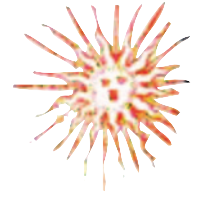


Portugal's Relations with the Philippines

According
to 16th Century
Portuguese
Chroniclers

JOSÉ MANUEL GARCIA*



Portuguese historiography of the 16th century contributed towards European knowledge of the Philippines, by pointing out the most significant questions of the beginning of the relations established by Portugal with the people and the land of the Philippines in that century, and making them well

known. This material in the History of Portuguese Expansion throughout the World has not yet been studied as a whole, which is why we feel it is necessary to draw attention to the more relevant elements and episodes, bearing in mind the sources which focused on them.

The bibliography on the History of the Philippines in the 16th century generally only refers to Spanish sources, which is why the importance of events in which the Portuguese were protagonists is unknown. Such events really should be duly evaluated, through the narratives and descriptions given by the main Portuguese chroniclers that wrote about oriental topics in the 16th century:

Fernão Lopes de Castanheda (c. 1500-1559) – *History of the discovery and conquest of India by the Portuguese*, which began to be written around 1531 and was printed between 1551 and 1561.

João de Barros (c. 1496-1570) – *Asia by João de Barros*, which began to be written around 1531 and was printed between 1552 and 1563, with a

* History graduate from Lisbon University Arts Faculty, was a member of the Executive Committee of the National Commission for the Comemorations of the Portuguese Discoveries. He is currently a consultant for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, voting member of the Portuguese Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, and holds a scholarship from the Foundation for Science and Technology. Among his works are: *História de Portugal* (1981), *As Viagens dos Descobrimentos* (1983), *Ao Encontro dos Descobrimentos* (1994), *Breve História dos Descobrimentos e Expansão de Portugal* (1999), *A Viagem de Vasco da Gama à Índia* (1999), *Pedro Álvares de Cabral e a Primeira Viagem aos Quatro Cantos do Mundo* (2001).

Licenciado em História pela Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa, foi vogal da Comissão Executiva da Comissão Nacional para a Comemoração dos Descobrimentos Portugueses. Actualmente é consultor da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, vogal do Centro Português de Estudos do Sudeste Asiático e bolseiro da Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia. Obras mais importantes: História de Portugal (1981), As Viagens dos Descobrimentos (1983), Ao Encontro dos Descobrimentos (1994), Breve História dos Descobrimentos e Expansão de Portugal (1999), A Viagem de Vasco da Gama à Índia (1999), Pedro Álvares de Cabral e a Primeira Viagem aos Quatro Cantos do Mundo (2001).

posthumous edition in 1615 of a fourth decade, prepared by João Baptista Lavanha.

Gaspar Correia (c. 1492-c. 1563?) – *Legends of India*, written between 1550 and 1563 but only printed for the first time in the 19th century.

António Galvão (?-1557) – *Treatise of the Discoveries*, published for the first time in 1563 (which was a posthumous edition, since its author died in 1557) and a treatise on the Moluccas from around 1544, which remained in manuscript format until being printed in 1971.

Diogo do Couto (1542-1616) – *From the Asia of Diogo do Couto. About the feats of the Portuguese during the conquest and discovery of lands and seas in the Orient*, written between 1595 and 1616, which was printed in stages between 1612 and the 18th century.

There are also other authors who made sporadic contributions, whom we will also point out.

1. FERDINAND MAGELLAN IN THE PHILIPPINES (1521)

The Portuguese arrived in the Moluccas in 1512, and it was between this year and 1515 that Tomé Pires was the first Portuguese author to write about the *luções* (Luzons), the people who occupied the island of Luzon (*Lução*).

The first Portuguese to arrive at these islands was Ferdinand Magellan in 1521, but he did so at the service of Spain, and this was the first fact to be pointed out by Portuguese chroniclers when referring to the history of that territory.

