



The Philippine Islands, Moluccas, Siam, Cambodia, Japan, and China, at the Close of the Sixteenth Century

Antonio de Morga

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From the preface:

"Judging, however, from the experience of modern times in our own possessions and colonies, I would humbly suggest that the cause of the well-being of the inhabitants of the Philippines is to be looked for principally in the establishment of the royal Audiencia, or High Court of Law, and that the foundation of the prosperity of the Manila Islands was that which is pointed out in the inscription over the principal gateway of the Imperial Palace of Vienna : "Justitia regnorum fundamentum." The atrocities of Pizarro were such that they have engrossed all attention, and the colonial legislation enacted to prevent the repetition of similar offences seems, from the following complaint of a modern Spanish writer, to have escaped the observation of European authors. Sr. Arias says, in a prize essay on the Influence on Spain of her Dominion in America, written in 1854, —"How certain it is that if the writers of other nations, on taking up then pens to write of America, had only known the code by which that part of the world was governed, they would not have shewn so little circumspection, nor would they have allowed themselves to be led away so blindly by then imagination. We have said the code, but indeed, by reading only some of its headings, they would have formed another opinion of the colonial rule of Spain. What, nevertheless, could then information be on this matter, when, hi the year 1812, Dr. Mier could not find hi the public libraries of London a copy of the Recopilacion of the Indies, which he required to consult upon certain points upon which he was writing ? In America itself there was the greatest neglect hi the study of these laws, as an author of that country shews. Perhaps there is not one of them which may not be presented as an example of equity and discretion ; but among them some stand forth which ought to be learnt by heart by those who take pleasure in meeting with proofs of benevolence towards peoples on the part of those that govern them, or by those who seek for models for establishing the public administration upon a basis of equity. Of this class is the Royal Order of Philip IV directed to the Viceroy and High Court of Mexico, reproduced a thousand times hi different works on account of the singularly humane terms in which it is drawn up : so is also another law providing that offences committed against Indians should .be punished with greater rigour than those committed against Spaniards ; and the law which directed that the prelates and clergy should from the pulpit and in confession persuade Spaniards who had made their fortunes in the Indies, and who wished to assign by their wills, legacies, pious works, alms or restitutions, that they should apply these to the country to which they owed their fortunes ; by this law, at the same time that America was preserved from being drained of large sums, the country of the testators deprived itself of a similar amount, and their families and relatives of considerable succours."

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