

Colonial Boundaries: The Philippine Territories During the Spanish Era

Keren Happuch D. Valleser
Reynante B. Casiro

Central Mindanao University
khappuchvalleser@gmail.com

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.0556>

Published May 24, 2026

Citation: Valleser K.H.D. and Casiro R.B. (2026) Colonial Boundaries: The Philippine Territories During the Spanish Era, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*,7(3),1-13

Abstract: *Spanish colonization of the Philippines from 1521 to 1898 brought profound transformations in society, politics, and the economy. From the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan to the consolidation of hundreds of islands into Las Islas Filipinas, the Spanish established territorial control that defined the archipelago as a unified colony. Central to this was the 1734 Murillo Velarde map, which provided the first precise delineation of the Philippine territory. This study examines how Spanish colonial authority shaped, expanded, and maintained these territorial domains, as well as the challenges and resistance encountered across the islands. Drawing from primary sources, it explores five key questions: the strategies used by the Spaniards to overcome resistance; the territories brought under colonial control; the barriers to maintaining authority; the territorial changes across three centuries; and the broader impact of colonial expansion. By analyzing these aspects, the study highlights the Philippines' significance as a vital colony of the Spanish Empire and underscores the lasting legacy of Spanish territorial hegemony.*

Keywords: colonial boundaries, Philippine territories, Spanish era

INTRODUCTION

Territoriality is a central concept in understanding how societies organize space, identity, and authority. As Jean Gottman observed, perceptions of territory are shaped by geography, politics, and economics, and these definitions shift over time as communities negotiate their relationship with their environment. In the Philippines, Spanish colonization (1521–1898) redefined territorial boundaries by consolidating thousands of islands and more than 150 ethnolinguistic groups into a single colony known as *Las Islas Filipinas*. Maps, particularly the 1734 Murillo Velarde map, played a crucial role in legitimizing Spain's authority while masking the persistence of

autonomous and resistant local communities. Spanish territorial rule was therefore both an instrument of control and a contested space, where negotiation, adaptation, and resistance coexisted.

This study examines the territorial dimensions of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines, focusing on how control was established, the challenges of maintaining authority, and the changes in territorial domains from 1521 to 1898. By analyzing maps, colonial records, and primary sources, it highlights both the strategies of empire and the resilience of local societies, offering a deeper understanding of the Philippines' place within the Spanish Empire and the enduring legacy of colonial territoriality.

METHODS

This study employs a narrative, descriptive, and historical approach to examine the territorial dimensions of Spanish colonization in the Philippines. Primary sources—including eyewitness accounts, archival records, case studies, and research articles—were carefully consulted, with online repositories serving as a key medium for access. These materials provided firsthand perspectives essential for reconstructing the dynamics of colonial expansion and territorial control.

To supplement these, the study also drew on secondary sources such as published books and scholarly articles that offer critical interpretations of Spanish colonial history. By integrating both primary and secondary sources, the research aims to present a reliable and coherent account of territorial change under Spanish rule. Beyond contributing to historical understanding, this study is intended as a reference for future researchers and as a resource for readers seeking to engage with the legacies of colonial territoriality in the Philippines.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The Republic of the Philippines is an archipelago of 7,641 islands situated in the western Pacific Ocean, lying off the southeastern coast of the Asian mainland and bordered by the South China Sea, Taiwan, Borneo, and Indonesia. Its present territorial configuration is rooted in colonial-era treaties, most notably the *Treaty of Paris* (1898), which ceded the archipelago from Spain to the United States. Understanding the historical evolution of Philippine territorial boundaries—particularly through map representations—offers crucial insights into present-day disputes over sovereignty and maritime jurisdiction in Southeast Asia.

As a former colony of Spain for more than three centuries and later of the United States for nearly half a century, the Philippines inherited territorial frameworks and claims defined by its colonizers. These arrangements continue to shape the nation's contemporary political and geographic identity.

