



Edited by Christina H. Lee and Ricardo Padrón

The Spanish Pacific, 1521-1815

A Reader of Primary Sources

Amsterdam
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The Spanish Pacific, 1521–1815

Connected Histories in the Early Modern World

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The publication of this book is made possible by a grant from Princeton University.

Cover illustrations: Guanyin with child (public domain) / Spanish coin suspended on Ocean (public domain) / Map of the “Yndias de Occidente” (Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library).

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 978 94 6372 064 9

e-ISBN 978 90 4855 227 6

DOI 10.5117/9789463720649

NUR 685

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Abbreviations

AGI	Archivo General de Indias
AGN	Archivo General de la Nación
AUST	Archives of the University of Santo Tomas
UST	University of Santo Tomas

Acknowledgements

We are most indebted to our contributors, all of whom were present at the workshop in Princeton in April of 2018, where we met to dialogue about what we had identified as an emerging field. We agreed in that meeting that *The Spanish Pacific* described the spaces and themes that had become subjects of our investigations. Vicente Rafael should be credited for recognizing the need for a reader of primary sources of this nature. John Blanco was the scholar who conceptually set the tone for this reader to be one that speaks against the grain. We are also grateful to the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, its Program in Latin American Studies, and its Department of Spanish and Portuguese for co-sponsoring our crucial event and, especially, to Nikki Woolward for her instrumental role in the process. We thank the Princeton University Committee on Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences for funding editorial assistance, provided by Joann Messina and Yangyou Fang. We are grateful to our copy-editor at AUP, James Thomas, for his meticulous and careful reading of the final version of this manuscript. Finally, we would like to recognize Julia Schleck, the co-editor of the *Connected Histories* series, for supporting and encouraging the vision for this volume; and Erika Gaffney, the Senior Commissioning Editor of Early Modern Studies at AUP, who guided us at every step in the production of this book with the utmost professionalism.

Introduction

Christina H. Lee and Ricardo Padrón

The “Spanish Pacific” designates the space Spain colonized or aspired to rule in Asia between 1521, the year Ferdinand Magellan reached the East by sailing west, and 1815, the year when the annual galleon that linked Mexico to the Philippines stopped operating. The Spanish Pacific encompasses the area in Asia that Spanish officials willfully called “the Indies of the West,” in order to clarify that they were not “the Indies of the East,” and, therefore, not Portuguese. It includes the Philippines and the Marianas—territories ruled by the Spanish Crown—but also parts of China, Japan, and other parts of Asia that Spanish officials and missionaries imagined as extensions of their American colonies (Fig. I.1).

The study of the early modern Spanish Pacific was once the exclusive purview of Philippine studies, the history of exploration, and economic history, but over the course of the past few decades, it has attracted interest from Latin American studies, Sinology, and Hispanic studies, as well as other fields. This reader is meant to support this expansion of interest, by providing a varied collection of primary sources, translated into English, that can be incorporated into existing course syllabi in a variety of disciplines, at the graduate and undergraduate level. It is the collective work of a group of scholars in Spanish Pacific studies who participated in an interdisciplinary symposium held at Princeton University in April of 2018. Each participant was asked to pick a text that illuminated a vital area of contemporary research, to transcribe, edit, and translate it, and to provide a general introduction for his or her selection. As a result, the collection provides a snapshot of the field as understood by the participants in the symposium, rather than a documentary history of the Spanish Pacific. It leaves many bases uncovered, but only so that it can push against the boundaries of the field as it has been conventionally understood.

This introduction provides an overview of Spanish Pacific studies as the editors of this volume understand it, and situates *The Spanish Pacific* reader within this emerging field.



Figure I.1. Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, *Descripción de las Indias del Poniente*. Rare Books, Firestone Library, Princeton University.

The boundaries to which we refer were established long ago, as far as English-language scholarship is concerned, by a trio of scholarly monuments dealing with the neglected history of the Philippines under Spain. All three were produced before 1960 and all three are still cited today. The first, and the one most relevant to this text as a collection of primary source material, is the fifty-five volume collection of documents about the history of the Philippines under Spain constructed by Emma Blair and James Robertson, *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898*, and published between 1903 and 1909. Widely available in both print and digital form, Blair and Robertson's collection has informed the work of scholars interested in the colonial history of the Philippines for over a century. Nevertheless, the collection is highly problematic and should only be used with extreme caution. The translations are often poor and based on faulty transcriptions of the Spanish-language originals, many of which are available in print in more reliable editions. More importantly, the collection as a whole is very much a product of its times. It was produced when the United States had seized control of the Philippines from Spain, and Americans were fretting about how to rule an archipelago inhabited by what they considered to be inferior racial minorities. As Gloria Cano has argued, the pattern of inclusions and exclusions

that mark the selection of the documents was designed to present Spanish rule as despotic and fanatical and, thereby, support the official story that the rule of the United States was fundamentally humanitarian in nature, designed to enlighten a people left benighted by Catholic Spain.¹ No room is given to subaltern voices.

