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Between the Military and Religious History of Early Globalization: A Book Review of *The Jesuit Encounters with Islam in the Asia-Pacific* by Alexandre Coello de la Rosa and João Vicente Melo

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Since the foundation of the Order in 1540, the Jesuits were primarily committed to global proselytism and strived to surpass the efforts of older, well-established orders, such as the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians. Although the Jesuits worked in Europe, trying to bring their wayward Christian fellows to what they believed to be the only true Church and distinguishing themselves as the educators of European elites, their action had even greater resonance and importance in the overseas territories colonised by the European Catholic powers.

The Jesuits were the forerunners of globalization. They were not only among the first European minds who conceived of humanity and a religiously motivated action on a planetary scale, but were also the first to appreciate the opportunities created by the Portuguese exploration and expansion in Asia. The Portuguese Assistancy, a component of the Jesuit internal organization, was a vast complex of units distributed along the routes of the farthest maritime exploration: in Hormuz, Goa, Malacca, China, and Japan. Although the Jesuits were also among the first explorers of landlocked countries, such as Tibet, the type of activity they designed, at once global and centralized, connected them durably to maritime routes. No wonder they are active in the Philippines and the islands of Mindanao and Sulu (called Jolo in Spanish sources), which for a long time constituted the "last frontier" of European presence.

Along with the process of realizing their overambitious planetary project of evangelization, the Jesuits established a database of knowledge that had no equal in the early-modern world. This empire of writing, vaster and more durable than all the political empires they served, is composed of all sorts of materials, from detailed personnel records to annual letters, relations, treaties, chronicles, histories, and grammars of non-European languages. The Jesuit archive is constantly explored by historians, triggering an endless variety of approaches and furnishing a collection of sources that are uniquely important in the domain of global history. Alexandre

Coello de la Rosa and João Vicente Melo's monograph, *The Jesuit Encounters with Islam in the Asia-Pacific* (2023), is one example of such works and offers an excellent opportunity for delving into the history of Jesuit activities, reconstructed from the Jesuits' source materials as well as the existing state-of-the-art bibliography on the subject. The monograph is not an extensive presentation of the Jesuit history but offers a narrower focus. Nonetheless, it provides insight into the mechanisms of early maritime and colonial history of the European incursions into the Indian and Pacific Oceans in which the Jesuits played an important role. Moreover, it invites readers to reflect on the logic behind the chaos of historical data concerning conquests, battles, and the interplay of multiple military and economic factors, for the Jesuits served not only as military leaders but also as the designers of doctrines, policies and strategies in varying scales.

The authors stress that understanding the coordinated action of the Order requires a perspective that goes beyond separating the national interests of Portugal and Spain (the monograph covers the time period when both nations were united by a dynastic alliance [1580–1640]). Treating the maritime presence of these two Catholic powers in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific jointly, the authors analyze five representative cases of Jesuit contact with Islamic societies in Asia. These cases are related to the attempts at implementing Portuguese cultural policies in Hormuz (Part 2), the Jesuit diplomacy in Bijapur (Part 3) and at the Mughal court (Part 4), the early missionary work in the Philippines and the Moluccas (Part 5), and, finally, the Jesuit involvement in the conflicts between Moro population and Spanish authorities in Mindanao and Sulu (Part 6 and 7). The structure of the book follows the progress of these five cases, staging the expansion of European powers from the West to the East.

The authors explore the rich Jesuit archives, which contain their annual letters and relations, such as Antoni de Monserrat's *Commentarium mongolicae legationis* (Commentary on the embassy to the Mughal court). These Latin texts were intended for the internal usage of the Order and were not meant to be printed. They were edited and published by scholars in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, yet remain insufficiently exploited by historians, especially when the history of distant parts of the world is the object of analysis. Of special interest to Filipino readers might be the role of the Philippines in a larger network of historical becoming during the early-modern period. The book provides an insight into the history of Asia-Pacific at its turning points, such as the arrival of the Jesuits in 1581 (whose predecessors were the Augustinian monks in 1565) and the establishment of contacts with the Dutch United East Indian Company (VOC) among others.

