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Faith in Peril: Gender and Catholic Conversion in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Philippines

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Faith in Peril: Gender and Catholic Conversion in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Philippines

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS

in History

by

Stefanie Joy Lira

Thesis Committee:
Associate Professor Rachel O’Toole, Chair
Associate Professor Bliss Cua Lim
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2014
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Faith in Peril: Gender and Catholic Conversion in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Philippines

By

Stefanie Joy Lira

Master of Arts in History

University of California, Irvine, 2014

Associate Professor Rachel O’Toole Irvine, Chair

[In early colonial Philippines, the Spanish crown believed the Catholic missionizing project was of primary importance. Colonizers and clergy, preliminarily, intended to convert all the Filipino indigenous peoples in the late sixteenth to early seventeenth century. However, the tumultuous seventeenth century impeded this mission. In this paper I analyze the ways in which colonizers interpreted the transformation of Filipino gender norms. By examining published correspondence among crown authorities, lay officials, and clergy, I assert that Spanish colonizers measured the success of their mission according to the Filipino’s gendered performance of Spanish Catholic gender norms. As full conversion of the Filipinos and Filipinas seemed more improbable, colonizers shifted their focus from what the colonizers believed to be superficial expressions of faith, to the chronicles of exceptional Filipinos. Although colonizers interpreted the success of their mission in different ways over time, they persistently conceptualized their mission through the transformation of indigenous gender norms].
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am also indebted to my committee members, Professor Heidi Tinsman and Associate Professor Bliss Cua Lim. Dr. Tinsman’s persistent quest to encourage her students to utilize the analytical lens of gender will continue to resonate with my studies. My work has also benefitted from Dr. Cua Lim’s knowledge of Filipino/a gender studies, which has shaped the way I engage with Filipino historiography.

I also owe my thanks to the professors I have worked with in the World History Colloquium, Professor and History Department Chair, Emily Rosenberg, and Associate Professor Laura Mitchell, who have emboldened me to investigate connectivities across national and imperial borders.
PROLOGUE

In this paper, I focus on representations of colonial voices. As I have attempted to understand the Spanish colonizers’ fascination with gender during their missionary expeditions, I have also allowed myself to assume their perspective. Although I follow the trajectory of colonial discourse I have remained conscious of colonizers’ perceptions on terminology and regionalism. To the same degree, I have been considerate of the secondary sources which I use to buttress Spanish peninsular conceptualizations. While I hope to contribute a nuanced study on Catholic conversion in early colonial Philippines, I also wish to contextualize the colonizers’ actions within the myriad acts of violence committed in the name of empire.

I have chosen to either incorporate or fully reject certain colonial terms. I have refrained from using the term indio/a and, instead, use Filipino/a. While the formation of a national Filipino/a identity will not develop until much later, I choose to deny the colonizer’s discursive violence that came with the racialization of the term indio/a.¹ In some cases I have chosen to utilize the language of the colonizer in order to demonstrate context as well as emphasize their peninsular biases. I include the term Moro as Spanish colonizers’ were familiar with Muslim threats in the form of peninsular moriscos. In some instances, I use Moro and Muslim interchangeably.

I have attempted to differentiate between certain villages and provinces throughout, as well. While historians have focused on the diverse regionality of the Philippines, my study foregrounds the colonial imaginary. Few colonizers emphasized regional difference and those that did tended to essentialize provincial Filipinos. My reading of the diverse geographical

¹ Teodoro Agoncillo, History of the Filipino People (Quezon City: Garotech, 1990), 102.
landscape and its reflective cultures is not in an attempt to flatten the places and experiences of Filipinos, but is meant to show how colonizers first conceptualized the Philippines.

I also use secondary sources from Colonial Latin American studies in this work. While I do acknowledge that there are distinct differences in how the Spanish Empire executed colonization in New Spain and the Philippines, I still find it pertinent to utilize the texts I have chosen. These works include valuable discussions on Spanish colonizers’ peninsular notions before they set foot on their colonial territories. Colonial Latin American scholarship is essential to my analysis of Spanish colonial conceptualizations of masculine and feminine norms.
Faith in Peril: Gender and Catholic Conversion in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Philippines

In his 1565 expedition, under the command of King Felipe II, one of Miguel López de Legazpi’s major objectives was to initiate massive Catholic conversion in early colonial Philippines. Colonizers expressed unbridled enthusiasm for the conversion of all indigenous Filipinos into Catholics. However, with the turmoil of the seventeenth century, the optimism for this goal changed. Militant Muslim raiders consistently harassed coastal communities. Resistant mountain dwellers vehemently refused the advances of the church and threatened the resolve of conflicted neophytes. Additionally, Dutch fleets undermined Spanish sovereignty as the Eighty Years’ War (1568–1648) reached the Pacific and endangered Spain’s tenuous hold on the Philippine colony. In order to adapt to these threats, colonizers adjusted their aims. With the full conversion of the islands becoming less certain, colonizers instead focused their energies on exemplary converts. While the ways in which colonizers perceived indigenous gender changed throughout the seventeenth century, reconfiguring gender roles was consistently fundamental to the conversion project.

The scholarship on colonial Philippines and conversion suggests that the missionary project suffered from innate instability and that missionary zeal diminished in the seventeenth century. I assert that it was this volatility that induced colonizers and clergy to reassess their goals of total conversion. Scholars John Leddy Phelan, Renato Constantino, and Carolyn Brewer have highlighted the delicate character of colonial contact and the missionary project as a whole. Phelan and Constantino noted the rise and fall of religious fervor. Phelan stated that the clergy’s enthusiasm waned when they approached the limits and dangers of their mission and Constantino attributed this shift in enthusiasm to internal fractures in the peninsular Spanish church; both did
not elaborate on how colonizers might have understood these changes in their mission. If scholars take seriously the notion that the influence of the religious on Filipinos manifested as both a spiritual and political hegemony, dramatic changes in the colonizers’ idealization of their mission must warrant further research. While not the central aim of her work, Carolyn Brewer also presented the conversion project’s mutability in the tenacity of the babaylanes/catalonan (shaman priestesses), the indigenous women who combatted Spanish Catholic power and practiced their religion in secret. I expand on these scholars’ assumption that the conversion project shifted in enthusiasm and that conversion was inherently unstable. In order to represent the colonizers’ shifting perspectives and goals I will trace the flux of conversionary fervor in the seventeenth century as lay officials and clergy responded to the minacious dangers within and outside of Philippine borders. More importantly, I assert that conceptualizations of gender were imbricated in the implementation of the colonial project as colonial authorities imagined the successes of their precarious mission.

Scholars of gender and colonialism have deeply influenced this work. Answering Joan Scott’s call to examine the past with gender as an analytical lens, historians and theorists have ascertained that both gender and race are constitutive of empire. Ann Stoler’s employment of Foucauldian principles in the Dutch East Indies simultaneously revealed the shortcomings of Foucault’s theories and the multiplicity of racialized and sexualized identities in the colonial setting. In Anne McClintock’s work, she examined the inter-related nature of imperial power, class, race, and gender by applying psychoanalytic theories on discursive expressions of colonial

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3 Phelan, *The Hispanization*, 73.
4 Carolyn Brewer, *Shamanism, Catholicism and Gender Relations in Colonial Philippines, 1521-1685* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), xvii.
anxiety and sexuality. In the same vein, I pose questions which frame gender as undeniably linked to empire. I argue that Spanish configurations of gender shaped the way colonizers imagined the progress of their conversion project.

As I have analyzed chronicles authored by colonizers it is essential that I illustrate the complexities between colonial discourse and the colonizing project. Two concepts are central to the connectivity between discourse and colonial action: the notion that colonial discourse is inert and the problematization of the singular colonial voice. I employ Peter Hulme’s definition of colonial discourse as a functionary device that was enacted into colonial practice, or “ideology.” I will employ this same definition in my own work. The myriad exchanges and Relaciones discussed in this study should not be understood as benign note-taking or “truthful” accounting of events, but as fears shared in times of peril, colonial fantasies, and cautionary parables. Colonial discourse is, in this sense, alive. Subject to the instabilities of colonial life, the colonizers’ musings are in constant unrest. As Nicholas Thomas suggested, “colonial projects are of course often projected rather than realized… colonial intentions are frequently deflected, or enacted farcically and incompletely.” With his assertion in mind I reviewed colonial documents and followed the trajectory of the colonizers’ stories while I also contextualized the order of these stories. Spaniards’ lengthy tales of violence suffered and losses at the hands of Muslim corsairs are often punctuated with gleaming adulations of the spoils of conversion. Colonial discourse is, then, not a static representation of events, but a much more complex product of colonial encounters.

