
Document 1566F

Letter from Guido de Lavezaris to the King, dated Cebu 25 July 1567

Sources: AGI 67-6-34; B&R 34: 207-213.

Sacred Catholic Majesty:

I informed your Majesty by the flagship which was despatched from this island, in the month of June of the year 1565 to discover the return route to New Spain, as your faithful vassal and servant, of events that had happened up to that time; and I petitioned you to reward me in consideration of the 27 years that I have served your Majesty in the discovery of these districts. [I told you] that I had come here before as your Majesty's accountant in company with Ruy Lopez de Villalobos; and further that I had taken the ginger plant (which is now [grown] in New Spain) at the great risk of my person. I have done other services for your Majesty of which I gave information.

The present information that I have to relate to your Majesty is that the **San Gerónimo**, despatched from New Spain in the month of May in the past year 1566, by the President and Members of your Royal Audiencia [of Mexico], and officials of the royal treasury resident therein, arrived at this island in the month of October of the said year. It made its voyage so inadequately prepared with necessities and with the articles that we asked from here, that we were placed in greater need than before its arrival. The ship had no captain because he had been killed during the voyage. There were also other mutinies and rebellions [on the ship] as appears from the investigations made here about it, which your Majesty may see if so minded and determine its fortune. At its arrival this whole camp received great happiness at learning that the [return] route, which had been so greatly desired by the Emperor our sovereign (may he rest in peace), by your Majesty, and by all your vassals and subjects, had been discovered and so easily and desired so very rightly, since besides the fruit that will be attained in the preaching of the holy gospel (the chief design of your Majesty and of your Catholic ancestors) your Majesty will be greatly benefitted in the temporal, your royal Crown greatly increased, your subjects and vassals advantaged, and finally there will be a gateway opened for the Spanish nation to have a place where it may employ its strength.



Guido de Lavezaris

Guido de Lavezaris, Royal Treasurer of the first Spanish colony in the Philippines. (From Juan Caro y Mora's *Ataque de Limahong a Manila en 1574*. Manila, 1898)

I rejoice more than I can tell, and rightly, since I gave advice to your Majesty and to your royal Council of the Indies, of the products of these districts in the year 1554 at Valladolid, and of the suitability and fitness of these Philippines for supporting the people in them both in the interim until the route should be discovered, and until your Majesty's commands should be sent, all of which availed for the work and affair. It has been very important for your royal service, and on that account there is legitimate reason why your Majesty should reward me. For, besides

the above-mentioned services, I came to serve you in this present expedition as Treasurer of your royal treasury. No other person than myself of all those who took part in the expedition of Villalobos came on this expedition, and I, by reason of my experience in the past expedition, have given advice on what has been necessary; for I came to these islands for this purpose and until the discovery of this route should be made, and left my wife and family in New Spain. I put away everything else for what touches your Majesty's service, and I hope from your clemency to be rewarded for my services.

I shall not give a full report of the occurrences of this expedition from the time of the despatch of the flagship [i.e. 1565] until the present, because the Governor and we, your Majesty's officials, give a report of them in the relations and letters which are being sent. I shall only mention that a huge quantity of cinnamon has been discovered on the point of Quavit¹ on the island of Mindanao. It is so abundant there that it is heard that the mountains are full of it. Inasmuch as there is no market for it in these islands we can easily procure at little expense as much as your Majesty would like brought to Spain. It will be necessary to have some settlement in the vicinity where the cinnamon is gathered, both in order to gather the cinnamon and because the Portuguese fleets en route from Malacca to the Moluccas pass by that place, which is also in the district of Borneo, the Moluccas, and other important places.

Since your Majesty has not yet sent orders declaring your royal will, we are only striving to maintain our men until the arrival of the reinforcements of which we are in great need. It is advisable that that aid be sent quickly, and that more zeal be displayed

¹ Ed. note: Cavit Point at 7°30'N.

in the despatch from New Spain than hitherto; for although it is about three years since we left there, only one ship has been sent, and it arrived (I mean came) in a condition more in need of aid than to aid. Therefore, this ship [i.e. the patache San Juan, Captain Juan de la Isla] is being despatched now. We send in it the cinnamon that the little time at our disposal gives us opportunity to gather.

