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ARTICLE

Flight and freedom: Chinese fugitives and the Spanish colonial state in the nineteenth-century Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the lives and circumstances of Chinese fugitives who were arrested and imprisoned for violating certain policies related to registration, taxation, and migration in nineteenth-century Philippines. Using previously unutilized archival source materials, this work explores the dynamic interactions between these outlaws and the Spanish colonial state set against the evolving colonial bureaucratic apparatus of the period as well as the increasing number and physical mobility of the Chinese within the islands. On the one hand, the paper probes the government's view on flight and its punitive actions against fugitives, the factors within the state apparatus that enabled escapes to occur, and the actors and processes involved in capturing runaways. On the other hand, it deals with the fugitives themselves by describing and analyzing their profiles, motivations, and the subtle means they used, including the geo-spatial factors and the socioeconomic networks within and beyond the Chinese community, which the authorities suspected to have aided their escape. An investigation into these themes highlights how Chinese offenders responded to the government's various forms of social control by fleeing from the authorities. This work argues that while the state considered fugitives as economic saboteurs, the fugitives themselves employed flight as a necessary and pragmatic means to evade the state's restrictive and exploitative policies.

KEYWORDS

Chinese, fugitives, flight, criminality, Philippine history

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Introduction

On 22 December 1856, the *alcalde mayor* (provincial head) of Pampanga, Francisco Rodriguez, reported that Sia Yengco, an 18-year old servant, was missing in the town of Angeles. Based on the provincial registers in Bacolor, Sia Yengco did not pay his *capitación* (head tax) for the entire year. Fully convinced that the Chinese had already left Pampanga and had gone into hiding somewhere else to escape his financial obligations to the state, Rodriguez sent requests to the *alcaldes mayores* of the neighboring provinces. In the first week of January, the *alcaldes mayores* of Manila, Zambales, Bataan, Nueva Ecija, and Pangasinan received his request to search for and arrest this *chino ausente* (absent Chinese) (Chinos 1856–1898, S 6–59). These *alcaldes mayores*, in turn, ordered the *gobernadorcillos* (town heads) within their respective jurisdictions to initiate rigorous manhunts. Together with other town officials and *cuadrilleros* (municipal police), the gobernadorcillos had to capture, by whatever means necessary, this Chinese described as a young, thin lad with "pockmarks from smallpox on his forehead and a large scar near his left eye" (Chinos 1856–1898, S 8).

The file about Sia Yengco's case is incomplete. Although all communications between the provincial and town officials are extant, comprising more than 50 pages in total, the result of the search is not available. Nevertheless, despite this limitation, this case is still considered an interesting one, because it illustrates how the state initiated meticulous bureaucratic measures and utilized considerable resources to find a single Chinese man who was not in his registered place of residence and who had not paid his taxes. These government actions highlighted how financially important each Chinese resident was to the colonial coffers, as they paid the highest taxes and other pecuniary exactions compared to other inhabitants in the colony. This rent-seeking view of the state is understandable given that such individual cases, when taken collectively, could render a fatal blow to the colony's financial stability. The state, therefore, had to capture Sia Yengco because from the standpoint of the government—to paraphrase the nineteenth-century Spanish journalist Rafael de Comenge—"an absent Chinese is a useless Chinese" (Comenge 1894, 367).

This paper examines the collective experience of Chinese fugitives arrested in nineteenth-century Philippines for violating certain policies related to registration, taxation, and migration. It explores the dynamic interactions between these outlaws and the Spanish colonial state set against the background of the evolving bureaucratic apparatus of the period as well as the increasing population and physical mobility of the Chinese in the colony. On the one hand, this work probes the state's view on flight and its punitive measures against fugitives, the factors within the state apparatus that enabled escapes to occur, and the actors and processes involved in capturing runaways. On the other hand, it also deals with the fugitives themselves: their profiles and possible motivations for escaping as well as the processes, geo-spatial factors, and socioeconomic networks within and beyond

the Chinese community, which the authorities suspected to have aided their escape. This historical inquiry is geared towards a more nuanced understanding of the lives of the working-class Chinese, colonial administration, and crime as well as the state of criminality in the colonial Philippines.

The primary sources used for this paper were the 148 *Chinos* bundles at the National Archives of the Philippines (NAP) in Manila. Although various NAP document series were also consulted, only these bundles contained materials related to "undesirable" and "criminal" Chinese, including police reports, criminal dossiers, arrest orders, court proceedings, prison records, and deportation orders. From these documents, I was able to compile 5,145 cases involving such offenders from 1831–1898. Of this number, 417 cases were about Chinese fugitives. It is important to note that these are official records produced by people in authority, written from their perspective and intended for their use. Yet, despite their official standpoint and limitations, these materials also contain important tangential information, which can open a window into the lives and circumstances of some Chinese fugitives. Reading between the lines of the text or "against the grain" of the documents reveals certain details that are often important although incidental to the main purpose of the document containing them (see Black and MacRalid 1997; Sharpe 1991). In addition, there were also cases in some documents, such as court proceedings, where individuals on trial (i.e., arrested fugitives) explicitly stated their personal background and the reasons why they evaded and hid from the authorities. An examination of these materials provides important information deemed necessary for a reconstruction of a collective biography of these unfortunate individuals, who remain inarticulate, obscure, and nameless in the historical narrative that tends to focus on the more affluent and influential segment of the Chinese population (see Chu 2010, 2012; Wilson 2004).

Flight and freedom

Throughout history, flight has been one of the common man's most frequent and effective responses to oppression (Moore 1978). James Scott (1985) considers it one of the key "weapons of the weak" utilized by "subordinate classes [which] have rarely been afforded the luxury of open, organized, political activity" (xv–vi). As a passive form of resistance, flight was practiced by subaltern and marginalized groups in various areas of the world at different periods in the past (see Heuman 1986; Price 1996). In the Philippines, since the sixteenth century, one of the Filipinos' main responses to colonization was to withdraw to the mountains in order to retain their freedom from Spanish military and religious incursions (Phelan 1967).[1] The Igorots of Northern Luzon, for example, maintained their culture and traditions by launching armed resistance and by retreating to the inaccessible areas of the Cordilleras (Phelan 1967; Scott, W.H. 1974). The "unconquered" Lumads of Mindanao also employed the same strategy (see Paredes 2017). This phenomenon of flight continued well into the nineteenth century. Aside from apprehending

criminals, newly established police forces were tasked to maintain order by arresting certain "dangerous classes." These classes included individuals and groups invariably called *tulisanes* and *remontados* (bandits), *cimmarones* (maroons), and *ladrones monteses* (mountain robbers), who lived beyond the limits of Spanish civil and religious administrative control as well as undocumented vagrants and other social outcasts that "plagued" the towns (Bankoff 1996; Gealogo 1994; Medina 1984; Millan y Villanueva 1897).

