



Filipinas

Italia

México



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Global Change: Carlo Vidua and the Age of Revolutions in the Hispanic World*

Abstract

The archive of global history left to us in Piedmont by the traveler Carlo Vidua –whose intention was to use it to write the story of the great transformations of his epoch– takes us on a journey between continents like an Ariadne's thread in the Hispanic world. Looking in particular at the poles of Mexico City and Manila, we will begin to explore with Vidua forgotten aspects of the reconfiguration of hegemonies and trade, between East and West, reciprocal influences in revolutions, the birth of new identities, unprecedented ways of circulating knowledge. We will look at independent Latin America as a nerve center of nineteenth-century globalisation, and in the old and new channels connecting continents and cultures we will find some of the multilateral origins of modernity.**

Keywords: Carlo Vidua, Age of Revolution, Risorgimento's exiles, Latin American Independence, Mexico, Philippines.

Resumen

El archivo de la historia global que nos dejó en Piamonte el viajero Carlo Vidua –cuya intención era usarlo para escribir la historia de las grandes transformaciones de su época– nos lleva a un viaje entre continentes como un hilo de Ariadna en el mundo hispano. Observando en particular los polos de la Ciudad de México y Manila, comenzaremos a explorar con Vidua aspectos olvidados en la reconfiguración de hegemonías y comercio, entre Oriente y Occidente, influencias recíprocas en las revoluciones, el nacimiento de nuevas identidades, formas sin precedentes de hacer circular el conocimiento. Observaremos la América Latina independiente como centro neurálgico de la globalización decimonónica, y en los viejos y nuevos canales que conectan continentes y culturas encontraremos algunos de los orígenes multilaterales de la modernidad.

Palabras clave: Carlo Vidua, Era de las Revoluciones, exiliados del Risorgimento, Independencia latinoamericana, México, Filipinas.

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Introduction

One of the greatest changes in human history took place between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century. We call it the “Age of Revolutions”. This transformation was the result of a profound crisis, a long period of uncertainty, and involved several different parts of the world (Armitage & Subrahmanyam, 2010). It witnessed the birth of both the industrial revolution and a new conception of sovereignty, based on “the People”. The French revolution is the most famous but is nevertheless interconnected with phenomena such as the Italian Risorgimento and the Wars of Independence in Latin America. The latter marked the end of a global empire, that of Spain, which for centuries had been both a model for other European empires and their main antagonist. It also signalled the definitive affirmation of the republican model in America, a model which only years later would become dominant in Europe and worldwide. The collapse of the Iberian empires cleared the way for new rivalries over the control of resources, lands, profit opportunities. Modern imperialism, in short, emerged soon after the collapse of the traditional empires.

A Piedmontese, the Hispanic World and the Great Transformation

Carlo Vidua di Conzano (1785-1830), was an exceptional “observer” of the Age of Revolutions. Vidua is relatively famous in Italy for contributing to the establishment of Turin’s Egyptian Museum by brokering the purchase of French Consul Bernadino Drovetti’s collection. The breadth of the documentary material from all quarters of the world, which he planned to use in writing about the Great Transformation (Osterhammel, 2014) of his epoch, is key to opening new research perspectives into

the role of the Hispanic world in the birth of modernity. We are referring in particular to the collection Vidua gathered in Mexico City and Manila¹ during his last voyage, from the Americas which he reached in 1825 after visiting the celebrated Alexander von Humboldt, to Asia where he met his death in 1830 because of an accident near a volcano (figs. 1 and 2). Vidua lived in the midst of the Age of Revolutions and his travels sometimes placed him at the centre of events, even if it seems that he never actively took part in them. In Paris during the fall of Napoleon, he decided to write a history of the revolution. He took an interest in the Spanish War of Independence. In 1814 he was present in France, Great Britain and Holland; between 1818 and 1821 in Scandinavia, Russia (Saint Petersburg, the Sea of Azov, Taganrog, Crimea, Odessa, etc.), the Near East and Africa (Istanbul, Ephesus, Egypt, Nubia, Arabia, Israel) and in Greece, where some acquaintances of his were involved in the struggle for independence. In 1825 he travelled to the United States (New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Boston, Hartford, Québec, Niagara Falls, the Western territories and down the Mississippi to New Orleans). He discussed Hispanic American independences and their consequences with ex-presidents Jefferson and Madison. Between 1826 and 1827 he lived in Mexico where he interviewed leaders in the Wars of Independence and protagonists in the building of the new state. He visited Tampico, San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato, Salamanca, Celaya, Querétaro, San Juan del Río, Arroyo Zarco, Tula, the *desagüe* of Huehuetoca, Cuautitlán, Mexico City, Puebla, Guadalajara, Tepic, San Blas, Colima, Morelia, Jalapa, Veracruz. He intended to sail to Peru from Tepic, but abruptly returned to Europe instead. From Bordeaux he left for Calcutta. From 1827 to 1830 he travelled widely in India (Benares, Lucknow, Agra, Delhi, Allahabad, Meerut, Haridwar, etc.) and in Singapore, the Philippines, Canton, Macau, Indonesia and New Guinea. He planned to visit Australia. From

1 Material on the Philippines makes up about 10% of the volumes in the “Vidua” Miscellanea at the Academy of Science in Turin and material on Mexico 35%. The remainder is composed of documents from Canada, the United States, Sweden, England, France, India, Canton, Macau, South America, etc. In France and in Asia (India, Java, Canton and the Philippines) Vidua collected additional material on Latin America, also in preparation for a future voyage. Books, objects and manuscripts are preserved as well in the Civic Museum and Library at Casale Monferrato. For the collections and Vidua’s life, see Rosa Necchi (2020), *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, [online], and the bibliography cited therein.

the most convenient port he wanted to reach Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, Argentina and Brazil.

Vidua was not only an indefatigable traveller but also a researcher and budding historian. It is not widely known that he intended to write about two principal themes: the birth of new nations in the West and the consolidation of European empires in Asia. His globetrotting was not the whim of an eccentric Romantic, but a unique study “in the field”. He knew that sooner or later he would have to retire to Piedmont to take up the duties of his aristocratic station as decreed by his father (a minister of the Sardinian Kingdom); he intended to spend this second part of his life in writing. As we know, however, he never completed his world tour and he never returned home.

His plan was to compose, either in French or Italian, a book on the Dutch colonies in Indonesia, a history of the Macau colony, a treatise *Des colonies modernes* and other volumes on the independence of Mexico. Also in the plans were pieces on independent South America, several travel diaries, an essay on comparative architecture and a history of Italy. Motivated by reflections acquired in the Philippines – where he abandoned the negative opinion of Spanish rule previously shared with liberals, independentists and English and Dutch colonists – he outlined a comparative study of the European Colonies.² He wanted to analyse key junctures; we need only to think of the debate over *Imperial Meridian* and the “swing to the East” of imperial strategies, not quite so sharp perhaps if we keep in mind phenomena like informal imperialism and neo-colonialism in Latin America (Harlow, 1940, p. 129-187; Robinson & Gallagher, 1953; Bayly, 1989; Brown & Paquette, 2013; Shawcross, 2018; Thibaud, 2018; Bartolomei, Huetz de Lempes & Rodrigo-Alharilla, 2021, Besseghini, 2021; Todd, 2021). We may explore this global redefinition of empires from Piedmont thanks to the “Vidua” collections, and analyse both Orient and Occident together, something rarely

attempted (Bayly, 2010). This material shows us what was considered important at the time – allowing a reasoned, scientific reconstruction of the global transformations underway – also by politicians, merchants and scholars who guided Vidua in the choice of documents, aspects of which have been taken up again in recent historiographic debate. Among these we find the role of violence in defining the will to independence in Hispanic America; migration and exile as vectors of modernisation; changes in networks, actors and rules of commerce and finance with the slow decline of mercantilism; the rapport between continuity and rupture, unity and separation, in the Hispanic world during the epoch of independences; geopolitical rivalries over crumbling empires’ spaces; the establishment of republican and constitutional ideas in the dialogue between the Americas and Europe; and the role of the Hispanic world in productive and scientific change, in re-discovery of collectionism, in nineteenth-century sensibility toward public history.³

It is quite rare that a collection of documents and statistical data, ample and varied, but reasoned and “manageable,” allows us to virtually see almost the entire world, in reference to just a few years of crucial transformations, as per the intellectual journey of the collectionist himself. We are talking about hundreds of volumes, books, folders and collections of papers and manuscripts: often either unique or hard to find elsewhere. This material can be used in so many ways, especially if we consider the entire corpus of the collection. It is possible to analyse how the world-wide circulation of news among continents influenced revolutions of the era; discover the customs and beliefs of indigenous peoples; recreate scientific debates running through time and space and the birth of national identities; retrace important elements in the American and Asian paths of Italian exiles of the Risorgimento (Isabella 2009; Morelli 2019); reconstruct both legal and illegal traffic in principal world ports at a given time; relive

2 Of all his works, only a volume of inscriptions compiled in the Near East was published during his lifetime: in 1826, in Paris, thanks to his friend Roberto d’Azeglio.

