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## **Supplies from Manila for the California Missions, 1781–1783**

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# Texts and Documents

## *Supplies from Manila for the California Missions, 1781-1783*

JOHN GALVIN

On 13 May 1783 the frigate *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios* (otherwise known as *La Favorita*) and the *Princesa* arrived at San Francisco Bay with supplies for the newly founded Spanish *presidios* in California. Included in their cargo were goods which a certain Father Pedro Cambón had brought from the Philippines for the missions that Father Junípero Serra had established. Father Serra began this work, perhaps his greatest achievement, in 1709, when Don José de Gálvez, visitor-general to Mexico, provided him with the means to do it.

The mission supplies on *La Favorita* had come to California some eighteen months earlier, on the *San Carlos* which docked unexpectedly at San Diego on 9 December 1781. However, as all the cargo was listed for San Blas, Mexico's naval station on the Pacific Coast, the usual government lack of sense prevailed and the goods were required to pass through customs at San Blas. This muddle might have been prevented but for the illness of Father Cambón who had been laid low by the rigors of the Pacific crossing and so was unable to persuade the authorities to let common sense prevail and allow delivery of the cargo in California.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good—or brings no vessels to port. Because of this veneration for the proper order of things which required San Blas as the port of discharge of the *San Carlos* cargo, a document now exists which is published here for the first time. This document is one of the official papers treating of the

mission cargo, its items, and their ultimate disposal. Even the bald factual information contained in such a document does much to show how closely linked were the Asian and American shores of the Pacific in the eighteenth century. It was a simple matter to shop in Manila for all the supplies needed by California's missionaries.

In Manila, the manufactures of China and India were available in rich variety. Precious metal ware for altar use; fine silk for priestly vestments; books and paper and pigments; medicines and tobacco; woven material of all kinds; pots and plates and umbrellas. These could be procured easily, and so it was done.

To bring such goods to California from Spain via Mexico City and the difficult overland route to San Blas was possible but difficult. Moreover, it was unnecessary, for as long as money was available and ships made Pacific voyages, Asian merchants were happy to be providers and suppliers to California, just as they had been merchants to the New World for two centuries.

In fact, ever since Legaspi sailed from Mexico to the Philippines in 1564 to establish a mart there, the Philippines was the center of European trade in the Pacific Ocean. Manila swiftly dominated all other centers. Macao, maintained by the Portuguese on the China coast, was its only rival, but Macao never became the great trading center that was Manila, to which each year for two hundred and fifty years the Manila galleon sailed from Mexico carrying silver on its three-months' voyage to Cavite, and returned again across the Pacific on a five-months' voyages to Acapulco, laden with whatever goods commerce demanded.

One additional comment must be made. Three consecrated altar stones and eleven stones still to be consecrated came to California from Manila. Some of our Californian missions began to serve their Indians with altar stones from Asia: an unusual contribution to a new country from old Asian lands.

The mission of San Francisco de Asís, known to modern San Francisco as Mission Dolores, was established in 1776 by Father Palou. It was there that Father Palou wrote his life of Father Serra, thus creating California's first literary classic about a fine priest who may yet be western America's first Catholic saint.

Our traveller from Manila on the *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*, Father Cambón, had been with Father Palou from the year 1776, when together they left Carmel, where good Father Serra lies buried in the humble mission he built for his beloved Indians. With the good Fathers there travelled a small party of soldiers whose task it was to found the San Francisco *presidio*, and hence the city which now bears that great saint's name.

Within six years of the founding of the new *presidio* the first mission building had grown too small and a new one was begun in 1782. Nine years later, in 1791, the Fathers began the building of the surviving mission house, which is open to this day.

It was to make ready and adorn this Mission Dolores that Father Cambón had gone to the Orient. His return and the arrival of his supplies meant that the mission could begin its life of useful service.

The document, translated into English, reads as follows.

## SUPERIOR GOVERNMENT

A.D. 1782

Affidavit of the file of documents drawn up concerning the effects bought for the Mission of our Father Saint Francis in California and the new establishments of Monterrey.

