**ABSTRACTS FOR PHILIPPINE LIVES UNDER EARLY SPANISH RULE**

**PANEL 1: ENVIRONMENT (Chair: Barbara E. Mundy, *Tulane University*)**

**After the Swarm: Colonizing Wax in the Philippines**

Dana Leibsohn, *Smith College*

In the late 16th and early 17th centuries in the Iberian Catholic world, wax was not quite as important as food and water, but almost. By the thousands, candles were burned in prayer, during mass, at public festivals. Drawing upon examples from the Newberry collection and, especially, Ignacio Alcina’s descriptions of wax collecting and consumption in his *Historia de los islas e indios visayas* (1668), this talk focuses on the ways that forests and people, bees and wax were rendered into colonial subjects and the implications of this rendering. For instance, Alcina’s descriptions of wax—both as “natural” substance and as Catholic necessity—open onto shifting histories of Indigenous creative labor and the temporalities of colonialism. What we, of the present, we might view as normative colonial history here, and what we cannot: this is my central question.

**Naming the Vernacular: Philippine Coastal Natures in Colonial Biological Inventories**

Ruel V. Pagunsan, *University of the Philippines Diliman*

In the 17th-century manuscript, *Declaracion de las virtudes de los árboles y plantas* *que estan en este libro* (published posthumously in 1878), Augustinian priest Ignacio de Mercado listed at least five plants which contemporary scientists identified as belonging to the mangrove family. The clergy chronicled the local names as well as the medicinal properties of the plants according to how the local inhabitants had utilized them. In this presentation, I explore Spanish colonial-era biological lists and catalogues, including Mercado’s manuscript, to examine colonial documentation of Philippine coastal natures. I view these botanical inventories as remnants of vernacular ecologies that characterized and were shaped by the archipelagic and estuarine environments of the Philippines.

**Revisiting a Monument of Philippine Cartography**

Ricardo Padrón, *University of Virginia*

The Murillo Velarde map is justifiably famous as the first accurate maritime chart of the Philippine Islands, and a snapshot of Philippine life during the eighteenth century. Scholarly attention to the map has highlighted the fascinating ethnographic illustrations that appear on the map’s margins, but has paid little attention to the cartographic image itself. This presentation mediates between the map’s ethnographic imagery and its cartographic image to arrive at a fuller understanding of the map as a whole.

**PANEL 2: LANGUAGE (Chair: Ricardo Padrón)**

**Grammars of God: Language and the Colonial Divine in the Early Spanish Philippines**

Marlon James Sales, *University of the Philippines, Diliman*

While many scholars have analyzed the material and economic components of the galleon trade and their impact on the early Spanish Philippines, there were linguistic and literary exchanges happening alongside them that need to be analyzed in the context of an emerging Spanish-speaking world centered around the Pacific. In this presentation, I will describe the linguistic and literary worlds of the early Spanish Philippines through an examination of extant colonial sources for the study of Philippine languages. Through a close reading of the missionary corpus in Tagalog from the Edward Ayer Collection of the Newberry Library, I will illustrate how missionary practices of meaning-making and knowledge production transpired at the behest of the colonial church, whose main task of religious conversion called for endowing Christianity with a heterolingual voice.

**Ladino Life in Gaspar de San Agustín's *Carta a un amigo suyo* (1720)**

Miguel Martínez, *University of Chicago*

This presentation will focus on Gaspar de San Agustín’s *Carta de Fr. Gaspar de San Agustín a un amigo suyo en España, que le pregunta el natural ingenio de los indios naturales de estas Islas Philipinas* (Newberry, Ayer MS 1429), written in 1720 after the author had spent over fifty years in the Philippines. A mash-up of colonial tropes and imperial racializing strategies, the Augustinian’s letter is also a rich ethnographic tapestry about urban indigenous life in Manila, including that of Spanish-speaking *ladinos*. This presentation will focus on a couple of moments that foreground the centrality of Spanish literacy, and its capacity to regulate and structure colonial society. It will also pay some attention to broader patterns of linguistic practice and *ladino* literacy in certain institutional and social contexts, from the school, to the court of law and the printing workshop.

**Francisco Blancas de San José, OP, and Early Philippine Printers**

Jorge Mojarro, *RCCAH, University of Santo Tomas*

Type printing made its appearance in 1604 in the Philippines with the primary, although not the only, objective of facilitating the evangelization of the inhabitants of the archipelago. The second book of this kind, *Libro de las Quatro Postrimerías* (the Newberry holds the only copy of the second edition), is quite eloquent regarding the evangelization strategies followed by the mendicant orders and the religious contents they considered a priority. Under the direction of the Dominican Francisco Blancas de San Jose, several Filipinos were not only in charge of printing, but were also encouraged to publish, thus integrating them into a new social order. This paper will explore the publishing strategies followed by the Dominican printing press during the early years as well as the crucial role played by Filipino printers as social agents of the Hispanic Monarchy in the Philippines.

