

Ander Permanyer-Ugarte

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0330-7740>

The Collapse of Mercantilism: Anglo-Hispanic Trans-Pacific Ventures in Asia at the End of the Spanish Empire (1815–30)

Abstract

Early modern connections between the Pacific shores of the Spanish Empire have been assessed in previous studies and yet, studies on the subsequent developments during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are scant. This particularly applies to the consequences of the commercial developments at the end of the Manila Galleon and the collapse of the Spanish Empire in America. Through the analysis of the professional networks of Francisco Xavier de Ezepeleta, and Juan Nepomuceno Machado, which stretched from Asia to Mexico at the time, this paper proposes some preliminary conclusions about trans-Pacific links. It focuses on the study of networks and connections, and builds upon archival sources — mostly from the Jardine Matheson Archive, in Cambridge. In the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, actors who made up Hispanic trading networks in what remained of the crumbling Spanish Empire, reorganised to benefit from opportunities as mercantilist limitations came to an end. In so doing, by the 1820s, Hispanic traders allied with the forebears of the British firm of Jardine, Matheson & Co., and controlled the resulting networks. This paper points to Hispanic trans-Pacific connections during the development of European private trade between East Asia and the Mexican Pacific. Ties between British and Hispanic merchants are key for the analysis of the opium trade and Western imperialism in East Asia, and the development of British commercial hegemony in Latin America in the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Francisco Xavier de Ezepeleta; Juan Nepomuceno Machado; Jardine, Matheson & Co.; Mexico; Philippines; Royal Philippine Company

La caída del mercantilismo: iniciativas anglo-hispánicas transpacíficas en Asia durante el fin del Imperio Español (1815-1830)

Resumen

Los contactos entre ambos lados del Pacífico del Imperio español, durante la edad moderna, han sido estudiados con anterioridad y, a pesar de ello, son escasos los análisis sobre los desarrollos posteriores, durante las últimas décadas del siglo XVIII y las primeras del XIX. Esto afecta en particular al estudio de las consecuencias de los desarrollos comerciales al final del Galeón de Manila y a la caída del Imperio Español en América. A través del análisis de las redes profesionales de Francisco Xavier de Ezepeleta y Juan Nepomuceno Machado, que abarcaban de Asia a México en ese período, este artículo propone algunas conclusiones preliminares sobre los vínculos transpacíficos. El estudio se focaliza en redes y conexiones, y se basa en fuentes de archivo, sobre todo del Jardine Matheson Archive de Cambridge. En el tránsito del siglo XVIII al XIX, los protagonistas de la construcción de las redes comerciales hispánicas en lo que quedaba del Imperio Español se reorganizaron para aprovechar las oportunidades aparecidas con el fin de las limitaciones mercantilistas. Al hacerlo, en los años de la década de 1820, los comerciantes hispánicos se aliaron con los precursores de la firma británica de Jardine, Matheson & Co., y controlaron las redes resultantes. De este modo, este artículo analiza las conexiones trans-Pacíficas hispánicas durante la expansión del comercio privado europeo entre Asia oriental y el Pacífico mexicano. Los vínculos entre comerciantes británicos e hispánicos son fundamentales para el análisis del comercio del opio y del imperialismo occidental en Asia oriental, y del desarrollo de la hegemonía comercial británica en América Latina en el siglo XIX.

Palabras clave: Francisco Xavier de Ezepeleta; Juan Nepomuceno Machado; Jardine, Matheson & Co.; México; Filipinas; Real Compañía de Filipinas

La caiguda del mercantilisme: iniciatives anglo-hispàniques transpacífiques a Àsia a la fi de l'Imperi Espanyol (1816-1830)

Resum

Els contactes entre tots dos costats del Pacífic de l'Imperi Espanyol, durant l'edat moderna, han estat estudiats amb anterioritat, i tanmateix, en són escasses les anàlisis sobre els desenvolupaments posteriors, durant les darreres dècades del segle XVIII i les primeres del XIX. Això afecta en particular l'estudi de les conseqüències dels desenvolupaments comercials a la fi del Galí de Manila i a la caiguda de l'Imperi Espanyol a Amèrica. A través de l'anàlisi de les xarxes professionals de Francisco Xavier de Ezepeleta i Juan Nepomuceno Machado, que enllaçaven Àsia i Mèxic a l'època, aquest article proposa algunes conclusions preliminars sobre els vincles transpacífics. L'estudi es focalitza en xarxes i connexions, i es basa en fonts d'arxiu, sobre tot del Jardine Matheson Archive de Cambridge. En el trànsit del segle XVIII al XIX, els protagonistes de la construcció de les xarxes comercials hispàniques en el que quedava de l'Imperi Espanyol es van reorganitzar per aprofitar les oportunitats aparegudes amb la fi de les limitacions mercantilistes. En fer-ho, en els anys de la dècada de 1820, els comerciants hispànics es van aliar amb els precursors de la firma britànica de Jardine, Matheson & Co., i van controlar les xarxes que en van resultar. Aquest article analitza així les connexions transpacífiques hispàniques durant l'expansió del comerç privat europeu entre l'Àsia oriental i el Pacífic mexicà. Els vincles entre comerciants britànics i hispànics són fonamentals per a l'anàlisi del comerç de l'opi i de l'imperialisme occidental a l'Àsia oriental, i del desenvolupament de l'hegemonia comercial britànica a l'Amèrica Llatina al segle XIX.

Paraules clau: Francisco Xavier de Ezepeleta; Juan Nepomuceno Machado; Jardine, Matheson & Co.; Mèxic; Filipines; Reial Companyia de Filipines

Corresponding author: e-mail: apermanyeru@gmail.com

Received 6 March 2021 - Accepted 11 November 2021

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No Derivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use and distribution, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered or transformed in any way.

1. Introduction: The Collapse of Trans-Pacific Mercantilism

In the studies on the development of early nineteenth-century British trade on the two sides of the Pacific Ocean, two famous houses have been studied separately, that is, Barron, Forbes & Co. on the Mexican side (Mayo 2006), and Jardine, Matheson & Co. on the Chinese side (Greenberg 1951; Cheong 1979; Grace 2014). Both have been considered hallmarks of British imperialism and free trade. Still, they both share a relevant Hispanic element in their origins. The two houses were connected thanks to the interests of two Spanish subjects: Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, from Navarre, and Juan Nepomuceno Machado, from the Philippines, who had started their commercial careers in Asia, and established themselves on the Western coast of the recently independent nation of Mexico by 1826; Ezpeleta in Tepic, and Machado in Mazatlán.¹ They were part of a wider network of private interests that stemmed from the Calcutta factory of the Real Compañía de Filipinas (hereafter Royal Philippine Company), and planned to make their fortune as new opportunities arose on Mexico's West coast as the country became independent from Spain.

By underlining the commercial ventures of Ezpeleta and Machado, this article will attempt a common trans-Pacific narrative, while underlining trans-imperial entanglements. Ezpeleta and Machado represent the link between the two sides of the Pacific Ocean as well as the Hispanic and the British commercial networks in Asia, working as agents for the group of firms and investors that stemmed from the Calcutta Philippine Company factory. Together with the Hispanic actors in the commercial world of East Asia at the time, they were backed by the institutional remains of the then crumbling empire, either be the networks and knowledge of

¹ The first references to their establishment in Mexico appear respectively in June and August 1826. Yrisarri & Co. (hereafter cited as Y&Co.) to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 13/6/1826, Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Jardine Matheson Archive (hereafter cited as MS.JM), C2/4; Y&Co. to Juan Nepomuceno Machado, Macao-Tepic, 21/8/1826, MS.JM C2/5.

the Royal Philippine Company in its Asian factories, or the financial support from the old Galleon traders in Manila. They thus benefitted from the end of the Spanish mercantilism, already set in motion before the end of the American empire, when by the 1820s many things seemed possible for these entrepreneurs.