In nineteenth-century Philippines, an individual who escaped from Spanish authorities was considered to have committed the "crime" of *fuga,* i.e., the act of flight or escape (Bankoff 1996; Perez Rubio 1887).[2] Similar to the related "crime" of vagrancy, *fuga* fell under the general heading of a crime against the state (Bankoff 1996). Generally, fugitives—commonly referred to in archival documents as *fugitivos*, *fugantes*, and *fugados*—can be classified into two: those who ran away from the authorities to avoid paying taxes and other economic, military, and religious impositions (Bankoff 1996; Cushner 1971), and those who escaped from prison (Perez Rubio 1887). According to Greg Bankoff (1996), between 1865 and 1885, 979 individuals were prosecuted for the "crime" of flight. Mainly due to the nature of the source materials he used, Bankoff did not specify the racial dimension of his data. His statement, however, that "flight…was a form of resistance that *indigenous men and women* resorted to…" (italics supplied) conveyed the impression that his focus was primarily on Filipino fugitives (1996, 75). However, as racism, in addition to paternalism, permeated the legal codes in the Philippines at that time (1996), an investigation into the lives and circumstances of Chinese fugitives (*chinos fugados*) is both relevant and necessary. This historiographical lacuna can now be filled by examining some cases from archival materials related to these 'non-indigenous' outlaws.

"*They evade the law*": Chinese fugitives and the Spanish colonial state

The nineteenth century was a period of change for the Chinese in the Philippines, as the opening of the colony to international trade brought to them new economic opportunities. Chinese merchants, artisans, and laborers all played an important role in the development of the economy, which was primarily based on the production and exportation of agricultural crops (Wickberg 2000). Although the state continued to encourage the Chinese to engage in agricultural ventures, they were also allowed—without restrictions—to take up occupations that best suited them beginning in 1839. Chinese immigration was also liberalized, and they were now permitted to go and reside in the provinces (Sobre el empadronamiento 1839; La admision de Chinos 1849). Such favorable conditions in the Philippines contributed to the increase in Chinese population from approximately 5,000 in 1815 and 9,334 in 1850 to 42,814 in 1881 and 44,900 in 1890 (Chinos 1890–1891, S 123–b; Chinos 1891–1892, S 766–b; Diaz 1850). Many of them, especially those

belonging to the merchant class, were able to climb the socioeconomic ladder and became influential not only within their community but in the broader colonized society (Chu 2010, 2012; Wilson 2004).

Owing to the growing number of the Chinese, their dominance in the colonial economy and their presence in many parts of the islands, the Spanish colonial government imposed various policies related to registration, immigration, and taxation aimed at policing and controlling their activities. For example, all Chinese were required to register in the *padron* (census and tax registers) from the municipal to the national levels of government. They had to possess documents of identification, such as the passports, *cedulas* (poll tax certificates), travel licenses, and residence permits (Sobre el empadronamiento 1839; La admision de Chinos 1849). As they were generally considered economically capable, the Chinese had to pay the highest taxes compared to Filipinos and Chinese mestizos (Wickberg 2000).[3]

However, notably, collecting taxes from them was a challenging task for the government. For instance, in February 1887, Segundo G. Luna, an official of the *Real Hacienda* (National Treasury), complained to Gov. Gen. Emilio Terrero about the treasury's difficulty in collecting taxes from the Chinese, especially in Manila where the majority of the immigrants lived. Luna argued that the government could not expect to collect regular funds from Chinese taxpayers unless bureaucratic changes related to the supervision of the Chinese population and tax collection system were undertaken. The city, he proposed, had to be divided into districts, each to be headed by a *teniente de chinos* (Chinese lieutenants). The *teniente* would be responsible in overseeing and monitoring all Chinese in his district and to efficiently collect taxes. This initiative, he further claimed, would address the state's perennial problem regarding those Chinese who evaded the law by escaping from the authorities. Mostly undocumented (*indocumentado*), they were often "absent" (*ausente*) from their registered places of residence and were "hiding" (*ocultos*) (de Luna 1887).[4]

This subtle yet effective practice of economic sabotage amongst the laboring classes was not new. In 1831, one of the earliest cases concerning Chinese fugitives was recorded. In that year, after the first *padron general de chinos* (Chinese tax and census register) was completed, 1,083 Chinese from Tondo who were incapable of paying the recently established taxes had fled to the mountains (Buzeta and Bravo 1850). Despite the state's policies of segregating Filipinos and Chinese and the occasional inamicable socioeconomic relations that occurred between them, interactions between these two communal groups persisted (Wickberg 2000). Hence, some *naturales* (i.e., Filipinos) living in the mountains located in the eastern portion of the province "provided shelter and protection" to these Chinese fugitives on account of these runaways' "misfortune and misery" (Buzeta and Bravo 1850, 136). Some of these Chinese fugitives, however, were eventually arrested and imprisoned in the *presidio de Manila* (military fortress of Manila or the Fort Santiago) for at least two years (Chinos 1832–1842, S 5–6b).[5]

Apart from these outlaws, there were also numerous cases made against absent, hiding, and fugitive Chinese found in the *Chinos* bundles of the NAP in Manila. In these bundles, I found 417 cases of arrests or arrest orders in various parts of the Philippines between 1832 and 1897. From the information in this data set, the earliest fugitive, recorded in 1832, was Chu Chadco. Belonging to the 4th class tax (lowest tax category before 1889), he was arrested in Gapan, Pampanga[6] for contraband trade (Chinos 1832–1893, S 164–b).[7] Although not specifically mentioned in the documents, it was likely that Chu was illicitly trading tobacco, as Gapan was part of an important tobacco *colección*[8] in Central Luzon since the late eighteenth century (de Jesus 1980). By 1830, the Cagayan colección had already surpassed that of Gapan in both quantity and quality of tobacco collected (1980). Nevertheless, Gapan continued to be an important colección attracting not only Chinese businessmen but also farmers, farm laborers and small-scale entrepreneurs.[9]

After his arrest, Chu, who also had no permit to travel to Pampanga (thus, an *indocumentado*) was brought to Tondo to be prosecuted. During the investigation, authorities found that Tondo's Treasury Office, since 1831, had been pursuing Chu as a *fugado* (escaped). Based on his records, he was registered in the *padron de chinos* of Tondo (Padron no. 4135) but had not paid his *capitación personál* for the last two years. In spite of his small-time smuggling activity—which suggested he had capital to conduct business—Chu claimed to possess no means to pay his tax debts and the corresponding fine of 30 pesos for being absent from the capital (i.e., Tondo). He was consequently sentenced to hard labor as a galley slave at the *Real Galera de Manila* (Royal Galley of Manila) (Chinos 1832–1893, S 165).

The final case I discovered in the *Chinos* bundles was recorded in 1897. On 27 July 1897, Antonio Nadal, the Administrator of the Treasury Department of Mindoro requested the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes*[10] in Manila, the highest representative of the Chinese community in the Philippines at the time, to assist his office in finding Lao Chuco, a Chinese belonging to the 6th class tax (lowest tax category beginning in 1889), who did not pay his capitación personál of 2 *tercios*.[11] According to Nadal, Lao was last seen in December 1896, working in Calapan, the capital of the island where the "absent" Chinese was registered. The administrator suspected that the debtor might have gone to Manila to look for more stable work. This suspicion helped explain why he sent his letter to the *gobernadorcillo*. However, due to the unstable political and military situation in Manila and its surrounding areas resulting from the outbreak of the Revolution in August 1896, the *gobernadorcillo* was not convinced that Lao really went to Manila (Chinos 1857–1898, S 584–586). Whilst it was possible that he sought refuge in Manila, it was also likely that he was still in Mindoro, hiding from provincial authorities. Lao's incomplete file, however, made it difficult to ascertain the outcome of events surrounding his case.

