

Convicts or *Conquistadores*?: Spanish Soldiers in the Seventeenth Century Pacific

Abstract: The Spanish colonisation of the Philippines relied on yearly dispatches of soldiers across the Pacific from New Spain. While professional Spanish soldiers formed the backbone of missions of conquest and exploration, they were in reality numerically weak. Royal officials in Manila struggled throughout the century to cover the bare necessities of defence let alone extend Spanish domination across the region. Faced with a chronic shortage of voluntary recruits, officials in New Spain and the Philippines increasingly relied upon a multiethnic mix of criminals and vagabonds found in the urban centres and rural highways of New Spain, who were impressed and coerced into military service. At the same time, however, conditions experienced in the Philippines equally undermined the effectiveness of the military. Widespread shortages in silver and supplies meant that soldiers existed in a state of chronic poverty and many chose to desert or turn to criminality. Thus, by examining the Spanish side of conquest we find that loyalty to the project of empire amongst those who were supposedly its chief protagonists was often contingent. By closely examining the social composition of Spanish soldiers serving in the Philippines in the seventeenth century, this article directly challenges the assumption that all Spanish agents of the colonial project in the Pacific were motivated by goals of self-aggrandisement and personal enrichment.

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In 1565, a conquering party led by Miguel López de Legazpi sailed across the Pacific to establish a permanent Spanish settlement in the Philippines.¹ Ever afterwards, the history of the archipelago was defined by its orientation towards the Pacific. More than thirteen thousand kilometres of ocean separated the islands from the nearest outpost of the Spanish empire, the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Yet, the Pacific crossing was enduring. Galleons plied Pacific waters between Manila and Acapulco for two hundred and fifty years, transporting cargoes of Chinese silks to New Spain and bringing back to Manila boatloads of soldiers, missionaries, silver and much needed supplies.² Spanish territorial control eventually settled across most of the Visayas, Luzon and parts of Micronesia, with brief

¹ William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon: The Romantic History of the Spanish Galleons Trading Between Manila and Acapulco*, (New York, 1959), 16-22, 220-221. Antonio Molina, *Historia de Filipinas*, (Madrid, 1984), 35-62. Teodoro A. Agoncillo and Oscar M. Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, (Quezon City, 1967), 79-83. María Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo Spínola, *Filipinas: La Gran Desconocida, 1565-1898*, (Pamplona, 2001), 40-63.

² Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*.

Spanish settlements in the seventeenth century in the Moluccas, Mindanao, Taiwan and the Celebes islands.³

Yet, within a historiography that lauds the transpacific galleon trade and charts the exploitation of indigenous Filipinos in the lead up to the revolutionary nineteenth century, very little has been written about the ordinary soldiers that acted as the agents of empire in this arena. Soldiers were nonetheless integral to the spread of Spanish control in the Pacific. They manned the galleons that patrolled the archipelago and transported silver and Chinese silks between Acapulco and Manila. They defended the islands against attacks by Dutch and Moro⁴ raiders, and they were essential for furthering the evangelisation and colonisation of indigenous peoples. Numerically, soldiers outnumbered other Spanish migrants to the Philippines seven-to-one, with approximately 15,600 soldiers making the Pacific crossing in the seventeenth century alone.⁵ Their presence within the archipelago has left a lasting impact on the Philippines and helps to account for the high levels of cultural and racial mingling between Spaniards and indigenous populations.⁶ Despite this, soldiers appear only as murky figures within the historiography of the early colonial Philippines.⁷

³ Marjorie G. Driver, 'Cross, Sword and Silver: The nascent Spanish colony in the Mariana Islands,' *Pacific Studies*, XIX, (1988), 21-51. Francis X. Hezel and Marjorie G. Driver, 'From Conquest to Colonisation: Spain in the Mariana Islands, 1690-1740,' *The Journal of Pacific History*, XXIII (1988), 137-155. Robert F. Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall: A History of Guam*, (Honolulu, 1995). Omaira Brunal-Perry, 'Las islas Marianas enclave estratégico en el comercio entre México y Filipinas,' in Leoncio Cabrero (ed.), *España y el Pacífico: Legazpi, Tomo I*, (Madrid, 2004), 543-556. José Eugenio Borao Mateo, *The Spanish Experience in Taiwan, 1626-1642*, (Hong Kong, 2009). Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York, 2007). Leonard Y. Andaya, *World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period*, (Honolulu, 1993). Gary William Bohigian, 'Life on the Rim of Spain's Pacific-American Empire: Presidio Society in the Molucca Islands, 1606-1663' (Univ. of California, Los Angeles, Ph.D. thesis, 1994). Willard A. Hanna and Des Alwi, *Turbulent Times Past in Ternate and Tidore*, (Moluccas, 1990). On the Celebes, see: AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 14, Ramo 2, Núm. 15. AGI Filipinas, Leg. 23, Ramo 17, Núm. 55.

⁴ In the context of Southeast Asia, the term 'Moro' was used by the Spanish to refer to Muslim communities that refused to recognise or pay tribute to the Spanish King and accept Christian missionaries into their communities. For the purposes of this article, the term refers specifically to communities on the islands of Mindanao, Jolo and Borneo. These same communities continue to use the term Moro to the present day as an ethnic identifier that distinguishes them from other Filipino groups.

⁵ See Appendix 3 in Stephanie Mawson, 'Between Loyalty and Disobedience: The Limits of Spanish Domination in the Seventeenth Century Pacific' (Univ. of Sydney, MPhil thesis, 2014).

⁶ Rafael Bernal, *México en Filipinas: Estudio de una transculturación* (México, 1965).

⁷ Specific works on soldiers in the Spanish Pacific during the seventeenth century include: Bohigian, 'Life on the Rim of Spain's Pacific-American Empire.' María Fernanda García de los Arcos, *Forzados y reclutas: Los*

Where soldiers do appear within the historiography of the Philippines, they are presented simultaneously as pawns of their military leaders and as complicit and active participants of conquest. Historians of the Philippines have often assumed that soldiers' interests were intertwined with those of their King and their military commanders, drawing on the famed image of the Spanish *conquistadores* who conquered the territories of New Spain and Peru and were richly rewarded with land and treasure for their efforts. The influential historian, John Leddy Phelan, reinforced the notion of a compliant and loyal soldiery very early on in the historiography of the colonial Philippines, by asserting that 'Spaniards of all classes ... were inspired by an almost limitless faith in their nation's power and prestige.'⁸ Robert Reed later wrote that the colonisation of the Philippines was 'a unified effort of soldiers, missionaries, bureaucrats and merchants in which all participants could reap their just material or spiritual rewards.'⁹ Renato Constantino, one of the great nationalist Filipino historians, concluded that all soldiers were motivated by the pursuit of 'their private goals of enrichment while at the same time consolidating the rule of Spain. ... The instruments of pacification thus served the dual purpose of strengthening Spanish sovereignty and of enriching the men who had made possible the annexation of the territory.'¹⁰ Subsequent historians have adopted these claims uncritically,¹¹ while still others have gone even further, imbuing the soldiers of the Spanish Empire with the quality of brutalised murderers.¹²

criollos novohispanos en Asia (1756-1808) (México D.F., 1996). Luis Muro, 'Soldados de Nueva España a Filipinas (1575),' *Historia Mexicana*, xix, (1970), 466-91.

⁸ John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565-1700* (Madison, 1967), 4.

⁹ Robert R. Reed, *Colonial Manila: The Context of Hispanic Urbanism and Process of Morphogenesis* (Berkeley, 1978) 11.

¹⁰ Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City, 1975), 41.

¹¹ Luis Camara Dery, *Pestilence in the Philippines: A Social History of the Filipino People, 1571-1800* (Quezon City, 2006), 5.

¹² Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, 'Colonialismo y santidad en las islas Marianas: Los soldados de Gedeón (1676-1690),' *Revista Española de Historia*, lxx, (2010), 17-44. Deryck Scarr, *The History of the Pacific Islands: Kingdoms of the Reefs* (South Melbourne, 1990), 82-105. Reed, *Colonial Manila*, 11-4.

By contrast, the archives tell us a very different story. In 1605, the attorney general of the Philippines, Don Hernando de los Ríos Coronel complained that the Spanish were losing face amongst indigenous Filipinos because of the disgraceful behaviour of the soldiers stationed in Manila, who regularly gambled away their wages and ‘afterwards they go about without their shoes and naked without their clothes.’ They would sell their arms and weapons to the indigenous population and ‘walk about begging for alms, making a thousand despicable acts amongst the unbelievers, so that only with dishonour they are called soldiers.’¹³ In 1626, Governor Fernando de Silva described the soldiers as ‘the scum of the entire Spanish nation,’ saying that most of the recruits were criminals and young boys with corrupt minds.¹⁴ In 1650 Governor Diego Fajardo Chacón reported that the soldiers were more often than not boys under the age of twelve, mulattos, Indians and ‘men of bad character’.¹⁵ Governor Juan Niño de Távora even described the soldiers as a threat to the overall project of colonisation, warning the King that the ‘great misery and labour’ endured by the soldiers of the presidios¹⁶ of the Philippines could have undesired consequences. He invoked the experience of mutiny amongst soldiers of Flanders by cautioning the King that ‘nothing places that state of Flanders ... in a greater predicament than [soldiers’] mutinies.’¹⁷

While confronting the myth of the quixotic conquistador, the research presented here also contributes to an emerging literature on the role of soldiers in early modern empire construction. Long considered the prerogative of military historians with an interest in charting the changing nature of service within the context of the military revolution,¹⁸

¹³ Archivo General de Indias [hereafter AGI], Audiencia de Filipinas [hereafter Filipinas], Leg. 27, Núm. 51.

¹⁴ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 20, Ramo 20, Núm. 137.

¹⁵ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 1, Núm. 9. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 1, Núm. 13.

¹⁶ A presidio is a fortification with a garrison of soldiers. In this period, there was no established association with a penal institution, although most presidios employed convict labourers.

¹⁷ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 1, Núm. 5.

¹⁸ Fernando Gonzalez de Leon, ‘“Doctors of the Military Discipline”: Technical Expertise and the Paradigm of the Spanish Soldier in the Early Modern Period,’ *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxvii (1996). Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800*, (Cambridge, 1988). Clifford J. Rogers, *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, (Oxford, 1995). Geoffrey Parker, ‘The Soldier,’ in Rosario Villari (ed.), *Baroque Personae* (Chicago, 1995).

soldiers have been largely left out of early modern and labour histories.¹⁹ Phil Withington has recently suggested that their exclusion from early modern historiography derives in part from a prevalent assumption that soldiers – like other lower class or plebeian subjects – lacked social agency and political consciousness, and therefore very little could genuinely be said about them.²⁰ Early modern historiography has tended instead to focus on the ‘chivalric’ and distinguished actions of the military elite, who better represent notions of military honour and patriotism dominant within the civic humanist imagination.²¹ While some fine examples of social history exist for soldiers that served in European armies,²² until recently there has been a paucity of similar texts dealing with soldiers that served in the expansion of European colonies.²³ Our understanding of the place of soldiers within early modern empires stands in stark contrast to the history of sailors and maritime labour. With the ship described famously as ‘an early precursor of the factory’ and a site of collective labour,²⁴ the maritime history of empire has been written as a labour history, replete with strikes, mutinies and the explicit

Frank Tallett, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1495-1715* (London, 1992), 69-104. Lorraine White, ‘Los Tercios en España: El Combate,’ *Studia Histórica. Historia Moderna*, xix (1998). I.A.A. Thompson, *War and Society in Habsburg Spain: Selected Essays*, (Aldershot, 1992). For a non-European comparison, see Michael W. Charney, *Southeast Asian Warfare, 1300-1900*, (Leiden, 2004).

