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Peasant Violence in Early Nineteenth Century Philippines and Guatemala: The Cases of Apolinario de la Cruz and Rafael Carrera in Comparative Perspective

Byron Josue de Leon*

The Philippines and Guatemala belong to a common indigenous Hispanic cultural sphere defined by the presence of large numbers of pre-Hispanic populations and their transformation by the institutions and rule of a shared history within the Spanish Empire. In the first half of the nineteenth century both regions were undergoing analogous fiscal pressures and economic transformations toward capitalist modes of agricultural production. They were also being introduced to global markets: the Philippines under the tutelage of a colonial regime and Guatemala under an inexperienced and dysfunctional federation of states. The brunt of the economic changes fell mostly on the lower castes of their societies, indigenous peasants. During the 1830s and early 1840s, despite efforts by the authorities in the Philippines to modernize and universalize the management of tribute in the colony, the territory's fiscal system varied throughout the archipelago. By 1841, the year of the *cofradía*'s uprising in the province of Tayabas, tribute administration remained under the old corruption-plagued system led by *alcaldes mayores* and *gobernadorcillos*. These factors help to explain the background and motivations for the early nineteenth century peasant revolts led by Apolinario de la Cruz in the Philippines and Rafael Carrera in Guatemala.

Keywords: colonialism, peasant violence, Philippines, Guatemala, Apolinario de la Cruz, Catholic Church, state repression, *cofradía*

The study of peasant violence in the early nineteenth century requires an interregional comparative perspective. The Philippines and Mesoamerica make appropriate candidates for interregional comparison due to their relative similarities in socioeconomic composition, colonial history, and political importance within the Spanish-dominated territories. The aim of this research is to analyze the 1841 Cofradía de San José revolt led by Apolinario de la Cruz in the Philippines in comparative perspective with the peasant rebellion led by Rafael Carrera in Guatemala in 1837. The revolt led by Apolinario, a former lay brother

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in the San Juan de Dios Hospital in Manila, was ultimately put down by Spanish colonial authorities in November 1841; and the movement led by Carrera, a former army drummer and pig farmer, managed to defeat the Central American federal government in March 1840. However, this research's assumption is that both cases represented the reactions of countryside peasants unified under the banner of religion against state intrusiveness in peasant traditional life and the imposition of heavy tribute during a period of rapid economic change in both locations and beyond. The paper will first give a sociopolitical description of the backdrop to the two revolts. It will begin by discussing the issue of land property as established in colonial legislation, followed by a brief survey of the economic conditions in the first half of the nineteenth century in both locations, continuing with a description of the reforms made to tribute collection. A brief description of the independence of Central America will be given to provide the reader with the political context in which the peasant revolt occurred in the former Kingdom of Guatemala. Lastly, the topic of religion in both territories' revolts will be addressed. The research finds that peasant violence occurred in Guatemala when the state intervened in peasant life through the imposition of heavy tribute, forced labor, and/or confiscation of church and communal property—features in colonial and former colonial states adjusting to capitalist modes of production in the early nineteenth century—and suggests that similar forces were at play in the province of Tayabas (now Quezon Province) in the Philippines during the revolt of the *Cofradía de San José* and should be regarded as possible explanations for the 1841 peasant revolt in the Philippines.

The Imposition of Hispanic Modes of Property in Spain's Overseas Dominions

Spaniards brought novel Hispanic institutions into the newly discovered lands of the Americas and the Philippines; and, most important, they imposed these Hispanic institutions on the newly discovered peoples. The new Hispanic modes of property introduced the concept of individual ownership of land, an alien concept for indigenous peoples who had previously exploited land under the basis of *ejidos*, or communal ownership of land. This communal mode of land exploitation was standard not only among the peoples of Mesoamerica but also among all the indigenous peoples whom the Spanish encountered in their overseas expansion, both on the American continent and in the Philippines.

From the sixteenth century onward, there were already two types of individual agricultural property owners in the Kingdom of Guatemala: owners of small properties who worked in subsistence agriculture; and owners of large properties, better known as haciendas, which were geared toward commerce in agricultural surpluses either in

domestic markets or overseas. The owners of small properties were for the most part *ladinos*—people who were ethnically indigenous but culturally Hispanic or mixed-raced Spanish and indigenous (*mestizo*). *Ladinos* tended to have more pronounced indigenous than Spanish physical features. The haciendas were for the most part owned by Spaniards, *criollos*—Spaniards born in the colonies—or corporately by religious orders. The masses of indigenous people exploited their lands in the form of *ejidos*.

The majority of *ladino* settlements did not enjoy any legal support throughout the colonial period. Colonial authorities also resisted the founding of new *poblaciones* or towns that would have given these groups access to more land. Large property owners backed the authorities' resistance to the founding of new settlements and to the conferral of legal rights to these small owners (Solórzano 1984, 98). It was also common for peasants to settle within the boundaries of haciendas, whose owners accepted them due to the labor they provided on their property and the possibility of retaining some proportion of the goods produced by the peasants as a form of payment for the use of their land. In fact, there were many cases in which *poblaciones* and towns were founded within haciendas, as studies from El Salvador demonstrate (Solórzano 1984, 98), and which occurred in Guatemala as well, particularly on its southern coast. One example of the latter is the current municipality of Palin, which originated from a previous hacienda. It is likely that such developments were commonplace in the region. Due to these complexities it is hard to determine with precision which territories were actual haciendas and which were settlements of a conglomeration of small producers utilizing common lands. What can be said with more certainty is that the expansion of territories owned individually by either haciendas or small landowners was occurring at the expense of indigenous communal lands and was analogous to the demographic increase of non-indigenous groups.