3 On these themes, see for example: Blaufarb 2005, 2007; Grafe and Irigoien 2006; Adelman 2008; Isabella 2009; Entin, Gómez, Morelli and Thibaud 2013; De Francesco, Mascilli Migliorini and Nocera 2014; McFarlane 2014; Llorca-Jaña 2014; Fradera 2015; Podgorny and Lopes 2016; Françaço and Ordoñez 2019; Miller 2020; Moutoukias and ‘T Hart 2021; Bartolomei, Huetz de Lempes and Rodrigo y Alharilla 2021; Thurner and Pimentel 2021.

changes in work, the genesis of reform. In addition, we find detailed statistical documentation on demography, ethnic composition, literacy, tax revenues, production, maps of ports and provinces (e.g., figs. 3 to 9) and plans for new colonisations in the Americas and Asia,⁴ which shed light on many aspects of daily life in certain provinces or cities of the Hispanic world (Nueva Ecija, Jalisco, Zacatecas, Manila, Mexico City, Puebla, etc.). We can admire prints, lithographs, drawings and monuments, for example, from India and Mexico (e.g., figs. 10-11 and 12) or read literary works in various languages. There are catalogues from booksellers and libraries, like that of the English Factory in Canton. There is one of the largest Italian collections of antique grammars of native languages in the Hispanic world. We may reconstruct debates similar to those of today, like those dealing with the destruction of monuments to a past later considered shameful, or with the public handling of epidemics, or with the effects of migration, or climate change. We may rediscover meaningful cases in micro-history, biographies useful as maps to explore forgotten trajectories, and connections and propose new generalisations on non-linear progress toward the roots of today's world (Cipolla 1974; on micro-history and global history: Trivellato 2011).

Vidua is not the case of a restless aristocrat, both exceptional and paradigmatic, offering the pretext of seeking the exotic in all four corners of the world. He is, rather, a guide leading us into the depths of intellectual and material life as it was two centuries ago. The documentation found in the Hispanic world, in particular, reveals personal, business and cultural networks important to global history, with which the history of Latin America struggles to relate, in spite of the obvious importance of the independences in defining the global Nineteenth Century (Brown 2015).

Vidua's sensitivity towards Latin America and the Hispanic world has been little understood. His journeys to the Near East and the United

States have been studied far more (Cometti & Gennaro-Lerda, 1969; Invernizzi & Roccati, 2019). His trip to Mexico has aroused interest in scholars like Maria Matilde Benzoni (2004, p. 365-366) and Luis Alberto de la Garza (2014), the former producing reflections on Vidua's contribution in creating an image of Mexico in Italy, and the latter hypothesises on the motivations leading Vidua to travel⁵ and make plans for a history of the Mexican revolution: a choice perhaps linked to the nascent Italian national question.

Yet, Mexico has still not been considered as a portal to a global intellectual journey, experienced, imagined and planned by Vidua, in which the Hispanic world became a thread of Ariadne in his reflections on revolutions and empires. The reason is that the voluminous material collected in Mexico has been little utilized, neither the "Vidua" Philippines collection nor the material on India has been analysed, and little interest has been shown in the rest on Asia and Latin America. We need to study the documentation from Mexico together with the Asian material in order to understand this collection's potential to analyse the global implications of the Hispanic-American independences.⁶ Opening a large portion of the Hispanic world to direct exchanges with other imperial areas, in fact, forced all global players to rethink politics and commerce, the flow of knowledge and persons, and to trigger new reflections on identity and citizenship.

Vidua was positioned strategically in the context of networks of politics, economy and science. He was part of a flow of travellers, intellectuals, politicians and merchants, like Giacomo Costantino Beltrami, Francis Baring, William Bullock, Francesco Pittaluga – or Frédéric de Waldeck and Francesco Vecelli who indirectly contributed to the building of the new Mexican identity based on its pre-Colombian past. Differently from many others, such as merchant Heinrich Witt, whose recently republished diaries are a precious source for the history of independent Peru (Mücke, 2015), Vidua left not

4 E.g. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino (hereafter AST), *Manoscritti Rari* (hereafter MSR) 098.

5 Several readings of the reasons driving Vidua to see as much of the world as possible have been proposed, for example, by Romagnani, Falcomer, Coaloa and Testa. My opinion is cited above.

6 On the economic implications of the independences, see: Besseghini, D. and Permanyer, A., Special Issue: Global Merchants in Spanish America: Business, Networks and Independence (1800-1830), *Journal of Evolutionary Studies in Business*, 8(1), 2023

only subjective testimony but an archive of global history as well.

Revolution Between East and West: Risorgimento, “Cancel Culture” and Criollism

Vidua is the perfect guide to exploring the “middle territories” between conservative and radical networks during the Age of Revolutions and Independence. In the Americas, for example, he met, in addition to presidents Adams (father and son), Monroe, Jefferson and Madison, the Mexican minister to the United States Obregón and the Colombian consul-general Leandro Palacios (who gave him a letter of introduction to Bolívar), and the Colombian minister to Mexico Miguel de Santa María. He also met many of the main players in the history of independent Mexico linked to the “yorkinos”, a pro-United States faction, or to the pro-European faction of the “escoceses”, such as diplomats Charles O’Gorman and Joel Poinsett, politicians Manuel Mier y Terán, Servando Teresa de Mier, Lucas Alamán, notables like José María Fagoaga, learned men like José María Bustamante y Septién and Vicente Cervantes and merchants such as Eustace Barron. Vidua could present different political credentials according to whom he encountered. His trip to the Americas was authorised by Foreign Minister La Tour, of Carlo Felice’s conservative government, who requested that he favour the kingdom’s commerce and not return a republican. He was often introduced as the son of one of the King of Sardinia’s ministers and he may have been perceived as an informal agent of his government.⁷ Even so, he was welcomed in radical circles. Old friendships bound him to Piedmontese participants in the 1821 and Greek revolutions, Santorre di Santarosa in

particular. In Mexico he was a guest in the home of United States’ minister Poinsett,⁸ founder of the “yorkino” lodge and contact of Italian exiles active in the “Great Game” of Atlantic reconfiguration, such as Claudio Linati and Fiorenzo Galli, editors of the famous political-literary journal, *El Iris*. Vidua gathered information about ex-soldiers and Italian exiles arriving from London to work in the British mines,⁹ and on freemasonry and political societies in Latin America. He paid particular attention to the activities of Orazio de Attellis di Santangelo, an Italian “bonapartist” quite well known in Mexican history (Pani, 2013), as well as to General Vincenzo Filisola, Andrea Pignatelli and other “yorkinos” supporters. He became convinced that this “radical”, pro-US party was a source of Mexican instability. He detested Lorenzo de Zavala, who was at the heart of schemes involving the Risorgimento exilées. Notes he made in Asia show his disillusionment in idealists and radicals, risorgimentals and independentists.¹⁰ He must have appreciated, however, Linati’s communicative and artistic talents, since he collected several of his lithographs (e.g., fig. 13). He gathered extensive information on the unspoken geo-political rivalries between Great Britain and the United States for influence in Mexico, and in the colonization of Texas, and a copy of the first published map of the territory –by Linati and Galli– can be found in Turin. In short, his documentation on Mexico offers original hints for analysing neo-imperial influences in redefining American territories and their ties to the conflict between centralism and federalism, republic and monarchy.¹¹

Part of the “yorkino” *pamphlets* selected by Vidua in Mexico is dedicated to the cancellation of institutions and memories of the Spanish domination and to the theme, controversial at the time, of the isolation and expulsion of the *gachupines*, i.e. the Spanish –figures often of complex genealogy, some of

7 The informal agents in Hispanic America prior to official recognition have long been the focus of my research work. See also: Gutiérrez Ardiola 2015.

8 Archivio storico di Casale Monferrato (hereafter ASCM), Fondo famiglia Vidua di Conzano, Viaggi di Carlo Vidua, Taccuino II, n. 10a (hereafter FV II 10a).

9 I have made extensive research on the director of some of these, the “impresario of the Risorgimento in exile”, Vincenzo Rivafinoli.

10 ASCM FV VIII.

11 On Federalism and monarchy see: Verdo 2006; Carmagnani 2011; Tenavasio 2021.

Genoese or Piedmontese descent, as noted by Vidua. Remarkable are the “anti-Spanish” leaflets of José Ignacio Paz, such as *Monumentos gachupines, que insultan la libertad*, published in 1826. In it, the author lashes out at the incomplete cancellation of emblems and mottos of the crown and Spanish noble houses, “*de sus quijotescos emblemas y ridiculos geroglificos [sic]*”,¹² from streets, public buildings, homes, churches, paintings and tombs. Vidua remembered having actually met the author, even if he thought he might have confused him with someone else.¹³ Paz theorised an uncompromising visual republican catechism, to drastically move beyond memories of conquest and monarchy. He went so far as to denounce the failure to cancel, from a palace where the crest had already been removed, decorations alluding to heraldic symbols on the mezzanines. He demanded the clergy show their patriotic faith with iconoclasm. One of his pet peeves was against the “*criollos viles*,” who he thought were helping the Spanish re-conquest with their tolerant attitude. Like Santangelo, he was convinced that the “Holy Alliance” was preparing the re-conquest and the proof lay in the military reinforcement in Cuba.¹⁴ There was a plot afoot, then, which only fools or traitors didn’t see – a conspiracy theory from the past.