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Second, colonial discourse cannot be accepted as a unitary voice. Although I have evaluated numerous sources and discerned gender as an integral component of empire and power, I do not attempt to present the colonizers as enunciating in a singular voice. One of the more difficult challenges for colonial and postcolonial studies, the representation of the colonial voice as monolithic is inherently incorrect. Within the available sources, other voices have been silenced. Colonial discourse has suppressed a multitude of colonial voices (women and lower classes, for example). My reading of colonial correspondence, often written by missionaries, does not assume that the colonizers followed a clear, coherent objective when they arrived in the Philippines. In fact, religious orders were prone to disagreements regarding conversion strategies, access to indigenous Filipinos, and clerical competency. I do not wish to represent all colonizers as having rigidly-formed, uniform aims in the colonization project as this is simply erroneous. Concurrently and over time, colonizers formed and re-formed their conceptualizations of Filipinos’ intellectual and spiritual capacity. I am, however, employing colonial discourse in a way that reveals the many gendered anxieties and fears Spanish colonizers held. These anxieties shaped the way colonizers understood their mission and how they perceived the Filipino people.

This work is divided into three parts. In the first part, I cover the years of Legazpi’s voyage to the early seventeenth century (1521-1620s). I argue that at this early juncture, colonizers conceptualized the progress of their mission through indigenous Filipinos/as’ performance of Hispanicized gender. Part Two highlights the discontents Spanish colonizers faced in the seventeenth century. The Eighty Years’ War (1568-1648) resumed and Dutch forces de-stabilized order on the colonial littoral boundaries, Muslim raiders from the southern

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10 Ibid., p. 159.
11 Phelan, *The Hispanization*, 34.
Philippines continued their seasonal raiding of the Visayan islands, and uneasy Filipino-Spanish relations sparked numerous Filipino-led insurrections. Part Three centers on the ways in which the de-stabilizing events of the seventeenth century affected colonial discourse regarding gender and the mission, from the 1620s to 1700. During the 1620s lay officials and clergy conceptualized the success of the mission, not just through performances of gender, but with a gendered lens that specifically underscored the accomplishments of Filipino/a exemplars. As full conversion of the islands seemed less likely, colonizers imagined the fruition of their missionizing efforts in epic tales of masculine and feminine exceptionality.

Part I: Early Contact

In the late sixteenth century, the “golden age” of the conversion project, colonizers and clergy interpreted the progress of their mission through indigenous Filipinos’ adoption of Hispanicized gender norms. In early chronicles, lay officials and clergy documented native men relinquishing “savage” behavior and embracing Christian, male norms. Similar to the discourse on masculinity, the indigenous Filipinas’ performance of Hispanicized femininity symbolized the progress of the missionary project. Colonizers calibrated Hispanicized femininity within a spectrum of honor and shame. Not unlike in colonial Latin America, colonizers attempted to replicate peninsular codes of honor and shame, which relied on the public arena and tied women’s sexual conduct to honor. Although colonizers interpreted the success of their mission as inextricably tied to Filipinas’ displays of femininity, Filipinas presented a stealthy impediment to a complete conversion of all Filipinos. Since colonizers portrayed Filipina women as innately evil, measuring Filipinas against Catholic feminine ideals was paramount to the

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12 Phelan, *The Hispanization*, 70.
success of the missionary project. For lay officials and clergy, these stories signaled the advancement of the conversion project.

Native Men: Competing Masculinities

In preliminary expeditions, colonizers portrayed Filipino men as uncivilized animals. In their Relaciones, explorers Miguel de Legazpi and Miguel de Loarca depicted indigenous men as inadequately masculine. When it came to Filipino men’s martial skills, Legazpi opined that native fighting habits and weaponry in Cebu were “the proceeding of savages, as these people really are, for they have only the form of men.” While he attempted to make sense of the strength and physicality of Filipino men, Legazpi discredited the military prowess of Filipinos as simply the inborn nature of savages. Not only did Legazpi diminish indigenous military skills, he further debased indigenous men by describing Filipinos as non-human creatures who only appeared as men superficially.14 During his time in Pangasinan on the island of Luzon, Loarca based his perception of Filipino masculinity on his observation of familial relations. Loarca found that men in Pangasinan killed their wives immediately, due to jealousy and as a consequence of adultery, at will. His uneasy response to these practices is conveyed in his statement that Filipinos reacted to jealousy and adultery too swiftly and in his notation that the relatives of the deceased, seemingly adulterous wife did not “resent” murderous husbands. He also perceived that Filipinos from Pangasinan killed their own children if the family produced too many so that “they (the family) may not live in poverty.”15 While infanticide and punitive sentences for adultery varied

from province to province, Loarca was alarmed at this practice. As Spanish colonizers likely assumed that the family was “the fundamental social unit,” Loarca and other Spaniards viewed practices that fatally harmed one’s family as antithetical to Western values of patriarchal fatherhood. Moreover, a father murdering his own children could be considered cowardly, as Spanish masculinity was defined by principles of honor and courage. This kind of familial disorder, which fell into the domestic realm wherein Hispanicized men were expected to maintain command, marked the unsteady hand of a weaker patriarch. For colonizers, the Filipino man was incapable of maintaining order in his own home.

Following the late sixteenth century, colonizers construed the success of the conversion project through the indigenous’ adoption of Hispanicized masculinity. In a relación regarding the good deeds of Father Francisco Almerique in the village of Antipolo, Father Pedro Chirino recounted a lengthy story in which an animist kin group descended from the mountains and encountered a priest. The priest coaxed the Filipinos out of the mountains with “much gentleness.” The priest’s leadership in this conversion, as a model of good Christian behavior, convinced the leader of superiority of a kinder, Catholic masculinity. Because Father Almerique led by “good example,” he then “subdued their [the mountain group’s] leader, whom the rest obeyed, and baptized them all.” The indigenous Filipino leader, who had to be “subdued,” recognized that Father Almerique’s anito (spirit) was stronger than his own and “for that reason they [the mountain group] recognized him as superior.” Where Almerique perceived this village’s conversion as one iteration of the missionary project’s success, Chirino highlighted the

18 Ibid., p. 45.
exchange as a moment wherein an indigenous leader prostrated himself to a placid, Christian masculinity.

Additionally, Father Almerique dichotomized feminine and masculine features in his representation of the mountain leader. After the indigenous leader acknowledged Father Almerique’s superiority, the Filipino publicly cut off his long, braided hair, which the priest described as the hair of a woman. “Like the Magdalen, with his hair, cut it off publicly, and with it the power of the Devil.” The priest’s likening of the indigenous leader’s hair to that of Mary Magdalen’s image exposes the missionary’s understanding (or misunderstanding) of the Filipino leader’s appearance. Rigid gender norms, which Almerique’s colonial discourse clearly defined as either masculine or feminine, were central to the ways in which the priest conceptualized holiness and normalcy in opposition to evil and male effeminacy. The priest’s regard for this hair-cutting ritual might have also stemmed from the Spanish notion of opprobrium that was meted out on adulterous women.20 After the ceremony, Almerique baptized the rest of the group and they consigned their “idols to the fire.”21 Chirino’s dedication to the details of this tale suggests that both colonizers interpreted the triumph of Hispanicized masculinity over seemingly effeminate Filipino leadership as a marker of the missionary project’s advancement.

Colonizers also interpreted the success of the missionary project according to Filipino man’s adoption of monogamy and male spousal responsibility. Filipino marriage relations varied according to province. In certain instances, colonizers noted polygynous marriage practices.22 In his relación, Chirino recounted how a Filipino man from the island of Leyte chose to divorce his

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21 Chirino, “Relación de las Islas,” 261.
22 Infante, The Woman in Early Philippines, 2.
other wives in favor of a marrying one wife in the “Christian fashion.” His polygynous marriages obstructed him from receiving baptism by the local priest. Under instruction from the cleric, the man’s most favored wife received baptism. At the sight of the celebrations for her baptism, the husband “put away the other two wives, giving them amounts of their dowry; and, freed from this obstacle, received baptism and was married.” While this account might be overlooked as a simple report on marriage dowry practice, the story’s context illuminates Chirino’s purpose for recounting this tale. Immediately after this marriage and baptismal account, Chirino outlined the forms of marriage in other provinces. He closed by condemning Filipino polygamy, which he claimed was an evil “Mahometan” custom. The competing religion, Islam, had been “increasing throughout the world, propagating their cursed doctrine with as much zeal and concern as we do our holy faith.” Chirino deciphered the Filipino husband’s jettisoning of polygyny and adoption of Christian monogamy as a slight victory in favor of Christianity and, against Islam. He also perceived the Filipino’s acceptance of monogamy as the enactment of religion, through marriage, and as evidence of the Catholic missionary project’s growing influence.

