
Chinese characters in the Spanish court:

The Manila petition of 1598 to Philip II



JOHN N. CROSSLEY AND ANTHONY WAH-CHEUNG LUN

Abstract

Most information concerning relations between Spain and China in the context of the early colonial Philippines comes from Spanish sources. In this paper we present a contribution from the Chinese. Soon after the Spaniards started settling Manila, the number of Chinese there started increasing rapidly. Relations between Chinese and Spanish were always fraught and the only protectors the Chinese had were the Dominican priests who ministered to them. In desperation they wrote a letter in Chinese to King Philip II, which was “translated” into Spanish. We do not know of any other letter document conceived in Chinese being sent to a king in this period. We present the powerful letter in English translation.

Keywords: Chinese in Manila; Spanish Philippines; Miguel Benavides; Sangleyes

At the end of July 1587, Miguel de Benavides arrived in Manila as part of the first mission of Dominicans comprising thirteen priests and two lay brothers. Though they were few in number they were keen to convert the people of China to Christianity as were all the Christian orders that arrived in Manila.

“The spiritual conquest of China and its conversion to the Gospel of Jesus was the prime object of the [Dominican] Province of the Most Holy Rosary,¹ which was established with its headquarters in the city of Manila”.² However, from the Philippines, no religious order would succeed in this endeavour. The Augustinian Martín de Rada had led an unsuccessful venture into China in 1575 and Benavides himself later went there with the then head of the Dominicans, Juan de Castro, in 1590.³ Much has been written about *la empresa de China* but

¹The Dominican Province for the Philippines was named after the Rosary beads and recitation, which were particularly dear to the Dominicans.

²“La conquista espiritual de China y su conversión al Evangelio de Jesús, era el objeto primordial de la nueva Provincia del Santísimo Rosario, que se establecía con sede en la ciudad de Manila”, Carlos Sanz, *Primitivas relaciones de España con Asia y Oceanía*, (Madrid, 1958), p. 121.

³For Rada, see Pedro G. Galende, OSA, *Apología pro Filipinos*, (Manila, 1980), pp. 180–201, and for Benavides, see Miguel Angel Medina Escudero, “Fray Miguel de Benavides Añoza, Una vida al servicio de Dios y del hombre. En el cuarto centenario de su muerte”, *Studium*, 45, no. 3 (2005), pp. 445–476.

such concerns, though substantial, are marginal to those treated here.⁴ The conversion of the Chinese already in Manila was, however, another matter.

When the Spaniards first went to Manila in 1570 they encountered a number of Chinese on the way and an anonymous writer reported: “In the town [of Manila] lived forty married Chinese and twenty Japanese”.⁵ This was despite the fact that Ming China had prohibited private maritime trade since 1372.⁶ The principal reason behind the original prohibition was concern for coastal security from the “Japanese” pirates (“wakô” in Japanese, 倭寇).⁷ However traditional tribute trade continued but the prohibition remained in place for 172 years. Over time enforcement became lax and coastal defences were neglected; rich and powerful families in Zhejiang and Fujian were in control of organised maritime smuggling. The influential Fujian Governor, Tan Lun (譚綸 1520–1577), was credited with finding the solution to the “Japanese” pirate troubles in Fujian Province by strengthening the coastal defences.⁸ Shortly before the Spaniards arrived in Manila, this prohibition was lifted (in 1567).⁹ That lifting of the prohibition was, however, only for one port: Haicheng County (海澄縣), also known as Yuegang (月港), in the Zhangzhou Prefecture (漳州府) of Fujian (福建省). The lifting of the private maritime trade prohibition in 1567 (despite arguments against it from hardliners resurfacing from time to time) has been hailed as an important event that set off subsequent waves of Chinese migration to South-east Asia, and, in particular, to

⁴See, for example, Manel Ollé Rodríguez, *La empresa de China*, (Madrid, 2002) and *ibid.*, *La invención de China / The invention of China: Perceptions y estrategias filipinas respecto a China durante el siglo XVI / Philippine perceptions and strategies towards China during the sixteenth century*, (Wiesbaden, 2002), and his thesis *Estrategias filipinas respecto a China: Alonso Sánchez y Domingo Salazar en la empresa de China (1581–1593)*, PhD Thesis, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 1998. A more aggressive view was taken by Kevin Joseph Sheehan, *Iberian Asia: The Strategies of Spanish and Portuguese Empire Building, 1540–1700*, PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2008.

⁵“Relation of the voyage to Luzon”, [June, 1570], Vol. III, p. 101, of Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands 1493–1898*, (Cleveland, 1903–1909) Translated from the originals, edited and annotated 55 vols, republished as 55 vols in 19, (Mandaluyong, Rizal, Philippines, 1973). This work will be referred to as BR with the volume number.

⁶《明太祖實錄·卷七十》洪武四年十二月庚辰朔。丙戌，仍禁瀕海民，不得私出海。Ming *Tai-zu Shi Lu* (*Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty, Hong-wu Emperor*), Juan 70, Hong-wu (洪武) reign, Year 4, Month 12, Day 7 [13 Jan 1372]. (Available in Simplified Chinese at <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=882945&re-map=gb>, accessed 28 November 2018.)

This was reiterated ten years later: 《明太祖實錄·卷一百三十九》洪武十四年冬十月壬子朔。己巳，禁瀕海民私通海外諸國。Ming *Tai-zu Shi Lu*, Juan 139, Hong-wu reign, Year 14, Winter, Month 10, Day 18 [4 Nov 1372]. (Available in Simplified Chinese at <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=83442&re-map=gb>, accessed 28 November 2018.)

⁷The term “Japanese pirates (Wokou 倭寇)” refers loosely to Japanese-led East Asian pirates from around the first part of the 13th century to the end of the 16th century. Initially, there were bands of pirates raiding the East Pacific coastal areas of Korean, China and South East Asia. By the mid-16th century, “Japanese pirates” collaborated with Chinese maritime merchants in smuggling and illegal trading. There were serious armed conflicts with Ming armed forces that led to great devastation in the coastal areas of Jiangsu and Zhejiang.

⁸A good summary of the connections between maritime trade, sea prohibition and “Japanese pirates” in the Ming Dynasty can be found in 《萬曆野獲編·卷十二·戶部·海上市舶司》*Wan-li Ye Huo Bian* (*An Unofficial History [of the Ming Dynasty compiled] in the Wan-li [reign, 1572–1620]*), by Shen Defu (沈德符) [1606], Juan 12, Section: The Ministry of Finance, Topic: Maritime Trade Authority. (Available at <https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/萬曆野獲編/卷12>, accessed 28 November 2018.)

⁹《東西洋考·卷七·餉稅考》張燮撰：隆慶改元[1567]，福建巡撫都御史塗澤民請開海禁，準販東西二洋。Dong-xi Yang Kao (*A Detailed Investigation of the East-West Oceans*) by Zhang Xie (張燮) of the Ming Dynasty (1574–1640), [first published in 1617, Wan-li (萬曆) reign, Year 45], Juan 7, (Available at <https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/東西洋考/卷七>, accessed 28 November 2018) and 《皇明經世文編·卷四百·許孚遠·疏通海禁疏》*Huang Ming Jing Shi Wen Bian* (*Imperial Ming Statecraft Classic Selections*), Juan 400, Xu Fu-yuan (1535–1604)’s Memorial to the [Wan-li] Emperor: Mediating the Sea Prohibition. (Available in Simplified Chinese at <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=508895&re-map=gb>, accessed 28 November 2018.)

