

Salve, which sailors in their own way are accustomed to recite and sing, all being present, the Admiral entreated and admonished them to keep a good lookout on the forecastle and to watch carefully for land; and that to the man who first told him that he saw land he would later give a silk jacket in addition to the other rewards that the sovereigns had promised, which were ten thousand *maravedís*¹ as an annuity to whoever should see it first.

START HERE

At two hours after midnight the land appeared, from which they were about two leagues distant. They hauled down² all the sails and kept only the *treo*, which is the mainsail without bonnets, and jogged on and off,³ passing time until daylight Friday, when they reached an islet of the Lucayas, which was called Guanahani in the language of the Indians. Soon they saw naked people; and the Admiral went ashore in the armed launch, and Martín Alonso Pinzón and his brother Vicente Anes,⁴ who was captain of the *Niña*. The Admiral brought out the royal banner and the captains two flags with the green cross, which the Admiral carried on all the ships as a standard, with an F and a Y, and over each letter a crown, one on one side of the \dagger and the other on the other. Thus put ashore they saw very green trees and many ponds and fruits of various kinds. The Admiral called to the two captains and to the others who had jumped ashore and to Rodrigo Descobedo, the *escrivano*⁵ of the whole fleet, and to Rodrigo

1. (8v19) A *maravedí* was a copper coin valued at two *blancas*, or 375 to the gold ducat.

2. (8v22) The Elizabethan English mariners' equivalent to *amaynaron* (hauled down) was *amaine*, which expressed a sense of urgency: "Lower as fast as you can." (Smith 1970, 50).

3. (8v24) *Pusieronse a la Corda* (jogging on and off) means tacking back and forth, intentionally making no headway. See Las Casas's definition at 23v23–25.

4. (8v29) *Anes*. Columbus uses the form "Anes" in every mention of Vicente except one, when the name is spelled "Yanes." Morison spells the name "Yáñez" and "Yáñes."

5. (8v41) Jane-Vigneras (1960) and Morison (1963) translate *escrivano* as "secretary." Jados (1975, 33ff.) translates the Italian equivalent term, *scrivano*, as

Sánchez de Segovia; and he said that they should be witnesses that, in the presence of all, he would take, as in fact he did take, possession of the said island for the king and for the queen his lords, making the declarations that were required, and which at more length are contained in the testimonials made there in writing. Soon many people of the island gathered there. What follows are the very words of the Admiral in his book about his first voyage to, and discovery of, these Indies. I, he says, in order that they would be friendly to us—because I recognized that they were people who would be better freed [from error] and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force—to some of them I gave red caps, and glass beads which they put on their chests, and many other things of small value, in which they took so much pleasure and became so much our friends that it was a marvel. Later they came swimming to the ships' launches where we were and brought us parrots and cotton thread in balls and javelins and many other things, and they traded them to us for other things which we gave them, such as small glass beads and bells. In sum, they took everything and gave of what they had very willingly. But it seemed to me that they were a people very poor in everything. All of them go around as naked as their mothers bore them; and the women also, although I did not see more than one quite young girl. And all those that I saw

"ship's clerk." Mallett (1967, 202) translates it as "purser." The *escribano* seems to have had many responsibilities. His duties (described in articles 55–58 and elsewhere in Jados, 1975) included maintaining and protecting the ship's register (*cartulario*), the records of goods and persons carried, financial transactions, and agreements between those on board ship. If he or anyone else made a false entry in the register, he could lose his right hand, be branded, and have his possessions confiscated. The *escribano* was also the purchasing agent, materials manager, payroll clerk, and executor of practically every other business management function. But he was also a kind of "officer of the court." His testimony was equal to that of three other witnesses (Jados 1975, article 330). Little wonder that he had to be present to record the landing on Guanahani and the formal claim to the lands discovered!

were young people,¹ for none did I see of more than 30 years of age. They are very well formed, with handsome bodies and good faces. Their hair [is] coarse—almost like the tail of a horse—and short. They wear their hair down over their eyebrows except for a little in the back which they wear long and never cut. Some of them paint themselves with black, and they are of the color of the Canarians, neither black nor white; and some of them paint themselves with white, and some of them with red, and some of them with whatever they find. And some of them paint their faces, and some of them the whole body, and some of them only the eyes, and some of them only the nose. They do not carry arms nor are they acquainted with them, because I showed them swords and they took them by the edge and
 9v through ignorance cut themselves. They have no iron. Their javelins are shafts without iron and some of them have at the end a fish tooth and others of other things. All of them alike are of good-sized stature and carry themselves well. I saw some who had marks of wounds on their bodies and I made signs to them asking what they were; and they showed me how people from other islands nearby came there and tried to take them, and how they defended themselves; and I believed and believe that they come here from *tierra firme* to take them captive. They should be good and

