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## Document 1588D

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# Letter from the Audiencia of Manila to the King, dated Manila 25 June 1588

*Source: AGI 67-6-18; translated in B&R 6:311-323.*

## Letter of the Audiencia about Cavendish's and other ships

Sire:

The two letters enclosed herewith are duplicates of those sent last year [1587] by this royal Audiencia, one on 24 June, carried by the vessel **Santa Ana**, which left these islands for New Spain; and the other, dated 1 November, sent via Malacca, in Portuguese India. It being understood that the letter carried by the **Santa Ana** was lost, we beg your Majesty to give orders that this letter, together with the enclosed copies, be attended to, taking such steps as may be required for the good service of your Majesty here.

Your Majesty will have received the news of the capture of the **Santa Ana** last year, which occurred while on its way from these islands to New Spain, by an English pirate, who entered the South Sea with two vessels; after having plundered the ship, he burned it, with all the goods which still remained on board. This was one of the greatest misfortunes that could happen to this land; because it is estimated from the investments made, and the treasure and gold carried, that the cargo of the said vessel would have been worth in Mexico two millions [pesos]. The loss has caused great poverty and distress in this city, and among its inhabitants and soldiers. To cap the climax, they have learned anew how much harder the Viceroy of New Spain makes things for this country, for he has levied certain taxes, ordering that every ton of cloth shipped from here to New Spain shall pay 44 pesos, the duty having been only 12 pesos up to now—an increase which is keenly felt. As the people here are serving your Majesty without receiving any salary or pay, it seems expedient and just that they be favored by ordering the Viceroy not to alter the regulations hitherto made, and also to allow all those people who desire, to come freely to these lands. From what has been ascertained, it appears

that they find it exceedingly difficult and expensive to obtain a licence to come; and even the personal effects that they bring must be declared and permission obtained for each article. All this causes a great loss, and prevents the development of these islands; and it is necessary, should your Majesty be pleased to do so, that this state of affairs be remedied.

...  
This Audiencia wrote to your Majesty, in the letter above referred to as sent via Malacca, concerning the great injury done to this country by the sale of the vessel **San Martín**, sold by the Viceroy of New Spain—an injury not only through the need of ships in these islands but because it was sold with permission to make its first voyage to Macao, and thence to return to Mexico without touching at this city. And now it has been learned by letter from private persons that the ship **Santa Ana**, [partly] burned by the English privateer, has been sold at public auction in the plaza of the City of Mexico, also with the condition that permission would be given so that it could make another voyage to Macao. If this be so, it means the total ruin of this country; because it cannot be supported if commerce be carried on between Macao and Mexico, and if the vessels which carry on that trade be taken away from us.

Your Majesty, if he be so pleased, will look into the matter, and furnish a prompt remedy, as the affair does not admit of any delay, and the welfare and development of this country depend wholly upon such a remedy.

This year [1588] we expected to receive help in the way of people and supplies, of which we suffer great lack, and without which this land is in the utmost danger of ruin; but as the **Santa Ana** and the **San Martín** which were the best ships that we had afloat are not coming anymore, there were no vessels that the Viceroy of New Spain could send for this purpose; accordingly, he sent a vessel so small that it could not carry any people. The necessity of this country and its extremity are such that no carelessness may be allowed in providing help. May it please your Majesty to command that aid be provided, with great care.

From the Portuguese at Macao came a large vessel loaded with a quantity of merchandise. Notwithstanding that the goods were excellent and valuable, they were not better than those brought by the Sangleys<sup>1</sup> who, having made such large profits during the last few years, bring now everything of the best that their country produces. Over 30 vessels have come here from that land, bringing so many people that, together with those who were living here, there are over 10,000 Sangleys now in this city. We have always received them very kindly, as ordered by your Majesty; and they are so friendly to the Spaniards that the **San Martín**, which sailed from New Spain for Macao, upon arriving at the province of Chincheo, which is in the country of those Sangleys, was very warmly received, and they expressed much pleasure at seeing the Spaniards in their country. The Sangleys offered to load the vessel with anything that the Spaniards wanted; but the latter, thinking that they would do a larger business at Macao, where

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1 Ed. note: That is, the Chinese traders, from Chincheo.

the Portuguese are in the habit of trading, did not accept the offer; they were supplied with all the provisions that they desired, with much show of friendship and kindness, after which they sailed for Macao. Near that place, the vessel was lost during a heavy gale which it encountered—not, however, until all the people and money were saved. Nothing was lost, as your Majesty will have been notified at greater length through some other source.

...

May God preserve the Catholic person of your Majesty.

At Manila, on the 25th of June of the year 1588.

The Licentiate Santiago de Vera

The Licentiate Melchor Davila

The Licentiate Pedro de Rojas

Don Antonio Rivera Maldonado