

Language Contacts and Plurilingualism in the Philippines (Seventeen and Eighteen Centuries)

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This work aims to study the enormous translating and interpreting works the missionaries carried out in the Philippines, focussing in the language contacts between natives and missionaries, and the plurilingual activities in Manila.

The interest of this study lies in the use of unpublished sources to study missionary linguistics. The countless number of languages spoken in the islands and the short number of Spaniards, mainly missionaries, made communication a difficult task. At the beginning, all the efforts were placed in the learning of the main languages, such as Tagalo, Pampango and Visaya, but in the end of the seventeenth and along the eighteenth century, they tried to evangelise and hispanicise the interior of Luzon Island, where we focus our study. From a linguistic point of view, this was a difficult area as the locals used a myriad of languages, some of them difficult to pronounce for Spanish speakers. Let us mention a native tribe whose members sawed their teeth, which made it almost impossible for Spaniards to reproduce the same phonemes without undergoing the same process. We present a biographical draft of *Pigu*, one of the few native interpreters of this period in these frontier lands. We also describe, through the words of the Jesuit Murillo Velarde, the linguistic situation in Manila: “(...) *no ay en el Mundo Ciudad, donde concurran tantas Naciones, como en esta, pues a demas de los Españoles, que son los vecinos, y dueños del Pays, y los Tagalos, que son los Indios Naturales de la tierra, ai otros muchos Indios Naturales de las Islas de lenguas diferentes, como son los Pampangos, los Camarines, los Bisayas, los Ylocos, los Pangasinanes, y Cagayanes. Ai Criollos, o Morenos, que son Negros atezados, Naturales de la tierra, ai muchos cafres, y otros negros de Angola, Congo, y el Africa. Ai Negros de Asia, Malabares, Coromandeles, y Camarines. Ai michísimos Sangleyes, o Chinos, parte Cristianos, y la mayor parte Gentiles. Ai Ternotes, y Mordicas, que se retiraron aquí de Ternate, ai algunos Japones, Borneyes, Timores, Bengalas, Mindanaos, Joloes, Malayos, Javos, Siaos, Oidores, Cambadas, Mogoles, y de otras islas, y Reynos del Asia, ai bastante número de Armenios, algunos Persas, y Tártaros, Macedones, Turcos y Griegos. Ai gente de todas las Naciones de Europa, Franceses, Alemanes, Holandeses, Genoveses, Venecianos, Yrlandeses, Yngleses, Polacos y Suecos. Ay de todos los Reynos de España, y de toda América, y de suerte, que el que estuviere una tarde en el tuley, o puente de Manila, verá pasar por el todas estas Naciones, verá sus trajes, y oirá sus lenguas; lo que no se logrará en ninguna otra Ciudad de toda la Monarquía Española, y con dificultad en alguna otra parte de todo el orbe”.*

To do this research we have used unpublished documents from the General Archive of the Indies, the Archive of the Augustinian Province of the Philippines and the Dominican

Province Archive of the Holy Rosary of the Philippines, as well as chronicles and histories published in the Philippines by the Augustinians, Dominicans, Franciscans and Jesuits, who documented the works interpreters and translators did in the frontier lands of the West Indies.