Another important element to consider is that in those regions of the kingdom where the proportion of the non-indigenous population was higher, the income generated for the government's treasury from sales taxes (*alcabala*) was among the most important sources of revenue; this was the case in San Salvador in the last two years of the eighteenth century. Conversely, in areas where the proportion of the indigenous population was higher, the most important source of revenue was tribute; this was the case in Chiapas, now in southern part of Mexico, and most of Guatemala (Solórzano 1984, 109).

The Legal Basis of Property in the Indies: *Recopilación de leyes de Indias*

As in Mesoamerica, Hispanic institutions—among them individual ownership of land—

were to be imposed in the Philippines upon indigenous populations that for generations had possessed their lands communally. Through individual landownership, proprietors were able to exclude outsiders from seemingly freely available land. This state of affairs would be hard to understand by communities on the islands that were used to working the land communally. It was expected that there would be clashes between communities needing access to lands and property owners excluding them. Nicholas Cushner's (1973) research on Meysapan, an Augustinian property formerly located in Tondo, is a good case for studying the development of large state holdings in the Philippines that could have been replicated in other parts of the territory.

The origins of Meysapan can be traced to a sixteenth-century royal grant in favor of the Augustinians of San Pablo monastery, a holding that would increase in size through the acquisition of nearby land initially owned by both Spaniards and indigenous groups in a succession of transactions that would turn Meysapan into "one of the largest estates in seventeenth-century Philippines" (Cushner 1973, 34). Cushner states that the legal basis for the acquisition of property in the Philippines was the *Recopilación de leyes de Indias*, Book IV, Title XII, particularly Laws I, II, VII, IX, and XIX. The *principalía*, the native elite class of colonial Philippine society, seems to have benefited most when Hispanic modes of property were imported from overseas, a situation that allowed many in the group to gain individual ownership of village lands.¹⁾

In the *Recopilación*, it is established in Law I that:

It is our will that it may be given and be given houses, *solares*,²⁾ lands, *caballerías*,³⁾ and *peonías*,⁴⁾ to all those who settle in the new lands, that by the governor of the new settlement be indicated,

1) In his paper, Cushner refers to the newly introduced concept of individual landownership as private ownership, an understanding of property rights shared by James Lockhart. It is important for the reader to be aware that the *Recopilación* itself does not mention the concept of private property or ownership; it discusses property ownership in terms of the Spanish word *propio*, which carries connotations of individual, particular, and/or proper (but not private) possession of an object. *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana* (1791) defines *propio* as "What belongs to someone, with the right of using it freely to his will," while it defines *privado* as "What is executed by the view of few familiar and domestically, without formality" and "what is particular and personal of each," among a few other definitions not relevant here (DLC 1791, 696). When the *Recopilación* uses the word *privado*, it does so mostly as the past tense of *privar*, which is defined by the same dictionary as "to strip away, or remove something that was possessed" (DLC 1791, 682) and used in the description of penalties and punishments for individuals who transgressed the law. For instance, an *alcalde mayor* who bought silver illegally would be *privado* (removed) from his office (Tribunal Supremo de Justicia 1841, 142). This is not to challenge the validity of employing the term as Cushner does, but to clarify the use of the word in the context of the time studied. The link between *privado* and property would probably persist until the nineteenth century.

2) Small landed property where a house was built.

3) Large unit of land around 43 hectares.

4) Small unit of land around 4.46 hectares (Konetzke 1977, 40).

making distinction between esquire and pawn, and those of lower grade . . .

and particularly Law IV:

If in the already discovered areas of the Indies there are some sites and regions so good that it suits the formation of settlements, and some people are willing to settle and live in them . . . the viceroys and presidents give them in our name lands, *solares*, and waters . . . and be it for the duration, according to our will. (Tribunal Supremo de Justicia 1841, 119)⁵⁾

Thus, we can appreciate that land was a patrimony of the Spanish Crown, and the distribution of land was to be done by high-level colonial bureaucrats in the name of Spanish monarchs, who granted land to those who were deemed to have provided loyal service.

In the case of Meysapan, the large state managed to increase its holdings through donations by *principalia* owners who expected goods or services in return for their donation, such as the provision of livestock or yearly Masses by local priests. By donating land to the Augustinians, the previous owners of the lands were in fact circumventing the prohibition by the *Recopilación* against the selling of property to religious orders or any member of the clergy (*Recopilación* Book IV, Title XII, Law X). Cushner mentions the case of Julian Talo, a principal land speculator who purchased land from other Filipinos in 1624 and later sold that land to the Augustinians for 300 pesos (Cushner 1973, 36). How Talo was able to sell his land to the clergy is unexplained, but two years later he made another donation to the religious order. It was in such ways that the religious group expanded its territory. The means through which these *principales* acquired ownership of the lands they donated or sold is not clearly explained, but it is reasonable to expect that their access to members of the colonial bureaucracy must have aided them in the acquisition of previously common land.

