

Seeds of Change, Seeds of Exchange

Magellan's Voyage and the Philippines

BERNARDITA REYES CHURCHILL*

CHANGE AND EXCHANGE. OLD WORLD AND NEW WORLD

We can probably safely say that one of the greatest events in the history of mankind was the Age of Discovery, when massive changes were brought about as a result of the contacts of the Old and New Worlds, what one writer calls “one of the great collisions of human history.” The story of the encounters between peoples of different nations, races, and religions of the Old World (of Europe) and the New World (of the Americas), changed the cultural, biological, environmental, and technological landscape of practically all the regions of the modern world, not only in the immediate aftermath of the voyages of discovery, but up to this day. The world has never been quite the same since.

Three voyages of discovery during this great age undoubtedly had tremendous consequences in bringing about these changes and sparked what we may consider the first globalization associated with the exchange of cultures and ideas. These are the voyages of Christopher Columbus (Cristóforo Colombo in Latin, Cristóbal Colón in Spanish) to the Americas in 1492, of Vasco da Gama to India in 1498, and Ferdinand Magellan (Fernão de Magalhães in Portuguese) to the Philippines in 1521. These and several other voyages of exploration

and discovery were pioneered by the Iberian countries of Portugal and Spain. Portugal was the most adventurous seafaring nation at that time.

Columbus thought he could go to the Orient, the source of gold and spices, by sailing west. Instead of reaching Asia, he arrived at the Caribbean island that took him to what was the “doorstep” to two “unknown” continents. The Columbus voyage forced cartographers of Europe to revise their maps of the world, as the newly “discovered” lands provided new knowledge of the earth’s landscape and peoples. The process of encounter brought “seeds of change” and concomitant “seeds of exchange” from both Europe and the Americas. It altered flora and fauna with the transfer of many new plants and animals from one world to the other. There was also a reordering of the ethnic composition of countries through migration and, tragically, through decimation by disease, war, and the forcible removal or forced migration of millions of people (as in the case of peoples from Africa to the Americas) to work the sugar plantations and the mines of the New World.

In the light of the celebration of the Columbus Quincentennial Commemoration in 1992, Herman Viola aptly described, in hindsight, what really happened after 1492:

What Columbus had really discovered was... *another old world*, one long populated by numerous and diverse peoples with cultures as distinct, vibrant, and worthy as any to be found in Europe...what Columbus did in 1492 was to link two old worlds, thereby creating *one new world*...It was as if a giant blender had been used to concoct an exotic drink, but the ingredients were the plants, animals, and people of two

* Professor of History (retired), Department of History, University of Philippines. M.A. and Ph.D in Southeast Asian History from Cornell University and The Australian National University, respectively. President of Philippines National Historical Society.

Professora de História, reformada, do Departamento de História da Universidade das Filipinas. Mestrado (Cornell University) e doutoramento (Australian National University) em História do Sudeste Asiático. Presidente da Sociedade Nacional de História, Filipinas.

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hemispheres, and the *product* was really a new world [italics supplied].¹

What was this *product*, this “*another old world*”? This is the “*new world*” that resulted from the linking of two old worlds into one through the crucial intermingling of peoples, animals, plants and diseases between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. A whole variety of plants and food crops were introduced in both directions—sugar, maize or corn (white or yellow), potatoes, tomatoes, peanuts, cacao, pepper, beans, squash, wheat and barley, which altered the diet of the people. Think how the Italians and other Mediterranean countries would have fared without tomatoes in their pasta, this vegetable considered an aphrodisiac in the Old World and called “apples of love,” or “golden apples”—the first tomatoes probably colored yellow. What would the Irish, Germans, and Russians do without their potatoes (native to the highlands of Peru) or the Africans without maize or corn. There was Old World sugar and New World cacao that produced fine chocolates. A veritable Noah’s ark of horses (which the American Indians cherish to this day), cows, pigs, goats, and sheep were transported to new lands. And, of course, sadly, there were germs and diseases—smallpox and measles, among others—which wrought havoc on the peoples of the New World. The first syphilis appeared in Europe brought aboard Spanish ships of *conquistadores* from the Americas. To the New World, Europeans brought Africans in great numbers to work as slaves in the sugar plantations of the Caribbean. They found the local people unsuitable for such labor, or their numbers had been decimated by new diseases. Thus were sowed seeds of racial antagonism in the New World that still persist today. Needless to say, every “seed of change” had both positive and negative consequences.²

