St. Francis Xavier—“Patrón desta jornada”: Jesuit Writings and the Spanish Re-Appropriation of the Pacific

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Abstract

The figure of St. Francis Xavier was a tool used in Spanish texts as an instrument to increase the prestige and dissemination of colonial endeavors. In the seventeenth century, amidst the tense rivalry between the Spanish and the Portuguese empires, several Jesuit writings take a stand in support of the Spanish monarchy's interests in Asia, reinforcing the legitimacy of its conquests and the appropriateness of Spain's intervention in the area. This article studies two of these texts: Diego de Bobadillas's *Relación de las gloriosas victorias* and Diego Calleja's *San Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente*, focusing on the textual strategies employed in them to vindicate the fight against Muslims in the Philippines and the wider Spanish intervention in the Pacific through the celebration of St. Francis's endeavors.

Keywords

The Philippines – Jesuits – Spanish empire – Islam – seventeenth century – Francis Xavier – Jesuit theater

Saint Francis Xavier (1506–1552) lived during the first half of the 1500s, but became an iconic figure at the center of numerous texts and visual images dedicated to representing the European colonization of Asia, especially during the seventeenth century. A revered figure by the Jesuit order, Xavier was adopted by the Portuguese and Spanish to celebrate their successes in the Pacific.

An analysis of these representations offers important clues to understand the rivalries between the European powers and the anxieties of the Spanish monarchy in relation to its presence in the Asian continent. The discursive mechanisms that emerge around the character of Xavier reveal the intention to appropriate the colonization of the territories in the Pacific Ocean by the Spanish and Portuguese. The South Pacific was the focus of imperial rivalries between Spain and Portugal, and invites a questioning of the definition of the Spanish imperial identity. Francis was a better-known European missionary who participated in the conversion of Asian territories and was a Spaniard who worked in Portuguese lands. Even though he traveled to Asia under the protection of Portugal, his beatification (1619) and especially his canonization (1622) were used to give relevance to the Spanish presence in the Pacific, to connect the Jesuits' successes to Spain, and to present him as the main agent of Catholic conversion in that part of the world.

Approaching the representation of a figure as crucial as Francis Xavier is an unavoidable step in understanding the history of European intervention in the Pacific and the relationships between that history and the culture that occurred around it. Here I will analyze two Jesuit writings in which the representation of Xavier is a pivotal element for the elaboration of a discourse that legitimized the Spanish power in the Pacific while simultaneously associating the Jesuit order's successes to the support of the Spanish monarchy. Even when written in different periods of the implementation of the Spanish power in Asia, both Diego de Bobadilla's *Relación de las gloriosas victorias* (1638)¹ and Diego Calleja's play *San Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente*,² reveal the intricacies of the relations between Spain and the Jesuit order when facing the fight for power in the European conquest and colonization of the Pacific territories.

Diego de Bobadilla's *Relación* and Spanish Power in the Philippines

The Jesuit Diego de Bobadilla (1590–1648) published in Mexico a *Relación de las gloriosas victorias que en mar, y tierra, han tenido las armas de nuestro*

- 1 Diego de Bobadilla, *Relación de las gloriosas victorias que en mar, y tierra han tenido las armas de nuestro invictísimo rey, y monarca Felipe III, el Grande, en las Islas Filipinas, contra los moros mahometanos de la gran isla de Mindanao, y su rey Cachil Corralat, debajo de la conducta de don Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera, Caballero de la Orden de Alcántara, y del Consejo de Guerra de su Majestad, Gobernador y Capitán General de aquellas islas* (Mexico City: Pedro de Quiñones, 1638).
- 2 Diego Calleja, *San Francisco Javier: El Sol en Oriente*, ed. Ignacio Arellano (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2006).

invictísimo rey, y monarca Felipe IV el Grande, en las islas Filipinas, contra los moros mahometanos de la gran isla de Mindanao, y su rey Cachil Corralat (Report on the glorious victories that, on land and sea, the arms of our undefeated king and monarch Philip IV the Great, have had in the Philippine islands against the Mohammedan Moors of the great island of Mindanao, and their king Cachil Corralat) only a couple years after Governor Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera (1587–1660) successfully confronted the Muslim forces on the island of Mindanao. During a short stay in the Philippines, a very prominent Jesuit, Marcello Mastrilli (1603–37), was part of the Spanish expedition, which led him to write a letter summarizing the Mindanao events. Bobadilla's *Relación* incorporates Mastrilli's letter, along with other *relaciones* that offer a complete picture of this widely celebrated Spanish victory against Islam in 1637.

