 VALUABLE BUT FLAWED  
Review Article: A Dictionary of Asian Christianity*  

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As the editor remarks in a recent article describing how the work under review came into being, it is only since independence after World War II that Asians in general began to develop national church leaders and national church movements with their accompanying theologies. In an age of contextualization and praxis, this has led to national church histories, where formerly there had existed only missionary histories, and “by the late 1980s there were national church historians from many countries in Asia, which had never been the case before.”1 The rapid growth of Christianity in Asia, and the growing concern for interreligious dialogue, among other factors, have made it necessary to know not only national church histories, but other Asian church histories as well. It is in that context that this project of the Dictionary of Asian Christianity (DAC) was conceived, and has been carried out with fourteen national or regional meetings of local representatives over the past decade, gener-


ously financed by a variety of international foundations. Sunquist's enthusiastic description of these encounters of Christians from many traditions and nationalities makes one wish to have been there. The result hoped for, and to a large extent achieved, is a volume that is primarily the work of Asian church historians or those permanently working in Asia, though in a certain number of cases Western historians were called in for particular themes or regions for which no one could be found.²

Sunquist goes on to describe the process that brought about the DAC, which is important since it accounts for both the strengths and some serious weaknesses in the work. The project had its origins in Trinity Theological College in Singapore, where the editor was a visiting professor from 1987 to 1995, and the associate editors were permanent faculty members. As we will see, it bears the marks of its Protestant origins, in spite of the sincere efforts made to bring Roman Catholics into the project. That the authors were not more successful, at least in the case of the Philippines, is perhaps more the fault of Filipino Catholics, as we will have occasion to point out.

However, it was partly inherent in the process employed, which, though admirable in many respects, was open to weaknesses. Sunquist describes the process they went through as follows:

The editorial group of three decided early on that the writers for each country or region should decide what should be included for their country. The editors imposed some topics or themes to give the DAC some consistency (especially the survey articles), but otherwise each country group worked out for itself, over a two- or three-day period, what entries should be included. The relative length allotted to each country was determined by the length of time of Christian presence, the size of the Christian population, and the overall influence of Christianity upon the nation. Thus, China, India, and Indonesia have the largest entries in the DAC.³

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²Ibid., 82.

³Ibid. It should be noted that in the preface to the Dictionary itself, the editor includes the Philippines as a fourth prominent country (xxii).
The problem that the editors did not foresee, most probably, was that in some countries Christians are sharply divided—not so much between Catholics, Protestants, and non-ecumenical denominations, as is true to some extent everywhere, but also along lines of political ideology. The problem for the editors was to pick a group of writers for each country who would not monopolize the direction their national contribution should take. From an analysis of the articles present and those missing, and from my own experience, I would judge, for reasons to be developed, that the Philippine contribution was from the beginning badly skewed by the representatives chosen by the editors and never escaped that problem.

Referring to the second point, that is, the criterion for the relative length to be assigned to each country, no one could deny the antiquity of Christianity in China and India. However, neither in absolute, nor much less in relative, numbers of Christians do they or Indonesia exceed the Philippines. As to the antiquity of Christianity in Indonesia, Catholicism attained a tenuous presence under the Portuguese and Spaniards in Maluku (the Moluccas) a few decades before it arrived in the Philippines, but nowhere else was this true in Indonesia.4 Though influence on national life is necessarily a somewhat subjective estimate, it would seem clear that in none of these countries is Christianity, and Catholicism in particular, so deeply interwoven with the national culture, for better or worse, as in the Philippines, nor does Christianity exercise more influence on national life in any of these countries.5

4Christian Persian merchants are said to have come to Sumatra and north Java [?], “possibly from the 7th c. onward,” but “they left only very faint traces.” Thomas van der End, “Indonesia,” in DAC, 374.

