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Commentary

BRUCE CRUIKSHANK

A Puzzle about *Padrones* Tribute in the Eighteenth-Century Spanish Philippines

This essay critiques an argument by Luis Alonso Álvarez regarding a reputed change in tribute collection procedures in the eighteenth-century Philippines. It argues that Alonso's assertion on the diminished role of the priest in compiling the roster is unproven; that the statistics of augmented collections produced by the change seem to support a very different interpretation; and that the description of the change may have been taken from a 1799 order and mistakenly linked to the actions fifty-odd years earlier. The essay ends with suggestions concerning the importance and timing of trade in the provinces; and a series of questions and arenas awaiting further research in the history of the eighteenth-century Philippines.

KEYWORDS: COLONIAL FINANCES · TRIBUTE COLLECTION · CATHOLIC PRIESTS ·
ALCALDES MAYORES · VAGABONDS

The ideological aspect of tribute is relatively clear: the Spanish colonizers insisted that the subjugated Filipinos pay tribute as a token both to convey submission to the Spanish king as well as a means to secure payments in kind or in specie to support the colonial apparatus. The ideological aspect was stressed by the colonizers: “Because it is a just and reasonable thing that the *Indios*,¹ when they are pacified and reduced to our obedience and vassalage, serve and give us tribute in recognition of our dominion and give us service as subjects and vassals should, We order that they be persuaded by these reasons to respond with some tribute in moderate amounts from the fruits of the land . . .” (*Recopilación de Leyes de los Reynos de las Indias* 1791/1943, 2:225; cited in Cruikshank 1985, 41). In addition to this formalistic acknowledgment of submission, tribute was also imposed for economic reasons, helping to pay for costs of administration, defense, and evangelization.

Contemporary analysis has focused less on the ideological aspect and more on the economic ramifications of tribute, which included forced labor. We will see as well that the tribute system also provided opportunities for personal gain for Spanish and Filipino administrators. In the Philippines we know that not all paid the taxes, that the amount or measurement of forced labor varied over time, and that questions of how much or if to pay in specie rather than in kind were raised periodically. These points need not delay us. They will become clearer as we proceed. For now we need only acknowledge that Filipinos were meant to show submission to the Spanish colonial state and its representatives by paying tribute or by providing labor. Doing so meant that Filipinos paid into the system that ruled them and thus provided at least some of the means of support for that system. For most of the Spanish colonial period tributes (one *tributo* per married couple) amounted to 14 *reales*. Of this amount, 1 *real* each went for Corpus Christi, for the patron saint of the municipality, for Holy Week celebrations, and for the municipal budget.²

Colonial Hierarchies and Tribute Collection

The Spanish rulers were both the Spanish government and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, each of which involved different sets of players who often were at odds with each other. At all levels the actors were male. The ecclesiastical hierarchy involved the archbishop, bishops, and parish priests, extending from Manila and other dioceses in Luzon, Bicol, and the Visayas down to

parishes or municipalities with resident priests. Parallel to this “secular”³ ecclesiastical hierarchy were the organizations of Augustinians, Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, and Recollects, each centered in Manila and with their own sets of parishes subordinate to their “regular” superiors and not to the secular hierarchy.

The government had its own hierarchy, with the competing authorities of governor general and the Audiencia at the top down through governors of the provinces of the colony. Governors were called *alcaldes mayores* or *corregidores*, civilian or military governors. That distinction is not significant for our purposes.⁴ I will just call them governors. All of these individuals were Spaniards and for most of the third of a millennium that the Spanish ruled most of what is now the Republic of the Philippines, the governors were underpaid but did well for themselves by manipulating tribute collections and engaging in trade. Later I will return to this aspect of the system and its complications and some of its changes.

Below the governors appear the *Filipino* officials who helped collect the tribute. Each municipality was governed by an upper class, the *principalía*, from which came what we might term the mayor and his assistants. The mayor was called the *gobernadorcillo*, a term of some condescension; and the major assistants were heads of groups of family tribute payers called *barangays*, or *cabezas de barangay*. These terms I will retain in this essay. Within each municipality was a core area called a *población*. Outside the *población* were a variety of residential units varying roughly in size from larger to smaller ones called *visitas*, *barrios*, *sitios*, and *rancherías*. One municipality might then have a variety of residential units, divided into *barangays* but not necessarily corresponding neatly with the subordinate, smaller residential units outside of the *población*.⁵ These Filipino officials were exempt from paying the tribute—perhaps their major duty was to collect the tribute from those Filipinos on the *barangay* lists who were not exempted by office, age, or debility—and the *cabezas de barangay* were “entitled to one and half per cent of his total tribute collection” (Robles 1969, 71).

Below the Spanish and Filipino officials serving the Spanish government and ecclesiastical administrations were the ruled, the majority of whom were what today we would call Filipinos. Those subject to the tribute and forced labor had their names written on the official municipal *padrón* or census list, usually organized by *barangay*, with names listed of father and mother, children, young and unmarried adults, and the elders. Those

Filipinos whose names were not entered were not officially resident in the municipality and were termed variously *remontados*, *cimarrones*, *infielos*, *monteses*, or *vagabundos*. For convenience and for its relevance for this essay, I will simply use the last term *vagabundo*. The term did not necessarily mean that the person was a vagrant or a rover, only someone not listed and thus not paying tax and labor requirements. Research on Samar suggests that such “vagabonds” might very well live in settled communities, engage in trade with official settlements, be known to the Filipino authorities, have some knowledge of Christianity, but successfully and resolutely decline to be incorporated into the realm of Spanish control and demands (Cruikshank 1985, 128–32). This may well have been the case in many other provinces in the colony.

There was intense pressure on *cabezas de barangay* to register residents and then to collect tribute from them, as we see from this 1701 description (Blair and Robertson 1906a, 133):

It arouses pity in the hardest hearts to see and know by experience that nearly all the [*cabezas de barangay*] enter office under compulsion from the [governor], and, finding themselves perplexed to the utmost by the difficulties in rendering their accounts satisfactorily—either by the duplicate names on the registration lists, or the absences (which usually are many), or by the deaths [of those registered]—on account of the great poverty that is general in the villages these deficiencies fall back on the headmen, who are compelled to pay them or be imprisoned. This measure of imprisonment is carried out with so great rigor that many headmen are in prison . . .

