The Hacienda de Calamba Agrarian Problem (1887-1891): A Historical Assessment

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Chapter I. Introduction

For most part of the three centuries of Spanish domination in the Philippines, the Roman Catholic Church had been intimately involved with colonial government. By late 19th century, three religious orders—Dominicans, Augustinians, and Recollects—had acquired about one-tenth of all the improved lands in the archipelago. The discontent of the native peasants with this situation had been a contributing factor in the Philippine Revolution of 1896–1898.

The agrarian dispute that occurred between 1887 and 1891 at the Hacienda de San Juan Bautista in the province of Laguna was the loudest expression of peasant discontent in this far Spanish colony. The hacienda included the territory of what is now Calamba and the dispute involved, among others, the respected Rizal family.

Though this was not the first time that the native tenants challenged the ownership of the friars over vast tracts of land, this was the most earnest. Alarmed and threatened, the friars branded the problem as rebellion and its players, filibusters. Later, it led to the deportation of influential Calamba residents to different parts of the archipelago.

The Hacienda de San Juan Bautista affair, notorious as it was, became a cause célèbre among the members of the Hispano-Filipino Association, a society in Spain composed of Filipinos and Spaniards, which worked for reforms in the Philippines. The incidents were used as propaganda material by the association to expose the friars’ supposed excesses and greed. Details of the said agrarian problem were published at the fortnightly *La Solidaridad* and found its way into the powerfully critical novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*.

Locally, the Dominicans successfully fought for their rightful ownership over the subject lands in the courts of first level. They were likewise successful in obtaining eviction decrees. When the implementation of these decrees was defied, the friars then asked and were granted assistance of Governor General Valeriano Weyler. The governor-general deployed troops to Calamba to effect mass evictions. Contrary to claims of orderly execution of eviction orders, it
was in total chaos. These events spurred a more passionate propaganda staged by the *ilustrados* in Spain.

Abroad, the propagandists painted a picture: the Philippine problem was beyond cure; Spanish civil authorities were subservient and servile to the monastic supremacy and greed;[1] and the friars, the Dominicans in particular, were monsters of injustice. *¡Que hermoso arte de perder colonias!*[2], exclaimed, Eduardo de Lete, a Filipino expatriate and propagandist.

The general failure of the propaganda movement to achieve reforms led to a more drastic measure from the impatient masses – the 1896 Philippine Revolution. This revolution resulted in the birth of the Republic of the Philippines on 12 June 1898 and contributed to the fall of the Spanish empire.

This paper aims to present the history of the agrarian problem that occurred at the Hacienda de San Juan Bautista during the years 1887 to 1891. Through a learned and objective study of contemporaneous public documents, decrees, private letters, statements and testimonies, the real score behind the said agrarian problem is herein recorded, retold and made available to the society for historical awareness and future reference.

Being century-old old case, time had divested it of the prejudices of its era. The merits of the arguments from both sides can now be objectively appraised and assessed. The assessment is offered as a contribution to the growing literature on the contributory factors on the Philippine Revolution of 1896–1898.


Chapter II. The Historical Antecedent

The Church at the Hacienda de Calamba

Before 1759, little was known about the territory that will soon comprise Hacienda de Calamba. The area was said to be one of the villages of Tabuco, now Cabuyao, Laguna. It was certain, however, that a layman, Don Manuel Jauregui, owned the haciendas of Calamba and Nagtajan which he entrusted to the Society of Jesus (S.J.) on 29 January 1759. The conveyance was conditioned on his being permitted to live at the Jesuit monastery for life with a pension of 25 pesos per month until his death. From henceforth, it was known as the Hacienda de San Juan Bautista.

The trust, however, was not destined to last within Jauregui’s lifetime. Eight years later, on 27 February 1767, King Charles III issued a decree expelling the Jesuits from the entire
Spanish Empire including the Philippines. The Jesuits order was accused to be the instigator of the violent riots in Madrid and elsewhere that took place a year earlier.

Impoverished, Jauregui took asylum at the monastery of the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God. And as an act of gratitude, he worked for the transfer of the haciendas to his new benefactor. However, because of the royal policy of promoting secular ownership of lands in the Philippines, the petition, together with many other similar petitions were disapproved.[1]

After the expulsion of the Jesuits, Antonio Ortiz Narvaez, the administrator of the hacienda, on 22 May 1769, reported to the officials of the Hacienda Real an inventory of Hacienda de Calamba:[2]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Real Properties</th>
<th>Civil Fruits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugar cane plantation</td>
<td>300 <em>pilones</em>[^3] of sugar per annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 <em>quiñones</em>[^4] of irrigated rice paddies</td>
<td>435 pesos per annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenanted wheat and rice producing highlands</td>
<td>672 pesos per annum (each tenant pays 3 pesos and 4 <em>reales</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighty houses in the areas of Christobal, Banlic, Bocal and Socol</td>
<td>Each house costs 1 peso and 4 <em>reales</em> per annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A parcel of land in town</td>
<td>100 pesos per annum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adding to the aforementioned inventory, Luis Lozano Sandoval, the subsequent hacienda administrator, reported that the estate had[^5]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Animals</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>165 heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Carabaos</em> (water buffalos)</td>
<td>138 heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle (with complete agricultural equipment)</td>
<td>75 heads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents of the Warehouse</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mongo Beans</td>
<td>331 <em>cavans</em>[^6]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>500 <em>piculs</em>[^7]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Palay</em> (unhusked rice)</td>
<td>1,112 <em>cavans</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>21 bales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The inventories showed that the Hacienda de Calamba was sparsely cultivated. The land area of the hacienda was 16,424 hectares, yet only less than 2,000 hectares were
cultivated with sugar cane and rice. While some portions of the hacienda were used for pasture or planted with upland rice, much of it remained unproductive.

Hacienda de Calamba, together with the Makati and Nagtajan were known as the haciendas of the Jesuit Province. These were under the direct charge of the Father Provincial. Other Jesuit estates were managed by the Jesuit Colleges of San Ignacio, San Jose and San Ildefonso.[8] The hacienda, together with other Jesuit properties which the government did not see fit to assign to ecclesiastical authorities were confiscated and placed under the management of the Juez Comisionado de Temporalidades or Office of Jesuit Temporalities. The said office was created purposively to administer the Jesuit estates. [9]

On 14 January 1772, after the tiresome collation of messed up Jesuit documents, Governor-General Simon de Anda appointed Oidor Juan Francisco de Anda to sit as Judge Commissioner of the Office of Jesuit Temporalities.[10] The appointee did not find the task easy. Reporting to the king in 1773, he bewailed that “the haciendas which are still under government management have so far yielded nothing but trouble and expense.”[11] He complained that the proceeds from the property could hardly meet the expenses for the care of the sick Jesuits who were left behind, the maintenance of the churches and college buildings, and the salary of the employees.

After tedious paper trails and efficient administration, Commissioner Anda successfully made the estate solvent again. One by one, the debtors of the Jesuits were traced and were made to pay. Movable properties were inventoried and publicly auctioned while immovable properties were publicly offered for lease or sale on liberal terms.

In 1773, Commissioner Anda, through a public bidding, successfully leased all the Jesuit haciendas to private entrepreneurs. In particular, Hacienda de Calamba was leased to Don Francisco Xavier Ramirez for 1,400 pesos a year.[12] Although the government policy was to dispose of the Jesuit properties as quickly as possible, the general shortage of capital in the late eighteenth century retarded the success of said approach.[13]

At the turn of the century, the government finally found an interested buyer of the hacienda – a Spanish layman, Don Clemente de Azansa. With a partial payment of 20,000.00 pesos, the possession of the estate was conveyed to Azansa. He undertook to pay the balance of the purchase price annually with five percent (5%) interest. By 19 November 1802, Azansa
paid a total of 44,007.00 pesos. And by 28 January 1803, the land title was awarded to him. Upon his death, however, his wife, Doña Isabel Vasques, failed to pay the remaining balance and so the property was retaken by the government and publicly auctioned on 19 November 1832. The Corporacion de Padres Dominicanos de Filipinas (hereinafter, Corporacion) acquired the hacienda for 51,263.00 pesos.[14] The total land area of the hacienda at the time of its acquisition was 16,424 hectares.[15] It covered vast tracts of both cultivated and forested lands.

Even before the Corporacion acquired the Hacienda de San Juan Bautista, families and individuals from the surrounding haciendas had been drawn to it because of its renowned progressiveness. It had a great dam and extensive irrigation system which made the hacienda as productive as Biñan. Settlers started arriving on a variety of reasons, mostly economic, including opportunities for tenancy. Petrona Mercado, for instance came to Calamba as clothes merchant. She was one of the daughters of the three-time Biñan mayor, Juan Mercado of the neighboring Hacienda de San Isidro Labrador. Soon her siblings Potenciana and Francisco Mercado joined her and made Calamba their home. When the opportunity for tenancy was offered, Francisco, like some other members of his family from Biñan, became an inquilino (tenant) of the hacienda.[16]

Even some inhabitants of Manila were drawn to Calamba. Brigida de Quintos, daughter of Manila-based lawyer Manuel de Quintos, moved to Calamba where some properties of her husband, Lorenzo Alberto Alonzo, were located. Alonzo, at one time a mayor of Biñan, bequeathed to her some properties located in Calamba. Quintos brought with her all her five children: Narcisa, Teodora, Gregorio, Manuel and Jose. All of whom were born in Manila, but from then on grew up and settled in Calamba.[17]

From the abovementioned migrant families hailed Francisco Mercado and Teodora Alonzo. Married on 28 June 1848, the Mercados became one of the principal inquilinos of the hacienda. The family they raised was one basked in education and enlightenment. One of its members was the Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal, whose attacks on religious fanaticism gained for him the ire of the friars. It was then out of contempt, when a Dominican intramural account stated that:

It is known that the ancestors of this Filipino ingrate (Jose Rizal) came to Calamba as simple tenants, poor folk on the brink of destitution who rented lands, and little by little created their fortune on the hacienda of the Dominicans.[18]
Coming from families of Biñan town mayors and businessmen, it cannot be gainsaid that the Jose Rizal’s parents of either side were “poor folk on the brink of destitution.”

Through skill, thrift and hard work, the Rizal family became prosperous *inquilinos*. Other tenants who, in varying degrees of success, also made fortune in the hacienda include the families of Eusebio Elepaño, Nicasio Eisagani, Hugo Ilagan, Pedro Valenzuela, Francisco de los Reyes, Potenciano Andaya, Aniceto Camoseng and others. Majority of these tenant families did not actually till the land themselves. They were “middlemen landlord,” that is to say, other tenant farmers – sharecroppers – till the land for them.[19] These tenant farmers were provided with credit for seed, tools, living quarters, and food. They received agreed shares of the value of the crop less the charges. Only the *inquilinos* were registered in the books of the hacienda, the sharecroppers were not mentioned in the official census.[20]

The sizes of many of the leased lands in Calamba were above fifty hectares and thus, relatively large. In 1880, the Rizal family, through the effort of Paciano Rizal, acquired the “good and extensive”[21] lands of Pansol. By this time, the Rizal family rented almost 380 hectares of the hacienda, one of the largest leased lands. However, their lands were classified as third class, the least productive type.[22]

The Hacienda, for many years, yielded more than enough for the tenants. The tenants were able to erect houses of strong materials [23] and their children were able to study in elite schools in Manila and Europe. Before 1887, Calamba college students in Manila numbered more than twenty (20) men students and three (3) *colegialas*. [24][25] The prosperity, however, was short-lived as the Philippines plunged into agricultural and economic crisis.

