

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Heriberto Zarcal

## The first Filipino-Australian<sup>1</sup>

*Reynaldo C. Ileta*

Australia's proximity to the Philippines on the map has led me to wonder sometimes why there has to be such a void separating the two nations and peoples. Historically, of course, it is clear that the lines were drawn by Spain and Britain. The Philippines was defined by the claims of the Spanish Church and Crown; Australia was a collection of colonies attached to the British Crown. Filipinos looked to Manila and thence to Madrid as their centres; Queenslanders looked to Brisbane and thence to London. Policies such as Australia's Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 further deepened the void between the two.

Historically, however, it is also clear that individuals have a way of stumbling across lines and upsetting boundaries. In the second half of the 19th century, some Australians made Manila their home; they had drifted in as sailors, businessmen, tourists, prostitutes and entertainers (yes, White Australian prostitutes and entertainers). There weren't many of them; after all, in 1899, Manila and its suburbs had only 300 White foreigners other than Spanish in a population of 300,000. Far more Filipinos, hundreds of them in fact, went in the other direction to work as pearl divers and seamen in the northern parts of Australia.

The image of such movements of people across borders, bleaching those imperial reds and yellows or creating blotches of grey on the map, inspired me to title a book Rod Sullivan and I edited in 1993 *Discovering Austral-Asia: Essays on Philippine-Australian Interactions*. To my horror, however, I discovered

on my return from sabbatical leave that my colleagues had removed that all-important hyphen, and so the book was published under the rather puzzling title *Discovering Australasia*. I have since seen it cited in even more garbled fashion as *Discovering Australia*. Why? Because, I think, of the sheer difficulty in imagining such an indeterminate entity, an Austral-hyphen-Asia, a crossing of two fictions.

One of the characters I uncovered in my research on Austral-Asia was Heriberto Zarcal, a resident of Queensland, a naturalised British citizen, yet also a significant figure in the Philippine revolution. Zarcal is mentioned fleetingly in Philippine history textbooks as the 1898 Revolutionary Government's 'diplomatic agent' in Australia.<sup>2</sup> At the turn of the century, many Australians would have come across the name 'H. Zarcal', but in a very different context. In the 1899 edition of *Pugh's Almanac*, which was a compendium of current information about Queensland, there was an advertisement for a Thursday Island business that said: 'H. Zarcal Jeweller and Pearl Merchant, Wholesale and Retail, Licensed Dealer and Provision Merchant.' The skills on offer included: 'Lapidary and Optician, Goldsmith, Watchmaker, and Pearl Cleaner.'

More impressive even than the range of skills and claims advertised was the accompanying photograph of Zarcal's premises, which, with its airy two storeys and its cast-iron-fringed upper verandah, was typical of a successful northern Australian hotel. But where the sign 'Royal Hotel' or 'Commonwealth Hotel' should have been, there was a Latin inscription, '*Noli Me Tangere*' ('Touch Me Not').<sup>3</sup> These are the words Christ used to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection, and they constitute the title of José Rizal's 1887 novel.<sup>4</sup> Apart from its renowned literary merits, *Noli Me Tangere* was also a political document that had a shattering effect on the Philippine society of its day because it vividly communicated the corruption of the Spanish colonial regime, and a sense of the Filipinos as a national community.<sup>5</sup> For this, Rizal was executed on 30 December, 1896. Few, if any, Australian readers of *Pugh's Almanac* would have realised this, but *Noli Me Tangere*, displayed in large script on his business premises, signified Zarcal's empathy with the martyred Rizal and all that he stood for.

What was Zarcal doing up there on the northern tip of Australia? Writing in 1902, John Douglas, Government Resident on Thursday Island, anticipated present-day concerns when he observed that 'this question of Asia and Australia is one of the great questions of the present and of the future for Australia'. From his experience in the Torres Strait, Douglas knew that northern Australia was not and could never be an exclusively European domain; it was set on a different course demographically from southern Australia. Douglas advocated a 'White Australia' but defined it in *institutional* rather than racial terms. He maintained that Thursday Island, where Europeans

constituted but one in three of the population, was nonetheless still 'White Australia' because

we have the same all-pervading British law, applicable to Asian and Australian alike, the same English language, and the same forms of social intercourse which prevail in Southern Australia; our churches and schools are an exact counterpart on a small scale of what they are in Melbourne or in Brisbane.<sup>6</sup>

Heriberto Zarcal would not have disputed Douglas's views. What Filipinos moving up the socioeconomic scale found particularly odious about Spanish rule was that, at some point, race *did* matter and worked to block their progress. Spanish institutions in the friar-dominated colony were not what they were in liberalised Spain. Spanish law was not applicable to Indio and Spaniard alike. But Filipinos who moved or escaped to the British Crown colonies of Hong Kong and Singapore found the sociopolitical environments there quite liberating, with good prospects as well for economic gain. Quite likely, Thursday Island in the 19th century offered similar attractions.