Vidua’s material on Philippine “Criollism” and the Asian repercussions of western liberal revolutions is helpful in enriching an historiographic picture of the Age of Revolutions often skewed toward the Atlantic. Mexico’s independence and the chaotic flow of news, in fact, raised strong anxieties in Manila (Ruth de Llobet, 2020), even while its own commercial interests were being re-adjusted toward inter-Asiatic commerce (Permanyer-Ugarte-mendia, 2020). Relatively many people were accustomed to considering life as divided between Manila, Lima and Mexico City. Actually, relations with America continued through new channels. The wide circulation among

Filipino merchants of independent Hispanic-America’s coin led the Manila Government to the decision, in 1828, of countermarking them “habilitado por el Rey N. S. Fernando VII”. However, Republican symbols that “may excite liberal desires” (“*possono eccitar concupiscienze liberali*”) remained visible – something considered a problem.¹⁵ A few hypotheses link the circulation of American silver coin to the silver crisis in China (Irigoien, 2009). Among the documents preserved in Casale Monferrato, the one most similar to a draft of historical narrative is the account of the ill-fated independentist insurrection of Captain Andrés Novales which took place in Manila between June 2 and 3, 1823. It is drawn from Vidua’s interviews with “*il Maggiore della Piazza D. Placido Duro*”¹⁶ and others. Consequences of a prior autonomist plot, the repression and reforms limiting access to positions as officers to creoles had generated discontent. The King’s Regiment had risen and Novales may have been proclaimed emperor (Gironière, 1854, p. 72). Other Vidua sources portrayed Duro as “*un infeliz que tremava di paura [trembled for fear; in Italian]*.” Vidua, however, refrained from taking sides and narrated the insurrection in a disenchanting and anti-heroic tone. He recounted with detachment Duro’s emphasis on the apparent paradox that the champion of Criollism, Novales, was born of Spanish parents while his lieutenant was the son of a Mexican. In Mexico Vidua had fully grasped the fluid and complex nature of terms like “Spanish,” “Creole,” “patriot,” and “foreigner.”

The Hispanic World and the Circulation of Knowledge: Grammars of Peoples

The Age of Revolutions gave an enormous boost to the circulation of knowledge. Wars and ideological and geopolitical conflicts forced political and national communities to define themselves in relation to diversity.¹⁷ The central role acquired by “the People” stimulated the production of national

12 AST, Miscellanea Vidua, Volume 3 n. 39 (hereafter MV 3.39), 2.

13 Ivi 3.37, note by Vidua; ASCM FV VIII 1b.

14 AST MV 3.33bis, 3.37, 17.3.

15 ASCM FV VIII 4.

16 ASCM FV VIII 9. Compare to another version in AST MSR 097.

17 An example is the role of Italians in debates on the new Mexican identity which emerges from the “Miscellanea Vidua.”

histories and revitalised studies in archaeology, ethnography, folklore, oral memories and traditions (e.g., Fabre and Privat, 2011).

In the 1830s, Cesare Balbo published a portion of Vidua's correspondence and his juvenile work *Dello stato delle cognizioni in Italia*, written in 1816. Among other things, it contained an analysis of how the "progress" of nations lies in their capacity to imitate what is useful. As a model Vidua pointed to *The Edinburgh Review*, later platform of the *Society for the Diffusion of the Useful Knowledge* by Henry Brougham, supporter of Hispanic-American and Italian revolutionists. Vidua was keenly interested in cultural and technological exchanges capable of producing social improvements. Bearing witness to this are his relations with diverse members of the Mexican *Instituto de ciencias, literaturas y artes* and his consorting in Mexico and the Philippines with exponents of the *Sociedades económicas (or patrióticas) de amigos del País* – expressions of Hispanic illuminism dedicated to scientific and material progress that survived independence –, or with the *Peace Society*. Even more important are his collections of books – both antique and modern – scientific texts (medicine, botany, astronomy, geography, etc.), technical manuals (mining and agricultural production, architecture, engineering), literary and historical works, catalogues, missionaries' guides, data on production (metals, dyes, tobacco, medicines, etc.), migrations and commerce (for example, between Chile, Peru, India and Australia, or between Manila and the neocolony Singapore). Vidua obtained much information on indigenous peoples from parish priests, monks and missionaries, who were often advocates for social and economic reform.¹⁸

In Mexico and the Philippines, Vidua acquired several works belonging to the "Missionary Linguistic" genre: grammars and catechisms

written in the Nahuatl, Otomi, Totonacan and Purépecha languages in Mexico and in the Bisaya or Cebuano, Pampangan, Tagalog, Bikol, Ilocano (including examples of epic poetry) and Ybanag languages in the Philippines. The study of this "Missionary linguistic" and of guides to the parish priests, monks and missionaries in indigenous communities was an instrument of ethnographic research for Vidua, along with a few proto-ethnographic works, such as those by Juan José Delgado. Vidua avidly read and annotated some of them to gather information on relations between Europeans and indigenous peoples, especially of Mexico,¹⁹ not only in the present but also in the past. The oldest of these "grammars," in fact, dates from 1673 and the most recent from 1810.²⁰ We don't know if he used them to communicate, but some are pocket sized and it is probable that he did, especially in the Philippine provinces where Ybanag was the lingua franca.

Although his "*taccuini*" (notebooks) on Mexico have unfortunately been lost, the ones Vidua filled with notes on the Philippines are precious, including in relation with Latin America. His interviews with clergy contain an extraordinary kaleidoscope of the customs of the many ethnic groups present and of the mixed communities like that of the Chinese *mestizos* (e.g., fig. 14) Thus, we can discover, even through a partial European filter, how the different communities understood marriage, relations with children, work, religion and the role of women. Many of his friends made efforts to send him, even to different Asian ports after his departure, documents and notes he might find useful. He wrote: "It might be that monks are harmful in France or in Spain, I don't know, but here they are beneficial and such [liberal] innovations are not suited to this country" ("*Può esser che i frati sian nocivi a Francia, Spagna non entro &c. però qui giovano e tali innovazioni non sono adatte a questo paese*").²¹ His observations of the endemic violence in other colonies, especially in India, frightened him and at that

18 E.g., ASCM FV VIII 5.

19 For example, the *Farol Indiano, y guía de los curas de Indios* by Manuel Pérez, 1713 (México: de Rivera Calderon).

20 Respectively, the *Arte de la lengua Mexicana* by Agustín Betancourt and by Rafael Sandoval. On the page before the frontispiece of the latter volume, Vidua wrote, "perhaps the best" ("*forse la migliore*").

21 ASCM FV VIII 5.

time the Philippines seemed more tranquil. Of boisterous judgements against the work of monks and missionaries in the Hispanic world he wrote: “I don’t listen to them” (“io per me non li ascolto.” Balbo, 1834, p. 310).

On the whole, Vidua attributed the relative Filipino stability to the cultural mediation of religious figures.²²

Collecting Worlds in the Age of Commerce

The crisis of the Atlantic empires accelerated globalisation of commercial and financial networks as well as an unprecedented mobility of capital, goods, people, information and intellectual works. Collecting and exhibiting objects, documents and even human beings (Abbattista, 2013), from far-away lands not only glorified the burgeoning European society but rendered the staggering variety of human experience familiar and perhaps of easier comprehension. An example of this is Vidua, who made possible the foundation of Turin’s Egyptian Museum. Another example is the exhibitions of Mexican antiquities organised in England by William Bullock, cultural entrepreneur, mine investor and one of Vidua’s contacts in Mexico, who presented part of Valtellinese Lorenzo Boturini’s eighteenth-century collection (Costeloe, 2006; Glass, 1976).²³ Poinsett did the same in Philadelphia.

Due to the chaotic climate of the struggles for independence, the Viceroyalty of New Spain’s collection of antiquities did not survive intact. In his letters, Vidua himself announced that he had sent an important Mexican collection home (Balbo, 1834, pp. 223-224), but of some items there is no trace at the Civic Museum of Casale Monferrato, nor in Turin. Paintings and prints of different national customs are, however, kept in Casale and at the Academy of Science in Turin,²⁴ of particular interest are the Filipino illustrations by Damián Domingo, director of the local Academy of the Arts

(figs.14, 16 and 17). The collection of the Civic Museum of Casale Monferrato includes diverse works of art and objects of use, especially of Asian origin, and souvenirs produced for foreigners. The Chinese albums represent one of the major European collections of paintings produced in Guangdong specifically for exportation to the West (figs 18 to 20; see: Carbone, 2002). A Chinese striking weapon preserved in Turin’s Royal Armoury certainly belonged to Vidua; more difficult to locate are the Javanese weapons belonging to him, which almost certainly are in the Royal Armoury too (Seysssel d’Aix, 1840, p. 221).

Among the Mexican material of unknown fate, Vidua claimed that he had gathered “paintings by the ancient Indians, very rare” (“*Pittura degli antichi indiani, molto rare*”: Balbo, 1834, pp. 223-224), probably Mesoamerican codices. We know that Vidua would have had no difficulty in procuring the most precious ones. His contacts included several of the founders of Mexican archaeology. He met and corresponded with Isidro Icaza, director of the newborn National Museum, and, above all, Vicente Cervantes, botanist and archaeologist – a key figure in Mexican collectionism. It may have been through them that he became interested in the figures of Antonio de León y Gama and José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez, late-eighteenth-century pioneers in study of the “Boturini Museum” and other pre-Columbian collections, and came into contact with their heirs and collaborators. He sent to Turin publications and manuscripts of these intellectuals, including a few astronomic calculations of León y Gama useful in understanding specific codices and artefacts (fig. 15). During the same period, Lukas Vischer, the Swiss merchant who had travelled with Vidua in the United States and accompanied him to meet Jefferson, brought from Mexico to Basel an exquisite collection of Mexican art, especially ancient ceramics but also wax figures from Puebla, quite similar to those preserved in the Vidua collection of Casale

22 Contrary to many “progressive” travellers, for example, Giacomo Costantino Beltrami (their paths almost crossed in America), Vidua was not anti-clerical.

23 Humboldt had acquired Mexican antiquities belonging to the Boturini collection from the heirs and connections of the astronomer and archaeologist Antonio de León y Gama, heirs and connections with whom Vidua too had relations (fig. 15).

