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## **Foreign Accounts of the Chinese in the Philippines: 18th-19th Centuries**

Elliott C. Arensmeyer

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# Foreign Accounts of the Chinese in the Philippines: 18th-19th Centuries

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ELLIOTT C. ARENSMEYER

**D**URING the late eighteenth century, and increasingly during the nineteenth century, several merchants, among them the German Fedor Jagor and the Englishmen Sir John Bowring and Robert MacMicking came to the Philippines either to reside or to investigate possibilities for trade. Official visitors, whether from Spain for the express purpose of investigating local administration or from England to compare colonial services, were fairly numerous; Tomas de Comyn was one of these. J. Mallat, a visitor from France in the early 1840's, proclaimed that he had come to compare the administrations of the three great Empires in the Far East... those of Spain, the Netherlands and China. His goal, as he put it, was to be useful. A few, Charles Wilkes and Henry Ellis for example, came as part of a military tour, and others managed to combine military and scientific tours. The latter included the Frenchmen Pierre de Pages and Renouard de Sainte-Croix, both of whom wrote about their experiences in the Philippines.

Many of the visitors were fascinated by the presence of a vast number of Chinese and Chinese mestizos in the Christianized, superficially Hispanized islands. Some, like Mallat, delved into the early history of the Chinese in the Philippines at great length in order to understand their unique

position better. Others, like Jagor, concentrated on the developments in the first half of the nineteenth century in order to understand the increased power of the Chinese merchant class in the early 1860's. Bowring cites historical evidence to prove his points about the superiority of the Chinese. All the visitors comment lengthily on the Chinese monopoly of retail trade and of the various crafts in the Philippines. These monopolies were generally held at the expense of the Spaniards and the Indios (the accepted term for the Malay inhabitants of the Islands). Most of the travelers discuss Chinese social and religious customs, usually to point out their perpetual estrangement from their hosts. Others treat on the persecutions suffered by Chinese at the hands of the Spaniards and on the prejudice directed against them by the Indios. Most of the visitors attempt some sort of evaluation of the Chinese role in the future of the Philippines.

To read these comments in perspective, it may be helpful to look, even if briefly at one aspect of Chinese civilization and culture, which is important relative to the Chinese role in Philippine history. It pertains to the dual significance of the merchant in Chinese life. Between the sixth and the third century B.C. when Chinese thought was first taking shape in the feudal period of China's history, the merchant was assigned a place almost at the bottom of the social scale. The only class ranked lower than the merchant was the soldier. Though the merchant played a real and important part in the development of the Chinese Empire, on the Confucian scale of values he was a parasite and a leach. This thinking naturally applied as well to the Chinese who sought fortunes abroad. They were thought to have committed the most heinous of crimes, that of leaving their ancestors' spirits uncared for, and that of having deserted the "Middle Kingdom", the abode of "all under Heaven". No better expression of scorn for the overseas Chinese could have been made than that of an Imperial Official from Fukien Province who wrote in 1603 to the Governor of Manila:

...vile people and ungrateful to China, to their country, fathers and friends, since so many years had passed that they did not return

to China; which people the King [the Emperor of China] says he did not hold in much value...<sup>1</sup>

As this letter was written in response to a vigorous protest by the Chinese inhabitants of the Philippines against the terrible massacre of 1603 it is evident that the overseas Chinese could hope for little support from the land of their fathers. They were consequently committed to a tenacious policy of survival in any land they might adopt.

In spite of the onus attached to trade the Chinese played a significant role in the dissemination of merchant enterprise throughout Southeast Asia. When the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines, they discovered that the "Sangleys" (merchant traders) had already developed a flourishing and monopolistic control of trade in the Islands. Legazpi had then recognized the importance of the Chinese traders and was willing to give them a franchise in the port of Manila. The history, however, of Chinese-Spanish relations throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is an unfortunate one. The Spanish became dependent on the luxury cargo brought from China for the galleon trade and they were gradually forced to accept Chinese control over local trade and craft industries. This was partly because only a few Spaniards condescended to establish subsidiary businesses in the Philippines. Furthermore the revenue paid by the Chinese, who wished to reside in the islands, to the Spanish Imperial treasury in the form of taxes and tribute was considerable. The Chinese, for their part, were resentful of the social and economic measures set by the Spanish against them; the Spanish were plainly brutal in their treatment of the Chinese. Rebellions, or rumors of rebellion, against Spanish rule were frequent. The anti-Spanish actions of the Chinese during the British occupation of Manila in the years 1762 to 1764 are a case in point. This was the situation in the Philippines at the end of the eighteenth century when Philippine trade suddenly expanded and the number of visitors to the Islands increased. By the end of the century, the Chinese were dominating local trade crafts.

