

# The Governor's Blindness: Francisco Combés, SJ, and His *Relación de las Islas Filipinas* (ca. 1654)

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**Abstract:** The objective of this paper is twofold. First, to underline the fact that the *Relación de las Islas Filipinas* (ca. 1654) responded to the need to provide “entera notiçia de las cosas” to the new governor of the Philippines, Don Sabiniano Manrique de Lara, to promote good government. And second, to demonstrate how this report was drawn up to convince the new governor to fight against Muslim sultanates as a way to protect the Lutaos and Suban natives, thereby spreading the Catholic faith in the southern islands of Mindanao and Sulu. Placing it into Manila’s troubled relationship with the Muslim population, Francisco Combés’ *Relación* was a minor but no less important work. It was a complete report – *entera relación* - which used witness-based (autoptic) knowledge and empirical practices, with imperialist biases. Nonetheless, this new knowledge was not an imposition of hegemonic cultural models but the result of cultural exchanges across Muslim, Christian, and native cultures.

**Keywords:** Combés, Mindanao, 17th century, Jesuits, Philippines

## Introduction

In the last years, historians and literary critics (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2014, 2018a, 2018b, 2020; Mojarro, 2016, 2021; Coello, 2019a; 2019b) have paid attention to the religious chronicles of the Philippines not only as historical materials but also as forms of (anti-Islamic) rhetoric, Catholic propaganda or

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even literature, as well as histories of what Potet has called “religious monarchocracy.”<sup>1</sup> In this article, I focus on the role of Jesuit missionaries and ambassadors in gathering information about “cultural borders” of the early modern colonial Philippines, using witness-based (autoptic) knowledge and empirical practices. This new knowledge was not simply an imposition of hegemonic cultural models but the result of cultural exchanges across Muslim, Christian, and native cultures. The *Relación de las Islas Filipinas* (ca. 1654), by Jesuit Father Juan Francisco Combés (1620-65), clearly shows an effective global network for producing and disseminating missionary knowledge in Spanish East Indies, forming part of what has been called a “topography of Jesuit knowledge.”<sup>2</sup> As Federico Palomo pointed out, writing (and printing) reports became another way of carrying out the mission, of perpetuating it, and also of expanding it in written form.<sup>3</sup> The very structure of Combés’ narrative proceeded from the great chain of being (*scala naturae*), that is, from God’s most simple to the most perfect creation. Following this basic ordering principle, the *Relación* dealt with climate, then plants, and finally peoples of the Philippines.

Following this Scholastic tradition, the same organizing principle was applied to each part of the text: in the first one Combés began with first herbs, then fruits of the land, and finally natural and mineral wealth. The *Relación* is composed of four chapters (or sections) that embrace the natural conditions of the islands, covering such topics as climate, fruits, vegetables, herbs, and riches of the land. Often he looked for points of reference - that is, European ones - to establish natural taxonomies in themselves, which allowed him for comparing and translating native knowledge, in an equivalent way (“the mabolo resembles the apple;” “the guayava reminds me with great intensity at pears;” “the papaya is the earth’s melon;” “the durion is like a large melon;” “the balono is the size and color of a quince”). Based on his experience-based knowledge about the Philippines’ natural and human societies, Combés strove to avoid producing mismatches in the local forms of enunciation and classification.

Some scholars have argued that early modern representations of the Indies, which shaped European cultural encounters with the exotic animals, plants, and

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Paul G. Potet, *Seventeenth-Century Events at Liliw* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu Press, Inc, 2016), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Steven J. Harris, SJ, “Mapping Jesuit Science: The Role of Travel in the Geography of Knowledge,” in *The Jesuits. Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, Vol. I, eds. John W. O’Malley, SJ, et alri (Toronto & Buffalo & London, Toronto UP, [1999] 2000), 214.

<sup>3</sup> Federico Palomo, “Corregir letras para unir espíritus. Los jesuitas y las cartas edificantes en el Portugal del siglo XVI,” *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna. Anejos*, Vol. IV (2005): 57-81; F. Palomo, “Cultura religiosa, comunicación y escritura en el mundo ibérico de la Edad Moderna,” in *De la tierra al cielo. Líneas recientes de investigación en Historia Moderna*, coord. Eliseo Serrano (Zaragoza, Institución “Fernando el Católico,” CSIC, 2013), 70.

natives, must be understood as a colonial archive but also as a form of “translation:” from one language to another, from one place to the other, from a lived experience to a written experience.<sup>4</sup> Exoticism was not the main concern of Combés’ empirical and rational methodology of collecting information. More than an “otherness” to be discovered and colonized, Combés’ main goal was to open the eyes of the Governor Don Sabiniano Manrique de Lara (1653-63), the main recipient of the short report or narration. As representatives of the Spanish monarchy, the viceroys and governors, were intelligent, but blind, and only could “see” through the eyes of those servants who were able to describe the world.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the experienced missionary Francisco Combés made the natural and human world of the Philippines, and particularly Mindanao’s, comprehensible to the newly appointed governor, prescribing strategies of managing and exploiting the islands.

The second part, composed of three chapters, deals with the native population, with special emphasis on the peculiarities of religion, customs, and traditions. Combés tried to establish genealogical, “racial,” and religious taxonomies, in the hope that these natives would adopt Christian customs. Some chapters were integrated into the first book of the *Historia de Mindanao, Joló y sus adyacentes. Progressos de la religion, y armas catolicas* (Madrid, 1667), a posthumous work on the natural and moral history of the Southern Philippines.<sup>6</sup> In particular, the second one, entitled “Sects and Superstitions,” supported essentially the same arguments about the “atheism” of the Philippine Muslims - better known as “Moors” - as his *magnus opus*.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, Combés followed quite closely the Jesuit models of theological humanism. In his influential *Procuranda Indorum Salute* (Seville, 1588), Father José de Acosta (1540-1600)’s reflections represented the spearhead of a theological-moral discourse that served to strengthen the colonial order in America and the Philippines. In his no less influential *Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias* (Seville, 1590), Acosta carried out a novel categorization and systematization of the New World into a

<sup>4</sup> Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology in the Reinassance: South India through European Eyes, 1250-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ralph Bauer and Jaime Marroquín Arredondo, “Introduction: An Age of Translation,” in *Translating Nature: Cross-Cultural Histories of Early Modern Science*, eds. Jaime Marroquín Arredondo and Ralph Bauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 1-23.

<sup>5</sup> Arndt Brendecke, *Imperio e información. Funciones del saber en el dominio colonial español* (Madrid/Frankfurt: Iberoamericana, 2012), 82-102.

<sup>6</sup> Ana Ma. Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Francisco de Combés’s *History of Mindanao and Jolo* (1667),” in *The Spanish Pacific, 1521-1815. A Reader of Primary Sources*, eds. Christina H. Lee and Ricardo Padrón (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 141-156.

<sup>7</sup> As Rodríguez-Rodríguez points out, “Combés oscilará continuamente entre estas dos posiciones, infravalorando al Islam y su implantación en Filipinas, pero presentándolo simultáneamente como el principal obstáculo para la cristianización de los indígenas y el control español del territorio” (Ana Ma. Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Retorno a Zamboanga: estrategias imperiales ante el Islam en las islas Filipinas,” *eHumanista* 40 (2018a): 381-382).

natural and moral order belonging to human culture. His intellectual consistency articulated the discursive parameters necessary to establish the conceptual limits of the “other-barbarian.”