This paper will show how transitions in imperial hegemony unfolded. Much literature concentrates on the Great Divergence in European and Asian development patterns after 1830, when China's foreign trade turned negative (Pomeranz 2000). Still, there was a time when Europe and Asia were tied together in Spain's system of mutual trade, from which Britain was largely excluded. The change in that system had been developing for some time, yet there was a dramatic upturn in the pace of change between 1815 and 1830. For a moment it seemed Hispanic actors would develop private enterprise in the wake of the Galleon's loss, while collaborating with the British. However, the Spaniards suffered several blows, which opened the path to British hegemony on both sides of the Pacific Ocean by the 1830s.

Apparently, the trade Ezpeleta and Machado sought did not differ much from the Asian textiles-for-American silver pattern that had dominated trans-Pacific trade since the early modern period. However, such commerce was not an easy venture at the time. Not only had the Galleon trade ended in 1815, when the last galleon, the *Magallanes*, returned to Manila, but furthermore insurgents in many places of the then-crumbling Spanish Empire hindered the development of trade even in the 1820s. The liberalized Manila trade that followed the end of the Galleon was curtailed by high risk. Many Manila traders perceived as a warning Agustín de Iturbide's seizure of the proceeds of the Philippine ship *Santa Rita* in Chilpancingo, while revenues were being sent overland from Mexico City to San Blas (Legarda 1999, 98-100; García Gimeno 2017). At the same time, the Philippine Company tried in vain to keep up with the Calcutta-

Lima-San Blas trade which had emerged in the early 1820s (Alfonso Mola and Martínez Shaw 2018, 296-299).² Still, Spanish interests in Asia were developing apart from the Philippine archipelago, forming from the Calcutta and Canton (Guangzhou) factories of the Royal Philippine Company. Heeding the calls of the Mexican government to attract foreign trade, they also tried to revamp the trans-Pacific link, while avoiding using the Spanish flag in their new ventures.

To do so, private Hispanic traders moved the Asian terminus of the trans-Pacific line from the Philippine archipelago to China, thereby making the most of the burgeoning Western private trade then developing in Canton. On the northern shores of the South China Sea things were changing as well for the Western traders. European chartered companies were being dismantled at the time, while the regulations set up in the mid-eighteenth century by the Qing authorities so as to control the trade — known as the “Canton system” by foreign traders (Van Dyke 2005) — was still in place. By the early nineteenth century, only the East India Company, and the Royal Philippine Company remained. Western private firms imported increasing amounts of raw cotton and opium into China so as to cancel the trade deficit coming from their China trade, setting the stage for future development of European private trade in the 1830s (Greenberg 1951, 142; Cheong 1979, 11-12).

Through the study of the efforts of Ezpeleta and Machado, this paper aims at ascertaining to what extent the reconfiguration of Spanish private trade in Asia during the 1820s served interests on the other side of the Pacific in Mexico. It will explore the development of Spanish private trade in Canton and Calcutta amidst the collapse of the old mercantilist institutions,

² Others tried to relink Asia and Latin America at that time. See Marie Christine Duggan’s paper in this monograph and particularly the efforts by the Scot merchant Diego Goldie, formerly based in Calcutta, and in 1817-1818 in Lima, who tried to relaunch the San Blas-Lima-Calcutta trade together with the Spaniard Ignacio Mancisidor.

while pinpointing the place of the trans-Pacific ventures in this process of reconfiguration. While most of the Spanish trade in Asia was focused on the Philippine archipelago, which was at the time moving towards the export-oriented growth model promoted since the 1760s by the Bourbons, Spanish initiatives in the India-China trade allied with the British by offering access to credit in the Philippines. In addition, these initiatives also had the other side of the Pacific Ocean in mind. This paper will thus analyse the networks supporting Ezpeleta and Machado in the development of their trans-Pacific interests.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, mercantilist regulations that ruled Spanish trade for two hundred and fifty years disintegrated as empire collapsed. Nonetheless these institutions did not fall apart overnight. The end of the Galleon system in 1815 was the culmination of a process triggered in the mid-eighteenth century (Fradera 1999, 71-131). Thanks to the Bourbon reforms, a plantation economy and a regional trade had been developing, as was the case with the Southeast Asian region overall (Reid 2015, 196-212). As the prices of Asian merchandise increased during the eighteenth century, the Galleon trade had little room for development (Yuste 2007, 268-269). Therefore, its actors looked for alternatives. The Royal Philippine Company, created in 1785, was aimed at developing change (Díaz-Trechuelo 1965). Manila was opened to international trade in 1790 so as to export new plantation products, which in turn further integrated the archipelago in the trading networks of East Asia. As the Galleon ended, several private expeditions from Manila to Mexico followed (Legarda 1999, 94-101). At the same time, Spanish private trade from the Asian factories of the Philippine Company developed, mainly in the intra-Asian “country” trade.

Spanish trading activities in the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries in East Asia have been poorly studied. Lack of initiative is often taken for granted, when actually

the Galleon traders in Manila set their sights on new sources of supply other than the Fujian junk traders. Mercantilist rules limiting this trade were often dismissed, as showed by the numbers of the *permiso*, the tonnage permitted on each of the galleons of the Manila-Acapulco trade (Yuste 2007, 402). By the same token, laws banning Spanish navigation in Asia were often ignored. When the Manila *Consulado* — or merchant guild — was created in 1769, these laws were rescinded and Manila trade to China developed further; in late 1787, the Philippine Company established in the Canton factories (Permanyer-Ugarteandia 2020). In all, the 1820s expansion of Spanish private trade in Asia was a result of these previous developments, where alternatives to mercantilism had already been deployed. And with the collapse of mercantilism, private activities grew.

And yet, by the 1820s, the end of restrictions did not come at a promising time. Wars hindered trade, and uncertainty and constant change followed (Cheong 1970). This is not an easy period to tackle, as the old and the new coexisted, and the latter could prosper thanks to the former. The logistics provided by the mercantilist chartered companies allowed private “free” trade to unfold — and that was also the case of the East India Company. As for the Royal Philippine Company, the private ventures of its employees further developed as the crisis of the Company worsened, and while the Canton factory closed in 1821, there are not too many details on the activities of the office in Calcutta in the succeeding years.

During this transitional stage, collaboration played an unprecedented role that surpassed national and institutional barriers. This was certainly the case with the Spanish trade in Asia and its Mexican extension. After 1815, but prior to consolidation of British commercial hegemony in the 1830s, Spanish initiative prospered as Hispanic-Anglo projects developed (Cheong 1979, 51-85; Permanyer-Ugarteandia 2014). As the India-China opium trade

developed, and as silver supplies faltered while the Spanish Empire collapsed, private firms in Canton looked to the Philippines for sources of credit.³ In addition, Philippine produce was imported into China. British interests in the Philippines were not new. A clandestine “country” trade between British India and the archipelago had been developing since the seventeenth century, and the East India Company’s interests in silver and produce from the archipelago were manifest (Quiason 1966). In addition, the Spanish flag was used to avoid Chinese official vigilance against the traffic, as it was the only European flag besides the Portuguese allowed in Macao, and in the Fujian port of Xiamen (Amoy) (Cheong 1979, 51-85). These collaborations also extended to the new trans-Pacific ventures.