Vasco da Gama’s historic voyage to Calicut, India in 1498 brought about, once again, contact with the Orient (as the Asian lands were then referred to) which resulted in the change and exchange of new ideas and fresh knowledge, unfamiliar technologies, and exotic attractions—spices and strange foods, perfumes, precious gems and ornaments, luxurious silks and satins. It should be noted, however, that prior to this time, Europe was not without knowledge of Asia, for medieval travelers, friars, merchants and trading prospectors had traveled overland via caravan routes to places like Java and Sumatra in the Indonesian

Archipelago, Burma and China, and had reported incredible and fabulous stories about these lands and their peoples. There was the famous Marco Polo, the Franciscan Friars Odoric of Pordenone and John of Montecorvino, and the Bolognese Ludovico di Varthema, among others.

The crowning achievement of Portuguese exploration was Vasco da Gama’s historic voyage that opened the sea route to India and returned with a rich cargo. Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) had blazed the trail for overseas expansion, conquest, and conversion. Portuguese mariners, using vital navigational instruments like the quadrant and the astrolabe (from the Arabs), armed with the latest maps of newly discovered lands, supported by formidable naval power and “great ships” or caravels with lateen sails able to carry large numbers of men for long ocean voyages, had by this time more than half a century of Atlantic exploration and trading. The arrival of Vasco da Gama in Calicut, India may be said to have marked a new era of European maritime trade to India and East Asia, characterized by greater volume and more variety, hence lower costs, of many imported commodities treasured in Europe. In the words of an Indian historian, Vasco da Gama’s arrival in Calicut was a “turning point” in the history of India and Europe.³

Another intrepid Portuguese sea captain, Ferdinand Magellan, realized the dream of Columbus by sailing west to reach the east, arriving in the Philippines in March 1521. He pioneered in the southwest passage, and though he died on Mactan in Cebu Island, a Basque sea captain, Juan Sebastián del Cano, traversed the southwest passage in the ship *Victoria* and returned to Spain to complete the first circumnavigation of the globe in 1522, with a Malay on board, Enrique de Malacca, who was the slave of Magellan. The Magellan voyage was probably the most famous expedition in European naval history.

Ferdinand Magellan was born in 1480 in Sabrosa near Oporto, son of a minor nobleman. Several years before leading the expedition that brought him to the Philippines in 1521, he had sailed to the East Indies in 1505 and taken part in the conquest of Malacca in 1511. Having taken Spanish nationality in 1517 to get support for his scheme to take the western route to the East to reach the fabled Maluku Islands (Spice Islands), he was commissioned by Spanish King Charles I in September 1519 to undertake the voyage. It was left to the remnants

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of his expedition to make it to Maluku, where they fell into the hands of the Portuguese. No new lands were annexed to the Spanish empire. It should be noted that Ferdinand Magellan was only the second European visitor to the Philippines, the first being the Portuguese Francisco Serrão (Francisco Serrano) who was shipwrecked in Mindanao in 1512.⁴

In the words of Fernand Braudel, through the pioneering explorations of Portugal and Spain, the Atlantic was linked by Magellan to the Pacific and by Vasco da Gama to the Indian Ocean.⁵ The Magellan voyage brought the Spanish empire to the East and, in particular, changed the world of an archipelago that subsequently became known as *Filipinas*. The accounts of the Magellan voyage introduced to a European audience knowledge of the lands and peoples of the East, which initiated intense European activity in this much-coveted part of the world.

There are three near-contemporary accounts of the Magellan voyage: that written by Maximilian of Transylvania (*De Moluccis Insulis* in Latin, published at Cologne and Rome, 1523); that of Antonio Pigafetta, the Italian chronicler aboard the *Victoria*; and the third in Portuguese by António de Brito, Portuguese captain at Ternate, who had written an account of the Spanish arrival there. These survivor accounts offered the “first contextualized European accounts” of the Philippines, Brunei, the Moluccas, and Timor. Another text was that of Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola—*Conquista de las Islas Malucas al Rey Felipe III*, published in Madrid in 1609.⁶ It is interesting to note that the account of the Magellan voyage and circumnavigation was

included in several important subsequent collections on the Spanish voyages, such as the three-volume *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi* (Some Voyages and Travels), published by Giovanni Battista Ramusio (Venice, 1550, 1559), probably an indication of how important had been his contribution to explorations and discoveries. There were also compilations by the Spanish (Antonio de Herrera, 1601, 1615), Dutch (Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, 1595, 1596), and British (Richard Eden, 1552; Richard Hakluyt, 1582).⁷