The *Relación de las gloriosas victorias* is presented in the text's cover as "sacada de varias relaciones que este año de 1638 vinieron de Manila" (drawn from various reports that this year 1638 came from Manila). Bobadilla, the compiler of the texts, explains in the dedication that "diferentes personas, dignas de todo crédito, así eclesiásticos, como seglares, han deseado todos verlas, y con instancia las piden, no solo los moradores desta gran Ciudad de México, cabeza destos reinos, sino de todas las demás ciudades, y pueblos dellos" (different people, worthy of all credit, ecclesiastical as well as secular, have all wanted to see them, and urgently ask for them, not only the inhabitants of this great City of Mexico, head of these kingdoms, but of all the other cities and towns). There seemed to be great interest in Mexico City concerning the recent events in Mindanao, where the governor Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera, had just defeated the Muslim sultan Kudarat (1581–1671). But the *Relación* does not only explain those recent events and, taking advantage of the direct participation of Mastrilli in the "conquest" of Mindanao, also includes a narration of how Mastrilli miraculously recovered from a serious head injury he suffered during an accident in Naples, with the intervention of Saint Francis Xavier. Right after this, several short *relaciones* explain "cómo llegó a las islas Filipinas el Padre Marcelo" (how Father Marcello arrived in the Philippine islands), the characteristics of the "gran isla de Mindanao" (great island of Mindanao), "las hostilidades que aquellos mahometanos han hecho a las islas Filipinas" (the hostilities that those Mahometans have done to the Philippine islands), and "la batalla naval que nuestra armada tuvo con la de Cachil Corralat, y victoria que alcanzó" (the naval battle that our navy had with that of Cachil Corralat, and the victory that it achieved). The most important part of the text is the "Carta del Padre Marcelo Francisco Mastrillo, en que da cuenta al Padre Juan de Salazar Provincial de la Compañía de Jesús en las islas Filipinas, de la conquista de Mindanao" (Letter from Father Marcelo Francisco Mastrillo, in which

he reports to Father Juan de Salazar, provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Philippine islands, on the conquest of Mindanao), where Mastrilli offers his perspective of the Mindanao events while reflecting on the Jesuits' role in the victory. Finally, Bobadilla includes the narration of the celebrations that took place in Manila upon the return of the triumphant governor, soldiers, and missionaries from the southern islands.

When Bobadilla put together the *Relación de las gloriosas victorias*, the rivalry between Spanish and Portuguese interests in Asia was at its peak after decades of shared mistrust. As Kevin Sheehan explains, "The collision of Spanish and Portuguese aspirations in Southeast Asia at the turn of the seventeenth century was not simply the outcome of long standing Iberian territorial rivalries or a competition for lucrative commodities;" at "the heart of this conflict were two sets of prejudices backed by decades of imperial rivalry."³ Ever since the signature of the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, both Portugal and Spain took advantage of any opportunity they had to implement a rhetoric of empire and possession that would reinforce the rights of each of the two empires. For example, Juan López de Velasco's *Geografía* of 1575 offered a vision of Asia that included the Philippines, the Moluccas, Japan, coastal China, and a crucial portion of the Malay peninsula within the territories of the king of Castile.⁴ This did not change with the Iberian union that brought the entire Iberian peninsula, as well as Portuguese overseas possessions, under the Spanish Habsburg kings in 1580. Difficulties remained especially in the areas situated at the frontier, as is the case with the Moluccas archipelago, traditionally under Portuguese control but very often perceived by Spain as a "continuation" of the Philippines, due in great part to the presence of Islamic populations in both territories. Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu frequently received aid from Ternate, Bacan, or even as far as Brunei or Malacca. In fact, Portugal was never too happy about having a Spanish territory so close to its Asian domains, since the Philippines were, "on an ambiguous seam between the theoretical possessions of Castile and Portugal,"⁵ too close to the Moluccas and to the Portuguese territories between these islands and India. In addition, the Moluccas were commonly referred to as "Islas del moro" (Moro islands), while Mindanao and Sulu Muslim populations were known as *moros*, which increased the

3 Kevin Joseph Sheehan, "Iberian Asia: The Strategies of Spanish and Portuguese Empire Building, 1540–1700" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2008), 294–95.

4 Sheehan, *Iberian Asia*, 212.

5 Rafael Valladares, *Castilla y Portugal en Asia (1580–1680): Declive imperial y adaptación* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 1.

perception (especially on the Spanish side) of the continuity of the realities of these territories, even if they fell under different authorities. Animosity and mutual distrust increased in response to tensions that took place between the two powers outside the Asian territories, and this power struggle marked the sixty years of Iberian union.