5However, in fairness to the editors, there is evidence that a rather large number of the articles committed to Philippine writers were never completed, for reasons of varying validity. Though the editor was too polite to say this, it would seem to account in part for other countries being relatively better represented than the Philippines.
To deal with the first point—that is, the choice of contributors—since it has nowhere been explained, nor are any national committees or directors listed in the introduction to DAC, one will readily believe that the most normal thing for a group of professors representing a Protestant institution in Singapore would be to make contact with their counterparts in the Philippines through well-known Protestant church historians, through cooperative institutions like the Association of Theological Education in Southeast Asia, the Southeast Asia Graduate School of Theology, and through the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. That this was done may be inferred from the very large number of articles—more by far than any other Filipino writer—by Dr. T. Valentino Sitoy, Jr., former professor of church history in the Divinity School of Silliman University, the oldest and best-known Protestant university in the Philippines. A few years earlier he began publishing his *A History of Christianity in the Philippines: vol. 1: The Initial Encounter,* and subsequently published books on Protestant Christianity in the Philippines, particularly the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (though strangely no article on that church appears).

In an effort to involve Catholic scholars as well, the initial approach seems to have been through the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), which in the Philippines has unfortunately been chiefly associated with the ideological Left among Catholics, and in spite of its small numbers locally, has received undue international attention. As C.G. Arévalo put it in a survey of Filipino theology some years ago:

The Philippine group in EATWOT (Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians) and the Christians for National Liberation (CNL) generally show close affinity with the analysis of the situation and the prescriptions for action given by political groups of the far left and the National Democratic Front (NDF).... Because of a network of international contacts, this group has had

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6Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1985. Though originally planned for three volumes, the other two never appeared.
greater international exposure than others, and its work has been given wider distribution internationally.\(^7\)

None of the Filipino members of this group were academic historians. Apart from these, the Protestant professional historians (chiefly Leslie Bauzon and, to an extent, Sitoy) introduced a considerable number of topics, more or less well dealt with, which, though relevant to general Philippine history, had little or nothing to do with Christianity. Such, for example, were the *encomienda* (Bauzon), which is given a Christianizing function it had only in insignificant instances; the Philippine Inquisition (Bauzon) which receives almost two full pages, both affirming (incorrectly) that it was intended to keep the Filipinos within the Catholic faith, and denying (correctly) that it had anything to do with Filipinos, only Spaniards and other Europeans. Apart from censoring books, it only emerges significantly once in its whole history, and that in a political role (to eject Governor Diego Salcedo). We also find the Tondo Conspiracy,\(^8\) Miguel López de Legazpi (wrongly alphabetized and spelled as De Legaspi).\(^9\) This tendency was at some later point further exaggerated by articles on Aguinaldo, the Katipunan, José Diokno, Christians for National Liberation, Lorenzo Tañada, the Treaty of Paris, all apparently inserted

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\(^8\)Besides its having no religious connections, it seems to have been more an affair of the Brunei rajahs and datus who had imposed themselves on the Tagalogs and intermarried with some of them. In any case, I do not know of any historian who would consider it “a precursor of the Katipunan” in any sense. It is noteworthy that there is no bibliography.

\(^9\)There is considerable confusion in alphabetizing Spanish and other European names. Where Filipinos normally incorporate the particle *de* into the surname, Spaniards do not, and no one would know to look for Bishop Domingo de Salazar under De Salazar, just as with Legazpi. Nor would one expect to find Maillard de Tournon under *De*. 
for their relevance, not to the struggle of the Church, but to that of the Left against the Marcos dictatorship, and all authored by non-historian Teodoro Maximiliano M. de Mesa, closely associated with the Marxist-dominated church organizations. However, Philippine contributors can find some kind of justification in the fact that those mentioned were at least baptized, however little Christianity influenced their lives. No doubt the Singapore origin of the DAC is the reason for including, as far as I can ascertain, its only article on a living person, Lee Kuan Yew (Choong Chee Pang). The author admits that Lee was “never a very religious person” and that he was critical of such Christian ideals as freedom, democracy, human rights, welfare, and [the freedom of] the media. One might have added that his chief interaction with Christianity was in imprisoning—without trial and indefinitely, under the Internal Security Act—Christians who were vocal for those ideals.