By June of 1885, for the first time all tenants defaulted in their annual rents. While the rent increased, the price of sugar was so low. To punish the tenants for their lack of punctuality, the administrator declared all the lands of the hacienda vacant. He also invited citizens of other towns to take over all the lands. Frightened, some tenants paid their obligations with the distressed sale of their sugar. Others ignored the administrator altogether. Few investors responded to the invitation, thus, the administrator softened his position and spared the tenants from eviction, “except four or five who were really victimized by the comedy.”[26]
The following year, 1886, the sugar harvest was good. During harvest time, it was said that the price of sugar was high, but when the selling time came, the price was low. Worst, "no one buys sugar and since June locusts are all over the town." Locusts destroyed the palay and sugar cane plantations. Again, the tenants defaulted in their rents. By this time, Paciano Rizal was contemplating of giving up the lands of Pansol "because it is not possible for a farmer to support himself in these lands which are overloaded with rent, considering the bad price of sugar." Year 1887 was a time when the colony faced a commercial and agricultural crisis was at its peak. It was also the beginning of the rinderpest epidemic which eventually destroyed much of the livestock in the provinces and astronomically increased the value of the surviving animals. Again, the tenants defaulted in their annual rents.

On 21 August 1889, Friar Gabriel Fernandez, administrator of the Hacienda, for and in behalf of the Corporacion de Padres Dominicos de Filipinas (hereinafter, Corporacion) filed a formal petition to declare the estate rented and held by the defaulting tenants vacant.


[4] A quiñon is a land measure equal to 2.79 hectares or 6.94 acres.


[6] A cavan is a Philippine measure equivalent to 44 kilograms.

[7] A picul is equivalent to 107 liters.


[22] AUST, Libros, Tomo 91.


[24] Literally means college girls. They were girl students in convent schools rather than colleges.


[30] An acute infectious usually fatal disease of ruminant mammals (such as cattle) that is caused by a morbillivirus (species Rinderpest virus) and that is marked by fever, diarrhea, and inflammation of mucous membranes.

Chapter III. The Leasehold System at the Hacienda de Calamba

A **hacienda** (Spanish: estate, ranch or farm), in its Hispanic signification, is a landed estate organized to supply a small-scale market by means of scarce capital. It is operated by a dominant landowner called **haciendado** who employs a dependent labor force. The laborers were theoretically free wage earners. In practice, however, their employers somehow kept in an indebted state, and thus, were bound to the land. The factors of production are employed to accumulate capital and to support the status aspirations of the owner.

In the Philippines, the term **hacienda** is used rather loosely. By emphasizing internal social relations rather than the area of lands, every Philippine landowner who held few sharecroppers is considered as a **haciendado**, known in the Philippines as **haciendero**.[1]

The **Corporacion de Padres Dominicos de Filipinas** (henceforth, the Dominicans), the owner of the Hacienda de Calamba, belongs to the mendicant orders. Thus, like the Franciscans, they were barred by their rules and vows of poverty to own earthly possessions. These friars were
expected to live a life of utmost personal poverty and simplicity. Their temporal possessions should only be minimum—no lands, no funded property, no fixed sources of income.[2]

Maintaining this ideal, however, proved to be unworkable in practice. As early as 1640, the Dominican order in the Philippines mitigated the rigidity of this regulation in the following justification: The haciendas will be cultivated and improved in order to transport religious from Spain to the Philippines … These haciendas will be under the custody of the Rector of our College of Santo Tomas who will have the book of receipts of these funds. The Provincial will expend the money only for the purpose of transporting religious from Spain, and for no other purpose, because this is the only instance in which our province is permitted to have temporal possessions and incomes. He will not use any of the surplus for anything else, regardless of the benefits to the province, because we do not wish to have properties, but only to assist the Crown in transporting members of our order.[3]

Thereafter, the Dominicans acquired, among others, the ranches[4] of Tunasancilla in Tondo (1643), Biñan in Laguna (1644), Tabuco in Laguna (1660), Indan in Cavite (1761), Santa Cruz in Cavite (1761), Naic in Cavite (1831), Calamba Nueva in Laguna (1833), Calamba Vieja in Laguna (1883) and Los Baños in Laguna (1833).[5] Through the income derived from the lands, the Dominicans supported their missions in the Philippines as well as the University of Santo Tomas.[6]

**The Hacienda de Calamba**

One of the haciendas acquired by the Dominicans in 1833 was the Calamba Nueva in Laguna which was subsequently included Calamba Vieja in 1883. The two haciendas were collectively called the Hacienda de Calamba. The territorial extent hacienda de Calamba at the time of its acquisition was 16,424 hectares. In 1888, the **gobernadorcillo** and the **principales** of the town of Calamba delineated what was publicly known as the scope of the hacienda: On the north, the part of the lake until the Island of Calamba; on the south, until the Bigo Bridge, Olango, Santol and Mount Sungay; on the east, until Los Baños in Bacong, comprising almost one half of Mount Maquiling; on the west, until Cabuyao and Santa Rosa, having an area of at least 700 quiñones of clean cleared land.[7]

Many Calambeños believed that the above territorial delineations cover more area than what the land titles held by the Dominicans described. Thus, in many instances, the Calambeños asked for the presentation of the said titles,[8] which the Dominicans refused to do on the reason that the Pope prohibited the church from submitting to the jurisdiction of the temporal authorities. Religious orders did not and cannot commit any usurpation of lands.[9]
In 1905, as a step towards solving the Friar Lands Question, the Bureau of Lands (under the American colonial rule) surveyed the hacienda and found that its total land area was 18,501.8694 hectares. In other words, the hacienda accumulated 2,077.8694 hectares in the course of time. These accumulated areas became the subject of dispute for which the Dominicans which challenged to present their titles and which they strongly opposed.

The Administration of the Hacienda

The Hacienda de Calamba was administered by a Dominican lay brother administrator (hermano administrador) who was appointed by the Provincial Superior of the Dominican Order in the Philippines. The lay brother administrator managed the day-to-day operations of the hacienda subject to rules and regulations laid down by the Dominicans. The hacienda was audited annually by the visitador who was also appointed by the Provincial Superior.

To the Dominican landowners, the lay brother administrator was a loyal, trustworthy and efficient servant. His advice was given weight in the formulation of policies for the administration of the estate. Indeed, the success of haciendas in the Philippines can be credited to the lay brother administrators who managed them as if they were the owners.[10] But to the tenants, he is venal and ignorant, mindful only of flattering his masters.[11]

Though the administrator was under the direct authority of the provincial of the order, he was given a great deal of freedom and most decisions were left at his discretion being the most well-informed person in the affairs of the hacienda. He had no authority to eject or replace tenants as this power was bestowed upon the visitador, however, in practice it was him who actually made the decisions ejecting tenants.[12]

Eighteenth-century Spanish officials found him to be a local tyrant. He treated his tenants as slaves, published his own decrees, ran his own jails, harbored bandits, and illegally hid some natives in the estate from government tax officials so that the hacenderos could pocket the tribute payments.[13]

Besides the visitador and hermano administrador, the parish priest (cura parroco) also played an important role in the management of the hacienda. The parish priest complemented the administrator. This was especially true when the religious order which owned the hacienda also held the parish located nearby or within the hacienda. In extreme cases, the parish priest disciplined recalcitrant tenants by excommunication.
The Civil Guard (guardia civil), a civil-military police force, took up the task of maintaining peace and order. Soon, the guardia civil together with the hermano administrador, became instrumental in subjecting the tenants of the hacienda to abuses and tyranny.[14] The guardia civil became an oppressive force in the rural areas.

The Lands and their Rents

In all Dominican hacienda documents, it appeared that the owners employed two accounting methods. On the official registries, the tenants were listed and the lands they held described in terms of quiñones (5.76 hectares perquiñon) and balitas (one-tenth of a quiñon). However, rents were determined by the area of land which could be planted with a given portion of seedlings. Thus, it is difficult to evaluate whether or not the rents of the lands of the Hacienda de Calamba were reasonable.[15]

The lands in Hacienda de Calamba were customarily classified into into three: Tierras Palayeras, TierrasCañadulzales and Tierras Catijanes for purposes of determining the rents. Tierras Palayeras, lands suited for rice farming, were further classified into regadio and secano. Based on the productivity of the lands, the regadio and secano lands were classified as either first class, second class and third class lands. The third class being considered the least productive type. In 1886, Mariano Herbosa reported that irrigated rice land, even if it has no water (secano), were required to pay a tax of fifty (50) cavanes of palay (unhusked rice) and land with six cavanes of seed pay five (5) pesos in cash. [16]

However, the tenants and subtenants complained that though the agreed rent was thirty (30) pesos for lands with six cavanes of seed, if the harvests were good, the administrators unilaterally increased the rents. But if the harvests were poor, the administrators don’t decrease the rents.[17] If poor harvests or bad prices of crops caused the tenants’ default of payments of the annual rents, they had to pay double the following year. This took place in Calamba in the years 1886 and 1887.[18]

Tierras Cañadulzales (sugar lands) were dry lands suited for sugar cane, maize and upland rice cultivation. Rents of sugar lands were generally less than those for rice paddies. However, the rents increased from fifteen pesos for a quiñon of first class land in the 1840s, to twenty-five (25) pesos and finally thirty (30) pesos. In 1886, Mariano Herbosa reported that according to custom, lands classified as second and third-class were taxed at twenty-five (25) pesos or twenty (20) pesos.
While *Tierras Catijanes* were higher shore land which dried up during low tide. *Tierras Catijanes* included *pesquerias* or fishing grounds and *tomana* or garden plots. Various amounts were likewise levied on the plants in the fields far from the town. The tax on the *palay* is separate from that on maize, mango, or garlic.

