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Between Policy and Prerogative: Malfeasance in the Inspection of the Manila Galleons at Acapulco, 1637

WILLIAM J. MCCARTHY

One of the most noted characteristics of Spanish imperial administration throughout the entire period of empire has been encapsulated in the phrase, *Obedezco, pero no cumpro* (I obey, but I do not comply). It appears to have been the case that crown officials far from Europe operated very much as they desired. The Spanish settlement farthest afield was that of Manila, and it may be somewhat obvious to suggest that there was great opportunity for malfeasance among its officials, but the Asian colony provides excellent examples of the potential extent of the practice. An early seventeenth century observer noted:

...and [visitation] is more necessary here than in other places because we are farther from the eyes of the King. The governors and other officials are at liberty here to do as they please.¹

The governor and captain general of the Philippines enjoyed perhaps the widest prerogative of any imperial official. "Indeed the governor general of the Philippines possessed such broad authority and remained so geographically isolated from metropolitan officials that many scholars have likened him to an independent monarch."² Describing the current governor as despotic and tyrannical, the *cabildo* (municipal council) of Manila complained to the king in 1715 that, because of their distance from Spain, the governors acted at will.³

¹ Nicholas Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University, 1971), 157.

² John Reed, *Colonial Manila* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 36.

³ Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 132.

Officially subordinate to the viceroy of New Spain, the governor's authority was also circumscribed somewhat—or rather, occasionally—by several entities. The *Audiencia de Manila*, established in 1583, acted as high court and advisory body as it did in other parts of the empire. The *Junta de Repartimiento* was established in 1604 to see that the distributing of lading space on the galleons was more equitable—it had already become the province of speculators and nepotists. The archbishop of Manila was also an influential and frequently combative presence.⁴ For the most part, though, in spite of these presences, the governors tended to act independently.

Philippine governors were in good company in this regard; southeast Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a place of particularly autonomous behavior for many European officials. The Portuguese had been the first Europeans to arrive in the region, and realized the impossibility of ready communication with Lisbon. The celebrated Duke of Albuquerque took it upon himself to make sweeping decisions regarding Portuguese policy in his capacity as governor and captain general. His strategy of capturing only the strategic sea lanes between China and Europe, and of overcoming Asian opponents with strong initial shows of force, paid off handsomely. The Portuguese captains general of Ternate, a trading post in the Spice Islands (the Moluccas, now part of Indonesia), were said to have "comported themselves like criminals rather than responsible administrators."⁵ With reference to the calamitous frequency of shipwreck often caused by the overloading of vessels in the Portuguese ocean-going trade (the *Carreira da India*, or India run), King Philip II felt compelled to issue the following order:

...the loss of so much treasure has also been very great;...now of new making,...the basis of the registering [procedure] is to register these items in [only]

⁴ See John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959) for the contention that the imposition of the Catholic faith was the primary achievement of the Spaniards in the Philippines and the conscious instrument of their policy of conquest.

⁵ Bailey Diffie and George Winus, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 360.

the permitted poundage, and there is to be made new diligence by my order....⁶

Throughout Portuguese Asia, the presence of the *casados*, or married householders, gives important testimony to the significance of private initiative. Such men were permitted to opt out of the Portuguese service after two three-year terms of duty, if they married local women, and set themselves up as private traders. Their presence throughout the region did much to enhance Portuguese fortunes: for instance, after several decades of contact, the Chinese granted permission for the establishment of Macao in 1557.

The Asian empire of the Dutch was headquartered at Batavia (the Dutch name for Jakarta), and similarly, officials of their East India Company, or VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*), enjoyed substantial prerogatives. Jan Pieterszoon Coen, governor general of the Indies, seized Jakarta in 1619 in express disobedience of the stated intentions of the *Heeren XVII* (the VOC's governing body), "who had emphasized that the projected 'general rendezvous' [for Dutch trading interests in the East] should be secured by peaceful negotiations and not by force of arms."⁷ The company headquarters and seat of Dutch power continued to operate in much the same fashion: "The Directors in the fatherland decide matters as it seems best to them there; but we do here what seems best and most advisable to us."⁸

The experience of Spanish Manila and its trans-Pacific galleon trade provides one of the most cogent examples of the administrative tendency of the periphery to dictate to the center. The Pacific, or Manila galleon, trade was difficult to control from Spain as both terminal ports were thousands of miles from the metropolis. The monopoly held by Seville, and later Cadiz, had been designed to help minimize free trade throughout the empire, but had little effect on the Manila trade. Limiting the volume of imports, collecting duties, and urging diligence in enforcing regulations, were the only controls that

⁶ King Philip II to the viceroy of India, Mathias de Albuquerque, March 16, 1596, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarinho, Lisbon, Reino, Nova Goa.

⁷ Charles R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (London: Penguin, 1988), 211.

⁸ Quoted by Charles Wilson, *The Dutch Republic* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 209.

could be undertaken, and each proved problematic, as evasion of the regulations began at the source.

The situation of Manila was particularly challenging due to the fact that its trade was causing enormous amounts of bullion to be transferred out of Spanish hands. To be sure, the crown had urgent need of it in Europe, and much unregistered silver was exported through Acapulco or Buenos Aires, and into private or foreign hands, rather than via the official routes.⁹ The Manila galleon trade came under particular scrutiny because of this tendency.