In terms of the general types of fugitives previously noted, Chinese fugitives like Chu Chadco and Lao Chuco could also be classified into two. The first type was

composed of those who fled from the authorities to avoid arrest after committing "minor" offenses. As shown in Table 1, of the 418 cases of *chinos fugados*, 360 (86.12 per cent) belonged to this type of fugitives. In the archival materials, this particular group of offenders were commonly described as "absent" or "hiding," which meant they were not residing in their registered places of residence as recorded in the provincial *padrones de chinos*, or they had run away and hid from the authorities. When arrested, these *fugados* had to pay their tax arrears and the corresponding fines. However, if the individual had no resources, he would be imprisoned for a maximum of six months, depending on the amount of the unpaid taxes (Chinos 1832–1893, S 164b).

Table 1: Numbers and types of Chinese fugitives, 1832–1897

Year	Number of cases	Types of fugitives	
		"Absent"/"Hiding"	Escaped from prison
1832	1		1
1838	2		2
1840	2		2
1856	26	26	
1863	1	1	
1866	2		2
1867	2		2
1869	10		10
1870	9		9
1873	2		2
1877	1		1
1879	4		4
1880	2		2
1882	55	44	11
1883	1	1	
1886	4	3	1
1888	1		1
1889	1	1	
1890	14	14	
1891	4	4	
1892	3	2	1
1893	1	1	1
1894	165	165	
1895	3	2	1
1896	88	84	4
1897	13	12	1
Total	417	360 (86.12 %)	58 (13.87 %)

Sources: National Archives of the Philippines (NAP), *Chinos* (various bundles).

The data set for these absent and hiding Chinese is based primarily on two sources. The first source is the "search and capture" (*busca y captura*) orders issued by the Provincial Treasury Departments or the *alcalde mayor* to *gobernadorcillos* under the jurisdiction of a province. Moreover, as noted earlier in Sia Yengco's case, there were occasions when these orders were also sent to the *alcaldes mayores* of neighbouring provinces where the fugitives were suspected to be hiding. In the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in the 1880s and 1890s, officials and agencies who requested the arrest of an absent or hiding Chinese were also required to fill out an official form called *Motivo de la Captura* (literally, *Reason for the Capture*). The *Motivo* contained information about the missing person, including his personal details (*señas personales*), such as name, origin, residence, age, civil status, profession, and religion, if any, as well as his physical attributes, which included height, color of hair, eyes, and distinct physical marks (*señas particulares*).

Another important source of information regarding absent and missing Chinese is the annual reports submitted by Provincial Treasury Departments to the National Treasury. These reports contained information about the amount of tax collected for the year as well as the names of Chinese who could not be located, hence, from whom no taxes were collected. Unlike the fugitives in Bankoff's data, who were arrested and prosecuted (1996), most of these Chinese were not arrested. When the authorities were convinced of the impossibility of locating these missing individuals, the Treasury Departments, both at the provincial and national levels, omitted their names from the *padron general* and *provincial padron de chinos*.

The second type of Chinese fugitives (58 cases or 13.87 per cent of the total data in Table 1) comprised those who escaped from prison or from the guards tasked to monitor them whilst working on public projects outside the prison compound. These fugitives were eventually recaptured either on the same day they escaped or within a short period of time, which was oftentimes less than a week. These recaptured fugitives were tried[12] and sent back to prison to serve terms that were longer than the original sentence meted out to them, which depended on the offenses they committed. The data for this type of fugados were derived mainly from three sources: 1) reports of the police forces (e.g., Commandant of the *Guardia Civil Veterana* or the urban police of Manila) to the Chief Warden of Bilibid Prison informing him about how the prisoners managed to escape and the possible whereabouts of these offenders; 2) reports of the Bilibid's Chief Warden to the Civil Governor of Manila and the National Treasury; and finally, 3) reports from various courts that tried the recaptured fugitives.

Based on the data set, these Chinese fugitives were unmarried men (*soltero*) who belonged to the laboring classes (*clase obrera*). As the archival materials provide limited information, it is quite difficult to determine their recruitment from China and the entities involved in the process. Similar to other Chinese laborers, especially during the second half of the nineteenth century, they may have possibly

arrived in the Philippines through the assistance of well-established Chinese and Chinese mestizo businessmen in the colony. Only 16 or 3.8 per cent individuals declared they were Christians (*cristianos*) whilst the rest (401 or 96.2 per cent) were *infieles* (literally, infidels) or non-Christians. The majority (414 or 99.3 per cent) were Hokkien Chinese. Only three (0.7 per cent) identified themselves as *macanistas*, i.e., coming from Macau, hence, Cantonese. The Hokkien came from various areas in Fujian Province, such as Chincan, Lamua, Leonque, and Amoy.

In terms of geographical scope, the cases of Chinese fugitives were recorded in 18 provinces. As shown in Table 2, many of these cases occurred outside Manila: only 39 cases (9.35 per cent) happened in Manila, and 377 cases (90.65 per cent) were recorded in 17 other provinces. After 1850, although Manila still had the highest concentration of Chinese in the Philippines, they had already begun travelling to and residing in many other areas of the colony. These Chinese were lured by the economic opportunities in these provinces.

Table 2: Provinces where cases of *Chinos fugados* were recorded, 1832–1897

Province	Number	Percentage
Abra	4	0.96
Bataan	8	1.92
Capiz	2	0.48
Cavite	55	13.19
Cebu	1	0.24
Cotabato	5	1.19
Ilocos Norte	6	1.44
Leyte	1	0.24
Manila	39	9.35
Masbate	1	0.24
Mindoro	15	3.59
Negros	1	0.24
Nueva Ecija	26	6.23
Pampanga	87	20.88
Samar	153	36.69
Surigao	2	0.48
Tarlac	8	1.92
Tayabas	3	0.72
Total	417	100

Sources: National Archives of the Philippines (NAP), *Chinos* (various bundles).

The highest number (153), recorded in 1894 (150) and 1895 (3) came from the "backwater province" of Samar, the archipelago's third largest island and the easternmost one in the Visayas.[13] The 150 cases of absent Chinese in 1894, in particular, were reported missing in the towns where they originally registered.

The Treasury Department of Samar claimed these Chinese did not pay their taxes and other financial obligations (Chinos 1873–1898, S 5–7), including the additional provincial tax (*impuesto provincial* established in 1883 and collected quarterly) (Chinos 1886–1887, unpaginated). These laboring class Chinese who belonged to the lowest class tax bracket, worked as dock laborers but mostly as farm hands on abaca plantations that developed on the island after 1860 (Cruikshank 1982 and 1985).

The other provinces that recorded the highest number of absent and fugitive Chinese were those that were geographically close to Manila: Pampanga (87 or 20.88 per cent), Cavite (55 or 13.19 per cent), and Nueva Ecija (26 or 6.23 per cent). The vibrant economic activities in these areas, mainly caused by the production and circulations of cash crops, attracted Chinese businessmen and laborers. On the one hand, the cultivation of sugarcane in Pampanga, for example, was a pull factor for Chinese from Manila, luring them to work and conduct trade there.[14] The 55 missing Chinese in various towns in Cavite reported in 1882, on the other hand, all belonged to the 6th class tax category. These *fugados* did not pay their taxes and other financial obligations for that year, and the authorities had no knowledge whatsoever where they were hiding. After more than six months of fruitless searching, however, on 1 July 1883, the Treasury Department of Cavite reported that 11 of them had been arrested. In the report, the letter "*p*" was written after the name of each of the captured fugitives, signifying that they had paid (*pagado*) their tax debts (Chinos 1869–1897, S 47–b). It was not clear though how they had made their payments, as there were at least three ways to do it: 1) outright payment by the debtor himself, 2) imprisonment and working on public projects and 3) finding a guarantor (*fiador*) who paid on their behalf. The last two means were the most plausible as the first required the captured Chinese to have been employed to accumulate the amount necessary to pay their debts.

