

# A Dependent Empire: The Military Activities of the Filipino Natives in Spanish Taiwan, 1589-1642

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## ABSTRACT

In 1586, Governor Santiago de Vera (1584-1590) wrote a request to Felipe II of Spain for the pacification of Isla Hermosa (Formosa; modern-day Taiwan), and the King responded by instructing Governor Perez Dasmariñas to pacify the island for the benefit of its people and the safety of the Spaniards in Manila. However, no military expedition commenced in the sixteenth century; and only in 1626 did the governor of Manila send a force to occupy North Hermosa as a response to the Dutch occupation of the South. Half, if not most soldiers that were sent to occupy Hermosa were local soldiers of the archipelago. These indigenous soldiers, who participated in the establishment and maintenance of Spanish Taiwan from 1626 to 1642 when they were expelled by the Dutch, will be the focus of this paper. Examining the Spanish use and mobilization of local soldiers to expand the Spanish empire in Asia will serve as the objective of this research.

**Keywords:** *Spanish Taiwan, Isla Hermosa, Native Soldiers, Pampangans, Formosa*

*“Hermosa Island—a thing, which was considered impossible, for it seemed that all the power in the world would not be enough to conquer it.”<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, Formosa had become a place attractive to its surrounding kingdoms and European colonies. The Japanese, under Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) saw the island as a convenient foothold if they were to invade Manila, which was under Spain. The Dutch regarded it as a strategic outpost to Japan and a means to disrupt the Chinese-Spanish trade.

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Garcia, “News from the Far East, 1632,” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898 (Vol. 24: 1630-1634)*, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, trans. Robert Haight (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 203.

The Spaniards were also captivated by the island, evidenced by how they described and called it: Isla Hermosa, or a beautiful island because of its fertile land.<sup>2</sup> Hence, before the close of the sixteenth century, Felipe II ordered the pacification of Hermosa to the governors of Manila as soon as possible. Beyond this order, the colonization would ensure the safety of Filipinas against external threats. This was the context behind the King's urgency to establish a settlement in Taiwan. However, the limited and scattered military population throughout the Philippine archipelago made the establishment of a Spanish colony in Hermosa as a minor concern.

The researcher's first interaction with the history of Spain in Taiwan was reading Blair and Robertson's *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898* wherein seventeenth-century accounts and letters mentioned "Hermosa" and native soldiers being sent there yearly. The dearth of materials when it comes to the study of Spanish Taiwan is already felt, what more of the Filipino natives who manned the forts from 1626 to 1642. Hence, this is the goal of the research: to contribute a paper on Filipino natives who were sent to colonial Taiwan under Spain and to examine the Spanish reliance on its indigenous population.

This paper has a straightforward objective: To provide a historical narrative that examines the Spanish dependence on local soldiers in further expanding and maintaining its new but brief colony in Hermosa. In addition, Stephanie Mawson's indigenous agency will be utilized to examine the dynamics between the native soldiers and the colonial state that sent them abroad.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, to help attain this objective, the researcher has developed some research questions to answer: What problems occurred in the Philippines during the early seventeenth century that forced Manila to recruit and put more native soldiers in its *presidios*, especially in Hermosa? Why were more native soldiers sent to occupy Hermosa in comparison to Spanish soldiers? What groups of people in the Philippines participated in the different expeditions to Hermosa? Here, the researcher will argue that Spain depended on local manpower to fuel its expansion to Hermosa. Mobilizing different local groups of people to be part of the army was a result of the limited Spanish capability in the seventeenth century.

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<sup>2</sup> Juan de Medina, "Historia de La Orden de S. Agustin de Estas Islas Filipinas (1630)," in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898 (Vol. 24: 1630-1634)*, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 102.

<sup>3</sup> Stephanie Joy Mawson, *Incomplete Conquest: The Limits of the Spanish Empire in the Seventeenth-Century Philippines* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2023).

For the scope and flow of the paper, the research will begin in 1589 when the first royal order from Felipe II to colonize the island of Hermosa was issued. However, there was neither mobilization of troops nor expeditions ever sent to Hermosa in the sixteenth century because Manila was focused on expanding the southward (Mindanao) and was busy quelling various revolts and mutinies around the colonized areas of Luzon. Here, the researcher will discuss the problems that led to the recruitment of native soldiers in the colonial army and provide various reasons for the insufficiency of soldiers in the archipelago. After that, an examination of the Spanish solution to the problem of the military and its effectiveness in Hermosa will be assessed by how the local soldiers participated in the establishment and maintenance of the island.