António Galvão was the only Portuguese chronicler of the 16th century to record the name of the islands of *São Lázaro*, the name Ferdinand Magellan gave to the Philippines.

2. THE TRAVELS OF SIMÃO DE ABREU AND D. JORGE DE MENESES

Simão de Abreu (1523)

It is uncertain on which date the Portuguese saw the lands of the Philippines for the first time, but it could possibly have been as early as 1523, if we accept the possibility that this was when they came close to the island of Mindanao, during the journey Simão de Abreu made in that year to explore the route between the Moluccas and Malacca via Borneo.



Map of Mindanao, 16th century. The southern island was probably the first sight Portuguese navigators had of the Philippine archipelago, around 1523.

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António Galvão:

“In the same year of (1)523, in the month of May, António de Brito, who was the captain of the Moluccas, sent Simão de Abreu, his cousin, to discover the route from Borneo to Malacca. They sighted the islands of Manada (Menado, in the far North of the island of Sulawesi), and Panguensara (islands of Likiepang and Bangka). They went through the strait of *Dantreminao* and *Taguina* (that is, ‘between Minao and Taguina’, which is to say they went through the strait between the islands of Mindanao and Basilan) to the islands of São Miguel (Cagayan Sulu), which are located seven degrees to the North, and from there went on to the island of Borneo, and along its entire coast”.

According to this excerpt, which seems to be well founded, we can accept the idea that Simão de Abreu’s ship sailed between the islands of Mindanao and Basilan, thus having been the first Portuguese to sail Filipino waters.

Fernão Lopes de Castanheda – Had only vague news about this trip having been made.

João de Barros – Had a general idea that this was the first journey via Borneo.

Diogo do Couto – Mentioned the journey made by Simão de Abreu based on what was written by Fernão Lopes de Castanheda.

D. Jorge de Meneses (1526)

In 1526 D. Jorge de Meneses followed the Borneo route, passing the island of Mindanao.

Fernão Lopes de Castanheda – Was not well-informed about the journey.

João de Barros – Described the journey in greater detail.

Diogo do Couto – Followed what was written by Castanheda.

3. SIMÃO DE VERA’S DEATH IN MINDANAO (1528)

The interest of the Portuguese in the South Philippines in the 1520’s is mentioned in a few brief and vague references.

One is in regard to the intention of Gomes de Sequeira to go to this island in 1527, a trip that never came about.

The other is about a journey made to this area in 1528 by Simão de Vera, who died on a trip ashore in order to fetch supplies before continuing his journey to Malacca.

Fernão Lopes de Castanheda – Undetailed reference.

João de Barros – Idem

Diogo do Couto – Idem

4. JOÃO DA CANHA PINTO’S GREED AND TREASON IN MINDANAO AND *SIRIAGO* (1535)

The first trip made by Portuguese to the island of Mindanao about which details are known was the one made under the leadership of João da Canha Pinto, whose deplorable actions were severely criticised by the chroniclers who wrote about them.

The trip made by this Portuguese sailor to the Philippines was made in the context of the successive initiatives carried out by the Portuguese, in their attempt to obtain revenue during their journeys to lands located so far away from their homeland.

His mission arose in the context of a conspiracy thought out by the inhabitants of the Moluccas to divide the Portuguese who were in the area, in order to carry out a plan devised to kill them. This plan consisted of convincing them that if they sent an expedition to Mindanao they would find a lot of gold there.

When João da Canha Pinto realised that he was on a mission of geographical exploration that would bring him no profit, since he didn’t find the gold (or spices) he expected to find in Mindanao, he decided to take natives prisoner with the intent to sell them as slaves and thereby make his journey lucrative. By thus doing he went back on his promise to establish friendly relations with the local people.

Fernão Lopes de Castanheda – Supplies details about this episode.

João de Barros – Also mentions the same events.

Gaspar Correia – Follows what Castanheda wrote, with imperfections.

Diogo do Couto – Follows what Castanheda wrote, providing a more detailed and critical account.

