

philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints

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Eva Maria Mehl's

*Forced Migration in the Spanish Pacific World:
From Mexico to the Philippines, 1765–1811*

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Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints
vol. 66 no. 2 (2018): 261–65

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investments in military technology give the impression that research and development are used simply to maintain empire through fighting wars and not by cultivating the productivity of the younger generations. Covert action and American reliance on weak and corrupt leaders worldwide promote the image, especially in societies that Americans hope to win over, that Americans are insensitive and enablers of unpopular governments. All these public perceptions cast doubt on America's reputation as a unique power that believes in rights, the rule of law, democracy, self-determination, and a dynamic economy that fosters innovations, which originally made America appealing to the peoples of other nations (255–56).

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EVA MARIA MEHL

Forced Migration in the Spanish Pacific World: From Mexico to the Philippines, 1765–1811

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 310 pages.

The Spanish Jesuit Vicente Alemany, a keen observer of the *república* of Manila in his 1760s sequel to Francisco de Quevedo's picaresque novel *El Buscón*, portrayed all Europeans in Manila in a sarcastic but faithful way as “deserters, cabin boys, spanked [convicts], *marcados*, barbers, minions of the law, and more of this kind,” while the *americanos* were all “vulgar people from the flea market [thieves] and from prison,” the worst of whom were selected to serve in the militia and the marina (*Andanzas del Buscón don Pablos por México y Filipinas*, ed. Celsa Carmen García Valdés [Eunsa, 1998], 92–93). *Forced Migration in the Spanish Pacific World* sheds light on the lives of these people who had to cross the Pacific Ocean, mostly against their will. It follows their trajectories from rural villages in New Spain to the remotest presidios of Mindanao.

The author, Eva Maria Mehl, is associate professor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington and has specialized on colonial Mexico and the Spanish Philippines. Under her maiden name, St. Clair Segurado, she

has published on the history of the Jesuits in China and their expulsion from Mexico in 1767. *Forced Migration in the Spanish Pacific World* is based on her dissertation, which she defended in 2011 at the University of California Davis.

The Manila galleon and the transpacific connection it enabled are fascinating phenomena that have led a large number of scholars to focus on the interchange between Acapulco and Manila. Many historians of the early modern period emphasize the importance of reading the Pacific as a bridge rather than a barrier and understanding both sides of the ocean as a space of common agency. Traditionally, their main attention was set on the material exchange, yet in recent years the cultural and human exchanges have become attractive objects of study too. Especially, the subject of forced migration—in both directions—has aroused much interest on the part of scholars such as Tatjana Seijas and Stephanie Mawson.

Eva Maria Mehl also makes a strong case for the idea of an interconnected and intertwined transpacific world. Two decades after María Fernanda García de los Arcos's remarkable study, *Forzados y reclutas: Los criollos novohispanos en Asia (1756–1808)* (Poterillos, 1996), Mehl tackles the subject of forced migration to the Philippines with an innovative view on human dynamics at the fringes of the Spanish empire. Transcending former studies, her book discusses the “larger significance that the deportation of recruits and vagrants had in the implementation of imperial policy in New Spain and the Philippines” (13).

Mehl identified 3,999 individuals who were sent to the Philippines via Acapulco as part of the defensive scheme of the Spanish empire. Facing a number of military challenges, the Philippine colonial government was in urgent need of these reinforcements and employed them as workers or soldiers. Yet, the governors in Manila continually complained about these individuals as they appeared to be worthless for any employment, being either unfit for service, sick, uncontrollable, or not up to the standard of “whiteness” of the time. By analyzing the reasons behind this predicament, Mehl offers a look not only at the lives of these individuals, their families, and their social context, but also at the institutional history of the Spanish empire at the height of Bourbon reforms. She thereby connects late-eighteenth-century ideas of Enlightenment in the Spanish empire neatly with Michel Foucault's analysis of discipline and punishment in early-modern Europe. Mehl provides a picture of the socioeconomic insecurities and dynamics

of New Spain and displays the complex machinery behind the recruiting parties, the levies, and the transportation process to Manila.

To develop the argument, the book starts with an overview of the intertwined transpacific history since 1571, focusing on the connection via the Manila galleon and the flow of people across the ocean. The first chapter gives a comprehensive introduction to the Spaniards in the Philippines and discusses the military needs and security concerns of the colonial government. In the second chapter Mehl turns to the greater context of the Spanish empire and explains the chronic undersupply of soldiers from Acapulco with the fact that New Spain needed able bodies for its presidios too. Because there were never enough volunteers, a lot of criminals and vagrants had to be sent to Manila to fill the gap. This practice led to the Manila governors' various complaints to the Spanish monarchy: the number of able bodies was always too small, many soldiers were unfit for service, and others displayed such a bad attitude that the governor decided to return them to New Spain right away.