### Gathering the Sources

In writing this paper, the researcher has greatly utilized two bodies of work that consist of different primary sources. First, *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898* by Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, published in the first decade of the twentieth century remains a reliable source of information when it comes to the study of the seventeenth-century Philippines as the majority of its volumes are dated from the late sixteenth to eighteenth-century Philippines.<sup>4</sup> Volume 6 to volume 35 will be used for this paper. The other primary source is the two-volume work Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo's *Spaniards in Taiwan (1582-1682)* comprised of transcribed and translated archival documents from different Spanish and Dutch archives.<sup>5</sup> Since Borao is the historian in the study of Spanish Taiwan, other works related to Filipino soldiers and Taiwan have also been consulted.<sup>6</sup> Works related to native soldiers, such as Stephanie Mawson's "Philippine Indios in the Service of the Empire" and her recently published *Incomplete Conquest: The Limits of the Spanish Empire in the Seventeenth Century Philippines*, were also a great help in providing a different perspective on indigenous

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<sup>4</sup> Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898* (Quezon City: Bank of The Philippines, 1909).

<sup>5</sup> Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo, *Spaniards in Taiwan: 1582-1682 (2 Vols.)* (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo, "Filipinos in the Spanish Colonial Army during the Dutch Wars (1600-1648)," in *More Spanish than We Admit: Insights into Philippine Cultural History*, ed. Isaac Donoso (Quezon City: Vibal Foundation, 2008), 79-108.

agency, particularly, the natives who were integrated into the Spanish military.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Problem: Isla Hermosa and the Preoccupied Spanish Army in the Philippines**

In July 1582, a Spanish Jesuit was traveling from Macao to Japan by sea when a storm destroyed their boats on the island of Hermosa, a small island north of Luzon but south of Japan. Here, he noted that the island was settled by an indigenous population whose culture was more related to the Pacific islands than China.<sup>8</sup> This shipwreck was noted by Governor Santiago de Vera when in his memorial in 1586 to Felipe II there was a mention of Isla Hermosa as one of the islands that surround the Philippines, and that it should be pacified for both the “their (indigenous population) good and the safety of the Spaniards” in Manila along with other islands of Java, Borneo, and Palawan.<sup>9</sup> Three years later, Felipe II ordered his then-incoming governor of Manila, Gomez Perez Dasmariñas (1590-1593), to colonize Hermosa on account of the safety and welfare of the Spaniards who were based in Manila. Moreover, the King ordered that the process of “pacification and subjection can be best and most quickly brought about.”<sup>10</sup> However,

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<sup>7</sup> Stephanie Joy Mawson, “Philippine Indios in the Service of Empire: Indigenous Soldiers and Contingent Loyalty, 1600–1700,” *Ethnohistory* 63, no. 2 (April 2016): 381–413, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-3455363>. Mawson’s other works are: Stephanie Joy Mawson, “Convicts or Conquistadores? Spanish Soldiers in the Seventeenth-Century Pacific,” *Past & Present* 232, no. 1 (June 15, 2016): 87–125, <https://doi.org/10.1093>; Stephanie Joy Mawson, “Unruly Plebeians and the Forzado System: Convict Transportation between New Spain and the Philippines during the Seventeenth Century,” *Revista de Indias* 73, no. 259 (December 26, 2013): 693–730, <https://doi.org/10.3989/revindias.2013.23>.

<sup>8</sup> Pedro Gomez, “Macao, 13 December 1582. From Macao, Fr. Pedro Gomez, S.J., Writes to Another Jesuit Priest about the Shipwreck of 16 July 1582,” in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1: 1582-1641*, ed. Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 2–9.

<sup>9</sup> Santiago de Vera, “Memorial to the Council, by Citizens of the Filipinas Islands (1586),” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898 (Vol. 6: 1583-1588)*, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 124–40. Another publication of the source can be found here: Santiago de Vera, “Manila, 26 July 1582. A Fragment of the Memorial Presented by the Junta of Manila (Governor Santiago de Vera and 50 Others) to the Council of the Indies Regarding Reforms That Must Be Instituted,” in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1: 1582-1641*, ed. Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Felipe II of Spain, “San Lorenzo de Escorial, 9 August 1589. Instructions from the King to the New Governor of the Philippines, Gomez Perez Dasmariñas,” in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1: 1582-1641*, ed. Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 16–17. For the complete instruction: Felipe II of Spain, “Instructions to Gomez Perez Dasmariñas (1589),” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898 (Vol. 7: 1588-1591)*, ed. Emma Helen

