

Into the Frontier



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Studies on Spanish Colonial Philippines

In Memoriam Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo

Edited by Marya Svetlana T. Camacho



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Filipinos on the Mexican Pacific Coast during the Spanish Colonial Period (1570-1630)

Antonio García-Abásolo

Objectives

This work aims to contribute some information about the image of Filipinos in New Spain [Nueva España] or Mexico soon after the Philippines was administratively incorporated into the viceroyalty. On the one hand, the data present the official juridical status of Filipinos in New Spain as viewed by the Spanish colonial administration; on the other, they show the real condition of Filipinos in colonial daily life.

This work is also part of Project HUM2007-64796 (*Por la muerte a la vida*), under the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain. The project is devoted to the study of the last wills and testaments of settlers in the Spanish Empire, in America and the Pacific, through the application of information technology, and is funded by the aforementioned Ministry.¹

Some precedents for this topic may be found in Miguel López de Legazpi's considerations about Filipinos and Chinese. Being trained in law and having practiced as a notary public in the Spanish Basque region and in Mexico, Legazpi was certainly

¹ The Ministry of Science and Innovation proposes and implements policies relative to universities, scientific research, technological development and innovation in all sectors. The office that funds this particular project is devoted to the generation and dissemination of knowledge (Dirección General de Programas y Transferencias de Conocimiento).

knowledgeable about legal and juridical matters. This meant he dealt with them correctly, especially when his opinions were stated in writing, as contained in his letters to the Viceroy of New Spain and to the king.

Juridical precedents

Travelling from Cebu to Luzon on various occasions, Legazpi encountered Chinese merchants whom he always referred to as *indios chinos* [Chinese Indians] in his letters to the king and to the Viceroy of New Spain. He never used this term to refer to Filipinos although he also included them in the category of Indians. Possibly Legazpi was indicating his own projects when he considered the Chinese in this way. In his first years in the islands, it was not clear to him whether the final objective of his expedition was to remain and establish pueblos² in the Philippines or to move on and create settlements in China. He conveyed his dilemma to the king and the Viceroy of New Spain on several occasions, adding that he personally favored settling in China. Therefore, his use of the term *indios chinos* would seem to fit into his perspective for the future; he might have been referring to Indians who were potential subjects of the Spanish Crown, like the Indians of America and the Filipinos who had been incorporated into the empire. Shortly after, the Chinese who arrived annually in the Philippines and settled in the islands were called simply *chinos*—without the term *indios* attached to it—or *sangleyes*.

² Given their specific meanings in Spanish America and the Philippines, the terms *pueblo* and *pueblo de indios* are retained in the text, although *Indian municipality* is sometimes used to refer to the latter. *Pueblo* is closer to the concept of township or municipality as an administrative unit, with no exact correspondence with the English term. —Ed.

Asians in New Spain during the colonial period

The term *indios chinos* as used by Legazpi could also be found in documents of the Viceroyalty of New Spain in the same period, i.e., late sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. From the administrative documents, it is possible to analyze the official image of Asians in Mexico, while from private documents, their real image or how their neighbors viewed them. On the other hand, it is necessary to point out here that the focus is not the image of the Chinese but that of the Filipino. This will be done by studying a group of Filipinos who arrived in New Spain on board the Manila galleon at the end of the sixteenth century and established themselves in areas near the Pacific, from Acapulco to New Galicia.³ The dates covered in this study extend from the latter part of the first decade of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the second, although members of that community had settled in New Spain since the late sixteenth century. It was a time of intense commercial activity between the Philippines and New Spain, with Manila and Acapulco as points of contact, although the investment of silver and distribution of Chinese products already affected the whole of Spanish America.⁴

From the late sixteenth century there are references to the presence of Chinese people in New Spain, some of whom were ethnic Chinese and others clearly Filipino. The documentation is

³ The importance of Acapulco as port of entry for Chinese merchandise transported every year by the Manila galleon is emphasized by those who passed through that port. Special allusion can be made to two descriptions of the port: one by Francesco Carletti, *Razonamientos de mi viaje alrededor del mundo 1594-1606* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1976), 64; and the other by Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Carreri, *Viaje a la Nueva España* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1983). In this case the first is more useful because it is closer to the events whereas Gemelli Carreri described Acapulco in the late seventeenth century.

⁴ Clarence H. Haring, *Comercio y navegación entre España y las Indias* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1984), 184-85; J. H. Parry, *El imperio español de Ultramar* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1970), 106 and 107.

frequently misleading when it makes generalizations about Orientals as Chinese, without distinguishing between Filipinos and Chinese. In the historiography of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the occasional mention of Chinese presence in Mexico is therefore subject to double interpretation. Such references are also confined to some issues among which the following may be pointed out: first, that there was a great number of Chinese in New Spain, many of whom worked as slaves; second, that in the capital of the viceroyalty there were many Chinese engaged in crafts and different services, mainly as domestics and barbers; and third, that their presence was conspicuous especially in Acapulco and neighboring districts, areas close to the trade routes of the Manila galleon.⁵ With regard to the coming of Asians as slaves in the first years of Spanish rule in the Philippines although this trade was prohibited early on, there is evidence that it continued to be practiced at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

In any case, Filipinos could embark in Manila and freely settle in New Spain, and in fact they did throughout the colonial period. Whether they came in as slaves or by their own choice, the number of Asians who arrived in New Spain on the galleon could not be very high, partly because of the limited capacity of the transport system between Manila and Acapulco with only one or two galleons sailing every year. In addition, the Pacific crossing, one of the longest and toughest voyages in the history of navigation, suffered a high mortality rate. Deborah Oropeza, author of a work on the immigration of Asians in New Spain between 1565 and 1700, found in the official documentation of the Caja de Acapulco kept in the Archivo General de Indias, 7,200 entries of Asians arriving at the port of Acapulco. She thinks the figure may be higher, but difficult if not impossible to calculate, considering the possibility that there were