Then, as now, skilled Filipino seamen and workers could be found wherever they were needed and welcomed. For the majority of them, going to sea and working overseas offered an opportunity to accumulate some savings, which would be remitted to, or invested in, the Philippines. For example, a Filipino crew-member of the Confederate raider, *Alabama*, which visited Cape Town, South Africa, in 1863, decided to settle there and was so successful that other Filipino seamen joined him to form a colony. Filipinos were usually the steersmen or quartermasters on American ships in the Pacific and had early colonies in New Orleans, Philadelphia and Boston.<sup>7</sup> It is not surprising then, that soon after pearl-shelling began in Torres Strait in 1870, Filipinos were working there as 'swimming divers' and, later, as dress divers.<sup>8</sup> They were recruited in Singapore and brought to northern Australia by the steamers that plied the Singapore-Brisbane route.<sup>9</sup> Over the years their numbers grew steadily. By 1896, there were 212 Filipinos employed fishing for pearls and *bêche-de-mer*.<sup>10</sup> In March of that year, there were 119 Filipinos, including six women and 58 children, resident on Thursday Island, now the pearling centre of Torres Strait.<sup>11</sup>

Percival Outridge, who had worked in the northern pearling industry for some 10 years, told the 1897 Queensland Commission of Inquiry into the pearl-shell and *bêche-de-mer* industries that the '[M]anilla men ... make excellent divers and excellent citizens. They marry and settle down here.'<sup>12</sup> Douglas observed that the Filipinos on Thursday Island were generally married and had families, and were regarded as 'amongst the most settled of our Asiatic

population'. In fact, these married and settled 'Manila men' showed great eagerness to become naturalised citizens.<sup>13</sup> Such willingness and ability to integrate into the local community was a feature that distinguished Filipinos from other Asian settlers, especially the Japanese. Being for the most part Catholics helped. In 1895, Douglas described how some of the naturalised Filipinos had 'married wives selected for them by the Roman Catholic Fraternity, from their own country'.<sup>14</sup> Commonality of religion would have eliminated one hindrance to relations with White Australians.

It should be noted that for Filipinos in the late 19th century, taking out British-Australian citizenship meant merely transferring affiliation from one European empire to another. The Philippines was not yet a nation-state that demanded the unswerving loyalties of its citizens. The term 'Filipino', in fact, still technically applied to Spaniards in the Philippines; the people from whose ranks came the 'Manila men' were still demanding recognition as 'Filipinos' in their own homeland. It is not, therefore, surprising that there was a great demand for naturalisation among the settled Filipinos in northern Australia.

Lest we forget, however, there were just as many who returned to their homeland, much as overseas contract workers do today. Two Filipinos working in Australia were lucky enough to win a lottery and went straight back home with their prize. Candido Iban and Francisco del Castillo, however, did something unusual, which earned them an honoured place in Philippine history. On returning to Manila in 1894 or 1895, they joined the radical Katipunan secret society<sup>15</sup> and donated 400 pesos of their 1,000-pesos Australian lottery prize for the purchase of a printing press. This was used to put out the Katipunan's journal, *Kalayaan (Liberty)*, the first issue of which appeared in March 1896. They then returned to their home island of Capiz 'to spread the doctrines of the Katipunan'.<sup>16</sup> In March 1897, Candido Iban and his brother Benito were executed by the Spanish authorities and are remembered as two of the 'Nineteen Martyrs of Capiz'.<sup>17</sup>

Zarcal arrived on Thursday Island in May 1892.<sup>18</sup> Where he came from is a bit of a mystery, but there are suggestions that he had escaped from exile in the Marianas, one of many who eventually found his way to Hong Kong, Singapore and (or so it seems) Thursday Island. By 1897, Zarcal surfaces as a big man on the island. He is mentioned as one of only five men on the island licensed to deal in pearls.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, he had just acquired his own fleet of pearling vessels.<sup>20</sup> And, about this time, he was also establishing himself in the capital cities of Brisbane and Melbourne.<sup>21</sup> He was assisted by a nephew and adopted son, Manuel Anastacio, who served as treasurer of the pearling business and apparently did some schooling in Melbourne.<sup>22</sup> By January 1898, Zarcal would be expanding his pearling operations to the Northern Territory.<sup>23</sup>

In May 1897, Zarcal became a naturalised British subject, taking the Oath of Allegiance before the Supreme Court of Queensland in Brisbane.<sup>24</sup> From the heated discussions that took place in the pages of the local newspaper during the months after Zarcal's naturalisation, we get some idea of the scale of his success in business after five years of residence on Thursday Island, and why becoming a British subject was a natural recourse for him.