¹⁹ Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack, ‘Defining Soldiers: Britain’s Military, c. 1740-1815,’ *War in History*, xx (2013).

²⁰ Phil Withington, ‘Introduction – Citizens and Soldiers: The Renaissance Context,’ *Journal of Early Modern History*, xv (2011), 14. The same broad point about the exclusionary nature of early modern historiography has been made in Tim Harris, ‘Introduction,’ in Tim Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, 1500-1850*, (Basingbroke, 2001).

²¹ Withington, ‘Introduction – Citizens and Soldiers,’ 14-15.

²² See for example: Lorraine White, ‘Spain’s Early Modern Soldiers: Origins, Motivation and Loyalty,’ *War and Society*, xix (2001). Lorraine White, ‘The Experience of Spain’s Early Modern Soldiers: Combat, Welfare and Violence,’ *War in History*, ix (2002). Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries’ Wars*, (Cambridge, 2004). Ruth MacKay, *The Limits of Royal Authority: Resistance and Obedience in Seventeenth Century Castile*, (Cambridge, 1999). Angela McShane, ‘Recruiting Citizens for Soldiers in Seventeenth-Century English Ballads,’ *Journal of Early Modern History*, xv (2011). Paul Scannell, *Conflict and Soldiers’ Literature in Early Modern Europe: The Reality of War*, (London, 2015). John A. Lynn II, *Women, Armies, and Warfare in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge, 2008).

²³ While the collected volume of essays, ‘Warfare and Empires,’ sought to bridge the gap between colonial and military history, soldiers do not even appear in the index. See Douglas M. Peers (ed.), *Warfare and Empires: Contact and Conflict between European and Non-European Military and Maritime Forces and Cultures*, (Aldershot, 1997).

²⁴ Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, (Cambridge, 1987), 290.

challenge to the state of early eighteenth century piracy.²⁵ Sailors are thus written into the history of empire as active participants and sometimes even active detractors of empire.²⁶ Soldiers have traditionally attracted none of this romance. Especially within colonial Latin American historiography, they have been depicted as brutal conquistadors of indigenous victims of European domination, creating what one historian has termed ‘a neomythology of the good and evil twins, pairing an essentialized victim and victor, conquered and conqueror.’²⁷

Yet, an emerging literature on soldiers that served across a diversity of colonial spaces challenges these assumptions. As Miguel Martínez points out, the coincidence of the military revolution with imperial expansion meant that many early modern soldiers were thrust into global imperial networks, becoming both agents and subjects of empire. Their collective and individual stories point to an unprecedented global mobility and interconnectedness. Soldiers could thus be thrown into the role of empire’s victims – pawns within a game of military expansion, where their experiences of violence and conflict were

²⁵ Jesse Lemisch, ‘Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America,’ *The William and Mary Quarterly*, xxv (1968). Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, (London, 2004). Paul S. Taylor, ‘Spanish Seamen in the New World during the Colonial Period,’ *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, v (1922), 631-661. Gaspar Pérez Turrado, *Las Armadas Españolas de Indias*, (Madrid, 1992). Bibiano Torres, *La Marina en el Gobierno y Administración de Indias*, (Madrid, 1992). David Goodman, *Spanish Naval Power, 1589-1665: Reconstruction and Defeat*, (Cambridge, 1997). Carla Rahn Phillips, *Six Galleons for the King of Spain: Imperial Defense in the Early Seventeenth Century*, (Baltimore, 1986). Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaína, *Spain’s Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Carla Rahn Phillips, (Baltimore, 1998). Clare Anderson, et. al., (eds.), *Mutiny and Maritime Radicalism in the Age of Revolution: A Global Survey*, (Cambridge, 2013). Jaap R. Bruijn and Els van Eyck van Heslinga, ‘Mutiny: Rebellion on the Ships of the Dutch East India Company,’ *The Great Circle*, iv (1982). Nigel Worden, ‘“Below the Line the Devil Reigns”: Death and Dissent aboard a VOC Vessel,’ *South African Historical Journal*, lxi (2009).

²⁶ Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807*, (Cambridge, 2006). Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, (London, 2000). Marcus Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic: Sailors, Pirates, and Motley Crews in the Age of Sail*, (London, 2014).

²⁷ Amy Turner Bushnell, ‘Gates, Patterns, and Peripheries: The Field of Frontier Latin America,’ in Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, eds., *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820* (New York, 2002), 16-17. See also: Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997), 1-9. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2010), 12.

not equally matched by loyalty to the empires they served.²⁸ Rather than unthinking agents of empire, many soldiers serving in colonial armies were subject to conditions of extreme deprivation, exploitation, extortion and penury. Convictism and forced or fraudulent recruitment were common, as were brutal and cruel punishments.²⁹ At the same time, studies of colonial armies across a diversity of contexts have encouraged us to rethink the ethnic identity of the typical soldier by demonstrating the participation of slaves, free blacks, mixed race and indigenous peoples.³⁰

Soldiers also acted as settlers and go-betweens, marrying into local communities and forming relationships and alliances with indigenous and slave populations.³¹ In frontier regions like the Philippines, Chile and the Chichimec frontier, soldiers were often the only representatives of empire, and their service records thus help to enliven histories of

²⁸ Miguel Martínez, “‘The Spell of National Identity’: War and Soldiering on the North African Frontier (1556-1560),” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, xii (2011).

²⁹ Nigel Penn, ‘Great Escapes: Deserting Soldiers during Noodt’s Cape Governorship, 1727-1729,’ *South African Historical Journal*, lix (2007). Roger Norman Buckley, *The British Army in the West Indies: Society and the Military in the Revolutionary Age*, (Gainesville, Fla., 1998), 91-127, 203-247. Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company*, (Cambridge, 2008). Timothy J. Coates, *Convicts and Orphans: Forced and State-Sponsored Colonizers in the Portuguese Empire, 1550-1755*, (Stanford, 2001), 86-102. Stephanie Mawson, ‘Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System: Convict Transportation between New Spain and the Philippines during the Seventeenth Century,’ *Revista de Indias*, lxxiii (2013). Eva Mehl, ‘Mexican Recruits and Vagrants in Late Eighteenth-Century Philippines: Empires, Social Order, and Bourbon Reforms in the Spanish Pacific World,’ *Hispanic American Historical Review*, xciv (2014). Bohigian, ‘Life on the Rim of Spain’s Pacific-American Empire.’ Beatriz Cáceres Menéndez and Robert W. Patch, “‘Gente de Mal Vivir’: Families and Incurable Sons in New Spain, 1721-1729,’ *Revista de Indias*, Vol. lxxvi (2006). García de los Arcos, *Forzados y reclutas*. Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: Europeans and Eurasians in Colonial Indonesia*, (Madison, 2009), 7.

³⁰ Laura E. Matthew and Michel R. Oudijk (eds.), *Indian Conquistadors: Indigenous Allies in the Conquest of Mesoamerica* (Norman, 2007). Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall, ‘Black Soldiers, Native Soldiers: Meanings of Military Service in the Spanish American Colonies,’ in Matthew Restall (ed.), *Beyond Black and Red: African-Native Relations in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque, 2005). Ben Vinson III, ‘Race and Badge: Free-Colored Soldiers in the Colonial Mexican Militia,’ *The Americas*, lvi (2000). Ben Vinson III, ‘Free Colored Voices: Issues of Representation and Racial Identity in the Colonial Mexican Militia,’ *The Journal of Negro History*, lxxx (1995). Matthew Restall, ‘The New Conquest History,’ *History Compass*, x (2012), 151. José Eugenio Borao Mateo, ‘Filipinos in the Spanish Colonial Army during the Dutch Wars (1600-1648),’ in Isaac Donoso (ed.), *More Hispanic than We Admit. Insights in Philippine Cultural History* (Quezon City, 2008). Augusto V. De Viana, ‘The Pampangos in the Mariana Mission, 1668-1684,’ *Micronesian Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, iv (2005). Augusto V. De Viana, *In the Far Islands: The Role of Natives from the Philippines in the Conquest, Colonization and Repopulation of the Mariana Islands, 1668-1903* (Manila, 2004). Dirk H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850*, (Cambridge, 1990).

³¹ Marjoleine Kars, ‘Policing and Transgressing Borders: Soldiers, Slave Rebels, and the Early Modern Atlantic,’ *New West Indian Guide*, xxxviii (2009). Philip J. Stern, ‘Soldier and Citizen in the Seventeenth-Century East India Company,’ *Journal of Early Modern History*, xv (2011), 95. Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*, 8.

confrontation and negotiation that otherwise could not be told.³² While ultimately tasked with the job of subjugating indigenous people and extending European domination, soldiers' relationships with these populations could also be subverted in times of mutiny, rebellion or desertion, when the boundaries between agents and subjects of empire blurred. At these moments, soldiers could easily be as destabilising to the imperial project as they were essential to it.³³ While soldiers have traditionally been left out of the historiography of European expansion, as agents of empire they are nonetheless an important analytical category if we truly want to understand how empire was expressed and experienced.

What follows here is a detailed social history of Spanish soldiers serving across Spain's Pacific presidios. The article begins with an assessment of the origins of Spanish soldiers in the levies for the Philippines in New Spain. Far from the image of adventuring, fortune-seeking professional soldiers of pure Spanish ethnicity, the companies of soldiers stationed across the Pacific were comprised of half-starved, under-clothed and unpaid recruits, many of whom were in fact convicts, and were more likely to be Mexican mestizos than pure-blood Spaniards. The archetype of the quixotic conquistador is thus broken down not merely because most ordinary soldiers served in the Philippines involuntarily, but also because few were ever really rewarded for their service. From this basis we examine the conditions that soldiers experienced once they reached the Philippines, which often led

³² Amy Turner Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana: Spain's Support System for the Presidio and Mission Provinces of Florida* (New York, 1994). Peter Boyd-Bowman, 'A Spanish Soldier's Estate in Northern Mexico (1642),' *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, liii (1973). Roberto Mario Salmón, 'A Thankless Job: Mexican Soldiers in the Spanish Borderlands,' *Military History of the Southwest*, xxi (1991). Juan Eduardo Vargas Cariola, 'Antecedentes sobre las levas en Indias para el ejército de Chile en el Siglo XVII (1600-1662),' *Revista Historia*, xxii (1987). Philip Wayne Powell, *Soldiers, Indians and Silver: The Northward Advance of New Spain, 1550-1600* (Berkeley, 1969). Thomas H. Naylor and Charles W. Polzer (eds.), *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain: A Documentary History. Volume One: 1570-1700* (Tucson, 1986). Richard W. Slatta, 'Spanish Colonial Military Strategy and Ideology,' in Donna J. Guy and Thomas E. Sheridan (eds.), *Contested Ground: Comparative Frontiers on the Northern and Southern Edges of the Spanish Empire* (Tucson, 1998). Richard Smith, 'Soldiery,' in Philippa Levine and John Marriott (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Modern Imperial Histories* (Farnham, Surrey, 2012).

