

Reviews & Notices

Lee, Christina H., Padron Ricardo, eds. *The Spanish Pacific, 1521-1815: A Reader of Primary Sources*: Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. 249 pp. ISBN: 978-95-6372-064-9.

The Spanish Pacific, 1521-1815 is a collection of fifteen articles written and edited by different scholars who are experts in the field of early modern Spanish Pacific studies. This book identifies the space that the Spanish colonial power colonized and desired to hold in Asia starting in 1521, when the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan set foot in the East utilizing the Western passageway, until 1815, when the famous annual Galleon Trade (Manila-Acapulco Trade) ceased to operate.

Most of the narratives that you can find created the Spanish Philippines as a colonial contact zone, as a link that connects the transpacific trade, as a focal point of imperial rivalry, and as a confluence in the networks of early modern globalization. The topics presented vary widely, from official correspondence and travel narrative, snippets from printed and translated histories, a map, a historical novel, a royal decree, a will, a court case, confession manual, a constitution and poetry. The topics presented are grouped according to the following categories namely (1) *religion*, (2) *practices of Spanish colonialism*, (3) *competitors of Spain* and (4) *violence brought about by colonialism*.

In most of the narratives discussed in this reader, *Religion* is seen as the climax. A discussion on the Christian missionaries and their experiences in their stay in the Philippines, primarily with the aim of converting the indigenous population takes the center stage. The first three chapters is attributed to the following friars who provided an account on their stay in the Philippines. First is about the account of Fray Andres de Urdaneta, a participant in the expedition of Jofre García Loaysa (1490-1526) which aimed at consolidating the Spanish claim over the Spice Islands after

the death of Ferdinand Magellan. Fray Urdaneta provides a story of the unfortunate expedition due to the fact that Loaysa's fleet encountered armed conflict with the Portuguese who already settled in the island of Ternate. The next article provided the account of Fray Domingo de Salazar (1512-1594), the first bishop of the Philippines and a member of the Dominican order. Fray Salazar condemns the abuses committed by the Spaniards towards the local population as well as their ill-treatment towards the Chinese migrants. In doing so, it enables us to see how the relationship of the Spanish Philippines and China flourished. The third article authored by Ricardo Padrón focuses on another Dominican priest named Fray Juan Cobo (1546/47-1592) whose life was spent on converting the resident Chinese population of Manila and other regions. He, together with some unnamed Chinese collaborators, was able to create a map of the Pacific world from China to Mexico for the benefit of course of Chinese prospects for conversion. On the other hand, the seventh article presented a state of the Jesuit order in the Philippines as Fray Juan de Bueras, the Jesuit provincial, relates the difficulties that the Church experienced among the locals in the island of Mindoro. Fray Bueras mentioned the limitations of the Church's effort to convert the natives as well as the nature of Filipino religious life in the early onset of colonization. In the ninth chapter, Fray Francisco de Combés, a Jesuit friar wrote the *History of Mindanao and Jolo* that deals with the study of the geography of the Southern portion of the Philippines as well as the ethnic, social, political, and religious characteristics of its local inhabitants.

Another topic of interest in the book is the mapping of the *practices of Spanish colonialism*. It is evident on the following articles such as: (a) the Royal Decree of King Philip III which regulates the transpacific trade between the Philippines and Spain in the year 1604. This decree was created in response to the complaints of the harmful effects of this trade towards Spain and its possessions in the Atlantic. (b) A discussion about a series of documents unearthed from the University of Santo Tomas Archives about an attempt of one local whose name is Luis Castilla, a member of the local aristocracy or commonly known as *principalía* to sell several parcels of land. The *Castilla dossier*, one of the oldest surviving examples of legal process in the Philippines, speaks about the rapid propagation of Spanish legal culture in the island of Luzon. It also presented an idea on how the early *principalía* were able to acquire and sell land in the face of opposition from powerful forces in the Church. Lastly, (c) the slave trade is also one of the features shown under this category. It is shown on the Will of an Indian Oriental which speaks of how she wanted to liberate her four slaves which they acquired out of slave raids from Asia and Africa, including their children.

One of the highlights shown in this reader is the third category, *the competitors of Spain*. (a) China – in Salazar’s account, he mentioned how the Chinese traders immensely grow in number within the islands of Luzon and Visayas. This happened when Manila was opened as a trading port. Although he is not against the segregation of the Chinese population, the friar questioned the sufferings and mistreatment they experienced. He firmly believed that if Spain succeeds in converting the Sangleys in Manila, it will also reach the Chinese in the mainland. b) Great Britain – this country wished to execute savage raids on Spanish positions in the Philippines, robbing their way from Cambodia to Madagascar and Brazil. Eventually, the British were able to capture the city of Manila and established its rule from 1762-1764 during the Seven Years’ War.

Another topic of interest presented in the book is on the (4) *violence of colonialism* to the locals. This is clearly seen in Fray Domingo de Salazar’s defense stating that the Spaniards fail in their main point of the conquest, which is Christianization. The sufferings and cruelty experienced by the natives made it difficult for them to convert to the Christian faith. Another discussion focused on the confessional manual composed by a Franciscan friar and was aimed at converting the locals. Unfortunately, the manual failed to carry out its objective because it instead caused psychological violence as it created hierarchical power relation between the priest and the penitent. They demand constant surveillance, narrative exposition, economic expenditure, and redemptive expectation as a result of confession.

In this work, the reader is provided a varied collection of primary sources, which are translated in the English language. Arranged chronologically, the editors were able to bridge the entire history of the Spanish Pacific from one of Spain’s first encounters in Southeast Asia up until the nineteenth century, when the loss of Spain’s American colonies crucially changed its relationship with its only colony in Asia (the Philippines). This material allows its readers to have a comprehensive and alternative perspective about the history of the Philippines, one that marks a difference from what is usually seen as valuable sources such as *The Philippine Islands (1492-1898)* by Emma Blair and James Robertson; *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses (1565-1700)* by James Phelan; and *The Manila Galleon (1939)* by William Schurz. This work will be very beneficial to those who are into studying and teaching Readings in Philippine History, as well as Philippine-Spanish Relations, because the articles can be incorporated as part of the existing course plans in these disciplines, both in the graduate and undergraduate levels.

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