Luzon in the Philippines.¹⁰ By 1574 the Spanish Governor Labezaris was reporting: “Last year Chinese vessels came to this city to trade ... more vessels came this year than last, and each year more will come”.¹¹ An unknown person writing in Spanish between 1580 and 1596 noted that there were twenty-five, thirty or more ships coming to Manila from China each year.¹² It was not until 1580, after the arrival of Governor Gonzalo Ronquillo de Peñalosa (governed 1580–83) that Spanish merchants came to the Philippines, especially when Spanish silver, principally from Potosí, in the Viceroyalty of Peru,¹³ was available, since the Chinese had moved to a silver standard for their currency and supplies from inside China were sorely depleted.¹⁴

By 1590 Bishop Salazar reported:

Ordinarily three or four thousand Sangleys¹⁵ reside in this Parián,¹⁶ not counting those who come and go in the ships,¹⁷ who usually are more than two thousand, and with these and the ones who live in Tondo,¹⁸ and with the fishermen and market gardeners in this area, the padres of St Dominic tell me that those they have in their charge could ordinarily be six or seven thousand Sangleys, in whose conversion and ministry four of the religious [Dominican] Order are engaged.¹⁹

¹⁰The lifting of the Sea Prohibition by the Long-qing (隆慶) Emperor in 1567 would be seen as disobedience to ancestral instructions and going against filial piety. As a consequence, the two official Chinese histories of the Ming Dynasty, viz., the *Ming Shi* 《明史》 and the *Ming Shi Lu* 《明實錄》, are completely silent on this matter.

¹¹“Affairs in the Philippines after the death of Legazpi”, Guido de Lavezaris; Manila, 29 June 1573, BR III, pp. 179–189, at p. 182.

¹²See [Anonymous], *De la historia De las Philipinas, que trata de la conquista de las yslandas philipinas desde el gouierno de el adelantado Miguel lopez de legazpi que la començo*, Bloomington, Indiana, Lilly Library, Philippine MSS II, [n.d.], fol. 177r. “[De China] bienen ya veynte y çinco y treinta y mas nauios cada año cargados de muy rricas cossas” (From China] twenty-five, thirty, or more ships come each year carrying many valuable things). This 314-folio manuscript, covering events up to 1596, appears to be the oldest Spanish history of the Spanish Philippines and seems not to have been written by a cleric. An edition and translation are being prepared by Crossley and Clive Griffin, see their “The earliest (Spanish) history of the Philippines?”, *The Journal of History*, LXI (2015), 56–77.

¹³Potosí is now in Bolivia.

¹⁴Before the arrival of Spanish silver, the Japanese Iwami Ginzan (石見銀山) silver mine, discovered and developed in 1526, in Honshu (本州), was the main source of silver to Ming China through smuggling. This could be compared to the renowned Spanish colonial Cerro Rico silver mine, discovered in 1545, of Potosí in the Viceroyalty of Peru. (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iwami_Ginzan_Silver_Mine, accessed 30 November 2018.)

¹⁵Sangleys was the name given to the Chinese in Manila and its environs. For a detailed discussion of its etymology see Pieter van der Loon, “The Manila incunabula and early Hokkien studies”, *Asia Major*, Part 1: 12, 1–43, part 2: 13, pp. 95–186 (1966–7) at Part 2, p. 101, n. 22.

¹⁶The Spaniards usually called the area to which the (unconverted) Chinese were restricted “the Parián”.

¹⁷According to the Chinese source 《皇明經世文編·卷四百·許孚遠·疏通海禁疏》“...迨隆慶年間、奉軍門涂右僉都御史議開禁例、題 准通行、許販東西諸番。...東西二洋、商人有因風濤不齊、歷冬未回者、其在呂宋尤多。漳人以彼為市、父兄久住、子弟往返、見留呂宋者、蓋不下數千人。...議止通東西二洋、不得往日本倭國。亦禁不得以硝黃銅鐵違禁之物、夾帶出海。奉旨允行、幾三十載。...” *Huang Ming Jing Shi Wen Bian (Imperial Ming Statecraft Classic Selections)*, Juan 400, Xu Fu-yuan (1535–1596), Memorial to the [Wan-li] Emperor: Mediating the Sea Prohibition, “... During the Long-qing reign [1567–1572], Commander Tu [Ze-min] (涂澤民), Deputy Censor-in-chief on the Right, recommended lifting the [Sea] Prohibition Laws proposing allowing [private] maritime trade with foreign countries in the East and West [Oceans] ... Merchants were sometimes prevented by bad weather from returning to China, so many of them stayed in Luzon—indeed several thousands—especially older males. ... The recommended advice was that (private) maritime trade be allowed for (countries in) the East and West Oceans but (vessels) be prohibited to go to Japan. The export of goods such as sulphur, potash, copper and other precious metals, was also prohibited. That was acted on with imperial consent for thirty years [Note: this would date the memorial as presented in 1597] ...” (Available in Simplified Chinese at <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=508895&remap=gb>, accessed 28 November 2018.)

¹⁸Tondo is directly across the Pasig River from Manila.

¹⁹“Residen en este Parián de hordinario de tres á quatro mili sangleyes, sin los que van y vienen en los navios, que suelen ser más de dos mill, y con éstos y con los que residen en Tondo, y con los pescadores y ortelanos que viven en esta comarca, me dicen los padres de Sancto Domingo que los tienen á cargo que habrá de hordinario de

In the previous year of 1589, two years after Benavides had arrived, the *Audiencia* (the then governing body of the Spanish Philippines) reported that there were “over 10,000 Sangleyes now in this city [of Manila]”.²⁰ Clearly the estimates of the number of Chinese were very variable, but would increase even further to at least 15,000 in 1603.²¹ In 1589, Governor de Vera had written: “When the Dominicans came here, I entrusted to them the instruction of the Chinese, and supplied them with interpreters to teach them the language”.²² With three other Dominicans, Benavides learnt to speak and write Fukien (or Hokkien), the variety of Chinese spoken in Manila, as Chinese in Manila were native to Fujian.²³ The most notable of these Dominicans is Juan de Cobo, who arrived in 1588 the year after Benavides and who was reputed to be the best at Chinese, not only learning the language but also being able to write in the classical style.²⁴ There was also Diego de Aduarte who “translated” the letter of our title though he did not arrive in the Philippines until 1595. Finally there was Juan Maldonado (who changed his name to Juan de San Pedro Mártir), who had arrived with Benavides in 1587 and served the Chinese in the church and hospital of San Gabriel in Binondo, where Christian Chinese were allowed to live, just across the River Pasig from Intramuros (the walled city).²⁵ Aduarte reports: “Nobody knew as much of their Chinese language as he did, although others pronounced it better than he did. ... He was so conscientious in ministering [to the Chinese], and supported the Chinese so strongly that they counted him as their protector and he was, as it were, their advocate in their [law]suits.”²⁶

Benavides did not stay long in the Philippines. Apart from accompanying his superior Juan de Castro to China in 1590, in 1591 he returned to Spain with Bishop Salazar. The reason was that Salazar had had profound disagreements with the governor, Gómez Pérez

seis á siete mill sangleyes, en cuya combersión y administración andan ocupados quatro religiosos de la dicha orden.”

Wenceslao E. Retana, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino: recopilación de documentos históricos, científicos, literarios y políticos y estudios bibliográficos*, (5 vols), (Madrid, 1895–1905), III, pp. 70–71. Our translation is slightly different from that in “The Chinese and the Parián at Manila”, Domingo de Salazar, Manila, 24 June 1590, BR VII, pp. 212–238, at p. 230.

²⁰“Letter from the Audiencia to Felipe II”, Santiago de Vera, and others, Manila, 25 June 1589, BR VII, pp. 311–21, at p. 316.

