

## Spanish Arrival in the Philippines

**Guido De Lavezaris, royal Spanish commissioner in the Philippines,  
letter to Philip, King of Spain, 1573**

The Chinese have come here on trading expeditions, since our arrival, for we have always tried to treat them well. Therefore during the two years that we have spent on this island, they have come in greater numbers each year, and with more ships; and they come earlier than they used to, so that their trade is assured to us. They do not bring to sell the silks and beautiful things that they take to Malacca. They say that, if there were any one to buy them, they would bring all we wanted; and so, since trading with the Spaniards, they bring each year better and much richer wares. If merchants would come from Nueva España, they might enrich themselves, and increase the royal customs in these parts—both through trade and through the mines, the richness and number of which are well-known to us. Your Majesty knows how antagonistic the Portuguese are in everything here. When they can do us no harm in their own persons, they try to do so through others. Last year Chinese vessels came to this city to trade and told us how the Portuguese have asked them not to trade with us, because we were robbers and came to steal and commit other depredations, so that these people wonder not a little if this be true. As the treatment accorded to the Chinese neutralizes these reports, more vessels came this year than last, and each year more will come. I advise your Majesty of this, because it is better to have certain peace or open war with the Portuguese, and not to be uncertain, and not to have them trying to harm us at a distance. Every year we are disturbed by fears of their coming. This year I had news from Moro merchants, who came from the island of Borneo, that last year their king had collected a large fleet to descend upon us. After having embarked, he gave up for the time the voyage because of the severe storms; but gave out that he would return this year and bring the Portuguese with him. I exerted myself to get together the Spaniards, who were pacifying these islands and had the island of Borneo reconnoitered in two parts. I instructed them that if they could get any of the Moors from Borneo, they should bring them, in order to get at the truth; and so they did. The people whom I sent for this purpose arrived near Borneo, and because they did not dare bring small boats near the island itself, they halted about eight leagues from it, and captured six Moors. By these I was informed that the coming of the king of Borneo was uncertain, and that he lives in great privacy and prudence, keeping himself informed about us.

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