A European Thursday Islander, calling himself 'Torres Straits for the Whites', wrote complaining about Zarcal as 'a naturalised Manilla man ... reported to be importing several luggers and a schooner to work on the pearling grounds'. The success of Zarcal and other Asians was deemed 'to exceed reasonable limits'. The angry writer summed up his frustration with the question, 'Shall we suffer the men who ought to be our servants to become our masters?'<sup>25</sup>

The abovementioned letter attracted a response from James Clark, one of the most successful European pearl-shellers in northern Australia and a leading campaigner against the acquisition of pearling licences by Japanese.<sup>26</sup> Clark had earlier protested to the 1897 Queensland Commission of Inquiry that, Queensland being a British colony, 'the profits should belong to the white men instead of the Japanese'. Clearly, he was in favour of Japanese labour in the pearl-shelling industry, but he objected to them becoming boat-owners and therefore competitors: 'By all means, pay them a fair wage for their labour, but let them remain labourers and not owners.'<sup>27</sup> In responding to 'Torres Straits for the Whites', Clark widened his anti-Japanese campaign to include Zarcal. He was particularly incensed by Zarcal's newly won citizenship, which enabled him to operate a pearling fleet regardless of prohibitions on aliens. Clark appeared to regard 'whiteness' as a prerequisite of citizenship, and the naturalisation process as an unwelcome source of Asian competitors:

Naturalisation is a farce, and all naturalisation papers of Asiatics should be cancelled. Take Mr Zarcal's case for example. He gets naturalised here, but will anyone take him for an Englishman in Manilla, where anyway his Australian naturalisation does not give him the protection of a Britisher? Therefore he is a Manillaman in Manilla and an Australian here. If Mr Zarcal wishes to carry on his business of pearl buyer and sheller let him go back to his own country; he can get both pearls and shell there; we want ours for our own people.<sup>28</sup>

Clark's attack did not pass unchallenged. Robert Cremer, who spoke for European labour on Thursday Island, accused him of hypocrisy since he happily employed Asian labour while campaigning to exclude Asians from boat-ownership.<sup>29</sup> Clark's credibility suffered further when it emerged that he had

sponsored Zarcal in his application for citizenship. Moreover, Zarcal had rebuffed an overture from Clark to join 'a combination of pearl buyers' in the interests of price maintenance.<sup>30</sup>

Zarcal survived the racist diatribe. By 1897, he was too well established to be displaced from a major role in the Torres Strait pearl-shelling industry. Besides, he had roots in the community. He was married to a woman born in Queensland of Irish descent, Esther Emma Beach, and had close ties with the Catholic missionaries on the island.<sup>31</sup> In any case, he had the foresight to adopt British citizenship before restrictive legislation against non-Whites in the pearl-shelling industry set in.

Adopting British citizenship was a wise move in more ways than one. Clearly, it provided protection against the spectre of a 'White Australia'. But, also, it would have facilitated Zarcal's travel to and from business dealings in British Hong Kong, and provided some personal security for a task he had embarked on by 1897: to materially support the Philippine revolutionary forces. While Zarcal was in Hong Kong that year to look after the construction of his pearling vessels, he was in close contact with the Central Junta of the Philippine Revolutionary Government based there. About October, under instructions from Hong Kong, he organised an Australian committee in support of the nationalist cause.<sup>32</sup>

### **Overseas Nationalists**

Zarcal's involvement in the revolution should be viewed in the context of a Filipino diaspora after 1872. The execution, in February of that year, of three Filipino priests for alleged complicity in a mutiny of native troops was accompanied by deportations of Filipinos suspected of involvement in the affair. In the years after, more Filipinos were deported for student activities, while many others left the repressive atmosphere of Manila to seek higher education in Europe. These Filipinos eventually grouped together to organise reform movements based in Hong Kong, Singapore, London, Paris, Barcelona, Madrid and other cities.

Manila itself became the centre of a movement calling itself *La Propaganda*. On 1 March, 1888, Manila witnessed a massive demonstration of reformists, who marched through the streets to the residence of the civil Governor of Manila Province, Jose Centeno, a Spaniard of liberal and anti-friar sentiments. Centeno was handed a petition addressed to the Governor-General, titled 'Long Live Spain! Long Live the Queen! Long Live the Army! Away with the Friars!' It demanded the expulsion of all friars and the secularisation of all parishes. In the wake of the demonstration, many prominent Filipinos in

Manila and its suburbs were arrested and jailed. Among them was Doroteo Jose, the *gubernadorcillo* ('petty governor', mayor) of Santa Cruz, Zarcal's home district. Although the detainees were released owing to lack of evidence, they suffered persistent harassment afterwards. Many fled the country.<sup>33</sup>