²¹See, for example, Table 3.2, p. 31, of James Chin Kong [錢江], *Merchants and other sojourners: The Hokkiens overseas, 1570–1760*, PhD thesis, The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong SAR, 1998. See: <http://hub.hku.hk/bitstream/10722/65175/3/FullText.pdf>, accessed 11 April 2018.

²²See Pieter van der Loon, *op. cit.*, at Part 1, pp. 19, 23 and 25. The comment by de Vera is in his “Letter to Felipe II”, Manila, 13 July 1589, BR VII, pp. 83–94, at p. 91.

²³We use the term “Hokkien” since this is the generic name for the dialect spoken by Chinese in Southern Fujian, which includes Zhangzhou (漳州) and Quanzhou (泉州) from where most Sangleyes came. However the authors of the letter, see below, identified themselves as Tang Min (唐民), and the Min Nan language originated in southern Fujian (around Quanzhou, Zhangzhou and Xiamen, 廈門) and spread to Southeast Asia, so there is a question as to whether it was Min Nan or some other kind of Hokkien. See especially James Chin Kong, *Merchants and other sojourners*.

²⁴See van der Loon, “The Manila incunabula”, Part 1, p. 14.

²⁵See Hilario Ocio, OP, Eladio Neira, OP, *Misioneros Dominicos en el Extremo Oriente 1587–1835*, corrected and updated edition by Fr Hilario Ocio, OP, Life Today Publications. Volume 1 of *Orientalia Dominicana, General*, no. 7, (Manila, 2000); *Compendio de la Reseña Biográfica de los Religiosos de la Provincia de Nuestra Señora del Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores*, (Manila, 1895), pp. 43 for Benavides, 46 for Maldonado, 57 for Cobo and 64 for Aduarte.

²⁶... ninguno supo tanta lengua china como él, aunque en la pronunciación le hicieron otros ventaja ... Acudió a este ministerio con tantas veras, y favorecía tanto a los chinos que le nombraron por su protector, y era como su abogado en sus causas.” See Vol. I, Chapter LII, p. 382, of Diego Aduarte, OP, *Historia de la provincia del Sancto Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Filipinas, Iapón y China*, edition by M. Ferrero, (Madrid, 1962), 2 vols, which were originally published in 1640. This work is partly translated, partly paraphrased, in BR XXX, pp. 115–321, and the whole of Vols XXXI and XXXII. See BR XXXI, p. 148 for this quotation.

Dasmariñas about the payment of tributes.²⁷ The disputes grew so severe that Salazar decided to go directly to the king in Spain. However the Chinese would miss the support they had had from Benavides, as will be seen later.

While Benavides was in Spain, Manila was raised to an archdiocese and, when Salazar died in 1594, the Franciscan Ignacio Santibáñez was appointed Archbishop, Benavides being appointed bishop of the new diocese of Nueva Segovia.²⁸ Benavides was then ordained in the Convento de San Agustín, Mexico City, in 1597.²⁹ Sometime after his return to the Philippines in May 1598, Benavides felt impelled to write to the king on 30 June and 5 July about the state of affairs there.³⁰ The first was a complaint about the misdemeanours of the governor, Francisco de Tello, (governed 4 July 1596–May 1602) and a plea to reinstate Luis Pérez Dasmariñas, the son of Gómez Pérez, who had become governor on the death of his father and had governed 1593–6. The second letter by Benavides was written because “the Chinese, both Christians and infidels came to me, all bewailing the terrible abuses they suffer every day at the hands of Your Majesty’s officers as well as of other Spaniards”.³¹ They had given him two letters “written in their characters, and language, and in their style” addressed to the king.³² The (almost) direct appeal to the Spanish king from oriental people seems to be unique for this period.

Why did they go to Benavides, and what were their complaints? The Chinese in Manila were foreigners in a land ruled by other foreigners: the Spaniards. Though expressed only in 1603, the attitude of the Wan-li emperor (萬曆, ruled 1572–1620) in China to the question of aiding the overseas Chinese in Manila was as follows, slightly paraphrased:³³

1. Due to their long tradition in trade and commerce, the people of Luzon are no different from our people.
2. The antagonism, as well as the confrontation, took place outside of China.
3. Of the four segments in Chinese society, the merchant class is the lowest and, therefore, not worth waging war for.³⁴
4. Those merchants who abandon their families, roam the seas, and stay away from home for months, are held in contempt by elders and relatives because they do not consider their filial ties.
5. An expedition to Luzon would be a misuse of the armed forces and would only drain them.³⁵

²⁷For more details see Crossley, *Dasmariñas*, Chapter V.

²⁸This diocese covered most of the north of the island of Luzon.

²⁹See, e.g., <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bbenm.html>, accessed 14 May 2018.

³⁰“Letters from the bishop of Nueva Segovia to Felipe II”, Miguel de Benavides, 30 June and 5 July 1598, Manila, BR X, pp. 161–167. Regarding the dating of this letter to 1598 see the Appendix below.

³¹BR X, p. 166.

³²For further discussion of the “two letters” see the Appendix below.

³³José Eugenio Borao Mateo paraphrased this in, “The massacre of 1603: Chinese perception of the Spaniards in the Philippines”, *Itinerario*, 23, No. 1 (1998), pp. 22–39. Spanish version: “Percepciones chinas sobre los españoles de Filipinas: la masacre de 1603”, *Revista española del Pacífico*, 8 (1998), pp. 233–254, at p. 33.

³⁴The four segments of society (四民) in Imperial China were, in descending order, scholars (士), farmers (農), craftsmen (工) and merchants (商).

³⁵This was in response to a request to the Emperor for him to retaliate after the Spaniards had massacred thousands of Chinese in Manila in retribution for their uprising in 1603. Re 5: The Imjin war with Japan from 1592–8 had severely drained the Chinese treasury, in addition to the continuing costs of wars on the northern Chinese borders.

Item 1 is self-explanatory; item 2 reflects how the emperor's attitude was firmly fixed on China; item 3 reflects the low esteem (at that time) in which merchants, as opposed to farmers, were held, while item 4 strongly reflects the Confucian ideal of filial piety and respect for one's ancestors and final matter was a huge concern as the kingdom had been under constant attack by the Mongols on her Northern borders for years. Although these remarks refer to 1603, the brief comments show the attitude of the Chinese Emperor to those who had left their fatherland as opposed to the harm they had suffered. The background to these brief comments is illuminating (see the footnote).³⁶

In the light of the attitudes revealed it would appear that the Sangleys in Manila could not expect support from their emperor. On the other hand the Dominican fathers had been very supportive. In their letter, the Sangleys write: "If it were not for the [Dominican] padres³⁷ we should not be able to live here".

The Chinese had reason to complain. There had been an initial friendly contact between Chinese and Spaniards on 1 May 1571 when Legazpi's expedition to Manila from Cebu freed Chinese who had been taken prisoner on a local ship.³⁸ After that the attempted invasion by the Chinese pirate Lim Ahong³⁹ in 1574 had caused trouble for both Spaniards and Chinese: for the Spaniards in terms of the havoc it wrought, but also for the Chinese Emperor and his people: Lim Ahong was besmirching the reputation of the Chinese and they made strenuous efforts to capture and punish him, even to the extent of giving the Spaniards incentives to do so.