Colonizers and clergy further imagined the complete abandonment of pre-contact habits and religions as proof of the conversion project’s success. Since values of masculine Spanish honor were intertwined with Catholicism, colonizers conflated the indigenous’ fulfillment of Catholic roles with the adoption of masculine roles. In an enumeration of Filipino good deeds, Jesuit clerics told a story of a young Filipino’s abstinence. A young man, a member of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, fended off a group of “wanton girls” who found their way into his

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23 Chirino, “Relación de las Islas,” 291.
24 Ibid., 292.
25 Ibid., 295.
cottage. In order to keep himself pure, he “savagely scourged his own back with cords.”

Expressing the Catholic virtue of chastity through flagellation, this neophyte scarred his own flesh in order to adhere to Christian teachings. Although Catholic expectations regarding sexuality were not as strict for men as for women, peninsular norms of errant male sexual behavior were still an area of contention for the Spanish. Spanish men debated their sexuality in their “conscience” as a matter of “ethics and of religion.”

Similar to the abandonment of polygyny, clerics interpreted the denial of female temptation as an indication that Filipino males discarded past vices and adopted Catholic gender norms.

The colonizers’ assumption that Filipino men abandoned pre-contact masculinity and enacted a docile, gentle masculinity signaled progress in the conversion effort. Father Vaez told the story of a Spanish soldier who encountered a disobedient Filipino man. The soldier had commanded villagers to march, but found one man withdrew from the exercises. The soldier followed the man and found the Filipino self-flagellating. After the soldier realized that the man was “taking such care of his soul’s health,” the soldier gave the man money and “told him to go back home, that he might not be perverted by the habits of the soldiery.”

For Vaez, the preoccupations of the Filipino man were not centered on making war or wielding weapons, “savage” imagery that Legazpi previously portrayed. In the self-flagellant’s case, the Filipino did not brutalize other Filipinos during war, but inflicted the brutality inward. For the soldier, the spiritual Filipino could not be tainted – martial masculinity met gentle masculinity and the latter

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was much more sacred. Moreover, Vaez’ mention of the Spanish soldier’s concern regarding the Filipino’s potential perversion implies that the Spanish soldier recognized a kind of masculinity similar to that of Father Almerique within the Filipino. For Vaez and the general of the Society of Jesus who would later read this account, the soldier’s story conveyed the Filipino self-flagellant’s obedience to the Catholic faith as well as the seemingly triumphant adoption of placid colonial masculinity.

*Can We Feminize Filipinas?*

After Legazpi’s voyage (1565-1620s), colonizers depicted native women as immoral and inherently sinful. In a document on the conquest of Luzon, an unknown author described the native dress of indigenous women. He noted that the women, whose mid-sections were exposed, were “ugly and most indecent,” and likened them to “mares glutted with hay.”31 The notoriously humid climate was not to blame in the author’s description; rather it was the Filipinas’ natural inclination towards unchangeable crudeness. With Spanish honor and femininity inextricably tied to notions of chastity, an outward display of immodesty branded partially nude Filipina women as lacking in Hispanicized honor.32

Colonizers also saw more spiritual potential in Filipino boys over Filipina girls. In an unsigned *relación*, an author observed a fundamental difference between indigenous girls and boys. “The boys especially will become excellent Christians; for they have lively understanding and take very earnestly to the things of our holy faith and become such that our Spaniards are

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astonished by it.” In this case, colonial discourse perpetuates the assumption that Filipino boys were naturally gifted with intellectual and spiritual capacities not inherent in Filipina girls. Converting Filipinas, however, would prove to be much more daunting.

Lay officials and clergy depicted Filipino men as equally malleable subjects, while perceptions of Filipina women focused on immutable wickedness. In Francisco Sande’s relación he observed fixed differences between Filipino men and women. Indigenous men, he thought, were inclined to gamble, swear, drink and fight. However, colonizers minimized these vices in comparison to how they imagined the deeply ingrained iniquity of Filipina women. Sande noted that Filipino men could not lead honest lives because “the women in this country are so many and so bad, it is more difficult to correct this evil.” The discourse of indigenous women’s feminine immorality continued into Loarca’s relación. “The women are beautiful, but unchaste. They do not hesitate to commit adultery, because they receive no punishment for it… In the Pintados [Visayan islands]… the women are extremely lewd, and they even encourage their own daughters to a life of unchastity.” Loarca continued to describe how Pintados men remained loyal to their wives, even siding with the wife’s family (not his own) in moments of dispute. In Loarca’s representations, the missionaries presented Filipino men as devoted husbands whereas women were immovably evil and lustful. No longer represented as physically licentious, colonizers imbued the Filipina with an ingrained sinfulness which impeded the goals of men.

For the colonizers, the disparaging imagery of the bad Filipina woman extended into her role as a mother. As mentioned in Loarca’s account, without proper reprimand, indigenous

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35 Loarca, “Relacion de las Ysias,” 119.
women behaved lasciviously and passed this behavior down to their daughters. Throughout the
relaciones and other chronicles, colonizers expressed a real fear that women would continue to
embrace pre-contact, indecent femininity. In his relación, Chirino explored the missionaries’
fears that animist religion was corporeally tied to Filipina women. Most Filipinos and Filipinas
could abandon their indigenous religion, but “the vestiges of the vile [religion] which they have
sucked from their mothers’ breasts are not so easily forgotten as to unburden us… of many
cares.”36 Spanish colonizers’ phobia of women’s bodily fluids was connected to peninsular
anxieties regarding mothers’ biological ability to determine her children’s religion. Colonial lay
officials and clergy projected these fears regarding Jewish and morisco contagions, remnants of
the Reconquista, onto the Filipina’s relationship with her children.37 The disquieting notion that
religion could be transmitted through mother’s milk shaped the ways in which colonizers
portrayed Filipina women. Colonizers depicted Filipina women as the harbingers of evil and
conveyed their own fears that the missionary project could fail.

Lay officials and clergy deeply feared Filipinas’ influence on their children. The clergy
believed they had to intervene and surveil the upbringing of Filipino children. Similar to the
practices in New Spain, colonizers removed children from the care of indigenous mothers.38
Spurred by their fears of Filipino apostasy, colonizers intertwined aspects of biology, morality,
and animism to justify the extraction of Filipino children. In a petition for the seminary of San
Juan de Letrán, Father Juan Geronimo Guerrero appealed for financial aid. “In order that our
pious work may continue… so that those orphan boys may… not be ruined… there are many
children of Spaniards among the Indian women… these children may be taken from them and

36 Chirino, “Relación de las Islas,” 262.
37 Elisa Sampson Vera Tudela, Colonial Angels: Narratives of Gender Spirituality in Mexico, 1580-1750 (Austin:
University of Texas Press, 2000), 91.
38 Stoler, Race and the Education, 112.
brought to be reared in the said seminary, so that they may not become idolaters like the Indian
women.”

39 Guerrero articulated his own fear that indigenous women would be the central
conduit through which Filipinos resumed the practice of pre-contact religion. The possibility of
apostasy was transmitted through mother’s milk, but also emerged in her influence as a parent.
Clerics communicated similar fears regarding Filipinas’ immutable wickedness in the Santa
Potenciana seminary’s petition for aid. The priests built a seminary for the daughters of poor
Spaniards and the daughters of Filipina and Spanish unions. These clerics beseeched the crown
for more funds so that illegitimate daughters would avoid ruin because of the “great laxity [of
morals] in the country.”

41 While the religious of Santa Potenciana blamed debauched Philippine values, implicitly, the clerics targeted the weak character of Filipina girls. If immorality ran rampant in the Philippines, daughters, not sons, would be “ruined.”

For the colonizers, Filipinas’ supreme depravity was embodied in the babaylan and
catalonan (animist priestesses). Colonizers understood that babaylan and catalonan were
powerful female figures within the animist religion. Since Spaniards categorized animism as a
heretical idolatry, Loarca’s observation of a babaylan revealed his own fears regarding the
babaylan’s power and her proximity to the devil. In his description, the native “priestess
invokes the demon, who appears to her all glistening in gold. Then he enters her body and hurls
her to the ground, foaming at the mouth as one possessed.”

40 Brewer, Shamanism, Catholicism, 153.
42 Brewer, Shamanism, Catholicism, 101.
43 Loarca.“Relacion de las Yslas,” 131.
religion likely frightened colonizers. Colonial clergy believed in the Spanish Catholic conception which condemned a non-clergyman’s “unmediated contemplation of God” through the passive reception of spirits. The opprobrium would be much greater, also, if the colonizers perceived the babaylan’s “unmediated contemplation” emanating from the devil. Loarca’s and other colonizers’ attention to the minute details of the babaylan’s rituals expose an undeniable fascination with the Filipinas. While the reasoning behind the lay officials and clergy’s attention to detail may range from psychosexual attractions to the exotic Filipina body to the Spanish colonial-specific fear of possession and demonic shape-changing, what is clear is the male colonizer’s mistrust and abhorrence of the babaylan. Colonizers, through discourse, portrayed Filipina women as the most defiant and powerful opposition to conversion.

