

## Introduction.

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This inquiry looks anew at the representation of women's employment in the 1903 and 1939 Philippines Censuses and the reported transformation of occupations over that period. It stands back from current approaches, which address the conditions of life for Filipino women and see that women suffered economically and socially during the period of United States rule. According to the Census picture, women abandoned small-scale, home-based manufacturing for agriculture and domestic service or they withdrew from the workforce. Scholars now tend to accept as fact these apparently clear but negative occupation trends. In the light of renewed interest in historical documents, this inquiry reconsiders the data, the context of their production, their validity and the significance and consequences of the representation. It examines the structures by which census authorities managed and regulated the representation of Filipino workers and the criteria against which officials identified and counted women's paid employment in particular. It investigates data for women in selected occupations and assesses likely misrepresentation of change over time and space. The inquiry submits that although there is still much to doubt about the data, we should perhaps reconsider orthodox opinion on the reported transformation of women's occupations during the period. It also considers the implications for the wider perception and assessment of a census.

Given the Census picture of occupational change, previous research focuses on the implications and consequences of the reported trends. One claim is that the accounts revealed a deteriorating socio-economic position of women during the period of United States rule. While Boserup (1970) noted the worsening situation for Filipino women, Elizabeth Eviota (1992) justifies the assertion in her critical sociological survey of the Philippines over time. As the productive process marginalised married women and increasingly restricted them to purely home matters, she declares, so women's independence and power diminished. She indicates how U.S. commercial exploitation augmented that process, by entrenching the sexual division of labour and restricting economic opportunities for women. Eviota therefore concludes that during the U.S. colonial period, gender inequality and class differences among women widened. Her work supports the findings of other researchers for individual provinces

or for particular industries (Aldecoa-Rodriguez 1989; Cortes 1990; McCoy 1982b; Owen 1978, 1984; Szanton 1982). Such research has implications for public policy in the Philippines.

Particular assumptions that underlie this interpretation, however, suggest other possible questions. Eviota tends to assume, for example, that the deterioration in women's economic circumstances occurred everywhere at the same rate simultaneously. Yet, despite the availability of relevant Census data, there has been no systematic investigation of the geographical change in Filipino women's occupations between 1903 and 1939. A preliminary aim of my research therefore, was to complete that investigation. James Cook University library holds a copy of both Censuses on microfiche cards, the 1903 version in Spanish, from which I could gather the data. The inquiry would aim to map the recorded occupation changes at a provincial scale and perhaps contribute to a testing of the assumed association between those changes and the socio-economic well-being of the women.

But the 1903 Census statistics are frustrating. Provincial data are incomplete and there are discrepancies between the provincial tables and the national records. The document contains no explanatory help on these tabulation questions, much less about the concepts of measurement and classification used by the statisticians. Various economic studies doubted technical aspects of the data for women. Moreover, the 1939 Census adds to the problem. Although statisticians counted occupations in both Censuses by gainful employment, they appeared to alter without explanation the way they enumerated women's occupations in 1939. In short, the investigation was unsatisfactory and there was a lack of confidence in the 1903 Census data especially. Any assumption that the data were sound or an accurate representation began to appear unsustainable. By implication, a judgement that the Census source material was evidence of change appeared unstable. Furthermore, current research suggests that there are broader questions involved.

At issue here is the representation of women in the colonial Philippines Census occupation statistics. It is an issue comprising several elements. Recent studies are presenting revised opinions about representation, gender, colonialism, power, victimhood and agency in a huge body of literature. For example, researchers of colonialism present reconsidered interpretations on the growth of scientific knowledge or the role of white women in colonial exploitation. Others focus on the style and

purpose of bureaucratic props such as reports, maps, censuses, town plans, photographs, exhibitions and museums. At the same time, other scholars suggest that these largely Western studies and interpretations constitute a form of post-colonialism. Similarly, feminist and gender studies have moved on from the perceived need to represent women hidden in history, demography, economics and geography. New studies research women's resistance to subjugation and the ways in which they maintain their self-esteem and identity. Women are no longer seen as victims of patriarchal subordination, but as active agents in their own lives. Recent contemplative essays discuss emerging problems of evaluation of agency-victim stories and academic versus cultural authority. At the crux of this work is the problem of representation.