Thereafter the attitudes of the Spaniards hardened. In the fortieth of the instructions given to the incoming governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas by King Philip II in 1589, he was

³⁶As the representative of the Emperor in Fujian Province, Governor Xu Xue-ju (徐學聚), who was responsible for maritime trade, sent an official letter of denunciation to the Spanish Authorities in Luzon regarding the massacre of "ten thousand" Chinese in 1603 (see e.g. Borao, "Massacre"). The letter survived in the Chinese records as part of an undated memorial to the Wan-li Emperor (as Borao, "Massacre", p. 11, noted) collected in 《皇明經世文編·卷四百三十三·徐學聚·報取回呂宋囚商疏》, *Huang Ming Jing Shi Wen Bian*, (*Imperial Ming Statecraft Classic Selections*), Juan 433: Xu Xue-ju, Memorial to the [Wan-li] Emperor: Report on the Repatriation of Imprisoned Merchants in Luzon. From Chinese sources we can date this to 1605, since Zhang Yi (張巖), who perpetrated the fantastic lie about the "mountain of gold in Cavite", was executed (see e.g. Crossley, *Dasmariñas*, p. 217). As well as giving an account of the 1603 massacre, Governor Xu advised the Emperor why no military action should be taken and he reproduced his letter to the Spanish Governor in full. The letter was addressed to people of the various tribes in Luzon and stated reasons (which can be described more accurately as moral pretexts) why China should not take up arms for revenge against "the people of Luzon".

Xu wrote: 《皇明經世文編·卷四百三十三·徐學聚·報取回呂宋囚商疏》“... 臣隨會檄傳諭佛郎機國酋長：「呂宋部落知道、...。 皇帝以呂宋久相商賈、不殊吾民、不忍加誅。又海外爭鬪、未知禍首。又中國四民、商賈最賤、豈以賤民、興動兵革。又商賈中棄家游海、壓冬不回、父兄親戚、共所不齒、棄之無所可惜、兵之反以勞師。終不聽有司言、...。 ” (Available at <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=859654&remap=gb>, accessed 28 November 2018).

³⁷We have used "padre" rather than "father" because of the Hokkien pronunciation of this word. See the translation of the petition below.

³⁸See [Anonymous], *De la historia*, fol. 88v: Y escriuieron [los chinos] a los chinos que estauan en Manila el buen tratamiento que los españoles les abian hecho. (And the [rescued] Chinese wrote to the Chinese in Manila about the good treatment they had received from the Spaniards.)

³⁹Regarding Lim Ahong, see, e.g. "Lin Feng (林鳳)" in Vol. I, pp. 917–919, of L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, (eds) *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644*, 2 vols, (New York and London, 1976), or p. 59 of Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, Hakluyt Society, Second Series, Vol. 140, translated and edited by J. S. Cummins (Cambridge, 1971). First published in 1609 Mexico: in the house of Geronymo Balli by Cornelio Adriano Cesar. Also Guido de Lavezares, *Relación del suceso de la venida del tirano chino sobre este campo*, edición de Juan Francisco Maura, *Anexos de la Revista Lemir* (2004), pp. 2–26, available at <http://pamaseo.uv.es/Lemir/Textos/Maura/Index.htm>, accessed 13 July 2017.

warned to beware of five classes of people, the second of which was “the four or five thousand Chinese who reside and travel back and forth for trade”.⁴⁰ Even clerics expressed very negative views about the Chinese, in particular Bishop Domingo Salazar, in 1582, though he later said that the Chinese had come to love him.⁴¹ His successor, Ignacio Santibáñez, was quick to write back to Spain once he had arrived in Manila, saying how terrible the Chinese were, even though he was only archbishop for a few months, dying in the same year of 1598 that he arrived.⁴² Benavides was also at times condemnatory of certain Chinese, complaining about sodomy, etc.⁴³ But the Spaniards depended on the Chinese—as Salazar wrote—they needed them to do all the trades and even to supply food.⁴⁴ Also, in 1589, Juan Cobo wrote: “If there were no Chinese in this island, Manila would be miserable since the Chinese work for our profit”.⁴⁵ So the symbiosis between Chinese and Spaniards was, and would remain, difficult. The Spaniards with their needs—and their tiny number of people—and the Chinese with their desire for trade and all that the silver passing through Manila brought.

The Spaniards exploited this desire for trade and had long made impositions on the Chinese; on top of the tributes the local people had to pay, the Sangleys bore the burden of additional taxes. But it was not these that they were complaining about, it was the way that the Spaniards were treating them and the abuses they were inflicting—abuses that were not being corrected by the justice system. Their only supporters were the Dominican friars.

The history of abuses of the Chinese by the Spaniards can be dated back to at least 1582. In that year Bishop Salazar had summoned a synod (meeting of senior clerics), which included the heads of the religious orders then in the Philippines.⁴⁶ “From its inception,

⁴⁰Paraphrase from Crossley, *Dasmariñas*, pp. 233–234; the full letter with instructions is at Archivo General de Indias, Seville (AGI, for short), Filipinas, 339, L.1, fols 365v–389r, reproduced in Francisco Colín, SJ, *Labor evangelica de los Obreros de la Compañía de Jesús en las Islas Filipinas*, Nueva edición. Ilustrada con copia de notas y documentos para la crítica de la Historia general de la soberanía de España en Filipinas por el Padre Pablo Pastells, S. J., three vols, Barcelona: Henrich y Compañía, 1900–04, III, pp. 741–50; also BR VII, pp. 141–172.

⁴¹Later, in 1590, Salazar reported: “the Sangleys began to have much love for me, for they are the most grateful people I have ever seen”. See “The Chinese and the Paríán at Manila”, Domingo de Salazar, Manila, 24 June 1590, BR VII, pp. 212–238, at p. 221.

⁴²See “Letters from the archbishop of Manila to Felipe II”, Ygnacio de Santibáñez; Manila, 24 and 26 June 1598, BR X, pp. 141–158 at pp. 149–150. Ryan Dominic Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory: Spanish Dominicans, Chinese Sangleys, and the Entanglement of Mission and Commerce in Manila, 1580–1620”, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 19 (2015), pp. 337–365, wrongly attributes this letter to Benavides at p. 361, n. 96.

⁴³We have not found earlier such comments by Benavides but in a letter of 16 December 1603 (in BR XII, pp. 150–2, at p. 150) he says: “There were among these [Chinese in Manila] a certain number of worthless persons, vicious and criminal, who on that account did not dare to return to China.” Also, in 1605, just a few months before he died, Benavides wrote: “The said Sangleys are infidels and idolaters, and a most pernicious and injurious people ... the said infidel Sangleys are most vicious, both with women and in an unnatural manner, and are extremely liberal in spending money for their purposes and desires, and artful and crafty for every form of evil”. See “Complaints against the Chinese” by Miguel de Benavides *et al.*, Manila, 3–9 February 1605, BR XIII, pp. 271–286, at p. 271.

⁴⁴See the letter “The Chinese and the Paríán at Manila”, Domingo de Salazar, Manila, 24 June 1590, BR VII, pp. 212–238, *passim*.

⁴⁵Alfonso Felix, Jr. (ed.), *The Chinese in the Philippines*, vol. 1: 1570–1770, Manila, 1966–69) at p. 137; original Spanish: “De suerte que sino huuiera Chinos en estas Islas, era Manila vna miseria, porque con los Chinos ganan los Castillas”, in José Antonio Cervera Jiménez, *Cartas del Paríán: Los chinos de Manila a finales del siglo XVI a través de los ojos de Juan Cobo y Domingo de Salazar*, Colección “El Pacífico, un mar de historia”, Palabra de Clío, (Mexico City, 2007), p. 92.