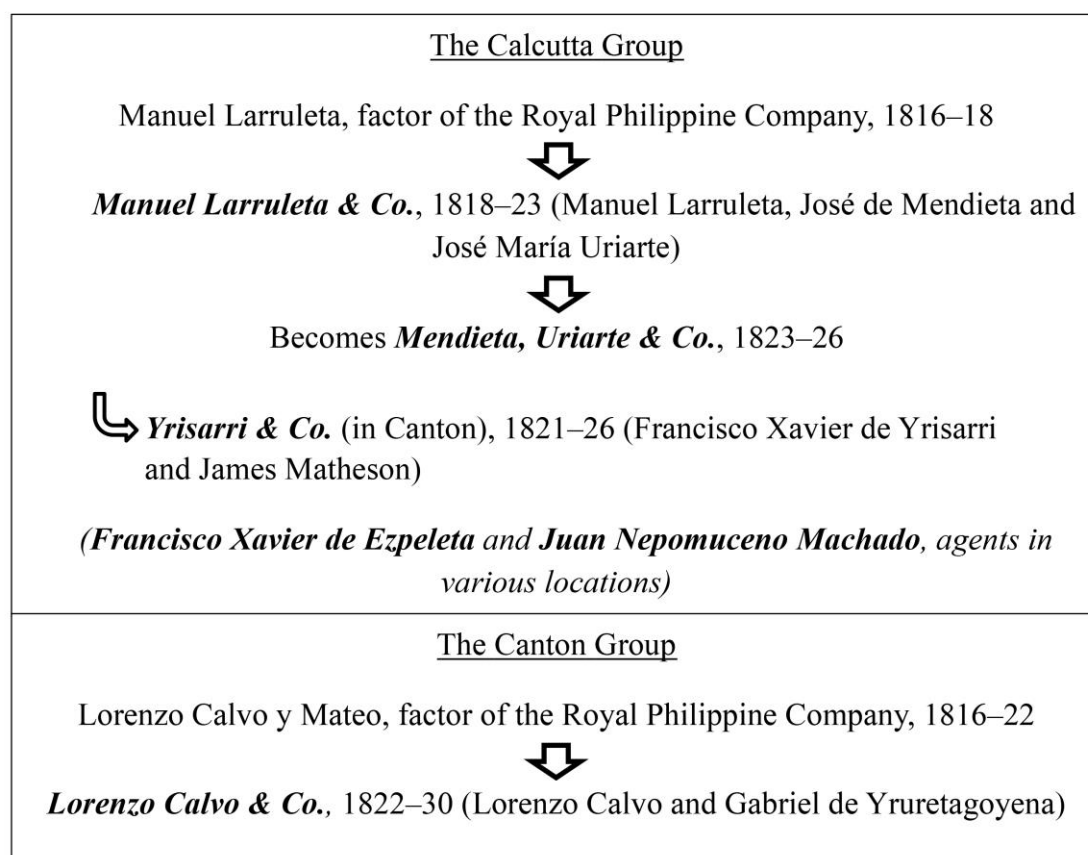
2. The Growth of Hispanic Private Trade in Asia in the 1820s

Spanish private activities in the Calcutta factory where Ezpeleta and Machado originated resulted from British interest in the Manila trade. Although formally enemies, Spain and Britain manifested interest in commerce through informal channels. Since 1790, the Spanish Crown had allowed the Royal Philippine Company to engage in direct trade between Spain and Asia; in 1796, the Spanish factory was established in Calcutta (Furber 1935, 462-463; Díaz-Trechuelo 1965, 179-180, 200-212). The Napoleonic Wars hindered the smooth conduct of the trade, yet this changed as a result of the Anglo-Spanish alliance in 1808-09 (Cheong 1970, 18). The East India Company’s 1813 Charter Act, by which the sovereignty of the Honourable Company’s possessions in India was transferred to the Crown, opened British ports in India to “free” trade, yet retaining the monopoly of the China trade for the Company. Not in vain, the directors of the Philippine Company perceived these prospects and by 1815 focused their efforts on the India trade. At the same time, developments in Canton also contributed to closer Anglo-Spanish

³ Other houses resorted to the British and US financial markets; see for instance the wider networks of Charles Magniac & Co. (Cheong 1979, 90-103).

collaboration. During the first half of the 1810s, as the Galleon was coming to an end, silver scarcity in East Asia emerged. The slowdown in flow of silver from the Americas to Asia coincided with the Anglo-American War of 1812 and the end of the Napoleonic Wars (Besseghini 2020a). Between 1815 and 1816, the East India Company's Canton Committee negotiated India Bills in Manila so as to assure liquidity (Cheong 1979, 32-40).

FIGURE 1. The Spanish networks in the India-China trade (1815–30)



Source: Own elaboration.

At the same time, the employees of the Philippine Company combined their service to the corporation with expanding private activities. By the end of the 1810s, the employees of the Spanish factory — its main representative, or *factor*, Manuel Larruleta, and his juniors José de Mendieta and José María Uriarte — were close to the British firm of Mackintosh & Co. As an important indigo firm in Calcutta, this was one of the main purveyors of the Spanish Company,

and had an interest in the Philippine trade as well. Thus, in 1818 the house of Manuel Larruleta & Co. was established, while in 1821 Larruleta also became partner of Mackintosh & Co. His contacts from the Eastern side of the Malacca Strait were surely highly valued, as he had been bookkeeper at the Manila factory of the Philippine Company, as well as a junior employee of the Philippine Company in Canton. Manuel Larruleta & Co. became gradually more involved in the consignment of opium from Bengal. Initially opium was sent primarily to the Canton firm of Robert Taylor & Co., yet this firm dissolved in 1820. At this point, in 1821 Manuel Larruleta & Co. and Mackintosh & Co. joined forces to create a new house in China for the consignment of big amounts of opium. This was Yrisarri & Co., an Agency House made of the Scotsman James Matheson, and the Spaniard Francisco Xavier de Yrisarri. Matheson, known nowadays as one of the founders of Jardine, Matheson & Co., was kin to the Mackintoshes (Grace 2014, 72-77) and had worked at Taylor & Co. As for Yrisarri, he was a former employee of the Spanish factory in Calcutta. The new house was to compete with the Canton factor of the Philippine Company, Lorenzo Calvo y Mateo, who had made a name for himself in the opium traffic by 1820. In 1823, Larruleta left the firm he had created, which then became Mendieta, Uriarte & Co.

The Spanish role in the opium trade was short-lived, yet relevant. This took place as the opium trade boomed,⁴ as silver supplies faltered and foreign traders looked for other merchandise to trade for Chinese merchandise. By 1825 Spanish activities had diversified and expanded, and yet, they did not overcome the 1826 Calcutta financial crisis that shook many firms (Cheong 1973). The end of the Philippine Company in 1834 deprived the Spaniards of the logistical support that had allowed them to enter into the trading networks of Asia prior to British

⁴ From a yearly average of around 4,000 opium chests, these had rose to 19,000 in 1830 (Trocki 1999, 95).

hegemony. In addition, at that time they could not compete in a business that required increasing logistics and human resources, as well as ampler financing networks.

These Spanish trading networks were far from being merely Hispanic: as Hispanic-Anglo efforts joined, in India these included known firms in the literature of Jardine, Matheson & Co., such as Cruttenden, Mackillop & Co., Blaney, Darby & Co., Mercer & Co. in Calcutta, together with William Jardine and Baboo Ramrattan Mullick in Bombay. As for Manila, one of the most frequent correspondents was the firm of Yrastorza, Brodett & Co., one of whose partners was the Philippine Company factor in the islands until 1822, which developed sugar exports to India and China. In addition, members of the Philippine elite were also in the networks of the firm, among them families related to the old Galleon trade, such as Baltasar Mier, Ventura de Pereda or Manuel de Revilla.

