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Marcelo de Ribadeneira's Historia  
de las Islas del Archipielago y  
Reynos de la Gran China:  
Franciscan missions and  
representations of Buddhism,  
1577-1601

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dissertation

**MARCELO DE RIBADENEIRA'S *HISTORIA DE LAS ISLAS DEL  
ARCHIPIELAGO Y REYNOS DE LA GRAN CHINA*: FRANCISCAN MISSIONS  
AND REPRESENTATIONS OF BUDDHISM, 1577-1601**

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to my late father Ricardo Eduardo Pascal

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation analyzes Friar Marcelo de Ribadeneira's *Historia de las Islas del Archipielago y Reynos de la Gran China, Tartaria, Cuchinchina, Malaca, Sian, Camboxa y Iappon* (1601), a Spanish document that chronicles the work of Discalced Franciscan missionaries centered in the Philippines as well as their accounts of non-European cultures in Southeast and East Asia. This dissertation argues for reading the *Historia* as a regional history that reinforced Franciscan identity and influence in Asia. A reassessment of the *Historia* as a synthetic regional history reveals that the Franciscans developed the first comprehensive missionary ethno-history of the region and used Manila to enable a substantial geographic reach. Most importantly, the *Historia* documents that they were some of the first Europeans to identify the basic features of Buddhism.

This study situates Ribadeneira's *Historia* within the context of early modern literature. It shows that the document went beyond sacred history in providing ethnographic descriptions that contributed to European knowledge of Asia. It illustrates



the establishment of Manila in the Philippines as a center for missionary activity, cultural preparation and exposure, and point of departure to other locations in the region.

Analysis of the *Historia* also reveals that Franciscan missionaries identified Buddhism as a distinct religion. This dissertation argues that Franciscans not only perceived a single founder behind the various names used for the Buddha in different locations in Asia; they also recognized religious features that were similar to Catholicism. As mendicants, friars were uniquely positioned to perceive direct analogies between Franciscan spiritual practices and values, and Buddhist monastic practices. Further, this study argues that Siam played an important role in encounters between Buddhist monks and Franciscan friars in Marcelo Ribadeneira's *Historia*. Missionary reports suggested that the social and political strength of institutionalized Buddhism in Siam, coupled with the recognition of parallels with their own religious lives and ascetic values, catalyzed the identification of a newly discovered tradition.

The significance of this study is that it challenges the common historiography that Franciscans in the sixteenth century were negative toward other cultures and did not have a major impact in Asia. The dissertation prompts a reconsideration of the Franciscan missionary contributions to early modern history.

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**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO RIBADENEIRA'S *HISTORIA DEL  
ARCHIPIELAGO Y OTROS REYNOS***

**Introduction**

In the last quarter of the sixteenth century, a reformed order of Franciscans from Spain established a significant center for missionary activity in the Philippines. From this center, Franciscan missionaries traveled widely throughout Southeast and East Asia, preached the gospel, planted Christian communities, fashioned themselves as diplomats, and had significant encounters with non-European cultures. The activities of these first generation Spanish Franciscans in Asia are chronicled in Friar Marcelo de Ribadeneira's *Historia de las Islas del Archipiélago y Reynos de la gran China, Tartaria, Cochinchina, Malaca, Sian, Camboxa y Iappon, y de los sucedido en ellos a los religiosos descalços de la Orden del Seraphico Padre San Francisco*, full English translation as *History of the Islands of the Archipelago (of the Philippines), and the Kingdoms of China, Tartary, Cochinchina, Malacca, Siam, Cambodia and Japan, and a Relation of the Religious Order of the Discalced Franciscans in those Kingdoms, (Composed by Friar Marcello de Ribadeneira)*, henceforth known as *Historia*.<sup>1</sup> This dissertation analyzes Ribadeneira's

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<sup>1</sup> Published in Spain with the spelling Marcello de Ribadeneyra, *Historia de las islas del archipiélago y reynos de la gran China, Tartaria, Cuchinchina, Malaca, Sian, Camboxa y Iappon, y de los sucedido en ellos a los religiosos descalços de la Orden del Seraphico Padre San Francisco, de la Prouincia de San Gregorio de las Philipinas: compuesta por fray Marcello de Ribadeneyra* (Barcelona: Gabriel Graells y Giraldo Dotil, 1601). I will follow the Colección España Misionera, edited by Juan de Legisima which standardizes the spelling, but closely follows the original, *Historia de las Islas del Archipiélago Filipino y Reinos de la Gran China, Tartaria, Cochinchina, Malaca, Siam, Cambodge y Japón* (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1947); I will provide book and chapter numbers that match the 1601 version. I will also opt for the altered Spanish spelling of the author's name as "Marcelo Ribadeneira," which is more common in modern scholarship. There is one English translation of the *Historia*, published in a bilingual edition in two volumes, using Juan Legisima's Spanish edition, with the English counterpart translated by Patricia Guevara Fernández as *Historia del Archipiélago y otros reynos. History of the*

*Historia*, and argues for reading the document as a regional history that synthesizes multiple aims that reinforce Franciscan identity and influence. Reevaluating Ribadeneira's *Historia* as a regional document reveals some of the significant contributions Franciscans made in the early modern period. This study shows that the Franciscans contributed to the development of written genres by developing the first comprehensive missionary ethno-history of the Asian region that added to European knowledge about Asia. This study also shows that the Franciscans established a substantial mission center in the Philippines that served to bolster cross-cultural exposure and launch missionary travel. This study further shows the Franciscans to be some of the first Europeans to identify the basic features of Buddhism.

Ribadeneira's *Historia* and its contributions to early modern knowledge about Asia, its contributions to early modern written genres, and its discoveries and insights about other religions such as Buddhism, have been forgotten or downplayed in the historiographical record. Ribadeneira's document emerged at the beginning of intense competition between the mendicant orders—Augustinian, Dominican, and Franciscan friars—and the Jesuits of the Society of Jesus. Because the *Historia* was published at the onset of competition between Catholic orders, the reception of the *Historia* has been informed by a Jesuit perspective. Further, the document has been read selectively for specific purposes to provide information about targeted cultures, places, or events in one or another part of Asia. Scholars have selectively used Ribadeneira's *Historia* as a source of information for a Franciscan perspective on the events of the first major outbreak of

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*Philippines and other kingdoms* (Manila, Historical Conservation Society, 1970). The full English translation of the title is my own.

persecution and martyrdom of Christians in Japan in 1597, known as the Twenty-Six Martyrs Incident. Readers and scholars have also selectively read the work for information about the biography of martyrs, and used Ribadeneira for information about Asia and missionary activities in the region. The selected reading of Ribadeneira does not take into consideration the synthetic character of the work that weaves together a variety of divergent aims. This has produced assessments of the work that do not account for the work as a whole document, and as a consequence, its major contributions have not been fully appreciated. This study aims to rectify the historiographical gap by proposing an alternative reading of the *Historia* that assesses its multifaceted character.

### **Reassessing Ribadeneira's *Historia*: Challenges to a Synthetic Reading**

This study is situated within an emerging body of scholarship that seeks to reexamine mendicant writings that have been overlooked or downplayed in the historiographical record. The downplaying of mendicant writings has long been a part of the history European interpretation. It began from the start of inter-order Catholic disputes between mendicants and Jesuits in the sixteenth century. Mission sites in Asia were at the center of these disagreements. Ribadeneira's *Historia* emerged at the start of these intense disputes between the orders over missions in Asia. The fraught historical context in which Ribadeneira wrote is one among many layers of complexity to an analysis of the document. Analyzing the *Historia* many complex components present a challenge for several reasons that merit consideration. Moreover, there are other challenges to a reanalysis of the *Historia* that also merit consideration. These challenges pertain to the length and complexity of the document, the selective reading and reception

of the work, and recurring biases in the historiography. Notwithstanding some of these challenges, this study proposes that reading the document as a synthetic regional history enables scholars to assess the document's many dimensions.

### The *Historia* as a Multi-Purpose Volume

One fact that adds a layer of difficulty for readers to evaluate Ribadeneira's document as a whole is its length. The work is voluminous. It is a feat in itself to consume the work in its totality. In addition to the table of contents, and prologue, dedication and other prolegomena, with six semi-autonomous sections called books, the original volume consists of 725 dense pages of text. As a large and dense text, I believe it is best to understand Ribadeneira's *Historia* not as a book but as a large volume containing several different components, some serving different purposes. Viewing the *Historia* as a volume may aid in interpretation of the document by breaking down the individual components that are synthesized together in the volume. At the same time, because the individual components are easier to consume than the whole volume, it has been perhaps understandable why it is common in the history of interpretation of the *Historia* to focus on one or another of the books within the volume than considering the work as a whole.

The six books within the *Historia* are organized by two guiding principles: chronology and geography. Book I pertains to the Philippines, describes the archipelago and its culture, and documents the establishment of the Franciscan Province of San Gregorio and their journeys crossing back and forth to the Philippines through New Spain. Book II chronicles the work of friars in several kingdoms adjacent to the

Philippines, including China, Malacca, Siam, and Cambodia, and provides information about the geography, history, and culture of these kingdoms. Book III contains stories and lives of Discalced Friars from the Province of San Gregorio in the Philippines. The second half of the *Historia*, about half the book, is dedicated to Japan. Book IV covers Japanese politics, religion, and customs, and the mission effort of the friars. Book V gives an account of the events leading to the Japanese execution of twenty-six Christians, and the aftermath of the incident. Finally Book VI provides biographies of the twenty-six martyrs who perished in 1597. Each of the books within Ribadeneira's volume serves different and sometimes overlapping functions. At the same time, each of the books could be read as an individual unit. The complexity of the structure and varied functions add to the difficulty of reading the document as a whole entity. Within the six books contained in the volume, some books served primarily as ethnographic accounts and mission histories, such as the geographically organized books (Books I the Philippines, Book IV on Japan, and Book II on kingdoms in East and Southeast Asia). Other books are more biographical in style and content (Book III on individual missionaries in the Philippines, and Book VI on the Japanese martyrs of 1597.) Book V focused on first-hand accounts of the events of persecution in Japan. Many of the books provide the history, methods, and reasons for Franciscan travel. Each of the components provides a full picture of the observations made by the Franciscans about other cultures, documents their ventures and accomplishments across the region, provides readers with an understanding of the means and justification for Franciscan missionary activity, and documents the martyrdom of beloved missionaries. Some of the books have been detached from the volume and used

to inform readers about Asian cultures, Franciscan missions, and for information about the individual martyrs and saints.

Indeed, some sections of this volume were printed and circulated separately as individual books. One section circulated separately was *Historia de los misiones del Japón* (History of the Missions of Japan) which was found in a list of held books in New Spain. A section of the book on China, *Historia de la China* (History of China) was carried by a priest named Manuel Correa from Peru to New Spain.<sup>2</sup> This forms part of a trend of increased interest, especially among intellectual elites, in descriptions and information about Asia and the Orient. Such interest went hand in hand with an increase in the production of texts that gave information about remote places that occurred in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>3</sup>

Interest in the account of the martyrs of Japan also propelled the printing and circulation of Ribadeneira's account of the incident and biography of martyrs. A portion of the manuscript pertaining to the Japanese martyrs was published in 1599 in Rome and Madrid.<sup>4</sup> The martyrdom in Nagasaki accelerated the urgency and speed of the writing and publication of Ribadeneira's *Historia*. Western interest also accelerated the speed with which Ribadeneira outlined and wrote the volume. The Franciscans were eager to generate their account of the events of Nagasaki from the perspective of one of their own,

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<sup>2</sup> José L. Gasch-Tomas and Natalia Maillard-Alvarez, "The Discourse Regarding the Chinese and Muslim Worlds in the Hispanic Empire (New Spain and Castile, c.1550-1630)," in *The Dialectics of Orientalism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Marcus Keller and Javier Irigoyen-García (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 74.

<sup>3</sup> Gasch-Tomas and Maillard-Alvarez, 75.

<sup>4</sup> For information on this printed document see, Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume I: The Century of Discovery. Book 2.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 712, 725; Pérez, "Los Franciscanos En El Extremo Oriente (Noticias Biobibliográficas)," 538–39.

who had the legitimacy of being present in Japan and having survived the persecution directed at Christians. In the writing process the biography of the martyrs of Nagasaki and account of the events in Japan were of the highest priority to be completed first. By the time Ribadeneira was in Mexico, he had prepared an outline of the book and composed much of the section on Japan with the biographies of the martyrs. The completion of the written accounts on the events of Japan and the biography of the martyrs were also given priority, and circulated separately because Ribadeneira was called by Rome to fulfill the role of primary witness in the process of beatification of the martyrs of Nagasaki.

As these examples of separately printed and consumed sections reveal, the specific information contained in sections of Ribadeneira's volume was in demand even as the author was putting together the components of his volume. Some of the challenges to a synthetic reading started early. Nonetheless, a reading of the document as a total product necessitates a wholistic approach that accounts for all the volumes' components.

#### Selective and Reductionist Approaches to Reading the *Historia*

European interest in learning about cultures and the martyrdom of Europeans in Japan led to the printing and circulation of individual sections of Ribadeneira's *Historia*, as shown in the discussion above. The selective reading of the *Historia*, mined for information about specific Asians cultures, missionary personalities, or significant incidents like the Japanese execution of Christians, continued to be one important mode of reading Ribadeneira's *Historia*.



Ribadeneira's *Historia* has served as an important primary source used, sometimes selectively, for information about the Twenty-Six Martyr Incident. The *Historia* also has the distinction of being the first major work to be published and circulated about the incident. Because it was the first major work accounting for the event in Japan, it became the work that other writers were forced to respond to. The other side of being the first major publication on documenting the execution of Christians in Japan is that responses to the work came after its publication. This began the reading of the *Historia* not as a Franciscan account of the incident of Japan, but as Franciscan polemical work.

#### The *Historia* read as Franciscan Polemic

One of the more pernicious and problematic readings of Ribadeneira's *Historia* in recent scholarship is that it is primarily a work of Franciscan polemics. The allegation that Ribadeneira's work was primarily written to promote the interests of the Franciscan order must be reconsidered. The narrow reading of Ribadeneira's *Historia* primarily through the lens of polemics is common in the historiography. For example, Donald Lach's important multi-volume work on Europeans in Asia, describes the *Historia* as "polemical," in part because Ribadeneira justified why the Franciscans went to Japan, even as they operated there "extra-legally," and by implication questioned the legitimacy of the exclusive operation of the Jesuits.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume I*, 718; says so again in *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume II: A Century of Wonder. Book 2: The Literary Arts* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), 192, and again in *Volume III: A Century of Adventure. Book 3: Southeast Asia*, 1491 (University of Chicago Press, 1998). The issues and arguments surrounding Franciscan entry into Japan will be addressed more fully in the next chapter.

The reading of the *Historia* as essentially a polemical document goes back to Jesuits, who, even if they did not target Ribadeneira by name, often claimed that the friars were biased against them. This Jesuit perspective—which itself can be understood as a form of polemic—has been reinscribed by many modern scholars. First, it is important to address the context for how the accusations of polemics arose, centered on events in Japan, and then look at how some scholars have read the work through Jesuit eyes.

### *Early Jesuit Perspectives on Franciscans*

Jesuit perspectives on Franciscans—and Ribadeneira and the *Historia* as representative of the friars—comes out of tensions over missionary jurisdiction and competition between the orders. The controversy over the jurisdiction of orders in Asia generated much contention between the orders, with mutual contention among the friars—Augustinians, Dominicans, and Franciscans—and the Jesuits. Much of the contention revolved around the Jesuits' having exclusive access to Japan. The persecution of Christians that erupted in the 1597 execution of twenty-six Christians exacerbated tensions between the Jesuits and the friars. Given the gravity of the incident, all parties attempted to process and explain the persecution.

From the position of the Jesuits, the friars—specifically the Franciscans—were responsible for the persecution. From their view, from the perspective of religion, things would have been manageable had the Jesuits maintained their exclusive access to Japan and worked within the boundaries of its unification. They would have continued preaching with discretion (since they viewed the friars as indiscreet in their evangelization efforts and their newly formed communities of converts as quite publicly

visible). In this vein some of the Jesuits, like Pedro Morejón among others, put the blame for the executions of 1597 on the shoulders of the friars, suggesting that for starters the friars were not qualified to evangelize in Japan, and that while the friars were there they did not respond adequately to the Jesuits who advised them to preach more modestly.<sup>6</sup>

Jesuits also made quite negative comments about friars in Japan. For instance, Morejón called Franciscans “*frailes idiotas*,” literally “idiot friars,” or in Charles Boxer’s rendition, “crazy friars.”<sup>7</sup> These are some of the roots of common Jesuit stereotypes that friars were less educated and had less diplomatic savvy compared to Jesuits.

Other Jesuits like Luis de Guzmán challenged the truthfulness of Ribadeneira’s account. Not long after the 1601 publication of Ribadeneira’s *Historia* in Spain, Guzmán published a comprehensive mission history of the Society of Jesus’ activities and preaching in Asia, *Historia de las misiones que han hecho los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús para predicar el sancto euangelio en la India Oriental, y en los Reynos de la China y Japon*.<sup>8</sup> Guzmán’s mission history is the most directly comparable work to Ribadeneira’s to emerge after the Japanese executions. Both are similarly titled, and written as “history.” Guzmán’s volume offered similar geographic coverage (East India, China, and Japan) as did Ribadeneira’s work—although Ribadeneira’s coverage was

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<sup>6</sup> Based on the letters of Morejón and others in Martín Santo, “Cosas de Tierras Extrañas,” 86.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Ralph Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1640* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951), 154; Martín Santo, “Cosas de Tierras Extrañas,” 85.

<sup>8</sup> Luis de Guzmán, in two volumes: vol. I: *Historia de las misiones que han hecho los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús, para predicar el sancto euangelio en la India Oriental, y en los Reynos de la China y Japon* (Alcalá: por la Biuda de Iuan Gracián, 1601) in two volumes; and vol. 2: *Historia de las misiones que han hecho los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús, para predicar el sancto euangelio en los Reynos de Japon*. In English (translation mine): *History of the Missions of the Society of Jesus and their work preaching the Holy Gospel in Oriental India, and the Kingdoms of China and Japan*.

more extensive. The organization and structure of Guzmán's volume is also similar to Ribadeneira's volume: both have six books, Guzmán's has three books on East India, one on China, and two on Japan; volume two contains six books on Japan. Like Ribadeneira, Guzmán dedicated about half of the book to Japan.

One significant difference between the volumes produced by Guzmán and Ribadeneira was that Guzmán was on the defensive about the Jesuits in Japan, whereas Ribadeneira was not, in part because Ribadeneira's work was circulated and published before Guzmán's. Guzmán thought it necessary to defend Jesuit work in Japan, Jesuit treatment of other orders, and their role in the events surrounding the Twenty-Six Martyrs Incident. The defense was written towards the end of the second volume in a section he called "Treatise in which some objections are answered about the history" (*Tratado en que se responde a algunos objeciones acerca de la historia*). The section addressed matters related to assertions about the Society of Jesus and the religious within the order. It lists a series of objections accompanied by his responses. The reasons Guzmán gave for this defense was that he came across two works—by authors he indicated were too well-respected to be named—that did not provide the complete story about the events occurring in Japan, and he thought were "ill-informed" (*malinformados*). According to Guzman, if these two works were the only pictures painted of the events, their accounts would be "false and without foundation" (*seria falso y sin fundamento*).<sup>9</sup> Donald Lach surmises, and he is very likely correct, that Ribadeneira was one of the two named works

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<sup>9</sup> Guzmán, 2:645–712; quotes 645, translation mine.

to which Guzmán was responding.<sup>10</sup> In the section, Guzmán confronted objections but also contradicted allegations that the Jesuits mistreated other religious. For example, Guzmán asserted that when friars first arrived in Japan from the Philippines, the Jesuits took them into their own homes and helped them recover from illnesses contracted on the journey “as if they were their same Religion” (*como si fueran de su misma Religión*).<sup>11</sup> The defense of the Jesuits given by Guzmán came at the expense of labeling accounts by friars as at best biased and polemical, at worst inaccurate and false. This Jesuit perspective has reemerged throughout the historiography on Franciscan sources about Japan.

The reading of Ribadeneira’s *Historia* as an essentially polemic document is all the more curious because Ribadeneira’s document does not take any direct polemical stance against the Jesuits. Thus, it is difficult to argue that it is polemical based solely on the contents of the work. Quite to the contrary, Ribadeneira indicates he forged friendships with many Jesuits and Jesuit affiliates, including Father Pedro Morejón and Brother Ambrósio Fernandes, captain of a war-style ship at Nagasaki.<sup>12</sup> Ribadeneira was also positive in his description of Jesuit Morejón admitting that he was “very religious and learned, and experienced in Japanese matters” (*muy religioso y letrado, y experimentado en las cosas de Japón*).<sup>13</sup> Ribadeneira described Jesuits, including

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<sup>10</sup> Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume I*, 718. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. I, Book 2*, 718.

<sup>11</sup> Guzmán, 2:692.

<sup>12</sup> For more on Fernandes and his warship (*fusta*) and its impact on the early community, as well as Ribadeneira’s account of him, see Hesselink, *The Dream of Christian Nagasaki*, 70ff.

<sup>13</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book VI, Chapter 9, 593.

Morejón, as respectful toward the friars. Ribadeneira also found there to be conviviality between the orders of the Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, and lay associates.<sup>14</sup>

It would not be historically accurate to label Ribadeneira as primarily polemical and comparable Jesuit works of mission history as non-polemical. Both the Jesuits and the friars attempted to make sense of and explain the traumatic events of the persecution and both, in this respect, can be read as having an apologetic or polemical dimension. However, contemporary scholars who view only the Franciscan works as primarily polemic reproduce early Jesuit tropes about friars.

### *Modern Historiographical Challenges*

This dissertation contributes to scholarship that seeks to reassess mendicant sources and provide a more balanced assessment of Franciscan publications that have been obscured in the historiographical record that has favored Jesuit sources and interpretations. Even when mendicant sources were some of the first to preach, such as was the case in places like Vietnam (Cochinchina), mendicant works have been obscured by later Jesuit documents and scholarship. To draw from the example of Vietnam, even though friars were first to preach there, Vietnamese Christianity has become associated with Jesuit missionaries such as Alexander de Rhodes and lauded for the Jesuit focus on the inculturation of Christianity with the local culture.<sup>15</sup> The more substantial quantity of

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<sup>14</sup> Martín Santo, “Cosas de Tierras Extrañas,” 76.

<sup>15</sup> Alexandre de Rhodes, *Divers voyages et missions dv P. Alexandre de Rhodes en la Chine, & autres royaumes de l’Orient: avec son retour en Europe par la Perse & l’Armenie ...* (Paris: Chez S. Cramoisy, imprimeur ordinaire du roy & de la reyne, 1653); For a translation and analysis of de Rhodes’ catechism and inculturation, see Peter C. Phan and Alexandre de Rhodes, *Mission and Catechesis: Alexandre de Rhodes and Inculturation in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam*, Faith and Cultures Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998).

Jesuit missionary writing and preservation of, not only published materials, but letters and archival sources compared to mendicant archives, which tend to be scattered in various colonial locations, has contributed to mendicant sources being disregarded. Tara Alberts observes that the discrepancy in Jesuit and mendicant archives has resulted in mendicant missions being “overlooked or downplayed in the historiography.”<sup>16</sup>

Yet the issue of overlooking mendicant sources in the historiographical record is not merely due to the unevenness in the number and availability of sources between mendicants and Jesuits. The overlooking of mendicant sources is compounded by negative Jesuit evaluations of, and deliberate minimization, of mendicant missions. Alberts argues that the negative attitude of Jesuits are mirrored in the historiography: “historians have often concurred with later Jesuit sources, which were dismissive or contemptuous of mendicant predecessors.”<sup>17</sup>

How scholars reinscribe the Jesuit positions might also have to do with the politics of investment in the Jesuits as an ideal missionary order. Implied is that the Jesuits are an ideal missionary order that respects and adapts to local culture, and the friars a negative example of missionary activity. Historians have widely ascribed to this view, with but few exceptions.<sup>18</sup> As Liam Brockley states in a review of a recent edited volume on Alessandro Valignano, the mastermind of Jesuit accommodation policy:

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<sup>16</sup> Tara Alberts, “Missions in Vietnam,” in *A Companion to Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*, ed. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia (Boston: BRILL, 2018), 277.

<sup>17</sup> Alberts, 277.

<sup>18</sup> An notable exception is George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: From Its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985). Minamiki argued that the Jesuits erred in their evaluation of the Confucian rites controversy in relying on elites to interpret those rites, instead of looking at their meaning in everyday practice at the time.

“Historians have lauded this insight as either the arrival of ‘the Renaissance’ in Asia or a glimpse of ‘modern’ tolerant attitudes before their time.”<sup>19</sup> The investment in Jesuit missionary methods has the underside of downplaying or disparaging the mendicant orders.

I do not here intend to take a theological or even a historical stand on whether or not the Jesuits are an ideal missionary order. However, it is important to recognize that such positions are steeped in Jesuit critiques of the friars. My point here is to make explicit, critically assess, and deidealize assumptions that hold the Jesuits up as model missionaries and friars as the mirror opposites.

### *Friars and Imperialism*

This study argues that a re-assessment of Ribadeneira’s *Historia* as a Franciscan document necessitates resisting reductionist approaches that insist the entire volume should be read from one particular lens, aim, or perspective. One challenge in the historiographical record is the association of friars with imperialism and cultural intolerance.

This reductionist approach is exemplified by Patricia Guevara Fernández, who translated Ribadeneira’s *Historia* into English in 1970. Fernández provides an important scholarly service by translating the Spanish text to English. However, the critical comments accompanying her translation leaves much to be desired. Fernández’ very

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<sup>19</sup> Liam Brockey, “Alessandro Valignano S.I., Uomo Del Rinascimento: Ponte Tra Oriente E Occidente (Review),” *The Catholic Historical Review* 96, no. 1 (January 10, 2010): 134; Review of: Adolfo Tamburello, M. Antoni J Üçerler, and Marisa Di Russo, eds., *Alessandro Valignano S.I.: uomo del Rinascimento, ponte tra Oriente e Occidente*, Bibliotheca Instituti Historici S.I. 65 (Roma: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2008).



short two-page introduction includes very limited guidance as to how to read the text and essentializes Ribadeneira's work as an account of "Christian conquest of pagans in the Philippines and Japan achieved by the first Franciscan missionaries in the sixteenth century."<sup>20</sup> Reviewer of the translation John Phalen laments the lack of a critical introduction to the translation,<sup>21</sup> to which can be added that such a view does not take into account the aspects of the document that address facets of mission and concerns outside Iberian imperial reach in Asia. It is not surprising, then, that readers using the English translation may be unduly primed to gloss over Ribadeneira's potential contributions to historical writing, and ethnographic descriptions, as the translator's introduction evaluates the text as essentially driven by Christian imperialism.

Other scholars have ascribed to the association of friars with imperialism. Charles Boxer, a foundational historian on early modern Christianity in Japan, has reproduced the Jesuit narrative about friars as intolerant and unsophisticated when dealing with older Asian civilizations. He adds to this the pairing of Franciscans with Iberian imperialism:

The methods they [the Franciscans] employed were merely those which had met with such success in Mexico, Peru, and the Philippines, or for that matter in Portuguese Brazil, where the comparatively backward native cultures could be largely ignored, and a clean sweep made of all existing beliefs and prejudices, in order to sow the Gospel seed. Such drastic methods were doomed to failure when applied to the inhabitants of Japan, China, and Hindustan, the culture of which was in all cases older, and in many ways superior, to that of the West.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Patricia Guevara Fernández, "Introduction" to the English translation, Marcelo de Ribadeneira, *Historia Del Archipiélago y Otros Reynos. History of the Philippines and Other Kingdoms*, vol. 1, 2 vols., Historical Conservation Society 17 (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1970), viii-ix.

<sup>21</sup> John Phelan, "Historia Del Archipiélago y Otros Reynos: History of the Philippines and Other Kingdoms (Bilingual Edition), Volume I and II," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 32, no. 2 (1973): 381.

<sup>22</sup> Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan*, 162; quoted in Robert Richmond Ellis, *They Need Nothing: Hispanic-Asian Encounters of the Colonial Period* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 26.

As Robert Ellis cautions, Boxer reproduces a common view of mendicant Iberian under royal patronage in favor of Portuguese Jesuits as “both ideologically and factually problematic.” Ellis pushes further against this view of friars: “Not only does it reflect a Eurocentric bias ... but it is also misleading, since the reason that the Spanish managed to conquer certain peoples more easily than others had less to do with overall cultural accomplishment than their weapons, armies, and (perhaps most important of all) resistance to disease. The Spanish in fact lacked the wherewithal necessary to conquer Japan and China ... and for this reason were unable to make ‘a clean sweep’ of their existing cultures.”<sup>23</sup>

What Ellis here exposes is the common association of the friars with imperialism that merits critical examination. Any Spanish publication can be read as a colonial document. Many Spanish writers were immersed in Spain’s colonial project, which was part of the world in which they lived. The Philippines was among the major sites of the Spanish imperial expansion in Asia. Modern resistance to colonialism includes as part of the hermeneutic of anti-colonial reform, the exposure of writers and texts that promote or are complicit in imperial projects. Anti-colonial scholarship forms a necessary and important dimension of academic analysis. However, it would be anachronistic to think that early modern Europeans would have a post-colonial or anti-colonial worldview, even if they resisted some of the more nefarious consequences of colonialism. A lack of anti-colonial sentiment among early modern writers does not invalidate contributions, even if these do not fit into modern post-colonial ideals.

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<sup>23</sup> Ellis, *They Need Nothing*, 26.

A reading of Ribadeneira's *Historia* as essentially an imperial document also does not account for the ways that missionaries attempted to distance themselves from the economic aims of the Spanish projects in Asia, which were to seek new avenues of trade. Missionary aims, although at times overlapped with colonial and trade aims, were not identical to them. Nor can missionary writing be reduced entirely to a colonial and economic lens of interpretation.

### **The Impact of the *Historia***

Of import to this study is a consideration of how Ribadeneira's *Historia* has been used by Europeans. There are several ways that Ribadeneira's volume was used, read and circulated after its publication. The volume was first and foremost used to document the events of the persecution of Christians in Japan and as a witness to the individual martyrs that would become canonized. The volume was also used as a reference for modeling subsequent mission histories that were produced after its publication. The volume was also used back in Europe to access knowledge about non-European peoples and traditions, particularly the religious life that was addressed by Friar Ribadeneira.

### *Printings and Editions*

Before the publication of the *Historia* as a complete volume, several sections were printed and circulated independently, such as printings on Japan, China, and the Japanese martyrs. While in Mexico, en route back to Europe, Marcelo Ribadeneira published an abridgment of the contexts of the volume in December of 1598—*Suma de los seis libros de la Historia* (*Summary of the Six Books of the History*). The publication

was reproduced in Rome at least twice, one in 1600, and another in 1601.<sup>24</sup> The *Suma* included detailed descriptions of the six books and the individual chapters within them.

The first version of the *Historia* as a whole was printed in 1599 in Rome by the Title *Historia de las islas del archipelago, y reynos de la Gran China, Siam, Cochinchina y Japón* by Niccolo Nutius, with a similar version in Spain.<sup>25</sup> These versions are rare, however. The version most widely known is the 1601 document printed in Barcelona by Gabril Graells y Giraldo Dotil. The 1601 version went through several printings in Spain and is the most common edition to have been preserved in European and American libraries.

Ribadeneira's *Historia* went through its second printing in 1613, twelve years after the 1601 edition. The title was slightly altered in the second printing to *Historia de los reynos de la Gran China, Tartaria, Cuchinchina, Malaca, Sian, Camboxa y Iapon: y de lo sucedido en ellos a los Religiosos Descalços, de la Orden del Seraphico Padre San Francisco, de la Prouincia de San Gregorio de las Philippinas*.<sup>26</sup> This second printing included corrections and amendments to the first printing (*Va corregido y*

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<sup>24</sup> *Suma de los seis Libros de la Historia* (Aprob. de Fr. Juan Bautista: Mexico, 29 December 1598); published in Rome by Fr. Francisco de Sosa: Roma, 6 June 1600, and by Fr. Juan Ximenez: Roma 28 May 1601; Pérez, "Los Franciscanos En El Extremo Oriente (Noticias Biobibliográficas)," 538–39.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander S Wilkinson, ed., *Iberian books: books published in Spanish or Portuguese or on the Iberian Peninsula before 1601 = Libros ibéricos: libros publicados en español o portugués o en la Península Ibérica antes de 1601* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 618. These editions are scarce but can be found in Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, France, and Biblioteca del Palacio Real in Madrid, Spain.

<sup>26</sup> Marcelo de Ribadeneira, Francisco de Sosa, and Gabriel Graells, *Historia de los reynos de la Gran China, Tartaria, Cuchinchina, Malaca, Sian, Camboxa y Iapon: y de lo sucedido en ellos a los Religiosos Descalços, de la Orden del Seraphico Padre San Francisco, de la Prouincia de San Gregorio de las Philippinas* (Barcelona: En la Empresa de Gabriel Graells, 1613); English translation (my own): *History of the Kingdoms of China, Tartary, Cochinchina, Malacca, Siam, Cambodia and Japan; and the History of the Discalced Religious of the Seraphic Order Saint Francis of the Province of San Gregorio Magno of the Philippines that worked in those kingdom.*

*enmendado en esta segunda impresion*). This printing was produced also in Barcelona by one of the same printers as the first edition by Gabriel Graells. Evidence of a much rarer 1654 edition is referred to in some libraries and publication lists, but was much less circulated and much rarer.<sup>27</sup>

There have been two publications of the volume in the twentieth century. The first was published in Madrid, Spain in 1947 by the Editorial Católica in Madrid. Franciscan scholar Juan R. de Legísima provided an introduction and rendered the volume into modern Spanish spelling.<sup>28</sup> This was the first major publication of Ribadeneira's work since the seventeenth century. Legísima gave an informative prologue to the work. His editing closely mirrored the original in content while standardizing the spelling for contemporary Spanish, and adds helpful references. The publication put the volume back into the preview of twentieth-century scholars, increasing accessibility.

The second twentieth-century publication occurred in 1970 out of Manila in the Philippines. This version issued Ribadeneira's work in two volumes, and includes an English translation. This bilingual edition of the *Historia* was published in two volumes with the Spanish text accompanied by an English translation. The Spanish text is not a new edition but a reissue of the 1947 version edited by Juan R. de Legísima. The English translation was done by Patricia Guevara Fernández, whose introduction was discussed

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<sup>27</sup> As one example, see Friedrich von Wenckstern, *A Bibliography of the Japanese Empire: Vol. I Being a Classified List of All Books, Essays and Maps in European Languages Relating to Dai Nihon (Great Japan) Published in Europe, America and in the East from 1859-93 A.D. (VIth Year of Ansei-XXVth of Meiji) : To Which Is Added a Facsimile-Reprint of: "Léon Pagès, Bibliographie Japonaise Depuis Le XVe Siècle Jusqu'à 1859"* (Leiden: Brill, 1895), 13.

<sup>28</sup> Marcelo de Ribadeneira, *Historia de las islas del archipiélago filipino y reinos de la gran China, Tartaria, Malaca, Siam, Cambodge y Japón; ed. y pról. de Juan R. de Legísima.*, ed. Juan R. de Legísima (Madrid, España: Editorial Católica, 1947).

earlier. Fernández' translation abridges some of the lengthy chapter names and shortens some of the text for ease of comprehension.

*Pioneer Work in Regional Mission History*

Ribadeneira's work has the distinction of being among, if not the first, the earliest comprehensive mission history of its time. Ribadeneira's and Guzman's works "launched the competition in mission histories,"<sup>29</sup> spurring contemporaries and later generations of religious historians to write about the mission history of their orders. Ribadeneira's *Historia* had a significant impact on later generations of mission historians. His work was consulted in the production of subsequent histories. His work was particularly referenced in Franciscan and Dominican publications.

As a pioneer publication in mission history, Ribadeneira's *Historia del Archipiélago* became a point of reference for subsequent historians who sought to write an account of their mission. Ribadeneira's work was consulted in the writing of other regional histories. For example, before the second printed edition was issued, Dominican Friar Luis de Urreta consulted Ribadeneira, among his sources in the writing of the History of the Sacred Order of Preachers in Ethiopia (*Historia de la sagrada orden de predicadores en los remotos reynos de la Etiopia*).<sup>30</sup> Like Ribadeneira, Urreta also cites

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<sup>29</sup> Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. III, Book 1*, 366.

<sup>30</sup> Luis de Urreta (originally rendered Luys de Vrreta), *Historia de la sagrada orden de predicadores en los remotos reynos de la Etiopia: trata de los prodigiosos Sa[n]tos, martyres y co[n]fessores, inquisidores apostolicos, de los co[n]juentos de Plurimanos, do[n]de viuen nueue mil frayles, del Allehuya con siete mil y de Bedenaglde cinco mil monjas, con otras grandezas de la religion del padre santo Domingo ...* (en casa de Iuan Chrysostomo Garriz, 1611).

other missionary orders and uses accounts drawn from published sources. Urreta uses Ribadeneira when talking about the history of missionary activity in China.

Franciscans coming out of the Philippines also used Ribadeneira to write accounts of the mission in the region. In the seventeenth century another friar set out to compose a chronicle of the discalced friars of the Province of San Gregorio Magno. The author of the chronicle was friar Francisco de San Inés. The date of the chronicle given in the manuscript was 1676. The document was badly damaged, and remained in the San Francisco archives in the Philippines until its publication in 1892, in two volumes. Santa Inés references Marcelo Ribadeneira as a source, particularly for his account of the biography of missionaries who were martyred.<sup>31</sup>

In the eighteenth century, another history of the Province of San Gregorio was published referencing Ribadeneira's volume. Friar Juan San Francisco de San Antonio's volume consolidates much of the work of Ribadeneira and adds other work in his chronicle of the discalced friars. San Antonio's work was called a "chronicle," like Santa Inés chronicle composed decades earlier, and was composed and published in Manila in 1738 as *Chronicas de la apostolica Provincia de S. Gregorio de Religiosos Descalzos de N.S.P.S. Francisco en las Islas Philipinas, China, Japon, etc...* (*Chronicles of the Apostolic Province of San Gregorio Magno of the Discalced Religious Franciscans in the Islands of the Philippines, China, Japan, etc. ...*).<sup>32</sup> San Antonio's work relies on

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<sup>31</sup> Francisco de Santa Inés, *Crónica de la provincia de San Gregorio Magno de religiosos descalzos de N.S.P. San Francisco en las Islas Filipinas, China, Japon, etc. Tomo I*, vol. I (Manila: Tipografía de Chofre; [1693], 1892), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006701922>.

<sup>32</sup> Juan Francisco de San Antonio, *Chronicas de la apostolica Provincia de S. Gregorio de Religiosos Descalzos de N.S.P.S. Francisco en las Islas Philipinas, China, Japon, etc. Parte primera en*

Ribadeneira directly and also uses similar accounts along with additional information to compose his mission chronicle.