I entreat your Majesty, since it is a matter that is so important to your royal service, to please send your orders promptly as to what you wish most to be done. For after the arrival of the reinforcements, I intend (the Divine Will concurring), to go and kiss your Majesty's feet, and to report in detail concerning these districts, as I am unable to give any adequate idea in a letter without great prolixity.

Two Portuguese ships such as the natives of the Moluccas use¹ came to this port on the 10th of the present month of July. They were sent by Captain Major Gonçalo Pereira Mamarraque, who went from India to the Moluccas by commission of the Viceroy, Don António de Noronha. They bore letters from the Captain Major for the Governor which informed him and declared that we were in their demarcation, and tried to get us to go to the Moluccas and thence to India. I endeavored to gain some information from those ships regarding the affairs in the Moluccas, and some of the men told me that your Majesty's old-time vassals, the kings of Tidore and of Gilolo, have been killed and persecuted by the Portuguese and by their friend and confederate, the king of Ternate. They killed the king of Tidore and destroyed a fort which the king of Gilolo possessed, who died while being pursued. The king of Ternate had the latter's son who succeeded him in his kingdom killed; while the son of the king of Tidore who is yet living, pays a yearly and very excessive tribute of 100 bahars or more than 500 quintals of cloves to the Portuguese. In addition, the vassals of those kings are greatly harassed and troubled by the Portuguese and by their friend, the king of Ternate. I believe, most invincible prince, that such trouble and harassing proceeds from the fact that those kings and their subjects are so affectioned to the Castilian name; for I, as an eyewitness, assure your sacred Majesty that the Castilians who sailed in the fleet of Villalobos were as well received and as kindly treated by the kings of Tidore and Gilolo and by their vassals, and that they always showed us as much love and goodwill, and offered their persons and property, to relieve our necessities, as if they had really been your Majesty's natural vassals for many years. And they assure me that they still live in great constancy, and are in hopes that your Majesty will have them delivered from the cruel bondage in which they live because they have ever shown themselves so favorable to the Castilians. For that reason their misery and trouble move me to deep compassion when I remember the kindness which I received from them when I was in the Moluccas, and the love and affection that they bestowed upon us. Besides this the Ternatans and the Portuguese in their company have made and are daily making raids and captives among these [Philippine] islands, so that the natives are in great fear when they see the harm that they receive from them.

1 Ed. note: That is, two caracoras.

Those Portuguese remained in this port of Çubu for 13 days where they were caressed and feasted by all generally. The Governor offered his services to them in whatever they needed, according to the orders of your Majesty's instructions. When the Portuguese left, they said that the Captain Major had received a resolution and express mandate from India to rout, destroy, and drive us out of this place by whatever means he could, and that he had left India with nine ships and eight hundred soldiers for that sole purpose. That news threw us into great consternation, as we are short of men, ships, ammunition, and artillery, and because the masters of the sea hostile to us [i.e. the Portuguese] can easily deprive us of provisions as they have many large ships and oared boats and many friendly Indians from Ternate who are well equipped with weapons and food, while we are in need of all things generally. However, although we are so needy at present, we have firmly resolved to die in the service of your Majesty like true Spaniards, and we shall not move from this place until your Majesty so orders. Consequently, we shall endeavor to defend ourselves as far as possible, with our few forces.

In the belief that I was doing your Majesty a service, I endeavored to get the loan of a **map** and navigation chart from the Portuguese, and quickly had a portion that falls within the Castilian demarcation copied from it as well as certain remarks made by one of our pilots. I enclose it herewith¹, and if your Majesty be so pleased the cosmographers may see by it the position of the lands and islands now newly discovered.

May your Majesty receive my willingness to see you. May our Lord prosper and preserve your Royal Catholic person with increase of greater kingdoms and seignories, as is the desire of your Majesty's vassals.

From this island of Çubu, 25 July 1567.

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

[Endorsed: "Examined. File it with the other papers treating of this matter."]

¹ The map does not accompany this letter [anymore].