The celebrations around the canonization of Francis Xavier in 1622 offer a great example of how the Jesuit saint was appropriated by both Portugal and Spain in order to legitimize their power in Asia. Francis was transformed into a propaganda tool serving the interests of both powers while trying to publicize their successes in Asian territories. The celebrations in Portugal were an opportunity to display sentiments of nationalism in the midst of the Iberian Union and vindicate the important and unique Portuguese contributions to the colonization of Asia, therefore reinforcing the idea of a Portuguese political identity. It is important to note that the staging of these canonization ceremonies was a visual and verbal display of Portuguese values. In Lisbon and Coimbra, Portuguese saints accompanied the canonized saints; and in Porto, geographical locations and administrative entities were personified during plays. Also, in Lisbon, a dance was performed of eight tributary rivers of the Tagus, while in Braganza, a horseman representing the city opened the procession.⁶ King João III (1521–57) was celebrated for his initial role in the development of the Jesuit order, and the king's request to Pope Paul III (r.1534–49) and Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491–1556) to send Jesuits to the East was included in the celebrations in different ways; it was part of a tragicomedy in Évora, for example.⁷

In Spain and the Spanish colonies, the celebrations had a completely different tone. In Madrid on June 19, 1622, one of the initial dances consisted of several individuals disguised as Spaniards, French, and Ottomans wearing swords and lances and pretending to fight, while another dance displayed a naval battle between Ottomans and Christians. It is evident that there was a need to frame the canonizations as one more of the successes of the Spanish empire across the world, and the conquest and colonization of Asia alongside the victories against European and Mediterranean enemies. The same document shows that one of the plays performed included a representation of the four parts of the world, symbolizing all the different territories under control of the Spanish monarchy, therefore insisting on the universal power of King Philip IV (1621–65). It is worth noting that the Asian populations were represented

6 Cristina Osswald, "Aspectos de autoridad y poder en las ceremonias de canonización de Ignacio de Loyola y Francisco Javier en Portugal," *Hipogrifo* 1, no. 1 (2013): 43–55, here 52.

7 Osswald, "Aspectos de autoridad," 46.

with “Persianos, Egypcios, y Turcos” (Persians, Egyptians, and Turks)⁸ alluding once again to the centuries-long confrontation with Islam, the most consistent enemy of Christian Spain for centuries. The celebration of Loyola and Francis Xavier is relocated inside a frame of Spanish imperial successes and directly connected to the specific Spanish vision of the political and spiritual control of the colonies. This is even more evident in the ways that the 1622 canonizations were celebrated outside the Iberian peninsula, as is the case of Mexico City and Puebla, where the Spanish saints are almost an excuse for the affirmation of the Americas as a pivotal part of the Spanish domains.⁹

The figure of Saint Francis Xavier is central to all parts of Bobadilla's *Relación*, but especially to the events narrated about or by Mastrilli. Even though the text is supposed to focus on the Mindanao victory, at times it seems more like a celebration of Xavier in particular and of the Jesuit order in general, represented by the overwhelming presence of Mastrilli. The first text in the *Relación*, relating the 1634 miracle of St. Francis Xavier to the recovery of Mastrilli sets the tone for the rest of the piece. From the beginning, Xavier is introduced as inseparable from the Mindanao events, through the miracle itself, and also because this is the origin of Mastrilli's mission in Asia. Very soon after his injury, Mastrilli promised to go to the Indies to evangelize the indigenous populations. Francis then appeared to him: “Le comenzó a hablar en su lengua italiana con increíble afabilidad, y le dijo así: ¿Queréis moriros o ir a las Indias? Respondió el Padre que él no quería ni deseaba otra cosa sino lo que fuese más agradable a la divina Majestad” (He began to speak to her in his Italian language with incredible affability, and said: Do you want to die or go to the Indies? The Father replied that he neither wanted nor desired anything other than what was most agreeable to the divine Majesty).¹⁰ Mastrilli had with him during his illness a portrait of the saint “pintado de peregrino” [...] (en efeto como él andaba cuando fue a predicar el santo Evangelio a Japón, y otras partes de India)” (painted as a pilgrim, in effect as he was when he went to preach the holy Gospel to Japan, and other parts of India).¹² Mastrilli's activities in Asia are presented in the text as directly related to the saint's intervention, and

8 *Relación de las fiestas que se han hecho en esta Corte, a la canonización de cinco santos: Copiada de una carta que escribió Manuel Ponce en 28 de junio* (Madrid: Viuda de Alonso Martín de Balboa, 1622), 7^v.

9 Ignacio Arellano, “América en las fiestas jesuitas: Celebraciones de san Ignacio y san Francisco Javier,” *Nueva revista de filología hispánica* 60, no. 1 (2008): 53–86, here 72.

10 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 4^r.