A series of incidents in the 1630s exemplifies the propensity for imperious conduct at Manila. In fact, the proceedings of Philippine governor Don Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera (1635-1644) show us that it was possible not only to interpret liberally orders from Madrid, but to influence policy and decisions emanating therefrom. It is clear that Hurtado de Corcuera set his authority against that of the viceroy of New Spain and Philip IV, winning a resounding victory for himself, and in the event, for his colony's commercial prerogative.

The developments progressed in the following manner upon the arrival of Hurtado de Corcuera at Manila. The 1635 sailing to Mexico was cancelled by order of the governor, who professed to be appalled at the lack of supervision of the trade and the extortionate fees whose collection he had witnessed at Acapulco. The 1637 galleons were inspected upon their arrival at New Spain by order of the viceroy, defying the tradition of laxity in the enforcement of regulations. In 1637, sailings were again cancelled at Manila, this time in protest over the inspection, which had severely angered Philippine merchants and officials. The following year, 1638, saw the shipwreck of the flagship, or *capitana*, which further impoverished the colony. Finally, in 1639, Philip IV responded to the situation, and to irate Philippine complaints, by disallowing further inspections, thereby acknowledging the initiative of his distant deputy.

One of the Philippine governor's most important (and lucrative) responsibilities was to oversee the galleon trade. He saw to: 1) the construction, or purchase, and maintenance of the galleons; 2) the assignment of lading space; 3) the collection of duties (Mexican

⁹ John TePaske, "New World Silver, Castile and the Philippines 1590-1800," in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, ed. J.F. Richards, (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1983), 425-45.

officials also collected standardized sums at Acapulco); and 4) regulation of the volume of trade in accordance with royal stipulations. The laws which addressed these points were issued piecemeal, most frequently in the form of *cédulas*, or decrees, from Madrid; others as ordinances issued by Philippine governors.

No attempt was made to regulate the trade at all during its first ten years. Regulations were issued in 1582 simply to forbid *limeño* merchants—who incidentally held enormous quantities of silver—from sending ships to Manila.¹⁰ Primarily to obviate the need for cumbersome physical inspection, an initial set of regulations was issued in 1593. The Manila-Acapulco trade was to be limited to two ships per year, each to be of no more than three hundred *toneladas* burden. The exact size of this unit, especially in the Pacific, is open to dispute. It is known that the Pacific galleons (and the Portuguese East Indiamen) were the largest afloat. On the whole, the trade was carried out in very large ships. They were certainly larger than the largest in use in the Atlantic.¹¹ The galleons were to carry merchandise up to the value of 250,000 pesos at Manila, and the merchants were to receive 500,000 pesos in exchange at Acapulco, a 100 percent profit.¹²

A 2 percent fee was also assessed at Manila for the building of the city wall (in effect from 1591 through 1596). At Acapulco the *almojarifazgo* (import duty) was collected: 12 pesos per *tonelada* until 1586, then increased to 45 pesos, and changed in 1591 to a flat rate of 10 percent of the Acapulco value.¹³ This eliminated the need for close inspection at Acapulco; the cargo was in any case very securely

¹⁰ Woodrow Borah, *Early Colonial Trade and Navigation between Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 118.

¹¹ Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques* (Paris: S.E.V.-P.E.N., 1960), 147.

¹² For a reaffirmation of the regulation in 1604: "...y que en ninguna manera exceda la cantidad de mercaderias que se traxere cada año de las dichas Philipinas a la nueva España de 250,000 pesos de a ocho reales como esta dispuesto, ni el retorno de principal, y ganancia en dinero de los quinientos mil pesos...", from *cédula*, Felipe III al Gobernador Pedro Bravo de Acuña, Valladolid, December 31, 1604, Archivo General de las Indias (hereinafter cited as AGI), Filipinas 2, no. 269-b.

¹³ William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1939), 180-81. See also "Sumario General de Carta Cuenta de Acapulco" in John J. TePaske and Herbert Klein, eds., *Ingresos y egresos de la Real Hacienda de Nueva España*, 2 vols. (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1986), 1:1-36. (Material kindly provided to the author by John TePaske.)

wrapped to guard it against the frequently ruinous shipboard conditions. These regulations were re-issued in 1604 and 1619, and remained in effect until the limit was raised to 300,000 pesos in 1734.¹⁴ Each of these laws was eventually incorporated into the *Recopilación de las Leyes de las Indias* (first compiled in 1680), but no comprehensive body of regulations covering the trade was issued until 1734.¹⁵

Other orders were issued from time to time in conjunction with sailing dates, the conduct of the voyage itself, the manner of actual assessment of the various fees, and the inspection of cargoes. Those in charge of the sailing were continually urged, ordered, and implored to honor a sailing schedule that would minimize the chance of wreck caused by adverse weather conditions. The optimum dates for sailing were, from Manila, the end of June, and from Acapulco, in February. Captains of the voyages were also routinely encouraged by the governors to enforce regulations regarding aspects of the voyage such as the conduct of individuals on board and the restrictions of fires. Another regulation eventually restricted participation in the galleon trade to those with 8,000 pesos capital.¹⁶ Elaborate procedures also accompanied the registering and loading of cargoes, purchase of trade goods from the Chinese, and the collecting and disbursement of monies.

Cargo space on the Acapulco galleon was one of the most eagerly sought-after commodities in Manila. Since commerce was virtually the only occupation undertaken by lay Spaniards in the early decades of the colony's existence, a unique system was devised: the *repartimiento*. Under this system, each citizen (*vecino*) of Manila, including widows and orphans, was entitled to ship on the galleons. The governor allotted each person a certain number of vouchers (*boletas*) entitling him or her to the stated amount of cargo space. This space could then be filled with merchandise for sale, or sold to a merchant who might be more inclined to go through the process of obtaining merchandise to ship.