Ezpeleta and Machado appear during the first years of Yrisarri & Co.'s correspondence without fixed dwelling, moving instead as the Calcutta group required them to do between Canton, Macao, Calcutta and Mexico. They undertook several tasks; very often they acquired opium and other merchandise on consignment. In their ventures, we find the names of British firms and individuals, as well as Indians, and Philippine creoles. Ezpeleta did not hold any known position in the Company though he may have entered its expanding Asian business by way of his cousin, Francisco Xavier de Yrisarri. As for Machado, there is a specific reference to his relationship with the Company as master of the ship *Infante Don Carlos*, which was sent in 1817 from Calcutta to El Callao (Alfonso Mola and Martínez Shaw 2018, 296-297). A Philippine origin can be deduced from his personal ties with the islands (McMaster 1959, 380);

there are references to the fact that while in Mexico, he could *avoid* expulsion, which meant that he was a Spanish subject.⁵

In 1821, Ezpeleta is mentioned in James Matheson's correspondence while working for Robert Taylor & Co., when the Spaniard was sent to Canton to work with him as an apprentice prior to the arrival of his cousin Yrisarri in June 1821.⁶ The kind of ventures he engaged in usually involved several parties from different places. For instance, in June 1823 he was in charge of the reception and disposal of ten chests of Patna opium, Ezpeleta's property, sent from Calcutta to China. He then invested the proceeds in several new ventures. Almost 17,000 rupees from these proceeds were invested on account of the Manila trader Felipe de la Peña in Yrisarri & Co. at a monthly rate of 8 per cent.⁷ In July 1823, Yrisarri & Co. told Ezpeleta, then in Macao, that they took note of his order to pay several individuals in Canton and Macao, as well as notifying him that six of the opium chests had been sold to three Chinese dealers with a net profit of almost \$2,000.⁸ The proceeds of the other four chests, they said, would be remitted to De la Peña. Finally, the total proceeds of the opium amounted to \$17,000, a result that, according to Yrisarri & Co., was "not favourable."⁹ As for Machado, the earliest mention of him is in October 1822 when Yrisarri & Co. took note that the Manila firm of Yrastorza, Brodett & Co. had sent money on Machado's account — yet the reason is not mentioned; other similar

⁵ Y&Co. to Juan Nepomuceno Machado, Macao-Tepic, 21/8/1826, MS.JM C2/5; James Matheson to José María Uriarte, Canton-Calcuta, 5/8/1831, MS.JM C5/1; Jardine, Matheson & Co. (hereafter cited as JM&Co.) to Juan Nepomuceno Machado, Canton-Mazatlán, 11/4/1837, MS.JM C10/22.

⁶ James Matheson to Larruleta & Co., Macao-Calcutta, 1/4/1821, MS.JM C1/4.

⁷ Y&Co. to Camilo de la Peña, Canton-Manila, 6/6/1823, MS.JM C2/2. Yrisarri & Co. used these deposits to invest them on bottomry — or *respondentia* — bonds on vessels that made intra-Asian trips, resorting to similar credit devices used on the Galleon and Macao trades (Yuste 2007, 91-101).

⁸ We use the dollar (\$) sign to refer to the Spanish imperial currency, that is, the *peso fuerte*, "Spanish dollars" in English.

⁹ "[E]l exito poco favorable de su especulacion." Y&Co. to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, Macao, 13/7/1823, MS.JM C2/2; Canton-Calcutta, 11/10/1824, MS.JM C2/3.



transfers to the Manila firm followed.¹⁰ In April 1823, Mackintosh & Co. consigned to Yrisarri & Co. five chests of Benares opium on behalf of Machado.¹¹ There are also other references to his connection to the Manila trader José de Azcárraga,¹² and in another occasion his connection to two Indian investors, Soorup Chund Dutt and Tuckeer Chund Day, on whose account Machado ordered during one year several consignments of silks and teas.¹³

3. Mexican Undertakings

Descriptions of the Spanish commercial system in Asia in the early modern period have focused on the Manila-Acapulco trade. During two centuries and a half, the Nao was certainly a defining feature of the Spanish colony until the early nineteenth century. Still, and as pointed out above, there were routes and interests other than the trans-Pacific trade in the early modern Philippines, especially since the Galleon could not develop further. These other routes included both alternative trans-Pacific routes, as well as intra-Asian routes. In the early nineteenth century, when the Spanish private trade networks in Asia were looking to the other side of the Pacific Ocean, their activities were focused on Asia rather than Mexico, and less still on Peru. Nevertheless, and in spite of difficulties in reviving the old trans-Pacific trade, the idea of trading to Mexico was not completely dismissed. Silver was in high demand in Asia at the time, and assuring sources of liquidity was an asset in times of transition and uncertainty. After an increase in 1818-1819, silver production was affected by Mexican independence and diminished between 1820 and 1834 (Valdés Lakowsky 1987, 273). The Spaniards could not

¹⁰ Y&Co. to Juan Nepomuceno Machado, Canton-Calcutta, 8/10/1822, MS.JM C2/1; to Yrastorza, Brodett & Co., Macao-Manila, 22/9/1822, MS.JM C2/1; Canton-Manila, 25/11/1822, MS.JM C2/1; to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 15/4/1826, MS.JM C2/4.

¹¹ Y&Co. to Mackintosh & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 29/7/1823, MS.JM C2/2.

¹² Y&Co. to José de Azcárraga, Canton-Manila, 2/9/1825 and 15/10/1825, MS.JM C2/4; 17/8/1826, MS.JM C2/5; to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 24/9/1825, MS.JM C2/4.

¹³ Y&Co. to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 21/6/1825, 27/7/1825, 22/9/1825, 28/10/1825 and 7/6/1826, MS.JM C2/4; Macao-Calcutta, 23/6/1825 and 7/2/1826, MS.JM C2/4.

easily access Mexico at the time, but nonetheless, some of them partly contributed to the development of trade on Mexico's Pacific coast (Mayo 2006). Insurgencies hindered trade in both viceroalties, but while Peru was at the time under turmoil, Manila merchants' contacts in Mexico had precedent. As for Peru, since the Philippine Company had developed a foothold in Lima (Marks 2007, 79-81), the lack of Spanish private trade there merits examination.

Unfortunately, documents found during these initial years between 1818 and 1821 are scant. Yrisarri & Co.'s correspondence in the Jardine Matheson Archive is consistent from April 1822 onwards. Judging from these letters, it appears that the trans-Pacific deals at the time were problematic, but not non-existent. This may suggest previous deals that might have taken place, pointing to an involvement of the Hispanic trading networks in Asia to the private trans-Pacific trade that followed the end of the Galleon until Iturbide's seizure of the proceeds of the *Santa Rita* in 1821 (Valdés Lakowsky 1987, 290-291). In turn, this may have opened the way to the British, who had been dealing in Asian and British merchandise in San Blas through the Caribbean since the mid-eighteenth century (Bonialian 2017, 7-36). And yet, collaboration also took place, at least in the Pacific. At the same time, the new Mexican government needed to rebuild the badly damaged national economy and attract investments. Thus, the ports of Mazatlán and Guaymas were opened in 1822 and 1824, while the states of Sinaloa and Sonora were exempt from the prohibitions on silver exports in 1824. Apart from quicksilver, Spanish products — which we may infer, included Philippine products — were forbidden (Heath 1993, 263).

We can explore some examples of the problematic trans-Pacific deals in 1822. As a reply to the proposal of the Manila trader Nicolás de Molina to send a cargo of Bengal, Philippine, and Chinese merchandise to Mexico, Yrisarri & Co. claimed that they were focused on taking care

of intra-Asian consignments, while adducing the “not too favourable prospects in New Spain [could not] bring ourselves to enter the venture you propose.” Yrisarri & Co. also warned Molina in Manila that, according to letters received from San Blas, “the emancipation of the colonies will naturally lead to higher competition of products.”¹⁴ Manuel de Revilla already had experience in this trade in the private expeditions following the end of the Galleon in 1815. In similar terms, Yrisarri & Co. warned him about the bad situation of the Mexican market.¹⁵ Letters also register the endeavours of Ángel de la Fuente, also from Manila, to retrieve the money confiscated by Iturbide. Fortunately, he managed to do so, thanks to his contact in Calcutta, Martín Serapio Uriarte. The latter was a relative of José María Uriarte, from the firm of Mendieta, Uriarte & Co. De la Fuente also was in contact with Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta (McMaster 1959, 318, n. 19; Valdés Lakowsky 1987, 301). Even some prominent names of the old trans-Pacific interests appear in the correspondence, as for example Iturbe & Co. from Mexico City — the heirs of the prominent Francisco de Yraeta Company (Torales Pacheco 1996, 73-102) — who in early 1823 sent funds to a certain Miguel del Río from Cavite, near Manila.¹⁶

In spite of the troubles, Spanish actors in Asia maintained interests in Mexico. From China, Yrisarri & Co. took charge of advanced funds, received consignments and contracted insurance policies. This was a first step to the shift of the Asian end of the trans-Pacific line from Manila to Canton and Macao. In 1823, the first venture where the Calcutta group invested on its own account appears, with Ezpeleta involved: a shipment of Asian merchandise valued at \$15,000,

¹⁴ “[...] el semblante poco favorable que presenta hoy Nueva España para que no nos animásemos á entrar en el negocio que v. m. propone [...] La emancipacion de las Colonias naturalmente ocasionará mayor Concurrencia de efectos.” Y&Co. to Nicolás de Molina, Canton-Manila, 22/9/1822, MS.JM C2/1.

