

Chapter 4

POLICING THE CHINESE: *TENIENTES MAYORES DE CHINOS* AND ‘UNDESIRABLE’ CHINESE IN THE PHILIPPINES, 1870-1898*

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Introduction

The Spanish colonial government in the Philippines had always considered the Chinese as “necessary outsiders.” The Chinese, called *sangleys*¹ and *chinos*,² were necessary because they played an important role in the colonial economy as businessmen, artisans, and laborers. Due to their strong economic position in the islands, Don Tiburcio Gorostiza, a commissioner in Madrid who

* Part of this paper was presented during a special lecture organized by the Philippine Association for Chinese Studies during its General Assembly held at Xavier School on September 21, 2019.

¹ On the origins of the word “*sangley*,” see C.R. Boxer, ed. (1953), 261; See, et. al., eds. (2005), 47.

² For discussions on the Spanish use of “*sangley*” and “*chinos*” during the Spanish colonial regime, see the works of Wickberg (2000), 155; Chu (2012), 69.

represented the Philippines in the Spanish *Cortes*, even claimed in 1834 that the archipelago had become “rather a colony of the Chinese Empire than a part of the Spanish monarchy” (cited in Diaz-Trechuelo 1969, 36). Despite their economic and socio-cultural contributions, however, the Chinese were still viewed as “outsiders.” Theoretically, they were not considered part of the body politic; they were neither the colonizers nor the colonized (i.e., Filipinos). From the standpoint of the Spanish authorities, their main goal was only to enrich themselves from the colony’s bountiful resources and economic opportunities, and then return, retire, and live the good life in China.³

During the second half of the 19th century, this negative stereotypical view on the Chinese intensified because of their dominant economic position, growing population, and residence patterns in different parts of the Philippines. Also, the government was concerned about the increasing number of “undesirable” Chinese – vagrants, drunkards, idlers, unemployed, pickpockets, undocumented, and the “suspicious” – who violated policies related to registration, taxation, and migration. The state regarded this particular segment of the Chinese population as a threat to the colony’s political and financial stability. Hence, they were arrested, prosecuted, and punished through the state’s judicial apparatus. But although this apparatus was primarily manned and administered by Spaniards, Filipinos, and mestizos,⁴ there were certain “Chinese” institutions and administrative units tasked to maintain peace and order within the Chinese community.

³ On the origins of Spanish stereotype on Philippine Chinese, see Horsley (1950).

⁴ Generally, the term “mestizo” refers to a person of mixed blood. Chinese mestizos or mestizos *de sangleyes* were the offsprings of Chinese fathers and Filipina mothers. For discussions on Chinese mestizos, see the the works of Wickberg (2001); Chu (2002), 327-370.

This paper explores an aspect of the 19th-century Philippine judicial system by examining the origins and development of the office of the *tenientes mayores de chinos* framed within the broader state concern related to the “undesirable” Chinese in the last three decades of the Spanish regime. Using underutilized primary materials from various archives in Manila and Madrid, it probes into how and why the government deemed it necessary to include the Chinese community in curbing criminality through such “Chinese agents.” Although a brief section is devoted to law enforcement agencies from outside the Chinese community, the focus will be on these Chinese officers, specifically interrogating how they conducted their dual function as government agents who had to enforce the law, and, at the same time, as leaders of their community, expected to protect their compatriots, even the “criminal” ones.

Criminality and the “Criminals:” The Emergence of ‘Undesirable’ Chinese

The National Archives of the Philippines (NAP) is a treasure trove of Spanish primary materials related to the lives and circumstance of the Chinese in the 19th-century Philippines. Of particular importance are the 148 *Chinos* bundles, which contain thousands of cases concerning “undesirable” Chinese. I put the words “undesirable” and “criminals” in quotable marks when referring to this specific section of the Chinese community to highlight the need to problematize these socially-constructed words (see O’Brien 1878, 508-520). The Spanish colonial state used these legal terms in accordance with the existing law and related regulations imposed upon the Chinese.

The Chinese “criminals,” however, claimed they were not criminals; that in light of their miserable economic condition, they were “only compelled” to commit their alleged “crimes” in

order to live and survive. Vagrancy, in particular, was viewed by the government as a “petty offense,” but for the vagrants themselves, being vagrant was a pragmatic response to the harsh economic realities they faced both in urban and rural settings (Bankoff 1996, 24-25; Cushner 1971, 108).

From the *Chinos* bundles, I was able to gather 5,145 cases⁵ brought against “undesirable” Chinese between 1831, when the first general Chinese census was made, and 1898, when the Spanish rule ended.⁶ With regard to their offenses, these individuals committed crimes considered “minor” (*delitos leves*) by the state such as insolvency (no material resources to pay state contributions and fines for committing “crimes”), tax debts (non-payment of taxes), and vagrancy (roaming around “aimlessly”). These Chinese were usually fined and given a prison term of three months or less. Those arrested for vagrancy were almost always arrested for also engaging in vices like gambling and drunkenness. Undocumented, some of these vagrants were also charged with pickpocketing and involvement in prostitution as pimps.

Their cases also highlight that these “criminals” belonged to the laboring class, who, because of unemployment, material deprivation, and the marginal nature of their work were unable to fulfill their financial obligations to the colonial state. These individuals were classified under the lowest tax category (fourth tax class before

⁵ I did not include in this number those arrested (453) and those who fled to the mountains (1,083) immediately after the first *padron de chinos* was completed in 1831. The data about these first “undesirable” Chinese during the 19th century was recorded in Manuel Buzeta, OSA, and Felipe Bravo, OSA 1850, 135-136. Fourteen of the 453 Chinese arrested and imprisoned in Manila in 1831 were released in December 1832. The record about the release of the 14 Chinese can be found at the National Archives of the Philippines (NAP), *Chinos*, 1832-1842, S-2b, 5-6b.