Borao noted that no military expedition nor any preparation to accomplish this order took place for four years as Dasmariñas was more preoccupied with pacifying the other parts of Luzon such as Cagayan and Zambales in 1591, where a total of 200 Spanish soldiers took part. More than that, the governor was more fixated on a southward expansion rather than a northward as evidenced by the two military expeditions to Moluccas in 1590 and 1593.<sup>11</sup> This kind of lack of action was one of the problems that the Spaniards faced towards the possible Hermosa colony. However, this was not because the Spaniards in Manila were indolent. On the contrary, they were overwhelmed and preoccupied with the defense and further pacification of the archipelago. For instance, Mawson observed that from 1585 to 1594, four military expeditions took place to pacify the Cagayan Valley and other parts of Northern Luzon, and six more expeditions took place until 1624.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, from 1575 to 1625, eight revolts in a similar region occurred.<sup>13</sup> Outside the archipelago, the Spaniards were also busy countering foreign threats, such as that of Limahong in 1575. At the same time, there was also a southward movement from 1578 to 1616 where Spain sent a total of nine military expeditions to Borneo, Cambodia, Singapore, and Moluccas.<sup>14</sup> Due to this preoccupation with the defense of the different newly established Spanish settlements in the islands, the movement of the military expeditions went contrary to where Hermosa was located.

Again, calls for the occupation of Hermosa were made by different government officials based on the same point: Japanese threat. Luis Perez Dasmariñas, son of the former governor wrote to the King about the possible Japanese invasion of Luzon. Moreover, he argued that aside from the rich resources that the island possesses and its proximity to China, taking Hermosa would be valuable in terms of the defence of Manila as it will serve as a colonial outpost to the north. Hence, he requested that more ammunition

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Blair and James Alexander Robertson, trans. Alfonso de Salvio (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 121–49.

<sup>11</sup> Borao Mateo created a table that shows how many Spanish soldiers joined different expeditions during the late sixteenth to early seventeenth century. José Eugenio Borao Mateo, “Contextualizing the Pampangos (and Gagayano) Soldiers in the Spanish Fortress in Taiwan (1626-1642),” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 70, no. 2 (December 9, 2013): 581–605, <https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2013.2.07>.

<sup>12</sup> Mawson, *Incomplete Conquest*, 113–116.

<sup>13</sup> Mawson, *Incomplete Conquest* 136–137.

<sup>14</sup> Borao Mateo “Filipinos in the Spanish Colonial Army during the Dutch Wars (1600–1648),” 80–83.



and reinforcements from Nueva España be sent so that they could be added to a possible expedition northward.<sup>15</sup> Regarding the Japanese threat, there are some truths to this as missionaries from Japan reported back to Manila about Hideyoshi's southward expansion of Japan, first capturing Hermosa and then Luzon. Fray Martin de la Ascension wrote the following:

*“This king's appetite has been much increased by what he robbed from the San Felipe, and they say that next year he will go to Luzon and that he does not go this year, being taken up with the Coreans; and that for this purpose he intends to take the islands of Lequios and Hermosa, to throw people thence into Cagayan, and from thence take Manila, if God does not first put a stop to his advance.”*<sup>16</sup> (researcher's emphasis)

The cosmographer Hernando Rios de Coronel reiterated this point to Felipe II considering the occupation of the island again as a matter of security, and establishing an outpost should be the most urgent action of Manila; if Manila was to survive, Hermosa had to be occupied.<sup>17</sup> Hence, In 1596, accompanying the new Governor General Francisco de Tello (1596-1602), was the order from the Felipe II to immediately occupy Hermosa, but should first be consulted with the Real Audiencia.<sup>18</sup>

During the entire term of Tello, still, no military expedition left Manila nor Cagayan to take the Hermosa. However, this time, Tello cited a critical concern that the Audiencia raised: the colonial army is scattered all around the archipelago, and if the Spanish army in Manila were to leave, it would put Manila in a vulnerable state. In short, Spain's military population was

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<sup>15</sup> Luiz Perez Dasmariñas, “Cavite, 8 July 1596. A Letter from the Interim Governor Luis Perez Dasmariñas to His Majesty the King Informing Him of the Situation of Isla Hermosa,” in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1 1582-1641* (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 18–20. L.P. Dasmariñas has also written a memorial to Governor Tello urging him to consider a military expedition to Hermosa as soon as possible: Luiz Perez Dasmariñas, “Manila. The First Memorial of the Conquest of Isla Hermosa That Luiz Perez Dasmariñas Sent to Francisco Tello, Governor General of the Philippines,” in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1 1582-1641* (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 21–23.

