

THE PHILIPPINES IN THE WEST AND IN THE EAST

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In Philippine chronology there is one exceptionally remarkable date: this is January 1, 1845. Up to December 30, 1844, the Philippines had been called *Islas del Poniente* or *Western Islands*: since January 1, 1845, the Philippines belong to the Far East. The intervening day, or December 31, 1844, did not exist in the Philippines: no birth, no death was registered on that day. To make the study of this important event more complete, first, we shall establish the fact that the Philippines for over three centuries followed a system of reckoning time different from the system used by the neighboring colony of Macao, and second, we shall study the circumstances and consequences of the change made in 1845.

THE PHILIPPINES IN THE WEST

Both ecclesiastical and civil documents of the early colonization period show that the Philippines were considered as situated in the West. The Governor of the Philippines is called in official documents Governor of these islands of the *West*; (1) in 1586, Juan Domingo de Salazar is called first bishop of these islands of the *West*; (2) in 1586 a certain resolution was passed by the Municipal Council of Nueva Caceres of the Philippine Islands of the *West*; (3) in 1586, Pope Sixtus V erected into a province the custodia of St. Gregory in the Philippine Islands of the *Western Indies*; (4) in 1588 at Madrid the City of Manila is known and spoken of as the capital of the islands of the *West*; (5) in June, 1584, Luis Velez Cherino as clerk of the court, signs an official declaration to the effect that the royal seal had been received with due honors and the Audiencia established in the City of Manila of the Philippines of the *West*. (6) In laying down regulations for the expedition of missionaries to Asia, the Popes Clement VIII (1600), Paul V (1608), and Urban VII (1633), either imply or explicitly state that, while Goa and Macao belong to the East, the Philippines and the adjacent Islands are in the *Western Indies*. (7) As late as 1639, Philip IV in a letter to Urban VIII petitioning the erection of the University of Santo Tomas states that the college of the order of Preachers is in the City of Manila of the Philippine Islands on my *Western Indies*. (8)

The fact that Manila is about 240 degrees west of Madrid, and Macao about 120 degrees east of Lisboa implies that the time, as kept by inhabitants of Macao, who reached the colony travelling eastward, must differ by one day from the time, as kept by the Spaniards of Manila, who discovered the Philippines travelling westwards. Again, whenever world-circumnavigating ships steering eastward and gaining time meet ships navigating westward and losing time, there must be a difference of one day in their time reckoning. Was this fact ever realized by the Portuguese and Spanish navigators? Was it ever recorded in their logbooks? Perhaps no other fact brings so forcibly home the truth that the Philippines are in the West than to find ships, one bound from Macao to Manila and the other from Manila to Macao, at a very short distance one from another, and yet with a difference of 24 hours in their reckoning, just