



# BATTLE OF MACTAN

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## **Foreword**

Especially written by Dr. Gerona for Sulu Garden's **BATTLE OF MACTAN PROJECT**, this article describes this dramatic event from actual accounts of Ferdinand Magellan's chronicler, Antonio Pigafetta, and other historians long after the conflict. Dr. Gerona is a faculty member in the Graduate School of Universidad de Isabel in Naga City and a research associate of the University of San Carlos Press in Cebu. He is the only non-Spanish member of **Sevilla 2019-2022**, which coordinates the global celebration of the **5<sup>th</sup> Centenary of Magellan's Circumnavigation of the World**. In 2016, Dr. Gerona published his epic book, **Ferdinand Magellan. The Armada de Maluco and the European Discovery of the Philippines**, based on primary sources from years of research in Spain.

The Diorama of the Battle of Mactan is a project to illustrate the real events of the battle between the forces of Magellan and Lapulapu on April 27, 1521. Both antagonists in this 16<sup>th</sup> century drama has been long misunderstood by our fellow countrymen because of long standing biases, sometimes disinterest in historical narratives and mostly from lack of true, historically accurate books on this subject.

Why create a diorama? The battlefield in Mactan is a diverse battlefield with so many players. There were Magellan's men, the Cebuano Rajahs Humabon and Sula, Rajah Lapulapu and his allies. The battlefield extended from the deep water edge of the almost 2 km coral reef fronting the Island of Mactan itself. There were over 2,500+ warriors of both sides, Magellan's Conquistadores, three Spanish ships known as caravels, 30 balanghai ships, assorted smaller boats and the complicated terrain of Mactan. Reading history books often fails to give anyone the panoramic scope and understanding of the real event. A diorama allows one to see historical events from all different directions. It sparks imagination and appreciation of major events in our history. It is both an enjoyment and a learning experience to us all, no matter what our age might be.

On a personal note, dioramas had been a fascination a long time ago when my parents took me to on a visit to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in 1974. It was the site of the biggest battle during the American Civil War and a defining moment in US history. Inside the pavilion was a diorama of the Battle of Gettysburg. It looked so big [Perhaps I was smaller back then] but in reality perhaps only 5 sq. m. in size. Since then, I became an avid armchair historian, first about the American Civil War. Finally returning home in 2012 to the Philippines, I became passionate about the History of Miag-ao and the History of the Philippines.

What sparked this imagination about the Battle of Mactan was meeting Danny Gerona in Sulu Garden three years ago when we talked about his research on Magellan and Lapulapu. Now, we are designing a 48 sq. m. diorama, perhaps one of the biggest in the world for the 5<sup>th</sup> Centennial Celebration of one of the most significant event that eventually led to the formation of our islands as an independent country. It will take 10 more months to create this diorama of the Battle of Mactan. And, it will be a combination of many talents you will meet today to make this

possible—3D designers, 3D printing, architects, artists to paint the miniatures, IT professionals and project managers.

I look forward to having you again during the grand opening of the diorama of the BATTLE OF Mactan on April 27, 2021.

**Jonathan R. Matias**

*Chairman & President*

*July 31, 2020. On the occasion of the launching of Project Mactan.*

## ----- **The Battle of Mactan** -----

### **THE ENIGMA OF LAPULAPU**

The Spanish arrival in a cluster of islands which eventually became the *Las Islas Filipinas* was marked by an auspicious beginning. Hospitably welcomed by the peaceful natives they encountered, Magellan set out to establish friendship anchored on the condition that they accepted Spanish sovereignty ritualized through Christian baptism and payment of tributes. Hence, the Spanish landing in Cebu, either pushed by necessity for survival or triggered by greed inspired by their discovery of the affluence of the native society, suddenly shifted the objectives of the imperial project from spice trade to colonial imposition.