<sup>16</sup> Recounted in Antonio de Morga, *The Philippine Islands, Moluccas, Siam, Cambodia, Japan, and China, at the Close of the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Henry E.J. Stanley (1868; repr., Cambridge University Press: New York, 2018), 81.

<sup>17</sup> Hernando de los Rios Coronel, “A Fragment from the Letter That Cosmographer Hernando de Los Rios Coronel Sent to the King on June 1597,” in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1 1582-1641*, ed. Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 34–38.

<sup>18</sup> Felipe II of Spain, “Instructions for Governor Tello (1596),” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898 (Vol. 9: 1593-1597)*, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 185–218.

very limited.<sup>19</sup> Fortunately for Tello and the whole archipelago, as Fray Martin de la Ascension put it, God did put a stop to Hideyoshi's potential advance to Hermosa and Luzon when he died in 1598, and all Japanese plans for invasion were buried with him.<sup>20</sup>

Another problem that emerged was the military population. The Audiencia's concern was valid to the point that this vulnerability would plague the colonial state for the entire seventeenth century. While Nueva España was supposed to send military manpower and supplies to Manila as ordered by the King, Mawson observed that the galleons coming from Manila would only have an average of 156 soldiers annually. Worse, these soldiers were not even trained nor did they have any military background. Mawson identified these men as convicts or men who were exiled from Spain and Mexico.<sup>21</sup> By 1635, the problem remained the same as Governor Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera (1635-1644) provided various reasons for such a limited Spanish military presence in the East Indies, hindering further expansion and risking the defense of the colonial towns. While Mawson noted the danger and discouragement that the transpacific voyage posed, even if the soldiers were successful in arriving in Manila, the Spanish soldiers would face another set of challenges.<sup>22</sup> Corcuera informed the King that Spanish soldiers hated the climate that usually caused their deaths. There were also cases where soldiers would turn clerics just to avoid being sent to the various presidios in the archipelago.<sup>23</sup> These circumstances had their

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<sup>19</sup> Francisco de Tello, "Letters from Francisco Tello to Felipe II (1597)," in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898 (Vol. 10: 1597-1599)*, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, trans. Arthur Myrick (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 36-44. Tello had also written to the King about his desire to occupy Hermosa for Spain and to deter Japan. See Francisco de Tello, "A Letter from Francisco Tello to His Majesty the King Making Known His Desire to Occupy Isla Hermosa before the Japanese Attempt It Themselves.," in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1 1582-1641*, ed. Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 24-26.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Turnbull, "Wars and Rumours of Wars: Japanese Plans to Invade the Philippines, 1593-1637," *Naval War College Review* 69, no. 4 (March 8, 2018): 109-20, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1145&context=nwc-review>.

<sup>21</sup> Stephanie Joy Mawson, "Convicts or Conquistadores? Spanish Soldiers in the Seventeenth-Century Pacific," *Past & Present* 232, no. 1 (June 15, 2016): 87-125, <https://doi.org/10.1093>. See also: Mawson, *Incomplete Conquest*, 96.

<sup>22</sup> Mawson, *Incomplete Conquest*, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, "The Hospitals and Hospital Contributions," in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898 (Vol. 26: 1636)*, trans. James Alexander Robertson (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 182-98. The case of a soldier who turned cleric will was reported by: Baltasar Luis de Escalona, "Letter to Felipe IV from the Treasurer at Manila," in *The Philippine*

consequences: a limited population of Spanish soldiers in the archipelago and surrounding territories. By the mid-1630s, soldiers under Corcuera in the entire Spanish territories numbered fewer than 2,000 officers and soldiers.<sup>24</sup>