Colonizers who depicted Filipinas as inherently evil understood that the greatest challenge to the conversion project was the conversion of the babaylan/catalonan. Colonizers conceptualized the indigenous woman’s thorough conversion as their most important goal. In the region of Taytay, Chirino recounted one of these momentous conversions. He chronicled a miracle in a town where “a band of worthless women [catalonan]” held sway.

Among these women, one who was a leader claimed that her anito was a very close friend of the anito of the Christians and had descended to earth from heaven. The woman most stirred up the fire on account of the power that she wielded, not only on account of the sagacity which she certainly possessed, but by her influence and reputation in the village. Not only was she herself of high family, but she was very well connected; and had several sons who were married, and thus related to the most prominent families of the village. By these

46 Brewer, Shamanism, Catholicism, 90.
47 Ibid., p. 83.
means she was, on the one hand, powerful enough to draw to her the weak, and
on the other, to compel the more influential to dissemble with her. 49

Despite the catalona’s continuing influence, the priests in Taytay proselytized to the villagers. Villagers still utilized animist idols until a small group of Filipinos (no specificity documented) relinquished the instruments of their religion (idols) to the priests. 50 These idols were publicly burned. This public performance of authority was in keeping with the Spanish colonial tradition of honor. In the tradition of the Spanish honor and shame complex, public spectacle legitimized the catalona’s shame. 51 For the colonizers, the pyre symbolized both the village’s disavowal of idolatry and the catalona’s education in the Spanish honor/shame code.

The events at Taytay concluded with the conversion of the entire village. The demon continued to torment the catalona “with visions and cruel threats. Already undeceived as to the weakness of her idol, she sought for conversion, and, hating the demon, begged for mercy.” 52 As the most menacing opposition to the missionizing project, the clergy perceived the catalonan’s eventual defeat as a tremendous victory for the clergy. 53 Following her conversion Chirino described the eventual conversion of the entire village: The neophytes thus led good and pure lives and were examples of the Christian faith. 54 Chirino, who smoothly connected the exorcism of the devil out of the catalona to the confession and baptism of the entire village, interpreted the Filipinas’ conversion as yet another success in the conversion project as well as a catalyst for the villagers’ conversion. 55

49 Chirino, “Relación de las Islas,” 271.
50 Ibid., p. 272.
52 Chirino, “Relación de las Islas,” 271.
53 Brewer, Shamanism, Catholicism, 103.
54 Chirino, “Relación de las Islas,” 274.
55 Ibid., p. 275.
Comparable to the Filipino man’s acceptance of male chastity, colonizers construed women’s adherence to Hispanicized feminine morals as emblematic of the success of Catholic conversion. In Father Vaez’ letters, an account of an attempted sexual crime was a potent illustration of the success of Christian values. An unwanted suitor stalked a Filipina woman who spurned his romantic efforts. After she attended church, the woman walked alone when “he came up to her, and with his dagger at her bosom, he threatened her with death unless she consented to wickedness.” With the options of death or sin, the neophyte Filipina protected her Christian modesty. “She answered with firmness that [she] preferred death to offending God. Then with blows and words of insult she vanquished the beastly desires of her adversary, barely escaping with her honor.” What Vaez deciphered as the Filipina’s deep respect for the virtue of chastity affected him profoundly. In his letter to the general of the Society of Jesus, Vaez aimed to relay the fortitude of the Hispanicized value of virginity in the Filipina’s actions. Vaez’ story also demonstrated a turning point in colonial discourse: the beginnings of the Filipina’s transformation from promiscuous to virginal.

Colonizers interpreted the progress of the mission project through the performances of masculine and feminine Spanish gender norms. Lay officials and clergy represented Filipino men as uncivilized, but colonizers believed that the Filipino’s spiritual potential could override men’s barbarism. Colonizers, however, depicted Filipinas as intrinsically evil and obstinate. Although lay officials and clergy gauged the conversion project through the acts of Christian monogamy or baptism, these standards would ultimately change. Colonizers’ accounts on the indigenous would eventually center on Filipino and Filipina exemplars, men and women who exhibited

58 Brewer, Shamanism, Catholicism, 50.
Hispanicized gender *par excellence*, as lay officials and missionaries faced the stark realities of their precarious mission and the dangers of war.

PART II: The Seventeenth Century Interrupts Early Objectives

During the turbulent seventeenth century colonizers persisted in conceptualizing the conversion project through a gendered lens. Missionary optimism, fueled by royal demands and the perceived malleability of indigenous Filipinos, characterized the attitudes of early contact. However, as lay officials and clergy conducted a more in-depth exploration into the islands, new threats jeopardized their mission. These perils included the resumption of the Dutch War (1621), Muslim (*Moro*) raids from the Southern Philippine islands, and numerous Filipino-led insurrections which would ultimately quell the clergy’s zeal for the missionary project.

Aside from exercising restraint when interacting with the indigenous Filipinos, Philip II requested that Legazpi take “special care in furthering the conversion of the Indian natives.” This order was not a mere suggestion. The King imbued Legazpi’s task, the responsibility of overseeing the missionary project, with divine authority. Legazpi was to “obtain it [conversion of the islands] by all possible good means.”59 With these royal orders, King Philip II confirmed Legazpi’s sacred purpose in the islands: the full conversion of indigenous Filipinos.

The ways in which colonizers interpreted pacification also revealed their initial enthusiasm for the mission project’s potential for success. In a letter written to Philip II in 1569, Andrés de Mirandaola outlined the feasibility of Filipino conquest. As a financial partner of Legazpi, Mirandaola stressed both the commercial and spiritual possibilities of the islands. “I believe that… the Christian religion – your Majesty’s *purpose* – can really be introduced into

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He further communicated that the “densely populated” islands were inhabited by a “warlike and vicious” race. As ominous as Mirandaola’s description of the indigenous Filipinos may seem, he expressed to Philip II that the pacification of the islands was, indeed, possible. The Spanish would only have to send martial support. While Mirandaola’s opinion regarding the entanglement of commercial and spiritual goals was representative of lay officials’ plans for the development of the Philippines as a “way-station” for Christianity and mercantilism, it was his belief that the pacification of Filipinos could be accomplished “without much trouble” that signaled Mirandaola’s underestimation of the missionizing project’s success.

Clerics similarly assumed that Filipinos’ imitative capacity to emulate the Spanish was indicative of the ease with which the religious could convert the indigenous. In a letter to Jesuit Martin de Rada, Marquis de Falces described the nature of indigenous Filipino social structure. Falces stated that indigenous Filipinos had no “king or sovereign” and respected no laws. Although to Falces it seemed most Filipinos lacked a religion, he recognized that some Filipinos were Muslim. Based on his assumption that Filipinos had little political organization or a religious-based moral character, Falces’ logic led him to assert that indigenous Filipinos could be converted easily. Filipinos were “rather like monkeys very desirous of imitating us in dress, speech, and all other practices.” Falces rendered Filipinos, to Rada, as a race that was not only easily influenced by Spanish culture, but also deeply longed for Spanish influence.

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61 Ibid., p. 204.
62 Ibid., p. 201.
63 Phelan, The Hispanization, 54.
64 Mirandaola, “Letter to Felipe II,” 201.
discourse, by emphasizing the malleability of Filipinos, functioned as a way to convince other clerics of the ease of the missionizing project.⁶⁶

Chronicles outlining the Filipinos’ eagerness to accept the new Catholic faith also fed the colonial fantasy of untroubled conversion. In his annual letters to the general of the Society of Jesus, Vaez recalled Father Valerio Ledesma’s interaction with Filipinos in Bohol. Ledesma encountered an elderly “chief” who wished to be baptized. The Filipino leader, who was so highly esteemed that the villagers looked to him “as a father,” begged Ledesma “on bended knee” to be baptized. Since the leader was a well-regarded patriarch, Ledesma perceived that the modeling of this Christian behavior moved others to desire this same Catholic rite. Ledesma ultimately converted the entire village.⁶⁷ Vaez relayed this chronicle to the Jesuit general, with an emphasis on the patriarchal leadership of the chief as a father to his villagers. This image is different than Loarca’s previous conceptualization of the inept, murderous patriarch who killed his children to avoid poverty.⁶⁸ Instead, Ledesma’s “old chief” is a well-respected sovereign, a familiar figure in Spanish conceptualizations of highly regarded masculine roles.⁶⁹ Vaez defined the Filipino chief by his leadership abilities which were integral to the conversion of the village and, thus, the furthering of the missionizing project.

