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The Eighteenth Century Tirones

Francisco Mallari, S.J.



Until the nineteenth century, piracy was one of the major problems that the Spanish government in the Philippines had to face. In swift-sailing ships, pirates pounced on defenseless trading boats at sea and attacked coastal settlements and towns. One group of pirates was called *Tirone* in Spanish documents. There are sources that identify the Tirones and the *Camucones* (another piratical group) either as one and the same people or two distinct ethnic groups. This makes it hard to tell who the Tirones really were.

Spanish writings are the principal source of information about piratical activities in the Philippines. But often enough Spanish writers lumped together those engaged in piracy as *los Moros piratas*. Even among the *Indios* or natives, the common usage was to call the pirates *Moros*. This label then became synonymous with "pirate" so that whenever seaborne invaders surged ashore, a shout of "*Moros, Moros*" was enough to send people scampering for safety. But there were also non-Moros who engaged in piracy and depredations but were called "*Moros*."

Non-Moro Predators

One can imagine the panicking inhabitants of Capalonga, Camarines Norte, at the cry of "*Moros, Moros!*" when Mariano Sartin, a notorious pirate from a Tayabas (now Quezon province) town landed with his men at Bamban, a hamlet not far from the town-proper (PNL HDP Camarines Norte, Capalonga, 2). The parish priest, Padre Saturio, the town head, Pedro Lapak, and a certain Pancracio Fermo sent out to talk with the pirate band. On their way, Pancracio broke out into loud shouts. Thinking that heavily armed men were

approaching, the pirates hastily boarded their banca and paddled away. They were Tagalog pirates, not Moros!

As late as the nineteenth century, a report to the governor and captain general of the Philippines from the naval headquarters in Cavite on 15 February 1864 communicated that not all reported appearances of pirates were true (PNA Pirateria 3, folio 2b). People in littoral communities feared pirates. Well aware of this, evil-doers took advantage of it to do their thing, by raising false alarms of Moro sightings or invasions.

Those who committed piratical acts at Lamon Bay, a body of water laving the shores of eastern Tayabas province and the northern part of Camarines Norte, were only Moros in name. In reality they were *vagamundos* (vagabonds) and contrabandists who circumvented stringent laws on alcoholic beverages by holing up in Cabaleta island where they set up illegal distilleries (AGI Filipinas 99). At times they put out to sea and raised false alarms of coming Moro pirates. They also sailed and robbed returning fishing boats loaded with tortoise shells or *balatan* (sea slugs) or foodstuff.

On sighting a small unarmed trading boat, their *modus operandi* was to hoist a sail in the manner of Moro pirates and give chase. The poor prey usually made for the nearest shore, its crew jumping shore and running into the bush, leaving everything to the "Moro" pirates (AHN [U] Filipinas, legajo 1351, expediente 48, fol. 5v; MN Ms. 2237, documento 13, fols. 93-93v). The vagabonds must have been a real nuisance. *Alguaciles de bagamundos* (anti-vagabond constables) appear in reports of parish priests from Bicol towns, like Camalig, Guinobatan, Bula and Baao (EPCS 1781-1883, II, fols. 5,6,8).

Basilio Menando, Samar's *alcalde mayor* (provincial executive) communicated from Catbalogan, on 12 July 1834, to Gov. Pascual Enrile the presence of Moro *pancos* in different places and their captives. However, the commanding officer of the armadilla who sailed to the reported places to check did not see any. This could be a confirmation that reported sightings were false alarms made by contrabandists to frighten the people so that they could freely go on with their illegal business (PNA EP-Samar 1749-1848, fol. 156).

Bad harvests usually triggered the vagabonds and contrabandists' piratical activities. Scarcity of rice could raise this staple's price which affected their illegal business. So they would leave their lairs and rob defenseless towns and isolated hamlets (AHN [U] Filipinas 5155, No. 31).

Contrabandists also engaged in tobacco smuggling. A report on 12 July 1831, by Antonio Siguenza, province head of Camarines

Norte, to the Governor confirmed this. He said that the smugglers' route was common knowledge. Smugglers brought by water craft to Camarines Norte tobacco harvested in the Visayas. After supplying that province, they carried the contraband to the shores of Mauban, Tabayas, then by land to Laguna de Bay, and finally by the Pasig river to Manila (MN Ms. 1666, doc. 19, fol. 42v).

Law enforcers were wary of going after the smugglers or contrabandists, for they were a dangerous bunch. They had acquired skill in the use of muskets, giving them an edge over inefficient anti-contraband officers. Besides their skill in the use of fire-arms, the Indio smugglers were many and knew well the "roads, rivers and trails" (AMA MF-78, Memorial). To facilitate their illicit trade, they also raised false alarms of Moro presence.