There is, of course, a great tradition of Portuguese histories of discoveries beginning with the publication of Fernão Lopes de Castanheda’s *História do Descobrimento & Conquista da India pelos Portugueses* (History of the Discovery and Conquest of India by the Portuguese) in 1551. There is also João de Barros’ *Asia: Dos Factos que os Portugueses Fizeram no Descobrimento e Conquista dos Mares e Terras do Oriente* (Asia: Facts Relating to the Portuguese Discovery and Conquest of Oriental Seas and Lands), commonly known as *Décadas*, published in Lisbon in 1552-1553, and several others.⁸

As a result of the voyages of discovery, the Europeans produced maps and graphic images of the new discoveries, albeit in limited numbers and circulation, available only to those involved in the discoveries (state patrons and mariners) and a select group of collectors and cartographers. The two nations most active in pioneering new discoveries, Portugal and Spain, were the most secretive in guarding new geographical knowledge. In the years immediately following the *Victoria*’s circumnavigation, the Pacific Ocean became a reality on European maps, where it



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was given boundaries in the east and west. The earliest maps of Southeast Asia with references to the Philippines were made by Portuguese travelers and cartographers even before Magellan's voyage to the Philippines (Francisco Rodrigues, *Livro da Geographia Oriental*, 1512-1515). The *Victoria's* circumnavigation provided further a wealth of new knowledge for European cartographers, who began producing maps based on empirical data. By 1600, with innovations in engraving and printing, the number of maps multiplied, and the international circulation of maps began, first in Venice, then in Germany, Holland, and England. Of course, Chinese maps had preceded, by centuries, Gutenberg's printing innovation in Europe. In China, methods of paper manufacture and woodblock printing were already in use, and maps and images were being exported to Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Tibet.⁹

CHANGE AND EXCHANGE. ASIA AND EUROPE

The various Iberian voyages from the sixteenth century that brought Europe to Asia and Asia to Europe, brought change and exchange through European seaborne traders, soldiers, and missionaries who launched themselves into these hitherto exotic lands, transforming lands and peoples on both sides of the globe. One can imagine various trajectories shooting from one direction to the other, singly and simultaneously, as changes and exchanges continued, and continue even to the present day. We cannot negate, however, the historically significant exchanges between the Mediterranean and China through the caravan silk roads dating back to Roman times, and the role of Asian traders—Arabs, Gujeratis, Malays, Javanese, Chinese—in this exchange. After 1500 the Europeans began to play a significantly new role in maritime trade.¹⁰

The “seeds of change” and “seeds of exchange” with reference to the cultural, biological, and technological consequences of the first Iberian (Old World) contacts with the New World had their echoes in the exchanges between Europe and Asia as well. A variety of flora types crossed lands and seas beginning in 1500. The list is almost illimitable, resulting in changes in social habits and diets. From southern India came mango, mangosteen, and durian. It was said of durian, which was also found in Malacca, that there

was “no fruit in the world to be compared with it.” Observing on opening that it smelled like rotten onions, the account further continued that “the fruit is for color and taste like an excellent meate, much used in Spain, called Mangiar Blanco, which is made of henne's flesh, distilled with sugar.”¹¹

The Portuguese introduced into the Pearl River delta region maize, peanuts, sweet potato, yam, tomato, lettuce, watercress (Portuguese greens), capsicum pepper, okra, manioc (cassava for making tapioca), papaya, custard apple, guava, pineapple (from Central America), pumpkin, and varieties of onions. These crops changed the people's lifestyle, and, in the case of maize, served as a dietary supplement of the poor, making the difference between life and death during times of famine. Potato and sweet potato also found their way to Japan from the Philippines.

Even in the small island of Timor, the New World imports included maize, beans, groundnuts, papaya, manioc of various varieties, cashew nuts, guava, capsicum pepper, and sugar apples. From India came mango, jackfruit, pimento (allspice), and cinnamon. Ginger and citrus fruits came via the Malay and Chinese trade network.

Fabled spices from Maluku provided spectacular profits in the European markets and were initially the lure behind the entry of the Iberians and northern Europeans into the maritime trade of Asia. These were pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, turmeric, cloves, nutmeg (and mace), called the “noble fruit” of the Banda Islands.

