9 Persistent Piracy in Philippine Waters

Metropolitan Discourses about Chinese, Dutch, Japanese, and Moro Coastal Threats, 1570–1800

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Abstract
The chapter focuses on how piracy was rendered in Spanish records from the Philippine Islands from around 1570 to 1800. The author demonstrates that the label "pirate" was used to denote a wide range of hostile elements or peoples, including other Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, and indigenous Philippine groups. Several of these alleged pirates have been largely overshadowed by later, mainly nineteenth-century, accounts that focused exclusively or overwhelmingly on the maritime raiding of indigenous Muslim "Moro piracy." The chapter thus demonstrates the complex nature of piracy and the multiplicity of actors, practices, and representations of the phenomenon during the long period under study.

Keywords: Philippines, Early Modern, conceptual plurality, Moros, Spanish colonialism

Introduction

In the early seventeenth century people of Mindanao apparently "helped those of Sulu in their piratical excursions, frequently invading the beaches of our islands, destroying their fields and forests, burning their villages, forcing them into a fortress or to flee into the mountainous region of the interior."[1] These lines were not recorded by contemporaries, however,

1 Pio de Pazos y Vela-Hidalgo, *Jolo, Relato Historico-Militar. Desde su Descubrimiento por los Españoles en 1578 a Nuestros Dias* (Madrid: Imprenta y Estereotipa de Polo, 1879), 12; author's translation.

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rather they were penned by a nineteenth-century Spanish historian of military background, Pio de Pazos y Vela Hidalgo (1841–1913), who personally participated in an expedition against Mindanao rebels in 1866. They were part of a chronological account of what he called a *Military History of Jolo.* It is an apt introductory quote reflecting both the key topoi and muddled chronologies of the history of piracy in the Spanish Philippines.

The main goal of this chapter is to highlight the discursive power of piracy and coastal raids in Spanish colonial reports produced in the Philippines between 1570 and 1800, with the key focus on roughly the first hundred years. The chapter focuses on the margins of the South China Sea or the waters and coasts of what is nowadays referred to as the Philippine, Sulu, and Indonesian seas. Discourses of external threat played an important role in both establishing sovereignty and in creating a sense of common political interest among different subordinate groups. For maritime Southeast Asia, non-European understandings of maritime violence and the relationship between those who talked and wrote about it and those who were accused of committing it are essential yet remain understudied. Approaching the theme through the lens of concurrent concepts of piracy can contribute to nuance long-held misconceptions of either religiously motivated raiding or spontaneous acts by opportunist seafarers. The perspective of concurrences, moreover, reminds us of the many unheard voices in these unequal encounters and the slippery recording by contemporaries and later historians.

In response to the edited volume's appeal to revisit the role of maritime violence in asymmetrical settings, this chapter reflects on the contradictions between the power discourses of land-based elites and the experiences of various maritime actors and the coastal population. For that purpose, it compares a plethora of sources, mostly produced by land-based authorities, in different languages. A central point of departure is that the Filipino-Spanish discourse on piracy was co-produced: It entailed European legal concepts, East Asian views of sovereignty and local maritime practices. In this sense, examples from the Filipino coasts and its surrounding waters inform us about non-European understandings of piracy and maritime security policies and more generally, about the attitudes of land-based centres towards seagoing-people and their efforts to control the ocean. What was considered maritime violence and who was persecuted for committing it? Selected case studies of prominent pirate attacks against what is conventionally known as the colonial Philippines will help to answer these questions.

The article contextualizes the multi-ethnic embeddedness of pirates, who challenged Spanish sovereignty. This way, it highlights the concurrent

relationship between perceived security threats and discursive strategies from a global perspective. The normative character of documents produced by the ruling elite suggests a heavy bias of "othering"; in other words the administrative elite made ample use of the language of "piracy", referring to any source of irritation coming from the sea as pirates or corsairs without particularly distinguishing ethical or political factors. Moreover, within the Spanish Empire the threat of piracy was an effective way to receive approval or financial support from the metropolis in Spain or Mexico and evidence seemed easy to get by. Such sources need to be read both along and against the grain.[2] Examples of Sino-Japanese maritime violence gradually overlapped and were eventually replaced by reports of Muslim ("Moro") and Dutch *corsarios*. The latter usually referred to private merchants and seafarers, often sponsored by the Dutch East India Company (VOC). In its narrowest definition, corsair (*corsario*) was a term originally used for privateers (entitled to attack ships of hostile nations), however the Spanish colonial records indicate that the term was used flexibly and was often interchangeable with heretics, as the compound *corsario luterano* (Protestant corsair) used for freebooters and privateers sailing the Atlantic indicates. The religious connotation of pre-modern European visions of piracy is also manifest in what the self-proclaimed Catholic Iberian authority spotted in the Mediterranean, e.g. navigators along the Barbary Coast in the sixteenth century.[3] Scholars exploring the links between piracy and the development of international law have thus persuasively shown that when the Iberians referred to hostile privateers or corsairs, the latter were not necessarily involved in systematic sea robbery but rather jeopardized what the Catholic powers had come to believe as their exclusive seascape.[4]

Like European perceptions of sea robbery and piratical activities, Asian perspectives have equally been challenged over the past decades. For a general understanding of raiding, it is important to challenge the biased

2 As employed in Bradley Camp Davis, *Imperial Bandits: Outlaws and Rebels in the China-Vietnam Borderlands* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2016); For methodological considerations, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

3 Amedeo Policante, *The Pirate Myth: Genealogies of an Imperial Concept* (London: Routledge, 2016), 41–46.

4 Lauren E. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty. Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Michael Kempe, "'Even in the Remotest Corners of the World': Globalized Piracy and International Law, 1500–1900," *Journal of Global History* 5, no. 3 (2010): 353–372.

land-based interpretations of piracy, a point made by Peter Shapinsky.[5] Shapinsky has shown that feudal Japanese lords increased their economic and political power by sponsoring piratical activities since the fourteenth century. Another crucial point is that piracy cannot be understood independently of early modern political economies or as a self-sufficient or autonomous phenomenon. In his work on early modern piracy in the China Seas, historian Robert J. Antony has stressed the importance of the clandestine economy as a by-product of piracy, providing many illuminating examples of flourishing black markets in late imperial China. Throughout history, any larger maritime movement needed services and infrastructure provided by the coastal populations, port communities and strategically located islands.[6] The complicated socio-economic web of supply and demand thus provided plenty of room for collaboration between alleged enemy groups.