The third part, composed of eleven chapters, is the most extensive in Combés’ *Relación*. In this concluding part, he reviewed the Spanish work in the Philippine islands from the arrival of the first conquerors in Manila to the foundation of the Zamboanga presidio, confirming his interest in political history in the line of the Spanish chroniclers of the 15th century, in particular Hernando del Pulgar (*Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, 1482-93)<sup>8</sup> and Andrés Bernaldez (*Memorias del Reinado de los Reyes Católicos don Fernando y doña Isabel*, 1513),<sup>9</sup> who inaugurated a providentialist vision of the Spanish reconquest against the Islamic presence in the Iberian Peninsula (15th century). This was an interpretation with messianic and imperialist overtones, which influenced the conviction and moral strength of Father Combés, who believed in a providentialist interpretation of the role of the Society of Jesus in the evangelization of America and the Philippines.<sup>10</sup>

### **Francisco Combés and the Muslim Threat**

The arrival of Father Francisco Combés in the Philippines took place in a context of external threats.<sup>11</sup> He was born on October 5, 1620 in Zaragoza, Spain. At the age of twelve he entered the Jesuits at the school of Tarragona as a novice, and after six years of studies, he asked to be part of the expedition led by the Procurators Diego de Bobadilla (1590-1648) and Simone Cotta (1590-1649)<sup>12</sup> that was heading for the Philippines (1642). By the time he arrived in Manila on August 6, 1643,<sup>13</sup> the Society of Jesus was already well established in the Philippines, having been there for some sixty years. Jesuit missions were established in Antipolo and in the relatively nearby province of Cavite. At the same time, they set up in the Tigbauan mission in the Western Visayan island of Panay (in today’s Iloilo province), as well as in the islands of Samar, Leyte, and Bohol in the central and eastern Visayan Islands.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Hernando del Pulgar, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*. Edited by Juan de Mata Carriazo y Arroquia (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1943).

<sup>9</sup> Andrés Bernaldez, *Memorias del Reinado de los Reyes Católico*. Edited by Manuel Gómez-Moreno y Juan de Mata Carriazo y Arroquia (Madrid: RAH, 1962).

<sup>10</sup> Alexandre Coello, Javier Burrieza y Doris Moreno, “Introducción,” in *Jesuitas e imperios de ultramar (siglos XV-XX)*, eds. A. Coello, J. Burrieza and D. Moreno (Madrid: Sílex, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Noël Sánchez, “A Prismatic Glance at One Century of Threats on the Philippine Colony,” in *The Representation of External Threats. From the Middle Ages to the Modern World*, eds. Eberhard Crailsheim and M<sup>a</sup> Dolores Elizalde (Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2019), 343-65.

<sup>12</sup> Horacio de la Costa, SJ, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989), 611.

<sup>13</sup> ARSI, Philip. 04, fol. 18<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> De la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines (1581-1768)*, 136-171; Pascale Girard, Jean-Claude

For those forty-one young novices and young Fathers who integrated the 1642 expedition, the objective was to continue in the missionary spirit of the Navarrese Francisco Javier (1506-1552) and the Italian Jesuits Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) over the territories of China and Japan,<sup>15</sup> and more specifically, over the southern islands of the Philippines.<sup>16</sup> In 1645, after completing his theological studies at the college in Manila and being ordained a priest at the church of San Pedro and Pablo Viejo in the town of San Pedro Makati, Combés was sent to the strategic points of Mindanao and the Bisayas under the direct orders of Father Alejandro López (1604-1655).<sup>17</sup> First, he was assigned to the presidio of Zamboanga. His ability to learn languages enabled him to work with fellow Jesuit, Father López, as a missionary, ambassador, and translator.<sup>18</sup>

From Rome it was considered urgent to strengthen the presence and action of the Catholic Church in Asia in the face of the advance of the “heretical enemies” (Protestants, Calvinists) of the doctrine. However, the state of “continuous harassment” of Spanish possessions in the Pacific marked the decline of the island’s maritime forces in the Philippines.<sup>19</sup> The shortage of soldiers, supplies, and ships, which made the arrival of assistance impossible, forced Governor Don Diego Fajardo Chacón (1644-53) to reduce the military campaigns of his predecessor and to take diplomatic actions. In this sense, the intervention of the Jesuits as ambassadors and mediators played an indispensable role in the resolution of the conflicts with the Islamic sultanates of Mindanao and Sulu [in Spanish sources, Joló].<sup>20</sup>

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Laborie, Hervé Pennec and Jean-Paul Zúñiga, “Frailes mozos y de pocas letras? Quatre Ordres Religieux (Augustins, Dominicains, Franciscains, Jésuites) aux Philippines entre 1572 et 1605,” in *Missions Religieuses Modernes. “Notre Lieu est le Monde,”* eds. Pierre-Antoine Fabre & Bernard Vincent (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2007), 144.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew C. Ross, “Alessandro Valignano: The Jesuits and Culture in the East,” in *The Jesuits. Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, Vol. I, eds. John W. O’Malley, SJ, et altri (Toronto & Buffalo & London: Toronto UP, 2000), 336-351.

<sup>16</sup> “Petición de Diego de Bobadilla para que se confirmen las doctrinas de Mindanao (1640)” (AGI, Filipinas 80, N. 215).

<sup>17</sup> Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, “Políticas geo-estratégicas y misionales en el sur de Filipinas: el caso de Mindanao y Joló (siglo XVIII),” *Revista de Indias*, 79:277 (2019a): 729-63. See also Ana Ma. Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Francisco Combés’s History of Mindanao and Jolo (1667),” in *The Spanish Pacific, 1521-1815. A Reader of Primary Sources*, eds. Christina H. Lee and Ricardo Padrón (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 142.

<sup>18</sup> ARSI, Philipp. 04, fol. 20<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Oswalt Sales Colín, “Apuntes para el estudio de la presencia ‘holandesa’ en la Nueva España: una perspectiva mexicano-philipina, 1600-1650,” in *Memorias e historias compartidas. Intercambios culturales, relaciones comerciales y diplomática entre México y los Países Bajos, siglos XVI-XX*, eds. Laura Pérez Rosales and Arjen van der Sluis (México: Iberoamericana, 2009), 166-67; Sales Colín, “Negritud y esclavitud aeta: cooperación en el fortalecimiento hispano en Filipinas, 1565-1650,” in *Relaciones Intercoloniales. Nueva España y Filipinas*, ed. Jaime Olveda (Zapopan, Jalisco: El Colegio de Jalisco, 2017), 161.

<sup>20</sup> Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Retorno a Zamboanga...,” 378; Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Francisco de

Indeed, on June 24, 1645, Governor Fajardo sent the governor of Zamboanga, Don Francisco de Atienza, along with Father López, who had been the rector of the residence since 1639, to sign a peace treaty with Muhammad Dipatwān Qudrāt (or Kudarat, better known in Spanish sources as Cachil Corralat, 1581-1671), in central Mindanao.<sup>21</sup> This treaty proved to be very advantageous to the Spanish. First, it authorized Jesuit missionaries to settle in Mindanao to preach the gospel, allowing them to build a residence and church in Simuay, where the court of Kudarat was located, which would eventually facilitate not only evangelization but also the reestablishment of trade relations.<sup>22</sup> And secondly, to prevent the capture of Spanish galleons by the Dutch, Governor Fajardo ordered them to unload at Caraga, in the northeastern part of Mindanao, where the Spanish maintained a small fort, so a peace treaty with Kudarat would reduce the Malayo-Mahometan attacks.<sup>23</sup>

It was clear then, that the constitution of a political space in the southern territories depended on the Spanish capacity to be on good terms with the so-called “Moors.” However, establishing diplomatic relations with the Sultan of Sulu was much more complicated than in Mindanao. On June 27, 1645, two Dutch warships under the command of Captain Lucas Albertsz were stationed off the island of Sulu to intimidate the Spanish.<sup>24</sup> Immediately, Prince Salicala (or Salikula) went to Batavia to solicit the support of the United Provinces of the Netherlands “to shake off the violent rule of Spain.” The Dutch came to the prince’s aid, but were defeated.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the Spanish decided to abandon their military post in Sulu and sign a peace and friendship agreement with Muwallil Wasit I, also known as Raja Bongsu (ca. 1610-50),<sup>26</sup> dated in Lipir, April 14, 1646, by which the sultan agreed to pay an annual tribute consisting of “tres joangas de a ocho brazas de largo, llenas de arroz y puestas en Samboangan en sus fuerças, en agradecimiento, y señal de hermandad, por el buen coraçon que ha tenido en darle, y dejarle dicha Isla,” thus reactivating local trade between Muslims and Spaniards in the presidio of Zamboanga.<sup>27</sup>

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Combés’s *History of Mindanao and Jolo*, 142; Alexandre Coello, “Diplomáticos y mártires jesuitas en la corte de Kudarat (Mindanao, siglo XVII),” *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Serie IV Historia Moderna (en prensa, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> De la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines*, 442.