The 26 Chinese in Umingan, Nueva Ecija—reported missing in 1856—were laborers employed to cultivate tobacco on *Hacienda El Porvenir* (Chinos 1856–1897, S 262). This hacienda was a large estate that encompassed parts of north-western Nueva Ecija and south-eastern Pangasinan. It was owned by the Lichaucos, a Chinese mestizo family (Doeppers 2016; McLennan 1969). As with other haciendas in Central Luzon during the nineteenth century, the lack of a reliable labor supply was a perennial concern at the *El Porvenir* (McLennan 1969). Although Filipino laborers were hired, they frequently "disappeared" after getting their advance payment from the *hacienderos* (owners of *haciendas*) (see del Pan 1878). It was against this background that Chinese laborers were employed on the *hacienda* as cattle ranchers[15] and farm hands. Spanish and Chinese mestizo *hacienderos* preferred Chinese laborers because of their positive work ethic (Chinos 1856–1897, S 283–4b). In this particular case, however, these 26 missing Chinese *agricultores* (agriculturists) had not paid their *capitación personál* from the middle of 1855 up to November 1856 (Chinos 1856–1897, S 281–b). The Provincial

Treasury Department sent search and capture orders to all towns as well as to the neighboring province of Bulacan where these *fugados* could have fled to (Chinos 1856–1897, S 263, 268, 272). However, the *gobernadorcillos* and the *alcalde mayor* of Bulacan reported that they were unable to locate them (Chinos 1856–1897, S 264–6b). Similarly, the *hacienderos* of the province also submitted negative reports on the whereabouts of these fugitive Chinese (Chinos 1856–1897, S 283).

Motivations and factors that enabled escapes

On 26 July 1838, 74 Chinese who belonged to the 4th class tax group were arrested by police forces in Manila for not paying their taxes and for being undocumented. One of them was Go Yco, who was registered in the provincial *padrón de chinos* in 1837. In his testimony given before the *Corregidor* of Tondo Province, Go Yco stated that he escaped to evade government pressure to pay his taxes for one and a half years. After temporary incarceration in the Tondo prison, he was sent to the *presidio de Manila* to labor in the foundries (Chinos 1837–1849, S 82). Over half a century later, in June 1892, Tan Jaco, a Chinese laborer in Cebu stated that he also had no resources to pay his taxes. To evade the authorities, he hid, together with some of his compatriots, in a house that served as their hide out. Unfortunately for them, members of the *Guardia Civil* (the rural police force), eventually located and arrested them. Tan Jaco and his fellow debtors were sent to Manila, imprisoned in Bilibid for several months, and were subsequently expelled to China (Chinos 1863–1898, S 863).

Evidently, as seen from Go Yco's and Tan Jaco's cases, as well as the various other cases of Chinese fugitives mentioned above, one of the main reasons why so many laboring class Chinese fled from the authorities was to evade the state's financial impositions. For these poverty-stricken individuals, such exactions were far too burdensome, especially given the precarious economic atmosphere of the Philippines in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Aside from these financial levies, since 1867, all able-bodied male Chinese aged 16–60 years old were also required to render 40 days of forced labor (*polo y servicio*) to the government annually (Chinos 1878–1898, S 970; Chinos 1885–1898, S 676–76b; Rodriguez San Pedro 1867b, 705). In 1883, however, the number of days was reduced to 15 (Chinos 1837–1898, S 325–36b). Most Chinese paid the *falla*, a certain amount to be exempted from the *polo* system. However, there were some, who, due to scarce financial resources, could not pay the *falla* and thus had no choice but to work for the state, albeit, on some occasions, against their will.

The tendency of some Chinese *polistas* (forced laborers) to escape whilst working under this corvée system is illustrated by one particular case. In October 1884, a few months after the establishment of the new municipal tax (*impuésto unicipal*),[16] the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* forwarded to the *Regidores Inspectores*[17] of Binondo 40 Chinese to work as *polistas*. The gobernadorcillo told the *Regidores* that these laboring class Chinese were incapable of paying their *falla* for the fiscal

year 1884–1885. Hence, they were required to work for 15 days on public projects in Manila (Chinos 1837–1898, S 319–23b). They were divided into two groups, each with 20 *polistas*, and assigned to work in Binondo's 2nd and 3rd sub-districts.[18] Although one *municipe*[19] and a number of *cuadrilleros* were deployed to supervise each of these groups, the *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* warned the authorities that constant surveillance of the Chinese laborers had to be strictly enforced. His statement implied that the possibility of escape was always high for such laborers who were forced to work against their will.[20] The *Corregidor* of Manila, who acted as the overall manager of the *polistas* (see N.a. 1861, 7–8), ordered stricter monitoring to prevent the laborers from escaping (Chinos 1837–1898, S 324–b). The order was also deemed necessary because, unlike Chinese and Filipino prisoners who worked alongside them, these Chinese *polistas* were not chained. Hence, they could easily flee from their respective posts (see N.a. 1861, 4).

Similarly, Lim Sitiang, who was arrested in Tarlac on 30 June 1877, stated that apart from his desire to seek employment, he was also not keen to work in the *polo y servicio* in Bulacan where he was registered, therefore, he decided to flee. The *alcalde mayor* of Tarlac reported that Lim was previously imprisoned for three months in Bulacan for insolvency. This Chinese did not pay his taxes nor the *falla*. Neither did he fulfil the government's labor requirement in lieu of the *falla*. Upon his release from the provincial jail in Bulacan, he went into hiding in Tarlac. When the *cuadrilleros* apprehended him, he was living with several other Chinese laborers in the provincial capital (Chinos 1856–1898, S 345–6).

The cases of 58 Chinese fugitives (see Table 1) also help explain those factors that motivated Chinese prisoners to escape. One of these factors was the poor condition of most nineteenth-century prisons. Bankoff (1996) claims that "[al] though Spain managed to establish a colonial prison system, it failed to provide the funding to make it effective" (162). This lack of funds, he further adds, led to the "dilapidated state or flimsy construction of many provincial and municipal prison buildings" (180). The poor condition of the prison in Pampanga, for example, enabled Tan Toco and Quing Tioco to escape in December 1894. The unemployed Tan Toco was arrested in Arayat by the *teniente de chinos*, Jose de Jesus Cocheco, for being *indocumentado* and for not paying his tax for the year along with the corresponding fines amounting to 29 pesos and 26 *centimos*. The day-laborer (*jornalero*) Quing Tioco was arrested for tax debts and had been in prison in the provincial capital since 1893 (Chinos 1894–1897, S 141–2). Despite the presence of prison guards, they were able to escape at night through a small gap at the back of the prison. However, they were recaptured in Bulacan, sent to Manila, and subsequently imprisoned in Bilibid (Chinos 1856–1898, S 508–27b).