1. (9r29–30) *Y todos los . . . todos mancebos*. This statement has been used to support the view that the inhabitants of Guanahani who greeted Columbus on 12 October were all young men except for “one [woman] who was just a girl” (Power 1983, 156). The word *mancebos*, “youths,” is masculine, but in Spanish such masculine plural nouns as *hombres*, *jovenes*, and *hijos* can refer to groups made up of individuals of both sexes. Whether there is, in fact, such a reference depends on context (see Keniston 1937, 37). In Columbus’s description of the island of San Salvador and its people there are several clear references to women. He writes that the natives “all go as naked as their mothers bore them; and also the women” (9r27–28). Later, going along the coast on the way to the eastern part of the island, he writes that “many men and many women came,” each bringing something for the Spaniards to eat or drink (10v22–23). The statement in 9r29 that “I did not see more than one very young girl” may not mean that he saw just one woman: it may mean that he saw only one who was very young. No inferences about the relative numbers of men and women on the island can be drawn from the information provided in the *Diario*.

intelligent servants, for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them; and I believe that they would become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they had no religion. Our Lord pleasing, at the time of my departure I will take six of them from here to Your Highnesses in order that they may learn to speak. No animal of any kind did I see on this island except parrots. All are the Admiral's words.

.13. de octubre

Saturday 13 October

As soon as it dawned, many of these people came to the beach—all young as I have said, and all of good stature—very handsome people, with hair not curly but straight¹ and coarse, like horsehair; and all of them very wide in the forehead and head, more so than any other race that I have seen so far. And their eyes are very handsome and not small; and none of them are black, but of the color of the Canary Islanders. Nor should anything else be expected since this island is on an east-west line with the island of Hierro in the Canaries. All alike have very straight legs and no belly but are very well formed. They came to the ship with dugouts² that are made from the trunk of one tree, like a long boat, and all of one piece, and worked marvelously in the fashion of the land, and so big that in some of them 40 and 45 men came. And others smaller, down to some in which came one man alone. They row with a paddle like that of a baker
 10r and go marvelously. And if it capsizes on them they then throw themselves in the water, and they right and empty it with calabashes³

1. (9v26) *Corredios* is a Portuguese word for "sliding" or "slipping." Applied to hair it probably means "smooth" or "sleek." Jane-Vigneras (1960) mistranslates it as "loose."

2. (9v36) The Portuguese used the term *almadias* for West African dugouts. Columbus did not use the West Indian term *canoe* until 26 October (17v32).

3. (10r3) *Calabazas* (calabashes) are bowls and containers made from the dried, hollow shells of gourds. The word can also apply to the edible or decorative fruit itself.

that they carry. They brought balls of spun cotton and parrots and javelins and other little things that it would be tiresome to write down, and they gave everything for anything that was given to them. I was attentive and labored to find out if there was any gold; and I saw that some of them wore a little piece hung in a hole that they have in their noses. And by signs I was able to understand that, going to the south or rounding the island to the south, there was there a king who had large vessels of it and had very much gold. I strove to get them to go there and later saw that they had no intention of going. I decided to wait until the afternoon of the morrow and then depart for the southwest, for, as many of them showed me, they said there was land to the south and to the southwest and to the northwest and that these people from the northwest came to fight them many times. And so I will go to the southwest to seek gold and precious stones. This island is quite big and very flat and with very green trees and much water and a very large lake in the middle and without any mountains; and all of it so green that it is a pleasure to look at it. And these people are very gentle, and because of their desire to have some of our things, and believing that nothing will be given to them without their giving something, and not having anything, they take what they can and then throw themselves into the water to swim. But everything they have they give for anything given to them, for they traded even for pieces of bowls and broken glass cups, and I even saw 16 balls of cotton given for three Portuguese *ceotis*,¹ which is a Castilian *blanca*.² And in

1. (10r33) The *ceuti* was a copper coin commemorating Portugal's capture of Ceuta in 1415.