The colonial project of the Magellan expedition marked its evolution in the affluent port village of Cebu, when its prominent chieftain, Humabon, his entire household and allied chiefs of nearby islands accepted baptism. But some of the newly baptized chieftains complained of the defiant stand of some chiefs of the neighboring island of Mactan, led by the ruler of a village called Opong who was invariably referred to in various Spanish sources as Lapulapu, Cilapulapu, etc. One version claims, such as that of Francisco Lopez de Gomara's *Historia general de las Indias*, that two chieftains boldly declared their refusal, one was Lapulapu who, was said to have declared that "he would not obey anyone he did not know, even Humabon." Pigafetta claimed that Magellan learned of Lapulapu's defiant stand from Zula, one of the chieftains of Mactan island allied to Humabon against Lapulapu. A portion of the Pigafetta narrative reads:

*Friday, the 26<sup>th</sup> of April, Zula, who was one of the principal men or chiefs of the island of Matan, sent to the captain a son of his with two goats to make a present of them, and say that if he did not do all that he had promised, the cause of that was another chief named Silapulapu, who would not in any way obey the King of Spain, and had prevented him from doing so.*

Considering the political circumstance of Zula and Lapulapu, one could probably entertain questions about the truth of such report.

The village of Opon, the base of Lapulapu insular domain, stood strategically at the entrance to the strait towards the port of Cebu. As observed by William Henry Scott, Mactan's location placed Lapulapu in a position to intercept shipping in Cebu harbor. On the northeastern coastline of Mactan, near the village of Buaya, a promontory stood by known to the Spaniards as Punta Engaño (Deception Point), but popular among the natives as Pangusan. The Spaniards gave the appellation Punta Engaño because vessels heading towards the Port of Cebu were oftentimes misled and proceeded instead to Mactan. Lapulapu capitalized on these "deceived" vessels which he charged with port taxes or even seized their goods which significantly affected the trade in Cebu.

Some sources however offered a different version regarding Lapulapu's response claiming he readily accepted Magellan's offer of Spanish sovereignty, even expressing willingness to comply with the demands for the payment of tribute. According to a manuscript by one who simply signed himself the Genoese pilot, but probably Maestre Bautista, Magellan demanded from Lapulapu, among them, "three goats, three pigs, three loads of rice, and three loads of millet and other provisions for the ships." The source noted that the chieftain was prompt and straightforward with his reply. As to the "threes" being asked, he had no opposition in complying with "twos" and if Magellan was satisfied with these, they would be complied with at once. If not, he would send whatever pleased him.

Another version concurred with the narrative of Lapulapu's outright submission to Magellan's demands, including the payment of tribute. It was the demand of Magellan for him to accept the leadership of a fellow native chief, Humabon, which provoked the Mactan chieftain to anger. Primary sources claimed that the reason which prompted Magellan to explode in anger was Lapulapu's alleged refusal to kiss the hand of Humabon as an acknowledgement of his subordination. Another member of the expedition who made his testimony upon their return in Spain, Fernando de Bustamante, barber-surgeon of the Victoria, in agreement with the other testimonies, also recalled that the natives of Mactan were actually willing to accept Spanish sovereignty but were not disposed to accept Humabon as their overlord: "...those of Mactan wished to obey the king of Castile but the said Ferdinand Magellan told them to kiss the hand of the king of Zebu and those do not wish to kiss the hand of the king of Zebu." It appears that Lapulapu was not the only chief who regarded the order of Magellan to accept Humabon as a supreme ruler of the islands for others shared such animosity as evident in the testimony made by Juan Sebastian Elcano on October 18, 1522, few weeks after their arrival, in Valladolid.

His testimony reads:

*Magellan went from the island of Zebu to the island of Bohol, or to the island of Matan, sending bateles to wage war with the mend so that those from other islands may obey the King of Zebu; and those they say that they would obey the King Our Lord, and would give him parias, (a tribute paid by one prince to another); but that they would not obey the King of Zebu since they are also of the same status; and that they would give the King Our Lord jewels of gold.*

While Magellan seemed to have used Humabon as a political ally to establish his base in Cebu as a springboard for establishing Spanish hegemony, Humabon, on the other hand had also used Magellan to coerce others to submission to his authority. As Pigafetta recalled Humabon was said to have asked Magellan: "but that if the captain would send him the following night one boat full of men to give him assistance, he would fight and subdue his rival. On the receipt of this message, the captain decided to go himself with three boats."