### Hong Kong Haven

For most of those who left the Philippines, British Hong Kong was the favoured destination. Since the 1870s, Hong Kong had been a haven for exiles. Some of them had escaped from exile in the Spanish Marianas and Guam. Persecutions in the 1890s of freemasons and suspected members of the reformist movement, La Liga Filipina, further swelled the ranks of the Filipino expatriate community in Hong Kong. This made inevitable its crucial supporting role in the 1896 revolution and thereafter. In December 1896, the Hong Kong Filipinos organised a revolutionary committee in support of the cause. It became the conduit for the Revolutionary Government's communications with the rest of the world. Its political climate was, furthermore, congenial. According to Galicano Apacible, who chaired the Hong Kong committee and junta from 1899 to 1903, political refugees from many countries residing in the colony were protected by the same English laws and 'English spirit of equity'. We can appreciate the value of Zarcal's British passport in the light of Apacible's glowing observations:

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<p><b>ROYAL HOTEL.</b> <i>This Hotel has lately been considerably enlarged and fitted out with the latest improvements in Parallels, making it one of the best in the South.</i></p> <p>Travellers will find the Sample Rooms unequalled. BEST LIQUORS AND WINES KEPT. Wires to Letters receive prompt attention. GEO. PEARSON, Proprietor.</p>	<p><b>R. SOOFAYA,</b> GENERAL STOREKEEPER, Importer of Drapery, Groceries, Ironmongery, Tobacco, Cigarettes, Fancy Goods, Boots and Shoes, etc., Victoria Parade, Thursday Island.</p>
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<p><b>S. A. DE SILVA &amp; CO.,</b> Watchmakers and Manufacturing Jewellers, DEALERS IN PRECIOUS STONES, NORMANBY STREET, THURSDAY ISLAND.</p>	<p><b>SUN TY LEE,</b> BAKER, GROCER, AND FRUITERER.</p> <p>Wholesale and Retail of this Firm can be supplied on shortest notice with FRESH BREAD, FRUIT, AND VEGETABLES. Conductor to A. U. &amp; N. Co. NORMANBY STREET, THURSDAY ISLAND.</p>

*Advertisements for Chinese, European, Filipino, Indian and Sri Lankan merchants, Thursday Island, 1897.*

Queensland Post Office Directory 1896-97, p. 483.

In our conflicts with some agents of the American secret service the British Government helped and protected us promptly, its official declaring that so long as we complied with the laws of the colony and did not violate the avowed neutrality of England in that conflict (ie., the Spanish-American War), we could rest assured that we would receive protection of the British Government.<sup>34</sup>

The Revolutionary Committee was able to send to the revolutionists food, clothing and medicine donated by Filipino residents in the colony. What the revolutionists needed, above all, however, were war materials. Hong Kong was the place to contact other foreign agents and close deals for the purchase of guns and ammunition. In late 1897, the Central Junta, successor to the Revolutionary Committee, was successful in smuggling arms into the Philippines with the help of the American consul.<sup>35</sup>

### **Australian Support Committee**

Hong Kong was the nerve centre for a worldwide network of support committees which, by late 1897, included one in Australia. In October 1897, Mariano Ponce, a veteran Hong Kong exile who would become Aguinaldo's emissary to Japan, wrote to a group of Filipinos in Australia reminding them that 'the same causes' had led them to emigrate all over the world. Physical distance, however, was 'not enough to separate our hearts, united by common sympathies'. Now was the time 'to collect all our energies, to convert them into one common force'. Alluding to the victories of the Spanish forces and General Aguinaldo's consequent retreat to the hills of Biak-na-bato, Ponce emphasised that 'the setbacks of the fatherland oblige all Filipinos with dignity to become part of this movement'. Ponce sought to mobilise the sizeable Filipino community in Australia, and to link it with others into 'one common force'. Thus he announced that a branch committee of the Hong Kong Central Junta was being organised in Australia under the leadership of Zarcal.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, events were moving quickly in the Philippines. In early December 1897, formal hostilities between Spanish and Filipino forces ended with the signing of the 'Pact of Biak-na-bato'. Aguinaldo and other top military commanders then went into exile in Hong Kong, taking with them some \$US200,000 given to them by Spain. This they intended to spend on guns and preparations for a resumption of the struggle. Zarcal, a frequent visitor to Hong Kong, was among the many expatriate nationalists who consulted with Aguinaldo. An issue of the *Overland China Mail*, which appeared in late March 1898, reported that Zarcal had commissioned the construction of three pearling schooners and named them the *Aguinaldo*, the *Llanera* and the *Natividad* — in

honour of three Filipino generals who had won victories against Spanish forces.<sup>37</sup> This must have been a well-publicised event because the Spanish Governor-General in the Philippines, Fernando Primo de Rivera, took offence at the names of Zarcal's boats and protested to Aguinaldo that they be changed to honour pioneers of Spanish settlement in the Philippines: Magellan, Legaspi and Salcedo.<sup>38</sup> Zarcal, it seems, did not heed the protest. In fact, his other boats bore names that alluded to Philippine history, nationalism, the revolution and Zarcal's own past; names such as *Santa Cruz* (Zarcal's birthplace), *Kavite* (the heartland of the revolution), *Sikatuna* and *Lacandola* (pre-Spanish chiefs), *Magdalo* (Aguinaldo's Katipunan name), *Kalayaan* (Liberty), *Kapayapaan* (Peace), *Justicia* (Justice), *Esperanza* (Hope), *Filipino* and *Esther* (Mrs Zarcal).<sup>39</sup>

Zarcal's new boats may have been intended for more than just pearling and propaganda service. After the US Navy's destruction of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in May 1898, Aguinaldo quickly returned to the Philippines to liberate the provinces from Spanish rule. On 12 June, he was able to proclaim Philippine independence and, on 23 June, to establish a Revolutionary Government. Despite a vague alliance with the US, however, the revolutionists still lacked the physical resources with which to completely overcome Spanish resistance. Urgent requests for help were sent to Filipinos overseas.