Philippine Territories Before Spanish Colonization

Knowledge of ancient Philippine territorial organization is limited due to the scarcity of surviving artifacts and the absence of indigenous written records. Nevertheless, Spanish chronicles, missionary accounts, and other foreign sources provide valuable evidence of the archipelago’s political and cultural landscape prior to European contact. Contrary to the misconception that Spain “discovered” the Philippines, the islands were already inhabited by diverse ethnolinguistic communities with established sociopolitical systems.

Prior to Spanish colonization, the archipelago was composed of independent polities—often referred to as *barangays* or chiefdoms—varying in economic scale and political complexity. These communities maintained trade and cultural exchanges with neighboring Asian polities, including China, India, and the Malay world. Geographically, the Philippines extended from approximately 4°45’ to 21°N latitude, encompassing hundreds of islands, of which eleven were of primary significance: Luzon, Mindanao, Samar, Panay, Negros, Palawan (then known as Paragua), Mindoro, Leyte, Cebu, Masbate, and Bohol. Collectively, these territories covered an estimated 52,500 square miles.

Ancient maps and cartographic records reveal that many of these islands were identified under varying nomenclature, reflecting the perspectives of early explorers and chroniclers. Such maps, alongside archaeological and ethnographic evidence, underscore that the Philippine archipelago was neither politically fragmented nor culturally barren, but instead a region of dynamic chiefdoms with distinct territorial domains long before Spanish colonization.

Present Name	Old Name
Negros	Buglas
Cebu	Sogbu
Leyte	Baybay
Albay	Ibalon
Tayabas	Calilayan
Batangas	Comintan
Mindoro	Ma-i
Cavite	Cauit
Samar	Ibabao
Basilan	Taguima
Manila	Santa- Ana
Bulacan	Meycauayan

Figure 1: Provinces under a different nomenclature

Source: Foreman, J. (1906). *The Philippine Islands: A political, geographical, ethnographical, social and commercial history of the Philippine Archipelago, embracing the whole period of Spanish rule, with an account of the succeeding American insular government (3rd ed. rev. and enl.)* <https://archive.org/details/philippineislan00fore>

Ethnohistorical sources indicate that at the time of European contact, the coastlines and lowland river valleys of most of the major islands of the Philippines were inhabited by politically complex and socially stratified societies, organized at the level of what cultural evolutionists refer to as *chiefdoms*.

Luzon and Mindanao, the two largest islands, together comprised more land area than the rest of the archipelago combined. Luzon alone was estimated to cover approximately 40,000 square miles. The southern boundary of the archipelago was defined by a chain of some 140 islands stretching from Mindanao to Borneo—collectively known as the Sulu Archipelago and the Sultanate of Sulu. Although historically under Spanish protection, the Sultanate was later incorporated into the broader Philippine polity under American rule, within the jurisdiction of the Moro Province.

By the early 15th century, European accounts identified Manila as a prominent center of power that exerted control over much of southeastern Luzon, including coastal settlements in the Calatagan Peninsula and surrounding polities such as Tondo and Santa Ana. Beyond the Tagalog regions, other significant states and polities flourished. In the Bicol Peninsula, the polity of Ibalon emerged as a notable center, remembered in tradition as the site of the first Spanish settlement in Luzon. In the Visayas, Cebu functioned as a vital chieftaincy and trading hub, facilitating exchanges between the Sultanates of Mindanao and the Kingdom of Borneo to the south, and the Rajahnates of Luzon to the north. Although central, Cebu was by no means the only important polity in the Visayas.

South of the Visayas lay Mindanao, home to both the Lumad communities and the Moro population, as well as the seat of four major powers: the Sultanates of Butuan, Lanao, Maguindanao, and Sulu. By the early to mid-16th century, Maguindanao had risen to particular prominence, described by European observers as the most powerful and widely known polity on the island. Its authority extended to the Zamboanga Peninsula, Cagayan de Oro, Sarangani Bay, and Davao. So dominant was its influence that the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch often referred to the entire island of Mindanao by the name “Maguindanao. As evidence by the type of Philippine archipelago discussed above, it can be inferred that the Pre-Hispanic Philippines was home to numerous kingdoms, sultanates and principalities which at the time had not yet been replaced through European influence.