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<sup>1</sup> H. de la Costa, ed., *Readings in Philippine History*, (Manila, Makati, Cebu: Bookmark, 1965), p. 46.

Periodically the Spanish authorities attempted to banish all the Chinese shopkeepers and artisans and to punish magistrates who took bribes to let them stay. Since Chinese immigration had been limited to those who swore to engage in agricultural pursuits only, a poll tax was later imposed on those who did not go into farming. The time was approaching nevertheless when the Chinese would openly monopolize most aspects of the Philippine retail trade as well.

The late eighteenth century visitors to the Philippines have little to say concerning the Chinese dominance of Philippine trade, since this was not apparent until the nineteenth century. Men like Pierre de Pages commented rather on the Parian and on the progressively increasing numbers of the Chinese mestizos. He estimated it to have reached the number of 20,000 in 1768.<sup>2</sup> Most of the travelers of this period confined themselves to observations about the character of the Chinese they encountered:

They are extremely supple and designing in business, artful and insinuating in their address and, under the mask of a smooth, smiling countenance, ever on the watch to take advantage of the credulous customer.<sup>3</sup>

Pages is impartial in his criticism of the Spanish for their failure to utilize to the fullest both the virtues of the Chinese and the Indios, more especially in the overall direction of their labor.

The comments of Tomas de Comyn, published in Madrid in 1820, are extremely revealing. These prove that in a period of barely twenty years the Chinese were able to rise to a position from which they could dominate all Philippine trading enterprises. Comyn clearly states that the Chinese mestizos possessed almost all the species in the Islands. In his report to the Spanish crown he speculates that the recent disruptions in Spanish trade caused by the Napoleonic Wars may have been the cause of the Chinese rise

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<sup>2</sup> Pierre de Pages, *Travels Round the World* (Dublin: P. Bryne etc., 1791), p. 181.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

to economic power. He has little good to say about the Chinese mestizo. He nevertheless admits that:

...economy and avarice complete with intelligence and activity in accumulating wealth and scattered as they are among the principal islands and in possession of the best lands and lucrative business in the interior, there are ample motives for pursuing these industrious and sagacious people....They have gradually...amassed immense sums in specie.<sup>4</sup>

Comyn goes on to say that it is impossible to tell how much specie is hoarded or hidden. He sees that there are more Chinese in the Philippines than any other foreigners, and the prospect of gain spurs them on to dominate all aspects of trade. He is evidently bemused and intrigued by their prominent position, and characterizes them as enterprising, keen, industrious, sensual, debauched and pusilanimous.

It may be helpful at this point to say a word on the population figures given by the various travelers. Comyn lists the Chinese mestizo population in 1810 as numbering 119,719.<sup>5</sup> This would indicate a rise of 99,000 from the figure given by Pages in 1768. While it is not impossible that the figures could have risen so dramatically, the next set of figures for a definite period are clearly suspect. Comyn lists the pure Sangley population in 1810 as 7,000,<sup>6</sup> but *Blackwood Magazine*, quoted in the appendix to Austin Craig's book, *The Former Philippines Through Foreign Eyes*, gives the pure Sangley population in 1818 as 20,000. This would indicate a gain of 13,000 in 8 years.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, evaluations of the overall Chinese domination of Philippine trade become clearer. In the face of the defunct galleon trade, the political and dynastic disruptions in early nineteenth century Spain and the increasing tendency of European traders to work in partnership with the Chinese in the Philippines, the scene is set