11 M. Gabriela Torres Olleta, *Redes iconográficas: San Francisco Javier en la cultura visual del Barroco* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2009), 424.

12 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 3^r.

therefore also as a continuation of the rich missionary activity of Xavier himself. The theme of martyrdom is also introduced in regards to Mastrilli, who expresses to Xavier his wish to "derramar la sangre por vuestro amor" (spill the blood for your love)¹³ and begs God for the possibility to "derramar por ti la sangre, que el Apóstol de las Indias Francisco Xavier después de sufrir tantos trabajos no mereció alcanzar" (to shed the blood for you, that the Apostle of the Indies Francis Xavier after suffering so many hardships did not deserve to achieve)¹⁴ foreseeing what will end up being his fate in Japan in 1637.¹⁵

This miracle became extremely famous and the portrait of St. Francis Xavier that Mastrilli had with him was widely copied and reached all corners of the Spanish territories, including Madrid. After this initial connection of Mastrilli with the Asian colonies, the *Relación* explains how Mastrilli arrived in the Philippines by chance, after almost miraculously escaping Dutch attackers, while he brought with him a portrait of St. Francis, "y afirma ser muy parecido a la figura de peregrino, en que le vio cuando se le apareció, para darle milagrosamente salud" (and claims to be very similar to the pilgrim figure, in which he saw him when he appeared to him, to miraculously give him health).¹⁶ Governor Hurtado de Corcuera asks him to be part of the journey to Mindanao, where he will be an active part of the events that will lead to the victory against the Muslim inhabitants of the islands. In this way Mastrilli is apparently involved in the Spanish mission to defeat Islam in the Philippines, an endeavor directly related to the historical confrontation with Muslims since the times of the Reconquest, reactivated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the conflicts with the Ottoman empire in the Mediterranean. St. Francis's involvement in this Spanish venture is constantly reinforced in the text, which directly associates his intervention with the success of the expedition.

The Mindanao confrontation is portrayed in antagonistic terms that identify Muslims with the stereotypical characteristics associated with them, as thieves who do not only steal but also disrespect "ornamentos y vasos sagrados, y haciendo mil desacatos a las santas imágenes, despedazándolas, y afrentándolas, cautivando los indios cristianos en tanta cantidad que quiebra el corazón decirlo" (ornaments and sacred vessels, and doing a thousand disrespects to the holy images, tearing them apart, and affronting them, captivating

13 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 5^r.

14 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 5^r.

15 For an analysis of Jesuit martyrdom in seventeenth-century Mindanao, see Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, "Diplomáticos y mártires jesuitas en la corte de Kudarat (Mindanao, siglo XVII)," *Espacio, tiempo y forma: Serie IV, Historia moderna* 33 (2020): 323–46.

16 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 9^r.

the Christian Indians in such quantity that it breaks the heart to say it).¹⁷ In fact, the hatred that Muslims feel for Christians is such that one of them promised to Mohammed that he would kill all priests.¹⁸ In the letter that Mastrilli writes to Salazar, Muslims are associated on numerous occasions with the devil, whose strength can only be overpowered by Francis and his numerous miracles. A painting with St. Francis's image guides the Spanish expedition in Mindanao, inscribing the island and the whole archipelago in the network of places connected by their relationship to the Jesuit saint and his travels. The isolation and irrelevance that characterized Mindanao in the context of the wide Spanish empire is relieved when the island and what happens on it is in some way re-interpreted as a new development of the great deeds of St. Francis. Simultaneously, the work that the Jesuit order developed in Mindanao is also raised in its value and impact since it is clearly associated to a universal cause. All this, without ever forgetting that this fight is against Islam, the most conflictive Other in the history of Spain, from the *Reconquista* all the way throughout early Modernity.

The references to the poisonous presence of Islam in Mindanao are constant, like when the soldiers enter the mosque and find that under "la Cátedra grande de Mahoma, [...] salieron de los pies [...] dos culebras venenosísimas [...], y realmente no podía estar otra cosa en guardia de la Cátedra del gran Diablo de Mindanao, que culebras y ponzoña" (the great chair of Muhammad, [...] two very poisonous snakes [...] came out of [...] the feet, and really there could be nothing else on guard of the chair of the great Devil of Mindanao, that snakes and venom),¹⁹ or when some soldiers were miraculously cured from their wounds filled with "ponzoña" when Mastilli mixes some healing herbs with "un poco de la reliquia de San Francisco Xavier, que junta con la fe, y devoción de los enfermos, y ciencia del cirujano, obró maravillas" (a bit of the relic of Saint Francis Xavier, which together with the faith, and devotion of the sick, and the science of the surgeon, worked wonders).²⁰ The antidote to the Muslim poison is St. Francis, and his name in the soldiers' mouth in the middle of the battle helps them face the enemy and the probable death they will encounter. Death is a constant theme in this letter, where not only Muslims and soldiers, but also priests, are tortured and end up as martyrs, like the Recollect fathers that they found in the island,²¹ and are envied by Mastrilli

17 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 11^r.

