INTRODUCTION

This regional guide to the Hakluyt Society publications is in two parts, 1) the Caribbean including the Greater Antilles, Lesser Antilles and the northern coasts of Venezuela and Colombia, and 2) Central America and Mexico. The Spanish referred to the Caribbean as the Indies, and to the Caribbean coast of Venezuela, Colombia and Panama as Tierra Firme (Mainland), translated as the Spanish Main. In English, the West Indies refers to the British colonies in this region and more generally to the Antilles archipelagos, as well as British Honduras (Belize) and British Guiana (Guyana).

The bibliographical details are taken from the lists of *Publications of the Hakluyt Society* compiled by P. E. H. Hair, R. C. Bridges and R. J. Howgego, and uses their numbering system of series and book number, e.g. from 1/2 being the First Series, No. 2 to 3/22 being the Third Series, No. 22. All books reviewed in this Guide were published by the Hakluyt Society in London unless otherwise stated. Dates in brackets refer to the subscription year if different from the publication year. A number of papers of annual lectures are also included. The books are described in the approximate chronological order of the voyages.

CARIBBEAN

1/2. *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus, with other Original Documents, relating to his Four Voyages to the New World.* Translated and Edited by R. H. Major, Esq., of the British Museum. 1847. Pages xc, 240. 1st series, 2.

The *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus* contains seven documents translated by R. H. Major regarding Columbus’ voyages of discovery to the Caribbean and Central America. Five letters by Columbus describe the First (1492–1493), Third (1498) and Fourth (1502–04) voyages; a letter by Dr Chanca, physician, describes the Second voyage (1493–94); and the final document is an extract from the will of Diego Mendez, one of Columbus’s officers on the Fourth voyage, which describes his adventures. The Spanish texts are included. Two copies of this edition were printed in vellum and one presented to the British Museum. A second edition was published in the 1st series, 43, and a third edition was published in the 2nd Series, 65 and 70.
1/43. Select Letters of Christopher Columbus, with other Original Documents relating to this Four Voyages to the New World. Translated and Edited by R. H. Major, Keeper of the Department of Maps and Charts in the British Museum and Hon. Sec. of the Royal Geographical Society. Second Edition. 1870. Pages iv, cxlii, 254 + 3 maps, 1 illustration (in colour). 1st series, 43.

A second edition of the Select Letters of Christopher Columbus (1st series 2) with a revision of the translation by R. H. Major was published in 1870 with the editor’s reply to J. A. Froude’s criticism on the first edition in the Westminster Review (1852) and in his Short Studies on Great Subjects, vol. 2 (1867).

1/86. The Journal of Christopher Columbus (during his First Voyage, 1492–93), and Documents relating to the Voyages of John Cabot and Gaspar Corte Real. Translated, with Notes and an Introduction, by Clements R. Markham, President of the Hakluyt Society. 1893 (1892). Pages liv, 259, 16 + 3 maps, 1 illustration. 1st series, 86.

The Journal of Christopher Columbus contains The Sailing Directions of Columbus – Letters from Toscanelli; The Journal of the First Voyage of Columbus in 1492–93; 11 documents relating to the voyages of John Cabot from Bristol who discovered North America at Newfoundland in 1497; 13 documents relating to the voyages of Sebastian Cabot; and 7 documents relating to the voyages of Gaspar Corte-Real to Labrador and Newfoundland in 1500–01.


The Select Documents illustrating the Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus is the third and expanded edition of the Select Letters of Christopher Columbus (1st Series 2, 43), translated and edited by Cecil Jane, and was published in two volumes in 1930 (2nd Series 65) and 1933 (2nd Series 70). The first volume contains four documents related to the First and Second Voyages of 1492–93 and 1493–94, including The Letter of Christopher Columbus describing the results of his first voyage.

The second volume of the Select Documents illustrating the Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus II contains four documents related to the Third and Fourth Voyages of 1498 and 1502–04, and a comprehensive introduction. Unfortunately, the editor Cecil Jane died in 1932 before finishing the Introduction, and a Supplementary Introduction was added by E. G. R. Taylor.