On 7 July, Aguinaldo wrote to two Filipinos of substance whom he personally knew — Pedro Roxas in Paris and Zarcal, somewhere in Australia — asking for 'some modern cannon and rifles with their corresponding ammunition, in quantities which your resources will allow'.<sup>40</sup> He assured them that this assistance would constitute a legal debt, which the Government would repay through an internal loan that was being floated, with occupied friar lands as guarantee. What is intriguing about Aguinaldo's request is that Zarcal or Roxas were to mount an expedition to land the supplies on the coast of Batangas.<sup>41</sup> Was Zarcal expected to use his new boats for this? A month later, a rather disappointed Aguinaldo instructed his chief envoy, Felipe Agoncillo, to tell Roxas and Zarcal 'that if they can't help with weapons I asked in my initial letter to them, they could at least send ammunition for Mauser and Remington rifles, if they have a heart (*kun sila'y may loób*)'.<sup>42</sup> No evidence has been unearthed thus far indicating that Zarcal even tried to smuggle arms or ammunition to the Philippines. In any case, by early 1899, such shipments would have become 'almost impossible, on account of the strict vigilance of American agents at Hong Kong and Chinese and Philippine ports'.<sup>43</sup>

Aguinaldo's letter of 9 July also contained an invitation for Roxas and Zarcal to act as representatives or 'correspondents' of the Revolutionary Government in their respective countries. The two must have acquiesced, for, on 10 August, Aguinaldo established the Revolutionary Committee, which

included representatives in France, England, the US, Japan and Australia (Heriberto Zarcal). This was an elite group of men of education and means.<sup>44</sup> Their task was to 'take care of Propaganda activities outside the country', to engage in 'diplomatic negotiations with foreign governments', and to 'prepare and contract all kinds of necessary expeditions for the maintenance of the Revolution'.<sup>45</sup>

What transpired in the months and years after the establishment of the fledgling Filipino Government is a tragic story of Asian nationalist aspirations floundering in a hostile, imperialist world order. Foreign recognition was nowhere to be gained; the highly educated and articulate Agoncillo, for example, was consistently rebuffed in Washington. On 10 December, 1898, Spanish and American commissioners signed the Treaty of Paris, handing the Philippines over to the US — ignoring the Filipinos both as belligerent (they bore the brunt of the fighting) and as an ally of the US against Spain.<sup>46</sup> As soon as the treaty was ratified two months later, hostilities between Filipino and American troops broke out. The Philippine-American war was to last until May 1902.

Bearing in mind the difficulties faced by his compatriots elsewhere, how did Zarcal fare in Australia? In October 1898, the nationalist legislator, Maximo Paterno, sent him a bundle of newspapers and other documents presumably to assist him in propagating the cause.<sup>47</sup> But the phrase *Noli Me Tangere* displayed on his business establishment, and the revolutionary connotations of his ships' names, are the only visible evidence of his efforts.<sup>48</sup> Such symbolic acts may not even have been taken seriously. The *Torres Straits Pilot* scoffed at the implications of the naming of his boats, observing that 'doubtless Mr Zarcal will be amused at the naive insinuation that he is in active sympathy with the insurgents'.<sup>49</sup> Zarcal would have had to be extremely discreet in championing the Filipino side in the war with the US. The predominant sentiment in Australia was that a Philippines run by brown natives would either be chaotic or, if successful, threatening to a sparsely populated Australia; in either case, Philippine independence would bring instability to a region dominated by European powers.<sup>50</sup> There was thus no hesitation in Australian acquiescence to a US takeover of the islands. The one piece of evidence concerning Australian involvement in the Filipino side of the conflict has to do with an Australian trying to sell arms and ammunition to the revolutionists in 1899.<sup>51</sup>