DON JOSÉ DE GORRÁEZ  
*Senior Scrivener*

Memorandum of the goods purchased in the city of Manila with a donation given by His Majesty [the King of Spain] to Father Benito Cambón for his services as royal chaplain on His Majesty's ship *San Carlos* (alias the *Filipino*), in which the said goods were shipped, with all the requisite licenses, to the Missions of our Father Saint Francis, in the port of northern California that has been named after him. In the event of the said priest's death or his assignment elsewhere, this memorandum must be delivered to His Excellency for the dispatch of the goods to the Missions. The goods are then to be given in care of Don Juan González, pilot of the royal navy and captain of the said ship, and failing him him to Don Juan García, chief surgeon of the said crew and ship. The mark on the goods listed in this memorandum is that shown on the margin of this affidavit.

## No. 1 (Case)

First, three consecrated altar stones wrapped in a piece of gingham.

Also nine altar stones not yet consecrated.

## No. 2 (Case)

First, eleven brocade chasubles, nine of *pequi*<sup>1</sup> and two embroidered on China satin, all brand new. Also four damask chasubles, quite worn. Also one alb with a number of purificators and two worn amices.

Also five wide cloth ribbons for cinctures, brand new.

Also a bundle of linen and cotton lace edgings.

Also two covers from Sibutu with tinsel flowers.

*Item, un foundo de golorín de chita ordinario.*<sup>2</sup>

Also, two altar cloths of common material, worn.

Also two frontals of brocaded satin, somewhat worn.

Also two small palls, one painted on *pequi*, one of silk, brand new.

Also one wrought silver chalice, made in Canton in South China, with its paten and spoon.

Also a pair of cruets.

Also a bell of white metal with ebony handle.

Also a linen sheet in which all of the preceding articles are wrapped.

One bundle with various pieces of ribbon.

## No. 3 (Case)

First, a large gilt tabernacle of wood, filled with silk and paper flowers.

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<sup>1</sup> A silk material resembling serge, of Chinese manufacture.

<sup>2</sup> We leave this item in the Spanish, as *golorín* and *chita* cannot be translated by anyone we know.

- P<sup>3</sup> Also nine rolls of bleached denim.
- P Also 24 cotton napkins with blue silk stripes.
- P Also 2 table cloths of the same, made in Lucban.  
Also 3 lecterns of painted wood, one of fine lacquer from China.
- P Also 39 rolls of material for kerchiefs from Bohol, 10 kerchiefs to the roll.

## No. 4 (Case)

First, one large sexagonal glass lantern to serve as a lamp.

Also two small ones to accompany the Blessed Sacrament.

Also one small; all with their plates of glass and painted tin.

- P Also a good quantity of cotton and wool with which said lanterns are packed close.

## No. 5 Case)

First, one *arroba*<sup>4</sup> of wax tapers and candles.

Also 1 paschal candle, its weight 17½ lbs. of wax.

- P Also 6 pairs of sandals.

- P Also 7 rattan hats, of the kind worn by the Reverend Fathers of the Philippines.

- P Also 29 rolls of common cloth from Bohol, ten cloths to the roll.

Also one altar stone not yet consecrated.

## No. 6 (Case)

- P First, 23 rolls of cloth for kerchiefs from Bohol, ten kerchiefs to the roll.

<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of the P on the margin against certain items, see the report of the officials of the Royal Tribunal of Accounts of Mexico further down.

<sup>4</sup> 25 lbs.

- P Also 12 trays of painted wood, of various sizes.

No. 7 (Case)

- P First 21 skirt- and shirt-lengths from Bohol.
- P Also 9 rolls of cloth for kerchiefs from Bohol, ten kerchiefs to the roll.
- P Also 51 ordinary palm hats.
- P Also a good quantity of seeds with medicinal value: *manungual*, *cabalongan* or St. Ignatius' bean, *ojos de gato*, *laga*, *abutra*, *amuyones*.<sup>5</sup>
- P Also a small case with three figures inside, toys from China.
- Also an altar stone not yet consecrated.
- P Also a pair of sandals.

No. 8 (Case)

Contains 10 arrobas<sup>6</sup> of wax tapers and candles.

No. 9 (Case)

A large bundle with large fiber mats for the sanctuary [embroidered?] with flowers of various colors.

Also 18 small ones for altar covers and rugs, of same.