**PANEL 3: IDENTITY (Chair: Nicholas Sy)**

**What is (the) Law in the Absence of Rule? The Implications of Legal Anarchy in the Philippines Between the 16th and 19th Centuries**

Jody Blanco, *UC San Diego*

The “secularization controversy” of the 19th century involved the struggle of native priests to either retain the parishes under their administration or to be assigned to parishes that needed religious ministers. In Philippine historiography, the controversy oftentimes boils down to the question of racial equality / inequality between colonial subjects (natives, mestizos, and criollos) and peninsular Spaniards, who comprised virtually all of the members of the Religious Orders or regular clergy. What we often miss, however, is the degree to which questions of racial privilege and aptitude themselves grew out of the legal anomaly in which these Religious Orders were themselves above or outside the law - both civil and canon. By examining the Newberry document *Defensa canónica por las Sagradas Religiones, sobre la visita que intentó y en parte ejecutó el Ilustrísimo Sr. Don Diego Camacho, Arzobispo de Manila* (catalogued as “A document on the resistance of the monks to the visits of the diocesan prelates, 1698”), I explore the long and obscured history of legal anarchy throughout the entirety of Spanish rule in the Philippines; and summarize what I understand to be the cardinal (!) points Dr. José Rizal took from his studies of friar immunity and impunity throughout the archipelago. Beyond even the ideological and sometimes idiotic claims of racial superiority and native inferiority that characterized the secularization controversy, Rizal aimed at nothing less than exposing a colonial regime based on the permanence of a (missionary) frontier in which laws could be neither administered nor executed.

**Unearthing Early Modern Martial Arts: Spanish *Destreza* in the Philippines**

Diego Javier Luis, *Johns Hopkins University*

By the seventeenth century, Spanish fencing (*la verdadera destreza*) had coalesced into a universal doctrine proclaiming the superiority of Spanish arms over all others. Destreza philosophy was deployed to legitimize violent action in overseas colonies, assess the martial prowess of foreign polities, and reify differences between choleric Spaniards and the alleged humoral types of other peoples. An extensive historiography uncritically reproduces the claims of *destreza* practitioners and attributes Spanish military “successes” to skill with steel swords and other similar pairings of martial ability with military technology.

However, as even conquest apologists like Bernardo de Vargas Machuca observed in *Milicia indiana* (1599), Spanish military technology was just as often a liability as it was an advantage. This talk focuses on a chapter of Francisco Combés’s *Historia de Mindanao y Joló* (1667) to demonstrate the unique challenges to *destreza* that Spaniards encountered in the Philippines and, in so doing, further deconstruct the myth of Spanish military superiority against the enemies of its empire.

**Merchants and Laborers in *Pueblos de Indios*: Investigating Chinese Presence outside Manila in the 17th century**

Grace Liza Y. Concepcion, *University of the Philippines, Diliman*

In April 1646, the *principalía* (native elite) of Liliw– located about 100 kilometers southeast of Manila in the province of Laguna– issued an official declaration stating that Juan Bautista, a baptized Chinese artisan, required additional laborers to complete the church’s altarpiece. These workers, also of Chinese origin, were to be recruited from neighboring Siniloan town. By February 1648, Chinese painters—Siti, Lawo, and Chaptico—had committed to finishing the altarpiece, with their compensation documented through a series of receipts issued by the parish priest. These records, preserved in the “Paglayonan Manuscript” in the Newberry Collection, offer valuable insights into the broader dynamics of Chinese migration beyond Manila during the seventeenth century. This paper explores the movement of Chinese individuals into Laguna province, where Spanish presence was limited, and examines their socio-economic roles and interactions with native inhabitants in the *pueblos de indios*. The study contributes to the wider discourse on the expanding Chinese presence and “Asian entanglements” in Spanish Philippines, highlighting local interactions and labor networks that shaped colonial society.

**A Sea of Ink: Print Cultures, Artistic, Technical and Material Exchanges across the South China Sea**

Stephanie Porras, *Tulane University*

In the spring of 1593, we know that at least two versions of a *Doctrina Christiana* were printed in Manila, in Tagalog and Chinese. The Governor of the Philippines, Gomez Perez Dasmariñas, wrote to Philip II that spring to inform him he had granted a license for the printing of these texts “to result in the conversion and instruction of the peoples of both nations.” Both xylographic texts included woodcut images and draw on both Spanish and Chinese book traditions; the books themselves were produced by Chinese immigrant carvers resident in Manila, who likely hailed from well-established print centers in Fujian. Just a few years before Dasmariñas letter, the Bishop of Manila, Domingo de Salazar had singled out the artistic abilities of this Chinese diaspora, singling out their ability to skillfully imitate existing models: from sculpture to embroidery and bookbinding. This talk considers how printed images were both made and used in the Philippines, situating acts of artistic imitation and creative innovation within the broader print cultures of the South China Sea.