On certain occasions, negligent prison guards, police officers, and soldiers tasked to oversee prisoners were responsible for their escape. Many of these prisoners (28 or 48 percent of the 58 cases, see Table 1)—escaped whilst working outside prison compounds on projects assigned by the government or private individuals. For example, in the afternoon of 4 July 1869, the manacled pair (*mancuernas*) Lim

Liengco and Diao Yap incarcerated in Bilibid for tax debts, were ordered to clean the canals in front of the prison. A *cuadrillero* from Sta. Cruz, Jose Ysidoro San Juan, was supervising them. However, San Juan's unexpected absence from his post led to the Chinese *forzados*' (convict laborers) escape, "complete with [their] chains and fetters." The reason why San Juan left his post at 3:00 in the afternoon was not mentioned in the documents, but from the *Alcaide*'s[21] standpoint, the *cuadrillero* was responsible for the escape and had to be punished. Immediately after lodging his report about the incident, *Alcaide* Fernando Fernandez ordered San Juan to present himself to the Civil Governor of Manila, and he was required to explain how the *forzados* under his watch were able to escape (Chinos 1877–1895, 1862–1869, S 57–8). The escape of the debtors Tan Cuaco and Tiu Chuico on 4 August 1870 was also blamed on the soldier Anacleto dela Cruz, who was assigned to monitor them. On that day, Tan and Tiu were assigned to clean a street located in Sitio Barraca in Binondo. At noon, dela Cruz left the manacled Chinese prisoners alone. According to the sergeant of the soldiers, dela Cruz's action was most probably due to his desire to have an early lunch (Chinos 1869–1877, S 513–b).

Officials also used prisoners to personally work for them for running errands and taking care of animals they owned (Bankoff 1996). These animals were often corralled in a certain area of the Bilibid compound. To make sure these animals were properly taken care of and well fed, certain *cuadrilleros* deployed prisoners to gather *zacates* (fodder). For example, on the morning of 16 March 1874, Chinese debtors Co Tico and Co Yco were sent outside Bilibid to look for *zacates* for the animals owned by the prison warden: a goat and a cow from Taguig and a horse from Caloocan. It was reported in the afternoon of the same day that the prisoners escaped whilst collecting the fodder. Their escape was blamed on the lax behavior of Nicolas dela Cruz, the *cuadrillero* assigned to supervise them (Chinos 1869–1877, S 844–b). Similarly, on 21 September 1873, So Suatco and Ong Punco were sent to Caloocan to collect *zacates*. The grass was intended to feed a number of carabaos and horses owned by the Civil Governor of Manila being held in the Bilibid compound. The *cuadrillero* Jose de la Cruz was assigned to supervise them but for some reason, he left the prisoners in Caloocan, which gave them the opportunity to escape. The *Alcaide* of Bilibid informed the Governor the same afternoon that the prisoners and dela Cruz had not yet returned to Bilibid. Although the *Alcaide*'s report did not mention it, it was possible that dela Cruz was ordered to find the fugitives and bring them back to prison.[22] They were eventually recaptured (Chinos 1858–1877, S 71–b).

Aside from the negligence of guards, the lack of officers tasked to oversee prisoners, particularly when they were working outside the prison, was also a genuine concern with respect to Chinese fugitives (see Bankoff 1996). For example, on 29 July 1870, the *Comandante* of the *Tercio Civil* of Manila Jose Romero reported to the Governor of the province that Quian Na, a prisoner for tax debts since August 1869, had escaped. According to the *Comandante*, Quian Na was part of the "5 ½ *chinos mancuernas*" (i.e., 11 prisoners) under the supervision

of soldier Vicente Mendiola. These prisoners were assigned to clean Calle del Principe, San Nicolas in Manila. However, before the prisoners began working, Mendiola received an order from Don Francisco Olca, *Regidor* of the District to send him (Olca) two *mancuernas* (i.e., four prisoners) to clean the canals at Calzada de Divisoria. Mendiola left the remaining seven prisoners unattended and delivered the requested *mancuernas* to Olca. Whilst Mendiola was away, Quian Na, not manacled to the chain gang, escaped. When the *bastonero* (prison trustee) informed Mendiola what happened, the frustrated soldier complained that he could not oversee two sets of prisoners assigned to two separate areas of the city (Chinos 1877–1895, 1862–1869, S 23–4).

The prisoners' determination and careful planning must also be taken into account in understanding their propensity to escape. Preparing to escape was considered a major inmate activity (Spierenburg 1995). On 14 August 1869, Chinese prisoners Sy Tico and Que Jueco, who were incarcerated for tax debts, escaped whilst cleaning the area around Puente de Barraz in Binondo in Manila. They worked under the supervision of soldier Balbino Jacinto and *bastonero* Pedro Bamba Cruz. As they were held responsible for the escape, Jacinto and Cruz made every possible effort to recapture the fugitives. They received a timely report from a certain Francisco Bao regarding the fugitives' whereabouts. The fugitives were recaptured at night the following day. Upon questioning, Que Jueco claimed he had no intention to escape and that it was Sy Tico was the one who was very determined to escape. Que Jueco added that, because he was manacled to Sy Tico, he had no choice but to go along with him. Sy Tico, however, had been imprisoned before. His knowledge of the guards and the perfect opportunities for escape gave him the confidence to devise a plan for their escape. He was released after serving a three-month prison term (Chinos 1877–1895, 1862–1869, S 61–b). However, in the first week of January 1870, Sy Tico was arrested again. On 11 January, he tried to escape once again. He was then imprisoned in Bilibid but was later transferred under the custody of the City Government of Manila (Chinos 1877–1895, 1862–1869, S 65–8).

Chu Pingco also showed the same determination not to remain behind bars. On 12 April 1877, the *Veteranas* arrested Chu for walking aimlessly at midnight on a street in Sta. Cruz. He was charged with vagrancy and sent to Bilibid. The Commandant of the *Veteranas* informed the Civil Governor of Manila, that based on their records, Chu had escaped from Bilibid several times already. Although the *Veteranas* were able to recapture him each time he escaped, the Commandant suggested that the authorities (implying, the *Alcaide* of Bilibid) should ensure that Chu would not escape again (Chinos 1842–1898, S 193–94b).

Prisoners Co Jico and Ong Changco had the same determination and desire when they attempted to escape on 14 September 1869. Co and Ong were assigned to clean the area around the church of Sta. Cruz. Whilst their guards were not looking, the two prisoners ran away. When the soldiers of the *Tercio* pursued them,

they jumped into a nearby animal pen to hide. Unfortunately, the escapees were unaware that the pen contained some rusty protruding iron bars, which caused serious injury to Co and inflicted contusions on Ong. They were immediately brought back to the Bilibid infirmary where they received medical attention (Chinos 1869–1877, S 217–18).

Another factor that motivated Chinese prisoners to escape was the fact that they often did not receive wages for work whilst serving their prison terms. On 18 January 1879, the *Gobernadorcillo de Sangleyes* made this claim on behalf of the prisoners in his response to the letter of the Governor of Manila. In the previous month, the Governor solicited the *gobernadorcillo*'s view on the issue of Chinese prisoners escaping from Bilibid (Chinos 1877–1881, S 361–3). The *gobernadorcillo* stated that the lack of financial incentives given to Chinese prisoners was the reason why many of them decided to escape. Prisoners were legally required to be paid by the government when they worked on public projects (N.a. 1861, 6). They were also meant to be paid when "subcontracted" by the government to private individuals (Rodriguez Berriz, 1887–1888, vol. 10, 207; Chinos 1890–1898, S 66; Rodriguez San Pedro 1867a, 114; Comenge 1894, 367; see also Chinos 1837–1898, S 318–22b). Whilst the *gobernadorcillo* was fully aware that prisoners' work was considered a means to pay their tax debts and fines and to generate funds to be used for their daily maintenance, he nonetheless, suggested that the government should allot a percentage of their wages to the prisoners themselves (Chinos 1877–1881, S 361–3). The prisoners could use such small amounts as pocket money to purchase things they needed (Chinos 1878–1898, S 197–9). They could also use it as savings towards their release from prison and for their subsequent pursuit of gainful employment. However, the *gobernadorcillo*'s proposal was ignored. The Treasury Department of Manila claimed that the funds generated from prisoners' labor (at least in the late 1870s and early 1880s) were, in fact, to be used exclusively for the maintenance of the prison and prisoners (Chinos 1877–1881, S 363b).

