Manel Ollé. *Islas de plata, imperios de seda: Juncos y galeones en los Mares del Sur*. Barcelona: Acantilado, 2022. ISBN: 9788419036131. pp. 519; Manel Ollé. 季风海域 的 丝银对流 1 6 —1 7 世 纪 中 西 交 往 图 景 中 的 东 亚 移 民 、 贸 易 与 文 化. 北京:中信出版社, 2026. ISBN978- 7-5217-7585-3. pp. 614

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In *Islas de plata, imperios de seda*, Manel Ollé offers a sweeping and deeply researched reconstruction of the maritime worlds that linked China, Southeast Asia, the Philippines, New Spain, and the Iberian empires during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For Ollé, the Pacific was not a peripheral extension of European expansion but a polycentric maritime world in which Chinese commercial networks, Iberian imperial ambitions, and transregional diasporas converged. Manila emerged as the principal hinge linking American silver, Asian commerce, and the first truly global economy. Drawing on decades of scholarship and an extraordinary range of Iberian and Chinese sources, Ollé argues that the "Mares del Sur" constituted one of the principal laboratories of early modern globalization. Rather than treating the Pacific as a peripheral extension of European expansion, he repositions it as a dynamic zone where imperial ambitions, commercial interests, migration, diplomacy, religion, and cultural exchange converged. One of the strongest recent examples of polycentric connected history, combining maritime history, global microhistory, and trans-imperial history to relocate the center of early modern globalization from the Atlantic to the Fujian–Manila maritime system. In the literature on early modern globality, it sits alongside works by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Angela Schottenhammer, Tonio Andrade, Francesca Trivellato,

Matt Matsuda, Ricardo Padron, Rachel Junlei Zhang, Christina Lee, while making its own distinctive contribution by demonstrating that the Pacific was not a peripheral extension of globalization but one of its principal organizing spaces.

One of the book's principal historiographical achievements is its reorientation of the geography of early modern globalization. Ollé rejects narratives that privilege either European imperial expansion or Ming-centered political history. Instead, he argues that Manila functioned as a commercial center in its own right rather than merely as a Spanish colonial frontier. As highlighted throughout the book, the real center of gravity of this maritime world lay along the Fujian-Manila axis, where Chinese merchants, Spanish officials, missionaries, and regional trading communities interacted within preexisting Asian commercial systems. This perspective challenges both Eurocentric and Sinocentric interpretations by emphasizing the agency of Asian merchants and the adaptability of Spanish colonial institutions within Asian networks.

A major strength of Ollé's study lies in his remarkable ability to integrate diverse historical actors into a coherent narrative. Missionaries, merchants, pirates, diplomats, translators, sailors, and Chinese brokers all emerge as participants in a highly interconnected maritime world. Particularly compelling is his treatment of the Chinese Parián in Manila. Rather than depicting the Parián simply as an appendage of Spanish colonial administration, Ollé reconstructs it as one of the principal commercial hubs within wider Asian trading networks. His concept of the Spaniards' "strategic Asianization" is especially persuasive, demonstrating how Spanish institutions in Manila progressively adapted to Chinese and Southeast Asian commercial practices rather than imposing exclusively European models.

Ollé carefully situates commerce within the environmental rhythms of the monsoon system, connecting the departures of Chinese junks and Manila galleons to seasonal winds, ritual calendars, and religious practices dedicated to maritime deities such as Mazu. By incorporating these ecological and ritual infrastructures into his analysis, he demonstrates that maritime mobility depended not only upon imperial policy or economic demand but also upon environmental knowledge accumulated over centuries by Asian navigators. This environmental dimension adds an important layer to existing scholarship on the Manila galleon and transpacific trade. Equally valuable is Ollé's sustained attention to cartography. The Selden Map occupies a central place in his argument because it visualizes the commercial geography that connected Fujian, Manila, Ryukyu, Japan, Batavia, Patani, Calicut, Hormuz, and other ports through dense maritime routes annotated in Chinese. In contrast with European imperial maps, the Selden Map represents an Asian commercial worldview organized around navigation and exchange rather than territorial sovereignty. Ollé uses this cartographic evidence effectively to support his broader contention that the Pacific should be understood as an integrated commercial system rather than as separate imperial spheres.

The chapters devoted to Japan interaction with Manila and the rebuilding of the Parián after the massacre of 1603 are particularly illuminating. Regarding the one on Parián, Ollé's short reconstruction of the 1606 registry reveals patterns of commercial concentration, property ownership, and social organization within Manila's Chinese community. His quantitative analysis demonstrates that nearly half of the Parián's commercial establishments were controlled by only a handful of elite Sangley landlords, illustrating the degree of economic consolidation achieved shortly after the violence of 1603. These sections also show how colonial authorities categorized the Chinese population through distinctions such as Sangley cristiano and Sangley infiel, revealing how commercial opportunity, legal status, and ethnic classification became deeply intertwined. Closely related is Ollé's insightful treatment of colonial nomenclature. His discussion of Chinese

self-designations such as *tanrenjie* ("street of the Tang") alongside Spanish labels such as Sangley demonstrates that naming itself functioned as a political instrument. Rather than accepting colonial terminology as neutral description, Ollé shows how these labels shaped legal identity, taxation, and social hierarchy while obscuring Chinese understandings of community and belonging. This analysis contributes significantly to current scholarship on colonial taxonomy and administrative classification in the early modern world.

Methodologically, the book is impressive for its interdisciplinary range. Ollé combines maritime history, cartography, economic history, missionary studies, literary analysis, environmental history, and Chinese-language scholarship without sacrificing narrative clarity. His prose remains accessible despite the complexity of the material, allowing readers to appreciate both detailed archival findings and broader historiographical interventions. The integration of Chinese primary sources with Iberian documentation is particularly valuable, allowing Ollé to move beyond traditional European perspectives and to reconstruct the maritime world from multiple vantage points. The principal limitation of the book stems less from what it includes than from what it intentionally leaves aside. Ollé explicitly narrows his focus to the Fujian-Manila commercial axis, leaving Austronesian and Malay-Polynesian maritime societies largely outside the scope of the study. While this decision allows for a more focused analysis of Sino-Iberian interactions, it also limits the extent to which indigenous maritime networks can be integrated into the broader picture of Pacific globalization. A fuller engagement with these communities might have further complicated the already rich commercial geography that Ollé reconstructs.

Despite this limitation, *Islas de plata, imperios de seda* stands as one of the most important recent contributions to the study of the early modern Pacific. By foregrounding Chinese agency, maritime mobility, environmental rhythms, and transcultural negotiation, Ollé fundamentally reshapes our understanding of Manila and the South China Sea within global history. His reinterpretation of the Pacific as a connective space rather than a dividing ocean challenges long-established historiographical assumptions and offers an important model for future research on global interactions before the rise of modern imperialism. For historians of China, the Philippines, the Spanish Empire, maritime Asia, and early modern globalization, this book will undoubtedly become an indispensable reference.