
Document 1519B

Final instructions given to Magellan by the King

Sources: Original ms., dated Barcelona, 8 May 1519, in AGI Seville: Papeles del Maluco, leg. 1, de 1519 a 1547. Published, in Spanish and in full, by Navarrete in his Colección de los viages, iv, pp. 130-152. An extract made by B&R I (pp. 256-259), is reproduced below.

Instructions which the King gave to Magallanes and to Falero for the voyage of discovery to the Molucca Islands

Summary

The instructions given to Magellan and Faleiro discuss more or less fully such points as the method and manner of navigation, e.g. information as to routes given to the other captains and pilots, method of signalling at night, and matters of procedures in case the ships became separated; the treatment of natives encountered, the treatment of other ships found trading in the spice regions "within our demarcation", such treatment being different if the ships are of Christians or of Moors; ransoms and exchange of prisoners; trade with the natives; division of prize money; re-provisioning the ships; distribution of rations; keeping of accounts; regulations regarding firearms; penalties for disobedience to the captain-generals; the taking of oaths; morals; discoveries; weights and measures used in trading; deaths of officers of the fleet; and cargoes.

Extract

Above all, the domains and demarcation of the King of Portugal must be respected. The exact locations of all lands must be recorded, and if these are inhabited they are to "try and ascertain if there is anything in that land that will

be to our interest.” The natives must be well treated, in order that food and water may be obtained.

When the land of spices is reached, “you shall make a treaty of peace or commerce with the king or lord of that land.” As high a valuation as possible is to be placed on the articles traded from the ships. The inspector-general and the accountant shall note everything in their books. Other ships found in the spice regions shall, if Christians, be warned not to trade further without permission, under penalty of seizure and confiscation of property; if Moors “not of the lands within our demarcation, you shall seize them in fair war”, and the gold, etc. found in their ships must be noted carefully in the books. Moors who may, by their rank, avail for ransom are to be well treated, but they may be sold as slaves. If Moors are found “who are from within our demarcation”, they must be well treated; and a treaty must be made, if possible, with their king or lord. If they do not desire peace, then the Spaniards may exercise a certain amount of cruelty against them to serve as a warning. Of the prize money or merchandise from the captured ships, certain percentages are to be given to all, these portions varying. The King’s share (one-fifth of the amount remaining, after deducting certain sums that go to the captain-generals, and the one-twentieth for the redemption of captives) is to be set apart for him. One-fifth of what remains shall be given the captain-generals. The remainder is to be divided into three parts “of which two parts are for us and the ships, and one for the crews”. Of the latter, ten parts are to be used for religious purposes.

Good treatment is to be accorded the natives in order that pleasant trade relations may be established. The physicians and surgeons are to take no money from the natives for medical services, not even from their enemies who are wounded in war. And the captain-generals must see that the men have no intercourse with the native women.¹

Entire freedom must be accorded every one to write what he pleases to Spain; and no letter must be seized, under penalties to be imposed by the captain-generals. They must guard against fire. **In case of the death of any of the crew, it is adviseable to get slaves to fill their places.²** Rations are to be given every two days, “and if it becomes necessary to shorten rations, they shall be shortened”. **Dissatisfaction as to the length of the voyage must not be expressed. The firearms are not to be discharged on any newly-found land “because the Indians fear this more than anything else”.** No weapons shall be sold, under penalty of loss of all property to the one so doing. Blasphemers, and card and dice players are not to be allowed to ship with the crew. The captain-generals have power to devise and execute punishments against disobedient men of their crews. Oath shall be taken before the captain-generals by all their crews to observe obedience and the King’s service. **If it should be necessary to**

1 Ed. note: See below for a complete translation of Articles 27 to 30 regarding the procedures regulating contacts with the natives.

2 Ed. note: This authorization may have led Magellan to take some Chamorro boys from Guam to Cebu.

seize water and provisions because of the hostility of the natives, it shall be done, but with as little scandal and show of force as possible.¹

Samples of all products must be brought from the lands discovered. "Ready-made clothes and other articles to give to the kings and other princes of these lands shall be carried." "And if the kings or lords of the land give any jewels or presents, they shall be ours, and the inspector-general or accountant shall place them in charge of the treasurer". No presents shall be given without permission of the officers of the fleet. Everything traded must be noted carefully and minutely in the books of the inspector-general and accountant. If the return cargo is spice, it must be obtained as clean as possible. The ships' cargoes must be traded first before any private business is attended to.

Full data must be recorded in the books regarding each member of the crew: his father and mother, whether he is single or married, etc., in order that his heirs may be known. Each person before embarking must have attended confession and communion. In case any officer dies, another is to be elected in his place, but one-half of all the pay, etc., that would fall to the said officer shall be given to his heirs, and the other half shall go to the one taking his place. Any Portuguese or other Christians found in the lands discovered must be treated well, in order to gain information from them. "If by any chance you should meet ships from Portugal within our limits, bid them quietly to leave the land, because in their own requirements given by our very dear and beloved uncle and brother, it is forbidden to them to enter or discover in the lands and limits belonging to us, and the same is forbidden to you by us." The cargoes must be given up by such ships, if not peacefully, then by means of force, provided that "you can seize it without much loss to yourself". A list is appended of the amount of freight that each one may take in the ships.