⁵ Jonathan Israel, *Razas, clases sociales y vida política en el México colonial 1610-1670* (Mexico City, 1980), 82.

unofficial disembarkations happening in other ports on the Pacific coast of Mexico.⁶

Nonetheless, there is some concrete information about the work of Asian slaves at the end of the sixteenth century and in the seventeenth century. In the mines of Francisco Escobedo in Tepic (Nayarit), there were many Chinese slaves in 1646.⁷ Since the term *chino* was equivalent to *Oriental*, it is difficult to determine if there were Filipinos among them. In Coyoacán, a visit to six textile factories by the oidor of the Audiencia of Mexico, Andrés Sánchez de Ocampo, revealed that there were Chinese slaves brought from the Philippines working in the factory owned by Melchor Díaz de Posadas. The owner was punished severely by the viceroy who took advantage of this occasion to warn the other textile factory owners of what might happen if they violated the law.⁸ In this case, the usage of the term *chino* to refer to all Asians makes it impossible to be accurate about ethnicity. The identification of Filipinos with the Chinese (and vice versa) became so customary that even Filipinos applied the term *chinos* to themselves.

With respect to the presence of Asians in Mexico City, it is possible that the Chinese tended to settle in the cities while the Filipinos preferred to settle in pueblos and rural areas. In reality, however, there is evidence of Filipino presence all over the viceroyalty. Thomas Gage, who visited New Spain in 1627, was

⁶ I am grateful to Dr. Déborah Oropeza for the information that she has provided about her doctoral dissertation, which is yet unpublished. The title of her work is "Los 'indios chinos' en la Nueva España: La inmigración de la nao de China, 1565-1700" (El Colegio de México, 2008). A summary of this work has been presented by the author with the title "Asian Immigration to the Viceroyalty of New Spain" (paper presented at the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, New York, January 2009).

⁷ Ida Altman and James Lockhart, *Provinces of Early Mexico: Variants of Spanish American Regional Evolution* (Los Angeles: Latin American Center Publications, University of California, 1976), 207.

⁸ Richard E. Greenleaf, "Viceregal Power and the Obrajes of the Cortés Estate, 1595-1708," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 48, no. 3 (1968): 375-76.

fascinated with the craftsmanship of Chinese goldsmiths whom he saw in Mexico:

There are no streets in all of Christendom comparable to those of Mexico, neither in breadth, in cleanliness, nor in the richness of the shops that adorn them. Most of all, the handiwork and shops of the goldsmiths are admirable. The Indians and Chinese who have converted to Christianity and come from the Philippines every year have surpassed the Spaniards in this business.⁹

In the notarial archives of Mexico from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, there are service agreements made by Filipino minors for temporary employment with a Spaniard in exchange for board, lodging, and wages. These agreements made in the city of Mexico followed a common formula. The agreement of the Pampangano Francisco with the Spaniard Simón Matoso can serve as an example:

Francisco, Chinese Indian, native of the Philippine Islands, 18 years of age, in the presence of Lic. Vivero, corregidor of México, said that he wished to enter the service of Simón Matoso, resident, for two years, and because he is a minor he asked for the designation of a guardian who could sign his contract. The corregidor appointed as his guardian Cristóbal de Medina, who placed his ward at the service of Simón Matoso for two years effective today, so that he may serve him selling clothes from China in the plazas and *tianguis* [street markets] of this city, and in all other things that may be asked of him, for which the latter shall give him board, lodging and five pesos every month.¹⁰

⁹ Thomas Gage, *Viajes por la Nueva España y Guatemala*, Crónicas de América (Madrid: Historia 16, 1987), 165-66.

¹⁰ Concierto de servicio y curaduría entre Francisco, indio chino, y Simón Matoso, México, 24 de enero de 1591. *Catálogo de protocolos del Archivo General de Notarías de la Ciudad de México*, vol. 2 (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005), Libro Protocolos 2. I am grateful to Dr. Thomas Hillerkuss for the references to the catalogues of the notarial archives of Mexico.

It would be very interesting to follow the cases of these boys because their situation was very suitable for an intense and rapid hispanization despite their highly differentiated ethnic characteristics.

Other evidences of Filipino presence in the big cities of the viceroyalty such as Mexico, Puebla or Guadalajara have been found in parochial marriage records, providing a glimpse of the ordinary life of Filipinos in New Spain—their origins, professional activities and the particular characteristics of their settlement in the viceroyalty—which is the objective of this work.¹¹

The presence of Asians is also evident in technical and aesthetic forms of Chinese and Filipino origin in New Spain. Such influence was more intense in areas on the Pacific coast, from Acapulco, the port of arrival of the Manila galleon, to New Galicia. Not only did they introduce new elements but they also enriched traditional Mexican handicrafts with Oriental features like what happened to the prehispanic techniques of the Tarascans, perfected under the influence of Chinese products brought by the Manila galleon. In Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán, Colima, and Jalisco where Asian influence was stronger, a tradition of crafts was formed and developed upon contact with the goods brought in by the Manila galleon. With renewed delight, the Mexicans decorated their houses, palaces, and convents with merchandise of Oriental designs. Mexican craftsmen themselves ended up being influenced by the new style, which translated into a proliferation of exotic flowers or in the technical and aesthetic perfection of products like *maque*, made in the image and likeness of Chinese lacquer. Many wooden basins [*bateas*] were made in profusely decorated *maque* that were widely used in daily life during the colonial period as trays or containers for food storage. Oriental decoration could also be seen in furniture like large and small chests and folding screens. In some places, old traditions

¹¹ William M. Mason, "Chinos in Mexico, 1585-1800" (paper presented at the Third National Conference of the Filipino American Historical Society, Sacramento, California, July 13-14, 1990).

of Mexican crafts, such as the Puebla ceramics of the Talavera style, also called *mayólica*, were filled with Oriental features. An unmistakable sign of Asian influence was the introduction of a drink known as *tuba*, clearly of Filipino origin, in the regions of the Mexican Pacific coast. It is a refreshing drink obtained from the flowers of coconut palm, which is still popular today in some areas, especially in Colima.¹²



Talavera ceramic-style tile featuring a Chinese servant.