Aromatic woods, like the famed sandalwood in the island of Timor, were noted by Antonio Pigafetta, who wrote about a Chinese junk trading in sandalwood (destined for manufacture of incense sticks and luxury items in China) and wax in Luzon.

Tobacco, cultivated by the Portuguese in Brazil, also arrived in Asia via the galleon trade from Mexico and went to Taiwan, China, Korea, Burma, and southern India, and eventually also to Java.

If one goes to the major botanical gardens in Europe, Asia and the Americas, one sees the results of global plant exchanges dating from the middle of the sixteenth century, such as those found in the Royal Botanical Gardens in Lisbon (mid-sixteenth century); Hortus Botanicus of Leiden (1590), the earliest scientific garden in Europe; Jardin des Plantes of Paris; Amsterdam Botanical Gardens (1682); the Royal

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Botanical Gardens (1763) and Kew Gardens in London (1772); and Jardin Botanico in Madrid. There are also botanical gardens in Africa, China, India (Calcutta), Sri Lanka (Kandy), Java (Bogor), Rio de Janeiro, and Mauritius. These gardens were plant nurseries that were precursors of commercial agricultural estates, such as those cultivated to cloves and nutmeg, tobacco, tea and coffee, or even opium, where the lure for profits far outweighed mere scientific curiosity.

The reverse flow of the global exchange brought rice, sugar, tea, coffee, rhubarb, ornamental plants, and opium from Asia to Europe. Sugar cane was indigenous to India and the Pacific and was brought to Europe by Muslim traders and flourished in parts of Italy, Spain, and the Canary Islands. The Portuguese introduced sugar cane to the West African island of São Tomé. Soybeans went from China to Southeast Asia, and by the seventeenth century soy sauce could be found in England. Tea and tea culture were introduced to Europe via the silk roads. Tea was exported from Macao and Manila to Europe. Coffee entered Europe via the Ottoman trade routes before the Dutch adopted mocha varieties for commercial cultivation in Ceylon and Java around 1690. Ornamental and landscape plants like the gingko tree, golden rain tree, pagoda or scholar's tree, and the tree of heaven found their way into European gardens.

A negative consequence of this global exchange was of course the introduction of diseases—smallpox, syphilis, cholera, beriberi—for which Asian plants served as sources of tropical medicines, including opium, areca, and concoctions made from hashish. Thus Indian- and Chinese-derived systems of medical and botanical knowledge were introduced. For instance, acupuncture was thought to be more effective than European blood-letting. Herbal drugs, remedies and other indigenous medical systems became acceptable alternatives to Western practices. The New World introductions into Asia were in many instances quickly indigenized, leaving their origins obscure.¹²

Following in the train of Iberian traders and *conquistadores*, European missionaries—Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits—embarked on the mission of converting to Christianity the elites as well as the mass populations of Asian lands, including the “Middle Kingdom” (China) and Japan, the land of the shoguns. Except for the Philippines and Vietnam, few in Asia accepted this alternative to the

prevailing traditional cosmology. Alongside the conversion came resulting alterations in social values and political systems. In this missionary enterprise, the role of the printing press was crucial in the dissemination of the new “superior” Christian religious doctrine and philosophical concepts, as well as subjects of a secular character, such as geography, languages, and histories. The Catholic world view met with a variety of responses, at least for the period from 1500-1800, ranging from selective acceptance to confrontation and rejection in the case of Japan, gradual change in the case of China, or irreversible cultural assimilation in the case of the Philippines.¹³

THE MAGELLAN VOYAGE AND THE PHILIPPINES

Let us revisit the significance of the historic first voyage of Ferdinand Magellan in Philippine historiography and take a different look at Philippine history during the period from 1500-1800 away from the narrow perspective of island history to a broader view of the Philippines in the context of a wider Asian history. In so doing we learn a lot more of how the Philippines played out its relations with its neighbors in Asia, the New World of Mexico, and Spain in the period of its supposed isolation during the first two hundred years of Spanish colonial rule, something that does not figure in Philippine historical writing. This is a perspective that goes against the grain of Philippine historiography now, which tends to be more focused on what was happening to the Filipinos rather than what was happening to the Philippines in the context of the colonial affairs of Spain and the other European powers in East and Southeast Asia. I will probably be criticized for taking what might be considered a step backward, but I feel that there is no place for the extreme ethnocentrism that is sometimes evident in some Philippine historical writing. We should also remedy the narrow vista that informs the teaching of Philippine history and deprives the Filipino student of the knowledge to be able to relate the Philippines to a broader Asian context.