¹⁴ Schurz, *Manila Galleon*, 155 and Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 128-29.

¹⁵ The renewed attention was stimulated by the notable increase in the face value and volume of the trade after 1690. See Carmen Yuste-López, *El comercio de la Nueva España con Filipinas* (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1984), 34-36.

¹⁶ Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 128.

Distribution of *boletas* turned officially upon factors such as a person's wealth, length of residence in the colony, and social status. By nature this system became subject to abuse by imperious governors and a horde of speculators. In the beginning, the majority of Manila's Spanish residents actually shipped cargo, but gradually the effects of abuse and privilege came to be felt, and fewer names were to be found on the ships' manifests.

By 1604 the system of the *repartimiento* had already become so rife with favoritism that the authority to allot lading space was transferred from the governor to the newly created *Junta de Repartimiento*. This board was comprised of the governor, the senior *oidor* (judge) of the *Audiencia*, the *fiscal* (roughly analogous to chief attorney) of the Philippines, two *regidores* (members of the *cabildo* of Manila), and the archbishop.¹⁷ The *Junta*, as it turned out, could neither prevent illegal speculation in *boletas*, nor prevent fraud against vulnerable widows or young heirs.

Logistically, it was always a challenge to dispatch the galleons on schedule. Goods arriving from China had to be purchased and allotted among the Spaniards. This process was complicated by the occasional lateness or non-arrival of the sampans (small Chinese boats), and forced reliance upon infant systems of credit. Disposition of the goods was always difficult, for many Spaniards could afford to purchase and ship them, and, of course, they were always saleable at Acapulco in any quantity. Ambitious Spaniards tended to establish means of procuring the most and best goods. They dealt with Chinese merchants a year in advance, arranged to meet sampans off the shore of Luzon well to the north of Manila, lobbied, and generally threw their weight around in Manila to gain choice consignments. Chinese merchants also benefited from this situation by inflating prices or otherwise arranging favorable terms for themselves. Eventually the system of the *pancada* (job lot) was devised in order to make the process seem more equitable, as well as to ensure government control.¹⁸ Approaching sampans were to be met offshore and escorted into Manila by Spanish officials, who purchased entire cargoes of

¹⁷ Schurz, *Manila Galleon*, 156.

¹⁸ See Milagro Guerrero, "The Chinese in the Philippines, 1570-1770," in *The Chinese in the Philippines*, ed. Alfonso Felix, 2 vols. (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1966-1969), 1:23. The system operated from 1593 to 1693.

merchandise at prices they attempted to fix. Then goods were distributed among Spanish shippers in much the same way that lading space on the galleons was allotted. As in any comparable dealing, there was always the possibility that the powerful governors could bend the system to their own or their retainers' advantage.

Once trade goods had actually been procured, the galleons needed to be repaired, outfitted, and provisioned, and cargo put aboard. The main problems in this regard were getting sufficient Malay islanders to relocate to the Cavite area to labor in the yards; acquiring provisions—usually from resident Chinese suppliers (only Christian converts were to be solicited); completing the extensive paperwork mandated by Spanish law and tradition; and managing the whole process in a timely fashion. By the time Hurtado de Corcuera arrived in 1635, the entire procedure had become sclerotic. As favoritism permeated each level, workers were not anxious to perform well or quickly, and things went from bad to worse.

Hurtado de Corcuera, one of the most dynamic and controversial figures of Spanish imperial history, was the protagonist of the late 1630s incident which indicates clearly the triumph of the frontier over the court. By his headstrong behavior, he was able to force the hand of Philip IV, resulting in a 1639 *cédula* which deferred to Philippine prerogative. Hurtado de Corcuera's experiences from his very debarkation at Manila may be seen to presage this. The governor, member of the distinguished Order of Alcántara, had proven himself by fighting in Flanders and had gained experience and insight as *maestre de campo* (field marshal) at Lima. He arrived at Manila from his previous post, that of governor of Panama, anxious to tackle the most pressing problems of the Philippines. These were easily identifiable as chronic insolvency and the inability to control the Islamic inhabitants, the *Moros*, of the southern islands of the archipelago. The former he proposed to deal with by various means, hoping to give the Philippines a balanced budget within four years.¹⁹ He apparently felt he could do this by increasing the *permiso* (weight allowance) and collecting revenue from all merchandise actually shipped aboard the galleons, rather than only the officially authorized amount. He also began to keep personal custody of the royal safe, closely monitor the sale of *boletas* and the collection of *medias anatas*, import more spices from Ternate

¹⁹ Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 160.

for re-export, and increase the revenue from the sale of residency permits to the Chinese.²⁰

Immediately, he ordered the galleons of 1635 not to sail,²¹ and he himself supervised the lading the following year, taking note of the fact that the amount of registered merchandise (only five hundred crates) had been loaded long before the piles were diminished.²² He also went so far as to usurp the authority of the *Junta de Repartimiento* entirely. For this action, he received criticism from some quarters, but was lauded in others for his attempt to break the stranglehold that wealthy interests, both lay and clerical, had come to exercise over the trade. To make more effective use of idle hands, he transferred many sailors to Ternate to man the garrison and built a soldiers' hospital with chapel at Manila. His military campaign against the Moros of Jolo (Sulu) in 1637-1638 was a dramatic and successful achievement. Hurtado de Corcuera led his men personally, and impressed them with his courage.

