

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Asia and America

Silvio Zavala

Philippine Studies vol. 12, no. 3 (1964): 517–519

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

S-348 (H-1915) amending the National Defense Act regarding military training.

H-1352 amending the Revised Charter of Manila to raise the salaries of city officials.

S-583 (H-4609) amending paragraph 1 of sec. 15, Article 8 of Republic Act 1135.

The 1964 Congress has presented additional difficulties regarding the delineation of party responsibility in legislation. What with the House under the control of the party in power and the Senate under the control of the opposition after it had first been under the control of the party in power, we can be reasonably sure that in the 1965 elections the President will complain about a "do-nothing Congress" and that many congressmen will, in turn, complain about an "inefficient President." If the majority of the Philippine electorate continues to be undemanding about party responsibility in legislation, President Macapagal may suffer a disadvantage.

It appears then, that the unitary structure of Philippine government and the wide powers conferred on the Chief Executive have led to a unique emphasis on presidential issues in election campaigns and a corresponding submersion, at least to a great degree, of the issue of legislative performance. The possibility of winning a seat in Congress independently of legislative issues seems to allow legislators and their parties the opportunity of shunning responsibility for legislation.

The problem of party responsibility in legislation is, in the final analysis, part of that broader problem faced by every democratic government, namely, intelligent participation by the people in democratic processes. It must be admitted that the greater part of the Philippine electorate is inadequately conversant with many of even the elementary processes of democratic government. But if, as one senator has urged, one considers that the Philippines is a young democracy and that the Philippine electorate has, by means of the democratic vote, brought about two changes of administration within the period of eight years (covering three presidential elections); and if one also considers how third-party candidates without the aid of strong party machinery have come very close to winning against the candidates of the established parties—then one can believe, with good reason, that democracy in the Philippines is on the way to maturity.

ANTONIO B. LAMBINO

Asia and America

The great maritime discoveries sponsored by the Iberian nations put the Portuguese in contact with Asia in 1498 and the Spaniards

with the Antilles in 1492. The former, extending their explorations to the New World, discovered the coast of Brazil in 1500. The Spaniards reached the Pacific near Panama in 1513, crossed the Strait of Magellan in 1520 and reached the Philippines the following year. Jêiré Garcia de Loaysa duplicated this voyage in 1526; but one of his ships, instead of making the Pacific crossing, reached Mexico and established contact with Hernán Cortés who had conquered the land in 1519-1521.

Taking advantage of Mexico's geographical position, subsequent Spanish expeditions used the west coast of the new colony as their point of departure. From it sailed Alvaro Saavedra Cerón in 1527, Ruy López de Villalobos in 1542, and finally, in 1564, Miguel López de Legazpi, who succeeded in establishing the first permanent colonial settlement in the Philippine Islands. This expedition has the added distinction that two of its ships, the one piloted by Alonso de Arellano, the other by Andrés de Urdaneta, were able to make the return voyage to Mexico (1565), a feat previously attempted without success. The importance of this achievement was not lost to the chroniclers of the time, one of whom wrote that "those from Mexico feel very proud of their discovery and believe that they will become the center of the world."

It was natural that these maritime connections should result in the influence of Asia being felt in various ways by the colonial settlements of the Iberian peoples in the New World.

In the case of Brazil, contacts with Asia were for the most part indirect, through Portugal. We know of only about twenty ships between 1500 and 1730 which special circumstances caused to deviate from the regular route between India and Portugal to seek the coasts of Brazil. In any case, whether through such deviations or by means of the indirect connection Goa-Lisbon and Lisbon-Brazil, exchanges of various sorts between Brazil and India assumed a degree of importance.

We know that troops were sent from Brazil to India; that pepper and cinnamon were exported to Brazil in the XVII century; that Indian fabrics were sent to Brazil and Brazilian tobacco to India; and that Portuguese officials passed from one post to another in America, Africa and Asia. As a result of these exchanges, Asian plants such as the coconut, mangrove and tamarind were transplanted to Brazil, and Asian manufactures such as umbrellas, sedan chairs, firecrackers, silk bedspreads, Chinese and Japanese luxury fabrics, Indian and Chinese furniture, chinaware, and tea sets enabled the landlords of Pernambuco and Bahia to enjoy refinements that in sixteenth-century Europe were the privilege of royalty. An indication of the extent of Oriental influence on Brazilian habits is the fact that *canja indiana* (chicken broth with rice) has become a Brazilian national dish.

Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula forced the Portuguese royal family to flee to Brazil. At the same time, England obtained direct trading privileges with Brazilian ports. These two factors drew Brazil closer to the European way of life. The English coach took the place of the Chinese sedan chair, and English and French fabrics prevailed over Asian textiles, European porcelain over chinaware, and varnished over lacquered furniture. Clothing ceased to be light in weight, designed for a warm climate, and became Europeanized. Customs developed by cultural exchange between tropical regions were superseded by those of the European temperate zone.

Turning now to Spanish America, we find the Acapulco-Manila line accounting for numerous administrative, commercial, missionary and cultural contacts that sometimes ended in the Philippine Islands but occasionally went beyond them to the Asiatic continent and Japan. There was a constant movement of travellers in both directions of this line. The viceroyalty of New Spain sent troops to the Philippines. The Philippines sent plants such as the mangrove and the tamarind, and manufactures such as silk and cotton fabrics, carpets, fans, ivory statues, furniture, porcelain and all the other articles which found their way to Manila from China and other Asian countries. In return, the same transpacific route brought to Asia America's cacao and cochineal, and above all the Mexican and Peruvian silver that became such an important factor in the economy of the Asian countries. It was by way of Mexico that the products of the Orient reached Spain, as the *mantón de Manila* (Manila shawl) bears witness.

The Catholic missionaries who came to the Philippines were interested in converting not only the people of those islands but also the other countries of the populous Asian world. Their contacts with the ancient cultures of India, China and Japan led them to modify the missionary approach they had developed among the natives of America. The extension of missionary endeavor from America to Asia was thus an enlightening and enriching experience.

If Manila was the missionary gateway to Asia, it was also the gateway by which Asian products, tastes and arts reached Spanish America. Asian ivory work influenced the style of Christian images in America, as the many valuable pieces preserved in Mexican museums attest. Oriental influence is evident in the lacquer work of Michoacán. The magnificent choir gate of the cathedral church of Mexico City was made in Macao by a Chinese artist whose name has been preserved in its hispanicized form as Quiaulo.

This historic process of cultural exchange between Mexico and the Philippines was cut short in the early nineteenth century. The Mexican War of Independence caused the interruption of the Manila-

Acapulco trade. The Philippines remained a Spanish possession until the end of the century, when it passed to the United States. Thus when regular communications were resumed between the Philippines and the New World, the lines of communication led no longer to the regions of Spanish, but to the regions of English speech and culture.

SILVIO ZAVALA