

## Nova Albion Revealed: Drake's claim of California celebrated by Hakluyt and Hondius

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**Abstract:** In this essay I will examine two accounts of Sir Francis Drake's acquisition of Nova Albion for England. I will compare and contrast a text, 'The famous voyage of Sir Francis Drake' from Richard Hakluyt's *Principall navigations, voyages and discoveries of the English nation* (1589) and a map, Jodocus Hondius's *Vera Totius Expeditionis Navticae* (c. 1590-1595). I will explore the role of Nova Albion itself, the two depictions, the motivating impulses of Hakluyt and Hondius, and the place of all of this in the political, commercial, and religious ambitions and wars of the late sixteenth century.

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One June or July day during the summer of 1579, Francis Drake, not yet Sir Francis, accepted in the name of England and Queen Elizabeth the free gift of an undefined extent of what is now California from the Coast Miwok Indians, whose ancestors had lived there for thousands of years. The incident was only acknowledged in print for the first time a decade later in Richard Hakluyt's *The principall navigations, voyages and discoveries of the English nation*, 1589.<sup>1</sup> The incident was illustrated in Jodocus Hondius's engraved map *Vera Totius Expeditionis Navticae*, prepared in London c. 1590, issued in both London and Amsterdam, c. 1590-1595.<sup>2</sup> In the ten years while all mention of Nova Albion, officially a state secret, was suppressed, Nova Albion acquired a symbolic significance for the promoters of an expansionist policy that, they claimed, would guarantee to England her rightful place among the powers in the New World. Narrative and map are alike in the story they tell; on first glance they could not seem further apart in mood. This essay will follow the path from event to the two recordings of the event to its apotheosis as herald for a new imperial England.

Richard Hakluyt (1552?-1616), MA Christ Church, Oxford, 1577, ordained priest, lecturer on maps, globes, and navigational instruments, chaplain to Sir Edward Stafford in Paris 1683-8, and advocate for English commercial and colonial expansion, was a forager and collector of every scrap of information on English discoveries and naval triumphs from the mythical past to the most recent. His 825-page folio volume had already been licensed for publication and prepared for binding and distribution when six unnumbered leaves were inserted between pages 643 and 644. (Figure 1) Folded in folio, the six leaves became the twelve pages entitled 'The famous voyage of Sir Francis Drake into the South Sea, and there hence about the whole Globe of the Earth.' ['The famous voyage'.] A note was added at the bottom of the title page: 'Whereto is added the last most renowned English Navigation round the whole Globe of the Earth.' (Figure 2) Printed on the 'pot' paper commonly used by the Queen's printer, with woodcut designs for occasional decoration, an estimated 1000 copies were sold at prices ranging from 9s (probably unbound) to 10s or 11s. One hundred and thirty copies survive.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *The principall navigations, voyages and discoveries of the English nation* (Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society and the Peabody Museum of Salem, 1965). Facsimile of London: 1589.

<sup>2</sup> Jodocus Hondius. Map: *Vera Totius Expeditionis Navticae*. (London and Amsterdam: c. 1590-1595). In possession of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Call number: G3200.1589.H6 Case C.

<sup>3</sup> D. B. Quinn, 'Hakluyt's Books and Sources' in *The Hakluyt Handbook* ii (London: Hakluyt Society, 1994) pp. 474-476.



Figure 1: *The principall navigations, voyages and discoveries of the English nation, 1589.* This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