## THE BATTLE

Magellan's endorsement of Humabon caused so much rejoicing among his allies but was received with fury by Lapulapu and his followers. Far from the response Magellan expected, only two obeyed this decree, Sula and Humabon, the rest of the chieftains dismissed Magellan's messenger with ridicule. Lapulapu, who was among the most vocal in his refusal to accept Humabon as their overlord, did not only send away the messengers with ridicule but defiantly declared, according to the sixteenth century Augustinian historian, Fray Aganduru Moriz, "He was the Lord of that island and that neither he nor his forefathers have recognized vassalage to anybody, nor even considered recognizing anyone, that he should not touch him, for they would defend themselves." Lapulapu alleged defiant reaction suggests that even long before his rule, no other ruler outside his own lineage had ever wielded authority over them.

According to Pigafetta, within the eight-day period, while the series of baptism was going on, "we burned a village because the inhabitants would not obey either the king or us. There we planted a cross because the people were gentiles; if they had been Moors, we should have erected a column as a sign of the hardness of heart, because the Moors are more difficult to convert than the Gentiles." This raid could have taken place around the third week of April, as indicated by Gomara, although other sources claimed that Magellan sent two bateles at midnight of April 26. Peter Martyr, who derived his facts from the members of the crew, made a passing remark on this event:

*Leaving the ships at Zubo, Magellan crossed to the island of Matam, visible on the horizon at a distance of only four leagues. He used the shallows and the native boats dug out of tree trunks. His intention was to persuade the ruler of Matam, through his interpreters, to make his submission to the great King of Spain, and to the chief of Zubo, and to pay tribute to the former. The king answered that he was willing to obey the King of Spain, but not the chieftain of Zubo. Thereupon Magellan ordered a fortress composed of about fifty houses, near the royal residence, to be sacked and burnt. He afterwards returned to Zubo, bringing his booty, some foodstuff which were needed there, as well as several pieces of furniture; but the inhabitants of Zubo, who were hostile to the islanders of Matam, stole the greater part from him.*

To leave a palpable mark of Spanish punitive justice, as a warning to other defiant chiefs, Magellan raised a cross right on the place where the settlement he torched once stood. The residents of this settlement, as their domiciles had been reduced to ashes, and fearing another attack, decided to transfer their settlement to the northeastern coast of Mactan where those of the chiefs allied to Lapulapu, such as that of Buaia, were located. Antonio de Herrera also mentioned this "midnight raid" but added that this took place a day after Magellan sent an emissary to the Mactan chief warning him to burn his village should he refuse to obey Humabon. The few eyewitness reports, such as that of Gines de Mafra, indicated that Mactan was raided twice and resulted in the destruction of at least two villages. These raids only increased the determination of Lapulapu and his allies to resist the Spaniards.

The reply of Lapulapu infuriated the captain-general who was further incensed when, on the 26th of April, one of the sons of Sula, the rival chieftain of Lapulapu in Mactan and ally of Humabon, only brought two goats, short of the amount he demanded. This man excused himself for failure to faithfully

comply with his and his father's obligation and blamed Lapulapu who threatened them should they faithfully comply with the demands of Magellan. As it turned out, these words infuriated the Captain-General who also learned that a substantial number of natives in a village in Mactan, most probably that of Lapulapu had assembled, prepared to defend themselves in battle in coordination with warriors from other villages, should Magellan's men attack them.

On April 27, Magellan sent an emissary to the Mactan chief warning him, once and for all, of an attack should he continue to ignore his orders. Lapulapu however made a defiant reply, "if Magellan did so, he would be awaiting them." As to what he was asking for, Lapulapu arrogantly refused to give "not so much because he does not have them but more for human reasons, that he would give those few goats and pigs only if he asked for them." Convinced that this old chief was actually taunting him to a battle, Magellan decided to settle score with him.