Colonizers identified other facilitators of favorable conditions for missionaries: Muslim husbands and animist wives. Writing to Philip II, Jesuit priest Diego de Herrera attempted to assure the crown that surrounding Moros would not prevent the missionizing effort. Herrera declared that there had been an increase in “families where the husband is a Moro and the wife a

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⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 209.
⁶⁹ Michael J. Horswell, Decolonizing the Sodomite: Queer Tropes of Sexuality in Colonial Andean Culture (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 52.
pagan.” Contrary to what might be expected from these competing religions, these types of marriage cleared the path for the clergy. Moro husbands and animist wives begged priests to baptize their sons.\textsuperscript{70} In keeping with the colonizers’ notion that boys would become more fit Christians, Herrera claimed that Moro husbands and animist wives chose sons over daughters in determining who would be better suited for Christianity. Herrera rationalized that mixed-religion parents would implore the clergy to baptize their children because Moro husbands only superficially practiced the Muslim religion. The priest did not speculate as to what the animist mother’s role might be in influencing the child’s religion since, generally speaking, fathers’ wishes would be privileged over the mother’s in Spanish colonial society.\textsuperscript{71} For Herrera, the danger of pre-contact religion, Filipino men’s weak practice of Islam and Filipinos’ control over Filipinas’ animism, was not a threat at all.

The Philippines was, for Spanish colonizers, an ideal land where the Catholic faith would surely prosper. As late as 1627, procurator-general Martin Castaño expressed this idealization. “As to the increase of the faith, it is quite well known that no other gate in all the world has opened through which so many souls may come into the knowledge of it as the Filipinas.” For Castaño, the gate represented a spiritual and terrestrial location. Castaño then strategized that conversion would surely spill into Japan and China through the gateway of the Philippines.\textsuperscript{72} As articulated through the colonizers’ colonial discourse on the goals for pacification, the perception of the malleable Filipino, and the primacy of location, colonizers conceptualized the achievability of both a completely Catholic Philippines \textit{and} a future Catholic Asia.


The tumult of the Eighty Years’ War complicated the supposed ease of the conversion project. Spain’s war with the Dutch (1621-1648) spilled into the Pacific and complicated the clergy’s missionizing efforts. Conscripted labor (polo) and compulsory vandala provisioning of Filipino goods exhausted indigenous men and contributed to high mortality rates.\(^73\) In addition to the decline of the indigenous population, Dutch invasion of the Philippines’ many littoral regions threatened the clergy.\(^74\) The Dutch presence also bolstered indigenous Filipino opposition to Spanish colonizers. Diaz reported that the Filipinos’ mounted insurrections against the Spanish. In the story of a rebellion in Bacor, Filipinos “pretended that two Dutch ships” drew near the coast. As told by Diaz, the Dutch “were coming to aid them [the Filipinos] as equals in their rebellion against the Church and vassalage.”\(^75\) Although the Spaniards violently crushed this rebellion, the simultaneous nature of the uprising in Bacor along with other insurrections in the central Visayas and Northern Mindanao indicated the Filipinos’ widespread dissatisfaction with their Spanish sovereigns.\(^76\) Diaz depicted the Bacor uprising as a manifestation of insolence, but still recorded the cunning of the indigenous as they faced their embattled colonizers and threatened colonial order.

Colonizers faced a multitude of difficulties that obstructed the conversion project; and endangered their very own lives. In a description of an episcopal visitation in the 1620s, an unknown author lamented the status of the missionary project. For this author, the Philippines was in desperate need of more secular clergy. The current secular clergy, mostly based in Manila, would only visit their distant districts once a year. As a result, the author worried that

many of the indigenous died “without the sacraments” and that many more children died “without baptism.” In addition to those Filipinos who died without sacrament, “ministers themselves” had also died without confession. The author observed that the deaths of Spanish religious without last rites were the norm, not the exception.\textsuperscript{77} What followed was a plea to send more clerics to the islands. There was, however, a caveat to this request. Those who chose to proselytize in the Philippines must understand that they were not entering into an easy mission, but one full of adversity. In one of the clearest utterances of colonial distress, the author opined, “How is it possible for missions in the islands… infested by infidel pirates, and [now] having new conversions of Moros and heathen, not to be full of hardship?” The author then elaborated upon “the constant danger of being killed by the Moros.”\textsuperscript{78} For this author, a martyr’s death was a calculated risk, but losing souls to the Muslim faith was equally disconcerting. Contesting the “infestation” of Muslim influence, a long-fought battle in peninsular Spain, exacerbated Reconquista fears in encounters with the indigenous.\textsuperscript{79} Quite different from Herrera’s 1570 projection that benign Muslim fathers and animist wives would welcome the conversion of their children, this author’s 1666 account revealed a different reality, plagued with anxiety and imminent death.

Lay officials and clerics underestimated obstructive terrain of the mountainous regions in Luzon and Mindanao as well. In his description of the Cape Engaño inhabitants, Diaz stated that the villages of these mountains had not yet seen the light of the holy gospel “because of the ruggedness of their mountains.” As a result, Cape Engañans continued to embrace animism.\textsuperscript{80} For Diaz, the physical blockades of the Philippines’ mountains represented the limits of Spanish

\textsuperscript{77} Unsigned, “Why the Friars are not subjected to episcopal visitation,” in The Philippine Islands, eds. Blair & Robertson (Cleveland, 1903): Vol. XXXVI, 265.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 267.
\textsuperscript{79} Horswell, Decolonizing the Sodomite, 36.
\textsuperscript{80} Diaz, “Augustinians,” 239.
rule. If colonizers were successful in traversing these highland areas, they would meet another obstacle: death by headhunting. The ultimate consequence for the religious would be “a martyr’s death.” Compared to Mirandaola’s assumption that the islands would easily be pacified by a well-equipped Spanish military, complete pacification was elusive as the realities of highland dangers proved insurmountable.

Aside from inspiring fear in the hearts of lay officials and clergy, colonizers highlighted the ways in which indigenous Muslims disrupted the missionizing project in the Visayan islands through crippling raids. Attacks like those perpetrated by Silongan and Busyan interrupted missionizing goals. In Diego de Bobadilla’s 1638 chronicle, he vividly described how Silongan, Busyan, and their large fleets invaded Spanish-controlled Philippine seas. The pair’s Moro raiders would sack “churches, carrying off the ornaments and consecrated vessels, committing a thousand desecrations on the sacred images, breaking them into pieces and insulting them.” When juxtaposed with how Spanish colonizers’ disrespected the animist idols of the babaylan/catalonan, it is likely that colonizers’ understood the Muslim raiders’ actions as an affront on the Christian religion, and thus, extreme heresy. In addition to theft and destruction of property, Bobadilla lamented that the pair’s fleets captured over two thousand and five hundred “Christian Indians.” Muslim raiders would either kill or enslave their captives. In his coverage of the Muslim raiders’ burglary, profane disrespect of sacred Christian idols, and enslavement of Christians Bobadilla succinctly articulated the destructive forces that imperiled the missionizing

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81 Phelan, *The Hispanization*, 140.
project. His account represented a small fraction of the larger, persistent Moro presence in the central Philippine islands.  

With Dutch affronts increasing in the 1640s, Muslim raiders seized the opportunity when attacking Spanish-controlled areas. Similar to the feigned attacks in Bacor, Diaz reported on the indigenous Moros’ opportunistic timing when besieging villages. Diaz wrote that Moros observed Spanish weakness during the hostile years of 1646 and 1647. At this time, Muslim raiders would escalate their offensives with “piratical raids,” pillaging and capturing in the “province of Pintados” (the Visayan Islands). For the colonizer, Dutch offenses in the Pacific intersected with the perceived war-like sensibilities of the indigenous Filipino Muslims. The pervasive nature of these factors de-stabilized the proselytizing mission in the Visayas and obstructed the colonizer from executing their missionizing goals.