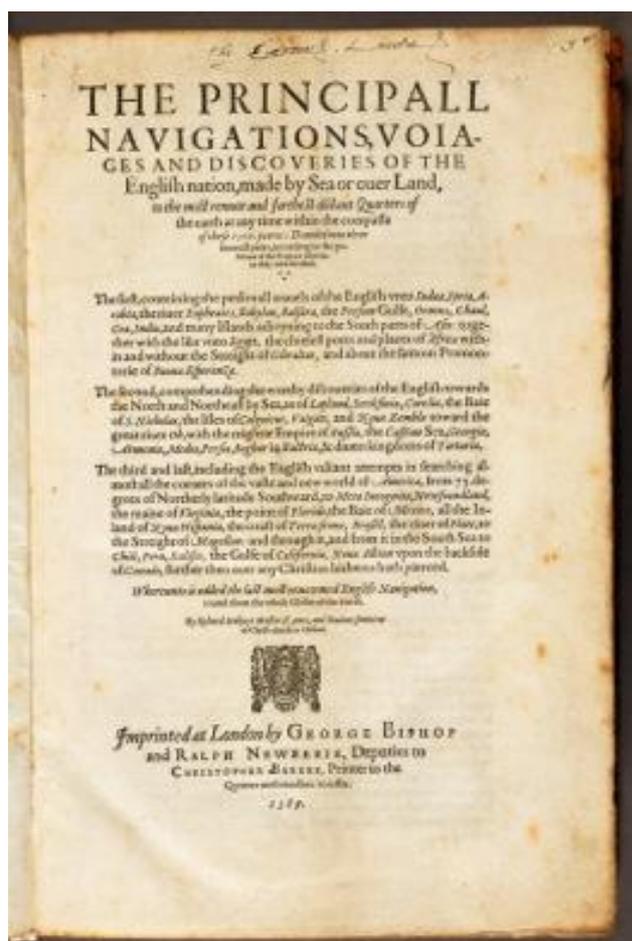


Figure 2: Title page from Richard Hakluyt, *The principall navigations, voyages, and discoveries of the English nation, 1589.* This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Jodocus Hondius of Ghent (1563-1612) arrived in London in 1583, a Protestant refugee from religious war and oppression in Flanders. His copperplate engraved map shows two hemispheres, each 28cm in diameter, on a sheet of paper measuring 40cm x 56cm. The mid-ocean intersections of the heavily drawn equator and meridians command the reader's eyes. The oceans and coasts are the important points on this map, not the landmasses, which are split and shoved apart. The map is signed, but bears no date or place of publication. It is thought to have been prepared in London and printed first in London and then, following Hondius's return to the Netherlands in 1593, in Amsterdam. Six copies survive.<sup>4</sup> (Figure 3)