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<sup>4</sup> Tomas de Comyn in Austin Craig, ed., *The Former Philippines Through Foreign Eyes*, (Manila: Philippine Education Company, 1916), p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

for total Chinese domination. Bowring states that the Chinese were, by the 1850's, the chief purchasers of European goods. They also served largely as middlemen between the European merchant traders and the local retail outlets (almost always Chinese). The Chinese were always willing to buy in quantity, up to the value of 15,000 dollars worth of goods, and they obtained ready credit from the Europeans, since they were thought to be trustworthy and honest. Bowring adds that it was usually within their own interests to be so. Both Bowring and MacMicking go on to point out that in the 1850's the Chinese controlled coastal trading (of which more will be said later), shopkeeping in Manila (also to be dealt with) and all the provincial trade outside Manila. Henry Ellis points out that at that time, they were able to undersell all competition and were, as he puts it, the most thorough materialists in the world.

The Parian, a ghetto or pale originally set up by the Spanish in the seventeenth century in order to segregate the Chinese from the town of Manila, inevitably came under the scrutiny of late eighteenth century visitors to the Philippines. All the Chinese were supposed to dwell outside the city walls, but gradually the Parian grew to be a town within a town. The French doctor Gironiere, a long time resident of the Philippines, points out that by 1820, the Chinese had secured a firm merchant position outside the Parian proper. A Chinese customs house stood at Binondo. Gironiere also points out that the Chinese in Manila operated gambling houses and organized cockfights. Gironiere further notes the patience of the Chinese salesmen in this period; he writes that they would routinely display thousands of yards of material without selling any. Without distinguishing Sangleys from Chinese mestizos, he hazards a guess at the Chinese population then at 25,000 to 30,000.<sup>7</sup>

In 1842 Charles Wilkes remarked that almost all the artisans in Manila were Chinese; indeed those living in the region of the Escolta outnumbered the Indios altogether. Mac-

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Gironiere, *Twenty Years in the Philippines*, (Manila, 1962), p. 16. Gironiere's figures of 25 to 30 thousand are a haphazard guess.

Micking describes the Chinese establishments in the Escolta as those showing the greatest amount of goods in the smallest possible space, the shops being only 10 feet wide at times. In fact, the Chinese had succeeded in eliminating all competition in the area by practicing ruthless economics. They lived in the shops, opened as early as 5:00 a.m., and often managed to monopolize certain goods from the provinces through family connections. A factor that contributed to the success of the Chinese in monopolizing the retail trade was their maintenance of close family ties; one family group frequently owned all the shops dealing in certain goods throughout the Manila area. Henry Ellis confirmed this in 1856, observing that the Chinese shops were overflowing with goods of every description and that they could well afford to undersell all competition. Fedor Jagor states categorically, that Manila was the favorite place of Chinese immigrants. By the 1860's, he writes, the city was virtually a Chinese enclave as it spread out north of the Pasig River.

The Frenchman Mallat, writing in the 1840's, gives an impressive list of the trades dominated by the Chinese. This list includes everything from soapmaking to pancit cookshops. Mallat also inventories the goods sold by the Chinese on the Escolta. They range from novelty goods to expensive perfumes and costly jewels. There is a colorful description in Mallat's account of Joaquin, the Chinese, who was one of the richest of the Manila merchants and a veritable center of gossip and news. Mallat, moreover, points out that certain streets in Manila, Santo Cristo for example, were occupied exclusively by Chinese grocers and pharmacists. He cites the numerous Chinese in Binondo who dealt with practically every sort of goods and also operated gambling houses, tea shops and pan-citerias. A game of chance known as Toyo was very popular then; it resembles the European game of Rouge et Noir.

Mallat also gives us insight into the methods the Chinese used in Manila to outfox the Europeans on the retail scene. They would buy up all the available goods, divide them up among the Chinese retailers, and set a fixed price among them-

selves. Since the Chinese always employed one another, they offered a solid front against any would-be rival.

Another trade at which the Chinese became proficient was that of doctor and barber (*frequently* one and the same when it came to emergency surgery). They did not charge fees until the patient had been cured; and if a patient died, they asked for no payment at all. They often effected remarkable cures unknown to Europeans. As barbers not only did they shave heads and faces, but they also cleaned eyes, ears and noses.