The estate of Meysapan leased land mainly to local natives and also to some Spaniards, sometimes through contracts with specific obligations and time of validity. Work in the lands of the religious orders must have been attractive for natives in the surrounding areas since domestic service to the religious orders granted exemptions from tribute and personal services (Cushner 1973, 44). In this way, the necessary labor force was obtained for the exploitation of the land. Meysapan is a representative example of how large haciendas originated in the Philippines during the centuries of colonial rule by the Spanish. Cushner concludes by stating that the imposition of “the concept of private ownership of land, superimposed on the native population, had created oppressive

5) The original Spanish documents were translated into English by the author of this paper. All responsibility for any error of translation falls entirely on this author.

landholding patterns beneath whose weight the Filipino peasantry is still struggling” (Cushner 1973, 53). The patterns of landownership were diverse in different parts of the Philippines, as also in Mesoamerica. What can be said in a general way is that the large state was a feature of Spanish rule in all of its possessions and became the economic basis for land exploitation. In addition, it represented a source of friction with natives, particularly in territories with large native populations. The hacienda, an economic unit with a semi-governmental domain (Lockhart 1969, 425), would become the foundation on which nineteenth-century capitalism would be based, having at its core the governmental bureaucracy as the distributor and arbiter of patrimony.

The Economic Importance of *Estancos* in the Early Nineteenth Century

After Spain’s loss of possessions on the American continent, it became crucially important for Spanish colonial officials to achieve self-sufficiency in Manila. Commerce would be the way to achieve self-sufficiency, but due to the slow progress of commerce in the Philippines the colonial state became the main economic agent, capable of developing the market and the bases needed for the production and distribution of certain mass-consumed goods. It was on this basis that the state participated in the archipelago’s economy through an economic model based on *estancos* (government monopolies), which became the key existential link between the colony and metropole throughout the nineteenth-century Philippines (Fradera 1999, 28). The years 1820–1920 represent a period of radical change in the Philippines, due to the unstoppable progress of the Industrial Revolution and the high demand for agricultural goods produced on the Philippine islands, most important among them tobacco, abaca, coffee, and sugar (Larkin 1982, 612). These new products competed favorably in global markets and represented an important opportunity for Spain’s non-metal-producing colonies to acquire an economic significance previously not even imagined. For the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, it also meant a further century under the command of Spain (Álvarez 2004, 115).

The improvement of fiscal incomes in Philippine coffers would come mainly from sugar and tobacco, complemented by alcohol made from coconuts, among other products. Debates on the future of the Philippines within the Spanish world had been ongoing since Miguel López de Legazpi reached the islands in the sixteenth century. In 1782 José Basco y Vargas, in a political move aimed to improve the income for the military in the Philippines, established *estancos*, a significant novelty that would later become the key institution for the modernization of nineteenth-century Philippine economic life, and the sought-after financial solution to the bankruptcy and final independence of New Spain

(Fradera 2005, 48). The Philippine government's revenue from *estancos* in 1839 was around 67.5 percent of total revenue. The percentage would keep increasing over the years. The second-most important source of revenue was tribute, which represented 20.3 percent of the total in 1839 and 19.8 percent in 1852 (Fradera 2005).⁶⁾

This economic dependence on *estancos* and Indian tribute and labor was shared also in Mesoamerica and would constitute the main characteristics of nineteenth-century sociopolitical life in both regions. These two sources of income became indispensable for the Philippine government to try to keep itself economically afloat, especially since by 1834 and 1839 the territory remained economically strained and its trade balance and pension system in a clear deficit (AGI 1834; 1840b). The First Opium War (1839–42) also caused strains in the islands' commerce, with the arrival of boats reduced due to developments in China (AGI 1841). So dire was the economic situation that the Philippine Treasury was unable to completely honor payments due and was falling behind in its obligations. For instance, in 1840 the Philippine Treasury was ordered to make a payment of 247,000 pesos, of which only 84,250 pesos could be paid (AGI 1840a). Channels existed for the avoidance of forced Indian labor and tribute. One was military service, particularly in the Philippines; and another was membership of religious organizations such as *cofradías*, which conferred immunity from forced labor (Di Tella 1990, 24). Exemptions were possible also by working on lands possessed by religious orders, as mentioned earlier. The *alcalde mayor* was the highest local official in charge of the hacienda (treasury) of its jurisdiction, and the *gobernadorcillo* acted as the local agent responsible for the collection of tribute, proceeds from the sale of indulgences, and exemption fees from personal service obligations (Bankoff 1992, 681–682).

One of the most significant sources of revenue for the treasury of the Kingdom of Guatemala was the subsidies emanating from New Spain, a dependency that was also shared by the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, until economic depression forced New Spain to suspend financial aid in the second decade of the 1800s. The subsidies were meant to be invested in the modernization and military defense of these territories. For the kingdom's treasury, there were four main sources of income: the first was government monopolies or *estancos* of tobacco and *aguardiente* (liquor); the second was *alcabala* (sales tax) and *almojarifazgo* (trade taxes); the third was Indian tribute; and the fourth was the Church tithe. Of the four, *estancos* of tobacco and liquor represented the most important source of income by 1820, providing around 50 percent of the income

6) Before the establishment of *estancos* of tobacco, tribute was the most important source of government revenue in the Philippines. Its importance at the close of the eighteenth century was even higher if taking into consideration provincial records of tribute collection as opposed to the accounts registered in Manila (Álvarez 2004).

entering the treasury of the kingdom just before the final separation with Spain (Hawkins 2004, 41).