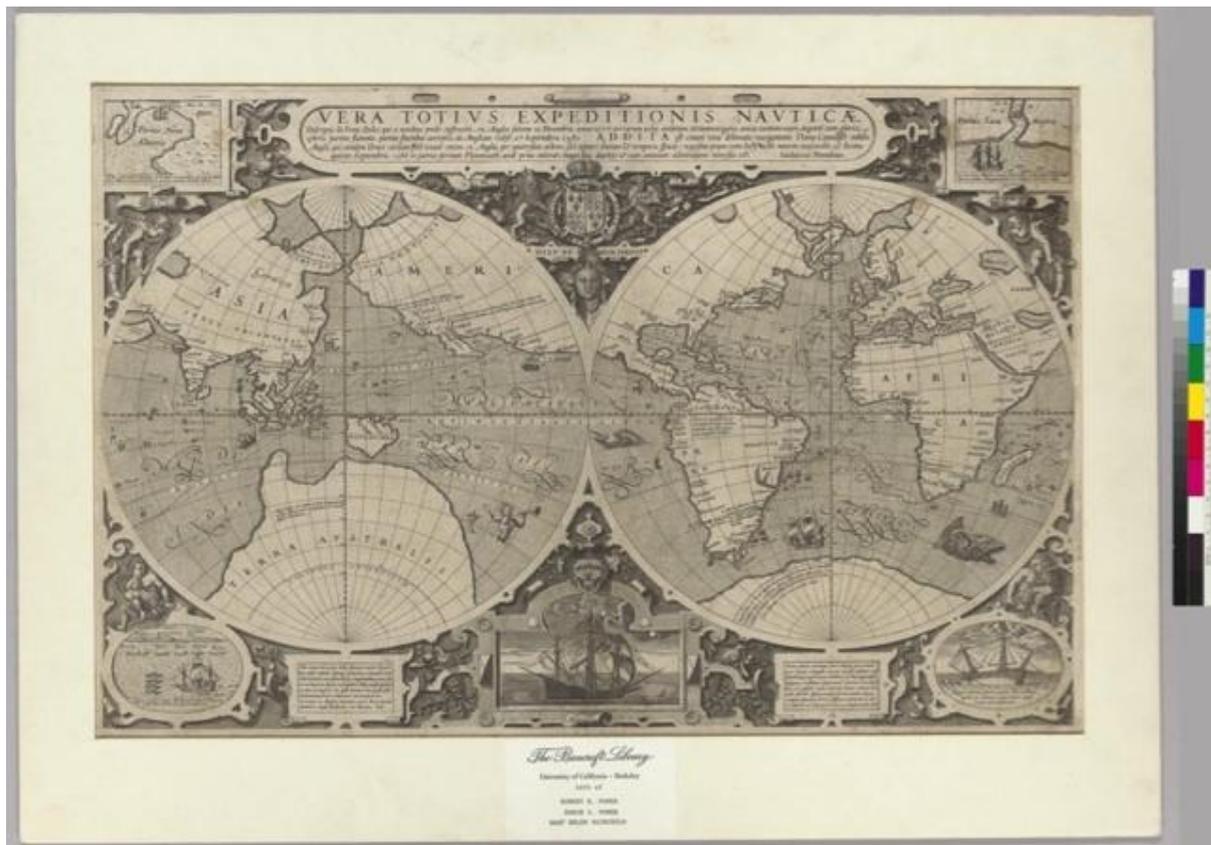


Figure 3: Map. Jodocus Hondius, *Vera Totius Expeditionis Navticae*, (London and Amsterdam: 1590-1595). Courtesy of the Bancroft Library University of California, Berkeley

The first half of Hakluyt's 'The famous voyage' is a brisk account, one aimed to appeal alike to armchair travellers seeking vicarious adventure and improved geographic knowledge, and to alert investors seeking possible future enterprises. Dates, degrees of latitude are frequently cited, but no map accompanies the text, leaving the sixteenth or seventeenth century readers to refer to one of the popular new atlases coming out of Antwerp or to paint scenes in their imaginations: harbours and anchorages where the fleet took on water and provisions, islands described as

<sup>4</sup> Helen Wallis, *The Voyage of Sir Francis Drake Mapped in Silver and Gold* (Berkeley: University of California, The Friends of the Bancroft Library, 1979), pp. 19-20. The British Library holds one of the six known surviving copies of Hondius's map. Images can be found easily on the web.

rich and fruitful, a very faire and pleasant country with exceeding fruitful soil, very ripe and sweet grapes, goats and wild hens a great store of large and mightie deer, [seals] whereof we slew to the number of 200-300 in the space of an hower, a great store of foule which could not flie, of the bignesse of geese, whereof we killed in lesse then one day 3000, and victualed ourselves thoroughly therewith.<sup>5</sup>

Increasingly the account lists the names of ports ransacked of their charts and maps and chalices, of shanghaied Spanish and Portuguese pilots taken on board, of ships commandeered and relieved of their cargoes:

a good store of wine, 25000 pezos of very pure and fine gold, 13 barres of silver which weighed 4000 duckets Spanish, linen cloth and fine China dishes of white earth, and a great store of China silks, of all which things wee tooke as we listed.<sup>6</sup>

Hondius's map is an extravagantly decorated representation of the same voyage, together with that of Thomas Cavendish, the second Englishman to circumnavigate the globe (1586-1588), framed in scrolls, swirls, strange birds, exotic plants, and winged cherubs ascending the bulging curve of the globe with the aid of stilts. Provided that one knows where to begin in England, one can follow the stippled track of Drake's five ships that seem to bob in full-sail south along the coast of Africa, across the Mar del Nors, south-west along the coast of Brasilia, through the Straits of Magellan, the fleet of five now reduced to three, and then to one, (the *Marigold* having been lost in a storm and the *Elizabeth* having returned to England). The *Golden Hind* continues north along the coast of Peru to latitudes north of Nova Albion, then across the great ocean through the archipelagos of the Moluccas, across the Mar de India, rounding Cape Horn, heading north and sailing well out to sea to elude the Spanish, before finally reaching England and home.

The second half of 'The famous voyage' describes Drake's return to England, during which time he scored three diplomatic triumphs – the acquisition of some part of western North America, the establishing of cordial relations and trade initiatives with the Sultan of Ternate in the Moluccas and the rajas of Java. He and his men had also survived one near disaster – the grounding of the *Golden Hind* on a reef in the Celebes Sea. Hondius shows the same four events in the insets at the corners of his map. Why was Nova Albion, faded from modern memory, awarded such prominence in these, two of the earliest accounts of the voyage?