One time, Jose Peñaranda, province head of Albay, reported from Nueva Caceres to the Governor an Albayeño who was captured by the Moros. He escaped from his captors at Rapu-rapu during a sea fight between his captors and two armed ships of Nueva Caceres and Catanduanes. The former captive said the pirates seemed to be Ilongos, not Moros (MN Ms. 2237, doc. 2, fol. 33v).

Not to be discounted were the riff-rafs or criminal fugitives from Basilan and the regions of the Balangingi and Illana. They fled from their abodes to escape from discord or harassment and became boat-dwellers or settlers of uninhabited islets. For their livelihood, they engaged in seizing prey or booty at sea (UST Archives: Folleto: Tomo 114, fol. 85).

As early as 1699, Governor Fausto Cruzat y Gongora wrote to Spain, on 16 June that European pirates infested Philippine coastal waters. In fact one pirate ship pursued a galiot carrying the tributes from Pangasinan (AGI Filipinas 103).

The German traveller, Feodor Jagor, who came to the Philippines in the nineteenth century, while traveling in the Bicol region, said:

I found out that the alarm about the pirates which had delayed my departure had some basis. Certainly they were not real Moros. At that season, they could not reach those seas, but they were deserters and vagabonds from the same region, who found it more desirable in these coastal provinces to pillage at sea than on land. During my trip, they had perpetrated a good number of robberies and captured some people (Jagor 1875, 102).

Inconsistent Sources

Another difficulty in knowing the Tirones is the inconsistency of the sources. Some treat the Tirones and the Camucones as one and the same people while others consider them two distinct groups. For example, on 22 June 1742 Governor Gaspar de la Torre reported to the King what he had done to combat some "Moros" called "Tirones or Camucones" inhabiting some small islands lying between the island of Palawan and the Visayas (AGI Filipinas 447). In his reply to la Torre on 23 July 1744 the King who should have been well informed, wrote back about the "Tirones or Camucones" (AGI Filipinas 110).

Copying from de la Torre and the King, Vicente Rodriguez Garcia, a Spanish author, also treated them as one people (1976, 198). So did Cesar Majul who wrote extensively on the local Muslims (1978, 240). Montero y Vidal (1895, 577-78) and Murillo y Velarde (1749, 30) could not agree whether the raiders of Catbalogan, Samar, in 1625, were Tirones or Camucones.

But there are Memorials of Religious Superiors and letters of public officials that treated the Camucones and Tirones as two distinct peoples. In one of his works, Wenceslao Retana (1921, 170), a respected Spanish source, said there were numerous works treating the Tirones and Camucones pirates, suggesting that they were two different peoples. In his letter to the King on 15 July 1745 the Archbishop of Cebu reported the deplorable deeds of the Tirones and Camucones (AGI Filipinas 111). Fr. Juan de Arechedera, Bishop of Nueva Segovia and ad interim Governor of the country in 1745-1750, distinguished one from the other. In fact, as we shall see later, he dispatched an armed expedition against the Tirones (AGI Filipinas 455). Then Arechedera's successor, Francisco Jose de Ovando y Solis, declared in 1752 a war of extermination against the Joloans, Tirones, Camucones and other groups (Montero 1895, 577-78).

The Spanish chronicler Juan Jose Delgado positively asserted that when the Maguindanaos and Joloan pirate-fleets had been subdued, their vassals—the Camucones and Tirones—took over the raiding and burning of Christian towns (BR 17:320). And bolstering the distinction between the Tirones and Camucones is a note in Blair and Robertson that the Tawi-Tawi islands group, southwestern tip of the Philippines, are populated "by Malayan tribes supposed to have migrated thither from Borneo—the Suluanos, Camucones and Tirones" (BR 29:142).

This confusion suggests that the ethnic identities of these people were not too clear even to some eighteenth century Spaniards who should have known better. One wonders how they could have expected to vanquish enemies they did not know.

Probably a clue to the confusion appears in another note of Blair and Robertson which says:

[Camucones is the] name of the Moro pirates who inhabit the little islands of the Sulu group east of Tawi-tawi, and the islands between these and Borneo; but on the last the name Tirones is also conferred—derived from the province of Tiron in Borneo to which these islands are adjacent (BR 18:79).

It can be surmised that any island close to the Tiron province in Borneo was given the name Tirones by reason of its proximity to that province. Thus its inhabitants who could belong to any ethnic group were called Tirones by virtue of the name of their habitation.

The Identity of the Tirones

Who were the Tirones according to the sources consulted? In eastern Borneo, there was a large district that went by the name of Tirun or Tedong. Four extensive rivers flowed through the region. The riverine portions of the land were generally swampy but in the interior swidden agriculture could flourish. This vast area was blessed with abundant forest products. It was rich in birds' nests which became a major commodity for trade and a much sought after delicacy by the Chinese. Sago palms, the chief source of subsistence for the inhabitants, also abounded. By the 1760s, rice and sago were the major crops raised for trade (Warren 1981, 87).

