
Document 1566G

Letter from the Royal Officials to the King, dated Cebu 26 July 1567

Sources: AGI 67-6-29; B&R 34: 214-222.

Sacred Catholic Majesty:

We reported to your Majesty all of the events up to the day of the departure of the **San Pedro** which came to these districts as flagship and which left this port on the first day of June 1565, under favorable auspices for the discovery of this expedition and voyage.¹ We shall now relate to your Majesty as your Majesty's faithful servants what new things have happened here since then.

A ship with news of the arrival at New Spain reached this port where we are settled in your Majesty's service, and of the flagship which went to discover the route which our Lord was pleased to have accomplished in the most invincible days of your Majesty. Not little should all Christians entreat His Divine Majesty to grant many years of life to your Majesty, so that the holy Catholic faith might be increased and exalted by your Majesty's influence in the very great kingdoms and seigniories that are located in these districts.

After the departure of the **San Pedro**, the natives of this port, both the chiefs and the other people, came to render obedience to the Governor in your Majesty's name, and to place themselves under the protection and dominion of your Majesty. They offered to recognize and to hold your Majesty as their natural lord, and said that they would give you the products of their land, namely rice, millet, and *boroña*.² The Governor received them as such vassals and told them what they were to observe to keep our friendship. They are so vicious a race and have such evil morals that they keep no faith nor perform anything although they have promised it. Accordingly we have temporized with the natives of this port and with the other natives who have as yet offered to accept our friendship. Inasmuch as no further force is shown them than that willed

1 Ed. note: For this previous report, see Documents 1565V3 & V4.

2 Ed. note: In Spain this was a dish made with apples, pumpkins, etc. In Cebu, it may have been a dish made with sticky rice and coconut.

by you, we have as yet not been able to do less; and inasmuch as (as we have remarked above) they are a vicious race and possessed of bad morals, and recognize no ruler, therefore if their chiefs try to force them, they will do nothing else than go to another island. They find enough desert lands if one tries to force them in their own. Until having your Majesty's order and instructions, the Governor has not cared or consented to have war made on them and we consider it as certain that if that had been done, we would have suffered, and have all met our death most wretchedly, for the first thing that those natives do is to take away all the food, and the misery in which they hold the land in which they live is such that war cannot be made there under any circumstance. Had it not been for the good government that has been exercised in all things in not making war upon those natives, and treating them well, we would doubtless all have died. Our Lord has been pleased to direct this entire affair as His own and to show us miraculous rewards. May it please His Divine Majesty to continue such actions and to preserve us in His holy service and in that of your Majesty.

In view of the great delay in sending us aid from New Spain, and news of what your Majesty has ordered provided, it was determined to despatch the patache **San Juan**. It carries 70 quintals of cinnamon which was bartered for in the island of Bindanao, namely, at the point called Cavite. We have heard that it is abundant in that part and that it can be easily gathered. Bindanao is a well settled island both in the north and in the south. We have heard that there is much gold in all parts of it, and that if we settle it and cultivate the land we shall learn many secrets of it. The inhabitants there are warlike and full of malice. We have taken possession of it in your Majesty's name.

Moros have come to this port where we are at present from certain islands called Luzon and Bindoro. They have brought rice and gold to sell in exchange for silver and pearls. These men have told us that the Chinese go to their land to trade and carry away all the products of this archipelago, namely, gold, wax, and slaves. From the information given us it is a rich land and has [plenty] of trade.

A **mutiny** happened on November 28th of the year 1565 but our Lord was pleased that those who took part in it should not succeed in their vile purpose. That mutiny was of such a nature that had He permitted it [to succeed] because of our sins, we would have all miserably perished. But He was graciously [inclined] to show us mercy, and did not allow them to succeed in the deceptions with which the devil had imbued them. Consequently, the ring-leaders were punished, and the matter smoothed over and settled. Justice is rightly done in what arises. There was another **mutiny** afterward which was engaged in by the same ones, although there were not so many in it and it was not a matter in which they could succeed. All punishment was inflicted in accordance with law.¹

1 Ed. note: In April 1567, the Master-of-Camp had gone to Mindanao to buy some cinnamon. A mutiny arose and they killed him because he had forbidden the men from private trading. The ring leader was Martín Hernandez, a Portuguese, who was hanged.

The said aid and advice that was despatched from New Spain reached this port in such a desperate and in such an unfortunate condition that, according to our understanding, no Christians have ever heard of so many things left to chance. Our Lord was pleased to bring the ship miraculously and those whom it carried, as your Majesty will see by the report that the Governor is sending about what happened.

The crew killed the Captain and his Lieutenant, and afterward hanged the Sergeant Major who was coming with an appointment in case of the absence of the one [Sergant Major already] here in this camp. He, in company with other tyrants killed the said Captain and Lieutenant, and his companions afterward hanged him. After that event they reached certain islets, located about 700 leagues from this port. They tried to abandon a great portion of the men there, while they intended to go to the district where the Chinese and Japanese trade, and to pursue their career of piracy if they were able. Our Lord was pleased at that juncture to give courage to the men who wished to serve your Majesty, some of whom were naked while others were clad only in their shirts. They determined to go to the ship and raise a shout in favor of your Majesty. It succeeded as we have written. Our Lord was pleased to give them strength and to direct them so that all the tyrants were left ashore on one of the said islands where the ship was anchored.

The ship arrived here without any kind of aid either of arms or of ammunition, for all of which we had sent to ask. The men were quite worn out and in a deplorable condition, and all their clothing had been left ashore. As soon as they arrived, the Governor ordered an investigation of everything that had occurred in the whole affair, and he is sending the report to your Majesty, by which everything will be more explicit and detailed.