Any book presenting the early-modern Jesuit presence in Asia must, to some degree, evoke fascination and adventure, and the monograph provides a captivating account of Jesuit encounters with the Islamic world in the Asia-Pacific. The Jesuits were not only the bearers of their religious credo but were also early explorers and transformers of local realities; the history of their missions speaks as much of bravery and daring as it does of spirituality. Nonetheless, it is important to stress what the book is and what it is not. The use of the term "encounters" in the title might suggest that the book attempts to analyse an inter-denominational exchange or that it is a study on divergent theologies. There is very little of such considerations in this monograph, except for the fragments commenting on the confrontation of the Jesuits with the politico-religious programme created by the Mughal emperor Akbar. Even though the Jesuits frequently served as diplomatic intermediaries between Christian and Muslim communities, they essentially contributed to the Iberian crowns' overall politics based on violence and coercion. As the authors suggest in the Conclusion, the martyrdom of Jesuit missionaries such as Juan de Carpio (1583–1634), killed during a raid on Ogmuc (Ormoc) which was a part of the hostilities provoked by the Maguindanao sultan Kudarat, contributed to deepening rather than soothing the interdenominational antagonism: "Jesuit martyrs performed cohesive functions as tools of propaganda as they began dying violently at the hands of the Moros, thereby reinforcing Islam as Spain and Portugal's primary alter" (92).

The main bulk of the monograph is thus a narration of the political and military conflict between the European maritime empires and the regional powers of Asia-Pacific, a circumstance in which sophisticated theological debates hardly find any space at all. To be honest, at many moments, the Jesuits themselves play only a subsidiary role in this conflict, yet they resurface as protagonists in the chapter dedicated to Mindanao, Sulu, and the Spanish-Moro Wars in the eighteenth century.

As the authors move from one case study to another, they connect diverse cultural realities. The described territories in the Persian Gulf, Indian subcontinent and Asia-Pacific archipelagos had different statuses; the divergence of state potential, military power and resilience of local societies led to diverging strategies and policies adopted by the European powers trying to control them. For instance, Hormuz enjoyed the status of a protectorate, as its annexation in 1515 was based on a treaty of vassalage between Turan Shah IV and Manuel I of Portugal. Nonetheless, the subsequent historical period was characterized by the demilitarization of the vassal kingdom and its progressive dependence on the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*: "Indeed, in 1543, the *Estado da Índia* took full control of the local fiscal structures when, claiming that the king was unable to pay his tribute, it took control of the custom house of Hormuz" (7). The position of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf was not only strategic in the commercial and military context, but also crucial for the Jesuits' mission.

The major figure in the missionary history of Asia, Francis Xavier (1506–1552), had a clear vision of the importance of Hormuz. This is why he appointed Gaspar Barzeus (1515–1553) for this mission. The former Dutch soldier who served under Charles V and settled in Portugal joined the Jesuits around 1546. Initially, he took up proselytizing actions targetting Muslims and Jews, such as public debates with mullahs and rabbis. His initial strategy consisted of attempts to Christianize the public space of the city with processions and other public acts of devotion. Yet, as the authors write, it "paved the way for a confrontational strategy that aimed to eradicate the Islamic presence in the city" (8). The confrontational strategy he designed strongly relied on the repressive resources of the *Estado da Índia*. The relative balance in local society was restored only after Barzeus' plans to convert the local population to Christianity were partially frustrated. Goa was the scene of much more severe oppression, including the activities of the Inquisition. The adopted model was the extirpation of idolatry, similar to the actions of Spanish authorities in Mexico and Peru. As the authors explain, Barzeus lacked interest in fostering an authentic debate with Islam, because he "was immersed in a long polemical tradition that presented Islam as a heretical sect or a false religion that distorted the fundamental principles of Christian doctrine" (93).

