

CONQUEST OF MINDANAO

Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas (1519–1593), Governor of the Philippines (1590–1593)

Manila, 12 May 1591

His Majesty orders and charges me, by his royal instructions and decrees, as the most worthy and important thing in these islands to strive for the propagation of our holy faith among the natives herein, their conversion to the knowledge of the true God, and their reduction to the obedience of His holy church and of the King, our sovereign.

And to this end and object, His Majesty has given me commission to make the expeditions and pacifications that I think best for the service of God and his own, and likewise to give license and commission for making them. By reason thereof, he also commissions me to make covenants and agreements with explorers and pacifiers who are willing to bind and pledge themselves, at their own cost, to make such expeditions and pacifications.

Moreover, the island of Mindanao is so fertile and well-inhabited, and teeming with Indian settlements wherein to plant the faith, and of so great circumference—namely, three hundred leagues—and distant two hundred leagues from this island of Luzon; and is rich in gold mines and placers, and in wax, cinnamon, and other valuable drugs. And although the said island has been seen, discussed, and explored (and even in great part given in *repartimiento*), no effort has been made to enter and reduce it, nor has it been pacified or furnished with instruction or justice—quite to the contrary, being at the present time hostile and refusing obedience to His Majesty; and no tribute, or very little, is being collected.

And the assignment into *encomiendas* made there has been null and void, as being made contrary to His Majesty's ordinances contained in his instructions and articles on "New Discoveries," as the land must be first entered and entirely pacified, and its rulers and natives must be reduced to the obedience of His Majesty and given to understand the evangelical instruction.

Besides the above facts, by delaying the pacification of the said island greater wrongs, to the offense and displeasure of God and of His Majesty, are resulting daily. For I am informed that the king of that island has made all who were paying tribute to His Majesty tributary to himself by force of arms, and after putting many of them to death while doing it, so that now each Indian pays him one tae of gold.

I am also told that he destroyed and broke into pieces, with many insults, a cross that he found when told that it was adored by the Christians. And that in Mindanao, the capital and residence of the said king, are Bornean Indians, who teach and preach publicly the false doctrine of Mohammed and have mosques. Besides these, there are also people from Ternate—gunners, armorers, and powder-makers, all engaged in their trades—who at diverse times have killed many Spaniards when the latter were going to collect the tribute (once killing thirteen, and at other times four or five), without our being able to mete out punishment because of lack of troops.

By reason of the facts above recited, and because all of the said wrongs and troubles will cease with the said pacification, and when it is made, we are sure that the surrounding Kingdoms of Borneo, Jolo, Java, and other provinces will become obedient to His Majesty. Therefore, in order that the said island may be pacified, subdued, and settled, and the gospel preached to the natives; and that justice may be established among them, and they be taught to live in a civilized manner, and to recognize God and His holy law, I have tried to entrust the said pacification to a person of such character that he may be entrusted with it.

Now considering that the good qualities requisite for this, and which are demanded by section twenty-seven of "New Discoveries," are found in Esteban Rodríguez de Figueroa—that he is rich, powerful, possessed of many friends, popular with the soldiers of this country, and well-acquainted with the land, as being one of the first discoverers—and that he has served His Majesty loyally and faithfully, and offers of his own accord to make the said pacification at his own expense. Therefore, as I am confident that he will fulfill whatever he covenants and

contracts to do in His Majesty's service, I have resolved to entrust and charge to him the said pacification, in His Majesty's name. And if he, on his part, shall fulfill his offers, which accompany this writ, then I on my part will fulfill likewise what I promise as a reward for the said pacification.

Therefore, by this present, I empower and authorize said Captain Estevan Rodríguez de Figueroa to make the said pacification and settlement of the island of Mindanao, and at his own expense, under the following conditions and declarations:

As the first condition, the said Captain Estevan Rodríguez binds himself and promises to fulfill and observe as inviolate, first and foremost, the decrees and ordinances of His Majesty in the sections of "New Discoveries," and in each one of them, separately of which he will be given an authorized copy, so that he may exercise the equity and good method of proceeding, gently and without violence, which His Majesty has commanded to be observed and kept in the said pacification.

That said Captain Estevan Rodríguez binds himself and promises to pacify and colonize the said island of Mindanao at his own expense within three years—making one settlement on the river of Mindanao, and more if necessary, according to the condition of the land; and to maintain the island, thus pacified and colonized, for one year.

From that time the life-title of Governor of said island shall be given to said Estevan Rodríguez de Figueroa, and to one son or heir. And I shall have letters sent to His Majesty entreating him to show him favor by granting him the title of *adelantado* or of *mariscal* of the island, as may be his pleasure, in accordance with the orders of His Majesty in my instructions.

It is granted in His Majesty's name that when the said pacification and colonization is completed, he may allot the land and island of Mindanao into *encomiendas* as follows. First, the ports and capitals shall be allotted to His Majesty's royal crown. Having subtracted these, he may, from the remainder, allot one-third part to himself for the time mentioned in the said sections of "New Discoveries," and in whatever part he wishes. The other two-thirds remaining he may allot and apportion among the soldiers enrolled under his banners, and those who take part in the said pacification.

The said Captain Estevan Rodríguez de Figueroa said that he accepted the above covenant and agreement made as above-stated, and promised to abide by its provisions. To this he pledged himself and his property; and both the said Governor and Captain-General, Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, and the said Captain Estevan Rodríguez signed the agreement (written secretly by the said Governor), before me, the undersigned notary.