<sup>22</sup> Pedro Murillo Velarde, SJ, *Historia de la Provincia de Filipinas de la Compañía de Jesús. Segunda Parte que comprehende los progresos de esta provincia desde el año de 1616 hasta el 1716* (Manila: Nicolás de la Cruz Bagay, 1749), fols. 149<sup>r</sup>-153<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Sales Colín, “Apuntes para el estudio...,” 167-68.

<sup>24</sup> Díaz-Trechuelo, cited in Sales Colín, “Apuntes para el estudio...,” 165.

<sup>25</sup> Murillo Velarde, *Historia de la Provincia de Filipinas*, fol. 149<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> He was the nephew of sultan Batara Shah Tengah (1596-1608). On sultan Bongsu, see Robert Nicholl, *Raja Bongsu of Sulu: a Brunei hero in his times* (Kuala Lumpur, Council of the Malaysian Branch of Royal Asiatic Society, 1991); R. Joel de los Santos, Jr, “Reflections on the Moro wars and the new Filipinos,” *Mindanao Journal*, 3:1 (1976): 26.

<sup>27</sup> “Capitulaciones asentadas con el Sultán Rey de Mindanao por el capitán don Francisco de

In 1646, Father Francisco de la Roa (1592-1660), Provincial of the Philippines, expressly entrusted Father Combés, who was then assigned to the Leyte shipyard, with the task of evangelizing the Suban natives from the village of La Caldera to the coast of Siocon in place of the deceased Father Juan del Campo. His work was intense, as set out in the Annual Letters of 1646 and 1649, taking care to eradicate gentility and encourage devotion to the blessed souls in Purgatory.<sup>28</sup> About Father López, rector of the residence at Zamboanga, Annual Letters noted that he had “special grace to win over these Moors and Gentiles,” which favoured not only the preaching of the gospel but also the expansion of commerce “through whose lands the Fathers pass and the seas sail safely.”<sup>29</sup> Despite the agreements signed with Kударat, largely thanks to the efforts of Father López, “whose words are heard as oracles,” the Muslims, traditional enemies of Christianity, were reluctant to accept missionaries into their domains.<sup>30</sup> From the Zamboanga presidio, the Spanish, assisted by six Jesuit Fathers, had made considerable progress in conversion, although Kударat’s opposition to Christianity was firm.<sup>31</sup>

As historian Ana M<sup>a</sup> Rodríguez pointed out, the Spanish-Muslim contact in the Philippines reproduced in many ways “the traditionally rejected Muslim Other.”<sup>32</sup> The continuous raids of the Malayo-Muslims threatened to invade the Bisayas (or Pintados) together with the Dutch from Batavia (now Jakarta).<sup>33</sup> Between 1645 and 1646 the Dutch *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (officially founded in 1602) prepared four fleets with which they intended to besiege the capital, block the arrival of the galleons at the port of Cavite, and later on, expel the Spanish from the East. However, in April 1646, Governor Fajardo, counting on the few available, managed to expel the “Dutch heretics” in the famous battle of Playa Honda.<sup>34</sup> In June 1647,

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Atienza Ibáñez, alcaide y gobernador de las fuerzas de Zamboangan, el día 24 de junio de 1645” (Arxiu Històric de la Companyia de Jesús a Catalunya (AHCJC), FILHIS-024, E.II, b-088, Booklet 161a, fols. 170<sup>v</sup> -179<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>28</sup> ARSI, Philip. 07-2, fols. 689<sup>v</sup> -690<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> ARSI, Philip. 07-2, fols. 688<sup>v</sup> -689<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Francisco Combés, SJ, *Historia de Mindanao, Joló y sus adyacentes. Progressos de la religion, y armas catolicas*. Critical and commented edition of Wescleslao Emilio Retana with the collaboration of Father Pablo Pastells, SJ. Bk. VII, Ch. I (Madrid: Imprenta de M. Minuesa de los Ríos, [1667] 1897), 427.

<sup>31</sup> ARSI, Philipp. 4, fol. 20<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Francisco de Combés’s *History of Mindanao and Jolo*,” 143.

<sup>33</sup> On the analysis of Muslim military threat, see Eberhard Crailsheim, “¿Fortalecer la cohesión interna.” El “peligro moro” en las Filipinas coloniales en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII,” in *Filipinas, siglo XIX. Coexistencia e interacción entre comunidades en el imperio español*, eds. M<sup>a</sup> Dolores Elizalde and Xavier Huetz de Lempis (Madrid: Polifemo, 2017), 393-425. More recently, see Eberhard Crailsheim and M<sup>a</sup> Dolores Elizalde, *The Representation of External Threats. From the Middle Ages to the Modern World* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Lucio Gutiérrez, *La historia de la iglesia en Filipinas (1565-1900)* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992), 186.

the Dutch attacked Cavite with a new fleet of twelve ships under the command of Admiral Martin Gertzen, which cost his life. They penetrated the Sulu Sea to Manila Bay, attacking the port of Cavite (where the galleons were usually built) and plundering the coastal towns of Mariveles (the “Boca Grande” of Bataan), Abucay and Samal, in the province of Pampanga.<sup>35</sup> Once again, Spanish and Filipino sailors managed to drive them to their possessions in Batavia, where they arrived battered and with many casualties.<sup>36</sup>

After the peace treaties signed in The Hague (Treaty of Westphalia, 1648), Spain recognized the independence of the Netherlands. However, the attacks of the United Provinces, although they diminished from the following years, had left a desolate panorama because of the paralysis of the trade of the galleon of Acapulco.<sup>37</sup> At the beginning of 1650, Manila’s defenses, reinforced by Governor Corcuera in 1642, were precarious or neglected, with the religious having the task of mobilizing the inhabitants of the islands to defend themselves from the continuous attacks of the Muslim “pirates.” The explorations and conquests of the Dutch admirals had ruined trade and threatened communication with the Viceroyalty of New Spain, with its epicenter in Acapulco, which, together with the earthquakes, typhoons, and shipwrecks (30/11/1645), desolations and internal revolts, made the islands of the West an unattractive scenario.<sup>38</sup>

Governor Fajardo, a knight of the Order of Santiago, who at first had shown serious reticence regarding the “particular way of proceeding” of the Jesuits, ended up praising them, especially Father López, who convinced him of the importance of strengthening the presence of the Jesuit Fathers in Zamboanga. Father Combés perfectly embodied this compromise of the Jesuits to the evangelization of Mindanao. In 1651, he replaced the renowned Father Pedro Gutiérrez (1593-1651)<sup>39</sup> as Rector of the Dapitan residence (1652-55). Father Gutiérrez’ reputation was such that according to his confrere, Father Diego de Oña (1655-1721), the Suban natives “were so fond of him” that they wrote to the governor of the Philippines to never

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<sup>35</sup> Pablo Pastells, SJ, *Catálogo de los documentos relativos a las islas Filipinas existentes en el Archivo General de Indias (AGI)*. Vol. IX (Barcelona: Compañía General de Tabacos de Filipinas, 1938), lxxix-lxxx).

<sup>36</sup> Gutiérrez, *La historia de la iglesia*, 187.

<sup>37</sup> In 1646, the captain ship *San Luis de Francia* was lost in the province of Cagayan, and with it, the Philippine *situado* (Juan Gil, *Mitos y utopías del descubrimiento*, Vol. 2. *El Pacífico* (Madrid: Alianza, 1989), 234).

<sup>38</sup> Pastells, *Catálogo de los documentos relativos a las Islas Filipinas*, Vol. IX, xcvi.