⁶ I used the *Chinos* bundles at the NAP for my doctoral thesis. Most data in this paper came from my unpublished PhD thesis, “Vagrants and Outcasts” (2019).

1889 and sixth tax class thereafter).⁷ While many “undesirable” Chinese were unemployed when they were arrested (131 cases), many also had some source of living. The top occupations (out of the identified 26) were day laborers (*jornaleros*), porters or stevedores (*cargadores*), and peddlers or hawkers (*tenderos*). The first two occupations required neither specialized skills nor prior training but only a strong body capable of heavy manual work (De Comenge 1894, 46). Compared to businessmen (*comerciantes*), peddlers and ambulant vendors did not need to have permanent shops and stalls, which required property tax or rents that most of them could not afford (Galang 2019).⁸

The emergence of these Chinese “criminals” during the 19th century was primarily caused by two interrelated factors: 1) the changes within the Chinese community, and 2) the evolution of the Spanish colonial state. With regard to the first factor, it was during this period that Chinese population significantly increased.

In 1842, for instance, their number was reported to be approximately 8,000 (De Mas 1903-1907, 67-68). After 40 years, in 1882, there were already 36,622 registered Chinese in the colony (NAP *Chinos*, 1876-1882, S 734-734b), and by 1890, it rose to 44,900 (NAP *Chinos*, 1890-1891, S 123-123b, S 766-766b). Besides their burgeoning number, the Chinese were also employed in numerous economic activities and occupations. In 1832 alone, the Chinese were reported to occupy at least 87 occupations, ranging from being

⁷ It was in 1889 that a new tax system was imposed upon the Chinese. Unlike the period before 1889, when they occupied the fourth tax class, the working-class Chinese in 1889 were now classified under the sixth tax class, in Blair and Robertson, eds. (1801-1840), 53-54; Berriz (1888), 779-780.

⁸ The other occupations were steelmaker, agriculturist, bricklayer, barber, blacksmith, businessman, stonemason, carpenter, slipper-maker, chocolate-maker, buyer of goods, domestic servant, gardener, herbalist, helper, operator, shop assistant, fisherman, repairman, tailor, tinsmith, and shoemaker.

businessmen to cooks (*cocineros*) to hopia-makers (*jopialeros*)⁹ and water carriers (*aguadores*) (NAP *Chinos*, 1837-1898, S 70-71). These diverse occupations increased in the succeeding periods especially in the 1880s due to Chinese labor migration to the colony. Furthermore, the Chinese also began to travel to conduct business and reside in different parts of the archipelago, particularly in areas where economic activities were vibrant and thriving. Even in Mindanao, there were now a considerable number of registered Chinese. For example, in 1865, Misamis only had 18 Chinese, but in 1886, there were already 471 Chinese in the province. In 1865, Surigao only had 12 Chinese, which became 257 after 25 years, mainly because of the province's large-scale abaca plantations and presses, where Chinese coolies were commonly employed (NAP *Chinos*, 1890-1891, S 123-123b, S 766-766b, S 46; Arenas 1850, unreferenced; "Estado del numero," 1865, 386; *Los Chinos en Filipinas* 1886, 102-103).

The second factor has to do with the changes within the Spanish colonial government since the late 18th century that affected how it administered the Chinese. The British invasion of Havana and Manila in 1761 and 1762, respectively, demonstrated Spain's waning imperial power. After her defeat, Spain initiated economic and military reforms to reclaim her control over her remaining colonies. Such actions consequently led to the transformation of the Spanish colonial state into a "judicial state," which, according to Bankoff, was a state that governed its subjects through the systematic use of the judicial apparatus comprising the law, court system, police forces, and forms of punishment (1996, 11, 13-18; Robles 1969, 54-59).¹⁰ To achieve its goal of regaining and intensifying its authority over the colonized population, the Spanish colonial

⁹ *Jopia* or *hopia* was a kind of pie.

¹⁰ The evolution of the Spanish colonial state into a judicial state was part and parcel of the overall expansion and centralization of the colonial state's administrative apparatus and the need for more revenue to support it.

state began to codify the different laws imposed on the islands. The court system was structurally reformed. Its mandate was defined more clearly, and its units were manned by qualified staff. Imprisonment, deportation and expulsion became viable options to punish criminals. And finally, new police units were created, and law enforcement was upgraded by employing trained and capable personnel (Bankoff 1996).

As part of its becoming a judicial state, the government implemented restrictive forms of control and surveillance on the activities and movements of the Chinese. Despite the role the Chinese played in the economy, the Spanish colonial government continued to treat them with utmost caution. All Chinese were required to possess documents of identification upon arrival in the Philippines. Internal passports were also required to those who traveled to different parts of the islands. The Chinese had to register with the municipal, provincial, and national authorities so the government could properly account for their numbers and efficiently collect taxes from them. The state also enforced regular inspections of houses and apartments where most working-class Chinese lived (AHN 1872; *China en Filipinas* 1889, 48-50; *Los Chinos en Filipinas* 1886, 81; De Viana 2001, 166-167, 175).¹¹ Chinese shops and stores were also closely monitored and checked to prevent any Chinese from not registering with the authorities (AHN 1872).

Law Enforcement Agencies from Outside the Chinese Community

To efficiently and effectively implement its policies upon the Chinese, the Spanish colonial state relied heavily on its law

¹¹ In Manila, working-class Chinese commonly lived in shop-cum-dormitories or in apartment houses called *acesorias* or *viviendas*.

enforcement agencies, which formed an important component of the judicial apparatus. These agencies were tasked to ensure all Chinese followed such measures. They also reported and arrested those who violated the law. Depending on their jurisdictions and the racial composition of their personnel, these agencies can generally be divided into two: 1) law enforcers from outside the Chinese community composed of Spaniards, Filipinos, and mestizos; and, 2) law enforcers from within the Chinese community whose staff were Chinese.

