

COUNTING PEOPLE: THE LATE COLONIAL PADRONES OF CENTRAL AMERICA

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The Spanish Imperial Government, like those of other places and times, was deeply concerned with the number and nature of its subject populations. In order to properly govern its people, it repeatedly sent out to local administrators, over a period of three hundred years, lists of questions pertaining to local economic and cultural conditions. These resulted in *Relaciones Geográficas*, or geographical accounts, with summary totals of individual populations (Cline, 1972:183-242; West, 1972:396-452). Another parallel set of responses, to Imperial requests, the *Padrones*, are hardly mentioned by any author. It is these, especially those pertaining to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that I wish to discuss at this time.

What is a *padron*? In brief, a padron is a census document listing the names of *all* taxpayers in a particular community as recorded for a single point in time. These need to be distinguished from the summary statements of population totals noted above. Fortunately for the anthropologist, it is extremely uncommon to find a padron that *only* provides a list of taxpayers. Most padrones, as can be noted in Table 1, give the age, sex and nuclear family for every member of the community. Generally they note what inhabitants are exempt from paying taxes, and why. Occasionally they provide data on livelihood and people marrying into and out of the community. More on the last further on.

When and where is a padron? Very complete Padrones are known for Guatemala, from the 1560's which is within thirty years of initial European contact in those towns. Unfortunately they are rather uncommon, apparently being restricted to the

Valley of Guatemala and Cakchiquel Maya communities neighboring departments. Without making any special effort to conduct a survey of available manuscripts in the Guatemalan archives, where most of the manuscripts to be discussed may be found, it was noted that many seventeenth century padrones were located for Nicaragua but few from elsewhere in Central America (Table 2). Continuing this survey into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a total of two hundred and ten padron citations are noted from the years 1700 through 1821, representing communities in Chiapas, Guatemala or El Salvador, and being particularly common for the series of 1813 and 1821 (Table 3). I hasten to add that this is a biased sample, based upon a listing already compiled in 1823 for the 1813 series (Fuentes, 1823) and my own research emphasis on the most recent colonial padrones. There are undoubtedly many more padrones in the various series for other years. Researchers will find, as I have, that for certain communities padrones exist every two or three years over a period of a decade or more, with additional scattered padrones representing decades both before and after these more dense clusters (Feldman, 1974).

So, there are a whole lot of census records, called padrones, in Guatemalan archives, from a great many communities, over a long period of time. What good are they? Well, sex/age ratios may be tabulated for populations at particular points in time. These can then be compared over time to determine the nature of change. Thus two small closely related communities near the mouth of the Motagua river, in Guatemala, show some striking differences over time (Feldman, 1975:6-7). One is the reversal of the sex ratio; the early population, counted at the point of initial contact with Europeans, has 47% males to 53% females while the more recent shows 62% males to 38% females. People also were living longer in the earlier period, 12% in 1604 as opposed to 2% in 1700 had reached an age greater than fifty-four years. Other demographic tabulations may reflect changes in birthrate, life expectancy and family size.

Eighteenth century padrones often contain explicit data on origins of immigrants. A 1740 padron, for the town of Chinautla just north of Guatemala City, lists one hundred and twenty-nine foreign spouses. If one compares them with a similar listing

from the adjacent town of Mixco, one finds that a surprising percentage of Chinautla spouses come from communities as distant as El Salvador (see Feldman, 1971 for listings); a fact related, perhaps, to the presence in Chinautla of major ceramic export industries. The people of this town were both producing and transporting a trade ware that even today still has a very wide distribution (Cortes y Larraz, 1958; Reina, 1966).

Finally, for the linguist, the native surnames (that is surnames not in Spanish but in the local Indian language), lend themselves to the identification of languages. On the south coast of the Mexican state of Chiapas there are several references to an otherwise unknown MAA language (Reyes, 1961:178; Laguna, 1735; Feldman, 1973). A list of surnames from a 1735 padron, is available for one of these towns identified with MAA. Of the seventy-two surnames culled from the document, a large number were Zoque, pointing toward an affiliation of MAA with the Zoque language. These same surnames, which frequently have a cultural content (such as day and deity names), can be plotted on the map by methods akin to those of dialect geography, to demarcate interaction spheres (*cf.* Feldman, 1971).

Thus the same type of manuscript, the padron, a type of manuscript that is by no means rare, has the potential of serving both the linguist and anthropologist in different ways. One hopes that the day is not too far distant, when students of contemporary cultures will, as a matter of course, check out these hitherto little known manuscripts of the Spanish colonial archives, examples of a data collection system that extends four hundred years into the past and that lasted until little more than one hundred years ago.

Table 1. Sample Page from San Jeronimo Padron
(1821)
Archivo General de Centro America Manuscript,
Signatura A1.44, Legajo 3021,
Expediente 29110

Patronciama López viuda, con dos hijos María de 14 años, y Pablo de 11 años...

Amolin Morales casado con Eleuteria Cahiuc, tiene el marido 30 años, y su mujer 30 años con 4 hijos, Estevan de 11 años, José de 8, Ignacio de 6, Martín de 3...

Termina Santiago viuda de 70 años...

Francisco Gabriel casado con Anastasia Garcia de 35 años y su muger de 34 con 4 hijos, Juan a 13 años, Libuncia de 10 años, Maralino de 6 y Juan a 4 años...

Pablo García de 28 años, casado con Albima Perez de 26 años con una hija de 2 años...

José González de 23 años casada con Vicenta García, tienen dos ijas, María de 5 años y la Josefa de 2 años...