18 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 12^r.

19 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 22^r.

20 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 32^v–33^r.

21 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 30^r.

since he aspires to also die as a martyr.²² St. Francis is the "patrón de la jornada" (patron saint of the occasion)²³ and Mindanao, where "San Francisco Xavier fue el primero que le predicó el Santo Evangelio, como consta de la bula de su canonización" (Saint Francis Xavier was the first to preach the Holy Gospel, as stated in the bull of his canonization) is, according to Mastrilli, "una de las más gloriosas misiones que se pueden desear, por no faltar a la evidencia del fruto grande, las esperanzas de nobilísimos mártires" (one of the most glorious missions that can be desired, not to miss the evidence of the great fruit, the hopes of the most noble martyrs).²⁴

Once again, Islam, the Jesuits' presence in the Philippines, and the iconic figure of St. Francis are combined in what ends up being a celebration of the Spanish presence in the Philippines under the command of the constantly praised Governor Hurtado de Corcuera. Mindanao is conquered with the assistance of St. Francis, who successfully intervenes to the "conquista desta su isla" (conquest of this island of his), and the influence of the Apostle of the Orient will ensure that many more priests and soldiers come to the island to culminate the feat. In addition, the celebrations in Manila are spectacular, as the last *relación* explains. Not only are the authority and leadership of Governor Hurtado de Corcuera emphasized, but also the important defeat of the Muslim king of Mindanao. Muslim men and women were displayed as spoils of war,²⁵ while Christian captives "que salieron del cautiverio de los moros" (who came out of the captivity of the Moors) after being rescued by the Spaniards, participate in a parade that reproduces similar ceremonies in Spain upon the return of ex-captives from North Africa.²⁶ Some objects are even displayed after their liberation from the *moros*: "ornamentos sagrados [...] que habían robado los enemigos, y se sacaron de su poder, vista que enterneció mucho y causó abundancia de lágrimas" (sacred [...] ornaments that the enemies had stolen, and were taken from their power, a sight that touched a lot and caused abundance of tears).²⁷ The festivities end with the performance of a play, a *Comedia de la toma del pueblo de Corralat y conquista del cerro* (Play on the taking of Corralat's town and conquest of the hill), once again emphasizing the triumph of Christianity and of the Spanish monarchy over the Muslims of Mindanao. It is unavoidable that St. Francis, so directly linked to the Spanish victory, is also "Spanishized" or, maybe more accurately, rediscovered as a Spanish saint who

22 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 31^r.

23 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 31^v.

24 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 35^v.

25 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 37^v.

26 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 39^r.

27 Bobadilla, *Relación*, 39^v.

contributes to the interests and goals of the Spanish monarchy in Asia, particularly in the centuries-long fight against Islam, reenacted in the new scenario of the Philippines. In the perennial rivalry between Spain and Portugal in the Pacific, the *Relación de las gloriosas victorias* selects and puts together a collection of writings where the Jesuits and St. Francis are introduced into the frame of successful Spanish enterprises in Asia, feeding the need to regain a position of symbolic leadership in the scene of European rivalries in the Pacific context.

Staging St. Francis Xavier, a Spanish Saint in Asia

One of the spaces in which the Jesuits participated in the political and religious discussions of the time were the theatrical works composed by members of the Society, the so-called “Jesuit theater.” On the one hand, we find minor pieces, such as dialogues and representations inserted in shows (*loas*, panegyrics, commendations), but also longer works characterized by the sumptuousness and magnificence in staging imitations of the scenography of authors such as Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–81).²⁸ One of these pieces is *San Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente*, a three-act play focused on remembering and celebrating the memory of the successes of the saint, and by extension of the Society of Jesus in the early evangelization of Asia. The piece, like Bobadilla’s *Relación*, brings these events closer to the interests of the Spanish monarchy, reinscribing them within the framework of the Spanish empire in the Pacific.