	Luzon	Visayas	Zamboanga	Hermosa	Ternate
Number of Companies	8	3	3	<b>3</b>	6
Captains	3	3	3	<b>3</b>	6
Alferez	3	3	3	<b>3</b>	6
Sergeants	6	3	1	<b>3</b>	6
Post below commissioned officers	24	12	4	<b>2</b>	24
Ordinary Soldiers	560	145	210	<b>180</b>	480
Mounted arquebusiers (cavalry)	30	-	-	-	-
Lieutenants	2	-	-	-	-
Trumpeter	1	-	-	-	-
Adjutants	2	-	-	-	-
Drummer	1	-	-	-	-
Guards	12	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>522</b>

Table 1. The population of the Spanish military according to their ranks in 1636. The numbers are according to Corcuera's list of soldiers who pledged to pay taxes for the construction of the military chapel and hospitals.<sup>25</sup>

The limitations of the Spanish military were also visible even during the late sixteenth-century to seventeenth-century military expeditions where Borao noted that in the defense of the archipelago against Limahong, only 250 Spaniards were present, while the first and second expeditions to Cagayan totaled only to 200 Spaniards in 1581 and 1591. Although the Spaniards may have appeared to have everything figured out in the seventeenth century, the military population to defend and maintain order was insufficient.<sup>26</sup> When comparing to Linda Newson's data on the population of the archipelago under Spain, by the seventeenth century, there

*Islands, 1493-1898, Volume 29*, trans. James Alexander Robertson (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1905), 44-53.

<sup>24</sup> Corcuera, "The Hospitals and Hospital Contributions," 192-197.

<sup>25</sup> Corcuera, "The Hospitals and Hospital Contributions," 192-197. For more information on the governorship of Corcuera and his military reforms in the 1630s, See: Moises Levi Orino, "Colonial Integration: The Native Soldiers under Governor General Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, 1635-1640," Kas 199 History Research Paper, University of the Philippines-Diliman, Quezon City.

<sup>26</sup> Borao, "Contextualizing the Pampangos (and Gagayano) Soldiers in the Spanish Fortress in Taiwan (1626-1642)," 586.



were about 241,000 Spanish subjects but only about 1,774 Spanish soldiers for the defense of such a vast population.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Solution: Recruitment of Native Soldiers and the Establishment of Spanish Taiwan**

If the Spaniards in Manila could not rely on Nueva España to provide sufficient military manpower and supplies, they were compelled to depend on the indigenous population of the archipelago to man their walls and be sent to various military expeditions inside and outside the archipelago. One of the actions of the Manila government was the integration of indigenous soldiers into the Spanish Army by showcasing the benefits a local soldier could gain if he joined various expeditions. For instance, local soldiers who took part in the taking of Ternate in 1606 and the Chinese repression of 1603 were highly favored by the government officials as evidenced by Juan Grau's memorial and request to the King regarding its loyal local subjects:

“The Indian natives of the provinces of Pampanga, Camarinas, and Tagalos have served and are serving your Majesty with great love and fidelity, since the time of the conquest of those islands. Those Indians, mingled with Spaniards, serve as soldiers in war, and have proved excellent therein. Especially are the Pampangos valiant soldiers, who have performed and are daily performing valiant exploits at the side of the Spanish. They were at the taking of Terrenate; and, whenever occasion offers, they with other companies come to guard the city of Manila. They also serve as rowers and pioneers in expeditions by the fleets... *If it should be deemed advisable, since they are serving in the military and are so valiant soldiers, in order to encourage them for the future [the writer suggests that you] honor them with military offices and charges...*”<sup>28</sup> (researcher's emphasis).

Here, Juan Grau was requesting the King grant the loyal indigenous soldiers offices and charges in the colony. In short, the King should acknowledge the local soldiers to encourage more people to participate in and join the colonial government. This was granted when Felipe IV responded

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<sup>27</sup> Linda A Newson, *Conquest & Pestilence in the Early Spanish Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila Univ. Press, 2011), 256.

<sup>28</sup> Juan Grau, “Military Services of the Filipinos (June 13, 1635),” in *The Philippines Islands, 1493-1898, Volume 25*, trans. James Alexander Robertson (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1905), 148–50.

that these local soldiers who were present in the expansion and defense of the empire were rewarded not just with offices but with exemptions from forced labor and tributes.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, during Corcuera's term, two Pampangan companies were ordered to be created in 1636 and two more indigenous companies were established the next year with full salary starting from the *capitan* to the ordinary soldiers.<sup>30</sup> However, indigenous integration in the Spanish military was not just invented in the 1630s (it was only enlarged and formalized by Corcuera during his term) but had been a long-standing practice among the Spaniards.<sup>31</sup> Evidence of this is that from 1575 to 1617, more than 16,000 indigenous soldiers joined various military expeditions and defended the archipelago against internal and external threats.<sup>32</sup>

