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
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
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.

Evolution of a Wall Panel

First Encounters

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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 missions instructed their native students in Spanish and several local languages were produced throughout the colonial period. Many of these documents have been preserved in 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 christiania*, 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.

*La Solidaridad*


*ISLAS FILIPINAS*
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 territory. Amidst the many changes in society transitioning between two imperial powers, Filipino identity in Spanish colonialism was not just about the shifting power dynamics but also about the continuation of certain cultural and social norms that persisted in a new context. The exhibit, organized by the Department of Comparative Literature in cooperation with the University Library as part of the Senior Series entitled "Rise of Translation in the Multilingual Midfield," tells the story of the Spanish Philippines through its literature and translations. Here we shall see how many Filipino literature, art, and representation of the Philippines in translation were influenced by various forces. The exhibit aims to highlight the complexities of identity, memory, and the continuation of cultural practices in a changing world.
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.