Xavier is the protagonist of several Jesuit plays written in those years. They are part of theatrical production in Jesuit schools, through which the order intended to entertain and teach, under a conception of theater within the *Ratio studiorum* (1599) that considered these representations as a privileged means of pedagogy, for students and also for the audience (made up of schoolboys, their families, mostly members of the cultured and well-to-do class). Ignacio Elizalde, in his classic study of St. Francis in Spanish literature, points out:

La vida de Javier, esencialmente dramática y profundamente humana, constituyó un tema fecundo y apropiado para el dramaturgo y comediógrafo. Su intensidad emocional, su aventura a lo divino, la psicología de su conversión, el clima exótico y legendario del Oriente, su apostólica impaciencia, su ardiente y volcánico amor, su carácter emprendedor que te-

28 Ignacio Arellano, “San Francisco Javier en el teatro del siglo de Oro,” in *Sol, Apóstol, Peregrino: San Francisco Javier en su centenario* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2005), 244.

jió el mapa de las naciones en una red de viajes, la simpatía de su carácter, hacen de Javier una figura extraordinaria apta para la escena.

(Javier's life, essentially dramatic and deeply human, constituted a fertile and appropriate theme for the playwright and director. His emotional intensity, his approach to the divine, the psychology of his conversion, the exotic and legendary climate of the Orient, his apostolic impatience, his ardent and volcanic love, his entrepreneurial character that wove the map of nations in a travel network, the sympathy of his character make Javier an extraordinary figure suitable for the stage).²⁹

Indeed, St. Francis was a very suggestive character for scenic creation. We lack a lot of information about his presence in the theater of the seventeenth century because many references to comedies, dialogues, colloquia, etc. are in *relaciones* about celebrations, and it is urgent to study those long-ignored texts. Some other texts have been lost because they were "theater of circumstances." But allusions in other sources allow us to examine the scope of St. Francis Xavier's presence in Spanish theater, a work still to be done.

San Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente is, according to the specialists, the best dramatically structured text on Xavier and the most complex in scenography effects. It also presents three main action threads (love, religion, and politics) that allow us to delve into issues that go beyond the defense of dogma or the theological aspects more prominent in other works.³⁰

The plot of the play is simple: The king of Bungo, Jaridono, receives news of the arrival of a foreign *bonzo* or priest who comes to introduce new laws in Japan. He meets Coralia, past queen of Yamaguchi, who comes to ask Jaridono for help since she has been dethroned for converting to the faith preached by Saint Francis Xavier. Jaridono has yet to be converted but is predisposed from the beginning of the first act, as the rest of the Japanese people are suggested to be. The love plot is structured around the converted Queen Coralia: Prince Maluco and General Ferivo fall in love with her, which makes Princess Amira jealous, since she loves Ferivo. All the threads are intertwined because Ferivo, disgusted by Maluco's marriage to Coralia, and conspiring with the priests, will rebel against King Jaridono, provoking a war in which St. Francis will miraculously intervene.

The Jesuit's miracles are numerous. He succeeds in converting a corrupted Portuguese; he miraculously finds a crucifix that he had lost, when a fish returns it, bringing it to the shores in its mouth. In addition, four geniuses

29 Ignacio Elizalde, *San Francisco Javier en la literatura española* (Madrid: CSIC, 1961), 107.

30 Arellano, "Teatro," 259–59.

representing four different languages make everyone understand what Francis preaches in Spanish, he expels Japanese *bonzos* with fire balloons when they interfere with his preaching of Catholicism, and two angels stop the sun, prolonging the light until Xavier is guarded and thus preventing the saint's enemies from assassinating him at night. He also saves Maluco and Coralia from a storm at sea; and Ferivo, an enemy of Catholicism, preaches against his will the dogmas of Christian doctrine driven by an unknown force, while Saint Francis resurrects Princess Amira, who had died of jealousy, to demonstrate the doctrine of immortality Fucardono denies. *El Sol en Oriente* presents a portrait of Francis Xavier as a hero of faith who also intervenes in Japanese political conflicts offering solutions to problems that seemed unsolvable before his arrival.

In its eagerness to intervene in the political organization and administrative decisions in the colonies, especially the Asian ones, this work portrays Xavier as the composer of the Japanese political chaos, proposing that the Jesuits are the best administrators of these and other territories such as the Philippines. The *Historia de Mindanao y Joló* (Madrid, 1667), by the Jesuit Francisco de Combés,³¹ firmly proposes that in the southern islands of the Philippine archipelago the only authorities who can dialogue with the indigenous people are the Jesuits, so that they stand out as evangelizing figures but also as essential administrators for success in the Asian colonies.

We do not know the date of writing or representation of *San Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente*, but we do know that its author, Diego Calleja, was born in 1639, so we can with some confidence speak of the late second half of the seventeenth century. It is precisely from 1640, the moment of separation from Portugal, when it becomes more urgent to recover the figure of Francis to promote Spanish politics, culture, and religiosity. *San Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente* becomes part of the discursive cartography that organizes the Asian world based on the Jesuit presence in the various territories on the one hand, but also symbolically recovering discursive possession of said territories for the Spanish empire.