The Journal of Christopher Columbus published commercially in 1960 is a revision of Cecil Jane’s translation published by the Hakluyt Society in 1930 (2nd Series, 65). It was published by a commercial publisher, Anthony Blond & The Orion Press, and not in the standard Hakluyt Society binding. The Society took over a number of sets with a separate title page. It contains The Journal of Christopher Columbus, The Letter of Christopher Columbus describing the results of his first voyage (1493), with notes on each, a Bibliography, and an Appendix by R. A. Skelton describing the cartography of the first voyage. The translation of The Journal used Jane’s version and was revised by L. A. Vigneras using the 1892 transcription made by Cesare de Lollis and Julian Paz for the Raccolta Colombiana.


Spanish Documents is a compilation of translations of 29 Spanish documents from the General Archive of the Indies in Seville from the period 1527–1568 which covers the first English visits to the West Indies, the Spanish Main and Mexico to trade slaves. The documents are dated at Santo Domingo (now Dominican Republic), Rio de la Hacha (now Venezuela), and some at Cartagena (now Colombia), San Juan de Ulúa (Vera Cruz, Mexico), Veracruz and Mexico City. Following the first English ship to visit the West Indies in 1527, which called at La Mona (Puerto Rico) and Santo Domingo under the command of John Rut, the documents deal mainly with the triangular slave trading voyages of Admiral Sir John Hawkins to Santo Domingo in 1562–65, Venezuela in 1564–65, and Mexico in 1567–69.

*Sir Francis Drake’s West Indian Voyage* is a collection of 11 published and unpublished documents, particularly journals kept aboard three ships, the *Tiger*, *Primrose* and *Leicester*, relating to Sir Francis Drake’s expedition of 1585–86 to attack the Spanish colonies, known as the Great Expedition to America. With 21 ships and 1,800 soldiers, Drake attacked Vigo (Spain), Santiago (Cape Verde islands), Santo Domingo (now Dominican Republic), Cartagena (now Colombia) and San Augustin (Florida). He then evacuated Sir Walter Raleigh’s colony at Roanoke (now North Carolina) before returning to Portsmouth. The book contains maps and drawings by the expedition’s cartographer, Giovanni Battista Boazio.


*Further English Voyages to Spanish America* is the third of a series of books edited by Irene A. Wright after 2nd Series 62 and 71. The present volume is a compilation of translations of 100 Spanish documents from the General Archive of the Indies relating to English voyages dated between 1583 and 1594 at Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo (now Dominican Republic), Havana (Cuba), Cartagena (now Colombia), Panama, Nombre de Dios (now Panama), San Agustín (now Florida), San Lucar (Sanlúcar, Spain), Jamaica, La Margarita (now Venezuela), Santa Marta (now Colombia), Seville, Cadiz and Lisbon.


*English Privateering Voyages to the West Indies* is a collection of 166 documents in 18 chapters relating to 25 privateering voyages made between 1588 and 1595, between the defeat of the Armada and the last voyage of Drake. They were selected from the records of the High Court of Admiralty in England, with some accounts from Hakluyt, and translations mostly by Irene A. Wright of 28 Spanish documents from the General Archive of the Indies in Seville which had been intended for a fourth volume on *English Voyages to Spanish America* (see 2nd Series 66, 71 and 99). The Introduction gives an account of the High Court of Admiralty itself, of Privateering during the Spanish War and Privateering in the West Indies, 1588–95.

*Sir Francis Drake his Voyage* contains two contemporary documents from the British Museum Library relating to Sir Francis Drake’s final expedition to the West Indies in 1595. The first is a report by Thomas Maynarde, one of Drake’s captains, titled *Sir Francis Drake His Voyage, 1595*. The second is a translation of a Spanish account of Drake’s unsuccessful attack on San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1595, *Relacion de lo sucedido en San Juan de Puerto Ricode las Yudias, con la armada ynglesa del cargo de Francis Drake y Juan Aquines, a los 23rd de noviembre de 1595*, during which Sir John Hawkins died of fever.