The missionary work of the Jesuits, inscribed in the framework of royal patronage (the Portuguese *Padroado real* and the Spanish *Patronato regio*), was closely connected to other European interests, such as commerce and politics. Religious agents were often employed, formally or informally, in diplomatic activities. Outside the sphere of influence of the *Estado da Índia*, their confrontational attitude toward Islam had to be softened and the Jesuits proved more inclined to explore the common points that might reconcile Christianity and Islam. The Jesuits were welcomed at the Mughal court of Akbar, which wished to develop the ideology of divinely sanctioned kingship. The elements of Christian theology, as well as European iconography of power, contributed to his intention to create a neutral language of power that might appeal to Hindu and Muslims alike in a "new, heterogeneous visual language" (22). Those links between Indo-Persian and Catholic iconography were exploited by Jerónimo Xavier (1549–1617), who tried to develop "a sort of accommodationist approach that aimed to build acceptable bridges between Islam and Christianity" (93). For example, the Jesuits missionaries in the Mughal Empire accentuated the reverence paid by Muslims to Jesus, Mary, and St. John the Baptist, and distributed artworks related to them.

Nonetheless, the reason behind those reconciliatory attempts at inter-denominational dialogue should be seen in the context of the global Jesuit strategy of addressing the elites. They used the "top-down" approach advocated by the

founder of their Order, Ignatius Loyola, who sought to engage the elites to trigger the widespread conversion of the lower social strata. This strategy, as the authors conclude, proved successful: "in the case of the Jesuit mission at the Mughal court, the establishment of patron—client relationships with prominent figures allowed the missionaries to secure a more or less stable presence that lasted until the dissolution of the empire" (94).

Meanwhile, marginal history interfered with this 'top-down' approach: the Luso-Mughal relationships were spoiled due to the friction caused by informal Portuguese settlements in Bengal, the so-called *bandéis*. In 1632, the Mughal troops of Shahjahan (1592–1666) occupied Hughli, the most important of those settlements that became one of the relevant ports in the Bay of Bengal. Such military actions aimed to quell the European maritime expansion in the region, yet they also had consequences for the Jesuit priests, who saw some of their churches raided or closed by Mughal authorities and, more generally, their privileged relations with the Mughal state durably damaged. The Jesuits appeared as exposed targets of retaliation by the Mughal state that wished to force the *Estado da Índia* to recognize the limitations of the freedom to navigate the seas surrounding the Indian subcontinent. On the other hand, as the Muslim pressure against the Jesuit activities grew stronger, the missionaries turned to the task of converting the Hindu population. Returning once again to the "top-down" approach, the Jesuits developed an interest in high Indian culture. A name to remember in this context is Heinrich Roth (1620–1668), a Swabian missionary who, having integrated the Mughal mission in 1653, wrote a grammar of Sanskrit and engaged in translation from and to this language.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the Spanish empire, the Philippine Islands remained a "frontier space" marked by turmoil until their liberation in the late nineteenth century. The situation of the Portuguese, who were the first European settlers in the region, was also very fragile. In 1575, they were expelled from the island of Ternate by the sultan Babullah and forced to resettle in the neighboring islands of Tidore and Ambon. Despite their difficult situation, Spain and Portugal remained interested in monopolizing the trade of the so-called Spice Islands, producing clove and nutmeg. The slow process of Spanish colonization was directed against the Muslim domains in Mindanao and Sulu in an attempt to grant safety and prosperity to the main Spanish centre, the island of Luzon. The Sultanate of Maguindanao, founded by Sharif Muhammad Kabungsuwan, who came from Malaysia, was one of the allies of the Sultanate of Ternate. The island of Mindanao was also Islamized by teachers coming from Malacca and Ternate. This is how the inhabitants of the southern Philippines found themselves in an intermediary position between two powers: the Islamic sultanates and the Catholic Spanish.