First, he set his hands to the buildings and fortifications, helped all the factions in the positions of greatest risk, and because others rested, he himself went around in the night visiting the barracks, and also the [sentry] posts of the hillside. Then the piety with which he responded to the sick and visited the wounded, and regaled them as much as those who stormed the battlements and did not suffer [injury], was admirable.²³

²⁰ The *media anata* was a tax equal to half a year's income from a particular office.

²¹ Don Juan Grau y Monfalcón, Philippine advocate at Madrid, reported that in the year 1635 Manila's citizens could not afford merchandise to ship: "por estar la ciudad de Manila tan acabada y pobre, no tuvo caudal para cargar las naos su permisión y asi no vinieron a la Nueva España," from "Memorial Informatario al Rey" (hereinafter cited as Memorial), Madrid, 1637, AGI, Filipinas 27, ramo 6, fols. 390-421 and also British Museum, Additional Manuscript 13,992, fol. 645v.

²² Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 161-62.

²³ "Sucesos de 1637-1638," unsigned pamphlet, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Diversos, Indias 332. Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 162, feels that the situation was less heroic: that Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera invited the chief to parley and then attacked his party. He bases this contention, however, on accounts by Archbishop Guerrero, who was entirely hostile to the governor. The account quoted, similarly, may be weighted on the other side by the influence of Hurtado de Corcuera.

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Don Sebastián, in memory of his victory at Jolo, "was placed in the distinguished company of the conquistadors."²⁴

The less flattering portion of his legacy derives from his imperiousness and acquisitiveness. The governor at one point ordered his soldiers to go to the residence of Archbishop Guerrero and place him under arrest. This took place on the occasion of the archbishop's excommunicating Hurtado de Corcuera for having a murderer hung after the latter had sought sanctuary in the cathedral. Finding the archbishop dressed in full regalia and holding the blessed sacrament, the soldiers refrained from placing their hands on him until the elderly man eventually fell over, dropped the host, and rendered himself vulnerable to arrest.²⁵ He was then exiled by the governor for a time to the island of Corregidor.

The governor is also thought to have enriched himself considerably at the expense of the king, the treasury, and the citizenry of Manila, as did many of his predecessors and successors. It was simply common practice for governors to enrich themselves and their retainers considerably via the galleon trade.²⁶ In Don Sebastián's case, this predisposition apparently extended to graft and extortion. Many spoke against him in his 1644 *residencia* (review of his term), and he was alleged to own a vast amount of illegally obtained treasure, including several items which were in fact seized at the time: gold plate, diamonds, a monstrance, enamel work, and a reliquary.²⁷ His personal treasure also comprised nearly the entire cargo of the 1638 galleons, captained by his nephew,²⁸ which he may have been attempting to spirit out of the islands under the eye of a loyal family member before the end of his tenure.

It is probably the same document as Guerrero to Philip IV, Manila, August 3, 1638, AGI, Filipinas 8, ramo 8, no. 271, described by Cushner as a defense of Don Sebastián.

²⁴ Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 163.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 163-64; and "Consultas originales correspondientes a dicha Audiencia 1637-1668," Manila, October 5, 1638, AGI, Filipinas 2, ramo 28, no. 19.

²⁶ See Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 132.

²⁷ *Residencia de Don Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera* (hereinafter cited as *Residencia de Hurtado de Corcuera, Contaduría*), Manila, 1644, AGI, Contaduría, 1225, fol. 885.

²⁸ The galleons carried "gran cantidad de hazienda de su tío y suya," referring to Don Sebastián as the uncle, AGI, México, 152, ramo 2.

Ultimately he was fined 52,210 pesos, 7 *tomínes*, 10 *granos* for his various transgressions,²⁹ spent an unusually lengthy period of five years imprisoned in Manila by order of his successor, and was convicted of forty-five charges. Friends at Madrid and cooler heads eventually prevailed, however, as his conviction was set aside in 1656,³⁰ and he ended his days as governor of the Canary Islands.

The truth about Hurtado de Corcuera, of course, lies somewhere between his having been pure brigand and pure hero. A contemporary, the priest Diego Collado, is reported to have called him "filius diaboli, flagellum Dei et alia hujus modi."³¹ He was notorious for his high-handedness at Manila and strongly resented by officials in New Spain. The episode surrounding the 1637 inspection of arriving galleons at Acapulco shows his determination and possibly his irascibility. But whichever aspect of his administrative technique predominated, he was, by any standard, energetic and effective. Furthermore, he proved able to challenge successfully the royal-viceregal policy with regard to the galleon trade.

Don Sebastián's treatment of Manila's Chinese population (or the treatment accorded them by officials implementing his policies) was another problematic issue. The Chinese community had always exceeded the Spanish in numbers, and officials sought to curb its potential political sway. The Spaniards had for some time attempted to restrict the numbers and location of the Chinese residents in Luzon. It had become policy after 1603 to issue residency permits as a means to raise revenues as well as to limit immigration. Converts to Christianity and the indigent were occasionally excused from payment.³² Govern-

²⁹ Residencia de Hurtado de Corcuera, Contaduría, fols. 608-9.

³⁰ "...por nullos todos los autos y procedimientos de el dicho Don Diego Faxardo [Hurtado de Corcuera's successor] en esta residencia," Orden sobre la Residencia de Don Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera, AGI, Escribanía de Cámara, 1189, Madrid, February 18, 1656.