The urban police, created in Manila in 1823, belonged to the first type of law enforcers. Apart from implementing the law and maintaining order in Manila, the urban police also assisted the city government in enforcing health policies to prevent disease outbreaks.¹² In 1836 and 1847, the urban police's provincial counterparts – the *cuadrilleros* and *carabineros* – were organized to apprehend criminals and bandits (“Reglamento Organico,” 1855, 3-5). *Alcaldes mayores* in the Visayas were also required to organize *cuadrillero* units in their provinces to prevent incursions of “Moro pirates” (“Reglamento Organico,” 1855, Art. 2, 7-9).” In 1839, the *resguardo* (revenue police) was established to monitor the circulation of monopoly commodities such as tobacco and opium, and prevented contraband trade (De Jesus 1980, 179; Robles 1969, 18, 108).¹³

After 1843,¹⁴ the *resguardo* allowed the Chinese and Chinese mestizo owners of opium dens in Manila, particularly in Binondo,

¹² For the detailed list of all the functions of the Urban Police in Manila, see Berriz (1887-1888), 83-102. For the 1820 cholera epidemic, see AHN “Epidemia, Colera” (1820); Worcester (1908), 3-4; De la Gironiere (1962), 3-8; Bowring (1963), 67; De Bevoise (1995), Ch. 7: Cholera.

¹³ For a discussion on the *resguardo* in relation to how colonial states in Southeast Asia monitored the movement of people and commodities in the region, see Tagliacozzo (2007), 5.

¹⁴ In 1843, the government finally allowed the legal use of opium among the Chinese in the Philippines.

to form paramilitary units (*comisionados*). These *comisionados*, organized by opium den operators, aided the *resguardos* in catching opium smugglers (NAP *Anfion*, 1847-1896a, Book 1, S 45-50; NAP *Anfion*, 1847-1896b, Book 7; NAP *Anfion*, 1849-1869, S 596a, 735a; Bamero 2011, 40). A few years later, in 1849, the *tercios de policia* were established in the colony to ensure the security of persons and property. The *tercios* in the provinces were an addition to the existing *carabineros* and *cuadrilleros* previously created. By the 1850s, the urban police was replaced by the *Tercio Civil de Manila* and the *Cuerpo de Vigilancia de Manila* (*Reglamento para la Guardia Civil* 1872, 1; Bankoff 1996, 153).

The second half of the 19th century saw escalating criminality in the provinces and in Manila. As a response, the government revitalized its law enforcement capability. In 1868, it created the *Guardia Civil*, the colony's "special military corps" (*Reglamento para la Organizacion*, 1868, vii-viii, 2; Grossman 1972, 2-7).¹⁵ The *guardia civil* was originally composed of three companies assigned to the three districts of Luzon.¹⁶ These companies were divided into sections, each with its own set of officers. The first company, which covered Manila and Morong, had 11 sections. The second company in the provinces south of Manila had 13 sections while the third company that controlled those provinces situated north of Manila had 14 sections (*Reglamento para la Organizacion* 1868, 97). After four years, in 1872, the *Guardia Civil's* geographic scope was extended to the Visayas. The companies were now referred to as "regiments." The first regiment covered the provinces situated south of Manila while the second, those of central and northern Luzon. The third regiment operated in the Visayas with unit headquarters located in Iloilo and Cebu (Robles 1969, 193).

¹⁵ The *Guardia Civil* was patterned after the *Carabinieri* in Italy and the *Guardia Civil* in Spain established in 1814 and 1844, respectively.

¹⁶ Hence, officially, this institution was called *Tercio de Guardia Civil*.

In 1872, the government organized the *Guardia Civil Veterana* as a special regiment of the *Guardia Civil* in charge of Manila. It replaced the existing *Cuerpo de Vigilancia Publica de Manila* and the *Tercio Civil de Manila* (*Reglamento para la Guardia Civil* 1872, Art. 1 and 2, 1; Fernandez 1877, 161). The *Veterana* was tasked to preserve order in the city and to track the movements and activities of all city-dwellers, and migrants from the provinces and outside the colony (*Reglamento para la Guardia Civil* 1872, 1). Some of its specific duties included the following: addressing traffic congestion; lighting street lamps; upholding cleanliness in public spaces; prohibiting the agglomeration of people in small dwellings; preventing fires; making sure proper licenses were secured before the construction and operation of houses, shops, and other establishments; and, maintaining the residents' moral uprightness by arresting "undesirable" individuals such as vagrants, drunkards, undocumented persons, and individuals roaming around the city at night (*Reglamento para la Guardia Civil* 1872, Ch. 9, Art. 4 and 5, 20-21).

Law Enforcers from the Chinese Community: The *Tenientes Mayores de Chinos* in Manila

The second type of law enforcers were the *tenientes mayores de chinos*. They were Chinese officers drawn from the Chinese community. Their office was first created in Manila and then subsequently extended to the provinces with considerable number of registered Chinese residents. Also, their office was an addition to the already existing office of the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes*, the highest official and representative of the Chinese community in Manila.

At least three major factors prompted the colonial government to establish the office of the *tenientes mayores de chinos*. The first factor has to do with the economic difficulties the Philippines

experienced in the 1880s. Because the Philippine economy was linked to the world economy since the 1820s, the prices of its export commodities were affected by fluctuations in the international market. The Philippines' major export products, therefore, had to compete with the same commodities produced in other countries (Larkin 1982, 621; Legarda 1999).

In particular, the 1884 introduction of a bounty system¹⁷ in Germany and France stimulated the production of sugar beet in Europe, which led to a sharp decline in the price of sugar. This development caused Philippine sugar – the colony's main export product – being cut out of the British market, responsible for more than half the total Philippine sugar exports (Fast and Richardson 1979, 44; Corpuz 1997, 156).¹⁸ This slump in the price of sugar affected big businesses in commercial centers like Manila and Cebu, where numerous Chinese coolies were commonly employed as manual laborers (NAP *Chinos*, 1865-1898, 1896-1898, S 286-293; Legarda 1999, 323-325).