By the 1620s, Spain had already temporarily remedied this problem that by 1626, in response to the Dutch occupation of 1624, Governor Fernando de Silva (1625-1626) had ordered *Sargento-Mayor* Antonio Carreños de Valdes to mobilize both the Spanish and indigenous troops for the immediate occupation of North Hermosa. In February 1626, three galleons, six frigates, two galleys, and twelve Chinese junks were in Manila Bay for the preparation to establish a Spanish outpost in Hermosa. Manning these ships were 500 Spanish soldiers and 1,100-1,200 Pampangan soldiers "who were well-versed in warfare."<sup>33</sup> Silva's report to the King elaborated that on May 5, 1626, Valdes left the Cagayan port to occupy the port in North Taiwan on May 11, then established the first Spanish village in Hermosa

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<sup>29</sup> Felipe IV of Spain, "Decree Regarding the Indians," in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898, Volume 35: 1640-1649*, trans. Victoria Peacock (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1905), 101-3.

<sup>30</sup> Escalona, "Letter to Felipe IV from the Treasurer at Manila," 46.

<sup>31</sup> Studies regarding the role of Corcuera in the integration of the natives into the Spanish military can be found here: Mawson, "Philippine Indios in the Service of Empire: Indigenous Soldiers and Contingent Loyalty, 1600-1700," *Ethnohistory* 63, no. 2 (April 2016): 381-413, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-3455363>; and Moises Levi Orllino "Colonial Integration: The Native Soldiers under Governor General Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, 1635-1640," (Kas 199 History Research Paper, University of the Philippines-Diliman, Quezon City), 6.

<sup>32</sup> The numbers come from Borao Mateo's article: Borao, "Contextualizing the Pampangos (and Gagayano) Soldiers in the Spanish Fortress in Taiwan (1626-1642)," 586.

<sup>33</sup> David Pessaert and Vincent Romeijn, "Nagasaki, 10 1627. A Description of the Fortress and the Strength of the Spaniards in Formosa...Based on the Information They Obtained from Some Spaniards in Cambodia," in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1: 1582-1641*, ed. Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 89-93.

with fifteen hundred houses and started the construction of a Spanish fort.<sup>34</sup> Another report of the occupation noted that an advanced party was dispatched consisting of 100 Spaniards and 200 Pampangans who were carried by two galleys<sup>35</sup> In short, in the first year of the settlement, only 600 Spaniards participated in the expedition while 1,300-1400 indigenous soldiers participated, doubling the Spanish population.

In the following year, Governor Juan Niño de Tavora (1626-1632) planned to send a vast amount of manpower and supplies. Mobilizing eight ships, including two galleons, Tavora organized over 2,000 military personnel, including 280 Pampangan soldiers. However, monsoon season prevented the travel of the galleons and only a small ship “*Rosario*” which was carrying 60 Spanish soldiers, and 25 indigenous soldiers was sent from Cagayan.<sup>36</sup> The indigenous soldiers and laborers became integral to the outpost as these soldiers served, leaving their families in Luzon and without any certainty of return. Thus, by 1632, some soldiers had started escaping Hermosa to return to Luzon. Aduarte suggested that these indigenous soldiers and laborers be rewarded for being the longest-serving group at the outpost, and for performing the heavier work in maintaining the colony as charcoal makers, iron workers, box makers and other tasks that Spaniards would not perform. Hence, further exportation of indigenous soldiers and laborers from Luzon was sent to potentially replace those who had served since 1626.<sup>37</sup>

From 1626 to 1642, both indigenous soldiers and Spaniards were sent to man Hermosa. From 1626 to 1630, 420 Spaniards were sent while 270 Pampangos and 150 Cagayanos were called to either man the wall or do labor

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<sup>34</sup> Francisco de Silva, “Letter from Fernando de Silva to Felipe IV (1626),” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898 (Vol. 22: 1625-1629)*, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 69–76. Other accounts of the occupation of 1626 were also written by: Miguel Garcia Serrano, “Letter from the Archbishop to Felipe IV (1625),” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898 (Vol. 22: 1625-1629)*, ed. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 36–38.

<sup>35</sup> N.a., “Zeelandia, 30 June 1631. Information about the Spanish Presence in Northern Taiwan,” in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1: 1582-1641*, ed. Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 147–49.