³¹ (...son of the devil, scourge of God...and other similar things....) from Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands: 1493-1898*, 55 vols. (Cleveland: A.H. Clark, 1903-1909), 29:26.

³² Manila had its own version of New Christians. They were treated favorably by the administration, for instance they were granted government contracts to provision the galleons. In 1638, such contracts were given to "Domingo Dizon, Sangley [Chinese trader] xpiano [Christian], [and] ...Martin Chulxan, sangy xpiano...." Another provisioner was "Gin say Grande, sangley infiel, caveca de carpinteros...." He was presumably recognized for his skill and leadership in spite of his non-

ment officials were repeatedly accused of profiteering from the selling of licenses. At every juncture it seems clear that many more Chinese lived in or near Manila than were officially authorized to do so.

The combination of Hurtado de Corcuera's whirlwind attempts at fiscal reform and the growing numbers of Chinese residents in the colony led to confrontation in 1639. The governor expanded the collection of licensing fees, claiming that he could balance the treasury immediately with the proceeds,³³ added a 25 peso head tax, and forced a number of Sangleys to relocate and work in rice fields for no pay.³⁴ The increase in collecting fees amounted to 3,909 licenses being sold by *contador* (accountant) Simón Delgado in 1638, at a profit of 5,374 pesos, 7 *tomínes*, and 3,682 in 1639 for 5,072 pesos, 6 *tomínes*.³⁵ This escalation of the practice eventually led to charges of extortion in the governor's *residencia*, and more immediately to the 1639 uprising, in response to which government forces killed as many as 23,000.³⁶ The opportunities afforded by Manila apparently remained attractive for Chinese immigrants, however, for "the unchecked immigration of the Chinese soon covered up the void left by the insurrection."³⁷ Here again, Hurtado de Corcuera displayed his

conversion, from "Mar de Manila y Maluco; compras de generos," AGI, Contaduría, 1218, fols. 1105-8.

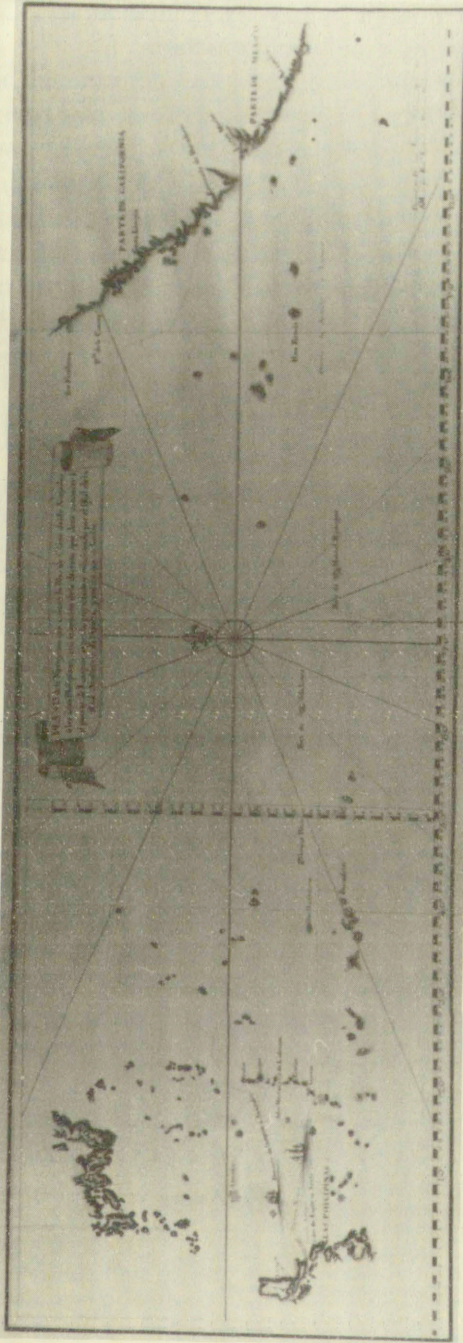
³³ Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 160.

³⁴ Guerrero, "The Chinese in the Philippines," 30-32.

³⁵ *Residencia de Don Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera*, Manila, 1644, AGI, Escribanía de Cámara (hereinafter cited as *Residencia de Hurtado de Corcuera*, Cámara, Caussas fiscales), 409-B, "Caussas fiscales," fols. 244-45. Another document from the "Cuentas de Real Hacienda" records 139,595 pesos, 6 *tomínes* and 3 *granos* having been collected for 1638, AGI, Contaduría, 1218, fol. 994v. This is a much more realistic figure; the smaller sums were probably collected by Simón Delgado alone, and perhaps kept by him. Such a supposition is borne out by another charge against him: that 5,029 Chinese arrived at Manila in 1639, and he collected five hundred pesos from each, but was authorized to collect only one hundred, *Residencia de Hurtado de Corcuera*, Cámara, Caussas fiscales, cuaderno 14, fol. 4587.

³⁶ Figures obtained by subtracting the 7,000 thought left after the rising from the 30,000 estimated in 1636 by Grau y Monfalcón, from Memorial, 1637. See also Guerrero, "The Chinese in the Philippines," 33. Alberto Santamaria, "The Chinese Parian," in Felix, *The Chinese in the Philippines*, 1:78, notes that 20,000 revolted, 13,000 actually fought, 8,000 were pardoned, and ten leaders were executed.

³⁷ Guerrero, "The Chinese in the Philippines," 33.



