

# BUTUAN OR LIMASAWA?

THE SITE OF THE FIRST MASS IN THE PHILIPPINES



## ABSTRACT

- In 1998, the National Historical Institute officially settled the long standing controversy over the site of the recorded first mass in the Philippines on March 31, 1521 between Limasawa Southern Leyte, and Masao in Butuan City in Mindanao.



## WHO IS FRANCISCO ALBO?

- ❑ was a Greek sailor of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- ❑ He was part of the Magellan's – Elcano expedition, ending the trip as pilot of the Victoria.
- ❑ Francisco Albo was the captain of one of Magellan's ship "Trinidad" and also one of the 18 survivors of Victoria ship.



## WHO IS ANTONIO PIGAFETTA?

- ❑ was an Italian scholar and explorer.
- ❑ He served as Magellan's assistant and kept an accurate journal, which later assisted him in translating the Cebuano language.
- ❑ He joined the expedition to the Spice Islands led by explorer Ferdinand Magellan under the flag of the emperor Charles V.

## ALBO'S LOG-BOOK

- ❑ On the 16<sup>th</sup> day of March (1521) they sailed in a westerly course from Ladrones, they saw land towards the northwest; but owing to many shallow places they didn't approach it. They found later that its name was Yunagan.
- ❑ 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 approach. This island was 9 and two-thirds degrees North latitude.
- ❑ Departing from those 2 island, 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 Pigafettas testimony, this seems to be the "Aquada" or Homonhon, at 10 degrees North latitude.)

- ❑ From that island they sailed westwards towards a large island names Seilani that was inhabited and was known have gold. (Seilani or, as Pigafetta calls it, Ceylon-was the island of Leyte.)
- ❑ Sailing southwards along the coast of the large island Seilani, they turned southwest to a small island called "Masaua". That island is also at a latitude of 9 and two-third degrees North.

## PIGAFETTA'S ACCOUNT

- ❑ Saturday, March 16, 1521 – Magellan's expedition sighted a high land named "Zamal" which was some 300 leagues westward Ladrones (Marianas) island.
- ❑ 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".
- ❑ Monday, March 18 – In the afternoon of their second day on that island, they saw a boat coming towards them with 9 men in it.

- ❑ There were 2 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 the Good omen" (Acquada la di bouni segniali).
- ❑ Friday, March 22 – At noon the natives returned. This time they were in 2 boats, and they brought food supplies.
- ❑ Monday, March 25 – In the afternoon, the expedition weighed anchor and left the island of Homonhon. In the ecclesiastical calendar, this day was the feast day of the Incarnation, also called the feast of the Annunciation and therefore "Our Ladys Day".
- ❑ The route taken by the expedition after leaving Homonhon was toward the west southwest, between 4 islands: namely Celano, Hiunanghan, Ibusson and Albarien.

- ☐ Thursday, March 28 – In the morning of Holy Thursday, March 28, they anchored off an island where the previous night they seen a light or a bonfire.
- ☐ Two native chieftains were in attendance: the Rajah of Mazaua and the Rajah of Butuan.
- ☐ Early in the morning of Sunday, the last March of Easter-day Magellan sent a priest with some men to prepare the place where the Mass was to be said; together with interpreter to tell the king that they did not going to land where to dine with them, but to say Mass.
- ☐ They remained 7 days on Mazaua island.
- ☐ Thursday, April 4 – They left Mazaua, bound to Cebu.

## Arguments in Pigafetta's account

Primary source;

- Work of the Jesuit Miguel a. Bernardo entitled, " Butuan or Limasawa: The site of the first mass in the Philippines: A re examination of evidence (1981)
- In Pigafetta's account a crucial aspect of Butuan was not mentioned- THE RIVER
- It can be pointed out that later after Magellan's Death, the survivors went to Magellan's death, the survivors went to Mindanao, and seemingly went to Butuan. Pigafetta then vividly describes a trip in the river. But it is to be noted that this account already happened after Magellan's death.

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