The inhabitants were called Orang Tedong or Tirun. They lived in long-houses in villages along river banks. They were characterized as a strong people given to agriculture but barbarous, "fiercely independent," and "predatory" (Majul 1978, 201). They were not Mohammedans but pagans later converted to Islam by the Sulus with whom they bartered slaves they had captured in their piracies and depredations in the Philippines (Warren 1981, 85). They were said to have tails. They were also said to eat human flesh, and their cruelty to captives was notorious (AMA M-F 112-i, fol. 1; Forrest 1779, 375).

The Tirones also lived in other places. Dotting the sea between Borneo and Palawan are small islands collectively called the Tirones. More than twenty of them are known. They are so small and numerous that the Spaniards called them *moscas* or flies (AGI Filipinas 455; AMA M-F 112-i, fol. 1). Only a short distance separates some islands from the others so that they form various channels, inlets and rivers which only light craft handled by skilled steersmen can safely navigate (AGI Filipinas 455). In these tiny inaccessible islands, more than one hundred villages of Tirones lived in freedom and defiance of Spanish sovereignty (AGI Filipinas 455). Their land was marshy and rugged with impenetrable mountains. Like their counterparts in Borneo, they also thrived on sago and rootcrops, and if reports are to be believed, oftentimes on human flesh (AGI Filipinas 455; AMA M-F 112-i, fol. 1).

Tiny as they are, these islands served as jump off points for their raiding expeditions (Murillo y Velarde 1752, 76). In frail fast crafts armed with *lantacas*, *sombilines*, grappling hooks, *kris*es and other hand-weapons, Tirones marauders set out for Palawan and the Visayas up to Mindoro, Marinduque, Manila Bay and the Bicol region, burning towns, desecrating churches, killing, taking booty and human captives, especially religious ministers (AGI Filipinas 455; AMA M-F 112-i, fol. 1).

Tirones Piracy and Depredations

Most of the recorded activities of the Tirones in the Philippines occurred in the eighteenth century. By the 1740s peace was struck between the government and Jolo. Joloan invasions ceased for a while, but the Tirones took over (De la Concepcion 1788-1792, 75). Even before the years 1745 to 1746, as far as the Tirones were specifically named the raiders or pirates, they attacked the Visayas, southern Luzon, and frequented the waters of the lower western coast of Albay and Sorsogon (AGI Filipinas 264).

As early as 1625 they raided Catbalogan, Samar, and robbed the sacred objects of its churches. On their return to the Visayas, together with the Sulus they carried away sacred Mass vessels and vestments from places of worship as the people fled for safety with their pastors (Montero 1888, 57-58).

On May 1740 Fray Hipolito de San Agustin, Augustinian Prior of Cagayan, was sailing along the coast of Mindoro when they encoun-

tered three Tirones vessels. The friar and his convento boy were captured and brought to Tirones islands, then to Jolo. Six months later, he was set free after paying the Sultan 12,000 pesos ransom (De la Concepcion 1788-1792, 56-57).

Reporting to the King in 1745, the Archbishop of Cebu said the Tirones ravaged the islands of the Visayas, robbing churches and capturing Christians and clerics (AGI Filipinas 111). What was painful to the Archbishop was the government's apathy in spite of his and other persons' reports to Governor de la Torre of the desecrations of places of worship, sacred images and loss of souls. Government inaction emboldened the Tirones to range even close to Cavite and Manila (AGI Filipinas 111).

On 15 October 1746 an official named Vicente de Villaseñor informed the Governor in Manila about the letter from the town head (gobernadorcillo) of Tiaong, Tayabas, asking for help against ten Tirones vessels at Nayung, a seaside settlement. Sariaya, Tayabas, which had 100 armed men was ordered to send reinforcements. Together with Tiaong's local force, this contingent set out to meet the Tirones (AGI Filipinas 455).

In the same year the frequently razed *visita* or hamlet of Gate, Bulusan, Sorsogon, twelve kilometers from the seaside, experienced a Tirones raid. Led by their *cabeza de barangay* (barangay leader). Don Crisanto, the people fought back. The Tirones killed the leader, burned the church and almost all the houses, and took men, women and children captives (Goyena 1940, 107, 184; Huerta 1857, 593; AGI Filipinas 455).

News of the captives taken in Gate reached a certain Juan Mateo who wrote on 14 October 1746 to Pedro Lorenzo Ramos del Castillo, provincial executive of Albay and Catanduanes. Mateo informed him of having received two letters from Gate and Matnog about what the Tirones did (AGI Filipinas 455). They captured nine persons in Gate, and two *caracoas* of Tirones landed in Matnog and also took captives. Five days later, the same province official received the news of Don Crisanto's slaying and the enemy's presence near Matnog (AGI Filipinas 455).