*Ethnographic Source about non-European Cultures*

One significant way in which Ribadeneira's volume was used was for its information about other cultures. Thus, Ribadeneira's observations had been consulted as a source on different regions such as Japan, China, and the Philippines. In the eighteenth century, some readers latched onto Ribadeneira for his observations about Buddhism as a religion. Ribadeneira's comments on Buddhism was cited in the writing of a Jesuit in Spain by the name of Benito Jerónimo Feijoo. Feijoo's work was a compendium of knowledge, a precursor to the encyclopedia, called *Demonstracion critico-apologetica del Theatro critico universal*.<sup>33</sup> The key ideas referenced pertain to Ribadeneira's evaluation that the traditions witnessed, particularly in Siam but shared in other parts of Asia, should indeed be considered a proper "religion." Feijoo used Ribadeneira to label the Buddhist traditions described in Asia as "religion" as opposed to "superstition." Feijoo's work was circulated widely in Spain as part of the Spanish Enlightenment, and translated in many languages.

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*que se incluye la descripcion de estas islas que consagra a la S.C.R. Magestad D. Phelipe V el Animoso, nuestro Catholico Rey y Augusto Emperador de las Espailas la misma santa Provincia y en su noihbre su Ministro Rovincial, escrita por el P. Fr. Juan Francisco de S. Antonio, Matritense, Lector de Theologia Escholastica y Moral, Ex-Diffmidor y Chmnista General de dicha Provincia* ([Sampoloc]: Impresa en la imprenta del vso de la propria provincia, sita en el Convento de N[uest]ra. Señora de Loreto del Pueblo de Sampaloc, extra-muros de la ciudad de Manila: por Fr. Juan del Sotillo, 1738), <http://archive.org/details/chronicasdelaapo00sana>.

<sup>33</sup> Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, *Demonstracion critico-apologeti ca del Theatro critico universal*; *Tomo Primero*, ed. Martín Sarmiento, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Por la Viuda de Francisco del Hierro, 1732).



### *Circulation of the Historia*

A few examples of locations of copies of the Ribadeneira's *Historia* provide a picture of the circulation and consumption of the work. Thus far this study has shown some of the ways Ribadeneira's *Historia* was used and referenced for specific purposes pertaining to Japan, mission history, and constructions of Buddhism. However, Ribadeneira's work was read and circulated. It was consumed along with many other writings about non-European cultures as part of European curiosity and interest outside of Europe, and European colonial and trade expansion. Various libraries and book inventories had copies of the *Historia* in its entirety and sometimes individual books from the *Historia* were collected and circulated. Looking at where the *Historia* was received shows that the work was circulated in both the New World and in Europe.

In the European continent, the complete volume of the *Historia* has been found in several libraries and lists beyond the Iberian Peninsula and shows that the work was read and known outside of Spanish circles. These include, for example, in French lists about books on China, with some references by authors in French encyclopedias in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>34</sup> The *Historia* was also known and read in Germany.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For example, Henri Cordier, *Bibliotheca sinica: Dictionnaire bibliographique des ouvrages relatifs à l'Empire chinois. vols. 1-4* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1878). It was first published in 1878, with new editions in 1879, 1881, 1883, 1884, 1895, and 1904, 1905, 1907, and 1908. Thereafter there were a number of printing in the 1920s, 1930s, 1960s, 1970s, 1990s and 2000s.

<sup>35</sup> Johann Vogt, *Johannis Vogt Catalogus historico criticus librorum rariorum, sive ad scripta huius argumenti spicilegium, index & accessiones*. (Hamburg: Kisner, 1732) and again published in 1747; quoted by Andreas Fedor Jagor, *Reisen in den Philippinen* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1873); English edition *Travels in the Philippines* (Chapman and Hall, 1875).

In the nineteenth century, Ribadeneira's *Historia* can also be found across the English-speaking world in library collections. In England, for example, a 1601 edition was found in the auction of a private library.<sup>36</sup> Ribadeneira's *Historia* was also listed in libraries in the United States, in one example from New York City as a primary source on the history of Japan and China.<sup>37</sup>

The evidence of circulation discussed above does not purport to be comprehensive, but aims to give some account of who might have access to and read the *Historia*, and how the *Historia* was used in the historiographical record. Although not widely circulated or translated, the *Historia* remained in readership and circulation well into the twentieth century. Many of those referencing the *Historia* used the work as a primary source of information about specific geographic interest, such as cultures, kingdoms, and events, or mission history. Less common are interpretations of the work that analyze its many divergent aims. This study seeks to fill that gap in the historiography by accounting for the *Historia*'s multiple functions.

### **Limitations and Scope of the Study**

This dissertation seeks to place Ribadeneira's *Historia* historically within the context of similar works published in the early modern period. With this purpose at a foreground, this dissertation looks at Ribadeneira's *Historia* relative to other published texts. There are other documents and archives in the early modern period that pertain to mission history, and representations of other cultures. However, they remain in archival

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<sup>36</sup> *Bibliotheca Heberiana: catalogue of the library of the late Richard Heber*, vol. Part 1 (London: Sold by Sotheby and Son, 1834), 306.

<sup>37</sup> *Systematic Catalogue of Books in the Collection of the Mercantile Library Association of City of New York* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1837), 71.

form, and unpublished. This dissertation limits its comparative scope to published materials in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

There are fitting reasons for the choice in this study to analyze Ribadeneira's *Historia* within the scope of published works of similar caliber. Comparison of similar documents is a more appropriate method to use in order to contextualize the *Historia* as a synthetic entity, among other documents that also integrate a variety of genres and aims. As a published work, it is public and circulated in Europe by way of the Spanish sphere of influence. This approach also ensures a reading that preserves the integrity of the text as a completed volume.

### **Structure and Content of the Study**

This chapter thus far has placed this dissertation in the context of scholarship on, and the reading and reception of Marcelo Ribadeneira's *Historia*. It has thus far examined some of the gaps in the historiography and proposes reading the *Historia* as a synthetic document that weaves together a variety of proposes about missionary encounters in Asia.

Chapter two further examines the process of writing and the purpose of the *Historia*, and how the writing itself contributes to early modern written genres. This chapter details the specific contributions to writing by placing the work in the context of emerging textual genres, and analyzes the text as a history. I also consider how the work has been read and received in light of Franciscan history, identity, and insights about other cultures.

In Chapter three the study moves beyond the writing itself to an examination of the geographical hub the Franciscans built as a mission stronghold. This chapter focuses on the importance of the Philippines for the Franciscans. This chapter shows the centrality of Manila as a mission center for the Franciscans through the establishment of the Province of Gregorio Magno. The Philippines was important for the Franciscan mission showing the geographic reach and network of the Franciscans in Asia. It also shows how Franciscans used Manila to prepare for missions through acquiring language skills and cultural exposure. Manila was also important for travel – as a site that launched friars’ to various parts of the region, even into areas under Portuguese patronage.

Chapter four moves the study of Ribadeneira’s *Historia* to Siam, and documents Siam’s unique role in the European understanding of Buddhism. I show that Siam is important for the Franciscans as it centers Siam for the discovery of Buddhism, and is at the center of the first published identification of what we later call Buddhism. This chapter considers the political and religious context of Siam and the Iberian presence in the kingdom. I examine the religious landscape out of which missionaries generated the view that Siam was the most significant representation of Buddhism as it was first identified as a religion. This chapter further shows the role of Ribadeneira’s work in contributing knowledge about Siam in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Chapter five deepens the Franciscan engagement with Buddhism in Siam. This chapter closely examines the description of Buddhist cultures and shows the parallels found by Ribadeneira and his informants between Franciscan spirituality and Buddhist

life. I also suggest the author used analogy to forge similarities between Catholic religiosity and Buddhist traditions. That is part of seeing Buddhism for the first time.

The conclusion summarizes the insights of the study. It reviews the findings and shows how the *Historia* has made major contributions in several areas of early modern history. A reassessment of the *Historia* restores the work in the historiography as important for not only accurately understanding the significant global networks the Franciscans built, but also for their documentation of non-European traditions.

## CHAPTER TWO: MARCELO DE RIBADENEIRA'S HISTORY OF ASIA

### Introduction

I know that some would say that the greatness of the kingdom of China has been written about extensively by father Mendoza of the Order of the glorious Father St. Augustine, relating the events concerning the Augustinian and Discalced Franciscan religious that went to that populous kingdom. Although a large part of that work was done with this purpose in mind, I shall endeavor to give an account of what came before, for it is necessary to treat some of it, but I will also cover different matters that no one has read about, and I will spend no less effort on reports concerning other kingdoms such as Tartary, Cochinchina, Siam, and Cambodia, for there is much reason to ask our Lord God to send preachers to those lands where people live outside the reaches of divine knowledge.

*(Bien sé que no faltará quien diga que de las grandezas de la Gran China está hecha una larga historia que escribió el padre Mendoza, de la Orden del gloriosísimo padre San Agustín, por relación de los religiosos Agustinos y Franciscanos Descalzos que estuvieron en aquel populoso reino. Pero aunque mayor parte de ella venía muy al propósito de está, yo procuraré de tal suerte epilogar lo dicho, por ser necesario tratar algo de ello, que contando otras cosas diferentes a nadie le pese haberlo leído, y no será menor el gasto que en la relación de los reinos de Tartaria, Cochinchina, Siam, y Camboxa se hallará, y mucho motivo para pedir a Dios Nuestro Señor que envíe predicadores a los que viven tan ajenos de su divino conocimiento.)<sup>38</sup>*

- Marcelo de Ribadeneira, *Historia*, 1601

Marcelo de Ribadeneira explicitly stated that his intention for writing the *Historia* was to provide an account of a great many of the kingdoms and city-states that together constituted the East, and to chronicle the activities of missionaries who preached in the region. This chapter shows why the original intention of the author to write a regional history should be taken seriously as a framework for reading the work. Further, this chapter argues for an analysis of Ribadeneira's *Historia* as a synthetic document: Ribadeneira weaves together many different elements and purposes and those must be

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<sup>38</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Prologue, 8.

held in tension with one another in order to fully appreciate the complexity and contributions of the document in its totality.

As Ribadeneira self-reflectively indicates in the above quote, the *Historia* broke new ground in being the first published account of many of the kingdoms and city-states in the East. Although the *Historia* was intended as a regional history of missionary activities and lands visited by the friars whose paths crossed in Manila, contemporary scholars have rarely received and interpreted it from a regional perspective. Many readers read Ribadeneira not as a synthetic document as a whole, but to gather information from one or another of its multiple books: for information on a specific culture in a certain geographic area, for information on the Japanese martyrs, or other specific interests. This has led to Ribadeneira's work largely being overlooked in a variety of areas, as it has sometimes been read and referenced narrowly as a primary source of information that addresses readers and scholars' specific concerns.

Reading Ribadeneira's *Historia* as a regional work that moves across many kingdoms and city-states highlights the underlying tendency of European travel writing to ascribe meaning to the whole world of non-European cultures and peoples for imperial purposes, for conversion purposes, or both.<sup>39</sup> Further, reading Ribadeneira's *Historia* as a synthetic volume allows interpreters to take into account many different contributions to early modern writing in the areas of sacred history, ethno-history, and biography. Read as a regional synthetic document makes possible an analysis of the cross-cultural insights about religion. Precisely because it is regional and synthetic, Ribadeneira made

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<sup>39</sup> As argued by Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

observations and claims about Buddhist traditions from across the regions, and theorized that these formed parts of the same religion.

### **The Many Purposes of the *Historia***

Friar Marcelo Ribadeneira's *Historia* is a complex work that served multiple functions. Perhaps because of its many functions, its contributions and comparative insights on religion have been obscured. The multiple purposes of the *Historia* need to be interpreted within the context of other similar works in the early modern period, and within the wider Christian tradition of accounts of missionary activity. I interpret the meaning of the *Historia* as "history," not as the term is understood as a modern academic discipline, but in the context of early modern histories whose main modalities were proto-ethnographical and biographical. I will also look at the most common ways contemporary scholars have received the *Historia*.

Part of the difficulty of interpreting the *Historia* for contemporary readers is the question of genre, as many works in this early modern period are hard to put within the framework of one established genre. Yet, the *Historia* does not fit neatly into a single genre of writing and resists easy categorization as hagiography, history, or polemics. The *Historia* was intended both as a history of the countries and peoples of Asia as well as a history of Disalced Franciscan to these countries. It was commissioned to inform both the secular and religious authorities about the mission work of the Disalced Franciscans and the peoples and cultures of the East. However, the work also offered a Franciscan account of the traumatic persecution of Christianity in Japan that erupted in the execution of twenty-six Christians in 1597. The *Historia* also served a biographical function by



narrating the lives of martyrs and missionaries with ethnographic-style documentation of their encounters with other cultures.

The *Historia* has proved useful for scholars interested in national histories, the hagiography and account of the persecutions in Japan, and for its insights from a Franciscan perspective. As the work overlaps many established genres, I argue for holding many of these various functions in tension, while taking the intention of the work as a regional history seriously. Reading the book as a regional history allows for the consideration of missionary observations of a variety of different regions with Buddhist traditions, and how missionaries began to connect various religious expressions into a single religion.

### **The Author, Structure, and Content of the *Historia***

There is not a great deal of information on the life of Friar Marcelo de Ribadeneira. However, the available sources provide information about the major events of his life, travels, and work as a missionary that informed writing of the *Historia*. Ribadeneira was born in Palencia, Spain sometime between 1560 and 1562. He joined the Franciscan order in the Province of Santiago and went on to the famous University of Salamanca where he studied arts and theology. Salamanca was a center for humanistic learning, the rethinking of natural and moral law, the debates surrounding Iberian conquest and the rights of indigenous people, and accounts of cultural encounters.<sup>40</sup> Here Ribadeneira studied the creative new approaches to law and data from outside Europe in

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<sup>40</sup> For important details on his life see Lorenzo Pérez, “Los Franciscanos En El Extremo Oriente (Noticias Biobibliográficas),” *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 1 (1908): 241–47; 536–43. See also Manuel de Castro, “Fr. Marcelo de Ribadeneira, OFM”, *Archivo Ibero-Americano*, 149-152 (1979), 181-246.

the tradition of leading theologians and jurists such as Dominican Francisco de Vitoria and Jesuit Francisco Suárez.<sup>41</sup> The preparation Ribadeneira received in Salamanca would prove especially important in his use of natural law to assess traditions in Asia, as Buddhist traditions were perceived to excel in understanding and implementing natural law.

In 1593 Ribadeneira began his career as a missionary, leaving from Seville to Mexico (New Spain), then arriving in Manila the following year. In the Philippines he joined other Franciscans in the missionary efforts on the islands within the Franciscan Province of San Gregorio. As will be discussed in more detail in chapter three, Franciscans had already begun to travel to other countries from the Philippines. Japan was one of the places missionaries were eager to evangelize. Ribadeneira was one of the Franciscans selected by Governor of the Philippines Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas to undergo a diplomatic mission to facilitate Spanish-Japanese trade relations. By August of 1594 Ribadeneira sailed to Japan with three other missionaries, Agustín Rodríguez, Jerónimo de Jesús, and Andrés de San Antonio, to join Francisco Pedro Blásquez who had arrived in Japan the previous year. Ribadeneira and Agustín Rodríguez were quickly received by “Taikosama” (Imperial Regent Toyotomi Hideyoshi).<sup>42</sup>

For the next three years Ribadeneira was active in the Franciscan mission in Japan, first helping to found convents in Osaka, and then assisting in hospital ministry in Nagasaki. When the Nagasaki persecutions erupted in 1597, concerned Portuguese sailors

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<sup>41</sup> André Azevedo Alves and José Moreira, *The Salamanca School*, Major Conservative and Libertarian Thinkers 9 (New York; London: Bloomsbury, 2009); Ángel Poncela González, ed., *La Escuela de Salamanca: Filosofía y Humanismo ante el mundo moderno* (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2015).

<sup>42</sup> As Ribadeneira refers to Hideyoshi in the *Historia*.

took him onto a vessel of Ruy Mendes de Figueiro moored off the coast, and later returned him to the boat after he tried to escape to join his Franciscan brothers who were executed. Portuguese merchants feared that Friar Ribadeneira would be executed if he were discovered, so they kept him hidden offshore for 66 days. Hidden from the forces of the *shogun*, Ribadeneira and four other Franciscans survived the persecution. Of Ribadeneira's four brothers, Jerónimo de Jesús stayed in Japan clandestinely; but Agustín Rodríguez, Bartolomé Ruiz, and Juan Pobre de Zamora were sent with him to Manila on the first ship out on March 21, 1598.<sup>43</sup> The vessel intended to sail for Malacca, but was redirected by strong winds to Macau, China, where they stayed for several months. Upon Ribadeneira's return to Manila in January of 1598, his superiors instructed him to write a history of the Discalced Friars Minor travelling through the Province of San Gregorio. This included a history of the missions of the Discalced friars, information about the kingdoms and lands, the religious life in each kingdom, and an accurate account of the persecutions he witnessed in Japan.<sup>44</sup> Ribadeneira spent the rest of his time in the Philippines traveling throughout the islands of the Province of San Gregorio, conducting interviews and collecting information for the book before leaving for Europe and then Mexico that same year.

Ribadeneira likely completed much of the research and some of the writing in the Philippines and took the manuscript with him during his journey back to Europe. While

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<sup>43</sup> Lay Spanish observer Bernardino de Avila Girón, present during the persecution, confirmed the names of the individual Franciscans who survived. Bernardino de Avila Girón, "Relación Del Reino de Nippon Por Bernardino de Avila Girón," ed. Doroteo Schilling and Fidel de Lejarza, *Archivo Ibero-Americano* 37 (1934): 543, 553, no. 2; in Martín Santo, "Cosas de Tierras Extrañas," 47.

<sup>44</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Prologue, for a discussion of the circumstances of the commissioning of the book.

in Mexico he published a Summary of the Six Books of the History—*Suma de los seis libros de la Historia* in December of 1598.<sup>45</sup>

In the writing process, the biography of the martyrs of Nagasaki, and account of the events in Japan were of the highest priority to be completed first. By the time Ribadeneira was in Mexico he had prepared an outline of the book and composed much of the section on Japan with the biographies of the martyrs. The completion of the written accounts on the events of Japan and the biography of the martyrs were also given priority.

Friar Ribadeneira was sent to Rome in order to testify to the events in Japan, and to help initiate the process of beatification of the martyrs. To aid in his role as a witness and in the process of beatification, Ribadeneira first completed sections of the book on Japan and the martyrs, which was printing in Rome and Madrid. In Rome he finished the remaining manuscript and the book was published in Barcelona in 1601. Ribadeneira was honored with the title *Penitenciario Apostólico* for completing the work. He retired in the convent of St. Anthony of Salamanca where he died in 1606.<sup>46</sup>

**Figure 2.1. Cover page of the first edition of Marcelo de Ribadeneira's *Historia*, 1601.**

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<sup>45</sup> *Suma de los seis Libros de la Historia* (Aprob. de Fr. Juan Bautista: Mexico, 29 December 1598); the publication was reproduced in Rome at least twice (Fr. Francisco de Sosa: Roma, 6 June 1600, and Fr. Juan Ximenez: Roma 28 May 1601); Pérez, “Los Franciscanos En El Extremo Oriente (Noticias Biobibliográficas),” 538–39.

<sup>46</sup> Pérez, “Los Franciscanos En El Extremo Oriente (Noticias Biobibliográficas),” 536–34.

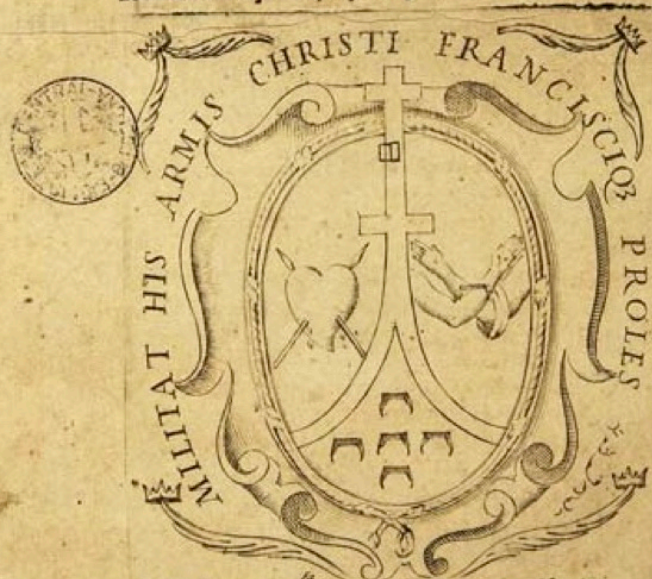
HISTORIA  
DE LAS ISLAS  
DEL ARCHIPIELAGO,

Y REYNOS DE LA GRAN CHINA, TAR  
TARIA, CVCHINCHINA, MALACA,  
SIAN, CAMBOXA Y IAPPON,  
Y de lo sucedido en ellos a los Religiosos Descalços, de la Orden del  
Seraphico Padre San Francisco, de la Prouincia de San  
Gregorio de las Philipinas.

COMPUESTA POR FRAY MARCELLO DERIBADE-  
neyra, compañero de los seys frayles hijos de la misma Prouincia Martyres glorio-  
sissimos de Iappon, y testigo de vista de su admirable Martyrio.

DIRIGIDA A NUESTRO REVERENDISSIMO PADRE  
Fray Francisco de Sofa, Generalissimo de toda la ordē de N.P.S. Francisco.

*A la buelta desta hoja esta la suma de toda la Historia.*



B.P.F. Petrus Bapt. Combarus. B.P.F. Martinus Ascensone  
B.P.F. Franciscus Blaas. B.F. Philippus a Castro. Levis  
B.F. Franciscus a Parrilla. Lais. B.F. Gundalobus Garcia Lais.

CON LICENCIA, Y PRIVILEGIO,

En Barcelona, En la Emprinta de Gabriel Graells y Giraldo Dotil, Año M. DCI

### Witness to The Martyrdom at Nagasaki

The proximate cause for the urgency to publish the *Historia* was to provide an account from eyewitness testimonies of the lead up to and aftermath of the execution by the crucifixion of twenty-six Christians ordered by *shogun* Hideyoshi on January 13, 1597. The episode came to be known by historians as the Twenty-Six Martyrs Incident. Of the twenty-six crucified were six European Franciscans, twenty Japanese Christians including Jesuit novices, and two young boys of twelve and thirteen years old. The execution was public and brutal, and was the largest in living memory for most Christians. The trauma of the persecution shocked and scandalized Europeans the world over. The execution quickly reverberated through the Iberian world in Europe, the Americas, and Asia in the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>47</sup>

As Noemí Martín Santos notes, Iberian presence had met with greater resistance in Japan than it had in the Americas, the Philippines, and other parts of Asia. The dramatic event spurred the production of a variety of types of publications, short and long, including the genres of *Relaciones*, *Sucesos*, *Historias*, *Vidas*, autobiographies, and hagiographical biographies.<sup>48</sup> The outbreak of persecution produced many works that attempted to document the incident, explain how or why it may have happened, and honor the lives of martyrs. Friar Ribadeneira was at the center of the events surrounding the execution, and the *Historia* dedicates a significant section to Japan. One of many reasons Ribadeneira gave in the Prologue to the *Historia* for writing the book was that he

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<sup>47</sup> Ainhoa Reyes Manzano, “La Cruz y la Catana: relaciones entre España y Japón (Siglos XVI-XVII)” (PhD diss., Universidad de La Rioja, 2014), 347.

<sup>48</sup> Martín Santo, “Cosas de Tierras Extrañas,” 13.

deemed it “necessary to provide truthful information” (*era necesario darse verdadera información*) regarding significant observations and events he witnessed.<sup>49</sup>

### *The Religious Climate in Japan in the Late Sixteenth Century*

In the late sixteenth century Japan was emerging out of a century of civil war. Regional war lords, or *daimyos*, exerted a fair degree of independence in a way akin to feudal lords. But military leaders, *shoguns*, vied for the unification of the realm. Toyotomi Hideyoshi became successful at unifying the realm, and although he did not achieve a full *shogunate*, he became the Imperial Regent of Japan. Toyotomi Hideyoshi attempted to subdue and bring under his influence or rule independent *daimyos* and Buddhist temples and monasteries. Some *daimyos*, such as in Nagasaki, were open to Christianity or converted to Christianity. For religious and political reasons, these *daimyos* were viewed with suspicion by Hideyoshi. Hideyoshi, and later the *shogun* Tokugawa Ieyasu, also disrupted the mutually supportive relationship between Buddhism and the state by attempting to elevate the state as superior to religious institutions so that Buddhist entities served the state. This meant also bringing under their rule powerful Buddhist temples that sometimes controlled whole regions, had religious monarchies, and retained their own armies. The state began to use or mimic religious institutions in order to enforce rule.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Prologue, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Eugenio Menegon and Gina Cogan, “Religious Change in East Asia, 1400 – 1800,” in *The Cambridge World History. Volume 6, The Construction of a Global World, 1400-1800 CE. Part 2, Patterns of Change*, ed. Jerry H Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Merry E Wiesner (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 240.

Before the rise of Hideyoshi, the Portuguese had already been trading in Japan, and the Jesuits had been there since the 1540s. The Jesuits had enjoyed an exclusive mission up until the arrival of the first mendicant Franciscans in 1592. With the efforts of the Jesuits and later friars, Christianity had undergone tremendous growth. One estimate is that Christians increased fivefold between 1559 and 1601, with Christians numbering 300,000 of an approximate population of 15 to 20 million.<sup>51</sup> Even after the execution of 1597, Christianity continued to grow after the death of Hideyoshi in 1598, up until the edict of expulsion in 1614. Mass conversion occurred through Jesuit missionary efforts, and Dominicans also entered Japan starting in 1602.<sup>52</sup>

Prior to the arrival of the friars, the situation was tense for Christians. In a sudden move on July 24, 1587, Hideyoshi issued a decree expelling the Jesuits. It is unclear exactly what prompted the decree. It appears Hideyoshi had received reports of vandalism of Buddhist temples at the hands of Christians. The Jesuits had control of the thriving international port of Nagasaki, which they had helped to found, and collected tax directly for themselves. The Portuguese merchants were perceived as non-cooperative, and Hideyoshi perceived Christians in that region generally to be working separately and independently. He used similar terms as he had used with the Ikko (Honganji) school of Pure Land Buddhism. The Ikko had a religious monarchy that controlled the region of Kaga and fought for their independence from the unification project of Oda Nabunga. Hideyoshi was also engaged in a campaign to subdue the region of Kyushi where many

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<sup>51</sup> Kentaro Miyazaki, "Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan," in Mark R. Mullins (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 1–18; Menegon and Cogan, 415–16.

<sup>52</sup> Ikuo Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice* (Leiden: BRILL, 2001), 135–36.



Christians lived. Hideyoshi sought political control, but his justification was also couched in religious terms, as he saw his rule as religiously decreed. The expulsion was issued after Hideyoshi subdued Kyushi and took control of Nagasaki. However, the decree was never carried out.<sup>53</sup>

The Franciscans arrived in Japan as diplomatic envoys from Manila. It is likely Toyotomi Hideyoshi sought to diversify the Portuguese monopoly by engaging the Spanish in trade. The Franciscans for their part also requested permission to preach in Japan, permission which Hideyoshi granted. Although Friar Ribadeneira does not include many details about his meeting with Hideyoshi, the meeting appeared to have been successful. This was corroborated by his merchant companion Bernardino of Avila who reported that Hideyoshi “received them very well.”<sup>54</sup> When first arriving in Japan, for example, the friars reported that the Japanese Imperial Regent Hideyoshi ordered the construction of a house in order that the friars could gather and engage in their spiritual disciplines.<sup>55</sup>

Hideyoshi, like Oda Nabunga before him, and Tokugawa Ieyasu after, for long periods of time begrudgingly tolerated Christians for practical reasons. Christianity was less a threat than powerful Buddhist temples, for example. Up to the execution, Spanish traders and missionaries were largely free to conduct business as they saw fit. The Franciscans gained converts and built convents and hospitals. The Franciscans were bold

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<sup>53</sup> Higashibaba, 129–35; for a discussion of Buddhism and the state see N. McMullin, *Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan* (Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> Noemí Martín Santo, “‘Cosas de Tierras Extrañas’: Textos Y Contextos de La Relación Del Reyno Del Nippon de Bernardino de Ávila” (Boston University, 2016), 37.

<sup>55</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book IV, Chapter 8.

in their missionary efforts, and relied not just on preaching but on communicating Christianity publicly by living a life of poverty, humility, and sacrifice as a means of gaining trust and attracting locals. They also performed public masses and had processions on high holidays like Easter.<sup>56</sup> Below the surface, tensions from the Imperial Regent could shift and erupt. A confluence of factors may have contributed to the execution of the twenty-six Christians (like the various agitators, the Dutch, the Portuguese, Buddhists, competition between the orders, and Hideyoshi's political ambitions).<sup>57</sup> However, the proximate cause of the 1597 execution revolved around the shipwreck of the Spanish galleon *San Felipe* near the Tosa coast. In the dispute over recovery of the contents of the ship, reports—purportedly from the Spanish captain, whom some claimed to be from a Portuguese informant—reached Hideyoshi claiming that missionaries were the first installment of a Spanish invasion of Japan. Hideyoshi arrested Franciscans and Japanese Christians around them who were out in public, and executed them in Nagasaki. From a broader standpoint, perhaps the suppression of Christianity was “inevitable.” N. McMullin suggests that Oda Nabunda began efforts of suppression at independent Buddhist temples, with Hideyoshi and Ieyasu following this campaign. Once the threat of independent Buddhist temples was curbed more fully, attention could be turned directly to the lesser threat of independent Christian *daimyos*.

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<sup>56</sup> For descriptions see Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Books IV & V; see also Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan*, 192.

<sup>57</sup> For a discussion of these factors and how different parties have interpreted the reasons for the execution see Manzano, “La Cruz y la Catana,” 87–93; 346–48.

During Ieyasu's *shogunate*, once he had achieved near complete state control of Buddhist temples, he then directed attention to Christians, culminating in their expulsion in 1614.<sup>58</sup>

*The Aftermath of the Twenty-Six Martyrs Incident*

The execution deeply impacted not only foreigners residing in Japan but the Japanese community of Christians. The ship anchored close to shore, where Ribadeneira and others were hidden by the Portuguese, would have had a view of the events prior and after the execution. The execution took place on the slope of a mountain, and Hideyoshi ordered the martyrs to be arranged in a semi-circle. Other eyewitness testimony such as that of Bernardino de Avila Girón observed that although soldiers did not allow the people to approach the execution, a large number of people congregated at the foot of the hill or watched from their houses or rooftops. Those watching were greatly troubled and their laments were heard loud and far.<sup>59</sup>

Witnesses along with Ribadeneira reported that both Portuguese and Japanese Christians could not be deterred from collecting any splash of blood, remains, or clothing from the martyrs as relics. Ribadeneira observed that some soldiers took advantage of the desire of Christians to obtain relics from the martyrs by selling items of clothing off the bodies of the deceased for a steep price. Reinier Hesselink's study of the aftermath of the execution contents that Nagasaki and neighboring towns became "obsessed with the corpses."<sup>60</sup> As a lesson to Christians, Hideyoshi wanted the bodies to remain on the

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<sup>58</sup> McMullin, *Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan*, 230.

<sup>59</sup> Reinier H. Hesselink, *The Dream of Christian Nagasaki: World Trade and the Clash of Cultures, 1560–1640* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016), 112ff.

<sup>60</sup> Hesselink, 112.

crosses until they decomposed. He had soldiers guard and cover the corpses, but they were overwhelmed by the number of Christians seeking relics.

Reports of miracles associated with the martyrs and relics emerged almost immediately after the execution. The victims had gone through preparation for martyrdom in their rites prior to crucifixion. The frenzy surrounding the relics went hand in hand with the urgency to hail the martyrs as saints. Sections of Ribadeneira's *Historia* were among the early wave of publications offering eyewitness testimony.

### **Travel Writing and Ethnography**

To fully appreciate Ribadeneira's *Historia* as a regional history that provides a conceptual contribution to the European understanding of religion, it should be read broadly as travel literature that seeks to convey proto-ethnographic information about non-European cultures. Many explorers, missionaries, conquistadores, and merchants wrote under the umbrella of what early modern scholars broadly call travel writing or travel literature. Europeans were increasingly curious to learn about new cultures and traditions. With travel and exploration, Europeans developed a healthy appetite for reading and learning about the world beyond Europe. Publication of travel writings was lucrative, and whatever their professions, travelers of all kinds, including missionaries, explorers, and traders, helped to feed this European appetite for learning about other cultures. Portugal and Spain were the first European kingdoms to enter Asia and thus

became the center for publications on Asia in the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century.<sup>61</sup>

Travel literature is not so much a strict category; it might be better to view travel writing as a meta-category that contains within it different categories or genres. Joan-Pau Rubiés states that travel literature is best understood as the “genre of genres” since many different styles, impulses, and concerns fall under the designation of travel literature.<sup>62</sup> Rubiés makes an important point, insisting that travel literature is a much broader category than colonial writing or “literature of discovery and expansion.” Similarly, when discussing early modern historical writing outside Europe, Mary Gaylord’s cautions against the tendency toward “scholarly provincialism” that relegates the literature written during the period of Iberian expansion only to the category “colonial.”<sup>63</sup> Travel writings came in many shapes and forms and often overlapped genres and styles, serving multiple purposes. Part of the challenge in interpreting such texts is attending to these overlapping purposes, some of which the authors make explicit, others of which need to be brought to the surface.

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<sup>61</sup> Tara Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion: Catholicism in Southeast Asia, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 12 note 49; Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. III, Book 1*, 589.

<sup>62</sup> Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travellers and Cosmographers: Studies in the History of Early Modern Travel and Ethnology*, Collected Studies (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 6.

<sup>63</sup> Mary M. Gaylord, “The True History of Early Modern Writing in Spanish: Some American Reflections,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (June 1, 1996): 223. Gaylord was particularly concerned with writings on Latin America being dubbed as “Latin American colonial.”

*Travel Writing as Ethnography*

One important modality of travel writing was proto-ethnographic descriptions of cultures. Ethnography, as a modern method of anthropological writing, was not yet invented in the early modern period. But the roots of ethnography lay in these writings that seek to describe eyewitness or first order accounts of the geography, religion, and politics of other cultures. Thus, scholars qualify these writing as proto-ethnographical, or proto-anthropological, also known as ethnohistorical. As Joan-Pau Rubiés states:

The role of early modern Christian missionaries as ethnographers, or indeed as proto-anthropologists, has long been recognized. Often working within a consolidated colonial project, but sometimes also acting precariously in areas with limited European presence and at the mercy of local powers, missionaries were often at the forefront of the encounter with various peoples across the world, whom they generally sought to convert to their own version of the faith, while perhaps also indirectly supporting an imperialist agenda.<sup>64</sup>

As missionaries were at the forefront of encounters with other peoples and cultures, they made important contributions to ethnographic descriptions, and Ribadeneira played a significant role in such writings.

Donald Lach and Nancy Vogeley categorize Marcelo Ribadeneira as writing ethnohistory. Ribadeneira is put alongside other late sixteenth and early seventeenth century authors of ethnohistory such as Antonio de Torquemada, Juan González de Mendoza, José de Acosta, Gaspar de la Cruz, Bernardino de Escalante, Pedro de Ribadeneira, Juan de Mariana, Luis de Guzmán, Pedro Chirino, Antonio de Morga, Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola, and Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas.<sup>65</sup> Ribadeneira,

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<sup>64</sup> Rubiés, "Ethnography and Cultural Translation," 272.

<sup>65</sup> Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume II: A Century of Wonder. Book 2: The Literary Arts* (University of Chicago Press, 2010) "New Historical Genres," 187-95; Nancy Vogeley,

along with these other authors, wrote works associated with providing accounts of other cultures in an evolving and fluid form.

A central feature of the travel writing that overlaps with history is the description and survey of the laws, customs, peoples and religions lands outside Europe. Many of these authors, like Ribadeneira, did more than inform about political leaders; they included much broader compilations of descriptions. Joan-Pau Rubiés notes how many travel writers went beyond “political cosmographies” to produce a more politically and moralistically detached map of the world.<sup>66</sup> Often these works, and in turn much knowledge of lands outside of Europe, were organized geographically by kingdom or by region. Relevant to any study of the construction of religion are the descriptions and comments about religion that are often found within a specific geographical region, as is the case for Ribadeneira’s *Historia*. Thus, comments about Buddhism would be found where Buddhist communities were most visibly noticeable and perceived to be most powerful. In Ribadeneira’s case, Siam was the repository of Buddhist laws and ideas. Thus, Ribadeneira’s constructive abstractions about Buddhism were located within the topic of Siam.

#### *The Author’s Intent as Regional Ethno-history*

Marcelo de Ribadeneira makes the intent of the work explicit: he sees it as an expanded global history, building upon previous work, to be distributed in Europe. His

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“China and the American Indies: A Sixteenth-century “History”,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 6, no. 2 (1997): 165–184; Caroline B Brettell, “Introduction: Travel Literature, Ethnography, and Ethnohistory,” *Ethnohistory* 33, no. 2 (1986): 127–38.

<sup>66</sup> *Travellers and Cosmographers*, 26.

*Historia* was the first major work published in Europe on the history of Asia since Juan González de Mendoza's *Historias más notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno de la China*, first published in 1585 and then translated into various languages.<sup>67</sup> Friar Ribadeneira recognized his work as an enlargement of Mendoza's history of China and justified his project as a new contribution because of his inclusion of other parts of Asia. Friar Ribadeneira was aware of the success of his predecessor's work on China and intended not only to add to the knowledge of China, but also to introduce Western readers who were clearly curious about the East to the many other kingdoms in the region for the first time. The work was intended to go beyond the history of one kingdom, in this case China, to cover a number of other countries, such as Cambodia and Siam, thereby breaking new ground.

### **Mission History**

A second function of the work was that of mission history. The work was meant not only to inform general readers and secular authorities about the East but also to give a history of the mission of the Franciscans. Christians have been writing histories of missionary activities since the book of Acts. Iberian travel and expansion in the sixteenth century created a new wave of missionary activity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, spurring the production of histories pertaining to mission travel and the establishment of Christian communities. Many of these histories were written for and about specific

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<sup>67</sup> Juan González de Mendoza, *Historia delas cosas mas notables, ritos y costumbres, del gran reyno dela China ...* (Roma: a costa de Bartholome Grassi, en la stampa de Vicentio Accolli, 1585); translated in English as Juan González de Mendoza, *The Historie of the Great and Mightie Kingdome of China, and the Situation Thereof: Together with the Great Riches, Huge Citties, Politike Governement, and Rare Inuentions in the Same. Translated out of Spanish by R. Parke.*, trans. Robert Parke (London: I. Wolfe for Edward White, 1588); see Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. III, Book 1*, 322.



missionary orders. Ribadeneira's work was one of the earliest attempts in the sixteenth century at a comprehensive history of the missionary efforts of a religious order.