24 For example, works on customs from the Ottoman world by Manzoni from Ancona, acquired by Vidua in Istanbul in 1819.

Monferrato (fig. 21, Cf. Anders Pfister-Burkhalter & Feest, 1967, p. 183). As we know, in 1827 Vidua suddenly returned to Europe from Mexico. He was probably aware of the offer to sell Mexican collections to the French court promoted by New Orleans merchant Latour Allard, together perhaps with the above-mentioned Waldeck, friend of Linati and Galli and sometime-collaborator to Icaza. In fact, Vidua had left Mexico with a letter from Cervantes to Tomás Murphy (ex-agent of the British Treasury in Mexico, among other roles) in Paris, just as the Mexican minister to London asked Murphy to investigate the affair,²⁵ a matter worthy of further study.

Active in cultural circles (as editors, theatrical impresarios, antiquarians, etc.) these entrepreneurs seized fresh opportunities in independent Latin America. We have already mentioned Bullock. Another example is the Lombard Vincenzo Rivafinoli who, after managing mines and selling Italian books in Mexico, ended up making Italian opera a saleable commodity in New York, in complicated synergy with Lorenzo Da Ponte, Mozart's librettist (Da Ponte, [1833] 2014). There is an inevitable bond between the flow of knowledge and commercial opportunity. The crisis of the Spanish empire induced Hispanics to break down important residual barriers to international commerce, even in loyalist territories. Thus connections among firms and merchants from Britain, the United States, France, etc., multiplied in the Americas, in Europe, and in Asia, stimulated by opportunities created in Hispanic America.

Vidua's letters of recommendation and of credit illustrate these networks, in particular the transpacific one, little studied as yet (Bonialian, 2019; Permanyer Ugartemendia, 2020). Commerce grew in alliances between foreigners and Hispanics. This is demonstrated by Vidua's encounters in Mexico, India and the Philippines. In the mesh of these networks may be found several Italian merchants, like Gandolfi & Co. of London who, by means of the Fratelli Nigra of Turin, bankers to the Papal and Sardinian courts, financially backed, at least in part, Vidua's journeys. We see commercial

relations between Manila and Macau, for example. One of the letters of recommendation obtained by Vidua in Mexico in preparation for his trip to Peru, never realised, was actually a letter for China. James Smith Wilcocks, United States commercial agent in Mexico, wrote to his cousin Benjamin Chew Wilcocks, with whom he had years earlier begun a lucrative opium traffic, that Vidua, Minister Poinsett's friend, intended to reach Canton from South America. As we know, Vidua instead first returned to Europe and then went on to the Orient. In India and in Canton Vidua gathered, in view of his trip to South America, numerous letters of recommendation and credit, invaluable to scholars (e.g., fig. 22).²⁶ We may see bonds between the famous British firm Russell & Co. in Canton and the no less important firm of Alsop & Co. in Lima and Valparaiso, linked to several Creole and United States merchants who, from Chile, did business in India via the British firm of Alexander & Co., which was likewise contacted by Russell & Co. for Vidua's journey. We know that the Canton firm Perkins furnished Vidua with letters of credit payable in Valparaiso at Alsop, Wetmore & Cryder and Frederick Huth, Guning & Co., and in Montevideo at Zimmermann, Frazier & Co. Moreover, we see that Bordeaux merchants Portal were in contact, too, with Johann Zimmermann, active in selling arms to the independentists and in privateering and former United States viceconsul and Hamburg consul to Buenos Aires (Körner, 1966). The Portals had business in Peru and Chile as well, for example with the Templeman Bergmann firm of Lima.²⁷ Thomas Templeman was connected to the house of Brittain, Waddington & Co. of Valparaiso, also because he was related to the Winters, of the British mother house of Winter & Co. (Bessegghini, 2020). Thanks to the Vidua collections we can see that Templeman and Bergmann of Lima had relations with Macau. Their contact in Calcutta was Henry Waddington, who in fact wrote Vidua's letters of recommendation to, among others, Thomas Green of Waddington, Green & Co. in Lima and Winter & Co. in Chile. As Cristina Mazzeo's research work shows, this group linking Bergmann, Templeman, Winter, Brittain

25 ASCM FV I-10.

26 ASCM FV I and II.

27 On Bergmann see Cristina Mazzeo's research work.

and Joshua Waddington constituted one of the most important networks in all Hispanic America. Henry Waddington also wrote to Juan José Sarratea (brother of the famous Argentine politician Manuel de Sarratea), who was involved in supplying and financing the Wars of Independence together with Templeman, Bergmann, Green and Joshua Waddington. Other documents reveal the global contacts of Latin-American notables and politicians, for example the continuous relations between the Carrera family in Chile and Minister Poinsett, who had been their supporter. More surprising is the discovery that British merchant and publicist in Calcutta, George Prinsep, was also in contact with the Sarrateas, due to old prior mutual affairs during the colonial epoch. He had recommended Vidua to the British minister in Rio de Janeiro, Henry Chamberlain, as a source of interesting information.²⁸

All this confirms that affairs linked to the Wars of Independence soon found synergies with the interests of global merchants in Asia.²⁹ In this commercial reconfiguration, the Hispanics were key. The British vice-consul who hosted Vidua at Tepic, Barron, was actually a Spanish merchant of Irish descent from Cádiz. In 1822 he had accompanied the Factor of the Royal Philippine Company in his flight from independentist Lima to San Blas and Manila – information on this is in

the Turin collection—,³⁰ later reaching Mexico (Besseghini, 2020). Here he became a key figure in exporting silver (coins and bullion) on British ships, illegally as well, towards Europe and Asia (Mayo, 2006). In Tepic, Vidua had met Danishman Fred W. Lofgreen, who had passed on to him contacts in Lima and information on how to reach Asia through the Pacific. When they met up again in Manila, Lofgreen had been the victim of a mutiny – he gave Vidua a written account of it – on the Chilean brig *Indefatigable*, in Australia.³¹ The Chileans were especially present in trade between South America and Asia. Like those of the United States, Chilean ships – which were sometimes former British vessels – could be used by British merchants to circumvent the remaining restrictions of the East India Company (House of Commons, 1821, pp. 140-141).

After the fall of the last shaky barrier between Atlantic and Pacific – the Spanish Empire – the world was more open. Economically and strategically, Great Britain dominated maritime trade, followed at a distance by the United States. Within this new hegemonic structure, however, were the polycentric roots of change, subterranean branches worth pursuing through Vidua and which, against all ethnocentric interpretations, nourished the birth of the modern world.

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28 ASCM I 3n.

29 Besseghini, D., The Weapons of Revolution: Global Merchants and the Arms Trade in South America (1808-1824), *Journal of Evolutionary Studies in Business*, 8(1), 2023, 81-119.

30 "Exposición presentata por A. de Peyster", 1822, Manila, AST MV 28.

31 AST MSR 097 3.

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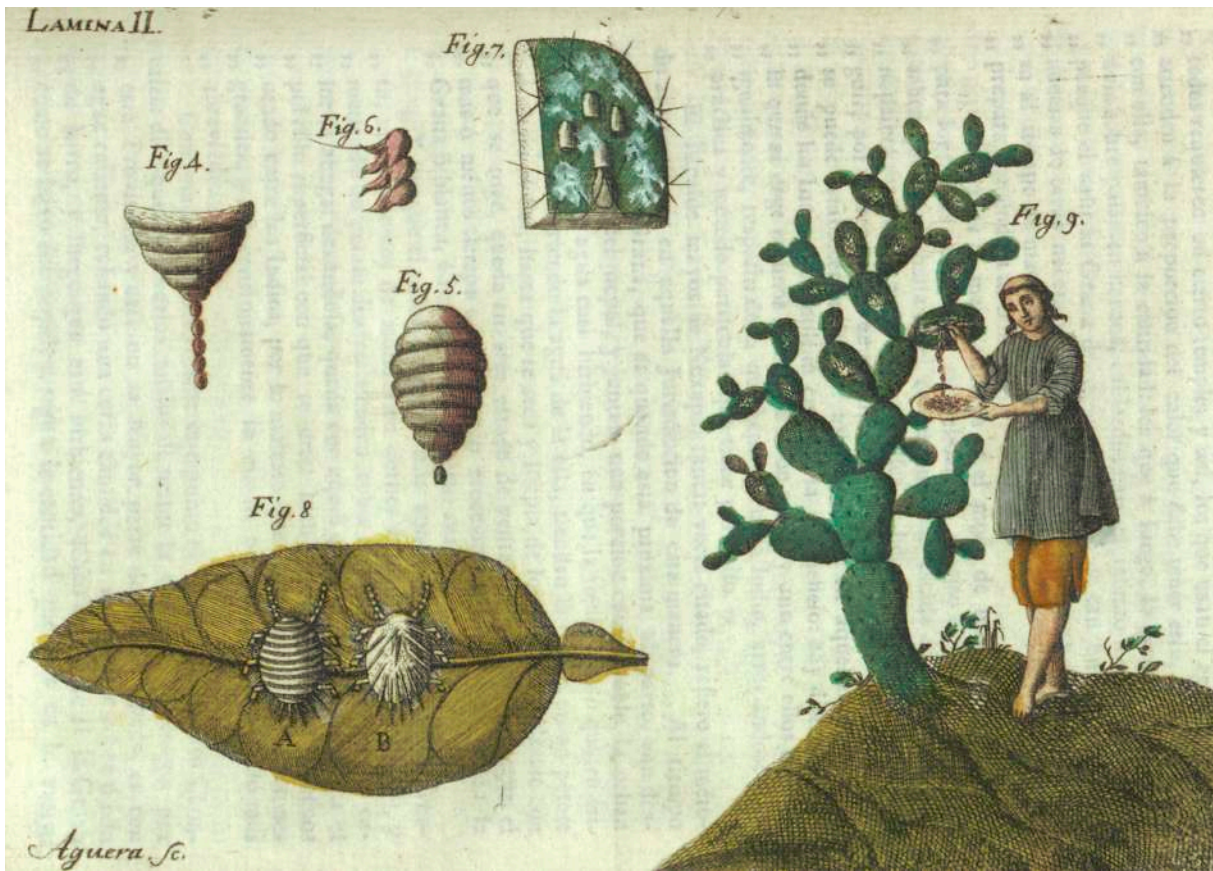
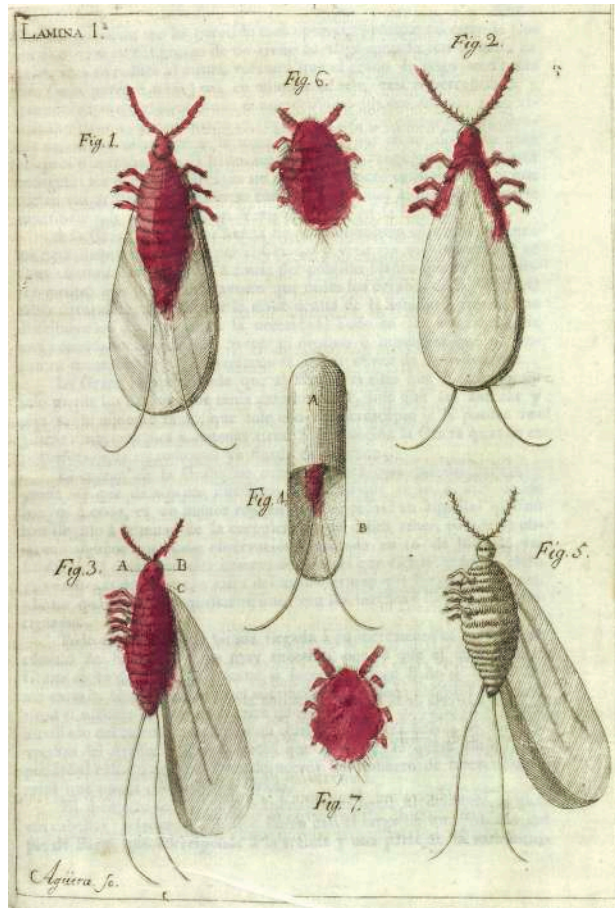
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Figure 1: Map of the United States and Mexico, 1825-1827. Accademia delle Scienze, Turin: Maps of Vidua's travels.



