
Documents 1568A

The galleon San Pablo, Captain Salcedo, shipwrecked at Guam in 1568 when on the way to New Spain

A1. Letter from Legazpi to the King, dated Cebu 26 June 1568

*Note: This letter was aboard the doomed ship and was sent again in 1569 along with Letter A2 below.
Sources: AGI 67-6-6; B&R 2:239-243; copied in FBG 8:126-128.*

Sacred Royal Catholic Majesty:

When I arrived at these Philippine islands in the year 1565, I despatched a ship to discover the return route to New Spain. I also sent to your Majesty a relation of the events of the voyage, and of my colonization in this island of Çubu, where I should await the reply that your Majesty should be pleased to have sent me; and stated that I was writing to New Spain that they should provide me with all the most necessary things; and those we lacked most. Seeing so much delay on all sides, last year [1567] I sent another ship with the relation of all that had occurred here, begging your Majesty to be pleased to order that we should be helped and provided, with all possible expedition, with the things that we have asked for, and which were extremely necessary and important; and that the matter be committed to someone in New Spain, who should provide and have charge of it, because although they sent us reinforcements of men, they sent us nothing else that we had asked for. They said that they had not your Majesty's commission for it, and that they were expecting every day the warrant that your Majesty will be pleased to give in this case, so that by virtue of it they could supply us with what was needed. This great delay has subjected us to hardship and distress, and to great danger and risk—especially through our lack of powder and ammunition, and rigging and sails for the vessels, of which we are quite destitute, and of which there are not, and cannot be any here. I beg your Majesty to have the goodness to have these things seen to, as is most in accordance with your royal pleasure, with the expedition required in a matter of such a great importance; and that henceforth this matter be

entrusted to someone in New Spain, at your Majesty's pleasure, who shall administer it as is most fitting to your royal service and the good of those here.

By the vessel that left last year [1567], I sent your Majesty 70 quintals of cinnamon which we got in trade with the natives; and this vessel [i.e. San Pablo] about to sail carries 150 quintals more. There is abundance of it, and we could send more, were it not for the lack of articles to barter; for those we bring are valueless, and these natives do not desire them. There are also other drugs, aromatics, and perfumes which our people do not know; nor do the natives know them, for they have but little curiosity, and care nothing for these things. In some places there are oysters, and indications of pearls; but the Indians neither know of them nor fish for them. There are gold mines; pepper might be had also if it were cultivated and cared for, because pepper trees have been seen, which some chiefs keep in their houses as curiosities, although they value the pepper at little or nothing. The country is healthful and has a fair climate, although it is very rough and mountainous. All trade therefore is by sea, and almost all the natives live on the seacoast and along the rivers and creeks that empty into the sea. In the interior there are few settlements, although in some islands there are blacks living in the mountains, who neither share nor enjoy the sea, but are most of the time at war with the Indians who live down on the seacoast. Captives are made on both sides, and so there are some black slaves among the Indians.

If this land is to be settled, to pacify and place it under your royal dominion, in order to civilize its inhabitants and bring them to the knowledge of our holy Catholic faith, for it cannot be sustained by way of trade, both because our articles of barter have no value among them, and because it would be more expense than profit—in order to possess it for pacification, it is most necessary and important that your Majesty maintain here a half-dozen galleys, with which to explore all this archipelago, and make further discoveries. Likewise they could coast along China and the mainland, and find out what there is there, and achieve other things of great importance. The galleys could be built here at very slight cost, because there is plenty of wood and timber. Your Majesty would have only to provide tackle, sails, anchors, and the heavy bolts and nails for these vessels. You would also have to send from New Spain two skilled ship-builders, two forges, and two dozen negroes from those that your Majesty maintains at the harbor at Vera Cruz who might be taken without causing any shortage. Pitch, oakum, and grease, which are not to be had here, could be made without any further cost. The ships could be manned by slaves bought from these natives, or taken from those places which do not consent to obey your Majesty.