By the spring of 1579, the *Golden Hind* lay heavy in the water and Drake determined to set a course for home. He would not return by the Strait of Magellan; the Spanish, expecting him to return the way he came, would be lying in wait. Unless he chanced upon the yet-undiscovered Northwest Passage, he would have to return by way of the Moluccas. Before he attempted the Pacific crossing, the now-leaking *Golden Hind* would have to be scraped, caulked, and made fit for the long voyage home. A suitable and safe anchorage was found, 'a fair and good Baye' somewhere on, or very near, the Point Reyes peninsula, a splintering shard on the coastline some thirty miles north of San Francisco, the creation of earthquakes and grinding tectonic plates. In 1579, as for thousands of years, Point Reyes was the home of the Coast Miwok Indians, who lived without metals or writing, traded the shell and feather ornaments they made for the obsidian of tribes further inland, and almost certainly had never seen a European. Drake and his men were with the Coast Miwok from 17<sup>th</sup> June to 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1579, roughly the half-way mark of their three-year journey.

<sup>5</sup> 'The famous voyage'. All twelve pages of 'The famous voyage' are unnumbered.

<sup>6</sup> 'The famous voyage'

According to ‘The famous voyage’, Drake and his men and the Miwok entered into cautious diplomacy. They exchanged presents: Drake ‘liberally bestowed on them necessarie things to cover their nakednes, whereupon they supposed us to be gods, and would not be perswaded to the contrarie: the presents which they sent to our Generall, were feathers, and calcs [cauls] of networke.’ In language that might apply to an embassy to the English court, ‘The famous voyage’ describes the Miwok coming to Drake’s camp with guards and ambassadors, their king escorted by a sceptre-bearer carrying crowns. ‘The crownes were made of knit worke wrought artificially with feathers of divers colours: the chaines were made of a bonie substance.’ The sceptre-bearer sang and danced, soon joined by the king and all the Miwok.<sup>7</sup>

They made signes to our General to sit downe, to whom the King, and divers others made several orations, or rather supplications, that he would take their province & kingdom into his hand, and become their King, making signes that they would resigne unto him their right and title of the whole land, and become his subjects. In which, to persuade us the better, the King and the rest, with one consent and with great reverence, joyfully singing a song, did set the crowne upon his head, inriched his necke with all their chaines, and offered unto him many other things, honouring him by the name of Hioh, adding thereunto as it seemed, a signe of triumph: which our Generall thought not meete to reject, because he knewe not what honour and profite it might be to our Countrey. Wherefore in the name, and to the use of her Maiestie, he took the scepter, crowne, and dignitie of the said Countrey into his hands, wishing that the riches & treasure thereof might so conveniently be transported to the inriching of her kingdome at home, as it aboundeth in the same.<sup>8</sup>

To the Miwok, ornaments of feathers and shells conveyed status. Whether their cauls and chains represented the same authority as the golden crowns and jeweled regalia of the courts of Europe was not entertained by Drake or his men. A claim in America would be seen in both England and Spain as a challenge, a taunt, a slap in the face of Spanish imperial pretensions. Drake seized the opportunity, naming the land Nova Albion, ‘in respect of the white bankes and cliffs, which lie to wards the sea: and [...] because it might have some affinitie with our Country in name, which sometime was so called.’<sup>9</sup> Before setting off on the homeward journey across the Pacific, Drake registered England’s claim on a metal plate which he

nailed upon a faire great poste, whereupon was ingrauen her Maiesties name, the day and yeere of our arrival there, with the free giving up of the province and people into her Maiesties hands, together with her highness picture and armes, in a peece of sixe pence of currant English moneye under the plate, where under was also written the name of our Generall.<sup>10</sup>

On Hondius’s map Drake’s encounter with the Miwok is illustrated in the inset in the upper-left corner. The *Golden Hind* rides at anchor in Portus Novae Albionis. A small crowd of the Miwok approach, tearing their faces with their fingernails until the blood runs, which, the caption explains, was evidence that the Miwok recognized Drake and his men as gods. A

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<sup>7</sup> ‘The famous voyage’

<sup>8</sup> ‘The famous voyage’

<sup>9</sup> ‘The famous voyage’

<sup>10</sup> ‘The famous voyage’

stockade with rows of neat houses is shown at the top. Here Drake was crowned twice, the caption reads, and the people wept when he departed.

In England a year and a half later, Drake's return was celebrated. Drake's 'name and fame became admirable in all places, the people swarming daily in the streets to behold him, vowing hatred of all that durst mislike him.'<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth ordered the *Golden Hind* to Deptford, where she knighted Drake on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1581, passing her sword to the French Ambassador to perform the accolade, thereby implicating France in a blatant show of defiance against Spain.