There were during the period in which the DAC was being compiled, seven to ten, depending on the year, Catholic church historians with advanced degrees in the Pontifical schools of theology and seminaries around Manila. None of them appear here except Antolin Uy, SVD, who writes competently on his own congregation. He must therefore have been included only quite late, when, as Sunquist tells us, a special meeting was held in Singapore “to identify major Roman Catholic congregations (orders) that should be included and to find authors for these articles.”

Earlier, I myself received a form letter from the then Dean of St. Andrew’s Seminary, in which the assigned contributors were urgently pressed to submit their articles as soon as possible, since almost all those from the other countries had already done so. I found my name down for a minor article, for which I had never even been approached—much less given agreement to—before that pressing letter. It was at that point that I discovered that such a project as the DAC existed, and likewise that practically all the major articles on

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10 DAC, xxii.
Catholicism had been preempted by a few EATWOT members, especially the amateur Leftist historian, the late Mario Bolasco, and a number of the rest were assigned to others associated with the ideological Left. (No doubt the tragic death of Bolasco not long afterward accounts for a number of important topics that are missing from the DAC, while trivial or irrelevant topics abound). Rightly or not, I declined to lend my name to a project that at the time seemed to be definitely oriented to the Left in its Philippine articles. Later developments, such as the addition of the religious congregation articles, and recruitment of some other Catholic writers through the East Asian Pastoral Institute would change this considerably, but it seems that no other of those professionally qualified in Philippine church history were ever approached. At least none appear here, except Father Uy.

I have thought this attempt to reconstruct how the work evolved in the Philippines necessary to explain the reason for my judgments on the individual articles. But before this, we must give the reasons why we nonetheless consider this a valuable resource for historians and theologians alike, and give credit to the editors and authors for having accomplished such a work despite numerous obstacles. It encompasses 1260 entries, each accompanied by a bibliography, into which 464 other articles have been incorporated, not always successfully, in order to assure a certain symmetry among the countries involved, as far as that was possible. Nearly 500 contributors took part, 90 percent from Asia, later supplemented by a certain number of Western scholars.

The editors were faced with the problem of defining "Asia" geographically. As they perceptively point out, many Indian Christians today have close ties to those Christians—the Nestorians and Monophysites in particular—who in the early centuries were at the boundaries of and related to the Christian Roman-Byzantine Empire. Today these countries are more oriented toward the Mediterranean and Islamic world. To resolve the problem, it was decided to cover the Persian area of western Asia until the Arab conquest of the seventh century. From that time on, the editors have limited the
scope of the "Asian" churches to the area from Pakistan to the East, excluding Asian Russia and the Pacific islands. It seems a reasonable decision. One may note, in passing, that the articles from the early period have a certain greater depth and abundance of bibliography, which will make them valuable even to those who have access to earlier major reference works on the church history of the West.

The articles on the various Roman Catholic religious orders and congregations, usually written by members of the congregations themselves, are of a generally high level, and do much to fill in what would have been a serious lacuna in the presentation of Catholicism. Though obviously it was impossible to include every congregation that is working in Asia, there are some major omissions, particularly as regards the Philippines. The Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres, the second largest women's congregation in the Philippines, with missions in several other Asian countries, are mentioned only for Thailand. The Augustinian Recollect Missionary sisters, one of the larger women's congregations in the Philippines, receives only a brief mention under "Indigenous Religious Congregations," as if the latter were less important than the many minor Western congregations that receive extensive articles. The even earlier beaterio, now known as the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena is not included at all, though it always had Filipina members in spite of its Spanish origin. Among male orders, the Passionists, long active in China and in the Philippines, receive no mention of any kind. Similarly, the Augustinian Recollect friars—the largest order in the Philippines at the end of the Spanish regime, and with seventeenth-century martyrs in Japan—go completely unmentioned. The Marists are spoken of only under China, while the Capuchins and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) only find mention under Indonesia, though they both have been equally long or longer in the Philippines. The article on the Jesuits, not by a Jesuit—after unacknowledged dubious and irrelevant remarks on their European history—has nothing on Vietnam, the Philippines, or Japan, the latter a considerable omission for an article that features St. Francis Xavier. It is difficult to understand why the editor says that "No one could do an adequate job on such large topics as Jesuits in Asia." It is true that the work
of Alexandre de Rhodes and the Jesuits is treated in the country article on Vietnam (although nothing is said of the Dominican work in Tonkin, which produced canonized native and Spanish martyrs, many of them coming from the Philippines). It is also true that Xavier, Valignano, and the later Jesuits in Japan receive considerable treatment in the article “Kirishitan Evangelism,” but in the absence of any cross-reference, who would know to look there?