*The Last Voyage of Drake & Hawkins* contains a collection of 47 transcripts or translations of documents, mainly from manuscripts and including many from the General Archive of the Indies at Seville, related to Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins’ last voyage of 1595–96 to the West Indies and Panama in which they and many others died. Hawkins fell ill and died on 12 November 1595, and was buried at sea off Puerto Rico. Drake died of dysentery on 27 January 1596, and was buried at sea off Portobello, Panama. The appendix is on The Art of Navigation in the Age of Drake, by D. W. Waters.


*The Voyage of Sir Robert Dudley* consists of three accounts of Robert Dudley’s (1574–1649) expedition to the West Indies in 1594–95, the first written by himself and reprinted from Hakluyt’s *Voyages*, and the others by Captain Wyatt and Abraham (or Abram) Kendall. Dudley’s voyage was the earliest recorded English attempt to colonise Trinidad and to ascend the River Orinoco.
Samuel de Champlain (1567–1635) was a French explorer who founded Quebec City in 1608 and the territory of New France (now part of Canada and the USA), and is an important figure in Canadian history. However, his first travels were to the West Indies and New Spain (Mexico) in 1599–1600 on his uncle’s ship, the *Saint-Juliene*, which was chartered to accompany a large Spanish fleet to the West Indies. His report of the voyage is translated by Alice Wilmere in this book. The authenticity of this report has been oft questioned, and indeed the Hakluyt book list states that it is “now considered an invention”, but recent scholarship shows that Champlain probably was the author of the report.

His itinerary was from Seville to La Deseade Island (La Désirade, Guadeloupe), Guadeloupe, the Virgin Islands, San Juan (Puerto Rico), Puerto Plata (now Dominican Republic), Mancenilla (Manzanillo, now Dominican Republic), Tortuga Island (now Haiti), St. Nicolas (Môle–Saint–Nicolas, Haiti), along the south side of Cuba, Cayman Islands, and to St. Jean de Luz (San Juan d’Ulloa, Vera Cruz, Mexico), then inland to Mechique (Mexico City). Returning to the coast, he made a side trip to Portobello (Panama), and back in St. Jean de Luz, he departed for Havana, made a side trip to Cartagena, and rejoined the fleet to return to Seville.


*Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana* is a compilation of 21 documents in 5 Parts comprising journals, narratives, and descriptions relating to English colonisation of the islands of St Christopher, Nevis and Barbados; Sir Henry Cotland’s expedition to Guiana; Admiral de Ruyter’s raid in the West Indies (Barbados) in 1664–65; Tobago and Trinidad; and Guiana.
1/34. Narrative of the Proceedings of Pedrarias Davila in the Provinces of Tierra Firme or Castilla del Oro, and of the Discovery of the South Sea and the Coasts of Peru and Nicaragua. Written by the Adelantado Pascual de Andagoya. Translated and Edited, with Notes and an Introduction, by Clements R. Markham. 1865. Pages 12, 4, xxix, 88 + 1 map. 1st series, 34.

The Narrative of the Proceedings of Pedrarias Davila is actually a first-hand account by Pascual de Andagoya (1495–1548), one of the officers who accompanied Pedro Arias de Ávila (Pedrarias Davila) from Spain when he was appointed governor of Tierra Firme or Castilla de Oro (Panama) in 1514. The period covered is from 1514, the year after the discovery of the South Sea by Vasco Núñez de Balboa, to about 1544. The title Adelantado was a noble and military title granted to governors and justices of the new world. The book is an early Spanish eye-witness account of the Indians of the Darien; various expeditions in which he participated including Balboa’s second expedition to the South Sea carrying ships in pieces for reassembly; the founding of Panama City on the Pacific in 1519; the discovery of Nicaragua; and expeditions to conquer western Colombia. Here, in the province of Birú, or Pirú in 1522, he was the first to obtain information about the Inca empire, leading up to the conquest of Peru by Francisco Pizarro in 1532.

The book is a translation by Clements Markham of a work published in Spanish by Martín Fernández de Navarrete, Coleccion de los viajes y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los españoles desde fines del siglo XV, Seccion iii. Establecimientos de los Españoles en el Darien. Tomo 3, No. VII, p. 393–456 (Madrid, Imprenta Nacional, 1829, Pages xv, 642). The original MS is preserved in the General Archive of the Indies in Seville. There is a 29-page Introduction by the Markham including Balboa’s Letter to the King of 1513 about the Darien and its gold mines, and a biography of Andagoya.


Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1495–1584) was a foot soldier in Hernán Cortes’ Spanish army which defeated the Aztec empire and conquered Mexico in 1518–1521. He originally went to the Darien with Pedrarias in 1514. Díaz del Castillo claimed to have taken part in 119 battles, and ultimately became governor of Antigua Guatemala. The True History, completed in 1568, is regarded as one of the best contemporary accounts of the conquest of Mexico. The
Hakluyt edition, the first translation into English, and was made from the 1904 Mexican edition of the Mexican historian Genaro García. It was translated and edited by Alfred Percival Maudslay (1850–1931), an English diplomat, explorer and archaeologist, who was one of the first Europeans to study the Mayan ruins in Guatemala. The 214 chapters were divided into 17 Books by the translator which do not exist in the original or Mexican edition, and published in five volumes between 1908 and 1916, including a small volume of historical maps (2nd series, 23, 24, 25, 30 and 40).

Volume I contains Books I–IV (1517–1519) and Chapters 1–81 concerning the first two expeditions to the Yucatán coast, the discovery of Mexico and the expeditions of Francisco Hernández de Cordova and Hernan Cortés, the march inland, and the war in Tlaxcala (Tlaxcala State). This volume includes part of Garcia’s Introduction to the 1904 edition, and a comprehensive bibliography of Mexico.


Volume II of The True History contains Books V–IX (1519–1520) and Chapters 82–136 concerning the march to Mexico, the stay there, the expedition against Narvaez, the flight from Mexico, and the halt at Tepeaca (Puebla State).


Volume III of The True History is a box of maps and plans of the valley and city of Mexico, several reproduced from sixteenth–century originals.


Volume IV of The True History contains Books X–XIII and Chapters 137–173, relating the siege and fall of Mexico in 1521 and the ensuing settlement. An appendix contains a timeline of the 1521 siege.


The final Volume 5 of The True History contains Books XIV–XVII and Chapters 174–214 which describe Cortes’ expedition to Honduras, the return to Mexico, the rule of the
Audiencia there, and the record of the conquistadores, with an appendix including the Fifth Letter of Cortés to the Emperor King Charles V, 1526 (1st series, 40).

1/40. The Fifth Letter of Hernan Cortes to the Emperor Charles V, containing an Account of his Expedition to Honduras. Translated from the Original Spanish by Don Pascual de Gayangos of the Spanish Academy; Corresponding Member of the Institute of France. 1868. Pages 3, xvi, 156. 1st series, 40.

Hernán Cortés (1485–1547) described the conquest of Mexico in five letters to the Emperor King Charles V of Spain. The second, third and fourth letters were published Hernán Cortés’ lifetime, but the first and fifth were lost. They were found in Vienna and published in Spanish in 1844. This book is a translation of the fifth letter. It is a description of Hernán Cortés’ remarkable overland expedition from Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City), through the Yucatan jungle of what is now Guatemala to the head of the Gulf of Honduras in 1524–1526. From here the expedition sailed along the coast to Trujillo to secure Honduras for Spain against rival Spanish claims.


*Documents concerning English Voyages to the Spanish Main* is a follow-up to *Spanish Documents concerning English Voyages to the Caribbean* (2nd Series, 62) which covered the period 1527–1568. The present volume continues for the period 1569–1580 and deals with the privateering exploits in the Spanish Main, and principally Panama. The documents describe the voyages of the English corsairs Sir Francis Drake, Sir John Hopkins, John Oxenham – the first non-Spaniard to cross the Isthmus to the South Seas, where he built a boat and raidied the Pearl Islands and Spanish ships in 1577–78, and Andrew Barker, a privateer who raided the Caribbean coast at the same time. After a Preface and Introduction, Part I contains translations of 73 Spanish documents mostly dated at Nombre de Dios and Panama, from the General Archive of the Indies, Seville. Part II reproduces four English documents: *Sir Francis Drake Revived*, about his voyage of 1572–73 and his attack on Nombre de Dios in 1573; Hakluyt’s accounts of the voyages of John Oxenham and Andrew Barker; and Sir Richard Hawkins’ *Observations* about Oxenham’s expedition.
1/16. "The World Encompassed by Sir Francis Drake; being his next voyage to that to Nombre de Dios. Collated with an unpublished manuscript of Francis Fletcher, chaplain to the expedition. [Edited] with Appendices illustrative of the Same Voyage, and Introduction, by William Sandys Wright Vaux. 1854 (1855 [sic]). Pages 8, xl, 295 + 1 map. 1st series, 16.