³³ Stephanie Mawson, 'Rebellion and Mutiny in the Mariana Islands, 1680-1690,' *Journal of Pacific History*, 1 (2015). Kars, 'Policing and Transgressing Borders.' Martínez, "'The Spell of National Identity",' 302. For a different political context, see also: Michael A. McDonnell, *The Politics of War: Race, Class and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia*, (Chapel Hill, 2007).

soldiers towards disloyalty in the form of desertion and mutiny. The final section considers how these factors impacted on the success of Spanish aims in the Pacific in the seventeenth century, concluding that ultimately both a chronic shortage in voluntary recruits and a lack of loyalty amongst those who did serve undermined ambitions to expand the project of empire in the Spanish Pacific.

I.

The Social Origins of Spanish Soldiers Serving the Pacific

In 1617, Diego López de Miranda crossed the Pacific from New Spain to fight in the wars against the Dutch. An honoured soldier with an illustrious career spanning more than fifteen years and three continents, he had served as a military officer in Hispaniola, as captain of a ship in the armada off the coast of Africa, as an *alférez* in New Spain responsible for recruiting soldiers for the Philippines and as captain of infantry in Puerta de Navidad before finally enlisting to serve on the other side of the Pacific. Once in the Philippines, he was quickly promoted into the officer ranks and in 1620 he served as corporal of an aid ship sent to the Moluccas. Unfortunately, his ship was seized by Dutch corsairs and he was taken prisoner and held captive for three and a half years before finally escaping on board a tiny boat. As he sailed across the Celebes Sea towards the Philippines, his ship was attacked by Moro raiders and his arm was broken during the ensuing skirmish. He was left floating at sea for the next eight days. Undeterred by his travails, when he finally returned to Manila, López de Miranda signed up for the next armada that set sail in pursuit of the Dutch.³⁴ In recognition of his loyalty and services to the Crown, he became captain of artillery in Panama in 1632.³⁵

³⁴ AGI, Indiferente General (hereafter Indiferente), Leg. 111, Núm. 74.

³⁵ AGI, Casa de la Contratación, Leg. 5793, Libro 2, Fols. 132-133. AGI, Audiencia de Panama (hereafter Panama), Leg. 238, Libro 15, Fols. 91R-93V. AGI, Panama, Leg. 239, Libro 19, Fols. 68R-69V. AGI, Panama, Leg. 229, Libro 3, Fol. 56V.

López de Miranda's service record paints a colourful, swashbuckling picture of the mobility and adventure experienced by the military officers who traversed the Spanish empire in the seventeenth century. His time spent in the Philippines formed just one part of a much longer career that crisscrossed four continents. The service records of other officers serving in the Philippines also suggest that elements of López de Miranda's story were relatively common. The careers of the military officers in the Philippines link almost every corner of the empire and beyond. Particularly in the first half of the century, many had fought in European theatres of war such as Flanders and Italy, while others had participated in military incursions into Africa or sailed on board the famed silver fleets of New Spain.³⁶ Of all the military men serving in the Philippines, these officers were the most likely to adhere to the image of the conquistador portrayed in the historiography, since as career soldiers they benefitted through the attainment of future positions of title and prestige, if not monetary advantage.

Nevertheless, we need to pause and question how accurately this story reflects the common experience of ordinary soldiers serving in the Philippines. Although numerical data across the century is patchy, what data exists suggests that Spanish soldiers numbered between 1,500 and 2,000 across all Philippine presidios during the course of the century.³⁷ What is also clear from official records is that this was never considered enough. An audit of the military needs of the Philippines in 1633 indicated that the archipelago needed to maintain a military presence equalling at least 2,200 soldiers in order to be able to maintain its defences.³⁸ The major barrier to meeting these needs was simply a lack of sufficient

³⁶ See for example: AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 111, Núm. 146. AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 111, Núm. 241. AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 117, Núm. 23. AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 122, Núm. 12. AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 113, Núm. 6. AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 113, Núm. 47. AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 114, Núm. 56. AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 111, Núm. 142. AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 111, Núm. 213. AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 111, Núm. 212. AGI, Indiferente, Leg. 111, Núm. 195.

³⁷ AGI, México, Leg. 25, Núm. 62. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 50. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 1, Núm. 1, Fols. 408R-428V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 7, Núm. 21. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 10, Ramo 1, Núm. 6. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 32, Núm. 30. AGI, Filipinas, Libro 285, Núm. 1, Fols. 30R-41V.

³⁸ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 27, Núm. 179. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 27, Núm. 184.

soldiers sent to the archipelago on board the galleons from New Spain. Although dispersed and fragmentary, the yearly accounts of the *socorros*³⁹ sent to the Philippines during the seventeenth century indicate that the number of soldiers sent from Acapulco to Manila averaged just 156 per year.⁴⁰ By contrast, Governors of the Philippines regularly requested that the Viceroy send up to 300 soldiers annually, while the King on a number of occasions commanded the Viceroy to organise dispatches in the order of 400 or 500 soldiers.⁴¹

Table 1: Distribution of Spanish Soldiers in the Philippines⁴²

	1603	1636	1642	1644	1654	1655	1670	1672
Manila	900	446		407	821	799	708	667
Fort Santiago		22			50		86	81
Cavite		70			89		225	211
Moluccas	180	480	507		389			
Cebu	86	50					135	135
Oton	66	50					169	169
Cagayan	46	80					155	155
Zamboanga		210			184			
Caraga		45					81	81
Formosa		180						
Calamianes							73	73
Other	255							
TOTAL	1533	1633	2067	2085	Unknown	Unknown	1632	1572

Table 2: Detail of Soldier Distribution in Pacific Presidios, 1670 and 1672⁴³

Year	Location	Officers	Soldiers	Musketeers	Indigenous officers	Indigenous Soldiers	Total
1670	Manila	96	476	220	0	0	792
	Fort Santiago	9	66	20	4	46	145
	Cavite	48	150	75	36	355	664
	Caraga	9	81	0	6	45	141
	Calamianes	9	73	0	0	48	130
	Otón	17	169	0	6	91	283

³⁹ The *socorro* was the yearly supply of aid sent to the Philippines from New Spain, comprising financial, military and material aid.

⁴⁰ See Appendix 3 in Mawson, 'Between Loyalty and Disobedience.'

⁴¹ AGI, México, Leg. 26, Núm. 33. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 20, Ramo 20, Núm. 137. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 23, Ramo 2, Núm. 4. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 340, Libro 3, Fols. 463R-463V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 340, Libro 5, Fols. 18R-20R.

⁴² AGI, México, Leg. 25, Núm. 62. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 50. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 1, Núm. 1, Fols. 408R-428V. AGI, Filipinas, Libro 285, Núm. 1, Fols. 30R-41V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 7, Núm. 21. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 10, Ramo 1, Núm. 6. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 32, Núm. 30.

⁴³ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 10, Ramo 1, Núm. 6. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 32, Núm. 30.

	Cagayan	17	155	0	0	51	223
	Cebú	17	135	0	6	95	253
	Governors guard	2	12	0	0	0	14
	TOTAL	224	1317	315	58	731	2645
1672	Manila	72	528	127	0	0	727
	Fort Santiago	9	61	20	6	42	138
	Cavite	44	173	38	36	251	542
	Caraga	9	81	0	6	45	141
	Calamianes	9	73	0	0	48	130
	Otón	17	169	0	6	91	283
	Cagayan	17	155	0	0	51	223
	Cebú	17	135	0	6	95	253
	Governors guard	2	12	0	0	0	14
	TOTAL	196	1387	185	60	623	2451

Table 3: Soldiers sent on board the galleons from Acapulco to Manila during the Seventeenth Century⁴⁴

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>
1600	209	1644	255	1662	300
1601	500	1645	254	1663	700
1603	150	1646	141	1664	149
1604	150	1647	0	1666	70
1605	850	1648	81	1667	50
1606	40	1649	136	1670	0
1608	350	1650	54	1671	135
1610	268	1651	0	1672	101
1615	311	1652	0	1676	146

⁴⁴ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 7, Ramo 1, Núm. 23. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 7, Ramo 5, Núm. 58. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 7, Ramo 5, Núm. 64. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 7, Ramo 5, Núm. 67. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 1, Núm. 16. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 1, Núm. 17. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 1, Núm. 13. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 1, Núm. 16. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 2, Núm. 30. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 2, Núm. 34. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 3, Núm. 44. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 3, Núm. 49. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 3, Núm. 50. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 13, Ramo 1, Núm. 7. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 14, Ramo 1, Núm. 4. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 15, Ramo 1, Núm. 23. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 19, Ramo 3, Núm. 47. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 19, Ramo 6, Núm. 91. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 10, Núm. 57. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 9, Núm. 45. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 23, Ramo 2, Núm. 4. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 30, Núm. 12. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 31, Núm. 43. AGI, México, Leg. 24, Núm. 39. AGI, México, Leg. 25, Núm. 4. AGI, México, Leg. 25, Núm. 62. AGI, México, Leg. 26, Núm. 22. AGI, México, Leg. 26, Núm. 46. AGI, México, Leg. 26, Núm. 91. AGI, México, Leg. 27, Núm. 35. AGI, México, Leg. 27, Núm. 58. AGI, México, Leg. 28, Núm. 2. AGI, México, Leg. 28, Núm. 24. AGI, México, Leg. 28, Núm. 46. AGI, México, Leg. 29, Núm. 18. AGI, México, Leg. 29, Núm. 37. AGI, México, Leg. 29, Núm. 86. AGI, México, Leg. 30, Núm. 14. AGI, México, Leg. 36, Núm. 25. AGI, México, Leg. 36, Núm. 35. AGI, México, Leg. 38, Núm. 86. AGI, México, Leg. 39, Núm. 7. AGI, México, Leg. 41, Núm. 18. AGI, México, Leg. 44, Núm. 23. AGI, México, Leg. 46, Núm. 19. AGI, México, Leg. 46, Núm. 45. AGI, México, Leg. 60, Ramo 1, Núm. 1. Gregorio M. De Guijo, *Diario, 1648-1664*, Vol. 1, (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1952), 89, 209. Antonio de Robles, *Diario de Sucesos Notables (1665-1703)*, Vol. 1, (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.a., 1972), 195, 277. Antonio de Robles, *Diario de Sucesos Notables (1665-1703)*, Vol. 2, (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.a., 1972), 62, 83-84, 177-178.

1617	0	1653	100	1680	130
1619	156	1654	167	1684	190
1620	407	1655	110	1685	206
1621	170	1656	0	1686	0
1622	482	1657	0	1687	0
1628	250	1658	164	1688	0
1630	0	1659	130	1689	163
1631	80	1660	41	1692	0
1632	90	1661	0	1693	0
TOTAL					8,436
<i>Yearly Average</i>					<i>156</i>

These records also suggest that ordinary soldiers outnumbered officers anywhere up to nine times.⁴⁵ Yet, ordinary soldiers are almost inevitably much harder to study than the officer class. For the most part they did not leave behind the kind of merit and service records that allow us to tell an individual story like the account given above of López de Miranda's military career. Instead, the archives portray ordinary soldiers as a mostly shapeless mass. Questions regarding the origins and motivations of soldiers serving in the Philippines and their overall loyalty to the Spanish empire therefore need to be approached in a different way, beginning with the records relating to the military levies for the Philippines.