The effects of a growing global economy provide a further essential theoretical frame for reflection. In that regard, the Sulu Zone, a term coined by historian James Francis Warren, is of major significance. He mapped out how, from the 1770s onwards, social and personal ties in the maritime landscape south of Manila, including Sulu, Borneo, the Celebes, and the Malay Peninsula, enabled the Sultan of Sulu and his network of outlying chiefs and diverse maritime actors to take advantage from the expanding China trade. The integration of the region's trade in sea and jungle products in the global commercial exchange led to an increase in coastal raidings since around 1770.[7] Charismatic local Taosug *datu* (chiefs) created a cross-regional system of distribution that rested on the labour of people captured by Iranun and Balangingi Samal raiders.[8] Within the long-term perspective of this article it is crucial to note that these systematic, large-scale processes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century differed significantly from the coastal raids and illegal maritime

5 Peter D. Shapinsky, "With the Sea as Their Domain: Pirates and Maritime Lordship in Medieval Japan," in *Seascapes, Littoral Cultures and Trans-Oceanic Exchanges*, ed. by Kären Wigen, Jerry Bentley, and Renate Bridenthal (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 221–238.

6 Robert J. Antony, "Maritime Violence and State Formation in Vietnam. Piracy and the Tay Son Rebellion, 1771–1802," in *Persistent Piracy: Maritime Violence and State-Formation in Global Historical Perspective*, ed. by Stefan Eklöf Amirell and Leos Müller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 113–130; Robert J. Antony, *Like Froth Floating on the Sea: The World of Pirates and Seafarers in Late Imperial South China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2003).

7 James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State, 1768–1898* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2007).

8 *Ibid.*, 149–97.

operations around Luzon in previous centuries. However, while Warren claims that no regular commerce existed between the Catholic Spanish Philippines and Moro territories (Sulu), Eberhard Crailsheim has collected bits and pieces suggesting the opposite. He traced how both Spanish and Muslim traders invested in maintaining profitable trade relations between Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and Borneo.[9]

Piracy as empirical narrative in colonial Philippine history

In recent years, scholars have begun to study socio-political developments through an examination of rivalry *and* collaboration between Europeans in Southeast Asia.[10] The role of indigenous populations is increasingly integrated in such research despite obvious challenges arising from imperial archives and their normative accounts.[11] Now, to overcome culturalist explanations it helps to apply a maritime or "intertidal" perspective, to cite Jennifer Gaynor.[12] In addition to scholars' persistent refusal to refer to the Moro raiders as pirates, maritime-centred approaches towards island Southeast Asia started to further change definitions of piracy and piracy discourses around Philippine and Indonesian waters. Ariel Lopez's research on Maguindanao's raiding in the late eighteenth century examines the socio-economic conditions resulting from Spanish and Dutch rivalry in the southern Philippines.[13] Emphasizing the socio-cultural factors of Islam and kinship with regard to the activities of Maguindanao – a traditional rival of the leading regional Islam polity of Sulu – in the Dutch-claimed territories up to the 1780s, he shows how the endemic Islamic practice of selling of Christian slaves legitimized raiding in the multi-cultural and multiply contested maritime region. While both religion and raiding practices

9 Eberhard Crailsheim, "Trading with the Enemy. Commerce between Spaniards and 'Moros' in the Early Modern Philippines," *Vengueta. Anuario de La Facultad de Geografía e Historia* 20 (2020): 81–111.

10 See, for instance, Ariel C. Lopez, "Kinship, Islam, Raiding in Maguindanao," in *Warring Societies of Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia: Local Cultures of Conflict within a Regional Context,* ed. by Michael W. Charney and Kathryn Wellen (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2018), 73–100.

11 Hans Hägerdal has shown that there are ways around the expected bias. See, Hans Hägerdal, "The Colonial Official as Ethnographer: VOC Documents as Resources for Social History in Eastern Indonesia," *Wacana: Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* 14 (2012): 405–428.

12 Jennifer L. Gaynor, *Intertidal History in Island Southeast Asia: Submerged Genealogy and the Legacy of Coastal Capture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

13 Lopez, "Kinship, Islam, Raiding"; Laura Lee Junker, *Raiding, Trading, and Feasting: The Political Economy of Philippine Chiefdoms* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

connected the Southern Philippines to the broader Islamic world, Chinese maritime networks including private merchants, captains, and outlaws ("pirates"), who operated in reaction to the initiatives of trade monopolies and state control, connected the East and South China Seas to Southeast Asia. The basic argument goes back to Philippine historian Cesar Adib Majul, whose studies on the "Moro Wars" have shown that piratical activity in the Southern part of the Philippine archipelago peaked in the midst of the eighteenth century.[14]

It goes without saying that most coastal raids and maritime attacks in Philippine waters prior to the late eighteenth century were economically motivated; however, prior to the eighteenth century, they differed in scale and regularity from pre-modern raids in the East China Seas or the Caribbean. That said, the intention is not to downplay the impact of naval expeditions for the sake of securing the waters or the sufferings caused to coastal populations by various maritime groups.[15] Maritime raiding had by any means a lasting psychological effect on the islanders.[16] However, it is important to unpack the different layers of perceptions, timelines and imaginations within the colonial Spanish piracy discourses and thus question the substance of piracy panic in the official sources. It can, moreover, be helpful to contrast them with other biased narrations. In regard to the many unauthorized seafarers landing in Manila, Catholic authors liked to stress their struggle to survive in their homelands as main motivation for their deeds. An account by Padre Juan de Medina, based on hearsay and first published in 1630, illustrates the fate of the Fujianese immigrants' in China, suggesting that over-population forced people to live on the sea. Joint enterprises with other seafaring groups would have guided these "floating people" to the Philippines as soon as they got wind of easy gains or a better living.[17] In the fashion of promoting a glorious life under Christian rule, the Catholic friar insisted that roaming around the South China Sea would make their lives a misery, but once they came to Manila they were assured a prosperous future.[18] In short, the complex combination of lawlessness and

14 Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 1999), 121–190.