The title of this book is somewhat misleading and it is not about Sir Francis Drake’s Nombre de Dios (Panama) voyage of 1572–1573, but is about his next voyage, the circumnavigation of the Earth of 1577–1580, the second such voyage after Magellan (1519–1522), and the first by an Englishman. The only relevant part of this volume is a short description of Guatulco in southern Mexico (Santa Maria Huatulco, Oaxaca State), where Drake stopped after sailing north from Lima, bypassing Panama and Central America.

The book is a reproduction of a volume published in 1628 “collected out of the notes of Master Francis Fletcher”, chaplain to the expedition, by the Admiral’s nephew, also called Sir Francis Drake. To this have been added extensive footnotes taken from a manuscript in British Library, Sloane MS 61, described as a copy of the notes of Francis Fletcher of the first part of the voyage as far as Patagonia. There are five appendices, including Extracts from Hakluyt’s Voyages in five parts.


*New Light on Drake* is a collection of translations of 65 Spanish documents relating to Drake’s circumnavigation of 1577–1580 from the National Archives of Mexico, with additional material from archives in Spain, Italy, France and England. The documents were collected and translated by Zelia Maria Magdalena Nuttall (1857–1933), an American archaeologist and anthropologist born in San Francisco to an Anglo-Irish father and a Mexican-American mother, who lived in Mexico City. The original Spanish of all Drake’s quotes is given in footnotes. There is a 43-page Introduction describing the author’s interesting search for the archives, and a discussion of Drake’s influence in the Americas. The volume deals exclusively with the Spanish Americas and mainly with Central America and Mexico, and is a complement to *The World Encompassed by Sir Francis Drake* (1st Series, 16) by Vaux (1854).

The volume is arranged in 13 parts. Part I contains the testimonies of English captives in America: John Oxenham from Drake’s Nombre de Dios expedition, John Butler, Thomas “Xerores” and John Drake. Part II is the Narrative of Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa who pursued Drake off South America. Part III contains official Spanish reports about Drake from Callao (Peru), Guatemala, Esparza (Costa Rica), Realejo (Nicaragua), Cartagena (now Colombia) and Nombre de Dios (now Panama). Part IV has the depositions of 15 Spanish prisoners taken by Drake in 1579. Part V contains the official Spanish reports relating to
Drake’s entry into the port of Guatulco (Santa Maria Huatulco, Oaxaca State, Mexico). Part VI has the depositions of prisoners released at Guatulco. Part VII is the log book of Nuño da Silva, Drake's Portuguese navigator whom he took prisoner, the only surviving log book of the expedition. Da Silva was released in Guatulco and was tried by the Inquisition, as described in Part VIII. Part IX contains the English documents relating to the cargo of Nuño da Silva’s ship, while Part X has documents about Nuño da Silva after his release. Part XI contains the official reports made to King Philip II about Drake’s voyage. Part XII has the charges against Drake made in Spain in English and Part XIII are the false charges against Drake and their refutation.


*The Coastal Profiles* is the paper of a talk given at the previous year’s Annual General Meeting. Sir Francis Drake employed a painter and writer to paint coastal profiles and navigational charts on his Panama voyage of 1595–96 (described in 2nd Series, 142). They are preserved as a set of 23 folios bound in a book in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris known as the 1595–6 Paris Profiles. Twenty of the folios depict islands, capes, bays or stretches of coastline in the West Indies and the Spanish Main: Martinique, Dominica, All Saints, Guadeloupe, Montserrat, Nevis, St Kitts, St Eustatius, Curacao, Los Monjes, Cape Conchibacoa, Nombre de Dios, Veragua, Escudo de Veragua, Portobelo, Cartagena, the Isle of Pines and Cuba. The others have views of Fuerteventura, Corvo, Flores and the Isles of Scilly. Seventeen folios were published by Charles Bourel de la Ronciere, Paris in 1909.