*History of the Discalced Franciscan Missions*

The *Historia* was written from the perspective of the order of Discalced Friars Minor, one of the reformed branches of the Franciscan Order. Ribadeneira's superiors commissioned him to write the work as a witness to the missions of the Discalced Franciscans that crossed paths with each other in the Province of San Gregorio Magno in the Philippines. In this regard the *Historia* doubles as an institutional history of the activities of the Discalced Franciscans, as well as a description of Asian kingdoms, religions, and peoples. The institutional and spiritual characteristics of the Discalced order shaped and informed their reflections and their accounts of the religious traditions they encountered. A brief account of the institutional history of Discalced Franciscans will illuminate the values and priorities that informed how they described religious "others."

The ideal of strict poverty and mendicancy set by the Franciscan founder St. Francis of Assisi would prove difficult to uphold and would, in the Middle Ages, generate numerous reforms and splinter groups. The Discalced Friars trace their roots to sixteenth century reform movements precisely around the observance of poverty and mendicancy. Differences among the Franciscans over their founder's ideal prompted Pope Leo X to consolidate Franciscans into two main orders: the Conventuals, who typically lived in endowed convents and monasteries, and the Observants, who advocated stricter observance of poverty and mendicant practice outside monastic dwellings. Yet

some among the Observants called for even more rigorous practices around poverty and mendicancy.<sup>68</sup> The three main splinter groups of the Observant branch were the Reformed (mainly in Italy), the Recollects (mainly in France), and the Discalced Franciscans, or Alcantarines (mainly in Spain).<sup>69</sup> The Discalced movement was spearheaded by and named after St. Peter (*Pedro*) of Alcántara (1499–1562). By advocating going barefoot, not eating meat, and avoiding libraries, Alcántara called for strict observance of poverty and mendicancy that reflected the original spirit of St. Francis.<sup>70</sup> The movement was also named from its practice of going without shoes, and hence, they were sometimes called simply *descalzos* (from the Latin *discalceātus*, “barefoot”). The act of going without shoes or simple sandals was, for the Discalced Franciscans, a marker of commitment to strict poverty. The Discalced Franciscans also insisted on mendicancy and were distinguished by begging for alms. Although the Alcantarine movement did not become well known as part of Franciscan spiritual practice, Alcántara himself influenced St. Theresa of Ávila and the founding of the

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<sup>68</sup> For a more comprehensive study of Franciscans, including schism and debates over poverty, see Daniel Vaquerín Aparicio, “Vida, Espiritualidad Y Proyección Social de Los Franciscanos Descalzos En La España de La Ilustración” (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Servicio de Publicaciones, 2005), <http://eprints.ucm.es/tesis/ghi/ucm-t28046.pdf>; on poverty and reform in the middle ages, see Michael David Bailey, “Religious Poverty, Mendicancy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages,” *Church History* 72, no. 3 (September 2003): 457–83; for study around property, inheritance, and the interpretation of Franciscan poverty practices see Virpi Mäkinen, *Property Rights in the Late Medieval Discussion on Franciscan Poverty*, Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2001); Thomas Frank, “Exploring the Boundaries of Law in the Middle Ages: Franciscan Debates on Poverty, Property, and Inheritance,” *Law and Literature* 20, no. 2 (2008): 243–60, <https://doi.org/10.1525/lal.2008.20.2.243>; Melanie Brunner, “Pope John XXII and the Franciscan Ideal of Absolute Poverty” (University of Leeds, 2006), <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1095/>.

<sup>69</sup> John Patrick Donnelly, “The New Religious Orders, 1517-1648,” in *Handbook of European History 1400 - 1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Thomas A. Brady, Heiko Augustinus Oberman, and James D. Tracy, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 294.

<sup>70</sup> Michael Bihl, “Order of Friars Minor,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06281a.htm>.

Discalced Carmelites—a group more widely known for going barefoot and for their mendicant practices.<sup>71</sup>

Discalced Franciscans brought with them an understanding of what “good” religion looked like. The barefoot Friars had a high regard for ascetic discipline and took very seriously their commitments to poverty and mendicancy. They lived in common and operated under a well-organized hierarchy of leadership that culminated in the papacy. The Spanish Friars also owed allegiance to very strong monarchs who considered themselves to be the guardians of Roman Catholicism and took responsibility for its spread through their own territorial expansion. Franciscans were primed to use their commitment to poverty as a standard for the religious life. Thus, they found similarities between themselves and some Buddhist monks, as will be discussed later in this study.

### **The Early Modern Historical Genres**

Within the broader category of travel writings that fed European curiosity and desire for information about newly discovered lands and people, writers sometimes used specific designations such as *Historia* and the *Relación*, *Crónico*, *Suceso*, or *Vidas* (lives or biographies of saints or religious figures). However, even those genres are difficult to pin down. Looking at some of the different writings in the early modern period will be helpful in assessing the intention and different functions of the *Historia*. Circumstances of the formation of the text, stated goals, and methods of construction are a few helpful modes to assess the *Historia* in the context of similar writings. By contrasting them, one

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<sup>71</sup> Lázaro Iriarte, *Franciscan History: The Three Orders of St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Patricia Ross (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 176-7; see also Steven E. Turley, *Franciscan Spirituality and Mission in New Spain, 1524-1599: Conflict Beneath the Sycamore Tree (Luke 19:1-10)* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 23-28.

can get a better understanding of the expectations according to which the work was written relative to similar works by contemporary writers of the time period.

Walter Mignolo argues that one tool to think about the different writings of the period is to think about “textual formation” (*formación textual*). The *Relación* and *Cartas* (letters), for example, were technical accounts that answered specific questions that were originally intended to inform the crown, religious authorities, or some other official. These were sometimes written as letters that gave specific information that might be useful to authorities about newly discovered places and people. They were not intended to be a history, or produce a book. Some examples of *Relaciones* and *Cartas* include texts by Christopher Columbus, who wrote a letter to inform the crown about the discovery of the New World. Similarly, Herman Cortés’ letters were intended to inform the crown about the period of conquest, the state of rule, and commerce. The letters of Francis Xavier served to inform Jesuit superiors about the establishing of churches and the state of the mission field.<sup>72</sup>

*Historias*, such as Marcelo Ribadeneira’s work, exhibit from inception to reception a more widespread historical intention and character. Authors of such works set their *Historias* consciously within a historiographical horizon of previous works. For example, as revealed in the opening quote of this chapter, Ribadeneira put his work in the context of Mendoza’s history of China, acknowledging the work while also expanding the scope to other regions of the East. The methodology is also explicit in the prioritization of eyewitness informants. These could also inform religious or secular

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<sup>72</sup> Walter Mignolo, “Cartas, Crónicas y Relaciones Del Descubrimiento y La Conquista,” *Historia de La Literatura Hispanoamericana* 1, no. Epoca colonial (1982): 59.

authorities—as can be seen in the commissioning of Ribadeneira’s work—but informing authorities was imbedded within the broader historical and ethnographic project.

Comparing Ribadeneira to other works that take on the designation of *Historia* will help to contextualize the meaning of “history” in the early modern period. Another important tool Walter Mignolo uses to compare early modern histories is looking at similar subject matter and organization. Many of the writings of the period focus on a geographical area united by a common reference point (subjects such as a kingdom or several kingdoms in Asia). Works that utilize a geographic and chronological scheme form a “textual family” (*familia textual*). Each textual family can be further grouped in terms of types based on their formation, structure, discourse, and pragmatic aim.<sup>73</sup> Using Mignolo’s tool, works in mission history such as those by Ribadeneira, Gúzman, and Mendoza use similar organization through geography and chronology. The work of Acosta follows a different pattern of organization, by contrast, as its aim is not primarily historical ethnography, but a comparative moral history, seeking to organize and assess different current and past civilizations.<sup>74</sup>

The designation *Historia* is also distinguished from the *Crónica*. *Crónicas* tend to be organized in sequences of past events, sometimes in the form of lists (thus the title “Chronicle”). By contrast, *Historias* tend to be more ethnographic in presenting contemporary political and religious realities of other cultures as they appeared in the

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<sup>73</sup> Mignolo, 58.

<sup>74</sup> José de Acosta, *História natural y moral de las Indias: en que se tratan las cosas notables del cielo, y elementos, metales, plantas, y animales dellas : y los ritos, y ceremonias, leyes, y gouierno, y guerras de los Indios*, 1590; English Translation: Joseph de Acosta, *The Naturall and Morall Historie of the East and West Indies*, Tr. by E.G. [With] *Map of Peru*, 1880.

period. Thus, the *Historia* has little to do with the distant past. The past when discussed is done so with a view to explaining contemporary realities and developments. As an example, in the opening quote from the previous chapter, Ribadeneira discussed why he thought Siam, China, and Japan shared a common law. In his view, these kingdoms *now* shared a similar law because this law was established in the *past* by a founder and disseminated to different kingdoms in the East.

Mignolo cautions, however, that the borders of designations such as the *Historia* and *Crónica* were fluid. There is overlap in the nomenclature, and some cases where *Crónica* is used in place of *Historia*. This occurred in the famous early work of ethno-history by Pedro de Cieza de León, *Parte primera de la crónica del Peru* (1553).<sup>75</sup> In this example it is evident that over time, the *Crónica* would conform to *Historia*.<sup>76</sup>

The blurring of genres to conform more to the *Historia* might also be seen in works that choose the designation of *Relación*. Noemí Martín Santo's analysis of the earliest secular European writing on Japan, the "Relación del Reino de Nippon" by Bernardino de Avila Girón, provides a helpful comparison to Ribadeneira's *Historia*. Bernardino and Ribadeneira were contemporaries who referred to each other in their writing and who both witnessed the Twenty-Six Martyrs Incident. Santo notes that Bernardino was not typical of an author of either a *Historia* or a *Relación*: He was not commissioned or requested by a religious or political authority to write; neither was he a

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<sup>75</sup> Pedro de Cieza de León, *Parte primera de la chronica del Peru. Que tracta la demarcacion de sus prouincias: la descripcion dellas. Las fundaciones de las nuevas ciudades. Los ritos y costumbres de los indios. Y otras cosas estrañas dignas de ser sabidas. G.L.* (Sevilla: M. de Montesdoca, 1553).

<sup>76</sup> Walter Mignolo, "Cartas, Crónicas Y Relaciones Del Descubrimiento Y La Conquista," *Historia de La Literatura Hispanoamericana* 1, no. Epoca colonial (1982): 75-98 on histories and chronologies; quote 75: "ver o formular preguntas apremiantes a testigos oculares."

secular or religious professional. Ribadeneira was commissioned to write his *Historia* by his religious superiors, just as Christopher Columbus was instructed to write about the New World. However, Bernardino's work in many ways mimics the style of a *Historia* rather than a typical *Relación* in its descriptions of Japanese culture and the Twenty-Six Martyrs Incident. Santo's work highlights the difficulty of trying to limit the writing of the period to a specific genre.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, other genres gravitated toward *Historia*. *Historia* was a more public and comprehensive form of writing about other cultures that early modern writers tried to emulate.

### **Contributions to Modern Genres**

Works of mission history coming out of a religious institutional context had their own impact on the development of modern historiography, not in spite of religious subjects, but because of them. The focus on religious life and institutions was meticulously reported and processed, even if by necessity this data had to be interpreted from within a Christian frame of reference. Religious histories contributed to modern genres along several trajectories: contributions to ethnological methods of eyewitness informants, to humanistic approaches to religious history, and to biography and narrative writing.

#### *Contributions to Ethnographical Methods*

Although scholars have long acknowledged missionary travel writing as contributing to ethnography, the methodology utilized by works such as Ribadeneira's *Historia* contributed to the prioritization of observation and local informants as sources of

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<sup>77</sup> Martín Santo, "Cosas de Tierras Extrañas," particularly chapter 3.

cultural data. As Mignolo keenly argues, *Historias* as conceived in the early modern period were related to the Greek etymology of the word “see” or “observe.” In terms of sources *Historias* seek to “see or ask compelling questions to eyewitnesses.”<sup>78</sup> These two components of seeing and questioning go back to Cicero, but were followed in the histories of the period. Sources are both narrated and reflected upon.<sup>79</sup> *Historia* can thus be understood as a memory of the past where narration is important. Marcelo de Ribadeneira’s *Historia* focused on eyewitness and written accounts in terms of documentation. Ribadeneira explained his method and documentation in this way:

And I assumed that what I saw and what others saw was equally true, because I went through the Province conducting research and interviews about all that took place, intimating that all religious follow the precept of the superior commanding them to tell me the truth faithfully. Some of these religious coming through still lived in the kingdoms of Great China, Siam and Cochinchina. They not only informed me in their words what they suffered, saw, and learned of the remarkable things of those kingdoms, but I saw long accounts made about what they did. Regarding this information, and as God fearing men, their remarks concerning the remarkable things related to that archipelago of countless islands never lacked for truth. It is my intention to deal only with what the friars of our Province of St. Gregory have seen. I refer to other historians who have written about the various related events and of the conquest of the islands, and the religion pertaining to each place.

*(Y pretendiendo que tuviese igual verdad lo que no vi, como lo que vi, yo mismo anduve por la Provincia haciendo curiosa investigación de las cosas que habían sucedido en aquella conversión, intimando a todos los Religiosos un precepto del superior, en que mandaba se me dijese en todo fielmente la verdad. Y como aun viviesen algunos de los Religiosos que peregrinaron por los Reinos de la gran China, Siam y Conchinchina, no solo me informaron ellos de palabra de lo que padecieron, vieron y supieron de las cosas notables de aquellos Reinos, pero vi las largas relaciones que de lo sucedido tenían hechas. En las cuales, como temerosos de Dios pretendían no faltar a la verdad en lo que decían de las cosas notables de aquel Archipiélago de innumerables Islas. De las cuales solo es mi*

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<sup>78</sup> Mignolo, “Cartas, Crónicas y Relaciones,” 75.

<sup>79</sup> Mignolo, 80.



*intención tratar lo que los frailes de nuestra Provincia de S. Gregorio han visto, remitiéndome en otras cosas á otros Historiadores que escribieron los varios sucesos, que en la conquista de aquellas Islas han sucedido, y cada religión de las que hay allá historiará lo perteneciente á ella.)*<sup>80</sup>

Ribadeneira emphasized firsthand observations and accounts of the countries visited by friars and what they “saw” as most authoritative. Written accounts of friars who had firsthand experiences were given attention. These were then corroborated with other written histories and sources on a particular region.

### *Humanistic Sources of Religious History*

Because of the secular roots of history as a modern discipline, religious literature is not often seen as contributing to the development of humanistic approaches to historical writing. Studies like Richard Kagan’s *Clio and the Crown* focus on the impact of official royal histories and humanism in the development of the modern discipline of history.<sup>81</sup> Perhaps this perspective is looking back from the vantage point of a contemporary, highly secular discipline of history to the exclusion of religious literary works. Ribadeneira’s *Historia* has as its subject adventurous missionaries and their travels, while other religious works focus on the lives of saints and other religious heroes. The subject matter of religious historiography runs against the grain of modern secular sensibilities, and that may be one of the reasons religious literature is not typically taken into consideration as a serious contributor to modern historiography.

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<sup>80</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Prologue, 7-8.

<sup>81</sup> Richard L. Kagan, *Clio and the Crown: The Politics of History in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

Rady Roldán-Figueroa argues that Jesuits such as historian and biographer Pedro de Ribadeneira (1527-1611), who writes several years after and shares a last name with the author Friar Marcelo de Ribadeneira, developed a high regard for source documentation in pursuing the truth of the lives of saints. Pedro de Ribadeneira was deliberate in composing an account of saints, such as the biography of St. Ignatius of Loyola, that eschewed what he viewed as embellished and undocumented accounts of miracles. Roldán-Figueroa cautions that this skepticism of miracles can also be understood in the context of the absence of miracles associated with the founder St. Ignatius.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, Pedro de Ribadeneira set his method against those religious works prone to the pitfalls of looking to unreliable sources or supernatural explanations as evidence for historical events. Pedro instead focused on providing reliable source documentation for accounts of events in his biographies.

Writing a generation before Pedro, Marcelo de Ribadeneira's *Historia* surprisingly does not rely heavily on miracles, either to explain historical events, or to boost the status of Franciscan missionaries. Miracles are almost entirely absent from the accounts of missionaries in the first half of the book pertaining to countries other than Japan. In the account of the Japanese martyrs, their Christ-like deaths remained the most salient evidence for their imminent sainthood. The few but important miracles witnessed occurred after the death of the martyrs, and paralleled Jesus' death—for example, how

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<sup>82</sup> Rady Roldán-Figueroa, "Pedro de Ribadeneira's Vida Del P. Ignacio de Loyola (1583) and Literary Culture in Early Modern Spain," in *Exploring Jesuit Distinctiveness: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ways of Proceeding within the Society of Jesus*, ed. Robert A. Maryks, Jesuit Studies - Modernity through the Prism of Jesuit History 6 (Leiden; Boston: BRILL, 2016).

the bodies of the martyrs, like Jesus' body, did not begin to rot after death.<sup>83</sup> Ribadeneira himself did not examine the accounts of the miracles, nor did he make any direct comparison to other martyrs. He chose only to report what others witnessed, and made no claims about them as such. However, editors of the *Historia* address the witnessed miracles through an addendum to the end of the work written by Francisco Peña. Peña examined the claims to miracles, assessed their truthfulness, and compared them to similar accounts associated with past Christian martyrs.<sup>84</sup> The *Historia* focused on the human sources of information to depict and describe events in history. Similarly, the work relied on informants, local and missionary. God and miracles were present in the *Historia*, but the sources of documentation were humanistic.

#### *Contributions to Biography and Narrative Writing*

Modern scholars have noted that early modern *Historias* over centuries resembled in narrative style the modern genre of biography. Ribadeneira's *Historia* relied on eyewitness ethnographic accounts. These accounts are often written in narrative form, following the travels of an individual missionary or a mission party. The narrative style of Ribadeneira and other writers of *Historias* leads to an overlap with biography. Many *Historias* often included biographical information often resembling *Vidas* (*Lives* of saints, missionary heroes, etc.). Ribadeneira's *Historia* incorporated the lives of missionaries and martyrs. Additionally, events and observations are narrated through the eyes of the missionaries providing information. Ribadeneira, for his own approach,

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<sup>83</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book VI, Chapter 22.

<sup>84</sup> Francisco Peña, "Sobre los señales y prodigios que se siguieron después de su muerte" (Roma: Impresa Nicolás Mucio, 1599).

narrates mostly from a third person perspective, even though he was present at many of the events he writes about. Very rarely does Ribadeneira provide his personal interpretation, for the most part subsuming his voice in narration. In fact, Castro notes how difficult it is to hear Ribadeneira's own voice because he gives priority to the stories of the friars.<sup>85</sup>

### **Contemporary Reception and Reading of the *Historia***

Reading the *Historia* as a regional history of Asia brings to the foreground the insights the friars had about religious life in the diverse kingdoms of the region. In order to restore the *Historia* to its intended place as a regional history, the contemporary reception of the work must be critically assessed. In the following, I examine some of the more common ways that the *Historia* has been received and been seen as useful by contemporary scholars. The regional character of the *Historia* has not been taken into consideration when evaluating the impact of this work. More commonly the work has been used as an important historical resource or primary text that illuminates the concerns of scholars and historians about specific regions or topics covered in the work. Because the Japanese persecution and the Twenty-Six Martyrs Incident was such a watershed event, the work has been often associated with it as an important source on Japan, while it has also been read as a Franciscan polemical account of the execution. Because the work has also discussed regions not typically covered in published works, it has also been an important resource for specific national histories. Japan figures prominently in the way that Ribadeneira has been received by contemporary scholars.

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<sup>85</sup> Castro, "Fr. Marcelo de Ribadeneira, OFM."

*The Historia as National Histories*

One of the more common contemporary readings of the *Historia* is from the perspective of modern national histories. The work covers a vast array of kingdoms and city-states, and this early modern geography was the primary principle of organization for this and other works of history written during the period. The geographical organization has made it easy to locate observations of a particular land, kingdom, or region. Ribadeneira ascribed clear boundaries to kingdoms and city-states, and often used these political markers as the organizing principle in their published works. By organizing the *Historia* geographical by political and cultural groups, Ribadeneira contributed to the European classification of the culture and geographic boundaries of the region. Some of these boundaries and cultures existed prior to the arrival of European, and some were formed by European contact (such as the notion of a single entity—the Philippines out of diverse people and political entities), while others were perceived as entities or were in transition to take on early modern designations. Further, the early modern perception of the political boundaries served as an important source of information for historians interested in how modern nation states emerged out of the city-states and kingdoms of the early modern period. Scholars focused on geography or national history have been keenly interested in looking at early modern sources such as Ribadeneira's *Historia* to understand the early modern accounts of specific regions.

In terms of contributions to individual national histories, the *Historia* is frequently cited as an important source on Japan. Japan played an important role in the formation of the work. The outbreak of persecution that resulted in the Twenty-Six Martyrs Incident

that included many Franciscans shook Europeans greatly and proved a watershed event in the history of Europeans in Asia. Ribadeneira worked in Japan prior to the outbreak, and was witness to the event, barely escaping with his life. Many of the martyrs were personal friends and brothers of Ribadeneira as well. His account is thus an invaluable source for scholars interested in reconstructing the persecution and martyrdoms that occurred in Japan. Over half of the book is dedicated to Japan. It is also an important source for the history of Christianity in understanding where Christians had active communities, and the individuals who served there. In this regard Ribadeneira provides extensive biographical information on the lives of the martyrs.<sup>86</sup> Ribadeneira's *Historia* is also the first extensive account of Japan by a non-Jesuit.<sup>87</sup>

Although Japan held a prominent place in the *Historia*, it is but one among many geographic regions and kingdoms covered. The first half of the over 700-page book addresses a variety of other kingdoms visited by the Franciscans. The *Historia* was an important publication that substantially addressed mission and travel to several countries. It is also counted among the first works to circulate in Europe on some of these countries.

Among the regions in the first half of the book, the first is the Philippines. The Philippines was home base for all of the Franciscans in the Province of San Gregorio Magno. Franciscans were very active in the Christianization process and established religious institutions. It was in the Philippines that Ribadeneira interviewed missionaries

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<sup>86</sup> Charles Ralph Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1640* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951); Robert Richmond Ellis, *They Need Nothing Hispanic-Asian Encounters of the Colonial Period* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), uses Ribadeneira as a primary source for chapter 1 on Japan; Martín Santo, "Cosas de Tierras Extrañas."

<sup>87</sup> Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. III, Book 1*, 322.

and other witnesses for the work, collected documents, and began composing the *Historia*. The work became a primary source for future historians on the history of Christianity in the Philippines, and specifically the history of the Franciscans in the Philippines.<sup>88</sup>

Ribadeneira's *Historia* also contains important information and documentation on Spanish missions to China from the Philippines. Johannes Beckmann rates Ribadeneira's *Historia* as the best representation of missionary accounts of China coming from the Philippines for historical knowledge and extensive mission history.<sup>89</sup> The *Historia* thus provided information about the first generation of missionaries to China.

Mainland Southeast Asia was generally considered to be under Portuguese patronage. Although the Spanish contributions do not fit within the stated boundaries of the Iberian powers, they did make contributions to knowledge of those areas, and Ribadeneira is among the early Spanish language publications covering mainland Southeast Asia. Ribadeneira's *Historia* is cited as a main source to examine missionary

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<sup>88</sup> Ribadeneira is used extensively in the later history of the Franciscan Province, Juan Francisco de San Antonio, *Chronicas de la apostolica Provincia de S. Gregorio de Religiosos Descalzos de N.S.P.S. Francisco en las Islas Philipinas, China, Japon, etc. Parte primera en que se incluye la descripcion de estas islas que consagra a la S.C.R. Magestad D. Phelipe V el Animoso, nuestro Catholic0 Rey y Augusto Emperador de las Espailas la misma santa Provincia y en su noihbre su Ministro Rovincial, escrita por el P. Fr. Juan Francisco de S. Antonio, Matritense, Lector de Theologia Escholastica y Moral, Ex-Diffmidor y Chmnista General de dicha Provincia* ([Sampoloc] : Imprensa en la imprenta del vso de la propria provincia, sita en el Convento de N[uest]ra. Señora de Loreto del Pueblo de Sampaloc, extra-muros de la ciudad de Manila: por Fr. Juan del Sotillo, 1738), <http://archive.org/details/chronicadelaapo00sana>; for recent scholarship see María Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo, *Filipinas: la gran desconocida, 1565-1898* (Díaz-Trechuelo: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2001); and Lucio Gutiérrez, *Historia de la Iglesia en Filipinas (1565-1900)* (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992).

<sup>89</sup> Johannes Beckmann, "Neuerscheinungen zur Chinesischen Missionsgeschichte von 1945-1955," *Monumenta Serica* 15, no. 2 (1956): 378–462, see especially p. 393.

presence in Southeast Asia in general.<sup>90</sup> In terms of mainland Southeast Asia, Ribadeneira also offers a substantial account of Siam.<sup>91</sup>

Cambodia is another important area of the *Historia*'s contribution. The Portuguese explorers and missionaries were indeed the first Europeans to enter Cambodia (missionary Gaspar de Cruz arrived in Cambodia in 1555 or 1556). Official chronicler of Portuguese India Diogo do Couto also wrote in manuscript form the earliest description of the remnants of the ancient Khmer capital of Angkor. Couto composed the manuscript in the second half of the sixteenth century based on the account of Portuguese missionary Antonio da Magdalena. However, Couto's manuscript was not published until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>92</sup> Publications did not emerge until the Spanish began efforts to gain access to the mainland from the Philippines. Within the wave of Spanish publications, Ribadeneira's *Historia* provided the first description of the ancient ruins of the Khmer city of Angkor Wat, thereby bringing Cambodia into the awareness of Europeans.<sup>93</sup>

Ribadeneira's *Historia* remains an important account for regional and national histories, including Southeast Asia, and the individual countries within this region, as

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<sup>90</sup> Tara Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion: Catholicism in Southeast Asia, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>91</sup> Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion*; Nadchaphon Srisongkram, "Los Franciscanos Españoles En El Siam de La Era de Ayutthaya: La Descripción de Fray Marcelo de Ribadeneyra" (Catalogación y estudio de las traducciones de los franciscanos españoles, Universidad de Valladolid, No date), <http://www.traduccion-franciscanos.uva.es>.

<sup>92</sup> Bernard P. Groslier, *Angkor and Cambodia in the Sixteenth Century: According to Portuguese and Spanish Sources*, trans. Michael Smithies (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2005), 49ff. for Couto's unpublished account; Groslier also discusses Ribadeneira's published account; Robert Richmond Ellis, "Cambodia in the Writings of Diego Aduarte and Gabriel Quiroga de San Antonio," *Hispanic Research Journal* 8, no. 3 (June 2007): 219.

<sup>93</sup> Ribadeneira asserts he is the first to publish an account about Cambodia. Thus far, no other published work has contested this claim. Further, Ribadeneira so far remains the first published account of the ancient city of Angkor. See Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. III, Book 3*, 1147; and also *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. I, Book 2*, 501.



well as China and Japan. And yet, unlike some other writings in the period that cover a single region, the *Historia* covers almost the entire swath of Asia to which the Franciscans could gain maritime access, from the Andaman Sea to Japan.

### *The Historia As Biographical Hagiography*

Ribadeneira's *Historia* is perhaps most commonly understood in terms of biography, or sometimes as hagiography. About half the work concerns Japan, including a brief account of Japanese religion, society, and political systems; the Japanese mission; an extensive section on the Japanese execution of twenty-six Christians in 1597 and its aftermath; and the biographies of the twenty-six martyrs. Thus, one important motive for the work was to document the deaths of the martyrs. Ribadeneira was not unlike other writers telling the stories of religious heroes in the early modern period, but his work set the tone for the growing wave of similar publications on Japanese martyrs from other orders that circulated widely in a variety of languages and countries well into the nineteenth century.<sup>94</sup> Further, Ribadeneira was a primary source for future writers who retold the story of the martyrs in *Vidas* and hagiographies.<sup>95</sup>

In order to assess whether the *Historia* should be read primarily as a work of hagiography, his employment of hagiographic language should be evaluated throughout

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<sup>94</sup> Rady Roldán-Figueroa, "Christian Martyrdom in Japan and Logroño's Theological Nobility in the Chorography of Fernando Alvia de Castro (1572–1640?)," paper presented at Sixteenth Century Society & Conference, August 18-20, 2016. Roldán-Figueroa's current project includes a quantitative study of publications about the martyrs of Japan. His preliminary findings show over 500 works published that include the persecutions in Japan and the martyrs.

<sup>95</sup> As an example, Balthazar de Medina uses Ribadeneira as a primary source for the life of San Felipe de Jesus, one of twenty-six martyrs of Nagasaki. See Baltasar de Medina, *Vida, martyrio y beatificacion del invicto Proto-Martyr del Japon San Felipe de Jesus, patron de Mexico su patria, Imperial Corte de Nueva España en el Nuevo Mundo* (Mexico: Por Juan de Ribera, 1683), <http://bvpb.mcu.es/es/consulta/registro.cmd?id=397426>.

the whole of the work. Ribadeneira employed some hagiographic language to describe the Franciscan martyrs in Japan, such as “the blessed Martyrs,” “the glorious Martyrs,” and “the Saints,” among other accolades.<sup>96</sup> Their persecutions and deaths were likened as direct imitations of the life of St. Francis and of Jesus Christ. Given that the Japanese chose crucifixion as one of the more conspicuous methods of killing Christians, such analogies are not only understandable but to be expected. Franciscan theology and spirituality are Christocentric, notably oriented toward the Christ figure and the attempt to follow St. Francis’ interpretation of imitating Christ. The Franciscan Christological theme is evident throughout Ribadeneira’s description of the Twenty-Six Martyrs, as exemplified in a chapter titled: “How the life and death of the holy Martyrs is an altarpiece of the Life and Passion of Jesus Christ, our Lord” (*Como la vida y muerte de los santos Mártires es un retablo de la Vida y Pasión de Jesucristo, Nuestro Señor*).<sup>97</sup>

Ribadeneira certainly intended the sections on Japan and the persecutions as a commemoration of the Franciscan martyrs in Japan, many of whom were Ribadeneira’s companions and spiritual brothers. Yet he also *reported* that the martyrs were treated as saints after death by Christians: Jesuits and other Christians visited the remains of the dead and venerated their relics, acts performed in the certain expectation of the martyrs’ sainthood.<sup>98</sup> Apart from the descriptions of the death of the martyrs, and their biographies, Ribadeneira was restrained in his use of hagiographical language. The first three books and the description of Japan are devoid of hagiographic themes.

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<sup>96</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, uses such descriptions throughout Books IV, V, and VI.

<sup>97</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book V, Chapter 22.

<sup>98</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book V, see Chapters 24 and 29.

Ribadeneira did not hesitate to include less “glorious” and more embarrassing encounters. The Franciscans made mistakes in their mission, and Ribadeneira reported them in part to not exclude from the history, but also to serve as didactic lessons of the cross-cultural mishaps. In one such episode, a group of Spanish friars arrived in “Cochinchina” (Southern Vietnam) with Portuguese merchants, who promised they would find translators to assist the friars in their mission; unfortunately, the merchants found no one. The local governor made for the new arrivals a great feast with food and dancing and instructed his security team to escort the friars. The friars became confused and frightened when they saw an altar in the distance with large cutlasses and blood and mistook the slaughtered calf for a person. Not understanding the language and convinced that they were taken to be sacrificed to idols, the friars began grabbing hold of icons and crosses, fervently confessing to one another, and professing their faith without being understood by the locals in a hasty and chaotic preparation for their supposed martyrdom. The Portuguese convinced them otherwise and took them back to the ship, but it would sour their stay, and the locals would not receive them after they made such a public spectacle. The friars resolved to leave after twenty days without success in either communicating with the locals or getting into their good graces.<sup>99</sup> This episode is one among several instances of cross-cultural embarrassment as Spanish friars ventured to new kingdoms in Asia. Episodes such as this one illustrates that the *Historia* is not so easily captured as or reduced to a hagiographical work.

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<sup>99</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, see Chapter 16.

### **Reading the *Historia* as Regional History Across Multiple Genres**

Too often the *Historia* is interpreted narrowly through the lens of particular national histories, as an account of martyrs, or an example of inter-confessional competition between different Catholic orders that erupted in Asia. In this chapter I have argued that in order to appreciate the contributions the *Historia* made to the comparison of cultural realities in differing kingdoms and city-states within the East, it must be read through the lens of its original intention as a synthetic regional history that served multiple intertwining purposes. Such a reading takes seriously the ethnographic method of data collection, and narrative style of the *Historia*. Only from the vantage point of regional history can Ribadeneira's synthesis of information from a variety of locations with Buddhist adherents be fully appreciated. The *Historia* contributed in early modern writing in specific areas. The *Historia* contributed to geography by constructing the East regionally, and by documenting the early histories of national histories. In the area of sacred biography, The *Historia* provided a modern way of writing about the saints and martyrs with the use of primary sources and interviews. The *Historia* also contributed to writing ethnographic history through the method of collection of first-hand accounts in the documentation of non-European cultures. These included first order encounters, in the manner that characterized many of the friars, who focused on rich descriptions of practices and providing accurate information, over theologizing about non-European traditions.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE NEW “ROME OF THE EAST”: MANILA AS A GLOBAL MISSION CENTER

### Global Mission Reach of the Discalced Friars Minor

The context for the composition and collection sources of Ribadeneira’s *Historia* took place in the global hub of Manila in the Philippines. This chapter sets the missionary accounts in the *Historia* within the context of Manila, the crossroads of the new Iberian global economy and missionary launching ground. I argue that intensified travel and exposure to new cultures and traditions was one of the most significant factors leading to the Western identification and classification of non-Abrahamic religious traditions. Extensive transoceanic travel to countries with traditions and practices that would come to be identified by the name “Buddhism” was a necessary precondition for westerners to identify that these traditions and practices shared the same religion. Only through this exposure and knowledge of different iterations of a perceived shared religious framework was it possible to abstract a religion containing different branches and schools. This chapter examines how missionaries fulfilled this precondition of engagement with a variety of the traditions that came to be known as Buddhists in the west. Throughout this chapter Buddhist traditions will be used to refer to religious communities now known as Buddhists.

In order to travel and engage with a variety of cultures in Asia, friars used the Philippines as their headquarters in bold efforts to missionize throughout the region. These efforts involved violating protocols, styling themselves as diplomats, taking advantage of loopholes in rules about who had jurisdiction over missionary activity,

integrating themselves into multiple ethnic communities in Manila in order to prepare to enter their countries, sailing with merchant trade ships in exchange for religious services, and joining the missions of other orders.

The Philippines played a central role as a major location for launching missionary travel and was a meeting point of complex missionary networks. The Philippines quickly shifted from the periphery of mission stations to become a launching point for sending missionaries to various corners of maritime Asia. The Philippines did not only become a center for sending missions; it was also a meeting point for travel, and served as a training ground for missionaries exposed to the language and culture of the various Asians living in the Philippines. Franciscans also undertook significant collaborations with Augustinians and Dominicans. Although these three mendicant orders were closer to each other than they were to the Jesuits, they also accessed Jesuit networks in the Philippines. These networks out of Manila were global in scope, and competed in size with, if not exceeded, that of the Jesuits under Portuguese patronage. Furthermore, from the Philippines, missionaries also crossed the boundaries of Spanish-Portuguese patronage spheres and connected with missionary networks that were administered through Portuguese-run missionary stations in Malacca, China, and Japan. These networks further exposed friars to Buddhist traditions in East and Southeast Asia.

The vast missionary networks that converged in the Philippines and shared knowledge about non-European cultures merit more attention that has been granted in scholarship undertaking the diversification of the category of religion. Case studies and sources of Spanish Catholic encounters in Buddhist majority areas of Asia remain

understudied. This is in part because Buddhist majority areas in Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Vietnam), China, and Japan, were under Portuguese mission patronage. Scholarship has understandably focused on Portuguese sources and because of Portugal's many "firsts" in trade and missions, it has dominated scholarship about European representations of politics and religion.<sup>100</sup> Spanish missionaries were often subject to the authority of Portuguese patronage or functioned outside the usual channels of geographic jurisdiction. However, Spanish friars were able to circumvent Portuguese patronage, while also defying the Jesuit monopoly in East Asia, even though there were many official limitations and obstacles to their travel. The following considers the limitations and obstacles to their travel, and the means they used to get around, or in some cases disregard, these obstacles.

### **Asia as a Testing Ground for the Iberian Line of Demarcation**

Asia was the fighting ground for contestations about geographic jurisdiction. The missionary orders were bound up in jurisdictional claims that religious and secular authorities attempted to impose on them. Franciscan missionaries, as recounted in Ribadeneira's *Historia*, were among the boldest proponents of their perceived right to unhindered access to new mission fields created by Spain's new global trade routes. In order to access Spain's new trade networks, missionaries justified their travel in a variety of ways.

The historical setting for the disputes over missionary travel go back to the early years of Iberian exploration. The church issued a series of papal bulls outlining policies

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<sup>100</sup> John M Headley, "Spain's Asian Presence, 1565-1590: Structures and Aspirations," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (1995): 623-46.

intended to aid in the missionary effort and to reduce potential territorial conflict between the Iberian powers of Portugal and Spain. Spurred by Christopher Columbus' voyages to the Americas, the 1493 papal bull *Inter Caetera* by Alexander VI formed a dividing line of jurisdiction between Iberian powers in the Atlantic Ocean. Missionary ventures and the establishment of churches in newly explored lands and colonies to the west of the Atlantic were put under Spanish patronage (the *Patronato Real*), and lands to the east, including the first African colonies, were put under Portuguese patronage (the *Padroado Real*). Portugal and Spain (then Castile and Aragon) confirmed the general outlines of the patronage division in the Treaty of Tordesillas that same year. The Treaty of Tordesillas granted Spain rights to lands discovered 100 leagues west of Cape Verde, and the Portuguese rights to lands east of the demarcation. Pope Leo X confirmed this division and the patronage system for missionaries in 1514. Because these new lands and colonies were so far away from Europe, the patronage system was intended to harness the financial and organizational support of the Iberian powers to facilitate mission work during exploration, trade, and settlement.

The papal bulls and treaties that divided the globe between Iberian powers were made prior to Iberian exploration of Asia. Spanish and Portuguese exploration and colonization projects were new developments that blurred and tested lines of demarcation and patronage. Portugal made it to Asia first. From bases in Malacca (Malaysia) and Macau (China), Portugal claimed mainland Southeast Asia, the Moluccas, and much of East Asia in its sphere. Spain's entry into Asia and the colonization of the Philippines was the first major contestation of the lines of demarcation. The Iberian Union (1580-



1640) also complicated matters as the Spanish Hapsburgs laid claim to the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, while Spain tried to access Asian trade ports.<sup>101</sup>

Within these complex jurisdictional disputes, missionaries had their own ambitions. Missionaries formulated various strategies and arguments that resisted encroachments by secular and religious authorities and took advantage of travel opportunities. Franciscans in the Philippines liberally interpreted the new political reality, reasoning that they had a right and duty to preach the gospel in as many countries as possible—including lands under Portuguese control and monopolized by the Jesuits, such as Japan. Spanish Franciscans embarked on missionary ventures by attaching themselves to Portuguese merchants, who took them to mainland Southeast Asia, China and Japan, in return for performing masses and hearing confessions. They also performed official and unofficial diplomatic functions as consuls and envoys of Spain to such places as China and Japan. As a result, friars travelled extensively in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and encountered many traditions in the Buddhist world of East and Southeast Asia.