In the exposition that was presented in the first sections of this article, I have tried to point out how the European Age of Discovery set the stage for the changes and exchanges which characterized relations among lands and peoples in the known world and

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which engaged and transformed Europe, the Americas, and Asia in the era of discoveries from 1500 until the period of imperialist interventions in the “high colonial age” of the nineteenth century.

In this section, I will focus on the consequences and repercussions of the Magellan voyage on the historical development of the Philippines and the Filipinos. In my view, the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan to the Philippines had the immediate effect of bringing to the areas that he visited the trappings of European and Spanish culture, while he and his men (as noted in Pigafetta's account) were introduced to the culture of the people of these islands. If one re-reads his account, Pigafetta stood in awe of some of the cultural practices he noted among the people of this archipelago, not always sympathetically, just as the Cebuanos were impressed and puzzled with wonderment at this strange-looking group of “white men” who seemed disposed to fire their cannons at every opportunity! The Magellan expedition was big news in Spain, made even bigger by the feat of the first circumnavigation of the globe, even if it was not “the noble captain” himself who had accomplished this. The *Victoria* even brought a small cargo of cinnamon and mace, samples of the much-coveted spices from the Indies, realizing a meager 4 per cent from the investment in the voyage. It also confirmed the existence of a southwestern route to the Indies and raised hopes for Spanish claims to the Spice Islands. Eventually, the rest of Europe, as far as the accounts of the expedition became available, learned of the Philippines and other places in this part of the globe.

The Pigafetta account is considered “a key source in Philippine historiography,” in the words of a Filipino scholar. The Magellan expedition stayed in the Philippines for about seven months (in a voyage that took three years) and the section on the Philippines is its centerpiece, consisting of a third of the entire account. The account includes twenty-three painted maps, nine of which are of the Philippine Islands—representations of “brown islands in a blue ocean.” It is rich in ethnographic data of the places visited in the Philippines and elsewhere and should really be studied for it is the first printed source for the history of some of the islands in 1521. Some of his observations are revealing. He wrote that there was gold in the islands; that Cebu traded with China, India and Siam; and that

the people loved “peace, ease and quiet.”¹⁴ It should be pointed out that there have also been various other accounts of the Magellan expedition published in recent times, and a comparison of the ethnographic data found in them would be interesting and useful to reconstruct the pre-Spanish period of Philippine history.¹⁵

Let me point out here that Portuguese chroniclers also produced some of the earliest works on the Philippines in the sixteenth century, which recorded the beginning of the relations between the people of the Philippines and the Portuguese who came to the Indies. These chronicles also contain important ethnographic data on the peoples of the islands and can be useful to reconstruct Philippine conditions at this time.¹⁶

What the Magellan voyage did was to bring the Philippines to the attention of Spain and Europe. Subsequent Spanish voyages resulted in the Philippines becoming a colony of Spain for over three hundred years. In keeping with the theme of “change and exchange,” it can be said that the western world was also brought to the attention of the Philippines, and the resulting colonial relations transformed both colonizer and colonized. The impact of Spanish and European culture on the Philippines is not unknown, and so I will not dwell on this topic. What I would like to do, as explained earlier, is to look at “globalization” and Philippine history during the colonial age.

The great distance between Manila and Madrid resulted in the Philippines being provisioned and governed directly from New Spain, or Mexico. The relations between the Philippines and Mexico is a subject that has been largely ignored by Filipino and Mexican historians, and this is a “puzzlement,” considering that the relations existed for about 250 years, and archival records on the Philippines in Mexico are quite voluminous. Thus, in many instances, when we say Spanish, we probably mean Mexican because it was not until the nineteenth century, after Mexico became independent from Spain in 1821, that direct relations were established between the Philippines and Spain.