Territorial Extent of the Spanish Philippines

In 1521, the Spanish expedition led by Ferdinand Magellan reached the Philippine archipelago. After establishing initial contact and friendly relations with the native population in Cebu, Magellan declared the islands a possession of Spain. However, before he could formally consolidate Spanish sovereignty, he was killed during the Battle of Mactan against the forces of Lapu-Lapu. Following Magellan’s death, Spain launched two more expeditions that also failed to

establish a permanent colony. The expedition of Ruy López de Villalobos in 1543 reached Mindanao and later landed in Leyte. It was during this voyage that Villalobos named the islands *Las Islas Filipinas* in honor of Prince Philip of Spain, who would later ascend the throne as King Philip II.

A more successful expedition came under Miguel López de Legazpi, who in 1569 was granted the titles of “Governor and Captain General” and *Adelantado* of the islands by the Spanish Crown. Legazpi was tasked with colonizing and consolidating Spanish rule over the archipelago. In 1571, he established a permanent Spanish settlement in Manila, which soon became the colonial capital and a major center of political, economic, and religious activity. From Manila, Legazpi dispatched expeditions to Christianize the indigenous population and to survey and extend Spanish control across the islands. After Legazpi’s death in 1572, his successor Guido de Lavezaris continued the colonial enterprise. Conquistadors such as Juan de Salcedo and Martín de Goiti spearheaded campaigns in northern Luzon. Salcedo extended Spanish influence into the Ilocos region and the northern coasts of Luzon, while Goiti subdued Zambales and Pangasinan. By 1573, Salcedo had also reached the gold mines of Paracale in the Bicol region, leading to the conquest of Albay and Camarines. By the close of the 16th century, most of the Cagayan Valley was incorporated under Spanish administration.

To consolidate their control, the Spaniards established provinces and cities with administrative frameworks that blended indigenous structures into the colonial system. Cebu, Manila, Nueva Cáceres (present-day Naga), Villa Fernandina (Vigan), and Nueva Segovia (La-Lo) became important centers of Spanish authority. Despite these successes, the colonial government never achieved complete control over the entire archipelago. The Cordillera highlands of northern Luzon and large parts of Mindanao resisted subjugation throughout Spanish rule.

From 1578 onward, several expeditions into Mindanao met with little success, as local resistance—especially from Muslim polities—proved formidable. Moro raiders frequently launched counterattacks, forcing the Spaniards to limit their presence to fortified garrisons in key strategic locations such as Zamboanga, Jolo, Basilan, and Iligan. Although Spanish missionaries and administrators achieved cultural and religious integration across much of the archipelago, Mindanao remained beyond effective colonial control. The persistence of Moro resistance, coupled with geographical challenges and political fragmentation, prevented Spain from establishing full territorial authority over the southern Philippines.

The Murillo Velarde Map of 1734

The delineation and demarcation of the national boundaries and maritime jurisdiction of the Philippines have long been subject to dispute. Since the declaration of Philippine independence

from Spain on June 12, 1898, questions regarding the extent of the country's territorial and maritime rights have persisted well into the 21st century.

One of the most significant historical references to Philippine territory is the 1734 Murillo Velarde Map, officially titled *Carta Hydrographica y Chorographica de las Islas Filipinas*. Produced by Jesuit priest Pedro Murillo Velarde and engraved by Nicolás de la Cruz Bagay, it was the first scientific map of the Philippines and was recognized by the Spanish Crown as the official cartographic representation of its colonial territory (National Historical Commission of the Philippines [NHCP], 2014). Known as the “mother of all Philippine maps,” it is notable for its precision and ethnographic detail. When closely examined, the map shows numerous towns, pueblos, and settlements across the islands in the early 18th century. Surrounding the main map are vignettes depicting various ethnolinguistic groups, rural scenes, fauna, and inset maps, making it both a geographic and cultural record of the Spanish Philippines throughout much of the 18th century (Roces, 2015).