Just as Blair and Robertson became the most famous and most cited collection of primary source materials, so James Phelan's 1959 monograph, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565–1700*, became the standard one-volume account of the Spanish conquest and colonization of the Philippine Islands. It is still cited today as the standard account of the subject, not necessarily because of its continued usefulness, but because nothing has effectively emerged to replace it, at least not in English. Its title encapsulates its principal theoretical shortcomings. Phelan treats the history of the Philippines as an encounter between two groups, Spaniards and Filipinos, assigning agency to the first and treating the actions of the second as "responses." Those responses are the same that a Latin Americanist like Phelan would have identified in the colonial history of Spanish America, various forms of social, political, and cultural syncretism or *mestizaje*, and isolated pockets of outright resistance, leaving relatively little room for indigenous agency as contemporary Latin American colonial studies has come to understand it. The enormous role played by China as a market for the American silver that funneled through Manila, as a threat to the continued existence of the Spanish colony, and as the home of a group of immigrants whose significance to the operation of the colony cannot be underestimated, gets short shrift, as do other aspects of the enmeshment of the Philippines in a broad political, cultural, and economic geography.

During the decades between the publication of Blair and Robertson's volumes and of Phelan's monograph, William Schurz published the third leg of our tripod, *The Manila Galleon* (1939). This colorful and highly readable volume tells the story of the galleon trade that flourished between Manila and Acapulco from roughly 1570 until 1815, a trade involving the exchange of American silver for Asian luxury goods, primarily Chinese silk. Blair and Robertson had certainly not neglected the galleons, and neither would Phelan, in his turn, but it was Schurz who converted them into an object of analysis in their own right. Like the other two legs of the tripod, the Schurz volume suffers from numerous limitations, especially when viewed from the perspective of the twenty-first century. Schurz, for example,

1 Cano, "Evidence for the Deliberate Distortion"; see also Gloria Cano, "Blair and Robertson's *The Philippine Islands*."

interprets encounters across cultures through a framework informed by highly problematic notions of race and nation, and gives short shrift to the role of Filipinos in the construction and navigation of the galleons, beyond their brute labor.² Nevertheless, it reframes the Spanish Philippines and their historical significance in ways that have proven to be quite influential. In Schurz's book, the Philippines are not Blair and Robertson's forgotten outpost of a despotic empire, or Phelan's curious appendix to Spanish America, but the nerve center of a thriving transoceanic exchange linking America to Asia by way of Manila, and the focal point of global encounters.

It is Schurz's perspective, if not his particular ideas or approach, that animates contemporary Spanish Pacific studies. During the 1980s and 90s, scholars working in Australia and Hawaii began to place the history of the Spanish Philippines within the larger context of the construction of Pacific space and the emergence of globalization. The historian Oskar Spate produced a three-volume history of the Pacific since the initial European encounters that remains useful today. The first of these volumes focuses primarily on Spain's sixteenth-century experience.³ Yet it is the work of the latter group of scholars, the ones interested in the role played by the Manila galleons in the history of globalization, that has had the greatest impact. These scholars, primarily economic historians, brought our attention to the centrality of India and China in the early modern global economy, upending established notions about the drivers behind the emergence of capitalism previously advanced by Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, and others.⁴ Within this framework, the Philippines were no longer peripheral, but surprisingly central. They were one of the gateways through which the upstart powers of the Atlantic accessed the center of the world economy, Ming China.

The work of Dennis Flynn and Arturo Giráldez was particularly prominent in the recent expansion of interest in the Spanish Pacific. Their studies of the flow of silver from America to Asia, and their insistence on the importance of this flow to the development of early modern globalization, inspired art historians to scrutinize the flow of luxury goods in the other direction, assessing the impact of Chinese silk, Philippine ivories, Japanese screens, and the like on the material culture of Spanish America.⁵ Spanish American

2 Schurz, *Manila Galleon*, 83, 129, 197, 289.

3 Spate, *Spanish Lake*; Spate, *Monopolists and Freebooters*; Spate, *Paradise Found and Lost*; Flynn et al., *Global Connections and Monetary History*; Flynn and Giráldez, *China and the Birth of Globalization*.