Ironically, it is the only Christian country in Asia that receives the most unsatisfactory and inadequate treatment, as we have partially indicated above. Even more ironically, apart from the generally well-done religious congregation articles, it is the Catholic Church, with which 82.9 percent of Filipinos identified themselves in the 1990 census, that is treated most inadequately, and even inaccurately, among the Christian churches of the country. The articles concerning the Protestant denominations are done by professional historians, almost entirely by one man (Sitoy). The country article on the Philippines, on the contrary, done by the same Protestant historian (Sitoy), does not contain a single Catholic item in its bibliography. Though not overtly biased against Catholicism in its brief treatment after the fashion of the older Protestant writers, he gives half the article to the Protestant churches and denominations, totally ignoring the Catholic Church in the twentieth century, as if it had ceased to exist with the coming of Protestantism. (One may note that many of the articles on various countries, particularly where Christianity first came in the form of Iberian Catholicism, tend to be very weak on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries).

Another comprehensive article, specifically on the Roman Catholic Church, is done in its Philippine section by two Filipino Catholics (José Mario C. Francisco, S.J., and José M. de Mesa), but neither is a trained historian. Unfortunately, though a reasonably accurate overview, it is carelessly done, most dates being incorrect, and a mere mention—inaccurate at that—given to the major problem of Philip-

11Ibid.
pine Catholic history, the failure in the formation of a native clergy. My own textbook on the history of Philippine Catholicism is cited in the bibliography, together with a very minor pamphlet of Horacio de la Costa and myself, while ignoring my two major works on the Filipino clergy. But the complementary and important, if partially deficient, textbook of Pablo Fernández, O.P., does not even merit a mention. Perhaps the most egregious omission in the bibliography is the book all historians consider to be the major work not merely on the Jesuits but on the whole church during the Spanish regime, de la Costa’s *Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768*. It is not found in the bibliography on the Roman Catholic Church, nor in the country article on the Philippines, nor in the article on the Jesuits (where, as noted, the Philippines is omitted completely).

Coming to Philippine biographical articles, a quick count indicated a minimum of forty-five non-Roman-Catholic ecclesiastical persons (excluding the political ones noted above). Many of the Protestant ones are totally insignificant and to be found only in the author’s (Sitoy) history of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. In comparison, there are only five Catholics—Bishop Domingo de Salazar and Mother Ignacia del Espíritu Santo (both incorrectly listed under “de”), Fr. Walter Hogan, S.J. (well done by Floyd Cunningham of the Asian Theological Seminary), Fr. Pedro Peláez (consistently misspelled as Paláez), and Fr. José Burgos (misleadingly not receiving an article of his own, but listed under the acronym password of the Katipunan, Gom-Bur-Za. In fact neither Gomez nor Zamora get more than a mention of basic biodata). The article itself (Luciano P.R. Santiago, a non-historian) misses completely the ecclesial significance of Burgos (as he does of Burgos’s mentor Father Peláez, in the article which he also wrote). The bibliographies for both the Peláez and the Burgos article have generally antiquated and erroneous or trivial entries, and ignore the major work of Fidel Villarroel, O.P., and my three major books on Burgos, in two of which documents of both men are given in their original and English translation. The definitive biography of Bishop Salazar by Lucio Gutierrez, O.P., undoubtedly appeared too late for inclusion, though several chapters had long since appeared in *Philippiniana Sacra*. 
The articles on Gregorio Aglipay (Apolonio Ranche and Teodoro M. M. de Mesa), Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr. (William Henry Scott) and the Philippine Independent Church (Apolonio Ranche) are even more unsatisfactory, though Ranche is, and Scott was, each a professional historian, teaching at the Anglican St. Andrew Theological Seminary. Though the first article is generally impartial in its bibliography, the second omits the admittedly unsympathetic, but solidly factual, massive work of Achútegui and Bernad. For here is found the unmentioned history of Aglipay's efforts to obtain orders in the historic episcopate in spite of his claim to valid orders through ordination by other priests at the beginning of the schism. These orders were achieved only in 1961, long after his death, with the reordination of the Aglipayan bishops of the Trinitarian faction of Bishop Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr., in the Anglican rite and their entrance into full communion with the Anglican Church. In this definitive work of Achútegui and Bernad is also found the history of Aglipay's own abandonment of Catholic doctrine in favor of Unitarianism and rationalism. Instead, the bibliography cites the error-plagued and deliberately untruthful book, long since exposed, of American Anglican Bishop Lewis Whittemore, written (by him or his Filipino ghost-writer) to persuade the American Episcopalian House of Bishops to accept full communion with the Philippine Independent Church (PIC). Missing from the bibliography also is the book of James S. Allen (pseud. Sol Auerbach), *The Radical Left on the Eve of the War*, containing the correspondence of Aglipay with this representative of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., displaying not only Aglipay's rationalist beliefs, but also his enthusiasm for Communism (to the extent he understood it) for the Philippines.