That same year, Julian Sarmiento de Aro, parish priest of Casiguran, Albay, reported that in the monsoon season of 1746, thirteen Tirones vessels tried to invade the *visita* of Ibalon in Casiguran but failed. The natives put up a spirited resistance, losing only four dead (AGI Filipinas 264). Their setback did not deter the Tirones from further piracies. Cristobal Leonardo Quiñones, priest of Sorsogon,

reported that two Tirones' vessels chased the tax collector of Masbate who crossed over to Sorsogon to give his accounts (AGI Filipinas 264).

There are also certain recorded plunders in the coastal towns of Tayabas in 1746-47. For instance, Ignacio Gonzales, parish priest of Mulanay, Tayabas, reported on 23 October 1746 to Don Manuel Ruano, province head of Tayabas, the thirty Tirones vessels that anchored at "Pagsanjan" [Pagsangajan?], a settlement at the southern tip of Tayabas under the jurisdiction of Mulanay (AGI Filipinas 455).

The eastern coast of the province was not spared. Juan de la Torre, parish priest of Obuyon, wrote that on 7 June 1747 four Tirones ships approached his town. Fully armed inhabitants prepared to oppose the enemy landing, but when an artillery discharge whistled over their heads, they ran to the mountains. The Tirones landed, went on a rampage, destroyed the church paintings, burned a public building, slaughtered cattle, wrecked small and big boats, damaged *convento* furniture and some farms (AGI Filipinas 264).

Even visitas or hamlets were attacked. Fr. Ignacio Gonzales, gave notice that in June of the same year, Tirones in five raiding vessels did much damage to the inhabitants and their property in Catanauan, Tayabas, and its visitas (AGI Filipinas 264).

More visitas on the eastern coast were assaulted. In July of the same year, Tirones in four vessels assaulted and destroyed the visitas of Pifis, Quibay and Paculago and left with fourteen captives of both sexes, as reported by the parish priest of Guinayangan (AGI Filipinas 264).

The Tirones must have committed more piracies and depredations, but there is no way of knowing. The piracies were simply attributed to "Moros." But compared to other marauding Moro groups, Tirones must have suffered fewer casualties, since they were "cunning" (De la Concepcion 1788-1792, 76). On land they attacked any time, but avoided communities where resistance was likely. Against coastal hamlets, they employed night assaults. Probably to conserve ammunition, they fired first only one musket to create panic among the populace, then attacked. At any sign of resistance, they left little damage, preoccupied as they were with retiring in their fast and light vessels. But in the absence of resistance, the devastation they made was considerable (AGI Filipinas 110; De la Concepcion 1788-1792, 76).

At sea the Tirones were merciless with small boats. They avoided large ones, knowing that they were incapable of surprising them. Their lack of force made them resort to surprise attacks on land and

sea (AGI Filipinas 110). No doubt they inflicted much harm and suffering on the lives of the people than other pirates.

In Palawan (Paragua) alone, after reconnoitering its coasts, Captain Antonio Gil reported that for fear of piratical attacks, no smoke in daytime or fire at nighttime could be seen along the coasts and nearby islets. Most littoral inhabitants had fled to the mountains inland (UST Archives: Libros: tomo 81, fols. 187b-188). The work of evangelization was almost at a stand still because of the frequency of raids. People could not leave the fort of Taytay Bay at the upper eastern coast for fear of capture. From the fort, they could view the innumerable vessels of the Tirones and other groups as they sailed by on their marauding expeditions (UST Archives: *ibid.*, fol. 189b).

Suppression Measures

The atrocities and plunder of the Tirones became too widespread to be ignored. Reports of religious as well as civil officials about the Tirones and other Moro pirates roused the government from its stupor. It adopted various measures to suppress the Tirones. Considering the few resources at hand, they were provident but lamentably ineffective. For example, in 1719 the Governor had a fort erected in Labo, Palawan, under the command of Sergeant Major Jose de Aroza. The fort was useless. It was staffed by depressed and indigent soldiers and workers who were left unaided, unpaid and physically maltreated. At any opportunity, they deserted, the authorities not knowing whether they joined the Moros or not (UST Archives: Libros: tomo 81, fols. 186b, 189).

One armada after another hunted the pirates. They proved to be nothing more than costly exercises in futility. The enemy vessels were simply too fast for them and constructed to suit their tactics. To match their advantage in speed, by 1741 Domingo de Neyra, *ad interim* Fiscal of the Royal Audiencia, requested the reactivation of the Pintados fleet (AMA M-F 112-i, fol. 2). This would consist of a fast-sailing squadron of *caracoas*, one of the types of vessels used by the raiders.