Crucially, the map includes Panacot Shoal (now Scarborough Shoal) and Los Bajos de Paragua (the Spratly Islands), both of which appear within the territorial scope of the Spanish Philippines. This detail became highly relevant in contemporary geopolitics. In July 2015, the Philippines presented the Murillo Velarde Map as one of 270 historical maps submitted during the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) hearings at The Hague, contesting China's claim over the South China Sea (Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2016). The map illustrates that Panatag Shoal (then Panacot) was historically part of the Spanish-administered Philippine territory.

The Murillo Velarde Map also figured prominently in legal and political debates surrounding China's controversial “Nine-Dash Line” claim, which asserts ownership of much of the South China Sea based on alleged historical usage. According to Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, the map undermines China's claim by demonstrating that Spanish jurisdiction, not Chinese authority, extended over the shoals and islands during the 18th century. Carpio (2015) further explained that the map reflects territorial claims to islands rather than to the entire maritime expanse, thereby contradicting the vague and historically unsupported dashes on Chinese maps. Notably, Scarborough Shoal (referred to by China as Huangyan Island or previously Minzhu) does not appear as part of Chinese territory in earlier records.

The crucial role of the 1734 Murillo Velarde Map in the Philippines' arbitration case against China underscores the enduring value of ancient maps in shaping modern understandings of sovereignty, historical geography, and international maritime disputes. It remains a vital piece of evidence, bridging the past with contemporary struggles over territorial integrity and national identity.

Spanish Expansion and Territorial Governance

The Spanish colonization of the Philippines from the 16th to the 19th century reshaped the archipelago's political, religious, and social structures. Early settlements evolved into organized provinces, becoming key centers of governance, missionary activity, and economic growth. The following table outlines the major provinces established during Spanish rule and their historical significance.

Table of Provinces Founded under Spanish Colonial Rule

Region / Province	Date of Establishment / Spanish Entry	Early Centers / Towns Founded	Historical Notes
Abra (Luzon)	1598 (Augustinian missions); province later organized	Banquet, Tayum (1803), Pidigan (1823), La Paz (1832), Bucay (1874)	Originally under Ilocos Norte and Sur; strong missionary presence.
Manila (Luzon)	1570 (visited); 1571 (occupied)	Maynila (ruled by Rajah Soliman)	Became the seat of Spanish colonial rule; formerly part of Tondo province.
Pampanga (Luzon)	1571	Lubao, Betis, Macabebe, Bacolor, Candaba, Arayat	One of the earliest organized provinces; reduced when Bataan was created in 1754.
Albay (Luzon)	1569 (exploration); 1636 (province formally created)	Libon (1569), Oas (1587), Polangui (1589), Malinao (1600)	Explored by Luis Enriquez de Guzman; later expanded with nearby settlements.
Bataan (Luzon)	1754 (created by Gov. Gen. Arandia)	Balanga, Abucay, Samal, Orani, Hermosa, Pilar, Orion, Mariveles, Bagac, Morong	Previously part of Pampanga and Mariveles corregimiento.
Baguio / Benguet	1829 (explored by Guillermo Galvey)	Trinidad Valley settlements	Later attempted as a health resort; remained an Igorot rancheria under Spanish rule.
Tarlac (Luzon)	1860 (comandancia established)	Bamban, Capas, Concepcion, Magalang, Porac, Victoria, Tarlac (capital)	Originally divided between Pampanga and Pangasinan.
Tayabas (Luzon, now Quezon)	1571–1572 (explored by Juan de Salcedo)	Calumpit (1578), Malolos (1580), Hagonoy (1581), Bocaue (1582)	One of the largest early provinces; jurisdiction shifted over time.
Cagayan / Nueva Segovia	1583 (political division recognized)	Tuguegarao, Aparri	Served as base for northeastern Luzon conquest and Christianization.
Ilocos Norte	1572 (explored by Juan de Salcedo)	Laoag, Vigan	Early coastal trade with Chinese and Japanese merchants before Spanish arrival.
Rizal	1853 (Morong district); 1901 (province created)	Taytay, Cainta, Antipolo, Morong, Tanay, Pililla, Angono	Formed from parts of Manila and Laguna provinces.