5. FRANCISCO DE CASTRO’S MISSION TO MINDANAO (1538)

The nobleman Francisco de Castro took pains to learn more about the geography of the Mindanao region and to increase relations between the Portuguese and Filipinos. His activities had positive

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Fernão Lopes de Castanheda's *História do Descobrimeto e Conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses*.

results because he followed the orders of António Galvão's demanding and discerning leadership, who also provided important information about this matter.

António Galvão – “In the very same year of (1) 538, António Galvão, who was captain in the Moluccas, sent a ship to the North with Francisco de Castro as its captain, with firm orders to convert as many as possible to Christians, since Christians were needed in that region, António Galvão himself had converted many (Christians) such as ‘*celebres*’ (sic, for Celebes; i.e., Sulawesi), macaçares, Ambonese, Moors, *Morotax* (sic), and in many other places.

Upon Francisco de Castro's arrival at the islands of *Mi(n)danao*, and others he discovered beyond them, six kings were baptised with water, along with their wives, children and subjects. António Galvão had most of them named *Ioannes*, in memory of the mediator reigning Portugal, so great was (his) (memory) of this man”.

Fernão Lopes de Castanheda – Developed the above information with details possibly supplied by António Galvão:

“Upon realising that it would be possible to convert souls and gain land at the same time, António Galvão sent an honest gentleman, by the name of Francisco de Castro, to these lands, along with two priests, who he charged to make friends with the kings of those lands and encourage them to take on our Belief, giving them gifts and other items.

After he left Ternate, Francisco de Castro came upon such terrible weather that he was forced to sail wherever the winds took him; and after some days he came upon some islands over one hundred leagues to the North of the Moluccas, which had remained undiscovered until that time. He discovered that the island he chose to disembark upon was called *Satigano* (Possibly the island of Sarangani (5° 30' North and 125° 28' East), the people and king of which were gentiles. Francisco de Castro immediately made

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friends with these people; to seal this friendship he and the king both drew blood from their arms, according to the custom of these people, and drank each others blood. The king converted to Christianity a few days later and his queen and one of his children were baptised with him, along with three of the king's brothers and many noblemen and peasants. Having spent twenty-two days on these activities, Francisco de Castro then set sail once more, leaving behind him much goodwill. Sailing along the island of Mindanao, he arrived at a river, along the banks of which was located a city called *Soligano* (Possibly the island of Surigau or Siargau (9° 55' North and 126° 10' East), the king of which converted to Christianity along with his queen and two of his daughters and many other people. On this same island he also converted to Christianity the king of *Butuano* (a small island in the bay of Butuan, 9° 9' North and 125° 31' East), who they named King John the Great, and the king of *Pimilارانo* (Possibly located in the bay of Dumankilas 7° 43' North and 123° 7' East), who also took on the same name of King John; and the king of *Camisino*, who was named King Francis, and thus were also converted to Christianity the wives and children of these kings, and many of their subjects”.

João de Barros – Points out details identical to those provided by Castanheda, possibly also based on testimony by António Galvão.

Diogo do Couto – Follows the writings of Castanheda.

6. THE VOYAGES OF ANTÓNIO DE ALMEIDA AND BELCHIOR FERNANDES CORREIA TO MINDANAO (1543)

The mission carried out by Francisco de Castro was that which left the deepest Portuguese mark on the Philippines of the 16th century, a mark still very much in evidence when the men on the Ruy Lopez de Villalobos' expedition visited the islands in 1543.

It was when he mentioned this expedition that António Galvão became the first Portuguese author to record the name Philippines.

The most important references to the contacts established in 1543 in the Philippines between the Spanish and the Portuguese were made by:

Gabriel Rebelo – who described the missions of the two Portuguese sent successively by the captain of



Portrait of Diogo do Couto, from the first edition of his *Década Quinta*.