4 See Frank, *Reorient*.

5 For a survey of this scholarship, see Leibsohn and Priyadarshini, "Transpacific"; the essays in Pierce and Otsuka, *Asia and Spanish America*, are particularly useful.

colonial art, which had once been dismissed as derivative of metropolitan models, now appeared to sit at the vanguard of emerging aesthetic trends, embracing and even imitating all sorts of Asian art long before it became all the rage in Europe. Historians in other fields, meanwhile, asked questions about other types of exchanges, including foodstuffs, slaves, and even music, while scholars in literary and cultural studies began to analyze the neglected corpus of early modern Spanish writing about the Philippines, the Pacific, and East and Southeast Asia, not as historical documents, but as instances of early modern ethnography and of colonial discourse.⁶ It is this body of scholarship, produced primarily during the last thirty years, that constitutes early modern Spanish Pacific studies.

Given the vital importance of the Philippine Islands to everything the Spanish did or hoped to do in the Pacific Rim and Basin, the field of Spanish Pacific studies inevitably concerns itself with the colonial Philippines, but not with the archipelago alone or in isolation. It treats the Philippines as a contact zone among actors of various origins and ethnicities, all with varying levels of agency. Spaniards and Filipinos feature prominently, but the former is understood to be only one among various groups seeking hegemony over the islands, while the latter is understood in and through their particular linguistic and ethnic groupings. The Spanish colonial project is seen to emerge from engagement with the local population, but also with the Chinese and the Japanese as crucial immigrant populations, foreign commercial partners, and potential external threats. In this way, the Philippine contact zone becomes the nexus that connects the histories of the islands themselves, China, and Japan.⁷

That web of connections, moreover, extends farther afield to the rest of Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean Basin, the Americas, and the Atlantic world. Spanish Pacific studies thus operates on a variety of geographical scales, from the local scene where wide-ranging forces come together to create colonial settings, to the regional and global spaces needed to understand the migrations, long-range commodity exchanges, and cultural transfers involved in Spain's attempt to extend its empire across the South Sea. It requires attention to such matters as Spain's ongoing rivalry with Islam, particularly in Southeast Asia, as well as its competition with the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English for global hegemony. It is inseparable

6 See, for example, Mazumdar, "Impact of New World Crops"; Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint*; Ellis, *They Need Nothing*; Lee, *Western Visions of the Far East in a Transpacific Age*; Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico*.

7 Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*; Tremml-Werner, *Spain, China, and Japan in Manila*.

from the history of late Ming and early Qing China, the economic and political elephant in the room, yet it involves connecting the history of East and Southeast Asia to distant phenomena of all kinds, like the dynamics of silver production and silk consumption in Spain, Spanish America, and elsewhere. It involves probing the cultural imaginaries of Europeans and Asians as they compete, overlap, and change in tandem with developments on the ground.

It should become clear from these brief remarks that while the name of the field, “Spanish Pacific studies,” alludes to a particular physical geography, be it the Pacific Ocean, Rim, or Basin, and identifies that space as “Spanish,” the space that the field actually constructs and scrutinizes is not precisely physical and certainly not natural. Neither was it ever the “Spanish Lake” that some have made it out to be. Spanish Pacific studies begins by recognizing that Spain’s presence in the Pacific was always slim, tenuous, and contested. The Spanish Philippines lived under the constant fear of aggression from the Japanese to the north, the Chinese to the west, and the Muslims to the south. Attempts by Spain to become the most influential European power in transpacific Asia struggled against the challenges posed by the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English. The Spanish Pacific, in other words, was nothing like the Spanish Atlantic. While Spain cast a net over the Atlantic that extended deep into the Americas, producing dramatic changes of all kinds, it cast only a slender line across the Pacific, a single galleon route, whose primary purpose was to keep its lonely colonial outpost on the far side of the ocean from falling into the hands of its more powerful neighbors. The exchanges that took place along that line, however, helped produce a social, cultural, and political space whose frontiers were ragged and whose borders were malleable, but that nevertheless extended far beyond the territories effectively controlled by Spain.

The documents in this collection reflect these assumptions and priorities. They are arranged chronologically and range in date from 1536, thirty years before the establishment of the Spanish Philippines, to 1813, the twilight of the galleon trade. In this way, they span the entire history of the Spanish Pacific from one of Spain’s first encounters with insular Southeast Asia to the early nineteenth century, when the loss of Spain’s American viceroyalties fundamentally altered its relationship with its sole Asian colony. Nevertheless, they do not constitute a documentary history of the Spanish Pacific, something far beyond the scope of a single volume. There are countless issues, events, and historical figures that are indispensable for a full understanding of the Spanish Pacific that are not even mentioned here. Many of those omissions are accidental,

the result of the admittedly arbitrary process by which this particular collection was brought together, but at the heart of that arbitrariness lies a deliberate choice. The editors decided not to begin with a list of obligatory topics or texts that had to be represented in order to cover all the bases, so to speak, in an attempt to avoid the otherwise inevitable influence of existing historical paradigms, particularly those established by Blair and Robertson.