The second factor was the occurrence of destructive earthquakes and the outbreak of cholera in the early 1880s. The 1880 earthquakes, for example, left numbers dead and numerous damaged buildings in its wake (*Los Terremotos de Filipinas* 1880; Centeno 1881). In regard to the 1882-1883 cholera epidemics, the Sub-Delegación de Medicina's official count of casualties in Manila alone was 5,413. Some authors, however, claim the estimated casualties reached 15,000 to 20,000 and even up to 30,000 (*Los Terremotos de Filipinas* 1880; Centeno 1881).¹⁹ These

¹⁷ Germany's and France's bounty system, in effect, subsidized the production of sugar beet.

¹⁸ By the 1890s, Philippine sugar was rated poorest in quality and, thus, commanded the lowest price in the world.

¹⁹ De Bevoise used the data from Koeniger (1884), 419; and Sawyer (1900), 400-401.

events imposed a heavy financial burden on the colonial coffers as the state had to find funds for the labor and materials needed for the reconstruction of damaged buildings and other infrastructures. It also had to confront the challenges posed by the epidemic by addressing related problems of the need for more trained medical personnel, the burgeoning number of patients in hospitals, and the increasing casualties to be interred in cemeteries (De Viana 2004, 87-132).

Finally, the rise in the number of “undesirable” Chinese in the 1870s was also a major factor for the establishment of the office of the *tenientes mayores de chinos* as the presence of these social outcasts meant less revenue for the already financially challenged government. Based on the 5,145 cases from the *Chinos* bundles, there were 902 cases in 1870-1889 filed against these social “undesirables,” equivalent to 47 cases per year. This data was more than twice the cases recorded between 1832 and 1869, which was 726 cases or 20 cases per year. The majority of the cases (4,584 or 89.09 percent) from the total 5,145 cases happened in Manila where the main Chinese population was concentrated during the entire Spanish regime. In 1881, there were 26,448 (62 percent) registered Chinese in Manila. Five years later, in 1886, it became 27,364 (63 percent) of their total population in the islands, pegged at 43,538. It is not surprising, therefore, that the impetus to create the office of the *tenientes mayores de chinos* came from officials of the Manila city government.

In order to generate more funds, and, at the same time, remedy the state’s concern related to “undesirable” Chinese, an official of the Treasury Department in Manila, Segundo G. Luna, suggested in late 1886 that a new set of officers (with law enforcement capacities) from the Chinese community had to be organized (AHN 1887a). Luna claimed that the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* was overworked and had to be partly relieved from some of his

functions.²⁰ It was nearly impossible, according to Luna, for the *gobernadorcillo* to perform his judicial, fiscal, and administrative functions without assistance. This was especially the case because the *gobernadorcillo* was in charge of all matters related to the Chinese both in Manila and the provinces (AHN 1887a).

On January 8, 1887, Governor General Terrero approved Luna's proposal to divide Manila into 13 districts for more efficient administration of the Chinese population. Each district was headed by a *teniente mayor*, a wealthy and influential Chinese of the city. It is important to note that of all the city's suburbs (*arrabales*), only Binondo – part of Manila's "municipal district" (*distrito municipal*) (i.e., economic and demographic center) (De la Cavada and De Vigo 1876, 18)²¹ – was divided into two administrative districts: North Binondo (Binondo Norte) and South Binondo (Binondo Sur) (AHN 1887b). This bureaucratic move, done in 1887 by the city government, was expected considering that during that time, Binondo was the colony's economic capital. As such, it attracted an influx of Chinese migrants who benefitted from the socio-cultural support systems and networks within the Chinese community.

Binondo was the location of the largest Chinese population in the colony. It became "the [only] neighborhood" in Manila that was "totally Chinese" (De Comenge 1894, 178). In 1876, most working class Chinese in Binondo were watchmakers, silversmiths, tinsmiths, blacksmiths, foundry workers, gunsmiths, painters, carpenters, cabinet makers, tailors, and shoemakers (Cavada and

²⁰ Even in the mid-1890s, the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* continued to complain to the Treasury Department about his numerous duties. See "Letter of Mariano de Ocampo" (1892), S 339-343.

²¹ The three other smaller towns that constituted the municipal district were Quiapo, Sampaloc, and San Miguel.

De Vigo 1876, 52). In 1890, Binondo had 13,335 registered Chinese while the other two “core towns” of Santa Cruz and Tondo only had 2,465, and 1,910 registered Chinese, respectively (NAP *Chinos*, 1870-1898b, S 649).

The *Tenientes mayores* were elected by members of the Chinese *principalía*, the socio-economic elite of the Chinese community. The elections were done every two years, a practice that had been observed since the election law was promulgated in the Philippines in 1861 (see NAP *Chinos*, 1893-1894, S 263-282b). A *teniente mayor* was required to report directly to the Treasury Department, emphasizing his important role in tax collection. He also had to oversee the registration, movement, and activities of the Chinese within his district (see NAP *Chinos*, 1889-1892, S 247-258). Furthermore, he also had the responsibility to report and arrest any Chinese who violated existing policies and laws. Any *teniente mayor* who failed to keep track of the number of Chinese in his area was fined (AHN 1887b).

Table 1 shows the 13 districts of Manila and their respective *tenientes mayores de chinos* from 1890 until the outbreak of the 1896 Philippine Revolution. Based on the table, at least three important features of the *tenientes mayores de chinos*, apart from being males and Chinese, emerge. First, all of them carried the honorific title “Don.” This title was used to signify their important position not only in their own community but also in the Spanish colonial bureaucracy. It highlighted both their socio-economic position and their *politico*-administrative functions. Second, all of them were Catholics as reflected in their Christian names. Their complete names had their Christian names – commonly the names of their sponsors when they converted to Christianity – and then their Chinese names. Only Joaquin Cembrano (District 1), Nicolas Rivero (District 2), and Alejandro Carrillo (District 12) did not indicate their Chinese names in 1890-1892.