The ever cautious Juan Serrano who voiced out his disagreement with Magellan's decision to wage war was worried about the lack of provisions and the number of able-bodied men still capable to fight. He even made a defiant answer that should Magellan insisted on his plan, he should rather send somebody in his place. It appears that Serrano made good of his threat and did not join the group. Although the sentiment of the crew was not known, it seems they would not have approved of Magellan's rashness. First, it was obviously against the instruction of the king which reiterated the need to employ more diplomatic approach than to resort to coercive and military solutions. Likewise, by taking side in the local political intramural of the chieftains, Magellan was compromising not only his crew but the imperialist purpose of the expedition.

Magellan set out together with sixty well-armed men to face the formidable warriors of Lapulapu and his allies. Among those constituting his small assault force were his personal servants such as Cristobal de Rabelo, Antonio Pigafetta, Enrique, Francisco de Espinosa, sailor; Juan de Torres, bearer of arms; Rodrigo Nieto; Anton Gallego, cabin boy; Pedro, servant of the fleet's alguacil, Gonzalo de Espinosa, Antón de Escobar. The other forty or more who went with him were not identified. The personal background of these few, as provided in the fleet's manifest, hinted outright their lack of appropriate combat experience, being mere young men. But Magellan had cast his die. "We set out from Zebu at midnight, we were sixty men armed with corselets and helmets," wrote Pigafetta. With them were Humabon, "the Christian king," the prince, and some of the chief's men, many others who were divided among twenty or thirty balanghai. Offered by Humabon his own phalanx of warriors, Magellan politely declined even boasting that "he had brought them, not to fight but to watch their bravery and fighting power." It was April 27, 1521.

The group arrived in Mactan "three hours before daylight" which could mean past two o'clock in the morning, and even in the tropical summer climate, the hour was still dark. But with the early morning sky still lit with the moon on its last quarter phase, the huge number of fully-loaded watercrafts stealthily crossing the channel between Cebu and Mactan could have been easily detected by their enemies guarding the shores of the opposite island. This impressive armada of Spanish and native allies headed towards a cluster of villages, including Opon, and Buaya, on the coast of what is now the Magellan Bay where, unknown to these attacking force, the natives had been anticipating their arrival. Pigafetta learned that the natives had dug up holes with spikes in the seashore as traps for the Spaniards. This was a common feature of their war tactic. Visayan vocabulary was replete with words pertaining to this strategy.

A negotiation was begun through the Muslim merchant, the same person who was baptized in Cebu, whom Magellan had instructed to relay to Lapulapu and his allies the ultimatum that "unless they

recognize the Christian King (Humabon) as their sovereign, obey the King of Spain, pay us tribute, and the captain becomes their friend, we would prove how our lances inflict wound.” This emissary, according to the nineteenth century Jesuit historian, Pablo Pastells, was the Muslim Thai, who had to deliver another *Requirimiento* to the Mactan chieftain. Magellan’s threat was ignored and convinced that a war was imminent, told the group to wait until daylight before they began their assault. “We then leaped into the water up to our thighs, for on account of the shallow water and the rocks the boats could not come closer to the beach,” wrote Pigafetta. The shoreline of the bay of Mactan, particularly the area where the Spanish positioned themselves for battle, turned out to be Lapulapu natural ally but a geographical nightmare for the Magellan’s forces.

These native settlements located on the north and northeastern portion, unlike in the rest of the islands, was located in a shoreline extending some two miles of stiff and clear waters, accessible for disembarkation. But Magellan’s problem was further complicated by the low tide where they had to wade “two good crossbow shots” towards the shore. According to Morison’s estimate, this was a little over a mile or a little more than one and a half kilometers. Out of the 60 soldiers he had, only 49 formed the assault team as the 11 remained in charge of the boats.

