition sailed northwestwards through the Canigao channel between Bohol and Leyte, then northerwards parallel to the eastern coast of this latter island, then they sailed westward to the Camotes Group and from there southwestwards to Cebu.

4. At no point in that itinerary did the Magellan expedition go to Butuan or any other point on the Mindanao coast. The survivors of the expedition did go to Mindanao later, but after Magellan's death.

#### 4. *The Legazpi Expedition*

There is confirmatory evidence from the documents of the Legazpi expedition, which sailed into Philippine waters in 1565, forty-four years after Magellan. One of the places that Legazpi and his pilots were anxious to visit was precisely Mazaua, and to this end they inquired about “Mazaua” from Camotuan and his companions, natives of the village of Cabalian at the southeastern end of the island of Leyte. Guided by these natives, the Legazpi ships rounded the island of “Panae” (Panaon), which was separated from Leyte by a narrow strait, and anchored off “Mazaua” — but they found the inhabitants to be hostile, apparently as a result of Portuguese depredations that had occurred in the four-decade interval between the Legazpi and the Magellan expeditions.

From Mazaua they went to Camiguing (which was “visible” from Mazaua), and from there they intended to go to Butuan on the island of “Vindanao” but were driven instead by contrary winds to Bohol. It was only later that a small contingent of Spaniards, in a small vessel, managed to go to Butuan.

The point seem clear: As pilots of the Legazpi expedition understood it, Mazaua was an island near Leyte and Panaon; Butuan was on the island of Mindanao. The two were entirely different places and in no wise identical.<sup>28</sup>

#### IV. *The Geography of “Mazaua”*

The question may be asked: If “Mazaua” is the little island of Limasawa, why did Magellan go there? Why go to an insignificant little island; why not instead to the larger islands? The answer must be sought in geography. He was coasting southward down the eastern coast of Leyte (Albo’s “Seilani”; Pigafetta’s “Ceylon”) with Hibuson Island on his left. This took him down to the southern tip of what looks like a part of Leyte but is really a separate island, the island of Panaon. When his ships rounded the tip of Panaon, the wind was blowing westward from the Pacific. It was late March: in March and April in this part of the Philippines, the east wind is strong. It is what the

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<sup>28</sup>See Appendix C, below, for the account of the Legazpi expedition’s visit to “Mazaua” and the attempted visit to Butuan.

people of Limasawa call the "Dumagsa", the east wind. Sailing with the wind, Magellan's vessels would find themselves going west or south-west, toward the island of Limasawa. Having seen a light on the island one night, they dedded the following day to anchor off it.

A visit to Limasawa will convince the traveller that here indeed is the place circumstantially described by Pigafetta. The island is shaped 'like a tadpole, running north to south. The northern portion is almost all hills, with the slopes dropping steeply to the sea, leaving only a narrow coastal strip. But the southern portion of the island is almost all level land with a few hills. It has a good harbor, protected on the west by Panaon Island and on the east by Limasawa. The fields in this portion of the island are fertile. It is easy to understand why an expedition should wish to stay a week anchored off this fertile island where the natives were friendly and there was enough food, water and wood. Here the Mass could be said with solemnity. Here, on one of the hills, the cross could be planted which everyone could see from the plain. And from the top of that hill could be seen the islands to the south, to the west and to the east.

It is unfortunate that in the controversy that has arisen between the supporters of Butuan and those of Limasawa, this question of geography has been given little notice.

If the island of Limasawa is the "Mazaua" of Pigafetta and the "Masava" of Albo, why then is it now called Limasawa? Were Pigafetta and Albo wrong? Or were the historians and map-makers wrong from the 17th century onward?

We do not have the answer to that question. Except to state that in the southern part of Leyte, the island is still referred to by the fisher-folk as "Masaoa", not Limasawa.

### *V. Why Then the Butuan Tradition?*

How then did the strong three-century tradition in favor of Butuan arise? Here we are in the realm of conjecture, but a number of reasons could be adduced to account for the tradition.

First, it must be remembered that the tradition is based on second-hand information. One author repeats (and often distorts) what previous authors have written, and is in turn copied (and distorted)

by subsequent authors. In such a chain, one author making a mistake could easily start a tradition that could last three centuries.

A second reason is suggested by Pastells. Magellan and his men got to know the rajah of Butuan at Masaua. According to Pigafetta, that rajah was at Masaua only on a visit. But it is easy to see how the fact that Magellan had known the rajah of Butuan could be misunderstood by later historians as meaning that he had known him at Butuan.