In 1894-1896, however, Joaquin Cembrano (District 5) stated his complete name, which was Joaquin Cembrano Lim Chiu. This

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Table 1. Tenientes Mayores de Chinos in the Districts of Manila, 1890-1896				
<i>Districts</i>	<i>Jurisdictions</i>	<i>Tenientes mayores</i>		
		1890-1892	1892-1894	1894-1896
1	Intramuros	Don Joaquin Cembrano	Don Manuel Tanbunting	Don Juan Ycara Tan Tianco
2	Ermita, Malate, San Fernando de Dilao, Concepcion and the left side of the Pasig River up to the Muelle (dock) de Magallanes	Don Nicolas Rivero	Don Joaquin Sy Sioco	Don Ignacio Elizaga Co Tengco
3	San Miguel and Sampaloc	Don Francisco Co Aoco	Don Cayetano Chua Chioco	Don Apolonio B. Lim Jico
4	Quiapo	Don Alfonso Tan Baco	Don Jose Yu Coco	Don Jose Reyes Yu Joeco
5	Santa Cruz	Don Mariano Chua Uanco	Don Jose H. Cua Buco	Don Joaquin Cembrano Lim Chiu
6	Binondo – South	Don Apolonio Lim Jico	Don Manuel O. Uy Liengco	Don Calixto Lim Anpeng
7	Binondo – North	Don Juan P. Tan Cuevo	Don Trinidad J. Te Titco	Don Ambrocio Villaba Que Angsuay
8	Tondo	Don Manuel Yap Chioco	Don Enrique Sy Guatsia	Don Manuel Yap Chioco
9	Caloocan, Tambobong, Navotas, Tinajeros	Don Fulgencio Tan Tonco	Don Crisanto Suy Suoco	Don Guillermo Uy Tiongjuat
10	San Juan del Monte, Mariquina, San Mateo, Novaliches, Montalban	Don Federico V. Tan Quimpong	Don Florencio M. Lua Siengsi	Don Mariano Chia Soco
11	Santa Ana, San Felipe Nery, San Pedro Macati, Guadalupe, Pandacan	Don Pablo Ortega Dy Queco	Don Jose Uy Loeco	Don Federico Valera Chua Pungco
12	Pasig, Pateros, Taguig	Don Alejandro Carrillo	Don Tomas Go Cunco	Don Joaquin Chan Tiangsim
13	Paranaque, Malibay, Pineda, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa	Don Jose Ong Sico	Don Domingo Lim Paco	Don Jose Ong Sico

Sources: NAP *Chinos*, 1891, S 718; NAP *Chinos*, 1887-1888, S 418; NAP *Chinos*, 1893-1894, S 431-432.

aspect is important because from the standpoint of the colonial government, since the *tenientes mayores* were state agents, it was necessary that they had converted to the Christian faith, which demonstrated their loyalty to the Church and, by extension, to the government. Lastly, there were at least two *tenientes mayores* who held their positions in various districts of Manila at different periods. This suggests their residential mobility (i.e., the change of their residence from one place to another) in the city within the six-year period indicated above. For example, in 1890-1892, Don Joaquin Cembrano was the *teniente mayor de chinos* in District 1 (Intramuros), but in 1894-1896, he headed District 5 (Santa Cruz). Moreover, Don Apolonio Lim Jico was the head of District 6 (Binondo-South) in 1890-1892. He held the same position in 1894-1896, but now, in District 3 (San Miguel and Sampaloc).

But as “the Chinese had always found ways to evade the law” (AHN 1887a), the *tenientes mayores* were assisted by *alguaciles* (subalterns), especially in apprehending Chinese who at times blatantly resisted law enforcers (NAP *Chinos*, 1886-1889, S 1025-1027b). On May 22, 1888, Don Basilio Chanquijon, the *teniente mayor* of District 13, requested the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* to petition the government on their behalf (*tenientes mayores*) to carry revolvers when performing their duties (NAP *Chinos*, 1886-1889, S 481-481b). *Gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* Don Federico Gamir Co Sequieng forwarded the request to the Governor General (NAP *Chinos*, 1886-1889, S 477-S 479). While no record is available of the Governor General’s reply, it is apparent that the request was turned down. From the government’s standpoint, the *tenientes mayores*’ main function was administrative (AHN 1887b), hence, instead of arming them, they had to rely on their *alguaciles* for policing work. Prior to 1850, the *Gremio de Sangleyes*, urban administrative and social organization of the leading Chinese residents, in Manila already had an *alguacil mayor* (Buzeta 1850, 105). After the creation of the 13 districts, at least one *alguacil* was assigned to each of the *tenientes mayores*.

Tenientes Mayores de Chinos in the Provinces

Governor General Terrero's 1887 decree, which created the 13 districts of Manila and the office of the *teniente mayor de chinos*, was also applied to the provinces. Implicit in the decree, a province with a "considerable number" (i.e., at least 250) of tax-paying Chinese could elect a *teniente mayor de chinos* (NAP *Chinos*, 1869-1897, S 590-592b; AHN 1839). Despite its clear guidelines, however, the decree's implementation depended on the *alcalde mayor* (provincial head) who had the prerogative to conduct elections for a *teniente mayor* in his jurisdiction. Aside from the required number of Chinese in the province, the *alcalde mayor* could also consider their commanding role in the provincial economy. This meant that a *teniente mayor de chinos* could be elected if there was a significant number of resident Chinese businessmen (*comerciantes*) (compared, for instance, to the those from the laboring class) in the province. The earliest provinces to have *tenientes mayores de chinos* were Pampanga, Cavite, Pangasinan, Iloilo, and Cebu.²²