⁴⁶The Augustinians arrived in the Philippines in 1565, Franciscans in 1578, Jesuits in 1581, and the Dominicans in 1587.

the Synod tried to tackle problems that were eminently pastoral and practical”.⁴⁷ Chief among these was the question of justice. Although the focus was predominantly on the proper treatment of the indigenous people, the Chinese were also taken into consideration. One outcome of the Synod was a draft *Handbook for confessors*.⁴⁸ Since Christians, especially those in office, had to go to confession this provided the priests with the opportunity to direct them not to commit sins, in particular not to inflict injustices against people. Moreover the *Handbook* instructs them on what penetrating questions confessors were to ask. There are, for example, sections explicitly concerning the obligations the governor has to the Chinese. However, the attitude to the Chinese is very mixed. They are described as “treacherous” and the governor is advised to “look to the harm that the Chinese do to this commonwealth”.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, since they are human beings, they should be treated properly. There follows a list whose items are remarkably similar to those in the letter of complaint that we present below. These include:

... let [the governor] make sure that no one aggrieves [the Chinese] and that no one takes their merchandise by force or on credit against their will; that those who inspect their boats do not take what they want at a lesser price and before the set time.⁵⁰

The governor is also to be questioned by his confessor “whether [his servants, relatives or friends] go to the boats of the Chinese and take the best for themselves ... [and] whether <he grants> a full hearing to those who come on business”.⁵¹

Likewise instructions are given to the Spanish officials from the Synod. “They may not inspect the Chinese boats in the manner they usually do, which is to enter and choose the best for themselves” and “if, finding themselves in such a needy situation, they rob Indians [*sc.* Indigenes] or Chinese, they should make restitution for all damages”.⁵²

These recommendations were made nearly a decade earlier and clearly were not being followed. In desperation the afflicted Chinese turned to Benavides, who had long been an ally. The mechanism is not entirely clear but the document preserved in the Spanish archives is assembled into a single document and contains the Chinese text, which is dated and signed in Chinese, together with the Spanish “translation” by Aduarte.⁵³

On the far right is the Chinese text, written in the standard way from top to bottom, then right to left.⁵⁴ To the left of the letter, it says in Spanish:⁵⁵ “These are the names of those who signed the letter; some [in fact, nine] are vessel owners and others [in fact, seventeen]

⁴⁷Lucio Gutierrez, OP, *Domingo de Salazar, O. P., First Bishop of the Philippines (1512–1594)*, (Manila, 1985), at p. 125.

⁴⁸See Paul Arvisu Dumol, translator, *The Manila Synod of 1582: The Draft of its Handbook for Confessors*, (Quezon City, 2014).

⁴⁹Dumol, *The Manila Synod*, pp. 59–60. “Treacherous” is Dumol’s translation but, as a referee suggested, “disloyal” might be more appropriate.

⁵⁰Dumol, *The Manila Synod*, pp. 59–60.

⁵¹Dumol, *The Manila Synod*, p. 61.

⁵²Dumol, *The Manila Synod*, pp. 64 and 66.

⁵³The document is AGI, Filipinas, 76, N.41, image 3 available in Mapas, planos, documentos iconográficos y documentos especiales, available at http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas/servlets/Control_servlet?accion=2&tx-t_id_fondo=1931454, accessed 20 July 2018.

⁵⁴In the Chinese text below we have presented this in the modern style: left to right, top to bottom.

⁵⁵“estos son los nombres de los q[ue] firmaron esta carta, de los quales unos son señores de nauios y otros mercaderes”.

[are] merchants”, but in the Chinese there is added the comment, “and a hundred and more others”.⁵⁶ However only the first signatory includes his surname, so it seems likely that the signatories may have been concerned for their own safety, if they planned to return to China — or for that of their family and relatives in Fujian—because of prohibitions on private sea trade, so were reluctant to give their full names. Next comes the date 西土一千五百九十八年五月[space]日, i.e. “Western calendar, day [space] May 1598”, but the actual number of the day is not included. However, Benavides came back to the Philippines on one of two galleons from Acapulco and these arrived on 5 and 20 May so, given that the letter is dated “May”, it seems likely that Benavides arrived on 5 May.⁵⁷ Finally, on the far left of the document is Aduarte’s “translation”.

Since Aduarte had only been in the Philippines three years it is likely that his Chinese was nowhere near as good as Cobo’s. Certainly the “translation” is much shorter than the substance of the original Chinese. He starts off by saying the letter is from the “chinos infieles” of Luzon, whereas both the letter of Benavides and the Chinese text mention both believers and non-believers. Other differences are the noticeable toning down of the complaints of the Chinese. We give some examples after the English translations below.

The letter would take almost a year to get to Spain and would not be considered by the king until 1600 (see the Appendix below). It would appear that the *Audiencia* in Manila saw, or at least knew of, this letter going to the king since, on 18 March 1599, the *oidores* [members of the *Audiencia*] decreed that as soon as ships arrived from China the *contador* [accountant] of the Spanish Treasury should register their merchandise and other contents so that nothing should be taken without being accounted for.⁵⁸ So a little action was taken but not much.

In Spain it seems unlikely that anyone at the Spanish court at that time knew Chinese but the letter was presented to the king. However the king was not Philip II but his son Philip III who had succeeded his father in 1598. The Philippines was not high on the royal agenda. Technically it came under the viceroy of New Spain and was a constant drain on that treasury. Later many would argue for the Philippines to be abandoned or exchanged for Brazil.⁵⁹ Thus in 1619 when the remarkable Franciscan Hernando de Moraga, who had travelled mainly overland from the Philippines to Spain, was granted an audience by the king, he prostrated himself at the feet of the monarch and implored the king not to abandon the Philippines.⁶⁰

⁵⁶See below for the list of names.

⁵⁷Four ships are listed as arriving from Acapulco in May 1598; see R. R. García, H. F. Díaz, R. García Herrera, J. Eischeid, M. del Rosario Prieto, E. Hernández, L. Gimeno, F. Rubio Durán, and A. M. Bascary, “Atmospheric Circulation Changes in the Tropical Pacific Inferred from the Voyages of the Manila Galleons in the Sixteenth–Eighteenth Centuries”, *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 82(11) (2001), 2435 ff. (Available at <https://journals.ametsoc.org/doi/pdf/10.1175/1520-0477%282001%29082%3C2435%3AACCITT%3E2.3.CO%3B2>, accessed 9 July 2019.)

⁵⁸See Juan Gil, *Los chinos en Manila (Siglos XVI y XVII)*, (Lisbon, 2011), pp. 44–45, quoting AGI, Filipinas, 18B, 9 124, *Ordenanzas*, folios 31v–32v.

⁵⁹See John Newsome Crossley, *Hernando de los Rios Coronel and the Spanish Philippines in the Golden Age*, Ashgate, Farnham, England, 2011, at p. 169 and John N. Crossley and Sarah E. Owens, “The First Nunnery in Manila: The Role of Hernando de los Ríos Coronel”, *Catholic Historical Review*, 102 (2016), pp. 469–491 at p. 485.

⁶⁰See Crossley, *Hernando*, pp. 152–153.

The king responded positively saying, “Go with God, so that it shall not be said of me that I abandoned what my father gained and left for me”.⁶¹

Philip III did take note of the Chinese letter, but his response, as noted on the original, was as terse as usual: “Bid the archbishop [Santibáñez] and governor [Tello] to exercise great care in the fair treatment and instruction of these Sangleys,⁶² and let them see that no injury is done them, so that no harm may result to their settlement”.⁶³ The earliest this response could have been received in Manila was May 1601,⁶⁴ but it seems the response fell on deaf ears; we have found no report of any action being taken in Manila. Then in October 1603, the Chinese in Manila rebelled against the Spaniards.⁶⁵ The story is well known. The rebellion quite literally decimated the Spaniards killing about 150 of them, but the Spanish response was Draconian; the minimum number of Chinese killed was 10,000 though estimates go up to 20,000 or more. Nevertheless it would not be their last uprising.⁶⁶ So now we turn to the letters.