“The country”, sighed Paciano in 1883, is “a country most burdened with taxes.”[19] “This year,” he added in 1886, “if things turn out well for me, I shall try to have my own land, giving Pansol either to Silvestre or to anybody else or return it to the Estate, because it is not possible for a farmer to support himself in these lands which are overloaded with rent, considering the bad price of sugar.”[20]

**The Collection of Rents**

When the *visitador* arrived, all the tenants were summoned to appear before him. He began to call the roll and as they were called, the tenants approached the *visitador* to pay their cannons. Those who settled their accounts will be marked “paid,”[21] while those who weren’t able to pay were given ten-day grace period after which, the land will be declared “vacant.” Still, though rarely, there were those who pleaded for extension of time to pay the cannon. These were granted.[22]

One peculiar complaint was the failure of the *visitador* to issue receipts for the taxes collected every time the Calambeños pay. In 1883, Paciano Rizal wrote:

This is the time to pay land rent at the Hacienda and contrary to the general customs they accept the money without issuing any receipt to any one. Has this any relation to the important reforms of the general or it is nothing more than one of the arbitrary nets of the administrator? I’m more inclined to the latter one, though I would like it to be the first one…[23]

And in 1886, Mariano Herbosa wrote:

I’m looking for a receipt to send you but I cannot find any, because we don’t get a receipt every time we pay. Any way it is valueless, as it does not state the amount paid; it only says that the tax for that year has been paid; it only says that the tax for that year has been paid, without stating whether it is five centavos, twenty-five centavos, one hundred, or one thousand pesos. The residents here who ask or get the said receipt accepts it with closed eyes. The receipt has no signature in the place where the amount paid ought to be, though it bears their name. Until now I cannot comprehend why some are signed and others are not. This is more or less what is happening here in the payment of land tax and it has been so for many years, since I can remember.[24]
Spanish land grants were frequently referred to as *estancias*.


[12] AUST, Folletos, tomo 120, folio 147. See Roth 56.


Chapter IV. The Cases of Eviction

Year 1889, the situation in Calamba worsened. The past locust infestations, low price of sugar and other natural calamities had taken their toll. The practice of the hacienda of not issuing receipts to rents paid[1] aggravated the situation. If ever receipts were released, these were useless as these contained no signature and no indication of any amount paid. The receipts only stated the taxpayers’ names and the fact that the tax for that year had been paid.[2] Thus, year after year, the unpaid rents increased enormously for payments may end up unreported.

By August, after the tenants boycotted the May canon collection, the hacienda formally asked the court for the eviction of defaulting tenants.[3] Almost sixty (60) tenants were sued by the administrator of the Hacienda before the Court of the Justice of the Peace.[4] The list of receivables
shown to the governor general during his November visit at the hacienda appeared that the tenants paid nothing. This alarmed the governor general for it displayed civil disobedience. [5]

Three things worried the Calambeños about the case. First, the Justice of the Peace confessed that he cannot go against the interests of the Dominican Corporation, because he was a servant of the former syndic. Second, majority of the tenants have no money to defray the costs of litigation. And third, word spread that if the tenants lose the case, they will be expelled, and their warehouses, sugar mills and everything built on the ground will be demolished. [6] The case of Don Francisco Rizal y Mercado was a representative case.

The Rizal Case Before the Municipal Court of Calamba

On 21 August 1889, Friar Gabriel Fernandez, administrator of the Hacienda de Calamba, for and in behalf of the Corporacion de Padres Dominicanos de Filipinas (hereinafter, Corporacion) filed a formal petition to declare the estate rented and held by one Don Francisco Rizal y Mercado and his family vacant. The petition further prayed that the tenants be evicted from said land and tenements. The petition was filed before the Municipal Court of Calamba, Province of Laguna, presided by Don Procopio Pabalan, Justice of the Peace.

The petitioner was represented by Don Vicente Ilagan who, upon request of the respondents, presented his power of attorney to prosecute the case. The respondents, on the other hand, were represented by Don Paciano Rizal y Mercado, [7] a law undergrad but able solicitor. Preliminary hearings were made on 26 November 1889 and 6 December 1889. The trial was conducted on 7 January 1890 where both parties asserted and proved their respective claims. [8]

Petitioners claimed that the contract of tenancy held by the respondents had already expired and that respondents failed to pay a part of the annual rent amounting to 472.21 pesos due on the year 1889.

Respondents insinuated that in 1888 despite prompt payment, they were deprived of their tubigan. All other tenants were left undisturbed despite their failure to pay rents for two or three years. Consequently, respondents argued, there must be different bases for ownership and legal possession of said lands. And since the petition was founded on the ownership of the leased lands by the corporation, respondents argued, said ownership must be proven by presenting the land title. Respondents sought that the boundaries of the hacienda be defined so that all lands not included therein can be declared free from rents, and rents unjustly collected be returned. [9]
Petitioner pointed out that from the very beginning, it was of public knowledge that the lands in dispute, be it rice lands or farm lands, had been the property of the Corporacion de Santissimo Rosario[10]. All tenants recognized this ownership and they conceded with the Corporacion as they renewed their contracts. These proved the Corporacion’s ownership.

Respondents replied that if in the past their fathers and forefathers acknowledged the domination of the Corporacion, it was because of their ignorance or of the fatherly dealings of the past hacienda administrators. Further, respondents claimed that ownership of the said lands cannot be established by mere acquiescence of the tenants but by land titles. Furthermore, respondents now repudiated the Corporacion’s ownership of the subject lands as well as the Corporacion’s legal standing to sue in the instant case.

On 20 March 1890, the Municipal Court dismissed the petition of the Corporacion. The court reasoned that for the Corporacion’s petition to prosper, it must first prove its ownership over the subject lands by showing its titles. This condition was set under section 1546 of the Law on Civil Trials. The failure of the petitioner to show the said titles hampered the proper administration of justice.

After carefully considering Sections 1546, 1561, 1563 and 1564 of the Law on Civil Procedure, the court ruled that the petition was unjustified.

The Review of the Rizal Case Before the Court of First Instance of Laguna

On 29 March 1890, the Corporacion appealed the adverse decision of the Municipal Court of Calamba before the Court of First Instance of Laguna, presided by Judge Celestino Dimayuga. Don Santiago Esquerra and Atty. Manuel Navas Diaz represented the Provincia del Santissimo Rosario de Filipinas while Don Paciano R. Mercado represented the respondent Don Francisco R. Mercado.

On 28 April 1890, after a couple of postponements, trial ensued. Counsel for the appellant, Atty. Navas Diaz, prayed for the annulment of the decision of the Justice of the Peace. He argued that the core issue of the case was the eviction of the respondents by reason of non-payment of rents. The Court of First Instance, he ratiocinated, allowed the proceedings to drift away from the real issue. Instead of resolving the legitimacy of eviction, it tried to determine ownership, which was beyond the jurisdiction of the Court of First Instance. Furthermore, the appellant maintained that the ownership of the lands by the Corporacion had been recognized by the appellee several times and
that the following facts remained unopposed: (1) a contract of tenancy existed; and (2) there was
default in payment of rentals.

As a rejoinder, Don Paciano Rizal Mercado asked the appellate court to affirm the judgment
of the Court of First Instance. He argued that under section 1546 of the Law on Civil Procedure,
actions for eviction must be based on the true ownership of the land in question. Thus, it was
inevitable that land titles must be presented from the very start. Although the core issue of the
appealed case was the propriety of the eviction of tenants, the land titles – the bases of ownership
and of the petitions for eviction – had not been shown. According to the appellee, the failure of the
plaintiff to present these titles as promised showed that it was not trustworthy, thus, the Court of First
Instance properly declared its petition for eviction, unreasonable.

The Court of First Instance of Laguna resolved to nullify the assailed decision of the
Municipal Court of Calamba. The appellate court found the eviction of the tenants proper. A
restatement of the court’s deliberation is presented as follows:

1. The issues raised by the appellant Corporacion (e.g. the appellee’s failure to pay the
agreed rents on time as stipulated in the contract of tenancy) remained undisputed. These issues
were not addressed head-on by the appellee but rather vaguely.

2. On the issue of land titles, the presentation of the same was deemed unnecessary. The
appellee himself, acknowledged the existence of tenancy when he claimed that in 1888, the
appellant dispossessed him of his rented irrigated lands without due process. The katihan (higher
lake shorelines), the subject of the present dispute, was also acknowledged to be a subject of a
contract of tenancy. These submissions, even in the absence of the land titles, were enough
incidents of ownership for purposes of commencing petition for eviction from the said lands under
Section 1546 of the Law on Civil Procedure.

3. When the court conducted the trial based on evidence, it did not necessarily entail the
presentation of land titles evidencing ownership. The parties may present other proofs of their
positions. They may prove, for instance, the existence of contract of tenancy or that the contract was
still subsisting or that there was no default in the payment of rents.

4. The appellee admitted that his ascendants recognized not only the ownership of the
Corporacion of the subject lands but also the contract of tenancy. The appellee, as a substitute and
heir, inherited not only the rights and actions of his ascendants but also their obligations entrenched
in the terms and conditions of the contract of tenancy. The appellee was thus estopped from denying the Corporacion’s ownership to the lands in question.

5. The primary basis of the appellee’s opposition to the prayer of eviction was the non-presentation of land titles evidencing ownership. The presentation of land titles, however, was not necessary in this case – which only looked at the propriety of the prayed eviction. Land titles may be required in litigations where the issue of ownership is in question.

6. The existence of the contract of tenancy presupposed the acknowledgement of the right of the appellant to pursue the case of eviction upon termination of the tenancy and upon non-payment of rents which were due. As the appellee failed to refute this allegation by presentation of receipts evidencing payment in accordance with section 1561 of the Law on Civil Procedure, his eviction, as prayed for by the appellant, must be granted.

7. The appellee’s insistence and adamant stand in opposing the eviction manifested his boldness and being unafraid to be held liable for damages under sections 355, 561, 1544 for the first case, and under sections 1546, 1547, 1561, and 564 of the Law on Civil Procedure.

On 1 May 1890, Judge Celestino Dimayuga ordered Don Francisco Rizal Mercado to vacate the lands in question within twenty (20) days. Judge Dimayuga also ordered the Justice of the Peace to impose upon the appellee a fine amounting to one hundred twenty five (125) peseta. On 16 May 1890, Don Francisco Rizal Mercado was furnished with a copy of the said judgment.

**The Appeals in Manila and in Madrid**

Aggrieved, the evictees immediately appealed the judgment before the Audiencia Real in Manila. Since the appeal, Don Paciano Rizal traveled to and fro following up the cases in Laguna and Manila. In December of 1890, Don Telesforo Antonio Chuidian, a long-time Rizal family friend, requested Atty. Felipe Buencamino, Sr. to defend twelve (12) of the evictees before the Audiencia, which functioned as the Supreme Court. Atty. Buencamino accepted the case having in mind his personal connections with the magistrates of the said court and his friendship with the Marquis de Ahumada, the General Segundo Cabo. On February 3, 1891, thirty-one (31) more evictees were added to Buencamino’s safeguard.

Atty. Buencamino’s strategy was to question the flaws in the processes of the court. He, for instance, questioned the summons to married women respondents without marital permissions. This is so because he intended to delay the proceedings so that his clients, among others, can harvest
their crops. Personally, he doesn’t believe in the achievability of his client’s position. “The Friars cannot justify their ownership of the lands of Calamba,” he explained to Rizal, “but neither can your townsmen prove their right to them.”[14]

He claimed that successfully negotiated a viable agreement between parties which Rizal purportedly rejected, because of which he withdrew his appearance from the case. [15] On June 2, 1890, the Audiencia dismissed the appeals of Don Francisco Rizal Mercado and Don Nicasio Eigasani Alacala.[16] All of the sharecroppers of the Rizals and Eigasanis, approximately 300 families, were ordered evicted with them.

