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
#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 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.

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 directly involved in the evangelization of the islands and who wrote religious texts are noted for having performed their own learning and documenting native literacies in order to facilitate the process of conversion.

It was for this reason that a number of grammars, dictionaries, and introductory religious texts were produced throughout the colonial period. Even the first printing press in Southeast Asia was brought to the Philippines, 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.

*La Solidaridad*

*La Solidaridad*

*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 paved the way for the US to claim the Philippines as its colony. Amid the many changes in society transitioning between two imperial powers, Filipino identity in Spanish evolved into a declarative response to American colonialism, often changing its presence through resistance and revolts. Through the lens of popular art, Filipino identity became a central focus of conversations, in which the legacy of colonialism continues to be examined and understood. This exhibit, organized by the Department of Comparative Literature in cooperation with the University Library as part of the Senior Series entitled "Rise of Translations in the Multilingual Mind," explores the story of the Spanish Filipinos through their literature and translations. How we shall see how everyday菲律賓人 faced issues of translation, where the task of preserving a nation’s history for remembrance or for the future, but also by persuading readership through philosophical language, the ways in which the story of the Spanish Filipinos can still be re-told. This exhibit, through its series of translations and interpretations, highlights where the very notion of colonialism is sought externally on a host of images.
Translation, Memory, and the Archive: The Literary Worlds of the Spanish Philippines

The year 1739 was pivotal in the history of the Philippines. By then, the Spanish had been in the region for over three centuries, and the first Filipino-language novel was published in that year. The novel, titled "La Vida de San Agustin," was written by Pedro Calungsod, a Jesuit priest. The book was a significant contribution to the development of Filipino literature and helped establish the Filipino language as a vehicle for literature.

The novel was part of a broader cultural and intellectual movement that sought to adapt the Spanish literary tradition to the local context. This movement represented a form of cultural resistance and a way to maintain and express the identity of the Filipino people.

The Philippines during the 18th century were part of the Spanish Empire, and Manila was a significant hub for trade and communication in the Pacific. The city was a center for the exchange of goods and ideas between the East and West. This period was marked by a surge in international trade and the growth of the Philippine economy.

In the context of this cultural and economic activity, the intellectual and artistic production of the time played a crucial role in shaping the identity of the Filipino people. The novel "La Vida de San Agustin" was one of the many contributions that helped define the literary and cultural heritage of the Philippines.

The Philippines, with its rich history and diverse cultures, remains an important part of the world's literary and cultural landscape.
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?