

....An impressive list of first discoveries in the Pacific **must** be credited to the Spanish.

The Spanish discovered the large group of archipelagos consisting of Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia, although these terms were not used at the time. Melanesia is an exception, since the Portuguese were in the West of New Guinea, in the Papuan and Molucas Islands in the period between 1512 and 1526. The Spanish made four trips along the coast of New Guinea, between 1528 and 1545 covering the whole of it, from Kepulauan Schouten to Astrolabe Bay, taking possession of it and naming it in 1545. The southern part of the island was completely surveyed in 1606, which resulting in the discovery of the Torres straight, and proving that New Guinea was an island. Among some of the main groups of the islands discovered in the Melanesia region were the Kepulauan Schouten, the Admiralty, the Solomons, the Duff, the Santa Cruz, the Banks, the New Hebrides and the archipelago of the Louisiadas.

The Spanish discovered the whole of the Mariana Islands and were the first Europeans to visit the Gilbert, the Marshall and the Caroline Islands –which constitute Micronesia-. The Spanish are also likely to have discovered most of the islands in the wide region of the Caroline- Marshalls.

In Polynesia, the Spanish discovered the Tuamoutus, the Marquise islands, the Southern and Northern Line islands and the Northern part of the Cook and Ellice Islands.

All the islands in the Pacific to the East of the 130°W meridian were discovered by the Spanish, with the possible exception of the Clipperton, the Pascuan Islands (which the Spanish were the second to visit) and the Pitcairns.

In the North-West Pacific, the Spanish discovered the Volcano Islands, Parece Vela, one or more islands in the Izu Shoto, Wake Island and most probably, Bonin and Marcus. **In addition, isolated discoveries were made by the Spanish in the Australes, Bismarck and Tonga islands**

With the exception of the South-West corner and the far Northern part, the Spanish **sailed all round the Oceanic basin**. The whole of the American Pacific coast from Tierra del Fuego to the Queen Charlotte Islands, were first explored by the Spaniards **who produced corresponding maps**; moreover, Tierra del Fuego and the Vancouver islands were first circumnavigated by the Spanish.

The first Europeans to explore the main Japanese Islands were the Spanish.

In addition, they were the first to sail round and map the Philippine Islands of Luzón, Samar and Mindanao – which, with the discovery of Pulau-pulau and Talaud, the circumnavigation of Halmahera and **exploration of** the Northern coast of New Guinea -- completed the whole Western Pacific from latitudes 40°N to 5°S

Nevertheless, the magnitude of the Spanish discoveries has been minimised by the lack of publicity of the contents of their logbooks and their maps. Consequently, only a small number of names given by the Spanish exist in modern maps. Nevertheless, **enough** maps and reports were published, **to show that the** change of names of many islands and places on the continental coast can only be **attributed to** the studied ignorance and impudence of

the British and other hydrographers. An example of this attitude by the non-Spanish navigators and cartographers can be seen in the names given to the Pacific Mexican coast by the British and North American navigators of the 19th century –names which **remain** in the British and North American maps, although other names were given by the Spanish in the Spanish and Mexican maps for **many** centuries.

The Spanish, by observations and **trial**, opened many of the great maritime routes in and through the Pacific.

If Krusenstern and Maury had had access to the maps and logbooks of the Depósito Hydrográfico in Madrid (which functions under the name “from 1787 to 1862”) they would have **obtained better** routes **as well as** wind and current **charts** of **several** different parts of the Pacific.

From 1520 onwards they took **note** of magnetic variation and the **behaviour** of the winds, currents and tides. **From time to time during the period from the 16th to the 19th centuries** these were studied and many recommendations were made by sailors such as Santa Cruz, Sarmiento, García de Palacio, Rios Coronel, Porter and Casanete, Seijas and Lobera, Cabrero Bueno, Juan and Ulloa, Malaspina and Espinosa and Tello,. Among the Spanish maps that had great influence in their time can be mentioned those of Ribero, 1529, Santa Cruz, 1542, Cabot, 1544 and Lopez de Velasco, 1575-80....

From all the **aforementioned** it can be concluded that Spain was the greatest exploratory and scientific nation of the 16th and 18th centuries. Moreover, the scientific exploration of the Pacific region carried out by Malaspina at the end of the 18th century can be favourably compared with any other of the period. Nevertheless, the wide recognition that Spain deserves for all that was achieved (much more than has been published) will **only** come when the study of the many unpublished and little known Spanish documents that are in Spanish and Mexican archives, the British Museum in London, the National Library of Paris and in other smaller collections.