In some interesting side commentaries Bowring notes that the Chinese completely dominated the shoemaking trade. He says that out of 784 shoemakers in Manila in 1858, 633 were Chinese. Mallat observes that in the neighboring areas around Manila, in Cavite for instance, the Chinese dominated the cockfighting business; they even operated opium dens and ran tobacco and wine shops.

It is interesting to note that, according to the British Consul Farren, the Chinese had, by 1862, managed to acquire permission to live wherever they wanted. They had also acquired most of the contracts for public services that were organized out of Manila: meat slaughter, the regulation of ferries and toll bridges, and all public transportation to the provinces. Their powerful system of mutual assistance rendered all Spanish attempts to limit their enterprise ineffectual.

Although the Spaniards originally meant to promote and expand agriculture when they sanctioned Chinese immigration, the latter, in fact, completely dominated coastal and interior trade in the provinces. They almost never followed agricultural pursuits. Perhaps the easiest explanation for the Chinese reluctance to engage in agriculture is the fact that in China there was an overabundance of agricultural labor and a chronic shortage of land. The adventurous Chinese who had left their homeland were eager to pursue more lucrative work. In reality Chinese bribes caused the Spanish officials to look the other way even as the former tightened their hold on interior trade. Periodic attempts to

enforce the ordinances limiting Chinese immigration to agricultural laborers came to nothing.

As early as the eighteenth century it had become the common practice of the Chinese immigrant in the provinces to bribe the *alcalde mayor* with as much as two hundred pesos or more (followed by smaller, regular donations) and then set up a little Parian in an inconspicuous part of the town. There houses and shops were built. The Chinese then set about making themselves indispensable to the economy of the town. One of the chief methods they used was to give credit to the natives on rice and tuba purchases and take a lien on the next rice crop as payment. Often a local farmer found himself owing the whole of his next season's crop to the Chinese.<sup>8</sup>

The Chinese soon "absorbed like sponges" all the produce the provinces had to offer which they sold to the Spanish in Manila at an enormous profit. Some even started out as itinerant peddlers; then, fortified by family clan relationships, they established a vast network of retail outlets. These outlets, in fact, allowed the British to bypass the Spanish when they came to the Philippines to trade in earnest in the nineteenth century. Bowring substantiates the observation that the Chinese had a complete network of wholesale dealers and merchants throughout the Philippines; he comments on the nature of the Chinese merchant:

Where will not a Chinaman penetrate...what risks will he not run...what suffering will he not endure and what perseverance will he not display if money is to be made?<sup>9</sup>

He also points out the Chinese value as a settler in the provinces as they were generally thought to be economical, patient, persevering, submissive to laws and respectful of authority.

Many of the visitors to the Philippines discuss specific ventures engaged in by the Chinese. MacMicking mentions

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<sup>8</sup> Letter of Governor Manuel de Leon in H. de la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> Sir John Bowring, *A Visit to the Philippine Islands* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1963), p. 254.

the street in Zamboanga entirely given over to Chinese shopkeepers who dealt in such exotic import items as Bass' Bottled Ale, silk, velvet, and paté. Bowring estimates that 300 Chinese merchants dwelt in Zamboanga in the 1850's and goes on to say that most of the inhabitants of Iloilo were of Chinese descent. He gives figures ranging from 30,000 to 40,000 dollars worth of goods brought in per month to Iloilo and sold by the Chinese.<sup>10</sup> In Molo, Bowring says, as many goods were sold in a year's time. He also notes that the Chinese exerted considerable influence in Pangasinan, Lingayen and San Fernando. In San Fernando they had originally been forced to live in the *Alcaicería* if they entered as sailors or as prospective settlers, but they had long since bribed the authorities and spread out to "insinuate themselves into all profitable occupations." The Chinese, MacMicking and Bowring both note, were the first to exploit the piña trade; they used it as a prime source of income in the provinces. They sent the piña to Manila and sold it at enormous profit.