Let me briefly relate the Spanish-Mexican flavor in Philippine culture and society, while I also point to traces of Asian and Philippine influences in Mexican culture and society, the result of American-Asian exchanges. Mexican-Philippine relations, more or less, began in 1525 when the expedition of Alonso de

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Saavedra Ceron sailed from Zihuatanejo and arrived in northeastern Mindanao, reported as a place rich in gold, chickens, wild pigs and coconuts; where the women were beautiful, the men fair-skinned, and both sported long hair; where weapons consisted of iron cutlasses, cannons, long arrows, and blowguns tipped with poison herbs; and where blood-brother ceremonies (*kasi-kasi*) were performed to forge new friendships. From that time on, all subsequent Spanish expeditions to the Philippines originated from Mexico, and this connection continued for the succeeding 250 years via the galleon trade.

It has been said that Spain's experience in the pacification and Christianization of Mexico was not repeated in the Philippines, where the process was relatively peaceful and bloodless. In time, many colonial institutions already in place in Mexico were eventually transported to the Philippines. For instance, the settlement patterns in the Philippines followed a grid-iron (*parilla*) pattern or checker board (*tablero* or *dama*) consisting of two major plazas—the *plaza mayor* (main square) and the *plaza de armas* (parade ground). Witness the layout of Intramuros as well as major Philippine towns up to this day. The *encomienda* was introduced, *encomendado* to an *encomendero*, where the *Indios* were required to render *prestashop personal* or *polo y servicio personal*, patterned after the Mexican *repartimiento*. Three classes of Mexicans came to the Philippines—the *hombre de Intramuros* or bureaucrats who were *criollos* if not Spanish *peninsulares*, the clergy from five religious orders, and the *guachinangos* or common soldiers.

Looking at the specific cultural influences that came from Mexico, there are the churches that dot the Philippine landscape and resemble in architectural style and ornamentation those found in Mexico. Two Mexican-made religious images brought to the Philippines in the seventeenth century are among the most popular with the Filipino masses: the Virgin of Antipolo and the *Cristo Negro* or the Black Nazarene in Quiapo. During the Lenten Holy Week, the *penitencia* (flagellation) is still practiced when *penitentes* (flagellants) symbolically imitate the passion of Christ, including the rituals of carrying the cross and crucifixion. This was supposedly introduced by the Franciscans in the seventeenth century. A unique festival in Marinduque called the *Moriones* (*morion* means steel helmet) is held for five days beginning on

Ash Wednesday and ending on Easter Sunday. This fiesta, in honor of the Roman centurion Longinus, was probably transplanted in the middle of the nineteenth century from Cuernavaca or Morelos in Mexico.

Christmas in the Philippines also comes with a Mexican flavor—the predawn *misa de aguinaldo* or the *misa de gallo* is a tradition, and Christmas would not be Christmas without the colorful lantern or *farol*, the Filipino version of the Mexican *piñata*. And, of course, there is the fragrant *calachuchi* (used in early times as flowers for the dead) and the Christmas flower, *pascua* or poinsettia.

Spanish-Mexican words abound in Philippine languages, including the Mexican-Spanish pronunciation of *cabayo* (*caballo*, which came to the Philippines in 1575), *sibuyas* (*cebolla*), and *silya* (*silla*). Then there is Chabacano or *español de tienda*, spoken in the Puerto in Cavite City, where the galleons docked upon arrival in the Philippines, and in Zamboanga, where Spanish and Mexican soldiers were stationed in the fort. The institution of *compadrazgo* or *compadre* system also came from Mexico, and also *nanay* and *tatay* for mother and father.

There is also a considerable contribution from Mexican flora: maize, sweet potatoes and cassava or manioc (tree potato), tobacco, cacao, papaya, guava, avocado, *camachile*, *chico*, *cacahuate*, and cactus, among others. In fact, some of the fruits and vegetables that came from Mexico are still known by their Mexican-Spanish names. Certain food items were also introduced, indigenized by the Filipinos: the Mexican *tamale* is the Philippine *tamales* with Philippine ingredients; Mexican *champurreado* is Philippine *champurrado*, which is chocolate-flavored rice gruel. Cockfighting and *tuba* came from the Philippines and became popular among the *clase pobre* in Mexico, and so did the *yoyo*.

