

too, of the palm-fibre. This sort of ships they call junks, and they only use them with a wind fore and aft.'

The Spice Islands were the Moluccas, a few small islands in the eastern sector of the East Indies. Later in his letter Maximilian says that 'Magellan had a slave, born in the Moluccas, whom he had bought in Malacca some time back; this man was a perfect master of the Spanish language'. But Magellan himself did not see the Moluccas or have the opportunity of using his slave as interpreter there, for he died in the Philippines as the result of his own foolhardiness: 'The King of Mauthan [Mactan], seeing our men coming, draws up about three thousand of his subjects in the field, and Magellan draws up his on the shore, with their guns and warlike engines, though only a few; and though he saw that he was far inferior to the enemy in number, yet he thought it better to fight this warlike race, which made use of lances and other long weapons ... So, having charged the enemy, both sides fought valiantly: but, as the enemy were more numerous, and used longer weapons, with which they did our men much damage, Magellan himself was at last thrust through and slain.'

In a memorable passage, Maximilian testifies to the banishment of superstition by the experiences of the men of the *Victoria*: 'They seemed not only to tell nothing fabulous themselves, but by their relation to disprove and refute all the fabulous stories which have been told by old authors. For who can believe that these were Monosceli, Scyopodae, Spitamei, Pygmies, and many others, rather monsters than men ... it must be believed that the accounts of them are fabulous, lying, and old women's tales, handed down to us in some way by no credible author.'

After Magellan's death his men visited Borneo, and eventually reached the Moluccas, where they were on the whole well received. 'Having, therefore, loaded the ships with cloves, and having received letters and presents for Caesar from the kings, they made ready for their departure. The letters were full of submission and respect. The gifts were Indian swords, and things of that sort. But, best of all, the Mamuco Diata; that is, the Bird of God, by which they believe themselves to be safe and invincible in battle. Of which five were sent, and one I obtained from the captain, which I send to your reverence, not that your reverence may think yourself safe from treachery and the sword by means of it, as they profess to do, but that you may be pleased by its rareness and beauty. I send also some cinnamon and nutmeg and cloves, to show that our spices are not only not worse, but more valuable than those which the Venetians and Portuguese bring, because they are fresher.'

Another touch of realism in Maximilian's account is his telling of how the time-honoured notion of the Alexandrine geographer Ptolemy that a great tongue of land extended north and south to the east of Africa was refuted by the voyage of the *Victoria*: 'So the ship sailed again from