There is a third reason. It must be remembered that the Butuan tradition, while erroneous as to the site of the first Mass, is not entirely without validity. Magellan's expedition, after Magellan's death, visited several places in Mindanao, very probably including Butuan. (The riverine community described by Pigafetta in a later section of his account could have been Butuan.) Certainly, forty years later, members of Legazpi's expedition visited Butuan. The people of the district would remember these visits by the bearded white-skinned men from Europe in their big ships, and a tradition could have grown among the people that "the first Spaniards came here." The Spanish missionaries coming to Butuan would pick up this tradition and come to the conclusion that Magellan's expedition had visited Butuan. They would not have been entirely wrong in that conclusion, as survivors of Magellan's expedition may actually have visited Butuan but after Magellan's death at Mactan. From the tradition that "Magellan visited Butuan," it is easy for incautious historians to conclude that "therefore the first Mass must have been celebrated at Butuan."

On the other hand, the Butuan tradition may not have started in Butuan but in Europe. In that supposition, two questions might be asked: Who started it, and how was it started? The answer to the first question (who?) is not clear; the answer to the second (how?) is clear enough. To illustrate how easily a second-hand source could be mistaken in a matter like the site of the first Mass, all we have to do is to examine the evidence of the earliest and most important of the second-hand sources, namely Maximilian of Transylvania, commonly known as Transylvanus. His letter, *De Moluccis Insulis* was the first published account of the Magellan expedition. It was first printed at Cologne in January 1523, only two years after Magellan's discovery of the Philippine Islands. Maximilian got his data from the survivors who had returned on the "Victoria". His account is therefore important, but it is a second-hand account. Here is what he says:

Our men having taken in water in Acaca, sailed towards Selani; here a storm took them, so that they could not bring the ships to that island, but were driven to another island called Massaua, where lives a king of three islands, after that they arrived at Subuth. This is an excellent and large island, and having made a treaty with its chief-tain, they landed immediately to perform divine service, according to the manner of the Christians, for it was the feast of the resurrection of Him who was our salvation. . . .<sup>29</sup>

Maximilian locates the first Mass on Easter Sunday, 1521, at Cebu, which he spells Subuth. He is clearly wrong: but if he could make a mistake who had eyewitnesses of the event for his source, how much easier was it for later writers to err, who had to depend on second- or third- or fourth-hand testimony for their data?<sup>30</sup>

One thing is dear: whoever started the tradition that the first Mass was celebrated at Butuan, it was certainly neither Pigafetta nor Albo, nor Maximilian of Transylvania.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>*De Moluccis Insulis*, James Baynes translation, in *Magellan's Voyage Around the World: Three Contemporary Accounts*, ed. Charles E. Nowell (Evanston 1962), p. 293.

<sup>30</sup>Another writer who had access to the survivors of the Magellan expedition and to their papers was Gaspar Correa, who was in the Indies at the time. He mentions nothing of the first Mass in the Philippines, but in other matters, despite his contact with first-hand data, his account in most matters is full of inaccuracies. For instance, he has Magellan killed at a banquet, instead of at Mactan. (*Lendas da India*, in Nowell, op. cit., pp. 312 ff.)

<sup>31</sup>After this article was already in press, a manuscript was sent to me in March 1980 by Father Peter Schreurs MSC, pastor of the church in Magajlanes, near Butuan. He treats of almost the same points as here, although from a different angle. That manuscript contains the following suggestion as to how the Butuan tradition may have originated: "At least one very early map (rather sketch) could be included among the primary sources .... In 1523 when the only surviving ship of Magellan's expedition had returned to Europe, Garda de Torreno prepared the first known sketch of the southern Philippines. A comparison with a more complete map made in Amsterdam in 1570 by Abraham Ortelius puts us smack in the middle of the controversy: Torreno locates 'Mazzaua' in a place away from Butuan (roughly north of Bohol and obviously intended to be Limasawa) while Ortelius plunks his 'Messana' down next to Butuan! It seems as if the Butuan tradition took off from the second map, which, however, is a secondary source!"

## VI. *The Importance of Butuan*

It must be remembered that we are dealing here solely with a question of fact: Was the first Mass on Philippine soil — namely the one celebrated on Eastern Sunday in March 1521 — was it celebrated at Butuan or Limasawa? To reject the Butuan claim is in no way to downgrade the cultural or historical importance of Butuan.

Indeed, it is about time that Philippine historians and students of Philippine culture should awaken to the importance of Butuan in prehistoric days.

Pigafetta himself is a witness to that importance. The king of Butuan, he says, “was the finest looking man that we saw among those people.” Here is how Pigafetta describes him:

His hair was exceedingly black and hung to his shoulders. He had a covering of silk on his head, and wore two large golden earrings fastened in his ears. He wore a cotton doth all embroidered with silk, which covered him from the waist to the knees. At his side hung a dagger, the haft of which was somewhat long and all of gold, and its scabbard of carved wood. He had three spots of gold on every tooth, and his teeth appeared as if bound with gold. He was perfumed with storax and benzoin. He was tawny and painted [i.e. tattooed] all over.

From hearsay, Pigafetta tells us of the splendors of the kingdom of Butuan of which he had heard:

Pieces of gold the size of walnuts and eggs are found by sifting the earth in the island of that king who came to our ships. All the dishes of that king are of gold and also some portion of his house, as we were told by the king himself. According to their customs he was very grandly decked out, and the finest looking man that we saw among those people.