Museo José Bello, Puebla (Mexico).

¹² Miguel Ángel Fernández, *La nao de China* (Monterrey, Mexico, 1998), 134-58. In this beautiful book, the author discusses these influences at length in the chapter titled “A imagen y semejanza” which is accompanied by excellent illustrations. The importance of the products from the Manila galleon trade in New Spain is also clearly demonstrated in the classic work by William Lytle Schurz, *El galeón de Manila* (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica, 1992), 309-24.

Despite the lack of studies on the Filipino presence in areas of the Mexican Pacific coast, the phenomena of cultural syncretism with a distinctive Asian contribution made that presence so significant that it has been included in the general studies of the Indian communities in that area.¹³ Even some crafts of prehispanic origin were so thoroughly transformed by Asian influence that they came to be identified most of all by that influence, as what happened to the ceramic of Tonalá, a pueblo fourteen kilometers from Guadalajara. Most of the time Oriental ceramics came from Acapulco to Guadalajara through the Pacific roads, passing through Michoacán and Colima. The prehispanic ceramic of Tonalá was transformed during the colonial period upon contact with Oriental techniques and motifs. Gemelli Carreri, who was in Mexico towards the end of the sixteenth century, wrote that the ceramic of Tonalá had as much prestige as that of Puebla de los Ángeles. In the eighteenth century, Matías de la Mota Padilla, chronicler of Jalisco, referred to the *tibores* [decorated earthen jars] of Tonalá as being so polished and perfect that they were highly prized in Spain and Europe. The unauthorized unloading of products even before the Manila galleon docked in Acapulco was also a very efficacious way of disseminating the taste for the Oriental in the north of New Galicia. From Mazatlán and San Blas, Chinese luxury goods were usually but illegally unloaded and then distributed to the north of Jalisco, thus spreading Oriental influence to far-flung cities such as Durango. Ultimately, in the viceroyalty a mixture of Mexican, Spanish, and Asian influences was produced, leading to a new aesthetic. It is also possible that this very phenomenon of adaptation and syncretism of what was Mexican and what was Oriental in crafts was also experienced by the Filipinos

¹³ In his study on the evolution of the indigenous communities of Guerrero, Danièle Dehouve, *Entre el caimán y el jaguar: Los pueblos indios de Guerrero* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1994) includes the Negroes and the Chinese, the latter term used in this case to call Filipinos.

themselves who settled in Mexico, the reason why they did not stand out distinctly as Filipinos and passed almost unnoticed in documents.

Filipinos in Colima and Jalisco

Although the Filipinos had no problem being called *Chinese* by their neighbors, a term that they even used to refer to themselves, it was an erroneous practice consonant with the popular and generic thinking that considered the Philippines as being the same as or part of China. Also, it corresponded to the fact that the Filipinos' physical features were not distinct from those of the other Asian residents of the viceroyalty. Perhaps owing to this, sometimes a certain person was specified as *chino de Filipinas* or *indio chino de Filipinas*. Although there is no information about the origin of the individual members of the group of Filipinos under study, majority of them were from Pampanga, a province north of Manila, whose inhabitants Spanish authorities always praised for their capacity to integrate into the colonial system. In this regard, the good reputation of efficiency and loyalty of the Pampango militia may be called to mind.¹⁴

Some of these Filipinos were closely related by blood, others lived in nearby pueblos and had frequent dealings among themselves, and everyone usually had news about the others. Within this group, there was one residing in Acapulco while the rest had settled in pueblos or were scattered in orchard zones in Colima and Jalisco. In short, all lived in areas near the routes that linked the Pacific coast of the viceroyalty with Mexico City in the interior and with Guadalajara

¹⁴ The importance of the help extended by the Pampangos and a general view of the province's wealth is well expounded by the *oidor* of the Audiencia of Manila, Pedro Calderón Enríquez, who knew the province well because he had inspected that region. Calderón Enríquez a Fernando VI, Manila, 8 de julio de 1747. AGI, Filipinas, 182; A. García-Abásolo, *La población filipina y las órdenes religiosas a mediados del siglo XVIII. La hacienda de Biñán* (Córdoba, 1976), 7-9.

to the north. Colima was situated between Mexico and the port of Navidad. What is truly interesting about the documentation is that it offers a glimpse of how these Filipinos went about their lives within the viceroyalty, giving testimonies of themselves, their social and economic life, their devotions and their relationship with the Mexican populace in whom they appear to be completely integrated.

Information about this community may be extracted from the documents related to the demise of one of their members, a dealer in Chinese products by the name of Domingo de Villalobos, a native of Pampanga, who died in Zapotlán at the end of 1618 at the age of thirty-one. In the Archivo General de Indias I have found only two *expedientes* relative to Filipinos who died in New Spain: that of Villalobos and that of Simón de los Ángeles, also Pampango, unmarried, a filigree worker who died in the royal mines of Sombrerete in 1773. Unfortunately, the second expediente contains only a summary of the judicial procedures carried out by the alcalde mayor, referring to Simón de los Ángeles as Chinese, to his sudden death, to the fact that he had no known relatives, and that the auction of his possessions yielded forty-three pesos: ten pesos was used to say twenty Masses for the repose of his soul and the remaining thirty was kept by the *juzgado de bienes de difuntos* [probate court] of Guadalajara.¹⁵

The majority of the papers of this sort, which are kept in the Archivo General de Indias and deal with the Philippines, pertain to Spaniards who died there. These documents were generated by the proceedings of the *juzgado de bienes de difuntos* which took care of implementing the laws on inheritance then in force in Spain and its overseas empire. The scarcity of records of Filipinos is perfectly understandable considering that the heirs of settlers in the Indies were generally in their Spanish places of origin. In reality, the proper place for the records of the Filipinos who passed away in New Spain

¹⁵ Autos sobre los bienes de Simón de los Ángeles, oficial de filigranero, difunto abintestato en el Real de Sombrerete. AGI, Contratación, 459 N2 R2.

should be the audiencia of the district where they died, where more cases may probably be found to broaden the perspective of this study. In fact, a royal order from the Audiencia of Guadalajara expounded on the case of Domingo de Villalobos. It declared that his was not a Spaniards' case nor was it covered by royal cédulas; thus it was not appropriate to take his property to the kingdoms of Castile.¹⁶ And if the property was not taken there, obviously neither were the papers.