2. (10r34) A *blanca* was a copper coin valued at half a *maravedi*.

them there was probably more than an *arroba*¹ of spun cotton. This I had forbidden and I did not let anyone take any of it, except that I had ordered it all taken for Your Highnesses if it were in quantity. It grows here on this island, but because of the short time I could not declare this for sure. And also the gold
 10v that they wear hung in their noses originates here; but in order not to lose time I want to go to see if I can find the island of Cipango. Now, since night had come, all the Indians went ashore in their dugouts.

Sunday 14 October

go .14 de octubre

As soon as it dawned I ordered the ship's boat and the launches of the caravels made ready and went north-northeast² along the island in order to see what there was in the other part, which was the eastern part. And also to see the villages, and I soon saw two or three, as well as people, who all came to the beach calling to us and giving thanks to God. Some of them brought us water; others, other things

1. (10r35) An *arroba* (*arrova*) was a commercial weight of one-quarter of a *quintal* (see p. 107, n. 3), equivalent to 11–12 kilograms (*Diccionario* 1956). Seville also had a second *arroba* unit, equal to one-tenth of a *quintal*, used for buying and selling oil.

2. (10v8) *Camino del nor nordeste*. "The way to," or "in the direction of" is expressed in the *Diario* by four phrases that include the word *camino*: *camino de* (16 times); *camino a* (25 times); *camino para* (1 time); and *camino* (4 times). Each phrase is followed by a compass direction or by a place name.

Fuson (1983, 63) maintains that the *de* in *camino de* means "from," not "to," and interprets two critical episodes of the voyage on that basis (*Diario* 10r8–9 and 15v22–23). It is not clear whether he thinks that in all, or only in some, cases *camino de* must be read as "the way from." Power (1983, 153 n. 12) admits that the phrase usually means "the road toward," but it can also (he says) be translated as "the road from." He offers no guidance about when it is to be interpreted in one way and when in the other.

The *Diccionario* (1956) gives two examples of *camino de* meaning "the road to": *Camino de Roma, ni mula coja ni bolsa floja* (On the road to Rome, don't take a lame mule or an empty purse) and *Camino de Santiago, tanto anda el cojo como el sano* (On the road to Santiago [since groups travel together] the lame go as fast as the healthy.) A line by Francisco de Quevedo (1580–1645), from the poem *Todo tras sí lo lleva el año breve*, provides another: *Antes que sepa andar el pie, se mueve camino de la muerte* (Before the foot knows how to walk, it moves toward death).

Among the 16 appearances of *camino de* in the *Diario* only one requires translation as "the way from." See p. 123, n. 1. The other occurrences can, and should, be translated as "the way to."

to eat; others, when they saw that I did not care to go ashore, threw themselves into the sea swimming and came to us, and we understood that they were asking us if we had come from the heavens. And one old man got into the ship's boat, and others in loud voices called to all the men and women: Come see the men who came from the heavens. Bring them something to eat and drink. Many men came, and many women, each one with something, giving thanks to God, throwing themselves on the ground; and they raised their hands to heaven, and afterward they called to us in loud voices to come ashore. But I was afraid, seeing a big stone reef that encircled¹ that island all around. And in between the reef and shore there was depth and harbor for as many ships as there are in the whole of Christendom, and the entrance to it is very narrow. It is true that inside of this belt of stone there are some shallows, but the sea is no more disturbed than inside a well. And I bestirred myself this morning to see all of this, so that I could give an account of everything to Your Highnesses, and also to see where a fort could be made. And I saw a piece of land formed like an island, although it was not one, on which there were six houses. This piece of land might in two days be cut off to make an island, although I do not see this to be necessary since these people are very naive about weapons, as Your Highnesses will see from

11r seven that I caused to be taken in order to carry them away to you and to learn our language and to return them. Except that, whenever Your Highnesses may command, all of them can be taken to Castile or held captive in this same island; because with 50 men all of them could be held in subjection and can be made to do whatever one might wish. And later [I noticed], near the

1. (10v28) Alvar (1976) reads the canceled text as *tierra*.

said islet, groves of trees, the most beautiful that I saw and with their leaves as green as those of Castile in the months of April and May, and lots of water. I looked over the whole of that harbor and afterward returned to the ship and set sail, and I saw so many islands that I did not know how to decide which one I would go to first. And those men whom I had taken told me by signs that they were so very many that they were numberless. And they named by their names more than a hundred. Finally I looked for the largest and to that one I decided to go and so I am doing. It is about five leagues distant from this island of San Salvador, and the others of them some more, some less. All are very flat without mountains and very fertile and all populated and they make war on one another, even though these men are very simple and very handsome in body.

