

John Leddy Phelan

The Hispanization of the Philippines



Spanish Aims
and Filipino Responses

1565-1700

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JOHN LEDDY PHELAN

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For my parents

Preface

In the average Philippine community today three kinds of buildings are apt to capture the attention of a visitor. One is the Filipinos' homes, which are elevated on thick timbers and constructed with bamboo walls and nipa palm leaf roofs. This is the style in which Filipinos have been building their homes since time immemorial. Neither the advent of the Spaniards in the late sixteenth century nor the arrival of the Americans in the twentieth century has changed the style of Philippine folk architecture, which responds to the needs of that hot and humid climate. A second type of building also stands out. It is the Catholic church, frequently an ornate, baroque structure built under the direction of Spanish missionaries centuries ago. And the third building is the schoolhouse, constructed in the twentieth century under the auspices of the American regime. These buildings are visible expressions of the three movements that have shaped Philippine civilization over the course of the centuries—indigenous culture, Spanish culture, and more recently the influence of the United States. This

book concerns itself with the meeting of indigenous society with Spanish culture.

The Spanish program in the Philippines envisaged a radical transformation of native Philippine society. Inspired by their previous experience in Mexico, the Spaniards launched a sweeping social reform in the islands, a reform which was religious, political, and economic in scope. To determine the nature of the Spanish program and to assess its permanent results are the basic aims of this book. In this ambitious design to reorganize Philippine society, Spanish successes were striking. So were some of their failures. The Filipinos were no mere passive recipients of the cultural stimulus created by the Spanish conquest. Circumstances gave them considerable freedom in selecting their responses to Hispanization. Their responses varied all the way from acceptance to indifference and rejection. The capacity of the Filipinos for creative social adjustment is attested by the manner in which they adapted many Hispanic features to their own indigenous culture. Preconquest society was not swept away by the advent of the Spanish regime. Rather, indigenous culture was transformed during the seventeenth century, in some cases profoundly so and in other cases only superficially. Significant though these changes were, a substantial degree of continuity between the preconquest and the Hispanic regimes was preserved. The principal aim of this study is to analyze how this result came about—in particular, to assess the role of the Spaniards as innovators and the complementary role of the Filipinos in adapting themselves to changes introduced by the Spaniards.

Since in this study I attempt to reconstruct the history of the Philippine people in the early Spanish period, Spanish historical materials constitute the principal sources. I have not, however, employed the historical method exclusively but rather have made an effort to combine sound historical practices with some anthropological techniques. Such an approach, already successfully applied by Ralph Roys, Charles Gibson, George Kubler, John Rowe, Howard Cline, and others, now has a designation of its own,

namely, "ethnohistory."* One of the major objectives of the Philippine Studies Program directed by Professor Fred Eggan, under whose auspices the research for this book was completed, was to bring the disciplines of history and anthropology into closer collaboration, and my study of Philippine society in the seventeenth century is, therefore, oriented to a significant extent toward ethnohistory.

I have placed considerable attention on the religious aspect of Hispanization. Events themselves suggest such a stress. The Spaniards put a heavy emphasis on Christianization as the most effective means of incorporating the Filipinos into Spanish culture, and the Filipinos themselves responded enthusiastically to the multiform appeal of the new religion. Although it is abundantly clear that Spain left its deepest imprint on the Philippines through the agency of Catholicism, the economic, the political, and the social aspects of Hispanization produced enduring consequences. Their importance has not always been appreciated.

Spanish colonization in the Philippines cannot be viewed in a vacuum. The islands constituted the Oriental outpost of a colonial empire that stretched halfway around the globe. Spanish policy in the Philippines was largely shaped in terms of previous experience in North and in South America. Since this imperial perspective cannot be ignored, I have made a concerted effort in this book to draw systematic comparisons between the intentions and the results of Spanish policy in the Philippines, Mexico, and to a lesser extent Peru.

The terminal date of 1700 was selected on the grounds that the principal characteristics of Spanish influence had made themselves evident by the end of the Habsburg era. On the whole, this working hypothesis has fitted the facts. In those cases, however, where the terminal date has proved arbitrary or cumbersome, I have not hesitated to carry the story into the eighteenth and nine-

* See Howard F. Cline, "Problems of Mexican Ethno-History: The Ancient Chinantla," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXXVII (August, 1957), 273-95.

teenth centuries. The nature of the source material also suggested 1700 as a convenient terminal date. A substantial number of the seventeenth century sources in Seville at the *Archivo General de Indias* have already been published, and four months in Spain enabled me to examine many of the unpublished sources of that period. But for the eighteenth century the situation is quite the reverse. The printed sources represent only an infinitesimal fraction of the vast archival resources available to scholars, and until these sources are examined, it will not be possible to make any firm conclusions about the eighteenth century. It is to be hoped that this study dealing primarily with the seventeenth century will in time be followed by monographs of other scholars dealing with the later period.