No. 10 (Bale)

- P 150 rolls fine denim from Ylocos dyed blue, 6 varas<sup>7</sup> to the roll.

No. 11 (Bale)

- P 150 rolls of same, also blue, 6 varas to the roll.

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<sup>5</sup> *Manungal* is a small tree with fleshy leaves. *Ojos de gato* are shiny blue and black beads. *Laga* are red and black seeds then used as rosary beads. *Abutra*: a kind of root. *Amuyon*: a tree.

<sup>6</sup> 250 lbs.

<sup>7</sup> The *vara* is 2 feet 9 inches.

## No. 12 (Case)

First, one large painted and gilt tabernacle of carved wood with its half case that opens and closes instead of the usual curtain.<sup>8</sup>

Also a pair of gilt and painted processional candle holders.

Also a painted and gilt cross.

Also six painted and gilt bouquet-like holders to serve as candlesticks.

Also a set of *sacras* painted and gilded, all of wood, very well carved.<sup>9</sup>

P Also a copper flatiron with coals inside for ironing clothes.<sup>10</sup>

Also a small copper stoup for holy water. This is from the [ship's] kit of the chapel of the *San Carlos, el Filipino*. By mistake it was put here and must be delivered to the port and royal dockyard of San Blas in Mexico with this note.

P Also a roll of wire.

P Also fourteen large platters.

P Also twenty-two rattan mats, in one bundle, from Camarines.

P Also three parcels of about 250 Spanish primers.<sup>11</sup>

P Also a staff with its head.<sup>12</sup>

P Also two sabers with their guards and sheaths.

P Also 15 rolls of bleached fine denim, eleven varas to the roll.

Also a thin box with seven glass plates for lamps.

P Also two bags filled with cotton.

<sup>8</sup> This tabernacle is still to be seen at Mission Dolores.

<sup>9</sup> *Sacras* are altar cards.

<sup>10</sup> Shaped like our modern steam iron. The handle of wood is fixed on a metal plate that can swung around so that live coals can be put in the hollow body of the instrument. Such irons are still in use in China.

<sup>11</sup> Probably printed in Manila.

<sup>12</sup> A bishop's crozier?



## No. 13 (Case)

First, a middle-sized tabernacle of wood gilded inside and all carved on the outside.

P Also two rolls of cinnamon.

P Also a parcel of *timsin*.<sup>13</sup>

P Also fourteen skirt- and shirt-lengths from Bohol, four varas a length.

P Also two copper flatirons for pressing clothes.

P Also four copper taps for sacristy wash basins.

P Also four rolls of finely woven Manila hemp cloth for sacking cloth.

P Also three small red boxes with tea.<sup>14</sup>

P Also two paper parcels of ink.<sup>15</sup>

P Also 154 red chocolate cups.<sup>16</sup>

P Also 82 of the same, blue.<sup>17</sup>

P Also 12 small plates.

P Also 4 black *payos*, the common head protector of Asia, for sun and storm.<sup>18</sup>

P Also 12 bundles of white cotton tape.

## No. 14 (Case)

P First, one parlor clock with its bell, tall case with glass on three sides, winding key, cords and weights.

P Also 50 blue kerchiefs from China.

P Also some paper packets of paints, blue, red, and yellow, two cattie<sup>19</sup> of each color.

P Also one paper packet with a thousand gilt tacks.

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<sup>13</sup> Reed wicks for lamps.

<sup>14</sup> The color of the boxes suggest that they were originally gifts from a Chinese person.

<sup>15</sup> The ink being in the solid-block form common throughout Asia.

<sup>16</sup> If "red" here means the *sang-de-boeuf* glaze of the Ching Dynasty, each cup would be worth ten times its weight in gold today.

<sup>17</sup> Perhaps K'ang Hsi blue-and-white porcelain.

<sup>18</sup> The *payo* was a waxed paper parasol made in South China, Foochow chiefly.

<sup>19</sup> The catty is about 2 1/4 lbs.

Also 8 lbs. of Paris green.

- P Also 2 catties of *alazorcon*; these are leaves used for dyeing material.