For now the focus is on the data provided by the documents related to Domingo de Villalobos. The information ranges from the geographical area in which he moved as a merchant to his religious devotions. The documentation is very extensive and has two parts: the first contains the will, the inventory, and the record of auction of property, which provide much information about his commercial activities and private affairs, including his friendships and religious devotions. The second part pertains to the activity of Alonso Gutiérrez, his friend and executor, tasked to carry out the will: negotiations with debtors and creditors, gathering of the property of the deceased, and execution of bequests in Mexico and the Philippines. An investigation by the Audiencia of Guadalajara regarding the administration of the executor was made because of some accusations of the alcalde mayor of Zapotlán against Alonso Gutiérrez. The second part also provides information about the deponents who were Indians, Filipinos, and Spaniards. One of the most useful documents is a royal order dated October 2, 1619 containing very interesting details about the juridical status of Filipinos.

As a result of their closeness to Villalobos and Gutierrez, information about the rest of the members of the Filipino group gradually surfaces, either on account of the commercial activity of

¹⁶ Real provisión. Guadalajara, 30 de septiembre de 1619. Autos y diligencias en razón de la cobranza de los bienes de Domingo de Villalobos, difunto. AGI, Contratación, 520 N2 R14. (Hereafter cited as *Cobranza de los bienes*).

Domingo de Villalobos or of the actions of the executor Alonso Gutiérrez. Because of his mobility as a muleteer, Alonso Gutiérrez knew all the Filipinos, although the information is limited to those still in debt to the deceased Villalobos. Another Pampango by the name of Francisco Matías also occupies a prominent place. At that time, he was a sixty-year-old resident of Zapotlán, and had lived in New Spain for a long time.

Alonso Gutiérrez and Domingo de Villalobos are the main sources of information about the Filipinos in Colima and Jalisco but as to what extent they can serve as models for all the Filipinos in Mexico is not known. In the documents, some general matters are taken up, such as the juridical status of the Filipino in New Spain which is one of the objectives of this study.

The trader Domingo de Villalobos: His route and commercial products

Domingo de Villalobos travelled mainly through the region of Colima and the part of Jalisco closest to the Pacific Ocean. He went with an Indian servant named Miguel who was a native of the pueblo of San José, together with his mules laden with merchandise. Within this area, his usual route passed at least through Zapotlán, Colima, San José and Zapotiltic. There are other data which may indicate his other trading stops along the route: these were pueblos with convents where he requested Masses to be held for his soul, among them the convents of Guainamota and Tepique. The first was located within the area of his habitual travels, and the second was farther, where many Chinese worked as slaves in mines, as has been mentioned above. Most probably he was known in those pueblos on account of his commercial activities.

Regarding details of Domingo de Villalobos's activities, his means of transportation was a train of nine mules with corresponding

gear requiring considerable capital. It seems that he had no permanent residence although he conducted business often in San José and Zapotlán. He died in Zapotlan, in the house of his Filipino friend Alonso Gutiérrez.

The products that he marketed were mostly Chinese, but the list of his merchandise was really varied. It included fabrics and clothing from Castile, the Philippines, and New Spain, and local products like cocoa, maize, and salt. Among the Chinese goods were high quality textiles such as *sinabafa* [finely woven fabric made of linen, silk or cotton], taffeta, damask, and coarser ones like cotton.



The areas in New Spain where Filipinos preferred to settle, bounded by the ports of Acapulco and Navidad. Drawing by Antonio Garcia-Atance.

He also sold blankets from Pampanga, taffeta from Mexico, and garments such as shirts, Japanese *zaragüelles* or loose trousers, stockings and scarves that were made of fabrics produced in New Spain, Castile, and China. Sometimes he obtained maize, cocoa, and salt in exchange for fabrics and garments.¹⁷ Salt often figured in exchanges because it was produced around the pueblo of San José. In the inventory of Villalobos's property, there were cinnamon and wax—four pounds of cinnamon auctioned off for five pesos, that is, at ten reales per pound, and ten pounds of Chinese white wax. The inventory does not specify if the cinnamon came from the Philippines, although it is known that the first shipments of cinnamon from the islands that reached New Spain did not sell well. Not much cinnamon was consumed in the viceroyalty because other spices were preferred. Hence, the shipments of cinnamon were sent to Seville where they did not find a good market either. The selling price of cinnamon in Mexico in the 1560s was ten reales per pound.¹⁸

Although the documents examined do not tell if the Philippine and Chinese products sold by small Filipino merchants like Domingo de Villalobos were obtained directly from Manila or from Acapulco, they show beyond doubt that some Filipinos in New Spain benefitted from the galleon trade, at least as distributors of various products in the viceroyalty.

The testament of Domingo de Villalobos and the judicial procedures carried out by his executor, Alonso Gutiérrez, contain information about Villalobos's clients. The majority were Indians, but he also transacted with Spaniards, other Filipinos, and even Negro and mulatto slaves. The transactions did not involve big payments, judging by the difficulties the executor experienced in collecting payment for unpaid sales. Alonso Gutiérrez's declarations about

¹⁷ Testamento de Domingo de Villalobos, Zapotlán, 22 de abril de 1618. *Cobranza de los bienes*.

