
Document 1566D

**Pericón expedition—Letter from
Legazpi to the King, dated Cebu
23 July 1567**

Sources: AGI 67-6-6 (Simancas—Secular, Audiencia de Filipinas; Cartas, etc. (1567-1599); translated in B&R 2:234-239, 334; copied in FBG 8:122-125.

Letter from Miguel López de Legazpi to Philip II

Sacred Royal Catholic Majesty:

On the vessel which I sent to New Spain to discover the return route, I gave your Majesty a relation of the events of the voyage, and of our arrival and settlement at these islands, up to the time of the ship's departure. The succeeding events in this camp may be seen by the relation which I send with this letter.¹

Last year a vessel² was sent from New Spain to this island with news of the arrival of the flagship [San Pedro] which went from here. It arrived here on the 15th of October of last year, in great extremity and trouble, for on the way they killed the captain and a son of his, and some others, and raised mutinies, rebellions, and other troubles, as may be seen from the evidence thereof which I send.³ As it brought no other assistance, nor any of the articles which we sent for from here, nor any command or order from your Majesty (nor have these things been sent here since then); and since after so long a time the flagship has not returned, nor have we received the assistance that was hoped for with it, the men of this camp are in extremities and distressed. Because it has not been permitted them to rob, or make war upon, or in any way harm the natives, and as they see such a great delay in the sending of aid, some have not been lacking in treacherous and damnable purposes and desires, from which God, our Lord, has been pleased up to now to deliver your Majesty's loyal and faithful servants—who with all

1 Ed. note: See Doc. 1566E.

2 Ed. note: The San Jerónimo.

3 Ed. note: The relation by Martinez (See Doc. 1566B).

loyalty and zeal have served you and are now serving you in these regions—and I hope therefore that in his divine goodness he will continue to do so.

There have been some islands discovered in this neighborhood, and more are being continually found of which we knew nothing, and which are inhabited by many people. There is disclosed a very great foundation and opening for both the spiritual and temporal, from which God our Lord and your Majesty may derive much profit, and our holy Catholic faith be much increased, if your Majesty will give the necessary orders, and provide the suitable religious and laborers who may work diligently in this great vineyard of the Lord. And from what has been hitherto seen much fruit may be had in their conversions, without much difficulty, because there are not known among them either the temples or the rites and ceremonies of other peoples—although they are a people extremely vicious, fickle, untruthful, and full of other superstitions.

They all have many specimens of gold, and this they trade and wear as jewelry; but there is only a small quantity of it, by reason of there being no headmen or great lords among them. In some islands we have been informed of and have seen mines of gold, which, if the islands were peopled with Spaniards, would, it is believed, be rich and profitable. In other islands there is an abundance of cinnamon, of which they make little use. They make no exportation of it, and therefore it is of little worth to them. Seventy quintals of it, more or less, have been carried upon this ship¹ for your Majesty; and there may be carried every year as much as your Majesty wishes—enough indeed to supply all Christendom.

I have resided continuously on this island of Çubu, awaiting the orders which your Majesty may be pleased to have sent. I have barely succeeded in maintaining the forces with the least possible harm to the natives, and I shall try to do the same until I see your Majesty's command, and know your royal will; because if we should make war upon these people, I think that great harm would ensue, but little advantage would be gained, and we should suffer hardships greater than those which have been suffered, although they have been bad enough. By the blessing of peace, we have succeeded in attracting into the obedience of your Majesty many towns. As they have come from all this neighborhood of which possession has been taken in your royal name, the list of the towns accompanies this letter. And as these people are fickle and treacherous, and know not how to obey or serve, we ought to have here a fort and a number of Spaniards, who by good treatment might restrain them and make them understand what justice is; and who may settle in other places most convenient for the security of all those of this region. For this purpose married men should be sent and those who would have to remain permanently in this land. I beg your Majesty to be pleased to have provided with all despatch what is most in accord with your royal pleasure, and give the commission to someone in New Spain, who with all care and special diligence, will provide all that is necessary, without there being so much delay as in the past.

1 Ed. note: The patache San Juan which made an eastward passage in 1567.

For the security of these parts, and in order to get this needed security, it would be fitting and necessary to have built half a dozen **galleys**. For this, and even to provide them with crews there is reasonable provision here, provided you send artisans and workmen to build the vessels, as has been written to the Royal Audiencia of Mexico. With these vessels all these islands may be protected, as well as many others that are farther away from them; and it might even be possible to coast along the shores of China and to trade on the mainland. They would be very profitable and effective. Your Majesty will cause to be provided in this regard what is most pleasing to you.

In November of last year arrived, very near where we are, a large fleet of Portuguese who were going from India to the Moluccas, where they must have thought that we were. Having arrived near our settlement, they stopped a few days, giving out that they were coming in search of us. They sent two small boats to reconnoiter our colony and station, afterward resolving to continue their voyage without stopping here. It may well be imagined that they were not pleased to see Spaniards in these parts.

Farther north than our settlement, or almost to the northwest not far from here, are some large islands, called Luzon and Vindoro [Mindoro], where the Chinese and Japanese come every year to trade. They bring silks, woolens, bells, porcelains, perfumes, iron, tin, colored cotton cloths, and other small wares, and in return they take away gold and wax. The people of these two islands are Moros, and having bought what the Chinese and Japanese bring, they trade the same goods throughout this archipelago of islands. Some of them have come here, although we have not been able to go there, by reason of having too small a force to divide among so many districts.

The people who remain here are very needy and poor, on account of having had, up to now, no advantages or profits in the islands; and they have endured many miseries and troubles, with very great zeal and desire to serve your Majesty, and are worthy of receiving remuneration. I humbly beg your Majesty to be pleased to be mindful of their services, to grant them all favor (since these regions and districts contain sufficient for it), because a hundred merit it, and have served well and will serve much more in the future. Therefore, I beg your Majesty, in addition, that your Majesty approve the duties and offices given and assigned for these districts, and that your Majesty confirm them to the persons who hold them, together with the greater favors that you may confer on them; for in these men are found the necessary qualifications, and they fulfil their duties with all fidelity.

As this ship was about to sail, there arrived at this port two small galleys from the Moluccas, carrying certain Portuguese with letters from the captains of the fleet that came to these regions last year for the assistance and fortification of the Moluccas. In these letters they ask us to go out to their fleet, as your Majesty will see by the very letters which accompany this present letter, together with the copy of the one I sent back to them. Some of those who came with the letters gave us to understand that, if we would not go willingly, they would take us by force; and that very shortly they would attack us with such a great force that we could not resist them. I do not consider that they have any right to attack us or make war on us, since we, on our part, are causing

them no trouble or harm; and although they come, we cannot do anything else than wait for them, notwithstanding that we are few and short of ammunition and other war materiel, since help has not come from New Spain as we expected; and we have neither vessels nor equipment in order to escape.

May God provide in this what he sees necessary, and as is your Majesty's pleasure, whose sacred royal Catholic person may our Lord watch over for many and prosperous years with increase of many kingdoms.

From this island of Çubu, 23 July 1567.

Your sacred royal Majesty's very humble and faithful servant who kisses your hands and feet.

Miguel López de Legazpi.