While surely he must have contributed generously to the revolutionary coffers, Zarcal appears to have thoroughly failed to gather Australian support for, or at least recognition of, Philippine independence. But, after all, did not Ponce emphasise in his letter to Australia back in 1897 that there was a need to propagate the cause, 'but we are not obliged to do more than what is in our power to accomplish'?<sup>52</sup> We might point out that there is no evidence either

that Zarcal campaigned *against* the cause. Owing to concerns about their personal fortunes, and the attractions of the American system (compared with Spain's), nearly half of the members of the Filipino Central Committee — successor to the Hong Kong Junta — had, by the end of 1898, turned around to support US annexation. The veteran, José Maria Basa, was among them. Pedro Roxas, while still contributing financially to the Revolutionary Government, told the Americans in Washington that Filipinos did not deserve independence, but could manage with an autonomy *like that of Australia*.<sup>53</sup> These sentiments did not come from Zarcal. Significantly, as late as May 1900, Aguinaldo — then leading a desperate guerrilla resistance — would be assured that Australia was one place where there continued to be a correspondent.<sup>54</sup>

The more we think about it, *Noli Me Tangere* — 'Touch Me Not' — so boldly displayed at the very heart of Zarcal's business operations, could not have pointed solely to the Philippines. In Rizal's novel, it clearly meant 'we want Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality'. Filipinos had 'awakened' and were asserting themselves against a Spanish regime dominated by conservative and even racist friar elements. But, to Zarcal, the struggle for recognition as equals was one to be waged in Australia as well. 'Oriental nations are awakening, their peoples are swarming out from their shores like ants whose nests have been trampled upon', declared Senator Staniforth Smith during the debates on the Immigration Restriction Bill.<sup>55</sup> Such awakening could mean only danger for a White Australia. The stakes were high, as Charles Pearson, an Oxford historian and former education minister of Victoria, put it as far back as 1894:

We know that coloured and white labour cannot exist side by side ... and we know that if national existence is sacrificed to the working of a few mines and sugar plantations, it is not the Englishman in Australia alone, but the whole civilised world, that will be the losers ... We are guarding the last part of the world, in which the higher races can live and increase freely, for the higher civilisation. We are denying the yellow race nothing but what it can find in the home of its birth, or in countries like the Indian Archipelago, where the white man can never live except as an exotic.<sup>56</sup>

Pearson would have had some detractors in northern Australia where, as pointed out earlier, multiracialism was a stark reality. Nonetheless, as the *Brisbane Courier* pointed out in August 1901, 'The people of Queensland have been as strongly in favour of the exclusion of alien races as the people in the Southern States'. And the danger to a 'White Australia' came not from transient labourers such as the Kanakas, but 'from Asiatic races, which have *permanently settled* in the large cities of the South as well as in the country districts throughout Australia'.<sup>57</sup>

Up on distant and tiny Thursday Island, backed by Queensland citizenship, Zarcal was fairly secure from such acrimony. But, by 1902, protectionist measures were being taken to bar non-White aliens from owning pearling vessels and to prevent the issue of new licences to non-White divers.<sup>58</sup> Such moves were aimed primarily at the Japanese, who had come to dominate the industry; however, Zarcal's expansion to other areas would still have been hindered. In January 1898, he temporarily expanded his operations to the Northern Territory, securing licences from the Government Resident in Port Darwin over the protests of European boat-owners, who alleged that his Queensland naturalisation had no validity in South Australia — that he was, in effect, a British subject in Queensland but an alien in the Northern Territory. Perhaps these protests did have an effect, for, by January 1899, Zarcal's fleet had departed from Northern Territory waters.<sup>59</sup>

A major turning point in Zarcal's fortunes came on 30 April, 1905, when a massive fire destroyed 14 buildings on Thursday Island's main commercial block. Zarcal's 'fine two-storeyed' building, still sporting the inscription *Noli Me Tangere*, was the main casualty.<sup>60</sup>

Forced to sell his fleet to recover from the disaster, Zarcal was left with only a handful of boats for pearl-shelling.<sup>61</sup> In semi-retirement, he concentrated on his Thursday Island business as pearl-buyer and jeweller, augmenting his local stock of pearls with purchases from Port Darwin and the Dutch East Indies.<sup>62</sup> Characteristically, perhaps, the final episode in his life was an extended journey to Europe begun in 1914. Mr and Mrs Zarcal are said to have paid homage to their monarch, the Queen of England, giving her a huge pearl. Prevented from returning home by the outbreak of the Great War, the Zarcals waited it out in Europe, finally renting a flat in Paris in early 1916. There, on 9 February, 1917, Zarcal succumbed to a stomach ulcer. At his deathbed were his wife Esther and 'an old friend from Thursday Island', the Rev. Father Ferdinand Hartzel.<sup>63</sup>

With Heriberto Zarcal died an era of Philippine-Australian or Austral-Asian interactions. Owing to the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, no longer would Filipinos, for a couple of decades at least, be able to filter into Australia's frontier regions in order to work or settle there. It was the relative openness of late 19th-century Australia that had enabled Zarcal to bring the world of Rizal, Aguinaldo and the Philippine revolution of 1898 right to her doorstep. But it was a move ahead of its time, which entertained no hope of success; fear of 'Asian assertion' was already in place at that time. Quite appropriately, by the end of 1905, all visible reminders of this episode had disappeared from Thursday Island. Zarcal himself died and was buried in France, the country whose history had inspired the Filipino revolutionists.