15 Warren, *Sulu Zone*, 166–171.

16 Cf. Domingo M. Non, "Moro Piracy during the Spanish Period and Its Impact," *Southeast Asian Studies* 30, no. 4 (1993), 401.

17 BR 10: 212–213.

18 Juan de Medina, *Historia de los Sucesos de La Orden de N. Gran P. S. Agustin de Estas Islas Filipinas, Desde que se Descubrieron y no Poblaron por los Españoles, Con las Noticias Momorables* (1630) (Manila: Biblioteca Histórica Filipina 1893), 68–69. For the original, see Ng Chin-keong,

lack of central power stimulated the development of flexible commercial networks that changed the nature of regional trade.

A cross-regional view shows how the Spanish fear of Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, and "Moro" maritime attacks triggered the construction of fortification and surveillance architecture. Even the built environment of the colonial capital reflected the everyday fear of piracy: the sturdy fortification of Manila dated back to rumours spreading after threats of a Japanese invasion in the 1590s; previous encounters with Japanese pirates and the simultaneous prolific maritime violence in the China Seas turned vague rumours into effectful fear in Manila and real concern in Madrid and Mexico, from where defence architecture was financed in this period. During the eighteenth century, the built environment of Luzon and Mindanao was complemented with watchtowers and sanctuary stone churches for the protection of the local population against coastal raiding. Some of them serve as witnesses of this age of fear until today.[19] However, at that point, neither Manila nor imperial centres in the Americas or Spain were able to assist financially. The fact that the majority of surveillance constructions and means of defence were not financed by the colonial centre in Manila but grew out of local initiatives and private donations tells us a lot about the social and political implications of coastal raids' accompanying discourse of permanent threat.[20] The fort of Zamboanga (first built in 1634) in Mindanao is a prominent landmark reminding of Spanish counter measures against coastal raids.[21]

The Spanish colony and Sino-Japanese piratical raids, 1570–1610

All things considered, the very existence of a unified Spanish colony on the Philippines can be linked to the earliest signs of a shared sense of sovereignty. This sense of a common colonial project that needed to be defended against the outside world, developed with pirate raids along the coasts of Luzon,

"Maritime Frontiers, Territorial Expansion and Hai-Fang During the Late Ming and High Ch'ing," in *China and her Neighbours: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy 10th to 19th Century*, ed. by Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 244. Censor Yüan-ch'u described the situation in 1639 as one in which the "sea is the paddy land for the Fukienese [...] the poor joined the sea bandits and connected to the overseas barbarians"; BR 7: 214.

19 Non, "Moro Piracy," 412–414.

20 Warren, *Sulu Zone*, 174.

21 Non, "Moro Piracy," 410; 413; Eberhard Crailsheim, "Las Filipinas, Zona Fronteriza. Algunas Repercusiones de Su Función Conectiva y Separativa (1600–1762),"in *Intercambios, Actores, Enfoques. Pasajes de la Historia Latinoamericana en una Perspectiva Global*, ed. by Aarón Grageda Bustamente (Hermosilla, Sonora: Universidad de Sonora, 2014), 133–152.

which had turned into the centre of Spanish colonial rule, in the decade following Spanish conquest in 1565. The most famous coastal assaults of this early period were carried out by Chinese and Japanese mariners.[22] The most prominent example in this regard are the accounts of a pirate attack from Southern China by an outlaw, referred to as *haikou* 海寇 in Chinese sources, from Chaozhou in Guangdong province known as Lin Feng or Limahong.[23] In 1574, he commanded a large group (varying accounts speak of several hundreds or even several thousands) of maritime marauders of multi-ethnic origin around Hainan, Taiwan and Penghu. After having captured a richly laden Fujianese merchant vessel on its return from Manila, the attacked crew informed Limahong about the riches carried to Manila onboard of the galleons from Mexico. Arriving in the Bay of Manila in late 1574, Limahong and his people boldly went ashore where subsequent battles led to deaths on both sides, including the Spanish commander Martin de Goiti. Limahong and his people fled thereupon to Pangasinan to prepare for another attack. In March 1575, a joint force of Spanish soldiers and indigenous warriors led by the Spanish admiral Juan de Salcedo set out to destroy Limahong's camp on the Agno river in Pangasinan, roughly 200 kilometres north of Manila. The Spanish expedition seriously decimated the Guangdong raiders but was unable to drive them off the island. Negotiations followed between the Spaniards on the one side and Lin Feng and his surviving men on the other.[24] A few days later, according to Spanish reports, Limahong managed to escape just days before the arrival of a fleet under the command of admiral Wang Wanggao (王王郜), who had been sent from Ming China.[25]

An official Chinese record of the year 1572, three years before Limahong's Luzon expedition, shows illuminating parallels in the pirate leader's strategies towards central authorities:

> The Censor Yang Yi-gui, regional inspector of Guang-dong, memorialized: '[…] There has been proposals to pacify the pirate Lin Feng through

22 Birgit Tremml, "Waren Sie Nicht Alle Piraten? Mit Den Wakō Durch die Chinesischen Meere, ca. 1400–1660," in *Schrecken der Händler und Herrscher. Piratengemeinschaften in der Geschichte*, ed. by Andreas Obenaus, Eugen Pfister and Birgit Tremml (Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2012), 144–167.

23 林鳳, known as Limahong or Limajon in European sources.

24 Miguel de Loarca, "Relacion del viaje que hezimos a la China desde la ciudad de Manila en las del poniente año de 1575 años, con mandado y acuerdo de Guido de Lavazaris governador i Capitan General que a la sazon era en las Islas Philipinas,". 1575, Capítulo 1, Folio 115 (136) a, in "La China en España," transcribed by Dolors Folch. Available at: 13 October 2019.

25 See Manel Ollé, *La Empresa de China. De la Armada Invencible al Galeón de Manila*. (Barcelona: Acantilado, 2002), 56–57.