As more reports of Moro and Tirones raids reached the government in Manila, the combined Councils of War and Ministry of Finance approved Neyra's proposal (AGI Filipinas 150). This, however, was shelved, occasioned by the news that the British Admiral, George

Anson was seen in China with his squadron hunting for Spanish galleons. The government decided to consolidate its resources to face the British menace. Unfortunately this move gave the Tirones free rein to launch daring attacks even against communities at the shores of Manila Bay (AGI Filipinas 455; AMA M-F 112-i, fol. 2).

The Tirones vessels continued to mock the clumsy and heavy government armadas. Fray Concepcion, biased and occasionally sardonic, gave an example of what he bitingly called "the effectiveness of these armadas" and "end-product of their cost" (De la Concepcion 1788-1792, 46-47). The Magistrate of Mariveles notified the Superior Government in Manila of the arrival of four fighting ships. He also informed the skipper of the presence of Tirones in Morong, and gave him eight skilled native archers who were assigned two to a vessel. Having set out to hunt for the Tirones for about four or five miles, they encountered a couple of parao from Bagac, Bataan. Thinking these were Moros, the government ships swung swiftly away, and the skipper's ship shamelessly made for the island of Corregidor.

The following day, three of the ships left to join their skipper and sailed for Maragondon, Cavite, to check the report about Moro vessels. On receiving a report of the specific location of the enemy, the Magistrate alerted the squadron. At the sight of the enemy, the skipper sent two ships to give chase. The speedy enemy fled leaving behind in their wake their sluggish pursuers. Aware of the scanty and weak government forces, the Tirones must have been fearlessly lurking in Manila Bay, swooping down with impunity on the helpless seaboard towns of Bataan (*ibid.*).

The King stepped into the crisis. He ordered Governor Gaspar de la Torre to construct fighting ships. After consultations with councils of war, de la Torre instructed the provincial heads of Hoilo, Negros, Cebu and Leyte to construct thirty-six fighting vessels and fortify strategic coastal areas with watchtowers and sentinels. He also offered handsome rewards for exemplary action in combat with the pirates. They consisted in allowing the captors to enslave their captives and enjoy perpetual exemption from tribute and personal and public services (AGI Filipinas 111, 150; Montero 1888, 276).

This measure failed. The raiders' vessels outsailed and outrowed their lumbering pursuers. When cornered, the raiders could dart into shallow inlets and estuaries with their shallow-draft vessels leaving their pursuers helpless in their deep-draft ships (AGI Filipinas 447). A well-known example was the pirates' encounter near Masbate with the "Scourge of Pirates," naval captain Jose Gomez. Unable to further

sustain the casualties Gomez was inflicting on them, the pirates turned around into a mangrove swamp to escape (AGI Filipinas 928).

The Tirones' activities must have been extensive. Escaped captives and the *gobernadorcillo* (town head) of Balayan, Batangas, reported some thirty Tirones vessels spread along the Batangas and Cavite coast. The government dispatched a squadron of seven ships under the command of a professional pilot, Jose Valverde, to merge with Pedro Guevarra's force and harry the Tirones. Pedro Losada, a distinguished leader of this group sailed to Calavite, Mindoro, a place reportedly harassed by the Tirones, then hastened to Tayabas upon hearing of the Tirones there. In both places, he came upon nothing but the misery and desolation left by the fast-moving raiders (De la Concepcion 1788-1792, 47-49).

It was not only the enemy ships' speed that made government ships look ridiculous. Though armed squadrons would promptly scramble to answer calls for help, the distance from their base in Manila or Cavite to points under attack in Mindoro or Panay was just too much for the rowers. They were mostly Indios. Physically and psychologically, they were unfit for such a demanding task. Their daily fare was poor by any standards. They had no incentives to serve well. Those who were not able to flee to the mountains or bribe their way out to avoid being drafted were pressed into service, leaving their livelihood and families to fend for themselves. And often enough, they were maltreated and unpaid (AFIO D-10/22, Ms. 1823, fols. 318-19; BR 18:333-34; Schurz 1939, 210-12; Picornell 1989). Where then would they get the drive and energy to row hard? No wonder they arrived too late, too often.

It was not only the government ships' sluggishness that neutralized government efforts but also the lack of men well-versed in the geography of the Tirones islands. This was obvious in the response of Juan Pulgar, Zamboanga province head, to an order from the Governor (De la Concepcion 1788-1792, 43-44).

In 1744 clamors for action moved the Governor to order Pulgar to have on the ready an adequate, properly manned, armed and fully stocked naval squadron. With an adequate home defense left behind, this force would be dispatched to Tirones under able officers. They were to inflict every damage possible and conceivable under such circumstances to such an enemy (*ibid.*).

The Governor also appointed Agustin de Oliva privateer and coast guard captain of the Visayas. He was to sail with his men to seek, pursue and harry the Tirones infesting the Visayan sea. He should

take them by surprise and carry out whatever would be worthwhile for the service of His Majesty (*ibid.*).