### **Portuguese Goa: The “Rome of the East”**

Until the Spanish arrived in the Philippines, the main point of entry for Europeans to Asia was through the Portuguese controlled Goa in India, through the route called the *Carreira de India*. The Portuguese route went around Africa to India, to the islands of Southeast Asia, and to East Asia. From the early sixteenth century, until the arrival of

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<sup>101</sup> For the disputes over jurisdiction of the orders in the period of the united crown see Horacio de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines: 1581-1768* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 419-21, 258ff; and Marcelo de Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 20, 161-3, Book VI, Chapter 3, 331ff.

Spanish, and later Dutch merchants, Portugal was the only European power in Asia. From India they went through the Straits of Malacca and in 1511 conquered the city of Malacca and established colonial outposts. In Macau, China, the Portuguese administered the trade city, and they forged trade relations with Siam and other ports in Southeast Asia. For several years the Portuguese were the only Europeans to trade in Japan as well. All missionary activity followed the Portuguese trade routes, and flowed through Goa. For decades Goa was alone as meeting point for Christian missions, and was known as the “Rome of the East.”<sup>102</sup>

### **Spanish Manila: The New “Rome of the East”**

The arrival of Spain to Asia arguably made more of an impact than Portugal in being fully global, not only in trade and politics, but also in terms of its impact on expanding knowledge and exposure to religious traditions. The establishment of the Spanish in Manila would create new global connections. Increase in travel, and the opening of new trade destinations to and from Manila had significant consequences for missionaries. Missionaries were able to use newly opened trade routes to gain access to many different parts of Asia. Friars also took advantage of the crown’s recruitment of missionaries to aid in the process of colonization and Christianization of the islands. They gladly heeded the call, but often used the Philippines not as a final destination, but a point of departure to other parts of Asia.

During the last quarter of the sixteenth century, Spanish sailors discovered a new route from the Americas to the islands of the Philippines. This new route would change

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<sup>102</sup> Juan Hernández Hortigüela, “Felipe II Y La Conquista Política, Militar Y Espiritual de China (Filipinas Puente Hacia China),” *Revista Filipina* 13, no. 3 (2009): Online.

the center of gravity of European engagement with Asia from Goa to Manila. Manila would displace Goa among missionary orders as the “Rome of the East.” For this reason, Manila was thought of by the orders as a “gateway” or “bridge” (*puente*) for mission ventures to countries in East and Southeast Asia.<sup>103</sup>

### *Spain’s New Route to Asia*

The Spanish conquest of the archipelago of the Philippines made possible the creation of a new and thriving center of Catholic missionary activity at the behest of the Spanish crown. For this center to be possible, Spain had to gain a foothold in Asia, since Portugal remained the only other European country of influence there for the better part of the sixteenth century. The conquest of the archipelago was cause for tension between Spain and Portugal. Spain’s entry into Asia challenged the Treaty of Tordesillas. The treaty was signed before the Iberian kingdoms had sailed to the Pacific Ocean.

Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama navigated to India around the Southern horn of Africa in 1497, and arrived in India in 1498. From Goa and Calcutta, Portuguese explorers moved west to Southeast and East Asia. By the time the Spanish found a new route to Asia, the Portuguese were already established in the neighboring regions of Malacca and the Malay Peninsula, the Moluccas, and Macau, with trading communities in ports in mainland Southeast Asia.

While seeking an alternative route to access the lucrative spice trade in the Moluccas, a Spanish expedition led by Ferdinand Magellan (*Fernando de Magallanes*) navigated the Pacific by way of New Spain, arriving in the Philippines in 1521.

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<sup>103</sup> Hortigüela.

Following the discovery of the new route to Asia through the Pacific, known as the Strait of Magellan, Spain in the 1520s began successful explorations of the islands in Southeast Asia. Spanish vessels continued to trade and travel, as both countries laid claim to the spice islands of the Moluccas. To avoid conflicts, and to resolve the “Moluccas issue,” Emperor Charles V of Spain and King John III of Portugal signed the Treaty of Zaragoza (also known as the Treaty of Sargasso) on April 22, 1529. Under the terms of the treaty, Spain sold the Moluccas to Portugal and established itself in the Philippines, despite the fact that the archipelago was understood by some to be in the Portuguese demarcation zone. The conquest and Hispanicization of the archipelago would begin in earnest in 1565 with the expedition of Miguel López de Legazpi sent from Mexico City at the behest of Phillip II. Captain Legazpi managed to broker an initial peace that began the process of establishing a colonial government in the Philippines.<sup>104</sup>

**Figure 3.1. Map of Southeast Asia “Indiæ Orientalis Nova Description” by Jan Jansson (1644-45). Includes the navigation route used by the Spanish.**

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<sup>104</sup> J. Gayo Aragón, “The Controversy over Justification of Spanish Rule in the Philippines,” in *Studies in Philippine Church History*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 3–43; see also the first hand account of Antonio De Morga, *The Philippine Islands, Moluccas, Siam, Cambodia, Japan, and China* (Applewood Books, 2009), originally published in Mexico City in 1609. For sources and documents related to Spanish history in the Philippines see Emma Helen Blair et al., *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1803: Explorations by Early Navigators, Descriptions of the Islands and Their Peoples, Their History and Records of the Catholic Missions, as Related in Contemporaneous Books and Manuscripts, Showing the Political, Economic, Commercial and Religious Conditions of Those Islands from Their Earliest Relations with European Nations to the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* Vols. I-III (Cleveland, Ohio: A.H. Clark Co., 1903-1909).



(Source: Dutch cartographer J. Janssonius, *Novus atlas, das ist Welt-beschreibung mit schönen neuen ausführlichen Taffeln inhaltende die Königreiche und Länder des gantzten Erdtreichs*, Amsterdam, 1644-45. Digital scan reproduced with permission of Sanderus Maps, Gent, Belgium, [www.sanderusmaps.com](http://www.sanderusmaps.com).)

### *The First Global Trade Route*

From the very beginning, European observers cited location as an important asset of the Philippines. The proximity of the Philippines to neighboring kingdoms, especially China, was as much a prize as its goods. From Manila travelers could venture to China,

India, Japan, Malacca, and the Moluccas and mainland Southeast Asia.<sup>105</sup> Before the arrival of Europeans, many trade routes between large metropolitan ports in Asia and Southeast Asia such as Ayutthaya in Siam, Aceh, Bantam, and Malacca thrived.<sup>106</sup> Portugal, and Spain more fully, built on these existing routes, and by connecting them to the Americas and Europe, expanded global trade. These ports became accessible to missionaries as well if they could find the means and justification to venture outside of Manila.

Access to travel occurred through Manila. The ships traversing the Magellan Straits from Manila to Acapulco in Mexico were known as the Manila Galleon (also known as *Nao de China* or *Nao de Acapulco*), and these ships connected trading goods originating in Asia, the Americas, and Europe. The Acapulco-Manila route would last two and a half centuries.<sup>107</sup> Along with Spanish and Portuguese merchants, Chinese, Japanese and Southeast Asians merchants congregated in Manila to trade in the new markets going to New Spain and Europe. From Manila merchandise would go to Acapulco where some of the commercial items were exchanged for money, and some

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<sup>105</sup> Pedro Chirino, *Relación de las Islas Filipinas : y de lo que en ellas han trabajado, los padres de la Compañía de Jesús*, 2nd ed., Biblioteca de la “Revista católica de Filipinas” (Manila: D. Esteban Balbás, 1890), 18, <https://archive.org/details/aqn8202.0001.001.umich.edu>.

<sup>106</sup> Andrew Christian Peterson, “Making the First Global Trade Route: The Southeast Asian Foundations of the Acapulco-Manila Galleon Trade, 1519 - 1650” (PhD diss., University of Hawai’i at Manoa, 2014), 71–72.

<sup>107</sup> John M Headley, “Spain’s Asian Presence, 1565-1590: Structures and Aspirations,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (1995): 634.

sent to Seville. This network of commerce created the first global trade route in history.<sup>108</sup>

Portugal, by contrast, had no direct connection to the Americas and Europe without going through Africa. Under the Iberian Union of 1580, dynastic union under the Spanish Hapsburgs further pushed Spain into trading regions the Portuguese had previously reserved for themselves. Spain's circumnavigation of the globe, and their claims over Portugal, gave rise to a global power whose full dimensions historians have sometimes failed to appreciate. As John Headley notes, "the extraordinary encompassment of the globe" was the "first oceanic power in history, the first truly world power."<sup>109</sup> The height of Spain's power, both globally, and in Europe, occurred several years before the English defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

The islands of Southeast Asia were known for riches in raw goods and proximity to populous and prosperous neighboring kingdoms like China. The Philippines itself had natural resources and was an important acquirement of the Spanish crown. From as early as Marco Polo's description of Java as a place where "there is such wealth, that no man in the world could calculate or describe it,"<sup>110</sup> European travelers frequently lauded Southeast Asian port-cities as prosperous and rich. Southeast Asian goods and

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<sup>108</sup> Geoffrey C. Gunn, *First Globalization: The Eurasian Exchange, 1500 to 1800* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Gaston Fornes and Alan Butt Philip, "The China-Latin America Axis: Following the Path of the Manila Galleon," *AIB Insights* 14, no. 1 (2014): 7; Noemí Martín Santo, "'Cosas de Tierras Extrañas': Textos Y Contextos de La Relación Del Reyno Del Nippon de Bernardino de Ávila" (PhD diss., Boston University, 2016), 20–21.

<sup>109</sup> Headley, "Spain's Asian Presence, 1565-1590," 623.

<sup>110</sup> Narrative of Marco Polo in Colin Jack-Hinton, "Marco Polo in South-East Asia: A Preliminary Essay in Reconstruction," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 5, no. 2 (1964): 47; citation and quote from Tara Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion: Catholicism in Southeast Asia, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

merchandise were also described as “a garden of earthly delights.”<sup>111</sup> The Philippines would not in itself be a financial gain for Spain, as will be discussed later in this chapter. However, the access to neighboring ports and trade networks were important factors for Spanish trade. Port-cities accessible to Manila boasted not only of raw materials like silks and saffron, but also of manufactured goods like glassware and lacquered furniture. Many of these manufactured goods came from China and India, but also as far away as the Arabian peninsula, Persia and the east coast of Africa.<sup>112</sup> The bustling trade created a global world system: “At Manila, silver-surfeited Spaniards met silver-hungry Ming Chinese, thereby making the Philippines the great conduit for siphoning American bullion into Asia and beginning the creation of a world economy.”<sup>113</sup> The access to America, and through America, Europe, created a world economic exchange from Manila to Seville. The global economic system extended as well to religious paraphernalia. As an example of a microcosm of globalization, statues of the biblical figures such as the Virgin Mary made from ivory imported from Africa were carved by Chinese artisans in Manila and sold as goods in Mexico.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion*, 2 based on the descriptions of Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa. An Account of the Countries Bordering on the Indian Ocean and Their Inhabitants, Written by Duarte Barbosa and Completed about the Year 1518 A.D.*, trans. Mansel Longworth Dames, vol. 2 (New Delhi, 2002), Vol. 2, 164-75, and Alexandre de Rhodes, *Divers voyages et missions de P. Alexandre de Rhodes en la Chine, & autres royaumes de l’Orient: avec son retour en Europe par la Perse & l’Armenie ...* (Paris: Chez S. Cramoisy, imprimeur ordinaire du roy & de la reyne, 1653), 39.

<sup>113</sup> Headley, “Spain’s Asian Presence, 1565-1590,” 634.

<sup>114</sup> Bethany Aram and Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, eds., *Global Goods and the Spanish Empire, 1492-1824: Circulation, Resistance and Diversity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), see especially Chapter 9: “Asian Silk, Porcelain and Material Culture in the Definition of Mexican and Andalusian Elites, c. 1565–1630,” by José Luis Gasch-Tomás, 153–73.



*Missionaries in the Philippines*

New commercial routes to and from the Philippines were vehicles for missionaries to access new lands. Missionaries were very much aware of different objectives between themselves and merchants, and at times made explicit contrast between the less noble quest for “wealth” and the more rewarding quest for “souls.”<sup>115</sup> At the same time missionaries had access to non-Christian souls precisely because of the quest for trade and wealth. Furthermore, missionary work was patronized by the Spanish crown to establish church institutions, hospitals, and schools that would provide a stable civil society so that trade and commerce could thrive.

Christianization was one of the central objectives in the Legazpi expedition from the start, for instance, and a group of Augustinians, led by Friar Andrés de Urdaneta, accompanied the 1565 fleet. The Augustinians were the first of the major regular orders to arrive in the Philippines. The second order to arrive were the Discalced Friars Minor in 1577. Pedro de Alfaro led the Franciscan group, who were initially bound for the Solomon Islands in 1576 but were redirected by Royal Order to the Philippines.<sup>116</sup> The

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<sup>115</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 20, 161; Alexander de Rhodes and Giovanni Filippo de Marini made similar comments on new converts as great treasures Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion*, 4.

<sup>116</sup> There is some confusion about the date of the first arrival of the Franciscans, as some Franciscan popular sources and internet sites claim the arrival year as 1578. The biographer of Alfaro’s life, Francisco de Santa Inés’ *Crónica de la provincia de San Gregorio Magno de religiosos descalzos de N.S.P. San Francisco en las islas Filipinas, China, Japón, etc.* (Manila, Tipo-litografía de Chofre comp., originally prepared in 1693, but due to substantial damage, remained in a university archive until its publication in 1892), Vol. I, p. 124, claims the arrival to Manila as June 1577. Other records show August 1577; see Blaire, et. al., *The Philippine Islands, 1493*, Vol. III, 125-6. This 1577 arrival date is preferred by Lach and Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. III, Book 1*, 215. However, it is dismissed for a July 2, 1578 arrival by Lorenzo Pérez (O.F.M.), *Origen de las misiones franciscanas en el Extremo Oriente* (Madrid: Impr. de G. Lopez del Homo, 1916), 173-92. Pérez’s preferred dating has perhaps caused or at least contributed to the discrepancy in dating the arrival of the first Franciscans on popular websites and histories about Franciscans in the Philippines. Others such as Ubaldo Iaccarino, “Comercio y Diplomacia Entre Japón y Filipinas En La Era Keichō (1596-1615)” (PhD diss., Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Institut

first Jesuits arrived in 1580, with Antonio Sedeño as Superior of the mission, Alonso Sánchez and Brother Nicolas Gallardo. The Jesuits accompanied the future first Bishop to the islands, the Dominican Domingo Salazar, from Mexico to Manila.<sup>117</sup> The first large group of Dominicans, however, arrived a few years later in 1587. The last of the regular orders to arrive in this formative period was the Recollects, who landed in Cebu in 1606.<sup>118</sup>

The Philippines quickly became a regional center of jurisdictional authority and a meeting point for many missionaries in regular orders as well as secular priests. In the early years, secular as well as religious administration was managed from Mexico. Manila was first established as a diocese under Mexico by Pope Gregory XIII's "Ilhus fulti praesidio" on February 6, 1579.<sup>119</sup> A few years later in 1582, Manila became an

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Universitari D'Història Jaume Vicens I Vives, 2013), <http://hdl.handle.net/10803/130789>, use an earlier date of 1575, but this likely refers to the year of departure of the Franciscans toward Asia, 54.

<sup>117</sup> Chirino, *Relación de las Islas Filipinas*, 19.

<sup>118</sup> Other orders that arrived in later years include: The Fathers of San Juan de Dios (1641), The Vicentians (1862), the Capuchins (1886), and the Benedictines (1895). See Pablo Fernandez, *History of the Church in the Philippines, 1521-1898* (Manila: National Book Store, 1979); See also Greg Bankoff, "Friars, Spanish (The Philippines)," ed. Keat Gin Ooi, *Southeast Asia: A Historical Encyclopedia, from Angkor Wat to East Timor* (ABC-CLIO, 2004).

<sup>119</sup> Early records indicate the bull was dated February 6, 1578, not 1579, and some authors such as San Antonio record the year as 1578. Juan Francisco de San Antonio, *Chronicas de la apostolica Provincia de S. Gregorio de Religiosos Descalzos de N.S.P.S. Francisco en las Islas Philipinas, China, Japon, etc. Parte primera en que se incluye la descripcion de estas islas que consagra a la S.C.R. Magestad D. Phelipe V el Animoso, nuestro Catholic0 Rey y Augusto Emperador de las Espailas la misma santa Provincia y en su noihbre su Ministro Rovincial, escrita por el P. Fr. Juan Francisco de S. Antonio, Matritense, Lector de Theologia Escholastica y Moral, Ex-Diffmidor y Chmnista General de dicha Provincia* ([Sampoloc]: Impresa en la imprenta del vso de la propia provincia, síta en el Convento de N[uest]ra Señora de Loreto del Pueblo de Sampaloc, extra-muros de la ciudad de Manila: por Fr. Juan del Sotillo, 1738). Pedro de Achútegui's study of the conflict in dating indicates the confusion is due to reforms in the Gregorian calendar by Gregory XIII in 1582 that moved the beginning of the year to January 1 from Annunciation day March 25. Thus the 1578 record is in actuality 1579 after the Gregorian reforms. This study also has implication for the dating of other years prior to 1582 whose dates fall between January 1 and March 25. Pedro S. de Achútegui, "A Problem of Chronology: The Quadricentennial of Manila and the Gregorian Calendar," *Philippine Studies* 27, no. 3 (1979): 417–31.

episcopal see under the leadership of Bishop Salazar. With the subjugation of the islands, and its Christianization in large part through the work of the missionary orders, the Manila see grew, and was elevated to an archbishopric on August 14, 1595.

Even before the creation of the see, the substantial labor of evangelizing the population of the archipelago was divided more or less equally among the orders. The first four religious orders to arrive began to organize, and many were erected directly as, or quickly elevated to the level of a Province. From their Provinces, missionaries could also exert more independence and autonomy. Their quick establishment also allowed missionaries to plan trips out of Manila.

The Augustinians promptly began the establishment of an independent Province the year they arrived. They were considered an independent Province by the Order of Missions in 1567 under the Provincial Diego de Herrera; in 1575 their status was confirmed by the General of the Order as the *Provincia del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús de Filipinas* (Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus of the Philippines).<sup>120</sup> The Dominicans began forming their Province upon arrival and were officially admitted by the General Chapter of the Order in 1592 as the *Provincia Santísima Virgen Maria del Rosario* (Province of Our Lady of the Rosary) under the leadership of Provincial Juan de Castro.<sup>121</sup> In 1595 Jesuit General Claudio Acquaviva made the Philippines a Vice-

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<sup>120</sup> David Gutiérrez, *History of the Order of St. Augustine: The Augustinians from the Protestant Reformation to the Peace of Westphalia, 1518-1648*, vol. 2, 4 vols. (Villanova, PA: Augustinian Historical Institute, Villanova University, 1979); Isacio R. Rodríguez, *Historia de La Provincia Agustiniiana Del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús de Filipinas*, vol. 1–20 (Manila: Arnoldus Press, 1965), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/312185.html>.

<sup>121</sup> Diego Aduarte (Obispo de Nueva Segovia), *Tomo primero de la Historia de la provincia del Santo Rosario de Filipinas, Japon y China de la ... Orden de Predicadores*, vol. 1 (Zaragoza: Domingo Gascon, 1693), gives the date November 3, 1592; for a more recent discussion of the process of recognition

Province under Mexico, with Antonio Sedeño made Vice-Provincial. Acquaviva raised the Philippines to an independent Province in 1605.<sup>122</sup> The Discalced Friars Minor began their Province of San Gregorio Magno (St. Gregory the Great) in 1577, named after the Friar Gregorio who recruited the Discalced Franciscans in Spain to pursue missionary work in New Spain and the East. San Gregorio Magno was elevated to independent Province from Spain by Pope Sixtus V in 1586, and served as the Provincial center for all Franciscans coming out of Spain up until 1853.<sup>123</sup>

The orders were quick to begin the work of evangelizing the islands and establishing religious institutions within their respective provinces. To prevent territorial disputes and to facilitate the evangelization of areas that were not yet Christianized, missionary activity on the islands was geographically divided among the various orders. The Jesuits concentrated their work in the Visayas islands and Zamboanga on the southwest tip of the island of Mindanao. Franciscans concentrated their work in the northern provinces, and were also present near Manila in adjacent Laguna de Bay, Batangas in the south of Luzon, and the Camarines in the Southeast of Luzon. The Augustinians and Dominicans operated in the Ilocos region on the northwestern coast of Luzon island, Pangasinan on the western side of Luzon running along the Lingayen Gulf,

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of the Province, see Pablo Emilio Fernández, *Dominicos donde nace el sol: historia de la provincia del Santísimo Rosario de Filipinas de la Orden de Predicadores* (Barcelona: Gregorio, 1958), 27ff.

<sup>122</sup> For the Jesuits in the Philippines, see Horacio de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961); the official webpage for Jesuit history in the Philippines also has important resources, “Jesuits in the Philippines | Philippine Jesuits,” accessed June 27, 2018, <https://www.phjesuits.org/portal/the-jesuits/jesuits-in-the-philippines/>.

<sup>123</sup> Marcelo Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book I, Chapter 22, 92ff; Francisco de Santa Inés, *Crónica de la provincia de San Gregorio Magno de religiosos descalzos de N.S.P. San Francisco en las Islas Filipinas, China, Japón, etc. Tomo I*, vol. I (Manila: Tipo-litografía de Chofre; [1693], 1892), 523ff, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006701922>.

and the Cagayan region in the northeast of Luzon. The Manila metropolitan area with its surrounding border towns and villages were divided more or less equally among the three orders of friars. In the city itself, all four orders, friars and Jesuits, concentrated their work within designated areas, with Jesuits in the southern part of Manila.<sup>124</sup>

*Manila as a Launching Center for Missions*

Manila was the New Rome and home base for mission. Placing Manila at the center of Christian activity in the East disrupts common assumptions about Europe or even New Spain as a center of missionary activity. As Simon Ditchfield argues, the Catholic world in the early modern period cannot be adequately captured by thinking of its center as Europe whose power and authority extended vertically to so-called peripheries in Asia, Africa and the Americas. A more dynamic way of thinking about emerging centers of Catholic activity would be to think of horizontal ties connecting Catholic communities.<sup>125</sup> Manila was one of these centers, and missionaries were sent not only from Manila outward to Asia, but from Manila to the Americas.

For the Franciscans, the province of San Gregorio Magno in the Philippines was the base for all missionary activity outside of Spain. Once rooted in the Philippines, the Franciscans and other regular orders soon began building churches and institutions around the Philippines. Missionaries had eyes on the rest of Asia as well, and began

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<sup>124</sup> Iaccarino, “Comercio y Diplomacia Entre Japón y Filipinas En La Era Keichō (1596-1615),” 54; Díaz-Trechuelo, *Filipinas*, 54-5.

<sup>125</sup> Simon Ditchfield, “Decentering the Catholic Reformation: Papacy and Peoples in the Early Modern World,” *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 101, no. 1 (2010): 186–208.

extending their missionary activity to other countries as opportunities opened to go to Japan, the Marianas, China, and mainland Southeast Asia.

A closer look at the historical record shows the Philippines itself was a hub of Catholic mission sending, meeting, and regrouping. On the episcopal level Manila was under Mexico until 1595, but the reverse was true for the Franciscan Province of Gregorio Magno. Manila was the center for Spanish Franciscan activity, and Mexico the periphery. From Manila Franciscans sent missionaries to the Americas. In Mexico they established the Province of San Diego in 1593 that was under San Gregorio Magno until 1599. Other Mexican Provinces founded included San Cosme, and later Santa Barbara. Franciscan work in Asia included missions to areas with large Buddhist communities such as Japan, China, Siam, Cambodia, Burma (Pegu) and Cochinchina (Vietnam). Franciscans were also active in other parts of Asia and islands surrounding the Philippines including among others Malacca, Formosa, Borneo, and Micronesia.<sup>126</sup>

#### *Manila as a Training Ground for Global Missions*

Many missionaries based in Manila, as attested to in Ribadeneira's *Historia*, took advantage of the cosmopolitan composition of the Manila metropolis to gain cultural and linguistic preparation by ministering to residents of many different Asian regions. Missionaries moved between these ethnic neighborhoods and often functioned as cultural mediators between Asian and Spanish residents. Missionaries served ethnic communities by running churches, monasteries, schools, and hospitals. With missionaries serving in

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<sup>126</sup> Lorenzo Pérez, "Origen de las misiones franciscanas en el Extremo Oriente," *Archivo Ibero-Americano* 1 (1914): 100–120.

various ethnic enclaves, these communities became training grounds for missionaries. Missionary service to Japanese and Chinese communities were examples of intercultural encounters and missionary preparation to travel to Japan and China. Thus, many missionaries were already exposed to Buddhist traditions prior to leaving Manila. This better positioned missionaries to converse with Buddhist monks and laypeople upon arrival.

For historians of the Franciscans, the Province of San Gregorio Magno in the Philippines functioned as a training ground and gateway that connected missionaries to the rest of Asia. For other orders, Manila also served as a similar gateway to other regions of the East. All paths went through Manila. The nineteenth century historian of the Province of San Gregorio Magno, Felix Huerta, noted that the missionaries and martyrs gathered at Manila to prepare for their missions prior to going to “hundreds” of other lands.<sup>127</sup>

Living and working in Manila was itself an exercise in intercultural engagement due to the composition of the greater city. Manila was a cosmopolitan city with many different ethnic groups that served as a microcosm of the vast diversity of people from different lands and kingdoms in the region. Missionaries worked among the different ethnic groups in the Philippines, and this helped to provide linguistic and cultural

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<sup>127</sup> Félix de Huerta, *Estado geográfico, topográfico, estadístico, histórico-religioso de la santa y apostólica provincia de S. Gregorio Magno, de religiosos menores descalzos de la regular y más estrecha observancia de N.S.P.S. Francisco, en las islas Filipinas: comprende el número de religiosos, conventos, pueblos, situación de estos, años de su fundación, tributos, almas, producciones, industria, cosas y casos especiales de su administración espiritual, en el Archipiélago Filipino, desde su fundación en el año de 1577 hasta el de 1853* (Manila: Ymprenta á cargo de D.M. Sánchez, 1855), 38–39.

exposure and training. Intercultural contact also fueled desire to engage in missions outside the Philippines.

The Spanish route between Asia, New Spain, and Europe attracted a wide variety of people to Manila, including adventurers, missionaries and traders. However, many of these adventurers, missionaries, and traders saw Manila not as a final destination, but as a base to access other parts of Asia. In order to maintain a stable residential population, Spanish authorities devised various strategies to keep European merchants and adventurers in the Philippines. One such strategy was requiring merchants to reside at least three years in Manila as part of the passage on the Manila Galleon from Acapulco to Manila. Many Asians from the neighboring regions also flocked to Manila in pursuit of new economic prospects. However, initially many of these Asian traders opted not to reside in Manila. To lure non-Europeans to the port of Manila and to bolster the residential population of Asians, Spanish authorities created incentives for Asian merchants to stay in Manila and do business by waiving taxes on much of their merchandise.<sup>128</sup>

The lure of the new global trade route grew the city substantially, into a cosmopolitan port. In 1581 Manila had 600 houses organized in 17 streets, with 300 or 400 Spaniards. By the turn of the century, the Spanish residents had grown to around 1,500. Spaniards formed a minority of the metropolitan growth, and they were very much outnumbered by Asians residing in the city. There were many other groups as well. Among them was a sizable contingent of around 30,000 Chinese (known by people in

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<sup>128</sup> William Lytle Schurz, *El galeón de Manila*, trans. Pedro Ortiz Armengol (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica, 1992), 165.



Manila as *sangleys*).<sup>129</sup> Among the many different ethnic groups living in the city with Spaniards and the large community of Chinese were Japanese, Malay, Javanese, Italians, French, Greek, Portuguese, Burmese, and Siamese (Thai).<sup>130</sup>

Merchants from different parts of East and Southeast Asia had settled into communities in the city of Manila, located in the central region of the large island of Luzon and around the outskirts in ethnic neighborhoods. Many of these communities also formed farther out from the cosmopolitan center in towns and villages. The metropolitan area around Manila was very cosmopolitan in sheer diversity of people and cultures, but the various communities tended to live in ethnic enclaves quite separate from each other. The Chinese merchant community was the largest, but there was also a large Japanese community. At times hostilities erupted between neighborhoods, most notably between the Chinese and Spanish.<sup>131</sup> The village of Balete in Dilao was so predominantly Japanese that Governor Francisco Tello converted it to an exclusively Japanese zone in 1601.<sup>132</sup>

The large Chinese communities in Manila, known to them as *Sangleys*, were serviced in large part by the Dominicans. The Dominicans were housed by the Franciscans before building their own convent. The first Dominican convent of Santo

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<sup>129</sup> Marcelino A. Foronda and Cornelio R. Bascara, *Manila* (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992), 87; Marta María Manchado López, “Estrategias familiares en una sociedad de frontera Manila (1571-1604),” in *Familias, poderes, instituciones y conflictos*, ed. Jaime Contreras and Rachel Sánchez Ibáñez (Murcia: University of Murcia, 2011), 80; in Martín Santo, “Cosas de Tierras Extrañas,” 20-1.

<sup>130</sup> Manel Ollé, “Interacción y conflicto en el paríen de Manila,” *Illes i Imperis*, no. 10/11 (2008): 66; in Martín Santo, “Cosas de Tierras Extrañas,” 23.

<sup>131</sup> Martín Santo, “Cosas de Tierras Extrañas,” 36.

<sup>132</sup> Pedro Luengo Gutiérrez, “Balete. Arquitectura En La Comunidad Japonesa de Manila Entre 1601 Y 1762,” *Quiroga* 1 (2012): 21.

Domingo was located near the Chinese neighborhood in Manila, and Dominican Friars in Manila specialized in ministry to the Chinese. The Chinese ministry of the friars greatly increased their knowledge of Chinese culture, which they shared and used to prepare for trips to China.

To exert some control over the Chinese populace, in 1581 the Spanish concentrated many non-Christian Chinese, most of whom were merchants from Fujian Province in China, in the districts of Binondo and Parian. These districts were also pastored by the Dominicans. The Dominican-founded San Gabriel Hospital was built for Chinese as well. The Dominicans trained the Chinese community in grammar schools. Their work in education would culminate in the University of Santo Tomas founded in 1611 and the Colegio de San Juan de Letran in 1620, the oldest institutions of higher education still running in the Philippines. The relationship of the Chinese and Dominicans was sometimes utilitarian. Some in the Chinese community perceived that the Dominicans helped them better settle into Manila and have successful businesses, and the Dominicans also wanted to use their intercultural experience to extend their missionary work to China. Dominicans like Bishop Salazar and Juan Cobo understood themselves to be “protectors of the *Sangleys*” because they mediated and deterred Spanish colonial abuses. Indeed, some Chinese confirmed the Dominicans helped them in efforts to curb or get some justice for colonial abuses. In the Parian district Juan Cobo “pioneered Dominican efforts to understand and classify Chinese culture.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> See Ryan Dominic Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory: Spanish Dominicans, Chinese Sangleys, and the Entanglement of Mission and Commerce in Manila, 1580-1620,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, no. 4 (June 18, 2015): quotes 351, 356.

Dominican knowledge about Chinese culture would benefit the Augustinians and Franciscans who later went on diplomatic missions to China in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The Dominicans would put their cultural knowledge to use directly once they had opportunities to venture out from Manila. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, Dominicans set off on small missions to Cambodia, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Ming China.

In the service of Japanese residents, missionaries were also able to gain cultural and linguistic knowledge about Japan. Friars positioned themselves well to engage with Buddhist monks and to have some knowledge about the traditions of the Japanese. Japanese neighborhoods not only in Manila but in other areas of Luzon and Mindoro were serviced in large part by the Franciscans. Similarly, the village of Balete in Dilao was administered by the Franciscans under the direction of Alonzo Muñoz. Just to the east of the Japanese village of Dilao, the convent of Santa Ana de Sapa, founded in 1578, was also a prime location to learn Japanese. This incubator of Japanese linguistic training was administered by two important Franciscans who would travel to Japan, Pedro Bautista, the commissioner of the Franciscan mission of Japan, and Francisco de Santa María. Both were martyred in the infamous Nagasaki Twenty-Six Martyrs Incident of 1597.<sup>134</sup>

In these Japanese neighborhoods, merchants and missionaries learned a good deal of Japanese, and familiarized themselves with Japanese culture before setting foot on Japanese soil. Such language training was evident in the Franciscan-led diplomatic party

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<sup>134</sup> Huerta, *Estado geográfico, topográfico, estadístico, histórico-religioso de la santa y apostólica provincia de S. Gregorio Magno*, 42–45.

that traveled to Japan with Marcelo Ribadeneira in 1594. Several individuals in the party were competent in Japanese. Ribadeneira noted that the merchant associate of the Franciscans Bernardino of Ávila knew a great deal of Japanese.<sup>135</sup> Friar Gonzalo García, one of the twenty-six martyred in 1597, was sufficiently versed in Japanese on arrival to directly address Japan's Imperial Regent Toyotomi Hideyoshi and to converse with Buddhist monks.<sup>136</sup> Although Ribadeneira rarely refers to himself in the *Historia*, his own contemporaries considered Ribadeneira to be an expert in Japanese.<sup>137</sup>

Although some Jesuits portrayed friars as “idiots” unschooled in Japanese customs, language, and etiquette, evidence of the preparation of the friars starting in the Philippines shows the Jesuit judgement to be inaccurate. Jesuits claims about Franciscans ill-preparedness for mission fits into the Jesuit polemic against the presence of other orders in Japan. In anticipation of future missionary ventures, and having pastored the Japanese Christian communities living in the Philippines, friars were already familiarizing themselves with Japanese language and culture.

### **Defying Obstacles to Mission Travel**

The evangelization of the Philippines was a difficult and labor-intensive process that required large numbers of religious personnel. Although the Philippines was important in the conversion effort, missionaries of all stripes also came to the Philippines

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<sup>135</sup> Martín Santo, “Cosas de Tierras Extrañas,” 28.

<sup>136</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book IV, Chapter 5, 337; Martín Santo, 86–7, and footnote 144, notes that Jesuit Pedro Morejón, who was often critical of the friars, did not consider the martyr an expert in the language.

<sup>137</sup> José Luis Álvarez-Taladriz, ed., *Documentos franciscanos de la Cristiandad de Japón (1593-1597). San Martín de la Ascensión y Fray Marcelo de Ribadeneira: Relaciones e informaciones* (Osaka: Japón Eikodo, 1973).

with the intention to move beyond the Philippines to the neighboring mainland regions, especially the populous China and Japan. This was a dilemma for Spanish religious and secular authorities seeking to build up the Philippines. Trouble with lack of personnel was exacerbated by economic issues. In the first few decades of Spanish rule in the Philippines, overall living conditions were reportedly quite poor. Spanish residents in the Philippines were concerned about the financial state of the islands, and that their religious and government buildings did not reflect the majesty and greatness of God and King. The Philippines had a high mortality rate as well, due to lack of medical personnel. The islands also were in short supply of missionaries to aid in the process of Christianization, run hospitals and schools, and pastor new converts. In 1586 Spanish residents in the community chose Jesuit Alonzo Sánchez to deliver the message of issues in the colony to the King and to request the resolution of some of these issues.<sup>138</sup> These efforts increased interest among the Spanish, and spurred an influx of residents and clergy to build up and Christianize the colony. Authorities particularly wanted missionaries who would stay in the Philippines and not go to other regions, as so many missionaries desired. Bishops and secular leaders had practical reasons for wanting to keep missionaries in the Philippines to build up the diocese and colonial project, but the missionary orders went beyond the Philippines nonetheless.

The orders faced many obstacles to expanding their efforts outside of the Philippines. Missionary freedom to travel to the various polities and kingdoms in Asia

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<sup>138</sup> Francisco Colín, *Labor Evangelica, Ministerios Apostolicos De Los Obreros De La Compania De Jesus, Fundacion, Y Progressos De Su Provincia En Las Islas Filipinas*, ed. Pablo Pastells (Barcelona: Henrich, 1900), II, 331; Martín Santo, "Cosas de Tierras Extrañas," 22.

was an issue entangled in wider disputes about jurisdictional authority. Entangled in these disputes, a variety of players made competing claims to jurisdiction over geographical regions in question. One set of players were the missionary orders. The orders operated under the papacy and their own organizations and claimed the prerogative to guide secular and spiritual authorities and to spread the gospel unimpeded. Mendicant friars often cooperated with each other, as is the case with the friars against the Jesuit claims to monopoly of Japan. Another set of players were the Iberian crowns and secular authorities. Under their respective royal patronage systems, secular powers claimed authority to restrict travel and direct clergy and the orders. A third set of players were bishops and secular priests. Under Tridentine reforms, episcopal leaders made claims to the oversight of the missionary orders. A fourth player was the papacy. The Holy See attempted to regain some control over the appointment of bishops and regain some oversight of missionary activity away from the control of the Iberian powers—control the papacy had inadvertently ceded to the royal patronage systems. These various players and their claims were frequently in conflict but at times overlapped and converged. The following will look at some of the ways that missionaries, while sometimes thwarted from planting roots in some areas of exploration, found ways to travel and have cross-cultural interactions despite the barriers to their mobility.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion*, Chapter 1 is an informative study of the jurisdictional challenges in Southeast Asia.

### *The Synod of Manila*

Arguments about jurisdiction in the Philippines were debated openly in a series of juntas now known as the Synod of Manila. In the synod, missionaries, the bishop, and secular authorities pushed their interests and agendas that related to religious matters in the new colony. In late 1581 under Bishop Domingo de Salazar, not long after the establishment of the governorship in the islands of the Philippines, the first meetings began and were convened regularly in 1582.<sup>140</sup> Jesuit Alonzo Sanchez was an important member of the council, and in his absence to travel to Spain on behalf of the financial and personnel needs of the islands, the meetings were interrupted until 1586.<sup>141</sup> Near one hundred leaders participated in the synod, primarily composed of secular priests and members of the religious orders, but also a handful of lay people.<sup>142</sup>

The friars—Dominicans, Franciscans, but especially the Augustinians—pushed for the synod because they wanted justice for alleged abuses committed by Spanish settlers towards indigenous Filipinos during colonization, and to prevent any future abuses. For the friars, the synod was convened in large part to address the matter of injustices committed by Spanish rulers and soldiers during the conquest. From the perspective of the friars the synod was the occasion to assert their moral authority to correct errant secular and episcopal rule. The friars wanted justice for abuses in the form

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<sup>140</sup> There was some discussion about whether this meeting was a synod, as documents at that time of the meeting called it a “junta.” But given the nature of the meetings it is widely accepted to be a synod and continues to be referred to as such. See Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines*, 25.

<sup>141</sup> For an excellent account of the Synod of Manila based in part on Jesuit Alonso Sanchez who was secretary and integral to the meetings, see Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines*, Ch. 2, pp. 14–36.

<sup>142</sup> Phillip M. Finegan, “Manila,” ed. Charles Herbermann, *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), 597.

of corrections but also intended reforms of institutions like the *encomiendas*. They questioned the justification for subjugation altogether. Using several papal documents and arguments for spiritual independence, the friars made their boldest arguments for the moral authority of missionary orders over secular priests and secular rule.