Another profitable, if sometimes dangerous, occupation among the Chinese in the provinces involved coastal trading. MacMicking clearly states that the outfitting of coastal vessels remained entirely in the hands of the Chinese, this, in spite of the terrible treatment they had to suffer at the hands of the Spanish authorities. As MacMicking succinctly puts it, only the Chinese would stand for it: "...the character of the Celestial people leading them to suffer any amount of bad usage provided they are paid for it and can make money by it."<sup>11</sup>

The question of Chinese trade in Sulu was an interesting one. Generally speaking the British merchant visitors to the Philippines in the nineteenth century spoke bitterly of the tactics used by the Chinese in the southern Philippines. There is clearly a bias here since, for the most part, both Bowring and MacMicking admired and respected the Chinese people. In this one case professional jealousy was at work. The British

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<sup>10</sup> Robert MacMicking, *Recollections of Manila and the Philippines* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), p. 147.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

had, for nearly a hundred years, been trying to secure a permanent trading base in the south; in fact it was the ultimate goal of the invasion of 1762. By the mid-nineteenth century, the British were still frustrated in their efforts to gain the upperhand in the Sulu area. This is no doubt why MacMicking refers to the Chinese as "troublesome competitors" who bought the produce of the area at a higher price than the British could afford to pay and frequently used false weights and measures to outbid the "honest Europeans." Certainly the fact that the Chinese had been trading in the area for centuries, knew the districts and were used to dealing with the *datus*, and had an effective system of bribes and extortion had much to do with the British chagrin on the subject. In fact the Chinese tended to look on bribes and bad debts as all part of the day's work.

In order to tell the story fairly, in typical British fashion, MacMicking points out the considerable dangers the Chinese faced in Sulu. As many as eight vessels weighing 20 tons each would visit the archipelago from China from the month of March to the month of October. Many Chinese came on these boats and elected to stay in order to pursue profitable commercial arrangements. As no laws protected them (the Spanish themselves held but tenuous control over the area) they were frequently forced to flee for their lives. If they did stay, they were strictly segregated and forced to suffer many personal indignities. The goods they dealt in throughout the Sulu area included cotton, cloth, iron and other hardware, glassware, earthenware, silk, copper, tortoise shell, mother of pearl and even such Chinese culinary delicacies as sharks' fins, sea slugs, deer muscles and birds' nests. Much of this trading involved dealings with the Dutch East Indies. This proved to be risky: drownings and pirate attacks were frequent occurrences.

Jagor, the German trader, offers an interesting note on the Chinese in Camarines. With only a minimum of capital investment, the Chinese, he says, gained complete monopoly on all shops dealing in clothing materials, woolen stuffs, embroidered slippers and jewelry. Along the same line of

specialized information is the description of Chinese involvement in the highly lucrative trade in birds' nests. This was a high profit item; the Chinese themselves were willing to pay high sums to obtain this delicacy. Palawan offered an excellent source for birds' nests and the Chinese were heavily involved in the business there. They offered good prices to those who would scale the cliffs and obtain good, white nests without too many feathers in them. Since this was a very dangerous undertaking the Chinese insisted on selling the nests at an admirable profit.

The question concerning the assimilation of the Chinese into Philippine life is one dealt with at some length by the observers of the Philippine scene. Most of the comments deal in some detail with the Spanish treatment of the Chinese in order to point out that out of sheer self protection the Chinese had no choice but to remain clannish and exclusive. It should be pointed out, however, that the Chinese have always regarded themselves as a superior people and have practiced the extended family system wherever they have gone, at least in the economic sense. In fact the closely knit economic loyalty within the family in the Philippines today is due in part to the Chinese example.

Generally speaking the bias of each visitor contributed to the tone of his observations about the Chinese social presence in the Philippines. The Englishmen Bowring and MacMicking, both with experience in Hong Kong, tend to be lavish in their praise of the Chinese. The English Naval Officer, Henry Ellis, with similar experience, is highly critical. Mallat and Jagor are more objective, and the other French travellers comment only briefly on this subject. All are careful to differentiate between the pure Sangleys and the Chinese mestizos, the group which alone merited the name *Mestizo* in the nineteenth century.