There are five folios about Panama: Folio 13 as the fleet arrived at Nombre de Dios; Folio 14 as the fleet left Nombre de Dios and sailed to the west; Folio 15 at Escudo de Veraguas Island; Folio 16 on the return passage along the coast of Veraguas to Portobelo; and Folio 17 at Portobelo recording the death of Sir Francis Drake.


*A buccaneer’s atlas* is the paper of a talk given at the previous year’s Annual General Meeting about the Spanish *derrotero* or book of nautical charts captured from a Spanish ship on the west coast of the Americas by Captain Bartholomew’s buccaneering expedition of 1680–82, after crossing the Darien isthmus. The atlas was translated and copied by chart maker William Hack in London in 1682, to which Basil Ringrose (ca 1653–1683) added his journal of the expedition and detailed Sailing Directions or *waggoner*. The atlas contains 106 charts covering the Pacific coast of the Americas from California to Tierra del Fuego, including the Galapagos and Juan Fernández Islands, the first such atlas and pilot in English. Ringrose’s journal was published in 1685 as the second volume of Exquemelin’s *Bucaniers of America*, with 15 charts. The atlas and waggoner were too confidential to be printed. The
beautiful original charts are held in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich and can be viewed on the internet (https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/492506.html). The atlas with introduction (including Ringrose’s journal from Exquemelin), waggoner, and background information was published subsequent to this talk as A Buccaneer’s Atlas: Basil Ringrose’s South Sea Waggoner: A Sea Atlas and Sailing Directions of the Pacific Coast of the Americas, 1682. Edited by Derek Howse and Norman J. W. Thrower. University of California Press, Berkeley. 1992, pp. xiii + 314.

2/73. A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America by Lionel Wafer, Surgeon on Buccaneering Expeditions in Darien, the West Indies, and the Pacific from 1680 to 1688, With Wafer’s Secret Report (1698), and Davis’s Expedition to the Gold Mines (1704). Edited, with Introduction, Notes and Appendices, by L. E. Elliott Joyce. 1934 (1933). Pages lxxi, 221 + 4 maps, 4 illustrations. 2nd series, 73.

The editor, Lilian Elwyn Elliott Joyce (1874–1963), an English author of several travel books about South and Central America, recounts in the Preface that she was first given the original version of Wafer’s Voyages by Tracy Robinson, “that delightful poet of Panama”, while visiting the Panama Canal construction in 1910. This is followed by a 56-page introduction to Lionel Wafer and his Times.

A New Voyage contains the text of the original 1699 edition, with slight changes, and is the first complete English edition published since the second edition of 1704. It was a very influential book even before it was published. Lionel Wafer (1640–1705) was an English surgeon with the buccaneer William Dampier who was injured and left to recover with the Cuna Indians (now called Guna) of San Blas on the Caribbean coast of eastern Panama in 1680–81. He wrote the first ethnographic description of the Guna Indians, who still occupy the area in the Kuna Yala Comarca (indigenous territory), and are little changed from Wafer’s description. His manuscript was very influential in the decision of William Paterson and the directors of the Company of Scotland in Edinburgh to set up the ill-fated Scottish colony in San Blas in 1698–1700, known as New Caledonia and the Darien colony. The colony’s failure bankrupted Scotland and was a major factor that led to the Union with England in 1707.

Wafer’s Secret Report of 1698, in Appendix I, was written for the directors of the Company of Scotland, who asked him to delay publication of the book until after the colony was founded.

The Expedition to the Gold Mines, which forms Appendix II, is a first-hand account by English pirate Nathaniel Davis of a buccaneer expedition in 1702 to raid the famous Spanish gold mine of Espiritu Santo de Cana (the Holy Ghost of Cana) deep in the Darien jungle of Panama near the modern day border with Colombia. It is reproduced from the second edition of Wafer’s Voyages of 1704.
The Cuna Folk of Darien are described by Joyce in Appendix III in an account up to the then recent Tule Revolution of 1925, and the Early Spanish Colonies in Darien are described in Appendix IV.