Ternate, Dom Jorge de Castro, to meet with the Spaniards in order to remove them from the area and maintain the Portuguese presence in the area.

Diogo do Couto – who closely follows that written by Gabriel Rebelo.

Gaspar Correia – Informs of the contacts between the Portuguese and the Spanish in Mindanao, but makes no mention of Belchior Fernandes Correia.

7. PÊRO FIDALGO'S JOURNEY TO THE ISLAND OF LUZON (1545)

The first trip made by the Portuguese to the island of Luzon was recorded by António Galvão as having taken place in 1545. He was the only author to describe this journey:

“In the year (1)545, in the month of June, a junk set off for the city of *Borneo*, on which was travelling a Portuguese man by the name of Pêro Fidalgo: They put into port for shelter due to bad weather, and found an island located nine or ten degrees North and about twenty-two in altitude,

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which they named *Lucões*, since that was the name of the inhabitants of this island: There may be others, along with their ports, that we are still unaware of. It runs from Northeast to Southwest; it lies between *Mindanao* and China. It is said that they travelled two hundred and twenty leagues along this island and that the land was cool and well shaded, and they say that there they give two weights of gold for one of silver, even though it is very close to the land of China”.

If we look up the latitude of the Western elevation of Luzon we see it is located between 13° 45' and 18° 39' North, amounting to some 570 km. Such data is far different to that supplied by António Galvão. To properly interpret what information must have been given to him, we believe that the journey in question would have taken place under the notion that the set of islands of Palwan and Luzon were only one island, for the far South of the island of Palwan is at 8° 19' (close to the 9° reported) and the South of the island of Taiwan is at 21° 19'. It should be pointed out that the latter of these islands was named *Léquio Pequeno* by the Portuguese, and that the distance between the two points mentioned above is 1556 km.

Allowing for errors in measuring the latitude and size, we may accept that the description given by António Galvão corresponds to the graphic portrayal of an island on a cartographic standard that can be found on Portuguese maps from around 1560, with the following caption:

“coast of *luçõis* and *laos*, along which Pêro Fidalgo travelled on his return from *Borneo* on a Chinese junk; he sailed along this coast in a storm and came upon *Lamao*”.

The cartography we refer to with information about the region of the Philippines, based on the voyage by Pêro Fidalgo, would have become known to the Spanish in the Philippines in 1567, as can be inferred from the observations about this fact made by Diogo do Couto in regard to Gonçalo Pereira Marramaque's expeditions against the Spanish in 1566-1568. Although we will come back to this episode further on, it is worthwhile mentioning it here since it contains an interesting reference to a topic of cartography, which Diogo do Couto must have heard about in India from Gabriel Rebelo, who was in the Moluccas at the time when a messenger from

Gonçalo Pereira Mararamaque, to whom he referred as António Rombo (who must be António Lobo, mentioned by António Pinto Pereira), carried out a disastrous operation against the Spanish. According to the aforementioned chronicler:

“After the chief captain had provided him with some things he was ordered to advance against the Castilians, which he was quick to comply with using the services of one António Rombo, who took two coracoras to go to Cebu to visit Miguel Lopez de Lagaspa; but instead of ascertaining how much power he had and whether more help was coming to him from New Spain (Mexico), and if he had discovered the route back to there; because this man was (according to Gabriel Rebelo who hired him), as stupid by nature as by name (*rombo*), he was neither able to look into things the best way nor able to ask questions as unobtrusively as others before him, instead of doing service, he made matters worse, because he inconsiderately showed the Castilian pilots a navigation map which they prized greatly, because it showed them the route to China and Japan and to that entire archipelago, something they had not known about before and would have paid dearly for to obtain, and all handed over for so little by Rombo because of his ignorance”.