¹⁸ On the shipments of Philippine cinnamon traded in the sixteenth century, see A. García-Abásolo, "La expansión mexicana hacia el pacífico: La primera colonización de Filipinas (1570-1580)" *Historia Mexicana* 32, no. 125 (1982): 65-67.

Domingo de Villalobos provide a very interesting gauge of the size of his business:

I have exerted much effort to collect the goods that said Domingo de Villalobos told me to collect, and I have been unable to do more than what I have put down in writing, because the goods and debts are few and of small amounts, distributed among many persons. And should I have to resort to judicial means, the expenses to be incurred would be greater than the amount to be collected. And even though he had left me bonds of some persons, they were not acknowledged, neither did they specify whose they were, because the debtors are persons who live outside town, in cocoa farms and ranches; [while] other cédulas pertained to slaves and some deceased persons.¹⁹

The total sale of Domingo de Villalobos's property made by Alonso Gutiérrez and the collection of debt payments owed to the deceased—some were yet to be collected—amounted to 866 pesos and 5 reales. It totalled to a little over 900 pesos with the remaining 80 pesos in cash. It was not a fortune, indicating that Villalobos was a small trader.

The documents also disclose that he had various weapons in his possession, something that draws attention because he was Filipino, a status which, as we shall see later, placed him among the indigenous people in New Spain. He had a harquebus and a small pistol with all its accessories, aside from a sword, dagger and an Indian saber. There were no references in the testament to his having been attacked during his business trips in the last years of his life, although evidently he deemed it necessary to be protected while travelling. When Gutiérrez referred to these arms in the inventory of his friend's property, he indicated that the latter had made dents on

¹⁹ Información ante el alcalde mayor de Tamazula, capitán Juan Vizcaíno. Zapotlán, 16 de abril de 1622. Declaración de Alonso Gutiérrez, chino, albacea de Domingo de Villalobos. *Cobranza de los bienes*.

the pistol to avoid problems with the law. Gutiérrez ran similar risks as Villalobos because he was a muleteer and must have travelled on the same routes as his fellow Filipino.

The *Recopilación de leyes de Indias* prohibited Indians from carrying arms and stipulated that should one be found carrying them, he would be disarmed. But it added the following exception: “certain *indios principales* [local elite], whom we allow to carry arms will be given a licence by the viceroy, audiencia or governor to do so.”²⁰ It does not appear in the documentation that Villalobos had this authorization, but what is important is that he dared carry arms and was not denounced by anyone for doing so, even if the law allocated one-fourth of the possessions of the arms-bearing Indian to the person who would choose to report him.

His activity as a merchant also reflected the diversity of his clients, since Villalobos traded with Indians in their pueblos [*pueblos de indios*] and also with Spaniards, mestizos, mulattoes, and Negroes in pueblos and cities of Spaniards. This is an important matter because at that time laws of separation of residence prohibited Spanish and mestizo vagabonds, mulattoes, and Negroes from residing in pueblos de indios. Villalobos and the majority of the Filipinos lived in such pueblos but some of them were able to approach and were accepted in the world of Spaniards. According to available information, undoubtedly Villalobos and Gutiérrez were among the latter.

The religious sentiments of Domingo de Villalobos: devotions and confraternities

The religious devotions that Domingo de Villalobos had observed indicate the depth with which he had put down roots in New Spain.

²⁰ Book 6, Chapter 1, Law 31 of the *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias*. Facsimile edition of the fourth printing made in Madrid in 1791 (Madrid: Gráficas Ultra, 1943).

He allotted different sums of money and some donations for Masses, confraternities, and shrines, some of which were embedded in popular Mexican tradition.

In the first place, he asked to be buried garbed in a Franciscan habit, demonstrating that his devotion to St. Francis was amply nurtured considering that the convents in the area where he resided and moved around were all Franciscan. Then he entrusted Alonso Gutiérrez, his friend, executor, and countryman, with the task of disposing his remaining property in a manner that would redound to the benefit of his soul after all the bequests had been fulfilled.

The first of these bequests was to send 100 pesos to his mother, Mónica Binangan, to Quilao, Pampanga. He requested Gutiérrez to ask a trustworthy person to write her a letter communicating the news of his death. Another portion of his possessions was allotted for the celebration of Masses: ten High Masses in Zapotlán, fifty at the Altar of Forgiveness in the Cathedral of Mexico, and 100 at the shrine of Our Lady of Remedies [Nuestra Señora de los Remedios], patroness of Mexico City. He also donated four mules to the *mayordomo* [steward] of the Confraternity of the Souls in Purgatory [Cofradía de las Ánimas del Purgatorio] of which he was a member.²¹ He was a brother of the Confraternity of Our Lady of the [Immaculate] Conception in the San José and also of the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Rosary [Cofradía de Nuestra Señora del Rosario] of Zapotlán, to which he bequeathed a gilded *agnus dei*.²² His membership in two Spanish and one Indian confraternities also reflects the ease with which this Filipino was able to adjust to both Indians and Spaniards. It would be interesting to have more data to see if other Filipinos had such an ability, or only

²¹ On the Confraternity of the Souls in Purgatory of the Cathedral of Mexico, see Alicia Bazarte Martínez and Clara García Ayluardo, *Los costos de la salvación: Las cofradías y la ciudad de México (siglos XVI al XIX)* (Mexico City: Instituto Politécnico Nacional y Archivo General de la Nación, 2001), 157-62.

²² An *agnus dei* is a pious object blessed by the Pope, consisting of a small wax disk with a lamb representing Jesus Christ imprinted on it.

the likes of Domingo de Villalobos who knew how to write in Spanish and apparently dressed up like a Spaniard even though he lived in a *pueblo de indios*.