A copy of these instructions is to be given to Juan de Cartagena, the inspector-general.

This document was copied from his books by the Secretary Juan de Samano in 1524.

Translation of selected articles

27. You shall be careful, in the lands that you might discover and make a settlement in, when making contact or trading, to watch out how you go ashore, by placing continually forward one or two of those [Spanish] exiles whom you carry with you, the said persons are to go out with the person whom you carry as linguist, by taking along something to give to those ashore, because with gifts many times we have seen in the [West] Indies the gaining of goodwill of the natives of the land, more so than by the force of arms, by making them understand that we are not people who go and take anything of theirs against their will, without giving them something we bring. When trading and bartering your merchandise in exchange for those they have in their land, and when making peace and commerce treaties for the future: be continually on your guard, when

¹ Ed. note: See Article 46 fully translated below.

going ashore, go under guard with your weapons, and leave some people aboard the ships in case (God forbid) something might happen, and to lessen this risk do not stop sailing.¹

The procedure to make peace consists in seeking advice and agreeing among yourselves, then by making gifts, because they are the best ways to make them come with much kindness; still, beware you do not trust the natives [too much] because sometimes, on account of not going armed disasters happen. The main thing which we must warn you about is that, whatever the thing that you might barter with the Indians, you shall not cheat them in any way, and that you shall not break [the deal], and should anything happen, they should be the cause of it, even though it might require much work to come to an agreement. You shall not consent in any manner that any wrong or harm be done to them, so that fear will not cause them to get excited and rebel; rather, you shall punish those who do them harm. This way they will more easily seek friendship, and the knowledge of God, and of our holy Catholic faith, and [because] it is better to convert one hundred by this method than one thousand by another.

28. In the [lands] to be discovered you shall ensure that the people are treated in a manner to make them glad to deal with you, by making presents to the chiefs who govern the land. The main thing, which we hold to be much contrary to our service (and you are to order punished those who commit this infraction) is assaulting the native women. Above all, you shall never consent to have anyone touch a woman, because this is the main thing you must watch out for, the reason being that in all those parts the people, on account of this thing over and above all other, might rebel and do harm, and become less agreeable to making peace and trading ashore. Neither shall anything of whatever character be taken against their will.

29. In all the lands you might discover, try hard to get linguists to make contact in the other parts where you might go; you, and the others who go with you, shall treat them well, and dress them well. If, coming at one of those parts, you should find it convenient to let go some of them in order to make a verbal contact with the natives, you shall let them go and send them with clothes on, with a few presents, in order to be seen by the other natives and you shall display the merchandise that you carry with you, so that you shall be seen as traders and not people to take away anything from them by force. This is the procedure you shall follow in all the parts you might discover and settle to trade; and from Seville, an effort shall be made to provide two or three linguists in order for them to learn something from the others at the newly-found lands.

30. In the ports where water will have to be taken aboard, given that the lands are unknown, you shall have to be careful how to take it. The boats sent to get water should be continually on their guard; people should remain aboard the ships in case something might happen, and should it be inhabited land, you shall treat them with kindness, giving them continually something to be brought along, and trying to find out what there is in the land, and if you should think it advisable to leave there some of the exiles, in order for them, while you are proceeding with the voyage of discovery, to question the

¹ Ed. note: Which means that the ships should stay under sail, in the offing, while a party is ashore.

local people about what there is in the land, in order for you to learn upon your return what they have discovered and found out in the land, you may leave them, promising them a reward for the good news and a pardon for their crime, by discovering something that will be advantageous to the realm, and you have our power to grant such a pardon, the said power is granted to you as of now.

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46. Should it appear to you a good idea to go ashore at any part of the islands and lands to be discovered to find out what there is there, or to make contact with the Indians, or to take on water, or other things necessary to the said fleet, and the natives oppose it in some way, you should make some sign of peace, and [if] with all this they still forbid your going ashore, you shall go out against their will, although it might be prejudicial to the said Indians, but you shall order all your people to do it with the least damage possible, and once ashore you shall then make signs of peace and friendship, trying by all possible means to come to a peaceful agreement with them. In case necessity makes you do something other than what you wish, make the least scene as possible. If you cannot take the land without much damage, consider first that it is better not to take it rather than make a scene and do a lot damage to them and to those of the fleet. Therefore, we order you to seek the advice [of your officers] before doing so, and to think about the best means possible to bring them to make friends with you, by giving them gifts from what you shall carry in the said fleet as we have expressly ordered.¹

1 Ed. note: It is ironic that if Magellan had strictly adhered to the above guideline, he might not have left his bones on Mactan Island in the Philippines...