
Document 1518A

Magellan's petition to the King

Source: AGI Seville (old signature): Leg. 1, Papeles de Maluco, 1519-1547. Navarrete's Colección de los viages, iv, pp. 113-116. Summary in B&R I, pp. 251-253.

Memorandum to the King [supposedly by Magellan and Faleiro, dated March 1518] regarding the discovery of the Moluccan Islands, which they have proposed, and the favors they request for themselves.

Most Powerful Sir:

Inasmuch as with the help of God our Lord, we have to discover and open the way for the placing under the dominion of Y.H., many very advantageous islands and lands, what we beg Y.R.M. to grant us and reserve for us is as follows:

1° Firstly: that Y.H. will not give a permit to anybody whom he outfits for the discovery of our part [of the world] where we intend to go, God willing, from now for ten years, as we ourselves wish to do it with such good competence, and with as many ships as the other persons; about which Y.H. ought to have us notified, in order for us to respond whether we will do it or not; and if so, whether to do it ourselves or through other persons engaged by us for it.

[Official recommendations in margin:] *In this chapter, it is necessary before answering to know the proposed route, because it is possible to discover by various routes.*

2° Next: that out of all the profit and interest, which out of all such lands that we would discover, from rents as well as from dues, as well as any other thing, which will accrue to Y.H. after expenses, Y.H. will give us one twentieth of everything, with the title of his Admirals, and with the government of the said lands for us and for our legal heirs in freehold [i.e. in perpetuity].

In this chapter, one must know the quantity, and regarding the title of Admirals, there is a difficulty on account of the privileges of Admirals.

As for the government, Y.H. may be pleased to give it to them and to their sons, keeping the supremacy for Y.H., and provided the sons are their own and married in these kingdoms, and sufficiently skilled for it, and the government is left with his son.

In the jurisdiction by freehold, it is against the laws of the Kingdom, and it has been seen that it is very prejudicial to the King to have an Admiral hold jurisdiction by freehold in the Indies.

3° Next: that we may take to the said lands or islands that we might discover merchandise worth one thousand ducats (purchase price), to be used in the places that would seem preferable to us, each year at our expense; and which we could sell there and use [the proceeds] for what would seem suitable to us, and to bring back the return to these Kingdoms and Dominions of Y.H., by paying you one twentieth of it, to be free of any other duties, either common or to be imposed in the future.

The thousand ducats would be for the future, not for the voyage.

That provision be made for the spices to be free of tonnage fees and other duties when they arrive.

Regarding the duties, it is to be seen upon the return here, because there would be a discount applied to the tonnage fees.

This chapter appears imbalanced, because they offer one twentieth here, and in another that follows hereunder they request the fifth of the same quantity for themselves.

4° Item: that out of the islands that we might discover for Y.H., should they number more than six, we be favored with two of them, Y.H. selecting six first, and then from among all the others we could take the two that we think best, of which Y.H. would give us the lordship with all their present and future income, and with all the trade, without Y.H. taking more taxes than ten percent of our income, and this "in perpetuity" for us and for our heirs and successors.

That from these two islands which they would so chose they take the fifteenth part, and from the others the twenty-fifth.

5° Item: that from the returns of this first fleet, may it please God that we carry it out, whatever interest there may be from the things to be brought back from there, Y.H. should give us the fifth after expenses for the said fleet have been taken out, and also that on the return voyage we may bring aboard each ship to return here, one hundred quintals¹ of the same merchandise to be brought back for Y.H.

In this chapter, to be equal with the one above, the twentieth would suffice, or they should pay the fifth to the King.

That if the one thousand ducats are given to them, they should not ask for the one hundred quintals.

6° Next: that if some ships of Y.H., or of other persons trying it were to find or discover some lands or islands within the said ten years, that out of all the interest or profit

1 Ed. note: One quintal equals 100 pounds.

from them be given to us the twentieth part, and Y.H. would give it to us safe and sure, as if we had discovered them ourselves, given that we would have been its instigators.

In this [chapter] it is also necessary to indicate the limits.

That it be joined with the first chapter, because once the limitation has been indicated, it can be acted upon.

7° Next: that, Y.H. wishing to outfit at his expense with the said conditions, we would show him the great profits to be accrued to him from this [venture], and the things that there is in the islands and lands existing within the boundaries and demarcations of Y.H.

Let him declare.

8° *Item:* that if in the voyage of discovery one of the above-mentioned were to die, that Y.H. would hold the other and his heirs and successors to the contents of these chapters, as they would be held responsible being both alive.

*Fiat.*¹

9° *Item:* that Y.H. should order us to comply with all the above, with all the signatures and formalities that would ensure our security.

OK, this would be granted them.

[Alternative proposal:]

If the outfitting at his expense should not be agreeable to Y.H., and that he should be agreeable to having us go on this voyage of discovery at our expense and cost, what we humbly beg Y.H., and request be reserved for us, is the following:

1° Firstly, that all the land and islands that we, or the persons acting on our behalf, were to discover, be ours, with all the commerce, dominion and government, giving Y.H. the fifth of all net interest and profit which they would bring to us.

2 *Item:* that Y.H. would agree not to send ships of his, nor of any other persons, to trade at the said islands, nor bring or carry any merchandise whatever; and if anyone should do so, that in such a case, they would lose all their goods, which would be confiscated by us: to that effect, Y.H. would give us all the favor and assistance necessary to put it into execution.

3° *Item:* that Y.H. would not give a permit to anyone who would go on a voyage of discovery, nor would send anyone to do so during the ten-year period, inasmuch as we are involved in it or wish to be involved on our own account, or for other persons, therefore, if anyone should discover anything, the said party would be for us, as if we ourselves had discovered it.

1 Ed. note: An elegant way of saying: OK, or Let it be.

4° *Item*: that if during the voyage of discovery one of us should die, that Y.H. would have the other and his heirs and successors comply with all the contents of these chapters completely, the same as it would be, both being alive.¹

5° *Item*: that Y.H. would have us comply with all the above-mentioned, with all the signatures and formalities that would ensure our security.

1 Ed. note: As it turned out, Magellan's business partner, Ruy Faleiro, did not sail with the fleet. Some historians have said that the reason for the change was that Faleiro had become mentally ill. Others say that he had been promised the leadership of a follow-up expedition that was already being planned.