The Spaniards’ estimate of the number of warriors who stood by on the shores of Mactan varied. The Genoese pilot, who wrote his memoir of the event, placed it between 3 to 4 thousands but Pigafetta’s “fifteen hundred” figure was closer to realistic demographic configuration of larger pre-colonial settlements. It has been a widely accepted historical fact that the native settlements found by the Spaniards were only composed of some 30 to a 100 households or approximately 200 to 500 persons. Pigafetta’s demographic estimate therefore suggested that the number included allies from other villages ruled by 3 or 4 other chieftains. This fact refutes the traditional belief that Magellan’s only enemies were the men of Lapu-lapu.

The superior number of enemies on the shore of Mactan did not shake Magellan’s confidence as he even belittled the native’s weapons made largely of “reeds, and wood hardened with fire.” Although native cannons called lantakas were known to the natives, Spanish accounts did not mention any of these as having been used by Lapu-lapu’s men. In the midst of such overwhelming number of enemies, Magellan encouraged his men to be brave by reminding them of the recent triumph of Hernan Cortes who defeated the thousands of Aztec warriors with only a few hundred soldiers. As Magellan prepared for battle, he divided his men in two groups who were greatly outnumbered but relied on the superiority of their arms.

The Pigafetta account described this:

“We set out from Zubu at midnight, we were sixty men armed with corselets and helmets;” Indeed, his aggressive impulse could have been provoked by his overwhelming confidence on their military might. This gave Magellan enormous confidence so that when Humabon offered his warriors to join his men in battle, the Spanish politely declined boasting that “he had brought them, not to fight but to watch their bravery and fighting power.”

Impressed by this tactical and technological superiority Humabon must have shared Magellan’s overwhelming confidence.

These corselets and helmets were only a small portion of their ensemble of war technology. The documents of *the Archivo General de Indias* provided detailed information on the military logistics of the expedition, a formidable coercive power which included the fleet’s impressive array of massive artilleries

capable of sustaining a fierce battle both on land and on sea: 58 culverins of small bore (versos), 7 small bronze cannons called falconetes, 3 large Lombardy guns (lombardas gruesas), 3 cannons designed for battering down walls called pasamuros, aside from those cannons installed on the deck of the naos. The soldiers wore adequate body armor. Even the cynical Portuguese spy, Sebastian Alvarez, acknowledged the formidable firepower of the Armada, who wrote: "The artillery which they all carry are eighty guns, of a very small size; only in the largest ship, in which Magellan is going, there are four very good iron cannons."

For their body defenses, the crew were protected with 100 corselets, armors, shoulder-pieces of a coat of mail, helmets, 200 shields from Bilbao. A type of body armor consisting of small metal rings linked together in a pattern to form a mesh, the mail, was worn by Magellan and his soldiers. Even their small portable weapons were intended for long-range shooting. Except for 6 swords, all the rest were designed to be fired or launched at a certain distance from their enemy. At the time they departed from Seville, the ships carried 95 dozens of darts - missiles- harpoons, 10 dozens of javelins, 1,000 lances, 200 pikes or long lances, 6 pitchfork and 6 handles of lances from Bilbao. The sheer number of these weapons alone must have inspired great confidence on Magellan.

From these array of weapons, Magellan relied on two, one was the crossbow, described by the Second Lateran Council in 1139 as "a weapon hateful to God and unfit for Christians," and was banned by the Church for military purposes, except when used against infidels. The ships carried 60 crossbows with 360 dozens of darts/arrows coming from Bilbao. The other weapon carried by Magellan's men was the long portable gun, commonly known as the arquebus, although identified by Pigafetta as *squiopeti* and referred to in other documents as *sclopas*, *sclopette*, *escopette* or popularly called *escopetas*. The men of Magellan carried 50 of these fire-lock from Vizcaya, which explains why he only picked 49 to come with him. The fleet manifest also mentioned of *espingarda*, the precursor of the arquebus, musket or rifle introduced about the middle of the fifteenth century.

Realizing that peaceful means had been exhausted and yet Lapulapu remained stubborn, Magellan resorted to violent means. "Putting to torch a village, and not contented with this walked to one large settlement where he fought with the savages."