These measures, in Concepcion's mind, were again provident but ineffective. There was a disparity between the pursuer and the pursued who were definitely set to flee. But the most serious deficiency was the lack of personnel well acquainted with the Tirones isles who could pinpoint the places to be attacked with less risk or casualties (*ibid.*).

Arechederra Takes Over

By 1745 the state of affairs had turned from bad to worse fueled by the dynastic disputes in the Sulu Sultanate. On 21 September Governor Gaspar de la Torre died. Friar Juan de Arechederra took over as *ad interim* Governor. This man of the cloth seemed to have been the opposite of his unimaginative and passive predecessor. Aware of the British threat and the piracy problem, he inspected and supplied Manila and the port of Cavite with weapons and ammunition. He even sent an envoy to Batavia to purchase cannons (BR 47:232-33; AGI Filipinas 455).

Aware of the Spanish soldiers' clumsiness in handling their weapons, Arechederra gave strict orders to drill them in the manual of arms and target practice three days a month. Neither did he exempt the artillerymen from drills. He also prescribed a weekly target practice for them, each gun firing at least twelve rounds. When free from pressing business, he made it a point to be present and, as an incentive, he had an award given for efficient marksmanship (De la Concepcion 1788-1792, 50-51).

Arechederra's energetic and prompt responses to problems caught on with other officials. Juan Antonio del Valle, a public official, wrote to their province head on 16 October 1746, acknowledging receipt of six pounds of gunpowder. But he also said half of it was spent in the fiesta of the patron saint of Gubat, Sorsogon. Alarmed by the Tirones raids in Gate and Matnog, he begged for another six pounds. He did not have to wait long. Five days later, he wrote from Bulusan, thanking the province head for the new shipment of gunpowder. He even proposed the assembling of fighters from Casiguran, Juban, Hibalog and Gate to assault and punish the Tirones at their raiding station at the Embocadero. He also communicated with the Padre of Capul, Samar, hoping that the priest would exhort his people to come to the aid of Bulusan and Matnog if attacked (AGI Filipinas 455).

In the same year, after the news of Tirones' presence at Tiaong, Tayabas, Arechederra called a council of war in Manila on 20 October 1746. The council recommended the following to the Governor: form an armada to punish the Moros raiding the provinces and those reported by the province head of Tayabas; make the province head of Laguna take measures to let the lakeside towns of his province nearest Tayabas help besieged communities along the Tiaong coast, since to dispatch an armed squadron from Manila or Cavite was both costly and most frustratingly futile. By the time it arrived, the speedy enemy would be long gone (*ibid.*).

It instructed the squadron bound for Tiaong not to sail individually or separately but in an organized defensive formation. It should go into action only upon the order of its officers. Its skipper had to reconnoiter every cove, river and possible hiding places along the way and inquire for the enemy's whereabouts from any vessel met on the way. He should not forget the usual hiding places or havens—the Mulanay river and Tablas island. To augment his force, the Chief Magistrate of Mindoro would send him several fighting ships to be under his command. To sustain his force, he should ask the provincial heads for aid in men and supplies. He should act wisely and see to it that every crew member observes good manners, avoids conflicts and cursing and recites the Holy Rosary daily (*ibid.*).

When thirty Tirones vessels attacked Pagsanjan, Tayabas in 1746, the province head notified Governor Arechederra of the lack of arms in his province, and how he had sent his people to the beaches armed only with lances and arrows (AGI Filipinas 455). He then petitioned the Governor on 24 October to send him muskets and ammunition. Five days later, the action-man in the Governor ordered the royal officials to act on the needs of Tayabas, prepare a council of war to evaluate his predecessor's policies towards that province and adopt relevant measures. That same day, Sergeant Major Jose Ruiz received eight muskets, a jar of gunpowder and 600 bullets to be sent at once to Laguna's executive who, in turn, would send them to Tayabas (*ibid.*). That was not all. On 30 October, a council of war decided to send the following: the small galley constructed in Cavite with twenty-eight crew members, ten soldiers, four gunners, a skipper with an aide and another small galley (*ibid.*).

To satisfy the demands of civil and religious officials to contain the Tirones, Arechederra decided to build a fighting fleet. Meanwhile he received requests from provinces and towns desirous of putting up their own armadilla. On February 1747, he allowed Guiuan,

Samar, to equip its own ships with 500 fighting men and rowers, and if so desired, invade Tirones territory with fire and sword and enslave as many captured Tirones pirates (Montero 1888, 278).

A Sultan Comes In

An unexpected event advantageous to the government occurred. It was the internal power struggle in the Sulu sultanate in favor of Azim ud-Din. Better known in Philippine history as Sultan Alimuddin, he made his next move to consolidate his sultanate's territory. He decided to deal first with the Tirones in Borneo whom his father had subjugated. He planned an expedition against them to install a chieftain to assert his authority over those rebellious people (Majul 1978, 201).