When in times past the study of representation meant assessment of a document's objectivity, reliability and accuracy, conflicts arose over technical aspects of the data compilation and therefore, of the contents and their interpretation. Early studies based on Philippines Census data, especially those tabulating women's occupations, typified that approach. Now, revised opinions of representation suggest that we should be wary of the claim to represent others. Scholars see investigative government reports, for example, no longer as instruments of analysis (of the population), but as texts for analysis (Scott 1996). In this light, they examine context dependency, assumptions, the document's organisation and the style of writing and presentation, including iconography. Researchers wish to understand the relation between text and context, or the ways in which the detailed content became fixed, authoritative and part of the political process. In the course of such investigations, the writers tend to redefine the document category, such as maps or photographs, to emphasise the source's social construction and representative power.

Consequently, it is now accepted disciplinary practice to examine the context of documentary sources, and the Philippines Censuses are largely unexamined documents. In addition to my initial focus on the geographical change in women's occupations, the following questions interested me. What was the influence on the Censuses of their colonial circumstance? How did that context affect the occupation accounts and what other factors might have been important? In particular, what factors influenced the representation of Filipino women's employment and what were the consequences of that description? To what extent was the reputed occupational change

a social construction? Last, what are the implications for the way in which we view a census and assess it as a piece of evidence?

My inquiry began with an assumption that there was misrepresentation of women's occupations in the 1903 and 1939 Censuses. Two approaches seemed appropriate. First, we might consider that the U.S. Census officials regulated and distorted the occupation statistics to gain colonial advantage and to subordinate Filipino women. In this proposition, the colonial relationship directs the manner of the possible inquiry and any interest in the changing geography of women's occupations evaporates. Investigations might include the reliance by Census officials on their U.S. knowledge, assumptions, purposes and methods of census taking, and their disregard for the Philippine circumstances. The proposition implies that as Filipino women were subject victims, the effects on them were different from those, for example, which affected U.S. women who had political standing as citizens, as Prakash (2000) asserts. It places emphasis on the experiences of Filipino women, so that their stories might be told. I question this possible hypothesis however, because of its assumptions, the lack of proof of intent and the difficulty in ascribing an action to a theory of colonialism or gender.

An alternative avenue of inquiry focuses on the census and the data. I hypothesise that misrepresentation occurred when U.S. Census officials managed the statistics using their body of knowledge, and that the distortion was sufficient enough to affect future interpretations of Filipino women's occupations. The proposition stems from the recognised mystery of the 1903 Philippines Census occupation account and the real need to regulate complex occupation statistics. It is an attempt to determine what happened and why it occurred, to investigate the consequences of the presumed misrepresentation and perhaps to suggest an alternative significance of the Census. As such, it is a search for certainty and understanding of the information we have of the Census events and of the occupations of Filipino women in historical time. It allows examination of the context, acknowledges the colonial relationship and the representative authority of male outsiders and lets us recognise the tensions between a government agency and the lives of Filipino women. It should provide insight into the significance of defects and deficiencies in the Census representation and into the reported change in women's occupations. As well, it may inform current debate about the occupations of women and the use of historical census material as evidence.

Literature covering the early twentieth century employment of women in the Philippines is limited in scope and depth and reflects the time in which it was written. Apart from Eviota's (1992) work, much of the rest is dated, some so much so that perhaps it can now be regarded as primary source material in its own right. Other papers consider occupations of Filipino women only in the latter half of the century. There is similarly limited discussion in the literature about the early Philippines Censuses. A number of reasons for the paucity of discussion over the years might apply. It might reflect changing interests in a nation struggling to emerge from its colonial past, when current problems are of greater importance. Because the topic concerned women's contribution, perhaps it did not interest male scholars, or perhaps researchers dismissed the role of women as being inconsequential and not worthy of study. On the one hand, the lack of comment suggests that the representation of women in the Census occupational accounts may make a suitable and due study. On the other, the dearth of appropriate literature makes a conventional literature review in which I can formulate my argument, difficult.

Beginning with a framework for my study, Chapter 1 is a synopsis of opposing arguments put forward on the assessment of an historical document. The viewpoint chosen determines the form of evaluation of the relevant document and hence my approach to the research. Joan Scott's (1988) paper on a Parisian census in 1848, in which she presents revised opinions on subjectivity, representation and meaning, provides a setting for the chapter. Scott views the historical census as a representation, a text, that created a false reality and from which its political meaning can be extracted. To this end, her investigation emphasises the intended role of the document in her opinion. Her paper stimulates consideration of the issues involved in evaluating historical censuses and the links to the larger perspective. By choosing to concentrate on a real world interpretation of the document, I can examine the actual role of the census in representing Filipino women and their occupations and suggest another view of its significance.