> negotiation and settle him in Hui-zhou. Feng's gang does not exceed 500–600 persons, but without a major force it will be difficult to exterminate it. [Lin] urges the government to arrange negotiated pacification, but still appears and disappears, plundering and killing as he goes. In such a situation, wanting to pacify him through negotiation again is like raising a tiger, and will lead to future calamities."[26]

In Western-centric history, the story of Lin Feng/Limahong has mostly been presented as an attempt by a Chinese outlaw to conquer the fledgling Spanish settlement.[27] It came to be remembered as the Battle of Manila, in which joint Spanish forces under the command of Juan de Salcedo heroically defended the young colony and defeated Limahong's pirate force of seventy ships and more than 3,000 invaders.[28] While Igawa Kenji emphasizes the broader East Asian dimension by introducing evidence for Limahong's incorporation into *wakō* networks, represented by a Japanese general called Sioco,[29] others point at the missing trans-imperial narrative.[30] The arrival of Wang Wanggao in Manila was the first direct encounter between the Ming state and the overseas Spanish Empire and challenges persistent views on a passive and inward-oriented Chinese empire. The pursuit of the "Guangdong bandit," as Limahong is called in Chinese sources, all the way to Luzon by Ming forces resulted in the first, albeit from Ming perspective, unofficial negotiations between Spain and China.[31] Luzon-based Spaniards conclude that Wang Wanggao was sent by the viceroy to sign peace ("para firmar la paz") with the Spanish in Manila.[32] A common interest in law and peace in the South China Sea where the participation in commercial exchange should

26 Geoff Wade, transl., *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource* (Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, 2005). Available at: http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/long-qing/year-6-month-8-day-27; last accessed 22 September 2019.

27 See Francisco de Sande, "Relation of the Filipinas Islands," in *The Philippine Islands 1493-1803, Vol. IV*, ed. by Emma H. Blair, James A. Robertson and Edward Gaylord Bourne (Cleveland, OH: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1903) (hereafter: BR).

28 Archivo General de Indias (AGI) Filipinas 34, n. 18, 4 June 1576.

29 Kenji Igawa, "At the Crossroads: Limahon and Wakō in Sixteenth Century Philippines," in *Elusive Pirates, Pervasive Smugglers. Violence and Clandestine Trade in the Greater China Seas*, ed. by Robert J. Antony (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 80.

30 Travis J. Shutz, "Limahong's Pirates, Ming Mariners, and Early Sino–Spanish Relations: The Pangasinan Campaign of 1575 and Global History from Below," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 67, nos 3–4 (2019): 315–342.

31 AGI Filipinas 34, n. 18, 4 June 1576.

32 *Ibid.*

remain in the hands of manageable actors resulted in mutual recognition of two governments on either end of the South China Sea. This can be seen in the fact that official China initially approved of the measures taken by the "yi troops of Luzón" burning ships of the bandit Lin Feng.[33]

The arrival of the Chinese officials nourished Spanish hopes to get access to China by establishing official relations with the Ming court.[34] From his communication with Wang, Governor-General Guido de Lavezaris (in office 1572–1575) concluded that the "king of China" was interested in friendship with the Spaniards and subsequently dispatched two Augustinian friars as official delegation to the viceroy of Fujian.[35] Martín de Rada and Jeronimo Marín were chosen to carry Levazaris' letter to the emperor – translated by the Chinese Manila-merchant Sinsay – soliciting friendship and trade.[36]

Two Spanish accounts, one by the Spanish soldier Miguel de Loarca and a later copy by missionary ethnographer Gaspar de San Agustín, describe the diplomatic dimensions arising from Limahong's assaults on the fledgling Spanish colony in the Philippines.[37] In the manner of instrumentalizing foreign maritime threats for the sake of affirming Spanish military power both Spanish narrations memorialize Spanish successes on the coastal battlefield. Moreover, all Spanish accounts are suspiciously silent about the participation of the Chinese navy in fighting the raiders.[38] One should add that such Spanish descriptions ignored Chinese participation in fighting organizations like the one controlled by Limahong, but also failed to identify the pirates as political actors within Asian trading networks.[39]

33 Wade, *Southeast Asia*.

34 What shaped this narrative was Governor Francisco de Sande's bold plan of the year 1576 to conquer China with a force no larger than 6000 men, as well as restless attempts by Padre Alonso Sanchez to establish missionary posts in China. AGI Filipinas 6, r. 3, n. 26, 7 June 1576.

35 W. E. Retana, ed., *Archivo del Bibliófilo Filipino. Recopilacón de Documentos Históricos, Científicos, Literarios y Políticos y Estudios Bibliográficos*. 3 vols (Madrid: Impr. de la viuda de M. Minuesa de los Rios, 1895–1905), vol. 1, 30; Gaspar de San Agustin, *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas, 1565–1615*, libro 2 (Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel Ruiz de Murga, 1698), 301–303.

36 AGI Filipinas 34, n. 12, 1575. "Sinsay" may well be a mispronunciation of the Japanese *sensei* meaning teacher.

37 The letter is reproduced in San Agustin, *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas*, 305–306.

38 Shutz, "Limahong's Pirates," 327–329.

39 For the lack of recognition of pirates as political actors in colonial documents, see Sebastian Prange, "A Trade of No Dishonor: Piracy, Commerce, and Community in the Western Indian Ocean, Twelfth to Sixteenth Century," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (2011), 1269–1293.

Sino-Japanese pirates: *wakō* 倭寇

While the Spaniards in Manila distinguished between Chinese corsairs ("corsario chino") and Japanese enemies ("enemigo" or "corsario Japon"), both private maritime initiatives were part and parcel of a broader phenomenon. Since the fourteenth century, Ming Chinese and Chŏson Korean official reports mention maritime intruders along the East Chinese and Korean littoral. They call them *wokou* (chin) or *waegu* (kor.). Indeed, from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, groups of Japanese sailors and mariners from Tsushima, Iki and Gotō islands made landfalls on the Korean peninsula and the eastern Chinese coast, robbing, raiding, and burning settlements. The scale of these operations must have been significant and soon became a diplomatic matter and subsequent joint intervention between the Ming Court (1368–1644) and the Ashikaga Bakufu (1338–1573). They are referred to as *bahan* 幡船/八船 or *kaizoku* 海賊 in Japanese accounts of the time. Both combinations of Chinese characters are source terms and appeared in descriptions of unlawful maritime operations in waters surrounding the Japanese isles much earlier than the emergence of the *wakō* phenomenon. The genealogy of *wakō* is another example of misguided discourses of pirates as an evil "Other" from a foreign, less civilized origin. On the Chinese side, the othering was articulated by the use of the ideographic symbol for "Japanese" and bandit (occasionally also translated as dwarf) happened in normative accounts of imperial China since the early Ming times. The Japanese-ness of these so-called Japanese bandits bore little resemblance with the actual composition of these groups, or with contemporary perceptions of the multi-ethnic raiders of the East China Sea. Even Ming Chinese official accounts confirm that these pirate associations included people coastal provinces such as Fujian and Zhejiang.[40] Nevertheless, from the 1890s onwards even Japanese nationalist historians overemphasized the homogenous Japanese expansionist spirit in relation to the pirate groups.[41] Moreover, these groups made up of Cantonese, Fujianese, Korean, Ryukyuan and at times even local Southeast Asian and European outcasts not only engaged in plundering and murdering (as stipulated by the accounts of their victims) they also