Spanish map from the seventeenth century showing the Pacific Islands and the coast of California. Inscriptions on the map: (Upper Center) "*Plano de la navegacion que executa la Nao de China desde Acapulco a las Islas Philipinas, con expresion de la derrota que deve ejecutar a el puerto de Lampon, segun lo proyectado y relacionado por el fiscal de la Real Audiencia de Manila, y assi su buelta.*" (Lower right) "*Delineado por Don Angel Francisco Badaraco, maestro delineador por su Majestad de esta Real Academia de Pilotos, en el Departamento de Cadiz.*" Courtesy of Museo Naval, Madrid. Source: Map Collection, Spanish Colonial Research Center, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

forceful leadership, even though it may by contemporary standards appear to have been driven by cruelty and paranoia.

The single incident which brought open confrontation between governor and king (via the viceroy) was the rigorous inspection of the cargo of the 1636 galleons upon their arrival in Mexico, with its resultant seizures and fines. The recently installed Mexican viceroy, the Marqués de Cadereyta (1635-1639), was unusually desperate for revenues in 1636. He was forced to deal with a number of emergencies: the 1628 Dutch capture off the north coast of Cuba of the treasure fleet taking silver from Peru to Spain, disastrous flooding in Mexico City, a precipitous decline in silver production, and the creation of a defensive armada for the Caribbean.³⁸ He turned to the Pacific galleon trade as a promising source of revenue, and attacked the problem of contraband with determination.

A new *licenciado* arrived to assist him in 1636—Don Pedro de Quiroga y Moya. Frequently referred to in the literature as *visitador*, he was a friend and partisan of the viceroy, and had been deputed initially to conduct the *residencia* of the outgoing viceroy, the Marqués de Cerralvo. He also shared Cadereyta's and the king's fervor in hoping to curb the smuggling on the Manila galleons.

It was widely known that *manileño* merchants shipped a good deal more than the *permiso* allowed. Manila's Chinese were frequently employed for their skill in overpacking crates; Manila chests were held to contain twice as much merchandise as those of comparable size in Spain. The silks and satins were tightly folded, with the cheaper materials on the outside in case of inspection, insect or water damage, and the whole wrapped, usually in canvas, for additional safety.³⁹ Close inspection was thus quite impracticable, and violations of the 250,000 peso *permiso* routinely went unpunished. Presumably the rationale here, as elsewhere (and throughout the duration of Spanish rule) was that it was wise to allow for some excess private profit.⁴⁰

The time had come, however, to attempt to reduce the extent of fraud, and to stop (in the words of the king) the "sailors, soldiers, officers and many other passengers who come in said ships into New

³⁸ Jonathan Israel, "Mexico and the General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century," *Past and Present* 63 (May 1974):33-57.

³⁹ Schurz, *Manila Galleon*, 182-83.

⁴⁰ J.H. Parry, *The Age of Reconnaissance* (New York: Mentor Books, 1963), 181.

Spain, who hide merchandise and secretly carry [it] on their persons."⁴¹ Aside from the subversiveness that such behavior implied, the immediate concern was that this was the principal means whereby *mayores cantidades* of silver from Peru were being drained off to Manila and China.⁴² Quiroga y Moya's mission, then, was to bring to the trade at Acapulco a "new form," one that would cease to "excuse the excesses committed there in the trade of the [Philippine] islands."⁴³

Ordinarily, there was only an accounting of the goods registered in the manifest, the established system making close inspection superfluous. These were notated by bundle and crate, and any mention of the contents was only a means of identifying the bundles and prices for the merchants.⁴⁴ They were by tradition neither opened nor weighed, although officials at Acapulco may have assumed that this had been done at Manila. So as the galleons *San Juan Bautista* and *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* arrived at Acapulco within a day of each other in January of 1637, an unwelcome surprise awaited them.⁴⁵ Quiroga y Moya met the galleons at the quay and began what was intended to be a new era in the annals of the trade.

Under his direction, the traditional ritual of off-loading the galleons was altered in favor of a strict interpretation of the regulations. Technically, the official procedure was always followed—communication between shore and galleon was curtailed; the galleon was boarded and inspected; the official manifest was relayed to treasury officials and returned for the official unloading of the cargo; passengers and their personal belongings were disembarked; the sick were hospitalized; and the commercial cargo quickly transferred to warehouses to await the

⁴¹ Letter of Philip IV, February 16, 1635, AGI, Filipinas, 340.

⁴² Letters of April 18, 1635 and February 14, 1640, *ibid.*

⁴³ Letter of Philip IV to Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, February 14, 1640, *ibid.* Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, a future viceroy of New Spain, succeeded Pedro Quiroga y Moya. His particular commission similarly was to look into the Philippine trade.

⁴⁴ The register for the *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, one of the two 1636-1637 galleons inspected by Quiroga y Moya, can be found in Residencia de Hurtado de Corcuera, Cámara, Caussas fiscales, cuaderno 16, folio 198. Actual merchandise is not listed—simply the numbers of boxes, crates, lockers, bales, leather chests, etc.

⁴⁵ "[Papeles] Relativos a la Resid[enci]a de d[on] Sevastián Hurtado de Corcuera," AGI, Escribanía de Cámara, 409-D, ramo 3, fol. 28.

feria (trade fair).⁴⁶ But there would also have been found the time and opportunity to unload contraband cargo, frequently with the cooperation of the inspecting officials.