On the Bourbon Reforms, Reformation from Above

As the Spanish historian José Miranda González described, reformer heads of state—from Catherine the Great of Russia to Holy Roman Emperor of Austria Joseph II and Charles III of Spain—were heading a process of modernization sweeping Europe under the banner of enlightened despotism (cited in Commons 2003, 42). The gradual top-to-bottom process of reformation and modernization of Spain's metropolitan and colonial bureaucracies that began in the early eighteenth century under the new Bourbon Dynasty is known collectively as the Bourbon Reforms. For Spain and its colonies, the main aims of the reforms were uniformity and universality of the legal framework (a result of which was the *Recopilación*), a reorganization of administrative territories through intendancies, stimulation of the economy through enterprises that would increase the wealth of the kingdoms (the formation of *estancos* was a result of this impulse), among other measures in the realms of commerce and education. The Crown's goal with these series of measures was to regain authority lost to the lower hierarchies of the colonial bureaucracy and traditional groups of colonial society, an erosion of authority that accelerated in the economically depressed seventeenth century. In essence, the measures were designed to consolidate absolutism in the lands belonging to Spain (Arroyo 1989, 89).

Among the most important reforms was the introduction of the intendancy system. Intendants were responsible for collecting revenue (a duty that previously belonged to the *alcalde mayor*), finding means to increase revenue, supervising the lenders of land and preventing them from oppressing the people in their jurisdiction, granting payment delays to farmers when needed, among other administrative duties (Fisher 1928). Aimed at improving the collection of tribute and limiting the corruption of local officials, intendancy was introduced progressively across the Indies: in Havana in 1764, northern Mexico in 1768, Louisiana in 1775, Venezuela and Argentina in 1777, the Philippines in 1782 (where the system did not enjoy much success) (Fisher 1928, 8), Peru in 1784, and the Kingdom of Guatemala in 1786 (where five intendancies were set up). Although the initial plan was to create five intendancies in the Philippines—in the territories of Manila, Ilocos, Camarines, Iloilo, and Cebu (Commons 2003, 59)—only one was established, in Manila. It was removed after two years, making the income collection system in the Philippines inconsistent with developments on the American continent and also making tribute collection different among the Philippine provinces themselves, a characteristic

that would have implications for the events described later in this paper.

A possible reason behind the failure to implement the intendency system may have been disputes surrounding the competing jurisdictions between the new intendants, the previous structure of *alcaldes mayores*, and a network of officials from the Treasury Superintendency (Fradera 1999, 103). Despite the bureaucratic reformist zeal in the Americas in the final decades of the eighteenth century, the Philippines would see the continuation of power of the “*alcaldes mayores*, and *corregidores*, parish priests and curates, all of them structured over the mechanisms of control associated with the collection of indigenous tribute” (Fradera 1999, 105). Given that *alcaldes mayores* in the Philippines were to retain their tributary functions, let us examine the importance of their roles, the implications of their roles on the Philippine political system, and what the roles meant for Guatemala when these officers were in place.

***Alcaldes Mayores*, Tribute Collection, and Governmental Corruption**

Tribute was one of the main sources of revenue for the Manila authorities from the establishment of the captaincy in the sixteenth century until the final century of Spanish possession of the islands. Tribute was imposed on *indios*, *mestizos*, and Chinese according to a pyramidal structure: *indios* were taxed the least and Chinese the most—but Chinese were exempted from labor obligations—while the *mestizo* caste fell somewhere in between. This progressive tax structure was based on the castes’ varying capacities to produce wealth: the Chinese were the biggest producers of wealth and the indigenous peasants the smallest—although for Edgar Wickberg there might have been in the Spanish mind a correlation between economics and biology (Wickberg 1964, 64). Tribute (*capacitación*) and labor obligations (*polos y servicios*) were not required of the traditional *principalia* posts of *cabezas de barangay* and *gobernadorcillos*, including members of their immediate family, and those who were working the land in large haciendas belonging to religious orders. In the seventeenth century indigenous soldiers who had provided exemplary service to the state could also be exempted from *bandala* (forced purchase of agricultural goods) and *repartimiento* (forced labor) (Mawson 2016).

The collection of tribute depended on *alcaldes mayores*, *gobernadorcillos*, and *cabezas de barangay* alongside lesser-known but important lower clerical officials such as the *directorcillo*, who aided the *gobernadorcillo* in legal matters and tasks involving the Spanish language, an ability that most *gobernadorcillos* lacked, and the *fiscalillo*, the ecclesiastical counterpart who aided local priests in distant towns (Bankoff 1992). As in Mesoamerica before the introduction of the intendency system, the collection of tribute

was plagued with corruption; and the result was

much more than simply corruption. An entire commercial system based on government officials came into existence. The Spanish *corregidores* (magistrates), *alcaldes mayores*, and governors who ruled in the Kingdom of Guatemala in reality were entrepreneurs who organized a variety of business activities that affected the economic integration of the whole of Central America. (Patch 1994, 78)

Robert Patch reveals that the average salary of an *alcalde mayor* in eighteenth-century Western Guatemala was around 600 pesos a year, but corrupt practices could boost that income to 12,000 pesos (Patch 1994, 98). To put this amount in context, Eliodoro Robles notes that in the nineteenth century the captain and governor-general of the Philippines received an annual salary of 13,325 pesos and three grams of *oro común*, which combined amounted to 20,000 pesos (Robles 1969, 16); the official salary of the viceroy of New Spain was a similar amount. Geography mattered: it was in regions with high concentrations of indigenous populations that there was more opportunity for wealth accumulation by local officials. This system allowed the Crown to maintain a colonial bureaucracy at little cost, and presented local bureaucrats with commercial channels for personal enrichment, a system where corruption was “an integral and necessary part of the colonial system” (Patch 1994, 80). This same system was in operation in the Philippines. Cushner describes how local officials such as the *gobernadorcillo*, who “represented the central government on the village level, was reduced to practice fraud in order to support the ordinary running of village affairs” (quoted in Bankoff 1992, 682).

