
Documents 1592E

A Spanish embassy sent to Japan in 1592 and its aftermath

Sources: AGI 1-1-3/25 and 67-6-6; translated in B&R 9:23-57.

Preliminary note.

Father Juan Cobo, O.P., having been despatched as envoy to the court of Japan with the Governor's letter, was received by Hideyoshi and given a letter. He travelled back to Satsuma to embark for the Philippines, but he refused to go aboard Faranda's ship and took a Portuguese ship instead. By the way, Harada Shiro was called Gaspar Faranda by the Europeans. His master, Faranda Keimon (actually Harada Kiuyemon), was the real ambassador appointed by Hideyoshi, but he had been unable to travel in 1592. However, the Portuguese ship, with Hideyoshi's second letter, was lost on the coast of Formosa and Faranda's ship arrived alone at Manila. Faranda carried only a small note from Fr. Cobo, scribbled at Kushi on 29 October 1592. This turn of events was somewhat confirmed by Antonio López, a Chinese, who sailed with Faranda and also carried a note for the Governor, in which Fr. Cobo says only that "we were well received by the emperor." An enquiry was held at Manila in May 1593 to ascertain the above facts.

From the documents below, we learn that an unnamed ship had crossed the Pacific from Panama to Macao, probably the San Ildefonso, Captain Juan de Solis, in 1591. This ship was seized by the Portuguese and Captain Solis eventually built another ship at a port of the province of Satsuma in Japan, 1592. With this vessel he appeared at Manila and was interviewed in May 1593.

E1. The contents of the lost letter, according to Captain Juan de Solis

...
He said that, as one who had just come from the kingdoms of Japan, and who was in Japan when Father Fray Juan Cobo arrived there—where this witness was building

a ship (the one in which he came here), a work which he left and abandoned [temporarily] in order to go and see, protect, and serve the said Father Juan Cobo, and to instruct him in the customs and usages of the country, as the Father came on behalf of his Majesty—he will relate what he knows.

While this witness was in the kingdoms of Japan last year, the emperor resolved to send an embassy here. This he entrusted to Faranda Queymon, but as the latter fell sick at the time of his intended departure from that country, he sent in his stead a Christian Japanese, named Gaspar, otherwise called Faranda.

...
As soon as Father Cobo had arrived and was about to disembark in the port of the said city of Nagoya¹, a nobleman of the court came to receive him, bearing three letters: one for the said Father, another for Captain Lope de Llano, and the third for the present witness. They were borne on the shoulders of men to the house of the man who came to receive them. There lodging had been prepared by order of Cuambac [i.e. Kuwambaku or Hideyoshi].

Within a week, Cuambac had the Father summoned; as soon as the latter had entered the palace, the emperor bade him be seated, and received the messages that he bore. Then he made the above assertion to him with indications of great pleasure. After that he ordered a collation spread for the Father, and asked him if he would like some tea to drink. The Father replied that he kissed his Highness' hands. As he rose to go, the emperor ordered him to be taken to the Chanayu—a small house where the most privileged go for recreation and to drink tea with the emperor. This house is well provided with gilded tables, vessels, sideboards, and braziers; and the cups and basins, and the rest of the service, are all of gold. There the emperor ordered a very fine banquet to be spread for him, and had wine carried to him. He again repeated the words above mentioned, two or three times, and then sat down. After a moment's conversation, he took leave of the Father.

Thirteen days after that, he sent the Father a *catana* or sword, which is held in high estimation there in his kingdom, because of its fineness and adornments; and a letter for the Governor.

This letter was written on a large sheet of gilt paper resembling damask, in letters of gold. This witness saw it, and took it in his hand, and had it read many times. In brief, it contained these words:

"I sent Quiemon, as he is a man of intelligence, and as he had given me a relation of that country, and the good treatment shown to my vassals there; but I do not desire silver, gold, or soldiers, or anything else, but only fast friendship with your nation, for I hold everything under my sway. In Coray [Korea] my captains have already taken the King prisoner, and are now near Lanquin, and about to seize China."

1 Ed. note: A city, then recently-built, east of Kyoto, at the bottom of Ise Bay.

I am sending you this sword now, in order that you may have some remembrance from me in that country. You shall have this written to your King, and shall send me his reply.

To the "lioccata" of Manila, Huye Çama." [that is to say, "the great captain"].

...

