
Documents 1592C

The embassy that came from Japan in May 1592

Sources: AGI 67-6-18; translated in B&R 8:256-267.

C1. Covering letter by Governor Dasmariñas, dated 11 June 1592

Sire:

In another letter I have informed your Majesty of my fears of Japanese enemies. After that letter and packet were closed, and the ships about to leave, it happened that the ambassadors of whom we had advices came here in a ship that made port on the 29th of May.

On the 31st, they delivered a letter from that king, enclosed in a box of wood one and a half yards in length and painted white. Inside this was another box of the same proportions, excellently painted, varnished, and polished in black, with some medium-sized gilded iron rings and some large cords of red silk. Within this box was another one painted in various colors—yellow and gold—with its large iron rings and cords of white and violet silk, both covered with damask. In this third box, wrapped in a stout, wide paper, painted and gilded, was the letter, written with Chinese characters in the Japanese language, on stout paper, illuminated and gilded with great neatness.

The letter was even larger than the sealed bulls from Rome, on parchment, and is sealed with two painted seals stamped in red. I am not sending the originals, because you have no-one who can translate them there; while they will be needed here, perchance, for what must be done to affirm the embassy, and even for objects and matters of importance that we might be able to discuss, by virtue of these letters, with the King of China. Therefore, I enclose only one copy of the letter, in accordance with the best and most exact translation that could be made here; and another copy made for me by the emperor himself, by means of an interpreter. Although those two copies [i.e. translations] differ somewhat, they agree in their essential point, namely, the demand for

recognition and obedience, made with the arrogance and barbaric haughtiness that your Majesty will find in them.

They also brought, resting in small boxes, a letter from the king's chamberlain (one of the grandees of that kingdom), another from their Captain General and another from the King of Firando [i.e. Hirado]; and at other times letters have been written to the governors here. I am also sending the translated copies of these letters, from which your Majesty will see the determination and resolution of that king; and that we are not harboring suspicions, but veritably expect him here by October of this year or the beginning of next.

...
My purpose in sending a person to Japan and in answering his letter, is, as your Majesty will see plainly, only to divert his attention and put him off, until the repairs and fortifications and the reinforcements that I am expecting are well assured; and to prevent him of being informed by his ambassador of matters here, so quickly as the latter could inform him. I also plan that, by means of the envoy going from here, I may know and be advised of affairs there, by one way or another.

...
Your Majesty will ordain what is most to your service.
May our Lord preserve your Majesty many long years, as Christendom requires.
Manila, 11 June 1592.
Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas

C2. Letter from the King of Japan¹

It is more than one thousand years since Japan has been governed by one sovereign. During this period the wars and dissensions among the rulers of the country were so many that it was impossible to send a letter from one part to the other; until now the Lord of Heaven has willed that the country be united in my time, and that it be reduced to my obedience. In accomplishing this, everything was so favorable to me, that as yet I have lost no battle, but have been victorious in every one for ten years. Likewise I have conquered the island of Riu-Kiu, which was not under my sway, and Acoray [i.e. Korea].² Even from Eastern India embassies have been sent to me.

Now I am about to invade Great China in order to conquer it, for heaven, and not my forces, has promised it to me. I am much surprised that that country of the island

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- 1 Ed. note: This is the translation made by the ambassador, through an interpreter. The Spanish in Manila did not immediately realize that they were dealing, not with the actual Mikado or Emperor, but the Kuwambaku or Shogun, i.e. the Regent and military ruler of Japan, the famous Hideyoshi. In 1591, he had relinquished his position in favor of his adopted son, Hidetsugu, but retained effective authority until his death in 1598.
 - 2 The conquest of Korea was not accomplished until 1592, although the preceding year had been spent in vigorous preparations for the campaign. Hideyoshi evidently made this statement [in 1591] in boastful anticipation of success.

of Luzon has not sent me an ambassador or messenger, and I was therefore of a mind, on my way to China, to attack Manila with my fleet, were it not that Faranda, a Japanese noble, told me of the good treatment accorded to my vassals, the Japanese traders, who go to those islands from here. When I asked him if the ruler there was my friend, he answered and assured me that, if I should send a letter to the Governor, he would send me an ambassador. And should he not do it, since I am well established in my kingdom, I am so powerful that I have men who can go to conquer any kingdom whatever.

Although this messenger is a man of low rank, I have accredited him, because of the good account he gives. And also, since I am not sending the troops I thought to send, I shall descend, within two months, from where I am now, to Nanguaya [Nagoya], my seaport, where are stationed the forces composing my army; and if an ambassador comes to me there from those islands, and I ascertain that the governor is my friend, I shall lower my banner in token of friendship. If an ambassador is not sent, I shall unfurl my banner and send an army against that country to conquer it with a multitude of men; so that that country will repent at not having sent me an ambassador.

In order to become the friend of the Spaniards, I am sending this embassy from Meaco [i.e. Kyoto], in the year 19 [sic], from the country of Japan, to the country of Luzon.¹

C3. Letter from Governor Dasmariñas to the ruler of Japan

Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, knight of the order of Santiago, Governor and Captain General in these islands, great archipelago, and district of the West, for the King, our Sovereign, Don Phelipe the Second, King of Castile, León, Aragon, the two Sicilies, Jerusalem, Portugal, Navarra, Granada, Sardinia, Corsica, Murcía, Jaen, the Algarves, Aljecira, Gibraltar, the Eastern and Western Indies, and the islands and mainland of the Ocean Sea; Archduke of Austria; Duke of Burgundy, Brabant, and Milan; Count of Hapsburg, Flanders, Brittany, Tirol, etc.:

To the very exalted and powerful Prince and Lord Quamboc [i.e. Kuwambaku], after all due respect, wishes health and perpetual happiness.

Faranda [i.e. Harada] Mango Shiro, a Japanese vassal of yours, and a Christian, arrived at this city, bringing me news of your royal person, at which I rejoiced exceedingly; for, because of your greatness, and the worth and prudence with which the God of Heaven has endowed you, I am much affectioned unto you. Some days ago Faranda gave me a letter, which—although it seemed to be in its form and authority, and even in the gravity and style of its language, a document despatched by such a great prince—yet, since the messenger was below the rank and quality requisite to the royal name of

¹ Ed. note: From the letter of the chamberlain, not reproduced here, the date was the 9th month of the 19th year of Tensho, which was the beginning of 1592, the Tensho period being 1573-92.