es .15. de octubre

Monday 15 October

I had killed time this night for fear of reaching¹ land to anchor before morning, because of not knowing whether the coast was clear of shoals, and as soon as it dawned I spread sail;² and as the island was farther than five leagues, rather about seven, and the tide detained me, it was around noon when I reached the said island and I found that the face which is in the direction of San Salvador runs north-south and that there are in it five leagues; and the other, which I followed, runs east-west, and

1. (11r27-28) *Temor de no llegar*. "A redundant *no* is occasionally found in clauses dependent upon verbs which imply a negative thought" (Ramsey 1956, 216). As this example shows, the "negative thought" can also be expressed by nouns, in this case *temor* (fear).

2. (11r30) Guillén Tato (1951) defines the phrase *cargar velas* as "to lower [*arriar, bajar*] sails." We maintain, on the contrary, that in the present context the phrase means "to spread or put on sail." Alvar (1976, 59 n.115) expresses the same opinion. See also *Glosario* (1950, 2:101). The same meaning is required in *Diario* 11r40: *cargue las velas*. The usage may be derived from the meaning of *cargar*, "to loosen." Here the sails are "loosened" by unfurling or spreading. In this second example, Columbus writes that even with all sail spread, he might not have been able to reach the western end of Santa María before nightfall.

there are in it more than ten leagues. And since from this island I saw another larger one to the west, I spread sail to go forward all that day until night because [otherwise] I would not yet have been able to reach the western cape of the island, to which island I gave the name Santa María de la Concepción. And close to sundown I anchored near the said cape in order to
 11v find out if there was gold there,¹ because these men that I have had taken on the island of San Salvador kept telling me that there they wear very large bracelets of gold on their legs and on their arms. I well believe that all they were saying was a ruse in order to flee. Nevertheless, my intention was not to pass by any island of which I did not take possession, although if it is taken of one, it may be said that it is taken of all. And I anchored and² remained here until today, Tuesday, and at dawn went ashore with the armed launches. I got out, and the natives, who were numerous and naked and of the same character as those of the other island of San Salvador, let us go around on the island and gave us what was asked of them. And because the wind increased and blew toward shore from the southeast,³ I did not wish to stay and departed for the ship; and a large dugout was alongside the caravel *Niña*. And one of the men

1. (11r38–44) *Y como . . . Santa María de la Concepción*. These lines have been used to support the view that Columbus bypassed the second island that he saw and that it was at the western end or cape of a third island, “a larger one to the west,” that he anchored at sunset on 15 October. This view ignores the fact that when Columbus left his anchorage on the following day, it was with the express purpose of “going to the other big island that I was seeing to the west” (*para yr a la otra isla grande que yo via al guesste*) (11v38–39). The idea that Columbus would not land on the second island that he saw also runs counter to his statement that he did not want to pass any island without taking possession of it (11v7–9), although he does qualify this plan by saying that “taken of one, it may be said that it is taken of all.” It seems unlikely, however, that he would have relaxed his efforts at such an early point in the inter-island voyage.

2. (11v9) The word *e* appears to be overwritten on a *y*.

3. (11v14–15) *El viento . . . sueste*. Guillén Tato (1951, 123) defines *travesía* as “perpendicular to the side of a ship.” Here, however, it must have been a wind blowing toward shore, *su travesía*, that made Columbus cut short his exploration of Santa María and return to the fleet. The direction of the wind from the southeast is evidence that Columbus’s anchorage was on the south shore of the island. According to the *Diccionario* (1956), *travesía* was formerly used in the sense of *travesía*, which seems to be true here. Woodbridge (1950, 205) omits *travesía* from his list of old Spanish nautical terms and is in error about the meaning of *travesía* in *Diario* 27r6.

from the island of San Salvador who was in the *Niña* threw himself into the sea and went away in the dugout. And the night before at mid-¹ thrown the other and went after the dugout, which fled [so speedily] that there was never ship's launch that could overtake it even if we had a big head start. However, the dugout made land, the natives left the dugout, and some of the men of my company went ashore after them; and they all fled like chickens. And the dugout that they had left we brought alongside the *Niña*, to which now from another cape came another small dugout with one man who came to trade a ball of cotton; and some sailors jumped into the sea because the man did not want to enter the caravel and they laid hold of him. And I, who was on the poop of the ship and saw all this, sent for him and gave him a red bonnet, and some small green glass beads which I put on his arm, and two bells which I put on his ears, and I ordered his dugout, which I also had in the ship's launch, returned to him and sent him to land. And then I set sail to go to the other large island that I had in view to the west. And I also ordered the other dugout, which the caravel *Niña* was bringing along at her stern, let loose. And later I saw, on land, at the time of arrival of the other man—[the man] to whom I had given the things aforesaid and whose ball of cotton I had not wanted to take from him, although he wanted to give it to me—that all the others went up to him. He considered it a great marvel, and indeed it seemed to him that we were good people and that the other man who had fled