¹⁵ Y&Co. to Manuel de Revilla, Canton-Manila, 22/9/1822, MS.JM C2/1.

¹⁶ Y&Co. to Miguel del Río, Macao-Cavite, 27/1/1823, MS.JM C2/2.

on which Ezpeleta ordered insurance policies. Of this amount, José de Mendieta, partner of Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., had an interest of \$3,700.¹⁷ The bill of lading was sent to Ezpeleta, who embarked for Mexico; and in his absence, it was sent to a certain “Cubillas & Forbes.” This surely referred not to a firm but to the merchants José Cubillas of Tepic, one of the most prominent merchants there. As for Alexander Forbes, he was a prominent member of the trade on the Western coast of Mexico and partner in Barron, Forbes & Co.¹⁸ Apart from these, José María Castaños was also pre-eminent at that point (Meyer 1981; Mayo 1987, 389-411; Mayo 2006, 45, 66-69, 150-151). Ezpeleta went back to Calcutta, through Singapore, in late 1824.¹⁹ Prior to that, Ezpeleta already had had some dealings with Mexico, as one of the first mentions of him in the correspondence refers to his order in 1822 of insurance policies out of the Canton Office, on account of Mackintosh & Co., on a cargo of copper sent from San Blas to Calcutta on board of the British ship *Marquis of Hastings*.²⁰

Caution gave way to new ventures, and by 1825, the Calcutta group undertook a new trans-Pacific push when it organised a larger silver-for-textiles venture, where several parties were involved. This was sent on board the British corvette *Merope* and was followed by Ezpeleta and Machado’s relocation to Mexico. Surely the abovementioned measures from the Mexican government, as well as advice from Manila trans-Pacific networks prompted this change of opinion. The prospects of the Spanish private trade in Asia were also expanding at the time. Mendieta, Uriarte & Co. organised the expedition, together with Yrisarri & Co. as supplier of part of its cargo. Financing was provided by Britons and Indians from Calcutta, as well as

¹⁷ Y&Co. to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, Macao, 13/7/1823, MS.JM C2/2.

¹⁸ Y&Co. to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, Macao, 11/7/1823, MS.JM C2/2.

¹⁹ Y&Co. to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, Canton-Calcutta, 11/10/1824, MS.JM C2/3; to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 11/10/1824, MS.JM C2/3.

²⁰ Y&Co. to Manuel Larruleta & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 8/10/1822, MS.JM C2/1.

Manila creoles. The *Merope* set sail in June 1825 from Macao to Mazatlán, and its cargo was mainly composed of Chinese and Indian produce, mostly textiles, among which 109 packages of nankeens, valued \$11,998, as well as fifteen bundles of European merchandise, and twenty-five from China, valued \$17,000, together with fifteen more from China, valued \$3,865. Ezpeleta and Machado went on board the ship as consignees of the cargo.²¹ This was not the *Merope*'s first trans-Pacific trip: being a British private ship from Calcutta, the Philippine Company had already chartered it in 1819 to undertake what was the last trip of the Spanish Company to Peru (Alfonso Mola and Martínez Shaw 2018, 297-298), before Yrisarri & Co. used it for opium smuggling in the Canton waters and on the Fujian coast by the early 1820s.

The trans-Pacific ventures of the Calcutta group came just prior to the great difficulties it envisaged, as Francisco Xavier de Yrisarri died unexpectedly in late 1826, and in 1827 the firm of Mendieta, Uriarte & Co. suspended payments, leading to a dispute on the distribution of its assets. The correspondence does not provide a balance of accounts over the *Merope* expedition.²² We can form, however, partial pictures. Among the investors, Pedro de Barcáiztegui stood out, a sea captain and member of a prominent family from San Sebastián some of whose members established in Asia, who invested \$2,000. His brother Joaquín, a Calcutta resident, and Máximo de Mendieta, nephew of José de Mendieta, partner in Mendieta,

²¹ Y&Co. to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 2/5/1825, 14/6/1825, 18/6/1825 and 21/6/1825, MS.JM C2/4; Macao-Calcutta, 23/6/1825, MS.JM C2/4; to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, Macao, 26/6/1825 (three letters), MS.JM C2/4; to Yrastorza, Brodett & Co., Canton-Manila, 15/5/1827, MS.JM C2/5; James Matheson to José Antonio Fernández, Canton-San Sebastián, 15/1/1827, MS.JM C2/5; to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 12/2/1827, MS.JM C2/5; to José de Azcárraga, Canton-Manila, 1/10/1828, MS.JM C2/5; José María Uriarte to James Matheson, Serampore-Canton, 4/11/1830, MS.JM B6/9 no. 52. On the return of the *Merope*, Y&Co. to Dolores de Yruretagoyena, Canton-Manila, 12/10/1826, MS.JM C2/5; details of its return cargo are in Y&Co. to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Macao-Calcutta, 28/10/1826, MS.JM C2/5.

²² An encompassing list of the Manila investors is included in the circular sent by James Matheson to all the Philippine creditors of Mendieta, Uriarte & Co.; this includes Dolores de Yruretagoyena and her husband, Pedro de Barcáiztegui, as well as Ventura de Pereda, Ángel de la Fuente, Baltasar de Mier, José de Azcárraga, Manuel Cacho, Matías Sáenz de Vizmanos, and Ana María and Felipa Vélez de Escalante; Canton-Manila, 26/9/1827, MS.JM C2/5.

Uriarte & Co., financed jointly \$7,563 from their account at Yrisarri & Co. Several employees of the firms of the Calcutta group also invested in the venture: Hugh Matheson, nephew of James Matheson; Joaquín Ybar, employee of Yrisarri & Co.; and William MacKay, second official of the *Merope* and cousin of Matheson, appear in another invoice of the products carried by Ezpeleta on the same voyage amounting \$3,702.²³ From the profits earned, information is again patchy. We know that Dolores de Yruretagoyena, widow of Pedro de Barcáiztegui, would earn \$1,599 for the sale of the *piña* silver — and thus unregistered²⁴ — that came on his account. On another letter, there are some details of the earnings from the sale of two chests of silver consigned by Machado from Mexico. These totalled \$9,999, that were divided among Joaquín de Barcáiztegui, Máximo de Mendieta, Joaquín Solano — a Spaniard in India who also worked for the Calcutta group — and Dolores de Yruretagoyena; they earned respectively \$3,967, \$2,644, \$744 and \$2,644.²⁵

By the mid 1820s, trans-Pacific ventures developed after Guadalupe Victoria's cabinet established measures to encourage trade. Other ships followed the *Merope* (Valdés Lakowsky 1987, 298-303), of which several were related to the ventures of the Calcutta group. The *Brillante*, the first Mexican ship in Asia, was sent from the other side of the Pacific and arrived in late July 1826 in China, carrying on board its supercargo Manuel Gómez de Noriega, who was introduced to Yrisarri & Co. by a letter sent by Ezpeleta. Noriega, associated with Juan Bautista Martiarena, from Tepic, and a certain J. R. de Menchaca and José María Castaños

²³ Y&Co. to Dolores de Yruretagoyena, Canton-Manila, 12/10/1826, MS.JM C2/5; James Matheson to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, Canton-Tepic or Bordeaux, 31/10/1828, MS.JM C2/5; to Juan Nepomuceno Machado, Canton-Mazatlán or Tepic, 20/11/1828, MS.JM C2/5; to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, Canton-Bordeaux, 9/2/1831, MS.JM C5/1.

²⁴ This was the name given to amalgamated but not minted silver, which had not yet paid taxes, and was thus exported illegally in great numbers (Irigoin 2010, 941).