Likewise if the land is to be settled, the mines here ought to be worked and equipped. Since at first it will be difficult and costly and very laborious, for many causes and reasons, your Majesty ought to do us the favor of giving up your royal rights and fifths, or a part of them, and for a time suitable, to those working the mines, so that they might reconcile themselves to undertaking it and expending their possessions therein; your Majesty ought likewise to give them permission to buy the slaves, whom these natives barter and sell among themselves, and whom they can use on their estates and for their

advantage, without taking them from their land and native home. In everything your Majesty will examine and provide according to your pleasure.

May our Lord keep your Sacred Royal Catholic Majesty, and increase your kingdoms and seigniories for many and prosperous years, as your Royal heart desires.

From this island of Çubu, 26 June 1568.

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

Miguel López de Legazpi.

A2. Letter from Legazpi to the Viceroy, dated Cebu 7 July 1569

Sources: AGI 67-6-6; B&R 3:44-53; copied in FBG 8:138-143.¹

On the 1st of July of last year [1568], I despatched from this port Captain Felipe de Salcedo in the flagship [sic]² to that New Spain, to give your Excellency an account and relation of what had occurred until then, and to carry specimens of articles produced in this land. It pleased God that the ship should be **wrecked while at anchor** at one of the Ladrone Islands; for it was driven on the coast and **all that was on board was lost, except the crew**. They returned to these islands with much difficulty, in the boat, which they repaired for that purpose, as well as they could. Felipe de Salcedo saved the packet of letters for your Excellency, which accompanies this letter.

A few days after the departure of the flagship from here, I heard that a Portuguese fleet was coming toward us. In fact, it came in sight of this port, seven vessels in all, sailing in a line, four galleons and three *fustas*. The Captain Major of the fleet was a gentleman named Gonçalo Pereira. At first, he declared that he came here only to see us and to inquire whether we needed anything that he could supply us; but after he had entered the port with fine words, offers, and promises both general and specific, he tried to persuade us to go with him to India, saying that he was surprised at our remaining so long in this land, when we knew that it belonged to the King of Portugal. I answered him that I had believed myself to be on land of his Majesty, but that, not being a cosmographer, and not possessing a commission from his Majesty in regard to it, I did not wish to contradict him or quarrel with him on that subject. I assured him that, on arriving at this land, I was obliged to go into winter quarters here; and that I had despatched a ship to his Majesty with a relation of what had occurred on the voyage. I added that I had been expecting and still expected an answer to that report; and that for lack of ships I had postponed my departure from the country until they should be sent from New Spain. To this he answered that, on the contrary, it seemed to him that

1 Ed. note: On 16 October 1566, a third viceroy had arrived at Mexico, Gaston de Peralta, Marquis de Falces. Legazpi was unaware that he had already returned to Spain in March 1569.

2 Ed. note: Not the old flagship San Pedro, but the old almiranta San Pablo.

we wished to take possession of the land of his king, with the intention of passing over into China and other regions which were likewise his, thus breaking the compact made between the kings of Castile and Portugal. That was satisfactorily answered by me, in the above manner, and I assured him that my intention was not to injure his king in anything whatever, or to seize anything belonging to him, because such was the injunction imposed upon me by his Majesty. All this did not prove sufficient, and he said that he could not go away from here unless either he took us away, or we left the country immediately. He began to issue some written injunctions, which, together with our answer to them, accompany the present letter, so that your Excellency may know what occurred.

My intention was always to avoid giving him occasion for commencing hostilities; but it availed little, for without any cause whatever he started the war, and began to demolish with his artillery some gabions we had built on the coast for our defense. He blockaded both entrances to this port with his ships, to prevent us from bringing in provisions or anything else, as will be confirmed by the testimony accompanying this letter; and declared that, if they could not capture us by any other means, they would do so by hunger. Thus he besieged us for nearly three months, and the harm which he could not inflict upon the Spaniards he inflicted upon the natives of the neighborhood who were our friends. He burned and destroyed seven or eight towns, and gave the natives to understand that this land belonged to the king of Portugal. He said that we were thieves on a plundering expedition, and that the Portuguese would destroy and kill those who befriended us. From this we clearly saw and understood the goodwill with which they had come. Many towns which had been won to us have withdrawn from our friendship, especially those lying along the coast of Mindanao, where cinnamon is bartered. These towns the Portuguese injured, and captured and took away some of the people. On New Year's Day just passed, they raised the blockade and departed; for God, our Lord, in His infinite goodness and mercy was pleased, through the very means by which they thought to defeat us, to force them to depart—namely, because of lack of provisions; although at their departure they threatened to return soon and take us away by force.¹