## Acknowledgements

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## Footnotes

- 1 This chapter is based largely on my 'Philippine-Australian interactions: the late nineteenth century.' In Iletto, R. C. and R. Sullivan (eds), 1993, *Discovering Australasia: essays on Philippine-Australian interactions*, Townsville: James Cook University, Department of History and Politics. pp. 10–46.
- 2 See Zaide, G. F. 1979. *The Pageant of Philippine History*, Vol. 2. Manila: Philippine Education Co. p. 308. Agoncillo, T. A. 1969. *Malolos: the crisis of the republic*. Quezon City. p. 312.
- 3 Pugh, T. P. 1899. *Pugh's Almanac*. Brisbane: T. P. Pugh. p. 108.
- 4 Rizal, J., translated by L. Guerrero. 1961. *Noli Me Tangere*. London: Longman.
- 5 Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso. p. 32.
- 6 Douglas, J. 1902. 'Asia and Australasia.' *The Nineteenth Century and After*, Vol. 52, July–December. pp. 43–54, at p. 51.
- 7 Netzorg, M. annotations to R. MacMicking. 1967. *Recollections of Manilla and the Philippines*. Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild. pp. 31–2, note 4.
- 8 'Report by his Honour Judge Dashwood, Government Resident, Palmerston, on the Pearl-Shelling Industry (Dashwood Report).' *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 2, 1901–02. p. 9. Bach, J. P. S. 1962. 'The pearlshelling industry and the "White Australia Policy".' *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 10, No. 38. pp. 203–13, at pp. 203–4. The diving dress with mechanised air pump allowed them to work further from shore in deeper water.
- 9 Douglas, J., 'Asia and Australasia', pp. 47–8.
- 10 'Report of the Commission appointed to Inquire into the General Working of the Laws Regulating the Pearl-Shell and Bêche-de-Mer Fisheries in the Colony (Hamilton Report).' *Queensland Votes and Proceedings* (hereafter QVP), Vol. 2, 1897, p. xxx.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 14 Douglas, J. 'Asiatic aliens in Torres Straits.' 13 July, 1895, PRE/102/8767, Queensland State Archives (hereafter QSA).
- 15 The Katipunan secret society, which in 1896 led the first phase of the revolution against Spain, was founded by Andres Bonifacio.
- 16 Agoncillo, T. A. and M. C. Guerrero. 1973, 4th Ed. *History of the Filipino People*. Quezon City: R. P. Garcia. p. 183.
- 17 Manuel, E. A. 1955. *Dictionary of Philippine Biography*, Vol. 1. Quezon City: Filipiniana Publications. p. 229.
- 18 Pugh, T. P., *Pugh's Almanac*, p. 154.
- 19 *Torres Straits Pilot*, 19 June, 1897.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 25 September, 1897.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 16 April, 1898. The *Pilot* was citing a write-up in a late-March 1898 issue of the Hong Kong journal, *Overland China Mail*.