<sup>39</sup> Diego de Oña, SJ, *Labor Evangélica. Ministerios apostólicos de los obreros de la Compañía de Jesús. Progresos de las islas Filipinas. Segunda Parte* (ARSI, Philipp. 19-I, fol. 1271r’).



leave his side.<sup>40</sup> Later, Combés was transferred to the residence in Cebu, where on July 2, 1654, he made the solemn profession of four vows in the presence of Father Pedro Díaz Carlos (1619-1701), who acted as rector.<sup>41</sup>

The expertise he accumulated as a competent missionary among the Lutaos and Suban natives served Combés to conclude the *Relación de las Filipinas*, probably as a proof of the aptitude required of the professed Fathers in letters.<sup>42</sup> In 1655, Fathers Alejandro López and Juan de Montiel (1632-55) were brutally martyred at the court of Kudarat. According to the Jesuit theologian Francisco Suárez (1548-1617), only injury to reputation or honor of the subjects and the King could be repaired by “just war.” In this sense, the only reason to justify it was to restore justice and peace.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, governor Manrique de Lara would be authorized to wage a just war against Kudarat as a response to a previous unjust action, namely, the martyrdom of Jesuit ambassadors.

Afterwards, Combés remained in the Bisayas until 1656.<sup>44</sup> He then occupied the chair of theology at the college and university of San Ignacio de Manila (1656-59), where he wrote an *Encomio al Discurso Parenético* (Manila, August 27, 1657).<sup>45</sup> This way an eulogy or dissertation that Combés attached to the controversial *Discurso Parenético* in defense of the natives of these islands, asking for the regulation of the unpaid personal services (Manila, August 22, 1657), by Don Salvador Gómez de Espinosa y Estrada (c. 1610-60). In this treatise the *oidor* (judge) of the Audience of Manila criticized the religious orders for not complying with the Royal Decrees prohibiting personal and royal services, denouncing the undue burdens on the natives, as well as their excessive mistreatment and abuse.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Oña, *Labor Evangélica*, fol. 779<sup>r</sup>; ARSI, Philipp. 07-1, fol. 375<sup>r</sup>; ARSI, Philipp. 07-II, fols. 698<sup>r</sup>-707<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Combés was stationed in Cebu (and Mandaue) together with Fathers Domingo López, procurator, Pedro de la Cueva, and Domingo Ezquerro, who was appointed as rector until 1653 (ARSI, Philipp. 04, fol. 28<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>42</sup> Santiago Arzubialde, Jesús Corella, and José M<sup>a</sup> García-Lomas (eds.), *Constituciones de la Compañía de Jesús. Introducción y notas para su lectura* (Bilbao: Universidad Pontificia de Comillas & Mensajero & Sal Terrae, 1993), 53; 59.

<sup>43</sup> Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, “No es esta tierra para tibios:” la implicación de los jesuitas en la conquista y evangelización de Mindanao y Joló (siglo XVII),” *História Unisinos*, vol. 23, n<sup>o</sup> 1 (2019b): 48-51.

<sup>44</sup> ARSI, Philipp. 04, fol. 39<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> Francisco Combés, *Encomio al Discurso Parenético* (ARSI, Philip. 11, fols. 353<sup>r</sup>-357<sup>r</sup>). Regarding this work, see Jorge Mojarro, “Un alegato a favor del indio filipino: el *Encomio al Discurso Parenético* (1657) del padre Francisco Combés,” *Guaragua*, n<sup>o</sup> 65 (2021): 199-206.

<sup>46</sup> Salvador Gómez de Espinosa y Estrada, “Expediente sobre trabajo de los indios” (AGI, Filipinas, 22, R. 9, N. 51).

## Mapping out the Southern Philippines

As Jaime Marroquín has recently pointed out, “the *relación* – a short witness-based account of event, often based on standardized questions – permitted the massive accumulation of matter-of-fact information from the Indies, precisely the kind deemed necessary for adequate imperial rule.”<sup>47</sup> In this vein, Combés’ *Relación*, completed in 1654, was a comprehensive eyewitness account written with political interests. In a nutshell, it is to inform Governor Manrique de Lara about the particularities (ethnographic, geographic, botanical) of the Philippines, as well as its potential riches (natural, moral), in order to help him design the expansionist policies to be followed.

In this sense, the collection of rationalist-empirical knowledge, as Arndt Brendecke pointed out, became an indispensable tool for the colonial government.<sup>48</sup> The first concern of a ruler was the “art of governing” through strategy or political arithmetic based on empirical knowledge and legal sanctions, especially at the margins of the Philippines.<sup>49</sup> The *Relación* is inscribed in a context of production and dissemination of imperial/colonial knowledge, which was also part of a global program of evangelization. It was meant to be didactic and informative, useful to the government of Manila as *gesta hominis et magistra vitae*. Gone were the historical fantasies, myths, and legends, inherited from the patristic and the Plinian *topos*. What it was all about now was to present a detailed report on the riches of the land for the “strengthening,” not the consolidation, of the Spanish seat in the Philippines, especially in Mindanao and Sulu, not yet under the monarchy’s control.<sup>50</sup> To this end, it was necessary to evaluate the economic resources offered by the different archipelagos, including the character and nature of its inhabitants as well as the number of tributaries.

The Jesuit missionaries were familiar with the southern Philippines, especially the Bisayas, from where they had spread to other strategic enclaves in the Moluccas, and then in Mindanao and Sulu. However, their presence in the southern islands was never completed. It was an area of constant communication, where Muslims and

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<sup>47</sup> Jaime Marroquín Arredondo, “The Method of Francisco Hernández: Early Modern Science and the Translation of Mesoamerica’s Natural History,” in Jaime Marroquín Arredondo and Ralph Bauer (eds.), *Translating Nature: Cross-Cultural Histories of Early Modern Science* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 47.

<sup>48</sup> Brendecke, *Imperio e información*, 17.

<sup>49</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” *Archival Science*, 2 (2002): 87-109; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>50</sup> For a critique of the so-called “Spanish consolidation,” see Sales-Colín Kortajarena, “Negritud y esclavitud aeta: cooperación en el fortalecimiento hispano en Filipinas, 1565-1650,” in *Relaciones Intercoloniales. Nueva España y Filipinas*, ed. Olveda, 164.

Christians sailed through insular spaces. In a context of centralization of apostolic and missionary action under the pontificate of Pope Gregory XV (1621-23), other religious orders, such as the Augustinian Recollects, began to dispute the Jesuits' missionary role following the creation of the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (1622).<sup>51</sup> In the same year of the canonization of the founder of Ignatius of Loyola (12/3/1622) and fifty years after the death of General Francis Borgia (1510-72), Fray Pedro de Arce, OSA, Bishop of the Holy Name of Jesus of Cebu and interim Governor of the Archbishopric of Manila (1613-42), entrusted the Recollects with the spiritual administration of the islands of Palawan and Cuyo, as well as northeastern Mindanao, extending along the villages from Butuan (Davao Oriental) to Caraga.<sup>52</sup>

To avoid future conflicts, on February 6, 1624, the Governor General of the Philippines, Don Alonso Fajardo de Tenza (1618-24), divided the island of Mindanao into two areas of influence: the regions to the northeast of a line drawn from Cape Suluan to Cape St. Augustine were assigned to the Augustinian Recollects, while the regions to the southwest of the same line were assigned to the Jesuits. On July 12, 1628 the governor Don Juan Niño de Távora (1626-32) confirmed this division. Nevertheless, the Jesuits never admitted any interference in their missionary spaces and always considered Mindanao “their own business.” It could be said, without a doubt, that the ethnogenic dimension of the Jesuits in the islands of Pintados, seen as a united whole, was prolonged towards the south of the Philippines through a process of “Bisayization” similar to that which would take place in the Paraguayan reductions of the 18th century. It should come as no surprise, then, that the Combés' *Relación*, besides constituting an excellent “state of play” on the process of conquest and evangelization of the Philippines, also vindicated the greater knowledge and experience of the Society of Jesus against other missionary orders considered “intruders,” such as the Augustinian Recollects, who also postulated themselves to manage those peripheral spaces.