As they advanced, Magellan's musketeers and crossbow-men sustained firing for half an hour but, owing to their distance from the target estimated to be over 60 yards, they barely inflicted harm except for slight wounds on their enemies' arms since the bullets and the arrows hardly penetrated their wooden shields. Seeing their ineffective efforts wasting precious bullets and arrows, Magellan ordered to cease fire but "he was not listened to," wrote Pigafetta. On the part of the natives, this only encouraged them to advance while wildly shouting their war cries and "springing from one side to the other" met their outnumbered enemies to whom they were "throwing arrows, javelins, spears hardened in fire, stones, and even mud."

Magellan's men succeeded in approaching the coastal settlement still without incurring casualty until met by the advancing motley natives who ganged up on them. Magellan directed their efforts to dispersing these attackers by setting fire to their houses which, according to Pigafetta, "rendered them more ferocious." Magellan's incendiary strategy worked in deflecting attention from them since these warriors rushed to their burning houses, where some 20 or 30 of them were reduced to ashes, according to Pigafetta. The warriors directed their efforts to 2 of Magellan's men torching the houses and were slain.

The boats carrying the artillery, which Magellan relied for tactical advantage, being too far from the beach, did not serve its purpose of providing cover. Based on Fernando Oliveira's account that the natives were not able to approach them, "...as long as our gunpowder lasted, those of that land did not dare to close with them, but when it was used up, they surrounded us on all sides, and since they were incomparably more numerous, they prevailed, and our men were not able to defend themselves or escape, and fighting until they were exhausted,..." Correa wrote, "They acted with cunning, for they had placed ambushes of men hidden in the bushes who, seeing the Castilian wearied, came out against them and killed many, and another ambush came out of the bush to seize the boats which were on the beach without men."

The natives were actually leading them to a close range combat which the Spaniards were absolutely unprepared and completely disadvantaged not only by number but even by experience. In this desperate situation, the group of Humabon, whom history had only depicted as mere spectators in obedience to Magellan's order to simply watch them fought, actually became part of the battle as they intervened and provided support to the small beleaguered force of Magellan as recorded in the same chronicle of Correa: "then the king (Humabon) came out, and fought with them, and defended the boats, and brought off the men." The natives of Mactan were nevertheless determined to fight as they divided themselves into 3 groups, attacking in both flanks and the third in front. It was in the middle of this fierce skirmish that Magellan's mission finally came to an end.

## THE DEATH OF MAGELLAN

As the natives continued their relentless assault, aware that despite the armor, the Spaniards were vulnerable in their legs, aimed their weapons on them, particularly their poisoned arrows, an important feature of their assemblage of war technology. Part of the Visayans' technology of warfare even during Alcina's time was the employment of poison for their arrows, drawn from the sap of certain herbs and plants. The most common from among these was taque, a milky or resinous substance from a tree called *camandag* but used mainly for the darts in the sumpit or blowgun. The milky sap from the pine or cheesewood called *dita* was another favorite poison for their arrows.

One of these poisoned arrows pierced Magellan's right leg compelling the intrepid leader to order a gradual retreat but was ignored by his men who took a hasty flight, leaving behind 6 or 8 loyal soldiers to protect the wounded leader. As Magellan limped his way out on the shore, but still pursued by the natives who continued to hurl their spears 5 or 6 times, the men succeeded in reaching "a distance of a crossbow shot from the shore," or a little less than a kilometer from their boats. With waters still shallow, just above their knees, Magellan thought of maintaining their position, "without choosing to retreat further," wrote Pigafetta.

Different sources provided varying versions of how Magellan died. The battle, according to Pigafetta lasted for more than one hour which, having identified Magellan, directed their fury, knocking his helmet off his head twice, "but always stood firmly like a good knight, together with some others," wrote Pigafetta. A native hit the captain's face with a bamboo spear but before his assailant could inflict another wound, Magellan quickly killed him with his lance piercing through the chest which remained embedded. As he tried pulling out his other weapon, a sword, another bamboo spear hit his right arm, a

signal for the natives to gang up on him. Although bleeding, Magellan tried to parry the attackers with his sword, only drawn halfway from the sheath. But a scimitar or a kind of a bladed weapon struck his left leg bringing the captain down on his face, a signal for the native warriors to “rush upon him and ran him through with lances and scimitars, and all the other arms which they had.”