From the dismissal, the appellants appealed before the Tribunal Supremo in Madrid. They executed Powers of Attorney for Dr. Jose Rizal and Atty. Marcelo H. Del Pilar to represent them before the said Tribunal and before the Minister of Colonies.[17] From June 2, 1890, Atty. del Pilar have sixty (60) days to appeal before the Supreme Court of Spain.[18] The Calambeños, never really expected a favorable judgment from the Audiencia. “I’m not hoping for anything good to come out of it,” wrote their counsel, “there (in Spain) perhaps one can still hope for something.”[19]

Jose Rizal was in Brussels, Belgium when he was informed that the Calamba case had been elevated to the Supreme Court of Spain. He immediately informed Atty. Marcelo H. del Pilar about it. Rizal was determined to defeat the Hacienda to weaken it. He also told Atty. del Pilar of his plans of going back to the Philippines if his presence is not required before the Supreme Court. The appeal must be filed before the end of July 1890.[20]

Through Rizal and Del Pilar, both being prominent members of the Asociacion Hispano Filipina, the causes of the Calambeños were espoused by the Asociacion. On 26 May 1890, a complaint was filed by the Asociacion before the Minister of Colonies questioning the banishment without trial of prominent Calambeños to Mindoro.[21] On 30 January 1892, the Asociacion also filed a petition before the Minister of Colonies questioning the acts of the colonial government in Calamba and the punitive orders of the Governor-general Valeriano Weyler executing the Audiencia decision pending appeal and banishing prominent Calambeños to Jolo and to other parts of the country. Public meetings were also held to condemn those acts. [22] The pleadings, however, fell on deaf ears.

Even before the Asociacion filed a petition before the Minister of Colonies, thirty one (31) Calamba families, who were dispossessed of their houses, presented the dispossession issue for review before the Tribunal Supremo in Madrid in the middle of December 1891. They were
represented by Don Gumersindo de Azcarate. The legal fees and other incidental expenses, amounting to 56.12/100 pounds sterling, were sent to Madrid through Dr. Jose Rizal.[23] However, on 5 March 1892, the procurator of the Supreme Court informed the counsel of the appellants in Manila, Atty. Jose Maria Gutierrez, that the court had not received the legal fees. The procurator urged that payments must be sent by telegraph to beat 8 March 1892, the last day of payment. [24]

The Calamba tenants, led by Don Aniceto Camoseng and Binay Elejorde, spent whole day looking for money, offering diamonds, pearls and some jewels of the women of Calamba as security. Socialite Doña Agustina Medel accompanied them and succeeded in raising at least 500 pesos. Through Atty. Gutierrez, the sum was telegraphed to Madrid on 6 March 1892. [25] Despite these efforts, however, their cases were also dismissed for lack of merit.

A Proposed Compromise

In 1890, Fr. Bernardino Nozaleda, a professor of the University of Santo Tomas, was in Spain waiting for his ordination as the Archbishop of Manila. He proposed a win–win formula to solve the Calamba crisis to Marcelo H. Del Pilar. The latter was said to have rejected it. Upon hearing of the said compromise, Don Paciano Rizal expressed that the people of Calamba, tired of the unbearable situation, were more than willing to give in. What did the people of Calamba want? Don Paciano Rizal, in their behalf, expressed:

The people do not wish to own this Estate because it was ceded to the Corporation (of the friars) about 18… by Asanza (sic),[26] but they know also that the original property did not have its present area that they claim now. The most just and equitable settlement of this case is to define the boundaries of the Estate, so that all the land not included in the original sale or cession, can be declared free from the payment of rent, and the amount of rent unjustly collected for it be returned. This is what should be done for the sake of justice, although it leaves much to be desired with respect to the tranquility of both sides…The settlement should be based on something more enduring, such as the separation of their land-holdings through compensation…If the proposed settlement will not hurt your cause there, you may suggest it in order to put a respite to the unbearable situation of the people; otherwise I think secondary interests should always be postponed.[27]

For his part, Atty. Buencamino, through the mediation of Don Francisco Iriarte, Don Vicente Reyes and some government officials, was able to draw the following agreement with the Corporacion:

1. The Dominican fathers as owners of the Calamba estate ceded the ownership of all lands comprising the area of the población of Calamba which involved about 100 quiñones valued at 1,000.00 pesos per quiñon;

2. Accounts for rentals in arrears were all remitted;
3. In exchange, the accused acknowledged the ownership by the Dominicans of the rest of the quiñones of the estate, and would pay only ten percent of the canon in succeeding years.

Atty. Buencamino claimed that the Rizal family, upon consultation with Jose Rizal in Europe, rejected the above concessions. This, however, seemed unlikely for Don Paciano Rizal, the driving force behind the cases, was open to compromise. At any rate, Buencamino withdrew his appearance from the case. Buencamino believed that Jose Rizal considered the case from a political viewpoint rather than from a private point of view. In other words, “Rizal was pushing the Filipino people to the brink of a revolution through the simple act of the tenants' refusing to pay the friars' canon for their supposed estate…”[28]

The Calambeños detested Buencamino as their lawyer. He was janus-faced. Before them, he promised that he would negotiate their case with the governor general and work in Spain for the lifting up of the deportation orders. Yet, before the Dominicans, he disclosed that the Mindoro deportees had been communicating with their relatives in Calamba about the bringing their deportation cases to court. He was also reported to have amassed 2,000 pesos from the insolvent Calambeños. Later, when prominent Calambeños were deported to Jolo, he also obtained several smaller sums from the wives of the deportees.[29] Buencamino was replaced by Atty. Jose Maria Gutierrez, a famous Spanish lawyer and himself an anti-friar.[30]

On 14 August 1890, on the occasion of the execution of the eviction orders, Don Vicente Ilagan, the lawyer of the hacienda, encouraged Don Francisco Rizal Mercado to beg for a compromise with the Syndic. He replied that he would never resort to shelling out any money. As ordered, Don Francisco left his family home and lived with his daughter Narcisa.[31] After the failed “attempts,” there seemed to be no serious effort for compromise coming from both sides.

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Don Paciano Rizal y Mercado was once a student of the Faculty of Civil Law of the University of Santo Tomas from 1868 to 1872. He abandoned his academic career at the end of school year 1871-1872 by not attending the final examinations. Around 1883, in his undated letter to his brother Jose Rizal, he confessed that he found the legal profession useless in Calamba as lawyers there only performed “the duties of landlord, teacher, farmer and contractor, that is, all the professions except that of the lawyer.” See Paciano Rizal to Jose Rizal, Laguna, 1883. Letters Between Rizal and Family Members. Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964.

Sentencia en el Juicio de Desahucio Contra Francisco Rizal y Mercado Deligancia de Consamamiento.

See Paciano Rizal to Jose Rizal, no place, May 27, 1890, Letters Between Rizal and Family Members (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 295 - 298.

In the contracts, the owner of the Hacienda de Calamba was the Corporacion de los Padres Dominicos de Filipinas. In the cases, however, the owner was referred to in different names: Corporacion de Santissimo Rosario and Provincia del Santissimo Rosario de Filipinas.

The peseta was Spain’s currency since 1868. It replaced the peso, which had been adopted in the 15th century and which was known in full as the peso de ocho ("piece of eight"), being divided into eight reales.

Antonino Lopez to Jose Rizal, Manila, 3 June 1890, Letters Between Rizal and Family Members (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 308.

General Segundo Cabo was the second in command to the Governor General.

Felipe Buencamino, Sr. to Jose Rizal, Calamba, 7 February 1891, Rizal’s Correspondence with Fellow Reformists, (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1992), 529 – 537.

Felipe Buencamino, Sr. Sixty Years of Philippine History, Alfonso Lecaros, (trans.), 13.

Antonino Lopez to Jose Rizal, Manila, 3 June 1890, Letters Between Rizal and Family Members (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 308.

Narcisa Rizal to Jose Rizal, Calamba, 10 March 1891, Letters Between Rizal and Family Members (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 323-324.

Jose Rizal to Marcelo H. del Pilar, Brussels, 20 July 1890, Rizal’s Correspondence with Fellow Reformists (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1992), 486.


Jose Rizal to Marcelo H. del Pilar, Brussels, 18 July 1890, Rizal’s Correspondence with Fellow Reformists (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1992), 485.

“Complain,” La Solidaridad: Democratic Fortnightly, 30 September 1890.

“Calamba Incident,” La Solidaridad: Democratic Fortnightly, 31 January 1892.


The hacienda was acquired by the Corporacion in 1833 from a government public auction and not from its last private owner, Don Clemente de Azansa.


Buencamino, Felipe, Sr. Sixty Years of Philippine History, Alfonso Lecaros, (trans.), 15.


Buencamino, Felipe, Sr. Sixty Years of Philippine History, Alfonso Lecaros, (trans.), 15.

Manuel T. Hidalgo to Jose Rizal, Manila, 1890, Letters Between Rizal and Family Members (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 265-266.
Chapter V. The “German Invasion” of Calamba

Rizal's companion, Don Jose Tavier de Andrade. It was rumoured that Rizal and Andrade made speeches against Spain and planted a German flag at Calamba.

On 25 August 1885, a German warship, the *Ilties*, entered the harbor of Yap, one of the islands of the Caroline Islands. These Pacific islands were under the control of Spain since in 1686 when it was rediscovered by the Manilagalleon captain Francisco Laeano. The Germans seized the
archipelagoes of Caroline and Palau, hoisted the German flag and proclaimed them German protectorate.[1]

When the news of these German incursions reached the Spanish imperial capital, the overbearing Madrileños rose in violent riots and demanded war against Germany. To avert an impending war, both countries submitted the question to Pope Leo XIII for arbitration. The Pope proposed a compromise which was accepted by both nations. The compromise recognized Spain’s sovereignty over the archipelagoes but allowed concessions to Germany.[2]

The proximity of the Philippines to the Caroline Islands threatened the Spanish colonial administrators and drove them almost to a point of paranoia. The German incursions reminded Spaniards of the fragility of their position in this far side of the world. So much so that when the Calamba tenants defaulted in their annual rents due to the commercial and agricultural crisis generally experienced by the colony, the Spanish colonial administrators panicked. They thought that the default was instigated by a Germanophile and was a prelude to a German invasion.