Donoteo Pérez de 42 años casado con Donotea García de 40 años, con 7 hijos Hernando de 22 años, Francisco de 20, Teresa de 18, Josefa de 14, Cesárea de 9, Valencina de 4, Isabel de 2 años...

Table 2. Some Nicaraguan Towns with Padrones
in the Archivo General de Centro America

1662. Litelpaneca	1703. Petoa
1663. Diriamba	1714. Guijalba
1671. Nonimbo	1717. Santisima Trinidad, Xinotega
1676. Posoltega, Mosonte (Nueva Segovia)	1718. Tuistepe (Chontales), Boaco
1692. Xalteca	1719. Quezalguaque, Teustepe (Sebaco), Posoltega
17th century. Matagalpa	

Table 3. Some Central American Padrones of 1813 and 1821

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| 1. Acala Chiapas: 1813 | 34. Milpa Dueñas: 1813 |
| 2. San Cristobal Totonicapan: 1813 | 35. Panajachel: 1813 |
| 3. San Juan Olinstepeque: 1813 | 36. Sta. Cruz Laguna: 1821 |
| 4. Huehuetenango: 1813 | 37. San Pedro Laguna: 1813 |
| 5. San Bartolome Mazatenango: 1813, 1821 | 38. Santa Clara Laguna: 1821 |
| 6. Malacatan: 1813 | 39. Sta. Lucia Utatlan: 1821 |
| 7. Soloma: 1813 | 40. San Raimundo: 1813 |
| 8. Sacapulas: 1813 | 41. Sta. Catarina Laguna: 1821 |
| 9. Nebaj: 1813 | 42. Patulul: 1821 |
| 10. Samayac: 1813 | 43. San Martin Jilotepeque: 1821 |
| 11. Santa Cruz Quiche: 1813, 1821 | 44. Patzun: 1813 |
| 12. Joyabaj: 1813 | 45. Salama: 1821 |
| 13. Nejapa: 1813 | 46. Sacatepequez Pueblos: 1821 |
| 14. Momostenango: 1813 | 47. Amatitlan Pueblos: 1821, 1813 |
| 15. Chiantla: 1813 | 48. Tecpan: 1813 |
| 16. Ilotenango: 1813 | 49. Toco y (Morazan): 1813 |
| 17. San Antonio Suchitepequez: 1813 | 50. Palencia: 1813 |
| 18. Retalhuleu: 1813 | 51. Sta. Cruz Munchu: 1821 |
| 19. Semetabaj: 1813, 1821 | 52. Solola: 1813, 1821 |
| 20. Zacualpa: 1821 | 53. San Juan Obispo: 1813 |
| 21. San Jeronimo: 1821 | 54. Sta. Maria de Jesus: 1813 |
| 22. Peten Pueblos: 1821 | 55. Chacaya: 1821 |
| 23. Flores: 1821 | 56. Tamahu: 1821 |
| 24. El Chol: 1821 | 57. Itzapa: 1813 |
| 25. Comalapa: 1821 | 58. San Cristobal Cahcoh: 1821 |
| 26. Rabinal: 1813 | 59. Parramos: 1813 |
| 27. Tucuru: 1821 | 60. Siquinala: 1821 |
| 28. Cubulco: 1813 | 61. Cuilapa: 1821 |
| 29. Cahabon: 1821 | 62. Jalpatagua: 1821 |
| 30. Jocotenango: 1813 | 63. Comapa: 1821 |
| 31. Patzicia: 1813 | 64. Gomera: 1821 |
| 32. Lanquin: 1821 | 65. Nestiquipaque: 1813 |
| 33. Santa Cruz Balanya: 1821 | |

66. Moyutla: 1821
67. Guazacapan: 1813
68. San Juan Mixtan: 1821
69. Chiquimulilla: 1813, 1821
70. Azulco: 1821
71. Taxisco: 1813
72. Escuintla: 1821
73. Chipilapa: 1813
74. Pasaco: 1821
75. Guanaguazapa: 1813
76. San Luis Jilotepeque:
1821
77. Sinacantan: 1813
78. Zacapa: 1821
79. Chiquimula: 1813, 1821
80. Casillas: 1813, 1821
81. Jalapa: 1821
82. Valle de Canoas: 1821
83. Mataquesquinta:
1813, 1821
84. Tecuaco: 1821
85. Esquipulas: 1813
86. Gualan: 1821
87. Jumatepeque: 1813
88. Sta. Ana Mixtan: 1821
89. Metapan: 1813
90. Tejutla: 1813
91. Chalchuapa: 1813
92. Santa Ana: 1813
93. Nahuizalco: 1813
94. Cojutepeque: 1813
95. Ilopango: 1813
96. Izalco: 1813
97. Tejutepeque: 1813
98. Santiago Nonoalco: 1813
99. Chinameca: 1813
100. Sonsonate: 1813, 1821
101. Atiquizaya: 1821
102. Ahuachapan: 1813
103. Coatepeque: 1813
104. Ateos: 1813, 1821
105. Opico: 1813
106. Guaymango: 1821
107. Apaneca: 1821

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Resumen

Destaca el autor la importancia de los padrones coloniales en el contexto de las investigaciones sobre diversos aspectos económicos, demográficos, etcétera. En el caso de Guatemala menciona algunos de los principales padrones que se levantaron. Ofrece asimismo muestras de algunos de principios del siglo XIX y hace el registro de varios pueblos de Guatemala y Nicaragua de los que se conservan padrones, en el Archivo General de Centro América en la ciudad de Guatemala.