²⁵ Y&Co. to Dolores de Yruretagoyena, Canton-Manila, 26/9/1827, MS.JM C2/5; to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 12/10/1826 and 1/3/1827, MS.JM C2/5.



(Mayo 2006, 70), from San Blas, went to China to acquire Chinese cargo, with the assistance of Yrisarri & Co. The ship left China by mid-December.²⁶ Martiarena had sent \$20,000 on board of the *Merope* to China on account of the Manila trader Nicolás de Molina; Martiarena, Menchaca and Castaños invested at least \$30,000 on the *Brillante* venture. The aforementioned Solano also consigned textiles acquired to Yrisarri & Co. through Noriega amounting to \$2,380.²⁷

Since then, and even though the ventures of Yrisarri & Co. coming to an end, many names related to the trans-Pacific initiative appear more often in the correspondence. For instance, the Basque trader established in Mazatlán, Francisco José de Jáuregui, who invested \$5,000 on account of Dolores de Yruretagoyena on Chinese merchandise on board of the *Brillante*. Jáuregui carried several transactions of silver for Asian merchandise by the mid 1820s, and he travelled from Mexico to China on board of the Sardinian frigate *Rosa* together with a huge amount of *piña* consigned mostly to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., in exchange for which he sent several cargoes of China merchandise to Mexico, one of them amounting \$200,000 to San Blas, and another on board of the *Brillante* amounting \$80,000.²⁸ The *Rosa* had been chartered by the Canton British firm of Dent & Co., and Jáuregui, according to correspondence, was a friend of Yrisarri & Co.'s employee Ybar, who would eventually work for this British house (Valdés Lakowsky 1987, 300). Antonio Alonso de Terán, a veteran of the Mexico City trade since the

²⁶ Y&Co. to Juan Bautista de Martiarena, Canton-Tepic, 17/8/1826, MS.JM C2/5; to J. R. de Menchaca and José M^a Castaños, Canton-San Blas, 17/8/1826, MS.JM C2/5; to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta (absent Juan Nepomuceno Machado), Canton-Tepic, 9/12/1826, MS.JM C2/5; James Matheson to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, Canton-Tepic, 1/11/1827, MS.JM C2/5.

²⁷ Y&Co. to Joaquín Solano, Canton-Calcutta, 30/12/1826 and 8/7/1827, MS.JM C2/5.

²⁸ Y&Co. to Dolores de Yruretagoyena and to Yratorza, Brodett & Co., Canton-Manila, 15/6/1826, MS.JM C2/4; to Yratorza, Brodett & Co., Canton-Manila, 15/6/1826, MS.JM C2/4; to José Nicolás de Yratorza, Canton-Manila, 5/9/1826, MS.JM C2/5; to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 11/8/1826, MS.JM C2/5; to Francisco José de Jáuregui, Macao-unidentified, 14/12/1826, MS.JM C2/5; to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta (absent Juan Nepomuceno Machado), Canton-Tepic, 9/12/1826, MS.JM C2/5; Francisco José de Jáuregui to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., Canton-Calcutta, 11/8/1826, MS.JM C2/5.

late eighteenth century, also consigned money to Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., which Yrisarri & Co. should tranship from China to Calcutta, as ordered by the agents of the former in Manila, Baltasar de Mier and Manuel Cacho (McMaster 1959, 381, note 19).²⁹ Eustace Barron, from the prominent firm of Barron, Forbes & Co., also appears in the correspondence at the time as consignee of a cargo of Chinese furniture by mediation of Ezpeleta.³⁰

4. The 1830s Trans-Pacific Heritage of Jardine, Matheson & Co.

The networks that Ezpeleta and Machado established in Mexico outlived the ventures of Yrisarri & Co., which dissolved in 1827. James Matheson integrated the networks of the late firm into Charles Magniac & Co. — which morphed into Jardine, Matheson & Co. in 1832. No longer the priority in the more Asian-focused ventures of the firm, the trans-Pacific link developed on the same silver-for-textiles basis. Asian textiles had been displaced by the British, which had been shipped from Asia nonetheless. This trade certainly did not move the same amount of silver as the old Galleon trade did, and yet, silver ingots and coins were still the main Mexican export; these increased, mainly towards Asia, by the late 1830s. The old colonial *peso* still enjoyed high demand in China, due to its stability, and was being imported into the country together with the less sought-after new republican *pesos* (Lin 2006, 95, 106; Irigoien 2009, 207-43).

Ezpeleta did not stay long in Mexico. He left in 1828 for Europe for he was expelled from the country during the Expulsion of the Spaniards in 1827 (Ruiz de Gordejuela Urquijo 2006, 289). Business opportunities seem to have moved him as well: he then settled in Bordeaux, where he established the firm of Yñigo, Ezpeleta et C^{ie} together with another Spaniard from Mexico, Juan

²⁹ Y&Co. to Juan Bautista de Martiarena, Canton-Tepic, 17/8/1826, MS.JM C2/5; to J. R. de Menchaca and José María Castaños, Canton-San Blas, 17/8/1826, MS.JM C2/5; to Baltasar de Mier and Manuel Cacho, Canton-Manila, 10/11/1826, MS.JM C2/5.

³⁰ Y&Co. to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, Canton-Tepic, 9/12/1826, MS.JM C2/5.



Bautista Yñigo; at some point, Xavier de Barcáiztegui, from the Barcáiztegui family and old partner of Mendieta, Uriarte & Co., was also partner. Like other Basque firms in that city, it attracted capital expatriated from Mexico belonging to expelled Spaniards (Ruiz de Gordejuela Urquijo 2006, 167-173).³¹ Benefitting from an advantageous exchange rate, they invested it in railroads as well as in shipping. The firm also obtained concession for the exploitation of the quicksilver Almadén mines, in Ciudad Real (Spain), until this was transferred in 1835 to N. M. Rothschild & Sons.³² Surely the expulsion hindered further developments of the trans-Pacific trade or at least, was among various factors that accelerated to its eventual dominance by the British, yet with a Hispanic link.

Machado himself dodged the expulsion decrees and remained in Mazatlán the rest of his life, where he became a prominent member of local society. In late 1830, he visited China on board his Mexican schooner *Joven Dorotea* so as to reestablish connections with Charles Magniac & Co., again, on a silver-for-textiles basis that was financed with drafts on the British firm's agents in Britain. He maintained these connections until the 1840s, thanks to his regional contacts as well. He was the main link to the ventures that the British firm in China maintained with Barron, Forbes & Co. (McMaster 1959, 380-381; Mayo 1987; Heath 1989, 77-89; Heath 1993).³³ As aforementioned, this was one of the leading firms on the Mexican Pacific, with which the Hispanic forebears of Jardine, Matheson & Co. had already established contact. Eustace Barron — or Eustaquio Barrón — was certainly linked to the Hispanic world. Born in Cádiz and of

³¹ The famous firm of Aguirrebengoa Fils & Uribarren stood out for this practice (Ruiz de Gordejuela Urquijo 2006, 212). Circular announcing the establishment of Yñigo, Ezpeleta et C^{ie}, Bordeaux, 1/1/1830, MS.JM B6/7 no. 30; James Matheson to Rickards, Mackintosh & Co., Canton-London, 25/11/1828, MS.JM C2/5; to Echegaray & Fernández, Canton-San Sebastián, 24/2/1829, MS.JM C2/5; to Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta, Canton-Bordeaux, 19/3/1832, MS.JM C5/1.

³² Barcáiztegui was witness in this transfer (De Otazu 1987, 34-41).

³³ James Matheson to José María Uriarte, Canton-Calcutta, 5/8/1831, MS.JM C5/1; to Juan Nepomuceno Machado, Canton-Mazatlán, 19/3/1832, MS.JM C5/1.