In his coverage of the Bacor rebellion, Diaz identified what he believed was another enemy from within: the Filipina woman. According to Diaz, the same Filipinos who faked the Dutch alliance conspired with a femme fatale. A Spaniard named Pedro Zapata joined Filipinos [against his own countrymen] in what Diaz observed as “the greatest cause for surprise.” Diaz does, however, narrow down the true culprit behind this betrayal. Zapata married an “Indian woman” who “must have perverted him.” In the same way that Sande previously characterized indigenous women as innately “bad” in early contact, Diaz blamed the Filipina wife’s capacity for evil for what Diaz himself believed was a lapse in Zapata’s judgment. In this chronicle, however, Zapata met his end. Without outlining the cause, Diaz stated that the insurgent Filipinos turned on and then killed Zapata “in order to take away the woman” which was “a

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84 Phelan, The Hispanization, 45.
worthy reward for his incredible treason.”86 In Diaz’ account, Zapata’s wife and the many insurgents at Bacor embodied colonial perceptions of the evil Filipina woman and the untamable, militaristic Filipino man. Zapata’s wife, through her feminine charm, assisted in enlisting a Spaniard to the enemy’s side, further challenging Spanish authority. More importantly, Diaz illustrated the image of the intrinsically bad Filipina woman as an obstacle to the conversion of the Philippines.

That indigenous Filipinas played a role in uprisings should not be overlooked when examining the colonizers’ impediments to the full conversion of the Philippines in the seventeenth century. The ways in which colonizers depicted Filipinas as integral actors in the struggles against the Spanish merged two colonial fears: the failure of the missionizing project and Filipina women’s evil inclinations. In an ethnohistorical study of the Lumad (the non-Muslim indigenous population) of Mindanao, Oona Paredes analyzed the figure of María Campan in the Caraga Revolt of 1631. During the insurrection, Campan donned the vestments of a local priest and conducted a “mock mass” by proclaiming herself as Father Jacinto. Paredes dissected the colonizers’ perception of Campan’s offenses. For the colonizers, Campan, an indigenous woman, cross-dressed, mocked a Spanish man, and “disrespected a religious authority figure.” In war-torn Mindanao, the Spanish obsessed over Campan’s acts.87 Paredes stressed the peculiarity of Campan’s popularity among the Spanish and that this notoriety should be contextualized within the colonizer’s attitudes on gender. Campan’s acts inspired lay officials and clerics to recall Reconquista fears regarding conceptualizations of gender and miscegenation. Such anxieties included the threat of Muslim or Jewish tainting of Spanish blood that ultimately

resulted in racialized gender ambiguity. The complicated relationship between race and religion ultimately de-stabilized colonizers’ conceptions of clearly discernable norms of masculinity and femininity. Fears regarding gender swapping, in the form of cross-dressing, reemerged in cases like Campan’s. Like Zapata’s wife, colonizers centered on Campan’s inherent wickedness and her disregard for Spanish Catholic female norms, but also recognized the peninsular unease surrounding gender ambiguity.

In the case of the 1649 insurrection at Palapag, Diaz shifted colonial discourse on Filipinas by illuminating their beneficial role as protectors of the missionizing project. Diaz sets Doña Angelina Dinagunan, the wife of the “very influential” rebel leader Don Juan Ponce, apart from the rest of the actors in his account. Ponce himself was “a bad Christian”, but his wife was more “virtuous” and exhibited better morality. Diaz noted the group of insurrectionists that Ponce associated with had recently murdered a priest. The night before this murder, with “devout fidelity… amid the infidelity and apostasy of the men” Dinagunan and other good Christian Filipina women “saved some holy images and ornaments” along with a trunk that belonged to a religious whose life was spared. Dinagunan acted as a kind of loyal Catholic spy in that she had prior knowledge of the coordinated murder of the priest. Anticipating the ruination of the priest’s holy artifacts, the indigenous Filipina rescued these sacred tokens. Filipina women, once conceptualized as unchangeably evil, are depicted here as the saving grace of Palapag. In Diaz’ story, he re-focused his attention on Dinagunan’s incorruptibility and her demonstration of perfect Spanish Catholic piety which worked in the colonizers’ favor. For Diaz, during a time of

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89 Horswell, Decolonizing the Sodomite, 35.
91 Ibid., p. 116.
PART III: Gender and Faith Par Excellence

Throughout the turbulent seventeenth century, colonizers continued to measure the success of their mission by how well indigenous Filipinos adopted Hispanicized gender norms. However, the difficulties resulting from the resumption of the Eighty Years’ War, Muslim raids in the Central Visayas, and numerous Filipino-led insurrections prompted a change in lay officials and clergy’s discourse on gender. With the missionizing project in jeopardy, colonizers no longer focused their stories on the full conversion of the islands, but instead privileged stories of exemplary Filipinos and Filipinas. As early as the 1620s, colonial accounts emphasized superlative, positive, and in some cases exceptionally negative, qualities in Filipino men and women. Colonizers highlighted Filipinos as brave, capable leaders and represented Filipinas as deeply virtuous Christians. Colonizers also emphasized the remarkable successes of archetypal Filipinos in juxtaposition with the drastic failures of non-Christians. While the traits of Filipinos and Filipinas varied by gender and transformed over time, lay officials and clergy continued to perceive the progress of conversion through the indigenous’ performance of gender.

Filipino Boys into Filipino Men

Among the disorder of wars and insurrections, colonizers interpreted male Filipino resistance as a negative assertion of indigenous manhood. During the uprising in the Ibabao province of Samar, Father Francisco Combés hypothesized the main reason behind the Filipinos’ insurrection. As a result of shipwrecked galleons, colonizers forced indigenous carpenters to
work in a local shipyard and, in response, the inhabitants of Ibabao bore arms and resisted. Combés understood this opposition as the Filipinos’ fight to maintain their “liberty.” Mountain-dwelling Filipino men revolted because they refused the Spaniards’ demand for labor, which was, for Combés, a “political compulsion to citizenship.” The indigenous rejected this labor requirement and preferred that they, instead, “live as men.” Combés deciphered the residents of Ibabao’s retaliatory responses in a manner fitting of a Spanish gentleman. Peninsular discourse recognized a man’s military prowess as a defining attribute of Spanish masculinity. Combés commentary turns from unease to abhorrence as he rendered the Ibabao insurgents as bloodthirsty and power hungry. He noted that the leader of the Ibabao resistance, Sumuroy, along with his fellow rebels dreamed that they would become “masters of the entire world” after they “had slain all the Spaniards.” Evoking Legazpi and Loarca’s earlier image of the “savage” Filipino man, Sumuroy and the men of Ibabao’s military resistance demonstrated an uncontrollable, disreputable masculine performance against the Spanish.

Amidst the tumult of Filipino-led insurrection in the seventeenth century, colonizers praised Filipino leaders who chose to adopt the Catholic faith. Lay officials and clergy depicted men who led their villages to conversion as natural-born leaders. In a conversion narrative that was “cried far and wide,” Fray Lorenzo de San Facundo, baptized the “so-called” obstinate inhabitants of the mountain dwelling villages of Bacoag and Bolor. San Facundo first noted their mountain leader was “a man of considerable wisdom, prudence, and… [he] kept them [his subjects] very well in hand.” San Facundo then, after meeting the leader, Salimbong, confirmed these positive traits. Quite distinct from Legazpi’s observation of non-human Filipinos, or

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92 Constantino, A History of the, 86.
95 Combés, Historia de Mindanao, 491.
Loarca’s assertion that Filipino men were murderous patriarchs, San Facundo imbued Salimbong with the respectable qualities of a natural leader.\textsuperscript{96} Even more of a surprise for San Facundo, was that Salimbong, in a display of the wisdom he was popularly known for, pursued the priest for his own baptism. San Facundo asked Salimbong to “prove his spirit” by performing an interview of sorts, to which Salimbong readily passed. As an unbaptized, un-catechized mountain-dweller, Salimbong’s spiritual intelligence astonished San Facundo. He then baptized Salimbong and all of his men.\textsuperscript{97} San Facundo opined that not only was the Filipino an impressive head of his village, but that Salimbong’s leadership qualities and spiritual aptitude were enough for the priest to baptize Salimbong’s entire village. San Facundo closed the story with a note on how Salimbong’s conversion could ensure the missionary project’s future progress: “(the story) was of great use in the pacification of many villages.” In San Facundo’s mind, the tale of exceptional Salimbong would work as a rhetorical tool that would guarantee the success of the missionizing project.\textsuperscript{98}

Colonizers also blended earlier discourse on the indigenous’ adoption of gentle masculinity into tales of brave, indigenous Christian men. This emphasis on Filipino valor is articulated in the story of Binondo, a son born to a “Tagál woman” and Chinese man. In an unsigned account, the narrator emphasized the plight of a mestizo who participated in the 1638 Dominican mission to Japan. While Christians celebrated the martyrdom of the mission’s leading priest, Francisco Marcelo Mastril, Binondo’s tale received equal acclaim. The author chronicled Binondo’s commitment to the mission as the mestizo “refused to return [to the Philippines].”