From the point of view of the friars, but also Spanish King Phillip II, mistakes committed during the subjugation of the Americas should not be repeated in the Philippines. The atrocities committed by Spanish conquest in Americas were well documented. The religious orders intended to assert their spiritual authority to ensure a more just rule in the Philippines than had occurred in the Americas. From the perspective of friars, the conquest of the Philippines was certainly not as egregious as the Americas, but it did involve unjust acts by soldiers and colonists. There was also a call for some uniformity on how to approach the absolution of the perpetrators of abuse. Confessors varied substantially in handling lay absolution; some were lenient, others harsh. Another much debated matter was how to approach the issues procedurally: some thought they should contend with each incident on a case by case basis, while others wanted to discuss the matter of abuse generally as a systemic issue. The Augustinians were particularly zealous about addressing misuses of power and cruelty. The Spanish claim on the people and land was subject to moral and legal scrutiny. The Augustinians even introduced the issues of the slave-like treatment of locals, and cited King Phillip II's ban on slavery. The Augustinians also cited as applicable to the Philippines the forward-thinking declaration *Sublimus Dei* given by Pope Paul III in May 1537 on the inalienable rights of liberty and



property of natives in the Americas.<sup>143</sup> In the context of arguments about the moral authority of missionaries, the friars asserted their rights of independence from secular authority and their rights to mission travel. It was also the occasion for the orders to exert their mobility in order to conduct missionary work as they saw fit.

### *Resisting Tridentine Episcopal Power*

The friars called for the synod with their own interests in mind. However, the bishop, secular priests, and secular leaders also added their own concerns to the agenda of the synod. The bishop attempted to negotiate and assuage some of the moral and spiritual concerns stirred up by the subjugation of the islands and attempted to adjudicate secular and missionary interests. Within the context of the synod, Tridentine reforms were introduced, and the bishops attempted to exert their own authority over the missionary orders.

The Manila synod was the occasion for the implementation of Tridentine reforms. An important node of contention about jurisdiction of orders and missionary travel happened in the context of the process of adaptation and implementation of the Council of Trent. One of the key decrees debated pertained to the office of the bishop having visitation rights over the institutions and churches run by the orders. The orders represented at the Manila Synod focused their concerns on this Tridentine decree that required religious missionaries to function as secular priests under the jurisdiction and oversight of the diocesan bishop as part of the larger Tridentine project centralizing

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<sup>143</sup> Paul III, "Sublimus Dei On the Enslavement and Evangelization of Indians," May 29, 1537, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul03/p3subli.htm>.

episcopal authority. The decree granting episcopal visitation of the orders gave the bishops further powers beyond inspection of missionary institutions to make corrections when necessary.<sup>144</sup> The friars' passionate push for justice and reform at the Manila synod put the bishop and some of the secular rulers off balance. Tridentine visitation decree greatly favored episcopal authority over the missionary orders. The orders were able to resist this decree using a variety of tactics, arguments, and the incremental implementation of Tridentine changes.

The friars were helped by the slow development of the Council of Trent, and the incremental implementation of its many decrees across the new territories of the Iberian world. Individual decrees were discussed and adopted in stages in different places. The Council of Trent itself took place in three stages and included twenty-five sessions over almost two decades from 1545 to 1563. Philip II of Spain and the Spanish church played an important role in Tridentine proceedings and inaugurated the third and final stage of the council in 1562. In 1564 Philip II issued a royal *cedula* promulgating the council. However, Tridentine decrees took time to ratify and went through discussion at different times in different places in the Spanish territories. The decrees took time to reach Spanish territories outside of Europe. The reforms had to be discussed and implemented piecemeal and by degree. In South America, the process of discussion of the decrees took place in Quito starting in 1570 and took several years to fully implement. Thus, the diffusion of the decrees was a gradual process in the new territories of the Americas and

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<sup>144</sup> Decrees of the Council of Trent, The Twenty-Fourth Session: Decree on Reformation [1564], Chapter III, J. Waterworth, ed. (London: Dolman 1848)  
<https://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/CT24REF1.html>.

the Far East.<sup>145</sup> Bishop Domingo de Salazar attempted to apply the visitation and correction decree of Trent to the missionary orders in the Philippines. Salazar's efforts were met with strong resistance from all four orders.

*Missionary Claims to Exceptionalism*

The Augustinians, Franciscans and Dominicans claimed exemption from Tridentine visitation. Among the central arguments used to claim missionary exceptionalism were papal bulls promulgated prior to Trent. One important bull cited was known as the *omnimoda*, issued by Adrian VI in May 1522. The *omnimoda* bull was confirmed by Pope Paul III in January 1535. It allowed missionaries in the Americas to function as church representatives in the absence of a bishop; once a bishop was appointed, the bull also granted missionaries the ability to consent to the bishop. The *omnimoda* was preceded by a similar bull, *alias felices*, issued by Leo X in April 1521. Pope Pius V used *alias felices* in 1567 to grant missionary orders the powers of diocesan priests. Thus, missionaries functioned as the spiritual authorities for both indigenous Americans and Europeans in the interim period while missionaries established Christian communities in the peripheries of Mexico but before the appointment of a bishop.<sup>146</sup>

Officially called *Exponi nobis fecisti*, the *omnimoda* was widely known for the phrase *omnimodan auctoritatem nostrum in utroque foro quantam ipsi*. The phrase gave

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<sup>145</sup> John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>146</sup> John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (New York: J. G. Shea, 1886), 213.

religious orders “all-encompassing authority in both courts (*utroque foro*).”<sup>147</sup> The bull was presented to Emperor Charles V as a vehicle to allow missionary travel and activity in the early stages of exploration and conquest in the Americas. The Franciscans were mentioned specifically in the bull, but the intention was to ease access for missionary orders to preach and establish churches and other institutions in these new locations. The papal bull came to be referred to as the *omnimoda* in large part because the orders emphasized the word “all-encompassing.” This was interpreted by missionaries as granting them authority in both secular and religious affairs (“both courts”).<sup>148</sup>

The agreement between the Emperor and the papacy freed the missionary orders to conduct their own affairs and preach the gospel in the absence of secular rule and/or the establishment of an episcopal see. Missionaries could exercise episcopal functions where no bishops were present or if the bishop was two days’ journey away. It also gave them the secular functions of the courts in civil and criminal jurisdiction over both European Christians and indigenous converts. Missionary travel also went beyond the boundaries of colonial reach to the far recesses of Asia, Africa and the Americas. In new territories, and even more so in unconquered trading posts, some missionary outposts were far away. Thus in many areas where missionaries were active, diocesan borders

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<sup>147</sup> Mauricio Novoa provides a large portion of the bull in Latin and a translation of a copy from the Mexican collection of the Lilly Library, *The Protectors of Indians in the Royal Audience of Lima: History, Careers and Legal Culture, 1575-1775*, Legal History Library 19 (Leiden: BRILL, 2016), 24–25.

<sup>148</sup> Pontificia Università lateranense Rafael José Luis Ruiz Esperidón, “El breve, Exponi nobis fecisti, de Adriano VI (Zaragoza, España, 9 de Mayo de 1522): estudio histórico-canónico” (Pontificia Università lateranense, 1993); Pedro Torres, *La Bula Omnimoda de Adriano VI: (9 mayo 1522), y su aplicación durante el primer siglo de las Misiones de Indias*. (Madrid: Instituto Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo, 1948) Torres does not regard the document as technically a bull but a papal brief, even if it was treated as one at the time.

were vague to non-existent. Many of the missionary orders in the early stages of exploration and conquest represented the church and served to correct the laity without much hindrance. They were the face of the church, but also served to ensure civil order, functioning as *de facto* secular agents in new Christian communities.

The *omnimoda* in effect provided missionaries with substantial independence to evangelize in the Americas. But the Franciscans and other orders applied the bull beyond the Americas to missionary activity in Asia. The orders viewed the *omnimoda* to have precedence over Tridentine decrees. In their hierarchical structures, and in their own self-conception, the orders were subject to their provincial superiors, superior generals, and ultimately the papacy. The missionary orders, unlike the secular clergy, were not fully subject to the diocesan prelate but to their own superiors, who themselves were under the direction of the Pope. They were governed by their own special institutes in accord with the charism of each order. The *omnimoda* bolstered the orders' positioning themselves as independent from both the bishops and secular rulers, and they used the *omnimoda* to assert their spiritual authority to engage in mission.

The mendicant orders interpreted the document in the broadest sense as a reminder of the orders being accountable to the sovereign pope alone in their hierarchy, and they also read the document to grant them authority to correct and criticize lay Christians. However, the crown and the bishops had a different interpretation of the bull. The bishops and civil authorities interpreted the *omnimoda* as a temporary measure. Interpreting the *omnimoda* as a temporary measure meant, for bishops and civil personnel, that missionary authority was provisional and had to be divested upon the

arrival of a bishop and the formation of a diocese. These differing interpretations caused much conflict once a bishop was appointed, because the orders continued to claim exemption from episcopal oversight. Instead missionaries viewed the bishop as the overseer of his see alone.

Franciscans wasted no time in using the papal bulls to claim independence. A contingent of Franciscans known as the twelve apostles arrived in Mexico in 1524 under Martín de Valencia and Toribio de Benavente Motolinia. The Franciscans used the 1521 and 1522 papal bulls to claim jurisdiction in Mexico in both ecclesiastical and secular authority, to the exasperation of secular leaders. The Franciscans employed the bulls to launch complaints of mistreatment and injustices toward indigenous peoples. The Franciscans were aided in their case by the Mexican bishop and fellow Franciscan Juan de Zumárraga. The Franciscans advocated for indigenous rights and called for justice and restraint against secular abuses.<sup>149</sup>

The orders used the *omnimoda* as a trump card to exert their independence in missionary ventures and would continue to do so for many years to come. The use of the *omnimoda* in Manila was not the first time missionary orders brought the bull into play to ensure their independence—and to travel where they saw need and opportunity—and it certainly would not be the last. The *omnimoda* was the subject of many disputes about missionary jurisdiction in various corners of the globe until its interpretation was explicitly addressed by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Propaganda*

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<sup>149</sup> This and other examples can be found in Mauricio Novoa, *The Protectors of Indians in the Royal Audience of Lima: History, Careers and Legal Culture, 1575-1775*, Legal History Library 19 (Leiden: BRILL, 2016), chapter 1, 16-43.

*Fide*) in 1628. The issue was brought to the attention of the Congregation in large part due to conflicts between the Portuguese *Padroado* and the *Propaganda Fide* in India, especially after Portugal was brought under the Spanish crown in 1580. On April 3, 1628 the Congregation attempted to clarify the conditions under which the bull could be used, and suggested how potential conflicts might be resolved: “-The Religious may use the privileges that were given to them only in the places where there are no bishops; -Where there are bishops, the invocation of the Bull *Omnimoda be* [sic] subject to the endorsement of the local bishop; -The Apostolic Nuncio in Madrid and the Pontifical Collector in Lisbon should try to detect the opinion and feelings of the royal ministers over the same Bull.”<sup>150</sup>

The Jesuits were also concerned about the possibility of being subjected to the control of the bishops, but they took a slightly different approach than the friars. Since the early bulls were issued prior to the formation of the Society of Jesus, the bulls did not apply to the Society. The Jesuits sought council from their Superior General of the Society of Jesus Claudio Acquaviva back in Europe. He advised a middle way of cordial cooperation, but stood firm that the Society should not allow the bishop to conduct an inquiry into their affairs.<sup>151</sup>

The Manila Synod proceeded to adopt the decrees of the Council of Trent, but made no clarification on the contentious decree of episcopal visitation and correction. Dispute and uncertainty over the jurisdiction of missionary orders continued after the

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<sup>150</sup> Cosme Jose Costa, *A Missiological Conflict between Padroado and Propaganda in the East* (Goa, India: Pilar Publications, 1997), 32ff, translation by the author.

<sup>151</sup> Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines*, 258ff, 419-21.

Synod of Manila. Bishop Salazar chose not to push his privileges. His successor, Don Diego Vásquez, in 1610 tried to do so by asking for the backing of the Governor, but he did not secure the support he needed, limiting his visitation to missionary churches to administrative matters.<sup>152</sup>

### *The Constraints of Iberian Patronage Systems*

Another overlapping variable in the push and pull over missionary jurisdiction was the royal patronage of missions, and the authority the crown exerted over missions. From the Philippines one of the political obstacles for missionaries getting to the kingdoms that comprised Southeast Asia, as well as China and Japan, was that the area remained under the jurisdiction of the Portuguese *Padroado*. Acknowledging the Portuguese *Padroado* and the Spanish *Patronato*, the sovereign pontiffs in effect conceded oversight of overseas mission to Iberian monarchs.<sup>153</sup> The crown viewed itself as another equal arm to the papacy bringing Christianity to the world, and in practical terms funded and oversaw missionary affairs. This extended to governors which were viewed as extensions of the crown and the King's representative in the far reaches of the empire. Clashes between missionaries and governors were not limited to critique by missionaries of the abuses of colonial rule or poor governance.

From the perspective of the crown, royal patronage gave the crown control of the church within its geographic jurisdiction to build churches, name bishops, hire priests, as well as direct missionary activity. From Ferdinand I and Isabella, right into Phillip II and

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<sup>152</sup> Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines*, 259.

<sup>153</sup> As Costa keenly notes, 416–17.



Phillip III, the crown interpreted their patronage to be expansive and universal. Firstly, the crown saw the *omnimoda* bull of Adrian VI as a provisional concession that had to be divested the instant a bishopric was established. Secondly, as there were no specific powers attached to the patronage, the crown claimed wide privileges: civil courts weighed in on ecclesiastical matters, even banished priests; Iberians crowns also nominated bishops and only presented them to the papacy for confirmation after.<sup>154</sup>

With regard to the crown and secular authorities, the main anxiety for the four missionary orders stationed in the Philippines was whether the crown would try to exercise the full brunt of royal patronage that could curtail missionary freedom to travel. During the last few decades of the sixteenth century the Spanish King attempted to use royal patronage to exert oversight. This effort was met with resistance as were the more specific decrees of the visitation of the bishop under Tridentine reforms. The orders opted to sidestep Royal Patronage by accessing their religious networks across demarcation lines, with or without the blessing of the United Crown. Friars also fashioned themselves as Spanish diplomats when it suited them as a vehicle for travel.

Jurisdictional arguments were most contentious when it came to Japan. The Jesuits, anticipating the desire of friars to enter Japan, reasserted Pope Gregory the XIII's papal brief that no missionaries should be sent to Japan without the approval of the Jesuits. However, in the case of Japan, Spanish commercial interest aligned with the friars who wanted to enter Japan. Both the governor and the friars found reason to

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<sup>154</sup> For an examination of all the privileges claimed by the crown in the name of royal patronage see Hans-Jürgen Prien, *Christianity in Latin America: Revised and Expanded Edition*, trans. Stephen Buckwalter, Religion in the Americas Series 13 (Leiden; Boston: BRILL, 2013), 27–30.

sidestep the Jesuit missionary monopoly that aligned with the Portuguese trading monopoly in Japan. Marcelo Ribadeneira provided several reasons for the decision to travel to Japan. The first was diplomatic: the governor had to respond to the Japanese ambassador, and the governor had a right to choose the most fitting representatives to go back to Japan. The Japanese ambassador had requested ten Discalced religious clergy as Spanish emissaries. One of the reasons given was Pope Sixtus V's assertion, in a brief on San Gregorio Magno, that gave Franciscans permission to engage in missionary expeditions in any of the neighboring areas—including Malacca, Siam and Cochinchina which were under Portuguese patronage—even if such travels contradicted the local bishop. Using this line of argumentation, the Governor of the Philippines allowed the friars to go to Japan.<sup>155</sup>

The friars also resorted to theological argumentation to justify their travel. Theological justifications for venturing outside Spanish controlled zones were deployed especially for travel to Japan, as Japan was under Jesuit monopoly by papal orders. These cut to the core of the charism of the friars and their very reason for existing as an order:

One of the reasons why the Holy Spirit compares to fire is that fire consumes all it touches into itself; so, too, once the Holy Spirit possesses the minds, hearts, and souls of men, they are transformed into flames, zealous of transforming other hearts and souls into the Holy Spirit. This is the manner in which the Discalced Franciscans sought to spread the fires of Divine Light and Love whose source is the Holy Spirit. It was this same active zealous flame that drove these men to unknown and far flung regions such as the Philippines, but also to the gentiles in neighboring kingdoms.

*(Una de los razones por que el Espíritu Santo se compara al fuego es porque así como a todo lo que está junto al fuego lo pretende el fuego con su actividad*

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<sup>155</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book VI, Chapter 3 presents the six reasons justifying the friars' travel to Japan, 331ff.

*transformar en sí, con el hambre insaciable que tiene naturalmente de abrasar y comunicarse, de esa misma manera el Espíritu Santo en los corazones adonde entra les transforma en sí con el fuego de su celestial amor, comunicándoles su divina actividad, como se ha visto en la sed insaciable que los religiosos Descalzos tienen no solo de las almas de las Filipinas, pero de los infieles de los reinos vecinos a ellas. Por lo cual no han perdido ocasión que les ofreciese de comunicar el divino fuego de sus pechos endiosados, dando a los infieles conocimiento de las cosas celestiales discurriendo por los reinos de gentiles.)<sup>156</sup>*

The Franciscans in effect likened themselves to the work of the Holy Spirit. No policy could obstruct missionaries, as agents of the Holy Spirit, from seeking to preach the gospel.

### **Missionary Networks**

Along with the Franciscans, Augustinians were some of the most vocal of the orders in rejecting any constraints on their travel. As did the Franciscans, the Augustinians insisted on their autonomy to conduct missionary expeditions and resisted any restrictions to their movement. The friars used similar arguments and camaraderie in conjoined efforts to secure missionary independence. Furthermore, in terms of missionary travel, the friars did not wait to resolve jurisdictional disputes before they began to travel outside of the Philippines. The Augustinians pioneered the first religious expeditions. In these travels, the different orders of friars also showed solidarity by sometimes joining in on missionary ventures.

One of the earliest of these expeditions occurred in 1581 with an Augustinian-led mission from Manila to mainland Southeast Asia bound for Cochinchina and Siam. The Augustinians were a party of eight religious and lay people, and according to Augustinian reports were headed by Commissioner Diego de Oropesa and accompanied by Bartolomé

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<sup>156</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 16, 154 (translation mine).

Ruiz and Diego Ortiz Cabezas.<sup>157</sup> The Augustinians were joined by Franciscans under commissioner Diego de San José. The group stayed for a brief period off the coast of Cochinchina before their mission was cut short by the Portuguese governing captain. Marcelo Ribadeneira's informants reported that after staying twenty days without interpreters, the friars suffered a misunderstanding that resulted in the friars inadvertently offending the locals. The captain, accompanied by five galleys, signaled them to leave, after which they returned to Manila.<sup>158</sup>

Ribadeneira's account suggested the friars went on the mission at the invitation of the bishop in the port of Macau in China. A letter was written to Manila that the King was open to hearing the gospel, and requested that religious be sent to him.<sup>159</sup> This instance is one example of these jurisdictional conflicts. The friars saw themselves as orders comprised of a brotherhood of nations of Europe, with a right to cross boundaries to engage in mission. From the point of view of the friars, there was little problem in summoning friars of the same order to help in the missionary work, no matter whose flag they were under.

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<sup>157</sup> Rodao, *Españoles en Siam*, 31-2; based on Miquel de Loarca to Phillip, "Relacion de las Islas Filipinas," June 1582 in B & B Vol. 4, 77 and references in Lucio Gutierrez, *Historian de la Iglesia en Filipinas* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992), 252.

<sup>158</sup> Ribadeneira also gave an account of the mission, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 16, 155: "*Vino un capitán con cinco galeras muy galanas, y éste les hizo volver el timón y las velas, y por señas les dijo que se fuesen, to cual que hicieron y se volvieron a Manila ...*" Ribadeneira does not report on Augustinians explicitly, although they were part of the mission party.

<sup>159</sup> "Macán," as Macau was often spelled in Spanish sources, Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 16, 154; sometimes spelled "Machao" in Latin. Portuguese documents used the spelling "Macao," also a common English spelling. Wu Zhiliang and Jin Guaping, "The Evolution of the Spelling of 'Macau': An Examination of Early Portuguese and Western Archival Material," in *Macao – Cultural Interaction and Literary Representations*, ed. Katrine K. Wong and C. X. George Wei (New York: Routledge, 2013), 5–6.

Portuguese merchants, while at times not too happy about taking Spanish friars with them to ports under the Portuguese sphere of influence, would be hard pressed simply to deny passage to the friars. The friars had spiritual authority and offered their services as confessors to the merchants. But once in port, secular leaders could and did use the *Padroado* to expel missionaries if the situation was difficult or proved to be more trouble than their presence was worth.

These tensions over jurisdiction and the *Patronato* and *Padroado* could also be exacerbated if political tensions flared between the two Iberian powers. This was the case regarding Franciscan nuns and friars who traveled from Manila to Macau. Four women religious (including the named Margarita, Clara, Maria Magdalena, and Teresa) of the Poor Clares, accompanied by Franciscans, founded a convent in Macau 1633, and at the time were under the oversight of the Portuguese *Padroado*. But the United Crown began to crumble with the ascension to the throne of the rebel Duke of Bragança as João VI in 1640. With the news that Manila sent troops to Macau to ensure their loyalty to Castile, anti-Spanish sentiments flared. All Spanish residents and the male and female Franciscan religious from Manila were expelled by 1644.<sup>160</sup>

Franciscans and Augustinians were not the only friars to value the camaraderie of their order and their mobility to preach beyond the boundaries of Spanish or Portuguese jurisdiction. Sometimes it was not secular authority that intervened, but the bishop or viceroy. The Dominicans also positioned themselves to launch from Manila to other parts of Asia in order to join other Dominicans. They had some success in travel and were able

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<sup>160</sup> Tara Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion: Catholicism in Southeast Asia, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 161–3.

to move extensively from Macau. The structure of the Dominicans helped to make such travel possible. Dominicans had a complex and centralized hierarchy, but each level had a degree of autonomy, representation, and, due to the Dominican mission, openness to movement and preaching between provinces. When it came to missions to East India, a papal brief given to Spanish Dominican Fernando Vasquéz allowed any chapter over six to function as an independent congregation. Vasquéz was part of a Dominican reform movement similar to the Franciscans that had more robust interpretations of the vow of poverty and an enthusiasm for mission. The Provinces also functioned with some independence from the general, and Priors who headed provinces could permit friars to preach outside the region of their convent. From the Province of the Rosary in the Philippines they began travelling to Macau. They also used Macau as a point of departure for missions into other parts of China, Japan in the eastern direction, and continental South East Asia in the Western direction, where a group of Spanish Dominicans reached Cochinchina in 1596. Their mission was perceived by the viceroy of India to be an imposition on their territory and they were expelled from Macau around 1589.<sup>161</sup> Their expulsion demonstrates the boldness of the friars who insisted on their right to mission exploration and preaching. But their expulsion also shows that in some cases, particularly where Portuguese had administrative control of a city such as they did in the Chinese trading port of Macau, demarcation zones and jurisdictional rank resulted in the

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<sup>161</sup> Tara Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion: Catholicism in Southeast Asia, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 25; for a detailed history see the chronicle of Diego de Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de Filipinas, Japon y China, de la sagrada orden de Predicadores* (Zaragoza: Pasqual Bueno, Impresor del Reino, 1693).

termination of mission ventures. But the return to the Philippines deepened their network and shared encounters with Buddhist expressions in different contexts.

**Conclusion: from Manila to all of Asia**

Missionaries were ready and willing to travel to new lands as the opportunities presented themselves. The Philippines proved to be that opportunity. Missionaries used the global trade routes opened by the Spanish conquest of the Philippines to access trade cities in South and East Asia. Furthermore, missionaries did not see themselves as bound to their Spanish or Portuguese patrons but crossed these boundaries of demarcation. Missionaries then multiplied their geographic reach and religious exposure by breaching the demarcation line between Spain and Portugal. Their travel showed missionaries to be unconcerned with the nationalistic tendencies of diocesans and settlers, and they proved able to forge across national boundaries within and between the mendicant orders. From a metropolitan base in the Philippines, missionaries were also able to steep themselves in cultural knowledge that prepared them to have significant exchanges with Buddhists, and to share these encounters with other missionaries that converged in the Philippines.

## CHAPTER FOUR: IBERIA AND SIAM IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

### Introduction

... [Siam is] the storehouse of all the deceptive idolatries common to the kingdoms of Burma, Patani, Cambodia, China, Cochinchina, Vietnam, and Japan, among others who participate in the idolatries of Siam.

(... [*Siam es*] *recámara de todos engaños, con que trae engañados también los reinos de Pegú [Burma], Patán [Patani], Camboja [Cambodia], China, Cochinchina [Vietnam], Japón y otros que participan de las idolatrías de Siam.*)<sup>162</sup>

- Marcelo de Ribadeneira, *Historia*, 1601

Franciscan missionaries viewed Siam as the “storehouse” and center for a distinct and newly identified form of idolatry that came to be known as Buddhism. This chapter seeks to explain why Marcelo de Ribadeneira and other missionary informants viewed Siam as the center of Buddhism by contextualizing missionaries within the political and religious landscape of Siam. I argue that the pervasiveness of Buddhism in Siam, and its influence on politics and society propelled Ribadeneira to view Siam as the strongest manifestation of Buddhism in Asia. Siam became the standard for comparison to other Buddhist regions, and this distinct form of “idolatry” that other kingdoms took part in. Furthermore, the most significant comparative statements about Buddhism in the *Historia* were proposed with the understanding that Siam had the fullest representation of the religion, and religious practices and structures that most resembled Christianity.

This chapter provides a reconstruction of the religious and political context of Siam out of which Franciscans formulated constructs about Buddhism and connecting practices from other regions. Friars were well placed to be culturally competent

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<sup>162</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia* Book II, Chapter 24, 170.



interlocutors as they built upon the experience of Portuguese, Dominicans and other Franciscans coming from Portuguese centers who had integrated into the social fabric of Siam's capital of Ayutthaya. At the same time, Ayutthaya was a thriving cosmopolitan, multi-racial and multi-religious community, which served as base for missionaries to engage substantively with the culture.

Given the limited records from local sources, Iberian observations about Siam are important sources of information that historians have used to get a fuller picture of political and religious life in the kingdom. Observations made by Franciscan missionaries about Siam, most notably in the matters of religious life, synthesized by Friar Marcelo de Ribadeneira, contributed to knowledge about religion and Buddhist life in sixteenth-century Siam.

### **The Ayutthaya Period in Thai History**

Franciscan missionaries worked in Siam during what is known as the Ayutthaya period of Thai history. During the period where Spanish Franciscans were active, starting in the 1580s, Siam was exerting its political and military power in the region, and exerting independence from political rivals. Thus, missionaries would be in Ayutthaya in times when Siam was at its most powerful. This would impact missionary perception of not only politics, but religion, as these were both tightly intertwined from what we can discern from local sources and from the accounts made by missionaries.

The modern nation-state of Thailand, known as Siam before the name change, began with a revolution in 1932 that marked a shift from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. Thailand as an entity is rooted in several pre-modern kingdoms that existed

within Thai geographic parameters. Modern Thailand is commonly understood to be in continuity with these kingdoms. Prince Rajanubhab Damrong's study of Thai records proposed a tripartite division of the history of Thailand. Prince Damrong's tripartite division of Thai history rests on three kingdoms centered on their capitals and divided into periods: the Sukhothai period (1238–1438), the Ayutthaya period (1351–1767), and the Rattanakosin (Bangkok) period (1782–1932).<sup>163</sup> Subsequent historians have commonly added the interim Thonburi period (1767-1782) between the reestablishment of a new monarchy after the destruction of the defensive position across the Chao Phraya river, and the permanent relocation to Bangkok. This periodization and the stated origin in the Sukhothai period have become the standard for understanding Siam as a continuous entity.

All European activity, including European missions, took place outside of colonial protection. One of the cornerstones of Thai national history is the fact that Thailand was never colonized by a Western power. In terms of Thai political and religious identity, during the Sukhothai period it was the first kingdom to exert independence from the neighboring Khmer kingdom (modern Cambodia) that had extended into central Thailand. The Sukhothai period established royal dynasties that ruled under Buddhist principles. Theravada Buddhism was made the state religion and incorporated into society, flourishing under royal patronage and protection. When Ayutthaya arose, it was ruled independently from Sukhothai, but gradually absorbed the declining Sukhothai city-state into its orbit.

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<sup>163</sup> Prince Rajanubhab Damrong, "Story of Records of Siamese History," *Journal of the Siam Society* 11, no. 2 (1914-1915): 1.

Early modern Siam falls into the Ayutthaya period of Thai history (1351–1767) centered in the capital city of Ayutthaya. In the middle of the sixteenth century, Siam had extended its sphere latitudinally East into the remains of the fallen Angkor Kingdom in Cambodia, and West into parts of Burma. At the height of the Ayutthaya period, Siam controlled several major ports and had a tributary sphere spanning north to the kingdom of Lanna centered in the city of Chiang Mai, and south to the Malay peninsula and the port of Tenasserim.

Burma (the Kingdom of Pegu) was the main nemesis of Siam from the sixteenth and well into the eighteenth century, and would be the cause of Ayutthaya's final destruction in 1767. Starting in the middle of the sixteenth century Siam and Burma engaged in a series of wars with Burmese staging several sieges of Ayutthaya. In 1569, the Burmese looted and depopulated Ayutthaya and made Siam a vassal of Burma. However, Siam asserted its independence amid the transition of King Nanda Bayin in 1581 in Burma. By 1590 Naresuan made himself King of Ayutthaya and was able to defend the city against Burmese attacks in 1593. Burma's military pressure would decline as they had to withdraw some troops to fight on other fronts. With this successful defense of the city, Naresuan the Great, as he came to be known, shepherded Siam into a new era of strength and independence.<sup>164</sup>

Franciscan missionaries began to arrive from Malacca and Manila in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Ayutthaya was a thriving trade city that was open to

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<sup>164</sup> Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume III: A Century of Advance. Book 3: Southeast Asia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1168ff.; Wyatt, *Thailand*, 100ff.

many foreigners of different persuasion. Siam also allowed missionaries to preach freely. Throughout the sixteenth century, and more so the last quarter, Siam was a flourishing cosmopolitan center for trade that attracted a diverse population of merchants. Located between Moghul India, Persia and the Turks to the West, and Japan and China to the East, Ayutthaya was an “entrepot between East and West.”<sup>165</sup> Siam’s trading networks greatly influenced its political life and the foreign communities formed part of the fabric of the city and were also brought into the affairs of the court.<sup>166</sup>

### **Historical Sources on the Ayutthaya Period**

An account of Thai history in the Ayutthaya period can be gathered from both local and foreign sources. Local sources communicate a great deal about royal and court history. However, many of the local sources have been lost to history. European observations have aided in the understanding of Ayutthaya in the sixteenth century.

#### *Local Sources*

Historical records from indigenous sources on Siam in the sixteenth century were significantly reduced by the perennial wars between Siam and Burma. The second (and final) fall of Ayutthaya significantly decreased local sources. Many of the Thai sources were unfortunately destroyed during a fire that consumed the city in 1767. The documents were one of the many casualties of the second fall of Ayutthaya during a new wave of Siamese-Burmese war that began in 1765 and ended with the sacking of the city in 1767. The Burmese occupation of the city was brief, as the Burmese withdrew in

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<sup>165</sup> Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 121.

<sup>166</sup> Baker and Phongpaichit, 122.

November that same year to defend, unsuccessfully, against Chinese forces on their borders. Nevertheless, the sacking resulted in much destruction, including of historical documents, and the relocation of thousands of captives to Burma.

Despite significant loss in the local sources, some royal inscriptions and annals survived. Translations and later transcriptions ensured some important manuscripts were preserved, as it was common to translate court documents into four languages, and some were transcribed in the later Rattanakosin (Bangkok) period. The few surviving annals were discovered and compiled by Prince Rajanubhab Damrong in 1912. These would give some account of the history of kings and events from the perspective of the ruling class, as well as provide insight into the religious underpinnings of monarchical rule. These documents are known collectively in English as the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya.<sup>167</sup>

#### *European Sources*

As a cosmopolitan trading port, some Europeans living and passing through Ayutthaya wrote about life in Siam. Information from European sources, as Monika Arnez Jürgen and Sarnowsky have aptly observed in their study of religion and European perceptions of mainland Southeast Asia, might often “contain information that has been

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<sup>167</sup> For a summary of Siamese records, see Prince Rajanubhab Damrong, “Story of Records of Siamese History,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 11, no. 2 (1914-1915): 1–20. The collection is translated into modern Thai as *Prachum phratamra boromaracachuthit phua kanlapana samai ayuttaya* (Collected royal decrees establishing religious foundations in the Ayutthaya period, Bangkok, 1967); Yoneo Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society: Thai Buddhism in History*, trans. Peter Hawkes, Monographs of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University 16 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 53 note 30; for an English translation see David K. Wyatt, ed., *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya: A Synoptic Translation by Richard D. Cushman* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 2000).

lost in today's regional and local traditions."<sup>168</sup> Travelers of various stripes, traders as well as missionaries like the friars, sometimes relied on local informants or written sources and may reflect the historical situation in which the visits took place, even as they had to process such information in ways that made sense within a European perspective.<sup>169</sup>

The Portuguese were a significant contingent in Ayutthaya, and the writings of Portuguese traders are important sources for Siam in the early and mid-sixteenth century. The Portuguese had explored Siam from 1511. Some of the most significant of the Portuguese writers on Siam were Duarte Barbosa and João de Barros. Duarte Barbosa accompanied several fleets from India to the China Sea over a decade, and some of his manuscript publications date from 1516. Barbosa often made general remarks on politics and religion in the places he visited. He commented extensively on the nature of politics in Siam and emphasized that the monarch ruled by absolute power.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> "Introduction," Arnez and Sarnowsky, *The Role of Religions in the European Perception of Insular and Mainland Southeast Asia*, 2.

<sup>169</sup> For overviews of ethnography, travel, and local sources see Arnez and Sarnowsky, *The Role of Religions in the European Perception of Insular and Mainland Southeast Asia*; Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume III: A Century of Advance. Book 1: Trade, Missions, Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume III: A Century of Advance. Book 3: Southeast Asia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Travel Writing and Ethnography," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 242–60.

<sup>170</sup> Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa: An Account of the Countries Bordering on the Indian Ocean and Their Inhabitants: Written by Duarte Barbosa, and Completed about the Year 1518 A.D. 2 Vols. First in London, Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1918-1921*, trans. Mansel Longworth Dames (Taylor & Francis, 2017).

*Marcelo Ribadeneira's Historia*

Ribadeneira's *Historia* is an important source for understanding religion and politics in Siam because it is among the few sources to describe the city of Ayutthaya after the city was rebuilt after it was sacked by the Burmese in 1569. The Portuguese sources reported on Ayutthaya prior to its destruction by the Burmese in 1569. However, reports of the city after the walls were rebuilt are scarce. For information and description of the city and life after the rebuilding, historians have relied heavily on the missionary accounts cited in Ribadeneira. Donald Lach, for example, describes Ribadeneira's synthesis as the "best description of Ayutthaya in the end of the sixteenth century."<sup>171</sup> Reports in Ribadeneira's *Historia* are also the earliest Western descriptions of the rebuilding process in Ayutthaya. The rebuilding process was completed around 1580 during the period that Spanish missionaries started to arrive in Siam. Ribadeneira includes reports of the geography of the city as a large island-like city, accessible by navigable river streams, with high, heavily fortified cemented walls, splendid royal residences, and grand temples.<sup>172</sup>

In the area of religious life and ritual, European observers are important sources that provide descriptions not otherwise available from sources such as the royal annals. Missionary reports do not add anything significant to politics and the monarchy, but they corroborate what is known from other European and local sources. Ribadeneira's account makes substantial contributions about the role of Buddhist religious education in the

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<sup>171</sup> Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. I, Book 2*, 519.

<sup>172</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 22

intellectual formation of the nobility, as well as Buddhist devotional practices such as royal and lay processions, giving and receiving alms, the ritual maintenance of temples, and Buddhist monastic practices.<sup>173</sup>

### **Religion and Politics in Thai History**

Marcelo de Ribadeneira understood Siam to be the center of Buddhist law and practice because of the perceived convergence of religious law and political rule in the kingdom. Further, royal patronage of religion in Siam was not unlike the royal patronage of missions maintained by the Spanish crown. The missionary perception that religious law underpinned social and political order has significant historical resonance. The close relationship between religion and politics in Siam is an important context in the view that Siam was the stronghold for Buddhism in Asia.

Buddhism has a long history in Thailand—indeed Buddhism has been central to the formation and legitimacy of the monarchy and state since the Sukhothai period. It is nearly impossible to discuss religion in Siam without discussing the state and monarchy, and state and monarchy have been intimately tied to religion for centuries in Siam. As Yoneo Ishii claims: “At no time in its history has the Sangha merely subsisted in one form or another within the state; when it has flourished it has done so by entering into a positive relationship with the state.”<sup>174</sup> The state and the monarchy in turn depended on religion for its legitimacy. The state provided patronage and the monarch was understood

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<sup>173</sup> Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. I, Book 2*, 519.

<sup>174</sup> Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 34.



as the “defender of Buddhism,” ruling under the basis of the Buddhist *dharma*.<sup>175</sup> The term *dharma* *Dharma* (*Sanskrit*) or *dhamma* (*Pali*) has multiple meanings that can mean law, truth, or cosmic order based on the teachings of Gautama Buddha. Writing on the historical relationship between religion and the state in Southeast Asia in general, and the Thai kingdom in particular, Tomas Larsson notes: “As classic works of Southeast Asian politics have emphasized, the early nation states of the region were conceived of as serving cosmological purposes informed by Hindu and Buddhist worldviews, and this was central to their legitimation.”<sup>176</sup>

#### *Theravada Buddhism*

Another reason Siam was considered to be the center of a newly identified tradition was because Theravada Buddhism remained one centralized institution in Thailand overseen by one head monk, and had a monastic order operated within the confines of a unitary institution. This religious hierarchy in Siam matched the Catholic hierarchy led by the pope. By contrast, Mahayana traditions in Japan, for example, were organized by competing schools (Zen, Pure Land, Tendai, etc.), each with its own separate hierarchy and monastic lineage. Further, missionaries perceived monastics in Siam to be the most disciplined in following ascetic rules.

Theravada Buddhists trace their tradition to the aftermath of the Gautama Buddha’s death in which schisms occurred in the community about whether the Buddha’s instructions on monastic rules should be preserved intact or reformed according to

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<sup>175</sup> Ishii, 61.