Another source (Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental 1706, ff. 1–2) documents for the Camarines region a remarkably high number of *cabezas de barangay* imprisoned due to failure to produce the requisite tribute:

I learned that there were sixty-six *cabezas* [de *barangay*] in the Camarine province in jail, [all because] . . . the Filipinos in this province are very mobile. Almost every year they change their home from one municipality to another, both in this and surrounding provinces as well as to municipalities as far away as Laguna de Bay, Tondo or Bulacan. To collect the tribute from these is almost impossible, and with others

to collect it entails such expense that it undoubtedly would cost more than the tribute itself. And so it has occurred that when the *Cabezas* go to hand over the tribute to the [governor], they go without it and must provide it themselves, [from their own pocket].

“Closed” and “Open” Tribute Collection Systems

As far as I know, only Luis Alonso Álvarez has discussed at some length the “closed” and “open” tribute collection systems. The distinction and the points he makes appear in two of his essays (Alonso 2003, 13–42; 2004, 91–116).⁶ His major points are that the “closed” system was supplanted by the “open” system in the early eighteenth century. The “open” system was imposed in order to increase revenues by cutting back on those exempt from the tribute and by tracking down *vagabundos* to make them pay tribute. The change, he argues, marked a significant shift in procedure and resulted in greater revenues for the Crown. The “closed” and “open” systems represent alternative methods for the tabulation of tribute payers in order to increase royal revenues.

Alonso argues that the “closed” system was based on a church *padrón* of those coming to confession for Easter, was often out of date, and omitted tribute payers through the connivance of, on the one hand, Filipino officials—who wanted to collect more but turn over less—and, on the other hand, parish priests who wanted more Filipinos exempted so they could work for the church. Here he quotes a document from 1726 describing the creation of the *padrón* (Biblioteca de Palacio [Madrid], *Miscelánea Ayala* II, 2411, no. 12, cited in Alonso 2003, 37):

Every year during Lent the *indios* come for confession. They bring with them a slip of paper with their name, [marital] status, and name of their *cabeza de barangay* on it. They give these slips to the priest, who organizes them into a *padrón* of those who have confessed, organized by [*barangay*], and listed by married couples, boys, and girls. The signed *padrón* is then sent to the governor as certification of tribute status. Only this list signed by the parish priest is used to collect tribute.

He argues further that the *Audiencia* would then “approve the count, send the *padrón* to the *contaduría*, which then would send a copy to the

governor so he would know how many tributes would be subject to collection (ibid.). Alonso (2003, 23) argues that the “closed” system carried significant advantages to hide tribute to the benefit of those collecting it: they “collect all of the tribute due but only surrender” a part of it. Moreover, the parish priests “reserve” from the tribute lists “a great number [of Filipinos] for religious services and thus obtain a means of social control.” The governors effectively collude with the priests and the *principalía* by not checking carefully and thus “evade the costs of collecting the tribute.”

Faced with low tribute returns, the Crown wanted to reform the collection of tribute in order to increase the receipts credited to the colonial administration. While Alonso has located earlier efforts by the Crown to change from the “closed” tribute system,⁷ he argues that the effective shift to an “open” tribute system occurred in the 1740s,⁸ when the Crown ordered Pedro Calderón Henríquez to make a careful recount in the Province of Tondo, chock full of *vagamundos*. “He accomplished this . . . ‘without giving the least cause for the complaints that such novel actions usually occasion . . . attracting to political life the natives by listing those . . . previously known to the *cabezas de barangay*’” but heretofore unlisted.

With this success in hand, a royal order of 16 May 1744 ordered Calderón to extend the recount to other provinces. The results, according to Alonso (2003, 39), were noticeable, even “spectacular.” In reports of 12 August 1745 and 14 July 1746, Calderón reported that, through registration and “extinction” of *vagabondage*, remittances to the Crown had increased “considerably.” “The Crown on its part ordered that he continue his work in Pampanga . . . noting that in the six provinces” where he had enforced a recount that “the sums remitted had increased by 30,000 pesos, an increase of almost 36% over the gross returns from the collection [done] before the reform” (ibid., 37). Subsequently the Crown ordered that all the provinces implement the “open” system.

The “open” system seems to be the same as the “closed” system except that the Filipino officials—not the parish priest—were to do the compilations and that the penalties for error or noncompliance were either more severe or at least enforced more effectively. Alonso indicates that the new requirements for the tribute numeration and collection required that “each *cabeza de barangay* was annually to make up a report of all residents under his charge,” with all the lists then “submitted to the *gobernadorcillo* and certified by the parish priest” (ibid., 40). Penalties for failure to do so

Table 1. Increases in tribute collection, 1740–1746

PROVINCE	TRIBUTE
Tondo	14,225
Cavite	5,972
Bulacan	4,581
Laguna and Batangas	4,284
Pampanga	5,866
Total	34,928

Source: Alonso 2003, 39

“ranged upward to a year of forced labor” (ibid.).⁹ The research by Alonso suggests that the change from “closed” to “open” did in fact mark a major change in revenues collected and turned over to the Crown.

According to Alonso, the statistics of revenues received by the royal treasury show a decided jump when the “open” system was instituted. The numbers of tributes and thus revenues gained in the provinces that Calderón tried out using the new method indeed appear impressive, as Alonso shows in the data presented in table 1 (García-Abásolo 1991, 28 cited in ibid., 39).

He suggests that the gains came from increasing supervision, decreasing the number of those exempt from the tribute, and enrolling those “*vagabundos*” who heretofore had escaped the tribute entirely.

However, when we look more closely at the distinction and the information provided by Alonso, we will see that there are problems. They begin with what we know or surmise regarding the *padrones*, extending through the revenue data, and including some of the basic research sources themselves. It is to these issues I now turn.