Nicolas de Napoles, a companion of Magellan who made an official report of the event to the royal authorities dated 4 June 1529, provided a slightly different version of the captain's death. Napoles testified that he saw Magellan, fighting with him on one side, killed by an arrow and struck by a lance on his throat. The chronicler, Antonio de Herrera, claimed that Magellan's helmet was knocked out by a stone, exposing his head. As he was already weakened by the deep wound on his leg, the natives hurled stones at him which could have severely wounded his head, finally knocking him down. As he had fallen on the soil, Magellan was again struck by natives with their long bamboo lances or cañas indianas.

The Chilean historian, Jose Toribio Medina, blamed Magellan's lack of reasonable judgement to a shocking spectacle, the death of Francisco Rabelo, whom he suspected of being the Captain-General's biological son. Borrowing from del Cano's narrative, another chronicler, the Augustinian missionary in Cebu in the early years of the seventeenth century, Fray Rodrigo Aganduru Moriz, made the same claim:

*As a brave soldier, he was leading his men. While the fight between the Mactan warriors and Spanish soldiers raged with great courage, an arrow pierced through his bastard son, named Rebello, young and spirited, and was discharging his duty well, and thus fell dead, because the arrows were dipped in lethal poison. The father was overwhelmed with grief at the sight, went ahead of the small squad and rushed towards the Indio as if he were a madman, where with his sword and shield, although aided by our soldiers, the enemies had encircled him and snapped his life miserably.*

Seeing the futility of fighting, as they were covered with wounds, Pigafetta and the few survivors scampered for the departing boats. As a loyal soldier and a faithful friend, Pigafetta looked at their abandoned leader and recalled his dying moments: “When they wounded him, he turned back many times to see whether we were all in the boats.” For Pigafetta to see Magellan's dramatic gazes only suggest that the captain was on the ground as he was dragged away by the natives and expired when their boats disembarked: “Thereupon, beholding him dead, we, wounded, retreated, as best we could, to the boats, which were already pulling off.”

Obviously, the exact spot where Magellan fell and the location of the battle was never identified by available contemporary sources. But in 1839, the Spanish colonial authorities made an intensive research on the place of Magellan's death and the report concluded “the older natives claimed that according to their preserved tradition, with few variations, the said hero lost his life in the island of Mactan, in a sitio called Punta Pangusan or Punta del Engaño, a small promontory similar to the entrance to the Port of Cebu.” Exactly fifty years after the construction of his monument, Camilo de Arana's marginal note indicated that it was a short distance to the south west of Punta Pangusan, at the extreme north of the island of Mactan. The name Pangusan was a Visayan word which means “a nose eaten by leprosy.” The Punta Pangusan was described the shoreline as “low, clear but stiff,” located in the center of a cove fronting the coastal village of Lapu-lapu in between Pangusan and Opon.

As it turned out, the battle proved a disaster. As Pigafetta reported: “There perished with him eight of our men, and four of the Indians, who had become Christians; we had also many wounded, among whom I must reckon myself.” Aside from Magellan, the recorded casualties in this battle were: Cristobal

de Rabelo, Magellan's servant and captain of the ship Victoria; Francisco de Espinosa, sailor; Juan de Torres, bearer of arms; Rodrigo Nieto; Anton Gallego, cabin boy; Pedro, servant of the Alguacil Gonzalo de Espinosa. Pigafetta received wounds on his forehead from a poisoned arrow which began to swell and caused him intense pain. Two days later, on 29 April, Antón de Escobar who survived the Battle of Mactan, eventually died from his wounds. On the part of the natives, Pigafetta reported having incurred only 15 dead and 24 injured.