The details of Drake's voyage were suppressed. That Drake had entered the South Sea and raided ports on the coast of Spanish America could not be denied. The extent of his encroachment into 'the Spanish lake', a true accounting of his staggering booty, details of his encounters and discoveries, the fact of the circumnavigation itself was all information too valuable to be allowed to fall into Spanish hands. That the investors in Drake's voyage, who had profited enormously from it, included some of the most powerful figures at court, the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham among them, would add to the embarrassment.<sup>12</sup> Drake's sailors were pledged 'not to disclose the route they took, on pain of death,' wrote the Spanish ambassador, Bernadino de Mendoza, to Philip II.<sup>13</sup> Drake himself claimed to have been at Lima only the previous year (he was in fact in mid-Pacific), leading Mendoza, who referred to Drake as 'the master thief of the unknown world,' to conclude that he had returned to England by way of the Strait of Magellan. Cartographer Gerard Mercator speculated that Drake 'must have found very wealthy regions never yet discovered by Europeans' and returned by the Northeast Passage which, Mercator believed, skirted the northern coast of Russia.<sup>14</sup> So effective was the secrecy in England that four years after Drake's return the English ambassador in Paris observed that the French knew more about Drake's activities than he did.<sup>15</sup>

In his first interview with the Queen, Drake handed over his log, 'a diary of everything that happened during the three years he was away', and a very large map.<sup>16</sup> Drake's log and illustrated journal disappeared. The map, known as the Queen's Map, remained on limited view, until it too disappeared, thought to have been burnt in the fires that destroyed Whitehall Palace in 1698. Samuel Purchas saw it in 1625 still hanging 'in His Majesties Gallerie at Whitehall neere the Privie Chamber' and described it in such detail that it is possible to establish three other maps as derivatives of it.<sup>17</sup> The engraved map by Jodocus Hondius is one of these three. Drake retained for himself the journal kept by Francis Fletcher, his chaplain on the voyage, which has been identified as one of Hakluyt's sources for 'The famous voyage.'<sup>18</sup> Other contemporary accounts, English and Spanish, are scattered in archives in England and Spain.

One of the people who chafed under the censor's restrictions was Richard Hakluyt. Drake's circumnavigation should be proclaimed, not censored, he believed. Hakluyt preached a vision of England as the equal of any other nation, no matter how mighty or overbearing, in a future where King Philip, 'our mortalle enemye', had been properly humbled and cut down

<sup>11</sup> John Stow, *The Annales or General Chronicle of England* (London: 1615) Quoted in Norman J. W. Thrower, *Sir Francis Drake and the Famous Voyage, 1577-1580* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> John Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990), p. 95.

<sup>13</sup> Letter of Bernadino de Mendoza to Philip II, 16 October 1580. Martin A. S. Hume, *Calendar of State Papers, Spain (Simancas), Volume 3: 1580-1586* (1896), pp.52-63. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid+87077>, accessed: 28 January 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Taylor, *The World of Gerard Mercator* (New York: Walker and Company, 2004), pp. 232-234.

<sup>15</sup> Wallis in Thrower, p. 139.

<sup>16</sup> Mendoza to Philip II, 16 October 1580.

<sup>17</sup> Wallis, *The Voyage of Sir Francis Drake*, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> D. B. Quinn, 'Early Accounts of the Famous Voyage,' in Thrower, pp. 38-39, 46.

to size. Driven by the ‘ardent love of my country,’<sup>19</sup> Hakluyt urged commercial and colonial expansion.

I maruaille not a little [he wrote in 1582] [...] that since the first discoverie of America (which is nowe full fourscore and tenne yeeres), after so great conquests and plantings of the Spaniardes and Portingales there, that wee of Englande could neuer haue the grace to set fast footing in such fertill and temperate places as are left as yet vnpossessed of them. [...] I conceiue great hope that the time approacheth and noew is, that we of England may share and part stakes (if we will our selues) [...] in part of America and other regions, as yet vndiscovered.<sup>20</sup>