A Mexican scholar graphically describes this exchange in the following words:

"When you speak about *zacate* and *petates*, when the women of the barrios go to the *tianguis* and buy *sincama* and *chico*; when they cook *atole*, *tamales* and *champurrado*; when the *compadre* comes into the house and is especially respected by all the family; when in the middle of the great Easter celebrations in Marinduque and other places you see the *penitentes* scourging their backs, you are living, as yours by right, that great

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popular transculturation. And in Mexico, when the people go to the *fiesta* of the Patron Saint of the village, and watch with eyes full of wonder the coloured glory of the fireworks; when they bet and haggle and imagine all kinds of tricks in the cockpit; and in the plaza they eat the delicious *mango de Manila*, those peoples from Mexico are living, perhaps unknowingly, the great process of transculturation that began four hundred years ago and ended in 1815 with the last galleon.”¹⁷

THE PHILIPPINES IN ASIA

In the early decades of Spanish rule in the Philippines and after the inauguration of Manila-Acapulco trade in 1565, using the *tournavaje*, or the “Urdaneta Passage,” back to Mexico, Manila was described as “one of the most thriving ‘European’ cities of Asia,... one of the greatest places of trade in the world.” It was reported that in Manila can be secured,

“rich goods better than any to be found in Spain and more finished than anything of its kind in the rest of the world, such as satins, damasks, taffetas, brocades, gold- and silver-cloth, woolen shawls of a thousand kinds; chinaware finer than that of India, quite transparent and gilded in a thousand ways...an abundance of jewels and chains of gold, wax, paper, cinnamon and quantities of rice.”¹⁸

Items traded in the galleons found their way throughout the Pacific, the Americas, and as far as the Mediterranean. Thus the galleon trade played a key role in the links between Europe and East Asia via the New World.

Through this trade, Spain also continued the close connections between the Philippines and China, at least with Chinese traders, who had been coming to the Philippines for centuries before the arrival of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. The galleon trade was basically a trade in Chinese products and wares that the Chinese brought to Manila from elsewhere in Asia. A Spanish Jesuit commented in 1694:

“They began to bring their rich silks when they saw our silver, and also provided the islands with cattle and even with ink and paper. From India and Melaka there come to Manila black and white slaves, both men and women, hardworking and

industrious, and from Japan a great amount of wheat, flour, silver, weapons and other things.”¹⁹

The Portuguese in Macao played a key role in this trade. From 1608 the Spanish merchants in Manila were allowed to send one ship a year to Macao to buy supplies. Portuguese ships arrived in the Philippines every June, bringing spices, black slaves, cotton, and other items from India, and luxuries from Persia; they returned in January with Mexican silver. Officially this trade did not exist, and it never paid taxes, although the value of imports from Macao was quite substantial.

The Philippines was also a traditional part of the Japanese trading system. It was reported that “every year Japanese ships come loaded with trading goods,” including “ever increasing amounts of silver.” A Japanese ship in 1607 reportedly carried to Manila “silver, saltpeter, hemp for rope, flour, nails, iron and copper.” A priest in the Philippines commented that “when trade with Japan flourished, Manila was the pearl of the Orient.” However, trade with Japan did not last long. Japan decided to close its doors to the outside world.²⁰

A seventeenth-century friar described the international market that Manila had become, with the most incredible riches changing hands between traders from all parts of the world. “The diversity of the peoples who are seen in Manila and its environs,” reported the friar in 1662, “is the greatest in the world, for these include men from all kingdoms and nations: Spain, France, England, Italy, Flanders, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Muscovy; people from all the Indies, both east and west; and Turks, Greeks, Persians, Tatars, Chinese, Japanese, Africans and other Asians.”²¹ This picture is, of course, deceiving, for this was not Manila all year round; this was only for the three months of the fair that attended the preparations for the departure of the galleons bound for Acapulco. Then Manila relapsed into indolence and inactivity for nine months while awaiting the return of the galleon to Manila.

In looking back at the impact of this “first globalization” on the Philippines, we can probably say that fortunately it was minimal compared with the impact on the New World or elsewhere where colonialism ruled with an iron hand. There was no demographic disaster in the Philippines, probably because the indigenous people had long had regular

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contact with practically all the neighboring cultures in Asia—Chinese, Japanese, Arabs, Chams (Orang Dampuan), Indonesians and Malays, people from Sukhothai (Siam) and Annam (Vietnam)—and they were relatively immune to new diseases. They did not suffer the slavery that accompanied the cultivation of sugar plantations or the mining of silver in the Americas. The Spaniards did not work to develop natural resources; they ignored agriculture, content to depend on food imports from Chinese “food junks” to survive in the subsistence economy of the islands under their control, and satisfied with the wealth which occasionally came when the galleons returned safely to Manila.