The pro-Chinese Bowring enthusiastically endorsed the Chinese intermingling with the native Malay population:

A middle race such as China contributes in the form of emigrating millions is wonderfully advancing the work of civilizations...the Mes-

tizo descendants of the Chinese fathers and Indian mothers form incomparably the most promising portion of the Philippine population.<sup>12</sup>

Bowring's considered opinion was that in the Chinese-Malay unions, Chinese characteristics predominated. The industry, perseverance and economic virtues all remained. He consequently predicted that they would form the backbone of a future middle class. Bowring also listed the virtues of the Chinese mestizo in glowing terms and referred to their moral, intellectual, elegant, handsome and prudent qualities.

Bowring did point out that the true Chinese were never permanent fixtures in the Philippine scene. They represented a vast outpouring of a surplus population to all points east of Bengal and were at best, "birds of passage who return to be succeeded by others of their race." As MacMicking noted it was never the rich Chinese who left China, and when sufficient money was earned all Chinese intended to return to the Middle Kingdom. Bowring gives the figure of 4,232 Chinese who entered Manila in the year 1857 and the corresponding figure of 2,592 who left that year for China.<sup>13</sup> The fact that no Chinese woman ever accompanied her husband overseas led the Chinese to take native wives. There were, according to Bowring, two Chinese women in the city of Manila in the year 1855. An attempt to introduce Chinese women into the Philippines by kidnapping Chinese female orphans from French orphanages in China failed.

Religious assimilation is dealt with in some detail by the nineteenth century travellers. It was the avowed policy of the Spaniards to Christianize all pagan peoples and the Chinese, with their ready surface adaptability, publicly embraced Christianity. Since they were not allowed to erect Buddhist temples or to maintain special cemeteries, they managed very nicely to combine a Christian veneer with ancestor worship and Confucian ritual in China, and so Christianity was neatly absorbed into Chinese life in the Philippines. A few of the travellers mention the colorful feast of St. Nicholas

<sup>12</sup> Bowring, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

celebrated by the Chinese on November 6th. This feast involved a Christian saint whose name was invoked by a Chinese when he was attacked by a crocodile while crossing a river. The saint intervened and the croc was turned to stone. The stone was supposed to have been preserved in a little stone chapel by the shores of the Pasig, but the Archbishop of Manila, scenting paganism, made the Chinese tear off the roof of the Chapel. The Chinese readily complied and with the "chapel" suitably ruined they could celebrate the saint's day with illuminated pagodas and feasting, a nice combination of Christianity and Chinese ritual which seemed to the visitors to symbolize the Chinese accommodating spirit.

The picture of Chinese life in the Philippines in the nineteenth century is at once vivid and elusive. One is left with the impression that the visitors saw the Chinese solely through their preconceived notions of what Chinese should be like. Aside from mechanical observations on their industrious nature (Mallat goes so far as to say that they work all night and sleep little) the picture is that of the everyday Chinese routine of a pork eating, coolie people clad in blouse and pants, shoes with paper soles and a little black skull cap with a red tassel. Mallat claims that these garments are imported from China. He further sees them as ugly Cantonese of the lowest class who shave their heads and wear the queue. They spoke little Tagalog and less Spanish and made little effort to assimilate physically.

This question concerning the physical appearance of the Chinese engages the attention of various visitors. In general they refer to them as ugly or pleasing according to their own particular standard of beauty. Mallat refers to the mestizos as uglier than the pure Chinese, with large faces, wide noses, an olive-yellow skin and Chinese eyes. . . .

One of the few more personalized accounts of the Chinese is given by a French cavalry officer named Renouard de Sainte Croix who visited the provinces in the first decade of the nineteenth century and witnessed a play where the figure of a Chinese provided comic relief. The situation showed the Chinese as an unsuccessful suitor of a

Malay girl, who, unknown to him, was already married and whose husband secretly encouraged the ridiculous courtship. The Frenchman noted hearty laughter from the audience at the fun poked at the Chinese. In actual fact, the Chinese not infrequently won the girl and fathered numerous progeny, thereby contributing to the rise of the Chinese dominated middle class.