<sup>176</sup> Tomas Larsson, “The Political Economy of State Patronage of Religion: Evidence from Thailand,” *International Political Science Review*, June 20, 2018, 5.

changing contexts. The Theravada tradition centered on the conservation of Gautama Buddha's instructions on monastic life, and his original teachings. The early teachings were written down over time in Pali (a vernacularized form of Sanskrit) and developed into the Pali Canon known as the *tripitaka*.<sup>177</sup> The Theravadins stood in contrast to the Mahasanghika or Great Community which advocated for the reform of the *sangha*. The reform instincts of this group fed into Mahayana (Great Vehicle) traditions which would later flourish in East Asia. The term Theravada provides insight into the importance of maintaining monastic rule for the tradition: *vada* means “doctrine or tradition,” and *thera* connotes an elder in the monastic order—someone “whose status derives from long years in the robe.”<sup>178</sup> Some of the salient characteristics remain important for the Theravada tradition historically: especially important are the focus on following monastic rules (*pratimoksha*) as laid down in the *vinaya-pitaka*; the hierarchy of order and rank within the monastic community; and the respect for seniority of those with years wearing the Buddhist robes.

Theravada Buddhism also divides the world between monastic community and lay followers in a symbiotic relationship, as under monastic rules monks do not generally engage in commerce, and are required to seek alms for food and depend on lay and state support for survival. That monks in Siam completely depended on alms for survival was

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<sup>177</sup> *Tripitaka* (Sanskrit) – *Tipitaka* (Pali) refers to the “Three Baskets” of the earliest Canon of Buddhist sacred texts originally written in Pali. *Tri/ti* refers to three, and *pitaka* refers to baskets. These “baskets” are the *Sutra pitaka* (discourses of the Gautama Buddha), the *Vinaya pitaka* (the monastic code), and the *Abhidharma pitaka* (higher teachings on the dharma). All branches of Buddhism have a version of the *Tripitaka*.

<sup>178</sup> Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 1–2.

a crucial consideration for Franciscans in their descriptions of religious life, as will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

Theravada Buddhism in Siam was predated by Mahayana Buddhism, but would come to be the form of Buddhism adopted by the state. The earliest records of Buddhism come from the Mahayana traditions, as the earliest writings were in Sanskrit, the language used by many early Mahayana schools. However, this early arrival of Buddhism in Siam did not have a lasting impact on political and social formation and eventually died out. Around 600 C.E. the earliest evidence of the Theravada tradition can be found through Pali writings from the Dvaravati kingdom in central Thailand.<sup>179</sup> Theravada Buddhism became a substantial presence in the cultural landscape with its own *sangha* in the thirteenth century, during the Sukhothai period. Royal inscriptions tell that, during Rama Khamhaeng's reign in the late thirteenth century, he firmly established Theravada Buddhism as the state religion, and built a monastery by inviting monks from the Mons in the south. During this period, a Theravada Buddhist monastic lineage was established through the Sinhalese *sangha* transmitted via Burma.<sup>180</sup> King Lithai of Sukhothai invited esteemed Burmese monks to the kingdom and built a residence and preaching hall. In 1399, the daughter of King Lithai founded Asokarama by enshrining two Buddha relics from Sri Lanka, and established servants and overseer, and a yearly endowment as alms to maintain the sacred site.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism*, 138.

<sup>180</sup> Gombrich, 168.

<sup>181</sup> Based on Sukhothai Royal inscriptions 1, 3, 5, and 93 in Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 60, 62 notes 3 and 4.

As with Sukhothai, Buddhism was a central component of the establishment of the Ayutthaya, which used both Buddhist and Hindu concepts of divine kingship. The city was named after Ayodhya in India, the birthplace of the Hindu god, Rama. Thai kings from the Ayutthaya period into the present dynasty bear the title “Rama.” It is no wonder that Portuguese observers described for the Thai treated Ayutthaya monarchs as if they were gods.<sup>182</sup>

During the Ayutthaya period, Siam also grew to become a strong center of the Theravada Buddhist world due to sharp decline of Sri Lankan Buddhism, which had for centuries maintained the tradition. The Sri Lankan monastic lineage collapsed over time under the foreign reign of Hindu Tamils from the tenth through the thirteenth century, then Portuguese rule starting in the sixteenth century. Siam’s King Boromakot was able to send a delegation of 25 monks headed by Upali Thera back to Sri Lanka through the mission to Kandy of 1753 at the request of Sinhalese king Kirti Sri Rajasimha who sought to revive Theravada Buddhism. The monks were able to perform a higher ordination ceremony (*upasampada*) to reestablish the monastic lineage. The Kandy mission is understood as a watershed moment in Buddhist history, as Siam showed itself as a powerful force in preserving and spreading Theravada Buddhism. It is also underscored a royal promotion and patronage of Buddhism crossing the boundaries of different kingdoms.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> João de Barros, *Terceira decada da Asia de Ioam de Barros: dos feytos que os portugueses fizeram no descobrimento & conquista dos mares & terras do Oriente* (Lisboa: Por Ioam de Barreira, 1563), <http://archive.org/details/terceiradecadada00barr>.

<sup>183</sup> Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism*, 139–40; Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 63–64.

*State, Sangha, and Society*

The interconnection between the state and religion observed by missionaries had a long history in Siam. In the Sukhothai period, extant inscriptions recorded important instances of royal patronage and protection of the *sangha* that created a precedent for the relationship between state and religion in Thai history. State patronage ensured the survival of the monastic order and the monarch helped in the oversight of the religious order by settling disputes, sometimes expelling wayward monks. Royal patronage by monarchs and members of the royal family aided in the construction of temples and monasteries, and facilitated the exchange of religious materials between monastic communities from other Theravada Buddhism kingdoms.<sup>184</sup>

In the Ayutthaya period, rulers followed the precedent set in the Sukhothai period of monarchs as defender and patrons of Theravada Buddhism. Extant chronicles of Ayutthaya from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries show monarchs building monasteries, providing annual offerings, and commissioning Buddha statues to commemorate their reigns. For example, King Ramabothi II in 1518 commissioned a 16-meter-high gilded Buddha statue called Rama Si Sanphet.<sup>185</sup>

In the period after the rebuilding of Ayutthaya, Franciscans, as reported in Ribadeneira, observed King Naresuan performing a royal procession through the Chaopraya river and up a temple in order to provide gifts and alms. From the description, the royal procession is most like a *kathina*. The detailed observation provided in the

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<sup>184</sup> Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 63.

<sup>185</sup> Luan Prasert Ayutthaya Chronicle, in Yoneo Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society: Thai Buddhism in History*, trans. Peter Hawkes, Monographs of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University 16 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 63.

*Historia* showed the significance to the friars of state patronage of religion. The *kathina* ceremony is an auspicious time for laypeople to provide alms to the monastic community that takes place at the end of the rainy season retreat (*vassa*). The word comes from the stick used to cut Buddhist robes, one important lay gift to monks, among other items such as food and money. The community engages in collective giving, and often processions also form part of the giving ceremony.

Buddhist monarchs from the Sukhothai period of Thai history engaged in royal *kathina*'s typically alongside a royal procession to an important monastery. Extant Sukhothai inscriptions describe King Rama Khamhaeng performing *kathina*.<sup>186</sup> The Franciscan description provides details of the continuity of royal practice. The account recorded by Ribadeneira is the earliest description of a royal *kathina* ceremony in the Ayutthaya period. Ribadeneira's account confirms the continuity of the royal practice after the rebuilding of Ayutthaya. However, seventeenth-century accounts also corroborate the *kathina* ritual in Ayutthaya. The *kathina* practice continues with the current royal family and is a common practice of lay giving in the Theravada Buddhist world.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Ishii, 41.

<sup>187</sup> Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 18, 41, 133; Baker and Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 142; After the Franciscans in Ribadeneira's *Historia*, later seventeenth century accounts of *kathina* processions include Vliet, *Van Vliet's Siam*; and, François Caron and Joost Schouten, *A True Description of the Mighty Kingdoms of Japan and Siam (1671); a Facsimile of the 1671 London Edition in a Contemporary Translation from the Dutch by Roger Manley*, ed. John Villiers (Bangkok: Siam Society, 1986).

*Buddhist Devotional Practices*

The religious landscape of Theravada Buddhism in Siam was as rich in devotional items and images as anything in the Catholic world. The religious landscape was also rich with devotion to relics, Buddhist monks and saints, sacred objects like amulets, and images of Buddhas and divine figures.<sup>188</sup> The survival of the monastic order depended on the “social mechanism” of regular and spontaneous devotional giving and support from the laity and the monarchy.<sup>189</sup>

Theravada Buddhism in practice included the appropriation, within the bounds of Buddhism, of many different forms of spiritual practice. As Richard Gombrich points out, other elements like ghost cults have been incorporated into practice but priority is given to Theravada Buddhism as the only way to salvation.<sup>190</sup> Theravada Buddhism in Siam also took from preexisting animistic practices and local beliefs. Additionally, Theravada Buddhism also selectively incorporated elements of Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism and brought various dimensions into its sacred orbit: “In Siam, for example, divinities, god-kings, and sacred representational techniques had been selectively absorbed from regions including Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, India, and China; reworking new religious imagery, combining it with older forms could create objects of devotion with lasting sacral power.”<sup>191</sup> Hindu religious worship and elements of animism

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<sup>188</sup> Donald K Swearer, *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 26; Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 196, 203–4.

<sup>189</sup> Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, xv.

<sup>190</sup> Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism*, 29.

<sup>191</sup> Quote: Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion*, 149; based on Betty Gosling, *Origins of Thai Art* (Trumbull, CT: Weatherhill, 2004), 170–83.

were sometimes also incorporated but relativized within Theravada Buddhism: “The Buddha and Hindu gods were dovetailed with local religious practices including ancestor worship, fertility ceremonies, and spirit cults.”<sup>192</sup>

### *Religious Education and Law*

One of the central reasons that Ribadeneira viewed Siam as a “storehouse” of Buddhism was the role that religion played in education in Siam. In fact, education was considered by the friars to be the primary achievement of Siam. Buddhist monastics schools were free and available to any male who ordained as a monk. Ordaining as a novice trained students to be proficient in the vernacular and also Pali from canonical scriptures (used primarily for ceremonies, chanting, and worship, but also for the study of Buddhist law and philosophy). Buddhists viewed learning in both vernacular and sacred languages as integral for knowledge and application of the *dharma*, the foundation for a sound civilization and culture.<sup>193</sup>

Buddhists were important for the education of elite leadership in a context that offered few other means for education. Since much of public administration also required knowledge of Pali, it was difficult to climb the social hierarchy without some Buddhist education. Many of the elite in Siam were educated in Buddhist institutions, and also received higher social standing for excelling in Buddhist studies. In the Ayutthaya period, under King Boromatrailokanat, it was stipulated that social status and “rice land” were given to monastic students who could best master the Pali scriptures. These were

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<sup>192</sup> Baker and Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 13.

<sup>193</sup> Wyatt, *Thailand*, 207; Iraola, *True Confucians, Bold Christians*, 138.



recorded in the “Laws of Military and Provincial Hierarchies” of 1454, promulgated in 1466, and laid down the system of grade ranking: “educated monks and novices received higher *sakdi na* grades [by which they were given land and social status] than those who were not educated.” Many in the royal court would pass through Buddhist education in order to become literate and lettered in order to perform administrative functions.<sup>194</sup>

Male members of the royal family were also expected to receive some education in Buddhism by ordaining for a period of time as monks, a practice that began in the Ayutthaya period. King Boromatrailokanat, ruling from 1448 to 1488, who himself became a monk for a period during his reign, sent his own children to receive monastic education. This tradition may have had the effect of further socializing the royal family in Buddhist principles and ideas.<sup>195</sup>

The state not only used Buddhist schools for the formation and education of state leaders and the general education of citizens, the state also helped support Buddhist educational institutions financially. The royal family regularly commissioned the preservation of writings and translations of Pali texts. For example, King Boromatrailokanat in early Ayutthaya period commissioned the translation of a Siamese version of the *Vessantara-jataka*, the highly popular story of the penultimate life of Gautama Buddha as Prince Vessantara.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Quotation in full from Khammai Dhammasami, *Buddhism, Education and Politics in Burma and Thailand: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 100; see also Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 82.

<sup>195</sup> Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 63.

<sup>196</sup> Khammai Dhammasami, *Buddhism, Education and Politics in Burma and Thailand: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 112.

Monastic education also influenced the state in a variety of ways. Pali concepts and terms infused royal protocol and law.<sup>197</sup> Buddhist principles were also the primary foundation for the legal code of the state.<sup>198</sup> Further, Buddhist law and teaching in the Ayutthaya period were viewed as the means by which the court could manage politics and social ethics throughout the kingdom. The use of Buddhist principles more broadly through Buddhist educational formation gave Buddhism a substantial role in society.<sup>199</sup>

### **The Portuguese in Ayutthaya**

The Portuguese community in Siam was important as a cross-cultural mediator that helped Franciscans coming from the Philippines to engage with the culture and religion in Siam. The Portuguese community also facilitated the entry of Spanish Franciscans into the kingdom. Once in Siam, the Portuguese hosted Franciscans making it possible for them to do missionary work. The Portuguese were crucial sources of knowledge about local culture.

Prior to the arrival of Spanish Franciscans, Spaniards did not have an established community in Siam and had no shared cultural and linguistic knowledge of the kingdom. However, the Portuguese had established themselves within Ayutthaya society for decades. The Portuguese had a substantial community of traders, with some clergy primarily from the Dominican order. Some Portuguese also worked as mercenaries and soldiers, working for both the Portuguese but also the Siamese army. Portuguese had

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<sup>197</sup> See Dhammasami, *Buddhism, Education and Politics in Burma and Thailand*.

<sup>198</sup> Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 44; 150–53.

<sup>199</sup> Baker and Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 272–74.

intermarried with Siamese and the community also had people of Portuguese-Thai decent.

### *Portuguese-Thai Relations*

The Portuguese community in Siam was built on a long history of formal diplomatic relations between the two kingdoms. These relations were generally friendly and made possible a fairly stable Christian community in the capital. The history of the Portuguese community in Siam dates back to the first diplomatic mission to the capital of Ayutthaya in 1511 in the earliest stage of Portuguese exploration of Southeast Asia. The mission was led by the Governor of Portuguese India, Duke Afonso de Albuquerque, whose successful fleet had conquered Malacca earlier that year.<sup>200</sup> Afonso deployed Duarte Fernandez as his personal envoy to meet with Siam's King Rama Thibobi II. The mission proved a success as Portuguese diplomats and the Siamese court began a long history of peaceful relations with an official exchange of gifts. The successful Fernandez mission was followed up by several other diplomatic meetings that produced a formal treaty of friendship and commerce signed between Siam and Portugal in 1516. This was the first such agreement between Siam and the West, and 2011 marked 500 years of friendly Portuguese-Thai relations.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> For more information on the early history of the Portuguese in Siam, see David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 88; Dirk Van der Cruysse, *Siam & the West, 1500-1700*, ed. Michael Smithies (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 2002), 9; Manuel Teixeira, *The Portuguese Missions in Malacca and Singapore (1511-1958)* (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1961), 56, 109.

<sup>201</sup> The official celebration of 500 years of Portuguese-Thai relations was presided over by the Honorable Chakrarot Chitrabongs on February 24, 2011 at Ayutthaya Rajabhat University, and was organized by the Foundation for the Promotion of Social Science and Humanities Textbooks Project, the Toyota Thailand Foundation, and Toyota Motors in Bangkok. Charnvit Kasetsiri has shared a summary of

The friendship and commerce treaty proved to be beneficial to both kingdoms. The Portuguese were allowed access to hospitable ports to engage in commerce, and they helped to diversify Siam's trade. While Siam did not possess the spices found in the Moluccas, it offered other exotic goods such as sandalwood, ivory and sealing wax. The Portuguese also brought goods to and from India, and went on to China, as Siam's ports became a central point of commercial exchange.<sup>202</sup>

Both kingdoms prioritized trade and military cooperation. Portugal was allowed to place some military outposts in Siam. Siam, in turn, obtained military technology and training. One of Siam's most important defense concerns was not Iberian powers but its neighbors, particularly Burma. Burma was Siam's regional archrival and most immediate threat. Siam and Burma were locked in years of territorial and suzerain disputes. The Portuguese diplomatic treaty provided Siam with additional means to fend off its neighbor and to expand Siamese territory. Siam received military gifts such as muskets and ammunition, as well as technical training in how to use and reproduce them. As part of the arrangement, Portuguese men also joined the Siamese army as mercenaries in some of Siam's military campaigns.<sup>203</sup> The Portuguese boost in military capability was quickly put to use: not long after the treaty was signed, Siam used Portuguese help in defeating the city-state of Chiang Mai to the north, and incorporated Chiang Mai in tributary region

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the Conference on the Southeast Asia Studies listserv, run by Justin McDaniel at University of Pennsylvania, <https://groups.sas.upenn.edu/mailman/listinfo/rels-tlc>. See also Michael Smithies, ed., *500 Years of Thai-Portuguese Relations: A Festschrift* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 2011).

<sup>202</sup> Laura Jarnagin, ed., *Portuguese and Luso-Asian Legacies in Southeast Asia, 1511-2011*.

<sup>203</sup> Manote Tripathi, "What Siam Had to Offer," *The Nation*, February 6, 2012. This news article came out of The International Conference on the 500th Anniversary of Siam-Thailand Relations with Portugal and the West: 1511-2011.

in 1515; Siam also defeated the city again after a rebellion in 1543 with the help of Portuguese mercenaries.<sup>204</sup>

### *The Portuguese Community*

Although military service and vocations were part of the Portuguese occupations, their community was quite diverse and adaptable. For example, some Portuguese served as mercenaries and fought with (and sometimes against) Siam in individual campaigns, not as part of official policy. New archeological evidence from excavations of the ruins of Ayutthaya has shifted the historiography away from understanding the Portuguese community in terms of an extension of Portugal's imperial ambitions. Official institutions were quite weak and far removed from the Portuguese strongholds at Malacca and Goa. The treaty between Portugal and Siam did not do much to generate any official political institutions or military outposts within Siam. The Portuguese had to operate on a case by case basis with the royal court, with informal and *ad hoc* arrangements. With little by way of official institutional or colonial protections, the Portuguese in Siam were left to their own devices to navigate the chaos and poverty from the Siamese-Burmese wars. Living on the outskirts of the empire, the Portuguese managed to carve out a distinct presence while being incorporated into the social fabric of Siam. Stefan Halikowski Smith calls the Portuguese practice "inter-communitarian," for they integrated into the

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<sup>204</sup> Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. I, Book 2*, 519–21.

city of Ayutthaya while they maintained their distinct identity (a practice that has held into the modern era).<sup>205</sup>

By the end of 1540 the Portuguese merchant community had carved out a substantial neighborhood in Ayutthaya, concentrated in the south end of the city, known by the Thai name *Moo Ban Portuget* (Portuguese neighborhood or village).<sup>206</sup> There was the third largest foreign settlement in Ayutthaya after Chinese and Muslim trading communities. The Portuguese community grew to include many houses, shops, warehouses, and churches.<sup>207</sup>

#### *The Catholic Church in the Portuguese Neighborhood*

Friars, often serving as chaplains, commonly accompanied the Portuguese in their voyages to Ayutthaya. Some were able to lay down roots and establish religious institutions. Dominicans under the Portuguese *Padroado* reached Malacca by 1554, and Gaspar de Cruz, who was made Vicar General of the Dominicans, founded a convent in the city. Through the Portuguese *Padroado Real*, a Siamese parish was established under the diocese of Malacca and the Archdiocese of Goa in 1558.<sup>208</sup> Archeological evidence also corroborates that the Dominicans most probably had the first church, San Pedro, in the city, the remains of which have been successfully excavated in recent years. By the

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<sup>205</sup> See Stefan Halikowski Smith, *Creolization and Diaspora in the Portuguese Indies: The Social World of Ayutthaya, 1640-1720* (Leiden; Boston: BRILL, 2011), phrase from 300.

<sup>206</sup> In Thai, หมู่บ้านโปรตุเกส.

<sup>207</sup> Charnvit Kasetsiri, Summary of the International Conference on the 500th Anniversary of Siam-Thailand Relations with Portugal and the West: 1511-2011.

<sup>208</sup> Bull by Pope Paul IV, *Pro Excellentia Praeinentia*; see Manuel Teixeira, *The Portuguese Missions in Malacca and Singapore, 1511-1958* (Lisbon: Agencia General do Ultramar, 1961-1963), 109.

time French diplomats and French Jesuits arrived in the middle of the seventeenth century, they had known that the church had been around for several decades, a fact that indicated that it was built before the turn of the century. The cemetery in the Dominican church also indicates that many of the people buried there were Portuguese and Eurasian.<sup>209</sup> The Dominican missionaries of Portuguese descent were preoccupied with tending to the existing community of Christians, Portuguese merchants, diplomats, and the new family additions of Portuguese and Eurasians. Spanish merchants and missionaries frequently also made residence in the Portuguese neighborhood starting in the 1580s. As Japanese Christian refugees who fled Japan after the outbreak of persecutions made their way to Siam, they also were welcomed into the Portuguese Christian neighborhoods in the late sixteenth century. The Japanese, whose numbers also included merchants and warriors, would be granted their own neighborhood on the southern outskirts of the city when their numbers increased as persecutions intensified in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.<sup>210</sup>

### **The Spanish in Ayutthaya**

Spanish merchants and missionaries made their way to Ayutthaya in the 1570s and formed part of the cosmopolitan community, albeit in smaller numbers. Spanish diplomatic relations with Siam were less stable and established compared to relations between Siam and the Portuguese. Portugal arrived first and enjoyed decades of friendly

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<sup>209</sup> Rita Bernardes de Carvalho, "La présence Portugaise a Ayutthaya (Siam) aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles," Master's thesis, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, 2006, 91ff.

<sup>210</sup> Baker and Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 154ff; Smith, *Creolization and Diaspora in the Portuguese Indies*, 117.

relations with Siam, while Spain had little contact with Siam: Spanish interaction with this part of Southeast Asia remained sporadic and minimal until the late sixteenth century. However, despite Siam being in the Portuguese zone, Spanish travelers were able to visit and reside in the city. Several factors facilitated Spanish engagement: Ayutthaya functioned as a free market; Portugal was incorporated into the Spanish Crown in 1580, thus blurring lines of demarcation, and missionaries persistently defied limitations on their travel. Even so, Spain attempted to solidify official relations with Siam to some degree of success.

*Blurred Boundaries: Free-Markets and Shifting Politics*

Ayutthaya, as a large commercial trading port in Southeast Asia, eased the crossing of boundaries of demarcation. As Florentino Rodao notes in his study of Spanish presence in Siam, the relatively open ports of continental Southeast Asia were territory where it was not advantageous to respect the boundaries of demarcation between Iberian powers. Port cities in Siam, Cambodia, and Malacca were authentic commercial centers where all manner of private affairs could be conducted, no matter what their origins. Siam, like other trading zones, welcomed regional merchants to its ports. Southeast Asian commercial centers like those in Siam were zones where “private traders, deserters, and all sorts of adventurers could act freely without it being terribly important if their origin was Castilian, Portuguese or even Armenian.”<sup>211</sup> Regardless of the initial lack of formal

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<sup>211</sup> Florentino Rodao, *Espanoles en Siam (1540 - 1939): una aportación al estudio de la presencia hispana en Asia Oriental*, Biblioteca de historia 32 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1997), 8: “Allí, comerciantes privados, desertores, y toda clase de aventureros podían actuar libremente sin tener excesiva importancia si su origen era castellano, portugués o, incluso, armenio.”



diplomatic relations between Spain and Siam, the welcoming environment encouraged free commercial travel. As Thais traded and formed part of the cosmopolitan community of Manila, so too were Spanish merchants and missionaries able to conduct their affairs in Ayutthaya. As early as 1576 there is evidence of Spanish-Siamese trade in arms. The regular movement of ships between the Philippines and Siam began in earnest in 1588.<sup>212</sup> Marcelo Ribadeneira himself describes the kingdom as “rich and abundant in all goods,” including cotton, Brazilwood, silver, and lead.<sup>213</sup> Siam also sought to acquire weaponry and artillery through trade with the Portuguese but also with Japan.<sup>214</sup>

Spanish trade through the Americas introduced increased trade competition in general and pluralized the Portuguese *de facto* trade monopoly of Europeans in Southeast Asia. No longer was the *Carreira de Índia* the only trade route to Asia. Spain was first to break Portugal’s trade monopoly that had stood unchallenged for the first three-quarters of the sixteenth century. Portugal’s incorporation into Spain under the United Crown in 1580 further eased Spanish trade in Southeast Asia. On the one hand, the united crown under the Hapsburgs still respected the separate administrations of the two countries in terms of prior agreements in Asia. On the other, the Hapsburgs presented a united front when it came to trade policy with the lower countries such as the Dutch. It was better to pool together resources to compete with the Dutch and English who were beginning to establish trading companies in the early seventeenth century. Both Spanish and

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<sup>212</sup> Florentino Rodao, *Españoles en Siam (1540 - 1939): una aportación al estudio de la presencia hispana en Asia Oriental*, Biblioteca de historia 32 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1997), 27, based on the *relación* of Domingo Salazar and others at the time.

<sup>213</sup> “*Es esta ciudad muy rica y abundante de todas mercaderías,*” Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 22, 167.

<sup>214</sup> Rodao, *Españoles en Siam*, 27.

Portuguese merchants had to compete with newly founded Northern European companies like the East India Company (the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, chartered in 1602) and the English East India Company (chartered 1600).

Despite efforts at establishing a united Iberian front on trade, by the end of the sixteenth century the Dutch and British had broken the Iberian dominance on trade in Southeast Asia and even expelled some Portuguese from some of their trading posts. The British emerged in 1757 after the Battle of Plassey in Bengal, India, not just as a commercial, but also as a military power in South Asia that would extend eastward. The Dutch, in turn, had established themselves by 1800 in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) as well as Java, lands previously under Portuguese control.<sup>215</sup>

The United Crown had also relaxed rules on Portuguese and Spanish communities living in each other's respective spheres. Many Portuguese, as well as new Christian converts under Portuguese patronage or having Portuguese descent, conducted business in and sometimes resided in the Philippines. This lasted up to the end of the United Crown in 1640 with the expulsion of new Christians with Portuguese heritage from Manila.<sup>216</sup>

### *Spanish-Siamese Relations*

Unlike the Portuguese who forged official relations with Siam early on, Spain attempted but did not gain the same level of diplomatic success. In regards to commerce and political order, Iberian sources on Siam were generally positive. Siam was perceived

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<sup>215</sup> Monika Arnez and Jürgen Sarnowsky, "Introduction," Arnez and Sarnowsky, *The Role of Religions in the European Perception of Insular and Mainland Southeast Asia*, 1–2.

<sup>216</sup> Rodao, 6–8.

by the Spanish writers as a formidable military and commercial force that could, if provoked, amount to a forbidding enemy.<sup>217</sup> Despite acknowledging Siam as a regional power, Spanish interventions in the region complicated official relations. Missionaries played a role in warming relations between Spain and Siam. When Siam inserted itself in Cambodia, some of these friars became prisoners, along with Spanish adventurers implicated in the Cambodian hostilities. They sought the mercy and protection of King Naresuan. Juan de Mota and others gained considerable favor with King Naresuan, and the friars received royal approval to preach. Missionaries became the connection that paved the way for warmer relations between Siam and Spain in the late 1590s. Governor Tello was able to take advantage of this good favor to extend a hand to Siam.

Spanish records indicate that in 1586 Governor Santiago de Vera and likely Juan Juárez Gallinato visited Siam. Siamese sources refer to two envoys, that of 1594 by Diogo Veloso, and another by Pedro Ortiz Cabezas and Pedro Dos Santos around 1596. The Spanish also reported receiving letters from Ayutthaya, for instance in 1596 during the governorship of Luis Pérez Dasmariñas, and in 1598 during the time of his successor Francisco de Tello de Guzmán. These diplomatic exchanges were rather cool, at least at first. The later mission would evolved into more substantial agreement, which the Spanish call the *Embajada Pacífica* (literally Peaceful Embassy, or Pacification Embassy). The peace-seeking embassy had to be created to undo distrust shown by Spanish incursions into Siam's political sphere.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> See Rodao's study of the Spanish in Siam, 27.

<sup>218</sup> See Rodao, 26ff. for a detailed account of attempts at diplomatic exchanges from both parties.

The main complications to positive relations between Spain and Siam were due to altercations over the Khmer kingdom in Cambodia. In 1593 Siam invaded Cambodia and captured Lovek, the Khmer capital, in July 1594. Along with the spoils of war, the victorious Siamese brought back to Siam, overland, a large number of prisoners, including Portuguese and Spaniards who were in Cambodia at the time. Some of the heavier loot was loaded onto a junk, with a Siamese and Chinese crew and three Spanish prisoners, to be transported back to Ayutthaya. While at sea the Spanish prisoners, with the help of the Chinese crew, managed to overtake the junk and sailed it to Manila. Some Spanish missionaries were in Cambodia in the first place as advisors to the Khmer king and as missionaries and were allowed to reside in Ayutthaya in the hope of helping with diplomatic relations with Manila.<sup>219</sup>

Manila, seeking to influence Cambodian affairs, conducted two expeditions in 1595 and 1598 headed by Luis Dasmariñas and Juan Juárez Gallinato. Spain sought to overthrow the Khmer king and replace the political leadership with another monarch to Spanish liking. Instead, Siam succeeded in thwarting the Spanish plan, taking many Spanish prisoners in their efforts. In 1596, after the first failed incursion in Cambodia, Captain Juan de Mendoza Gamboa and Father Juan Maldonado (a Dominican) were sent from Manila to Ayutthaya on a trading mission. They were received coolly by the Siamese court. The mission attempted to leave the Siamese capital stealthily with the earlier Portuguese captives. Angered by this action, King Naresuan ordered his troops to give chase. The Spaniards managed to escape with heavy losses and both Captain

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<sup>219</sup> See Ellis, "Cambodia in the Writings of Diego Aduarte and Gabriel Quiroga de San Antonio."

Mendoza and Father Maldonado succumbed to their wounds upon returning to the Moluccas. The Cambodian campaigns were so unpopular that the second expeditions had to be self-funded due to the opposition of the residents in Manila.<sup>220</sup>

Relations were tense between Ayutthaya and Manila. Both the Thai and the Spanish were reticent about the intentions of the other. From the Siamese side, much of the reports in letters and by envoys revolved around assurances of peace, as the Siamese sought clarity about Spain's intentions. Siam perceived Spain as harboring their hostile ambitions.

From the Spanish side, there were fissures and lack of agreement about how to approach Siam. There was not a coherent policy toward Siam. Spanish leaders and advisors had conflicting perspectives and aims. Many knew Siam to be a formidable kingdom in terms of their military capacity and the fortification of the capital city. Siam could not be taken by force. Or, if any attempt were to be made to conquer it, such an invasion would not be easy.

Franciscans in Ribadeneira's *Historia* reported on the strong defenses of the city, heavily fortified with 800 pieces of artillery. The city was difficult to take by force. Such reports added to the Spanish reluctance to try to conquer Siam, especially as the trade in arms and military strategy that Siam obtained from the Portuguese contributed to Siam's own strength and ability to defend itself against adversaries, either European or regional. The Portuguese recognized Siam as a significant regional power, and entered into

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 12 and 22; Martín Santo, "Cosas de Tierras Extrañas," 60ff.

diplomatic arrangements as partners. Spanish reports showed similar respect for Siam as a regional power with great military capability.

However, a minority of Spanish advisors toyed with the possibility of invasion. One of the central justifications for the risky military incursion was the view that Siam was an alternate path to accessing mainland China and would further open the preaching of the gospel. This possibility was entertained more acutely by Governor Luis Pérez Dasmariñas; the backing of the losing side in Cambodia tempered this ambition as others also advised against it. Those advising against intervention also attested that Siam was much more powerful than Cambodia, and the few altercations Siam had with Spanish ships proved this to be true.<sup>221</sup>

Changing circumstances would improve Spain's relations with Siam. Siam's King Naresuan, seeking to push further into Burma in military campaigns starting in 1594 onward, sought to cultivate friendship with European powers. In 1598, Governor Francisco de Tello Guzmán orchestrated the diplomatic mission known as the *Embajada Pacífica* from Manila to Ayutthaya based on commercial interests. Guzmán chose his nephew Juan Tello de Aguirre for the mission, which was captained by Juan Ruiz de Ycoago. Aguirre succeeded in obtaining a Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Spain and Siam. The treaty mirrored some of the terms set in place in the treaty between Siam and Portugal. This treaty allowed Spaniards to live in Ayutthaya, to trade and to

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<sup>221</sup> For an account of Spain's altercations with Siam, see Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de Las Islas Filipinas (1609)*, ed. J. S Cummins, vol. 140, Second Series (Cambridge: Published for the Hakluyt Society at the University Press, 1971), chapter 5, 71ff.

freely carry out missionary work. The mission succeeded in providing both sides assurances against hostilities, and established the intention of peaceful relations.<sup>222</sup>

Spanish-Siamese relations soured again during the second decade of the seventeenth century. European powers were able to capitalize on the military force by sea. However, Ayutthaya itself was protected by the surrounding rivers which made attacks by sea difficult. One such attempt by the Spanish, who entered the Chaopraya river, ended in disaster. Encountering heavy weather, Don Fernando de Silva's ships were stranded in Siam in 1624. While there, the Spanish captain attacked the passing Dutch yacht *Zeelandt* and captured its crew and cargo. When Don Fernando refused the Siamese King Songtham's order to return the cargo and liberate the crew, Songtham ordered his forces to attack the Spaniards, ending with the death of Don Fernando and the defeat of the Spaniards. In the incident, 150 Spaniards were killed while 200 were imprisoned.<sup>223</sup>

This incident brought Siam to the brink of war with Spain and the loss of Portuguese special status in Ayutthaya as Portugal was under the United Crown. The remaining decades of the seventeenth century brought Spain and Siam into intermittent contact with each other, some more peaceful than others. While some Spanish missionaries, such as the Jesuit Antonio Cardin, were allowed to evangelize in Ayutthaya in 1626, Spain never regained traction in Siam. By 1640, when the union between the Spanish and Portuguese crowns was terminated after six decades, the Iberian influence in

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<sup>222</sup> Rodao, *Españoles en Siam*, 28.

<sup>223</sup> Baker and Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 122.

Southeast Asia was eclipsed by the Dutch in terms of trade, then later by the French in terms of diplomacy and missions.<sup>224</sup>

### **Catholic Missionaries in Siam**

As was common in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Iberian voyages, religious clergy often accompanied diplomatic missions in official capacities, or joined voyages as a means of transportation in exchange for confession and other religious services. Given that reality, scholars have some evidence that religious clergy likely accompanied the diplomatic envoys and merchants to Siam in the early decades of contact. The Portuguese-Siamese official treaties and open trade allowed for a residential community in Ayutthaya and paved the way for missionaries from India, Malacca, and Manila as part of community building efforts.

### *Religious Tolerance and Diversity in Ayutthaya*

Ayutthaya in the sixteenth had a diverse religious and cultural composition. Although Buddhism predominated in the city, and had a long history of being tied to the state, Siam was fairly tolerant of other religious expressions especially among residing merchants and did not by law compel residents or subjects to be Buddhist. Both Portuguese and Spanish sources, including Marcelo de Ribadeneira, reported on religious tolerance for a variety of faiths.

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<sup>224</sup> See the account of Dutch merchant Jeramias Van Vliet writing between 1636 and 1640, *Van Vliet's Siam*, ed. Christopher John Baker, Dhiravat na Pombejra, and David K. Wyatt, trans. Leonard Andaya, Alfons van der Kraan, and L.F. van Ravenswaay (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2005); Cruysse, *Siam & the West, 1500-1700*; Michael Smithies and Luigi Bressan, *Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century* (Bangkok: Published and distributed by River Books, 2001).



Several distinct communities appear explicitly in reports of the diversity of faiths in the city. In European writings, these include Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Early Portuguese reports indicated that there may have been an indigenous Christian community, perhaps Nestorian, Armenian or Persian, prior to the arrival of Europeans.<sup>225</sup> This community may have consisted of traders who made residence in the city. However, this community did not establish lasting roots in the capital. The Portuguese would come to predominate Christian presence in the city, bolstered later by Spanish missionaries, and traders, Japanese Christians escaping persecution, and by the late seventeenth century, French missionaries and diplomats. Ayutthaya also had a substantial Muslim community, and reports indicated Muslims made up the largest non-Buddhist religious contingent. Many within the Muslim community came from the neighboring Malay peninsula.

The friar's in Marcelo Ribadeneira's *Historia* recorded the existence of a small Jewish presence and a synagogue in the city, the first known account to report on Jewish merchants residing in the capital.<sup>226</sup> Ribadeneira's account of a Jewish community has served as an important starting point for historians of Jewish presence in Thailand. Jewish accounts dating from the seventeenth century corroborate a small but diverse community of merchants that ebbed and flowed with trade, with a more permanent community established in the nineteenth century.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Victor Larqué, *A History of the Catholic Church in Thailand* (Chachoengsao: Mae Phra Yook Mai Punlisher, 1996), 1; see also J. C. England, "The Earliest Christian Communities in South East and North East Asia: An Outline of the Evidence Available in Seven Countries before 1500 A.D.," in *East Asian Pastoral Review* 25.2 (1988): 145.

<sup>226</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 21, 166.

<sup>227</sup> Ruth Gerson and Stephen Mark Mallinger, *Jews in Thailand* (Bangkok: River, 2011).

Ribadeneira reported on the extent of religious tolerance, using as example the ability of friars to openly preach to locals, even during their procession of sacred images, about the demonic dangers of devotion to idols. Buddha images in bronze or metal are a common feature of Buddhist art and devotional practice, as Buddhists often show respect and veneration by bowing or kneeling to the images. The friars also used the example of sacrilegious acts by Portuguese residents that could have elicited strong reactions or punishment. The friars reported how “Portuguese young men, in their irreverence, took some of the innumerable bronze idols [Buddha images] found in the temples and dragged them across the streets” (*los mozos de los portugueses por irreverencia tomaban algunos ídolos de bronce, de los innumerable que en cada templo hay, y los arrastraban por las calles*). The young men were evidently affronted by the perceived idolatry to pull images out of temples and haul them through the streets. Ribadeneira’s informants saw this as foolish. However, they also reported that Thai Buddhists did not retaliate, but instead would try to pay for the images to get them out of the hands of the Portuguese.<sup>228</sup>

Despite religious toleration and favorable reception on the whole in Siam’s courts, missionaries were vulnerable in times when wars disrupted royal power to offer them protection. Thus, Catholic missions were often interrupted by political instability. Nevertheless, the Franciscan missionaries from the Philippines persisted through a revolving flow of missionaries to the kingdom from 1582-1603.

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<sup>228</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 21, 166.