Critique of the Alonso Description—the Count

This section begins with a minor disagreement with Alonso and then proceeds into some larger questions associated with the *padrón* and the reliability of its data. Alonso (2003, 38, citing García-Abásolo 1991, 26ff.) makes the following points regarding the problem of an out-of-date *padrón* and how it led to inaccuracies:

The system of a closed count continued into the eighteenth century with advantages for the governors . . . who did not need to compare

the submitted padrón with the [actual] number of those who left or entered the count (the young and the old). The padrones were brought up to date every four or five years, an inflexible procedure that impeded reductions in the tribute caused by epidemic, flight, famine, exemption, etc. . . . Movements of population at this time were significant.

He does not explain why the parish priests would not produce accurate listings every year in the “closed” system—particularly since the compilation was linked to confession and the seminal Easter ceremonies of the church. Now he adds that the padrones might *overcount* those subject to the tribute. Then he adds further the surmise that large numbers of Filipinos were moving in and out of the municipalities. The rationale of the Crown for the move from “closed” to “open” was a concern with *undercounting* those subject to the tribute. Overcounting would provide more tribute for the government. The rigidity of the padrón in response to natural disasters and the possibility of overcounting were not the reasons advanced for the purported change. In any case, communities could petition the governors for relief in calamitous cases and, while governors were commonly inflexible, at least the procedure of petition existed and would more than suffice for concerns with overcounting those subject to the tax. Alonso offers no research or citations for the assertions that priests produced inaccurate listings, that overcounting occurred, and that significant numbers of Filipinos were moving to and from the municipalities.¹⁰ It is undoubtedly true that data on these points are difficult to locate.

If we focus just on the priest and the padrón we will see both the gaps in sources as well as puzzles and complexities yet to be addressed. I will begin by suggesting that the priest’s role probably did not change with the purported change from “closed” to “open” system. It is possible both to confirm the priest’s official role *before* the installation of the “open” system; and to confirm the continuation of this role even *after* the new system was said to have been installed, when the priest was supposed merely to be a signer of a padrón constituted by the cabezas de barangay. A 1726 book of ordinances and statutes for the Franciscans in the Philippines, a book whose contents were reconfirmed in 1730 and republished in 1753,¹¹ states that “the priest will make up a list of inhabitants (padrón)” based on confessions made during the Lenten season, “putting first the Cabeza de Barangay and his household, and then the others, house by house . . . then list those men

reserved from the tribute and those women who are reserved,” ending with underage men and women, schoolboys and schoolgirls, and those resident in but not part of the municipality (foreigners, Chinese, and so on). From work with a microfilm of the Mahayhay eighteenth-century padrones provided for use by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, it is quite evident that priests continued to register padrones in the church books and that the tribute totals in those padrones were the basis for payments in silver to the local church by the governor of the province.¹²

Let us turn now to the question of priests’ accuracy in data compilation. For data on general population counts, the priests could be rather cavalier. Research on Samar (Cruikshank 1985, 250) suggests that simple population counts, the *estados*, could involve significant duplication:

Moreover, not all the statistics for the years we have are actually new—many merely repeat earlier population counts. For instance, the figures for Borongan were the same for 1768–70 and 1773–74; 1785 and 1787; and 1795 and 1796. The figures for both Palapag and Gandara were duplicated for the years 1768–70. Duplications for the years 1768–69 and 1773 existed for Catarman, Catbalogan, Catubig, Lanang, and Paranas. The 1768–69 figures were the same for both Calbiga-Villareal and Capul-Calbayog. The figures for 1768–70 and 1773 were the same for Sulat, as were those for 1774, 1776–77; 1785 and 1787; and 1795 and 1796. Tubig’s figures for 1769–70 and 1773 were also duplicates of each other, and the 1799–1800 figures were duplicates for both Paranas and Calbiga-Villareal. . . . Guiuan had duplicate population figures for 1790 and 1791, and Basey had them for 1786 and 1787 as well as for 1783 and 1784.

These totals of population produced at various times of the year, were primarily of informational and general use, and are problematic not only for duplicated data but for the fairly common appearance of scribe errors in transcription and addition. Gaps in data and obvious improbabilities also appear to have been a general occurrence.

The padrón, however, was to be compiled on a regular basis and carried more weight and expectations. My work on the Mahayhay microfilm found only one case in almost a quarter of a century of entries, this from the mid-1780s, where the total for tributes in the padrones was the same

Table 2. Number of tributes submitted to the royal treasury, 1750–1774

YEAR	ILOCOS	CAVITE	ISLE OF NEGROS	LEYTE
1750	16,853	4,421	4,668	16,814
1755	17,040	4,421	4,078	16,814
1760	17,604	3,702	4,881	16,814
1766	17,604	3,702	4,881	16,814
1774	17,604	3,702	4,881	16,814

Source: Cosano Moyano 1986, 479

in two successive years. However, gaps in the data make this *quite* weak as evidence.¹³ On a broader scale, another source suggests that the incidence of duplicates in the padrones appears to have been more common by governors than by priests. We see this in data taken from José Cosano Moyano (1986, 479), data from years after the purported change to the “open” tribute system (table 2). He compared the tribute numbers submitted to the royal treasury for five different years and four administrative units, chosen he says “at random.” The duplications (bold-faced) are remarkable, particularly when one notes that the figures are for population totals five years apart.

It seems most unlikely that every municipality in each of these four administrative units failed for the same years to submit an up-to-date padrón. (It also suggests that Spanish governors might have been less diligent than Filipino cabezas de barangay and [Spanish or Filipino] parish priests.)

The Padrón, Easter, Compilation

Inescapably at this point we must turn to conjecture. The pressure to confess and receive communion during the Easter ceremonies was undoubtedly intense. It stands to reason that most parishioners would do their utmost to fulfill these obligations and participate in one of the major rites of their faith. Nonetheless, it seems unlikely to me that confession and communion lists during the Easter season would have been the basis for the padrón. I assert this even though sources say the opposite, including ones cited earlier in this essay.