40 Geoff Wade, transl., *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource*, Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/wan-li/year-10-month-11-day-3, accessed September 22, 2019.

41 Birgit Tremml-Werner, "Narrating Japan's Early Modern Southern Expansion," *Historical Journal* 64, no. 1 (2021): 1–23 (open access).

participated in peaceful commercial transactions and the offering of intermediary services to land-bound communities. In the closing decades of the sixteenth century, socio-economic developments in both China and Japan led to an increase in *wakō* attacks both on the Chinese coast and along the route to Luzon lured by the riches of the Manila Galleon. As a result of their unpredictability – both Chinese and Spanish observers describe their ability to switch between raiding and trading – a discourse of external danger nourished fears all over the China Seas.[42]

Colonial Spanish accounts describe how Japanese pirates (*gente con poderosa armada*, *corsario* or *gente de mar*[43]) carried out their operations from a settlement in Cagayan on their northern edge of Luzon in the 1580s.[44] Cagayan was also the point of entry were Spanish missionaries and officials feared the invasion of the Japanese commissioned by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598).[45] In 1592, news arrived in Manila that if the Japanese were to land in Cagayan (via Taiwan or Ryukyu), the natives of Cagayan would deliver the Spaniards to them.[46] A Chinese Christian based in Hirado (a small island in Kyushu not far from the above-mentioned pirate hubs Tsushima and Gotō, which turned into a thriving international port with significant "piratical" Chinese and European settlements in the second half of the sixteenth century[47]) declared that even pilots of regular mercantile vessels used to stop at Cagayan to plunder on their

42 Charles R. Boxer, *Great Ship from Amacon: Annals of Macao and the Old Japan Trade, 1555–1640* (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1963), xxiv: "the 'wa' (Japanese) were shrewd by nature; they carried merchandise and weapons together, and appeared here and there along the sea-coast. If opportunity arrived, they displayed their weapons, raiding and plundering ruthlessly. Otherwise they exhibited their merchandise, saying that they were on their way to the Court with tribute. The south-eastern coast was victimised by them." Boxer's account is based on an entry in the official Ming Annals (Ming Shi).

43 AGI Filipinas 18 B, r. 7, n. 6, 19 May 1597; AGI Filipinas 6, R. 4, N. 52, 1 July 1582.

44 AGI Filipinas, 18 A, r. 5, n. 31, 26 June 1587. The existence of a settlement of Japanese sojourners in Cagayan, on the northern edge of Luzon, which according to contemporary records hosted the unlikely number of several hundred Japanese, also proves the existence of early links between Japan and Luzon. See Iwao Seiichi, *Nanyō Nihonmachi* (Taipei: Taihoku Teikoku Daigaku, 1937), 245–247. See also Pastells, *Historia General de Filipinas. Catálogo de Los Documentos Relativos a Las Islas Filipinas Existentes En El Archivo de Indias de Sevilla* (Barcelona: Compañía General de Tabacos de Filipinas, 1925), vol. 1, 294: He mentioned a report by the conqueror of Manila and first governor general, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, who noted in the late 1560s that Japanese came together with the Chinese on the same trading vessels and went as far South as Mindoro.

45 AGI Filipinas 29, r. 4, n. 92, 2 October 1595.

46 BR 9, p. 39.

47 Iwao Seiichi. "Li Tan, Chief of the Chinese Residents at Hirado, Japan, in the Last Days of the Ming Dynasty." *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 17 (1958): 27–83.

return to Japan from Manila. Indeed, Japanese researchers have suggested that private traders from Japan frequented Cagayan and the Pangasinan region – perfectly located for the Japanese – even before the arrival of the Spaniards.[48] This assumption is supported by the existence of an outpost of Japanese sojourners in Cagayan. In 1581, the Spaniards would uncover the existence of what they considered an illegitimate Japanese village with Japanese and indigenous residents, which they entitled Puerto de Japón.[49] According to Spanish records, this Japanese settlement in Aparri hosted six hundred residents who traded weapons for gold under the command of their captain Taifusa.[50] Understanding this as challenge to the sovereignty of the king in Spain, Governor Peñalosa urged a military strike against the Japanese settlement in 1582, which resulted in around 200 Japanese deaths.[51] After the Japanese defeat at the hands of Captain Carrion, the Spaniards founded the city of Nueva Segovia using the remains of the Japanese fortifications.[52]

The example of 1582 indicates that during that period the Illocos and Cagayan were of similar importance to Sino-Japanese trading networks as the Manila Bay area. Reports of Japanese settlers from Cagayan coming on friendly trade missions to Manila to sell their weapons prove how the adaptable nature of these organizations meant potential rivalry with Spanish traders.[53] The situation only changed gradually after 1587 when Japanese elites began to formalise trade relations with the Spaniards. In a next step, military overlords such as Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) were eager to gain control over Japan's external relations and maritime trade. Their efforts led to a major decline in maritime plundering and raiding but likewise nurtured the piracy discourse in colonial Southeast

48 Kenji Igawa, *Daikōkai jidai no Higashi Ajia. Nichiō tsūkō no rekishiteki zentei* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2007), 252; Maria Grazia Petrucci's research embeds this sort of business arrangements in a broader Southeast Asian context; "Pirates, Gunpowder and Christianity in Late Sixteenth Century Japan," in *Elusive Pirates, Pervasive Smugglers: Violence and Clandestine Trade in the Greater China Seas*, ed. by Robert Antony (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 59–72.