*The First Missionaries*

Franciscans were the first European missionaries to preach in Siam, albeit unofficially. One of the first recorded missionaries was French Franciscan Bonferre. He is thought to have arrived there with Portuguese merchants going from the capital Pegu in Burma to Malacca in 1550 and worked in Siam for three years.<sup>229</sup>

It was the Dominicans, not the Franciscans, who would establish a more permanent presence in the city. Dominicans under the Portuguese *Padroado* reached Malacca by 1554, and Gaspar de Cruz, who was made Vicar General of the Dominicans, founded a convent in the city. The formation of the *Congregação de Santa Cruz das Índias* allowed the friars to function with a considerable degree of independence. From India, missionaries were quickly dispatched outward to Cambodia (1554), China (c. 1555), the Moluccas (1561), and Siam (1567). Starting in 1553 several Portuguese ships landed in Siam, and at the request of the king of Siam three hundred Portuguese soldiers entered his service. More servicemen would enter on the side of Siam in preparation for the third Burmese invasion and siege of the capital. With hired militants and merchants in the city, Siam needed chaplains. Two Dominicans, Jeronimo da Cruz (Hieronymus of the Cross) and Sebastião de Canto (or Sebastian de Cantu), arrived in Siam and began ministering to Christians and seeking converts. They are known as the first to have official missionary posts in Siam.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> An early historian of Jesuit mission in Asia who also includes vignettes of Southeast Asia from available witnesses. Giovanni Pietro Maffei, *Historiarum Indicarum libri XVI (Florence 1588)* (Cologniae Agrippinae: In officina Birckmannica, sumptibus Arnoldi Mylij, 1589), 236.

<sup>230</sup> Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion*, 25; The Catholic Encyclopedia uses Maffei for the 1554 date, referring to Maternus Spitz, "Siam," *Catholic Encyclopedia Online* (New York: Robert Appleton

Friars Cruz and de Canto received their mission post at the behest of Friar Fernando di S. Maria who was also the Vicar General in Malacca. Portuguese Dominican João dos Santos wrote extensively that the missionary pair was highly regarded by locals and officials for their devotion to God. They were well received and given houses to perform mass. Due to Muslim agitators, Cruz went on to become the first martyr of Thailand. The agitators recruited people to incite a riot directed at the Portuguese community, and a violent attack killed Friar Cruz and severely wounded Friar de Canto. Local residents were reported appalled by the killing, and the King, who was not in the city at the time, ordered capital punishment on the central actors upon his return—the Muslims involved to be trampled by elephants, the guiltiest Buddhists by beheading. Friar de Canto begged for the life of the perpetrators to be spared. The King was moved by the request and the willingness of the Portuguese to forgive the perpetrators—viewing the Portuguese as exemplary residents—intervened on his behalf.<sup>231</sup> The incident showed how important royal protection was to the missionaries, as violence was directed at Christians when the king was out of the city. The swift punishment of the perpetrators—although stayed—helped set a precedent of protection.

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Company), accessed July 28, 2017, <http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=10791>; Maffei, *Historiarum Indicarum libri XVI*; Surachai Chumsriphan confirms the date as date of arrival in Ayutthaya by a letter addressed to the vicar general of Malacca at the time, in *Historia Fratrum Praedicatorum*, “The Great Role of Jean-Louis Vey, Apostolic Vicar of Siam (1875-1909), in the Church History of Thailand during the Reformation Period of King Rama V, the Great (1868-1910)” (PhD diss., Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1990), 73.

<sup>231</sup> João dos Santos, *Ethiopia orientalis, e varia historia de cousas, notaveis do oriente* (Evora: Imprensa no Conuento de S. Domingos de Euora, por Manoel de Lira impressor, 1609), Primera Parte, Libro Segundo, Ch VI: 35-8, <http://archive.org/details/ethiopiaoriental00sant>.

After the incident that martyred Friar Cruz, additional missionaries were sent to maintain the presence of the religious in the city. Among them were Lopez Cardoso, John Madeira, Alphonsus Ximenes, Luis Fonseca and Jorge de la Mota (John Maldonatus, who died of natural causes in 1568). When the Burmese won the siege of the city in 1569 the remaining friars were without the Siamese king to ensure their protection. The Dominican mission, like much of the functioning of the city, was interrupted as the Burmese killed some missionaries and sacked their church. The Dominicans were replenished in later years and established a continuous mission from 1593 to 1605.<sup>232</sup>

#### *Spanish Franciscans Missions to Ayutthaya*

It was the Dominicans, long established in Siam's capital of Ayutthaya, who facilitated the arrival of Spanish Franciscans to Siam. Dominicans reached out to their fellow Franciscan friars to aid in the preaching the gospel as Ayutthaya was rebuilt and became more stable.<sup>233</sup> Dominicans in Siam appealed first to Portuguese Discalced Franciscans working in Malacca. Spanish Discalced Franciscans who also shared missionary labor in Malacca were recruited alongside Portuguese Franciscans.<sup>234</sup> A cohort of three Discalced Franciscans, originally stationed in the Province of San Gregorio in the Philippines traveled through Malacca to Siam in 1582. Portuguese missionaries went to Siam through Malacca and went on to stay in the kingdom

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<sup>232</sup> Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion*, 25-6.

<sup>233</sup> Srisongkram, "Los Franciscanos Españoles En El Siam de La Era de Ayutthaya"; Klaus Koschorke et al., eds., *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450-1990: A Documentary Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2007), 13.

<sup>234</sup> Pérez, "Los Franciscanos En El Extremo Oriente (Noticias Biobibliográficas)."

permanently. Thus, Friar Ribadeneira's *Historia* includes accounts from Portuguese and Spanish Franciscan informants.<sup>235</sup>

The Spanish cohort that entered Siam was headed by Friar Jerónimo de Aguilar Mission Commissioner to Siam. A second in the cohort, Juan Pobre de Zamora, excelled in the Thai language and had some success in gaining converts. Commissioner Aguilar and his party were forced to return to Manila in 1584, however, after the fourth attempted siege of Ayutthaya by the Burmese, which Siam repelled.<sup>236</sup> Reports from other sources document that in 1585, not long after it was safe to return to Ayutthaya, the Franciscan missionary activity was reestablished with a group that included Antonio da Madalena, who resided in Siam until 1588. A few years later, in 1593, Friar Gregorio Ruiz joined the mission. Friar Ruiz established himself in the capital with a decade long mission ending in 1603 with his departure for Spain.<sup>237</sup>

These Discalced Franciscans, preferring suburban location to reside and perform exercises, set up residence in the north of the city, founding the Convento de Madre de Dios with a church or chapel in 1585. The location now lost, the convent was likely made of wood or perhaps was not build as a permanent structure. However, perhaps because it was made of wood, it has not been located.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 20.

<sup>236</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 20, 161-3. For the life of Friar Aguilar, Book III, Chapter 22.

<sup>237</sup> Iraola, *True Confucians, Bold Christians*, 140–41.

<sup>238</sup> Srisongkram, "Los Franciscanos Españoles En El Siam."

Spanish Franciscan Pedro Ortiz later made a trip to Siam in 1596. Ribadeneira also incorporates accounts from Portuguese Franciscans stationed in Malacca.<sup>239</sup> Other accounts indicate that the additional friars in the mission were Martin Ignacio de Loyola, Juan Bautista Locarelli, Augustin de Tordesillas, Juan Pobre de Zamora (the friar who was able to learn Thai), Francisco de Montilla, Diego Jiménez, and Gregorio Ruiz.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 20, 161-3.

<sup>240</sup> Iraola, *True Confucians, Bold Christians*, 140–41.

## CHAPTER FIVE: MONKS AND FRIARS: AFFINITY AND RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION

### Introduction

The learned men of Siam claim that a king, one of the first kings of that realm, gave the religious the laws they followed. . . . Because the law in Siam was the same kind of idolatry as received in Grand China, Japan, and other neighboring kingdoms, the name of the king who gave them the law ought to be Amida [Buddha], as the Japanese call him, although in Siam some call him Perbeneab, while still others claim he is known by many other names.

*(Dicen, pues, los letrados de Siam que un rey de los primeros de aquel reino les había dado la ley que guardaban. . . . El nombre del rey que les dio la ley, por estar el modo de idolatría de Siam recibido en los reyes comarcanos y en el de la Gran China y Japón, debe de ser Amida, como dicen los japoneses, aunque en Siam unos les llaman Perbeneab y otros dicen que tienen muchos nombres.)*

- Friar Marcelo de Ribadeneira, *Historia*, 1601

By 1601 Marcelo de Ribadeneira's synthesis of Franciscan missionary accounts, relying on exchanges with Buddhist monks, transmitted the basic story of the life of the Buddha to the West, and claimed the historical Buddha as the source of "commandments," and identified a core doctrine centering on transmigration. Franciscans claimed this tradition was shared across regions with significant Buddhist populations, and asserted that the founder, despite having different names in different places, was one and the same person.

This chapter argues that friars in Ribadeneira's *Historia* set in place a framework for the Western conceptualization of Buddhism as a religion. Based on exchanges with Buddhist monks, they perceived that the organizing principle holding the different threads of this newly identified religion together was the existence of a common founder, a discernible community of followers, and common doctrine. Further, these missionaries began theorizing about the connection and spread of the religion from one place to the



next. Remarkably, Siam and Southeast Asia played such an important role for religious and secular missionaries trying to understand this newly identified religion that the founder was sometimes perceived to have come from or travelled through Siam before reaching East Asia. In the account of Friar Ribadeneira, Siam was perceived to have the most representative form of this newly identified religion in Asia. Siam thus became paradigmatic in the constitution of Buddhism as a religion in the West. This chapter examines how missionary observers of Buddhism in Siam perceived direct comparisons between Christian and Buddhist institutions and practices, such as a hierarchical “religious” clergy, shared ascetic values, and doctrinal laws that formed the basis of rationally ordered civilizations.<sup>241</sup>

### **The Identification of Core Components of Buddhism**

I take the *Buddha* as my Refuge

I take the *dharma* as my Refuge

I take the *sangha* as my Refuge<sup>242</sup>

-The Three Refuges, or Triple Gem

The Three Refuges or Triple Gem of the ancient Pali Canon are often repeated by Buddhists as a conversion ritual, a creed, and a commitment to faith by taking refuge in the Buddha, his teachings, and his community of monastic followers.

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<sup>241</sup> Some of the research conducted and findings in this study are included in Eva M. Pascal, “Buddhist Monks and Christian Friars: Religious and Cultural Exchange in the Making of Buddhism,” *Studies in World Christianity* 22, no. 1 (March 18, 2016): 5–21.

<sup>242</sup> From the Saranagamana sutta— Going for Refuge, “The Khuddakapatha,” (Khp 1-9), *Khuddaka Nikaya*, translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight* 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/khp/khp.1-9.than.html> .

Franciscans identified three core components of Buddhism, in reverse order of the refuges. One of the central and first areas of commonality and affinity was through analogies of the friars to the *sangha*. The friars recognized Buddhist monks as their peers and as equivalent religious figures. The friars also identified a law or doctrine shared among many regions of Asia. Finally, friars proposed the law or doctrine could be traced back to one founder, who was the source and beginning of what they understood as a distinct mode of idolatry that came to be known as Buddhism.

The constitution of the Buddhist conceptual frame was made possible through cross-cultural exchange with Theravada Buddhist monks and lay people. In Siam especially, friars were invited into temples, joined monks on alms walks, received gifts from locals, debated with Buddhist monks who resembled them in dress, lived together with a common spiritual practice, were committed to poverty, and overall witnessed the monks' strong integration of politics, society, and religiosity. The Franciscans explicitly recognized monks as their religious counterparts, and Buddhist monks and lay people treated the friars as counterparts to monks. This chapter closely analyses the text of Ribadeneira's *Historia* that elucidate the cultural exchanges between Spanish friars and Buddhist monks and how these encounters spurred friars to see Buddhism in religious terms.

### **Searching for Analogies over Differences**

Inter-cultural encounters are never neutral. Early modern missionary observers had to process their encounters with unfamiliar cultures from within the framework of

their existing knowledge, categories, and pre-judgments.<sup>243</sup> However, the early modern framework of understanding was also challenged and transformed through the encounter with unfamiliar people and phenomena, as observers tried to make sense of other cultures and incorporate that new information and experience into a European worldview.<sup>244</sup> The frequency and variety of European contact with other cultures during the early modern period necessitated references to and redefinitions of Europeans' own self-understanding.<sup>245</sup> Comparison would prove a key to European observers' reflections on other ethnic groups. Indeed, Anthony Pagden argues, convincingly, that early modern observers approached comparison very differently than do their modern counterparts. Whereas modern observers and oriental scholars focus on the "otherness" of the "other," early modern observers focused on similarities and searched human behavior for "restrictive figures of similitude."<sup>246</sup> The act of comparison in this period was characterized by processing encounters with unfamiliar beliefs and practices analogically to familiar phenomena. It was common in missionary writing to see observations about other traditions by noting how they were similar to European practices or ideas, or other familiar points of reference. Further, missionaries also looked for points of contact for missiological purposes to establish friendships and to facilitate the preaching of the

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<sup>243</sup> F. Dallmayr, *Dialogue Among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 17.

<sup>244</sup> An important discussion of the initial process of cultural contact is Hassan Bashir, *Europe and the Eastern Other: Comparative Perspectives on Politics, Religion and Culture before the Enlightenment* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 7.

<sup>245</sup> Eric J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 21.

<sup>246</sup> Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5.

gospel.<sup>247</sup> As a consequence of the focus on similarity in the process of comparison, on the one hand, missionaries noted similarities to Christian traditions, but on the other hand, differences were also remarkable precisely for the lack of analogous examples.

In discussing the role of religion in travelers to Southeast Asia in the early modern period, Arnez and Sarnowsky further construe the focus on analogy over difference as in part functional: “In many cases, the travelers tried to find parallels between European and Southeast Asian cultures, in an attempt to render them more comprehensible to the European readership they were targeting.”<sup>248</sup> Jürgen Sarnowsky’s examination of Portuguese sources on religion in Southeast Asia notes that Europeans sometimes applied the principle of analogy eagerly: “often employing parallels to explain the foreign countries and customs to their European public, even if the comparison does not fit adequately.”<sup>249</sup>

Spanish Franciscans, like many early modern observers, used analogy to compare and make sense of unfamiliar cultural phenomena they encountered, and sometimes saw religious parallels to Christianity that did not always “fit.” Yet since the Discalced Franciscans valued spiritual practices of poverty and mendicancy as the highest forms of religiosity, they found many direct points of comparison to themselves and to Christianity in general.

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<sup>247</sup> Eva M. Pascal, “Missionaries as Bridge Builders in Buddhist Kingdoms: Amity amid Radical Difference,” *Missiology* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 64–77.

<sup>248</sup> “Introduction,” Arnez and Sarnowsky, *The Role of Religions in the European Perception of Insular and Mainland Southeast Asia*, 2.

<sup>249</sup> Jürgen Sarnowsky, “Duarte Barbosa’s View of Religions,” in *The Role of Religions in the European Perception of Insular and Mainland Southeast Asia: Travel Accounts of the 16th to the 21st Century*, ed. Monika Arnez and Jürgen Sarnowsky (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 13.

### Monks and Friars: “Religious” Analogies

Early modern European writers had different terms to refer to members of the Buddhist *sangha*. Regional variations in clothing and traditions meant that observers did not always make the connection between monks in different regions. Each region had its own designation for Buddhist monks as well. Ribadeneira, like colleagues and travelers in the Americas and Asia, rarely used the term *religiosos* to refer to non-Christian clergy. In the Philippines, for example, Ribadeneira referred to those leading rites and ceremonies as “ministers of idols” or “demons” (*ministros de los ídolos, demonio*), not “religious” (*religiosos*). Sometimes writers also used priest (*sacerdote*) to refer to clergy from different traditions. In other cases, words were combined to refer to leaders of non-Christian traditions. However, encounters with Asian institutional orders prompted a widening of the application of the term “religious” outside of Christian orders.

#### *What it Meant to be “Religious”*

How early modern Europeans understood the meaning of the term “religious” is an important dimension of the application of the category of religion to other traditions. In contemporary parlance, “religious” is a verb describing someone who is attached to religion or participates regularly in religious practices or has strong religious convictions. This more common way of thinking about the term religious is a later development from the Catholic uses in the early modern period. “Religious” was most commonly used as a noun for a member of a religious order. This did not, then, apply to secular priests. This

definition has formed part of canon law and continues to be used among Catholics.<sup>250</sup>

Marcelo Ribadeneira and others of his time used “religious” to describe anyone in a religious order as “the religious” (*los religiosos*), often reserved for themselves and other orders.

### *Descriptions of Buddhist Monks*

The Portuguese employed a variety of terms when referring to Buddhist monks. Early Portuguese sources often described Buddhist monks as “priests,” but they also began the custom of calling monks by the term *talapão*. Up to the nineteenth century many encyclopedias associated this term with a word used in Sri Lanka for the fans employed by monks, but recent etymology traces the term to a Mon word of respect for monks: “lord of merit.”<sup>251</sup> The more common spelling is the French *talapoins* popularized in the seventeenth century by French envoys and Jesuits in Siam.

In the context of Japan, for example, Jesuits like Francis Xavier and Valignano referred to Buddhist monks as *bonzes*, derived from Japanese *bonzo* for monks. Ribadeneira, who travelled to Japan, confirmed that the monks were known by the designation *bonzes*. Ribadeneira also noted ordained nuns in Japan as called “*vicunin*”<sup>252</sup> (a word resembling the Pali/Sanskrit for female monk: *bhikkhuni/bhikṣuṇī*). In observation of China, the Discalced friars also noted that “there are religious in China”

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<sup>250</sup> Specifically, a religious institute is someone who has taken a vow and adheres to an order or rule. Title II. Religious Institutes (Cann. 607 - 709) [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_P1Z.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P1Z.HTM). Some Protestants also use the term for religious orders as well.

<sup>251</sup> For example, Edward Balfour, *Cyclopædia of India and of Eastern and Southern Asia, Commercial, Industrial and Scientific: Products of the Mineral, Vegetable and Animal Kingdoms, Useful Arts and Manufactures*, 2nd ed., vol. V (Madras: Printed at the Scottish & Adelphi presses, 1873), 11.

<sup>252</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book IV, Chapter 2, 325.

(*tiennen religiosos*).<sup>253</sup> The “religious” were observed in the context of the cult of Amida Buddha.

One way that Europeans came to identify Buddhism as a single religion was to link the variety of Buddhist monks from different traditions as participating in the same religion, despite regional variations, lineages, monastic rules, and appearance. Barros, among other Portuguese, also noted that the “priests” of Burma and Siam wore similar garb and used a paper fan to protect against the sun.<sup>254</sup> Ribadeneira built on Portuguese insight and not only saw similarities across the different monastic orders, but went as far as to call them “religious”—analogous to Christian religious orders. Below I will discuss the specific convergences the friars saw in Buddhist monks. It is important to highlight here that the friars were an important link in Siam to French insights in the later part of the seventeenth century, since they connected different *sangha* communities. For instance, Simon de La Loubère, who relied on both Portuguese and Spanish sources, cited the different names for monastics in different regions (*talapoins*, *bonzes*, etc.) as different names for the same “Profession” based on a shared doctrine and founder.<sup>255</sup>

### **Analogies of Appearance**

Christian friars and Buddhist monks shared an affinity in several areas, most notably in the similarities in their overall appearance, and in their ascetic religious

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<sup>253</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 13, 139.

<sup>254</sup> Singkha Grabowsky, “João de Barros and His View of Buddhism in Siam,” in *The Role of Religions in the European Perception of Insular and Mainland Southeast Asia: Travel Accounts of the 16th to the 21st Century*, ed. Monika Arnez and Jürgen Sarnowsky (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 56.

<sup>255</sup> La Loubère, *A New Historical Relation Of The Kingdom Of Siam. ... Wherein a Full and Curious Account Is given of the Chinese Way of Arithmetick, and Mathematick Learning. In Two Tomes. Illustrated with Sculptures*, 10.

practices. In the earliest layers of European encounter with Theravada Buddhists, Portuguese lay observers such as Barros employed analogy when describing Buddhist monastics: the most direct analogy observed by Barros was between Buddhist monks and Discalced friars specifically. Both showed religious devotion through dress and appearance: friars were tonsured, Buddhist monks were shaven and both were often shoeless.<sup>256</sup>

Reports of contact between Jesuits and Japanese Buddhists indicate that the Jesuits regarded the Buddhist monks as resembling friars like Franciscans and Dominicans in appearance and dress.<sup>257</sup> Jesuits did not see themselves as resembling Buddhist monks but did see friars and monks analogously. This observation was probably due to the fact that friars did not have to make efforts to appear like Buddhist monks. Yet, when Jesuits thought it advantageous to gain local trust in China and Japan by looking more like Buddhist monks, they had to make concerted efforts to present themselves as Buddhists by tonsuring and dressing in monks' robes. Jesuits in China under Matteo Ricci would later adapt their dress to look more like Confucian scholars.<sup>258</sup> Jesuit versatility in dress showed they did not have any particular attachment to a habit and

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<sup>256</sup> Grabowsky, "João de Barros and His View of Buddhism in Siam," 56.

<sup>257</sup> App, *The Cult of Emptiness*, 35-6.

<sup>258</sup> M. Antoni J. Üçerler, "The Jesuit enterprise in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Japan," and Nicolas Standaert, "Jesuits in China," in Thomas Worcester, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008); see also the targeted study on Jesuit purposefully changing their appearance from Willard J. Peterson, "What to Wear? Observation and Participation by Jesuit Missionaries in Late Ming Society," in *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz, Studies in Comparative Early Modern History (Cambridge UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994), <http://bu.worldcat.org/title/implicit-understandings-observing-reporting-and-reflecting-on-the-encounters-between-europeans-and-other-peoples-in-the-early-modern-era/oclc/30318947/viewport>.



purposefully contextualized their dress and spirituality in order to facilitate mobility and flexibility.<sup>259</sup>

*The “Habit” of Friars and Monks*

In contrast to the Jesuits, the friars placed more meaning on the continuity of their dress, going all the way back to St. Francis. The Franciscan habit visually communicated general ascetic values and, most importantly, poverty. Franciscans wore a habit and a tonsure, and some, like the barefoot Franciscans, moved about shoeless and carried a shoulder bag to collect alms in order to maintain an emphasis on mendicancy and poverty. Ribadeneira remarked that the appearance of the friars wearing a habit in all seasons and weather conditions, and going barefoot around Buddhist temples, was the reason and motivation for locals to approach them.<sup>260</sup>

The barefoot friars’ outward appearance also displayed markers similar to those of Buddhist monks in Siam: monks often went bare-footed or wore simple sandals, and they wore a robe (a “triple robe” or *tricīvara*), shaved their heads, during alms walks carried a bowl for food-stuff, and sometimes wore a cloth bag for transporting other items.<sup>261</sup> The Buddhist monastic robes signified poverty, as early texts suggest that the materials used by Buddhist monks were taken from funeral pyres, thus having a saffron

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<sup>259</sup> For the Jesuit adoption of mental prayer as a modern transformation in spirituality in contrast to the asceticism of friars, see H. Outram Evennett, “Counter-Reformation Spirituality,” in *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. David Martin Luebke, Blackwell Essential Readings in History (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999).

<sup>260</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book IV, Chapter 19, 374.

<sup>261</sup> The Buddhist robes are described more fully in the *Vinaya*, one of the three baskets of the Buddhist Pali Canon, and the book of discipline for the Theravada monastic community (Vin 1:94, 289); see also commentary and interpretation by Bhikkhu Khantipalo, *With Robes and Bowl: Glimpses of the Thudong Bhikkhu Life*, Wheel Publication, no. 83/84 (Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1965).

color. Across Buddhist communities many monks and nuns wore variations of the saffron hue. The robe, which all monks and nuns wore, was the first possession given after ordination. Along with robes that signify poverty, another central possession is the begging-bowl monks use in order to go on regular alms walks to collect food for the day.

Friars made note of many of the details and the mode of the appearance of monks, and saw their overall dress and appearance as analogous to their own. In acknowledgment of the analogies in appearance, the friars preferred to use the same term for monks as they did for themselves by describing monks' robes simply as "a habit" (*el hábito*).<sup>262</sup> The friars saw a direct mirror in their appearance by the common use of a "habit," and recognized that wearing it distinguished men as religious authorities with spiritual responsibilities and social privileges.

The analogies of appearance friars claimed to monks did not minimize what they identified as the stark differences in the social reception of men who "wear the habit." Most of these differences regarded the high reverence for ordained monks in the kingdom. They observed that entering the monkhood was also a refuge—no matter what crime a person may have committed, he could enter the monkhood and not be disturbed. The social privileges of the Buddhist "habit" placed monks outside the reaches of the law, and men in robes could not be compelled into military service. The friars referred correctly to law, still Thai law to this day, forbidding the arrest of a monk in robes.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23 and 24.

<sup>263</sup> The exceptionalism of ordained monks to the rule of law creates a tension between the state and *sangha* that has periodically erupted in the history of the kingdom. A prominent historical example from was King Mongkut reforms that attempted to curtail men who sought ordination in order to avoid

Other differences noted by the friars included ornate ordination practices, the widespread religious education and ordination of young boys, as well as religious schools for novice monks, and the ability for men to enter the monkhood, even if they were married and had children. They could also return to lay life if they pleased. The ability to move in and out of religious life contrasted with the friars' lifelong vow of chastity. Another important difference they noted regarded the large proportion of men who became monks. Perhaps a more uncomfortable difference for the friars' difference was the reverence most people had for monks. Several of the friars described the significant social position held by monks, as shown by the following description:

During the time they wear the habit they take pride in making themselves great examples of humility and composure, maintaining loftiness and chastity ... And often seeing them in the streets, secular [lay] people put their hands together in a show of reverence, but they [monks] do not return the gesture or even nod their heads. When young religious men encounter a religious person, who is older or loftier in the streets, they accompany them and carry an umbrella for them, all others make way for them on the road and put their hands together reverently. They do this because that is how much they revere the habit of the religious.

*(Y el tiempo que traen el hábito se precien de dar grandísimo ejemplo de mortificación y compostura, guardando gravedad y castidad ... Y cuando los encuentran los seglares en las calles, ponen las manos en señal de reverencia, y ellos ninguno la hacen ni menean la cabeza. Cuando los religiosos mozos encuentran a los más ancianos y graves por la calle, les acompañan y llevan el tisasol, y la otra gente se aparta del camino y pone las manos reverenciándoles. Porque estiman mucho el hábito del religioso.)<sup>264</sup>*

The gesture of putting one's hands together, used in South and Southeast Asian cultures, like the Indian *namaste*, is a staple of Thai cultural etiquette called the *wai* (ไหว้)—a

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military conscription. For the law regarding monks see Sucharitkul, Sompong, "Thai Law and Buddhist Law" (1998). Publications. Paper 667, <http://digitalcommons.law.ggu.edu/pubs/667>, 16ff.

<sup>264</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 24, 173.

gesture of greeting and respect. The *wai* is done by holding one's hands together at the chest or the head. The gesture was, and continues to be, widely used as a greeting and to show respect to elders, leaders, and monks. Those in lesser social positions are expected to *wai* first, such as children to adults, students to teachers, laypeople to monks, novice monks to senior monks, and so forth. Some senior monks in the leadership of the *sangha*, as the friars noted, are not expected to return the *wai* greeting. In the view of the friars, the main reason for the widespread reverence for monks had to do with their commitment to spiritual asceticism. The "habit" represented similar ascetic commitments of obedience, poverty, and chastity.<sup>265</sup> the Buddhist monks lived a life of poverty without possessions, and the friars noted that many were virgins and were expected to remain so while ordained. All adhered to obedience to their superior within a religious hierarchy.

### **Performing Poverty**

Friar Ribadeneira and his fellow Franciscans belonged to an order that formed out of concern for strict interpretation of practices of poverty and mendicancy. The values of poverty and mendicancy fundamentally shaped the practice of the friars as they engaged in missionary work and travel. The friars also viewed their poverty and mendicancy as sources of spiritual power that would, by their imitation of Christ, pave the way for conversations with and gaining the trust of non-Christians in the East. The friars showed their commitment to poverty and mendicancy by performing spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, silent meditations, abstinence, and mortification.

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<sup>265</sup> As stated in the Rule of St. Francis: "The Rule of the Friars Minor is this, namely, to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience without anything of our own, and in chastity," *Solet Annuere*, Chapter I, November 29, 1223.

In Ribadeneira's *Historia*, friars in Japan described their spiritual practice most vividly. Importantly, Japan was one of the early places Ribadeneira went to after arriving in the Philippines. In Japan, the friars viewed their rigorous spiritual practice, centered on poverty, as a vehicle for building trust and attracting interest from local Japanese. Maintaining their spiritual practice was also an important priority for the friars, and they continued to practice spiritual exercises during travel and in the early stages of missionary activity.

When first arriving in Japan, for example, the friars reported they were able to perform their spiritual exercises in the house constructed for them by the Imperial Regent Hideyoshi:

Although we were by ourselves, we observed the same rules and regulations of prayer, fasting, abstinence, self-discipline, and mortification as well as silence. Our gentle neighbors who were constantly but surreptitiously watching us, marveled at our regulated life, and being edified by our behavior, started gradually to ask questions about the Christian God, and even requested the Blessed Fr. Leon, a brilliant preacher who happened to be with us, to deliver a sermon about this God.

*(Y nosotros entreteníamos allí las noches y los días con los acostumbrados ejercicios de oración, ayunos y disciplinas, rezando el oficio divino a las horas acostumbradas en un aposento pequeño que nos dieron, y era admiración ver la lástima que tenían de nosotros los gentiles. Y como notaban nuestras obras, palabras y afectos, y perdían que les enseñásemos a persignar, y gustaban de oír sermón al bendito mártir León, que estaba con nosotros, que era fervorosísimo en predicar la palabra de Dios a grandes y chicos.)<sup>266</sup>*

These observations speak to the internal and external perception and function of poverty and the importance of observing a set of spiritual practices. Performing poverty was a marker of identity for the friars, and a full representation of the imitation of Christ on

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<sup>266</sup> Translation adapted from Ribadeneira, *Historia* 1970, Book IV, Chapter 8, 674; Spanish text Book IV, Chapter 8, 345.

Earth. Yet it had an external function as well. The friars presupposed that their performance of poverty would be well received and communicate spiritual power to outside observers. Performing poverty itself was to approximate Christ which would elicit admiration and attraction. Without preaching, but living in poverty, the friars believed they would draw observers to them. The spirituality of the friars would also elicit trust from observers, and pave the way then for further friendship, and invitations to hear about God through preaching. They believed this was “the best” way to win Japanese hearts.<sup>267</sup>

It is unclear if any one practice in particular attracted curious observers, but the friars reported that their spiritual discipline did caused curiosity and admiration from Japanese observers. The friars also learned from concrete experience that their spiritual practices should be appealing, which in fact worked, in their experience, to build trust and accumulate spiritual capital.

#### *Admiration for Monks for Avoiding Money*

The practices of poverty and mendicancy were among two of the most substantial convergences they felt they shared with Buddhist monks in Siam. To the friars, Buddhist monks displayed a rigorous commitment to communal poverty. Franciscans found reason to commend Buddhist monks for their rigor in observing poverty, especially in relation to how they approached money. The friars implied that the monks outdid them in their

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<sup>267</sup> Translation adapted from Fernández, *History of the Philippines and Other Kingdoms*, Vol II, Book IV, Chapter 9, 676.

commitment to poverty, namely by the monks' complete avoidance of money. The friars observed that Buddhist monks

present themselves as very virtuous and collected, so poor, they do not want to take money, only food. They walk the streets with such exterior composure that one can admire them.

*(Précianse de muy virtuosos y recogidos, de tan podres, que no quieren tomar dinero, sino solamente la comida. Andan por las calles con tanta compostura exterior que admira.)*<sup>268</sup>

This observation refers to the monastic rule, enforced rather strictly in Theravada traditions, banning monks from physical contact with money. This rule pertains to the precepts stating that monastics should “abstain from taking gold or silver.” Money is associated with impurity of mind and signifies attachment (a precept still expected of monks in most Theravada contexts today).<sup>269</sup> The fact that monks refrained even from touching money was most admirable to an order that was fervent in its devotion to poverty. The observation about the virtues of Buddhist poverty centered on Siam since the other missionaries, along with Jesuits like Matteo Ricci, had a more negative view of Buddhist monks in the context of Japan and China. The Jesuits were generally hostile toward Buddhists, especially in China, preferring Confucianism instead.<sup>270</sup> Some

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<sup>268</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 24, 173.

<sup>269</sup> Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life: According to the Texts of the Theravada Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), see especially 81ff for the “Theravadin Attitude Toward Money” compared to other Buddhist schools.

<sup>270</sup> Yu Liu, “The Dubious Choice of an Enemy: The Unprovoked Animosity of Matteo Ricci against Buddhism,” *The European Legacy* 20, no. 3 (2015): 224–238, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2015.1005346>; Mary Laven, *Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011).

Buddhists, in turn, also had little appreciation for Christians.<sup>271</sup> Antton Iraola observes that the impressions of Siam were quite positive: “Missionaries on the whole admired the [Buddhist] monks’ commitment to a simple life, their humble and polite manners, and their celibacy.”<sup>272</sup>

Furthermore, the Discalced friars’ admiration of the monks’ avoidance of money should be put in the context of perennial debates and schisms within the Franciscan order about how to adhere to St. Francis’ virtue of poverty. In the absence of an agreed upon rule among the Franciscans about how to approach money, like Theravada Buddhist monks had, it may have appeared to the friars that monks were living out the original Franciscan ideal of poverty more fully than the friars.

#### *Mendicancy and Lay Support for Religious*

Going on alms walks, begging for food, and living off the generosity of laypeople are a central parts of early Buddhist ideals for the monastic community. The Pali word equivalent to monk is a *Bhikkhu* for men, *Bhikkhuni* for women. The literal meaning of *Bhikkhu* is to beg. From the earliest stories of Gautama Buddha, the road to awakening is facilitated by living off the generosity of others in order to go down the spiritual path while not having to be preoccupied by getting food. Begging for food and going on regular and daily alms walks has also been a prominent feature of early Buddhist texts, and continues to be practiced in the Theravada tradition.

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<sup>271</sup> Douglas Lancashire, “Anti-Christian Polemics in Seventeenth Century China,” *Church History* 38, no. 2 (1969): 218–41.

<sup>272</sup> Iraola, *True Confucians, Bold Christians*, 138.



The mendicant practice of begging was one of the features that distinguished the Discalced Franciscans as an order. The Theravada Buddhist tradition institutionalized the practice of monks regularly (often daily) going out to the community to receive alms in the form of food and other gifts, typically in exchange for a blessing or a short sermon. Begging and receiving alms would prove one of the most important commonalities observed between friars and Buddhist monks. The friars, having similar markers in overall appearance and alms practices to Buddhist monks, were received as monks when they went on alms walks in the city:

And although they [the friars] were foreigners, the gentiles [Buddhist laity] showed themselves to be notably generous and loving, and they gave them alms when they went begging through the streets with their alms bag on their shoulders.

*(Y aunque aun extranjeros, los gentiles se les mostraban notablemente afables y amoros, y cuando iban a pedir por las calles limosnas con el alforja al hombro, se le daban.)*<sup>273</sup>

Lay Buddhists recognized and treated the friars as religious figures deserving of respect, and, further, deserving of alms gifts. Buddhist monks also “received [the friars] in their homes with much love and showed them their temples and convents” (*los recibían en sus casas con mucho amor y les mostraban sus templos y conventos*).<sup>274</sup>

#### *Friars Treated as Buddhist Religious Figures*

The reverence and alms that the friars received in Siam, and the fact that monks treated them as peers, has a particular meaning in Theravada Buddhism. In Theravada Buddhism, the dominant tradition of Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka,

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<sup>273</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 20, 162.

<sup>274</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 20, 162.

Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia), monks are generally more highly revered than in Mahayana traditions (in China, Korea, and Japan). Ordained monks are considered “unsurpassed fields of merit,” and giving alms to an ordained monk bestows the giver a level of merit (the accumulation of good deeds, or *karma*) unsurpassed by any other good deed.<sup>275</sup> Thus, local observers readily recognized the friars as having religious roles parallel to those of Buddhist monks. The affinity between monks and friars was mutual and affirmed by the Buddhist laity. The affirmation of the friars in Buddhist terms as “fields of merit” and the warm reception that the friars received from local monks show that the analogy of religious authority of friars was also confirmed from the perspective of Buddhists.

From the Franciscan perspective of this encounter and exchange with Buddhist monks and lay people, the friars drew comparisons to their practices of poverty, thereby reading Buddhist acts of merit-making and giving as the equivalent to Christian alms (*limosnas*). The religious ideals of the friars made them uniquely positioned to interpret Buddhist life within the framework of their own ascetic values and strong religious institutions. The Discalced friars depended on the generosity and almsgiving of others to help maintain their mission within the confines of a commitment to poverty and preaching. To the friars, Buddhist monks also demonstrated a rigorous commitment to poverty that went beyond their own because monks received the bulk of their material necessities entirely from alms, and begged daily. Theravada Buddhist countries,

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<sup>275</sup> As stated in the Pali *Mahanama Sutta*, see James R Egge, *Religious Giving and the Invention of Karma in Theravāda Buddhism*, Curzon Studies in Asian Religion (Richmond: Curzon, 2002), especially 19–22.

particularly Siam and Sri Lanka, institutionalized the complex mutually dependent exchange between the *sangha* and the laity, centered on daily alms. The exchange distinguished clear social roles and responsibilities, upheld by the veneration of monks who, thanks to lay support, could focus on religious matters. Catholic Christianity in general, and the Discalced movements in particular, did not have the structural advantage provided by Theravada Buddhism' centuries old, alms-centered social arrangement.

The Buddhist social arrangement between the monastic order of the *sangha* and the laity of merit-making through the act of almsgiving captivated the friars. As much as the barefoot friars praised Buddhist monks, they also admired the commitment of the laity to almsgiving, the respect they had for Buddhist monks, and their maintenance of religious buildings and institutions. The friars had never seen such lay devotion and commitment to alms as they did in the relationship between the laity and the Buddhist monastic order in Siam. Lay people were described as “highly pious” (*muy piodosos*) and “notable almsgivers” (*notablemente limosneros*) who participated in daily religious activities, and generally supported monks and local temples. The friars were greatly impressed by the piety, quality, and quantity of almsgiving in the kingdom. Everyone gave gifts, from the poorest up to the king. They not only gave alms of goods and money, but also their labor in contributing to impressive sacred spaces.<sup>276</sup> The admiration for the piety of the locals extended to the mutual dependence between laity and religious clergy. People relied on the monks for many different aspects of daily life, from giving inaugural blessings on boats to prayer for the ill and afflicted.

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<sup>276</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23, 163-6, quote 170-1.

### Religious Rule and Hierarchy

The friars drew analogies to religious life and institutions in Siam that closely mirrored their own in structure and organization. One such analogy centered on the observation that monks obeyed rank within their institutional hierarchy:

All the religious recognize rank among each other. And there is a senior leader in each convent, whom they all show reverence to, but he never returns the gesture to anyone, and they do one to another, as he is considered older and wiser. They all recognize a major prelate, who lives in a huge, well fenced temple, which is in the midst of the city.

*(Todo los religiosos se reconocen mayoría unos a otros. Y en cada convento hay uno más principal, a quien todos hacen reverencia, y él nunca lo hace a nadie, y el mismo es unos con otros, por ser más viejos o sabios. Todos reconocen un prelate mayor, a cual vive en un templo grandísimo, muy bien cercado, que está en medio de la ciudad.)<sup>277</sup>*

The friars also referred to the major prelate as the religious chief or major religious person (*religioso principal*). They described here the Supreme Patriarch (Pali *sangharaja* “king of the *sangha*,” Thai rendition as *sangkharat* สังกษราช), head of the whole order of Buddhist monks in Siam. The Buddhist monks, like the friars, had a visible hierarchy: every convent had an abbot leader and a rank of seniority in the community, including novices, and a single monk who spoke for the entire community. The well-defined structure showed that the Buddhist monks, like their Christian counterparts, had a complex institutional organization with clear leadership. The monks also adhered to common rules at set hours of the day, kept a rigorous schedule, and limited eating to twice daily.

