Epistola Christofori Colom ...de insulis Indie supra Gangem
Rome, April 1493.
(abridged)

A Letter addressed to the noble Lord Raphael Sanchez, Treasurer to their most invincible
Majesties, Ferdinand and Isabella, King and Queen of Spain, by Christopher Columbus, to whom
our age is greatly indebted, treating of the islands of India recently discovered beyond the
Ganges, to explore which he had been sent eight months before under the auspices and at the
expense of their said Majesties.

. . . Thirty-three days after my departure from Cadiz I reached the Indian sea, where I
discovered many islands, thickly peopled, of which I took possession without resistance in the
name of our most illustrious Monarch, by public proclamation and with unfurled banners. To
the first of these islands, which is called by the Indians Guanahani, I gave the name of the
blessed Saviour (San Salvador), relying upon whose protection I had reached this as well as the
other islands; to each of these I also gave a name, ordering that one should be called Santa
Maria de la Concepcion, another Fernandina, the third Isabella, the fourth Juana, and so with all
the rest respectively. . . .

. . . In that island also which I have before said we named Espanola, there are mountains of very
great size and beauty, vast plains, groves, and very fruitful fields, admirably adapted for tillage,
pasture, and habitation. The convenience and excellence of the harbors in this island, and the
abundance of the rivers, so indispensable to the health of man, surpass anything that would be
believed by one who had not seen it. The trees, herbage, and fruits of Espanola are very
different from those of Juana, and moreover it abounds in various kinds of spices, gold, and
other metals. . . .

. . . On my arrival at that sea, I had taken some Indians by force from the first island that I came
to, in order that they might learn our language, and communicate to us what they knew
respecting the country; which plan succeeded excellently, and was a great advantage to us, for
in a short time, either by gestures and signs, or by words, we were enabled to understand each
other. These men are still travelling with me, and although they have been with us now a long
time, they continue to entertain the idea that I have descended from heaven; and on our arrival
at any new place they published this, crying out immediately with a loud voice to the other
Indians, “Come, come and look upon beings of a celestial race”: upon which both women and
men, children and adults, young men and old, when they got rid of the fear they at first
entertained, would come out in throngs, crowding the roads to see us, some bringing food,
others drink, with astonishing affection and kindness. . . .

. . . Finally, to compress into few words the entire summary of my voyage and speedy return,
and of the advantages derivable therefrom, I promise, that with a little assistance afforded me
by our most invincible sovereigns, I will procure them as much gold as they need, as great a
quantity of spices, of cotton, and of mastic (which is only found in Chios), and as many men for
the service of the navy as their Majesties may require. I promise also rhubarb and other sorts of
drugs, which I am persuaded the men whom I have left in the aforesaid fortress have found
already and will continue to find; for I myself have tarried nowhere longer than I was compelled
to do by the winds, except in the city of Navidad, while I provided for the building of the
fortress, and took the necessary precautions for the perfect security of the men I left there.
Although all I have related may appear to be wonderful and unheard of, yet the results of my
voyage would have been more astonishing if I had had at my disposal such ships as I required.
But these great and marvellous results are not to be attributed to any merit of mine, but to the
holy Christian faith, and to the piety and religion of our Sovereigns; for that which the unaided
intellect of man could not compass, the spirit of God has granted to human exertions, for God is
wont to hear the prayers of his servants who love his precepts even to the performance of
apparent impossibilities. . . .

Such are the events which I have briefly described. Farewell.

Lisbon, the 14th of March.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS,

Admiral of the Fleet of the Ocean.