49 The term was probably coined by Miguel de Loarca, who reported that Japanese traders visited Pangasinan regularly for trade. Cf. Iwao, *Nanyō*, 250.

50 Iwao, *Nanyō*, 245–247; See also José Eugenio Borao, "La Colonia de Japoneses en Manila en el Marco de las Relaciones de Filipinas y Japón en los Siglos XVI y XVII," *Cuadernos CANELA* 17 (2005), 25–53.

51 AGI Filipinas 6, R. 4, N. 52, 1 July 1582.

52 Iwao, *Nanyō*, 246. Other sources claim that Nueva Segovia was founded in 1581, in face of the shortage of building material some doubt remains regarding the credibility of the records about the event. AGI Filipinas 6, r. 4, n. 49, 16 June 1582.

53 A Japanese attack on a Chinese trading ship with food supply for Luzon, caused great harm to the colony. See Iwao, *Nanyō*, 249; AGI Filipinas 18 A, r. 5, n. 31, 26 June 1587.

Asia: After coming into power in 1600, the Tokugawa Shogunate sent letters to foreign rulers, denouncing Japanese private seagoing merchants as pirates and inviting foreign regimes to collaborate in fighting and punishing Japanese outlaws. Several such letters were addressed to the Spanish governor general in Manila and contributed to existing stereotypes about Japanese pirates.[54]

Inspired by an allegedly universally understood vocabulary, the incumbent Philippines' governor general Acuña used a piracy analogy in a letter to Tokugawa Ieyasu in June 1602. He described Dutch mariners in the China Seas as rebelling vassals of the king of Spain, compared them to pirates and boldly asked that the Dutch were sent to the Philippines where they would receive just trial.[55] Although similarities to a previous Japanese request to send all *wakō*-pirates from the Philippines to Japan were obvious, Ieyasu did not give in to Acuña's demands arguing that the Dutch were very committed to him.[56] Ieyasu, knowing the Dutch version of the story, counted on potential future collaborations and soon equipped them with official Japanese trading licences: In 1604, captain Jacob Quaeckerhecq sailed on behalf of Tokugawa Hidetada to Patani, an act that marked the beginning of lasting, albeit convoluted Dutch-Japanese relations for the following 260 years.[57]

After being rebuffed by the ruler of Japan, Acuña repeated the anti-Dutch mantra in a letter sent to Southern China in 1606. Thanking the Viceroy of Fujian for his punishment of joint Sino-Dutch piratical operations along the Fujianese coast, he remarked that the "Dutch are not friends of the Castilians, but bitter enemies; for, although they are vassals of the king of the Hespañas, my sovereign, they and their country have revolted, and they have become pirates like Liamon [Lin Feng] in China. They have no employment, except to plunder as much as they can."[58] The Chinese authorities had already made their own observations about the red-haired barbarians' (a common and widespread East Asian label referring to the Dutch) practices offshore and remained on alert. What is noteworthy in the

54 Hayashi Akira, ed., *Tsūkō Ichiran* (Osaka: Seibundō, 1967), 179, 575.

55 AGI Filipinas 19, r. 3, n. 35, 1 June 1602.

56 This argument has been developed further in Adam Clulow, "Like Lambs in Japan and Devils Outside Their Land: Diplomacy, Violence, and Japanese Merchants in Southeast Asia", *Journal of World History* 24, no. 2 (2013): 335–358.

57 The important pepper port Patani in present day southern Thailand played a crucial role in early Tokugawa foreign relations. The sultan of Patani was the first recipient of a Tokugawa diplomatic letter in 1599.

58 BR 14: 46.

letter from Manila is the reference to Limahong, more than three decades after his attacks in the south. It shows that uses of the past such as "the time of Limajon" became an emblematic moment in Spanish colonial correspondence; having turned into a temporal marker in colonial security politics, Limahong's political impact was much greater than the short-term economic harm he caused.

Speaking of the Dutch

Soon after Dutch vessels first arrived in Southeast Asian waters in 1596, Spaniards feared Dutch privateering around the Philippines and Maluku. Indeed, in the year 1600, Olivier van Noort successfully crossed the Pacific and upon arriving in the Bay of Manila he made attempts to capture vessels coming and going from the Spanish port city. Bothered by what they identified as acts of piracy, the Spanish took action against Van Noort and his people. In a naval battle commanded by Antonio de Morga, they were able to capture one of Van Noort's two remaining ships, but lost their own flagship.[59] At that time, the Spanish colonial administration cared less about the threat of Dutch competition than about the loss of the Spanish ship and the 120 people on board.[60] The image of the Dutch raiding Asian waters circulated with Morga's bestseller *Events in the Philippine Islands* (*Sucedos de las Islas Filipinas*, first published in Mexico in 1609). Morga described in detail the naval battle against the Dutch *corsario* Van Noort and how apt Spanish naval forces fended off enemy personnel before elaborating that the Dutch *corsario* would have caused more harm had he been allowed to roam the seas.[61] Ever since, the book became an important reference for the early Spanish history of the Philippines and thus shaped the reputation of the Dutch as pirates. Complementary to the Spanish interpretation a powerful visual source has left a strong imprint on popular and scholarly discourses: a son of the famous Frankfurt-based Southern Dutch illustrator

59 For Van Noort and Dutch global maritime ventures prior to the establishment of trading companies, see Kris E. Lane, *Pillaging the Empire: Piracy in the Americas, 1500–1750* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998); Peter Gerhard, *Pirates of the Pacific 1575–1742* (Glendale, CA: A.H. Clark Co, 1990).

60 In fact, one contemporary source refers to Van Noort as Irish corsair. See, AGI Filipinas 19, R. 2, N. 21, 13 July 1601.

61 Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de Las Islas Filipinas* (*Historical Events of the Philippine Islands*) *published in Mexico in 1609 recently brought to light and annoted by Jose Rizal* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 2008), 158–163.