This time, however, no such laxity was permitted, and each crate and bundle was weighed and opened for inspection. To the chagrin and consternation of merchants and speculators (whose number probably included some anxious Mexican officials), Quiroga y Moya assessed the value of the cargo at 1 million pesos (at Manila prices—that is, four times the permitted value). He seized excess merchandise to be sold on behalf of the king and charged the Manila treasury 900,000 pesos in *derechos* (duties).⁴⁷ When the ships returned to Manila, they carried with them (as a return on the merchandise) only the ordinary 500,000 pesos of silver, in accordance with official policy, thus short-changing the Manila merchants of as much as 1,500,000 pesos that they had been expecting.

Quiroga y Moya himself did not long survive this impressive show of authority, as he contracted a serious illness and died before the year was out.

On 22 June after having returned from Acapulco, Don Pedro de Quiroga y Moya was carried to God by a grave illness, and with displays of boldness, was entertained until that day in a manner that his courage demonstrated the health that he did not have....⁴⁸

A less sympathetic observer commented, "God permitted [him to die] in the midst of his cruelties."⁴⁹ His sincerity and loyalty to the king were evidently his abiding motives, for it appears that he served as *licenciado-visitador* without receiving his salary. After his death, his brother petitioned on at least two occasions for his back pay of 4,000

⁴⁶ Schurz, *Manila Galleon*, 379-81.

⁴⁷ Cédula, Philip IV to Palafox y Mendoza, September 30, 1639, AGI, Filipinas 340, vol. 2, fols. 13-17.

⁴⁸ "Cartas y Expedientes del Virrey....," Viceroy Cadereyta to Philip IV, July 22, 1637, AGI, México, 33, fol. 203.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Schurz, *Manila Galleon*, 188.

pesos.⁵⁰ The policy was not in fact defeated by death, but by its own failure. In particular the angry and confident Governor Hurtado de Corcuera of the Philippines made a powerful protest to which the king succumbed. Quiroga y Moya's death merely provided a quick and easy escape for the king as he backed away from this particular attempt to milk the Philippine trade.

When news of the *visitador's* inspection and the resulting seizures and fines reached Manila, merchants, citizens, and government officials alike were incensed. Long accustomed to shipping as much as could possibly fit on board the galleons, to the point of stacking crates on the main deck and stowing artillery below with the ballast, they had also become used to the lax enforcement of regulations. Most important, they had without a doubt come to depend on the actual revenue generated by the trade—far in excess of the legal limit to which they had suddenly and painfully become subject. With the loss of possibly 1,500,000 pesos profit and the assessment of 900,000 pesos in duties, Quiroga y Moya had caused a fiscal disaster for Manila. Hurtado de Corcuera so informed the king:

Sir, last year [I] gave an accounting to Your Majesty of the estate that these Philippine islands hold, and the Spaniards of them, by occasion of the commission that Your Majesty did serve to give to the visitador Don Pedro de Quiroga,...[which] is that truly, Sir, these Spaniards are extremely impoverished. And it appears that only a miracle can sustain them and sustain the land....⁵¹

A similar scene of desperation and plea for help was transmitted by other officials:

...on the present occasion of the miserable state in which these islands find themselves...in view of the rigors that el sr. [v]isitador Don Pedro de Quiroga y

⁵⁰ Petición de Don António de Quiroga y Moya al virrey sobre Don Pedro de Quiroga y Moya, April 16, 1638, AGI, México, 275 and Petición al thessoro de la R[ea]l Hacienda del puerto de Acapulco, 1639, AGI, México, 151.

⁵¹ Hurtado de Corcuera to Philip IV, July 25, 1638, AGI, Filipinas, 8.

Moya has permitted with the treasures that were sent from here in the year [1]636...the governor...dispatched a ship [1637] to New Spain...that brought [only] dispatches and letters and no treasure at all....[T]hat the said ship makes [return] voyage, upon this depends the brief remedy that is hoped for from the clemency of Your Majesty.⁵²

Messages such as these were sent to the king and the viceroy complaining of the rigors of the inspection and of the interruption in the normal conduct of the trade—affecting New Spain and Peru as well as the Philippines. Hurtado de Corcuera claimed that the economy of Manila, the very colony in fact, had been ruined by this excessively cruel new policy, that the viceroy and his *licenciado* were a menace to the Philippines, and that "for two years there has been no money brought to this city."⁵³

On the other hand, the actions of Quiroga y Moya were roundly defended by Viceroy Cadereyta in Mexico City. He focused repeatedly on the intransigence of the Manila colony and its traders, taking special care to castigate the ambitious and wily governor, and speaking of "las demasías [excesses] y ambición de don Sebastián,"⁵⁴ and how the governor operated the galleon trade "con resolución tan perniciososa."⁵⁵ Cadereyta was not against the trade per se, and was even prevailed upon to petition the king for an increase in the *permiso* in 1638. It was rather the audacity of the Philippine officials that most aggravated him.

Mexican merchants also, judging from their complaints, stood to lose substantial revenues from both the closer supervision of the Manila trade and a strict enforcement of the ban on commerce between New Spain and Peru. A letter of 1642 still complained that Quiroga y Moya had "ruined trade," that "his Majesty's loyal subjects" in New

⁵² Undated letter from Captain Gavriel Gómez de Castillo, Sargento Mayor del Cavildo de Manila, to Philip IV, AGI, Escribanía de Cámara, 409-B.

⁵³ Hurtado de Corcuera to Philip IV, August 22, 1638, AGI, Filipinas, 21.

