

him who sends him, and of the one to whom he is sent and the importance and greatness of the embassy, I have doubted, on the one score; and on the other, because he is a man so common and poor, and coming in an ordinary merchant vessel, which came hither for the purpose of selling provisions and other articles.

Because this took so long in coming hither, I have doubted whether these letters were not written by this man himself or by another, for some individual purpose, so that by this means, he might receive more attention here.

Furthermore, as I have no accurate interpreters thoroughly acquainted with both the Japanese and Spanish languages, as has been likewise declared to me by the letter and embassy, I am in doubt also of the true sense and purport of the words of the letter. I think that if the King of Japan wished to write to me, he might, since he has in his kingdom the Fathers of the Society of Jesus and other Spaniards, send me at least a copy of his letter in my own language, through their medium. I can say with truth that I have not even been able to read or understand fully the letter or embassy presented me by this man; and therefore, that he may have practiced any fraud or deceit toward your royal person, or toward me, I have thought it best to detain him here, until I could ascertain the truth and will of the King of Japan, and what are his commands and wishes.

And in that doubt, because of what I owe to even the semblance and appearance of a letter and embassy from you, I have observed this respect and courtesy of writing this reply to the small portion of your letter that I understand, which has been no more than Faranda has chosen to interpret for me.

Since I am sending the Father vicar, Fray Juan Cobo, a man of great virtue and goodness, and of the highest estimation in these islands, from whom because of his prudence and worth, I seek counsel, and to whom I communicate the most important matters, he will express, in my name, the fullest respect due to your exalted rank.¹

For the honor of the embassy, if it is really one, I kiss your royal hands, assuring you that I am and will remain your friend; and that, in the name of my King and sovereign, the greatest monarch in the world, I shall rejoice at your well-being and grieve over ill fortune (which may the King of Heaven keep from you). Let it be taken for granted that I desire your friendship, in the name of my King and sovereign, because of the good reception and hospitality extended by your royal hands to the Spaniards, vassals of my King, who have gone to Japan and Asia by way of Eastern India and these districts; and because the best treatment possible has been extended here to your vassals and will be extended to them with the same love.

My King will consider it a favor to be advised if the message brought to me by this man is true. If it is such, then I shall respond to the friendship due such a great prince, without any lack of my duty and obligation to my King and sovereign, to whom I shall immediately give account of this, in order to ascertain what his orders shall be then.

1 Ed. note: Father Cobo carried out his embassy but was shipwrecked on Formosa on the return voyage, with the loss of all people on board and all papers.

I trust that this matter will result quite to the satisfaction of two great princes such as my King and the King of Japan; and that these discussions and conferences in true friendship and alliance may redound to much peace to the universal happiness of the world, and to the glory of omnipotent God, the King of Kings.

Inasmuch as certain presents have been sent me but lately from Japan, which are of great value, I would wish to have some rare and valuable products of our Spain to send in return; but, since weapons are the articles most esteemed among soldiers, I am sending you with this a dozen swords and daggers. They are the finest that we have, and you will receive them from me as from a private person who desires your well-being and greatness, with the goodwill with which they are offered, and as a token of affection, and only these, because the bearer of this is going only for the purpose of assuring me of what I have stated above, so that we may have the information here that is desired.

May our Lord preserve your royal person with great prosperity.

Manila, 11th of June, 1592 years since the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Document 1592D

Another letter from Governor Dasmariñas, dated 20 June 1592

Source: AGI 67-6-18; translated in B&R 8:268-275.¹

More about shipping, etc.

Sire:

Last year I wrote to your Majesty that I had arrived in this city of Manila, on the first of June of the year '90, having been nine months on the way, counting the time I spent in Mexico recruiting troops...

...

Likewise, I found here not a ship or a galley, not a pound of iron or of copper, or any powder except what I brought from Mexico—40 quintals. Not a fathom of rope did I find, nor balls for ten pieces of artillery which are here. These are very insufficient for the needs of the place; for four of them are swivel-guns, and another, a large piece, is neither culverin, cannon, nor sacre; nor do any here understand how to manage it, except by chance; there is no account of it, no design, and no name for it. There are no storehouses, with the exception of a shed where there is a little rice; and an enclosure where have been put the wood and remains of three rotted galleys, which were built but never launched. Their timbers are all rotted, and the oars also. The enclosure contains, as well, a makeshift turret where the little powder that they had was kept, and where I put what I brought; but unfortunately, we had a fire, and now it is all gone. In order to collect the necessary supplies from those places where it is not proper to keep them, I resolved to build storehouses, and have constructed four, where we are placing what comes—such as iron (for I confiscate it all), rigging (which is being made, for the sake of having some in reserve), rope, lead, and rice. Shovels, pickaxes, and spades are being made, because of the great need for them.

¹ Ed. note: One of about half a dozen letters sent that year.

Ammunition I planned to obtain in the following way: I sent to Macao a ship which I found here, and which had been despatched hither from Mexico by the Marquis of Villamanrique (bound for Macao¹, as he said), after taking from it guarantees to the amount of 15,000 pesos that it should make the voyage to Macao and return, bringing the ammunition. I sent also a regidor, Pedro de Brito by name, with a copy of the warrant that your Majesty gave me, authorizing me to do this; but up to this time he has not returned. Some Chinese who have come from there say that the ship has been captured by Portuguese, and sent to India. I can scarcely maintain my position for the lack of ammunition, which is great, and greater than ever just at the present time, for 22 Chinese ships have come, without bringing a pound of copper, of saltpeter, or of powder; and they say that under peril of their lives they had been forced to dispose of them. They say the same of horses and black cattle.

...

May our Lord guard the Catholic person of your Majesty for many long years, since Christendom has need of you.

Manila, 20 June 1592.

Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas²

1 Ed. note: This was probably the ship owned by João da Gama.

2 Ed. note: The following year, in a letter dated 20 June 1593, Dasmariñas tells the King that "on 27 April (1593), a vessel from Mexico arrived at his port. I received no letter from your Majesty or your councils, because no fleet went from here to Mexico this year. Consequently, I shall note here only what has happened since last year." This statement is a bit confused, unless the 1593 letter was sent via Malacca....