



In Pursuit of Longitude: Magellan and the Antimeridian.

André Rossfelder

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Ferdinand Magellan is widely known and studied, yet his common image can be misleading. Magellan was not the first Circumnavigator. In fact, neither his mission nor even his intent was to sail around the world. In his captivating book "In Pursuit of Longitude: Magellan and the Antimeridian", marine geologist and explorer André Rossfelder reminds us that the Portuguese navigator's strict instructions were only to lay a Spanish claim to the fabled Spice Islands, the Moluccas. Charles of Spain had endorsed his proposal to find the seaway rumored to exist through the New World, and then to cross the unexplored face of Earth and confirm that these treasure islands were on Spain's side of the Antimeridian, the Line separating the Portuguese and Spanish domains. This meant ascertaining their position within two degrees of longitude by sole means of dead-reckoning after sailing across some 200 meridians of uncharted waters -- an extraordinary feat. Magellan's credibility was supported by years of combats and voyages through Portuguese India, but while possession was the king's goal, the navigator harbored his own aims: to search for and claim governorship of the gold-rich Luções, now the Philippines. Close to success, he died in a vain combat. His victory was elsewhere. At the heart of this book is the study of genius, and how one man navigated with amazing confidence and precision to the far side of the world through storms, intrigues and mutinies, and forever changed maritime history. Survivors' accounts of the Pacific crossing, an in-depth analysis of this course as logged by Magellan's pilot Francisco Albo, an extensive bibliography and an index complete the book. Tim Joyner (Magellan, 1992, McGraw-Hill), foremost expert on the great navigator, wrote the Foreword.

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