From the accounts of Legazpi’s expedition, which visited Butuan forty-four years after Magellan’s death, we know that Butuan was an important trading port for interisland (and possibly for foreign) commerce.

A visit to the new Museum at Butuan (officially affiliated to the National Museum in 1978) will dissipate any doubts as to the archaeological importance of Butuan and the Agusan River delta.

Almost all of the archaeological artifacts on display in that museum had been dug up in that delta.

Butuan's importance is underlined by the fact that it was the first place in Mindanao where a Christian mission was established. It was served, first by the Jesuits and later by the Augustinian Recollects.

Thus, the importance of Butuan in the history of the Philippines is in no way dependent upon its claim to have been the site of the first Mass in the Philippines. To reject that claim is in no way to belittle Butuan's importance. Butuan in its own right deserves an honorable place in the study of Philippine culture and history.

### *The Butuan Monument*

Let us now go back to where we started, namely to the monument erected in 1872 at Magallanes, near Butuan. The site where it was erected was near the river-edge and after a few decades that site went under water. The monument was saved by the local population, who dragged it to higher ground and left it lying on its side. There it remained for decades. In 1953 a petition was sent to the National Historical Committee (which had been created in 1933 and of which Luis Montilla was the current chairman) asking that the Butuan monument be rehabilitated and reerected. This petition put the Committee in a quandary, since to comply with it would give the impression that the Philippine government was giving official sanction to the tradition that the first Mass on Philippine soil had been celebrated at Butuan. Accordingly, the petition was referred to the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. O.D. Opiana, for study and comment. Opiana formulated his conclusions and recommendations in a memorandum addressed to Montilla dated 30 September 1953. In that memorandum, Opiana reviewed some of the evidence in favor of the Butuan tradition by citing some of the authors that support it. Then, having quoted an impressive array of authorities in favor of Butuan, the Butuan contention was brushed aside, merely quoting what seemed (in that context) an apodictic statement by Don Jayme de Veyra: "*En Limasawa y no en Butuan fue en donde se celebró la primera Misa en estas regiones.*" ("In Limasawa, not in Butuan, the first Mass in these regions was celebrated.")



De Veyra gave no proof for his verdict, except to say that he “remembered” having seen among Pardo de Tavera’s papers a manuscript on this subject, entitled “*Notas para una cartografía de Filipinas*” (Notes for a Philippine cartography). On the strength of this, Opiana recommended to the National Historical Committee that the petition to rehabilitate the Butuan monument be dismissed.

The Committee did not accept this recommendation, although they accepted De Veyra’s (and Pardo de Tavera’s) opinion. They compromised. On 11 December 1953 they passed a resolution, agreeing to comply with the petition to rehabilitate and reerect the Butuan monument; but they stipulated that the marble slab with the inscription claiming that this was the site of the first Mass should be removed “for revision purposes.”

The Committee’s action was correct, and so, for that matter, was Opiana’s memorandum. Nevertheless, it is easy to understand why the defenders of the Butuan tradition should have been offended by what to them must have seemed like a high-handed and arbitrary rejection of their claim. They were not shown why the Butuan tradition was wrong; nor were they given valid reasons why De Veyra’s verdict was correct.<sup>32</sup>

In the event, despite the resolution of 1953, the Historical Committee apparently did nothing to rehabilitate the Butuan monument. When I saw it in 1978 (a quarter century after the Historical Committee’s resolution) the monument was still lying on its side. The benchmark of the U.S. naval survey of 1905 was still there.<sup>33</sup> But the original marble slab of 1872 had been removed.

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<sup>32</sup>In the Filipiniana section of the University of San Carlos library, Cebu City, there is a carbon copy of a letter from Luis Montilla, Chairman of the National Historical Committee, to Emilio Quisumbing in Cebu, dated 7 September 1954, in reply to the latter’s inquiry regarding the Butuan monument. Enclosed with Montilla’s letter is a copy of the Opiana Memorandum of 30 September 1953. (I wish to take this occasion to acknowledge the helpfulness and constant kindness shown to myself and to other visiting scholars by the staff of the Filipiniana Section of the University of San Carlos Library.)

<sup>33</sup>The benchmark is a bronze plaque with the following inscription: “Bench Marck. / Scribed line on bold Head / 945 feet above place of MLW / Survey of the Agusan River / August 1st - November 25th 1905. / USS Arayat / Lieut. R. del Hasbrouch USN Commanding / Ensign J. C. Townsend USN.” That inscription is useful in this connection, in that it shows that in 1905 (33 years after its erection) the monument was still in place.

In 1978, however, a more honorable future was being prepared for that monument. The municipal authorities were constructing a concrete pedestal, shaped like the prow of a ship, upon which to mount the monument. That monument should be preserved. In its own right it is a historic artifact. But the historical error in the 1872 inscription should be pointed out for what it is: a historical error. 