Reviews of other papers interspersed with an examination of the colonial production of the 1903 Philippines Census make up Chapters 2 and 3. Although I am aware that a literature review should usually avoid gathering facts and opinions as its purpose, I have chosen the mixed format for a particular reason. It allows discussion and eventual rejection of one possible hypothesis. One aspect of the discussion

concerns a proposal on the revised assessment of colonial censuses put forward by Benedict Anderson (1991). Detailed investigation of the format, style and metropolitan origins of the 1903 Philippines Census in Chapter 2 tests Anderson's proposition, contributes to the critique of his argument and assists in the explanation of my position. Here, it should be noted that after my writing of the chapter, Vergara (1995) has presented a detailed examination of the colonial construction of the 1903 Philippines Census from the perspective Anderson proposes. I have chosen to retain my chapter, for the reasons just given. As well, my interpretation tends to be situated in a wider context and may help to answer in part some of the questions Vergara raises in his critique of the Census document. Chapter 3 narrows the review to feminist views of the representation of women in census occupation accounts and ends with earlier literature pertinent to the 1903 Philippines Census data. By this means, the review considers interpretations of the influence of historical and social structures on the construction of colonial occupation accounts. It also facilitates assessment of the early literature in a manner consistent with present practice and enables me to refine my hypothesis.

New understanding of the problem of representing others suggests that while we cannot represent the colonised persons documented in reports, neither can we represent the authors of the documents. Nevertheless, we can examine the criteria against which the authors gathered and assembled their information. In this way, we can consider the efficacy of the criteria for understanding the real world of Filipino women and their employment. It also facilitates evaluation of the soundness of the data as evidence. In the case of the Philippines Census, however, we first have to establish the criteria. Chapters 4 to 6 therefore attempt to determine and then examine the criteria against which Census authorities identified, measured, classified and tabulated Filipino women's employment in the 1903 and 1939 Censuses.

Because previously there has been most perplexity about the classification scheme used by the Census authorities in the Philippines, I begin with that. Little information is available about the operation of the scheme in the Philippines, so that it is possible to suggest a likely procedure only. Chapter 4 shows how Census Office statisticians possibly organised the nominal positions of Filipino men and women in occupation classifications arranged in economic sectors. It examines the practical nature of obscurity in the occupation classification scheme, and how the Census

authors produced an account distinguished by apparent and perhaps arbitrary reduction of occupations, not only in the classifications but also spatially. Much information that might have been given about women's occupations therefore was concealed or condensed. I find that the managed nature of the classification scheme and the published occupation statistics most likely led to distortion in those data, although the likely misrepresentation is unverifiable. I also suggest that the economic sector data on their own are perhaps deceptive and their usefulness in establishing future change, perhaps doubtful.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine the use of gainful labour as a measurement tool for respectively, the 1903 and 1939 Censuses. Officials in 1903 apparently ignored the disparity between the assumption of women's dependency and the reality in the Philippines (Chapter 5). The chapter investigates how and why that occurred and why the measurement criteria of gainful labour were perhaps unsuitable for the Philippines. Incompatible purposes, ambiguous instructions, subjective interpretations and chance probably affected the enumeration. Disorder in officials' thinking about women's place in the market economy became apparent in 1939 (Chapter 6). The investigation depicts contradictory instructions to enumerators and discrepancies between the instructions and the published Tables, particularly for housewives. I suggest one possible explanation for the apparent inconsistencies. I also find that regulation of the gainful labour count added to the difficulty of interpreting the economic sector data.

Detailed scrutiny of the data for selected manufacturing and domestic service occupations follows in Chapter 7. Here, I examine what the data tell us about provincial change in the occupations and consider the evidence that the portrayal might have been false. A lack of other evidence limits the scope of the investigation and ensures that all findings are tentative. Reference to the literature demonstrates partial support for the revised interpretation in one case, but in the others, my findings are contrary to conventional opinion and I address possible reasons for the different views.