Reform of Tribute Collection in the Philippines

Josep Fradera in *Filipinas, la colonia más peculiar* (1999) gives a very detailed and clear description of the reforms that *alcaldes mayores* experienced in the Philippines. The *alcaldes mayores* were responsible for the collection of tribute. They depended on a network of local officials led by *gobernadorcillos* and *cabezas de barangay*, in a process that depended on tributary lists produced by local parishes. Tribute was required to be paid to the *alcalde mayor* and his network of subdelegates (*gobernadorcillos* and *cabezas de barangay*) in the form of produce, usually unhusked rice (*palay*), which was then transported and sold in local markets by the *alcalde* at a profit. This suggests that the amount of rice collected from peasants was inflated for the purpose of personal profit by the collectors. The system was rife with corruption, as mentioned above, and measures were taken to gradually reform it beginning in 1768, with limited success. The most important

modifications to the collection of tribute occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1826 tribute was required to be paid in metallic money in an attempt to curb the abuses of the *alcaldes* and *gobernadorcillos*. The gathered amount was to be placed in accounts belonging to the Philippine Treasury (previously it was deposited in provincial accounts), and in 1837 it was decreed that jurists should be named for the post of *alcalde mayor*.

In spite of all these measures, adoption was not uniform in all the territories. In 1837 a decree established that military officers were to be named *alcaldes mayores* in the provinces of “Caraga, Samar, Iloilo, Antique, Capiz, Albay, Camarines Sur and Tayabas” as well as the Marianas, Cavite, and Zamboanga, which already had military governments (Fradera 1999, 172). It would not be until 1844 that the *alcaldes* lost the privilege of carrying out commercial activities while holding office. By 1840 most provinces were collecting tribute in the form of metallic money, with the exception of Tayabas and Ilocos, which were still paying in commodities. A number of important circumstances coincided in 1841, the year that Apolinario’s brotherhood violence erupted: first, the group’s home province of Tayabas was still required to pay heavy tribute in the form of rice; second, the *alcalde mayor* in charge of tribute collection was a military officer; third, the *alcalde* still retained the right to commerce, which was a means for personal enrichment and a source of abuse against peasants; and fourth, Tayabas Province was still being run by *gobernadorcillos* even though the surrounding provinces were not.

Guatemala and the Preservation of Empire

The process of gaining independence in the Kingdom of Guatemala was quite different from developments in the seat of government in New Spain and in the Spanish colonies of South America. While Mexico and South America were involved in violent civil wars in 1810–21, the Kingdom of Guatemala—like Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines—remained stable and loyal to the absolutist Ferdinand VII, making the kingdom a case of preservation of empire (Hawkins 2004). Guatemala’s independence came about not through a violent independence struggle, but through the political instability caused by a military revolt in 1820 led by Rafael del Riego in Spain against Ferdinand VII, which forced the king to restore the contentious Constitution of 1812. The constitutional crisis in Spain led to Mexico’s decision to finally secede from Spain and form an independent Mexican Empire in 1821. Mexico encouraged the Kingdom of Guatemala to secede from Spain and join its new empire; at the same time, it dispatched military forces toward the Guatemalan border in order to exert pressure. Ultimately, Guatemalan representatives

agreed that the Guatemalan territory would join the Mexican Empire. Thus, the struggle for the independence of Central America from Spain was carried by Mexico, and was not a result of an internal project that aimed for the emancipation of the former kingdom (Acosta 2014, 17).

Mexico's experiment with independence, led by the military man Agustín de Iturbide, would be short-lived. The experiment began when the viceroy of New Spain sent Iturbide to defeat the rebels approaching the capital in 1821. After seeing the strength of the rebels, Iturbide signed a pact with the rebel leader, Vicente Guerrero, known as the Plan of the Three Guarantees.⁷ In it, New Spain declared its independence from Spain (first guarantee), established Catholicism as the state religion without tolerating any other (second guarantee), and declared the union between Americans and Europeans (third guarantee). The plan named, of all people, Ferdinand VII as emperor of the new political entity (Article 4), or in his absence any other prince from the Bourbon Dynasty (Mexican Government Documents 2019).

After the plan was rejected by Ferdinand VII, Iturbide was named emperor by the Mexican Congress in May 1822. By March 1823 Mexico was once again embroiled in a civil war, and Iturbide's short reign ended with his abdication. Central America convened a congress and in June 1823 declared its annexation with the Mexican Empire null and void. In this way the Central American region found itself surprised with independence for a second time, and once again without violence (Acosta 2014). This marked the beginning of the United Provinces of Central America, and this was the political backdrop against which Carrera's peasant uprising would make its appearance.

Peasant Revolts, Reactions from the Countryside

Both the revolt by the *Cofradía de San José* led by Apolinario in Tayabas Province in the Philippines and the movement led by Carrera in eastern Guatemala were peasant revolts that could be categorized as movements of the folk, of the masses, of those coming from the villages, of the laymen—or, using a term employed by Robert Redfield, revolts belonging to the little tradition (Redfield 1955; Sturtevant 1976; Iletto 1979).

Both uprisings—in 1841 in the Philippines, and in 1837 in Guatemala—were led by charismatic leaders from humble origins who had participated, however indirectly, in two of the most important political institutions of the nineteenth century, the Church and the military. These two institutions were for the most part the only channels in colonial

7) Widely known as the Plan de Iguala.

society (and postcolonial society in the case of Guatemala) that could provide some measure of upward social mobility to a small number of members of the lower castes.