The vast majority of soldiers serving in the Philippines were recruited from levies conducted in New Spain. Banners were raised across the major urban centres of New Spain in the months leading up to the arrival of the galleons from Manila in March or April of each year. Levies most commonly took place in Mexico City,⁴⁶ Puebla de los Ángeles⁴⁷ and Veracruz,⁴⁸ but could also be held in more minor cities such as Zacatecas,⁴⁹ Antequera,⁵⁰

⁴⁵ For a breakdown of soldiers in the islands see: AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 1, Núm. 1, Fols. 11R-14V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 10, Ramo 1, Núm. 6. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 32, Núm. 30.

⁴⁶ Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGN), Reales Cédulas Ordinarios y Duplicados (hereafter RC), Vol. D49, expedientes 211, 212, 288, 289. AGI, México, leg. 46, núm. 19.

⁴⁷ AGN, RC, Vol. D49, expedientes 196, 197. AGN, RC, Vol. D50, exp. 57. AGI, México, leg. 46, núm. 19.

⁴⁸ AGN, RC, vol. D49, exp. 209. AGI, México, leg. 46, núm. 19.

⁴⁹ AGN, RC, vol. D49, exp. 213.

⁵⁰ AGN, RC, Vol. D49, expedientes 229, 230, 231. AGN, RC, Vol. D50, expedientes 56, 58, 59.

Celaya,⁵¹ Cuernavaca,⁵² Tlaxcala⁵³ and Acapulco.⁵⁴ In these locations appointed captains were instructed to establish a recruiting booth and issue a public decree that the levy was in progress.⁵⁵ These levies were intended to attract voluntary recruits; however, finding sufficient volunteers to serve in the Philippines was a consistent and notorious problem throughout the seventeenth century. Deterred by the lengthy voyage across the Pacific and the limited prospects for returning from what was known to be a volatile and dangerous frontier, few soldiers ever really enlisted voluntarily. Some soldiers were even known to have paid officials in the port of Acapulco to be exempted from the levy before they embarked on the galleons bound for Manila,⁵⁶ while others deserted while en route to Acapulco.⁵⁷ In 1648 the Viceroy Conde de Salvatierra acknowledged the unpopularity of the levy, noting that recruits ‘were always lacking, they collected men from the levies of [Mexico] City, Puebla and Veracruz, but from the rest of the recruitment sites there were few or none.’⁵⁸

Viceregal officials responded to the chronic shortage of voluntary recruits in two ways. Firstly, military officers in the Philippines came to rely much more heavily on the recruitment of indigenous Filipino soldiers – a complex subject which I have dealt with in much greater detail elsewhere.⁵⁹ Secondly, recruiting officers in New Spain utilised a number of coercive means to find soldiers. A standard clause within the instructions given to recruiting captains charged them with issuing a pardon ‘to all of those [criminals] who within the first fifteen days following the pronouncement of this decree do present themselves

⁵¹ AGN, RC, Vol. D49, expedientes 219, 220, 221, 223, 252, 269.

⁵² AGN, RC, Vol. D49, exp. 241. AGN, RC, Vol. D50, expedientes 65-67. AGI, México, leg. 46, núm. 19.

⁵³ AGI, México, leg. 46, núm. 19.

⁵⁴ AGN, RC, Vol. D49, exp. 252. AGI, México, leg. 46, núm. 19. See also: Mawson, ‘Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System,’ 713.

⁵⁵ AGN, RC, Vol. D49, expedientes 192, 193, 197, 200, 202, 205, 207, 210, 215, 216, 220, 229.

⁵⁶ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 1, Núm. 1.

⁵⁷ AGI, México, Leg. 27, Núm. 58.

⁵⁸ Ernesto de la Torre Villar (ed.), *Instrucciones y Memorias de los Virreyes Novohispanos*, Vol. 1, (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1991), 515.

⁵⁹ See Stephanie Mawson, ‘Philippine *Indios* in the Service of Empire: Indigenous Soldiers and Contingent Loyalty (1600-1700),’ *Ethnohistory*, (forthcoming, 2016).

before the said captain or his deputy to enlist themselves.⁶⁰ The same captains were then instructed to forcibly apprehend and impress any criminals who failed to enlist in the stated timeframe.⁶¹ Yet, recruiting officers who were desperate to meet their quota often resorted to more informal methods of impressment. In Puebla de los Ángeles, the city council reported that it was commonplace for respectable citizens to be impressed into the army alongside vagabonds and young boys. Only a hefty bribe to the recruiting officers would secure them their liberty.⁶² Finally, when all of these other methods failed, viceregal officials in New Spain would seek to supplement the number of recruits sent to the Philippines through the criminal justice system. Criminals were taken off the rural highways and urban streets and out of the gaols of New Spain and sentenced to serve as convicts in the military of the Philippines under a system known as the *forzado* system.⁶³

Roughly a quarter of all soldiers sent to the Philippines were *forzados*;⁶⁴ however, once we take into account the full range of coercive recruitment methods used in the levies it seems safe to assume that the number of soldiers serving in the Philippines against their will was very high, if not an outright majority. Significantly, this had an impact on the type of soldiers who travelled to the Philippines. Since the Philippines levies relied so heavily on involuntary methods of recruitment, the majority of ordinary soldiers were drawn from the *plebe* of New Spain, rather than from the ranks of career soldiers. The *plebe* of New Spain was a multiethnic underclass of criminals, idlers, vagabonds, fugitives and runaway soldiers and sailors who transgressed the social norms of genteel Spanish society.⁶⁵ According to the Viceroy, the miscegenated nature of the *plebe* meant that it had absorbed all of the worst

⁶⁰ AGN, RC, Vol. D49, expedientes, 193, 205, 210, 216, 220, 229.

⁶¹ Mawson, 'Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System,' 714

⁶² Mercedes Gantes Tréllez, 'Aspectos socio-económicos de Puebla de los Ángeles (1624-1650),' *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, xl (1983), 540-4. Mawson, 'Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System,' 715.

⁶³ Mawson, 'Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System,' 693-730.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 717.

⁶⁵ R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720* (Madison, 1994). Thomas Calvo, *La Plebe Según los Virreyes de América (siglos XVI-XVIII)* (México, D.F., 2003).

characteristics of its constituent subgroups, and for this reason miscegenation was discouraged by the viceregal authorities.⁶⁶ Viceroy Palafox y Mendoza described the *plebe* of New Spain as being made up of ‘negros, mulattos, mestizos ... and Indians and some fallen Spaniards and habitual delinquents.’ He went on to argue that ‘there runs risk among such a diversity of colours, nations and conditions, all of them with little light of reason and no shame.’⁶⁷ The *plebe* was a particular fixture of urbanised populations in Mexico City and Puebla de los Ángeles, where they congregated in taverns and marketplaces and engaged in unruly and criminal behaviour.⁶⁸ At the same time, an itinerant plebeian population plagued the highways of New Spain, engaging in acts of petty theft and highway robbery which threatened many of the major communication routes in New Spain.⁶⁹ Criminals on the highways of New Spain were known to target large land holdings and attack travellers, merchants and carters travelling between settlements.⁷⁰

Unsurprisingly, a variety of criminal justice measures were designed to transform the unruly *plebe* of New Spain into productive members of society through forced labour schemes.⁷¹ While a number of these schemes existed, recruitment and sentencing to serve in the Philippines was in many ways a particularly final measure for removing unwanted social elements from Novohispanic society. This was certainly the intention behind the *forzado* system, if not the majority of other coercive recruitment methods used during the Philippines

⁶⁶ Calvo, *La Plebe Según los Virreyes de América*, 21. *Instrucciones y Memorias de los Virreyes Novohispanos*, 584. Alejandro Cañeque, *The King’s Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico* (New York, 2004), 223-224.

⁶⁷ *Instrucciones y Memorias de los Virreyes Novohispanos*, 413.

⁶⁸ William B. Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (Stanford, 1979). María Rebeca Yoma Medina and Luis Alberto Martos López, *Dos Mercados en la Historia de la Ciudad de México: El Volador y La Merced* (México, D.F., 1990), 54. Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination*, 37.

⁶⁹ AGN, General de Parte, Volume 8, Exp 61, Exp 235; AGN, Reales Cédulas Originales y Duplicados, Volume D48, Exp 51, Exp 423, Exp 427, Exp 454, Exp 443, Exp 457, Exp 489; AGN, Reales Cédulas Originales y Duplicados, Volume D50, Exp 30; AGN, Reales Cédulas Originales y Duplicados, Volume D14, Exp 738, Exp 747; AGN, General de Parte, Volume 14, Exp 9; AGN, Reales Cédulas Originales y Duplicados, Volume D28, Exp 641, Exp 642; AGN, Indiferente Virreinal, Caja 763, Exp 22

⁷⁰ AGN, Indiferente Virreinal, Caja 763, Exp. 22. AGN, General de Parte, Vol. 8, Exp. 61. AGN Reales Cédulas Originales y Duplicados, Vol. D28, Exp. 641.

⁷¹ Samuel Kagan, ‘Penal Servitude in New Spain: The Colonial Textile Industry,’ (City Univ. of New York, Ph.D. thesis, 1977), 41. Gabriel Haslip-Viera, *Crime and Punishment in Late Colonial Mexico City, 1692-1810* (Albuquerque, 1999), 104-5.

levies.⁷² Records relating to the *forzado* system indicate that the majority of *forzados* were sentenced to serve in the Philippines either for property crimes including highway robbery, rustling and petty theft or for the ‘crimes’ of vagabondage and idleness. Although rarer, violent crimes such as murder and rape were also recorded.⁷³ *Forzados* were emblematic representatives of the unruly *plebe* of New Spain, and they were thrust into the volatile frontier environment of the Philippines largely against their will. Far from being loyal servants to the Crown, the same culture of disobedience that led to their expulsion from New Spain travelled with them to the Philippines on board the galleons that crossed the Pacific each year.

In addition to the recruitment of criminals, the Philippines levy also targeted another specific plebeian grouping – illegal migrants arriving in New Spain on board the Indies fleets. Lower class Spaniards frequently circumvented the official restrictions on migration to the New World by enlisting as soldiers and sailors in Spain and then deserting upon arrival in Veracruz. One estimate suggests that this form of illegal migration contributed as many as fifty percent of the annual migrants to the Indies during the seventeenth century.⁷⁴ When they arrived in the New World, these soldiers and sailors would desert from their ships and attempt to disappear into the colony without a trace, establishing themselves in a trade, re-enlisting in the army, or joining the ranks of the itinerant populations that roved the highways of New Spain. Historians such as Jonathan Israel and R. Douglas Cope have argued that the presence of these illegal migrants helped introduce irreverent picaresque traditions from the streets of Spain into the melting pot of New World society. Moreover, the presence of lower class Spaniards was abhorred by viceregal authorities as a threat to the established order of

⁷² Mawson, ‘Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System.’

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 702. AGI, Escribanía de Cámara de Justicia, Leg. 425B, fojas 119r-205v. Cáceres Menéndez and Patch, “‘Gente de Mal Vivir’,” 368.

⁷⁴ Auke Pieter Jacobs, ‘Legal and Illegal Emigration from Seville, 1550-1650,’ in Ida Altman and James Horn (eds.), *‘To Make America’: European Emigration in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley, 1991), 70, 80. Auke Pieter Jacobs, *Los movimientos migratorios entre Castilla e Hispanoamerica durante el reinado de Felipe III, 1598-1621* (Amsterdam, 1995), 104.