This witness declares that he knows that the Father embarked, after receiving many presents and supplies. The vessel on which he embarked was in poor repair, and the season the very depth of winter. The sea was in great turmoil, and the winds contrary. On this account he thinks that the Father perished at sea.

As to the person of the ambassador Faranda, he knows him to be a man of influence in Japan, who was recently created a lord by the emperor of that country. The emperor ordered him to come here in attendance on Father Fray Juan Cobo, as one who was held in high estimation. For this reason, this witness thinks that his coming is without any duplicity, or cause for suspicion—beyond a little vanity, to show that he is a lord, and one whom the emperor chooses for things as important as this. Therefore, this community has no grounds for fear of any wrong being done by that country; but should, on the contrary, esteem highly the friendship made with the said emperor; and as the latter is a friend so powerful and important, his ambassador should be served and entertained in the manner that seems most desirable to the Governor.

This witness asserts the above, by the oath he took, to be what he knows and what he has heard. He is 38 years old. He affixed his signature to the above.

Juan de Solis.

E2. The contents of the lost letter, according to other witnesses

Declaration of Antonio López.

...

Antonio declares that Juan Sami, a master of Chinese letters, who accompanied Father Fray Juan Cobo, read the letter given to this Faranda by the Japanese emperor. It contained injunctions to subdue the inhabitants of these islands, and oblige them to recognize him as lord. If the Spaniards should not do that promptly, he would come soon; and had it not been for the dangerous sea for half the distance, he would have come already.

Juan Sami, master of Chinese letters, declared that he accompanied Father Fray Juan Cobo to Japan. There the Father met Juan de Solis, a Spaniard, who was much persecuted by the Portuguese. This same master presented a petition to the Japanese king, by order of Father Fray Juan Cobo. This petition complained of the injuries that Juan de Solis had received from the Portuguese, who had stolen from him a quantity of gold, silver, and other property. He presented this petition to the king of Japan, on

the day when he met him. The latter accordingly ordered one of his captains to return all the stolen articles, but as yet only 500 pesos are paid.

Declaration of Francisco de Loadi de Oñate.

Francisco de Loadi de Oñate declares that he knows Juan de Solis, who is a captain of the King, our sovereign. This captain went, at the order of the Audiencia of Panama, to Macao, in order to purchase copper and other articles; but the Portuguese seized all his money and his vessel. They sold the ship very cheaply, and sent the crew as prisoners to Goa. From sheer pity, he entered his pulpit one day, and there complained of the injuries done to the captain—among others, maiming one of his arms.

After this the aforesaid Solis, in company with a Father of the Society [of Jesus], who was about to go to Japan as visitor, went to the said kingdom. Without the knowledge of the Father visitor, Solis, as soon as he arrived at Japan, presented [to the king] a rich gift, which according to various estimates cost 7,000 or 8,000 ducats. He also presented certain letters in the name of the King our sovereign, whereupon he was very kindly received by the Japanese king. The latter gave Solis a letter ordering the refunding of all that had been taken from him, with interest.

After this, Solis obtained permission to build a vessel, which was already completed, all but the stepping of the masts. The boatswain was found dead one morning, and the ship scuttled. Solis, after the Portuguese and Theatins had denied that they had done this, went to Meaco. When the king of Japan asked him why he had not gone, he told him what had happened; and recounted to him what the Father visitor had done. Thereupon, the King began to persecute the Theatin Fathers. The witness declares further that the said King gave the said Captain Solis a letter ordering that no Portuguese or any other person should dare or attempt to oppose him any further.

Declaration of Juan Sami.

Juan Sami declared that he saw and read a letter from the King of Japan to the Governor of these islands. Its substance was as follows:

"Formerly I was a man of little renown. Now all who live beneath the sky recognize me and are my vassals. I ordered the king of Core to render me homage. At his refusal, I sent my captain to war upon him, and seize his land even to the confines of Liauton [Liao-tung]. This Liauton is a land with many Chinese soldiers, near which resides the king of China. I have seized the fortress of Partho, which I have subdued, and it is very devoted to me, because I love the people of that fortress as fathers and mothers love their children. Those who recognize my authority I do not ill treat, but I send my captains to war upon whomever shall refuse to submit to me. I am writing this letter to thee, so that it may prove a token, a sign, and a reminder. Thou shalt write these things to the King of Castile quickly, so that he may be informed thereof. Do not delay, but write at once. I send thee that sword, which is called "quihocan"."