\textsuperscript{97} Luis De Jesus, “Recollect Missions,” in \textit{The Philippine Islands}, eds. Blair & Robertson (Cleveland, 1903): Vol. XXXV, 82.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., p. 83.
during times of peril and chose to continue with the clerics. Both Mastril and Binondo eventually faced torture and death at the hands of the Japanese. The author noted that “they tell and do not finish telling of the valor, fervor, and courage of that holy mestizo, who suffered cruel tortures with a rare constancy, ever preaching the Divine law of God.”

In the tradition of Catholic hagiographies, the author praised Binondo’s martyrdom as a missionary achievement in a moment when the mission was in a vulnerable state. Also, Binondo’s tale omitted any mention of the mestizo’s martial skills and, instead, highlighted his resolve. For the author, Binondo’s valor, displayed in martyrdom, was far more valuable than the mestizo’s military abilities. The author represented Binondo’s masculinity as a unique blend of placidity, piety as well as exemplary fearlessness in the face of non-Christian Japanese. And, similar to the story of Salimbong, colonizers could harness Binondo’s masculine qualities to benefit the conversion project.

Although colonizers scarcely chronicled the placid resolve of non-Christians during times of conflict, Bobadilla’s account of Joloans demonstrated colonizers’ unexpected surprise at Muslim mercy. Bobadilla presented two differing Moro responses to priests. The first involved the 1638 Mindanao Muslims’ indiscriminate, brutal murder of Filipino and Spanish men, including priests. The second response, however, presented the Joloan Muslims’ reverence to the Christian dead. Bobadilla praised missionary priest Juan Domingo Vilancio’s widely-respected reputation, a reputation which the Muslim Joloans deeply admired. The Joloans “did not ill-treat” the cleric as they planned his ransom. When Vilancio unexpectedly died the Joloans buried his remains on their island as they believed his body blessed Jolo. “For sanctity and virtue are

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100 Sampson Vera Tudela, *Colonial Angels*, 22.
pleasing even to Moros and infidels.”

Bobadilla’s interpretation of the Joloans’ actions reveals his conceptualization of “sanctity and virtue” (at least in regards to respecting a Christian priest) as either being unrestricted to Christianity (and could therefore be translatable to the Muslim faith) or as values that Filipino Muslims recognized and respected. Both rationales assume the Filipino Muslims’ mercy in an otherwise rancorous encounter. Although Bobadilla did not portray a mass conversion in Jolo, he still recounted a moment of exceptional Muslim behavior. Bobadilla perceived the war-like Moros’ extraordinary display of veneration towards Vilancio’s dead body as evidence of the Filipino Muslims’ humanity in war.

Lay officials’ and clergy’s recognition of monogamy as a sign of adoption of Christianity was also complicated by the Moro practice of transvestite marriage. As Spanish colonizers experienced increased interaction as a consequence of Muslim raids, they also came to know new Muslim family practices. Reminiscent of Father Almerique’s interaction with the Magdalen-like hair of the mountain dwelling village chief or Maria Campán’s cross-dressing, Father Domingo Fernandez Navarrete discovered an unheard-of marriage practice. Among the Moros in the village existed “those infernal monsters of men clad in women’s clothes, who are married publicly to other men. Nothing has ever surprised me more than that.” The image of the lascivious Moor was an old trope in Spanish discourse, but transvestite marriage would still have surprised Navarrete. These Reconquista memories of Muslim transculturation and miscegenation contributed to Spaniards’ distrust of ambiguous displays of sexuality. In the case of Muslim men keeping monogamous marriages with cross-dressing Filipino men, Navarrete could no longer rely on monogamy as a determinant in appraising Christian gender norms. Spanish

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102 Horswell, Decolonizing the Sodomite, 36.
colonizers, bringing peninsular anxieties regarding racial and religious impurities, construed exceptional performances of masculinity, or exceptional failures of these performances through the lens of Hispanicized gender norms.

In the same way that the practice of monogamy could no longer be indicative of Christianity, colonizers understood that baptism alone could not determine full Catholic conversion. Near Mount Calavite, Filipino mountain villagers “descended [from] the mountains to ask for baptism.” A devout, elderly man who had been baptized long ago numbered among these villagers. The chronicler, Navarrete, learned that the man had never received catechism, to which the priest responded with sadness followed by doctrinal instruction. Navarrete’s account reveals two issues: that he believed religious instruction past baptism was a weakness of the missionizing project, and that the moment of conversion did not occur at baptism but instead at catechism. Instead of writing off the elderly Filipino man’s spiritual curiosity, Navarrete actively cultivated it. The elderly Filipino’s growing spiritual knowledge through catechism represented an ideological deepening of the conversion project. The priest was so impressed with the old man’s spiritual thirst that he re-named him “Juan de Dios” (John of God). The priest presented the story of Juan de Dios, an inquisitive elderly man, an inherently wise Filipino, and an exemplar of the Christian faith as the crowning achievement of Navarrete’s time at Mt. Calavite and as an example of the missionizing project’s promise.

104 Ibid., 26.
105 Rafael, Contracting Colonialism, 92.
The colonizers’ predilection for male students of Christianity was further exemplified in a narrative concerning the boys from the seminary San Juan de Letrán. This same seminary in which Father Guerrero had plucked boys from their idolater mothers’ sides became an institution where young indigenous boys learned “reading, writing, grammar, and music.” The young men who excelled in “arts and theology” continued their education at San Juan de Letrán College. Through the clergy’s rigorous enforcements of punishments and rewards, the seminary aimed to produce commendable Christian men. “Some of those boys became soldiers, some secular priests … the seminary was a general camp of soldiers, both temporal and spiritual.” In times of persistent martial turbulence and in opposition to Vaez’ chronicle of the Filipino who exhibited placid masculinity, the superior Filipino of Navarrete’s San Juan de Letrán were primed for a future of combat. The indigenous men who chose a military life might gain notoriety in the same fashion as the martyr Binondo; as Filipinos who sacrificed their lives to protect the clergy. The clerics of the seminary expected Filipino seculars to grow the missionary effort in the same way San Facundo hoped Salimbong’s story might have. Navarrete proudly called the efforts of San Juan de Letrán priests “a heroic work.”¹⁰⁸ He prided himself in what he understood to be the fruition of the missionizing project’s efforts: cultivating young Filipino boys into masculine “soldiers” of Christ.

Perfecting Filipinas

Colonizers shifted their discourse on Filipinas from general depictions of irreparable sinfulness to flawlessly pious exemplars. For lay officials and clergy, these perceptions still symbolized the progress of the missionizing project. While early colonial chroniclers insisted that Filipino men were naturally inclined to receive conversion, Filipinas posed a much greater

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 54. (Emphasis mine).
threat to the missionizing enterprise. In order for Sande, Loarca, and Chirino’s essentially corrupt Filipina to transform into an archetype she had to model Christian perfection. The colonizers’ turn in rhetoric, from Filipinas’ inherent wickedness to spiritual excellence, ultimately represented the supposed limitless possibilities of the conversion project. Lay officials and clergy articulated superlative Filipina piety in the following chronicles. Although colonizers deciphered indigenous femininity in varying degrees of sophistication over time, these chroniclers persistently conceptualized the mission’s progress through Filipina adoption of Hispanicized gender norms.

Lay officials and clergy emphasized the image of the incorruptible Filipina as a way to prove her transformation. Combés’ 1666 portrayal of the daughter of a Muslim prince and her decision to abstain from marriage illustrated the Filipina’s metamorphosis into a pious Catholic. Doña Maria Uray refused to marry wealthy Joloan kings. Uray did not want “to subject her faith to the outrages of barbarous and faithless princes.” As a result of her decision, Combés depicted her “as an example and ornament of these nations because of the perfection of her virtues – which she prefers to a better fortune.”109 While the earlier accounts illustrated Filipina women as unmoving, devilish babaylan, Combés’ exceptional Uray transcended the image of the depraved Filipina through her enactment of perfect piety. And, like Doña Angelina Dinagunan, the colonizer praised Uray for her obstinacy against the enemy.