But where was Lapulapu, what was he doing during the battle? Owing to his advanced age, Lapulapu was probably directing his men from a safer location which explains why all the accounts providing brief details on the battle were silent about his role. In fact, he was never mentioned at all. Except for the mention made by Sula prior to the attack of Magellan, Lapulapu vanished in history and any references to him by any other sources were purely speculation, or derived from legends and oral traditions. This is another indication of Lapulapu deteriorated physical condition as an old man.

Assuming the post of Magellan, Juan Serrano and Duarte Barbosa were determined to secure the remains of the fallen commander. In the afternoon, Humabon, with the consent of the Spanish survivors, sent his emissaries to negotiate with the inhabitants of Mactan to secure the body assuming the post of Magellan, Juan Serrano and Duarte Barbosa were determined to secure the remains of the fallen commander. In the afternoon, Humabon, with the consent of the Spanish survivors, sent his emissaries to negotiate with the inhabitants of Mactan to secure the body of the captain and the other companions killed in that battle in exchange for some merchandise. But the defiant natives of the island arrogantly replied that "on no account would they ever give up that man, but they wished to preserve him as a monument of their triumph."

As the most important person they ever defeated in battle, Magellan became the object of martial and talismanic rituals, particularly, decapitation. Fray Rodrigo Aganduru Moriz was among the earliest to mention of the decapitation of Magellan. According to this friar, Magellan was decapitated in accordance with the martial custom of the natives where the victor took a trophy, which was a major part of his body, commonly the head and placed it on the tip of a lance. The natives regarded the body of Magellan as their *dangin*, which, according to Fray Alonso de Mentrída's sixteenth century *Diccionario de la Lengua Bisaya*, was "a trophy of their enemy killed or captured in war." In a society which put premium on prestige and prowess not only as social virtues but also equated with mystical qualities, the body of Magellan constituted as the most valuable war booty. It was suggested that, based on the prevailing custom of the pre-conquest Visayan, Magellan was indeed decapitated, as they did to those they conquered, "which was their great desire," wrote a seventeenth century Augustinian friar.

This Visayan practice of head-taking was an integral feature of their pre-colonial culture. This found confirmation in a number of excavations undertaken from the second half of the twentieth century until few years ago in what were supposedly fifteenth to sixteenth centuries burials in Tanjay, in the island of Negros. In this mass burial, archaeologist recovered not only entire skeletal remains but detached skulls regarded as grave accompaniments. These were presented as strong evidence for widespread inter-polity warfare and head-taking raids as part of political maneuvering and status rivalry among chiefs shortly before Spanish contacts. These human crania represented the heads of enemies captured in raiding or warfare, brought into the settlement and used in mortuary ritual, associated with the phrase coined by Laura Junker, "a precipitating mass death event." This phrase refers to a large-scale massacre resulting from external raiding which provoked head-taking, through "revenge raids."

In 1971, according to Morison, a skull was dug up on Mactan with the remains of a Spanish sword believed to be that of Magellan. Except for this, nothing else was found to provide extensive details to come up with reliable identification. As to what happened to Magellan, Sweig has this to say: "No one knows what became of Magellan's body, or to which element his mortal envelope was returned; whether to fire, to water, to earth, or to air. No witness was there to tell us, and his grave, if he was buried, remains secret. All traces of the man who wrested its last mystery from the unknown have vanished."

Magellan's death was received by Humabon with great sadness, as Pigafetta recalled, "When he knew how the captain had died he wept bitterly for him." Humabon's grief demands qualification. Did he sincerely grieve for his fallen ally out of affection or was it for the bleak prospect he foresaw for his rule which could emanate from Magellan's death? No one else felt so much pain for Magellan's death than his wife, Beatriz, who learned of this tragic news more than a year after. Beatriz, the tragic heroine in the story of the Magellan expedition, had to bear the anguish and bitterness of consecutive deaths of two of her most beloved persons. First was their young boy, Rodrigo, and barely a year after, that of her husband, Magellan.

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