No matter how much parishioners might have wanted to confess during this season it seems without doubt that some were unable to do so, due to sickness or other impediment. Statistics proving this are difficult to find, but we do know that a century later, for the parishes in the Camarines, Albay, and Tayabas, 26.4 percent did not take communion in 1842—about a fifth was disqualified due to ignorance of the essential components of the faith,

the rest being absent due to illness or other priorities (Cruikshank 2003, 208).¹⁴

Moreover, since one was also required to pay one and a half reales per person prior to confession (the full tribute was collected separately and later, by the cabezas de barangay), lack of funds by parishioners might also have made difficulties. While some priests may have been flexible on this, one observer noted that “It is certain that the Indian believes that he pays for confession, and it is also a fact that if he does not pay he is not confessed” (Blair and Robertson 1907c, 145). It seems likely, then, although I have no source for this, regardless of “closed” or “open” systems, that the padrón was *not* based on those who confessed but was instead compiled separately. I suggest, again with no evidence, that when “the indios come for confession” with “a slip of paper with their name, [marital] status, and name of their cabeza de barangay on it,” the names might have been confirmed against the current padrón but not necessarily used as the basis for the listing.¹⁵ This is speculation on my part but, given the press of work during the Easter season and difficulties in getting all parishioners to confess, it seems plausible. Again, my surmise is to date undocumented.

It also seems unlikely to me that the parish priest would compile the padrón without input from the cabezas de barangay. Moreover, it seems unlikely that the cabezas de barangay would provide the padrón without consulting with the parish priest, at least on the question of ages of those listed. Perhaps too the priest provided a scribe to make up the padrón. Certainly by 1852 such cooperation was recognized and mandated, although phrased with what might be a bias in favor of the priests over the Filipino officials: “For compilation of the padrones there must be a concurrence between the zeal of the parish priests with the direct and residential intervention of the gobernadorcillos and other auxiliaries of justice that the parish priests consider necessary for the most perfect construction of the padrón” (De Tiscar and De la Rosa 1866, 163). To assert that either party would compile the padrón without consultation and information from the other appears unlikely and impractical; and, again, such a surmise is not yet validated by documentary evidence.

Critique of the Alonso Description—the Statistics

I have argued in the previous sections that the role of the priest in the compilation of the padrón seems not to have changed, although I have also

Table 3. Number of *tributos*, 1690–1760

YEAR	NO. OF TRIBUTOS	NO. OF TRIBUTOS SINCE LAST
1690	86,699	
1695	96,800	10,101
1700	97,800	1,000
1705	99,937	2,137
1710	113,923	13,986
1715	123,676	9,753
1720	121,196	-2,480
1725	125,129	3,933
1730	124,933	- 196
1735	124,932 [sic]	- 1
1740	124,815	- 117
1745	191,217	66,402
1750	193,608	2,391
1755	193,011	- 597
1760	206,308	13,297

Source: Alonso 2004, 107–8

asserted that aspects of the process are not perfectly clear. Alonso states that the “open” system put the burden entirely on the shoulders of the cabeza de barangay with only validation of the data left to the parish priest. This would seem to be a mere technical quibble, hardly enough to center a critical essay around. After all, the results given by Alonso of significant increases in revenues show that the change was instituted and made a major impact in the provinces affected, right? No.

There are major problems with that data and its interpretation (see table 1).¹⁶

If we assume that the sum of 34,928 represents the growth in tribute count from 1740 to 1746 for the six provinces, the only ones at that time where the move to the “open” system had been implemented, then one should see significant continuity among older figures with the tribute figures for the other provinces in the colonies for this period. If, however, tribute figures went up significantly elsewhere, in municipalities in the other provinces, then the presumption would be that the “open” system was not fully responsible for the 34,928 spike after all. Thanks to Alonso (2004, 107–8) we can see comparative data (table 3).

The growth in tributes for all provinces from 1740 to 1745 was 66,402. If we subtract the 34,928 tributes gained from 1740 to 1746 (we need not worry about the extra year) for the six provinces subject to the change to the “open” system, all the other provinces gained 31,474 tributes in this five-year period. This figure is over twice as high for the highest growth in tributes for all provinces in any five-year period through 1760. Obviously something else is happening.¹⁷ To ascribe the growth in tribute figures in the six provinces solely to the “open” tribute system would seem to be questionable. Of course one can understand that Calderón might have done so to justify and validate his efforts in those provinces, but we need not accept his self-interested assertion at face value.

Critique of the Alonso Description— 1799 and Associated Issues

I have argued that the role of the parish priest in compiling the padrón probably did not change with the change to the “open” system of tabulation. I have established that the figures showing the impact of that change in the six provinces initially targeted are less than fully convincing when contrasted with a significant spike in returns for provinces not yet subject to the transition to the “open” system. This last section of the critique explores associated issues and problems raised as one studies the padrón and tribute in the eighteenth-century Philippines.

The first issue: the quotations that Alonso presents for the process and changes caused by the move from “closed” to “open” padrones do not in fact say what he says they do. The quotations provided from the royal order calling for the “open” method merely indicate that the padrón be more detailed and done annually. It says nothing of a change from priest to cabeza de barangay:

For the proper collection of that branch of My Royal Treasury, We order that new tribute lists be made with due formality, with deputized ministers from the Royal Audiencia and with the agreement of the regent, without burdening the tribute payers, so that the governors be charged to make a new enumeration to cut the fraud that I understand is committed [now].¹⁸

And, again:

The King wants to know promptly and with certainty the number of vassals that he has in all of his vast dominions in the Americas and the Philippines. To that end [he has ordered] that all Viceroy and governors [there] make exact padrones with the proper distinction of class, marital status, and race for both sexes including the children. By order of His Majesty you are ordered to expedite your correspondence with all the governors . . . in your jurisdiction and district to draw up the above mentioned padrones and do so each year, sending them to His Majesty at the end of each year. These annual statements are to include the amount of increase or decrease [in the population] from the preceding year.¹⁹

Alonso (2004, 92 n.3) also argues that the new “open” system “required a visit to the province, a recount (count) of the actual vital statistics, and a tax of the items determined for each territorial demarcation, all operations that would enhance the collection.” I assume the reference to specified items assigned to be collected from each province applies to those regions where the tribute is collected in kind, or for the *repartimientos* (mistakenly included here in provisions for tribute enumeration and collection). Moreover, Alonso continues, “the reinstatement of the ‘open’ system permitted the receipt of larger receipts owing to the [closure of loopholes] that before this benefitted the indigenous principalía. Henceforth [larger revenues] in the form of new tribute will pass to the power of the Crown” (ibid.). Once again the quotations advanced by Alonso do not in fact signify that the *cabezas de barangay* would make up the padrones. What is said is that there would be more active supervision by governors, which was intended to collect more for the Crown.

