Hispanofilipino Literature Exhibit

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HispanoFilipino Literature Exhibit

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Project Overview

- 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
#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 activities of this period. Although the official colonial policy was to teach the Spanish language, the Spanish priests who were devoted to contact with Filipino peoples performed learning and documenting native literatures in order to facilitate the process of conversion. It was for this reason that a number of grammars, dictionaries, and introductory religious texts published in Spanish and several local languages were produced throughout the colonial period. Many in these documents were based their way to the University of Michigan and several other archives in the US Midwest.
#3

**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 *Boxer 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.
Map of Manila 1739

Translation, Memory, and the Archive: The Literary Worlds of the Spanish Philippines

By the mid-seventeenth century, the Spanish had established a colonial presence in the Philippines, which were then known as the Spanish East Indies. This presence was marked by the construction of forts and the establishment of trade routes, including the Manila galleon, which connected the Philippines to Acapulco in Mexico via the Strait of Malacca. The galleon carried silver and other goods from the Americas to Asia, and returned with Chinese and other goods.

The year 1739 was particularly significant in the history of the Philippines. It was the year that Philip V, the King of Spain, issued a proclamation known as the Placeto, which granted the Philippines a degree of autonomy. This move was seen as a step towards the modernization of the colony, and it helped to create a sense of national identity among the Filipino people.

In the Philippines, the use of language and translation played a crucial role in the development of cultural and political identity. Spanish was the language of the colonial government, while local languages such as Tagalog and Cebuano were also widely spoken. This period saw the rise of a significant body of literature in the local languages, which helped to preserve and develop the cultural heritage of the Philippines.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Philippines had become a significant hub of trade and cultural exchange, with links to Europe, Asia, and the Americas. This period saw the development of a rich literary tradition, which continues to be celebrated today.
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?