As for the third article, Scott uncharacteristically fails to mention (or even try to refute) the thoroughly documented fact of the return of Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr., to Roman Catholicism some years before his death. It may be noted also that the otherwise well-done articles on the Philippine Episcopal Church and on Anglican Bishop Charles Henry Brent (both by Edward P. Malecdan, dean of St. Andrew's Seminary) fail to record Brent's rejection of Aglipay and the so-called priestly orders conferred by him, as well as the lengthy
negotiations to persuade the PIC to accept Anglo-Catholic doctrine and reordination.

History being written by the victors, no article is devoted to Santiago Fonacier, the immediate juridical and doctrinal successor of Aglipay at his death in 1940, since he kept alive the Unitarian theology the later mainstream church wished to forget. Though it is indeed true that the Unitarianism and rationalism of the later Aglipay and of Fonacier never represented the belief of most of the ordinary members of the church or probably even of the majority of bishops, he and his Independent Church of Filipino Christians at least deserved an article, Supreme Court decision in favor of the De los Reyes, Jr., mainstream faction notwithstanding.

Given the extreme difficulty of getting reliable information on the Iglesia ni Cristo, though the article devoted to it by Jeffrey Mann is reasonably competent, the bibliography deserves more than the two brief articles contained in books on a wider subject. Apart from the pioneering book-length article of Julita Sta. Romana (1955), the later books by Conservative Baptist Arthur Leonard Tuggy (1976) and the more doctrinal one by Roman Catholic Fernando G. Elesterio (1977) certainly deserve attention.

Speaking of the imbalance between the infinitesimal number of Roman Catholic biographies and those of other churches, one may note the fine article done by Malecdan on William Henry Scott, certainly well deserving of Philippine church historiography. At the same time, one misses an article on Scott's mentor for his Ph.D. in history—Horacio de la Costa, S.J., the major contributor to Catholic church historiography, to whom Scott always acknowledged his own debt. It is ironic that the only twentieth-century Roman Catholic acknowledged is the American, Walter Hogan, S.J., mentioned above, with whom de la Costa also worked in providing the intellectual background to Hogan's endeavors.

One other Roman Catholic biography should be included among those from the Philippines, Takayama Ukon, or Don Justo, as the Spaniards knew him. The article devoted to him is based entirely on
out-of-date Japanese sources, with half a sentence on his exile to the Philippines and the Japanese Christian community he brought with him. In fact, though his life in the Philippines was short, he represented a Japanese presence that included a beaterio of Japanese women, very probably the precursors of the Filipino Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesús founded a few decades later by Ignacia del Espíritu Santo. The cause for beatification of Takayama Ukon has been actively pursued for some years now in the Philippines as well as Japan.