Moreover, the inhabitants of the South-East Asian archipelagos were coveted by two global religions that were in the process of expansion. The inhabitants of Maguindanao, Slangan, Matampay, Lusud, Katittwān, and Simway chose to convert to Islam in the aftermath of Kabungsuwan's conquest. From the coastal regions of modern-day Maguindanao province, further spread of Islamic ideas followed the Pulangi River. The Jesuits who had settled in Manila were unable to hinder this progress. Nonetheless, they appealed to the Spanish crown for support, arguing that the Christian converts in this region were threatened by the Muslims. Furthermore, the projected conquest of the Spice Islands was justified as a religious and commercial enterprise. Manipulating the principles of international law created by the Dominican theologian Francisco de Vitoria (1483/86–1546), the Jesuits argued that the conflict was a "just war." In this way, they legitimized and triggered the military action of the Spanish crown, leading to the "Moro wars."

Furthermore, the authors claim that "the Jesuits were involved in the project of conquering the Moluccas (Ternate, Tidore, Ambon) militarily and spiritually" (48). At the time of their arrival, the life in the archipelago was organized into various independent *barangays* (Tagalog political units). Their first effort was to gather the dispersed population into *reducción*, analogous to the strategy enforced by priests in Latin America to indoctrinate and control the indigenous population. These measures were accompanied with more vigorous Spanish military presence, as the royal *Adelantado* Don Esteban Rodríguez de Figueroa conquered the Pulangi River Delta to establish Spanish towns in the area, motivated by personal gain and legitimized by the state. Both individual and collective greed were satiated by the commercialisation of cinnamon. Nonetheless, the crucial step toward the globalization of the Asia-Pacific region was the decision taken not by the Spanish, but by the sultan of Ternate. Wishing to counter the expansion of Catholic Spain, he established a link with the Protestant Dutch, opening the gate to the United East Indian Company (VOC). Contrary to the Iberian kingdoms' confrontational attitude toward Islam, the Dutch adopted a more accommodating attitude and established a series of contacts and alliances with the Muslim states of Mindanao, Johor, and Aceh in the western part of Sumatra. The conflicts between the Spaniards and the Dutch over the monopoly of spices as well as other interests introduced yet another factor of instability to the region. They also opened new chapters of maritime history, such as that of contraband and illicit trade between the Philippines and the rest of Asia.

The Moluccas, Sulu, and Mindanao occupied a particular place in the Jesuit corporative imagination upon the visit of Francis Xavier in Maluku in 1546. The archipelago was to become a major site of Jesuit martyrdom in Asia. One of the most gruesome episodes in this period of history was the martyrdom of Afonso de

Castro in 1558, which the authors analyze through Luís Fróis's account in the annual letter of 1559. After being captured by the ruler of Ternate, Castro was crucified and decapitated; his suffering was subsequently presented as a "glorious triumph" in the defence of Christianity. No wonder the Jesuits treated the islands sanctified by the blood of martyrs as "entirely theirs," a part of their exclusive legacy. Consequently, they treated the Islamic powers as intruders and "tyrants," whose rule had no legitimacy and should thus be eliminated. Yet to conduct their missionary activities, the Jesuits had to obtain Muslim acknowledgement of the Spanish sovereignty over those territories (which was disputed despite the official Spanish conquest of Ternate in 1606). In 1655, trying to reach this aim, the Jesuit fathers Alejandro López (1604–1655) and Juan de Montiel (1630–1655) were sent to the court of Kudarat, where once again they became martyrs.

In the absence of a diplomatic solution, the "Moro wars" raged until the eighteenth century. The war waged by organized forces of the Spanish crown, Dutch company (VOC), and the English coexisted with piracy and privateering in the waters of the Sulu Sea. The Dutch settled on the island of Ternate between 1607 and 1610, rapidly extending their control to other parts of the Moluccas. Despite the ferocious defense of the islands to which the Jesuits contributed "militarily and spiritually," their influence waned. Finally, the affairs of the region were regulated by the Treaty of London (1604) and the Twelve Years' Truce in Antwerp (1609–1621).

