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Hispanofilipino Literature Exhibit

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Hispanofilipino Literature Exhibit

Charlotte Fater

Mentors: Fe Susan Go, Marlon Sales, and Barbara Alvarez
Design an exhibit as part of the program Sites of Translation in the Multilingual Midwest

Research the history of the Philippines and its literature

Identify additional materials for use in exhibit

Create wall panels and a layout for the display of physical materials
Exhibit Objectives and Personal Goals

- Educate visitors on history, literature, and translation in the Philippines
- Showcase the U-M library collections
- Expand my knowledge about the history and literature of the Philippines
- Learn practical skills related to exhibit design
Challenges and Solutions
**#1**

**CHALLENGE**
- Lack of access to the physical materials

**SOLUTION**
- Digital scans, cardboard boxes, and index cards
#2

**CHALLENGE**

- Design accessibility and relative size

**SOLUTION**

- A contrast check and a reality check
Evolution of a Wall Panel

First Encounters

The first Spanish expedition reached the archipelago in 1521, but it was not until 1542 that the name Philippines (or Filipinas in its archaic Castillian spelling) was coined in honor of Philip II of Spain. It would take another two decades for Spain to establish its first settlements on the islands in 1565 upon the arrival of Miguel López de Legazpi.

Although an economically profitless venture for the Spanish Crown, the Philippines remained a colony of Spain because it was regarded as a springboard for the Christianization of continental East Asia, particularly China.

Translation figured prominently in the literary activity of this period. Although the official colonial policy was to teach the Spanish language, the Spanish priests who were directly involved in the Christianization of the islanders also wrote in local languages. This resulted in the production of several Spanish and several local languages were produced throughout the colonial period. Many of these documents have found their way to the University of Michigan and several other archives in the US Midwest.
CHALLENGE

- Working from home - too few coworkers and too many distractions

SOLUTION

- Roommates and picnic tables
The Final Product(s)
Many books and manuscripts produced during the early days of Spanish rule reflected this missionary role. One of the first two books ever printed in the Philippines in 1593 was the *Doctrina Christiana*, a book of Catholic prayers in Spanish with an accompanying Tagalog translation written in both the Latin alphabet and the pre-Hispanic Filipino alphabet called baybayin.

Also worth mentioning is the *Baxer Codex*, a manuscript produced in the capital city of Manila around 1590. In addition to very vivid narrative descriptions of Asian cultures, it also contains a series of drawings depicting the peoples of the Philippines and its neighboring countries.
The two foundational novels of the Filipino nation were written originally in Spanish by the most illustrious of the ilustrados. They were the *Noli me tángere* (or *Noli*) and *El filibusterismo* (or *Fili*) of the intellectual and martyr José Rizal. The *Noli* was first printed in Berlin, Germany in 1887, while the *Fili*, its sequel, came out in Ghent, Belgium in 1891.

Since Spanish authorities banned the novels in the Philippines, the first Philippine edition got published only in 1899, a year after the fall of the Spanish Empire. It was around this time when the first translations of the novels were made. In addition to translation into various Philippine languages, a number of English-language translations of Rizal’s novels have been produced over the years.

*An Eagle Flight*, an anonymous translation into English based loosely on the plot of the *Noli*, was published in New York in 1900. *The Social Cancer* and *The Reign of Greed*, Charles Dersbyshire’s influential English-language translations, were printed in 1912.
It is worth noting that the University of Michigan played a pivotal role in the American imperialist project in the Philippines. One of Michigan’s alumni, Dean C. Worcester, became the US Secretary of Interior of the Philippine Islands. He also acted as the consultant of the University of Michigan Mission, whose objective was to gather archaeological and anthropological data on the Philippines. Worcester’s controversial research methods, which involved incursions into ancestral lands in search of precious metals, earned the ire of Filipino nationalists.

The Filipino newspaper *El Renacimiento* published its most famous editorial entitled “Aves de rapiña,” or Birds of Prey, in criticism of Worcester’s dubious fact-finding mission. It was Worcester who brought back to Michigan his collection of papers, photographs and other effects on the Philippines, which are now curated as the Worcester Philippine History Collection.
The fall of the Spanish Empire in 1898 opened the way for the US to claim the Philippines as its colony. Amidst the many changes in society brought about by this imperial process, filipino identity in Spanish-Mexican America shifted from a colonial perspective to American colonialism, often blending its provenance through a complex interplay of languages and cultures. In the context of this transition, the establishment of a new national identity involved the re-evaluation of one’s own heritage and the promotion of new cultural practices.

This exhibit, organized by the Department of Comparative Literature in cooperation with the University of Michigan Library as part of the Library’s exhibit, “A Sense of Translation in the Philippines Medieval,” tells the story of the Spanish Philippines through its literature and traditions. Here we shall see how one story and its functions as a form of translation, where the task of creating a nation is not seen as a mere translation, but as a continuous act of negotiation. The process of translation can be seen as a means of redefining cultural identity and the way it is perceived and transmitted between different communities.

The exhibit aims to explore how the Philippines has been shaped by its colonial past and how it has redefined its cultural identity over time. It highlights the复杂ities of translation as a process of cultural exchange and the challenges faced in maintaining one’s own identity while living within a larger cultural context.
Lessons Learned

- The history of the Philippines
- Perfectionism: a double-edged sword
- What is history, who writes it, and why that matters
The Future of the Project

Hopefully, it will be possible to safely visit the exhibit in its final form in the Clark Library on the second floor of Hatcher Graduate starting in January, 2021.
Questions?