One of the major problems that the editors faced early on concerned local Christian institutions, which they intended to include. They soon found that to include colleges, universities, seminaries, and bible schools would mean thousands of entries. In evaluating the articles already submitted, they found enough material "to publish a separate two- to three-hundred page dictionary of Asian colleges and seminaries." Hence, the solution adopted was to write survey articles based on this material "to describe some of the trends and generalizations in Asian Christian colleges and universities." This appears to have been done chiefly in two lengthy articles, "Colleges and Universities" and "Theological Education." Admittedly the task was still formidable, but we have to say that the results, at least as far as the Philippines is concerned, are not very satisfactory. First of all, contrary to the decision not to give individual institutions separate articles, Silliman University alone receives its own (Anne C. Kwantes). Secondly, in the article on "Colleges and Universities," though a paragraph is given to general statistics on the membership of the CEAP, only the Ateneo de Manila gets a survey of its first century. The other Jesuit universities also get a mention. For the rest, we can quote: "Other Catholic schools include De La Salle University (1911), established by the Brothers of Christian Schools, and Divine Word University (1929) operated by the Society of the Divine Word." The S.V.D. fathers in fact operate many more institutions of higher education than the Jesuits, and the one cited no longer

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12Ibid.

13Ibid.
exists under that name, while their major and oldest university is the University of San Carlos in Cebu. Not only are all the women’s colleges and universities ignored, and the first Colleges of Manila and of San José of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also the two oldest institutions of higher Christian education, not only in the Philippines but in Asia, the University of Santo Tomas and the College of San Juan de Letran. One can perhaps understand such gross, if not deliberate, ignorance by the fact that the only Catholic item in the bibliography is “Ateneo de Manila University Fact Sheet 1994.” It would have been better to eliminate Roman Catholic schools completely (as is done for India, despite its wide network of colleges operated by the Indian Jesuits, not to speak of other religious orders) than to present such an essentially false picture of Catholic education in the Philippines. It is hard to escape the conclusion that anything about or by the Dominicans has been deliberately omitted from the DAC by someone.

The travesty of “Colleges and Universities” is surpassed only by the article “Theological Education,” where the Catholic contribution is limited to one sentence: “Roman Catholic theological education in the Philippines was a very late development.” Not to speak of the so-called “cloister seminaries,” where, even in the sixteenth century, the religious orders gave informal theological education within their monasteries to those who joined them in the Philippines, or at least the latter part of their theological education to young recruits coming from Mexico or Spain, the Jesuit College of Manila and that of San Jose (the latter still subsisting in a different form as San Jose Seminary) began theological education in 1595 and 1601, respectively, while the Dominican Colleges of Santo Tomas and San Juan de Letran date from 1611 and 1620. All of these gave theological education to hundreds of Spanish priests and, from the end of the seventeenth century, also to hundreds of Filipino priests at a time when there was no Protestant theological education anywhere in Asia. Any educated Filipino, historian or not, would be at least to some extent conscious of this, and it is difficult to see how even non-Catholic historians could fail to be aware of the general lines of these facts.
To summarize what has of necessity become an overlong review of this major work, almost no article on Catholic Philippines approaches accuracy. This is tragic, since, as far as my knowledge of other Asian Christian churches goes, and to a large extent, of the Protestant denominations in the Philippines, this can be a very valuable work of reference. It is clear that an enormous amount of work and of money has gone into its making. It is clear too that blame for much of its deficiency with regard to the Philippine Roman Catholic Church is not to be laid on its Protestant editors, but on Filipino Catholic contributors and planners. The editors may be blamed for their failure to see to it that a small group did not get hold of the project, and exclude most of the qualified Catholic Church historians in favor of non-historians who shared their ideological and theological biases. Those Filipino Protestant professional historians who took part in the planning cannot escape blame either, since they could not help but be aware of the number of highly-qualified Roman Catholics who were being excluded.

In the end we must say that though no serious theological or university library can afford to be without this reference work, no one should cite it for Catholic Philippine subjects without confirmation from more reliable sources. In his introduction, the editor expresses his opinion that the DAC should best be seen "as a first edition resource for the study of Asian Christianity."14 Though he expresses this judgment principally with regard to the rapid development of Asian Christianity in the next decade or two, we may hope that more than just updating but serious revision of at least the Philippine articles be undertaken.

14 Ibid., xxiv.