By order and command of the Governor, the Master-of-Camp, Mateo del Saz (may he rest in peace) left this port to go to the place where we had heard that cinnamon was to be found, and to run along the coast in order to visit our friends there, and to go on to where the said cinnamon was to be found. He, going upon that expedition, met with a Portuguese galley during very furious weather. The Master-of-Camp, desiring to know what ship it was, tried to go to them, upon which the Portuguese retired. Thereupon the Master-of-Camp waited to see whether there was any fear on the part of the Portuguese. Then the captain of the galley sent him a letter, whose copy and reply is enclosed herewith.¹ When the said Master-of-Camp perceived what that meant, and when he saw two other sails, he tried to come to this port with all haste as he had a favorable wind. He met a large fleet of the Portuguese, who, as was believed, did not see him or else thought that his ship was one of their own which had become separated by a storm which they had suffered. When the Master-of-Camp had reached this port he immediately put us on the watch and lookout for whatever might happen. In this way did we wait to see what the Portuguese were going to do. After three days had passed we saw two galliots. When the General saw them he waited to see what they wanted,

1 Ed. note: Not reproduced here.

ready for them with his men. But as they did not wish to come or to wait, the Governor determined to send Martin de Goiti, who is the present Master-of-Camp because of the death of Mateo del Saz (may he rest in peace) to ascertain their design. When he had reached them, he spoke to them and told them if they were under any necessity, to let him know, for he was ordered by his Governor to aid and protect them if there was any opportunity. If they would come to where the Governor was stationed they would be helped and protected with right goodwill, in accordance with his Majesty's order. They answered all with great politeness and said that they had no need. On the contrary they would aid and protect us if we needed anything. When this Governor heard their reply, he again despatched his own captain, and sent the Portuguese some refreshment, and wrote them that he would be very glad to see and speak to them, as your Majesty will see by the copy of the letter which the Governor is sending.

All the men of this camp are in general very necessitous and have no present resource, because as we have said above, the General did not allow them to make war on the natives, awaiting to see what orders and instructions your Majesty would be pleased to send, and what reward it has pleased your Majesty to grant to all the men who have suffered the imminent risk of their lives, and hardship and misery in the service of your Majesty—which surely have been great, and for which we have been given courage and strength, by the pleasure of our Lord, to suffer them.

We humbly beg your Majesty to grant us the salary and increase which we ask your Majesty to make us to the sum of 3,000 ducats per year, in consideration of the fact that we are in parts so remote where the things which we need are so dear, as we have pledged and been cheated out of our patrimonies in order to come to serve your Majesty, on this expedition in which we have endured many hardships and necessities. We hope to be remunerated for it all by a sovereign and prince so Christian and one who has such a munificent and liberal hand as your Majesty, by your showing us the favor to concede and grant us the *repartimientos* [i.e. land grants] which might be in this land.

At present there is nothing in this land from which our salaries can be paid, unless in cinnamon which has no market in these districts. We humbly beg your Majesty to grant us and concede us the power of being paid in New Spain from the proceeds of the cinnamon and other drugs in these districts, and that they be paid to the person who shall have and has had our power of attorney therefor. We beg and entreat [this] of your Majesty with all humility.

Some of the natives have been converted to the true knowledge and have received the waters of holy baptism. The chiefs and all the natives say that since we have no wives we do not intend to remain in the country. It is advisable for your Majesty to have some married people sent here who are of good morals, and may they come quickly.

We have great need of artillery, ammunition, and arms for the men who are here. Will your Majesty please have us provided with the best men and men of the best morals who can be found, for this is necessary for the service of your Majesty whose royal Catholic person we pray our Lord to preserve with greater kingdoms and increasing seignories, as is desired by us, your Majesty's faithful servants.

Two *coracoras* of the Moluccan Indians arrived at this port on the 10th of this month. They carried 12 Portuguese, whom a certain Gonçalo Pereira, Captain Major of a large fleet which the Viceroy of India despatched to the Moluccas because he thought that we must have stopped there, and Alvaro de Mendoça, Captain of the fort of the said Moluccas, had sent. They wrote to the Governor that they had sure evidence that we had settled in this port, and they thought that it must have been by accident, as all the district hereabout was (as was a fact [they said]) within their demarcation. Therefore if it were so, and we were here because of any need, we should endeavor to go to the fort of the Moluccas where we would be given the best of welcomes. The Governor answered this putting them off as much as possible, as your Majesty will see by the letters and their reply to which we refer (as well as to Captain Juan de la Isla, who has a good understanding of this in detail and of all other things that have happened in these districts, and from whom your Majesty will receive as we have said, a true and extensive relation).¹

There has been a singular carelessness in providing us from New Spain with reinforcements; and if it should happen (which may God our Lord avert) that we should suffer some loss, it would be because of that. At present we have neither arms, ammunition, nor artillery with which to defend ourselves if the Portuguese should try to harm us. May His Divine Goodness remedy and direct everything as He deems best. Surely His divine hand has protected us, and so we are ready to die in His most holy service and that of your Majesty with great steadfastness if occasion offers.

May our Lord preserve your Sacred Catholic Majesty and give you greater kingdoms and increasing seigniories.

From this port [i.e. Cebu], 27 July 1567.

Sacred Catholic Majesty, your Sacred Catholic Majesty's faithful servants, who most humbly kiss your Majesty's royal feet.

Guido de Lavezaris,
Andrés Cauchela,
Andrés de Mirandaola.

¹ Ed. note: Captain de la Isla returned to the Philippines from Spain 3 years later (1570).