8. GONÇALO PEREIRA MARRAMAQUE'S INITIATIVES AGAINST THE SPANISH IN CEBU (1566-1568)

A particularly serious phase in Portuguese-Spanish rivalry for leadership of this region took place on the island of Cebu between 1566 and 1568. The matter centred on the beginning of actual Spanish dominance of the Philippines under the guidance of Miguel López Lagazpi and the efforts made by the Portuguese in order to avoid this, led by Gonçalo Pereira Marramaque. This nobleman had been sent to the Moluccas in 1566 with an important armada. Upon learning of the Spanish presence on the island of Cebu he took the initiative of trying to dislodge them from the position they held there. He had no orders from Goa to this end, but it is possible that he decided to proceed according to prior actions by the Portuguese authorities, when they had sent contingents in an effort to dislodge the Spanish from positions they were trying to take over in the area. During his first initiative carried out at the end of

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1566 he was unable to approach Cebu, nor was his second attempt in 1567 any more successful. Only in 1568 did he arrive at Cebu. At first he was persuaded to believe that the Spaniards were going to leave, but after strengthening their positions the Spanish refused to leave the area and held out against the siege and the attacks the Portuguese carried out against them.

Four Portuguese authors wrote about these events:

António Pinto Pereira wrote in greatest detail about them.

Another author who reported some of these events chose to remain anonymous and was quite critical of Gonçalo Pereira's anti-Spanish activities.

What the anonymous author wrote was in part adopted by Diogo do Couto, who went further and completed the narrative in some aspects.

Estêvão de Lemos, possibly only a short time after the events had actually occurred, summarised them briefly.

9. PORTUGAL AND THE PHILIPPINES DURING THE REIGN OF PHILIP II OF SPAIN

When Philip II of Spain rose to the Portuguese throne in 1580 as Philip I, cooperation began between the Spanish and the Portuguese, which consisted of sending forces from the Philippines to take part in the attacks the Portuguese carried out against Ternate in 1584 and 1585. Such attacks were fought off, as described by Diogo do Couto.

This author also revealed how Portuguese-Spanish rivalry continued to exist in the Orient by indicating two instances of laws passed by Philip II of Spain, involving the delicate matter of prohibiting any trip to be made by the Castilians of Manila and the Philippines to Macau and China, due to the disadvantages that this would have on Portuguese finances and business in the State of India. However, through contraband and other means, such relations did exist.

CONCLUSIONS

The Philippines began to be referred to in Portuguese Historiography within the context of Ferdinand Magellan's journey, with references to

these territories then appearing within the narratives recounting the efforts of the Portuguese to consolidate their domination of leadership positions in the East Indian Peninsula, which enabled them to gain from the trade with the Moluccas, where they tried to prevent competition from the Spaniards.

The centre of attention of the Portuguese in this part of the world was focused on these islands because of their wealth in clove spice, although the means they had stationed there were limited, which enables us to understand the reasons behind the fact that they didn't disperse their forces throughout the archipelago located to the North, where there were no comparable goods to seduce them.

In contrast with this situation, it is remarkable that the contacts of the Portuguese with the Philippines came only a few years before the establishment of relations with Japan, which began at the beginning of the 1540's and flourished for almost a century. This can be explained by the importance of the trade that was established there, by reason of the attraction that silver and dealings with China held.

The Portuguese of the first half of the 16th century saw the Philippines as a food source, since they were located North of the route between the Moluccas and Malacca via Borneo, which was where they expected Spanish competition to come from.

For these reasons, the Portuguese carried out activities to strengthen their presence in the region and some contacts were made, the most important of which were established in 1538 by Francisco de Castro. He created areas of political and Christian influence in Mindanao and on the neighbouring islands, after João da Canha Pinto had been there in 1535 and verified the lack of gold and spices, which would have attracted Portuguese investment to these islands.

Relations between Portugal and the Philippines began to change as of 1565, when such relations started to be dominated by the Spanish, something the Portuguese were unable to avoid, despite the fact that they had thus far been able to vaguely claim the right to the possession of the territories by calling into play the stipulations of the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) and moreover the Treaty of Saragossa (1529). 