As it turned out, the lack of wages for their labor was an important factor that drove some Chinese prisoners to escape. This exploitative situation was exacerbated by the government requiring them to work beyond their physical endurance. For example, in accordance with the Regulation for Public Works (1861), *polistas* and prisoners were only required to work from 7 to 12 in the morning and then from 2 o'clock in the afternoon until sunset (N.a. 1861, 5). There were cases, however, when Chinese prisoners were compelled to work well after midnight and even without eating dinner. This happened to the debtors Co Quiaco and Ju Liongco. On 26 April 1867, Co and Ju, together with other chain gangs, were assigned to work on a public project in Bagumbayan. It appeared that they had been working on this project for a long time. When they were to return to Bilibid at dawn after a very arduous day, Co and Ju slipped away from their custodians Sergeant Modesto de la Virgen and soldier Emiterio dela Cruz in their bid to escape (Chinos 1877–1895, 1862–1869, S 204–b).

Chinos remontados: Mountains as "Zones of refuge"

For some Chinese fugitives, mountains and hills were "zones of refuge."[23] These remote and inaccessible areas served as hiding places from pursuing government agents. From the data sets, I discovered five cases of Chinese fugitives who fled to the mountains in Luzon. One of these *chinos remontados*[24] was Go Yco. As noted earlier, Go Yco was a Chinese laborer from Tondo. In 1835, he sought refuge in the mountainous parts of Mariquina and San Mateo. It was possible that, like the Chinese fugitives who escaped to these mountains in 1831, he was also protected by Filipinos living in the area. Perhaps, this was the reason why for one and a half years, he survived there without having to go down to the towns. However, following the tax collection conducted in May 1837, the *Corregidor* of Tondo sent soldiers to these mountains to hunt down the Chinese fugitives. Go Yco was one of those arrested in July 1837. He was imprisoned in the *presidio de Manila* where he was compelled to render hard labor for two years (Chinos 1837–1849, S 82).

There were also Chinese fugitives who hid in distant mountains, which were located relatively far from their place of origin. These outlaws were not hindered by precarious travel and the possibility of arrest along the way. In 1838, two Chinese debtors from Tondo were arrested on separate occasions. Tuan Pocua, who incurred a tax debt of 21 pesos and 4 *reales*,[25] told the fiscal during his trial in June 1838 that he escaped to the mountainous area near Calamba in Laguna to avoid paying his *capitación personál*. He was referring to the northern slopes of Mt. Makiling where Calamba was situated. In order not to be discovered by roving patrols, he travelled from Tondo to Laguna with merchants and ambulant vendors who frequented the province to buy and sell goods. Tuan claimed he lived in the mountains for two and a half years. After his arrest, he was sentenced to work for two years at the *presidio de Manila*'s royal foundry (Chinos 1837–1849, S 82–b). Diem Jongco, also listed in the *padrón de chinos* in Tondo was charged with same prison term in 1834. However, the fiscal of the Treasury Department of Tondo sentenced him to heavier manual labor (most likely as a galley slave in the Royal Galley of Manila and Cavite) due to his tax debts and for evading the authorities for four years.[26] In July 1838, Diem confessed that he fled to the town of Liliw in Laguna to escape his financial obligations, living in the town's most remote part (Chinos 1837–1849, S 96b–97). Liliw is located at the southern end of Laguna, at the foot of Mt. Banahaw.

As previously mentioned, in 1856, the *Provincial Hacienda Publica* of Nueva Ecija reported that several Chinese, who were previously employed as farm hands at *Hacienda El Porvenir* in the town of Umingan, were missing. Provincial authorities initially suspected these laborers walked off the *haciendas* and went to find employment in the surrounding areas. Owners of other *haciendas* could readily have hid these Chinese on their properties despite existing regulations prohibiting plantation owners from employing undocumented runaway Chinese.[27] Moreover,

based on these regulations, *hacienderos* were required to report any Chinese who left their plantations without proper authorization as well as any fugitives found on their properties (Comenge 1894; Chinos, Sus Reglamentos 1893). However, the authorities also did not rule out the possibility that such fugitives might be hiding in the Caraballo Mountains, as Umingan was situated at the foot of this mountain range.

The last case of Chinese fugitives I located involved Quing Tioco and Tan Toco, who escaped from a prison in Bacolor, Pampanga in December 1894. Although both were arrested for tax debts and for being *indocumentados*, Quing had been imprisoned earlier than Tan. Quing, who had been incarcerated for more than a year, planned their escape. However, it was Tan who suggested that they hide in Arayat. As he was a resident of this town, Tan was aware that it would be difficult for the authorities to find them in Arayat, which was located at the foot of Mt. Arayat. They thus decided to stay on the mountain to "lie low." After a week, thinking that it was already safe to move and switch locations, they decided to come down off the mountain and go to Manila to find work. Unfortunately, on 5 January 1895, on their way to the capital, they were arrested by members of the Tribunal Municipal of Calumpit in Bulacan. They were brought to Malolos, Bulacan's capital, and then imprisoned in Bilibid (Chinos 1856–1898, S 507–27; Chinos 1894–1897, S 141-b; Chinos 1894–1897, S 135–142). They were later deported from the Philippines. Tan Toco was expelled from the colony on 16 May 1895 on board the German vessel *Presto* (Chinos 1856–1898, S 507–27).

Social networks and Chinese fugitives

Aside from the mountains, social networks formed amongst prisoners and within the Chinese community also played an important role in the escape process of some prisoners. There were cases when fellow Chinese, both inside and outside the prison, helped facilitate the escapes. On 1 May 1880, for example, the *Alcaide* of Bilibid reported that on the previous day, two *mancuernas* had escaped whilst working outside the prison. The debtors, Co Bico, Co Angco, Co Pico, and Chu Sanco, were assigned to bury the cadaver of Mariano Dimabasa, a prisoner who died in the Bilibid Infirmary at the La Loma Cemetery. *Cuadrillero* Luis de los Reyes and *alguacil* (constable) Tomas Paulino were assigned to oversee them. Upon reaching the cemetery, the four prisoners suddenly disappeared. The report did not indicate how this happened, but it was possible that their guards deliberately left the prisoners by themselves. According to delos Reyes and Paulino, the prisoners left the cadaver and stretcher used to transport it at the edge of the cemetery and not even near the specific site where the body was supposed to be buried. The two guards immediately reported the incident to the *Tribunal de Naturales*, which ordered the cemetery's resident gravedigger to do the job (Chinos 1878–1898, S 279–81b).