No. 15 (Case)

- P First, 12 dozen ordinary plates.  
Also an embroidered chasuble, very worn.  
Also a chasuble of *lampaso*, worn with a *mesadoble* of corporals.<sup>20</sup>  
Also a white embroidered satin chasuble in good condition.  
Also a red one, worn.  
Also a sash *de lampaso*, worn.  
Also three cinctures of ribbon, worn.  
Also three black holders for cross and processional candlesticks, worn.  
Also a good alb, worn.  
Also three amices.
- P Also twelve napkins with red stripes and fringes.
- P Also one tablecloth as above; all from Ilocos.  
Also one altar cloth.  
Also one white silk chasuble, brand new.  
Also a pallium of Chinese brocade, somewhat worn.  
Also holders for cross and processional candleholders, of same material as the abovementioned chasuble.
- P Also two pieces of woven Manila hemp cloth for flour sacking.
- P Also one black *payo*.
- P Also three small boxes of tea.
- P Also five bales of paper.

No. 16 (Case)

- P First, the long narrow case of the already mentioned clock.

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<sup>20</sup> We have no idea what *mesadoble* or *lampaso* means. Could *lampaso* be the exquisite Philippine pineapple-fiber cloth?

Also three staffs painted red for cross and processional candleholders.

P Also a good number of ordinary rattan mats.

No. 17 (Bale)

P 30 rolls of tobacco [leaves] wrapped in a bundle of fiber mats for use on the voyage.<sup>21</sup>

No. 18 (Case)

P First, two thousand cigars for use on the trip, for which a customs permit was obtained in Manila.

Also a statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, half a vara high, which was item no. 22 of the invoice handed to the customs officials of Manila and was able to be packed in this case to save space.

No. 19

P A green painted case for bottles with 18 large bottles of wine, liquor, oil, etc., for use on the trip.

No. 20 (Case)

P First, a case of 24 medium and small glass bottles of *manungal* wine for medicinal purposes.

P Also 7 crystal goblets and 6 glasses.

Also 3 vials with the holy oils for the use of missions.

No. 21

One hand mill of stone.<sup>22</sup>

No. 22

The statue of Our Lady of Sorrows. This was packed in Case No. 18.

Note: Besides all the foregoing, there was shipped from Cavite a case with 350 sea-shells for church windows

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<sup>21</sup> Fine Manila leaf, no doubt.

<sup>22</sup> For grinding corn.

labelled for the Mission of our Father St. Francis. It has no registry number because I forgot it.<sup>23</sup>

[Petition]<sup>24</sup>

Your Excellency: I, Father Francisco Pangua, Guardian of the Apostolic College of San Fernando of this city,<sup>25</sup> appear before Your Excellency with all due veneration and respect and declare:

That Father Pedro Benito Cambón went to Manila in the year 1780 as royal chaplain on the frigate called *La Princesa* and returned serving in the same capacity on His Majesty's ship called *San Carlos* (alias the *Filipino*) as far as the port of San Diego where he remained to recuperate, for he was broken in health by the hardships of the voyage across the Pacific.

In the said city of Manila he was able, partly with a donation from His Majesty, partly with the help, favor and protection of the Governor of those Islands,<sup>26</sup> to gather the effects listed in the enclosed memorandum. Having obtained the necessary licenses and permits he shipped the effects on said ship with the sole purpose of helping the missions of our Father St. Francis founded from the new establishment of Monterrey.

Hoping that the fruit of his diligence and activity may be reaped as soon as possible, he earnestly begs me in a letter dated the 14th of December last [1781] to entreat Your Excellency most forcibly to be pleased to order that all the goods be sent at the earliest possible moment to the said missions of our Father St. Francis. And at the same time, that Your Excellency be pleased to grant the favor of de-

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<sup>23</sup> Diligent search in all the surviving California missions failed to locate even one shell window. But Santa Barbara Mission does possess a fine Pietà of the right size which could well be the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows.

<sup>24</sup> Addressed to the Viceroy of Mexico, Don Martín de Mayorga.

<sup>25</sup> That is, Mexico.

<sup>26</sup> Don José Basco y Vargas.

claring them duty-free since they are destined to so pious an end, and were obtained in the manner stated.