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development -UK

Sorsogon	Late Spanish period (separated from Albay)	Sorsogon, Masbate, Ticao, Burias	One of the youngest provinces in Luzon.
Zambales	1572 (explored by Salcedo)	Masinloc (capital), later Iba	Early villages became nucleus of towns.
Batanes	1791 (civil government established by Gov. Jose Basco)	Basco, Ivana, Mahatao	Earlier Dominican missions (1686); later integrated under Cagayan.
Batangas	1581 (province created)	Nasugbu, Balayan, Batangas	Included Mindoro, Marinduque, and southern Luzon territories.
Bulacan	1578 (province founded)	Malolos (1580), Hagonoy (1581), Bocaue (1582)	Thriving native settlements existed before Spanish colonization.
Bohol (Visayas)	1565 (formally integrated under Cebu)	Panglao, Bool	Site of Sandugo (blood compact) between Legazpi and Sikatuna.
Cebu	1565 (Spanish settlement established)	Cebu City (Sugbo)	Opened to foreign trade in 1863; rivaled Iloilo as trade hub.
Leyte (Visayas)	1521 (Magellan sighted Limasawa); 1735 (province with Samar)	Tandaya (old name), Limasawa	First Mass in the Philippines held at Limasawa.
Negros Occidental	1890 (separated from Negros Oriental)	Bacolod	Previously called Buglas; name "Negros" given due to Negrito inhabitants.
Romblon	1582 (documented by Loarca); 1635 (Recollects arrived)	Simara, Banton, Romblon, Tablas	Initially administered by secular clergy; later Christianized.
Samar	1521 (sighted by Magellan); 1735 (united with Leyte)	Ibabao settlements	First Philippine island sighted by Magellan (Zamal).
Zamboanga (Mindanao)	1565 (Legazpi visited Dapitan); 1636 (Fort Pilar built)	Dapitan, Zamboanga	Abandoned in 1662 due to Chinese pirate threat; later reoccupied.
Agusan (Mindanao)	1600 (Jesuit missions); 1860 (East District of Mindanao)	Butuan, river settlements	Originally part of Caraga; known for early missionary presence.