It is also known that occasionally he required the services of a second servant by the name of Francisco de Atlacosahuic, an Indian. The documents include a request addressed to Gutiérrez as executor to retrieve three pesos from Francisco de Atlacosahuic because he had committed himself to help out Villalobos on his trip to the port but did not. This port referred to Acapulco where Villalobos had left some equipment for his trade, especially a large chest about six *palmas*²³ long with a padlock, in the house of a certain Agustín whom he himself called *pampango chino de Bacolote* [Chinese from Bacolote, Pampanga].

Because of his occupation as a trader, Domingo de Villalobos was constantly travelling, reaching far-flung places up to the north of Jalisco. But his usual area of business was in the *pueblos* located between the lake of Zapotlán and the Nevado in Colima, an elevated region with abundant water and forests.²⁴ Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa gave a description of these places during the early seventeenth century:

The land has a warm climate, is rich in gold and silver mines, has big farms or *milpas* of cacao, *cañafistula*²⁵ and other fruits and medicinal root crops; abundant in everything necessary for human life; in the district there are large ranches where cattle, mules and horses are bred; a large quantity of maize, cotton and cochineal is harvested,

²³ A *palmo* is equivalent to about 21 centimeters or one-fourth of a *vara*, which is approximately equivalent to one yard.

²⁴ Peter Gerhard, *Geografía histórica de la Nueva España 1519-1821* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1986), 347-49. At present this region is found in the southern part of the state of Jalisco.

²⁵ *Milpa* is a Nahuatl term referring to agrarian land, usually planted with maize. *Cañafistula* is a tree that bears pods whose pulp is used for dyeing and other medicinal purposes. DRAE.

and all the Indians in the region are “rational people” [*gente de buena razón*] and good Christians.²⁶

The documents also show that Domingo de Villalobos had an illness that made him ask for help and seek shelter in the house of his friend and countryman, the muleteer Alonso Gutiérrez. There was no description of the symptoms to give an idea of what type of sickness Villalobos had, but it seemed it was serious enough to make him write his last will and testament. However, he recuperated and was well enough to resume his business in Zapotlán and other pueblos of Tamazula to sell taffeta, sinabafa, cotton stockings from China and other things. There was no assessment of the illness but the testimony of Manuel Domínguez Velázquez, a Spanish resident of Zapotlán who knew him well, attested to his apparent recovery. Domínguez, who was another executor of Villalobos, often visited the house of Gutiérrez as he was the cousin of Gutierrez’s wife, an india principal and respectfully referred to by all the deponents as *Doña Mariana*. Domínguez’s testimony states thus:

When Domingo de Villalobos recovered from illness, this witness saw him on horseback and asked him where he was going; did he want to die? He replied to this witness that he needed to reach the pueblo of Zapotiltic to sell ten fanegas²⁷ of corn which he had in that pueblo at the house of an Indian.²⁸

He went about doing business for a month during which he also sold his commodities to many people who came to buy at Gutiérrez’s house where Villalobos had put up shop. Eventually, he had a relapse

²⁶ Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, *Compendio y descripción universal de las Indias Occidentales*, Crónicas de América 68a (Madrid: Historia 16, 1992), 270.

²⁷ A *fanega* is a dry measure equivalent to twelve *celemines* (4.6 liters) or 55.5 liters. DRAE.

²⁸ Testimonio de Manuel Domínguez. Zapotlán, 20 de abril de 1622. Información de testigos pedida por Alonso Gutiérrez como albacea de Domingo de Villalobos. *Cobranza de los bienes*.

and again took refuge in the house of his friend where he stayed for seven months until he died late in the year 1618.

Alonso Gutiérrez and the Filipino community in Zapotlán

Information about the real status of Filipinos in colonial society, and especially references to the legal ambit in which the Spanish government placed them in that society, appears in a very precise fashion in the actions of Alonso Gutiérrez, who in this respect really becomes the central figure in the documents studied. Gutiérrez arrived in New Spain in 1596 at the age of eleven and had been living there for twenty-six years at the time the events under study happened. This is not surprising because his mother Magdalena Cecilia, who likewise appeared in Domingo de Villalobos's will, had also lived in the colony of Filipinos in Colima and Jalisco. Although her place of residence was not specified, it is logical to presume that she was also a resident of Zapotlán as her son was. It seems that Alonso Gutiérrez was a man who enjoyed prestige in the district and was known in many pueblos because of his trade as a muleteer. As mentioned earlier, he was married to Doña Mariana, an Indian from Zapotlán belonging to a family of caciques, thus of noble lineage, and a woman of unquestionable prestige in the pueblo. Juan Luis, an Indian from Zapotlán who gave testimony in the judicial process initiated upon the death of Domingo de Villalobos, said that he took his daughter to Doña Mariana to be baptized by her. Manuel Domínguez, cousin of Doña Mariana, and Juan Juárez, another deponent, declared he was *compadre* of Alonso Gutiérrez. Indeed everything indicates that this Filipino had been fully integrated in Zapotlán, pueblo de indios, where he had established family ties and had been considered important enough to be able to marry a woman belonging to the local elite.

Besides being close to Indians, Gutiérrez also seemed to have good connections with other Filipinos from the community of Colima and Jalisco, who were always mentioned as Chinese in the documents. Francisco Matías, a sixty-year-old Filipino resident of Zapotlán, was a frequent visitor at the house of Gutiérrez whom he had known back in the Philippines. In that house he met Domingo de Villalobos, then already ill. Gutiérrez counted on him as witness because of their close relationship and also because Matías accompanied him several times on his trips around Colima and Jalisco between 1618 and 1622. He made those trips to fulfill his duties as executor of Villalobos, trying to collect payment for the many small unpaid debts owed to the deceased man. Matías assisted Gutiérrez in some of his tasks as executor, one of which was the turning over to the guardian of the Convent of St. Francis in Zapotlán the sum of forty-eight pesos as stipend for fifty Masses at the Altar of Forgiveness of the Cathedral of Mexico, requested by Villalobos for the repose of his soul.