Alonso (2003, 40) says that this royal order was dated 10 November 1776, directed to all colonial possessions, and “put into practice in the Philippines” in 1778, about three dozen years after the changes instituted by Calderón. It is possible of course that the procedural change was spelled out here or in other, earlier government manuscripts and that Alonso chose not to quote it. The confusion deepens, however, when one realizes that the procedural changes cited by Alonso were in fact described and mandated in 1799, more than half a century after the Calderón initiative.²⁰ A copy of this 1799 edict

is available in an 1866 volume (De Tiscar and De la Rosa 1866, 170–72), and it describes the provision for enumeration by the *cabezas de barangay* as a “new method” (Article 1). It seems possible that Alonso may have confused the reforms instituted by Calderón with the end-of-century changes and conflated the two.

Another Look at the Change

Some change was instituted in the early eighteenth century. We know from a study of the administration of the governor general at the time of Calderón’s activity that there was “a change in the system for the collection of tribute, changing from the ‘closed computation’ to the ‘open reckoning and padrón of inhabitants’” (Rodriguez 1976, 69).²¹ In this study we learn that the process had actually begun under the preceding governor general but had stalled:

At the start of 1737 Valdés Tamón . . . named Don José Ignacio de Arzadum, oidor of the Audiencia, to attend to the measures to put into effect the collection [based] on the padrón of inhabitants; and that he ought to begin with the provinces closest to Manila. Arzadum requested the corresponding documents to study the matter, and it appears that there were many of them since it took him almost a year to study them. On 26 November 1737 he returned the documents along with a report which put forward a variety of objections to the new system . . . [and concluded that . . . it would be better for the Crown and the naturales if the old, closed system were retained, a point seconded by the Audiencia 10 May 1738]. (ibid., 69–70)

There was another study with the new governor general that resulted again in no action, but finally in September 1740 the administration decided it was prudent to pursue the will of the Crown and implant the new method, choosing Don Pedro Calderón Henríquez to do so. He began work in the Province of Tondo in October 1740 and tried to establish “a baseline and some data” (ibid., 71–72). By June of 1741 he succeeded in installing the new system in Tondo. Unfortunately nowhere are we told what constituted the new (or the old) system.

By 1742 the system had been installed in Cavite as well as in the Province of Tondo. Work had begun in the province of Bulacan. However, even by June 1742, the governor of Tondo had not finished with the collection of tributes using the new system; nor had the administrator in Cavite. Only in

October would collection begin in the Province of Bulacan. After some more difficulties, we are told that Calderón “had an interest in demonstrating that the open count yielded more taxes than the closed count” and was able to show an increase in 1745 in tribute payments for the six provinces of over 62,000 pesos (ibid., 75–76). The only fly in the ointment had occurred in 1742, when the question arose of “where the salaries of the judges, scribes, officials and other ministers for the numeration of the tribute [were] to come from.” A decision was made to have the costs borne by the Crown (ibid., 73).

We do not have a description of what was done, but now we do have a hint of what possibly took place. It appears that the reform may have meant nothing more than sending, under the close supervision of Calderón, officials to count and validate the names listed on the padrones in the six provinces initially targeted. One appreciates the neatness of the bureaucratic solution: raise more revenues by hiring numerators who would then (presumably) effectively be paid from the extra they are able to raise. There is also a suggestion that those listed in the carefully revised padrones might have included those before labeled as vagabundos. One of the puzzles of the issues raised here is that there apparently was a roster listing vagabonds for each municipality. One would think that if these were individuals with no fixed abode and subject to no municipality’s control, listing them would be problematic, at the very least. Nonetheless, we are told that part of the reforms instituted by Calderón was to eliminate this separate roster and incorporate these individuals into the padrón of tributes: “It was also set forth that, after the budget for the provinces was drawn up, and the number of tributes in them realized, it was resolved in a conference of the royal treasury officials to abolish the register of strolling Indians, reducing them to a poll-list like the rest of the tribute-payers” (Blair and Robertson 1906b, 150).²² Of course this was only a temporary success. Anda in 1768 talked of Filipinos “as scattered as they were in the time of their paganism” and in 1851 officials were still mandating that vagabonds be listed in padrones.²³ Adding them to the padrón certainly would have contributed to a bump in the number of registered tribute payers.

After all of this, Calderón was pulled off of this task and assigned the task of “pacification of the uprising of several municipalities near Manila” and later “assigned” to an administrative position that “fully occupied him” (Rodriguez 1976, 75–76, 81). The reform apparently stalled at this point, because we have a royal order from 23 October 1762 recognizing that in 1747 Tondo still was using the “closed padrón” and ordered that “all the

provinces” use the “open” count, with none permitted to use the “closed.” Given the British occupation of Manila this probably would have been postponed or effectively ignored.²⁴

Trade and Tribute

Alonso (2004) says that the “closed” system tilted toward the interests of the *gobnadorcillos* and *cabezas de barangay*, encouraged undercounts and exemptions, and favored the trade interests of governors and *encomenderos*.²⁵ All of these continued under the “open” system. Possibly the governors were not allowing Filipino officials to keep as much as before. However, the literature suggests that this would not have been due to administrative rectitude but rather that they too were feathering their nests while ensuring that the official records showed a continuation of higher revenues from tribute turned in to the royal treasury.