Irish Catholic descent, he was in 1818 in Lima, later establishing himself in Mexico. In Peru he was strongly connected to the local Philippine Company factory: at San Martín's conquest, as the Spanish properties were about to be confiscated, he fled to San Blas and then Manila together with José de Arismendi, partner of the Lima factor Pedro de Abadía (Besseghini 2020b, 10). According to John Mayo, Barron would have fought with the Spanish Royal Army in Peru; he spent some time between 1822-1823 in the Philippines (Mayo 2006, 67), where he certainly might have established useful contacts for his trans-Pacific ventures. Barron, Forbes & Co. consigned considerable amounts of silver to Canton by the late 1830s (Mayo 2006, 302-306). Its value was then transferred in bills to several parties in Manila, both old members of the Galleon networks — such as Baltasar de Mier, Ángel de la Fuente and the Vélez Escalante family — and others like the trader José de Azcárraga, the Augustine Friars and even the *Consulado*.³⁴ Part of this silver also went to the Philippine trader based in Macao, Gabriel de Yruretagoyena — who in the 1820s had been partner in the firm of Lorenzo Calvo & Co. — and it is inferable that he sold the silver in China; he also traded in old colonial *pesos* bought *inside* China.³⁵ Machado also visited Yruretagoyena during his trip to China in 1830, and there are some hints that the latter maintained some contacts with merchants established in Mexico, such as the aforementioned Castaños as well as Barron, Forbes & Co. By the late 1830s, however, this Manila involvement diminished.

Other names appear in the correspondence of Jardine, Matheson & Co. to Mexico. This is the case of Ignacio Fletes, and of Castaños — now established in Guadalajara (Jalisco) — and both

³⁴ JM&Co. to Baltasar de Mier, Felipa Vélez de Escalante, the President and members of the *Consulado* of Manila, Ángel de la Fuente (among others), Canton-Manila, 12/6/1838, MS.JM C10/23; 10/9/1838, MS.JM C10/24; to Manuel Blanco, provincial of the Augustin Fathers of Manila, Canton-Manila, 12/6/1838, MS.JM C10/23; to José de Azcárraga (among others), Macao-Manila, 21/6/1839 and 23/8/1839, MS.JM C10/25.

³⁵ JM&Co. to Gabriel de Yruretagoyena, Canton-Macao, 10/9/1838; 24/9/1838 and 31/10/1838, MS.JM C10/24.

created in 1844 the firm of Castaños, Fletes & Co. Castaños re-established his contacts with Matheson through the sea captain Archibald A. Ritchie, who settled in Tepic after having resided in Canton for a time; there he formed the firm of Herrera & Ritchie, and he would also engage in the colonisation projects of California (McMaster 1959, 380-381; Valdés Lakowsky 1987, 301; Meyer, 1981).³⁶ Machado formed by then the firm of Machado, Yeoward & Co. in Tepic. Among the other correspondents of Jardine, Matheson & Co., Domingo Danglada of Tepic, W. W. Scarborough & Co. and Vega & Hermanos, as well as Parrot & Co. and Talbot & Co., were concentrated in Tepic; a few associates, such as Manuel Yñigo & Co. wrote to the firm from Guaymas (McMaster 1959, 382-384).³⁷

5. Conclusions: On Imperial Transitions and Global Hegemony

The cases explored here — the lives and experiences of Francisco Xavier de Ezpeleta and Juan Nepomuceno Machado — point to the relevance of Spanish actors in the Asian Pacific even after the Galleon ceased to sail. Further research is certainly warranted into other cases before conclusions can be drawn. Surely other similar trans-Pacific links existed,³⁸ while the persistence of networks that linked the Manila trader — not to their counterparties in China — but to those in Mexico on the other side of the Pacific Ocean merits further investigation. Ezpeleta and Machado point to these Hispanic links, as well as British entanglements, that are key to the analysis of the opium trade, Western imperialism in East Asia, as well as the development of British commercial dominance in Latin America in the nineteenth century.

³⁶ Charles Magniac & Co. to Juan Nepomuceno Machado, Canton-Macao, 12/7/1831 (three letters), MS.JM C10/13; James Matheson to Juan Nepomuceno Machado, Canton-Mazatlán, 19/3/1832 and 1/9/1832, MS.JM C5/1; to José María Castaños and to Archibald A. Ritchie, Canton-Guadalajara (Jalisco), 11/4/1832, MS.JM C5/1; Gabriel de Yruretagoyena to Charles Magniac & Co., Macao-Canton, 4/7/1831, MS.JM B7/27 no. 519; JM&Co. to Juan Nepomuceno Machado, Canton-Mazatlán, 22/5/1838, MS.JM C10/23.

³⁷ JM&Co. to Eugenio de Otadui & Co., Macao-Manila, 2/7/1841 and 15/7/1841, MS.JM C10/29; to Manuel Yñigo & Co., Macao-Guaymas, 28/8/1843 (three letters), MS.JM C11/7.

³⁸ The Canton British firm of Dent & Co. also invested in trans-Pacific ventures (Valdés Lakowsky 1987, 300).

These cases portray how imperial hegemonies unfold. A “stagnant” Spanish Empire did not leave a vacuum filled by the British, but rather intersections took place. Certainly, crisis and recession were at play in the Spanish Empire, and precisely because of that, its actors intervened. Starting from the mid-eighteenth century, during this long transition process there were adaptations from the traders on the spot. Colonial administrators acquiesced, through reform, to what until then had been an infringement of the mercantilist rules. During this transition, the agency of the Spanish actors was manifest, and they collaborated with actors of other nationalities — until then restricted by the old rules — among whom the British stood out, so as to face constantly changing circumstances. And finally, and in spite of the initiative for private enterprise shown by the Hispanic actors, Spanish trade never became hegemonic after the fall of empire in the Americas. The expulsion of the Spaniards from Mexico in 1827; war and turmoil in the new Latin American republics; and in Asia, the end of the Royal Philippine Company — thereby depriving the Spaniards of a precious logistical support to trade in Asia — hindered their means of competing with the British and US traders. A new commercial world was emerging, which required increasing logistics and human resources, and more diversified financing networks. The collapse of the Spanish Empire, in addition, affected how silver was globally distributed and deprived Spanish merchants of an asset.

As far as the Asia and Pacific trade is concerned, it should be noted how the trans-Pacific link was secondary to the main priorities of the Spanish Agency Houses of the early nineteenth century, that is, Philippine and intra-Asian — or “country” — trade, during this reconfiguration process. This does not mean that the trans-Pacific ventures were absent, yet these did not have the same relevance that they had during the Galleon days. Both Philippine and Western trade with China diversified as the nineteenth century advanced, and for the British in Asia, the silver-for-textiles trade to Mexico was one among many divisions of their activities. This division also

reconfigured, as the Asian terminus of the trade moved from Manila to Canton — and eventually, to Hong Kong — while British interests in the trade became hegemonic — among which Jardine, Matheson & Co. stood out. On the Mexican side, British fabrics meanwhile displaced Asian textiles that used to be shipped on the Galleon, while British firms such as Barron, Forbes & Co. dominated the commercial sphere of the Mexican Pacific coast.

The abovementioned process of reconfiguration certainly was one among many facets indicating the consolidation of the British hegemony in the global trade in the nineteenth century, as the Great Divergence was being attained. This was the last stage of “the first Age of Global Imperialism,” to use Christopher Alan Bayly’s words (1998), which had started by the 1760s and ended by 1830. British hegemony was not fully consolidated and by then was partly re-negotiated by different parties. Before the compartmentalization of the “High” imperialism consolidated, cooperation beyond national and institutional barriers also took place. This reconfiguration agenda, that took place even prior to the imperial collapse, presented Hispanic elements, or at least, Spaniards contributed with their knowledge and networks to the consolidation of a new British hegemony on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. This did not materialize overnight, and the British needed local and regional supports. To what extent Hispanic subjects such as Ezpeleta and Machado can be considered merely “local,” however, can be disputed, if we take note of their *global* — or rather *imperial* — experiences. Certainly their experiences are explanatory of the global connections of the Hispanic merchants, which should be taken into account when describing the reconfigurations at that time. They are indicative also of the wide transformations of the Spanish Empire, where old peripheries had been transitioning to new economic centres since the last third of the eighteenth century — such as the Caribbean, Venezuela, Río de la Plata as well as the Philippines (Fradera 2004, 161-199;

Goode 2019). Such peripheries were gradually more integrated in the global economy, and as far as the Asia and Pacific region is concerned, British and Hispanic collaboration took place.