Colonial discourse regarding the conversion of Filipinas transformed from chronicles of vague statements of faith, like that of Vaez’ Filipina who protected her chastity, to meticulous tales of Filipina women’s dramatic evolution into exemplary Christians. Jeronima de la Asunsion

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and the nuns of Saint Clare were committed to the transformation of young Filipinas into good Christian women. In a petition to increase the enrollment of Filipinas under the nuns’ care, de la Asunsion stated that Filipinas who were rejected had their “pious desires disappointed.” The restrictions on entry, for Asunsion, hindered “the souls who serve God in so great perfection as those women who are here, the natives of these kingdoms.” Colonial discourse works to strengthen the notion that indigenous women and girls could become the most ardent Christians. Contrary to previous accounts of their essentialized fallibility, Asunsion portrayed Filipinas as the most desirable candidates for Christianity. Her dedication may have come from the Spanish evangelical model applied in New Spain, where indigenous boys and girls were inculcated with the Christian faith then encouraged to marry one another in the hopes of expediting full conversion.\(^{110}\) For Asunsion, however, Filipinas entered St. Clare’s voluntarily. “An infinite number of little girls and older orphans come weeping, with their widowed mothers, begging us for the love of God to give them the habit.”\(^{111}\) Asunsion did not elaborate on the causes for the increasing widowhood, but it is likely that Filipino men succumbed to forced labor drafts.\(^{112}\) Asunsion’s petition, dated July 31\(^{st}\), 1626, was an early glimpse at how colonizers proposed to transform Filipinos into pious Christians. With careful attention to the catechismal process, the clergy illustrated the limitless potential of Filipina women.

Approximately ten years after Asunsion’s petition, Franciscan Miguel Peréz confirmed Asunsion’s success. Peréz noted if the “nuns who come from Spain pass away” the Filipina girls “may teach the same to, and cause it to be observed by, those who shall take the habit hereafter.”

The notion of Filipinas, once observed as unchangeably evil, instructing other Filipinas in the

\(^{110}\) Sampson Vera Tudela, *Colonial Angels*, 78.
\(^{112}\) Newson, *Conquest and Pestilence*, 121.
Catholic faith would have been unheard of before 1636. However, with the colonizers’ constant fear that their mission might fail due to the lack of religious in the islands, imagining neophyte women as heirs to the conversion project might have seemed like a logical step. Peréz remarked that the young Filipinas who had “taken the habit” continued “to flourish in virtue – so greatly that they furnish(ed) an example to the old nuns.” Similar to the ways in which clerics depicted indigenous nuns in other Spanish colonies, Peréz represented the indigenous women of Saint Clare as not only competent enough to proselytize, but virtuous enough that they modeled superlative piety to the Spanish clergy. According to Peréz, indigenous Filipinas were on their way to becoming archetypal Christian women.

Colonizers illustrated the attainment of their idealized, pious Filipina in the tales of nuns and *beatas*. Shortly after Peréz documented the successes at St. Clare, the narrative of an exceptional Pamapangan woman surfaced as yet another demonstration of Christianity’s victory. Upon hearing news of Jeronima de la Asunsion’s accomplishments in Manila, missionaries headed to Macau in order to petition for the creation of a convent. En route to this new location, a number of religious received the habit. The unknown author of this account provided a litany of the recipients, however, one “Pampango Indian woman” stood out. Marta de San Bernardo, supported by the requests of the St. Clare nuns, asked the Macau mission’s provincial for permission to take vows as a nun. Unfortunately, he could not allow her to take her vows in Manila. The racial restrictions on an indigenous Filipina (with no Spanish lineage) prevented the religious to allow Bernardo’s veiling. Steeped in racist logic, Church law dictated that

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113 Sampson Vera Tudela, *Colonial Angels*, 87.
indigenous Filipinos “were not sufficiently qualified” and because of the Philippine climate, were naturally effeminate and were not fit for ordination. Inhabiting a doubly liminal space of racial derision and feminine inferiority, it was highly unlikely that Bernardo would become a nun. Nevertheless, the priest gave San Bernardo permission to receive the habit at sea as Manila had no administrative oversight at these littoral boundaries. The priest allowed San Bernardo to profess her vows because “she was so influential a woman and so moral and virtuous.” When contrasted with the conversion of the Taytay catalona, this author’s rendering of Bernardo’s passage into the sisterhood should give us pause. Clerics once interpreted the Taytay villagers’ public burning of animist idols as proof of conversion to the Christian faith. But, in the seventeenth century, accounts of Filipina exemplars gained precedence over tales of full conversion. Stories like Bernardo’s demonstrated Filipinas’ potential in the missionizing project.

The beata Isabel’s encomium, written by Luis de Jesus, O.S.A., exceeded the nun Bernardo’s story both in detail and sentiment. De Jesus also described the indigenous Filipina as illustrative of the missionizing project’s promise. The clerics discussed both the beata’s fundamental character traits and life achievements at great length, an uncommon determinant considering her status as an indigenous woman from Butuan. As a neophyte, converted from animism, De Jesus remarked that Isabel was consistently “zealous” in God’s work. The beata was able to aid in the conversion effort because she was wonderfully “eloquent” and “explained the rudiments and principles of the Christian doctrine” well. In De Jesus’ opinion, Isabel was

117 Brewer, Shamanism, Catholicism, 115.
118 Sampson Vera Tudela, Colonial Angels, 88.
120 Brewer, Shamanism, Catholicism, xii.
deeply graceful and gentle with words, so much so that she clearly “instructed the stupid” and “enlightened the ignorant.”\textsuperscript{122} While De Jesus’ depiction of Isabel’s aptitude for Christian instruction disrupts Father Guerrero’s description (described earlier) of the Filipina mother’s incompetence for rearing children, both religious men participated in a discourse that essentialized the faculties of indigenous women. Isabel was somehow divinely endowed with her missionary skills; an intrinsic trait, similar to Guerrero’s Filipina mother who harbored a congenital predisposition to animism. Furthermore, the “spirit and strength” with which Isabel performed her conversions was “not of a weak woman, but of a strong man.”\textsuperscript{123} In his observation, the De Jesus constructed Isabel’s gender as he endowed Isabel with courage, a masculine trait, that shifted her from an anatomical woman to a Hispanicized 	extit{cojonuda} (a woman who “has balls”).\textsuperscript{124} Vacillating between feminine and masculine traits, De Jesus chose the beata’s characteristics carefully as he conceptualized her strengths as a missionary in gendered terms. He transformed Isabel, as a missionizing devotee, into the paragon of Filipina piety.

In Isabel’s obituary, De Jesus highlighted the challenges that the beata faced, despite her status as an prototypical woman of the faith. As an archetype of perfect morality, “the fathers sent her (Isabel) to preach in the streets and open places.” She was also sent into the homes of “obstinate” disbelievers to proselytize.\textsuperscript{125} Though Isabel was Filipina, Spanish expectations of decorum would insist she travel with a chaperone when frequenting public places as well as the homes of strangers.\textsuperscript{126} It is likely that De Jesus overlooked this requirement considering Isabel

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 110.  
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 111.  
\textsuperscript{124} Behrend-Martinez, “Manhood,” 1074.  
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p. 110.  
\textsuperscript{126} Burkholder & Johnson, 	extit{Colonial Latin America}, 196.
was supremely “modest” and as an “apostolic coadjutor” who only worked to worship the Lord.\textsuperscript{127} She was “sent to villages where (the) devil waged his fiercest war… she might oppose herself to him by her \textit{exemplary} life.”\textsuperscript{128} For De Jesus, Isabel confronted opponents in double form: as stubborn villagers and other-worldly demons. In his discourse, the superlative Filipina was a staunch militant against the devil, not a frail vessel like the Taytay \textit{catalona}. Isabel established a school for young girls, converted her entire province, carried the “needy” and sick on her shoulders, and begged for the poor.\textsuperscript{129} Within his record of Isabel’s deeds, he exclaimed, “What paths did she not take! What hardships did she not suffer!”\textsuperscript{130} Like the grown men of San Juan de Letrán, Isabel represented the apex of the missionizing project: the indigenous Filipina completely metamorphosed into the perfectly virtuous Christian woman.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The arduous seventeenth century shook colonizers’ faith that the full conversion of the islands could be realized. Enemies to Spanish sovereignty, the Dutch, Muslim raiders, and hostile Filipinos reduced native populations, threatened the lives of the colonizers, and implored lay officials and clergy to re-focus their mission. Chroniclers privileged stories of superlative Filipino/a faith over epics of mass conversions. The imagery of devout, brave Filipino temporal and spiritual soldiers and perfectly pious Filipina nuns and \textit{beatas} revealed the colonizers’ anxieties and fears, as well as their sense of accomplishment that the missionizing project was making progress. But, the instability of the conversion project was inherently built into the ways in which colonizes implemented conversion. The Spanish clergy would persistently deny native

\textsuperscript{127} De Jesus, “Recollect Missions,” Vol. XXXVI, 110.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., p. 109
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 110.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p. 111.
seculars ordainment due to the Filipinos’ natural effeminacy and, as late as the nineteenth century, Spaniards accused Filipinas of conspiring with the devil. Lay officials and clergy would not completely reconcile native ordainment and distrust of Filipinas in the seventeenth century, but the case of Spanish colonizers’ shifting attitudes on gender and the missionizing project proves that: projects of empire were, indeed, projected, and the missionizing project could only have been actualized incompletely.

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