Figure 2: India, China and Western Oceania, 1827-1830. Accademia delle Scienze, Turin: Maps of Vidua's travels.



Figures 3 and 4: Accademia delle Scienze, Turin: Gazeta de literatura, 1794, Miscellanea Vidua, Vol. 16



Figure 5: Accademia delle Scienze, Turin: Map of Manila, Miscellanea Vidua, Vol. 24.

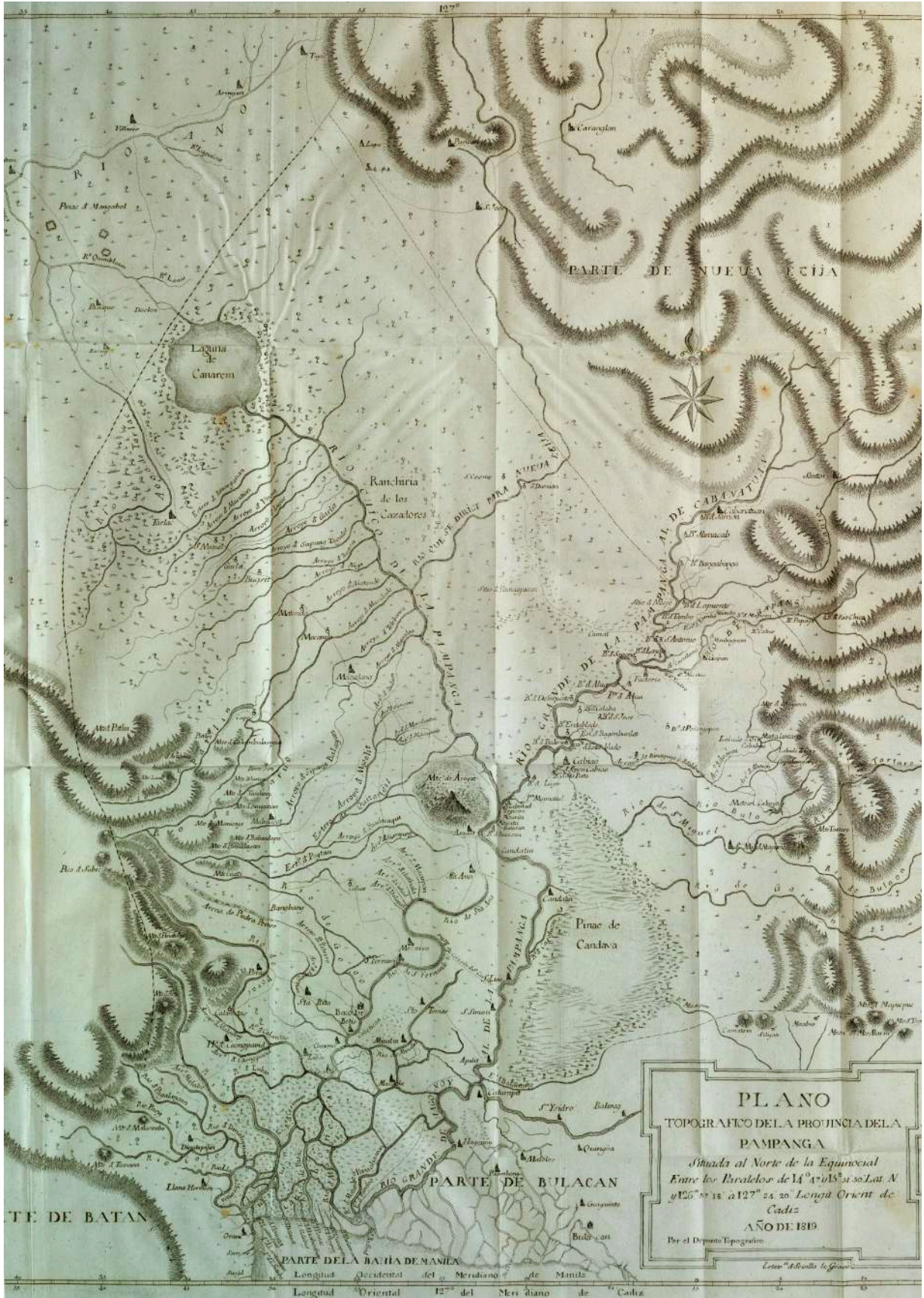
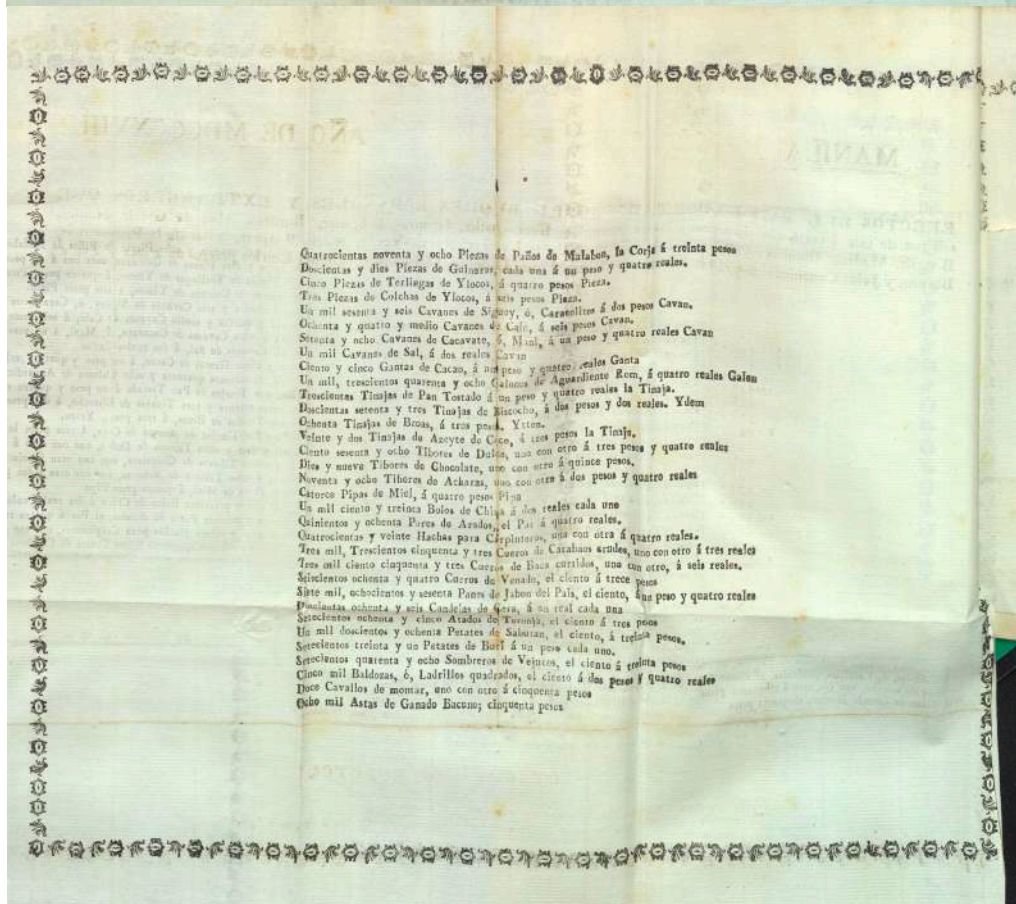
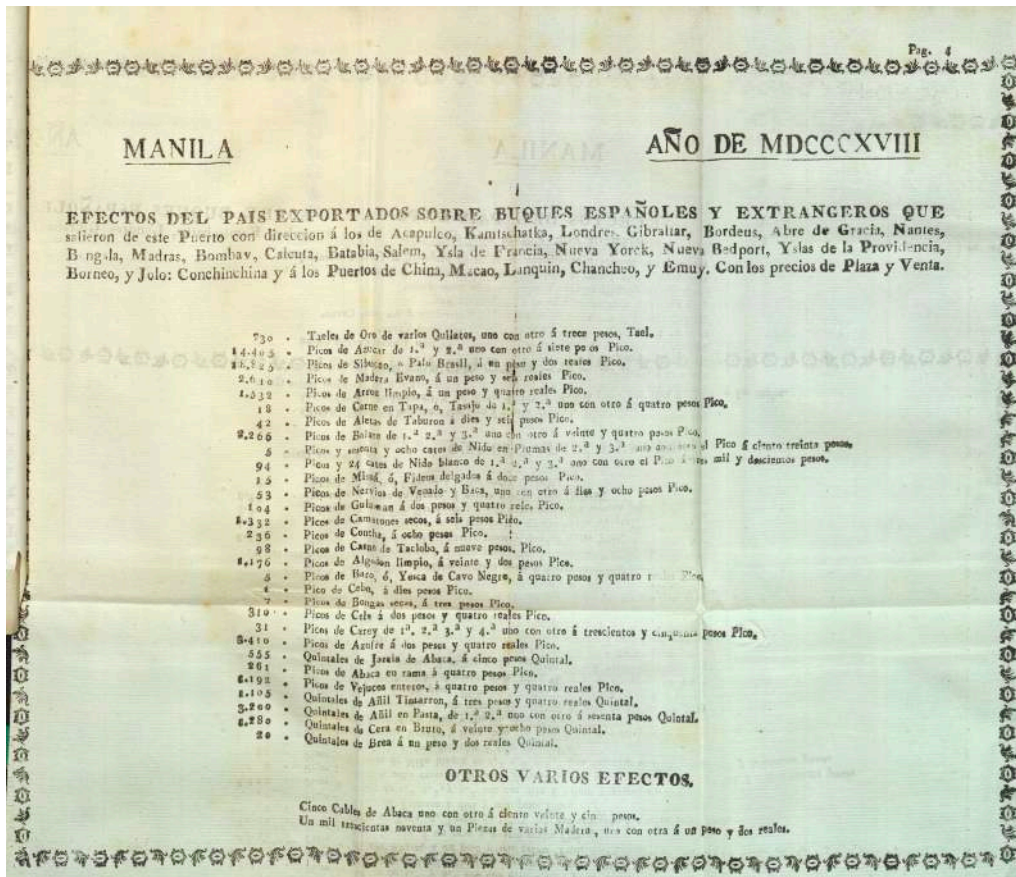