We have, then, a “new” system that is fundamentally the same as the older system, one that by the end of the eighteenth century seems at least in the use of the *padrón* produced or midwived by the parish priest to have been quietly reinstated (if ever in fact it was discontinued). One is still faced with the same difficult terrain, dispersed population, mobile populations, and human error or self-interest to conceal or misrepresent sums due or collected. In 1766 one source generalized that “It is generally the case that the heads of *barangays* keep back from the king at a very low estimate, at least ten tributes each, on account of the dispersion of the houses of the Indians, which renders almost impossible any exactness in the tax-lists. . . .”²⁶ Other forms of graft existed among the Spanish governors, from rigged scales for payment in kind to bogus fines. Governors “called their unauthorized collections ‘*caidas*,’ or, literally, ‘droppings’” (Corpuz 1957, 85).²⁷

The strong interest of the Crown, plus the energetic intrusion of Don Pedro Calderón Henríquez, might very well have generated more accurate accounts, less graft, and more sums collected in the short haul than in the past. Why, though, would the revenues collected and turned in to the Crown have continued at the higher levels as the “new” system was imposed elsewhere? What is going on? Let us move away from the critique mode and move into a short discussion of issues raised by the information at hand.

Working with the tribute collection alone, we can try to explain the “spectacular” rise in revenues initiated by Calderón. Logically there seem to be three possibilities:

1. More was squeezed from Filipinos, either by the same or by new agents.
2. More Filipinos were registered and squeezed as much or more than customary.
3. Those previously doing the squeezing were forced to surrender more to the Crown.

It is probable that all three possibilities coexisted. It is likely that many of those who previously had not paid tribute—those hidden, exempted, or “vagabonds”—probably now had to produce tribute, increasing the total. With more supervision from above, remittances of tribute collected to the Crown would have gone up. Both of these would have been sufficient to increase the official returns from tribute collection. And possibly, too, if more had to be surrendered to the Crown those profiting from the “squeeze” might have attempted to collect more than usual to maintain their level of graft.

One would not need to posit a move from “closed” to “open” for these to happen. All one needed was an energetic supervisor, intense interest by the king, and a decline in those hidden or reserved from paying tribute in the past. Alonso has documented all of these processes for us, namely: the person and actions of Calderón, the keen encouragement by the king, and the increase in registered tribute payers. Once established, expectations of tribute payments turned in to the Crown would have been set, barring of course exceptional events such as the British invasion, rebellion, and natural disasters. Presumably if more was available than usually remitted to Manila it went to the *cabezas de barangay*, the *gobernadorcillo*, and the governors.

If the “pie” or general economic wealth was also expanding in the early and mid-eighteenth century, then all three of those factors could have existed and been achieved with less difficulty than in more restrictive economic times. Was there more wealth in the provinces and thus (perhaps) fewer incentives to try to hide from the tribute collectors since the payment would have been easier? If there were more wealth, one would assume it would come not just from increased tax revenues from monopolies but also from increased trade activity. However, most accounts link such mercantile activity to the late eighteenth-century start of major exports to the international markets for what became the major exports of such crops as sugar and hemp. Alonso (2004, 112) alludes to this development:

we observe in the first place that the effect of the Calderón Henríquez reforms increased somewhat later, between 1745 and 1750, but then fell due to the British invasion of Manila (1762–1763) and the great native insurrection in northern Luzon. And we can observe how the [economic and administrative reforms after 1780] increased the efficiency of collection in the Philippines, especially in the government liquor and tobacco monopolies and in tribute . . . and made the Philippine Treasury self-sufficient after the independence of Mexico in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Was there an earlier trade spurt, maybe in the 1750s? There is a suggestion that there was, though many details are unclear. In 1751 the governors were given permission to trade goods openly if they paid a “fine” for breaking the prohibition against such trade, the penalty “regulated according to the value of the commerce of the respective provinces” (Corpuz 1957, 83–84). Those who became governors thus had to make enough from trade and tribute to redress this initial cost plus of course provide a profit: “The poverty of the [governors], their being loaded with debts when they go from Manila, and the ambition to become rich in a short time, draw them into trading with the product of the tributes in each province; they buy vessels, lade them with goods, and convey these to Manila, or send them to other provinces” (Blair and Robertson 1907a, 48:257). And, another source:

At the moment they are named governors, they buy a boat for . . . trade . . . and load it with goods. They then leave right away for the provinces of their appointments where they busy themselves in the buying and selling of the goods of the municipalities they govern. These they put in their boat and bring them to Manila. This [trade] as I have said is their foremost focus and their first care . . . [and] they continue pursuing [this] trade all the time that they remain in their positions. (Alvarez y Tejero 1842, 14 cited in Fradera 1999, 155–56 n. 60)

While these “entrepreneurial operations were as old as the colony itself” (Fradera 1999, 155), this now legal commerce, by sea or by river, between Manila and the provinces, seems to have expanded and perhaps become

increasingly controlled by the governors. As long as expected tribute returns continued to be remitted to the Crown, presumably everything else collected or gained through trade would be profit.

Unfortunately, given the dearth of sources documenting this trade and what was occurring in the provinces, we can do little more than speculate. We have much more information for the nineteenth century, even the early nineteenth century, on provincial developments than we do for the eighteenth century. However, if trade controlled by the governors did increase, then we can also assume that there were ripples from this extending into Filipino society, both negative (pressure to sell at low, mandated prices) and positive (returns from sales, pay, and employment from packaging and transport). Filipino officials might very well have found that it was both prudent as well as profitable to aid the governors' trade activities.

Conclusions and Issues Remaining

One of the major workers in history of the Spanish-ruled Philippines is Luis Alonso Álvarez. This scholar has contributed immensely through his careful research into that history. It is thanks to his work and the many sources he has unearthed that we see more clearly the issues of note and the questions yet to be addressed. I have taken issue in this essay with one of his arguments, using in large part the sources he identified, and I have argued a very different view of "open" and "closed" tribute collection systems. If this essay were only about that rather arcane and technical issue, perhaps it would be a mere technical footnote for larger studies of the eighteenth-century Philippines.