Since his arrival in Manila, Governor Manrique de Lara had denounced the militarization of the last stage of his predecessors in office, endorsing Father Acosta's insights of the dangers of prioritizing military occupation over gentle and

<sup>51</sup> M<sup>a</sup> Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo, “La Historia de la Iglesia en Asia,” *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, 5 (1996): 183. On the relations between this Congregation and the Society of Jesus, see the work of Giovanni Pizzorusso, “Il papa rosso e il papa nero: note sulle origini della conflittualità tra Propaganda Fide e Compagnia di Gesù (XVII secolo),” in *Les Antijésuites. Discours, figures et lieux de l'antijésuitisme a l'époque moderne*, eds. Pierre Antoine Fabre & Catherine Maire (Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 539-62.

<sup>52</sup> Delor Angeles, *Mindanao: the Story of an Island (A Preliminary Study)* (Davao, Mindanao: San Pedro Press, 1964), 27-28; Ángel Martínez Cuesta, OAR, *Historia de los agustinos recoletos: Vol. I: Desde los orígenes hasta el siglo XIX* (Madrid: Institutum Historicum Augustinianorum Recollectorum, 1995), 365; 378-393.

peaceful methods of conversion.<sup>53</sup> For this reason, and because of the “dire state” of the Philippines, as he had written in 1652, it was necessary to gather information on the political, ethnic-social, and economic reality of the archipelagos of Southeast Asia.<sup>54</sup> Combés’ *Relación* fully met that objective, although as we shall see, it prioritized military intervention against the enemies of the Christian-universal order over diplomacy. At this point, it is worth remembering that Combés was consistent with the thought of Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), who in numerous letters to his brothers (Diego Laínez, Jerónimo Nadal) had expressed a belligerent attitude against Islam. His fiery defence of a navy, the “Holy League,” against the Turks in the Mediterranean, as well as of the “just war” against Islam, was connected with Combés’ proactive thinking against the sultanates of the southern Philippines.<sup>55</sup> The wide experience of the Jesuits as priests and missionaries in those borderlands supported them.

However, it is also important to note that not all Jesuits shared the same views regarding the Constantinian model of forced conversion of the “Moors.” The attitude of Father López, who was much more of a negotiator, does not seem to have influenced Father Combés. In this sense, it is difficult to think, as Rodríguez argues, that all Jesuits would agree to apply the thoughts of the Granada-born Father Ignacio de las Casas (1550-1610), a converted Moorish and Jesuit, to the Muslim population of the Philippines.<sup>56</sup> These thoughts defended, in addition to evangelization in the Arabic language, the peaceful conversion of the “Moors” who inhabited the kingdom of Valencia.<sup>57</sup> However, this contradictory nature of the Jesuit order can be understood in the light of the tragic events that took place throughout the 17th century, namely: the martyrdom of Jesuit ambassadors and missionaries at the hands of the “Moors.”<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Brandon Bayne, “Converting the Pacific: Jesuit Networks Between New Spain and Asia,” in *The [Oxford] Handbook of Borderlands of the Iberian World*, eds. Danna A. Levin Rojo and Cynthia Radding (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018), 6.

<sup>54</sup> Sabiniano Manrique de Lara, “Petición” (1652), (AGI, Filipinas 330, L.4, fol. 271<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>55</sup> Emanuele Colombo, “Even among Turks: Tirso González de Santalla (1624-1705) and Islam,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 44:3 (2012): 36-41.

<sup>56</sup> Ana Ma. Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Mapping Islam in the Philippines: Moro Anxieties of the Spanish Empire in the Pacific,” in *The Dialectics of Orientalism in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Marcus Keller and Javier Irigoyen-García (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018b), 93.

<sup>57</sup> Francisco de Borja Medina, SJ, “La Compañía de Jesús y la minoría morisca (1545-1614),” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 57 (1988): 3-136; Youssef El Alaoui, “Ignacio de Las Casas, jesuita y morisco,” *Sharq Al-Andalus* 14-15 (1997-1998): 317-39.

<sup>58</sup> I refer especially to Fathers Juan de las Misas (Bisayas, † 4/10/1621), Tomás de Montoya († 14/6/1627), Juan del Carpio (Bisayas, † 3/12/1634), Francisco de Mendoza (Mindanao, † 1642), Juan Aresius († 10/4/1645), Francisco Paliola (Mindanao, † 27/1/1648), Miguel Ponce (Ibabao, † 15/10/1648), Vicente Damián († 11/11/1649), Juan del Campo (Bisayas, † 27/01/1650), and Juan Bautista de Larrauri (Near Mindanao, † 27/9/1663), (Alonso de Andrade, SJ, *Varones ilustres en santidad, letras y zelo de las almas de la Compañía de Jesús*, Tomo VI (Madrid: Joseph Fernández de Buendía, 1667): 64-66; 385-89; 590-94; 647-48; 648-80; 692-98; AHPCJC, FILPER-05, “Mártires de la Provincia de Filipinas de la Compañía de Jesús. Manila, 12 de mayo de 1903.” EI/b-9/6/1-7).

Although the Spanish still considered the Filipinos of the south as gentiles, and not as real Muslims,<sup>59</sup> there was not a real consensus regarding the application of “the soft law of Christianity,” especially after the military campaigns of the “very strong and invincible captain” Hurtado de Corcuera.<sup>60</sup> For Combés, the coordinates of historical thought must necessarily revolve around the obligation to report on the experiences of the protagonists and not on the basis of events of dubious “truth.” And the truth could only be told by those, like Combés himself, had acquired a witness-based (autoptic) knowledge through years of experience on the ground.

The first part of the *Relación* consisted in describing the geography, fauna and flora of the Philippines, highlighting its most notable characteristics, such as “impetuous ocean currents,” “rushing but navigable rivers” as well as “the furious wind and the power of *baguios* and hurricanes,” tearing down trees and houses, and indirectly causing the death of many natives through subsequent hunger and disease. For centuries it was thought that the devil, in the shape of Leviathan, had exercised its sovereignty over the Indies, taking root among its inhabitants. Proof of this was the manifestation of its preternatural powers in the destruction of the landscape. However, Combés never mentioned Satan’s attacks as responsible for such destruction (Part One, Chap. 1). No less important was the quality and availability of strategic materials, such as wood for shipbuilding, as well as the “abundance” and “curiosity” of the fruits of the earth, such as the coconut or palm, of excellent flavour, “whose flesh competes with almonds” (Part One, Chap. 2), or the tuba, “a delicate and very smooth liquor” obtained from the distillation of this fruit. The act of eyewitnessing was, according to Isidore of Seville, the foundation of historical truth. Not being a naturalist himself, Combés drew up a complete catalogue of the fruit and its qualities in relation to its appearance, colour, taste, size, abundance, and even its ease or difficulty of digestion, showing great familiarity with local knowledge.

Western epistemic thought, and especially, Jesuit tradition on natural history, such as José de Acosta’s and Bernabé Cobo (1580-1657)’s treatises, informed Combés’ interest in describing natural elements and the native customs with accuracy. But was he truly interested in natural and native knowledge? Did the Spaniards have anything to learn from the native peoples of the Philippines? The first goal was to evaluate if the Spanish religious and soldiers would have the necessary food to survive in these new “spiritual gardens.”<sup>61</sup> Planting should be promoted rather than hunting, gathering, or

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<sup>59</sup> It is worth noting that these ethnic categories were constructed on the basis of a religious, not an ethnic classification (Ana M<sup>a</sup> Prieto Lucena, *El contacto hispano-indígena en Filipinas* (Córdoba: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Córdoba, 1993), 235).