Spanish racial superiority.⁷⁵ This group of plebeians thus became another obvious target for recruitment for the Philippines. Specific commissions were given to individuals to patrol the highways of New Spain looking for runaway soldiers and sailors, as well as highwaymen, vagabonds and other criminals. In December 1648, for instance, Juan Alonzo was appointed ‘for the duration of the recruitment for the Philippines’ to capture thieves, highwaymen, criminals, vagabonds and runaway soldiers in the province of Chalco.⁷⁶ Juan Martín Gallardo was likewise instructed to send the runaway soldiers and sailors who he encountered to the Royal Gaol so that they could be enlisted in the 1645 levies for the Philippines and the Armada de Barlovento.⁷⁷

Inherent within the philosophy of socially cleansing New Spain of insubordinate plebeians was an assumption that such men could be transformed into not only productive but also loyal servants of the empire.⁷⁸ In 1642, Viceroy Palafox argued that it was convenient to apprehend vagabonds for the Philippines levy every year ‘because those that are here restless at peace, are considerable over there in war.’⁷⁹ The assumption that being transferred to one of the remotest parts of the empire would alter the moral character of forced recruits was particularly strong in relation to Spanish and mestizo soldiers. Soldiers with Spanish lineage were supposed to find a new pride in their race and their empire when confronted by the realities of the East Indies. For this reason, official instructions stipulated that soldiers recruited for the Philippines levy had to be ‘Spaniards and mestizos or sons of those ... and not elderly, friars, clerics, Indians, negros, Mulattos, nor those that have transmittable diseases.’⁸⁰ Yet particularly in the latter half of the century, soldiers were more often than not

⁷⁵ Jonathan I. Israel, *Race, Class and Politics in Colonial Mexico: 1610-1670* (London, 1975), 77-78. Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination*, 15-6, 21-3, 34.

⁷⁶ AGN, RC, Vol. D14, Exp. 738.

⁷⁷ AGN, RC, Vol. D48, Exp. 443.

⁷⁸ Mawson, ‘Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System,’ 717-8.

⁷⁹ Torre Villar, *Instrucciones y Memorias de los Virreyes Novohispanos*, 427.

⁸⁰ AGN, RC, Vol. D49, Exps. 192, 197, 200, 202, 207, 215. Similar findings exist for the eighteenth century, see García de los Arcos, *Forzados y Reclutas*, 77-8.

recruited from within the heterogeneous *casta* population of New Spain. In 1659, the royal officials in Manila complained that most of the soldiers who were being sent from New Spain were negros, mulattos and Indians, with almost no Spaniards amongst the contingents. They petitioned the King for more white soldiers to be sent from New Spain because of the large shortage of white people in the islands.⁸¹ Concerns about these recruits extended beyond their limited military training; the officials in Manila also worried about their overall loyalty to the imperial project in the Pacific and their capacity to combine with indigenous populations to form a multiethnic *plebe* which mirrored the plebeian underclass of New Spain.⁸²

The social engineering behind the Philippines levies were at the forefront of the minds of viceregal authorities in New Spain. Yet, the royal officials in the Philippines were far more concerned with the capacity of soldiers to perform their core duties of defence and pacification. Far from extolling the virtues of a glorious cohort of *conquistadores*, numerous governors throughout the seventeenth century described the men who arrived on board the galleons from New Spain as ‘pernicious and scandalous’. The criminal backgrounds and largely unfree nature of soldiers serving in the presidios ultimately meant that royal officials in Manila had a hard time trusting the loyalty or utility of their military forces.⁸³ Seen in this light, the soldiers who served in the Philippines hardly meet our expected image of the traditional conquistador. Nevertheless, the extent to which soldiers redeemed themselves by proving their loyalty to the empire can only be answered by considering the conditions that soldiers experienced while stationed in the presidios of the Pacific.

II

Conditions in Spain’s Pacific Presidios

⁸¹ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 31, Núm. 43. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 32, Núm. 1.

⁸² Mawson, ‘Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System,’ 720-1.

⁸³ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 23, Ramo 2, Núm. 4. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 20, Ramo 20, Núm. 137.

In 1660, Governor Sabiniano Manrique de Lara succinctly summarised the state of the Spanish infantry stationed in the Philippines. After having received just forty-one soldiers on board the galleons from New Spain that year, the governor noted that in the past twenty years of *socorros*, the viceroys of New Spain had not contributed a tenth of the number of soldiers who had died in the various wars that they had been fighting, and that the supply that arrived that year was not even a sixth of what they needed. This left the soldiers to ‘labour incessantly for the Crown so as to gain great returns and all for love ... despite the repeated adversity that has befallen them.’⁸⁴ The governor went on to add that the soldiers were ‘on the brink of giving up and losing their minds because of the lack of reinforcements and aid sent by the viceroy’ and because of the threat of enemy assault. He likened the situation to that of a cancerous attack running through the flesh and bones of the ‘incorporeal body’. Without reinforcements, the soldiers stationed across the Philippines were forced to ‘resign themselves to death from a life of fatigue without resources.’⁸⁵ The situation was the worst on the island of Ternate in the Moluccas, where the many deaths and bad conditions had led to mutinies and loss of loyalty amongst a soldiery faced with hopelessness. More than 120 soldiers had died in Ternate that year, with many others running away and defecting to the Dutch.⁸⁶

Life for those in the service of empire in the seventeenth century Philippines was hard. For the Spanish population, Spain’s Pacific presidios were defined by the vast and perilous expanse of the Pacific Ocean which separated the Philippines from the viceroyalty of New Spain. When soldiers arrived in Manila they were distributed across a network of presidios spanning Spain’s Pacific territories. Soldiers were primarily intended to defend the archipelago against external threats and to engage in the conquest of groups that violently

⁸⁴ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 2, Núm. 30.

⁸⁵ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 23, Ramo 2, Núm. 4. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 2, Núm. 34. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 2, Núm. 30.

⁸⁶ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 2, Núm. 30. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 2, Núm. 34.

resisted colonisation. Yet, in practice, they also supported the work of missionaries and helped to institute the labour and tribute systems that underpinned Spanish imperial authority over conquered populations. The bulk of these soldiers were stationed in Manila and Cavite, which through the century housed between four and seven companies, or between 400 and 900 Spanish soldiers.⁸⁷ These soldiers defended the city and the incoming galleon trade against external threats from Dutch raiders, Chinese pirates or against the threat of rebellion amongst the Chinese population of Manila and were also dispatched from Manila in times of need. Outside of Manila, soldiers were distributed across a network of presidios located in Cebu, Oton on the island of Panay, Cagayan in northern Luzon, the Moluccas (1606-1661), Zamboanga (1635-1661), Iligan and Caraga in Mindanao, Formosa (1626-1642), Calamianes in present day Palawan, the Mariana Islands (from 1667), Bolinao, Lampon and Pampanga.⁸⁸ There is evidence that the Spanish also occupied smaller locations rarely mentioned in administrative records, for instance in the Celebes Islands, north of Sulawesi.⁸⁹

Each of these presidios was located for its defensive and strategic value. The presidios of Cebu and Oton were jointly responsible for both the defence of the Visayas against Moro raiders and for organising and dispatching the *socorro* for the soldiers stationed in the Moluccas. Additionally, Cebu played the role of internally policing the indigenous peoples of the Visayas, and the *alcalde mayor* of Cebu was responsible for some considerable dispatches of soldiers who went to put down rebellions on the islands of Bohol and Leyte in

⁸⁷ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 50. AGI, Filipinas, Libro 285, Núm. 1, Fols. 30R-41V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 7, Núm. 21. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 10, Ramo 1, Núm. 6. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 32, Núm. 30. AGI, Audiencia de México (hereafter México), Leg. 25, Núm. 62. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 1, Núm. 1, Fols. 408R-428V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 1, Núm. 1, Fols. 11R-14V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 2, Núm. 22.

⁸⁸ AGI, México, Leg. 25, Núm. 62. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 50. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 1, Núm. 1, Fols. 408R-428V. AGI, Filipinas, Libro 285, Núm. 1, Fols. 30R-41V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 22, Ramo 7, Núm. 21. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 10, Ramo 1, Núm. 6. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 32, Núm. 30.

⁸⁹ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 14, Ramo 2, Núm. 15. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 23, Ramo 17, Núm. 55.

1622.⁹⁰ The presidios on Mindanao, including Zamboanga, Caraga and Iligan, were intended as outposts for controlling slave raiding amongst the Moros of Mindanao, Jolo, Borneo and the Camucones and as bases from which to extend Spanish control over these same territories. As a consequence, these presidios were constantly besieged by hostile neighbours. The Spanish occupation of the Moluccas in 1606 and Formosa in 1626 were intended to create a defensive buffer against the Dutch presence in the region, although in reality both presidios simply created a chronic drain on Spanish resources and were eventually closed for this reason. In contrast, the presidios in Cagayan, Pangasinan, Pampanga and the Mariana Islands were bases from which the Spanish could extend their control over indigenous populations and counter ongoing resistance to Spanish rule.

⁹⁰ 'Insurrections by Filipinos in the Seventeenth Century,' in Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, (eds.), *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1803*, [hereafter *B&R*], Vol. 38, (Cleveland, Ohio, 1903-9), 89, 92. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 76, Núm. 13.



Figure 1: Location of Presidios in the Seventeenth Century Spanish Pacific

All presidios suffered from shortages originating from a lack of sufficient silver arriving each year on board the galleons of New Spain. Soldiers stationed in the Philippines led lives exposed to poverty and hunger since the Crown lacked the means to pay them their wages. The Pacific crossing provided the archipelago's main supply route for material supplies, money, missionaries and soldiers, yet it was constantly beset by the risk of shipwreck and a lack of available galleons. In the years that the galleons failed to arrive in Manila, the government went without supplies or money to pay their soldiers. Soldiers' lives were cut short not merely from the nature of their duties, but from tropical illnesses and diseases which proliferated within the companies. As a consequence, soldiers turned towards criminality, desertion, vagabondage and mutiny, continuing many of the traditions of disobedience witnessed amongst similar plebeian bodies in Spain and New Spain.

Soldiers serving in the Philippines regularly went unpaid. The *socorros* sent from New Spain included a dispatch of silver which was intended to pay the wages of all of the employees in the colony, from the royal officials down to the indigenous and Chinese labourers employed in the shipyards. Soldiers' wages – which typically equalled 96 pesos a year – were also drawn from this pool of money.⁹¹ Most governors throughout the century felt that the amount of silver sent from New Spain was well below the needs and expectations of the colony. This situation led the royal treasury of Manila into a crippling debt.⁹² In 1660, Governor Manrique de Lara wrote that he had debts worth more than one and a half million pesos, not including the money owed to the indigenous labourers, soldiers, sailors, ministers and military and political officials.⁹³ Although the shortages were exacerbated in the latter half of the century, similar problems were also experienced in the early decades.⁹⁴ In 1605, Ríos Coronel argued that the royal treasury was known for paying the salaries of the royal

⁹¹ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 45.

⁹² AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 3, Núm. 44. A similar situation was described in 1680: AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 23, Ramo 2, Núm. 4.

⁹³ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 23, Ramo 2, Núm. 4.