Meanwhile, one of the most compelling chapters of eighteenth-century maritime history may be related to the illegal activity of pirates as well as the corsairs who enjoyed state sponsorship. The Spanish subjects obtained *patentes de corso* (letters of marque and reprisal) authorizing them to seize Muslim vessels, steal their goods, and enslave the crews and passengers. Nonetheless, as the authors conclude, the policy was ineffectual, as the Spanish inhabitants "did not throw themselves into a 'holy war' against the Sulu, Tirun, and Malanao raiders" (89) and the Malay Muslims prevailed in this irregular war of raids and kidnappings.

In this light, Jesuit writings propagated the suffering of the Christian population, exhorting the European powers to stand firm in defense of their settlements. The missionaries also served as soldiers and military leaders. For instance, the "father-commander" José Ducós (1724–1760) was known to have seized more than 150 Muslim vessels and freed more than five hundred Christian slaves. As the authors conclude, "the participation of Ducós in this violent expansion of Hispanic sovereignty belies the Jesuits' role as peaceful intermediaries between societies in conflict. It also demonstrates the Society's interest in extending its presence in the southern islands of the Philippine archipelago" (90).

Just as curious is the biography of the Sulu sultan Mohammed Azim ud-Din I, who appears in the Spanish sources under the name of Alimuddin. Assuming the throne of Sulu in 1735, he declared an interest in a peace treaty with Spain. The agreement was signed, and the Jesuits planned to use the new ally in their fight against a more ferocious adversary, Malinog, who ruled a small kingdom in Mindanao. To maintain their settlements on this island, the Jesuits had to reinforce the *presidio* (fortified base) of Zamboanga. As the authors narrate, the Jesuit missions played a crucial role "in the stabilization of the frontier and key actors in the consolidation of Spanish sovereignty over the archipelago" (83). Upon the instigation of the Jesuits, the Spanish monarch Philip V sent letters to the rulers in the area, urging them to convert. The reaction of Alimuddin was positive; he welcomed the missionaries to his kingdom, although the decision did not please his subjects. Facing the opposition of the *ulemas* (Islamic scholars) and his own brother, Alimuddin was forced to escape to Zamboanga and to request Spanish help in order to recover his throne. Adopting the name Fernando I after his conversion on board a Spanish frigate, he tried to cheat the Spanish, sending two letters to the sultan of Maguindanao. One of them exhorted him to accept the missionaries while the other, written in Arabic letters, explained that the addressee should not pay heed to the content of the first letter. The disloyalty was quickly discovered, and the convert was imprisoned. Nonetheless, Alimuddin tried to recover his freedom when Spanish rule weakened. Manila was captured by the British (1762–1764), who helped him to return to Sulu and recover his throne. He repaid his new allies by granting them the northern coast of Borneo.

The final blow that the Jesuits were not able to survive came from Europe. In 1759, the expulsion of the Order from Portugal and all its overseas territories was decided in Lisbon by the Marquis of Pombal, the chief minister to King Joseph I. It provoked the eviction of the Jesuit missions in Asia. In 1767, a similar anti-Jesuit policy was also adopted by Spain, evicting the Jesuits from the Philippines. Finally, the papal bulla *Dominus ac Redemptor* in 1773 sealed the suppression of the Society of Jesus. The Jesuit missionaries were replaced by other Catholic orders. The Mindanao and Bohol missions, for example, were handed over to the Recollects (a branch of the Franciscan order) among escalating Muslim hostilities. Nonetheless, the second half of the nineteenth century brought the Jesuit revival. In 1859, they were requested by the Queen Isabella II to return to Mindanao and Sulu to carry on their evangelizing mission.

Melo and de la Rosa's work contrasts with important monographs such as Joseph de Guibert's *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice, A Historical Study, or* Dauril Alden's *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire and*

Beyond. The narration of the Jesuit presence in the Philippines is well developed, yet still far from the detailed treatment that may be found, for instance, in Horacio de la Costa's *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768*. Even the chapter dedicated to the Jesuits at the Mughal court refers, in the Preliminary Note, to Melo's more extensive monograph *Jesuit and English Experiences at the Mughal Court, c. 1580–1615*.

