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978-1-107-13679-3 - Forced Migration in the Spanish Pacific World: From Mexico to the Philippines, 1765–1811

Eva Maria Mehl

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Forced Migration in the Spanish Pacific World

Nearly 4,000 Mexican troops and convicts landed in Manila Bay in the Philippines from 1765 to 1811. The majority were veterans and recruits; the rest were victims of vagrancy campaigns. Eva Maria Mehl follows these forced exiles from recruiting centers, jails, and streets in central Mexico to Spanish outposts in the Philippines, and traces relationships of power between the imperial authorities in Madrid and the colonial governments and populations of New Spain and the Philippines in the late Bourbon era. Ultimately, forced migration from Mexico City to Manila illustrates that the histories of the Spanish Philippines and colonial Mexico have embraced and shaped each other, that there existed a connectivity between imperial processes in the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans, and that a perspective of the Spanish empire centered on the Atlantic cannot adequately reflect the historical importance of the richly textured trans-Pacific world.

Eva Maria Mehl is an assistant professor of Latin American history and World history at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Under her maiden name, Eva M. St. Clair Segurado, she has published extensively in Spain on the missionary labor of the Jesuits in China and the expulsion of this religious order from Mexico in 1767. She is the author of *Expulsión y Exilio de la Provincia Jesuita Mexicana*, *Flagellum Iesuitarum*, and *Dios y Belial en un mismo altar*.

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To my boys, Richard and Alex, for all the days and nights

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The royal decree that instituted annual roundups of vagrants in Spain was received in Mexico City a few years after it was published in Aranjuez in May 7, 1775. Ordenanza de S.M. en que se previene y establece el recogimiento de vagos y mal-entretendidos por medio de levas. Madrid, 1775. Signatura: XVIII/494(23). Courtesy of Biblioteca Valenciana Nicolau Primitiu (Biblioteca Gregorio Mayans).

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This characterization of a vagabond in the early nineteenth century visually represents the wariness of authorities in Mexico City of individuals who pretended to be beggars but were actually just loafing around with no occupation. Colonial officials assumed that these men likely dedicated their time and wits to morally questionable activities. Lithograph by Claudio Linati, in *Costumes et Moeurs de Mexique* (London, 1830). Courtesy of SP Lohia Hand Coloured Book Rare Collection in London.

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Acknowledgments

Dear reader, you are about to know about the many people I need to thank for a variety of things. These couple of pages will be no less syrupy than those of many other authors. However, they are perhaps the most difficult to write and all the more necessary because, really, without all these people you would not be reading this book.

This is the end of a long journey. This book was born in a research paper that I wrote for a graduate seminar at UC Davis in the academic year 2005–06. I have always been attracted to the history of Asia, particularly China, even if several circumstances laid out the path for me to be a Latin Americanist. In order to include the Far East in my equation, I thought intensively about the links that the Manila galleons created across the Pacific Ocean for about two centuries and a half. Eventually, some hundred Mexicans deported to the Philippines under the accusation of vagrancy found me at the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City in the summer of 2005. The dissertation I completed at UC Davis built on this topic and is at the inception of this book.

Writing these words reminds me of my days as a graduate student at the history department of UC Davis. At this university I had the privilege of learning from excellent teachers and mentors. I need to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Chuck Walker, Andrés Reséndez, and A. Katie Harris, whose advice and comments pushed me to continue sharpening larger questions and themes. Tom Holloway contributed much with his criticism on a very early, partial draft. At UC Davis I also became a better scholar thanks to the inspiration of Alan Taylor, Arnie Bauer, and Ari Kelman. I am also thankful for the fact that several of them carved out time to write me letters of recommendation. Throughout the years

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