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The Voyages of Giovanni Da Verrazzano

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THE VOYAGES OF GIOVANNI DA VERRAZZANO. By Lawrence C. Wroth. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970. xvi, 319 pages, two portraits, appendixes, bibliography, map list, index, cartographic plates. \$25.00 cloth.

By the year 1514 the Portuguese had found and surveyed an "unhampered" route to the Moluccas. In September 1522 the *Victoria*, the single remnant of Magellan's fleet, leaving its chief dead on Mactan, completed its circumnavigation of the world. But neither of these feats solved the West's problem of communicating with the Far East. The hardships and length of such voyages made them impracticable for ordinary commerce. Yet the sky-high prices of Eastern silks, spices, dyes, and drugs in Europe made the problem a pressing one. Martin Behaim's globe in 1492 listed ten transshipments between Java and France, each with its impositions of freighting charges and tolls.

Giovanni da Verrazzano, a navigator of Florentine origin, aimed to overcome this impasse by finding a shorter route which he thought might run through the American land mass somewhere between Florida and Newfoundland. He got Francois I of France to back the trip he eventually made in 1524 to the eastern coast of what is now the United States and Canada in one vessel, the *Dauphine*. In his own account of the expedition he wrote:

My intention on this voyage was to reach Cathay and the extreme eastern coast of Asia, but I did not expect to find such an obstacle of new land as I have found; and if for some reason I did expect to find it, I estimated there would be some strait to get through to the Eastern Ocean.

Lawrence Wroth's volume presents Verrazzano's own narrative. The Italian text reproduced in photographs and print and translated into English is the Cèllere Codex. It is a transcript in court hand of Verrazzano's first draft annotated by the explorer himself and directed to Francois I, his sponsor. The first ninety pages of Wroth's work give the historical and technical background of the voyage. The next sixty present the Codex itself and the history of the manuscript. Sixty subsequent pages sum up the aftermath of the expedition and its influence on the cartography of the decades following. The last forty-five discuss the evidence for Verrazzano's later voyages and the controversy surrounding his death.

Wroth, a former research professor in American history, Brown University, skilfully uses Verrazzano's narrative to study the early explorations of the eastern coast of North America. The book is finely edited and produced, with forty-four full page plates depicting maps and globes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One of these, the Sebastian Münster map of 1544 (Plate 32), shows an "archipelago of 7448 islands" (the Philippines?) lying between Zipangri (Japan) and the coast of China. Its southernmost islands lie at the same latitude (about 15° N) as modern Quezon City and the British island of Dominica in the West Indies. It is interesting to note that the fifteenth and sixteenth century explorations of the eastern coasts of America were, almost without exception, nothing but frustrated searches for Southeast Asia. One of these searches, Verrazzano's, gave Europe its

first geographical and ethnological survey of the region now comprising New York's Lower and Upper Bays, the Narrows, Narragansett Bay, and Newport, Rhode Island and in broader perspective all the regions adjacent to these.

Verrazzano's lifetime, like the few decades between 1940 and the present, witnessed an enormous enlargement of man's mind and a stimulation of his imagination — due in that age less perhaps to group effort and more to the individual accomplishments of men like Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, Magellan, Balboa, Cortés, Erasmus, Thomas More, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Copernicus. The present work, therefore, is an important contribution to the history and geography of a time of great human achievement.

In Chapter Five Professor Wroth corrects several of Verrazzano's errors in topography and measurement of distance. To these could be added a rectification of a Scriptural reference of the great explorer in the last sentence of his narrative: *che si adempia la sacra voce de lo evangelio, In omnem terram exiit sonus eorum etc.* The text mentioned is not from the Gospels but from Psalm 19, 4 and is cited by St. Paul in Rom. 10, 18.

Thomas J. O'Shaughnessy, S.J.

A CATALOG OF FILIPINIANA AT VALLADOLID. Edited by Helen R. Tubangui. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1973. xv, 364 pages.

A number of books listing the holdings of public and private Filipiniana collections here and abroad have earlier been published. To name some taken at random: *Union Catalog of Philippine Materials of Sixty-Four Government Agency Libraries of the Philippines* (Manila, 1962), Doris Varner Welsh's *A Catalogue of Printed Materials relating to the Philippine Islands in the Newberry Library* (Chicago, 1959) and Isagani R. Medina's *Filipiniana Materials in the National Library* (Quezon City, 1973).

Helen R. Tubangui's *A Catalog of Filipiniana at Valladolid* is the latest addition to this growing list. To be sure, such listings are invaluable research tools to the scholar and student of Philippine history and culture, facilitating as they do the search for materials.

The Filipiniana Collection of the Colegio de los Padres Agustinos in Valladolid, Spain, more popularly known as the Colegio de los Filipinos (for hundreds of years it trained missionaries destined for the Philippines) is possibly the richest private repository of Philippine original printed and manuscript source materials in Spain. In it are found many items not listed by the early bibliographers Retana, Medina, and Pardo de Tavera.