Theodor de Bry (1528–1598) produced an engraving of Van Noort's landing in the Bay of Manila with clear references to a maritime clash between two maritime rivlas.[62]

Van Noort's circumnavigation of the world was a harbinger of the rise of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in the China Seas. In the decades to come, the systemic use of monopoly, coercion, private investment and complete ignorance of Luso-Spanish spheres of influence would become much more difficult to deal with than occasional plundering of ships.[63] After the founding of Batavia in 1619, and permanent East India Company factories in Japan (1609) and Taiwan (1624), interventions in Maluku (since 1599), and the triumphant expulsion of the Portuguese from Melaka in 1641, Spanish-Dutch clashes intensified in the Southern parts of the Philippines in the course of the seventeenth century. Regular Dutch contact with the Muslim coastal domains around Jolo/Sulu and Maguindanao/Mindanao alerted Spaniards on Luzon, Cebu, and the Visayas. Accusing the Dutch of privateering and other maritime threats, Spanish contemporary authors emphasized the need for military defence.[64] Indeed, in their opportune attempts to secure access to spices and marginalize Spanish influence in the region, Dutch private traders and company officials collaborated with local rulers.[65] Nevertheless, for the first half of the seventeenth century, the role of the Dutch in the vicinity of the Philippine archipelago should not be overestimated, despite a short-lived collaboration with Rajah Muda of Jolo.[66]

62 Copper engravings of the battle including a detailed illustration of the sinking of Morga's flagship were published in Isaac Commelin, *Begin ende Voortgang* (Amsterdam: Johannes Jansonius, 1646), vol. II, "Beschrijvinge van de Schipvaerd by de Hollanders gedaen onder 't beleydt ende Generaelschap van Olivier van Noort" between fols. 46 and 47; cf. Peter Borschberg, ed., *The Memoirs and Memorials of Jacques de Coutre. Security, Trade and Society in 16th and 17th-Century Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014), 159. See also Michiel van Groesen *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

63 For the Dutch in the surrounding waters of Taiwan, see Wei-chung Cheng, *War, Trade and Piracy in the China Seas, 1622–1683* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

64 AGI Filipinas 28, n. 44, 28 August 1645. This is one of the rare Spanish documents using the term *corsario holandes* in the 1640s–60s.

65 Ruurdje Laarhoven, *Triumph of Moro Diplomacy: The Maguindanao Sultanate in the 17th Century* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1989).

66 Pazos y Vela-Hidalgo, *Jolo, Relato Historico-Militar*, 25–29.

No such thing as Moro pirates?

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the term "pirate wars" (*guerras piraticas*) was coined by a new generation of Spanish historians. The term came to refer to clashes between what they thought of as "Moro" inhabitants of the south and Spanish colonial troops.[67] The term Moro was introduced to Philippine contexts by early Spanish colonizers to distinguish between Muslim and non-Muslim local populations and had originally been used for Islamic inhabitants of Southern Spain and North Africa.[68] Exploring new avenues in the history of the Muslim Philippines beginning from the period prior to any form of colonial contact, Isaac Donoso sees parallels in the way the Spanish perceived Muslims as alien to the territory, both in the case of Andalusia and in the Southern Philippines. This perception of the Other came to support the concept of the Reconquista (reconquest).[69] As a result, local Muslim sultans campaigned in insular Southeast Asia to gain support in striking back the spread of Christianity.

Most rulers of port entities in insular Southeast Asia had adopted Islam in the centuries prior to 1500: Sulu, Maguindanao, the Moluccas, and Brunei/Borneo followed the logics of Malay port states' tactics in militarily protecting external trade.[70] They were well linked to maritime trading networks with the Malay peninsula and China since the tenth century. In the century prior to the Spanish arrival, trade in luxury items for the ruling elites had emerged.[71] The arrival of the Spaniards caused a climate of mutual distrust, envy, antipathy, and aggression and hence affected the Chinese supply of these Muslim territories.[72] The sultan of Brunei sent a fleet of about hundred galleys to attack the Spaniards in Manila in 1574.[73] Similarly, in 1599, when Datu Salikula of Maguindanao and the Rajah of Buayan "with fifty sails and about 3,000 warriors and

67 Vicente Barrantes, *Guerras Piraticas de Filipinas Contra Mindanaos y Joloanos* (Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel G. Hernandez, 1878); José Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la Piratería Malayo-Mahometana en Mindanao, Joló y Borneo* (Madrid: n.p., 1888).

68 Ethan P. Hawkley, "Reviving the Reconquista in Southeast Asia: Moros and the Making of the Philippines, 1565–1662," *Journal of World History* 25, no. 2–3 (2014): 286.

69 Isaac Donoso, "The Philippines and Al-Andalus: Linking the Edges of the Classical Islamic World," *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints* 63, no. 2 (2015): 247–273 (here: 256).

70 Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450–1680. The Lands below the Winds* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

71 Junker, *Raiding, Trading, and Feasting*, 189–204.

72 This point has already been made by Majul, Non, and others.

73 Majul, *Muslims*, 93.

rowers attacked coastal towns in Panay, Negros, and Cebu, carrying back with them 800 captive Visayans."[74] Majul summarizes these activities as the first four stages of the "Moro Wars" (1565–1663), implying that Spanish motivation was fending of piratical incursions into what they perceived their sphere of influence. In cases when Spanish natives were among the captives, Muslim negotiators tended to free them upon payment. Majul thus countered the narrative of punitive expeditions of the Spaniards against Muslim piratical actions, providing an important analysis of the complex nature of maritime violence and raiding in Philippine waters following the arrival of the Spaniards.[75] More importantly, for an understanding of the long-term consequences is Ethan Hawkley's distinguished argument that parallel to Moro-Christian antagonism the early Spanish colonizers relied on Moro intermediation in social, political, and all above commercial matters.[76]

It has also been argued that raiding and capturing practices existed prior to the Spanish arrival in the island world. Also, until the eighteenth century, neither colonial officers nor inhabitants of the islands applied the term "Moro pirate" (i.e. *corsario moro* or *pirata moro*). Instead, they would write about *enemigos mindanaos* or about the harm caused by attacks carried out by *indios mahometanos* de Mindanao.[77] Notwithstanding the historical evidence for raids and captures on behalf of Muslim rulers, the way people remembered these incursions (piracy in the Philippine south) was influenced by concurrent events of the past. The double-biased term "Moro piracy" refers to incursions of Muslim seafarers in the Christian communities in the Visayas, Luzon and parts of Northern Mindanao. Like other pre-modern piratical associations, the so-called Moro pirates were multi-ethnic and heteroogeneous. Raiders originated from Maguindanao, Malanao, Lanun (Iranun), Sangil, Tausog, Samal, Badjao, and Balinguigui (from Sulu), occasionally to people from the Moluccas or Borneo; moreover, Christian renegades and Chinese adventurers got involved on various occasions.[78] Cesar A. Majul argued in this regard that piratical associations directed their blundering and raiding expeditions as often against territories that were not under Spanish colonial control and captured many coastal inhabitants that were