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<sup>277</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 24, 175.

### Categories of Religious Orders

The friars observed distinct categories of “religious” in Siam. In the Catholic context, religious life could take several forms and the general category of religious included both secular priests and religious orders. General categories of religious pertained to the manner of living and overall function, and similar to the Eastern orthodox traditions included monastics as well as priests. Religious could take three general forms, the first, the hermetic, included monastics who lived a solitary life; the second, the cenobitic, monastics who lived in communities; and a third, secular priests who served the spiritual needs and sacramental functions of a diocesan community. Within the cenobitic tradition, orders such as the friars could take several forms that might also include third order lay religious. These Franciscans were the Conventuals, monastics who remained in the monastery, and Observants, such as the Discalced Franciscans, who performed poverty by going out into the world to preach and beg. The more immediate reality of the Franciscans’ own order’s history of distinguishing between religious who stayed in the monastery and those who left to go into the world played a significant role in how the friars made sense of the religious lives of Buddhist monks using the framework of hermetic tradition and the two-part cenobitic tradition.

The friars also identified a variety of religious clergy paralleling different religious orders in Catholic Christianity. They differentiated “three types of religious in Siam” (*Los religiosos del reino de Siam son de tres maneras*). Ribadeneira described these three forms of Buddhist religious according to their spiritual lifestyle: solitary

monks, communal monks, and preaching-pastoral monks.<sup>278</sup> The first were solitary monks who lived outside the urban environment to focus on meditation and reading; the second, communal monks dedicated to communal meditation and chanting (*rezar*);<sup>279</sup> and the third, public monks who engaged in preaching, assisting the sick, and performing ceremonies of various kinds for people in need. Communal and public monks, as understood by the friars, had significant overlap in their spiritual life, such as living in a community, going on regular alms-walks, eating at set hours, and adhering to a schedule for meditation and chanting. Both engaged with scriptures, according to the friars, but they interpreted communal monks as more learned because they had to preach to the public.<sup>280</sup>

The perceived distinction between types of urban monks shows how friars interpreted Buddhist religious life as analogous to Christian structures. The friars represented some of the varieties of religious life among monks in Siam, but what they got wrong reveals the ways in which the friars perceived patterns in Buddhism as aligning with Franciscan religious structures. In terms of solitary monks, the friars accurately described what is commonly referred to as the forest tradition (an eremitical tradition going back many centuries) of retreating into nature alone or in small

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<sup>278</sup> Antton Iraola notes Ribadeneira's grouping to be according to "different degrees ... according to their lifestyle" as follows: monks living in complete solitude, by association of grouping, and an intellectual group. *True Confucians, Bold Christians*, 138; Srisongkram, "Los Franciscanos Españoles En El Siam" also details Ribadeneira's threefold grouping of Buddhist monastics.

<sup>279</sup> According to the *John Minshew's Spanish-English dictionary, London, 1599 = Diccionario Español-Inglés de John Minshew, Londres, 1599*. (London: Edmund Bollifant, 1599), *rezar* means to meditate, recite, pray. In the Buddhist context, monks would do a combination of chanting and recitation of Pali *suttas*, as well as meditation; all of these are covered by the word *rezar*.

<sup>280</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 24, 172-3.

communities. In the context of Siam, forest monks performed their own ordinations and did not typically adhere to the conventions of the centralized *sangha*.<sup>281</sup>

Since to be a *bhikkhu* was to beg, the original notion of becoming a monk and following Gautama was one of homelessness, or going forth from home. The early Buddhist ideal of “going forth” from home was indicated by the Pali phrase *agarasma anagariyam pabbajati*: “to leave (*pabbajati*) one’s home (*agara*), the basis of one’s livelihood, and enter the state of homelessness (*anagariya*) in wholehearted pursuit of the dharma.”<sup>282</sup> Scholars of early Buddhism have noted that the ideal of homelessness was short-lived, and monastics early on formed monasteries and began establishing rules that were later recited as the *pratimoksha* and would, in time, develop into the *vinaya-pitaka*. These communities or “assemblies” were the roots of the *sangha* (meaning “assemblies”). However, the original ideal of homelessness had in various periods in Buddhist history emerged among some Buddhist followers. These were occasions of schism; however, often the ideal of “going forth” into mountains, caves, or forests is an undercurrent of monastic Buddhism that in different periods inspired Buddhist hermits and monks who lived in rural settings.

The development of Buddhist monasticism from going forth into homelessness to more stable monasteries is not without historical parallel to Christian origins of monasticism. These began with ascetic heroes seeking solitude in the Egyptian desert,

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<sup>281</sup> The tradition of retreat to the forest goes back until the time of the Buddha but sees a wide revival in Thailand in the nineteenth century. See Kamala Tiyavanich, *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth-Century Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997) and Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>282</sup> Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 5.

such as Saint Anthony, where “monks” (from the root Greek word for solitude) sought to live in ascetic purity seeking God. Christian monastic leaders like Pachomius established cenobitic communities in monasteries not long after Anthony and developed some of the first monastic rules.

Apart from forest monks, though, there is only one other category of monks in Siam, typically referred to as urban monks, who form part of the centralized *sangha* and follow the discipline of the *vinaya*. There is no distinction among communal and public urban monks, as the friars surmised. As is still the case with contemporary urban monks, the friars may have been confused by the fact that some monks belonged to temples that were more active in the community, while others tended to be more insular. Although practices varied as to the frequency of ceremonies performed for the community, most monks were expected to adhere to basic monastic rules, and engage with scriptures, meditate, and chant together.<sup>283</sup> The friars were eager to make a distinction between urban monks, where none had previously existed, because it allowed them to categorize various types of Buddhist monks within the framework of their existing Franciscan typologies. The friars, further, claimed a distinction between communal monks and public monks because they believed it mirrored the Franciscans' Conventuals, who typically stayed in convents, and Observants, who went out into the community.

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<sup>283</sup> Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, Introduction; Srisongkram, “Los Franciscanos Españoles En El Siam de La Era de Ayutthaya: La Descripción de Fray Marcelo de Ribadeneyra”; Mongkol Nadkrasūd “แตกต่างแต่ไม่เคยแตกแยก สัมพันธ์ ‘พระป่า-พระบ้าน’ - Dhammathai.org,” In English: “The difference that never separates the forest monks from urban monks,” <http://www.dhammathai.org/articles/phra.php>, (2004).



The friars' reports on the different manner of religious lives among monks included accurate raw observations, but also a mapping of Christian religious distinctions onto Buddhist monastic life. In terms of raw observations, what the friars' reported accurately matched known modalities of Buddhist monasticism, such as the distinct traditions of forest and urban monks. The friars also accurately portrayed the lack of uniformity in the activity of Buddhist monks outside temples and monasteries. Firsthand, the friars perceived a distinction between monastics that remained in the monastery, and those that were more active in the community as matching their own Franciscan categories. Clearly, the friars interpreted the varieties of Buddhist monks using models from their own frame of reference. However, their reading of Buddhist monastic life as similar to their own exemplifies one way the friars viewed Buddhist monks in the same terms, indeed within the same groupings. Their willingness to assert similarities highlights the friars' perception of Buddhist monks as religious peers.

**“We too, like you, are fathers and religious”:** Affirming Religious Identities

Ribadeneira's *Historia* remains among the most explicit works in choosing to refer to Buddhist monks as “religious,” but it also purposefully records incidents of friars identifying directly with Buddhist monks. This explicit identification with Buddhist monks is all the more noteworthy because in the same instance the friars are also distancing themselves from their Portuguese counterparts.

Ribadeneira wrote that friars in Siam were interested in pursuing conversation with Buddhist monks who lived in relative solitude out of the urban area of the capital. The friars were interested in their way of life, their simplicity, poverty, and purposeful

spiritual practice in relative seclusion. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Spanish friars likely also had a dwelling on the outskirts of the city made of wood and thus of similar simplicity. Their visit was likely to monks who lived in the forest tradition who focused on meditation practices, and sought quiet in small communities.

The friars were accompanied by lay Portuguese. However, the Portuguese were apparently agitated during the conversation the friars had with the monks. The Portuguese began to disturb the conversations between friars and Buddhist monks by asking irritating questions. To regain the goodwill of the Buddhist monks, the friars distanced themselves from the lay people and asserted their affinity with monks. The friars reassured the monks saying, “we too, like you, are fathers and religious, and we want you to share of the virtues you know and have” (*les dijeron que también eran padres y religiosos, y que estaban deseosos de que les dijese algunas cosas de virtud*).<sup>284</sup>

In a later 1734 history of the Franciscan missionaries based in the Philippines, Juan Francisco de San Antonio elaborated on this incident, and focused on the deep respect and friendship of friars toward Buddhist monks: “Our religious were filled with admiration to see such virtue in a gentile and were filled with tears and compassion.”<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 24, 172.

<sup>285</sup> San Antonio, *Chronicas de la apostolica Provincia de S. Gregorio de Religiosos Descalzos de N.S.P.S. Francisco en las Islas Philipinas, China, Japon, etc. Parte primera en que se incluye la descripcion de estas islas que consagra a la S.C.R. Magestad D. Phelipe V el Animoso, nuestro Catholico Rey y Augusto Emperador de las Espailas la misma santa Provincia y en su noihbre su Ministro Rovincial, escrita por el P. Fr. Juan Francisco de S. Antonio, Matritense, Lector de Theologia Escholastica y Moral, Ex-Diffmidor y Chmnista General de dicha Provincia*, 684.

### **Analogies of Sacred Language and Religious Law**

Language was, for the friars, a necessary marker of civilization and religious complexity. Like Japan and China, Siam had a writing system and a canon of writings. Moreover, Siam also used several forms of written language, similar to the European context. Apart from the vernacular, they also employed a different non-vernacular form of language reserved for governance and court purposes—the use of ancient Khmer for official purposes. The friars also recognized a third written language, used for liturgical purposes and known only to Buddhist monks. Pali was not used in spoken communities but remains a sacred language in Theravada Buddhism and is used for study and chanting, a practice that resembled the use of Latin by religious clergy. Buddhists also had Holy Scriptures in their sacred language (Pali). The friars also pointed out their books and scriptures were illuminated and decorated, similar to book manuscripts in Europe.<sup>286</sup>

One of the things the friars most commended the monks for was their advances in languages and learning. The friars thought that learning, reading, and law were the only natural science in the kingdom.<sup>287</sup> Siam had developed its own script based on alphabetical letters and script. Vernacular Thai was taught at a variety of levels and there were many books pertaining to secular and religious history and culture. Buddhist temple schools aided greatly in the education of young boys—who could receive a free

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<sup>286</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapters 23 and 24.

<sup>287</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23, 169: “otras ciencias naturales no tienen.” Patricia Guevara Fernández translates it as: “the only worthwhile science,” Marcelo de Ribadeneira, *Historia Del Archipiélago Y Otros Reynos. History of the Philippines and Other Kingdoms*, trans., vol. 1, Historical Conservation Society 17 (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1970), 431–32.

education while becoming novices—and for the education of the ruling classes. Temple education was not extended to girls, as the *Bhikkhuni* lineage of fully ordained nuns was not transmitted to Siam or any Southeast Asian country after it died out in twelfth-century Sri Lanka (Ceylon) after the Hindu Tamils took control of the island. This was in contrast to female *bonzes* observed by missionaries in Japan and China.

### **Law, Doctrine, Civilization**

Early modern Europeans understood of religion to have inextricable ties to law with religion serving as the moral framework and rationale behind law. This served as a basic foundation for a civilized society from their view point. For Europeans, the absence of religion and the absence of law went hand-in-hand. Without law, there could be no proper moral or political rule, and thus no proper religion. Without law, or religion that produced the moral foundations for law, it was difficult to conceive of a society being a civilization. European encounters with societies that seemed to have developed law and sophisticated civilizations, and indeed sophisticated and systematic forms of idolatry, helped to change the paradigm of religious categorization. Such a paradigm shift was necessary as European observers began to see parallels with other cultures. Franciscans would see such parallels in the context of Southeast Asia, where religion, law, and civilization were perceived as interdependent and mutually reinforcing just as Christianity was to European civilization.

Speaking of the first encounter with non-Muslim civilizations, such as the Vajayanagara in India, Rubies claims that the image of an “idoltrous civilization” was a “challenge to European narrative topoi and political ideas.” In the opinion of Rubies,

Southeast Asian kingdoms like Siam, Burma, and Cambodia, however, remain regions that have been neglected by historians of European encounters with “idolatrous civilizations.”<sup>288</sup>

European travelers were primed to look for similarities with other cultures and traditions. But, in the early period of discovery, they did not always find significant overlap with other societies in terms of religion, law, and civilization. In the Americas, Africa, and the Philippines, travelers often perceived a lack of law and religion relative to Christian Europe. For example, in the Americas, Columbus described Amerindians as *Indios* who, in his observations, had “no sect” (or “religion”), and no language.<sup>289</sup> Columbus interprets the lack of visible markers of “religion” (hierarchy, clergy, law, sacred texts, sacred buildings, etc.) as a lack of *bona fide* religion. Spanish military engineer Sebastián Fernández de Medrano described sub-Saharan Africans as “living without law nor Religion” (*viven sin ley ni Religión*).<sup>290</sup> In terms of societal organization, Ribadeneira saw Filipinos as barbarians for their lack of a centralized leadership: “In regards to their governance, they lived like barbarians, as they do not recognize anyone as king and head.” (*En lo que toca de su gobierno, vivían como barbaros, porque no*

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<sup>288</sup> Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India Through European Eyes, 1250-1625* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>289</sup> Christopher Columbus, *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492-1493. Abstracted by Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas. Transcribed and Translated into English with Notes and a Concordance of the Spanish by Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley Jr.*, 1st Edition (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989). In original manuscripts Columbus uses the phrase “no sect,” and only reserves the term “religion” to refer to Christianity. In some versions, however, “religion” is substituted for “sect.” For an incisive account of Columbus’ use of these terms see Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” 195, and “Classification,” in W. Braun and R. T. McCutcheon, *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London and New York, 2000, 39-40).

<sup>290</sup> Sebastián Fernández de Medrano, *Breve descripción del mundo y sus partes ò Guia geographica y hydrographica, dividida en tres libros...* (Brussels: en casa de los Herederos de Francisco Foppens, 1686), 226.

*reconocían alguno por rey y cabeza.*)<sup>291</sup> For Ribadeneira and his fellow missionaries, Filipino and *Indios* lacked law, or doctrine, and instead were deceived by witchcraft, sorcery and superstition (*hechicerías y supersticiones*).

In contrast to the Philippines, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Americas, Siam had religiously-based, rational law. This law structured the social and political order. The friars relayed from Buddhist monks a sketch of the story of the Gautama Buddha well-known today to both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, as well as identifying the “Five Precepts” of Buddhism:

The lettered men of Siam say that one of the first kings of that kingdom had given them the law kept. They received it because, after being married many years and having children, the king left to live a solitary life of penance on a mountain. And having been there some time, he returned to his kingdom and gave them his law, of which there are seven commandments. They are: to honor idols, to not kill, to not steal, to not drink wine, to not deal with foreign women, and to not lie.

*(Dicen, pues, los letrados de Siam que un rey de los primero de aquel reino les había dado la ley que guardaban. Porque después de vivir casado muchos años y tener hijos, se fue a hacer vida solitaria y de gran penitencia a un monte, y después de haber estado allá algún tiempo se volvió a su reino y les dio ley, lo cual tienen siete mandamientos. Que son: honrar a ídolos, no matar, no hurtar, no beber vino, no tratar con mujeres ajenos ni mentir.)*<sup>292</sup>

Importantly, the Buddha was conceived as a historical person and a ruler, not a god or mythical figure. The friars, however, described him as a king, not as a prince, as the Buddha is in the original story. He left his wife and child for greater spiritual gain, and again the friars used the nearest recognizable pursuit within their experience—that of penance. The monks were also perceived as having “commandments.” These were

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<sup>291</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book I, Chapter 8, 49.

<sup>292</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23, 169.

perceived to be equivalent or matching many of the Ten Commandments traditionally given to Moses in the book of Exodus. The friars render these in the Biblical tradition stating “you should not” kill, steal, drink alcohol (“wine”), sleep with strange women, or lie.

The Friars identified six “commandments” (seven was the number given, but Ribadeneira only listed six). Five of the six correspond to the Buddhist Five Precepts that are taken on as vows by Buddhists. These are vows to abstain from non-virtuous acts, such as “I vow to abstain from lying,” or sometimes translated as “I undertake the precept to abstain from lying.” In Theravada Buddhism, as well as other Buddhist traditions, vows are often taken up when one becomes Buddhist after the recitation of Three Refuges (“I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the *dharma*, I take refuge in the *sangha*”). The vows help to restrain non-virtuous deeds, and aid in the accumulation of positive karma and merit. The Five Precepts could also be taken as vows for specific periods of time.<sup>293</sup> Below are the Buddhist precepts numbered in their traditional order in the left column, and in the right column—in the order the friars listed them in Ribadeneira’s *Historia*:

<b>The Five Buddhist Precepts</b>	<b>Commandments listed by friars</b>
	(1) Honor the idols
(1) abstain from taking life	(2) Do not kill
(2) abstain from taking what is not given	(3) Do not steal

<sup>293</sup> Donald S. Lopez, *The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to Its History & Teachings*, Reprint edition (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009), 167–68.

(3) abstain from sexual misconduct	(5) Do not sleep with strange women
(4) abstain from false speech	(6) Do not lie
(5) abstain from taking intoxicants	(4) Do not drink wine

**Table 1. The Five Precepts of Buddhism as understood by Franciscans.**

The first, to honor the idols, is not part of the Buddhist precepts. The friars understood there was no God language but sought equivalents to the Christian commandments. The friars observed adherents venerating Buddhist images and sculptures (“idols”). The omnipresent devotional practice of veneration of images was matched onto the Judeo-Christian first of the ten commandments *not* to worship any images. By adding a law that was not part of the Buddhist precepts, the friars created analogies to make Buddhist law match the ten commandments. In the Catholic tradition the first of the ten commandments is “You shall have no other gods before me; you shall not make for yourself an idol” (Exodus 12:3-4). The rendition of honoring idols has similarities to the Biblical commandment to “Honor your Father and Mother” (Exodus 20:12), and not honoring idols or images (Exodus 12:5). The friars saw the affinity of viewing the veneration of idols as a positive command to “honor idols.”

#### *The Doctrine of Transmigration and the Law Against Killing*

One unique doctrine stood out to the friars while observing religious life in Siam. That was the doctrine of transmigration. This particular doctrine was notable to the friars as it identified the idea within Buddhism that humans could be reborn as an animal in another life. The same core doctrine, which friars understood as entailing that “they believe for certain humans souls pass through the body of animals” (*tienen por cierto que*



*las almas de los hombres pasan por los cuerpos de animales*), was shared in China as in Siam.<sup>294</sup>

To the friars, transmigration, although strange, was a proper *doctrine* based on religious law—not a mere irrational superstition. The friars saw transmigration as the foundation for law, governance, and ethics. Friars and monks had extensive debates about the doctrine of transmigration. One point of conversation was how a rational human “soul” could be transmigrated into an animal. In their conversations with monks, they were apprehensive of the doctrine of transmigration. In conversation with Buddhist monks, friars sought not only to understand but to challenge this belief. The friars posited that rationality could not exist in animals given that animals showed no signs of rationality of language. To this point, the Buddhist monks responded that animals clearly communicated with each other and had their own distinct mode of communication.<sup>295</sup>

Of these precepts, not killing, including the killing of animals, was strongly emphasized within the country and greatly puzzled the friars. Though the monks and friars could not be more different on such doctrines as reincarnation, the friars admired the fact that such beliefs served as sources of inspiration for religious devotion and good morality. The friars noted that the doctrine of reincarnation led to laws against homicide, creating a people who heeded this law with vigor, and also led to the virtue of mercy, as well as care for animals.<sup>296</sup> Care for animals had been a constant within Buddhist law and ethics since the reign of the first great Buddhist king Ashoka in the third century BCE.

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<sup>294</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 7, 121.

<sup>295</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23, 169.

<sup>296</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23, 165.

Richard Gombrich notes “within the next thousand years at least five kings of Ceylon prohibited the killing of animals.”<sup>297</sup>

Why were the friars so preoccupied with the doctrine of transmigration? In the context of Japan, for example, Alessandro Valignano and his Jesuit companions were preoccupied with the doctrine of emptiness as a philosophical concept. By contrast, the friars focused on doctrines that impinged on everyday practice, and they viewed transmigration as a basis for social ethics. The doctrine itself was a source of fascination simply for its radical difference from Christianity. It served as a point of dialogue and debate as the friars listened to sermons related to the doctrine of transmigration. They wanted not only to understand and report about this striking doctrine, but also challenge monks on its coherence. These debates would not have persuaded the friars that transmigration was true, nor could it pose a challenge to Christian revealed truth. But the friars had a more complex engagement with the doctrine of transmigration than evaluating its truthfulness or falsity or for the purposes of rejecting it: the doctrine impinged directly on social order. In the view of Ribadeneira, transmigration *lead* directly to a more civilized society. It was foundation for laws that strongly punished the taking of human life and upheld a culture less violent and more caring toward animals. The friars’ point of comparison is not only neighboring countries in Asia but also their own European heritage. Many of the Spanish friars would be accustomed to violence in everyday life such as the prevalence of dueling in Europe. Comparing their own culture to others led the friars to affirm Siam’s sound laws and gentle culture as a model society.

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<sup>297</sup> Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism*.

Piety, religious devotion and common-sense laws were evidence of a highly developed society in the friars observations, as they believed only religious doctrines had the power to mold societies into a well-developed civilization.

### *Natural Law*

To the friars these “laws” or the Buddhist precepts were evidence of religion-based doctrines that served as the foundation for a rationally ordered society. In Friar Ribadeneira’s collected observations, Siam, Siamese society, and its political system were classed in a short list of what he considered to be sophisticated cultures in Asia. The list only consisted of Siam, Japan, and China. The Siamese, said Ribadeneira, like the Japanese and Chinese, “possess a good natural understanding” (*tienen bien entendimiento natural*) in their system of governance and justice.<sup>298</sup> To the Siamese, their laws were some of the “best in the world” (*mejor del mundo*), and were based on religious teaching.<sup>299</sup>

Marcelo Ribadeneira asserted that these doctrines, hierarchical structures, and clergy were similar to those in Japan, China, and neighboring regions. He reported that the Siamese exceeded all others in the public presence of religion in daily life, in politics, in the number of temples, in religious art, in the provision of free religious education, and in the number of ordained boys.

The friars generally admired the intersection of religion, politics and culture, and saw the same parallels in society, law, and good morality in China and Japan. Siamese

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<sup>298</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23, 169-71.

<sup>299</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23 and 24.

society, like civilized China and Japan, was based on a reasonable and orderly interpretation of natural law. Many missionaries were familiar with the basic distinction between natural and revealed law as sources for knowledge of God. All humanity could, at least potentially, come to know God through reason and natural law. In this view, Christianity would always have something to add to other traditions because Christianity had access to God through revelation. Still, knowing God through nature and reason was not an all-or-nothing proposition. Different peoples and societies had greater and lesser degrees of natural understanding. To many Europeans, one of the ways of adjudicating the degrees of possession of natural law was to look for a high level of complexity in social, political, and religious organization compared to their own. Not surprisingly, Europeans considered those societies that looked most like their own in social, political, and religious organizations—with strong centralized social structures and hierarchical institutions—to excel in knowing God through reason. An easy litmus test for possessing natural law was literacy. If a society had no written language, it could not hope to have any deep natural understanding of God. Along with illiteracy came a host of other traits, such as looser political organization and state institutions. The friars thought that the Siamese, Japanese, and Chinese, unlike the Filipinos and Native Americans, had excellent governance and laws—which they believed were founded on religious doctrine.

An important link in the construction of Buddhism was making the connection between Siam and Cambodia as sharing the same religious tradition. These two kingdoms had a long and conflicted history. According to Bernard Groslier's study of early modern Iberian sources on Cambodia, Portuguese travelers that predated the Spanish missionaries

reported that Siamese traced their origins to the ancient Angkor civilization in Cambodia. In Ribadeneira's synthesis of missionary interviews with Buddhist monks, he reported similar findings of the direction of transmission of Buddhist law from Cambodia to Siam, corroborating early Portuguese reports.<sup>300</sup> Ribadeneira and the friars went further in claiming this law of Siam and Cambodia was shared also with China, Japan, Vietnam, and Burma.

### **One Founder, Many Branches**

Ribadeneira tasked himself with reporting accurately what missionaries observed in their travels and missionary work. These reports did not always match each other. This was the case with many of the Buddhist figures and titles used by different varieties of Buddhist traditions. At times, Ribadeneira reported on the observations of his peers, but he also synthesized these observations. Trying to detect unity and make sense of the different names for important Buddhist figures across traditions shows the evolution of ascribing unity to the diversity of Buddhist traditions by abstracting a single founder to fit a newly abstracted and unified tradition.

#### *Buddhas by Many Names*

Buddhists claim their history back to India through the historical figure of Shakyamuni Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) on the border of India and Nepal. "Buddha" is a title for an "awakened one" that has also been ascribed to other Buddhas as well. This

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<sup>300</sup> Bernard P. Groslier, *Angkor and Cambodia in the Sixteenth Century: According to Portuguese and Spanish Sources*, trans. Michael Smithies (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2005), 73. Groslier, *Angkor and Cambodia in the Sixteenth Century*, 73.

is the case for the “Celestial Buddha,” Amida of the Pure Land school of Mahayana Buddhism. This particular Buddha is the primary figure prevalent in China and Japan.

This section of the *Historia* was probably written first, as I’ve argued in Chapter Two, as part of the accounts of Japanese martyrdom were written and circulated prior to the completion of the book. In reports on Japan, the friars identified the figures of Amida and Xaca as the primary idolatrous “sects” of Japan. At times, these figures appeared as gods with Xaca presented as the black god. The friars do not indicate the reason Xaca in Japan is associated with black, but perhaps this was due to bronze or wooden images. At other times, Amida and Xaca were represented as historical human kings who were deified and worshipped as gods.<sup>301</sup>

When Ribadeneira portrayed Amida and Xaca as historical figures, the story associated with them appears remarkably like the life of Shakyamuni Buddha more generally. Ribadeneira described Amida and Xaca as humans, as a way to explain why the Japanese admired the friars for their spiritual exercises and ascetic rigor. The Franciscans, in following their rule in every season, were able to attract Japanese locals, because, Ribadeneira supposed, their central idols were former kings who lived exemplary penitential lives.

The gentiles adore the principle idols called Amida and Xaca because they who forsook the world to live ascetic lives in the mountains.

*(Y es tanto esto, que los gentiles adoran a los principales ídolos suyos, llamados Amida y Xaca, porque siendo reyes se fueron a los montes a hacer penitencia y vivieron con gran pobreza y rigor.)*<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book IV, Chapter 1, 325 (both humans and gods).

<sup>302</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book IV, Chapter 1, 362

Ribadeneira, in remarks on Siam, elaborated on the story from the Thai perspective:

The learned men of Siam claim that a king, one of that the first kings of that realm, gave the religious the laws they followed. They received the law because, after being married many years and having sons, the king forsook the world and went off to the mountains to live a solitary life of penance and prayer. After some time in this retreat he returned to his kingdom and gave the religious a set of laws and commandments. There are seven commandments: honor idols, do not kill, do not steal, do not drink wine, do not cohabit with foreign women, and do not lie. ... And there was a standing belief that the souls of their dead kin were lodged in animals thus making them rational, which is why they scrupulously observe the commandment not to kill. ... Because the law in Siam was the same kind of idolatry as received in China, Japan, and other neighboring kingdoms, the name of the king who gave them the law ought to be Amida [Buddha], as the Japanese call him, although in Siam some call him Perbeneab, while still others claim he is known by many other names.

*(Dicen, pues, los letrados de Siam que un rey de los primeros de aquel reino les había dado la ley que guardaban. Porque después de vivir casado muchos años y tener hijos, se fue a hacer vida solitaria y de gran penitencia a un monte, y después de haber estado allá algún tiempo se volvió a su reino y les dio ley, lo cual tienen siete mandamientos. Que son: honrar a ídolos, no matar, no hurtar, no beber vino, no tratar con mujeres ajenos ni mentir. ... Y los tienen por cierto que las ánimas de sus antepasados están en los animales y que los hacen racionales, porque so no les quieren matar. ... El nombre del rey que les dio la ley, por estar el modo de idolatría de Siam recibido en los reyes comarcanos y en el de la Gran China y Japón, debe de ser Amida, como dicen los Japoneses, aunque en Siam unos les llaman Perbeneab y otros dicen que tienen muchos nombres.)*<sup>303</sup>

What was the source of the law shared across different regions? Ribadeneira suggested that the similarities in law, doctrine and practice among China, Japan, and Siam presupposed a shared common source. The friars reported that the Chinese told a story of a king who brought the mode of idolatry of Siam to China by way of a Chinese embassy that went to Siam. After a time, the Chinese authorities banned all foreigners or foreign

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<sup>303</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23, 169-70. Spanish translation and pagination, First mention.

teachers (*nadie trajese ni admitiese extranjero en el reino*) and insisted that all teachings must be approved by the government.<sup>304</sup> The friars were residing with Thai merchants who may also have added to the Chinese story. Of course, throughout Chinese history there have been periodic restrictions on religion. This story matches the 845 Tang Dynasty expulsion of “foreign” teachers and religions, particularly Buddhists (but also Muslims, Zoroastrians, Manicheans, and Nestorian Christians).

Like Japan and China, Siam had reasonable laws and social order, and Ribadeneira noted that the origins of the laws, teachings, and practices in these three nations came from the same person (the Buddha).<sup>305</sup> Beginning with a plurality of traditions across Asia, he concluded that the traditions in Pegu (Burma), Cambodia, Cochinchina (Vietnam), Patay (Patani, southern Thailand and northern Malaysia), China, and Japan were one and the same. At the time, each region used different names for the Buddha. In Siam, they referred to this founding lord as “Perbeneab,” in China as “Xaca,” and in Japan as “Amida.” It is significant that, when reporting on informants about Amida and Xaca, Ribadeneira persistently said these were different figures. At the same time, other sources claimed that the origin of all of them was in Siam. Ribadeneira, in the end, performed the abstraction necessary to claim that, despite conflicting reports, there was only one founder for the shared religious law these regions had in common. Thus, Ribadeneira asserted in his remarks on Siam that there could only be one founder, even if he was referred to by different names.

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<sup>304</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 7, 121.

<sup>305</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23, 169-170.



Friars proposed that all the varieties of “sects” in Asia in fact shared a common origin, and were part of one “religion,” and so they began referring to Buddhist monks as having “religion,” having their own manner of religion, and even as having quite a bit of religion (*manera de religión, aquella religión, tienen por mucha religión*).<sup>306</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Early modern observers were eager to compare new traditions with their own and expose similarities as point of analogy. For example, Acosta compared Aztecs and Inca religions to ancient Greeks. By contrast, the friars as reported by Ribadeneira saw Theravada Buddhism as directly comparable to Christianity first and foremost. The Franciscans saw direct comparisons between Buddhist and Christian spiritual practices and religious institutions. They presented the newly identified tradition using explicitly religious terms, finding analogies comparable to Christianity.

Spanish friars in the last quarter of the sixteenth century argued that the Buddhist devotion they observed in Siam counted as religion. In the eyes of the friars, Buddhist spirituality centered on mendicancy, poverty, lay piety, and a perceived religious and socio-political interdependence. The friars were cross-cultural agents who saw themselves mirrored in their encounter with Buddhist monks, and participated with monks in receiving alms. They came to view Buddhist monks as “religious” clergy with a high degree of discipline and hierarchy, and Buddhist monks and laity recognized the friars as equivalent religious figures to Buddhist monks. Expressing admiration for some

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<sup>306</sup> Ribadeneira, *Historia*, Book II, Chapter 23, 171, 173, 175.

practices, their observations about the spiritual and institutional life of Buddhist monks in Siam were largely positive.

Furthermore, the key building blocks for constructing the concept of Buddhism as a single religious entity were already in place by the late sixteenth century. Friars proposed that all the varieties of “sects” in Asia in fact shared a common origin. The barefoot Franciscans—whose observations were brought together by Marcelo de Ribadeneira—gathered information from a wide range of encounters with Buddhism from East and Southeast Asia and engaged different branches and schools of Buddhists.

At the core was the idea of one religion, large in scope across the East, centered on one founder, with a community of monastic followers, and a common body of doctrine. The religious exchange between Christian friars and Buddhist monks in sixteenth-century Siam formed the first stage in the gradual Western construction of Buddhism. Missionaries had begun to include Asian traditions in the progressive pluralization of the category of religion.

## CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

This dissertation analyzes Marcelo de Ribadeneira's volume *Historia del Archipelago y Reynos de la Gran China* as representative of the world and contributions made by Franciscans in Asia in the early modern period. This document is important because it shows that the Franciscans in Southeast and East Asia were a significant contingent in Asia, and were not simply a negative trope for Jesuits missionaries.

This study has argued for a more balanced view of Franciscans than has been granted in much of the historiographical record. A close analysis of Ribadeneira's *Historia* challenges some of the common historiography about Franciscans, such as assumptions that Franciscans were negative toward cultural others, did not understand or appreciate non-Christian traditions, and that they had a minor footprint in the history of missions in Asia. A fresh analysis of Franciscan activity in the region reveals a different picture. The Franciscans wrote a significant history, they had a substantial geographic reach through a mission center in the region, and they not only documented other traditions ethnographically, but positively engaged non-Christian traditions through identifying parallels between Catholicism and Buddhism.

This dissertation assessed Franciscan contributions in multiple areas. These contributions reflect the multifaceted functions of the *Historia*, and thus shows that any reassessment of the work must consider its synthetic character. This study restores Ribadeneira's *Historia* to its intended reading as a regional history meant to inform Europeans about cultures in Asia, and chronicle the missionary activities of Franciscans.

This study serves as an interpretive lens through which other similar early modern documents can be analyzed.

As a document that contributes to early modern writing, I have placed Ribadeneira and the Franciscans in the context of emerging literary genres, travel writing, and in the context of informants provided knowledge about non-European cultures. It has contributed to European written genres and shaped early modern writing in areas of sacred history, ethnography of non-European cultures, and in the biography of saints and martyrs.

This study has also shown that Franciscans were important geographically, and contributed to a regional conceptualization of Asia. Read as a regional history that is organized geographically and covering much of East and Southeast Asia, the *Historia* was an early writing organized around Asian regions. Franciscans were important in the region because they utilized Iberian expansion to build a substantial missionary network and widen their missionary reach in the region. Missionaries took advantage of the global economy created by the Spanish colonization of the Philippines, and used the cosmopolitan hub of Manila to gain cultural knowledge and mission preparation from the large contingents of Asian merchants they ministered to in order to prepare for their missionary adventures.

Further, this study demonstrated that only by travelling and sharing information about cultures from different parts of the Buddhist world could Franciscans propose that the different regions shared a common religion. Because Buddhist communities were concentrated in the Portuguese sphere of influence, Spanish accounts are often

overlooked for their contributions to Western knowledge and constructions of Buddhism. I have argued that by circumventing obstacles to their travel, Spanish Franciscans travelled significantly and engaged in substantial exchanges, especially with Buddhists, from a variety of regions. A regional, ethno-historical reading of the *Historia* is important because it is precisely this dimension that allowed the friars to find connections between different Buddhist communities in different countries, which could then be compared and interpreted. It was this regional character that allowed the friars to concretize a unified religious system out of the heterogeneous communities that followed the Buddha.

Within Ribadeneira's *Historia*, Siam was viewed as an important center for a newly identified Buddhist religion. Much of the comparative analysis, and proposed connections between Buddhist traditions were written within the context of the accounts of missionaries in Siam. In Siam, missionaries had important exchanges with Buddhist monastics and laypeople in the sixteenth century.

I have argued that Franciscan missionaries contributed to the European identification of Buddhism. It was Franciscans who first circulated significant analogies between Christian and Buddhist traditions and proposed that Buddhist traditions be regarded as a distinct religion. From the vantage point of the reformed Franciscans, Buddhist traditions were viewed in analogous terms to the major contours of Christianity. Further, Franciscans honed in perceived spiritual values such as poverty and chastity they shared with Buddhist monks. The ethnographic and narrative character of the *Historia* also showed Franciscans finding parallels with Buddhists in the areas of popular devotion, such as processions, almsgiving, and pilgrimage. In Siam, most prominently,

the overlap of political rule and religious law further mirrored Spanish and Portuguese links between the crown and the Catholic church. As in Siam, Iberian monarchs were central patrons of religion. Royal patronage of religion was most prolific in Siam, where Buddhism was at the center of state affairs and legitimation of the state. In other locations in Asia, by contrast, Buddhism did not have the same centrality within the state. Confucianism was at the center of the Chinese court and nobility, and Buddhism was divided into many competing schools in Japan and was predated by Shinto. Conversely, Buddhism in Siam was under one main *sangha* structure and tied tightly into the state and social fabric of the kingdom.

It is notable that Franciscans used analogy to highlight similarities between Buddhist and Christian religious practices. Their evaluation of Buddhist monks and monastic practices in Siam were viewed in glowingly positive terms of admiration. Further, friars affirmed Buddhist monks as their spiritual peers, a sentiment shared by Buddhist monks, and confirmed by Buddhist lay people. Franciscan approaches were far more amicable than, for example, Jesuits antagonism to Buddhism in the context of China. Franciscan practices of poverty played no small role in generating positive accounts of Buddhist monks in Siam. Buddhist lay devotion and piety was also evaluated in positive terms, particularly the wide practice of almsgiving and respect for monks.

This study has also shown that throughout Ribadeneira's *Historia*, Franciscan values and identity were reinforced. The Franciscans reinforced their missionary identity as preachers of the gospel and refused to be hindered by episcopal or secular restrictions. Friars made use of Iberian global expansion to increase their mission reach, using

economic maritime networks, and sometimes fashioning themselves as diplomats when expedient. The *Historia* also reinforced Franciscan identity through a document that focused on spiritual practice of poverty which formed part of the method of evangelization of the friars. Ribadeneira's document reinforced Franciscan identity through the imitation of Christ that combined passionate preaching through example of humility and poverty to dangerous lands and that together culminated in martyrdom in Japan. The focus on ethnographic accounts, particularly of Buddhist cultures, also reinforced Franciscan identity. Franciscans sought similarities with Buddhist monks and lay people and positively evaluated practices perceived as worthy from a Franciscan point of view. The very focus on practice over ideas, and of descriptions over theology, shaped the *Historia* and gave Franciscans their own mode of contributions that emphasize matters of practice. The reinforcing of Franciscan identity serves as a major modality for interpreting the *Historia* as Franciscan identity infused the contributions of the friars to early modern history.

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