The Dominicans were well aware that talks about Jose Rizal and his triumphs in Europe were circulating in Calamba. Because of his close friendship with Prof. Ferdinand Blumentritt, Rizal was rumored to have wide influence on the German nation. He was said to lead a German squadron, distribute the lands of the hacienda to his countrymen, and establish in it a model republic. These rumors disturbed the townsfolk and caused divisiveness. Those who sided with Rizal were labeled as the German party while those who remained loyal to the Dominican fathers were called friar’s party.[3]

Fray Felipe Dominguez, O.P., the lay administrator of the hacienda, reported to his superiors that during the Yuletide of 1887, Rizal was in Calamba. And at the monte de lecheria,[4] Rizal and his companion, a lieutenant of the Guardia Civil, made speeches against Spain and planted the German flag.[5] Certainly, Rizal was then accompanied by Don Jose Taviel de Andrade, the Spanish lieutenant assigned to him as his bodyguard by Governor-general Emilio Terrero. Andrade, years later, declared that no such incident (i.e. hoisting of a German flag) occurred. He believed "that such nonsense emanated from the friars of Calamba." However, he did not bother to find out if his belief was correct.[6]

Even among members of the Rizal family, the Spanish paranoia on the Rizal's German connections had been a subject of chatter.[7] It was said that in June 1888, the uproar caused
Rizal’s censorious novel *Noli Me Tangerereach*ed the Spanish Senate. In the chamber, a certain Senator Vila (sic) was said to have reported that the novel introduced anti-Catholic teachings in the Philippines. It also espoused the anarchist thoughts of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a French libertarian socialist. The novel’s author, whom Senator Vila identified as an *indio*, was a close friend of the Prince of Bismarck (sic).[8] He was a doctor of medicine[9] from a university in Madrid and because of his intelligence, he was elected as a professor at a university in Germany.[10]

Suspicion of German intrusions became intensified when the Calamba townsfolk refused to pay the annual cannon for as long as the Dominicans do not prove their title to the property. On 6 August 1890, Juan Mompeon, the provincial governor of Laguna, rushed to Calamba as if the feared German squadron had arrived. At 9:00 o’clock in the evening, he arrived and immediately summoned 19 or 20 townsfolk to the house of Eusebio Elefaño, the *gobernadorcillo* of Calamba. Among those summoned were Silvestre Ubaldó, Antonino Lopez, Leandro Lopez, Lucia Rizal, Matias Belarmino, Luis Habaña, Marcos Elasegui, Mateo Elejorde and Luis Elasegui. They were, according to the governor, the suspected heads of the rebellion or at least the instigators who were deceiving the innocent. Governor Mompeon proposed that they should settle their accounts with the Dominicans, or he would strictly fulfill his duty as governor.[11]

At 8:00 o’clock in the morning, the following day, the townsfolk met at the town hall. After deliberation, they agreed to wait for the outcome of the appeals made by their fellow citizens, Francisco Mercado and Nicasio Eigasani, before the Supreme Court. They will submit to whatever decision the Supreme Court may decree. They informed the governor of this stand.

Expecting his intervention would speedily resolve the case, the decision of the townsfolk angered the governor. He remarked that the townsfolk were indeed counting on the aid of France or Germany. He concluded that indeed there many rascals in Calamba and that filibusterism really existed. Later that day, at around 7:00 o’clock, the townsfolk were again summoned at the town hall and were asked if they knew when the Germans would come to defend them. They denied having any knowledge about the Germans and their supposed coming.

Realizing he can’t extract any information from the townsfolk, Governor Mompeon left Calamba frustrated. Later in the evening, he sent a telegram to the *gobernadorcillo* ordering the appearance before the government, and in case of defiance, the detention of Silvestre Ubaldó, Antonino Lopez, Leandro Lopez, Paciano Rizal and Mateo Elejorde.[12] They were suspected of
heading the Calamba rebellion. A month later, on 6 September 1890, all of them were shipped to Mindoro as exiles.[13]

The social mind-set of many citizens of Calamba can be gleaned from the letter of one of the evictees, Luis Habaña, to Jose Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar in Madrid: “The people here are not in the least afraid of this case. They are going to fight to the end...In addition to all this, we are very much satisfied and encourage whenever we receive a letter from you especially when we read the name of Mr. Fernando Blumentritt....Please greet on our behalf Mr. Fernando Blumentritt and regards and thanks to all the Filipinos. We shall let you know about the outcome of this case.”[14]

So prevalent was this belief that acting curate, Fr. Domingo, went around the town trying to convince everyone that Mr. Fernando Borromeo (sic) is already on the side of the friars and that Don Jose have already been denied the right of appeal by the Supreme Court.[15]

Unfounded rumors of the German participation not only in local disturbances in the countryside but also in the Philippine revolutionary movement were circulated as far as Europe. These rumors were mere conjectures gathered from unrelated circumstances such as: (1) That German traders were doing good business in Manila; (2) That a considerable number of Germans lived in archipelago and in Manila, they formed Club Nactajau; (3) That Club Nactajau, offered a banquet in honor of Jose Rizal, a known rebel; (4) That Rizal was from Berlin, where he published all his separatist works under the tutelage of Prof. Ferdinand Blumentritt and many others.[16]

Soon Jose Rizal was not only rumored to be a Germanophile, but was himself a naturalized German subject. On21 June 1892, while Rizal was on his way to Manila from Hong Kong, Governor General Eulogio Despujol secretly filed a case against him “for anti-religious and anti-patriotic agitation.”[17] On the same day, the Governor inquired from his executive secretary, Don Luis de la Torre, if indeed Rizal was a naturalized German subject. He also consulted about the possible consequences of deporting a person who had the protection of a strong nation without due process just like what they did with Filipinos.[18]

The imagined German incursions and support in the colony had been a convenient reason for getting rid of unwanted Calamba residents. On 6 October 1888, Manuel T. Hidalgo, by decree of the Superior Government, was banished to the town of Tagbilaran. He was accused of being a brave filibustero being supported by France and Germany.[19] On 6 September 1890, five (5) Calambeños were shipped to Calapan, Mindoro as exiles on the same accusation. On 13 November
1891, twenty five (25) Calambeños were decreed to be deported to the island of Jolo. And finally, on 14 July 1892, Jose Rizal was secretly deported to the town of Dapitan in Mindanao.

[8] Probably referring to Otto von Bismarck, Prime minister of Prussia (1862–1873, 1873–1890) and founder and first chancellor (1871–1890) of the German Empire.
[9] Rizal earned the degree of licentiate in medicine, not a doctor of medicine, from the Universidad Central de Madrid on 21 June 1884.
[10] Rizal attended lectures at the University of Leipzig and the University of Berlin (now Humboldt University of Berlin) but was never elected to a teaching post in any German university.
[12] ibid, 316.
[14] Luis Habaña to Jose Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar, Calamba, 11 January 1891, Rizal’s Correspondence with Fellow Reformists, (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1992), 516 – 517.
Chapter VI. The Calamba Evictions

During the years 1887 to 1889, the town of Calamba experienced an economic decline. The tenants of the Hacienda de Calamba could hardly pay their annual rents. The lay-brother administrators of the hacienda tried collect payments in cunning ways they knew. In 1885, they declared all the lands of the hacienda “vacant” and invited prospective tenants from the surrounding towns to take over the lands. Alarmèed, the tenants squeezed money from the distressed sale of their products and grudgingly paid their dues.\[1\] That year, the hacienda collected 7,465 cavans of palay and 14,136 pesos in rents.\[2\]

On 14 August 1890, the Rizals were ordered to abandon their family home.

In 1889, the lay-brother administrators used the governor general’s visit to Calamba to threatened the defaulting tenants. The Syndic, Fr. Francisco Govea, repeatedly announced that he was a friend of the governor and that whomsoever he named would be stripped and seized by the
order of the governor. Some paid, while others remained adamant. That year, the hacienda collected 8,650 cavans of palay and 9,929 pesos.

In 1890, after all the cunning means were exhausted, the hacienda resorted to confiscations and evictions. The irrigated lands of Don Mariano Herbosa, who died of cholera in 1889, were confiscated for his family’s failure to pay the canons for two years. Court battles against other defaulting tenants were also commenced. The hacienda lost before the Municipal Court of Calamba allegedly because “the presiding judge was the deputy inspector of the fields, a low-born indio, and Rizal’s brother dictated the sentence.” The hacienda appealed and won before the Court of First Instance of Laguna and before the Audiencia Real in Manila. The tenants appealed before the Tribunal Supremo in Madrid.

Pending appeal at Tribunal Supremo, the hacienda moved for and was granted execution of the judgment rendered by the Audiencia Real in Manila. The pertinent portion of the judgment to be executed read as follows:

“Let the rural and urban lots held on lease to which this case refers be evacuated, according to the terms and limits marked by law, with the understanding that, in case of failure to comply, the law will proceed to their demolition as provided for by the same.”

With the impending execution of judgment, the situation in Calamba became tensed. Some brave Calambeños opted defend their lands by force. They were dubbed as “ferocious beasts” by the opposing side. Endangered, the lay-brother administrators never traveled around the hacienda without being accompanied by the lieutenant of the civil guard. When they have some orders for the hacienda, they send out the capitan (gobernadorcillo), justice of the peace, and a certain Don V. Laureola Roque rather than implementing these orders by themselves.

In the case of Don Francisco Rizal y Mercado, his family had already received notices of eviction before 30 June 1890. In general, the evictees were given time, at least twelve (12) days, to gather their personal belongings after which they were ordered to abandon their houses. The Rizal family, however, was hoping that the proof of appeal filed before the Tribunal Supremo in Madrid would be sufficient to temporarily suspend the evictions. But contrary to their expectations, the evictions proceeded on 14 August 1890. The Rizals were ordered to abandon their family home and their furniture and other movables were removed and left on the streets for the people to view. The spouses Francisco and Teodora Rizal y Mercado went to live with their daughter Narcisa.
Gradually, other families were also evicted. Two, three, four and then finally, twelve families were driven out of their homes. Their family belongings were left in the streets. These humiliations were done “to put an end to this kind of socialistic communism taking form there (in Calamba), to the great harm of religion and the fatherland.” [12] It also served as a warning to the rest of the Calambeños not to venture into insurrectionary activities.

However, the disposessions and evictions seemed to have no effect on the tenants. “All those who had been dispossessed of their lands sometime ago returned to take possession of them by force.”[13] The bold ones returned to their houses after abandoning them. Others were accommodated by their relatives and friends who were not evicted. Still others built new houses on the lands of bonafide tenants of the hacienda without securing permission from the administrators.[14]

Irritated by the seeming mockery of their exercise of ownership, the proprietors again effected disposessions and evictions against the illegal tenants on January and February 1891. This time, however, it was done with vengeance. More than three hundred (300) families were stripped of all their lands, houses, farm animals, and crops (i.e. sugar, rice, and other industrial fruits). Their relatives and friends were prohibited to extend accommodation to them. Thus, the evictees were forced to live either in the streets, under the shade of trees, or at the lakeshore.