⁹⁴ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 60.

officials and the men employed on the galleys, and just about everyone else before paying the soldiers, ‘so that they might go eight or ten months or a year without [being paid] and with this one might consider what they might suffer.’⁹⁵ A sample of pay records for the period 1 July 1635 to 30 June 1636 indicates the haphazard nature of soldiers’ salaries. For the infantry of Manila, only twenty-two out of 388 soldiers were paid, and all but two of these soldiers were paid exactly one-third of the money that was owed to them. The average number of years’ salary owed to these soldiers was 2.2 years and ranged from between less than half a year to nearly four years. For the infantry of the Moluccas, thirty-eight out of 480 soldiers were paid, and each again received exactly one third of what was owed to them. The average number of years’ salary owed to the soldiers was 3.3 years and ranged between half a year and 16.4 years, indicating the length of time that some soldiers had to wait to receive any wages.⁹⁶

The lack of silver in the *socorro* also led to shortages in material supplies, including clothing and munitions. In 1668, Governor Salcedo argued that shortages in the supplies sent from New Spain forced him to send a ship to Dutch-controlled Banda in search of iron, wheat, clothing and other goods, and that he had been unable to clothe his soldiers.⁹⁷ Shortages were felt particularly keenly in presidios such as the Moluccas and Formosa, which were reliant on regular shipments of aid sent from Manila. In 1632, Friar Diego Aduarte reported that the soldiers in Formosa had no wine to celebrate even the most important religious festivals, nor woollen clothing to keep them warm against the cold northern winters. Meanwhile, the salted meat sent from Manila was ‘hardly enough to fill a cooking pot. What is worse, the meat is so badly done that it is only fit to be thrown to the dogs.’⁹⁸ That same

⁹⁵ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 27, Núm. 51.

⁹⁶ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 50.

⁹⁷ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 3, Núm. 51.

⁹⁸ Fr. Diego Aduarte, ‘Memoirs of Isla Hermosa,’ in *Spaniards in Taiwan: Documents*, [hereafter *SiT*], Vol. 1, ed. José Eugenio Borao Mateo, trans. Pol Heyns and Carlos Gómez, (Taipei, 2001), 196-7

year, the soldiers of the main fort on Formosa fell into famine when no further supplies arrived from Manila.⁹⁹

Hunger was a common problem for soldiers throughout the century. In 1602, one hundred soldiers were said to have died en route from Acapulco to Manila as a result of the hot climate, starvation and mistreatment by their officers.¹⁰⁰ In 1604, the ecclesiastic council of Manila claimed that the soldiers in the islands were dying of hunger and were forced to beg and sell their arms to support themselves.¹⁰¹ In 1658, the royal officials in Manila revealed that a lack of available sailors and pilots in the islands was contributing to shortages in food, since those available were being diverted to the Manila galleons and away from their ordinary responsibility of transporting rice and other goods from the provinces of the Philippines for the provisioning of Manila.¹⁰² In 1665, Governor Salcedo attempted to find a solution by establishing a large livestock ranch in the province of Pampanga, which would provide the infantry with meat even when times were tough.¹⁰³ Very quickly, however, this meat was being used in lieu of wages.¹⁰⁴

While these conditions were experienced across Spain's Pacific presidios, they were exacerbated in the furthest and most isolated presidios, especially in the Moluccas, located some 1,700 kilometres southeast of Manila. Officials struggled for decades to adequately provision the garrisons in the Moluccas, for want of ships as well as a lack of men willing to go there. A letter written by the Governor of Ternate, Lucas de Vergara de Gavia in 1619 indicated that the Moluccas presidios had not seen an aid ship for three years, meaning that the soldiers were without supplies and had not been replaced. The presidio needed 150 to 200 soldiers but in more than a decade Vergara Gavia had not seen more than eighty new

⁹⁹ From Fr. Diego Aduarte, 'History of the Province of the Most Holy Rosary,' reprinted in *SiT*, Vol. 1, 242-3.

¹⁰⁰ AGI, México, Leg. 25, Núm. 4. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 19, Ramo 3, Núm. 47.

¹⁰¹ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 84, Núm. 128.

¹⁰² AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 28, Núm. 61.

¹⁰³ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 3, Núm. 44.

¹⁰⁴ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 10, Ramo 1, Núm. 4.

soldiers sent from Manila. He also reported that more than 200 of the soldiers had died in conflict with the Dutch and from sickness, and that the others were so badly treated that no soldiers would voluntarily serve in Ternate.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, many men deserted from their posts, ‘fleeing by different means and particularly towards India and Portugal.’¹⁰⁶

III

Mutiny and Desertion among Spanish Soldiers

Poor material conditions experienced in the presidios were furthermore compounded by the exploitative and sometimes outright despotic behaviour of commanders and other authority figures. In 1634, the soldiers stationed in the presidios of the Moluccas were left besieged and surrounded by Dutch enemies, suffering from a shortage in supplies and reinforcements. That year, the Inquisitor of the Moluccas, Manuel Riberos published an edict forbidding the continuation of the practice of the ‘unspeakable sin’ of sodomy amongst the soldiers of the presidio. The edict promised to completely absolve the men of their sin if they ceased the practice within two months. Despite this, the Governor of the presidio, Don Pedro de Heredia, announced that he did not intend to uphold the absolution and would instead investigate and punish anyone who was found to have been practicing sodomy. In response, the soldiers of the Moluccas presidio staged a massive mutiny, resolving to rise up and murder Heredia and the other royal officials stationed in the islands. Eight days of fighting ensued, at the conclusion of which 150 soldiers were taken prisoner. The governor burnt and garrotted eleven of the mutineers, and many others died while in gaol. Forty mutineers were then sent back to Manila where an investigation took place and they were judged guilty of mutiny. These mutineers were considered to be at risk of ‘polluting’ the presidios, as well as inciting rebelliousness and disobedience amongst the native and Chinese populations within

¹⁰⁵ AGI, Patronato Real, Leg. 47, Ramo 37.

¹⁰⁶ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 7, Ramo 5, Núm. 53. AGI, Filipinas, Libro. 285, Núm. 1, Fols. 30R-41V.

the archipelago, and so they were punished heavily.¹⁰⁷ In the wake of this investigation, considerable blame was laid at the feet of the Governor of the presidio, Don Pedro de Heredia, who was said to be corrupt and abusive and had compelled the soldiers to mutiny and desert to the enemy to escape the conditions found in the Moluccas.¹⁰⁸

The 1634 soldiers' mutiny in the Moluccas was an act of desperation. Most known instances of mutiny amongst Spanish forces occurred in remote presidios like the Moluccas and Mariana Islands. Soldiers stationed in these presidios experienced degrees of isolation and deprivation that far exceeded the conditions of poverty and hunger that were commonplace across the Pacific. Soldiers stationed in the Moluccas were more likely to die from hunger and disease than from conflict with the Dutch. Nevertheless, the difficult conditions experienced within Spain's Pacific presidios evoked different degrees of rebellion amongst the Spanish infantry, ranging from individual acts of desertion or disobedience to acts of organised, mass mutiny. While mutinies of the scale witnessed in the Moluccas in 1634 were relatively infrequent, desertions were much more common. The soldiers of the Moluccas presidios were particularly renowned for deserting, making their way towards Portuguese India or going as far as to join the Dutch forces and fighting against their former comrades and countrymen.¹⁰⁹ Desertions were not limited to remote presidios, however. Reports from the 1650s suggest that soldiers from Cavite and Manila had abandoned their posts and were roaming the countryside robbing the indigenous population, since they had not been paid for many years and lacked any other means of supporting themselves.¹¹⁰ Even officers were accused of deserting. In 1619, Ríos Coronel noted that many of the officers who were demoted back to the ranks of ordinary soldiers had the capacity to disappear from their

¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, details of their exact punishment are not given within the archival records. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 2, Núm. 22. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 330, Libro 4, Fols. 16R-23V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 2, Núm. 26.

¹⁰⁸ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 27, Núm. 222.

¹⁰⁹ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 7, Ramo 5, Núm. 53. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 340, Libro 3, Fols. 219V-220R. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 27, Núm. 109. Bohigian, 'Life on the Rim of Spain's Pacific-American Empire,' 70-4.

¹¹⁰ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 31, Núm. 43.

duties and lose contact with Spanish society.¹¹¹ Individual Spaniards could also choose to actively rebel against the empire, as in the case of Pedro Zapata who joined an indigenous rebellion in Samar in 1649 and fought against the Spanish forces before he was eventually killed.¹¹²

The isolation of some presidios opened up the opportunity for brewing discontent to grow into full-scale, organised rebellion without detection, as happened in Ternate in 1634. Royal officials were constantly apprehensive that generalised disaffection amongst the infantry of the Philippines would boil over into outright mutiny. In 1604 the ecclesiastic council of Manila expressed the concern that the soldiers in the presidios would mutiny from a lack of wages.¹¹³ In 1628, Governor Niño de Távora argued that unless the soldiers were replenished and adequately paid, mutinies would break out similar to those that took place amongst companies serving in Flanders.¹¹⁴ In 1661, Governor Manrique de Lara justified his decision to withdraw the forces from the Moluccas on the basis that the conditions in the presidios there were so bad that not only had many soldiers died over the decades, but the outpost had been shaken by mutinies and a general loss of loyalty.¹¹⁵

A proposal to completely rotate the Moluccas garrison with companies stationed in Manila every three years was repeatedly suggested as a way of curbing desertion and mutinies by providing soldiers with the prospect of return from the isolation of the Moluccas. Yet, even with the King's endorsement, this proposal was never implemented, since so few soldiers stationed in Manila were willing to serve in the Moluccas voluntarily.¹¹⁶ Pay records of officers and soldiers serving in the Moluccas in 1620 indicate that the average time spent

¹¹¹ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 27, Núm. 109.

¹¹² 'Insurrections by Filipinos in the Seventeenth Century,' in *B&R*, Vol. 38, 119.

¹¹³ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 84, Núm. 128.

¹¹⁴ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 1, Núm. 5.

¹¹⁵ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 23, Ramo 2, Núm. 4. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 2, Núm. 30. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 2, Núm. 34.

¹¹⁶ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 27, Núm. 109. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 340, Libro 3,221V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 2, Núm. 22. AGI, Patronato Real, Leg. 47, Ramo 37. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 20, Ramo 19, Núm. 122. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 329, Libro 3, Fols. 119V-120R. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 30, Núm. 12.

servicing in the islands was six and a half years, with service periods ranging from one and a half years up to fifteen years.¹¹⁷ Soldiers in Manila were so desperate to avoid serving in the Moluccas presidios that a number of mutinies were staged on board the ships transporting them from Manila to Ternate. This happened in 1617 when the soldiers on board the ship dispatched to Ternate ‘mutinied to the shame of this nation.’¹¹⁸ One solution to the shortage of voluntary recruits in the Moluccas was to enlist *forzados*, yet even this was not foolproof. In 1654, a group of *forzados* sentenced to serve as convicts in Ternate mutinied and seized their vessel and sailed for land.¹¹⁹

Similar mutinies also plagued the supply route between Manila and the small Pacific outpost in the Mariana Islands in the 1680s. In this instance, however, it was the danger of the Pacific crossing which caused discontent amongst the soldiers and sailors on board the ships. Although the Marianas were settled in 1667, the establishment of a direct supply route between Manila and Guam was delayed until the 1680s since no pilot would risk making the voyage over what was known to be a particularly perilous stretch of ocean.¹²⁰ When a vessel finally set sail from Manila in September 1680 under the command of Captain Francisco Lazcano, the crew struggled against strong winds which buffeted the ship around for nearly five months, eventually forcing them to turn back towards the Philippines. Frustrated by the failure of his voyage, Lazcano became violent and started beating and abusing his crew until eventually they mutinied against him and sailed the vessel back to Manila.¹²¹ The voyage was not attempted again until 1683. The famed danger of the route was so well known by this time, however, that very few sailors were willing to risk their lives in the crossing. Eventually the ship set sail with a motley crew of sailors from across the globe, including from France,

¹¹⁷ Bohigian, ‘Life on the Rim of Spain’s Pacific-American Empire,’ Appendix II, 299-328. Note that this is just based on the sample from 1620, and does not include the records of previous pay periods recorded by Bohigian.

