The Philippines

Los Chinos en Manila (Siglos XVI y XVII)
By JUAN GIL
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Comprehensive surveys of Sino–Philippine relations abound. Such works are usually in Chinese, English or Spanish. Most of the latter date back to early times and are often characterised by traditional 'narrative modes'. The present volume, a heavyweight by all standards, is a well-balanced account and, not infrequently, offers very critical views. There are 10 long chapters in all (with a total of about 100 subsegments), 23 appendices, a glossary, and a select bibliography. The overall arrangement of the book follows both thematic and chronological considerations. The story begins with the 1560s–70s, at the time when Manila was 'founded', and ends with the late seventeenth century. Manila's exchange with the Chinese 'world' and the fate of the Chinese (or *sangley*) settlements in and around that city are the central themes of Juan Gil's account. Particular attention is given to the internal structure and characteristics of the Parián and other locations, their institutions, residents and cultural dimensions, as well as Spanish views of the 'Other' — in this case, the local Chinese.

Much of the material on which Gil has based his work comes from different Spanish archives such as the Archivo Histórico Nacional, or the *Filipinas* and *Contratación* sections in the Archivo General de Indias, to name just two examples. Gil also cites important published items, especially the well-known collection by Emma Blair and James Alexander Robertson, and a number of Portuguese works. By contrast, documents exclusively dealing with Taiwan and the short-lived Spanish outposts on that island rarely appear in the notes, evidently because their history belongs to a different sphere. This is also why, for instance, the two volumes called *Spaniards in Taiwan …*, edited by José E. Borao Mateo and others (Taibei 2001–2), did not get listed in the bibliography. Dutch records, largely irrelevant to Gil's study, on account of their one-sided views and inherent radicalism, were almost completely omitted from *Los Chinos en Manila*. Ming and early Qing texts describing Luzon, or containing references to other Philippine islands, form a highly special category as well; some are available in translation elsewhere and Gil occasionally mentions them, but generally, these accounts do not contribute very much to the themes treated in the present book. In short, then, this study reads like a comprehensive interpretation of fundamental Spanish sources dealing with the topics outlined above.

The first two chapters set the frame. They summarise the nature of commercial contacts between Manila and the Chinese, for example taxation procedures applied to vessels arriving from mainland China or Taiwan, the role of licences, record-keeping, the local *pancada* system, fiscal and other aspects. This is followed by observations on the flow of commodities, contraband trade and penalties, captains and ships, illegal migrants, etc. Where possible, simple statistics are provided in support of arguments. Chapter 4 links Manila's external connections to different developments in China and

other locations; this mainly concerns early Spanish wishes to 'access' the Chinese mainland, Koxinga's rule over Taiwan and the change from Ming to Qing, the Japanese market, the role of Macau and Guangdong, and also the Dutch, who threatened international traffic routes through the South China Sea.

With chapter 5 the book turns to the *sangleys* on Luzon. There are sections on the Dominicans and Jesuits, on Baybay, Binondo and, of course, the Parián. The latter went through good and bad times. Disastrous fires and several clashes, which took the lives of many Chinese residents, as well as tight controls implemented to restore order — all these elements are presented, one by one. The documents clearly show that colonial administrators differed in their views on how to accommodate migrants; this is addressed as well. The next chapter discusses various kinds of official posts and professions, one segment being dedicated to the role of interpreters, who were cultural mediators, but at the same time subject to certain restrictions. Chapter 7 investigates the fiscal administration of the Parián, chapter 8 analyses social groups — merchants, craftsmen, slaves, and others. Chapter 9 is one of the most interesting parts in the entire book; it exposes how the Spanish saw the Chinese. The initial segments differentiate between secular and clerical views; this is followed by a set of special points and 'problems'. One issue concerns gambling, further observations relate to suicide, heavy drinking (of *aguardiente de arroz*, not red wine), superstition, real and alleged cruelty, and many other vices commonly associated with the *sangleys*. From the sources it also transpires that Spanish contemporaries found it difficult to tolerate certain cultural activities such as Chinese theatrical performances. To them these spectacles were full of strange *dioses* and *ídolas*. Clearly, there was a religious barrier between both sides, in spite of the fact that some migrants had converted to Catholicism. More interestingly still, many Chinese honoured the image of the blessed Virgin. Perhaps this should be related to the belief in Mazu/Tianfei, but there may have been different reasons as well.

The last chapter takes up some of the sad events already addressed in chapter 5, but also provides additional material. This concerns the well-known story of Limahong, the assassination of Gómez Péres das Mariñas, the tragic conflicts of 1603, 1639, 1662, and so on. The author analyses the roots of all these clashes and offers general conclusions. Moreover, he often lets the sources speak for themselves and thus shows their strengths and weaknesses. In that sense, *Los Chinos en Manila* is very fair towards both 'camps'.

Indeed, this book is well structured, finely written, and full of little 'things'. There are countless names, for example, of Chinese merchants and officials, various statistics and useful lists, especially in the appendices. Appendix 6 is a case in point: it summarises all trade connections between Manila and Taiwan on an annual basis, i.e. for the years 1626–42. Appendix 13 is on the *tributos* of the *sangleys*, again with year-by-year citations. Appendix 21 deals with their petitions and other documents. The longest appendix, however, is the fifth one: it covers more than 50 pages and provides annual data for the number of incoming Chinese ships, their captains and cargos, and the taxes collected by the Spanish. This overlaps with the data found in the old work by Chaunu, but very often the figures are not the same, which Gil has indicated in his account. The exchange of silver for silk, I may add, is an issue in Gil's book, but (fortunately) the author has not moved this issue into the centre of his 'story'.

A further advantage of Gil's book lies in the fact that many of its segments can be read independently, almost as separate treatises on selected themes. Occasionally, there are also useful cross-references, which ensure that readers will not get lost in a sea of detail. To sum up: *Los Chinos en Manila* is an exhaustive account, similar to Gil's earlier book, *Hidalgos y samurais* (Madrid 1991), and it is a wonderful source-book as well — a work that bears authority, with a potential to substitute many other studies, and apt to become a new classic in its field.

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Singapore

The AWARE saga: Civil society and public morality in Singapore
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The image of a subservient and obedient citizenry in Singapore has probably been derived from a seemingly authoritarian political culture determined largely by the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) that has been in power since the republic gained self-rule in 1959. Under the watchful and paternalistic gaze of its senior statesman Lee Kuan Yew, his son Lee Hsien Loong and their efficient Mandarins, there has been effectively little trace of active dissent in the republic. In reality, the coherence of the PAP-run state is an exception rather than the norm in contemporary Singapore where angry disagreements in country clubs, cultural associations and corporations often spill into the public arena in extra-general meetings (EGMs) reported enthusiastically by the government-controlled media seeking juicier local news than official exhortations and lectures at ribbon-cutting occasions.

In 2009, the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), which has been quietly promoting women's rights in Singapore, hogged significant attention in the republic's media. A sequence of sensationalised events within AWARE, beginning from a coup by a predominantly conservative Christian women's group orchestrated by a 'feminist mentor' to their unceremonious ejection by secular activists some two months later in a boisterous EGM, to the government's balancing act in keeping the church separate from politics within the next few months, revealed Singapore's undercurrents. In the end, while the prime minister chided the Christian Right openly for trying to use religion to lobby their cause, the government also simultaneously reaffirmed its conservatism by suspending AWARE from the Education Ministry's Sexuality Education programmes. Thinking that this saga deserved to be more rigorously reflected upon, sociologist Terence Chong brought together 11 observers in an edited volume, *The AWARE saga: Civil society and public morality in Singapore*. The contributors are a mix of academics from a range of