Apolinario (or Hermano Pulé) was born in 1815 in Lucban, Tayabas Province. Encouraged by churchmen, he attempted to have a clerical career, but this was ultimately denied to him by the Spanish authorities. He worked as a *donado* or lay brother in the Hospital San Juan de Dios, in Manila, for six years until he was unexplainably fired in March 1840. The *ex-donado* along with other members of his community founded the Cofradía de San José in 1832 in his hometown of Lucban. The *cofradía* enjoyed great popularity and an increase in membership, which in 1840 numbered in the thousands. This success drew the suspicion of local authorities and led to a series of measures against the brotherhood. The brotherhood sought official recognition from secular and religious authorities numerous times, but each time it was denied. The authorities' responses were increasingly repressive, which led to an open revolt by the brotherhood on October 23, 1841. Despite its initial success in the revolt, the *cofradía* was suppressed by colonial authorities on October 31, 1841, and its leader, Apolinario, was executed a few days later.

Carrera was born in 1814 in what is today Guatemala City. Of mulatto, mestizo, and Spanish descent, he was described as possessing a physical complexion closest to an Indian's (Woodward 2008). Born into a humble family, Carrera enlisted in the federal army as a drummer when he was 12 years old. He rose through the ranks to attain the title of sergeant. After his time in the army he engaged in several odd occupations, from being a cochineal planter to finally becoming a pig farmer in the eastern town of Mataquesuintla in 1832. Motivated by members of the Church to fight against the government's liberal anti-clerical policies and the implementation of forced labor, he led the rebellion in 1837 that eventually saw the collapse of the government. He participated in the creation of a conservative government that he himself eventually oversaw.

The ages of both leaders are noteworthy: Apolinario was 27 years old at the time of his revolt (AHN 1842), while Carrera was 23 years old when he led his movement.

Causes of the Revolts, the Push for Capitalism

To understand the probable causes of the revolts led by Apolinario and Carrera, it is important to view the oppressive forces subjugating the respective communities. In the case of the Cofradía de San José, as mentioned earlier in the paper, the province of Tayabas was under different fiscal pressures from its neighboring provinces. The *cofradía's* province was one of only two territories where tribute was still being collected in the form of commodities (the other being Ilocos), the *alcalde mayor* had been recently

militarized, and countrywide the weight of tribute had been standardized to 12 reales⁸⁾ (Fradera 1999) (1 peso was equal to 8 reales). That means despite the efforts of the colonial authorities to modernize the tributary system in the Philippines, in the province of Tayabas the tributary structure in place was still the old corruption-plagued system dominated by *alcaldes mayores* and *gobernadorcillos*. This background may have influenced the likelihood of people joining the brotherhood and supporting it. It even seems that neighboring provinces did not have either *gobernadorcillos* or parish priests:

The authorities in Tayabas Province, and even those in the neighboring provinces of Laguna Batangas and Tondo, which did not have *gobernadorcillos* or parish priests—people who held so much influence among the natives—had not only remained loyal to the Supreme Government but even taken preemptive measures to defend the provincial capital and to capture Apolinario, dead or alive. (AHN 1842)

After independence from the Mexican Empire in 1823, the five states that previously made up the Kingdom of Guatemala formed a new independent nation called the United Provinces of Central America. The new Central American state became embroiled in a series of domestic political struggles involving the conservative and liberal parties. The conservative party was in favor of preserving the old institutions, privileges, and social leadership of the Catholic Church. The liberal party, inspired by political developments in the United States and the cultural influence of the British Empire, wanted to replace traditional Hispanic and indigenous institutions with those considered modern and civilizational, such as the privatization of means of production, separation of Church and state, and free trade. In the Guatemalan state, the political struggle between these two factions involved political intrigue and *coups d'état* that eventually led to open hostilities as early as 1826. By 1831 the liberals were in a strong position, having gained the presidency of the state of Guatemala and the presidency of the federal government, under which ambitious liberal reforms took place. The main targets of the reforms were the Church and *ejido* lands, with the confiscation and auctioning of religious and indigenous communal property. The Guatemalan government raised the head tax to two pesos, “an amount sufficient to harass the Guatemalan peasant of the 1830s who operated principally in a barter economy” (Woodward 2008, 49).⁹⁾ Infrastructure works depended on Indian labor, a population regarded by the upper classes as indolent. Exemption from labor obligations required payment of the daily low wage; this was not possible for most work-

8) For David Sweet (1970, 98), however, the amount of tribute was 3 pesos, which was equal to 24 reales.

9) Head tax was the same form of taxation as in the recent past colonial regime, that is, indigenous tribute.

ers, making this kind of labor a forced one (Woodward 2008). The government sought to develop the countryside by extending land grants to Europeans willing to settle there (Griffith 2012). Liberals viewed this series of land measures as modern and civilizational, but the peasantry was instead further infuriated by the actions. It was in the midst of this turmoil that in 1837 Carrera made his entry into the scene.