Figure 6: Accademia delle Scienze, Turin: Map of the Pampanga, Miscellanea Vidua, Vol. 24.



Figures 7 and 8: Accademia delle Scienze, Turin: Efectos del pais exportados sobre buques españoles y extrangeros, Miscellanea Vidua, Vol. 24.

FILIPINAS

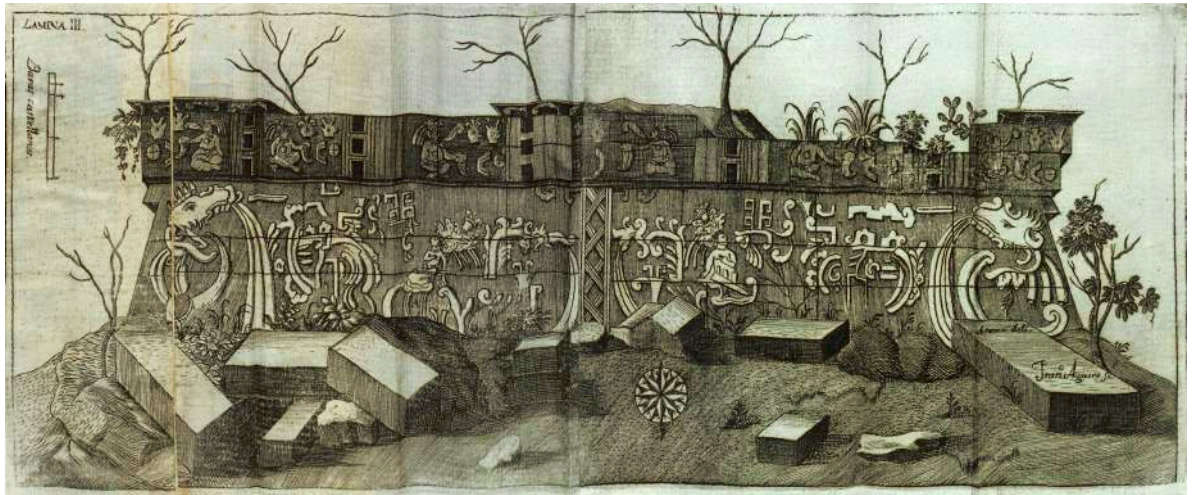
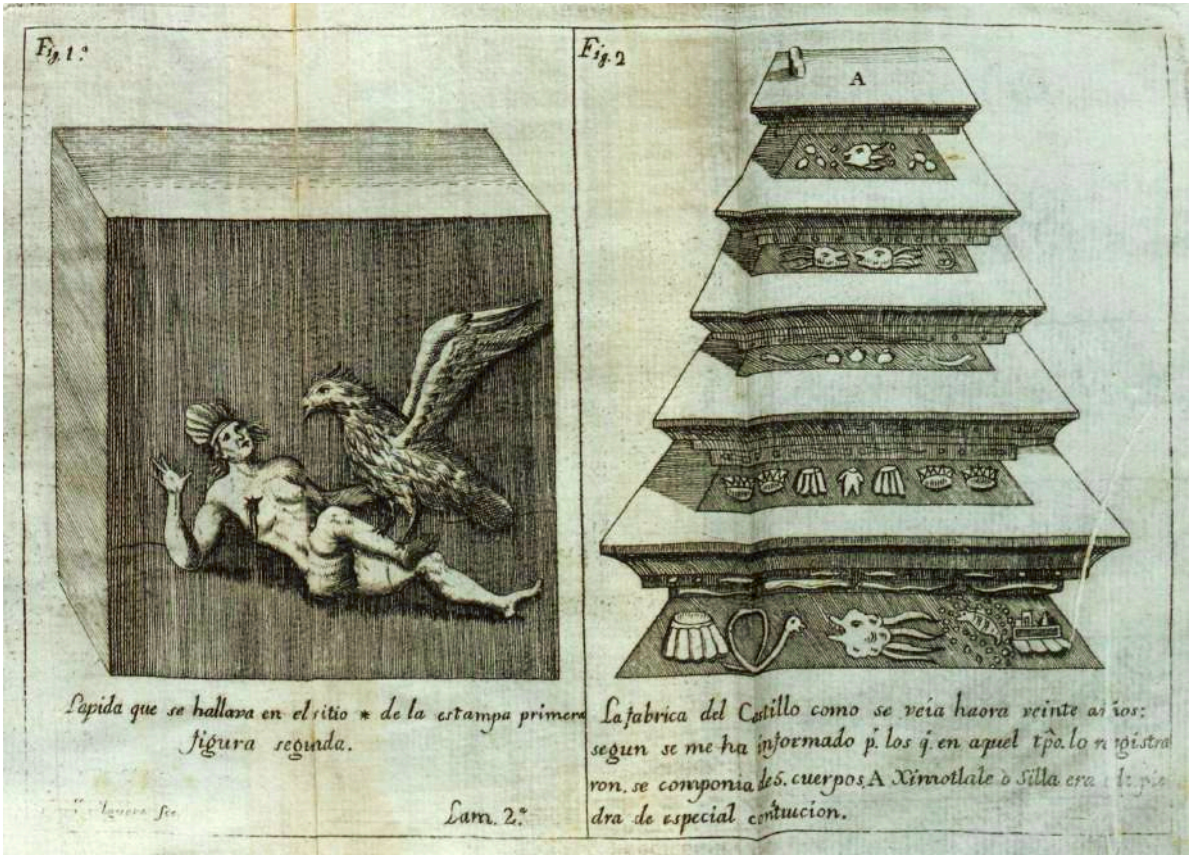
ESTADO GENERAL QUE MANIFIESTA LA POBLACION DE DICHAS ISLAS FILIPINAS CORRESPONDIENTE del año de M.DCCCXVII; con clasificacion de Islas, Partidos, ó Provincias, Pueblos, é Individuos contribuyentes de Naturales, y Mestizos de Sangley de ambos sexos, reservados por Privilegio, Edad, y Enfermedad; Solteros y Solteras; Jóvenes de Escuelas y Parvulos tambien de ambos sexos de Naturales, y Mestizos referidos; Españoles Europeos, con distincion de los Desendientes hijos de estos que se conocen con el nombre de Españoles Filipinos; Mestizos de Españoles; Morenos, Sangleyes, ó Chinos Christianos, é. Infieles, Negros Igorrotes convertidos, Indios Igorrotes Infieles, Caracumens, Ilongotes, Dima-gas Neofitos, Negritos del Monte, Negritos Cimarrones, Indios Cimarrones, Neofitos, Indios Infieles reducidos Carolinos, y otros varias Castas, como son las de Negritos Alaguetes, é; Indios Apayaos, Adamitas ó Adacen, Guinaan, Calansan &c. &c. todos Vasallos del Soberano de las Españas.