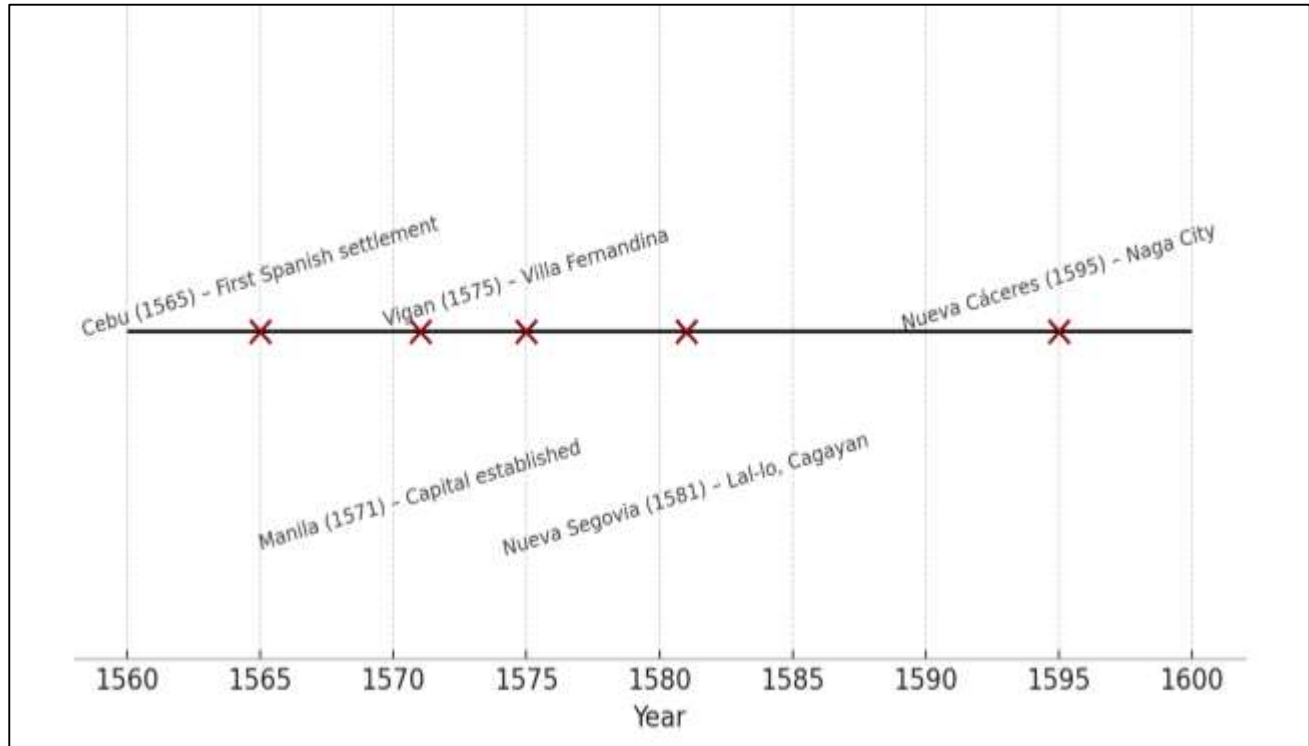


Figure 3: Chronological Timeline of Spanish-Founded Provinces and Cities in the Philippines

Source: Foreman, J. (1906). *The Philippine Islands: A political, geographical, ethnographical, social and commercial history of the Philippine Archipelago, embracing the whole period of Spanish rule, with an account of the succeeding American insular government (3rd ed. rev. and enl.)* <https://archive.org/details/philippineislan00fore>

Spanish colonial expansion across the Philippines followed a systematic pattern: exploration, establishment of settlements, consolidation into provinces, and integration into the colonial political system. Luzon became the focal point of administrative and religious control, with Manila as the capital and surrounding provinces like Pampanga, Bulacan, and Batangas serving as vital economic and military supports. The Visayas, particularly Cebu, Leyte, and Bohol, functioned as the early springboard for both missionary activity and trade. Negros and Romblon were later integrated, with agriculture and commerce driving their colonial importance.

In Mindanao, Zamboanga emerged as a fortified frontier against Moro resistance, while Agusan and surrounding regions witnessed extensive missionary work, although Spanish control remained contested.

The late incorporation of Batanes and Benguet illustrates the difficulty Spain faced in integrating geographically isolated and culturally resistant regions. Nevertheless, by the 19th century, Spain had established a vast network of provinces, each serving as nodes of governance, evangelization, and economic extraction. Despite their success, Spanish colonial policies fostered local resistance—from revolts in Pampanga and Bohol to persistent defiance in the Cordillera and Muslim Mindanao. These struggles highlight both the extent and limits of Spanish territorial control, shaping the socio-political landscape of the Philippines well into the modern era.

The establishment of provinces during the Spanish colonial period followed a gradual and uneven process. Coastal and agriculturally rich areas such as Cebu, Pampanga, Batangas, and Ilocos were quickly integrated, becoming centers of Spanish political and economic control. More remote or resistant regions, including Abra, Benguet, Batanes, and large parts of Mindanao, were incorporated much later, often only nominally.

