

Independent Catholicism in an indigenous-Christian Public Sphere. The Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Independent Catholics of India, Goa, and Ceylon around 1900

ADRIAN HERMAN

UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG

Sedanstr, 19, 20146 Hamburg,

GERMANY

Email Address: adrian.hermann@uni-hamburg.de

Abstract: In 1902 the publicist, folklorist, historian, political activist and religious rebel Isabelo de los Reyes y Florentino (1864–1938) proclaimed the establishment of an independent national Philippine church – the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) – and named the Filipino priest Gregorio Aglipay (1860–1940) as its first archbishop. In 1903 the IFI received two letters from Ceylon, signed by Stephen Silva, trustee of the Independent Catholics of India, Goa, and Ceylon. The independent Catholics in Ceylon were asking for support and the sending of Philippine priests for their parishes. Focusing its analysis on two early IFI periodicals (1) *La Verdad* (1903), edited by the American Arthur W. Prutch & Dr. Manuel Xerez-Burgos, and (2) *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente: Revista Catolica* (1903–1904), edited by Isabelo de los Reyes. This paper explores the manifold connections between religious, social, political and national struggles for emancipation in the Philippines around 1900. Furthermore, since its beginnings, the IFI understood itself as belonging to a transnational, global movement of independent Catholic churches, was seeking contact with other contemporary Rome-independent groups and was publishing letters it had received in the IFI periodicals. Focusing on the importance of periodicals and newspapers in the entangled histories of transcontinental contacts between indigenous-Christian elites in the colonial public sphere around 1900, the paper thus places the IFI and its periodicals into the context of the emergence of a transregional and transcontinental indigenous-Christian public sphere.