<sup>36</sup> Martin Ruiz de Salazar, “Manila, 30 August 1627. Reports on the Ships Sent by Tavora to Isla Hermosa on August 17, 1627. These, However, Were Abandoned the Mission as Soon as They Left Port.,” in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1: 1582-1641*, ed. Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 100–101.

<sup>37</sup> Diego de Aduarte, “Manila, 24, August 1632. Memoirs of Isla Hermosa.,” in *Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. 1: 1582-1641*, ed. Jose Eugenio Borao Mateo (Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc., 2001), 190–98.

in Hermosa. From 1631 to 1642, 602 Spaniards were sent, and 715 Pampangos and Cagayanos participated in the maintenance and defense of Hermosa.<sup>38</sup> These men, as part of the deal of the alliance between the Spaniards and the native soldiers, were paid 4 reales per soldier and one peso for native officers, a much lower payment than in Manila.<sup>39</sup>

However, some of those who were sent to Hermosa to participate in guarding the island would also start against the Spaniards by desertion. Reports of desertion started to emerge around the 1630s due to the abusive treatment by the Spaniards who did not receive any payment as per the agreement. An instance of these occurred when 17 indigenous soldiers attempted to return to Luzon but were discovered. Others who had given up on returning joined the Dutch.<sup>40</sup> As Mawson noted, Pampangos and Cagayanos who deserted to the Dutch, south of Hermosa, later joined the Battle of 1642 which saw the total expulsion of the Spaniards from the island.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

Two straightforward and related problems occurred from the late sixteenth to the seventeenth century. First, the colonial state, specifically the Spanish military in the Philippines was overwhelmed by the vast territories they held to the point that they were preoccupied with its maintenance and further expansion southward; postponing other orders from the king indefinitely. The second problem comes from the insufficiency of soldiers which further contributed to the first problem. Here, limited manpower and supplies that came from Mexico hindered the possibility of expanding the Spanish Empire. Hermosa is the perfect example where these problems are present. From the first order in 1586 to occupy the island for the safety of the Spaniards against foreign invaders such as the Japanese and the Dutch; Spain was swamped by different revolts in the Luzon and different military expeditions southward. Thus, neglecting the order to also expand northward to Hermosa. The limitation of the Spanish army when it comes to its population was also observed in Hermosa as the Audiencia itself and other

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<sup>38</sup> A table by Borao Mateo where he listed down the Spaniards and natives who were sent to Hermosa can be found here: Borao, "Contextualizing the Pampangos (and Gagayano) Soldiers in the Spanish Fortress in Taiwan (1626-1642)," 593.

<sup>39</sup> Borao, "Contextualizing the Pampangos (and Gagayano) Soldiers in the Spanish Fortress in Taiwan (1626-1642)," 591.

<sup>40</sup> Borao, "Contextualizing the Pampangos (and Gagayano) Soldiers in the Spanish Fortress in Taiwan (1626-1642)" 593-98.

<sup>41</sup> Mawson, "Philippine Indios in the Service of Empire," 382.

high officials implored Madrid and Mexico to send more reinforcements for the possible northward expedition. However, improved military aid from Nueva España never came as the average of Spanish soldiers sent to the Philippines was 156 for the whole seventeenth century.

With these problems, Spain depended on its indigenous soldiers to compensate for these problems. The colonial state started recruiting and paying the native soldiers, even exempting them from tributes and labor. Hence, making the military an attractive choice among those who did not want a life of forced servitude under the colonizer. This resulted in more native soldiers being sent abroad than Spaniards, and the same case goes for quelling rebellion in the whole archipelago. Hermosa was not different but an excellent case where Spain depended on local manpower to establish and maintain their colonies. More Pampangos and Cagayanos were sent to the island as soldiers and laborers than Spaniards. In every activity concerning Hermosa, the native soldier was ever present, from manning the wall and constructing the fort to the making of boxes and charcoals. Furthermore, the indigenous agency was also present in the case of the native soldiers and laborers who were sent to Hermosa. Fleeing through desertion became a choice for those who were ill-treated or were not paid by the colonial state. Some attempted to get little boats to return home while others allied themselves with the Dutch and even fought against the Spaniards in 1642. Mawson's view of fleeing as an agency that natives utilized whenever the colonizer would abuse them was present on the island as well. Overall, the presence of native soldiers in Hermosa is an example of Spanish dependence on the indigenous population to maintain their empire.

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