<sup>60</sup> ARSI, Philipp. 07-II, fol. 688<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> I have borrowed the concept of “spiritual gardens” from Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Católicos y puritanos en la colonización de América* (Madrid: Fundación Jorge Juan & Marcial Pons, 2008), 249.

fishing. The second goal was to evaluate the optimization of the existing resources with a view to their rational exploitation. However, Combés stressed not only the power of poisonous herbs but also that of antidotes to reverse the effects of all kind of poisons (“the person who uses such poisonous herb carries also the antidote and I once witnessed its rigorous effects in the Bisayas”). Additionally, there were a great deal of herbs of medicinal, even “miraculous,” nature, which clearly shows that he did recognize and adopt indigenous knowledge on medicine and other topics (Part One, Chap. 3).<sup>62</sup>

Lastly, Combés devoted special attention to emphasizing, on the one hand, the laziness and indolence of the natives, and on the other, the riches of the land, especially the mines of gold and pearls, civet, wax, cinnamon, cotton, amber, ivory, wool or hemp, as well as various dyes and exotic woods in abundance, such as *palo colorado* or sibucao, better known as brazil, pointing out that on the island of Cebu the galleons could carry this genus of which “the natives make little use” (Part One, Chap. 4). For Combés, there was no doubt that the two issues were directly related. Unlike the Moluccas, where the Spanish had lost all option of controlling spices, the archipelagos of the Philippines, and in particular the islands of Mindanao, Basilan, and Sulu, were also shown to be abundant in other goods. However, despite this plethora of richness, the natives of the southern islands were unable to exploit them because of their “laziness” and “lazy ambition.” Clearly, Combés viewed Western knowledge as vastly superior to that of the ignorant and naive Filipinos that any potential intervention was justified (Part One, Chap. 1). Thus, due to the limitations of native knowledge, Combés encouraged the conquest and evangelization of Mindanao through the viability of the exploitation of all its riches, with proper management. In a kind of transfer of power or authority (*translatio imperii*), the Jesuit Father offered what was God’s to the emperor, and from the emperor to the Governor Manrique de Lara.

Part Two is an ethnographic gem that was later replicated in numerous passages of the *Historia de Mindanao, Joló y sus adyacentes*. It describes the three nations that populated the islands, namely: the “Negritos,” which included diverse ethnic groups, such as the Aetas of Luzon, lived upon hilltops, crags, or other inaccessible locations without regard to any divine or human authority, without “government or *policía*”; the native nations, which included indigenous peoples of

<sup>62</sup> Some years later, the Bohemian Jesuits Paul Klein (1652-1717) and George Josef Kamel (1661-1706) stood out as botanist and pharmacist in the Philippines (Raquel A. G. Reyes, “Botany and Zoology in the late seventeenth century Philippines: the work of George Josef Camel, SJ (1661-1706),” *Archives of Natural History*, 36:2 (2009): 262-76; Šebestián Kroupa, *Georg Joseph Kamel (1661–1706): A Jesuit Pharmacist at the Frontiers of Colonial Empires*, Ph.D Dissertation, Darwin College, University of Cambridge, 2019; Francisco Guerra, “Los impresos médicos en Hispanoamérica y Filipinas durante el dominio español,” *Quinto Centenario*, 13 (1987): 143).

different names according to the provinces and islands, were the object of Spanish domination. For the first Jesuits who arrived in the Philippines, the contempt and annulment of indigenous traditions ran parallel to the enthusiasm for their salvation. However contradictory this may appear, salvation was associated with conceiving the native peoples as modeling clay, giving them the rudiments of town life by gathering and relocating the Indians of dispersed villages in common Hispanic-like settlements, *congregaciones* or *reducciones*. The goal was not only to optimize their evangelization, but also to avoid uprisings and to benefit from cheap labor force. A “missionary ethnogenesis,” to borrow Guillermo Wilde’s words (2011), which gradually modified their subsistence strategies.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, the Samales or Lutaos, who lived mostly in the Zamboanga region in far western Mindanao, earned their livelihood through fishing. They were seafarers and therefore in great demand by the “Kings of Mindanao” for their knowledge of navigation.<sup>64</sup> Combés stood out for his observation skills, describing in detail the attire of men and women of the Bisayas and the southern islands. He emphasized the variety of their languages and customs, but also the mixtures, religious syncretisms, and transculturations that were produced as a consequence of inter-cultural contact. One example involving knowledge interchange was Combés’ reference about the native preferences for some Spanish attires. Thus, he describes how “the *ladínez* [deceiving attitude] of the Tagalogs had become so accommodating to our hats” (Part Two, Chap. 1). However, Combés’ opinion about them was not too glamorous.<sup>65</sup> Of the Bisayas and Tagalogs he highlighted their modesty and simplicity of character, while of the Mindanaos and Joloes he underlined, besides the slavery of relatives, tyranny and extreme greed, their excessive ostentation and the existence of moral transgressions, such as nefarious sin and incest. This logic or theology of colonization, to borrow Subirats’ words, was the result of deeply rooted axiological parameters that placed the ethnographic discourse in a clear opposition between (Christian) and (Muslim) civilization.<sup>66</sup>

Inasmuch as the Spanish missionaries and theologians were not mentally prepared to develop an ethnological task so far, that is, “thick,” proto-ethnographic

<sup>63</sup> Guillermo Wilde, “De las crónicas jesuíticas a las “etnografías estatales:” realidades y ficciones del orden misional en las fronteras ibéricas,” *Nuevo Mundo/Mundos Nuevos Debates* (2011). <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/62238>, 22; G. Wilde, *Religión y poder en las misiones de guaraníes*, (Buenos Aires & México & Madrid: Sb editorial, 2016), 65-69.

<sup>64</sup> Colin, *Labor evangélica*, fol. 817<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> The *Historia de Mindanao y Joló* likewise contains these moral disqualifications of Muslims. Cfr. Ana Ma. Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Old Enemies, New Contexts: Early Modern Spanish (Re)-Writing of Islam in the Philippines,” in *Coloniality, Religion, and the Law in the Early Iberian World*, eds. Santa Arias and Raúl Marrero-Fente (Nashville, Tennessee, Vanderbilt UP, 2014), 146-147.

<sup>66</sup> Eduardo Subirats, *El continente vacío. La conquista del Nuevo Mundo y la conciencia moderna* (Madrid: Anaya & Mario Muchnik, 1994), 73.

methodologies clearly revealed discordant parameters that made cultural relativism impossible.<sup>67</sup> In this sense, the differences between native groups were not expressed in ethnic-racial but in religious terms, classifying them as “Gentiles” and “Moors.”<sup>68</sup> However, the *Adelantado* Miguel López de Legazpi (1503-72), in 1572 recognized without ambiguity that “los naturales desta isla de Luzón, que comúnmente llamamos los españoles moros, ellos no lo son, porque en verdad es que ellos no saben la ley de Mahoma, ni la entienden.”<sup>69</sup> Father Combés expressed himself in the same vein, and made an effort to highlight the gentleness of the natives, presenting them as false followers of the Koran (Part Two, Chap. 2). They were not, therefore, real Muslims, since they were “the most highly educated” and the majority of the population was gentile (Part One, Chap. 2). This opinion coincided with that of the Jesuit provincials, for whom “el gentilismo se tiene por plebeyo, y como lo plebeyo siempre es más numeroso en los reinos que lo noble, de aquí es que son pocos los moros que hay en ella en comparación con la turba mucha de gentiles que por todas partes la rodean y habitan.”<sup>70</sup>

Regarding eating habits, Combés noted that many natives “don’t want to eat cow, because they say it stinks. Rare is the one who likes cheese and everyone has a horror of milk.” Likewise, the native authorities, especially the older ones, “are disgusted with eating home-made pork because they see the filthiness of its taste and the stench of its food,” but instead they like wild boar, or wild pigs (Part Two, Chap. 3). The circulation of knowledge and information about the diet of the natives had a clear objective: to transform their eating habits into more “civilized” ones. It would be, therefore, not only a project of spiritual conquest but also a gastronomic one.<sup>71</sup> With all these arguments, Combés wanted the Governor to support the evangelizing project of the Society of Jesus in Mindanao to the detriment of other unviable or almost failed projects, such as the Moluccas.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup> As Geertz put it, “culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly - that is, thickly - described” (Clifford Geertz, *La interpretación de las culturas* (Barcelona: Gedisa, [1973] 1992), 14).