Calamba was in total chaos. The civil guards were everywhere, bothering everyone. Calesas, carts and horses were hailed and were required to present corresponding papers. Boys and girls aged twelve (12) and above were compelled to secure cedula from the municipal hall which cost four (4) reales.[15] The authorities confiscated everything that the evictees owned. If the authorities didn’t find the concerned evictee or his farm animals, they maltreated his manager, his peasants, or the barrio lieutenant. A Calambeño lost two teeth as a result of a blow he received on the mouth from the butt of a gun. There were others who fell unconscious because of similar cruelties. The townsfolk felt helpless because all these were perpetuated under the tutelage of the judge of first instance, the justice of the peace, the lieutenant and the civil guards. “Believe me,” pleaded Narcisa Rizal to his brother Jose, “if this outrage continues, Calamba is going to die.”[16]
Seven months later, in October and November 1891, twenty nine (29) more tenants of the rural and urban areas of the hacienda were evicted by the agents of the department of justice. To help enforce the huge number of evictions, Governor General Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau sent some fifty (50) soldiers of the Regimiento Peninsular de Artillería to Calamba. The deployment was under the command of the Colonel of the 20th Tercio[17] of the Civil guard, Don Francisco Olive y Garcia.
With the help of the troops, the demolition of edifices surreptitiously built was commenced. The wooden houses were dismantled and the building materials were turned over to the owners. The provincial governor, however, ordered that the materials should not be left at the public road for a long time. If within twenty (24) hours these materials remained uncollected, these will be burned in a safe place. According to a Dominican report, only four (4) or five (5) of the dismantled houses were made of wood. Most of them were made of light materials – bamboo and nipa – making them more apt to be called huts rather than houses. The unusual strength of deployed troops plus the burning of the uncollected building materials spurred loud debasing outcries against the Dominican Order in Manila, Hong Kong and Madrid.[18] Austin Craig, writing in 1913, estimated some 150,000 pesos worth of damaged property during the incident. The above estimates insinuated that there were more houses demolished than what appeared in the reports.[19]

The Spanish newspaper, La Epoca, reported that the troops sent by Governor General Weyler behaved well in Calamba. The colonel and his officials were billeted in a prominent house at the invitation of its owner. The rest of the troops rented a house which was deserted because of the evictions. The troops even helped a team of firemen during the disastrous fires allegedly started by the “rebels.” The “rebels” reportedly burned the house of the Justice of the Peace and a granary full of grain. [20]

On the other hand, La Solidaridad, a Filipino propaganda newspaper, reported a different version of the event. Governor General Weyler reportedly sent three hundred (300) artillerymen, two hundred (200) cavalrymen and one hundred (100) native soldiers.[21] The “dreadful” General Weyler sent the troops to destroy the town if the tenants refuse to leave the territory. Col. Olive reportedly ordered to shoot anyone who resisted. The colonial government purportedly simulated rebellion to place the Calamba under military control. To perfect the simulation, somebody burned a house and a granary on the night of 29 October 1891.[22]

Rumors on Weyler’s slavish subservience to the wishes of the Dominicans spread among the political circles not only in Manila but also in Madrid. As early as November 8, 1888, he had been reported to be eating at the convents – that is to say he had already fallen under the influence of the Friars.[23] Rumormonger Atty. Felipe Buencamino, Sr. recounted that the Dominicans paid Governor General Weyler in exchange of the protection he extended to the friars during the Calamba affair. The governor deployed troops “which started to demolish the house of Rizal’s
parents, whom they arrested with his brothers-in-law, brother and sisters, exiling the men to different places of the archipelago.”[24] In exchange, the Dominicans remitted to Spain a par value of 300,000 pesos in favor of Weyler. After the receiving the money, the governor immediately arranged his departure for Spain.[25]

The truth behind the rumored slavish subservience of Weyler to the friars was betrayed by his confidential letters to the latter. In a letter addressed to the Dominicans, the governor expressed his pleasure in denying the petition of the Calambeños (and thus favoring the Dominicans). He added that the friars should have noticed that the times demand diplomacy but, should occasion arise, he will act with energy. Spain promptly ordered an investigation into Weyler’s administration on charges of extensive and systematic frauds on the government.[26] The investigation, however, went nowhere.

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[15] Four (4) reales was then equivalent to one-half of peso fuerte.
[21] La Solidaridad, 31 December 1891.
[23] Mariano Ponce to Jose Rizal, Barcelona, 17 November 1888, Rizal’s Correspondence with Fellow Reformists, (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1992), 239 – 240.
Chapter VII. The Deportations of Prominent Calambeños

Don Manuel Timoteo Hidalgo was perhaps the most outspoken supporter of Dr. Jose Rizal in Calamba. He was a brother-in-law of Rizal being the husband Saturnina, Rizal’s elder sister. Although aware of the arbitrariness of those who were in power, Hidalgo was not afraid to speak his mind, after all, he held a degree in law from the University of Santo Tomas and had served as a directorcillo of the court.

As expected, Hidalgo gained many enemies. Without due process, the Superior Government decreed his banishment to the town of Tagbilaran, Province of Bohol. He did not even know his accuser or why he was banished. He believed, however, that it was Fr. Francisco Govea, the syndic of the Corporacion, who denounced him to the civil governor of the province. And through the Director General of Civil Administration, Don Benigno Quiroga Ballesteros, who inquired from the Governor General, Hidalgo found out that he was charged of spreading anti-religious and subversive ideas and of being a representative of Jose Rizal.

Don Cipriano Rubio, former lieutenant and acting gobernadorcillo, also charged Hidalgo of being a filibustero. The charge was seconded by Juan Lopez, a lieutenant of guardia civil and a harsh critic of Rizal. The other adverse witnesses were Capitan Lucas and Capitan Quico, who, Hidalgo believed, had axes to grind against him.

Thus, amidst the howling of his family, Hidalgo and a servant left Calamba as exiles. On 6 October 1888, they arrived in Cebu, where they took a boat to Tagbilaran. Hidalgo was the first to be deported on account of the agrarian problem in the hacienda. Upon informed, Jose Rizal worked relentlessly in Spain for Hidalgo’s exculpation. All his pleas, however, fell on deaf ears.

Year 1889, the situation in Calamba worsened. The past locust infestations, low price of sugar and other natural calamities had taken their toll. The practice of the hacienda of not issuing receipts to rents paid aggravated the situation. If ever receipts were released, these were useless as these contained neither signature nor indication of any amount paid. The receipts only stated the taxpayers’ names and the fact that the tax for that year had been paid. Thus, year after year, the unpaid rents increased enormously for payments may end up unreported.

By August, after the tenants boycotted the May canon collection, the hacienda formally asked the court for the eviction of defaulting tenants. The list of receivables shown to the
governor general during his November visit at the hacienda appeared that the tenants paid nothing. This alarmed the governor general for it displayed civil disobedience.[9]

In November, Don Manuel Hidalgo was allowed to return to Luzon to take care of his family’s businesses. He and his wife Neneng owned sugar plantations in Tanawan, Batangas and Los Baños, Laguna. After gathering the sugar crops and settling his businesses, Hidalgo was again decreed by governor general to be banished back to Tagbilaran. He was again denounced by the syndic and the lay brothers as the instigator of the recent Calamba disturbances.[10] He was arrested on the Christmas day of 1889 while dining with his family.[11]

Year 1890, the tenants still have no money to pay their obligations. When the Visitador arrived for the collection of annual canon, only Don Eusebio Elepaño, Don Pantaleon Quintero and few other families were able to pay.[12] The defaulting tenants’ only hope lied on Jose Rizal’s suggestion that their refusal to pay may allow the case to reach the Supreme Court in Madrid via appeal.[13] So hopeful were the penniless tenants that detractors had to fabricate stories about Rizal to demoralize them. Negative rumors about Rizal spread. Some of these rumors were: that Rizal was purchased by the friars and had changed side; that he was imprisoned in Madrid; and worst, he was poisoned to death.[14]

By May, Judge Celestino Dimayuga of the Court of First Instance of Laguna ordered the eviction Don Francisco Rizal Mercado from his tenanted lands in the hacienda. Don Nicasio Eisagani met the same fate. With the principal tenants evicted, a number of families working for them were also evicted. Both judgments were promptly appealed before the Audiencia in Manila, which dismissed the case for lack of merit. With waning hope, the Calambeños, appealed their cases before the Tribunal Supremo in Madrid.

Knowing what the friars can do pending appeal, Governor Mompeon persuaded Gobernadorcillo Elepaño to try to work for a compromise between the parties. Finding Elepaño unable to contain the crisis plus the rumors of French or German reinforcement to the “Calamba rebellion,” Governor Mompeon, tried to solve the problem himself. But the Calambeños, penniless, can’t offer any compromise except to wait for the outcome of the appeals of Francisco Mercado and Nicasio Eisagani in Madrid. Frustrated, Governor Mompeon took the Calambeño’s refusal to pay rents as filibusterism and ordered the appearance before the government of its
Some lettered Calambeños were vocal and thus, were charged to have incited others to fight the authorities. As a preventive measure, on 6 September 1890, at 4:30 o’clock in afternoon, Silvestre Ubaldo, Antonino Lopez, Leandro Lopez, Paciano Rizal and Mateo Elejorde, all apparent leaders, were shipped to Mindoro as exiles on board the steamer Brutus. Subsequent query by their relatives revealed that although there were deportation papers, there were no formal accusations against them. Thus, there was no due process.

The deportees stayed in the town of Calapan, the capital of Mindoro, where they rented a furnished house for seven (7) pesos a month. Later, the government attempted to transfer them to Jolo due to rumors that they were still communicating with their relatives in Calamba, inducing the latter to bring their deportation case to court.

Year 1891 was a fateful year. Its first two months were marked with violent evictions and dispossession. Calamba was in total disarray. In October, Governor General Valeriano Weyler sent armed troops, under the command of Colonel Francisco Olive y Garcia, to effect the orders of eviction. Col. Olive also recommended the exile of twenty-five (25) Calambeños who “formed a strong body to oppose not only the Dominicans but also the Spanish domination in the Philippines.”

The colony, if left unchecked, will soon plunge into a revolution.

Acting on the recommendation, on 13 November 1891, the Secretariat of the General Government of the Philippines informed the Civil Governor of Manila that the Governor General banished to the Island of Jolo twenty-five (25) residents of the town of Calamba, province of Laguna. The Civil Governor of Manila was expected to confine the deportees in the capital’s public jail and to order their embarkation in next the mail steamship bound for the Island of Jolo in Mindanao.

The deportees were: Don Francisco Rizal Mercado, Doña Saturnina Rizal Realonda, Doña Narcisa Rizal Realonda, Doña Lucia Rizal Realonda, Doña Petrona Quintero Paña, Don Nicolas Llamas Rizal, Don Aquilino Gicolea Hervolario, Don Matias Belarmino Quintera, Don Velentin Elejorde Alcala, Don Patricio Rizal, Don Nicasio Eygasani Alcala and Don Raymundo Alviar Faolmino.