Translation of the letter of Benavides to Philip II,⁶⁷ 5 July 1598⁶⁸

Sire

After having written to Your Majesty what I feel about the state of these islands, the Chinese, both Christians and infidels, came to me, all bewailing the terrible abuses they suffer every day at the hands of Your Majesty’s officers as well as of other Spaniards. And they brought me two letters for Your Majesty written in their characters, and language, and in their style. I had them translated and written in Spanish letters. They have no other protection than the Order of our Father Saint Dominic⁶⁹ and, since I am its senior priest, they came to me so that I could act as their advocate⁷⁰ and send the letters on to Your Majesty’s royal hands. I certify to Your Majesty that these poor people are the victims of such outrageous abuses that there are no greater enemies of the unblemished Christian faith than many of Your Majesty’s officers in these lands. Your Majesty has made clear provision that the property the Chinese bring should not be violated nor the best of it confiscated. This is one of the depredations of [damaged paper] Chinese, but none of these measures, nor any good provision, is respected. And [may?] Your Majesty [trust?] that I am exaggerating

⁶¹“... no se dirá de mí, que abandoné, lo que me gano, y dexó mi Padre.” See Vol. IV, p. 476, of Juan de la Concepción, ORSA, 1788, *Historia general de Philipinas. Conquistas espirituales y temporales de estos Españoles Dominios, establecimientos Progresos, y Decadencias. Comprehende los Imperios, Reinos, y Provincias, de Islas, y continentes con quienes há havido comunicacion, y Coincidencias. Con noticias universales Geographicas Hidrographicas de Historia Natural de Política de Costumbres y de Religiones, en lo que deba ineresarse tan universal tiulo*, 14 vols, (Manila: Imprenta del Seminar, Conciliar, y Real de San Carlos: Por Agustin de la Rosa, y Balagtas, 1788–1792).

⁶²On the identification of the archbishop and the governor see the Appendix.

⁶³See BR X, p. 167. Regarding the timing see the Appendix below.

⁶⁴See García *et al.*, “Atmospheric Circulation Changes” for 1601.

⁶⁵See, for example, Boroa, “Massacre”, especially, p. 32, which records the Chinese views as well as the Spanish.

⁶⁶There would be another Chinese rebellion in 1639 but this time not centred on Manila.

⁶⁷Philip II died in 1598 and was succeeded by his son Philip III. News of the death, however, would not have reached Manila until at least 1599.

⁶⁸This is a new translation from the copy in the AGI, Filipinas, 76, N. 41, fol. 1r. Blair and Robertson’s translation may be found in “Letters from the bishop of Nueva Segovia to Felipe II”, Miguel de Benavides, 30 June and 5 July 1598, Manila, BR X, pp. 161–167 at pp. 166–167.

⁶⁹i.e. the Dominican Order.

⁷⁰Literally: be a godparent to.

nothing.⁷¹ The Order of our Father Saint Dominic is now sending a very senior friar, who is prior here in M[anila] [called?] Fray de Soria;⁷² he knows more about these islands and lands than anyone who is left here. He will furnish information about everything. From Manila, 5 July 1598.⁷³

Padre [Miguel de Benavides]

We now give the original petition in Chinese and in our own translation. In the latter we have given the Hokkien pronunciations in brackets rather than the Mandarin ones since the language of the Sangleys was Hokkien.

連名徼坊陳情，唐民商眾，入廟與不入廟人等，相率具詞叩。

稟為興利除害，以靖地方事，乎東夷呂宋與我 唐通販蓋已 [? missing 4 to 5 characters]。

干系蠟 主上克相天主差委 國王、酋長、兵眾、前來蒞治鎮守茲土，叨蒙仙廚羅明、巴禮綿倪、巴禮羨等習學唐語唐字，教養有年，昔時風倍敦厚，九國王、諸判事體悉，巴禮之 王教，招撫愛恤唐民，通商柔遠經今二十載有奇，唐舡逐年來往，貨物任從時價，公平貿易，現錢交關，兩便稱慶，設攤買賣，利此商眾，各處州府，聽從民便，何曾禁制，漁食我唐眾耶，此乃 巴禮綿倪未回干系蠟之日，所目覩其盛焉。柰自歸國之后，上無正法之國王，下無秉法之判事，僅有 朗雷氏國王，一二諸判，撫綏之仁，嘖嘖傳聲，其余者，國王並營攤判事，拘篋負役，俱是貪贓受賂，利歸於己，害播於民，視諸昔日，不啻十佰而千萬之。夫何使唐民至於此極也。目今光景，舉目有江河之異，慘不可言。難以悉陳，姑條述其大概者，不惟新唐舡客商之貨物，被番猶 [? missing character] 買強搬，尤有甚者，貸謊入手，錢不肯還，僥負延藏，狀如劫掠，投公判事徇私，不肯秉公追給，反起僥套謀單回，商本無歸，此慘害於新唐不入廟 [? missing characters] 涕也，舊唐奇厘仙諸子，歸順向化從教巴禮匪居此地受制於酋長，困 [? missing characters]，吹不登款，外販州府 國王不少憐恤，文引不通，倘計較有文引，荷本興販 [? missing characters] 兵番劫掠掃空，又被判事查盤，蒙朧謊騙，經紀失利，家人無望，此慘害於入廟諸人者，可長太息也。豈我

干系蠟聖上責望國王酋長，盛心造福宋土，克奉乎天主者乎，今幸托庇王氏天主扶持，國祚獎陞，巴禮綿倪為和尚王，奉命舟來呂宋，此誠景星慶雲，降臨下土，為東夷之長城，保障唐民，蓋引領而望之。實相率匍赴叩陳，時艱懇恩，垂憐作主，抄台具由轉詳呈請，干系蠟聖上恩慈鑒察，採取一二便宜，有利則興，有害則除。弘恩沾及異域，大造普濟無私，以蘇此一方民焉。激切哀淚以聞，為此具

稟

計開舡商

舡主 黃濱田 環山 易軒 我宇 月來 碧江 汲吾 瑞泉 慎予

客商 竹泉 奇田 及源 玉峯 襟江 肖吾 植宇 三喬 槐廷

交瀆 明峯 我懷 潘吾 活榕 錦泉 軒戴 三吾 臨賓

等數百余名全叩

西士一千五百九十八年五月

日具稟

⁷¹The Blair and Robertson translation oddly omits this full stop and puts it after “Domingo”.

⁷²Diego de Soria, OP. He was in the first mission of Dominicans who arrived in Manila in 1587 and subsequently became prior in Manila until he succeeded Benavides as Bishop of Nueva Segovia from 1604 until his death in 1613.

⁷³Regarding the date see the Appendix.

Joint Petition,⁷⁴ with great respect, to explain the situation, from the Chinese (唐民, *Tang Min*)⁷⁵ Merchants, both within and without the church,⁷⁶ of the Parián [徽坊, *Kiao Hong*].⁷⁷

This petition is for the enhancement of benefits and the elimination of harm for the peace and tranquillity of this place [Luzon]. The neighbouring Eastern country of Luzon has had bilateral trade with our land, China (唐, *Tang*), for many years [? missing 4 to 5 characters].