<sup>68</sup> Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Mapping Islam in the Philippines...,” 85-87.

<sup>69</sup> López de Legazpi, cited in Isaac Donoso, *Historia cultural de la lengua española en Filipinas. Ayer y hoy* (Madrid: Verbo, 2012), 93.

<sup>70</sup> ARSI, Philipp. 07-II, fol. 687<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> Verónica Peña Filiu, *Alimentación y colonialismo en las islas Marianas (Pacífico occidental): Introducciones, adaptaciones y transformaciones alimentarias durante la misión jesuita (1668-1769)* (Ph. Diss., Barcelona: UPF, 2020).

<sup>72</sup> In this sense, Combés was in line with the arguments of the General Procurator of the Philippines since 1635, Don Juan Grau y Monfalcón (?-1643), who in his *Justificación de la conservación y comercio de las islas Filipinas* (Madrid, 1637) already warned of the high cost that the maintenance of the Moluccas had not only for the Royal Treasury, but for the security of the Philippines (Juan Grau y Monfalcón, “Justificación de la conservación y comercio de las islas Filipinas” (Madrid, 1637) in *Extracto Historial del expediente que pende en el Consejo de Indias a instancias de la ciudad de Manila y*



Part Three begins precisely by recalling that the conquest of the Philippines was not premeditated, but a consequence of the “strayed Moluccas” (Part Three, Chap. 1). Here Combés makes a summary of the most significant events that took place in the discovery and conquest of Manila, as well as the heroic actions of its protagonists, from Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521) to Miguel López de Legazpi (1502-72), using a warlike discourse. He then relates the particularities of some of the provinces and jurisdictions of the Philippines, placing special emphasis on their location, defenses, the quality of their inhabitants, mineral wealth of the land and the number of tributaries, as well as the religious who administered them. It focuses not only on the province of Cebu, but also on the nearby islands of the Bisayas, such as Negros, Otto (or Iloilo, island of Panay), Calamianes, Mindoro and Leyte, and further south, Mindanao and Sulu, reflecting the expansive character of the Society of Jesus.

Indeed, Combés devoted the last chapters to the Spanish-occupied provinces in Mindanao, emphasizing military confrontation over the evangelizing project. In line with Alonso Sánchez (1547-93)’s arguments, a staunch defender of the war against China,<sup>73</sup> the bellicosity of the “Moors” led Combés to affirm that Christianity should be introduced in the same way as in America: first with the conquest by arms and then with the preaching of the gospel. But that theology, now made universal, meant nothing other than a reductionist ethic. In other words, Combés’ *Relación* praised the military intervention of Corcuera, “the last conqueror,” as well as the defensive disposition of his forts and presidios as a strategy of religious conversion. Such a fundamentalist Christian ideology that had nothing to do with the model of cultural mediation or *acomodatio* - an intellectual apostolate, as Antonella Romano would say<sup>74</sup> - advocated by his confreres, Matteo Ricci and Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607), in Ming China, or Alessandro Valignano, in Japan.<sup>75</sup>

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*demás provincias*, ed. Antonio José Álvarez de Abreu (Madrid: Juan de Ariztia, 1736), 64-78. See also Juan Grau y Monfalcón, “Memorial dado al Rey en su Real Consejo de las Indias por D. Juan Grau y Monfalcón, Procurador General de las islas Filipinas, sobre las pretensiones de la ciudad de Manila y demás islas del Archipiélago en su comercio con la Nueva España,” in *Colección de Documentos Inéditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Colonización de las Posesiones Españolas en América y Oceanía, sacados, en su mayor parte, del Real Archivo de Indias*, ed. Luis Torres de Mendoza, Vol. VI, (Madrid: Manuel B. Quirós, 1866), 345-483).

<sup>73</sup> Manel Ollé, *La invención de China. Percepciones y estrategias filipinas respecto a China durante el siglo XVI* (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz – Verlag, 2000), 22-23; 130-36.

<sup>74</sup> Antonella Romano, “Conclusiones. *Un espacio tripolar de las misiones: Europa, Asia y América*,” in *Órdenes religiosas entre América y Asia. Ideas para una historia misionera de los espacios coloniales*, ed. Elisabetta Corsi (Mexico, DF: COLMEX, 2008), 262.

<sup>75</sup> From an Augustinian perspective, Jesuit theologian José de Acosta claimed that the only way they could achieve salvation was through the imposition of faith, while the “intellectual apostolate” of Fathers Ricci and Valignano defended that faith was implicit and that it was through reason that Eastern civilizations could come to a knowledge of God’s law (Joan-Pau Rubiés, “The Concept of Cultural Dialogue and the Jesuit Method of Accommodation: Between Idolatry and Civilization,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, LXXIV:147 (2005): 257-58).

Firstly, the province of Caraga stood out “por los gallardos atrevimientos de sus naturales, que por los intereses que rinde, no porque carezca de ellos, sino porque los ha hecho costosos su rebeldía” (Chap. 9). The spiritual care was the responsibility of the secular clergy and the Augustinian Recollects. However, Jesuit Father Fabricio Sarsali (1568-1645), “que en lo antiguo había trabajado en sus conversiones,” acudió a sosegar a los belicosos caragas, porque según Combés, los naturales conservaban “los ánimos y voluntad por sus primeros padres [Jesuits]” (Chap. 9). Secondly, the province of Iligan, jurisdiction of Dapitan, was the scene of many battles against Kudarat.<sup>76</sup> For Combés, Governor Corcuera achieved peace through an inevitable armed confrontation. However, the Jesuits were by no means safe. As the Annual Letter of 1646-49 certified, “los caminos están infestados de moros, que no se puede caminar por ellos sin riesgo de la vida.” The existence of the strategic forts, such as Caraga and Iligan, where there were a hundred men served to contain the attacks of the “Moors.”<sup>77</sup> For this reason, the Governor ordered the relocation of the fort on the Malanao lagoon near the port, but Combés regretted that this force, which was built of stone, had been reduced to a brief company of barely thirty soldiers under the command of the interim Governor, Don Pedro Durán de Monforte, lacking any deterrent capacity (Ch. 10).

Finally, the province of Zamboanga, whose jurisdiction was established to stop the attacks of the “Moors” from the south (Borneo, Sulu). The first to undertake the conquest of Mindanao and Sulu was one of the first benefactors of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines: the renowned Captain Esteban Rodríguez de Figueroa (d. 1596), one of the veterans of Legazpi.<sup>78</sup> The second (owned) Governor of the Philippines, Don Francisco de Sande (1574-1580), was a member of the colonial bureaucracy who had served as a hearer at the Audiencia of Mexico. Despite his legalistic character, Sande implemented an unprecedented warmongering policy in order to impose Spanish hegemony in the region. On June 6, 1576, he wrote a letter to King Philip II, arguing that “China’s enterprise would be a “most just war.” Two years later, he led a military campaign against Saiful Rijal (1533-81), Sultan of the island of Borneo, to demarcate the Spanish contact zone from the Portuguese one, expelling his merchants from the Bisayas and northern Mindanao.<sup>79</sup> In his opinion, the Portuguese were unable to solve the Muslim advance in East Asia. On May 23, 1578, he wrote from the island of Borneo to Captain Rodríguez de Figueroa, instructing him to reduce the island of Sulu to the obedience of the Castilian Crown. From there

<sup>76</sup> Murillo Velarde, *Historia de la Provincia de Filipinas*, fols. 109<sup>v</sup>-113<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> ARSI, Philipp. 7-II, fol. 698<sup>r</sup>; ARSI, Philipp. 0023.3.5, Doc. 22, fol. 25<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Eduardo Descalzo Yuste, *La Compañía de Jesús en Filipinas (1581-1768): realidad y representación* (Ph.Diss., Bellaterra: UAB, 2015), 130-132.