Interestingly, in this case, the four fugitives had known each other prior to their imprisonment. When the *Alcaide* checked their records, he discovered that they were all *cargadores* (transporters) who worked in various suburbs in Manila. However, the low pay and precarious nature of their work rendered them incapable of paying their taxes. Co Bico was arrested on 28 July 1879 and the rest were arrested in August 1879 for tax evasion and for being *indocumentados*. They also spoke the same dialect (Hokkien). Two of them (Co Pico and Chu Sanco) came from the same Chinese village of Chincan, whilst Co Bico and Co Angco originated from Amoy. The *Alcaide* suspected that the prior personal connection among these Chinese was an important factor in their escape. With assistance from the *Guardia Civil Veterana*, however, the four fugitives were eventually recaptured (Chinos 1878–1898, S 279–81b).

In another case, a fellow working-class Chinese facilitated the escape of two Chinese prisoners. On 13 October 1869, the *Alcaide* of Bilibid, Fernando Fernandez, reported that a manacled pair escaped while returning to the prison after a day's work. The debtors, Lao Tico and Chua Suatco, were assigned to clean the Binondo Theater. The two prisoners escaped from the custody of soldier Silvestre delos Santos at 5:00 in the afternoon. Based on the investigation conducted following their escape, a certain Lun Laoco, a vendor who sold merchandise in front of the theatre, helped Lao and Chua escaped. Lun hid the two fugitives inside the theatre. It was also very likely that Lun helped them break their chains so they could run more easily. The documents did not mention why Lun helped them, but it was possible that the three of them knew each other before Lao and Chua were imprisoned. Lun was arrested the following morning for aiding and abetting the fugitives (Chinos 1877–1895, 1862–1869, S 75–6).[28] After almost a month, on 13 November 1869, Lao was recaptured (Chinos 1877–1895, 1862–1869, S 82). He was brought to the District Court of Intramuros and was tried for the crime of escape (*fuga*) (Case no. 3372) (Chinos 1877–1895, 1862–1869, S 83). Chua, however, remained at large (Chinos 1877–1895, 1862–1869, S 82).

Chinese and mestizo *cabecillas* (employers) who hired Chinese laborers also played a role in the escape of some Chinese. During the 1880s and 1890s, authorities received various reports about the clandestine practices of some *cabecillas* in Manila and the provinces regarding hiring Chinese laborers. As mentioned earlier, *cabecillas* were prohibited from employing unregistered Chinese, as these individuals were considered dangerous (Rodriguez Berriz 1888). Employers were required to check whether a prospective employee had proper documents of identification which included residence permits and *cedulas de capitación personál*. Those originating from other areas were also required to present their travel permits. Some *cabecillas*, however, continued to employ undocumented compatriots for two reasons. First, compared to Filipinos, Chinese laborers worked more efficiently and required less wages. Second, logistically speaking, it was easier for *cabecillas* to negotiate with laborers who came from the same region in China

and spoke the same dialect. Due to the illegal employment practices amongst some *cabecillas*, house and shop inspections increased in the latter part of the nineteenth century (Sobre reforma general 1874; Proyecto de reforma 1874). On numerous occasions, these visits were conducted unannounced to prevent the *cabecillas* from hiding their undocumented Chinese employees before the authorities' sudden arrival.[29]

In November 1889, Ong Tiongtay, a former farm hand, was arrested in Gamu, Isabela, for being an *indocumentado* (Chinos 1869–1897, S 81, 812–18, 893–5). During his trial, it was revealed he was originally registered in Piddig, Ilocos Norte. He confessed that he left Ilocos because he could not pay his tax debt of 9 pesos and 52 *centimos*.[30] Despite having neither a *cedula* nor a travel permit, he claimed he still found employment in Isabela. According to him, 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 other work. Que and Bong, in particular, both residents of Tagudin, Ilocos Sur, had incurred tax debts of 6 pesos and 37 *centimos* each (Chinos 1869–1897, S 814). Ong's testimony highlighted the tendency of some *cabecillas* in Isabela to employ Chinese laborers even if they were *indocumentados* (Chinos 1869–1897, S 81, 812–18, 893–5). These *cabecillas* and their laborers were strongly attracted by the economic opportunities in the provinces linked to the production of tobacco (see Barrantes y Moreno 1869; Bowring 1859). In 1881, there were 190 Chinese in Isabela, but after five years, their number had risen to 221 (Chinos 1870–1898, S 46), and by 1890, there were already 486 registered Chinese in the province (Chinos 1890–1891, S 123–S 123b; Chinos 1891–1892, S 766–b).

Another interesting case involved two Chinese carpenters. In August 1895, the Treasury Department of Batangas reported that Co Chunco and Chua Chico were missing from the town where they had previously registered. Search and capture orders were issued to arrest them but produced no results. Two months later, the *Intendencia General de Hacienda* in Manila received a report stating that Co and Chua were found working in a carpentry shop in Intramuros. The documents implied that a Chinese businessman owned the shop (Chinos 1894–1897, S 360–b). How was this possible? Why had the shop owner hired them considering the regulations that prohibited the employment of undocumented Chinese fugitives? Although the documents did not provide ready answers to these questions, it was a fact that Chinese carpenters were actually sorely needed in Manila and the provinces at that time,[31] hence, the tendency of shop owners to hire them despite not having proper documents of identification. Their specialized skills were required for constructing buildings, houses, warehouses, and churches. In 1890 alone, there were 793 Chinese in Manila registered as *carpinteros* (Chinos 1870–1898, S 649). In 1893, numerous undocumented Chinese were arrested in various suburbs working in carpentry shops (*carpenterías*), retail stores and sawmills owned by Chinese *cabecillas* (Chinos 1781–1898, S 730–3).

Conclusion

The issues related to Chinese fugitives, including the absent ones who fled from their places of residence and those who escaped from prison, are very interesting. Their examination provides an important material by which to explore the interactions that occurred between the Spanish colonial government and certain Chinese who evaded policies on registration, taxation, and migration. An inquiry into the lives of these Chinese fugitives highlights how the state regarded flight and runaways as well as how it responded towards them through its various forms of surveillance and social control. From the state's standpoint, flight was a criminal act and fugitives were criminals who had to be brought under the law. Such views were primarily based on the state's crucial need to monitor, regulate, and track the movements and activities of its subjects. It was only through effective surveillance and policing of the colonized population that the state could extract financial and labor resources from them. The colonial state was particularly concerned and wary of Chinese fugitives, as the Chinese paid the highest taxes, and presumably, played a dominant role in the colonial economy.

However, some Chinese belonging to the laboring class found it necessary to flee from the authorities. Due to destitution and material deprivation, many of these down-and-out individuals opted to run away to avoid fulfilling their financial and labor obligations. Various Chinese prisoners utilized flight, especially when outside the prison compound, to gain freedom, albeit most of the time only temporarily, as they were often recaptured. Some missing Chinese in the provinces also escaped to the mountains to avoid arrest and imprisonment. Others sought refuge among their fellow Chinese while still others, as the authorities suspected, were protected by their Chinese and Chinese mestizo *cabecillas*. A collective biography of Chinese fugitives demonstrates how some marginalized sectors of society employed various "weapons of the weak" to challenge the Spanish colonial state's judicial apparatus in a non-confrontational way. For many of them, escaping and hiding from the authorities were a pragmatic means to evade the state's financial and labor exactions.