In addition, the *alcalde mayor* was also allowed by the central government to divide his province into districts, each to be headed by *tenientes de chinos*. In this context, the *teniente mayor de chinos* served as the overall head of the Chinese community in a province. The *teniente de chino* (note the omission of the "mayor" in the title), on the other hand, represented the Chinese population in his own district, which could cover more than one town. In this bureaucratic set up, the *alcalde mayor* was on top, followed by the *teniente mayor de chinos* and then the *teniente de chinos*. Depending on necessity (i.e., security and financial concerns) and the availability of funds for salary of personnel, each of these

²² For the Chinese population in these provinces before the 1880s, see "*Estado del numero*" (1865), 386.

officials had his own *alguaciles* (AHN 1887b). For example, four *alguaciles* could be elected to assist a *teniente mayor*. For example, in Cavite, for the term 1875-1877, under the administration of *Teniente Mayor* Luis Go Tingco were the *alguaciles* Ui Chinco, Chua Yngco, Go Queguian, and Di Jutco (NAP *Chinos*, 1875-1898, S 339; Wickberg 2000, 183).

To illustrate this further, let us take Iloilo province as an example, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. <i>Teniente Mayor de Chinos</i> and <i>Tenientes de Chinos</i> in Iloilo Province, 1887			
<i>Districts</i>	<i>Office Locations</i>	<i>Towns Covered</i>	<i>Names</i>
1	Iloilo	Iloilo, La Paz, Nagaba, Buenavista	<i>Teniente Primero of the Gremio</i> in Iloilo, Don Manuel Uy Tiepco
2	Molo	Molo, Mandurriao, San Miguel, Arevalo, Oton	Antonio Valderrama Go Liangco
3	Jaro	Jaro, Leganes, Pavia, Sta. Barbara, Lucena, Zarraga, Cabatuan, Maasin, Alimodian	Potenciano Sung Oco
4	Guimbal	Guimbal, Tigbauan, Cordoba, Leon, Tubungan, Igbaras, Miagao, San Joaquin	Uy Tuanco
5	Pototan	Pototan, Mina, Janiuay, Lambunao, Calinog, Passi, San Enrique, Duenas, Dingle, Barotac Viejo, Banate, Anilao, Barotac Nuevo, Dumangas	Quieng Joayco
6	Concepcion	Concepcion, San Dionisio, Ajuy, Sara, Lemery, Carles	Jao Chunco

Source: NAP *Chinos*, 1890, S 792-792b.

In compliance with the 1887 decree, the *alcalde mayor* of Iloilo allowed the election of a *teniente mayor de chinos* in the province which at that time had more than a thousand registered Chinese (NAP *Chinos*, 1890-1891, S 123-123b, S 766-766b, S 46; Diaz Arenas 1850, unreferenced; “*Estado del Numero*,” 1865, 386; *Los*

Chinos en Filipinas 1886, 102-103). Although not stated in the documents, it is possible that the election was conducted either in the provincial hall where the *alcalde mayor* held office or in the office of the provincial Chinese *gremio*. As in Manila, a Chinese *gremio* was similar to a “chamber of commerce” comprising all prominent and economically influential Chinese businessmen in the province. In the 1887 elections, Don Manuel Uy Tiepco was elected as the *teniente mayor de chinos*, also called *teniente primero*. He held his office in Iloilo City until 1889.

But since the Chinese population in Iloilo was too large to be administered by only one officer, the province was subsequently partitioned into six districts, each was supervised by a *teniente de chinos*. Every district covered several towns, between four and 14. The towns covered per district were dependent upon their geographical scope, proximity to one another, and total number of registered Chinese. Each district *teniente* had office in a particular town, supposedly, where this official resided. Based on their names, *teniente de chinos* in Iloilo were Fujianese despite the fact that there was also a Cantonese community in the province in the late-19th century.²³ It also appears, again based on their names, that these officials may not necessarily be Christians although it is possible that they have converted to Catholicism but decided not to include their Christian names in the available archival documents.

State Agents and Representatives of the Chinese Community

The main duties of *tenientes mayores de chinos* have been mentioned in passing in the foregoing sections. But it is important to discuss them in detail here. Available archival materials point

²³ For a discussion on Hokkien and Cantonese communities in Iloilo during the 19th century, see Randy Madrid's unpublished PhD dissertation, “Ang Mga Tsino” (2015).

to the fact that *tenientes mayores de chinos* were state agents. As such, they were tasked to ensure that the Chinese strictly observed relevant policies, particularly in consideration of the increasing number of “undesirable” Chinese from 1870 until the end of the Spanish regime. Reading these official records “between the lines,” however, also reveals that they also represented their own communities. There were some instances when they subtly and covertly protected the interests of their compatriots particularly those accused of committing petty offenses.

Collecting Taxes

Tenientes mayores de chinos were tasked to assist the government in the efficient and effective collection of taxes in their respective districts. Although *tenientes* did not possess the authority to directly collect taxes, they helped the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* in Manila, and the *alcaldes mayores* and *gobernadorcillos* (municipal heads) in the provinces to do this task (NAP *Chinos*, 1870-1898, S 406-459). This particular function was very important as the colonial state heavily relied on various financial exactions like taxes imposed upon the Chinese. Since the beginning of Spanish rule in the Philippines, the Chinese paid the highest taxes compared to other inhabitants of the colony.²⁴ Additional taxes were imposed upon the Chinese in the second half of the 19th century so, the government, with the help of *tenientes mayores de chinos*, had to work double time in collecting these financial contributions, which were too burdensome particularly for the laboring class Chinese. For example, the Chinese *cargador* Co Chico told the court in 1892, when he was arrested for being an *indocumentado* in Binondo: “With the kind of work I have, I could not even provide for my basic necessities.” How then could

²⁴ On the taxation system in colonial Philippines, see Plehn (1902), 125-148; Plehn (1901), 680-711.

the government realistically expect these laborers to faithfully pay their taxes? (NAP *Chinos*, 1891-1892, S 468-474).