12r

1. (11v19–20) *La noche de antes a medio*. Something must have been omitted after *medio* at this point in copying the document that Las Casas used. In his *Historia de las Indias* (1951, 1:210) it is clear that there were two escapes, not one, and that only one involved natives of Santa María and a canoe. As a conjectural reconstruction of the *Diario* text we suggest the following: *Y la noche de antes a medi[a noche se habia] echado [a la mar] el otro y habia huido. [Gente de mi compañía] fue atras la almadia . . .* In translation the whole passage would read: "And one of the men from the island of San Salvador who was in the *Niña* threw himself into the sea and went away in the dugout. And the night before, at midnight, the other man had thrown himself into the sea and fled. Men of my company went after the dugout . . ." Las Casas's text does not make entirely clear that it was the second escape that prompted the chase of the dugout. The first man presumably swam ashore.

had done us some harm and that for this we were taking him with us. And the reason that I behaved in this way toward him, ordering him set free and giving him the things mentioned, was in order that they would hold us in this esteem so that, when Your Highnesses some other time again send people here, the natives will receive them well. And everything that I gave him was not worth four *maravedís*. And so I departed when it was about the tenth hour, with the wind southeast and shifting to the south, in order to pass to this other island, which is exceedingly large and where all these men that I am bringing from San Salvador make signs that there is very much gold and that they wear rings of it on their arms and on their legs and in their ears and on their noses and on their chests. And from this island of Santa María to this other island it is nine leagues east-west, and all this part of the island runs northwest-southeast. And it appears that there may well be on this coast more than 28 leagues on this side. And it is very flat without any mountains, just like San Salvador and Santa María. And all the beaches are without rocks, except that at all of them there are some big rocks near land under the water, where it is necessary to keep your eyes open when you wish to anchor and not to anchor close to land, although the waters are always very clear and one sees the bottom. And two lombard shots [away] from land in all of these islands the bottom is so deep that you cannot reach it. These islands are very green and fertile and with sweet-smelling breezes; and there may be many things that I do not know about because I do not want to stop, so I can investigate and go to many islands in order to find gold. And since these people make signs that they wear it on their arms and on their legs—and it is gold because I showed them some pieces that I have of it—I cannot fail with the help of Our Lord to find out where it originates. And when we were mid-sea between these two islands, that is, Santa María

and this big one to which I gave the name Fernandina, I found a man who was passing alone in a dugout from the island of Santa María to Fernandina and who was bringing a small amount of their bread, which was about the size of a fist, and
 12v a calabash of water and a piece of red earth made into dust and then kneaded and some dry leaves, which must be something highly esteemed among them, because earlier, in San Salvador, they brought some of them to me as a present. And he was bringing a little native basket in which he had a string of small glass beads and two *blancas*; because of which I recognized that he was coming from the island of San Salvador and had passed to that of Santa María and was passing to Fernandina. He came up to the ship and I had him enter, which was what he asked, and I had his dugout put in the ship and all that he brought watched over, and I ordered him given bread and honey and something to drink, and so I will transport him to Fernandina and I will give him all of his belongings in order that, through good reports of us—Our Lord pleasing—when Your Highnesses send [others] here, those who come will receive courteous treatment and the natives will give us of all that they may have.

Tuesday and Wednesday 16 October

I departed from the island of Santa María¹ de la Concepción, when it was already about noon, for the island of Fernandina, which showed up very large to the west, and I sailed all that day in a very light wind. I could not arrive in time to be able to see the bottom in order to anchor in the clear, because in doing this it is important to have great diligence so as not to lose the

1. (12v22) *Las Isla de Sancta maria*. Some students of the voyage have taken this ungrammatical construction (plural article with singular noun) to mean that Santa María consisted of more than one island. For the ways in which other editors of both Spanish and English versions of the *Diario* have dealt with this matter, see Dunn (1983a, 44). See also Fuson (1983, 60).