Also included were: Don Rafael Elejorde, Don Santos Gicolea, Don Cayetano de Jesus, Don Luis Elasegui Ustaris, Don Custodio Faulmague, Don Angel Alcuyaga, Don Pascual Alcaraz, Don
Ysaac Alviar Alcala, Don Victor Alviar Lopez, Don Mamerto Alviar Faolmino, Don Pio Alcala Arambulo, Don Felipe Habacon Cañope[23] and Don Narciso Habacon.[24]

The next day, 14 November 1891, Don Nicolas Llamas Rizal, Don Cayetano de Jesus, Don Patricio Rizal and Don Felipe Habacoñe were arrested by the Guardia Civil under the command Col. Miguel Concepcion.[25] They were imprisoned in Bilibid awaiting their deportation to Jolo.[26] Atty. Jose Maria Gutierrez, a peninsular Spaniard, negotiated the lifting up of the deportation orders of the twenty-five (25) from the new Governor General but failed. The arrested deportees were placed on board en route to Jolo on 28 November 1891.[27] The wives of the deportees also presented a petition to the Governor General.[28]

Don Francisco Rizal Mercado evaded Jolo deportation by escaping to Hong Kong together with Don Paciano Rizal and Silvestre Ubaldo who also evaded completing their Mindoro deportation.[29] They were assisted by Partido Rizalino, a political party organized by patriotic Filipinos in Manila. The party hid them in the house of Martin Zamosa and then facilitated their escape to Hong Kong. Zamosa, a Chinese subject, was later on imprisoned because of the said acts.[30]

Manuel Hidalgo, not having returned to Tagbilaran, and wife Saturnina, another Jolo deportee, were in Manila, hiding. Although unafraid, they avoided being seen by the authorities. Tenetur, Hidalgo wrote, tadere se ipsum (Latin: To make one visible is to deliver oneself).[31] Don Matias Belarmino was arrested in his house on Christmas Eve of 1891. He was stricken with fever thus he was incarcerated in Calamba until he was well. He was brought to Manila and later deported to Jolo.[32] All in all, only seventeen (17) of the twenty-five (25) Calambeños decreed to be deported were arrested and sent to Jolo.[33]

On 23 November 1891, Doña Teodora Alonzo and Doña Josefa Rizal Mercado were also arrested and were turned over to the Civil Governor of the Province of Manila.[34] However, they were released on the same day because their names were not in the list of deportees.[35] Josefa’s real name, however, was suspected to be Saturnina, a name included in the deportation list. Thus, the Civil Government of Manila had to request the Civil Guards of Calamba to verify the baptismal records of Josefa Rizal Realonda if the name Saturnina appeared.[36] Likewise, the baptismal records of Saturnina, Narcisa and Lucia, all surnamed Rizal Realonda, were ordered verified for any
entry of other names.[37] The provincial government answered that all of them had singular names and their parents were Francisco Rizal Mercado and Teodora Realonda.[38]

As the name Teodora Alonzo, which appeared in the cedula personal (personal document) did not tally with name Teodora Realonda appearing in the baptismal records of her children, the old woman was subsequently accused of falsification of cedula. Thus, on 28 November 1891, Teodora Alonzo and Josefa were rearrested and delivered to the Civil Governor of Laguna. Austin Craig, a Rizal biographer who had the opportunity of interviewing the surviving Rizal relatives before 1913, stated that despite the presence of boats regularly plying the upstream of Pasig River towards Laguna, “the two women were ordered to be taken there (Santa Cruz, Laguna) for trial on foot.” The guards who escorted them, however, carried the elderly lady in a hammock.[39]

Soon, before the yuletide of 1891, Doña Teodora Alonzo, Lucia Rizal Herbosa and Josefa Rizal joined the rest of the family in Hong Kong. The reunion turned out to be one of the happiest times in Jose Rizal’s short life. “Here we are,” Rizal wrote his good friend Ferdinand Blumentritt, “all living together, my parents, sisters, and brother, in peace and far from the prosecutions they suffered in the Philippines. They are very much pleased with the English government.”[40]

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[2] Secretary


[22] Also spelled as Eigasani.

[23] In subsequent communications, his name was spelled as Felipe Abacon, see Primer Teniente Comandante del Primer Tercio de la Guardia Civil a Gobernador Civil de Manila, 14 November 1891 in *Ang Nawaglit na Tahanan: Mga Bagong-Tuklas na Tala Ukol kay Rizal at Mga Taga-Calamba*, (Manila: Pambansang Sinupan ng mga Tala, 1997), 38.


[26] Orden del Gobierno Civil de Manila de Entrega de Cuatro Individuos a la Carcel de Bilibid, 16 Noviembre 1891. See *Ang Nawaglit na Tahanan: Mga Bagong-Tuklas na Tala Ukol kay Rizal at Mga Taga-Calamba*, (Manila: Pambansang Sinupan ng mga Tala, 1997), 40.


[34] Comandante Jefe de la Guardia Civil a Gobernador Civil de la Provincia, Manila, 23 Noviembre 1891, facsimile in *Ang Nawaglit na Tahanan: Mga Bagong-Tuklas na Tala Ukol kay Rizal at Mga Taga-Calamba*, (Manila: Pambansang Sinupan ng mga Tala, 1997), 31.


[38] Gobierno Civil de La Laguna a Gobierno Civil de la Provincia, Laguna, 27 Noviembre 1891, in Ang Nawaglit na Tahanan: Mga Bagong-Tuklas na Tala Ukol kay Rizal at Mga Taga-Calamba, (Manila: Pambansang Sinupan ng mga Tala, 1997), 54.


Chapter VIII. The Calamba Affair as a Propaganda Battle Cry

News articles about the Calamba affairs appeared in La Solidaridad.

Jose Rizal, whose family was one of the evictees of the Hacienda de Calamba, was himself an eminent propagandist. His earnestness, personal discipline and determination to win reforms for the Philippines were admired not only by his colleagues but also by liberal Spaniards. Thus, though helpless in a faraway land, he was not alone in his struggle to help the Calambeños and his family seeking justice before the Supreme Court in Madrid. With him were his co-propagandists who did not only espoused the Calambeños’ cause but also used the incident as a propaganda battle cry to win reforms for the Philippines.

The Calamba Articles at the La Solidaridad

With the assistance of Atty. Marcelo H. del Pilar, articles were published about the banishment without due process of Antonio Lopez, Silvestre Ubaldo, Manuel T. Hidalgo, Leandro Lopez, Cipriano Rubio, Mateo Elejorde and Paciano R. Mercado to Mindoro. A petition asking the government to decree their immediate return was also filed before the Minister of Colonies.[1]

Rizal, himself, wrote a pointed article: “An Outrage” for La Solidaridad attacking the refusal of the religious authorities to allow the remains of Mariano Herbosa to be buried at Calamba’s Catholic cemetery on the sole ground that the deceased had been negligent in his religious duties.

Herbosa was Rizal’s brother-in-law being married to Rizal’s sister, Lucia – a fact that was spitefully mentioned by the friar parish priest when asking for instructions from the Archbishop stationed at Manila.[2] Herbosa died of cholera in 1889. He was buried at the Lecheria, a part of the hacienda leased to the Rizals.[3]
In the February 28, 1890 issue of La Solidaridad, Jose Rizal wrote an ironic article entitled Sin Nombre (Without Title) attacking the dismissal of the 1888 petition of the Calambeños asking for government intervention to avert the harassments of the hermano administrador.

The factual background of the said article follows. On 30 December 1887, the Gobernadorcillo and the principales of Calamba were ordered by the provincial government of Laguna to disclose whether the hacienda de Calamba had expanded its lands or increased its produce during the last three years. This order was made in compliance with the official inquiry of the Central Administration of Direct Taxes dated 24 December 1887.

On 8 January 1888, more than seventy (70) principales including the Gobernadorcillo of Calamba wrote a detailed reply which did not only reveal the enormous increase of the products on the part of the hacienda de Calamba but also the diminution of the possessions of the tenants. This reply reaped the ire of the hermano administrador who threatened to raise the tenants’ rentals if by reason of the detailed reply, the Central Administration of Direct Taxes would levy the appropriate taxes.

The stressed Calambeños wrote the insular government asking for intervention to avert the impending threats. The new governor, instead of sending an intervener to Calamba, sent a private investigator to the Provincial of the Dominicans where unilateral explanations were made. This led to the dismissal of the petition which was regarded as false data.

Rizal branded the dismissal as Sin Nombre (Without Title) attacking not only the lack of due process on the part of the investigator but also the lack of title of the Corporacion to some lands usurped by the hacienda.

In the December 15, 1891 issue of La Solidaridad, Eduardo de Lete reported with contempt the sad odyssey of the Calambeños who were driven out of their homes for failure to pay their annual rents. The governor then was Governor General Valeriano Weyler who was branded as the modern Nero. He sent troops to execute the evictions. De Lete painted a dismal picture of the unpleasant incident as follows:

…Houses closed; the streets deserted; the inhabitants walking gravely; the wife with a handkerchief in one hand and as much clothing as she could take in the other; a sack of rice [carried] on top of the head; behind her, the husband leading domestic animals and sacks of palay; the houses deserted; friend and business abandoned, without any fixed place to go, knowing not if shelter will be available in the next town.[4]
De Lete proceeded to ask a debasing question: “How low the prestige of the Mother Country and her unfortunate colonial policy has become? What a beautiful way of losing colonies!”[5] These prophetic questions bull’s-eyed the long term effect of this ignored agrarian problem.

On 31 January 1892, La Solidaridad reported that the Asociacion Hispano-Filipina espoused the cause of the Calambeños and spearheaded the filing of the complaint against the Corporacion before the Minister of Colonies. The Asociacion also organized a public gathering of the natives, Filipinos and liberal Spaniards at the Martin Theater in Madrid to discuss the Calamba incident.[6]
The Calamba Evictions were immortalized in El Fílibusterismo.

**El Fílibusterismo: Iron Pots vs. Clay Jars**

The saga of an ordinary Calambeño struggling against the hacienda administrators was fictionalized by Rizal in his second propaganda novel, *El Fílibusterismo*. The novel’s title came from a mid-19th century Spanish word *filibustero*, which was derived from the Dutch word *vrijbuiters*, meaning “pirate.” Another functional meaning was “a sea robber, especially one of the piratical adventurers, English and French, who preyed on the Spanish ships and colonies in America in the
17th and 18th centuries."[8] A person who advocated reforms for the Philippines was branded as a *filibustero* and held suspect by the Spanish authorities.[9]

Though fictionalized, Rizal cannot help but pour out raw emotions of rage, despair and helplessness. He even named names of real people, especially the victims of senseless banishments. After the fictional character Cabesang Tales killed the friar-administrator of the hacienda and the new tenants of his lands, Rizal then made the following lamentations naming names of real people and the town of San Diego was unveiled to be Calamba:

Calm yourselves, peaceful inhabitants of Kalamba! None of you are named Tales, none of you have committed any crime! You are called Luis Habaña, Matías Belarmino, Nicasio Eigasani, Cayetano de Jesus, Mateo Elejorde, Leandro Lopez, Antonino Lopez, Silvestre Ubaldo, Manuel Hidalgo, Paciano Mercado, your name is the whole village of Kalamba. You cleared your fields, on them you have spent the labor of your whole lives, your savings, your vigils and privations, and you have been despoiled of them, driven from your homes, with the rest forbidden to show you hospitality! Not content with outraging justice, they have trampled upon the sacred traditions of your country! You have served Spain and the King, and when in their name you have asked for justice, you were banished without trial, torn from your wives' arms and your children's caresses! Any one of you has suffered more than Cabesang Tales, and yet none, not one of you, has received justice! Neither pity nor humanity has been shown you—you have been persecuted beyond the tomb, as was Mariano Herbosa! Weep or laugh, there in those lonely isles where you wander vaguely, uncertain of the future! Spain, the generous Spain, is watching over you, and sooner or later you will have justice![10]

In Chapters IV, IX, and X of *El Filibusterismo* entitled “Cabesang Tales,” “Pilates,” and “Wealth and Want,” Rizal retold the story of a lowly native farmer, a loyal subject of Spain, who prospered through hard work and lost his fortunes when the Friars usurped his lands. He lost his fortunes, his family and eventually his loyalty to mother Spain.