Before the decade was out, he had pushed the limits of censorship, publishing two maps, one noting English explorations in western North America, the other clearly plotting ‘Nova Albion, discovered by the English in 1580.’<sup>21</sup> In the wake of the defeat of the Armada and Cavendish’s return from his voyage of circumnavigation, restrictions relaxed to allow the first published account of Drake’s circumnavigation and the claim to Nova Albion. Hakluyt’s ‘The famous voyage’ describes the voyage from the fleet’s departure on 15 November 1577, to Drake’s return on 26 September 1580. To the bare, bald facts of almost three years at sea Hakluyt added the lure of possible future enterprise and profit. The account of Nova Albion concludes: ‘There is no part of the earth here to be taken up, wherein there is not a reasonable quantitie of gold or silver.’<sup>22</sup> *The principall navigations* was enthusiastically received. An expanded 1175-page three-volume edition followed in 1598-1600. An estimated 200 copies survive, testimony to its broad circulation. ‘Read vigorously’, it was reprinted in 1625.<sup>23</sup>

Jodocus Hondius of Ghent had arrived in London, age 20, already with an established reputation as a master engraver of maps and charts. A staunch protestant, he had declined commissions offered by the duke of Parma, commander of the Spanish forces in Flanders, and fled to England. Setting himself up in Southwark, he published nautical charts and maps of new trade routes and discoveries and ‘associated with prominent English seamen,’ including Drake, Cavendish, and Sir Walter Raleigh.<sup>24</sup> He was commissioned to engrave the copper plates for the first globes published in England. Engraved portraits of Drake and Queen Elizabeth are ascribed to him. And he published the third of the maps known to have been derived from the Queen’s Map.

The earliest of the three derivatives exists in manuscript; the second was probably published in France and Antwerp. Hondius’s was the first map of Drake’s voyage to be printed and published in England.<sup>25</sup> All three maps identify Nova Albion across a generous span of western North America. Hondius’s alone includes an inset featuring Drake’s coronation in Nova Albion.

Compared with the direct telling of Hakluyt’s ‘The famous voyage’, Hondius’s map is exuberantly flamboyant. No mere geography lesson, its celebration of Drake’s voyage is proclaimed in every iota of space on the page. In the lower left corner the *Golden Hind* is

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Payne, *Richard Hakluyt: A guide to his books and to those associated with him*, (London: Anthony Payne, 2008.), p. 43.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America and the Ilands adjacent* (London: 1582). Facsimile edition, J. W. Jones, ed., (1850). (Elibron Classics, 2005), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Map ‘De Orbe Novo’ in Thrower, p. 141. ‘Nova Albion, Inventa An 1580 . ab Anglis.’

<sup>22</sup> ‘The famous voyage’.

<sup>23</sup> Quinn, in *Hakluyt Handbook*, ii, pp. 476-496.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin. *The World Encompassed* (Washington: 1981.) p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Wallis, *The Voyage of Sir Francis Drake*, pp. 7-10, 19-21. The earliest, manuscript map, the ‘Drake-Mellon map’, is in the Paul Mellon Collection of the Yale Center for British Art, Yale University. Copies of the second derivative of the Queen’s Map by Nicola Van Sype can be found in the British Library and the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

shown welcomed into harbour at Ternate in the Moluccas, towed by four canoes so finely drawn that only with a magnifying glass can one count the heads of the oarsmen and their oars, or pick out Drake's trumpeter and drummer on the deck, or make out the pattern of the planking on the hull. In the lower right inset the *Golden Hind* is shown very much on her side, when, having struck a reef, she was grounded for twenty hours in the open sea. One can make out the jettisoned barrels of victuals and cloves being carried off by the waves. These insets show the honours bestowed by powerful princes upon Drake, and by extension the Queen and all England – by the Miwok who crowned him their king, by the Sultan of Ternate and the rajas of Java who seemed hopeful of trade, and by God, who by rescuing the *Golden Hind* from the reef, signalled his indisputable blessing on the entire venture. The banner headline tells of Drake's return to Plymouth 'in great glory and with the admiration of all'. The Queen is portrayed wearing a headdress of conch shells under the royal coat of arms and the motto, *Dieu et mon droit*.

In hindsight, of all of the events described in 'The famous voyage' or portrayed in the insets in the Hondius map, the encounter with the Miwok was the most innocuous. No English colony, trading station, or military outpost was ever attempted at Nova Albion. Nova Albion offered nothing beyond a new name on the map. That alone was enough, proclaiming England to have a rightful stake in America equal with Spain and France. Separately or together, 'The famous voyage' in Hakluyt's *Principall navigations* and Hondius's map give witness to that moment when England took stock of her present state and launched into the world of empire.



Figure 4: Drake's Bay, Point Reyes National Seashore. National Park Service. [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

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