Another more personalized view of the Chinese appears in Mallat, who remarks that they were excessively miserly in their dealings with servants. The wealthier class of Chinese merchants employed Chinese servants at a beggarly wage. Often these servants were poor relations newly arrived from China. Another financial advantage the Chinese enjoyed came from the fact that the Catholic Church encouraged so many holidays, as many as 121 in one year, which the Chinese felt no obligation to observe; on those days they managed to conduct highly profitable business transactions.<sup>14</sup>

Almost all the observers refer to the insularity of the Chinese communities. They kept to their own customs and language (which alone would have served to keep them a race apart). They embraced local customs only superficially if it served a practical need. The oppressive climate did not seem to bother them since they were invigorated, according to Jagor, by the sheer struggle for existence.

How the Chinese population fit into the Spanish political organization of the Philippines is an interesting question. By the mid-nineteenth century any community which had a sufficient number of Chinese or Chinese mestizos was allowed to elect a mayor, or *gobernadorcillo*, among themselves, who had the power of a present day barrio captain and who was independent within the community, reporting only to the *alcalde mayor* of the province. Within one community there were sometimes two *gobernadorcillos*, one Indio and one Chinese. Each was responsible for the affair of his own people. Mallat points out, however, that inevitably the Chinese *gover-*

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<sup>14</sup> De la Costa, *op cit.*, p. 75 This remark is offered by Father de la Costa himself in reference to some of the financial advantages the Chinese held.

*nadorcillos* were inferior in rank to the Indio, giving rise to speculation that the Spaniards were nervous about granting too much responsibility to the Chinese in the provinces. The *gobnadorcillo* in Binondo could have his own Chinese lieutenants and *alquazils* and he was, also according to Mallat's account, a colorful individual clad in Chinese clothes topped off by a European hat and carrying a cane as his identifying insignia. This position called for, among others, conversion to Christianity.

The principal duty of the *gobnadorcillos* was to collect tribute and since the tribute was always exacted most heavily from the Chinese communities this duty was time consuming. The various special taxes which were levied against the Chinese before the middle of the nineteenth century resulted in the inclusion, among any Chinese official's duties, of the task of arranging bribes to offset these taxes. In Manila, according to MacMicking, the Chinese community chose a captain to collect tribute and settle petty disputes. He was responsible for the entire Chinese population, each of whom was supposed to have been registered upon his arrival in the Philippines.

Spanish justice for the Chinese meant suiting the punishment, not to the crime but to the appearance of the Chinese in the eyes of the particular presiding official. This was, of course, colored by the individual's ability to pay. According to Mallat, the Chinese were subjected to a pre-trial investigation before being allowed to testify. It involved the use of a white cock: the Chinese had to decapitate the cock with one stroke if he wished to have his testimony believed. Officers of justice called *bilongos* were independent of the *gobnadorcillos* in certain provinces and were especially charged with overseeing the collection of tribute. Mallat refers to the *Fiscales* who were directly charged with protecting the Chinese. Apparently, however, the Chinese were made to ask for protection for which probably, they had to pay heavily.

By 1858 most of the restrictions imposed by the Spaniards upon the Chinese had been lifted. Bowring remarks that the

Chinese at this date were too numerous and prosperous to be seriously oppressed. In 1850 the Parian had been abolished and the 1828 ruling dividing the Chinese inhabitants into three classes: merchant, shopkeeper, and others, had been modified, and the poll tax on Chinese had been abolished.

There is no doubt that hostility towards the Chinese still existed and would continue to exist as long as they continued to dominate the economy of the Islands. Many among the observers sensed this hostility; Bowring calls it a "subdued feeling of hostility" and points out that it was virtually impossible for the Chinese to take up agriculture due to the ill-will of the natives. MacMicking adds an interesting note, remarking that although the best chance for success in the sugar and hemp plantations lay in the importation of additional Chinese labor, the latent hostility between rural Indios and the Chinese as well as the traditional Spanish habit of accepting bribes made it unlikely that this would occur. The long history of the poor relations between the Chinese and their host country made the fate of the Chinese uncertain. Henry Ellis points this out. He says the Chinese were personally as well as professionally despised and disliked. In fact, he claims that the native inhabitants had less friendship for the "Celestials" than for their Spanish conquerors. It is essential to add, as Jagor does, that neither the hostility of the natives, the oppression of the officials nor wholesale massacre had stopped the Chinese from coming. The German merchant goes on to say that the very nature of the Chinese, thrifty and industrious, caused them to be hated, and Mallat adds a rider to the effect that the natives often refer to them as "dogs".