It was the miserable condition of these down and out individuals that led some *tenientes mayores de chinos* to turn a blind eye or even connive with various members of the Chinese community to cover the fact that numerous “undesirable” Chinese existed in their areas. For instance, in 1895, the Provincial Treasury of Samar reported that some 150 Chinese laborers did not pay their taxes in the previous year and had gone missing. *Teniente mayor de chinos* Juan Reyes Uy Liangco ordered his *alguacil*, Tiu Quioco, to summon seven *cabecillas* (Chinese or Chinese mestizo employers) known in the province to employ Chinese laborers (NAP *Chinos*, 1873-1898, S 134). All these *cabecillas* told the *teniente mayor de chinos* that they had no knowledge of the whereabouts of the missing Chinese. The *teniente* then summoned Sy Ajian, a shoemaker who was acquainted with some members of the laboring class community in Catbalogan. The *teniente* asked him if he knew where the missing Chinese were hiding. Sy Ajian replied that he did not know; the only person on the list he recognized was Chiong Liongco. According to Sy, he met Chiong in Catbalogan in December 1894 (the time the list of the missing Chinese was compiled). Chiong told him without fear or favor that he was going back to Macao (NAP *Chinos*, 1873-1898, S 137-137b). The *teniente* asked Sy no further questions.

An examination of the testimonies provided by the *cabecillas* and Sy Ajian conveys the impression that the questioning was done not to locate the missing Chinese but because it was ordered by the Provincial Treasury. The role of the *teniente mayor de chinos* in the proceedings is noteworthy. He did not even propose any additional inquiries despite the provincial government’s knowledge of the *cabecillas’* role in the process of Chinese immigration and employment in Samar. After a *cabecilla* told the *teniente* that he did not know the whereabouts of any of the missing Chinese, the *teniente* simply moved on to question the next *cabecilla* without

any cross-examination to determine if the *cabecilla* was telling the truth, or ask him for any additional evidence to support his claims.

Monitoring, Reporting, and Arresting

Tenientes mayores de chinos were also tasked to monitor the movements and activities of the Chinese within their respective jurisdictions. These Chinese officials were expected to report to higher authorities and assist the police in arresting anyone who violated the law. An important factor towards fulfilling such duties was their possessing a copy of all registered Chinese in their areas. These registers were commonly issued to them by the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* in Manila or the provincial *alcaldes mayores*. This was especially true in Iloilo where the *teniente primero* possessed a list of all residents (*radicados*), newly arrived immigrants (*inmigrantes*), and transients (*transeuntes*) in the province. A copy of such list was also given to the *tenientes* in various districts in the province (NAP *Chinos*, 1890, S 792-792b).

In the late 1880s, besides the existing law enforcement agencies in the provinces (*Reglamento para la Organizacion* 1868, Ch. 7, Art. 2, 55) and Manila (*Reglamento para la Guardia Civil* 1872, Ch. 12, Art. 17, 30),²⁵ *tenientes mayores de chinos*, particularly in Manila, were also allowed to create auxiliary groups called “*comisionados de visitas de chinos*.” The creation of these groups depended on the Chinese population to be policed in an area and the financial capability of the province or district to pay their salaries. As their title implies, *comisionados* were specifically tasked to conduct house and shop inspections or “visit” such establishments to arrest “undesirable” Chinese. *Tenientes mayores* usually gave inspection orders to the *comisionados*, who in turn

²⁵ *Tenientes mayores* with orders from the *Tribunal de Sangleyes* also conducted house inspections. See NAP *Chinos*, 1781-1898, S 645-645b.

submitted a report to the *tenientes* regarding the inspections they had conducted. The *tenientes* then forwarded the reports to the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* and the Treasury Department (NAP *Chinos*, 1894-1897, S 520-520b).

Such tasks of the *tenientes mayores de chinos* can be further demonstrated when, as noted earlier, in May 1888, *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* Don Federico Cosequing, in behalf of the *tenientes mayores de chinos*, petitioned the governor of Manila to allow the *tenientes* to possess arms. According to the petition, the said weapons were necessary because *tenientes* responsible to police the Chinese, both residents and non-residents in their domains, had to protect themselves from uncooperative individuals (usually traveling Chinese with no travel permits) who resisted searches (NAP *Chinos*, 1886-1889, S 477-479). Some suspects became unruly and even resisted arrest, resulting to violent confrontations with the authorities (NAP *Chinos*, 1892-1893, S 420-422).

There were instances, however, where the *tenientes mayores* did not diligently fulfill their monitoring duties either because of incompetence or due to their desire to protect their lowly compatriots. For example, it was reported by the Provincial Treasury Department in April 1897 that three Chinese laborers in Ilocos Norte were missing. It was clear on the registers that the *chinos* – Chan Baoco, Chua Lianzan, and Tan Lunco – did not pay their taxes in the preceding year. As expected, the *teniente mayor de chinos*, Que Luco, had prior knowledge of the Chinese population in the province. This knowledge made him suspect that certain Chinese store owners in Laoag, the provincial capital, might have hidden the three fugitives. But despite his suspicion, Que Luco still did not conduct the inspection of Chinese shops and stalls himself. Rather, he requested the *alcalde mayor* and the *gobernadorcillos* to help him initiate manhunt operations in different areas of the province to determine the whereabouts of these Chinese (NAP *Chinos*, 1869-1897, S 437).