The Voyage of Alejandro Malaspina to the Pacific is the paper of an Annual Lecture that was given at previous year's Annual General Meeting on the forthcoming three–volume publications of the Spanish Malaspina Expedition of 1789–94 (3rd Series, 8, 11 and 16).


The Malaspina Expedition was the first Spanish scientific expedition of discovery to the west coast of the Americas and across the Pacific to Manila, made between 1789–94. The Spanish preferred expeditions of conquest and commerce. The expedition was commanded by the great navigator, Alejandro Malaspina (1754–1810), an Italian nobleman, born in the Duchy of Parma, the son of the Marquis of Morello and Catalina Melilupi, and related to the princes of Soravanga. The translations from Spanish of Malaspina’s journals are published in three volumes, with comprehensive footnotes and appendices of related correspondence and papers. The publication was made in conjunction with the Naval Museum of Madrid.

Volume I, Cadiz to Panama, describes the first part of the expedition from Cadiz, through the Atlantic, around Cape Horn and up the western coast of South America to Panama in two small corvettes, the Descubierta and Atrevida. The final chapter of the volume gives a short description of Pacific Panama. The ships arrived in Panama from El Callao (Peru) on 16 November 1790 and anchored at Perico Island, the port for Panama City. In the Chirqui Fort (now Las Bovedas) of Panama City, the expedition set up an astronomical observatory to measure the longitude of Panama, while sending a party to survey the Pearl Islands and Darien coast. The sailed to the Island of Taboga on 12 December to load up water and firewood, while the naturalists studied the island. The volume ends at Taboga on 14 December, ready to sail the next day. The volume has important early engravings of ports and natural features by the expedition artist José Cardero, including Taboga Island, Naos Island and Panama City.

Volume II of the Malaspina Expedition covers the west coast of Central America and North America in 1790–92. Departing from the island of Taboga in Panama on 15 December 1790, they mapped the coast of the Gulf of Panama, Veraguas and Coiba Island (Panama), and continued up the west coast of Central America making detailed descriptions of the coast, with stop-overs at Realejo (now Corinto, Nicaragua), where they arrived on 19 January 1791, and Acapulco (Mexico) where they arrived on 27 March 1791. They continued up the west coast of North America, then Spanish controlled, as far as Port Mulgrave (Yakutat Bay, now Alaska) and Nootka Sound (Vancouver Island, now British Columbia), meeting with Captain George Vancouver’s expedition at Vancouver Island. The expedition returned via Monterrey to Acapulco in October 1791 and then crossed the Pacific to Manila in the Philippines, following the route of the Spanish Manila galleons. The volume reproduces the engravings of Realejo, Acapulco and Mexico City.

3/16. The Malaspina Expedition 1789–1794 ... Volume III, Manila to Cadiz. Edited by Andrew David, Felipe Fernández-Armesto, Carlos Novi and Glyndwr Williams. Translated by Sylvia Jamieson. 2004, pp. xxi + 487, colour frontispiece, 4 colour half-tones, 13 sepia half-tones, 41 black and white half-tones, 6 maps. 3rd series, 16

Volume III of the Malaspina Expedition covers the period November 1792 to September 1794 when the expedition sailed from Manila to New Zealand, Australia, Tonga, back to Callao (Peru), around the Horn and finally home to Cadiz. The appendices include biographies of the officers, details of the ships, and surveying and navigational instruments, as well as sources and a bibliography. The volume does not contain material of direct relevance to the present report on Central America and the Caribbean.


A 1793 journey across Mexico is described briefly in this recent Society publication. The volume is the complete transcript of Lieutenant William Broughton’s handwritten journal of his survey of the northwest Pacific, the Kurile Islands, the Siberian coast, Japan and Korea in 1795–18. Broughton first visited the North Pacific in 1792 in command of the brig Chatham on Vancouver’s voyage. Broughton was sent back to London for instructions, travelling across Mexico in 1793, which is covered in a 16-page account in this book, and returning to Europe in Spanish ships. Back in London he was appointed in command of the sloop Providence with orders to re-join Vancouver in the Pacific, which forms the subject of this book.