- 22 Zarcal family interview, Manila, 18 December, 1990. The family's claim that Manuel was educated in Melbourne is plausible since his uncle owned an establishment in that city. Manuel eventually returned to Manila to become a highly successful lawyer.
- 23 *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 27 January, 1899.
- 24 SCJ/CF27, QSA.
- 25 *Torres Straits Pilot*, 18 September, 1897.
- 26 See Mercer, P. 1981. 'Clark, James (1857–1993).' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 8, 1891–1939. Melbourne University Press. pp. 9–10.
- 27 'Hamilton Report', *QVP*, p. 32.
- 28 *Torres Straits Pilot*, 25 September, 1897.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 9 October, 1897.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 30 October, 1897.
- 31 He was very close to the missionary, Rev. Father Ferdinand Hartzler. 'Esther E. Zarcal to Manuel Zarcal, Thursday Island, 9 January 1920.' Zarcal Family Papers.
- 32 'Mariano Ponce to D. M. Español, D. M. Reyes and D. F. Consuji [in Spanish], Hong Kong, 22 October 1897.' In M. Ponce, 1936, *Cartas Sobre la Revolución*, Manila. pp. 57–8.
- 33 See Zaide, G. F. 1973. *Manila During the Revolutionary Period*. Manila: National Historical Commission. pp. 33–42.
- 34 Alzona, E. 1971. *Galicano Apacible: profile of a Filipino patriot*. Manila. pp. 62–3.
- 35 *Ibid.* See also de Ocampo, E. A. 1970. *First Filipino Diplomat*. Manila: National Historical Institute. pp. 71–2.
- 36 'Ponce to D. M. Español, etc.'
- 37 Mariano Llanera accompanied Aguinaldo to his Hong Kong exile. Mamerto Natividad was killed in action in November 1897. It is tempting to speculate that some of the funds paid by the Spanish Government to Aguinaldo and his fellow exiles may have been used to finance the boat-building.
- 38 Magallanes was Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese who sailed for the Spanish Court and, in 1521, 'discovered' the Philippines for Spain. Miguel Lopez de Legaspi led an expedition to the Philippines in 1564–65 and proclaimed Spanish sovereignty there. Juan de Salcedo, Legaspi's grandson, played a leading part in the Spanish conquest of Luzon, 1571–72. The report in the *Overland China Mail* was reprinted in the *Torres Straits Pilot*, 16 April, 1898.
- 39 *Torres Straits Pilot*, 29 July and 30 September, 1905.
- 40 Aguinaldo, E. 'Letter sent to Sres Zarcal and Roxas [in Spanish], Bakood, 9 July 1898.' *Philippine Insurgent Records* (hereafter PIR), Box FA-2 'Correspondencia', pp. 6–7, Philippine National Library (hereafter PNL).
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 'E. Aguinaldo to F. Agoncillo [in Tagalog], Bakood, 7 August 1898.' In PIR FA-2 Tagalog, PNL. The Mausers and Remingtons had been captured from Spanish Guardia Civil and Infantry units.
- 43 Alzona, E., *Galicano Apacible*, p. 66.
- 44 Between 1910 and 1916, Faustino Lichauco, dubbed the 'Cattle King of Manila', did business in live cattle with the Western Australian pastoral firm of Conner, Doherty and Durack. See Durack, M. 1983. *Sons in the Saddle*. London: Constable.
- 45 Aguinaldo, E. 'Establishment of "El Comité Revolucionario" [in Spanish], Bakood, 10 August 1898.' PIR FA-2 'Correspondencia', pp. 20–2, PNL. See also Taylor, J. R. M. 1971. *The Philippine Insurrection Against the United States*, Vol. 3. Pasay City: Eugenio Lopez Foundation. p. 197.
- 46 See De Ocampo, E. A., *First Filipino Diplomat*, p. 92.
- 47 Invoice No. 14 in *Marina* 1898-99, B-105, Philippine National Archives (hereafter PNA).
- 48 A metropolitan newspaper apparently contained an advertisement in support of the Philippine Revolutionary Government, but this has not been confirmed.
- 49 *Torres Straits Pilot*, 16 April, 1898.

- 50 These views were culled from reports in the *Sydney Bulletin* and the *Brisbane Courier*. Unfortunately, the detailed citations have been lost. For an overview of the Australian reaction to the conflict see Perdon, R. 1998. *Brown Americans of Asia*. Sydney: Manila Prints. pp. 91–103.
- 51 Turnbull, W. 1974. 'Reminiscences of an army surgeon in Cuba and the Philippines.' *Bulletin of the American Historical Association*, No. 2, April. p. 42.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 De Ocampo, E. A., *First Filipino Diplomat*, p. 96. My italics.
- 54 'I. de Santos to E. Aguinaldo, Hong Kong, 1 May 1900', PIR SD516.6, PNL.
- 55 *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates*, Session 1901–02, Vol. 6, p. 7245.
- 56 Pearson, C. 1894. *National Life and Character: a forecast*. London: Macmillan. p. 17.
- 57 *Brisbane Courier*, 13 August, 1901. My italics.
- 58 *Dashwood Report*, Appendixes C and D, p. 1004.
- 59 *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 27 January, 1899. Two Thursday Island luggers, which continued to fish off Port Darwin, the *Daisy* and the *Electra*, were alleged to be 'notoriously owned by a Japanese syndicate' although permitted to work on the basis that they were Zarcal's property. Ibid.
- 60 'Thursday Island's record fire.' *Queenslander*, 20 May, 1905. I am grateful to my colleague Elizabeth Holt for her transcription of this account.
- 61 *Torres Straits Pilot*, 29 July and 30 September, 1905. There was another reason why the sale would have made sense. By 1905, the yield of pearl shell in the Torres Strait was down to 527 tonnes, well less than half the peak 1897 figure of 1,223 tonnes. 'Report of the Royal Commission appointed to enquire into the working of the Pearl-shell and Bêche-de-Mer Industries (Mackay Report).' *QVP*, Vol. 2, 1908, p. xlix.
- 62 'Mackay Report', p. 154. Moreover, at his death, he still owned 'boats for obtaining mother of pearl, black conch, tortoise shell and black pez[?]'. Memorandum attached to Heriberto Zarcal's will, Zarcal Family Papers.
- 63 'Manuel Zarcal to Esther E. Zarcal, Manila, 3 November 1915'; 'Esther E. Zarcal to Manuel Zarcal, Thursday Island, 9 January 1920'; both in Zarcal Family Papers. The information about the gift of a huge pearl to the Queen is from the Zarcal family interview. Esther Zarcal did not remarry. She eventually moved to Sydney, where she died in 1951.



*Japanese divers in diving suits, 1928.*  
Courtesy of John Oxley Library, Brisbane (Item No. 177901).

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