The result is a collection free of certain topics that appear in scholarship on the colonial Philippines and the Spanish Pacific with oppressive regularity, but which are very well represented in existing scholarship. The most salient example is the Magellan expedition, which is often taken as a point of departure for the history of the Philippines. Rather than include excerpts from Antonio Pigafetta's chronicle of the first circumnavigation of the Earth, or from Maximilianus Translyvanus's influential letter about the expedition, we are happy to offer excerpts from an account of the follow-up voyage by García Jofre de Loaysa, previously unavailable in English. We are also pleased that Pigafetta was not alone among the obvious canonical voices that our symposium participants could have brought to the table, but did not. Noticeably absent are almost all of the major Spanish chroniclers of Philippine history who take up so many pages in Blair and Robertson, authors like Antonio de Morga, Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola, and Gaspar de San Agustín, whose work is available in numerous editions, both in Spanish and English. Instead, we feature Francisco de Combés and his fascinating seventeenth-century chronicle of Spain's contentious relationship with the Muslim population of Mindanao and Jolo, which has never been translated in full.

Most of the texts included here favor scenes of encounter and acts of translation, both physical and cultural, and they often provide glimpses of subaltern subjectivities. Collectively, they construct the Spanish Philippines as a colonial contact zone, as a nexus of transpacific trade, as a focus of imperial rivalry, and as a node in the networks of early modern globalization. They vary widely in genre, encompassing official correspondence and travel narrative, excerpts from printed histories, a royal decree, a will, a court case, a constitution, poetry, a historical novel, a confessional manual, and a map. Most of them use Spanish as the principal language, although Tagalog, Visayan, Chinese, and Latin are also represented, as is the native script of the Philippine Islands, *baybayin*. In this way, they attest to the multicultural and multilinguistic nature of life in the Spanish Pacific. The creators of these documents include ecclesiastics, would-be conquistadors, government officials, a native Filipino Latinist, and a

disgraced Jesuit turned secular intellectual. Most of them were created in the Philippine Islands, although some are from New Spain, Peru, and metropolitan Spain, and speak of how far the Spanish Pacific could be thought to extend. Most have never been published before, at least not in English.

Although the documents do not tell a continuous narrative, they can be grouped thematically in a variety of ways. Religion features prominently in the documents set out in Chapters 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 15, which shed light on the complex negotiations that were characteristic of religious life in the colonial Philippines. They involve Christian missionaries, officials of the Inquisition, and local populations of various kinds, including Sangleys, Tagalog speakers, Visayan speakers, a Moluccan Muslim, and *mestiza* women. Most of these documents shed light on local settings and events, but one (in Chapter 3) brings a global imaginary to bear on the work of conversion, while another (in Chapter 12) explicitly involves transpacific displacement, connecting Manila to Mexico. The spatial practices of Spanish colonialism emerge as prominent themes in documents exhibited in Chapters 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11, covering such themes as the regulation of the galleon trade, the slave trade, the problems of governing the Philippines from far-off New Spain, the attempt to organize Filipinos into European-style towns, debates over landownership, and the frustrated effort to exert power over Muslim Mindanao. The physical violence of colonialism is a theme in a number of documents, particularly those in Chapters 2 and 9, while others, particularly the second document in Chapter 13, deal with the symbolic and even psychological violence of religious conversion. Spain's rivalries with other empires emerge as a theme most prominently in documents brought to light in Chapters 2, 10, and 14. The document in Chapter 2 tells us something about how one Spanish speaker imagined transpacific space from his perspective in Manila, while the document in Chapter 10 allows us to glimpse how another Spanish speaker viewed it from Mexico City. The document in Chapter 8 reveals a household in Lima composed of a mix of people from China, the Philippines, Eastern India, and Africa, all drawn together by transpacific migration and the slave trade. The documents in Chapters 5 and 12 offer windows into the social life of Manila, the first emphasizing interethnic relations with the resident Chinese, and the second, the life of women. Of course, there are other themes that could be pointed out, and other groupings that would emerge from selecting them. We invite our readers to delve into the collection and discover for themselves what is of most interest.

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