

Vocabulario de iapon, a seventeenth-century Japanese-spanish dictionary printed in manila: From material object to cultural artifact

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Abstrak

In order to survive, books in the Philippines have had to contend with multiple forces: the humid tropical climate, typhoons, floods, fires, earthquakes, termites, wars throughout the nation's colonial history. This fact is often raised in studies on the history of the book in the Philippines, but how and why the book survives in spite of such conditions has hardly been given attention. Such a lacuna in Philippine book history is what this study seeks to fill. It explores the survival of Philippine incunabula (books printed from 1593 to 1640), with a focus on the transformation from material object to cultural artifact that the book undergoes in the course of enduring through the centuries. This study examines the case of the *Vocabulario de Iapon* (Japanese vocabulary), with a particular interest in the copy in the Bernardo Mendel Collection at the Lilly Library of Indiana University. The *Vocabulario de Iapon*, which was printed in Manila in 1630, is both typical and unique among Philippine incunabula for the circumstances it saw from its publication to its survival. It has much to tell about publishing in the Philippines in the seventeenth century, the reception of books through the ages, and the culture of collecting in modern times.