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## Document 1568B

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# Legazpi—His son Melchor's petitions to the King, dated Madrid November 1568 and later

*Sources: Col. de Ultramar, iii, doc. 46, pp. 330-370; summarized in B&R 2:157-160.*

## Summary of the five petitions of Melchor de Legazpi

Legazpi's son, Melchor, presented five petitions to the King, all growing out of the agreements made with the former by Viceroy Luis de Velasco, and his subsequent services in the islands.

The **first petition** on behalf of Legazpi is:

1. That two of the **Ladrones** with title of *adelantado* [Lieutenant-Governor], and a salary of 2,000 ducats be granted him and his heirs, this concession to bear civil and criminal powers of jurisdiction, and the title of Governor and Captain General of the Ladrones.

2. Some assistance with the expenses already incurred.

3 and 4. Exclusive right to choose men for the conquest both in New Spain and the Philippines, or any other place, and the appointment of duties and officials; also the right to fit out ships in any port of the Indies, and authorization of agents.

5. That he be permitted to assign land to the colonists.

6 and 7. That he and his heirs be high constables of all these islands and that they hold all forts built therein.

8 and 9. To him, his sons, heirs, and successors forever, one-twelfth of all incomes from mines, gold and silver, precious stones, and fruits, in the Ladrones and two fisheries, one of pearls and the other of fish, in the same islands.

10. That for ten years after any colony has been formed no import tax be paid on goods.

11. That only one-tenth of all gold, silver, gems, and pearls discovered for ten years after the first settlement be paid the King.

12. That Legazpi may appoint in his absence from the Philippines or Ladrones a Lieutenant, who shall act in his name.

13. That for six years he may commission two vessels for navigation of the Indies, and that he may despatch them together or separately.

14. That fines be granted for the founding of churches and monasteries throughout the islands.

15. That the petition in regard to Felipe de Salcedo be granted.

16. That a dozen religious from each order go to the islands, and that their superior do not object to their going.

17. That no foreigners, especially Portuguese, be allowed in the islands, "because therefrom might follow great losses and troubles, as happened when Lope Martín was sent as pilot with Captain Pericón."

18. That no vessels be permitted to go to these islands from the Indies, or from any other land, "without the express consent and commission of the Royal Audiencia or the Viceroy" of the district from which the ship sails, and the King must be fully informed thereof. The cause of this clause was that ships were fitting out in Peru and other places for these islands.

19. That Moros be prohibited from trading in the islands.

20. "Because the conquest of the Ladrones is of slight moment, by reason of their inhabitants being poor and naked", and their best use is as a way-station from New Spain; and New Guinea on the other hand offers much profit in both temporal and religious matters, that their conquest be permitted to Legazpi.

21. That, in case of Legazpi's death before the conquest is effected, the petitioner, or Legazpi's heir and successor, or the person appointed by him, may complete it.

This petition was heard in Madrid, on 2 March 1569, although it had been presented a considerable time before that date. After waiting for two years in vain for an answer to this petition Melchor de Legazpi presented **another petition** asking: that efficient aid be sent his father; that he be confirmed in his title of Governor and Captain General "with the salary that your Highness is pleased to assign him, and with the other rewards contained in his [Legazpi's] petition, ... and that he be not abandoned to die in despair at seeing himself forsaken and forgotten by his King"; that he be granted the 4,000 ducats promised him by Velasco "in order that we might better prepare for the marriage of ... my sister who is of marriageable age." The petition states that even had Legazpi's expedition proved a failure, the King should not permit want to come upon his children, since his substance had been expended in the royal service.

In the **third petition**, Melchor de Legazpi requests that the office of accountant of the City of Mexico rendered vacant by the death of its incumbent be bestowed upon him in remembrance of his father's services. He says that the family is "poverty-stricken and in debt" because of his father having spent all his possessions in the King's service.

The **fourth petition** presents information concerning Legazpi's services.

The **fifth petition** requests that certain persons be received by the court as witnesses, and give information regarding Legazpi. From the testimony of these persons it was

shown that Legazpi was one of the oldest and most honored citizens of the City of Mexico; that he was a wealthy landholder of that city; and had lost his wealth through devotion to the King's service, without receiving any reward therefor.

## Some relevant items from the first petition

Almighty Sir:

I, Melchor de Legazpi, son of Miguel López de Legazpi, your Governor and Captain General of the Islands of the West, say that the conquest of the Ladrões with which your Majesty has entrusted my said father is something that very manifestly and evidently has to be done with much labor and cost to which my said father has contributed in the service of His Highness until now in the said islands, for which reason I beg your Highness...

1. Firstly, that your Highness be pleased to favor my said father with two islands in the Ladrões, that you should deign to appoint him with the title of *adelantado* [military governor] and with a salary of 2,000 ducats according to the favor that your Highness is granting him, his heirs and successors forever with the understanding that this applies to civil and criminal jurisdiction, and as well that you should give him the title of Governor and Captain General of the said islands according to the said favor.<sup>1</sup>

...

20. Item: whereas the conquest of the said Ladrone Islands is of little import on account of the people who are beastly, poor and naked; and that they can be most useful for the shelter of the ships that would sail from New Spain to the Philippine Islands, and because great hopes can be held about New Guinea and its conquest, your Highness would be most pleased about it as it is something of some import, also that our Lord would receive pleasure in the conversion of those souls, I beg your Highness to please entrust my said father with their conquest in order that in both cases your Majesty can be served starting with the one already undertaken by the person who has the business at hand, given that your Highness would be better served because the distance from here to there does not allow a delay nor a lateness because while the account of one thing is coming another one could already be completed; whatever pleases your Highness.

21. Lastly, in case our Lord would take my said father from this present life before he can carry out the said conquest, may it please your Highness to let the heir and suc-

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1 Ed. note: Legazpi himself has submitted a petition for favors in 1565 but the document was forgotten after it was sent to Madrid in September 1567. The original paragraph by Legazpi himself reads as follows: "Item: I beg your Majesty to be pleased to favor me with two islands of the Ladrões to conquer and colonize at my expense, given that they are poor and without any advantage, and that the settlement of any of them would be of very much use to your Majesty as a way-station and shelter for the ships that will ply those western seas, in addition to the good and great benefit that would accrue from the conversion of their natives of which God would be served; may this favor be with the title of *adelantado*."

cessor of his house and estate, or the person so named by him, carry it out, or complete it if it has already begun, or begin it anew; he should be protected in the same manner and be granted the same favors mentioned above.

I beg your Highness to be pleased to consent all this to my said father taking into consideration his good service in the past and his willingness to serve your Highness and the high cost already spent by him and the present cost of the said journey about which your Highness is now again reminded and if you want to employ him in this other conquest, it is unavoidable that it be done at great expense and hardship; for this reason, etc.

Melchor de Legazpi.— A rubric follows.

[Decision:] That Melchor de Legazpi present the power of attorney from his father Miguel López de Legazpi for the contract negotiations at Madrid on the 28th of May 1569.

The Licentiate Vaños.— A rubric follows.

[Endorsements:]

“To everybody: please bring the petitions that are in and the draft decisions.

To Reporter Santander.—A rubric follows.

To Reporter the Licentiate Vaños.— A rubric follows.

Heard at Madrid on the 2nd of March 1569.”