In another case, which occurred in November 1889, Ong

Tiongtoy was arrested in Gamu, Isabela for being an *indocumentado* (NAP *Chinos*, 1869-1897, S 81).²⁶ During his trial, it was revealed that he was originally registered in Piddig, Ilocos Norte. He confessed that he left Ilocos because he could not pay his tax debts (NAP *Chinos*, 1869-1897, S 895). Despite having neither a *cedula* (poll tax certificate) nor a travel permit, he claimed he still could get a job in Isabela as this was the same strategy his friends – Lo Caco, Que Tiongco, and Bong Achuy – had used. These individuals left Ilocos before paying their taxes and fled to Isabela in search of work (NAP *Chinos*, 1869-1897, S 814). Ong’s testimony highlighted the tendency of some *tenientes mayores* (i.e., Ilocos Norte and Isabela) to not properly fulfill their task of policing the movements of the Chinese within their domains. It also shows that some *cabecillas* in Isabela had the propensity to employ Chinese workers even if these laborers possessed no documents of identification (NAP *Chinos*, 1869-1897, S 812-818, 893-895; NAP *Chinos*, 1869-1897, S 81).

Prosecuting

Tenientes mayores de chinos also had the responsibility to help *alcaldes mayores* who had executive and judicial powers in prosecuting “undesirable” Chinese. During court proceedings, the *tenientes mayores* could certify on the character of the Chinese being tried or the person he worked for. For instance, he could personally testify in court or submit a written testimony which stated if the accused was registered in the provincial *padron*, regularly paid his financial obligations to the government, or had no past criminal record. *Tenientes mayores* could also be summoned to testify in behalf of the Chinese *principalia* in the province when the accused had worked for or was registered under a member

²⁶ Ong Tiongtoy’s case is found in NAP *Chinos*, 1869-1897, S 812-818, 893-895.

of the *principalia*. Finally, when the “crime” was validated and the “criminal,” as a form of punishment, was fined but had no money to pay for it, *tenientes mayores*, with the assistance from his *alguaciles*, were required to confiscate any movable property, if any, of the convicted individual. Such properties were commonly auctioned and the proceeds were used to pay for the convict’s tax debts.

However, despite the *tenientes mayores de chinos*’ role as state agents in the judicial process, they were still considered by some Chinese suspects as representatives of the Chinese community. Some suspects would withhold information when being interrogated in court, but they would immediately cooperate when the *teniente mayor* was around. For example, in April 1890, an undocumented day laborer was arrested in Taganaan, a town in north-eastern Surigao. During the investigation, the arrested individual only stated his name, “Tomas,” but was generally reluctant to fully cooperate with the *gobernadorcillo* of Taganaan and the *politico*-military governor of the district (NAP *Chinos*, 1890-1891, S 284). He only began to divulge additional information about himself when the *teniente mayor de chinos* of Surigao, Francisco Valverde, urged him to do so. Tomas confessed that his real name was Te Yco; that he used Tomas as his “Christian alias.”

The same was true in a case that happened in Cabagan Nuevo in Isabela in June 1892. During the proceedings conducted by the *alcalde mayor*, the defendant claimed his name was “Poa.” The *alcalde mayor* was aware that this could be a nickname (*apodo*) the Chinese used, so he urged Poa to reveal his “legal” name. His suspicion was confirmed by the records of the Provincial Treasury which had no registered Chinese with the name “Poa.” Poa, however, insisted that was his real name and refused to provide more information about his background. He only stated his real name, Tan Poaco, when the *teniente mayor de chinos* of the province encouraged him to do so. Due to the limited information the

alcalde mayor was able to gather, Tan Poaco's case was forwarded to the *Tribunal de Sangleyes* in Manila, presided over by the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes*.

Conclusion

With the goal of reintensifying its control over the colonized population, the Spanish colonial state in the Philippines had to reform the various components of its judicial system like its law enforcement capabilities. In particular, between 1870 and 1898, when the number of cases against “undesirable” Chinese was increasing, the government implemented stricter measures of control and surveillance upon the Chinese. Apart from the then existing police forces comprising Spanish, Filipino, and mestizo personnel, the state also created the office of the *teniente mayor de chinos*, first in Manila, and then in the provinces. The government believed the *tenientes mayores*' ethno-cultural identities and affiliations made them familiar of the socio-economic and political dynamics and networks within their own community. From the state's point of view, such knowledge was beneficial for the *tenientes mayores* to efficiently and effectively perform their tasks as state agents.

Although the *tenientes mayores de chinos* were located in a relatively low position in the overall colonial bureaucracy, they, nevertheless, played an important role in maintaining order and stability in the colony. As discussed, they served as mediators between the government and the Chinese within their jurisdictions, making sure that relevant policies were properly followed. Together with the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* (based in Manila), and their *tenientes* and *alguaciles*, the *tenientes mayores de chinos* were tasked to curtail criminal activities among their compatriots. Their roles covered a myriad of policing responsibilities, from tracking the movements and activities of the Chinese to arresting and prosecuting Chinese

“criminals.” Despite its generally negative view of the Chinese, the Spanish colonial state depended on the *tenientes mayores de chinos* and their subalterns to advance and maintain its colonial project in the Philippines.

How effective were these Chinese officials in enforcing the law may be an inquiry that is difficult to ascertain. This is because while they were, first and foremost, state agents, the *tenientes mayores de chinos* also represented and protected (albeit subtly) the interests of their compatriots. Some cases involving “undesirable” Chinese demonstrate how some *tenientes mayores* would turn a blind eye to protect these “criminals.” It is even possible that some of them connived with the leaders of provincial Chinese community in order to hide the wrongdoings. Their presence during court trials also made some Chinese suspects to feel at ease. Believing that the *tenientes* were “one of them,” suspects would begin to cooperate with court authorities. Arguably, what was legally required of the *tenientes* as part of the judicial apparatus may not be entirely true when we take into account how they actually performed their duties. As this paper emphasized, a nuanced interpretation of the colonial state’s policing activities in the 19th-century Philippines is absolutely important especially in relation to the social “undesirables” within the community which the Spaniards generally regarded as “necessary outsiders.”

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