With the exception of disturbing elements such as the denial of the salvation of women in Japan, religions practiced previous to the arrival of Europeans are barely described in the work, hidden behind the celebration of Catholicism and its superiority, deepening the insurmountable difference between the faith of "us" versus the faith of "them." Those who can successfully propagate this Catholicism in Japan (and by extension throughout Asia) are the Jesuits, as demonstrated by the success of Francis's mission. He succeeds in planting

31 Francisco Combés, S.J., *Historia de las islas de Mindanao, Joló y sus adyacentes* (Madrid: Herederos de Pablo del Val, 1667).

the seed of a faith that in the second half of the seventeenth century was still defended by the Jesuits as a reason not to abandon their interests in Japan and the Philippines, spiritually and politically.

This strategy was one of the main reasons for confrontation with other orders participating in the colonization of Asia, such as the Augustinians, Franciscans, and Dominicans. In fact, the best-known works on the events that took place around the conversion of Japan in the sixteenth century, Lope de Vega's *Triunfo de la fe en los reinos del Japón* (Triumph of faith in the kingdoms of Japan) and *Los mártires de Japón* (The martyrs of Japan), were created under the patronage of the Dominican order, and they align with the aspirations of the Dominicans in Asia, publicizing their evangelizing work. In *Los mártires de Japón*, the Jesuit missionaries, political and religious rivals of the Dominicans are completely excluded, to the degree of completely eliminating the presence of the only Jesuit martyr.³² *El Sol en Oriente* can thus be considered a response to this interpretation of Asian colonization by glorifying the Jesuits through one of the order's most publicly admired figures whose link to Asian issues was undeniable.

However Francis Xavier had not traveled to Asia under the Spanish monarchy but under the protection of the Portuguese *Padroado*. Very shortly after his arrival in Japan, the Dominicans and Franciscans (sponsored by Spain) also arrived. At the time of publication of *Triunfo de la fe en los reinos del Japón* (1618) and *Los mártires de Japón* (c.1621), the political climate was plagued by controversies and internal struggles between the Castilians and Portuguese for control of the Pacific. Cummins, the editor of *Triunfo de la fe*, proposes that Lope's texts are part of a speech addressed to the king for the reactivation of an effective plan for Asia.³³ Ricardo Padrón suggests a reading of this book as a document of Hispanic imperial utopianism³⁴ where Japan becomes a space from which the universal monarchy of Catholic Spain can be imagined. It is effectively a space that had been claimed by Castile and Portugal since the arrival of the Europeans in Asia, even from 1580, when both powers were united under Philip II.

The missionaries of Japan are instruments of competing colonial interests, and works such as *Triunfo de la fe*, *Los mártires de Japón*, or *San Francisco Javier*,

32 Lope de Vega Carpio, *Los mártires de Japón*, ed. Christina H. Lee (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 2006).

33 Lope de Vega Carpio, *Triunfo de la fe en los reynos del Japón*, ed. James S. Cummins (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 2006).

34 Ricardo Padrón, "The Blood of Martyrs is the Seed of the Monarchy: Empire, Utopia, and the Faith in Lope's *Triunfo de la fe en los reynos del Japón*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 517–37, here 519.

el Sol en Oriente, reveal the continuing rivalry between two imperial powers. The rivalry is accentuated in 1640 and throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, and *El Sol en Oriente* tries in the midst of this struggle for political, religious but also textual/ discursive power in Asia, the mortal leap of simultaneously placing the Jesuits in the center of the evangelization of Asia while separating the actions of the order from the Portuguese empire, insisting on including them in the achievements of the Spanish monarchy in the Pacific. Francis's "Spanishness" is the key to this strategy. Francis is described by Queen Coralia as a "santo, que de tierra extraña (España dicen que es) vino a la mía" (saint, who from a strange land [Spain they say it is] came to mine)³⁵ and Coralia herself praises after her conversion the "santa ley de España venturosa, que puede ser cortés siendo piadosa" (holy law of successful Spain, which can be courteous and simultaneously pious).³⁶

