
Document 1518C

Magellan—Letter of commission from the King

Source: Letter from the King, dated Valladolid, 22 March 1518. Original manuscript in AGI Seville: Reg. de Reales Cédulas leg. 2; also Torre do Tombo, Lisbon: Gaveta 18, maço 8, n° 39. Published in Navarrete's Colección de los viages, iv, pp. 121-122; also in ACL's Alguns documentos, pp. 418-419. Translation from Blair & Robertson I, pp. 271-275.

Title of Captains of the Fleet to Magellan and Faleiro

Doña Juana and Don Carlos her son by the grace of God Queen and King of Castile, etc.

Inasmuch as we have ordered that a certain contract and agreement be made with you, Bachelor Ruy Faleiro, and Fernando de Magalhães, gentlemen born in the Kingdom of Portugal, in order that you go and discover over the Ocean sea, and in order to make such a voyage, we have ordered that five ships be outfitted with crews and food and other things necessary for the said voyage, trusting that you are such persons as will abide by our service, and that you will faithfully execute what we have entrusted to you: **it is our wish and will to appoint you, and by the presents we do appoint you our Captains of the said Fleet¹**, and we authorize you so that, during the time of the voyage and until (with the blessing of Our Lord) you return to these our kingdoms, you may use and shall use the said office as our captains, both at sea and ashore, for yourselves and for your lieutenants, in any case and in everything relating to the said office, connected and belonging to it. You shall see to it that justice be rendered in the lands and islands to be discovered, in accordance with and in the manner usually followed by those who have been our sea captains until now.

1 Ed. note: Emphasis mine.

By this our letter, we order the masters and boatswains, pilots, seamen, ship boys and pages, and any other persons and officials there may be in the said fleet, whatever persons who are and reside in the said lands and islands to be discovered, and to whom the contents of this letter may concern or affect, in whatever manner, that they shall regard, accept, and consider you as our Captains of the said fleet.

As such, they shall obey you and comply with your orders, under the penalty or penalties which, in our name, you shall impose or order imposed, and which by these presents we impose and consider them in fact imposed. We authorize you to execute sentence on their persons and goods. They are to respect and abide by all the honors, privileges, authorizations, liberties, preeminences, prerogatives and immunities which as our Captains you shall hold and enjoy, and which must be abided for you.

It is our wish and command that if during the voyage of the said fleet there should arise any disputes and conflicts, at sea as well as ashore, you shall deliver, determine and render justice with respect to them, summarily without hesitation nor question of law, and in order to deliver justice and decide about the said disputes, and for whatever else regarding the contents of this our letter, we grant you all the authorizations with their incident, dependent, annexed and connected articles. Let no-one therefore disregard them.

Given at Valladolid, on the 22nd day of the month of March 1518.

I the King.

I, Francisco de los Cobos, Secretary to the Queen and to the King her son, our Lords, had it recorded by their command.

[Endorsement:] Authorization as sea captains, given to Fernando Magalhães and to the bachelor Ruy Faleiro for the time they shall be in the fleet which Y.H. has ordered to be outfitted, until their return to Spain.

Johaanes le Sauvaige.

Fonseca, Archbishop and Bishop [of Burgos].

Registered. Juan de Samano.

[Seal:] Guilherme, Chancellor.