Therefore, in view of the needs of said missions, the pious object to which the effects are destined, and the great good resulting thereby in the propagation of our Catholic faith amongst our neophytes, with the greatest humility I entreat Your Excellency to be pleased to grant the request made by the said priest. Nor can it be thought that in so doing Your Excellency violates in the slightest degree the orders of the King our Lord, because of the zeal with which His Majesty (whom may God keep) has always protected those establishments since the beginning.

All this I believe you will agree to because of the well known benevolence of Your Excellency, whose important life may God keep for many years.

San Fernando, January 25, 1782. — FATHER FRANCISCO PANGUA, Guardian.

#### Decree

Mexico, 26th of January 1782. — To the Fiscal of the Royal Treasury. — [Rubric of His Excellency the Viceroy]

#### [Recommendation]

Your Excellency: The Fiscal of the Royal Treasury says that if it please Your Excellency this file should be sent to the Royal Tribunal of Accounts so that it may examine the invoices presented by the Father Guardian of the College of San Fernando and distinguish, as far as possible, the commodities that are suitable for vestments and church furnishings from those articles that are not so suitable. Then to record its findings and having done so to return this file to the responsible individual. — Mexico, 29 of January 1782. — POSADA.

## [Decree]

Mexico, 31st of January 1782. — As the Fiscal of the Royal Treasury requests. — [Rubric of His Excellency the Viceroy].

## [Endorsement]

Royal Tribunal and High Court of Accounts, 4th of February 1782. — Have the officials in charge of the affairs of the royal funds of Acapulco report. — [Signed with two rubrics].

## [Report]

The officials to whom Your Lordship has sent this file have examined the invoice presented by the Reverend Father Guardian of the Apostolic College of San Fernando of this city, and having carefully considered the effects listed therein, they are of the opinion that those marked on the margin with a P are not limited to church use for they lend themselves to profane use. On the other hand, they do consider that some are probably suitable for the use of the Reverend Fathers personally in their dwellings, as for instance the table cloths, crockery, parlor clock, etc. After reflecting carefully upon the said invoices and the statement of the aforementioned Reverend Father Guardian, the officials are of the opinion that this petition be granted and that shipment be made from Acapulco at the earliest possible moment of all the effects listed in said invoices which were brought from Manila by the Reverend Father Banito Cambón for the missions founded in the new establishment of Monterrey, and that the same be declared duty-free.

Such is the opinion of the undersigned officials, considering: first, that the value of the stated goods cannot be of great consideration; second, that a large part of them are without doubt for church use, and the others for the service of the missionary fathers; third, and last, that even those that can be qualified as foreign to the stated commendable purposes will, it is quite conceivable, be converted to good

works by way of exchange, even if it may entail a sale for money to do so. This seems a safe assumption because the Franciscans are a mendicant order conducted with poverty and a strict rule, and this is known to all. No other kind of action is possible, the more so when we see the purpose of Reverend Preacher Cambón supported by his Superior, who himself would not allow the slightest infringement of the strict rule of his Order. It will be well to point out to the Reverend Father Guardian (assuming that no further comment is made by the Fiscal of the Royal Treasury, and that a decision is made according to this our opinion) that the above has been one of the principal considerations for granting his petition. — Royal Tribunal of Accounts of Mexico, 6th of February 1782. — PEDRO MARÍA DE MONTERDO. — LUIS DE MEDINA.

[Endorsement]

Your Excellency: The reasons set forth by the officials in the preceding report are sound and this Royal Tribunal agrees *in toto*. For it is understandable that everything acquired with alms, or in kind, from the residents of Manila by Father Benito Cambón (who was chaplain of a vessel that sailed to those islands) is for the sole purpose of using them for divine worship, for the particular use of the religious of the missions for which the goods are destined, and also to be applied as gratuities to the Indian men and women of said missions. It is not even remotely believable that they will change some of the effects which seem profane to purposes other than those expressed, and not rather use them only for what may be an incentive to attract them [the Indians] to our Catholic religion. It is the opinion of this Royal Tribunal that all the effects listed in the enclosed memorandum be sent duty-free to the establishments of the missions of St. Francis referred to by Reverend Father Guardian of the College of San Fernando of this city. But the superior wisdom of Your Excellency will resolve in view of everything what you may deem most suitable. — Royal Tribunal and High Court of Accounts of Mexico, 7th of February 1782. — MARQUIS DE CIRIA.