After the blockade had been raised, and we saw the great need and distress into which they had brought us, the captains and leaders of the camp discussed the course which was to be taken for our defence in case the Portuguese should return hither, as they are likely to do. All agreed that we should change our location and settlement, because it would be impossible to defend ourselves here where they could, simply by closing the entrances to the port, as they did at first, starve us, on account of the lack of food on this island. In view of other causes and arguments set forth for this change, we thought that the Panae River, situated forty leagues from this place, would be a more suitable site, for it abounds in rice, and no one from the sea could prevent us from going up the

1 Ed. note: The details of this confrontation and the record of the 1568 negotiations between Legazpi and Pereira are contained in B&R 2:244-329.

river to the mountains. Accordingly, we have removed thither the artillery, although the quantity of powder and ammunition now remaining is so small that the artillery can be of little help in any place. We have decided to send the companies around the river into other towns, where they can sustain themselves until we hear from the enemy.

The flagship having been lost, I tried to repair this patache San Lucas, in order to send word to Your Excellency that I have no other ship left, nor can I send further information until its return.¹ Thus we are left surrounded on all sides by water and enemies, awaiting the mercy of God, and the help and remedy which your Excellency will be pleased to send us, for we cannot expect it from any other source.

During the blockade by the Portuguese, we did not lack infamous men who, persuaded by words and promises, turned traitor and passed from this camp to their fleet. These men, whose names accompany this letter, did us no little harm. If the enemy return, may it please God that there be no more thus inclined; for, as we are poor and needy, and have not seen for many years any letter or order from his Majesty, or from any other person in his royal name, concerning what we ought to do, some of our men are much disheartened. On the other hand, they are strongly solicited by the Portuguese with many offers and promises—a thing which I most regret, and which gives me more grief than the harm which the enemy can do us. May it please God to remedy this, for he knows what we need.

Before now I have written that if his Majesty has an eye only on the Philippine Islands, they ought to be considered of little importance, because at present the only article of profit which we can get from this land is cinnamon; and unless order is established and a settlement is made, his Majesty will continue to waste money—although since then I well understand that this land possesses regions which would more than pay for the money spent on them. If his Majesty desires more important things hereafter, he needs to have a settlement here with a sure harbor and port. In order that a better explanation may be given concerning what I am saying, I send to your Excellency a summary relation on the nature of this country and of the natives,² so that your Excellency may examine it and provide what is most necessary for the service of God and his Majesty and for the welfare of this land. **I also send with this letter the register of the flagship, so that it may be learned what it was carrying, and what of the cargo was lost** [at Guam in 1568].

What we most need and lack at present is powder, ammunition, arquebuses, and pikes. We are so short of them that a third of our men possess no weapons with which to fight. I humbly beseech your Excellency kindly to favor me by sending us what I have asked for, by this same patache, or by any other which might speedily be sent. This aid, even if no men or other supplies be brought over, will, with the news of favors to be received hereafter, give courage to the men; and will make them stand their ground and

1 Ed. note: The patache San Lucas was in charge of Captain Juan de la Isla. It left Cebu in June 1569.

2 Ed. note: This relation, dealing exclusively on Philippine affairs, is contained in B&R 3:54-61.

defend themselves until the other supplies arrive. Otherwise, I think it will be exceedingly difficult for them to do so. If your Excellency holds a warrant from his Majesty to provide what we need here, may your Excellency be pleased to see that it be fulfilled with the haste which the matter demands, and for which we beg and implore; otherwise, may your Excellency favor us by sending vessels by which we might leave this land, and not perish here without any profit. And I am sure that his Majesty will be pleased with that, for he would not wish us to perish here for lack of ships, as long as he expects nothing else from this land.