Similar developments were taking place in the Philippines in the 1830s, but at a much slower speed. It was in the first half of the century that colonial authorities were seeking ways to improve and modernize the economy in capitalistic terms. In 1839 the Philippine Treasury lamented over the territory's trade imbalance, regretting that despite the territory's many natural resources, its advantageous geographical location in Asia—close to the Chinese Empire—and its wealth in lands and people, it was underperforming. A treasury official viewed this economic malaise as originating from the inhabitants of the colony:

The causes of this malaise I already conveyed to His Majesty in the letter of January 28, No. 321. The main wealth of these islands is found in agriculture, and it finds itself being given to the tanned-skin caste of poor *indios*, who in every part of the world where they are found display apathy, sloth, and indifference to the comforts of life that are acquired through labor. This caste lacks capital and that active white caste that can guide them with the intelligence toward wealth and well-being. (AGI 1840b)

The official offered a solution for the economic difficulties of the islands: the protection of all foreign capitalists trying to establish themselves in the Philippines, particularly those that used their own capital and industry for the acquisition of land. From the same source, it is possible to see the 1834 request made by the president of the United States to the Spanish government for a royal permit for a businessman named Jonatan Willard Peel to establish himself in the Philippines to conduct commerce (AGI 1840b).¹⁰⁾

The Veneration of Saint Joseph: The Role of Religion in Peasant Violence

Various studies have made important contributions to the study of the Cofradía de San José, focusing on its religious aspects. Ikehata Setsuho used the activities of the Cofradía de San José as “a means of clarifying the nature of popular Catholicism in the Philippines

10) The source is significant because it clearly shows the racist attitude of Spanish officials toward the indigenous populations in 1840. It is important also because it shows the unfavorable economic conditions that the Philippines was perceived to be in compared with other foreign colonies, even Spain's own Cuba and Puerto Rico. To improve the economic performance of the islands, the Spanish official recommended capitalism and white immigration.

in the first half of the nineteenth century” (Ikehata 1990, 111). Reynaldo Ileto’s *Pasyon and Revolution* used the readings of the passion of the Christ (specifically the *Pasyon Pilapil*) as understood by the masses as a means of understanding how the traditional mind operates. According to him, Catholic traditions such as Holy Week “fundamentally shaped the style of peasant brotherhoods and uprisings during Spanish and early American colonial periods” (Ileto 1979, 11). On Apolinario’s uprising, Ileto notes:

The events that culminated in the bloody revolt of 1841 was [*sic*] not simply a blind reaction to oppressive forces in colonial society; it was a conscious act of realizing certain possibilities of existence that the members were made conscious of through reflection upon certain mysteries and signs. (Ileto 1979, 30)

Notwithstanding the enormous impact of *Pasyon and Revolution* on Philippine historiography since its publication in 1979, Ileto’s use of textual documents to understand the masses that revolted against their Spanish masters was convincingly put into question by Joseph Scalice, who argued that Ileto’s ambiguously termed masses did not experience the *Pasyon* in written form but through singing (*pabasa*) and dramatic acting performances (*sinakulo*), which both the elites and lower members of Tagalog society participated in (Scalice 2018). For Scalice, sources other than the *Pasyon* or the *awit* (Tagalog verse) are needed to begin to understand the consciousness of peasants, day laborers, and members of the working class who played a role in the Philippine Revolution:

We will not, however, learn from this reconstructed consciousness why the masses revolted to begin with. To address this latter question we must address the historical circumstances that shaped working-class and peasant consciousness and that made revolution an objective necessity for members of those groups. The Philippine Revolution emerged in the late nineteenth century from out of the dramatic transformations in the colony’s economic and political life. (Scalice 2018, 50)

For David Sturtevant, among others, the *Cofradía de San José*’s coalition of peasants and *principales* and its revolt confirmed Spanish fears by representing “the first coordinated religious rebellion in Philippine history” (Sturtevant 1976, 82). For Teodoro Agoncillo and Oscar Alfonso the motives behind the revolt led by Apolinario were also religious (Agoncillo and Alfonso 1960, 140), while for David Sweet the roots of the violence lay in a combination of discouraging the practice of traditional customs, combined with heavy taxes and labor, an increase in the economic importance of mestizos, and the “arbitrariness and a morality of the country clergy” (Sweet 1970, 114). When attempting to locate the factors that prompted the *cofradía*’s revolt, given what is discussed in this paper, Sweet’s argument seems to be the most reasonable. As Juan Carlos Solórzano and Douglass Sullivan-González succinctly describe in their works on Carrera’s peasant upris-

ing in Guatemala, indigenous and *ladino* peasants saw their economic, social, and religious institutions under threat from the modernizing forces being promoted by the state. For Apolinario's and Carrera's movements, religion became the unifying ideological motivation under which previously fragmented castes would join together as a community in defense of traditional peasant life (Solórzano 1987, 9; Sullivan-González 1998, 85). Thus, in the Philippines, the diverse members of Apolinario's movement became conscious of their common interests and under the ideological unifying banner of religion sought to defend themselves from the state's constraints and its intransigence toward freedom of assembly.

Likewise, in Guatemala a multiethnic and multi-class alliance formed; and a blend of "power politics and religion unique to Latin America in the 19th century" developed in Carrera's organized revolt (Sullivan-González 1998, 4). In both cases local priests played an important role as the most important nodes in local village networks, providing valuable moral support and guidance to the leaders while legitimizing the movements in the eyes of community members with their presence. Apolinario's adviser, Father Ciriaco de los Santos—who also managed the finances of the brotherhood as its treasurer—was the person through whom Apolinario met Don Domingo Rojas, a wealthy mestizo businessman. He counseled Apolinario to gain as many supporters as he could in order to force the authorities to approve the recognition of the *cofradía* or, if unsuccessful, to cut heads (*cortar cabezas*), in which case Apolinario and his friends were in danger (AHN 1842). This advice from Rojas probably made the tragic turn of events nearly unavoidable.