¹¹⁸ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 7, Ramo 5, Núm. 53.

¹¹⁹ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 285, Núm. 1, Fols. 30R-41V.

¹²⁰ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 11, Ramo 1, Núm. 6.

¹²¹ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 44, Núm. 34.

Greece, Venice and Sicily. One Jesuit passenger described them as ‘vile men, who as vagabonds had navigated a great part of the world untied in loyalty to any specific King but [only] to the situation and occasion that allowed them to live and support themselves.’¹²² Almost inevitably, the crew turned to mutiny once more and the religious passengers had to join with the officers in keeping the crew in hand. They made an emergency stop to send five mutineers to Manila and take on reinforcements in their place, before finally completing the voyage to Guam.¹²³

The isolated nature of outposts such as the Marianas and the Moluccas also offered the possibility for widespread corruption amongst officers and royal officials. The Governor of the Moluccas, Pedro de Heredia, died shortly after the conclusion of the 1634 mutiny, however not before an investigation was initiated against him for corruption.¹²⁴ Following his death, the Governor of the Philippines, Hurtado de Corcuera accused Heredia of systematically embezzling funds sent from Manila to Ternate by paying large amounts of wages principally to soldiers who had already died and those who had deserted, while withholding the wages of those soldiers who were present. He was also accused of selling goods to the soldiers at inflated prices. Rumours of this situation had spread amongst the soldiers stationed in Manila, and none would volunteer to serve in Ternate for fear that they would be forced to live ‘as slaves [*como esclavos*]’ without the possibility of returning to Manila.¹²⁵

The corruption allegations aimed at Pedro de Heredia are emblematic of the fact that royal officials could manipulate the situation of shortages and isolation to their own advantage. While the full extent of corruption across the Philippines is not clear, it is

¹²² ‘Año de 1684: Informe enviado a S.M. referente a las Islas Marianas. Manila 29 de Junio de 1684,’ copy held at Micronesian Area Research Center [hereafter MARC], Real Academia de la Historia [hereafter RAH], Cortes 567, Leg. 11, 2677, Vol. 2, 228-239.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 91.

¹²⁵ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 91. See also: AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 100. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 7, Ramo 6, Núm. 83.

certainly evident that corruption was endemic to isolated outposts such as the Moluccas. One of Heredia's predecessors, Don Gerónimo de Silva was accused of trading away supplies sent to feed and clothe the garrison for his own personal gain.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, Heredia's successor, Captain Francisco Suárez de Figueroa was said to be 'a man that by night and by day does not leave the gambling tables' and his suitability as someone in charge of the distribution of wages and supplies was seriously questioned.¹²⁷ Similar corruption charges were also laid against the governor of the Mariana Islands, Don Damian de Esplana, who was said to have hoarded supplies and sold them back to the soldiers at inflated prices, while keeping the majority of their wages for himself.¹²⁸

Soldiers were thus driven to rebellion not simply by the material conditions that they experienced in the presidios, but also in response to situations of exploitation imposed upon them by their officers. Yet, in addition to this, soldiers also rebelled against the more fundamental nature of their service in the Philippines, which was, as we have noted previously, often characterised by coercion and unfreedom. Instances of desertion and mutiny were common amongst the convict population of the Philippines. *Forzados* frequently attempted to desert from their companies. In 1602, Governor Acuña noted that the *forzados* sent to the Philippines had a habit of escaping, although he was unsure how they were able to achieve this. The vastness of the Philippines allowed them to simply disappear and it was virtually impossible to find them once this had happened.¹²⁹ Similarly, the *oidor* Diego Calderón y Serrano noted in 1677 that *forzados* arriving in the Philippines often escaped and went to live amongst indigenous or Chinese communities and frequently engaged in 'robbing the indigenous of their beasts of burden and devastating the ranches [*estancias*] of their

¹²⁶ Bohigian, 'Life on the Rim of Spain's Pacific-American Empire,' 69.

¹²⁷ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 30.

¹²⁸ Hezel and Driver, 'From Conquest to Colonisation,' 143-5. Driver, 'Cross, Sword and Silver,' 41. AGI, Ultramar, Leg. 562.

¹²⁹ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 19, Ramo 3, Núm. 47.

livestock.’¹³⁰ Some convicts even found their way back to New Spain,¹³¹ While others attempted shipboard mutinies even before they reached Manila.¹³²

The most noteworthy cases of mutiny amongst both *forzados* and ordinary soldiers occurred in Guam in the 1680s.¹³³ Between the years 1684 and 1690, Guam witnessed a total of five attempted and actual mutinies.¹³⁴ The most successful of these occurred in 1688, when a group of soldiers, led by a Mexican convict, seized control of the island for a period of three months, placing their governor and military commander in chains. The actions of these soldiers sent shockwaves across the Pacific, from Manila to Mexico City, and convinced many royal officials that the transport in convicts across the Pacific was both undesirable and dangerous.¹³⁵ Instances such as this placed doubt in the minds of many royal officials on both sides of the Pacific about the utility of the *forzado* system as an effective criminal justice method, since it was apparent that the Philippine authorities lacked the capacity to adequately control the *forzado* population, and relied on them to supplement their military

¹³⁰ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 23, Ramo 16, Núm. 44. Mawson, ‘Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System,’ 721.

¹³¹ AGI, México, Leg. 81, Ramo 1, Núm. 5. Mawson, ‘Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System,’ 718-9.

¹³² Robles, *Diario de Sucesos Notables (1665-1703)*, Vol. 1, 49. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 9, Ramo 3, Núm. 51. Mawson, ‘Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System,’ 720.

¹³³ I have examined these instances of mutiny in greater detail elsewhere. See Mawson, ‘Rebellion and Mutiny in the Mariana Islands, 1680-1690.’

¹³⁴ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 44, Núm. 34. ‘Año de 1684: Informe enviado a S.M. referente a las Islas Marianas. Manila 29 de Junio de 1684,’ copy held at MARC, RAH, Cortes 567, Leg. 11, 2677, Vol. 2, 228-239. ‘Jesuit Annual Report for 1684-1685, by Fr. Gerard Bouvens, dated 30/31 May 1685,’ in *History of Micronesia: A Collection of Source Documents* [hereafter *HoM*], ed. Rodrigue Lévesque, (Quebec, 1992-2002), Vol. 8, 353. ‘Official Report from the Governor of the Marianas for the year 1684-1685,’ in *HoM*, Vol. 8, 377. ‘Letter from Fr. Bustillo to the Duchess, dated Umatac 30 May 1686,’ in *HoM*, Vol. 8, 563-565. ‘Año de 1688: Carta del P. Lorenzo Bustillo, SJ al P. Antonio Xaramillo, S.J., Proc. Gen. de Filipinas y Marianas. S. Ignacio de Agadña de San Juan de Guan, una de las Marianas,’ copy held at MARC, RAH, Cortes 567, Leg. 11, 2677 Vol. 3, 320-321. ‘The soldiers’ mutiny of 1688, as narrated by Fr. Bustillo,’ in *HoM*, Vol. 9, 228. ‘Años de 1689-1691: Estado de las Marianas en la Milicia por Diego de Zarzosa y Lorenzo Bustillo, S.J.’ copy held at MARC, RAH, Cortes 567, Leg. 12, Doc. 4, 43-57.

¹³⁵ ‘Año de 1688: Carta del P. Lorenzo Bustillo, SJ al P. Antonio Xaramillo, S.J., Dic. 1, 1688,’ copy held at MARC, RAH, Cortes 567, Leg. 11, 2677, Vol. 3, 320-321. ‘Año de 1688: Carta del P. Thomas Cardeñoso al Padre Antonio Xaramillo, S.J., Junio de 1688,’ copy held at MARC, RAH, Cortes 567, Leg. 11, 2677, Vol. 3, 311-312. ‘Año de 1688: Carta del Padre Lorenzo Bustillo a P. Antonio Xaramillo, S.J., Nov. 20 de 1688,’ copy held at MARC, RAH, Cortes 567, Leg. 11, 2677, Vol. 3, 313-319. ‘Año de 1689: Carta del P. Gerardo Bouvens al P. Antonio Xaramillo, S.J. Agadña, Mayo 12 de 1689,’ copy held at MARC, RAH, Cortes 567, Leg. 11, 2677, 1r-2v. ‘Noticias del alzamiento que se ejecuto en Marianas,’ copy held at MARC, RAH, Cortes 567, Leg. 11, 2677 Vol. 3, 322-333. AGI, México, Leg. 58, Ramo 1, Núm. 10.

weaknesses.¹³⁶ Nonetheless, *forzado* transportation continued and just barely two years after the conclusion of the 1688 mutiny, a group of more than forty convicts were shipwrecked off the coast of the Mariana Islands. The colony readily accepted them and put them to work, yet within a matter of months these convicts hatched a conspiracy to murder all of the missionaries and royal officials in Guam, seize a ship and set sail for Peru. The plot was discovered before it could be carried out and twenty three of the would-be mutineers were executed. The rest of the convicts were kept in irons and later sent to Manila.¹³⁷

IV

Spanish Soldiers and the Unravelling of Empire

The episodes of mutiny in presidios like the Moluccas and Mariana Islands reveal something stark about the nature of military service in the Spanish Pacific. As often forced and coerced recruits, subject to conditions of material deprivation, isolation and cruelty from their commanding officers, the loyalty of Spanish soldiers to the imperial project was sorely tested. Although these soldiers were essential to the establishment of Spanish rule in the Philippines, their disobedient actions could equally precipitate the unravelling of empire. This is most evident when we consider the final factor of soldiers' life in the Spanish Pacific – their involvement in the defence of Spanish outposts against both external and internal threats. More often than not, we find that a chronic shortage in voluntary recruits coupled with a lack of sufficient supplies crippled the defensive capabilities of the colony and forced the authorities in Manila into a tenuous over-reliance on indigenous soldiers.

This impact was most strongly felt at the height of the Hispano-Dutch War, when soldiers were forced into regular confrontation with Dutch naval forces intent on disrupting

¹³⁶ AGI, México, Leg. 78, Ramo 3, Núm. 38. AGN, RC, Vol. 10, Exp. 43. AGI, México, Leg. 43, Núm. 9. Mawson, 'Unruly Plebeians and the *Forzado* System,' 721-2.