I am sending in this patache five pieces of artillery as ballast. They are medium-sized cannon, in very good condition; and, with their ammunition cases and fittings may be utilized by the ships which your Excellency may be pleased to despatch. They will not be missed here, for we lack powder and ammunition even for the cannon which are left.

I notified your Excellency, through the flagship, that I detained Captain Diego de Artieda against his will, for he desired to depart with the ship. He has now [1569] insisted and claimed that he should return; and I, in order not to oppose and detain him longer against his will, have permitted him to depart on the patache. On the same vessel departs Father Fray Diego de Herrera who has been our prior here, and whom we shall greatly miss. Only one religious is left us, Father Fray Martín de Rada, and it is fortunate that he is with us. If this work is to go on, it will be necessary to send him companions and religious suited for such a great and holy work, and who might help him to sustain the charge and labors of this land, where they cannot be rewarded at present as much as in that New Spain. The people who come here, whether they be religious or laymen, should be such as are willing to settle in this land as permanent residents, and not return in the same ship on which they came.

Your Excellency will provide for this and in all other necessary matters. I humbly beg your Excellency to have much compassion on me, and kindly give me permission to go into retirement, entrusting the affairs of this land to the hands of one who might take them up with more energy. This will be a very great favor to me.

Before now I have written that it is best not to allow any Portuguese to come over with the other people. This matter ought to have careful attention, for the Portuguese are not to be trusted, and will profit us little. Many of them, both soldiers and sailors, came on the flagship, and I would be glad to see them far from here. I beseech your Excellency to be pleased to take the necessary measures in this respect; for it is certainly an important matter, upon which much depends. Felipe de Salcedo is going in this patache and will give a more complete relation of everything; I refer you to him.

May our Lord keep, etc.

From this island of Çubu, 7 July 1569.

A3. Letter from Lavezaris to the King, dated Cebu 5 June 1569

Sources: AGI 67-6-6; B&R 3:29-32; copied in FBG 8:129-131.

Sacred Royal Catholic Majesty:

This letter will serve to advise your Majesty that by the flagship **San Pablo** which left this port on the 1st of July in the past year 1568, I wrote at length to your Majesty regarding events which had happened up to that time; and I refer you to the letters which will go on this advice-boat in the general budget, which is thus incidentally increased. Now I shall relate the history of this ship, and what happened to us after it left, with as much brevity as possible, both to avoid prolixity and because the Governor Miguel López will give your Majesty a longer and fuller relation. This ship was despatched with more than 400 quintals of cinnamon for your Majesty, besides small wares and other articles as specimens, which would give no little satisfaction in that land.

There arrived at this port of Cebu on the 18th of September of that year [1568] a small vessel of Portuguese whose Captain was António Rombo da Costa, a person who had already come, the year before, to this port with letters from the Captain Major Gonzalo Pereira. He said that the Captain Major was coming with all his fleet to see the Governor and provide him with necessities, and that having been separated from his fleet, he [Costa] came to seek shelter at this port, as he had knowledge of it, whence he would return immediately to seek the fleet. He did so, having first been well received by the Governor and this whole colony. On the 28th of that same month, he came back to this port with letters from the Captain Major to the Governor, saying that the former was very near the port. The Governor answered his letters, and despatched them; and on the 30th of the same month, the Captain Major entered the port with a heavy fleet of Portuguese. They came with nine sail—four ships of deep draught and five galleys and *fustas* without counting other small vessels which the natives of the Moluccas use for the service of the larger boats. They remained in this port certain days, peacefully, during which the Captain Major and the Governor saw each other twice, once ashore and the other time at sea. At the last visit, the Portuguese stated that he would serve summons upon us, which he at once proceeded to do. On the 14th of October he sent the first summons, which the Governor answered. The Portuguese made answer to this reply and after that made his third demand; and on the same day when he did this, he came to blows with us, in which nothing was gained. He surrounded us at the entrances of this port (of which there are two, one to the east and the other to the west). He always endeavored to make war on us from the outside, in order to guarantee his own safety as much as possible. Many people were seen from this camp, and he captured many more, without it happening that they could take or kill any of us. He granted life to a few soldiers and boys that fled from this camp and went to his fleet.