## [Memorandum]

Your Excellency: In the register of the cargo brought into this port by the ship *San Carlos* are listed twenty-one bundles and cases of vestments, church equipment, clothing for Indians and household furnishing, shipped by the Reverend Father Benito Cambón, chaplain of the said ship; their destination, the missions of the northern coast of California, principally that of St. Francis, with whose sign the said cases are marked.

A decree of the Government of Manila of the 14th of May 1781 inserted in the register ordered the said cargo to be passed duty-free on account of the pious purpose for which it is destined, and if duties are to be imposed they should be imposed here, similar to those existing in Manila at the time of shipment.

Your Excellency will be pleased to declare what you may deem just concerning the said payment of duties or exemption from them.

The above-mentioned religious, Father Pedro Benito Cambón, remained in San Diego through illness and from there he asks me to send the goods referred to to Monterrey on the first ship sailing there. To do this a definite order from Your Excellency seems to me necessary.

May Our Lord keep Your Excellency the many years that are in His power. — San Blas, 17th of January 1781. — FRANCISCO TRUJILLO Y VERMUEDES. — To His Excellency, Don Martín de Mayorga.<sup>28</sup>

## [Decree]

Mexico, February 9th, 1782. — Have this account sent to the Royal Tribunal of Accounts to be included in the file it is holding, and have it report on the matter at the earliest possible moment. — [Rubric of His Excellency the Viceroy].

<sup>27</sup> At the present San Francisco.

<sup>28</sup> The Viceroy.



## [Report]

The file referred to has been acted upon by the Royal Tribunal of Accounts, which returned it on the 6th inst. to the Fiscal of the Royal Treasury. — Mexico, 11th of February 1782. — POSADA.

## [Endorsement]

Mexico, 12th of February 1782. — Referred to the Fiscal of the Royal Treasury. — [Rubric of His Excellency the Viceroy].

## [Recommendation]

Your Excellency: The Fiscal of the Royal Treasury says that the goods contained in the invoice presented by the devout Father Guardian of the Apostolic College of San Fernando of this capital city which are marked on the margin with a P are by their nature suitable for profane use, and as such ought to pay the royal duties as defined by law in the Code of the Indies; especially is this so for the thirty rolls of tobacco leaf and the two thousand cigars.

But it is clear that this case is out of the ordinary, for the reasons expressed in the petition of 25th January with which the said invoice was presented, and by the reports made on the 16th and 17th inst. by the officials in charge of affairs pertaining to the royal funds of Acapulco and the Royal Tribunal of Accounts. In view of these facts, once the said articles have been evaluated and appraised in the usual way, and the duties determined (in case His Majesty should be pleased to declare that duty must be paid), and once they are guaranteed by a reliable person, Your Excellency will be pleased to order them shipped from the port [of Acapulco] to the missions of St. Francis at Monterrey. His Majesty should be informed with affidavits of the papers in quadruplicate. — Mexico, 14th of February 1782. — POSADA.

## [Decree]

Mexico, 18th February 1782. — As the Fiscal of the Royal Treasury requests. Having put in order the official papers relative to the Reverend Father Guardian of San Francisco and the Commissary of San Blas, have affidavits of this file made in quadruplicate in order to render account to His Majesty. — MAYORGA.

## [Report]

Done.

## [Notarization]

This copy agrees with the original which I returned to the Secretariat of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, and I so affirm it. And in order that it may be vouched for wherever necessary, in virtue of the preceding superior decree, I give these presents in Mexico on the 27th of February 1782. — JOSEPH DE GORRÁEZ.

## [Certification]

We testify that Don José de Gorráez Beaumont y Navarra, by whom this affidavit is signed, is the senior and oldest scrivener of the Government of this New Spain appointed by the King our Lord and as such uses and exercises said office; and that all the affidavits, decrees, certificates and the rest of what have passed and do pass before him have been given and are given complete faith and credit judicially and extra-judicially. — Mexico, 27th of February 1782. — JOSEF DE CONDANEO Y NANEXES, Royal Scrivener. — DE ALVA, Royal Scrivener. — JOACHÍN GUERRERO, Royal Scrivener.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Official action was requested by Father Pangua on 29 January, and a favorable decision handed down on 27 February. Quick work for any government department.