**The Saga of Cabesang Tales and his Family[11]**

Telesforo Juan de Dios, popularly known as Tales, the son of Tandang Selo, after acquiring two carabaos (water buffalos) and a considerable capital, cleared the lands situated at the borders between the towns of San Diego and Tani. Tales believed the lands belonged to no one. The clearing and cultivation of the lands was a family affair and thus, the whole family was stricken with malaria. Tales’ wife and his daughter, Lucia died and were buried at the said fields.

When the family began to harvest their first crop, a religious corporation, which owned a hacienda in the neighboring town, claimed the cleared fields on the pretext that the lands fell within their hacienda’s boundaries. The corporation, at once, started to set up their marks. The friar-administrator, however, offered Tales’ family to continue cultivating the lands on a minimal annual rent of twenty (20) or thirty (30) pesos.
Tales, in order not to smash a palayok (clay jar) against a kawali (iron pot), conceded to the offer. Rifts between the Spaniards and the natives were wryly alluded to as the clash between a kawali and a palayok where the Spaniards were the invincible kawali and the natives were the fragile palayok. Tandang Selo coaxed Tales to be patient and pretend that the thirty pesos had been lost in gambling or had fallen into the waters and swallowed by a crocodile.

The first harvests were great and sold well. The friars raised the rent to fifty (50) pesos. Again, without grudge, Tales paid in order to avoid the clashing of the kawali and the palayok. As coaxed, he pretended that the crocodile had grown.

With his fortune, Tales built a wooden house at barrio Sagpang, Municipality of Tiani, adjoining San Diego. Noticing Tales’ economic progress, the community appointed him as the cabeza de barangay (head of the barangay). Hence he was called Cabesang Tales who, in order to avoid disputes with the government, shouldered the uncollected taxes of those who moved out or those who died but whose names remained listed in the tax list. The grown crocodile’s relatives have joined him.

Another increase in the rent of his lands was charged the next year. When the rent skyrocketed to two hundred pesos, Tales grumbled and protested. The friar-administrator then told him that if he could not pay, someone else would be assigned to cultivate the land.

Cabesang Tales became furious. He resisted and refused to pay a single centavo. He would give up his fields only to the first man who could irrigate it with blood drawn from his own veins. Lawsuit followed and Cabesang Tales submitted himself court jurisdiction in the hope that somehow justice will still prevail. He spent his savings to pay lawyers, notaries, and solicitors, not to mention the officials and clerks who exploited his ignorance and his needs. He traveled to and fro between the village and the capital. He did not eat or sleep well. His talk was always about briefs, exhibits and appeals.

He fought insistently. Lawyers and judges tried to convince Cabesang Tales to instead pay the rent demanded. Even Governor M_______[12] made a trip to Sagpang just to convince him to give in to the demands of the friars. But the cabeza demanded that the friars must prove their ownership over the lands first by showing documents, papers, titles and deeds. The friars had none of these, resting their arguments only on Tales’ past concessions. The honorable local judges,
fearing for their own summary dismissal, gave the decision to the friars. The kawali smashed the palayok into a thousand pieces.

Cабesang Tales appealed, loaded his shotgun and patrolled his fields. He had two adversaries: the hacienda and the tulisanes (bandits). Rumors spread that he threatened to bury the friar-administrator in his fields. The Captain-General issued a decree forbidding and confiscating firearms. Cабesang Tales was forced to hand over his shotgun exposing him helpless to the kidnap for ransom activities of the tulisanes. Armed with a long bolo, he continued to patrol his fields, where “every stalk of cane growing there is one of [his] wife's bones.”

The bolo was also confiscated on the excuse that it was too long. Cабesang Tales took his father’s ax and continued his rounds. As Cабesang Tales’ ax was helpless against tulisanes’ revolvers and rifles, he was kidnapped and a five-hundred-peso ransom was demanded from his family which must be paid in two days. Tandang Selo and Cабesang Tales’ daughter Juli raised the amount by selling all their valuables except Maria Clara’s locket.

Still, the family lacked two hundred fifty pesos to complete the ransom. Hermana Penchang, a pious woman, lent the needed amount on the condition that Juli shall be her servant until the debt was paid. Juli accepted the condition and promised to start serving on the very next day – a Christmas day. Suffering from great despair, Tandang Selo became dumb.

Upon Cабesang Tales’ return, he was shocked to find his lands being tended by another tenant, his daughter working as a servant and his father dumb. He also received a notice to vacate his house within three days. Before the three days were over, the famous jeweler Simoun came to the Sagpang and stayed at his house.

For his protection against the tulisanes, the jeweler Simoun brought with him a revolver and showed it to Cабesang Tales firing at a palm tree two hundred paces away. Cабesang Tales became silent.

As the Simoun exhibited his wares to interested customers, the locket of Maria Clara, which was in Cабesang Tales’ possession, became the subject of conversation. Upon examining it, Simoun offered to buy it for five hundred pesos or barter it with any of his jewelries at Cабesang Tales’ choice. It was a rare opportunity, which could have reversed his misfortunes. Cабesang Tales left to consult his daughter and promised he will be back.
On his way to Juli, he saw the friar-administrator together with a man whom he recognized as the new tenant of his lands. He saw them moving over his fields. It seemed to him that they were mocking him and laughing at his powerlessness. He shut his eyes. When he opened them, he saw them merrily laughing and then he saw them pointing at his house and laughed again.

Simoun waited the whole night for Cabesang Tales. The next morning, he noticed that his revolver was gone. Cabesang Tales took the revolver and left Maria Clara’s locket in exchange. In a note, Cabesang Tales intimated that he will join the tulisanes. He also warned the jeweler to change his route for the tulisanes might abduct him for a large ransom. Simoun, himself full of vengeance, found his man.

That night, the friar-administrator and the new tenant were found dead. Their heads were hacked open and their mouths crammed with earth. The new tenant’s wife was also found dead with her mouth packed with earth and throat cut. And beside her was a piece of paper containing the name Tales written in her blood.

Such was Calamba as a propaganda material. It was a powerful propaganda material which electrified Spain and subjected the Dominican Order to demeaning public scrutiny. This continued even after the Philippines came under the colonial clutch of the United States of America.

[1]"Complain," La Solidaridad, 30 September 1890.
[6]"The Kalamba Incident," La Solidaridad, 31 January 1892.
[12]Probably Governor Juan Mompeon, the provincial governor of Laguna who rushed to Calamba on night of 6 August 1890. The Governor insisted that the Calambeños must settle their accounts with the Dominicans, or he would strictly fulfill his duty as governor. See Silvestre Ubaldo
Chapter IX. By Way of Conclusion: A Historical Assessment

From an uncomplicated legalistic perspective, it is easy to determine who should be the prevailing party in the Hacienda de Calamba agrarian problem. The prevailing party should be the Corporacion de Padres Dominicos de Filipinas. The Calambeños were estopped from questioning the ownership of the Corporacion over the lands of hacienda as they themselves tacitly acknowledged the Corporacion's ownership by renting the said lands.

The basic tenet of justice was and still is: that a lessee is estopped from asserting title to the thing leased as against the lessor. Estoppel is a legal principle that prevents a person from making a position inconsistent with one previously made, especially when the earlier representation has been relied upon by others. This mid-16th century legal maxim is necessary to sustain stability in the dealings among citizens living in a civilized community. One cannot simply assert one fact at one time and deny it in another time whenever advantageous. This was in fact the stand of the Corporacion which won the acquiescence of the tribunals from Santa Cruz, Laguna to the Audiencia Real in Manila.

Another principle of justice that comes into play under the circumstances surrounding the Hacienda de Calamba agrarian problem is laches or delay or negligence for an unreasonable length of time in pursuing a legal claim on the part of the Calambeños. If the Calambeños were entitled to assert their rights questioning the ownership of the Corporacion over the lands, they were deemed to have abandoned these rights because of laches. They had been tilling the lands of the hacienda for more than a generation; they should have questioned the Corporacion's ownership over the estate in whole or in part within a reasonable length of time.

But the legal adjudication of the issues does not put the problem to rest. The Calambeños wanted to know the metes and bounds of the Hacienda de Calamba so that “all the lands not included...can be declared free from the payment of rent, and the amount of rent unjustly collected for it be returned.”[1] This was especially important to those who wanted to farm the lands outside the hacienda and save themselves from the cannons.[2] This was the very reason why the Calambeños wanted to see the land titles exhibited.

Naturally, this demand must be denied at all cost for it struck deep into the very nature and sanctity of the Corporacion – it did not and was not capable of usurping lands. And that the Pope, argued the Corporacion, prohibited the church from submitting to the jurisdiction of the temporal
The Corporacion presumed that all its acts were considered acts of the Catholic Church.

This reason was a rather lame excuse. They did and were capable of usurping lands. In 1905, the Bureau of Lands surveyed the hacienda as against its titles and found that it accumulated 2,077.8694 hectares in the course of time. The Corporacion already submitted itself to the jurisdiction of the temporal authorities when it commenced actions for eviction of the Calamba tenants on 21 August 1889.

The Corporacion, the visitador and the hermano administrador cannot be left blameless for the vanished loyalty of the natives to the hacienda and eventually to Mother Spain. The issues of annual increase of land rents and the failure to issue receipts for some payments made were not thoroughly and convincingly explained by the hermano administrador. Arbitrary formulation of tax schemes by the hacienda to the point of levying taxes even on trees and plants remained undisputed. The explanation of the hermano administrador regarding the arbitrary transfer of lands to those with deeper pockets remained unconvincing. His tyrannous abuses remained to be investigated.

The continuous toleration of the Corporacion of the abuses of the hermano administrador and its turning of deaf ears to the plea of the Calambeños made it a subject of public scrutiny. The tenants of neighboring haciendas, especially Cavite, Laguna and Batangas, who experienced the same exploitations, also became restless and eventually rose in arms joining the 1896 Philippine Revolution.

The short term effect of the Hacienda de Calamba agrarian problems was the eviction of more than three hundred (300) insolvent families who were tenants and subtenants of the estate. These evictees were subsequently replaced by tenants with deeper pockets. This ushered the unprecedented increase in the income of the hacienda from 1892 to 1896. A temporal increase in wealth with wanton disregard for what lies ahead – the 1896 Philippine Revolution.

The long term effect of the Hacienda de Calamba agrarian problems was the culmination of hatred against the Friars which outbursts into a harsh rebellion and the led to lost of the last possessions of the once mighty Spanish empire. For want of a horse, the kingdom is lost!

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Thesis