Acknowledgments:

This study has benefitted from a Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship (PD012-U-17). This paper has been previously presented, in various forms, in the XXXVI International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA Barcelona, May 2018) and in the VI Latin American Congress of Economic History (CLADHE VI, Santiago de Chile, July 2019). The author would like to thank the reviewers for their directions, and would also like to express his gratitude towards Deborah Besseghini for encouraging him to assemble these ideas, to Cristina Mazzeo for her useful hints, and to Marie Christine Duggan for her essential final revision of this paper.

References

- Alfonso Mola, Marina, and Carlos Martínez Shaw. 2018. "Trade between Peru and Asia (1785–1820). An approximation." In *A Global Trading Network. The Spanish Empire in the World Economy (1580–1820)*, edited by José Ignacio Martínez Ruiz, 253-314. Seville: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla.
- Bayly, Christopher Alan. 1998. "The First Age of Global Imperialism, c. 1760–1830." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 26(2): 28-47. doi:[10.1080/03086539808583023](https://doi.org/10.1080/03086539808583023).
- Besseghini, Deborah. 2020a. "The Anglo-American Conflict in the Far Side of the World: A Struggle for Influence Over Revolutionary South America (1812-1814)." *Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* LIV: 35-56. doi:[10.26331/1099](https://doi.org/10.26331/1099).
- Besseghini, Deborah. 2020b. "British Trade and the Fall of the Spanish Empire. Changing Practices and Alliances of Antony Gibbs & Sons in Lima during the Transition from Viceregal to Independentist Rule (1820-1823)." *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*. doi:[10.4000/nuevomundo.79632](https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.79632).
- Bonialian, Mariano Ardash. 2017. "Comercio y atlantización del Pacífico mexicano y sudamericano: la crisis del lago indiano y del Galeón de Manila, 1750-1821." *América Latina en la historia económica* 24(1): 7-36. doi:[10.18232/alhe.v24i1.791](https://doi.org/10.18232/alhe.v24i1.791).



- Cheong, Weng Eang. 1970. "Changing the Rules of the Game (The India-Manila Trade: 1785–1809)." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 1(2): 1-19. doi:[10.1017/S002246340002021X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340002021X).
- Cheong, Weng Eang. 1973. "China Houses and the Bank of England Crisis of 1825." *Business History* 15(1): 56-73. doi:[10.1080/00076797300000004](https://doi.org/10.1080/00076797300000004).
- Cheong, Weng Eang. 1979. *Mandarins and Merchants. Jardine Matheson & Co., a China agency of the early nineteenth century*. London: Curzon Press.
- De Otazu, Alfonso. 1987. *Los Rothschild y sus socios en España (1820-1850)*. Madrid: O. Hs. Ediciones.
- Díaz-Trechuelo, María Lourdes. 1965. *La Real Compañía de Filipinas*. Seville: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos.
- Fradera, Josep M. 1999. *Filipinas, la colonia más peculiar. La hacienda pública en la definición de la política colonial, 1762-1868*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.
- Fradera, Josep M. 2004. "De la periferia al centro. (Cuba, Puerto Rico y Filipinas en la crisis del Imperio Español)." *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 61(1): 161-199. doi:[10.3989/aeamer.2004.v61.i1.146](https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2004.v61.i1.146).
- Furber, Holden. 1935. "An Abortive Attempt at Anglo-Spanish Commercial Cooperation in the Far East in 1793." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 15(4): 448-463.
- García Gimeno, Jorge. 2017. "La fragata *Santa Rita*, ¿la ruina del comercio de Manila? Un estudio sobre los efectos de la independencia de México en Filipinas." Paper presented at the IX Simposio Internacional de la Asociación Española de Americanistas "América y el Mar", Cádiz, Universidad de Cádiz, 21-23 June.
- Goode, Catherine Tracy. 2019. "The Pacific Borderlands of the Spanish Empire." In *The Oxford Handbook of Borderlands of the Iberian World*, edited by Danna A. Levin Rojo and Cynthia Radding, 765-788. New York: Oxford University Press. doi:[10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199341771.013.25](https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199341771.013.25).
- Grace, Richard J. 2014. *Opium and Empire. The Lives and Careers of William Jardine and James Matheson*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Greenberg, Michael. 1951. *British Trade and the Opening of China. 1800–42*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:[10.1017/CBO9780511896286](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511896286).
- Heath, Hilarie J. 1989. "Los primeros escarceos del imperialismo en México: las casas comerciales británicas, 1821-1867." *Historias* 22: 77-89.
- Heath, Hilarie J. 1993. "British Merchant Houses in Mexico, 1821-1860: Conforming Business Practices and Ethics." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 73(2): 261-90.
- Irigoin, Alejandra. 2009. "The end of a silver era: the consequences of the breakdown of the Spanish silver peso standard in China and the US by the 1850s." *Journal of World History* 20(2): 207-243.

- Irigoin, Alejandra. 2010. "Las raíces monetarias de la fragmentación política de la América Española en el siglo XIX." *Historia Mexicana* 59(3): 919-979.
- Legarda, Benito J., Jr. 1999. *After the Galleons. Foreign Trade, Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth-Century Philippines*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Lin, Man-houng. 2006. *China Upside Down: Currency, Society, and Ideologies, 1808–1856*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Marks, Patricia H. 2007. *Deconstructing Legitimacy. Viceroy, Merchants, and the Military in Late Colonial Peru*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Mayo, John. 1987. "Consuls and Silver Contraband on Mexico's West Coast in the Era of Santa Anna." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 19(2): 389-411. doi:[10.1017/S0022216X00020125](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00020125).
- Mayo, John. 2006. *Commerce and Contraband on Mexico's West Coast in the Era of Barron, Forbes & Co*. New York: Peter Lang.
- McMaster, John. 1959. "Aventuras asiáticas del peso mexicano." *Historia mexicana* 8(3): 372-399.
- Meyer, Jean. 1981. "Barrón, Forbes y Cía. El cielo y sus primeros favoritos." *Nexos*, April 1.
- Permanyer-Ugartemendia, Ander. 2014. "Opium after the Manila Galleon: The Spanish involvement in the opium economy in East Asia (1815–1830)." *Investigaciones de Historia Económica - Economic History Research* 10: 155-164. doi:[10.1016/j.ihe.2014.07.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ihe.2014.07.001).
- Permanyer-Ugartemendia, Ander. 2020. "Beyond the Galleons: China Trade, Colonial Agenda and Regional Integration in the Eighteenth-Century Philippines." In *Philippine Confluence: Iberian, Chinese and Islamic Currents, c. 1500–1800*, edited by Jos Gommans and Ariel Lopez, 115-136. Leiden: Leiden University Press.
- Pomeranz, Kenneth. 2000. *The Great Divergence. China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Quiason, Serafin D. 1966. *English "country trade" with the Philippines*. Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House.
- Reid, Anthony. 2015. *A History of Southeast Asia. Critical Crossroads*. Malden: Wiley Blackwell.
- Ruiz de Gordejuela Urquijo, Jesús. 2006. *La expulsión de los españoles de México y su destino incierto, 1821-1836*. Seville: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.
- Torales Pacheco, María Cristina. 1996. "Suegro comerciante, yerno financiero: Gabriel de Iturbe y su empresa mercantil en Nueva España, 1797-1812." *Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv* 22(1-2): 73-102.
- Trocki, Carl. A. *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy. A study of the Asian opium trade, 1750–1950*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Valdés Lakowsky, Vera. 1987. *De las minas al mar. Historia de la plata mexicana en Asia, 1565-1834*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Van Dyke, Paul A. 2005. *The Canton Trade. Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700–1845*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Yuste, Carmen. 2007. *Emporios transpacificos. Comerciantes mexicanos en Manila. 1710-1815*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No Derivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use and distribution, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered or transformed in any way.

