Hispanofilipino Literature Exhibit

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Hispanofilipino Literature Exhibit

Charlotte Fater

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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
Challenges and Solutions
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 Castilian 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.

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Translation figure prominently in the literary activities of this period. Although the official colonial policy was to teach the Spanish language, the Spanish priests who were directly involved in the conversion process preferred to use the vernacular languages of the local inhabitants. Various forms of learning and documenting native languages 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 of these volumes have found 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 christianana*, 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.
The fall of the Spanish Empire set the stage for the US to claim the Philippines as its colony. Amidst the many changes in society transitioning between two imperial powers, Filipino literature in Spanish evolved into a deliberate response to American colonial rule, often engaging in processes through a mixture of resistance and compliance. The literature produced served as a representation of the Filipino people's struggle for identity and national pride. This exhibit, organized by the Department of Comparative Literature in cooperation with the University Library as part of the Sarat Series entitled "Rites of Translation in the Multilingual Milieu," tells the story of the Spanish Philippines through its literature and translations. Here we shall see how many texts function as an idea of translation, where the task of remaking a nation's history is reenvisioning, as the century unfolded, by passing through stages of partial rejection to outright acceptance. The works, thus, serve as a conversation of a period in which identity and culture was explored and redefined, not only linguistically but also socially.
Translation, Memory, and the Archive:
The Literary Worlds of the Spanish Philippines

The year 1739 was pivotal in the history of the Philippines. That year marks the outbreak of the first Visayan War, which set the stage for the spread of Spanish colonialism in the region. The Philippines, nestled in the heart of Southeast Asia, played a crucial role as a key hub in the Pacific trade network, facilitating the exchange of goods and ideas between the East and West. It was at this time that the Philippines began to emerge as an important center of cultural and intellectual exchange, paving the way for the rich literary tradition that would characterize the Spanish colonial era.

From 1739 onwards, the Philippines became a vital link in the trans-Pacific trade routes, connecting Southeast Asia with the Americas. This strategic location attracted a diverse array of individuals, including explorers, traders, missionaries, and writers, who contributed to the development of the region's literary landscape. The interplay of these diverse influences gave rise to a unique blend of cultural expressions that continue to shape the literary identity of the Philippines to this day.

In the context of this historical backdrop, the year 1739 marks a significant turning point not only for the Philippines but also for the broader region. It is during this time that the seeds of a unique literary tradition were sown, reflecting the complex interactions between indigenous cultures, Spanish influence, and the global panorama of the Age of Enlightenment.

To fully appreciate the historical and cultural significance of 1739, it is essential to explore the diverse routes and influences that shaped the Philippines during this pivotal decade. This exploration not only sheds light on the literary production of the time but also offers insights into the broader social, economic, and political contexts that shaped the region's development.
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?