The expediente mentions other members of the Filipino community in Colima and Jalisco as debtors of Villalobos. Francisco Matías himself owed him four pesos, but for which item it was not specified. Several persons were classified as Chinese but were actually Filipinos: Francisco Luis, who owed an unspecified sum for the purchase of clothing; Nicolás Malanqua, who owed ten pesos for the purchase of salt; Pedro Timbán, three pesos and a fanega of salt; Juan Friana, two pesos and four tomines for the purchase of clothing; and Alonso Ramos, who owed five pesos given by Domingo de Villalobos to buy cacao for him. Another Filipino named Agustín Silampao owed him around two pesos which also had been used to buy cacao, and in addition, had pawned a riding seat to Villalobos.

With regard to these Filipinos and other debtors, whether Spaniards, Negroes, or mulattoes, Gutiérrez declared the difficulties he had to face as executor in order to locate them in the area of Colima. Earlier these difficulties were mentioned in assessing

Villalobos's movements as a merchant.²⁹ Gutierrez's statement not only confirms Villalobos's meticulous work as a small trader, but above all it also sheds light on the distribution of Filipinos in the scattered area of Colima and Jalisco and the humid orchard zones which they probably found to be similar to the natural environment in their country of origin. At any rate, as Indians they easily became integrated in the places where they settled and readily interacted with the natives.

The juridical treatment of Filipinos in New Spain. Indians in Indian municipalities.

A most interesting part of the expediente is the information about the circumstances of this group of Filipinos. It does not refer to geographical location because the area of Colima-Jalisco, as has been mentioned, is near Acapulco and the distribution lines for Chinese products; rather it refers to the settlement of Filipinos in *pueblos de indios*. There, everyone—Indians, Spaniards, and people of other races—knew them as Chinese and which they also called themselves.

A royal order from the Audiencia of Guadalajara contains useful data that outline the juridical image of the Filipino, even if the usual reference is made not to Filipinos but to Chinese or Chinese Indians. This can be contrasted with the juridical image of Filipinos living among Tarascans and relating with Spaniards and with Negro and mulatto slaves.

The royal order was issued as a result of Alonso Gutiérrez's negotiations in the Audiencia of Guadalajara in defense of his tasks as executor of Domingo de Villalobos. The *alcalde mayor* of Tamazula, Juan Vizcaíno, accused him of concealing goods and poor administration; specifically, he was accused of not having remitted

²⁹ Información ante el *alcalde mayor* de Tamazula, capitán Juan Vizcaíno. Zapotlán, 16 de abril de 1622. See footnote 19.

the hundred pesos bequeathed by the deceased to his mother in the Philippines and of retaining Villalobos's property, using it for his own benefit. Based on the performance of his executorship, and his course of action in the Audiencia of Guadalajara, it may be said that Gutiérrez was very well informed and capable of handling the difficult details of this type of lawsuit.

As the basis of his defense, Gutiérrez presented the steps he took to collect the debts owed to Villalobos. He showed proofs that he had gone on several trips to Colima and yet some debts remained unpaid despite much effort to collect them. The problem was compounded by the fact that the debtors were scattered in a large area. On the other hand, he presented the required documents, receipts as well as testimonies from witnesses, to prove that he had fulfilled Villalobos's bequests and had incurred expenses for his funeral and burial in Zapotlán. Moreover, he made a special effort to show that he had written several letters to Mónica Binangan, the mother of the deceased, so she could formally claim her inheritance from her son; however, by 1622 he was still awaiting her reply.³⁰

The royal order, signed in Guadalajara on October 2, 1619 and addressed to the alcalde mayor of Zapotlán was issued upon the request of Gutiérrez. The document states:

Know that in the presence of my president and ministers of my Audiencia, Court and, Chancery of Guadalajara in New Galicia [Nueva Galicia], Alonso Gutiérrez, Chinese Indian and resident of the aforementioned pueblo, appeared. Through the petition which he presented, he related that he has lived in Zapotlán for more than twenty years, is married to an india principal in tranquility and with the pleasure of the natives of that pueblo where he has his house and dwelling. It was there that a certain Domingo de Villalobos stayed and rested; he was also Chinese, a native of Pampanga, where he [Alonso

³⁰ Declaración de Alonso Gutiérrez ante el alcalde mayor de Tamazula Juan Vizcaíno. Zapotlán, 12 de abril de 1622. *Cobranza de los bienes*.

Gutiérrez] also comes from a land which is a subject and vassal of mine as is well-known. There he fell ill and died. In that house he made and drew up his last will and testament in the presence of five witnesses who, even if fewer than the ordinary, sufficed because he was an Indian and was in an Indian municipality.

And dying under that provision, he left it to his executor In accordance with which he has been carrying it out in works of mercy and to the extent possible And you, the aforementioned *alcalde mayor*, have wanted to interfere in the case of that will and have asked it from him together with the property of said Domingo de Villalobos. And it is feared that you should take the original will and the possessions which have remained with him to send to his mother and to fulfill everything else contained [in the will].

Therefore, he had approached my Audiencia since it was a *caso de corte*³¹ of persons who are lowly natives of my kingdoms, so that it might be retained as such, and that you, the aforementioned *alcalde mayor*, might abstain from trying it, or [pursuing it] at the level of appeal if necessary. Further, that you should be commanded to permit him to carry out his executorship and keep those possessions freely until he could dispose of them in accordance with the testament. This is neither a case involving Spaniards nor is it covered by my laws stipulating that the property of the deceased should be taken to the kingdoms of Castile. If that were necessary, I would give a sufficient bond in that pueblo in order to fulfill said testament.