¹³⁷ Mawson, 'Rebellion and Mutiny in the Mariana Islands,' 146-147. AGI, Ultramar, Leg. 562. 'Años de 1689-1691: Estado de las Marianas en la Milicia por Diego de Zarzossa y Lorenzo Bustillo, S.J.' copy held at MARC, RAH, Cortes 567, Leg. 12, Doc. 4, 43-57.

the Spanish presence in the East Indies. Shortages of soldiers were felt particularly keenly in remote presidios such as the Moluccas and Formosa, where the Spanish forts were established in close proximity to Dutch forts located on the same islands. The Dutch regularly set up naval ambushes to engage the ships arriving in the Moluccas with aid and military reinforcements from Manila. One such instance occurred in 1628, when the Dutch engaged a number of Spanish ships entering the narrow strait between the islands of Ternate and Tidore. The Dutch pursued the Spanish vessels towards their port and eventually overtook one of the ships and forced it to run aground, causing all of the soldiers to fall into the water. The remaining Spanish vessel prepared to fight, but they were quickly overpowered when the Dutch sent a cannonball flying squarely into the Spanish gunpowder stores, causing the ship to explode. After the ship had burnt itself out, the Dutch salvaged 3,000 pesos and other goods that were destined as aid for the soldiers stationed in the presidio. Twenty Spaniards, fifteen convicts and two captains of infantry died during the battle.¹³⁸ While not all of these encounters favoured the Dutch side,¹³⁹ the actions of the Dutch in the Moluccas were enough to encourage some governors to consider abandoning the position altogether.¹⁴⁰

Possibly the most devastating defeat during the seventeenth century was the loss of Formosa to the Dutch in 1642. In the late 1630s, Governor Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera had deemed Formosa of secondary importance to Spanish interests in the Philippines and had systematically starved the presidios in Formosa of both men and supplies in order to free up resources for other presidios.¹⁴¹ On the eve of the successful Dutch invasion, the Governor of Formosa wrote to Manila and described the soldiers as ‘few and most of them are boys and puny natives.’ The better quality soldiers had left the islands, and those who were left were

¹³⁸ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 30, Núm. 12.

¹⁴¹ ‘Act of the Council that Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera convoked,’ 22 January 1637, in *SiT*, Vol. 1, 262-71. Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 2007).

incapable of military action. A previous invasion by the Dutch had been met with no resistance, according to the governor, ‘not because I had faltered in the desire to fight, but because I had no one left.’¹⁴² Shortly after this, the Dutch captured the Spanish fort in Jilong and expelled the Spanish from the island altogether.

At the same time, Spanish aims of subjugating indigenous populations and transforming them into tribute paying members of the empire were also frustrated due to a lack of sufficient military strength. Major uprisings throughout the seventeenth century led to significant contractions of territorial control. This occurred notably in the province of Cagayan in the 1620s, when a large-scale indigenous uprising resulted in the complete expulsion of Spanish missionaries and soldiers for more than half a century.¹⁴³ Some areas of this province were never brought back under Spanish control.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, maroon communities across Northern Luzon continued to run raiding missions against Spanish settlements for the duration of the seventeenth century, with Spanish forces rarely able to retaliate in any meaningful way.¹⁴⁵ A similar observation can be made about the Muslim territories of Mindanao and Jolo. Although these islands were the sites of the two greatest military victories that Spain boasted in the Philippines during the seventeenth century, these victories were in reality very fleeting.¹⁴⁶ Spain never managed to exercise any meaningful power in these regions and was forced to withdraw completely in 1663.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² ‘The letter of Gonzalo Portillo, Governor of Isla Hermosa, to Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera, Governor General of the Philippines, informing him of the perilous situation of their garrison in Isla Hermosa,’ 2 March 1642, in *SiT*, Vol. 2, 373.

¹⁴³ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 85, Núm. 57. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 7, Ramo 5, Núm. 67. Fr. Diego Aduarte, ‘Historia de la Provincia del Sancto Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores,’ in *B&R*, Vol. 32, 112-21. Pedro V. Salgado, *Cagayan Valley and the Eastern Cordillera, 1581-1898* (Quezon City, 2002), 116-22, 388-9.

¹⁴⁴ William Henry Scott, *The Discovery of the Igorots: Spanish Contacts with the Pagans of Northern Luzon* (Quezon City, 1974), 2.

¹⁴⁵ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 28, Núm. 128. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 83, Núm. 52. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 329, Libro 1, Fols. 50V-51V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 85, Núm. 57. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 7, Ramo 5, Núm. 67. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 340, Libro 3, Fols. 406R-406V. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 80, Núm. 133. Salgado, *Cagayan Valley*. Scott, *Discovery of the Igorots*. Felix M. Keesing, *The Ethnohistory of Northern Luzon* (Stanford, 1962).

¹⁴⁶ In 1637 and 1638, Governor Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera led large armies of both Spanish and Filipino soldiers against the fortified strongholds of Muslim leaders in Mindanao and Jolo. In both instances, the Spanish forces managed to seize the forts and the battles were hailed across the empire as great victories against Muslim pirates. Despite this, Spain never actually achieved any dominance in either island and Moro raiders continued

Yet despite these vulnerabilities and almost against all odds, the Spanish managed to retain a presence in the Pacific and over the course of the seventeenth century slowly consolidated their control within the heartlands of Central Luzon and parts of the Visayas. Although they succumbed to the Dutch in the Moluccas and Formosa, to the Moros in Mindanao and Jolo and to the Maroon communities of Northern Luzon, by the end of the century Spanish society was more or less permanently settled in the Philippines. That they were able to achieve this is perhaps testimony to the innovative means with which successive governors attempted to address their military weaknesses. The most notable of these means was the widespread recruitment of indigenous soldiers to supplement – and in many cases completely outnumber – the Spanish troops. Indigenous soldiers were mobilised in extraordinary levies in times of need for defensive expeditions of conquest against the Dutch or Moros, expeditions of conquest, or in times of indigenous rebellion. Over the course of the century, we have records for at least 31,445 indigenous soldiers being levied in this way.¹⁴⁸

V

Conclusion

The gradual reliance on indigenous Filipinos for the conquest and control of other indigenous populations represents a final acknowledgment by Spanish officials that their own forces were insufficient and unreliable. Yet, more than this, it also highlights the inadequacy of colonial scholarship which has traditionally attempted to construct an unassailable

to attack Spanish settlements throughout the century. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 82. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 27, Núm. 224. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 8, Ramo 3, Núm. 97. AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 27, Núm. 233. H. De la Costa, S.J., *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), 384-389.

¹⁴⁷ Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon City, 1973), 161-164. De la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines*, 449-51.

¹⁴⁸ The involvement of Filipino soldiers in the Spanish military is a complex topic that I have dealt with in detail elsewhere. See Mawson, 'Between Loyalty and Disobedience.' De la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines*, 282, 323, 325. Borao Mateo, 'Filipinos in the Spanish Colonial Army,' 75. José Eugenio Borao Mateo, 'Contextualising the Pampangos (and Gagayano) soldiers in the Spanish fortress in Taiwan (1626-1642),' *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, lxx (2013). Bohigian, 'Life on the Rim of Spain's Pacific-American Empire,' 90. Linda A. Newson, *Conquest and Pestilence in the Early Spanish Philippines* (Honolulu, 2009), 171-2.

conquered-conqueror dichotomy. Recently, historian Matthew Restall has interrogated the historical image of the Spanish conquistador, arguing that centuries of reimagining the Spanish conquests of the Americas has constructed the conquistador as an ahistorical, immortal hero, represented as a glorious, professional soldier capable of the ultimate domination of heathen peoples. Yet, the initial conquests of the Americas took place before the advent of the military revolution in Europe, and thus the men who served in these conquests hardly meet our idea of professional soldiers.¹⁴⁹ James Lockhart's famous study of the conquistadors of Cajamarca similarly attests to these conclusions.¹⁵⁰ These same myths have had an impact on our understanding of the ordinary soldiers who consolidated Spanish territorial gains across the New World in the centuries that followed. Viewed simply as the heirs of the conquistador heroes of centuries past, these soldiers have been denied their own agency as historical subjects within the project of empire building. They have consequently attracted very little interest from historians of empire.

This article has sought to demonstrate that we not only have to confront our understanding of the agency of indigenous people in the face of empire, but also of those who have traditionally been considered empire's greatest protagonists. Spanish soldiers serving in the Pacific were themselves subjects, and at times victims, of empire. Uprooted from their communities in Spain and New Spain by the larger socio-economic changes that accompanied imperial expansion, many were vagabonds, petty criminals, highwaymen and illegal immigrants in addition to playing the role of soldier in the further reaches of the empire. Their relationship to empire was thus much more complex than is often acknowledged.

Our understanding of early modern empire construction can thus be reshaped through an analysis that looks beyond intellectual, political and administrative origins

¹⁴⁹ Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*, (Oxford, 2003), 27-43.

¹⁵⁰ James Lockhart, *The Men of Cajamarca: A Social and Biographical Study of the First Conquerors of Peru*, (Austin, 1972), 17-18.

towards the people who actually undertook the project of colonisation. On the colonial frontier, we see European empires adopting military recruitment strategies from Europe – including forced conscription, convictism, and a reliance on vagabonds and other ‘undesirables’ – yet the unique environment of the frontier changed the nature of this military service. In the seventeenth century Philippines, two thousand soldiers were given the task of conquering, pacifying and controlling more than a million Philippine *indios*,¹⁵¹ while defending the borders of the empire against attack from competing European rivals as well as powerful Southeast Asian communities. Within this tenuous context, the origin of soldiers and the conditions under which they served become important factors not only for considering the efficacy of empire building in Southeast Asia, but also in challenging the myth of an unassailable European dominance.

Humanising and complicating the face of imperialism thus helps to demonstrate the ways in which empire was constantly contested from both within and without. While soldiers stationed in the Pacific were involved in continuous acts of conquest, pacification and the imposition of imperial control, they did not necessarily engage in these acts by their own free will. Their support was for the most part tacit, but could turn quickly into dissent when they chose to mutiny or desert. Ultimately the story of the soldiers who served in the Philippines undermines a teleological view of empire and demonstrates that – at least in the first century or so of the Spanish presence in the Pacific – the continuity of empire was always fragile and uncertain.

Yet, we know that the Spanish presence in the Pacific continued for two centuries after the close of this narrative. The Manila galleons continued to criss-cross the Pacific up until the Mexican Wars of Independence in 1810, carrying with them cargoes of silk and

¹⁵¹ Linda Newson has estimated that the population of the Philippines was approximately 1.6 million at the time of the Spanish arrival in 1565, excluding the island of Mindanao. See Newson, *Conquest and Pestilence*, 251. Linda A. Newson, ‘Conquest, Pestilence and Demographic Collapse in the Early Spanish Philippines,’ *Journal of Historical Geography*, xxxii, (2006), 7.

silver as well as soldiers and *forzados*. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Philippines became a common place of exile for social miscreants and political dissidents.¹⁵² Many of those who crossed the Pacific found a home within Filipino communities by taking Filipina wives.¹⁵³ As García de los Arcos has also noted, not all of the Spaniards who married into Filipino communities necessarily did so with the blessing of Spanish authorities. Numerous cases exist in the late eighteenth century of Spanish soldiers who deserted their posts to live within indigenous communities, often outside of Spanish control.¹⁵⁴ Hence, even though empire persisted in the region, the stories presented here demonstrate that an exclusive focus on the victimisation of indigenous people and the monolithic dominance of Spain denies the complexities of confrontation and contestation that defined life in the Spanish Pacific. Our world as we live it now – delineated by borders and nations, rather than empires and island communities – was shaped as much by this history of contestation and negotiation as it was by the realities of oppression and exploitation which empire so commonly wreaked.

¹⁵² García de los Arcos, *Forzados y reclutas*. Cáceres Menéndez and Patch, “‘Gente de Mal Vivir’.” Mehl, ‘Mexican Recruits and Vagrants in Late Eighteenth-Century Philippines.’

¹⁵³ Bernal, *México en Filipinas*, 116-125

¹⁵⁴ García de los Arcos, *Forzados y reclutas*, 237-238.