
Document 1626

Letter from Governor Silva to the King, dated Manila 30 July 1626

Sources: AGI 67-6-7; translated in B&R 22: 93-103.

Letter from interim Governor Fernando de Silva to Philip IV

Sire:

Last year I advised you Majesty of the state in which I found these [Philippine] islands; and now I could tell you that they have not been in better condition for 30 years past. I kiss your Majesty's hand for the great favor which you do me in sending as my successor Don Juan Niño de Tavora, a person who, I am confident, will carry out whatever is ordered there for the service of your Majesty; for my part I shall aid him as much as I can, without heeding trifles.

As the despatch of last year was made early, the ships arrived at New Spain in less than six months, and returned to this city on 28 June, the day on which the [new] Governor took possession of these offices.

...

Of the ships which I informed you were being built, one is in Cavite, and the other, it is supposed, can be completed by Christmas, each of them of 1,000 tons of the North Sea. Two galleys are likewise being finished, which makes a sufficient fleet for anything which may happen here. By the way, I inform your Majesty that finding no remedy for the thefts of rigging, on account of the many foreign ships that arrive here, I have had a black thread put in the rigging belonging to your Majesty, so that it can be recognized and this loss will be obviated.

...

The ship which I had despatched to Japan for military supplies arrived at Nanguasiqui, where they took precautionary measures until the emperor was informed. This resulted in their being notified a few days later that they must return without trading at all, and make it known that no ship should go from these islands under pain of death,

on account of the religious which they conveyed from here; accordingly, it is impossible to enter that country alive.¹ The ship returned, and this year, goes as the admiral's ship to New Spain, of which the new governor will inform you.

...

May our Lord protect your royal person according to the needs of Christendom.

Manila, 30 July 1626.

Don Fernando de Silva.

1 Ed. note: The Jesuit relation of 1626 states that "the persecution of the missionaries in Japan has daily been assuming greater fury, and the doors are daily being shut more closely on the religious. It has been ordered under penalty of death, and of being burned with their merchandise and ships, that no ship sail from Manila to Japan. Accordingly, one ship which sailed last year and which they had not notified of the edict, they notified and ordered to return immediately to Manila, without allowing anyone to disembark, or to buy or sell anything—keeping them, on the contrary, shut up on the ship and guarded. The Japanese made a law that no Japanese could leave or enter the kingdom unless he first forswore our holy faith."