74 *Ibid.*, 131.
75 *Ibid.*, 121.
76 Hawkley, "Reviving," 296–298.
77 AGI Filipinas 27, n. 64, 4 July 1607.
78 Non, "Moro Piracy,", 405–408.

not even Christians, some even fellow Muslims.[79] The label Moro/Muslim is inaccurate not only because of the involvement of many non-Muslim indigenous people but also because of the absence of notions of inside and outside in Southeast Asian political geographies.[80] Hence, equal to the prototypical *wakō*, the Moro pirate was rather a discursive construct than a historical individual.

All said, one has to avoid the tendency to lump together different types of maritime raiding. The situation differed significantly over the centuries; it is crucial to distinguish between small-scale, semi-independent raiders and well-organized expeditions financed by Muslim rulers including the Sulu sultan or rajahs of island entities in the south of the Philippines. For the early seventeenth century, it has been estimated that slave raids would capture an average of 800 people annually from territories nominally under Spanish control.[81] During the early parts of the seventeenth century, "Sulu marauders on their own initiative and without the sanction of their sultans, attacked villages in Borneo to plunder them and carry away captives for sale to other Muslim lands."[82] This is one example of a private, profit-driven enterprise, neither explicitly targeting non-Muslims or Christians, nor necessarily carried out by Muslims – as discussed above. In the last three decades of the eighteenth century, Iranun-Samal marauding encouraged by the high demand for slave labour both in the colonial domains and Muslim realms caused estimated population declines up to forty per cent in certain coastal regions in the Camarines and Albay Provinces.[83] This was also the period when continuing coastal raids hampered the economic development of the affected regions, where marauders burned down entire settlements, for instance on the islands south of Luzon, the Visayas and the northeast coast of Mindanao where the Iranun operated up to two hundred raiding vessels (*prahu*) at a time.[84]

79 Barbara Watson Andaya, *To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993); Majul, *Muslims*, 139: "As non-Muslim people, the Camucones were often prey of the Sulus who sometimes sold them as slaves in Zamboanga and other Muslim principalities."

80 Jennifer L. Gaynor, "Piracy in the Offing: The Law of Lands and the Limits of Sovereignty at Sea," *Anthropological Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (2012): 817–857.

81 Majul, *Muslims*, 136–137.

82 *Ibid*., 122.

83 Warren, *Sulu Zone*, 295–296.

84 *Ibid*., 168–170.

Concluding remarks

For many land-based powers, extending sovereign control over the sea was a necessary consequence for controlling navigation and trade and the people in charge of it. The tools and practices of control, however, could differ significantly. In Asian waters, non-European regulations regarding piracy and related forms of maritime violence in the early modern era met with the Spanish understanding or the idealized forms of it. This complex process started with ambiguities such as the colonial administrators' overemphasis on military defence. Regardless of the importance of foreign trade for the survival of the colony, high-ranking Spaniards preferred strong military command to liberal trade. Such a view not only misinterprets East Asian foreign policies but also ignores the colonial discourses on masculinity. This discourse flourished among the many soldiers involved in fending off aggression from neighbouring Muslim communities, Dutch maritime attacks, and became moreover handy when refusing to give up its claims on the Moluccas to which the Spaniards held commercial and territorial interests into the 1660s. Piracy not only described a profit-seeking enterprise but also a socio-economic phenomenon. As indicated above, many such enterprises were sponsored by local authorities. Hence, the Spaniards were not all wrong when they unilaterally referred to them as corsairs.[85]

The article has argued, moreover, that any history of piracy is also a history of languages and labels operating in different power discourses. As such it too easily dismisses the veto of chronology. In pre-modern records, controversial labels and their genealogies merged with ethno-centric biases and the burden of mercantile rivalries. In later centuries, such terms have developed new notions and have become important instruments for imperial expansion, nation building and local identity politics. During the nineteenth century, when many of the treatises dealing with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century piracy in Philippine waters were drafted, these accounts got mixed up with contradictions and notions of untapped possibilities of the Spanish colonial state in Asia. Narratives of the historical Spanish presence in the East were constructed discursively around the lack of security, leading to a peculiar self-awareness of a permanently besieged territory. A blend of these interpretive layers has come to determine the memories of the people and the interpretation of the historian. In the age of expansion and conquest, violence determined all relationships between subjects and sovereigns.

85 AGI Filipinas 6, r. 6, n. 61, 26 June 1586.

The perspective of concurrent piracy of the early modern Philippines has pointed at several issues: First, the complex nature of piracy, differing depending on actors, their geographic origin and their objectives; second, the multi-layered historiographical nature of these events; third, the unprecise terminology in both sources and scholarship, with corsair or *wakō* being often only hollow terms lacking any analytical value; and fourth, a distinction into a pre-Spanish and Spanish type of piracy makes little to no sense: in all periods, plundering and raiding were a part of much broader phenomena than just a reaction to new political circumstances. Moreover, from the point of view of a social history of sea-raiding – an implicit demand of the concurrency approach – the introduced examples, brief as they were, lack one key element: actual actors. Most recorded episodes provide little else than the scattered biographical data on the "pirate" leader and hardly anything on the many hundreds of ordinary rowers and sailors participating in these operations; not to mention the thousands of coastal inhabitants who became involved, either when being captured and sold as slaves, when having to find new ways of lives after fleeing their native lands or by fighting or collaborating with the intruders. The representative imbalance of the humans behind and within these piracy stories resulted in an overemphasis of economic, military, and religious aspects. A similar point could be made for the relationship between the role of maritime actors in official foreign relations and how the appearance and shared concept of piracy turned into common point of departure for less-violent, but more abstract negotiations and treaty making between land-based authorities. None of these aspects are exclusive for the case of the early modern Philippines, but perhaps more pronounced than in the early modern Atlantic or in contemporary Southeast Asia.

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