In the third chapter Mehl gives an account of enlightened thinking in Spain in regard to "true" poverty and outdated ideas of charity, punishment, and society in general at a time when idleness was seen as an offense to productive society. A demographic drift of the rural poor to the cities led to the breakdown of public services in New Spain, stirred elite concerns about poverty and vagrancy—often related to the use of alcohol, violence, gambling, and sexual misbehaviors—and reinforced ideas of social cleansing. In this context, sentencing criminals and vagrants to forced labor had three purposes: it liberated society from morally and economically harmful subjects, served to educate the individual, and provided the state with a cheap workforce.

Presenting several cases of convicts from government sources (above all the Mexican Archivo General de la Nación), the fourth chapter offers a panorama of the circumstances and procedures of levying vagrants. Since 1783 the number of vagrants and other criminals who were arrested and sent to the Philippines increased. While this practice caused much individual suffering, some used this deportation system in their favor. It gave members of all classes the opportunity to exercise agency since everybody could make a denunciation; Mehl even shows some women who had their cruel husbands deported. Moreover, and in line with Enlightenment ideas, many colonial subjects believed deportation to be an appropriate penance

and means for correction. Following sixty-two cases in which convicts were turned in by their own family members, Mehl argues in chapter five that many collaborated in good faith, sending their wayward sons or husbands to the Philippines to serve the king, reform their corrupt behavior, and save the reputation of the family.

In the last chapter Mehl returns to Manila and recounts what happened to the forced migrants as well as how disappointed the colonial officials were upon receiving the recruits. By shipping vagrants and criminals as “reinforcements” to Manila, officials in New Spain were able to transfer some of their problems elsewhere, but consequently vagrancy, crime, alcoholism, gambling, and disloyalty to the crown intensified in the Philippines. Disobedient recruits and deserters aggravated the chaotic situation in which Manila found itself after the British occupation. While indicating that some of the work carried out by the convicts was useful for the Philippines, such as in the construction of fortifications and infrastructure, Mehl concludes that their presence in the colony was “unquestionably detrimental for the aspirations of the Spanish empire” (264). Although the recruits’ negative effects on the Philippines are evident, classifying their contribution on a strategic/military level as “unquestionably detrimental” strikes me as exaggerated, especially when we look further back. Since the sixteenth century, the Spanish colony in Asia was short of soldiers and requested reinforcements from Spain and New Spain until the nineteenth century. Despite continuous complaints by the governors since the beginning—instancing the very same accusations that Mehl mentions for the late eighteenth century, including the arrival of vagrants and children—the petitions for more soldiers from New Spain never ceased. This situation indicates that their contribution to the “aspirations of the Spanish empire” must not solely be perceived negatively.

Mehl’s contribution to the field does not reside in tackling a new subject but in placing it in a new context and presenting a bigger picture. She claims to provide a window through which one can see “the broader developments in the Spanish Philippines, namely the Bourbon attempts to intervene in the social, moral, and economic order of the islands” (264). The book does live up to that promise. Analyzing the topic within the context of European Enlightenment offers her the chance to unfold exciting views on social change and the history of mentalities in New Spain. Stressing the entanglement of America and Asia, Mehl highlights the importance of the Philippines for New Spain. Well-balanced in her writing, she pays attention

to the mechanism of the institutions as well as to the agency of the individuals and their families.

Forced Migration is a sound study of the connectedness between Mexico and the Philippines. It gives a valuable overview of the Spanish colonial history of the Philippines and offers interesting angles for the understanding of the phenomenon of forced migration in the Age of Enlightenment. It combines thorough historiographical analysis with insights from meticulously scrutinized archival material, resulting in a highly readable and elucidating book.

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MARIA ROVISCO AND JONATHAN CORPUS ONG, EDS.

Taking the Square: Mediated Dissent and Occupation of Public Space

London and New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016. 244 pages.

Taking the Square: Mediated Dissent and Occupation of Public Space joins the conversation on how to think about the public sphere beyond the classical ideal that Jürgen Habermas has sketched out. It connects with the theorizing stream of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (*Public Sphere of Experience: Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*; Verso, 1993), who deem the public sphere as the “social horizon of experience,” thus expanding the definition of this phrase beyond institutions and practices like the press, public opinion, and public places. Places, presence, and publicity, which are presupposed in a public sphere, are useful elements to think about when reading the ten essays in this book.

Mediated dissent refers to protests and other forms of oppositional communicative practices that are presented through media technologies (2–5). At the same time a mediated public sphere can be found on the internet. The internet is such an imposing public space that one of the contributing authors, Paulo Gerbaudo, calls it “digital-popular,” a take on the Gramscian phrase “national-popular,” which refers to the commonly held beliefs of subaltern groups (39). Many of the case studies in the book show how online discursive spaces are bound up with physical spaces of