Your Majesty [Philip II], King of Castile (干系蠟, *Kan-si-la*), anointed by the Grace of God, has sent governors, officials and soldiers to govern and protect this land. With one voice, we salute Domingo de Salazar (仙廚羅明, *Sian-du-lo-ming*⁷⁸), Padre Benavides (巴禮綿倪, *Pa-le Bian-chi*),⁷⁹ and Padre Juan de Cobo (巴禮羨, *Pa-le-Sian*),⁸⁰ who have learnt to speak and read Chinese (唐, *Tang*) through many years of training and practice. In those days, the general atmosphere [between Chinese and Spaniards] was cordial and sincere; governors and officials were understanding and sympathised with our situation. The princely teachings [on Spanish culture and Christianity] by the friars (巴禮之, *Pa-le-chi*) have shown compassion and pity to the Chinese; [the friars] are sympathetic to the Chinese merchants, who have been conducting bilateral trade [with Luzon] from far away for more than twenty years, and to Chinese vessels that have been sailing annually to-and-fro with cargo, and were permitted to trade fairly at market value on a cash basis—such practicality was welcome and honoured by both buyers and sellers. A house at the foot of the city wall (壩, *Kan*)⁸¹ was assigned for such trade, which was beneficial to the merchants.⁸² In those days, the city and county administrators were cooperative, making it convenient to conduct trade, and at no time did they ever obstruct or prey on the Chinese. This was what one could witness had been achieved before Padre Benavides returned to Castile.⁸³ However, we have had to endure much since he returned to his country [Spain]—at the head the governor is not one who upholds justice, and below there are no justices who enforce the law. We had comforting and conciliatory words only from Governor Luis Pérez Dasmariñas (朗雷氏,

⁷⁴AGI, MP-Escritura y Cifra, 28 in Filipinas, 76, N. 41. Small fragments of a translation due to James Chin Kong have been published in Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory”, p. 352.

⁷⁵The Chinese referred to their country and themselves as “Tang” after the early dynasty (618–902 CE), acknowledged by rulers and historians of subsequent dynasties to be a period of prosperity, great cultural achievements, and successful integration of peoples from Central Asia with Han Chinese. “Fujian was one of the major regions inhabited by the Yue people (越人) and the early Hokkien [were] known as *Min Yue* [閩越]”, (see Chin, *Merchants and other sojourners*, p. 318).

⁷⁶The Chinese text preserves the duality between converts and those not converted.

⁷⁷The characters refer to the walls of Intramuros. At this time the Parián was at the northeast edge of Intramuros.

⁷⁸仙廚羅明 = *Sian du lo bieng* or *lo ming* for literal/educated Hokkien pronunciation ... it may be Santo Domingo? (Email from Teresita Ang See, 25 June 2018.) 仙 is the standard title for saints.

⁷⁹*Pa-le* is the standard title, imitating *Padre*.

⁸⁰Cobo’s full Chinese name was 高母羨 (*Ko-bu-sian*).

⁸¹This unusual character means a house where you buy and sell. It possibly indicates the Baluarte (Bastion) of San Gabriel at the northeast corner of the walled city of Intramuros.

⁸²This was the second location of the Parian. Initially it was in the *Alcaicería* (Silk Market) inside Intramuros. The area now described was actually assigned by Governor Gonzalo Ronquillo de Peñalosa. (governed 1580–83).

⁸³He left Manila in 1591. There has been misdating of his departure to 1592. See Crossley, *Dasmariñas*, Appendix 2, p. 241, for a discussion of the dating.

Long-Dui-si)⁸⁴ and one or two officials, who were benevolent, while the other governors, officials and captains in charge of the [Chinese] quarter at the city wall beat us and order us to serve them. They are corrupt and take bribes to enrich only themselves. Great harm has already been propagated through the common people. From ten parts of what we used to have before, now we do not even have one! Why have the Chinese been put into such a diabolical situation? Looking at our present circumstances, you see wretched people in a foreign land enduring great injustices that are beyond description. We relate a few things, without going into particular cases, so as to convey some idea but nevertheless establish our case.

It is not only those newly-arrived Chinese merchants with cargo from Chinese trading vessels from China [who suffer that] the captains and others go through the ships from China, in which the Chinese merchants bring goods, seek out the best and take it away by force. What is even worse is that goods are taken on credit. Sometimes they make us wait a long time for payment, at other times they pay us much less than they should, and at other times [they pay us] nothing at all, just as if the goods were stolen property—so that they are being treated as goods confiscated by authority. If we do not want to hand them over, they take them from us by force. And if we complain to the justices, they do not follow the law [for us] to recover the debt but they only listen to one side. Nowadays there are many Chinese here, and if we go there [into Manila] to trade, the soldiers rob us, and later go and tell the *alcalde* that he should not inquire into the matter. Thus Chinese merchants cannot even recover their costs. This causes great harm to newly arrived Chinese and reduces them [missing characters] to tears.

Many older Christian Chinese and their descendants have naturalised and converted [to Christianity]. Dominican padres (巴禮匝, *Ba-li-chat*) who live here are under the control of the captains, and are trapped [? missing characters] ... even though they would like to report such matters to governors in other prefectures who are sympathetic. However legal sale documents are not valid. If one really had to count on the validity of the original documents of sale [? missing characters]. Everything is taken off by soldiers; at the same time the judges who investigate cover up and cheat; brokers lose out, family members are without redress. Such cruel harm extends to many [Chinese] persons. It is such a great pity!

We dare to hope Your Majesty, the King of Castile, will sternly remind them that the duty of governors and captains is to take care of the land of Luzon on behalf of God. Now we are very fortunate and blessed, with the Grace of God in Spain that Padre Benavides has been promoted to bishop to come back to Luzon. This is like “the appearance of the lucky star and the descent of the colourful cloud” (景星慶雲⁸⁵) on this land, and as the Great Wall of the Eastern people (夷, *Yi*), which also protects the Chinese inhabitants. With great hopes, we gather respectfully in front of his Grace [the Bishop] to have pity on us. His Grace has accepted the responsibility to translate [this from Chinese to Spanish] and transmit this petition on our behalf to Your Majesty, King of Castile. We gratefully hope that Your Majesty will be able to view this matter with kindness and provide some convenient ways to increase our welfare and eliminate harm. Your great mercy would touch this far away region,

⁸⁴Phonetically imitating “Don Luis”. 朗 is also used as a title in Chinese.

⁸⁵Celestial phenomena portending peace and prosperity.

benefitting all people without distinguishing between races and creeds! We are all truly grateful and in tears we beg you to hear our plea.

“Translation” by Aduarte of the Chinese letter⁸⁶

Letter from the Chinese unbelievers of Luzon to King Philip translated by Fr Diego Aduarte, religious of the Order of St Dominic, minister to the Christian Chinese. This letter, translated in their own idiom and manner of speaking, says the following:

We, the Chinese unbelievers of Luzon, report to Your Majesty about our travails so that you may know them. First paying due reverence to Your Majesty, asking you to order us to be well treated and that we not be molested. This island of Luzon is close to China, our homeland. For a long time we have been coming here to trade, and the King of Castile has sent here governors and captains to govern this land. The men to whom we owe most thanks are the Dominican padres who know our language. When Bishop Don Fray Miguel de Benavides was here in former days, the governor and *alcaldes* treated us better, but since he left we have been very ill-used. They take merchandise from us at the price they decide, though Don Luis [Pérez Dasmariñas]⁸⁷ treated us well. And we took solace in telling ourselves that Padre Fray Miguel, who is now bishop,⁸⁸ would bring a remedy for this from the king from over there [in Spain].⁸⁹ But now there is another governor,⁹⁰ other captains and *alcaldes*,⁹¹ and we can only do business with them if we pay bribes. They want to enrich only themselves and for vassals to suffer. From ten parts of what we used to have, now we do not have one. Everything is a trial that we do not know how to describe in full, just briefly. When the ships from China arrive in which the Chinese merchants bring goods, the captains and others go to them and look for the best textiles and take them from us; and if we are unwilling to give them to those men, they take them from us by force. And if we ask them to pay us, on some occasions they make us wait a long time for payment, on others they pay us much less than they should, and on others nothing at all. And if we complain to the justices, they do not listen to us. Nowadays there are many of us Chinese here, and if we go around trading, the soldiers rob us and then go and tell the *alcalde* that he should not inquire into the matter. If it were not for the [Dominican] padres we should not be able to live here. It is not the will of God that they should harm us, [torn page] (thank God) Bishop Fray Miguel has come to look after us. He is our father and mother, for [torn page] to see; we trust him as our lord, and we beseech the King of Castile to take <pity?> on us, and order the Spaniards here to treat us properly, because, we are among them [word illegible] as [torn page] could make us <better?> [word

⁸⁶AGI, MP-Escritura y Cifra, 28 in Filipinas, 76, N. 41.

⁸⁷Luis Pérez Dasmariñas succeeded his father as governor general in 1593 and governed until 1596 when Tello succeeded him and governed until 1602.

⁸⁸Benavides was appointed bishop of Nueva Segovia on 30 August 1595 and took up his post in 1598. The diocese of Nueva Segovia occupied most of Northern Luzon, with its seat at what is now Lal-loc.

⁸⁹Benavides had been in Spain from 1594–97, see p. 446 of Miguel Angel Medina Escudero, “Fray Miguel de Benavides”.

⁹⁰Francisco de Tello. Benavides complained to the king about his behaviour, see “Letters from the bishop of Nueva Segovia to Felipe II”, Miguel de Benavides; Manila, 30 June and 5 July [1598], BR X, pp. 161–167.

⁹¹Mayors or councillors.

illegible]. May God protect the King of Castile and [torn page] give him ten thousand years <of?> great happiness.

We have called this a “translation” with scare quotes because of the differences between this and the Chinese. It would appear that Benavides was better at Chinese than Aduarte and therefore could have checked the translation, but he obviously approved it, or at least he accepted it. The differences begin in the heading where Aduarte says it is from the “Chinese unbelievers” while the Chinese is much more inclusive, saying it is from the Chinese “both within and without the church”. (We have mirrored the Chinese syntax.) Aduarte does not list the individual friars mentioned in the Chinese, nor does he mention the long years of study they had undertaken. Then the Chinese explanation about the previous fair conduct of trade under Governor Luis Pérez Dasmariñas and before Benavides returned to Spain is curtailed. The same is true of the explicit complaints about the Spaniards’ excessive demands and illegalities. It seems curious that Aduarte does not include the statement about the number of Chinese who have converted to Christianity, but this is consistent with his omission of any mention of the converted Chinese at the beginning of the letter. Aduarte then ends the letter in a standard Spanish, rather than Chinese, way wishing the king “ten thousand years [of?] great happiness”.

Perhaps the most striking omission is that there is no mention of the converted Chinese. One would have expected a Christian to be zealous about the protection of fellow Christians. Given that the friars learnt the local language, rather than teaching Spanish, it seems unlikely that the translation was vetted by any Chinese, and one wonders why Benavides did not exact a more faithful translation. The extremity of the Sangley position is, however, clear; they could not appeal to their emperor since they had “abandoned their families without considering their filial ties”⁹² in contravention of Confucian ethics, and the Dominican friars were their sole protectors against depredations by corrupt Spanish officials. The petition was a last desperate cry for help.

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We are also very grateful for the Chinese resources at the web sites: Chinese Text Project (中國哲學書電子化計劃): <http://ctext.org/>, NUS Libraries (关于东南亚华人历史文献): <https://libportal.nus.edu.sg/frontend/ms/sea-chinese-historical-doc/about-sea-chinese-historical-doc> and Wikisource (维基文库): <https://zh.wikisource.org/>.

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⁹²Cf. the attitude of the Wan-li emperor noted above.

⁹³The Chinese sources we have used are all on the web at the URLs indicated in the footnotes.

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JOHN N. CROSSLEY

Monash University, Australia, john.crossley@monash.edu

ANTHONY WAH-CHEUNG LUN

Monash University, Australia, john.crossley@monash.edu

Appendix: The date of the petition and in particular that of the letter of Benavides

As noted above Benavides said he had been given two letters in Chinese. There appear to be two copies of all the letters concerned, Spanish and Chinese: one is in the Simancas archive (referenced below), which we have not seen, and one in the AGI. We have not found any trace of a separate second letter from the Chinese, neither in the AGI, nor in references to this incident, but it may simply be that there were two copies, since the one in the AGI, Filipinas, 76, N.41, is marked 子本, “secondary version”, i.e. “copy”, on the reverse. At first glance the copy of the covering letter by Benavides that is in the AGI looks to be dated “5 July 1596” because the formation of the last digit has an incomplete figure of eight that looks like a six. This must be wrong for two reasons: first, Benavides was still

in Spain in 1596,⁹⁴ and, secondly, Benavides expressly says that he is writing this letter *after* he had written the one complaining about Governor Tello, and that is dated 30 June 1598.⁹⁵ (Tello only started governing on 14 July 1596.) Further, in BR X, pp. 167, the letter is followed by: Endorsed: “The bishop of Nueva Segovia, July 5, [15]98. Received April 6, [1]600.” This copy of the letter is in the Simancas archives: 9. *Letters from Benavides*—“Simancas-Secular; Audiencia de Filipinas; cartas y espedientes de los obispos sufragáneos de Manila; 1598 á 1698; est. 68, caj. 1, leg. 34.”; see BR X, p. 318. Finally the Chinese letter in the AGI is clearly dated 1598 in Chinese: 一千五百九十八, as noted above. However, Gil, *Los chinos*, p. 43, and more recently, Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory”, pp. 351–352 (especially note 55), date the letter to 1596. The 1598 date for the letter of Benavides also makes more sense in the narrative in Gil, *Los chinos*, pp. 44–45.

Galleons from the Philippines arrived in November/December 1598 at Acapulco, and therefore must have sailed very soon after 5 July 1598, though the exact dates are not known.⁹⁶ This suggests the letter arrived in Spain mid- to late 1599. The much later date of 6 April 1600, when the king’s endorsement is made, is not out of line with the reply dates of the king to other communications from the Philippines. Moreover Philip III had only acceded to the throne in 1598.

Because Santibáñez died on 14 August 1598, news of his death would not have left the Philippines until 1599. Galleons carrying the letter only arrived in Mexico between 23 November 1599 and 27 January 1600, so it is unlikely that Philip III in Spain would have learnt of the death of Santibáñez until after 6 April 1600, the date of his endorsement.⁹⁷

⁹⁴See n. 85 above and Fidel Villarroel, O.P., *Miguel de Benavides, O.P. (1550–1605), Friar, Bishop and University Founder: Insights into the Life and Works of the Founder of the University of Santo Tomás. On the Occasion of the Fourth Centennial of his Death, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press, 2005*, pp. 32 and 45.

⁹⁵“Letters from the Bishop of Nueva Segovia to Felipe II”, Miguel de Benavides; Manila, 30 June and 5 July 1598, BR X, 161–167.

⁹⁶See García *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁹⁷His successor, Benavides, was only appointed on 18 January 1601. (See p. 467 of Miguel Angel Medina Escudero, “Fray Miguel de Benavides”.)