However, the critique and counterarguments I offer here have opened a door into a promising and radically new view of the rural Philippines in the eighteenth century. We now can say that there is a possibility that significant trade was occurring in the Islands much earlier than usually posited. The governors and their trade activities might have been a part of a larger set of economic activity in the areas outside of Manila, with coin and trade more widespread, earlier, than we thought. We have hints of such activity. We unfortunately do not yet have substantial evidence from the early and middle parts of the eighteenth century, but at least we now have the issue raised and the question posed.

There is much we do not know about the eighteenth-century Philippines. I have tried to suggest new ways to view tribute and the *padrón*. I have also raised questions that one hopes researchers will be able to explore and

document in the future. For instance, what was the oxymoronic *ramo de vagabundos*; how was it constituted; how could vagabonds be counted and taxed and still be vagabonds; who were these people, were they families, single women and men, just men? What were the roles of priest and *cabeza de barangay* in constituting the *padrón*? Where was the collected tribute in kind or in specie stored before transfer to the governor; when and how was it collected; what strategies of peculation and tyranny existed with the tribute system; how were goods in kind transported to Manila? There are associated questions as well. What were the markets, goods, prices, and transport mechanisms for goods and coin in the provincial Philippines in the eighteenth century? Were Muslim Malay raiders part of the trade system or were they mere pillagers adversely impacting sea-borne trade and communications? How did governance and administration work in areas subject to those raids as contrasted with provinces away from vulnerable coastal areas? Would it be possible to map settlements and dispersion patterns accurately; is it possible to accurately count eighteenth-century populations? How much movement of individuals and families in the early to mid-eighteenth century existed; was endogamy the predominant pattern in the municipalities? What products, activities, and wisdom did the women provide to society and its administration, trade, and governance? Where did the money come from for the tribute or portions of the tribute paid in specie? What sort of economies and trade networks existed in the Philippines away from Manila before the tobacco monopoly and the boom in export crops? How did the governors fit into or dominate these trade systems? Were there trade fairs, outsider merchants in the provinces, regular weekly or semiweekly municipal markets? Can we document and measure the location, extent, and impact of such local markets? Can we also document and measure the location, extent, and impact of labor levies and forced exactions of goods?

Finally we come back to this most fundamental of questions: how can we become cognizant of Filipino actions, grievances, and aspirations with documents that are largely administrative or focused on disputes among the colonizers? The eighteenth-century Philippines on the regional and provincial levels is a puzzle missing key pieces. We do not even have a complete picture of what the puzzle should look like when completed. We have to rely on administrative pronouncements, administrative statistics, occasional travelers, and a series of guesses on the dynamics of trade and tribute. We lack the pieces detailing the voices, goals, and the actions of Filipinos. My hunch is that trade, tribute, and settlement patterns may make

up the centerpiece and the bulk of the missing pieces of the puzzle. Beyond the critique of “closed” and “open” tribute system explanations, my goal with this essay has been to suggest what we know and what remains to explore and document.