ISLAS DE LUZON, O NUEVA CASTILLA

PROVINCIA DE TONDO CON INCLUSION DE LA CIUDAD DE MANILA

PUEBLOS	Individuos Contribuyentes de Nat. y M.	Reservados	Solteros y Solteras	Escuelas y Parvulos	Españoles Europeos	Españoles Filipinos	Mestizos de Españ.	Morenos	Negros convertidos	Sangleyes Christianos	Sangleyes Infieles	Bautizados	Casados	Defuntos	Numero de Almas segun los Padrones.	Numero de Almas á cinco por Familia
Manila.....	2198		1000	1920	371	680	1340	35	26		256	353	79	190	8998	7295
Tondo Cavenera.....	5316	1984	1992	3937								283	190	140	13424	13290
Caloran.....	680	200	545	428								107	40	126	1964	1700
Binondo.....	2368	1711	573	4459	125	483	924	33		1160	4200	1369	230	608	22370	5920
Tambo y Nabetas.....	7620	1792	3950	7308								508	100	389	21378	19050
Santa Cruz.....	1335	2044	1204	659		58		37				327	68	285	5074	3337
Qulapo y S. Sebastian.....	1176	165	1014	689			141	5		13	67	182	40	163	3453	294
San Miguel.....	623	284	467	298	26			88				105	33	83	1891	1557
S. Fernando de Paco, ó Dilao.....	2106	481	1421	956			181					190	43	163	533	5263
Santa Ana, Mandaleya, y San Juan del Monte.....	1644	596	1138	893								174	82	174	4441	4100
Pueblo, Sin Anton y San Francisco del Monte.....	1615	497	517	656								135	20	72	347	4037
Panalcan.....	1072	253	655	530								113	1	97	262	2680
S. Pedro Macati y Gosalupz.....	861	215	850	395								109	27	75	2437	2152
Pasig.....	6004	1529	1985	4437								510	180	309	14460	15010
Patena.....	1452	32	395	838								184	73	90	3181	3630
Taguig.....	2984	611	1028	1610								336	80	310	6568	7460
Manting-Lupa.....	713	107	181	271			4					41	3	24	1324	1782
Cainta.....	604	103	442	187								31	23	23	138	1511
Taytay.....	334	403	1270	500								5	11	21	1164	1995
Antipolo.....	796	54	146	113								29	9	9	648	531
Bonobon.....	312	31	128	87					170			159	27	155	302	3747
San Mateo.....	1499	301	706	344								22	39	142	608	4415
Mariquina.....	1756	411	2049	221								6	1	2	361	2480
Ermita.....	994	241	1280	678			7	159				228	72	195	361	2480
Malate y Pasay.....	3051	893	1243	2230								380	80	116	767	7623
Parañaque y Malibay.....	3640	874	1220	2988								390	202	336	9065	9100
Lupina.....	957	159	531	429								45	14	24	2121	2392
Total de Almas de la Poblacion del Corregimiento de Tondo.	55235	6283	32047	10711	572	1228	7937	181	210	1217	4543	6735	1964	455	162397	138334

Figure 9: Accademia delle Scienze, Turin: Estado general que manifiesta la poblacion de dichas Islas Filipinas, Miscellanea Vidua, Vol. 24.



Figures 10 and 11: Accademia delle Scienze, Turin: Antonio de Alzate y Ramirez, Descripcion de las antigüedades de Xochicalco. México: Zuniga y Ontiveros, 1791.

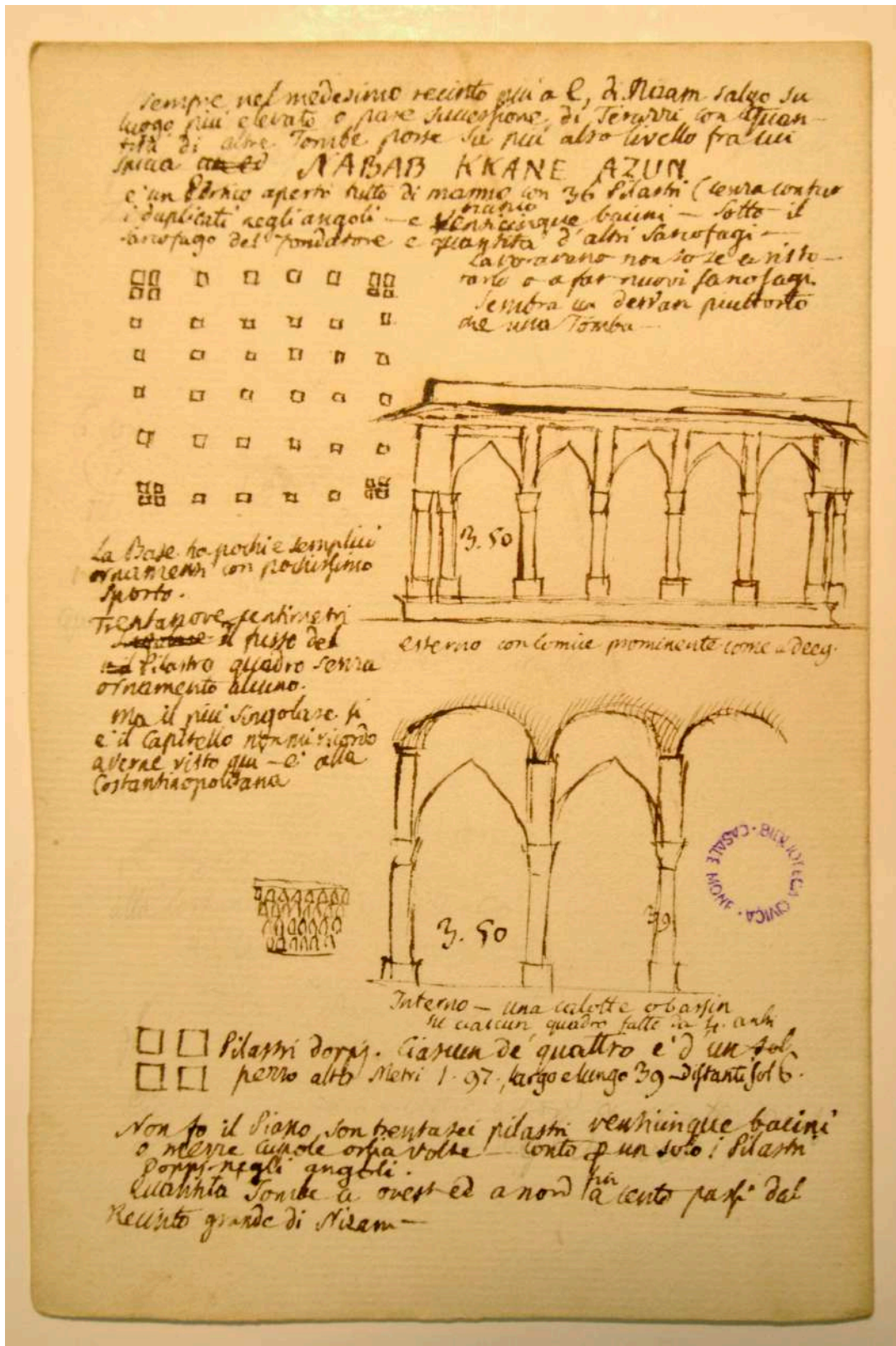


Figure 12: Archivio Civico di Casale Monferrato: One of many drawings by Vidua of Indian buildings; Fondo Famiglia Vidua di Conzano: Viaggi di Carlo Vidua, Taccuino IV, num. 17.

