
Document 1570A

Letter from Legazpi to the King, dated Panay 25 July 1570

Sources: AGI 67-6-6; B&R 3:108-112; copied in FBG 8:183-186.

Letter from Legazpi to Philip II

Sacred Royal Catholic Majesty:

With Captain Juan de la Isla, who arrived at this river on the eve of St. John's Day last [1570], I received a letter from your Majesty from the Escorial dated 16 November 1568, with the despatches and the favors that your Majesty was pleased to grant this camp.¹ For these and for other things that we expect from your Majesty, all these faithful vassals of your Majesty, and in their name for all, kiss your Majesty's royal feet and hands. We pray God, our Lord, to give us time and opportunity, as loyal vassals employed in your royal service, to merit being the instruments of the augmentation of your royal crown, with increase of new realms and dominions; and that in the fortunate days of your Majesty the Christian faith may be planted, grow, and increase in these lands, where the infidelity and rule of the devil, our adversary, so long prevailed.

With the ships that left here last year (1569), under Captain Felipe de Salcedo, I sent your Majesty a report of everything that happened until then and the affair with the Captain Major of the Portuguese fleet. They write me that this same Felipe de Salcedo took this despatch to your Majesty on an advice boat that was sent from Mexico, for this purpose, whereby your Majesty will have seen, learned, and understood what occurred here. We have had no word here, since then, of Portuguese; nor do I believe that they will return, because they were much harassed, and also I am certain that none of those who went from here will have any desire to return. That, however, is no reason why I should neglect what concerns your Majesty's royal service. I await them within three months in this archipelago, which is the time in which they can come; and so I live with as much foreboding as if I had them before me.

1 Ed. note: See Documents 1568C.

By other letters I have entreated your Majesty, informing you of the necessity in this archipelago for boats with oars; and how important they will be for further discovery of other things of greater importance, which until now has been neglected, through not having these boats. Twice I have sent men in Indian proas for explorations to the north and northwest of us. Once they discovered certain islands, small but well peopled with Moros; and the other time they discovered on the coast of Luçon, which is a large island, several settlements of Moros. The latter have cannon, which they themselves cast and finish, and likewise powder and other ammunition. Some of the towns received them in peace, but others would not. The possessions taken in your Majesty's name accompany the present letter.

These Moros have much more trade, because they make voyages for that purpose, going among the people on the Chinese mainland, and to the Japanese, I again repeat how advantageous it would be to your Majesty's service to have some oared vessels here, because the Spanish are not accustomed to navigate with skill in those of the Indians, and run great risks by going in them. And in order that this may not occur, will your Majesty please command that what seems best to you in that case be ascertained and provided.

The Portuguese left us so badly accredited with these natives that some of them withdrew from our friendship; and it has been necessary to turn to pacifying them again, and at somewhat greater cost than the first time. In the future we shall have the greatest care in their conversion and good treatment, as your Majesty commands. We will gladly strive to bring them to the subjection and dominion of your royal Majesty, and with those who refuse and do not wish it, we shall adopt more convenient means to preach and teach to them all the evangelical law, wherein God, our Lord, and your Majesty will be well served.

In fulfillment of your Majesty's orders, on these two ships which are going to New Spain, I send 10 or 12 Portuguese from this camp. Some still remain but it seemed to me that to avoid trouble, it was well not to send many together. I am certain that some of them are good soldiers, and have served your Majesty very well. There has not been heard or imagined of them anything that they ought not to have done, but your Majesty's order was very well considered and noted, and therefore will be executed. On the first ships that leave here will go those who remain. The foreigners of other nationalities cannot be banished at present, without considerable inconvenience, because all the workmen, carpenters, gunners, and half of the sailors are foreigners. Some of the soldiers are Flemings, and others Italian, Venetian, Greek, French, and so on. Therefore, no new action has been taken in this at present until your Majesty is pleased to have the matter looked into, and shall command what you think best to be done about it.

[News received about Mendaña expedition]

We have had news here from Mexico that a certain fleet that sailed from Peru in your Majesty's name, to discover New Guinea, and other lands in these western regions, was instructed to settle all the lands extending westward between 10° north latitude and 60°



Philippine-made bronze gun called lantaka.

south latitude. This was incredible, because, as your Majesty knows, the fleets that have left New Spain in your Majesty's name have discovered many islands and lands as far as the equator, and in south latitude. What I have settled, subdued, and discovered in your Majesty's name commences at 6° latitude north of the equator, and extends from there farther north. If it were conceded to those from Peru up to 10°, it would be equivalent to giving them the greater part of all this Philippine archipelago, and more. I thought that I ought to inform you of it, so that your Majesty could make the provisions seemed best to you.

Melchor de Legazpi, my son, who for a long time has resided at that court, has charge of my affairs; and last year, Captain Felipe de Salcedo, my grandson, went to give your Majesty a report of affairs here. I humbly pray your Majesty to have them sent back, granting them favor so that they may come to serve your Majesty in these regions.

Captain Juan de la Isla goes to that court [a second time], and will return on the same ship on which he went. He has served and labored much; I pray your Majesty to reward him as he merits. With him I send your Majesty two bronze *versos* [small guns] made by the Moros of this land, so that your Majesty may see what dexterity they possess in working and casting guns.

Sacred Royal Catholic Majesty, may our Lord guard and increase the life and person of your Royal Majesty with more kingdoms and seigniories for many happy years, with victories over your enemies, as your royal heart desires.

From this island of Panay, on St. James' Day, 25 July 1570.

Your Sacred Royal Catholic Majesty's most humble and faithful servant who kisses your royal feet and hands.

Miguel López de Legazpi.



Fr. Herrera and Captain de la Isla arrive at Panay in 1570. They brought the royal communications confirming Legazpi as Governor and Captain General of the Islands of the West, including the Ladrones. (From Beyer & De Veyra's *Philippine Saga*, Manila, 1952)