During the time of this blockade, the flagship [i.e. the **San Pedro**] was burned because it was of no use, and so that the nails it contained might serve for a ship that was

being made. At this time came the news that the flagship [sic] **San Pablo** had been lost at the Ladrones during a storm, and while the ship was moored [at Guam]. All the people had escaped and came to these Philippine Islands in a bark which they made from a small boat. It was a marvelous thing that 132 people should come in it as they did. May God pardon whomever did us such harm in losing this ship in this manner.

The Portuguese had notice of this loss, and, having kept us surrounded all the rest of the year, went away from this port on the 1st of January of this year 1569 with different ideas from those which they brought hither—because they had maintained that we must go with them to India; and the Captain Major demanded in his papers or summons that we should leave these islands, since they were within the demarcation of the king of Portugal.

Now because, as I said, the Governor will give your Majesty at greater length the news of all this, and is sending a relation and the copy of the demands, I shall say nothing further of it. I finish by saying that the advice-boat **San Lucas** is being sent away today, in order to request that your Majesty may send us sufficient help, suitable to our need, which is very great, as they who are going to you in this ship will bear witness¹; and by referring you to all that I have before explained to your Majesty. In the ship **San Juan** which left this port on the 26th of July of the year 1567, I sent certain tamarind trees and ginger roots to be planted in the more fertile districts of that New Spain. Now I am sending your Majesty by Rodrigo de Espinosa, chief pilot who came in the flagship, some roots of pepper already sprouted, for the same purpose. I, as a zealous servant of your Majesty, am always, so far as my little strength permits, watchful of everything that concerns the royal service. And because I personally desire to inform your Majesty of these things, and in order that I may do it as fully as I have heard it, I beg your Majesty to do me the favor to send me your favorable permission, in order that I may do so in the first ship that may leave these parts for that New Spain; and because in all things I hope to receive favor from your Majesty, in regard to all the rest referring to the aforesaid letters that I wrote your Majesty which are likewise going on this vessel. I close begging our Lord to keep your Majesty's sacred royal Catholic person, and prosper you with increase of greater kingdoms and seigniories, as we, your Majesty's servants and vassals, desire.

From Cebu, 5 June 1569.

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

Guido de Lavezaris.

1 Ed. note: Captain Artieda carried this and other letters to Spain and/or the pilot Rodrigo de Espinosa who is mentioned below.

A4. Letter from Mirandaola to the King, dated Cebu 8 June 1569

Sources: AGI 1-1-2/24; B&R 3:33-43; copied in FBG 8:132-137.

Sacred Catholic Majesty:

With the flagship [San Pablo] which left this port on the 1st of July 1568, I sent your Majesty a relation of what had happened up to that day in this place, with the fidelity and loyalty which I owe as your Majesty's servant; and so will I do in this. It pleased God that the flagship, making the return trip to new Spain for the second time¹ should lose the way, and be driven upon the island of Guan, which is one of those called the Ladrones, where they were lost on account of the storm that struck them there. Assuredly this caused great sadness and anxiety in this camp, besides the great loss that it occasioned us, both because that ship was very convenient and important for the expedition, and because of its large cargo of cinnamon and other goods which would have given great satisfaction in your Majesty's kingdoms and seigniories. It carried, registered for your Majesty, 150 quintals of cinnamon; and for private individuals more than 250, which consignments we allowed to be carried on the register, mindful of the misery and necessity which the people were suffering, and considering that they had nothing else with which to help themselves. On this account, permission was given to take these goods, and with the idea that if it should seem best in New Spain to take them at a moderate [price]² in your Majesty's name, they would be thus taken; and advices to that effect were sent.