⁵⁴ Letter from the Royal Audiencia (several officials signing including senior *oidor* Albares Serrano) to Philip IV, México, March 4, 1639, AGI, México, 75.

⁵⁵ Cadereyta to Philip IV, February 28, 1639, AGI, México, 35.

Spain were "in straits, and that trade with Peru was essential."⁵⁶ It is clear that Peruvian involvement in the Manila trade was of major importance, just as peninsular officials suspected and had tried to circumvent. Peruvian trade with Mexico had been suspended in 1631 and again in 1634, indicating lack of compliance, and was apparently still significant in 1637 (the year of Quiroga y Moya's inspection), but must have fallen off to the detriment of Mexico by the date of the letter.

The administration of New Spain, wary of losing profitable trade with Lima, had also tired of being forced to render continual financial assistance to the Philippines, a colony that, it appeared to some, could have been paying for its own sustenance. The viceroy stated how he had been providing help to the Philippines in the wake of the 1638 wreck:

...The dispatch from the Philippines made very good time, although the one that came from there [arrived] in a ship which was burdened with the news of the loss of the *capitana* of the year [16]38 and the [wretched] state in which those islands find themselves. I do not know whose fault [it is], for they may well have not lacked assistance nor aid, which has been provided on my part to the governor with much abundance....⁵⁷

It was in response to this violation of traditional laxity of inspection, and despite the immediate crisis at Manila, that the Philippine governor decided to suspend the sailing of the galleons in 1637. This course was detrimental to his own citizenry, but he felt he needed to take drastic action in protest of Quiroga y Moya's inspection. As a feeble response to later criticism of his decision, he claimed to have deemed a sailing unnecessary, having seen a glut of Chinese cloths in Mexican warehouses (an unlikely circumstance given their extraordinary popularity).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Letter from scribe on behalf of Domingo del Puerto, Lope Ossorio, and Francisco de Córdova to Philip IV, March 12, 1642, AGI, México, 4.

⁵⁷ Cadereyta to Philip IV, September 16, 1640, AGI, México, 35.

⁵⁸ "Causas fiscales," AGI, Escribanía de Cámara, 409-B, cuaderno 16, fol. 207 ff.

The circumstances of the lading of the 1638 galleons give further evidence of the deplorable situation in the islands in the wake of Quiroga y Moya's inspection and 1637's non-sailings:

...anxious because the previous year, fearful of the visitador Don Pedro de Quiroga, the citizens of this city did not wish to send...any type of merchandise [to Acapulco]. It appears the same this year; in the two galleons until today there was only...the provisions and weapons of the sailors...Not any citizen has liked to send either crate or bundle.⁵⁹

Furthermore, the *capitana* of the voyage, the *Concepción*, was wrecked off Saipan en route to Acapulco. Manila was thus subjected to disaster for three successive years—a paltry return for the 1636 merchandise, fines and no profit in 1637, and substantial losses in 1638. Rarely was there a more tragic succession of years for the commerce and for Manila.

In response to the rash of complaints from the Philippines, Mexico, and Peru, and grasping the reality of the bleak circumstances of the commerce, Philip IV eventually joined the chorus of condemnation of Quiroga y Moya and the severity of his inspection. He saw that the galleon trade needed the protection of minimal regulation:

[Neither] you [Hurtado de Corcuera] nor the viceroy of New Spain will place, nor can impose a tax, nor any new fee, permanent or temporary, for any cause or reason that presents itself, in the trade of these islands with New Spain, nor in its commerce, without my express and particular order....⁶⁰

Since the notorious *visitador* had died, it became convenient for many parties, including the king, to abandon the policy of severely limiting the trade, and lay blame on the *visitador*:

⁵⁹ Hurtado de Corcuera to Philip IV, July 31, 1638, AGI, Filipinas, 8.

⁶⁰ Philip IV to Hurtado de Corcuera, December 8, 1638, Bancroft Library, Reales Cédulas Filipinas, tomo VI, fol. 112v.

...[Quiroga y Moya] weighed and opened the registered bundles and crates contrary to the style of all the ports, and contrary to all of the royal *cédulas* pertaining to it [the commerce], made an appraisal so high and exorbitant, ...the loss can be judged very considerable that the citizens there sustained in paying the derechos for such a high peak of evaluation, [and] in the loss of the expenditure and treasure [in] this accounting, so much against justice and reason...and God permitted that he died, and by his death the Marqués de Cadereyta continued what he [Quiroga y Moya] had started for him, and was with no less rigor taking 300,000 pesos out of the commerce by force....⁶¹

The *cédula* eventually proceeded more directly to order the cancellation of the policy of conducting such rigorous inspections: "no abierse los fardos ni pessar los caxones de las Naos de las dichas Islas [F]il[ipin]as que llegaron a [A]capulco."⁶² Hurtado de Corcuera had won his gamble.

As for the memory of Quiroga y Moya, it remained tainted by the bitter resentment he caused. His *rigores* were vociferously resented, and they were remembered long after his death. They were recalled any time close inspection was recommended or excess of profit or merchandise suggested that the *permiso* was being exceeded.⁶³ The memory of these years kept the trade remarkably free of supervision for the remainder of its 242-year duration.

⁶¹ Cédula sobre el comercio filipino, Philip IV to Palafox y Mendoza, September 30, 1639, AGI, Filipinas, 340.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, 135, relative to an attempt to inspect the trade in 1710.

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