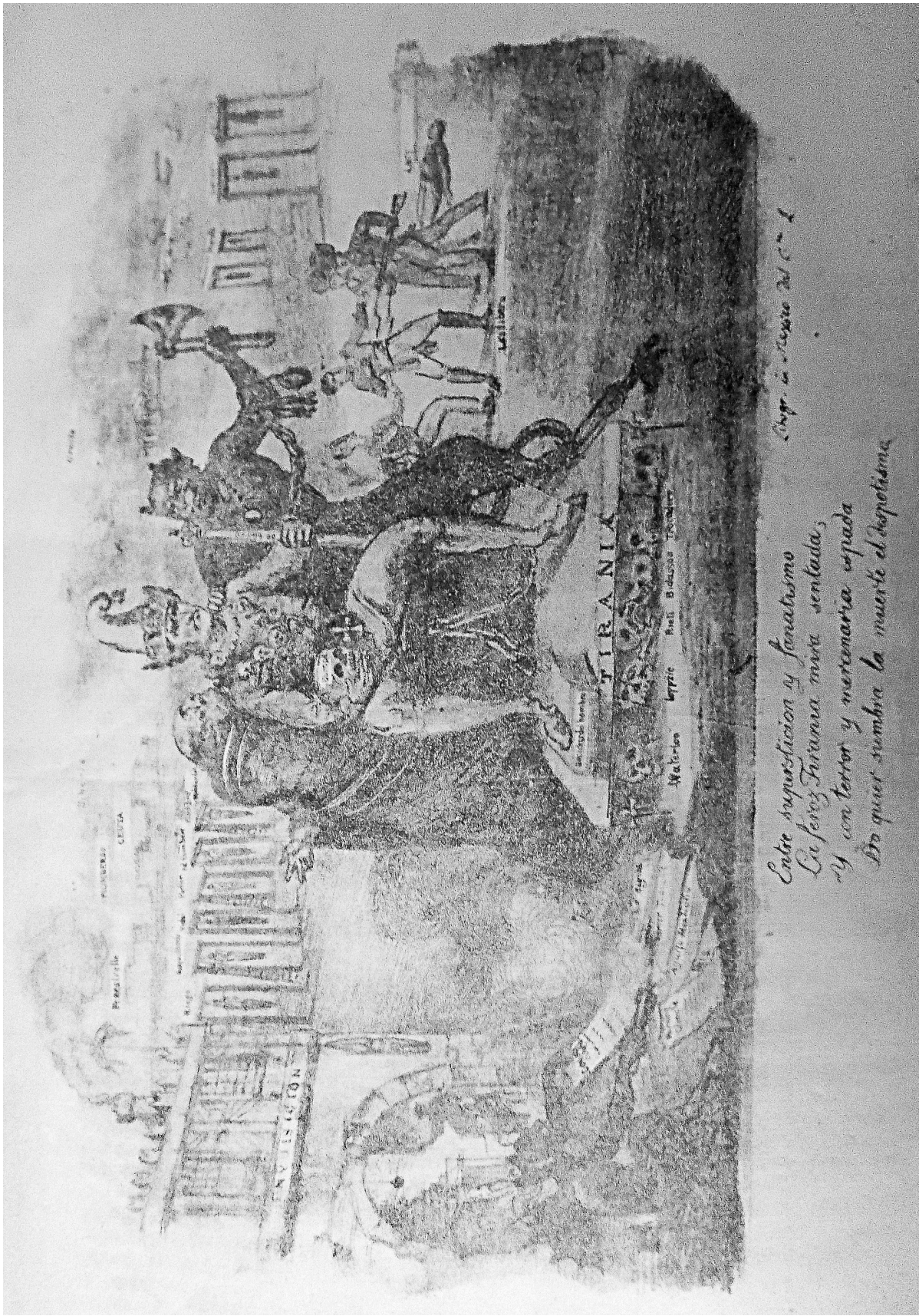


Figure 13: Accademia delle Scienze, Turin: "La Tirania", lithography by C. Linati, Miscellanea Vidua, Vol. 2; a slightly different version in "El Iris" April 15, 1826.



Figure 14: Museo Civico di Casale Monferrato, Vidua Collection: Damián Domingo, Coleccion de trages de los naturales de Filipinas, 1829.

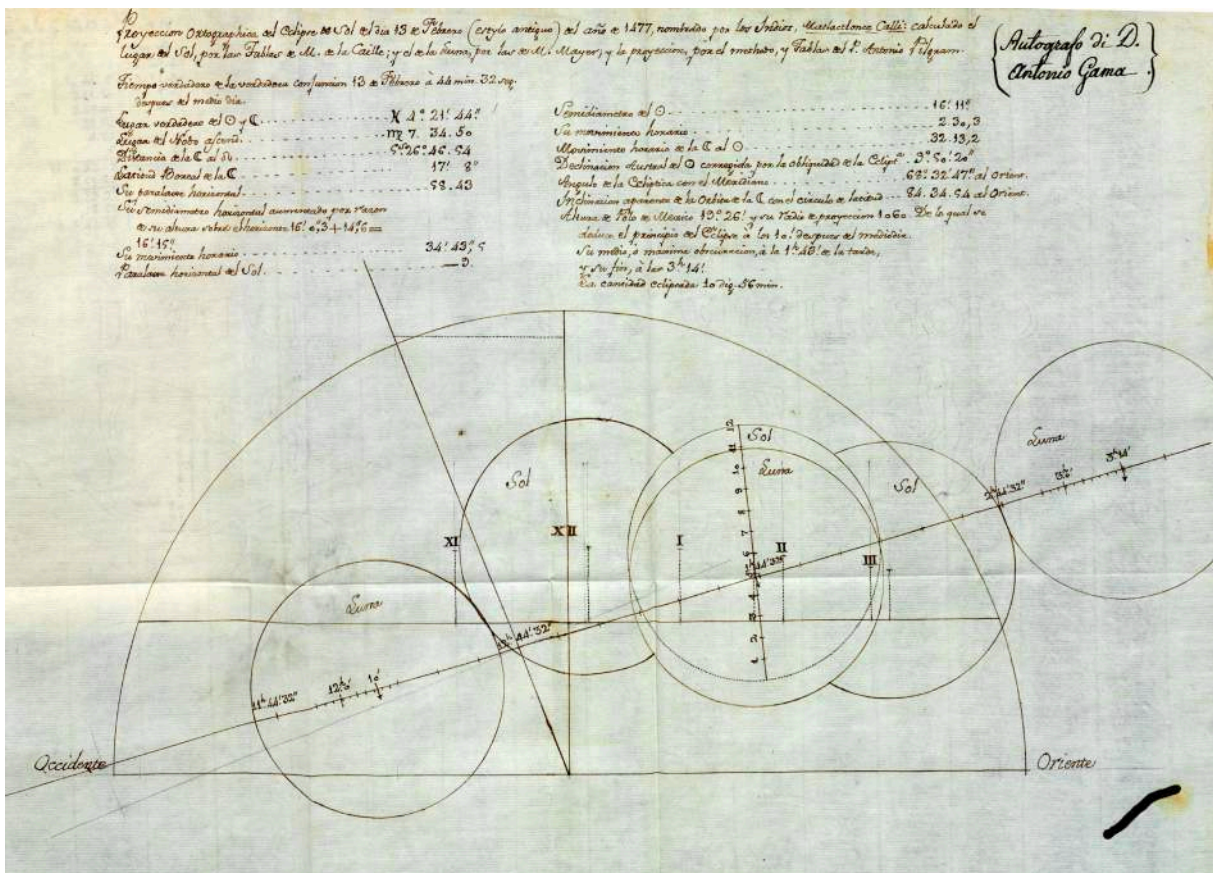


Figure 15: Accademia delle Scienze, Turin: "Autografo di D. Antonio Gama [...] datami da suo figlio" ["document handwritten by Antonio Gama [...] given to my by his son"], Miscellanea Vidua, Vol. 16.



Figures 16 and 17: Museo Civico di Casale Monferrato, Vidua Collection: Damián Domingo, Coleccion de trages de los naturales de Filipinas, 1829.



Figures 18, 19 and 20: Museo Civico di Casale Monferrato, Vidua Collection: Canton Export Watercolors.



Figure 21: Museo Civico di Casale Monferrato, Vidua Collection: Puebla wax figurines.

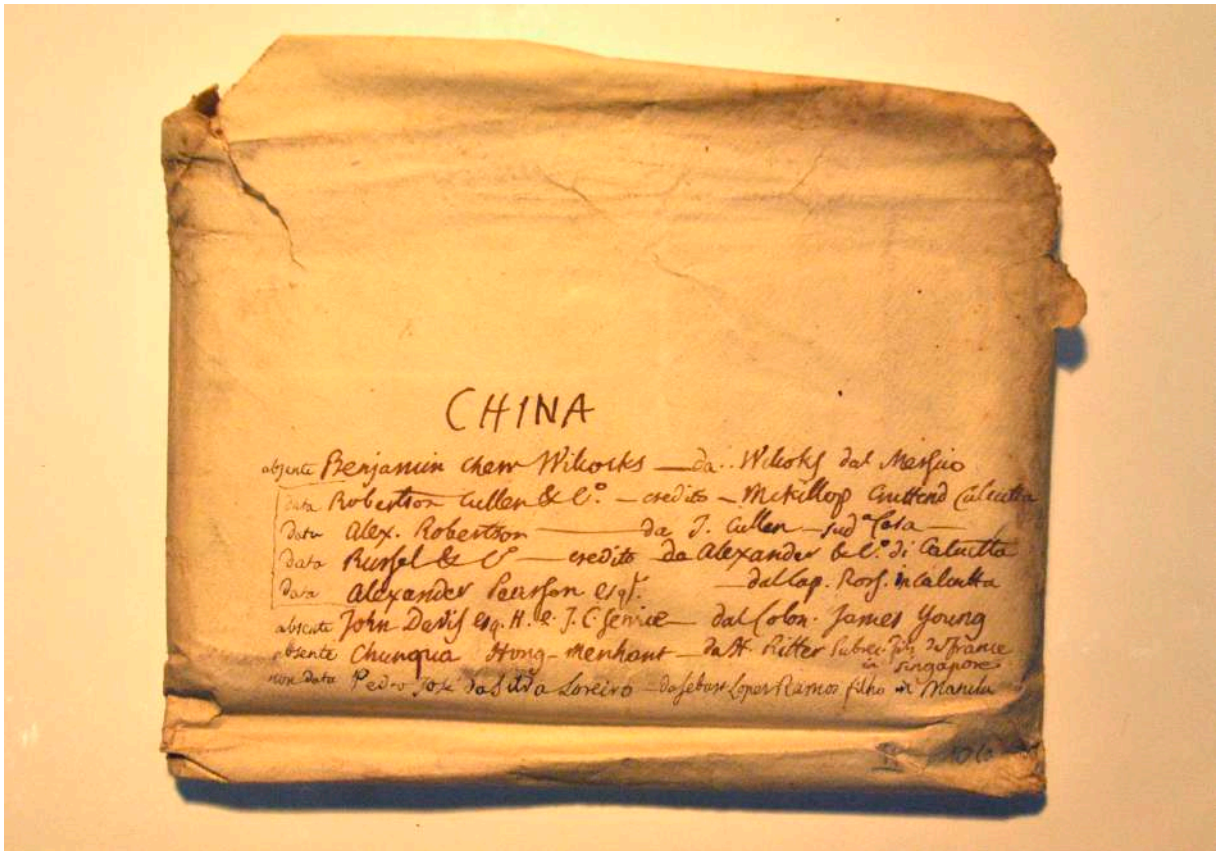


Figure 22: Archivio Storico di Casale Monferrato: Vidua's notes on his recommendation and credit letters; Fondo Famiglia Vidua di Conzano: Viaggi di Carlo Vidua, Taccuino II 10.