Therefore, he asked and entreated that, having presented the case on the most appropriate level, I command my Audiencia to give my letter and royal decree so that you, the *alcalde mayor*, might not interfere in anything concerning the said testament and allow him to fulfill it according to the will of the testator since he was the

³¹ Although it has variations in meaning, in this case *caso de corte* involves criminal acts of dishonesty of which Alonso Gutiérrez is accused by the *alcalde mayor*.

person fully trusted and chosen by the deceased. If necessary, he would provide the bond. Above all, he asked for justice.³²

To this royal order was attached a writ from the Audiencia of Guadalajara stating that the *alcalde mayor* of Zapotlán should not prevent Alonso Gutiérrez, Chinese Indian, from executing the will of Domingo de Villalobos. He should allow him to exercise his function as executor freely, provided he put up bonds and promise to give an account in three months' time. These documents make up the greater part of the expediente, consisting of a series of receipts and other data presented by Gutiérrez to justify his work as executor.

The content of the royal order is very clear in its classification of the status of Alonso Gutiérrez and Domingo de Villalobos as Chinese Indians, understood immediately as Filipinos. Further, it recognized their rights as members of the Indian community of Zapotlán, the same rights they would have enjoyed in any other such community in New Spain because they were Indians. An order from Carlos I (Valladolid, November 3, 1535) stipulated that the Indians could transfer from one place to another voluntarily to establish their home wherever they wished, in *pueblos de indios*, without being prevented by agents of the law.³³

Among the Indians, without a doubt Gutiérrez and Villalobos were more than *ladinos*³⁴: they knew Spanish, they knew how to write, they possessed skills that were not shared by some of their fellow Filipinos who had settled in Colima. The documentation does not provide much evidence about this aspect although it contains some interesting references. Francisco Luis, resident of San José, signed his

³² Real provisión, Guadalajara, 30 de septiembre de 1619. Auto de la audiencia. Guadalajara, 2 de octubre de 1619. (The signatories are Pedro de Otorera, Canal de Lamadrid y Chaves). *Cobranza de los bienes*.

³³ Thereafter this order was incorporated into the *Recopilación de leyes de Indias* (book 6, chapter 1, law 12).

³⁴ The term *ladino* usually refers to a Spanish-speaking Indian or Negro; hence, it connotes a certain degree of hispanization.

sworn statement in characters that the notary did not understand because, as he said, they were written in Japanese and Chinese. Another one was Francisco Matías, who did not sign because he did not know how to write. No information was provided for the rest (Agustín, Andrés Malate, Nicolás Malanqua, Pedro Timbán, Juan Friana, Agustín Silampao, and Alonso Ramos) except their being in contact with Domingo de Villalobos and Alonso Gutiérrez; and their places of residence in Acapulco, Zapotlán, San José, with some of them scattered in the cacao farms of Colima and Jalisco.

Other persons mentioned in the documents, particularly the residents of Zapotlán, were Indians, except in a few cases in which they were specifically classified as Spaniards. This was understandable because Zapotlán was a *pueblo de indios*. Hence, the Spaniards, mestizos, mulattoes, and Negroes were expressly prohibited from establishing their residence in Zapotlán as in any other Indian municipality by virtue of the laws on separation. Among those other residents of Zapotlán, majority could not sign their statements because they did not know how to write. Thus the status of *indios ladinos* given to Gutiérrez and Villalobos is further highlighted. On the other hand, at the time that these Filipinos lived in Zapotlán, the policy on separation of residence tended also to be contrary to the presence of Spanish-speaking Indians in Indian municipalities, although in the *Recopilación de leyes de Indias* there is no legal impediment to this. These tendencies at the beginning of the seventeenth century could have affected the case of Villalobos so much more because in those laws Spanish-speaking Indians engaged in itinerant trade are specifically mentioned.³⁵

³⁵ About this topic, see Magnus Mörner, *La corona Española y los foráneos en los pueblos de indios de América* (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica, 1999), 109-111.

Conclusion

What can be proven about the group of Filipinos in Colima-Jalisco, and particularly about Alonso Gutiérrez and Domingo de Villalobos, is their capacity to fully adapt to the Indian environment as befitting their juridical status as Indians, and to establish close contact with Spaniards at least in some aspects, as shown by the documentation. Alonso Gutiérrez's marriage to Doña Mariana, a member of the Indian elite of Zapotlán, is an indication of his rootedness in the Indian community and of his prestige and influence, also reflected in his being a godfather through marriage. In this respect, Doña Mariana's position must have played an important part. Along the same line is the fact that Gutiérrez's house was a meeting place for many persons, not only during the illness of Villalobos, but also as a merchandise store. All the deponents, Indians as well as Spaniards and Filipinos, testified lengthily, praising Gutiérrez's conduct in fulfilling his duties as executor. They emphasized his concern to avert the auctioning off of Villalobos's property in Zapotlán "because he would not have gained half the money that he did in the sale made, given that in auctions things are sold at less than half their value,"³⁶ and because in a *pueblo de indios*, the Spaniards made the best deals. Likewise they alluded to the difficulties of the executorship, especially because Villalobos sold goods after drawing up his will when he recuperated from illness. The difficulties increased because Villalobos died while Gutiérrez was away from Zapotlán practicing his trade as a muleteer. The common opinion about Gutiérrez in Zapotlán and in the district as a whole is well reflected in Juan Cervera's testimony:

³⁶ Declaración de Melchor de Covarrubias. Zapotlán, 18 de abril de 1622. *Cobranza de los bienes*.

It must be more than twenty years to date that the aforementioned Alonso Gutiérrez has lived in this pueblo; this witness has known him, and knows that he is an honorable man and reputed to be so in this district as in many other places notwithstanding his being Chinese.³⁷

Such an ambivalent comment about Alonso Gutiérrez as a Chinese native can be taken as further evidence to show how deeply rooted he was in the land. It would be interesting to know to what extent this can be applied to other Filipinos in the time and space of New Spain, but in the context of limited information available at the moment, it constitutes a testimony of value.

³⁷ Declaración de Juan Cervera. Zapotlán, 16 de abril de 1622. Interrogatorio general sobre la causa de Alonso Gutiérrez. Ante el alcalde mayor Juan Vizcaíno. *Ibid.*