Chapter 8 forms a review of the inquiry. During the process of drawing together the different strands, the chapter assesses the validity of the Philippines Census data as evidence. It outlines interpretations of the data that may be unjustified and it presents my findings as to what we can read from the data. I suggest that the economic sector data might have falsely represented a transformation in women's employment and perhaps we should reconsider that orthodox opinion. Nevertheless,

although my interpretation is possible, it is unproven. To the extent that much uncertainty remains about the document and the data, the inquiry is unsuccessful. It points to future topics of research and leads to consideration of the significance of the Philippines Census instrument. The chapter ends with brief comments on possible views of a census.

While writing this dissertation, some minor matters of perspective and syntax have arisen that need clarification. First, because the cited literature extends back over 100 years, I have made an arbitrary decision to refer to papers, volumes, etc. published since 1980 in the present tense, and to all other literature in the past tense. Twenty years is but a short term in an historical overview and the division corresponds to my own perception of passing time. Second, I do not speak Spanish and have not had access to a complete English copy of the 1903 Philippines Census. Where I am not confident of the translation of quotations, I include the relevant Spanish passage in the endnotes. Third, the use or not of the capital letter in 'census' may appear to be inconsistent. The capitalised variant refers to specific events, for example, the U.S. Twelfth Census of 1900, or to the relevant census authority and its officials, compared with an abstract or generalised expression otherwise. Finally, I do not mean the term 'women's occupations' to imply that the occupations were the preserve of women in a system of segregation, or that the occupations somehow belonged to women. There is little doubt that a degree of segregation existed in the Philippines labour market, but the only occupations listed in the 1903 Census without male participants were wet nurse, nun, modista and prostitute. I use the term merely as a form of shorthand to mean the occupations in which some of the women worked.

I would like to add some comments on my choice of illustrations. There are few photographs available from that time of women actually working, except for the widely published images of women seated at long, low tables, manufacturing cigars under the surveillance of a supervisor, usually male. Perhaps male photographers considered the work that women did of little economic or social importance. Inadequate lighting inside homes might also have discouraged photography. Figure I.1 illustrates the difficulty. It is hard to discern the mat weaver's physical conditions of work or the tools she had at her disposal, much less the intricacy and skill of her weaving.



But there are other latent problems with photographs from the time. Vergara (1995) strongly criticises the colonialist, constructed knowledge implicit in many photographs printed in U.S. publications of the time, including the 1903 Census. For photographs relating to occupations, taken in studios, he argues that the images constructed a type according to occupational lines, partly to legitimise the illusion of the constructed categories in the Census and partly to reinforce the supposed need for colonial rule. The 'Tagalog servant girl' image, reproduced in Bryan (1905, p. 730), typified that construction in his view. A decision to include such illustrations would perhaps perpetuate the injustice. It might be argued that Figure 7.1 (page 15.5) of women spinning and weaving symbolises the distortion of reality that Vergara criticises, and should not be reproduced. In this image, however, it was possible that the protected conditions necessary for piña weaving were present and perhaps the women were not out of context. The photograph conveys information about the methods of weaving then in practice, and for that reason, I include it. Similarly, other photographs I include impart information about the form of textiles or style of clothing manufactured by women, in the absence of other suitable illustrations. Where necessary, I comment in Chapter 7 on the construction of some of the illustrations.

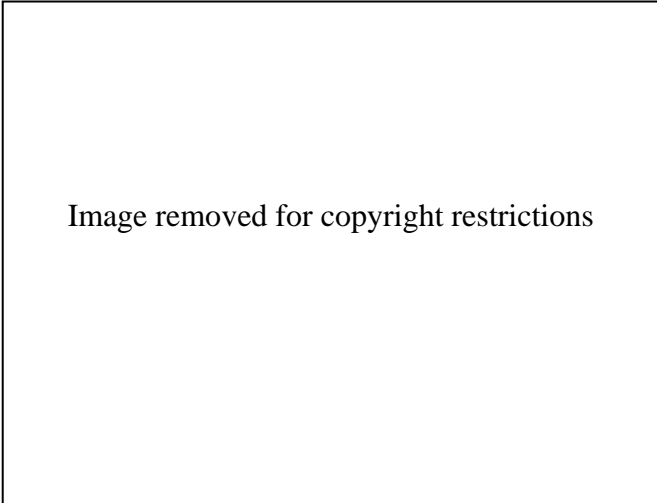


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**Figure I.1.** Sabutan mat weaving, Tanay, Rizal.