<sup>79</sup> Manel Ollé Rodríguez, *La empresa de China. De la armada invencible al galeón de Manila* (Barcelona, Acantilado, 2002), 74-49.

he went to the southeast of Mindanao, recognizing the banks of the Pulangui River, which later became the *Río Grande*, but without establishing permanent contact with its inhabitants.<sup>80</sup> In 1591 he signed a capitulation with Governor Don Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas (1590-93) to conquer the great island of the south.<sup>81</sup>

From then on began what Caesar A. Majul defined as the second stage of the “Moro wars.”<sup>82</sup> Five years later, in April 1596, the *Adelantado* Figueroa, accompanied by some religious of the Society of Jesus, such as Fathers Juan del Campo (1563-1597) and Brother Gaspar Gómez (1552-1622), took care not only to reduce Magindanao and Buhayen (or Buayan), to vassalage, but also to persuade the main authorities to accept the presence of missionaries in the area of *Río Grande*. The first Jesuits who knew the Muslim sultanates of Mindanao and Sulu first hand, like Father Melchor Hurtado (1571-1607), were not simply agents of Spanish imperialism, but missionaries imbued with a universalist and providential language that justified martyrdom for the sake of a “higher purpose.” Their task consisted in supporting the diplomatic and military campaigns of the political authorities in Manila.

Unlike the *Historia de Mindanao, Joló y sus adyacentes*, a propagandistic weapon that features Jesuit missionaries transformed into heroes of Christianity,<sup>83</sup> the *Relación* praised the courage of Governor Corcuera and his captains and generals, who fought victoriously against the “perfidious Corralat.” Paradoxically, the heroes were not the Jesuit missionaries but the (Spanish) soldiers who defended the Spanish forts in the southern islands, without making any reference, of course, to the native contingents without which it would not have been possible to defeat him.<sup>84</sup> The continuous attacks by the “Moorish” Camucones, killing and enslaving the Christianized natives, desecrating the images of the churches, and stealing the chalices, jewelry, and other sacred ornaments and vessels, forced the Jesuits to become directly involved in the defense of the Jesuit missions in the Bisayas.<sup>85</sup>

### Concluding remarks

Unlike Eduardo Descalzo’s opinion, Father Francisco Combés was not a “minor chronicler.”<sup>86</sup> Quite the contrary, he was a Jesuit of great erudition, versed in

<sup>80</sup> Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas*. Edición crítica y comentada y estudio preliminar de Francisca Perujo (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007), 22-23.

<sup>81</sup> Angeles, *Mindanao*, 20-21.

<sup>82</sup> Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Diliman, Quezon City: Philippines UP, [1973] 1999), 121–189; 233–297.

<sup>83</sup> Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Old Enemies, New Contexts...,” 144.

<sup>84</sup> Stephanie Mawson, “Philippine Indians in the Service of Empire: Indigenous Soldiers and Contingent Loyalty, 1600-1700,” *Ethnohistory* 63:2 (2016): 380-413.

<sup>85</sup> Oña, *Labor Evangélica*, fols. 48<sup>r</sup> -49<sup>r</sup>; 261<sup>r</sup>-262<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>86</sup> Descalzo Yuste, *La Compañía de Jesús en Filipinas*, 379.

the classics and baroque literary style of the time, as seen in the *Encomio al Discurso Parenético* (Manila, 1657) and in the much better known *Historia de Mindanao, Joló y sus adyacentes* (Madrid, 1667).

The *Relación de las Islas Filipinas* is surely not the least important work. Not only because it collects direct information about the native peoples and natural environments of the southern “Islands of the West” (islas del Poniente), but also because it reconsiders imperial knowledge (Muslim, native) to be processed. In his experience-based description of the southern island of Mindanao, Combés’ authority of eyewitness was supplemented by informal gathering of native knowledge and systematic interrogations of indigenous subjects. Missionary experience was therefore instrumental in mapping out geopolitical peripheries from the economic, political, and military center of Manila. Additionally, the *Relación* reflects the technologies of taxonomic homogenization of Jesuit knowledge, which undoubtedly affected the constitution of Spanish imperial knowledge production in 17th-century Philippines. In this vein, Combés’ *Relación* has much to do with Iberian imperialism and commercial strategies to confront Dutch and Muslim expansionism. More precisely, this text reveals the interest of the Governors of Manila, mainly Don Diego Fajardo and Don Sabiniano Manrique de Lara, in (re)establishing diplomatic and commercial relations with the Moors of southern islands.

The Society of Jesus did not simply defend the interests of a confessional monarchy and its allies, but rather a corporate model of globalized religious organization for the overseas territories.<sup>87</sup> Hagiographies and martyrologies portrayed its members as actors in a cosmic drama dominated by contempt for the world.<sup>88</sup> The idea of Spain as a tragic and chosen people characterized those “Baroque spirits,” willing to make the greatest sacrifices to rescue new souls and extend the faith of Christ in the porous spiritual frontiers - or “missionary frontiers,” as Manfred Kossok would say - starting from the classic principle of the “common good.”<sup>89</sup> The policy of the Society of Jesus in the southern Philippines was to repel the attacks of the Muslims, to consolidate Christianity in the Bisayas, and to initiate a slow but decisive penetration into the Islamic sultanates of Mindanao and Sulu. In a context of political-religious expansionism, the evangelization of Mindanao obeyed the missionary plan designed by the Society and the Holy See within the framework of the Catholic Reformation.

<sup>87</sup> Harris, “Mapping Jesuit Science...,” 228-233. For a notion of confessional monarchies, see Ute Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalization,” in *Reformation and Early Modern Europe. A Guide to Research*, ed. David M. Whitford (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State UP, 2008), 136-157.

<sup>88</sup> Coello, “Diplomáticos y mártires jesuitas en la corte de Kudarat (Mindanao, siglo XVII)” (forthcoming, 2020).

<sup>89</sup> Manfred Kossok, *La colonització espanyola d'Amèrica. Estudis comparatius* (Barcelona: Avenç & Sociedad Catalana d'Estudis Històrics, 1991), 34.

The missionary ideal of the Jesuits in the Philippines should be therefore placed in a broader context relating to knowledge production. That is, colonial areas where the missionaries, as agents of social change, played a fundamental role in the construction of political order in the 17th century Philippines. The Jesuit Father Francisco Combés, as one of these agents, elaborated an ambivalent discourse, an unrealistic image consisting of representing “Moors” as second-class Muslims, and therefore, potential Christians in the near future.<sup>90</sup> As a consequence, his work presents a clear example of what Ângela Barreto and Ines G. Županov defined as “Catholic Orientalism;” namely, the construction of a colonial imaginary geared to perpetuate political and cultural fantasies of the early modern Catholic protagonists and their communities, in this case, for the production of European knowledge of the southern Philippines.<sup>91</sup>

The expansion and aggrandizement of the Catholic monarchy justified as defensive wars provoked by the implantation of Spanish sovereignty in the territories of Asia-Pacific. The *Relación de las Islas Filipinas*, first, and the *Historia de Mindanao, Joló y sus adyacentes*, later, constituted two cornerstones in the ideological structuring of the peripheral missions in the Philippines.<sup>92</sup> The first one, addressed to Governor Manrique de Lara, supported without reservation the military interventions of his predecessors. The second, aimed at a wider audience, defended the missionary identity of the Jesuits as well as the maintenance of the Zamboanga’s presidio, considered as the only way to curb “Muslim audacity.”<sup>93</sup> **PS**

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<sup>90</sup> Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Old Enemies, New Contexts...,” 154.

<sup>91</sup> Ângela Barreto, Xavier and Ines G. Županov, *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), xxi.

<sup>92</sup> Rodríguez-Rodríguez, “Francisco de Combés’s *History of Mindanao and Jolo*,” 143.

<sup>93</sup> Combés, *Historia de las islas de Mindanao, Joló, y sus adyacentes*, 640.

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