However, he felt his resources were insufficient. By virtue of the 1737 peace treaty with the Spaniards, he approached them and requested a reinforcement of men and ammunition. He could not have chosen a more propitious time. Delighted to receive help in punishing pernicious pirates and fulfilling the King's royal *cedula* of 23 July 1744 that urged no sparing of expenses to fight the Tirones (AGI Filipinas 455), the Spaniards were not hard to persuade. But that did not mean that they discarded their past suspicion of Sulu-Tirones alliance.

As though by coincidence, the rest of the storm-beaten six-ship squadron which had been sent to quell the rebellion in Bohol proceeded to Zamboanga (AGI Filipinas 113). The Zamboanga executive was then under Arechederra's instructions to organize an adequate force to fight the Tirones. He promptly incorporated the survivors in his armada, appointed Tomas de Arevillaga commanding officer and despatched this force to Jolo (AGI Filipinas 455). Heartened by the Spanish support, Alimuddin warmly welcomed his new allies. All in all, he was able to muster 8,000 men (De la Costa 1965, 97). In the early part of March 1747, he personally led the expeditionary force (AGI Filipinas 455).

Meanwhile to build his projected fighting ships, Arechederra put Gaspar Tome de Leon, a Malabarese pilot, in charge. To match the speedy Tirones ships, he had the *panco*, the pirate's fast sailer, copied and constructed at the Cavite navy yard. He also employed de Leon to watch any British activities in Philippine waters (AGI Filipinas 192, 453).

While Alimuddin was battling the Tirones, Arechederra issued a decree on 26 March 1747 to heads of provinces. It was the season of the southwest monsoon commonly called "the pirate wind." Years of residence in the islands had taught him that it was time for piratical attacks. He urged them to look out for the Tirones, Camucones and Malanaos who could have launched their seasonal expeditions (AGI Filipinas 264).

By April of 1747, Alimuddin's expedition was meeting almost no resistance. The Tirones had fled to the mountains out of fear of the Spaniards. They contacted the Sultan and sought for protection. They agreed to the conditions laid before them, reaffirmed their allegiance to the Sultan and returned whatever captives they had (Majul 1978, 202; AGI Filipinas 455).

When the Sultan sailed home with his punitive force from the Tirones stronghold, he took with him several Tirones chiefs. He left the others in Jolo, then proceeded to Zamboanga with two of them and some fifty captives released by the Tirones. The Zamboanga governor approved the surrender and gratefully thanked the Sultan for all his efforts (AGI Filipinas 455).

The Aftermath

That expedition, in a letter of a Jesuit missionary in Zamboanga to his brother, left the Tirones "completely cowed" (De la Costa 1965, 97; AJPT, E-I-a-18, 3.600). This was substantiated by Arechederra's letter to Spain, on 15 June 1748, about the absence of Tirones slave-raiding ships in the Visayan and Luzon waters. Then the Spaniards took as a gesture of a job well done the Sultan's request to the Manila government for "6,000 pesos, powder, nails and other forms of ammunition as replacement for his expenses" which Arechederra did not take long to approve (AGI Filipinas 455; De la Concepcion 1788-1792, 107; Majul 1978, 202). In reciprocation, the Sultan allowed religious missionaries to work in Jolo and Tamontaca. He also offered to come to Zamboanga to personally lead them to their destinations (AGI Filipinas 455).

Then replies of the province heads to Arechederra's decree on 26 March trickled in. They showed mixed results. Since the last attack on the Tirones, the Zamboanga executive reported on 27 May 1748 the information he had gathered. He said that only the Tirones living in Sibuco were planning a raiding party on three vessels. But

those dwelling along the shores were constrained by their disadvantageous position in the face of a Spanish counter-attack (AGI Filipinas 264).

Then the executive of Calamianes who received the governor's decree only on July 1747, wrote of news that at the opposite coast of Malampaya, three nautical miles away from the Royal Fortress, hostile Tirones disembarked from six vessels for an assault. But he had already taken steps to counteract them. Within view of this fortress were three estuaries through which Moro vessels sailed to the Visayas unmolested. But since September of the past year till the month the Calamianes head had given notice, not one enemy ship had passed by to the relief of his constituents (*ibid.*). He further reported that Moros were always in Palawan where, humanly speaking, it was impossible to drive them away from the numerous inlets and mangrove swamps dotting that province. They had made Palawan not only a convenient place to waylay their victims and inflict harm on its inhabitants but also as a base for marauding ventures (*ibid.*).