A note on archival sources used

This paper relies mainly on the 148 *Chinos* bundles (*legajos*) located at the National Archives of the Philippines (NAP) in Manila. These bundles contain official reports on the condition of the Chinese, as well as regulations imposed upon them by the Spanish colonial government between 1781-1898. Also included are censuses, lists of arrivals and departures, and documents of identification. In addition, these bundles also have numerous documents on "undesirable" and "criminal" Chinese. They contain police reports, criminal dossiers, arrest orders, court proceedings, prison records, and deportation and expulsion orders. Despite the fragmentary nature of these documents, I was able to compile more than 5,000 individual cases involving these offenders (417 of which were about "fugados"). These materials provide important information necessary for a reconstruction of their collective biography.

Endnotes

1 In addition to flight, Filipinos also responded to Spanish colonization through acceptance, accommodation, or armed resistance (Phelan 1967).

2 When discussing flight and vagrancy, I prefer to use the term "crime" (in quotation marks) to stress the need to problematize these legal terms as viewed by both the Spanish colonial state and the "criminals" themselves (see O'Brien 1978, 508–20).

3 Spaniards were exempted from paying taxes.

4 The Governor General approved this proposal. In 1888, the Province of Manila was divided into 13 districts, each headed by a *teniente de chinos*. Subsequently, the establishment of *tenencias de chinos* (i.e., administrative units headed by *tenientes de chinos*) was also undertaken in provinces with at least 200 registered Chinese.

5 At least 10 of these arrested Chinese fugitives were released in July 1833.

6 Originally, Gapan was a town of La Pampanga. In the mid–nineteenth century, it became part of the province of Nueva Ecija.

7 Chu Chadco was arrested with Ong Puico, an *indocumentado* who was not registered in the *padron de chinos* of Tondo.

8 A *colección* was a group of towns organized to grow tobacco for the state's lucrative tobacco monopoly (de Jesus 1980).

9 For a list of registered Chinese and their occupations in Nueva Ecija in 1856, see the following: *Resumen general de las contribuciones cobrados a los chinos radicados en la provincia de Nueva Ecija segun el Reglamento vigente correspondiente al año de 1856* (Chinos 1856–1897, S 281–281b).

10 The word *sangley* or *sanglay*—the term used by the Spaniards to refer to the Chinese in the Philippines—has multiple meanings. The *Boxer Codex* (written c. 1590) states that *changlai* means "someone who comes often." Meanwhile, the Hokkien *siong lay* refers to a "frequent visitor" and *seng-di* means business (Boxer 1953, 261; See et al. 2005, 47).

11 During the nineteenth century, the Chinese were required to pay their taxes three times a year (Chinos 1886–1887, unpaginated; Alcalde Mayor of Batangas 1887; Chinos 1871–1898, S 236–239).

12 Chinese "criminals," including fugitives, were tried in regular and special courts. Presided over by *gobernadorcillos* and *alcaldes mayores*, regular courts prosecuted all offenders irrespective of their racial affiliations. When a Chinese was involved, the head of the Chinese *gremio* (occupational guild) in the province had to be present during the trial in order to protect the interests of the Chinese. A special court in Manila, the *Tribunal de Sangleyes* (Chinese court), exclusively heard cases involving members of the Chinese community. The *gobernadorcillo de sangleyes* had the authority to conduct judicial proceedings. (Chinos 1865–1898, 1896–1898, S 286–293; Buzeta and Bravo 1850, 105; Mallat 1983 [1846], 228).

13 Cruikshank (1982) describes Samar as a "backwater" province for three reasons: "little happened there; what happened there was overshadowed by events elsewhere [in the Philippines]; [and] it has commanded little attention from either administrators or historians" (219).

14 The data on the 87 missing Chinese in Pampanga in September 1896 are incomplete. Hence, it is difficult to ascertain the specific occupations of these fugitives before they hid from the authorities. What is clear, however, is the fact that they belonged to the 6th class tax category (Chinos 1856–1898, S 747–748b).

15 Many *haciendas* in Central Luzon were used in raising cattle. Several *haciendas* in Nueva Ecija from the 1850s onwards, for example, were suppliers of cattle for the Manila market (Gonzalez Fernandez 1877; del Pan 1878).

16 The *polo y servicio* (forced labor) was originally imposed upon Filipinos only. However, in 1867, the *polo* was extended to all able–bodied male Chinese (Chinos 1878–1898, S 970; Chinos 1885–1898, S676–676b).

17 The *Regidores Inspectores* were officials working under the Public Works Department in Manila. Their main functions were to identify the areas of the city which had to be cleaned and maintained, and to determine the number of *polistas* to be deployed in these areas (Reglamento para las Obras Publicas 1861; Gobernadorcillo de Sangleyes 1884; Chinos 1837–1898, S 319–323b).

[18] In 1861, for public works projects, the municipal district of Manila was divided into four sections. Binondo and Arroceros belonged to the 1st section. Depending on the number of projects to be undertaken, each section could be subdivided into smaller districts. For instance, in 1884, Binondo was divided into 3 districts (Reglamento para las Obras Publicas 1861, 1).

[19] A *municipe* was usually an individual affiliated with the *Ayuntamiento* (City Council) of Manila (see Bankoff 1996, 159).

[20] It appears from the letter of the *Gobernadorcillo de Sangleyes* that escape among Chinese polistas had been a serious concern before. (Gobernadorcillo de Sangleyes 1884; Chinos 1837–1898, S 319–323b).

[21] *Alcaide* was the prison warden.

[22] On punishments meted out to officials from whose custody prisoners escaped, see *Articulos* 358 and 359, *Capitulo* II (*Infidelidad en la custodia de presos*) of the Penal Code (Perez Rubio 1887, 331–333).

[23] On the role of mountains and hills to fugitives, see Scott, J. 2009, 22–32.

[24] A *remontado* (from the Spanish term *monte*, meaning mountain) was someone who lived and hid in the mountains to evade the authorities.

[25] According to Robert MacMicking (1967), a Scottish merchant who lived in Manila in 1848-1850, a Filipino laborer received "a quarter of a dollar a day, or a little more than a shilling, which is enough to keep him supplied with food of as good quality and quantity as he needs to eat for about two or three days" (97). A Chinese laborer, however, received less than this amount, which made it nearly impossible to pay his taxes (see Plehn 1901, 696–97; Wickberg 2000, 158)

[26] It was not mentioned in the documents what his assignment was, but he may have been sent to the Royal Galley of Manila (or Cavite) as an oarsman.

[27] These laborers were also considered undocumented because they had neither *patentes* nor certificates of payment of the *capitación*.

[28] For punishments meted out to those who assisted the escape of prisoners, see *Articulo* 261, *Capitulo* VI of the Penal Code (Perez Rubio 1887, 252, 331–333).

[29] See cases in the following: *Chinos* (Manila, 1889–1890), SDS 13065, S 62–63; *Chinos* (Manila, 1781–1898), SDS 13080, S 730–733.

[30] His debt covered the following periods: 2nd Semester of 1888 (3 pesos and 15 centimos) and 1st and 2nd Semester of 1889 (6 pesos and 37 *centimos*). Certification from the Interventor dela Administracion de Hacienda Publica of Ilocos Norte (Laoag, 10 November 1889) (Chinos 1869–1897, S 895).

[31] On 30 June 1891, Aldecoa and Company, a company involved in import–export business and inter-island shipping, informed the colonial government that it hired 24 Chinese carpenters. These carpenters were contracted for six months to build a warehouse in Oroquieta in the District of Cagayan de Misamis in Mindanao. This *camarín* was used to store abaca (Chinos 1891–1892, S 243–244, 251–252, 255).

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