The Spanish strategy combined military conquest, missionary activity, and administrative reorganization, reflecting both the empire's strengths and its limitations. These provinces became the foundation of the modern Philippine territorial framework, even as they remained contested sites of resistance and negotiation throughout Spanish rule.

Barriers and Resistance to Spanish Colonization

Spanish colonization in the Philippines was not a smooth and uncontested process. Throughout more than three centuries of colonial rule, the Spaniards faced persistent geographical challenges and widespread local resistance. The Philippines, with its scattered islands and independent barangays, made political consolidation slow and difficult. The Spaniards had to subdue communities one by one, moving from barangay to barangay and island to island. This decentralized social structure meant that conquest was never absolute, but rather an ongoing process of negotiation, suppression, and resistance.

Historians estimate that at least 200 revolts of varying scale and duration erupted during the Spanish period. These uprisings were driven largely by colonial abuses such as forced labor (*polo y servicio*), the compulsory sale of local products (*bandala*), excessive tribute collection, racial discrimination, and religious impositions. Some of the earliest revolts include the Dagami Revolt in Cebu (1567), the Manila Revolt led by Limahong's forces (1574), the Pampanga Revolt (1585), and the Magat Salamat Conspiracy in Manila (1587–1588). In the north, the Diego Silang Revolt in Ilocos during the 1760s became one of the most notable examples of resistance, fueled by grievances over forced tribute and abuses of power.

By the 17th and 18th centuries, opposition intensified as the Spanish strengthened the tribute system and labor obligations. *Polo y servicio* compelled Filipino men aged 16 to 60 to render 40

days of unpaid work annually, while the *bandala* system forced provinces to sell agricultural goods to the government at unfairly low prices. These economic burdens, combined with religious suppression and abuses by colonial officials, repeatedly pushed communities to arms.

The culmination of centuries of resistance came with the Philippine Revolution of 1896, spearheaded by the Katipunan under Andres Bonifacio. On August 30, 1896, hostilities erupted when hundreds of Katipuneros attacked a Civil Guard garrison in Pasig, while Bonifacio himself led forces in an assault on San Juan del Monte. Their aim was to seize the gunpowder depot and the water supply for Manila. Although initially successful in overwhelming the defenders, the rebels were eventually repelled after Spanish reinforcements arrived, suffering heavy casualties.

In response, Governor-General Ramon Blanco declared martial law over eight provinces identified as hotbeds of revolutionary activity: Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Pampanga, Bulacan, Tarlac, and Nueva Ecija. These became historically significant as they were later represented in the eight rays of the Philippine flag's sun. On October 25, 1896, Blanco extended martial law to additional provinces, including Zambales, Bataan, and Zamboanga (with some sources citing Sibugay as the area covered).

Despite Spanish military efforts, the revolution could not be entirely suppressed. The uprisings signaled the weakening of colonial authority, forcing the Spaniards to divide their resources between governance and the suppression of dissent.

Limits of Colonial Consolidation

Although Spain succeeded in maintaining dominance until the end of the 19th century, its rule was never absolute. Continuous uprisings, coupled with the Philippines' difficult geography, limited the full advancement of Spanish authority. The archipelagic structure of the country meant that central control was fragmented, and many upland and Muslim communities in Mindanao remained outside the grasp of Spanish power.

In effect, Spanish colonial rule was marked not only by conquest and administration but also by constant resistance and unfinished consolidation. The revolts—ranging from localized uprisings to the national revolution—highlight the enduring Filipino struggle for freedom and the inherent limitations of Spanish colonial control in the islands.

CONCLUSION

The examination of Spanish-controlled territories in the Philippines from 1521 to 1898 provides a critical lens for understanding the evolution of colonial power, its mechanisms of control, and its

enduring impact on Philippine society. The study revealed that Spanish colonial rule did not simply impose foreign authority over the archipelago but reconfigured the existing sociopolitical and cultural landscape, transforming barangay polities and indigenous sultanates into territories subjected to centralized colonial administration.