As in the case of the Cofradía de San José, members of the Church played key roles in Guatemala's peasant uprisings. The liberal government's anti-clerical policies forced many leading clergymen to live as exiles in Louisiana and Cuba and in the case of Father Mariano Durán led to death by firing squad. For Carrera, Father Francisco Aqueche played a very important role: not only was the latter the link through which Carrera would meet his wife, Petrona Carrera, daughter of a wealthy local man in Eastern Guatemala, but it was also he who convinced Carrera to accept the request by local peasants to lead them in revolt against the government. Carrera's forces managed to finally defeat their opponents, led by the president of the federation, Francisco Morazán, on March 19, 1840. The date was subsequently used not only to commemorate Carrera's important military victory but also as testament to the link between God's favor and the country, as the vicar general testified—for March 19 coincided with the festive day commemorating Saint Joseph (Sullivan-González 1998, 72).

The Regulatory Base of the *Cofradías*

The primary goal of Apolinario's brotherhood was to achieve official recognition for the Cofradía de San José. For this reason it is important to discuss the institution of *cofradías*. Apolinario and his followers believed that official recognition of the confraternity depended on the approval of either the ecclesiastical or secular authorities in the Philippines; they submitted applications at least four times to this end, meeting refusals every single time. The authorities at the Ministry of Justice in Madrid who in 1842 reviewed the confraternity's uprising the previous year (AHN 1842) advised the Audiencia of Manila to be vigilant of the governor's magistrates and the *alcaldes mayores* of all the provinces to enforce Law XXV, Title IV, Book I of the *Recopilación*, which regulates the establishment of *cofradías*. The law states that to

establish *cofradías*, juntas, colleges, or councils of Spaniards, *indios*, blacks, mulattos, or other people of any condition or quality, even if the things and ends were pious and spiritual, precedes our licence and authority from Ecclesiastical Prelate and having been made the ordinances and statutes, be presented to the Royal Council of the Indies, so that in it, it be observed and dispensed with what is suitable . . . and if it were approved or confirmed, may not gather nor council, without the presence of any of our royal ministers, that by viceroy, president, or governor be named. (Paredes 1681)¹¹

The regulation concerning the establishment of *cofradías* in the Spanish Indies was much more restrictive than the regulation governing the provision of land. Land was to be distributed by governors, presidents, and viceroys, while religious brotherhoods needed the direct approval of the king himself through the Council of the Indies.¹² This indicates how strongly the metropolitan authorities mistrusted autonomous religious groups as early as 1600, when the law was enacted. The mistrust of confraternities in Europe was widespread from medieval times: these pious organizations were seen as threats to both secular and ecclesiastical powers. The Church in Europe succeeded in bringing brotherhoods within its jurisdiction with the edicts of the Council of Trent (1545–63), while the state dealt with the threat posed by these organizations by suppressing them (Eisenbichler 2019, 1). In spite of the limitations imposed in the *Recopilación*, confraternities were widespread in the Spanish Indies: in the New Spanish capital, for instance, there were thousands of recognized confraternities by the eighteenth century and many

11) The law is titled "*Cofradías* may not be founded without license from the king, nor be gathered without the presence of magistrates and royal ministers."

12) The Council of the Indies was suppressed in 1836. During the time the brotherhood made its applications in 1840–41, the administration of the remaining colonies was the responsibility of the Overseas Government within the Secretary of State and Office of the Navy.

more unrecognized ones (MacLeod 2019, 281). By the last part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, secular and religious authorities in New Spain were targeting confraternities, particularly their funds, and trying to abolish them (MacLeod 2019, 284).

Confraternities were means through which indigenous communities could preserve some autonomy and pre-Hispanic traditions, celebrate feasts, provide funeral assistance, aid in Christian conversion, and promote general solidarity in their communities. They also provided social status to their members, provided extra income for priests, and conferred exemptions from forced labor (Di Tella 1990). Some *cofradías*' holdings were also designed for "evading the exactions of church and state" (MacLeod 2019, 302). For instance, on June 29, 1773, an earthquake struck the seat of government of the Kingdom of Guatemala. Due to the destruction, government officials decided to transfer the capital to a new location, where the current capital—Guatemala City—still stands. Such an enterprise required a large number of indigenous laborers and the forced migration of *indios* from the central valley of Guatemala. Many resisted these measures by migrating to other pueblos, fleeing into the mountains, or refusing to pay tribute. Some "joined religious *cofradías* to be exempt from all low class labor" (Pedro Pérez Valenzuela 1934, quoted in Jones 1940, 11).

Conclusion

The Philippines' nineteenth-century peasant violence should not be treated as a local spontaneous reaction unconnected with wider events in other parts of the former Spanish world and beyond. Peasant violence is a reaction against the state's economic and political intrusiveness in peasant community livelihoods and should be seen as an act of resistance in the defense of the traditional peasant economy, organization, and traditions. Apolinario's confraternity, although religious in nature, was victim to a centralized and militarized colonial state, traumatized by the loss of its American colonies and obsessed with discovering and destroying any hint of a political movement for independence or a movement that might be used by third parties with independentist aims¹³⁾ (AHN 1842). The case of the Cofradía de San José represents more than the mere suppression of a

13) After investigating and analyzing all the evidence surrounding the *cofradía*'s revolt, government officials in Madrid concluded that there was no plot or conspiracy by the members of the brotherhood against the authorities or to make the islands independent. Their efforts were focused on the establishment of the confraternity. Additionally, the officials revealed that the members involved in the violence had indicated that they would not pay tribute (AHN 1842).

religious brotherhood. Its importance is that it represented the emergence of a modern civil society organization in colonial Philippines, tragically suppressed by an arbitrary regime afraid of reliving the traumatic events that had led to the loss of the American colonies.

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