Apparently satisfied by the results of the expedition and the satisfactory reports of provincial heads, Arechederra strongly determined to get rid of the Tirones once and for all. He issued another decree on 3 April 1748. Every provincial head of Visayan and nearby provinces raided by Moros should report the damage done, the number and size of enemy vessels, when and where they proceeded afterwards. This decree should also be conveyed to the Fathers Provincial of Religious Orders and the Bishops of Camarines and Cebu (*ibid.*).

It was a very wise move to involve the religious superiors. They were shepherds concerned with the welfare of their flocks. Noteworthy were bishops like Domingo Collantes, of Nueva Caceres. A witness to the sufferings of his people, he presented a Memorial based on his pastoral visit of his diocese. His Memorial suggested the lifting of the ban on the purchase or fabrication of arms, if the local armadilla could not offer any help (Barrantes 1848, 149).

Furthermore, religion had a strong influence on the people. The experience of Bicolanos shows how the people fought against the Moros when led by an inspiring leader like their parish priest. People living in an organized parish fought better than those without a priest. Those in leaderless communities were caught like helpless chicken by Moro pirates (AAM Folder 1741-1918, fols. 93-94b, 111; AFIO 92/7, fols. 3-4; PNA EPCS, 1789-1838, fol. 19b).

Nevertheless Arechederra's euphoria was short-lived. In the early years of his successor's administration, in the 1750s, piratical attacks were again reported. Developments occurred that would trigger the renewal of raids. For instance, fortifications and defenses in Christian territories deteriorated as problems leading to the Seven Years War hampered the Central Government in Madrid from extending full support to the colonial government in Manila. Bad harvests plagued Mindanao. Thus the year 1754 saw the intense eruption of raids by "Joloans, Mindanaos, Malanaos, Camucones, Ylanos, Tirones and Tamontacas" (AGI Filipinas 611, 679, 920). The raiders pillaged especially for food. Zuñiga wrote:

They entered with fire and sword in all directions, murdering the religious orders, Indians and Spaniards, burning and robbing towns, and making prisoners of thousands of Christians, not only in the islands near to Jolo but in all our dominions, even in the provinces in the immediate neighborhood of Manila.

These renewed raids continued to the nineteenth century, giving credence to Governor Felix Berenguer de Marquina's evaluation of the Moro problem as "an evil without remedy" (Bernaldez 1857, 136; Montero 1888, 355).

Conclusion

With regard to the problem of the Tirones and Camucones' ethnic identities, there is need for more study to be definitively sure whether or not they were one or two distinct peoples. It is admittedly a vexing ethno-historical question whose solution could probably be dug up in foreign archives.

With regard to the labeling of Moro pirates, it would be obviously wrong to classify the pirates under the one unqualified name "Moros." There were widely known Moro piratical groups. For example—the Magindanaos, Balangingi, Iranuns, Camucones and Tirones, but there were also other Moro groups that did not indulge in piracy in the Spanish times. Besides, there were pirates who were not Moros. Hence calling the pirates "Moros" would not only be inaccurate but also unfair.

With regard to the anti-Tirones drive, all the government efforts and the last Sultan-led punitive expedition accomplished nothing

more than to stall off the Tirones' depredations and piracies. The campaign up to the end of Arechederra's term failed for various reasons. The most immediate was the government inability to come up with the right type of water craft to counteract the enemy vessel's mobility. This problem would have to wait till 1778 when Governor Jose Basco y Vargas built his Marina Sutil. This battle fleet of light, fast, anti-piracy vessels succeeded, if only for a time, in giving the people their long desired respite from piratical attacks (Mallari 1990, 83).

The government also lacked the necessary resources in men and materiel. It had no capable individuals to lead a punitive expedition against the enemy for lack of knowledge of the enemy's territory. Towns needed guns and munition but it was only in the 1790s and the 1800s that the government liberally aided the most attacked provinces with guns and gunpowder. Gunpowder was frequently in short supply. Yet it was wasted in senseless salvos and Arechederra himself, reputedly a pompous prelate, unwisely wasted precious gunpowder in childish salvos of artillery from the walls of Manila on birthdays, departures for vacation and dinner toasts in his palace (AGI Filipinas 198).

Another reason cannot be ignored for the failure of the anti-piracy campaign. The Spaniards accused the Tirones of being convenient allies of the Sulus and Maguindanaos, and since they were subjects of the Sulus, their overlords allowed them to engage in piracy and used them as cover for their own piracies and destructive raids (AGI Filipinas 706; Moor 1968, 96; De la Concepcion 1788-1792, 243; Montero 1888, 278). In the light of Alimud Din's tumultuous life, this stinging accusation seems to have had a basis in fact. When Bantilan, Alimuddin's brother, assumed the rule of the sultanate in place of his deposed brother, this fiery and haughty sibling's actions confirmed the Spanish accusation. Without any effort at dissimulation, he ordered many vessels to be armed and manned by Joloans and Tirones who sailed out on a renewed mission of death and destruction throughout the islands (BR 48:152).

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