
Documents 1594A

Letters from/to Japan, 1594

Source: AGI 1-1-3/25 ramo 50; translated in B&R 9:122- 136.

Introduction.

In the city of Manila, on 22 April 1594, Don Luis Pérez Dasmariñas¹, knight of the order of Alcantara, Governor and Captain General of the Philippine Islands, ordered a council of war to be held in his presence...

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The said Governor communicated to them that Governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, his late father (who is in Heaven), sent to Japan Father Fray Pedro Bautista and other Franciscan fathers, together with [Captain] Pedro Gonzalez [de Carbajal].

The latter returned from that kingdom of Japan a few days ago, and brought for the said Governor a letter from the King, which was shown to them, and its contents read, after it was translated into the Spanish language. It was as follows:

A1. Letter from the Emperor of Japan²

Father Pedro brought me letters from which I learned the customs of your country, as also from what Father Pedro told me particularly, and from what Father Cobo had stated before.

When I was born, the sun shone on my breast; and this is a miracle, and portends that I was destined from the beginning to be lord of all between the rising and the setting sun, and that all kingdoms must render me vassalage and bow down before my door; and unless they do it, I will destroy them with war. I have conquered all the kingdom of Japan, and that of Coria [Korea], and many of my commanders have asked my permission to go and capture Manila. Learning this, Faranda and Funguen³ told me

1 Ed. note: Son of the former Governor who had been killed by his Chinese oarsmen.

2 Ed. note: It should perhaps be repeated here that the letter was sent, not by the Emperor, but by Hideyoshi, the Regent of Shogun fame.

3 Ed. note: Otherwise written as Hunquin, an individual who had obtained a commission for the invasion of Luzon and had sent ships on a spying mission to Manila in 1591.

that ships went there from here, and came back, and so the people there appeared not to be enemies, for which reason I did not send troops. I made war against the Koreans [instead] and conquered as far as Meaco [error for Parto], because they failed to keep their word. Afterward my soldiers killed many Chinese and many nobles who came to help the Koreans. In view of this they humbled themselves, and sent an ambassador who asked that we send some of our people to Coria, and said that the Chinese desired eternal friendship with the kingdom of Japan. I have sent many of our people to Coria to occupy the fortresses and await the embassy.

Should they break their word again, I will go in person to make war upon them; and after going to China, Luzon will be within my reach.

Let us be friends forever, and write to that effect to the king of Castile. Do not, because he is far away, let him slight my words. I have never seen those far lands, but from the accounts given I know what is there. You were very discreet in coming immediately, and this pleased me greatly. I received your present. I will never fail in my friendship. Those who come from your country may come safely over land and sea without any wrong being done them, or their property being stolen. You may believe everything that the man who came with the Father [i.e. Gonzalez] says, because he has seen my country and the hospitality which I tendered.

Write to the King of Castile that he is waiting there.¹ Tell him to send a man of rank so that our friendship may be stronger. The rest I have entrusted to Funguen.”

A2. Official reply to the above letter, dated Manila 28 April 1594²

The letter addressed by your Grandeur to my father was received by me as the person left in charge of the government of this land at his death, which occurred on the way to the Moluccas. He was treacherously killed while sleeping one night, without apprehension or precaution, as one who did not dream of having enemies or traitors with him. The traitors were the Sangleys, whom he took with him to work his galley. Like the ineffably low, vile, and cowardly people that they are, they killed my father because he trusted them, and set them loose for their own comfort. The news of this event reached me far from the place of its occurrence, while I was awaiting him with the fleet and troops, that we might depart. Although after his death I endeavored to continue my journey, I was prevented because of several events and considerations.

I came back here, desirous of hearing news from your Grandeur and of seeing your letter replying to those sent by my father through Father Fray Pedro. Although two vessels arrived here from Japan, they could not give me the desired news. The arrival of Pedro Gonzalez has given me great pleasure, especially in view of the fact that I was unable to understand his delay, and of the rumor here that your Grandeur was going

1 Ed. note: That is, that Fr. Pedro Bautista is staying in Japan.

2 Ed. note: This is the final draft. A previous draft had been discussed in the council of war.

to send your armies, a report very different from the agreement made in your name with my father by your ambassador and servant Faranda, which was for firm peace and full amity. Through the letter brought by Pedro Gonzalez, I have learned that it is your royal desire that such relations be continued, and this has greatly pleased me; for it is to be hoped that as the kings are great, great will be the friendship, and greater still the fruits of it. Equally great is my desire that hereafter we treat each other in every way as friends, with less formality and more frankness than in your royal letters hitherto received. Since your Grandeur speaks of vassalage, I wish your Grandeur to understand that my king's power is so great and so extensive, and the kingdoms and states ruled by his Christian hand are so many, that they are beyond compare with the greatness of many kings, though these be most powerful each by himself. His dominions here are nothing but a corner, and my king's possessions are not to be judged by his dominions here. The reason that they are so small is, that our Christian and divine laws do not permit us to do injury or damage to anyone by taking away that which belongs to him. I say this to your Grandeur that you may know that, although we are in a confined and narrow region, we do not recognize other ruler, other power, other dominion, or other lord, than Jesus Christ, the almighty and true God and Lord, and our most Christian King Don Phelipe.

Concerning the friendship that your Grandeur suggests we ought to maintain forever, it will be kept by us; and I feel assured that your Grandeur will keep it on your part since it is so declared in your royal letters.

I will advise my Lord and King at the earliest opportunity of the peace and friendship established, so that he may ratify it from there; and I trust in the Lord that everything will be done as desired by your Grandeur, whom I wish to serve and please as the friend of my King and our own. For such purpose I should have been glad if I had some curious things from Castile to send as presents to your Grandeur, but I cannot do it now, and will send them later when they come.

Should Your Grandeur wish that as friends we send each other men of rank and of a high station, so that our intercourse might be more friendly and informal—not that the religious who have gone are not among us respected and highly esteemed as ministers of God, or are not sufficiently high in station—but from now on a layman could be sent of higher rank than that of those who have gone heretofore. Should your Grandeur desire to send someone to visit the court of my King and see its splendor, and the power and dominion of his Majesty, he will be sent on from here, and will be well received and highly favored by my King, because he is very fond of receiving and entertaining foreigners, specially such as might come from your Grandeur, who would receive special favor. Your Grandeur can advise me of your decision in regard to this as well as the other matters; and may our Lord keep and enlighten you with His divine light.