The territorial expansion of Spain was never absolute nor uncontested. Hostilities, resistance movements, and geographical barriers complicated their efforts to impose authority. From the revolts of local communities to the persistence of Muslim sultanates in Mindanao and Sulu, Spanish rule was consistently challenged. Despite these struggles, Spain succeeded in establishing political, economic, and religious dominance across vast portions of the archipelago, creating a colonial framework that redefined community life through tribute systems, forced labor, Christianization, and the integration of local elites into colonial governance.

This study also underscores the importance of historical cartography as a tool for understanding the shifting nature of territorial boundaries. Maps not only documented Spanish claims but also symbolized the legitimization of colonial sovereignty, particularly as reflected in the Treaty of Paris of 1898, which ceded the Philippines to the United States. These territorial representations provide context for present-day disputes, as they remain embedded in the historical processes of colonial expansion, negotiation, and contestation.

Ultimately, this research emphasizes the necessity of critically engaging with colonial territorial histories to better comprehend the roots of contemporary political and cultural issues. It reveals that the archipelago's transformation under Spain was neither linear nor uniform, but rather a dynamic process shaped by conquest, negotiation, resistance, and adaptation. For future researchers, an expanded inquiry into specific provinces, indigenous responses, and transoceanic connections could provide a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the territorial and socio-political legacies of Spanish rule.

REFERENCES

- Angara, E., Cariño, J. M. A., & Ne, S. P. (2009). *Mapping the Philippines: The Spanish period*. Quezon City: Rural Empowerment Assistance and Development Foundation.
- Blair, E. H., & Robertson, J. A. (1903). *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803 (Vol. 1: 1493–1529)*. Cleveland, OH: The Arthur H. Clark Company.
- Carpio, A. T. (2015). *The South China Sea dispute: Philippine sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the West Philippine Sea*. Integrated Bar of the Philippines.
- Cortes, O. M., Boncan, C. P., & Jose, R. T. (2000). *The Filipino saga: History as social change*. Quezon City: New Day Publisher.
- Foreman, J. (n.d.). *The Philippine Islands: A political, geographical, ethnographical and social account*. Internet Archive. <https://archive.org>
- Galang, Z. M. (1936). *Encyclopedia of the Philippines*. The Library of Literature, Art and Science.

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development -UK

- Hezel, F. X., & Driver, M. C. (1988). From conquest to colonisation: Spain in the Mariana Islands, 1690–1740. *The Journal of Pacific History*, 23(2), 137–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223348808572522>
- Junker, L. L. (1999). *Raiding, trading, feasting: The political economy of Philippine chiefdoms*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press.
- McCoy, A. W., & de Jesus, E. C. (Eds.). (1982). *Philippine social history: Global trade and local transformations*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press. [Includes W. H. Scott, “The Spanish Occupation of the Cordillera in the 19th Century”].
- National Historical Archives of the Philippines. (n.d.). *[Archival materials on Philippine history]*.
- National Historical Commission of the Philippines. (2014). *Murillo Velarde 1734 map: A Philippine treasure*. NHCP.
- Permanent Court of Arbitration. (2016). *The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of the Philippines v. The People’s Republic of China) (PCA Case No. 2013-19)*. <https://pca-cpa.org>
- Rafael, V. L. (1998). *Contracting colonialism: Translation and Christian conversion in Tagalog society under early Spanish rule*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Roces, M. (2015). Cultural and historical significance of the Murillo Velarde map. In *Philippine cartography and sovereignty studies*. Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Wilberforce, A. (n.d.). *Spain and her colonies*. New York: The Cooperative Publication Society
- Zaide, G. F. (1939). *Philippine history and civilization*. Manila: Philippine Associated Publishers.