The poor relationship between the Chinese and Spaniards throughout their association in the Philippines was partly due to the fact that Spain had never been given any advantage in direct trade with China. Under the Canton System, China's trade with the Western Powers had been strictly limited. The Europeans were expected to fit into the Chinese Tribute System and until this system was broken by the English in the Opium War of 1839 the Spaniards were forced

to deal with the Chinese on their terms. Furthermore, the Chinese, according to the Spaniards, had frequently ruined local industries in the Philippines, the textile industry for example, by the importation of cheap Chinese materials. This often forced the price of the local product to rise. Furthermore the Chinese never bought local goods; they contented themselves with amassing hoards of silver. It is well to remember this Spanish point of view in trying to understand the various restrictions, expulsions and massacres of the Chinese throughout the 280 years of Spanish rule.

The emigration from the too thickly peopled Empire of China has scarcely begun. As yet it is a stream but it will, by and by, pour over all the tropical countries of the East in one mighty torrent, completely destroying all such minor obstacles as jealous interference and impotent precaution might impose.<sup>15</sup>

Although this prophecy has not, in fact, been borne out, it serves to give an idea of the nineteenth century observer's impressions of the tenacity of a determined, clannish and exclusive people whose continued presence in a society where there was a long-standing dislike of them had become a fact. The Chinese had, by the mid-nineteenth century, considerably extended their economic influence because of liberalized Spanish policies, new business opportunities offered by export crops and lastly by their own financial and business acumen. They were tolerated, if not loved.

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<sup>15</sup> Fedor Jagor, *Travels in the Philippines* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1965), p. 335.

## APPENDIX

The following "foreign visitors" contributed significant information about nineteenth century life in the Philippines in their various reports and memoirs written after a visit to the Islands:

1. *Sir John Bowring*. Sir John was the Governor of Hong Kong in the period immediately following the founding of that British Colony. His interest was largely mercantile for the British sought new markets for their manufactured goods as well as raw materials. His book is especially useful in assessing the overall character of the Chinese settler in the Philippines and in his valuable observations concerning Chinese business in the provinces. He shows a strong pro-Chinese bias.

2. *Robert MacMicking*. MacMicking was first, last and always a merchant. His interest in the Philippines was on a business basis and he assessed the role of the Chinese in the Philippines from a practical viewpoint. His visits, at least those documented in his book, took place in the late 1840's, a time when British commercial interests in the Philippines were reaching a high point. His book is especially valuable for his information on the Chinese in the provinces, especially in the Southern Islands. He shows a strong pro-Chinese bias.

3. *Fedor Jagor*. Jagor was a German merchant who visited the Philippines in the late 1850's. His approach is impartial with a stolid attention to detail. His book is primarily of use for historical perspective for Jagor saw the Chinese in the light of a historic force which would eventually dominate all merchant enterprise in Asia. He emphasizes at all times the tremendous energy and industry of the Chinese settler.

4. *J. Mallat*. Mallat's book proved to be invaluable as a picture of the Chinese in Manila. His remarks, made in the early 1840's, give a graphic picture of the daily life of the Chinese settlers. He came, according to his preface, to make an impartial survey of life in the Philippines and his two-volume book provides one of the finest sources of knowledge for the period. Anyone doing research on this period should pay close attention to Mallat. His eye roved over all aspects of life and his remarks about the Chinese are detailed and fascinating. He represents the scholarly French traveler.

5. *Henry Ellis*. Ellis is useful in providing an anti-Chinese bias in his book. Ellis was stationed in Hong Kong in the early 1850's with the Royal Navy and his trip to the Philippines was in the way of a vacation from Hong Kong. He had not appreciated the Chinese in Hong Kong and his rather superficial remarks about those he saw in the Philippines reflect this bias.

6. *Pierre de Pages*. De Pages is primarily useful as an 18th century source. He describes the Chinese Parian and gives a picture of the Chinese in Manila in the 1770's.

7. *Paul Gironiere*. Gironiere was a French doctor who lived in the Philippines for 20 years in the period 1810-1830. He has little to say on the subject of the Chinese.