There were also specimens of pieces of [gold], porcelain, and other things, as I have said, which would give great happiness to your Majesty's vassals and make them desirous to come to these parts to serve God and your Majesty. As I have said, it pleased God that everything should be lost, and that the men should be saved, although with considerable risk of life. Moreover, after both privations and shipwreck had happened to them in a land where they had neither refuge nor refreshment, they had to deal with the most brutish and least civilized tribe of people ever seen hitherto. Our men experienced great difficulty with those people, because of their utter barbarism and their savage manner of fighting. God, who brought them to this port, protected them, showing them his divine clemency and pity. May He give us grace to serve Him, and may He keep us in your Majesty's service.

There arrived at this island, where we had settled in your Majesty's name, Gonzalo Pereira with the fleet (of which we sent your Majesty news by the patache San Juan). He arrived on the 2nd of October of the year 1568...

...

1 Ed. note: This was the second return voyage of a large ship but the first return of the San Pablo.

2 The words in brackets are conjectural readings, the ms. being illegible in these places.

I humbly beg and beseech your Majesty that you will grant me the favor of increasing my salary to 3,000 ducats, in consideration of the poverty of the country and the fact that we have to be supplied from Spain and your Majesty's realms with what we need to maintain ourselves. Consider also the position that was granted me in your Majesty's name by Don Luis de Velasco, Viceroy of New Spain (may he rest in peace); I have served until now in these districts as your Majesty's faithful servant, enduring great hardships and misery; and that, in order to join this expedition, I spent my patrimony and ran into debt besides, to the extent of many gold pesos.

It was agreed to despatch this patache on account of the delay there has been in sending your Majesty's despatches from New Spain, and also to let your Majesty know our negotiations with the Portuguese and our great necessity; for there does not remain to us a larger boat in which we can give notice of what happens, nor supplies enough to be able to make one. In consideration of this, your Majesty will be pleased to have provided, with diligence, sufficient assistance, so that we may find out what there is in these regions; and, that God and your Majesty may be served therein, we are sure that your Majesty will have this provided for.

May our Lord guard your sacred royal Catholic person and increase your kingdoms and seignories.

From Çubu, 8 June 1569.

Your sacred Catholic Majesty's faithful servant who humbly kisses your Majesty's royal feet.

Andrés de Mirandaola.

A5. Anonymous story of the shipwreck

Source: Anonymous manuscript in the Newberry Library in Chicago, Ayer ms. #1359, folio 333-334. Robertson (B&R 53:381) says that the title (Historia general sacro-profana) is strikingly like that of Delgado's, but it is not the same manuscript. I have found close similarities with Fr. Gaspar de San Augustin's Historia also.

In the meantime, the flagship galleon was prepared to go out to [New] Spain. It departed Cebu under the command of Felipe de Salcedo on the 1st of June [1568] with good weather, carrying a crew of 130 persons and a great quantity of cinnamon, for the King as well as for individuals, amounting (what was on the register) to 400 quintals. However, God in His highest judgment did not wish the success of this voyage, because after many hardships which they suffered they had to turn back to Cebu.

Leaving behind many people who had become sick, and having departed a second time to pursue their voyage, they arrived at the Islands of the Ladrones where Captain Salcedo was under orders from his grandfather, the Governor, to make a stopover, and to find out if in some island of the Ladrones could be found clove or pepper.

Upon arriving at the island of **Guam**, and entering the port which is not very sheltered, and Felipe de Salcedo having stepped ashore with a few people, on the day of the Assumption of Our Lady, 15th of August, they were hit by such a stiff storm that the

ship was carried away and pushed against the coast where it was broken into pieces without their being able to save anything which was carried aboard. Only the people left aboard were rescued through the diligence of those [already] ashore who flocked to rescue them with a few proas.

They were detained for 3 months there, while they were building a big bark on top of the boat with the boards and woodwork that they could pick up from the lost galleon. They had big clashes with the natives of that island, as they are very treacherous and were attacking them all the time, although Felipe de Salcedo with his prudence calmed them down until the building of the bark was complete, aboard which they all returned to Cebu, arriving at the islands at the same time as the Portuguese fleet was in and trying to throw the Spanish out, as we shall see.