Notes

- 1 *Indio* can mean either “Indian” or “native.” The first term is inaccurate, stemming from Columbus’s error; and the second, more importantly, can carry pejorative connotations. I use the term to accurately quote from Spanish materials. My use should not be construed as more than that.
- 2 The charge of three *reales*, one and one-half reales per person, “was instituted in 1697,” according to Leandro de Viana, in Blair and Robertson 1907b, 95. Luis Ángel Sánchez Gómez (1991, 211–13) has a good discussion of quantities assessed over time. The *tributo* was assessed for married couples, with half tributo collected for unmarried males living with parents and over 20 years of age (later over 18), and unmarried females living with parents and over 25 (later over 20). If the young people were emancipated and over 16, they were subject individually to a half tributo payment as well. “From 1635 to the middle of the nineteenth century there was a further addition to the tribute, at the rate of one-half *real* for each contributor, ostensibly for the conquest of Joló. This was known as the *donativo de Zamboanga*” (Plehn 1901–1902/1962, 144).
- 3 “Secular” priests were those directly subject to the bishops and not members of the Jesuit or friar orders. The friars and Jesuits were “regulars,” subject to an additional *regula* by virtue of their vows to their own order or society.
- 4 Unlike in Spain and the Americas, in the Philippine colonies “it is difficult to determine the differences between *alcaldes mayores* and *corregidores*” (Díaz-Trechuelo 2001, 110).
- 5 Sánchez (1991, 160–66 n. 4, 502–3) speaks of the distinction between the “administrative entity” of the *barangay* and the geographical, residential unit of the *barrio* or other settlements.
- 6 Nowhere was I able to find an explanation of why the Spanish administrators referred to the two registration systems as “closed” and “open.” I assume it was somehow related to the frequency of registration and the verification of those subject to tribute payment.
- 7 His earliest date is from 1664—Alonso 2003, 36 n. 78: “Instrucción para la numeración y cobranza del tributo por el sistema de cuenta abierta” que ordenaba “cesar los padrones de confesión observados en algunas partes, y los de cuenta cerrada que hasta aquí han estado en estilo”. Museo Naval, Madrid, manuscrito 1664, doc. 42, ff. 77–80—with another effort recorded from 1716. Alonso 2003, 36 n. 77: “En la real cédula de 16 de mayo de 1744, que extiende el procedimiento de cuenta abierta a todo el archipiélago, se indica expresamente que se realice con arreglo a las cédulas de 10 de febrero y 23 de noviembre de 1716. [Manuel Joseph de] Ayala, *Diccionario de Gobierno [y legislación de Indias]* (Madrid 1988–1996)], vol. XIII, pp. 262s.”
- 8 Alonso (2003, 38), citing at the end of this paragraph Manuel Joseph de Ayala, *Diccionario de Gobierno y legislación de Indias* (Madrid 1988–1996), vol. XIII, pp. 262s. Don Pedro Calderón Henríquez is described as “young” and “intelligent, educated, cultured, active, enterprising, efficient and one who knew how to carry out with perfection that which was assigned to him” (inteligente, culto, activo, emprendedor, eficaz y que sabia desempeñar con perfección cuanto se le confiaba) (Rodríguez 1976, 53 cited in Alonso 203, 39).
- 9 Citing “Bando del gobernador de 30 de enero de 1799,” Philippine National Archives (PNA), Tributos, bundle 4, ff. 3–4. Why this is dated 1799 for administrative changes made in the 1740s is not explained, a point I return to later in this essay.
- 10 The 1706 manuscript cited earlier (Archivo Franciscano Ibero-Oriental 1706) would seem though to agree with Alonso.
- 11 The full reference is *Estatutos y Ordenaciones de la Santa Provincia de San Gregorio de Religiosos Descalzos de la Regular, y Mas Estrecha Observancia de N.S.P.S. Francisco de Philipinas Dispuestas, y ordenadas por el Compromiso de el Discretorio, y Diffinitorio en el Capitulo Provincial celebrado en nuestro Convento de Nuestra Señora de los Angeles de la Ciudad de Manila el día 8. del mes de Junio de año de 1726. Y mandadas dár a la Estampa por el Ministro Provincial, y Venerable Difinitorio el año de 1730* (Sampaloc: Reimp. en el Convento de Nuestra Señora de Loreto del Pueblo de Sampaloc, 1753). It is cited in Cruikshank 2003, 76 n. 3; the material translated was from a photocopy of ch. 7 of these statutes found in Balquiedra 1982, Appendix 11, 549–67.
- 12 From the Mahayhay film on church accounts: Registros Parroquiales, 1748–1961, Majayjay, Laguna, Philippines, Film #1085075, Mormon Microfilms, Cargo y Data, 1772–1824, 1842–1853. For an argument that there was significant silver coin in the provinces earlier than most authorities assert, some or all of which would have been payments by the governors to the priests for reported *tributos*, see Cruikshank 2008, 124–51.
- 13 The data are not too convincing since I did not find the governor’s payment information for some of the years from 1776 to 1799 (I found data on this point for 1776–1778, 1780, 1782–1783, and 1785–1799).
- 14 Citing PNA, Patronato, unclassified *legajo*, 1836–1849, “Resumen de la Estadística remitida por los Curas Parrocos del Obispado de Nueva Cáceres á la Secretaria Episcopal perteneciente al año 1842.”
- 15 The quotations are taken from the 1726 manuscript cited earlier in this essay and drawn from Alonso (2003, 37), whose source was the Biblioteca de Palacio (Madrid), Miscelánea Ayala II, 2411, no. 12.
- 16 Alonso 2003, 39, citing García-Abásolo 1991, 28. We do not know from Alonso’s article if the figures are cumulative over the seven years or the average increase per province or (most likely) the change from 1740 to 1746. Nor are we told why two major provinces (Laguna and Batangas) are tabulated together. The major reservation regarding these figures is that we are not given the denominator, that is, the total number of tributes for each of these provinces. Without that we cannot tell if Tondo’s increase is significantly higher than the increase in, say, Pampanga. If the number of increases is disproportionate, that raises the question of why it would have been so, leading us to dig further into the change and how it worked to produce what we are told are impressive increases in those being taxed. Presumably one could solve this problem by clarifying the assumptions and providing base data, neither of which I can do from the information provided by Alonso. These points of mine seem to be quibbles and thus more appropriately placed in this note.
- 17 Fradera Barceló (1999, 87–88) says that “The incorporation [in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries] of tribute payers grew proportionally with the growth of the population, but generally [the number of tributos] exceeded or preceded [that of population]. This appears to indicate that [tribute] had its own, specific dynamic . . .” He asserts that this “dynamic” was “linked to advances of the Spanish colonial polity in the Islands and its more effective control of the

population and the [colonial] territory," but I think this is not the case for most of the eighteenth century. We need to look for reasons linked to regions and localities.

- 18 Alonso (2003, 40), citing "Los odores de aquella Audiencia don Juan Bautista Bonilla y don Hemeterio Cacho Calderón. Sobre lo ocurrido con aquel gobernador con motivo de haberlos nombrado para que fuesen a la numeración de los indios por la falta de auxilios para el desempeño de la comisión. Manila, 26 de agosto de 1785," Archivo General de Indias, Filipinas 874.
- 19 Ibid. Alonso (2003, 40) says that this royal order was dated 10 November 1776, directed to all colonial possessions, and "put into practice in the Philippines" in 1778.
- 20 Ibid., citing "Bando del gobernador de 30 de enero de 1799," PNA, Tributos, bundle 4, ff. 3–4.
- 21 I am grateful to Dr. Alejandra Irigoin for providing photocopies of the pages of this book that I needed to consult.
- 22 Also see Rodríguez García 1976, 72: "la renta del 'ramo de Vagamundos' hoy incorporado al nuevo planteo. De todo esto da cuenta De la Torre y Ayala al Rey en carta del 23 de junio de 1741." This same source on page 76 implies that the roster of vagabonds had been folded into "open" collection records for Laguna and Batangas.
- 23 Blair and Robertson 1907c, 50:176; De Tiscar and De la Rosa 1866, 176, from an 1851 circular on *padrones* and tribute collection.
- 24 De Tiscar and De la Rosa 1866, 169–70, "Real Cédula de 23 de Octubre de 1762." The 1851 circular previously referred to indicated that *padrones* were to "serve for two years," though with updated annotations as needed (p. 175, Article 1)—effectively vitiating the attempts to construct annual, accurate *padrones* that roiled the bureaucratic waters one hundred years earlier. Plehn (1901–1902/1962, 143) states that "Every second year a *padrón de tasas*, or tax list, was made up for each *cabecera* and served as a basis of assessment for two years."
- 25 Alonso (2004) generally and Alonso (2004, 92 n. 3) specifically: "one contracted with the local, native elite to produce the census of tribute payers, a complex undertaking with such a dispersed settlement pattern, while at the same time avoiding a periodic revision of the valuation of the items collected in kind, thus benefiting the governors."
- 26 In Blair and Robertson (1907b, 98–99), Don Francisco Leandro de Viana offers no data validating his generalization but some concealment of tributes probably existed, both for personal gain as well as for an attempt to provide a margin in case some of those registered failed to pay.
- 27 Plehn (1901–1902/1962, 136) also refers to this evocative term.

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