Francis is also the "santo español" (Spanish saint)³⁷ who brings "la luz de España" (the light of Spain) to the East. One of the miracles he performs occurs when the saint laments his inability to speak all the languages he would need to communicate the faith: "¡Oh, Señor, quién al oído vario de tan varias gentes, indios chinas, lusitanos y japones, que me atienden, como en trajes y costumbres en lenguajes diferentes pudiese dar de tu fe noticias! ¡Oh, quién pudiese hablando en mi español solo enseñarlos!" (Oh, Lord, who in the various ears of so many peoples, Chinese Indians, Lusitanians and Japanese, who attend me, as in costumes and customs in different languages, I could give news of your faith! Oh, who could speak my Spanish just teach them!). It is then that four geniuses descend from the clouds and miraculously make everyone understand Francis even though he speaks "en su idioma" (in his language), the Spanish. Portuguese is included in this list of languages of foreign peoples that are insistently enumerated during the episode (Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese), and that need to be translated from Francis's real language: the language of the Spanish empire. Portugal and the Portuguese language are "Others": they belong to a "they" not as distant as the Japanese but undoubtedly alienated as non-Spaniards. On the other hand, the only Portuguese character of relevance, Diego Suárez, is a corrupt gambler who tries to hide from St. Francis as they both travel the Pacific following what are significantly the most important Portuguese lands in Asia: Goa and Malacca. The Portuguese, particularly Suárez, are greedy characters in the play who only look for gold and precious jewels. None of them perform any admirable act, and they do not

35 Calleja, *Sol*, 412.

36 Calleja, *Sol*, 415.

37 Calleja, *Sol*, 619.

contribute to making conversions among the indigenous population either. Moreover, one of them is returned to the Catholic faith through a miracle by the Spanish St. Francis Xavier.

The storyline of the relationship between St. Francis and Suárez continues until the third act, giving continuity to a theme that is the backbone of the entire work: the Hispanization of the saint and, above all, of his evangelizing work, which reaffirms the relevance of the Spanish presence in Asia, even when there is some Portuguese involvement. The conquest and evangelization of Japan is associated with the Spanish empire through another subtle strategy: an association with the American conquest. Certain similarities with the conquest of Mexico are hinted at: the division of local powers upon the arrival of the Europeans that favors the defeat of the indigenous peoples and above all, the existence of a prophecy that announces the arrival of a foreigner who will dominate the kingdom, and that is associated with Francis. In addition, the Japanese are called "Indians," they wear feathers, and their characterization responds to the stereotypical image of the American Indian and also the Filipinos. Because the Philippines is the great Asian colony of the Spanish empire and, when Spaniards think about Asia, its evangelization and its control, or rather, on the difficulty of achieving said control, the archipelago is always at the center of their reflections and actions.

Conclusion

St. Francis Xavier is a fundamental element in the permanent advertisement work of the Jesuits and the Spaniards in the Philippines and the whole of Asia: propaganda reinforced by the narration of the miracles performed by the members of the order or by inspiration of their great reference and spiritual model, Xavier. The texts try to relate the conquest of the Philippines with the Jesuit work on the islands, simultaneously elevating it by association with acts of supernatural intervention. At the same time, texts like the *Relación de las gloriosas victorias* and *Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente*, also try to rescue from the margins the work of evangelization of a place as irrelevant as the southern Philippines in the wider context of the Spanish global empire. More than any other factor, it was missionary and religious interest that kept the Spanish state in colonies as economically unprofitable as those of the Pacific Ocean.³⁸

38 John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565–1700* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), 14.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the idea of an Asian empire, which was never a priority in Madrid anyway, was abandoned. Around the same time the missionaries had ruled out the possibility of the rapid conversion of the Asian continent, but, throughout the seventeenth century, the Jesuits never gave up on expanding the influence of the order in the Pacific. They insisted on the relevance of conquering the Muslim territories in the southern Philippines,³⁹ and even taking the leap from the Philippines to Japan, where after the death of 188 martyrs between 1606 and 1639, and several rebellions, there were hardly any Christians left, and those practiced their faith in hiding. These texts propose that the Spanish empire is the appropriate agent to carry out this conquest. While the role of the Jesuits in Asia is being vindicated, the Jesuits celebrate Spanish interests, insisting on Hispanizing St. Francis Xavier's deeds. In order to do this, they take advantage of the propaganda from which the image of the saint benefited during the process of his beatification and canonization, and the knowledge of his Asian miracles by a large part of the population since its enormous diffusion in the first half of the sixteenth century. They then introduce these elements in works such as the two I have analyzed here and that were read or watched by their students (future leaders), their powerful family members, and by the generally interested public. Before an audience fascinated by the spectacular nature of their representations and by the heroic interventions of Jesuits in Asian politics, Jesuits responded to the attacks of other orders and defended the still incomplete evangelization of the Asian continent, with a proposal that involved the essential presence of the Spanish monarchy in those territories, headed by the Jesuits, the heirs of St. Francis Xavier.

39 Ana M. Rodríguez-Rodríguez, "Old Enemies, New Contexts: Early Modern Spanish (Re-)Writing of Islam in the Philippines," in *Coloniality, Religion, and the Law in the Early Iberian World*, ed. Santa Arias and Raúl Marrero (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2013), 144–45.