This book was prepared under favorable circumstances. I spent two and one-half years in Chicago as a Fellow in Philippine Studies at the Newberry Library. This fellowship was a part of the Philippine Studies Program operated jointly by the Newberry, the Anthropology Department of the University of Chicago, and the Chicago Natural History Museum under a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. To the Carnegie Corporation and to the trustees of the Newberry Library I should like to acknowledge an abiding debt of gratitude. Two committees are in charge of the program: a policy committee headed by Fred Eggan, of the University of Chicago, whose membership also includes Evett D. Hester, Sol Tax, Harvey Perloff, of the University of Chicago, Stanley Pargellis, Librarian of the Newberry, and Ruth Lapham Butler, Custodian of the Ayer Collection at the Newberry. An advisory committee presently consists of Fay-Cooper Cole, Felix Keesing, H. H. Bartlett, Paul Russell and Leopold Ruiz. I am deeply grateful to Mr. Eggan, Mr. Hester, Mr. Pargellis, and Mrs. Butler, all of whom have been unfailingly generous with their knowledge and their encouragement. The completion of this book was facilitated by a summer grant provided by the research committee of the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin.

I am particularly grateful to Professor C. R. Boxer of the Uni-

versity of London and to the Newberry Library for their joint permission to reproduce some of the illustrations in his manuscript of an early Philippine codex, a photostat copy of which is in the Newberry Library. For a complete description of the document see: C. R. Boxer, "A Late Sixteenth Century Manila MS.," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (April, 1950), pp. 37-39.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the directors and to the staffs of the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville, the Library of the *Palacio de Oriente* in Madrid, the Bancroft Library of the University of California, the Knights of Columbus Foundation for the Preservation of Historic Documents at the Vatican Library of St. Louis University, and the Library of Congress for many helpful and courteous services rendered. I would also like to extend my warmest appreciation to all my good friends on the staff of the Newberry, who have aided me in countless ways. In addition I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the following persons who have helped me in the preparation of this volume: Woodrow Borah, John Donoghue, Robert Fox, Charles Kaut, Benjamin Keen, Paul Lietz, Francis Lynch, S.J., Stella Paluskas McPherron, Melvin Mednick, John Parry, Randall D. Sale (cartographer) Willis Siebley, Lesley Bryd Simpson, George Smith, Lutie Mae Springer, and Doris Varner Welsh.

J.L.P.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
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Illustration from San Agustín's
Conquistas de las islas Philipinas

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THE TWO
PEOPLES

The Spaniards

Few revolutions in history have enjoyed the good fortune of an immaculate conception, least of all, the Spanish conquest of America. In the conquest the whole range of human emotions found ample room in which to express themselves. Christian charity, humanitarian zeal, sadistic cruelty, and gross perfidy all had their personifications, and sometimes in the same man. There was more to the conquest than the sanguinary conquistador enshrined in the popular stereotype and the equally conventional image of the selfless missionary dedicated to saving the soul of the Indian. Conquistadores sought riches not only in the form of precious metals but also in the exploitation of native labor, for the latter was the traditional reward for those who had fought infidels in the Moorish wars in the peninsula. Many conquistadores were as desirous of fame as they were of riches. The heirs of medieval civilization, they were also men of the Renaissance who yearned for immortality in this world by having their deeds recorded for posterity.

Wanton destruction in abundance there was. The sanguinary character of the conquest cannot be minimized, but it should not

obscure the more constructive aspect of Spanish colonization, which was partially an outgrowth of Spain's historical development prior to 1492. Spanish expansion overseas retained many of the characteristics of the centuries-long *reconquista* of Spain from the Moors. Both enterprises were essentially military in character, Christian proselytizing, and territorially acquisitive. The military subjugation of infidels—be they Moors, Indians, or Asiatics—and the imposition of Christianity form one continuous temporal and spatial sequence in Spanish history, stretching from the Cave of Covadonga in the eighth century to the conquest of the Philippines in the late sixteenth century, from the Pyrenees to the Pacific. In both America and the Orient the *reconquista* tradition of suppressing paganism was supplemented by a Christian humanist ideal of Renaissance inspiration. The Indians were to be Hispanized as well as Christianized. The natives were to be resettled in compact villages and taught to live and to work as European laborers. The more enlightened members of the Spanish regular clergy envisaged in positive terms a harmonious synthesis of some elements of primitive society with certain features of Spanish culture.

Spaniards of all classes during the sixteenth century were inspired by an almost limitless faith in their nation's power and prestige. The Spanish race appeared to them as God's new Chosen People, destined to execute the plans of Providence. Spain's mission was to forge the spiritual unity of all mankind by crushing the Protestants in the Old World, defending Christendom against the onslaughts of the Turks, and spreading the gospel among the infidels of America and Asia.

To those of mystical inclinations, Spain's task of uniting mankind under "one faith, one pastor, and one flock" seemed like the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Apocalypse. The millennial kingdom would be established under Spanish auspices before the second coming of Christ and the Last Judgment. Many of the early missionaries in the Philippines, for example, regarded the islands merely as a convenient doorway to the fabled lands of China and Japan, just as the Antilles had previously served as the base of