There were, of course, changes in the lives of the people as a result of this “first globalization” and more than three hundred years of Spanish-Filipino exchange. Some of the trappings of European and American culture have entered into their own indigenous culture. Hopefully, only what is best for Filipinos will endure.

If we look back at this “first globalization” that resulted from Magellan’s voyage to the East Indies, one can imagine the Philippines in the middle of this vast ocean where the Pacific joined the South China Sea and to these shores came various strands of culture, including various peoples from Europe, America, and Asia, that eventually formed the beautiful mosaic that is the Philippines today. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 See article of Herman J. Viola, “Seeds of Change,” in Herman J. Viola and Carolyn Margolis (eds.), *Seeds of Change, Five Hundred Years Since Columbus* (Washington, DC, and London: Smithsonian Institution, 1991), pp. 11-15.
A recent book, *1421, The Year China Discovered America*, by Gavin Menzies (New York: William Morrow-Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), asserted that a fleet of Chinese treasure ships led by the Ming dynasty Admiral Zheng He had reached the New World in 1421, seventy-one years ahead of Columbus, and that his ships circumnavigated the world ahead of Magellan’s *Victoria* in 1522. He further asserted that Magellan learned of the strait which now bears his name from Chinese maps; that maize was carried to Asia before Columbus landed in America in 1492; that Chinese fleets brought Asian chickens and roses to South America, and coconuts from the South Pacific to Ecuador. Needless to say, some historians have not readily accepted his ground-breaking history and consider it at best a “flight of fancy.” But Menzies had produced a *New York Times* best-seller.
- 2 Viola, “Seeds of Change,” pp. 11-15; see also William H. McNeill, “American Food Crops in the Old World,” in Viola and Margolis, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-59.
Archaeological evidence suggests that the people of the Americas also suffered from tuberculosis, a few intestinal parasites, and some types of influenza. See *Newsweek* Columbus Special Issue, “When Worlds Collide, 1492-1992, How Columbus’s Voyages Transformed Both East and West,” Fall/Winter 1991, p. 55.
- 3 D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia* (London & New York: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1981), p. 213; Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), pp. 1-14; A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire, 1415-1808, A World on the Move* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 9, 27, 44, 120, 124, 156.
- 4 See José Manuel Garcia, *As Filipinas na Histografia Portuguesa do Século XVI (Philippines in Portuguese 16th century historiography)* (Porto: CEPESA, 2003).
- 5 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York and Cambridge: Harper Colophon Books, Wm. Collins Sons, Ltd., 1972), p. 224.
- 6 Cited in Geoffrey C. Gunn, *First Globalization: The Eurasian Exchange, 1500-1800* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), pp. 21-22.
- 7 Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 25-30, *passim*.
- 8 Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 23-25.
- 9 See *ibid.*, pp. 113-120. Also José Manuel Garcia and Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, *The First Portuguese Maps and Sketches of Southeast Asia and the Philippines 1512-1571* ([s.l.], CEPESA, 2002).
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 11 Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
- 12 See *ibid.*, pp. 59-84, *passim*.
- 13 See *ibid.*, pp. 85-11, *passim*.
- 14 See Resil B. Mojares, *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2002), pp. 20-51. See also section on the Philippines in Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Book 2, Vol. 1: The Century of Discovery (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1965), pp. 623-650.
- 15 The latest publication in the Philippines on the Magellan expedition is Fernando Oliveira, *Viagem de Fernão Magalhães (The Voyage of Ferdinand Magellan)*, with transliteration and English translation by Peter Schreurs, MSC (Manila: The National Historical Institute, 2002). The original Portuguese manuscript is in the University Library of Leiden, The Netherlands. In 1976 Pierre Valière, professor of Portuguese, Brasilian and Luso-African studies of the University of Nantes (France), published an in-depth study of the manuscript.
- 16 See José Manuel Garcia, *op. cit.*
- 17 Materials from this section on Philippine-Mexican relations come from an unpublished paper of the late Isagani R. Medina, 1990, which he very generously gave me a copy of. See also Rafael Bernal, *México en Filipinas: estudio de una transculturación* (Mexico, 1965).
- 18 Quoted in Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492-1763* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers Inc., 2004), p. 206.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 220.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 218.
- 21 Quoted in Robert R. Reed, *Colonial Manila: The Context of Hispanic Urbanism and the Process of Morphogenesis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), p. 33.