Certainly, the abundance of older bibliography should not discourage new research. Nonetheless, it raises the question of novelty and originality that new publications are expected to contribute to a field already saturated with satisfactory works. In many places, de la Rosa and Melo's book sounds like a synopsis of problems and historical events that have been treated more extensively elsewhere, both in other scholarship and their own. Certainly, the scope of the analysis is deliberately narrowed to just five case studies. In this narrow choice, however, the Jesuit Goa receives less attention than would be expected; it is not listed among the five foci of interest and serves merely as a contextualization of the policies introduced by Barzeus in Hormuz. Arguably, Goa deserves more. It was not only the core of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*, but also a major Jesuit centre where in 1548 the fathers founded a college and in 1556 introduced a printing press. The book, nonetheless, seems clear on one point—the deconstruction of the Jesuit positive myth (if there remains any) as "civilizers," innovators or introducers of new ideas and inventions. Overall, the authors are merciless toward the Order, stressing its contribution to conflict rather than lingering on the importance of new techniques, forms of organization, or attempts at conciliation fostered by the members of the Society of Jesus.

Should concision be treated as a specific advantage of this publication? It might be so for many readers. Nevertheless, this should not come at the cost of original, innovative research. While the analysis of the chosen case studies is thorough and based on primary sources, the degree of innovation is debatable and depends strongly on the reader's horizon of expectations. The comparative presentation of the action of Spain and Portugal, for instance, can hardly be presented as a consistent, important advantage. It is easy to imagine a more illuminating approach. For example, I would gladly read a monograph presenting with richness of details and depth of analysis the concurrent religious expansions of Christianity and Islam in the Asia-Pacific. The Philippines as the "last frontier" of both would be a fascinating playground of such a comparative approach. It would also stand more prominently in the context of present-day global studies advancing at an accelerated pace in the research of non-European and non-Western history.

De la Rosa and Melo did not go far in this direction, although they made some headway. Their book is not a comprehensive comparative work; the adopted perspective explains with sharpness and clarity only one side of the conflict, i.e. the Catholic's, while the figures of the opponents often remain blurred in the background. Although the Islamic figures of the Indian subcontinent such as Akbar (1542–1605) and Ali Adil Shah of Bijapur (1558–79) are depicted in full colour, the leaders of smaller, insular states are almost featureless. The story of Alimuddin, mentioned above, is an exception. However, the authors have little to offer regarding his motivations or the policies behind his conversion. It demands questions such as: who are those enigmatic "Quranic instructors" (45) who became instrumental in the Islamization of the Moluccas? Did they form any kind of congregation or was their action strictly individual? Did they serve state interests just like the Jesuits or was their expansion fostered by purely religious motivations? Did they nurture any interest in Christianity or was their attitude just as antagonistic as that of the Iberians'? These are questions that require further research that go beyond the analysis of the Jesuit archives and put the Jesuit discourse in a wider regional context.

Be that as it may, *The Jesuit Encounters with Islam in the Asia-Pacific* brings about a coherent presentation of lesser-known episodes, situated in the margins of the Order's history. Certainly, these "minor" episodes gain importance as the perspective shifts from European to non-European readers. For the latter, the legacy of the Jesuit missions often shapes a familiar, directly accessible reality. Presenting the trajectory of Jesuit missions running eastwards until the "frontier space" of the Philippines is not only coherent and captivating, but also helps elucidate the underlying logic of early-modern globalization along maritime routes. The streak of missions presented in the book could be developed further, beyond the range of "encounters with Islam," as the Philippines became a midway station for contact with Japan. Yet, as it is, the book presents the modus operandi of early-modern globalization in which religion, war, and long-distance trade-based economies created synergies, gradually stripping societies of their autonomy and involving them in a tightly knit network of interdependent processes. The Jesuit legacy remains controversial and ambivalent.

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