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Ch'en Ching-Ho: The Chinese Community in the 16th Century Philippines

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Book Reviews

SINO-PHILIPPINE RELATIONS—16TH CENTURY

THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY PHILIPPINES. By Ch'en Ching-Ho. Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1968. vi, 176 pp.

With this volume, Ch'en Ching-Ho of the Southeast Asian section of the Chinese University of Hong Kong has added another to the growing but still relatively small list of survey histories devoted to the Chinese community in the Philippines.

The present work was originally written in Chinese entitled *Shih lu shih chi chih fei-lu-pin hua-ch'iao*, and published in August 1963, as a monograph series no. 2 of the Southeast Asia Studies Section, New Asia Research Institute, Hong Kong.

The book is divided into five chapters, Chapter I, "Chinese Knowledge of the Pre-Spanish Philippines," describes the Philippine setting from Chinese sources such as the *Sung Shih*, the official history of the Sung Dynasty (960-1279 A. D.), and Wang Ta-Yuan's *Tao i chi lueh chiao chu*, Brief Description of Island Barbarians. Of particular interest in the chapter is his reference to the *Tao i chi lueh chiao chu's* description of certain Filipino customs which reveal traces of Hindu and Buddhist influences, such as widows throwing themselves into the funeral pyre of their husbands to burn themselves to death (p. 8), or a young widow who failed to find another man of equal status to the former husband shaved off her hair and devoted her remaining years to chanting sutras (p. 9).

Chapter II, "The Spanish Conquest of the Philippines," deals with the arrival of the Spaniards in the Philippines. In Chapter III, "The Invasion by Chinese Pirates," the author sets out to describe Limahong's attacks on Pangasinan and Manila. The piratical attacks inevitably brought initial contact between the Chinese and Spanish governments when Wang Wang-kao (Omocon) an imperial emissary came to find out Limahong's whereabouts. The incident of Limahong's invasion and the "disgraceful" conduct of Wang Wang-kao brought about a

total loss of the Sinophilic tendency in the Spanish mind. For till then, the Spaniards had been impressed favorably by the Chinese as a people and as merchants. In Chapter IV, the author sets out to examine early Spanish policies of controlling the Chinese residents. No measures had greater consequences, in his view, than the imposition of three per cent duty and the establishment of the Parian. The main reason cited for the imposition of the duty was the felt need for the government to balance its import and export, for the Philippines was then troubled both internally and externally, and had to maintain its finances with annual subsidies from the Mexican government. Partly because of the Spaniards' sinophobic tendency, the Parian was built for the Chinese residents. The Parian served not only to isolate the Chinese and the natives thus preventing any possibility of political collusion between them against the Spaniards, but also to facilitate Spanish control of Chinese trade activities and collection of their taxes. An interesting portion of this chapter is the Spanish effort to convert the Chinese residents. Chapter V, "The Philippines of the Late Sixteenth Century," discusses among other things, the Pan Ho Wu incident. Pan Ho Wu was one of the 250 local Chinese forcibly drafted to man the galleys of Governor Dasmariñas in defending the islands against English privateers and Japanese pirates. While on the high seas, the Chinese rowers, led by Pan Hu Wu, mutinied and killed Dasmariñas.

In a sense, the title of the book is misleading, for it implies that the coverage is about the Chinese community in the Philippines as such. The book is primarily concerned with the early relations between China and the Philippines and of the contacts between China and the Spanish authorities. Except in Chapter IV where he discusses the late sixteenth century Philippines, there is not much detailed survey and analysis of the Chinese community throughout the book.

Although the author purports "to produce a volume which is written thoroughly from the Chinese point of view of myself," his tendency to illuminate certain incidents or events with both Chinese and Western sources achieved the effect of showing a balanced and impartial judgment on Sino-Spanish relations. Yet, at the end of the volume, he feels compelled to reaffirm the "Chinese view" in reference to the Pan Ho Wu incident.

From our Chinese standpoint, the Pan Ho Wu incident was a happening thoroughly regrettable. The cause of the unhappy incident, however, the inhuman treatment of the Chinese by the colonial government of the Philippines. These Chinese, who had no state power to back them, nor could expect any protection by their own government, but had to suffer constant abuses under the foreign yoke, are not to be

blamed just because they did not wait idly for their certain death. It was really the greatest tragedy in the history of the Spanish rule of the Philippines that after the incident, the colonial government failed to recognize the true cause of the disaster and turned to even more intensified restrictions out of morbid suspicion and fear. (p.154).

In writing this volume, he has made use of a varied assortment of materials, Western, Chinese and Japanese. It is not so much that the author has dug up materials unavailable to others as that he has correlated materials used mainly in isolation. His bibliography is selected but adequate.

One might have reservations about the author's statement in the preface that "Chinese scholars in the Philippines have tended to neglect comprehensive study of the history of Chinese immigration and economic activities" in this part of Southeast Asia. "To fill the lamentable gap," the author "has made a general, scientific survey on the history of my countrymen in the Philippines." It must be pointed out that at least three works dealing with the general history of the Chinese in the Philippines have been written by Philippine Chinese scholars. They are Ch'en Lieh-fu's *Fei-lu-pin yu chung-fei kuan-hsi* (The Philippines and Chinese-Filipino Relations) (Hong Kong, 1955); and Liu Chi-t'ien's 3 volumes: *Chung-fei kuan-hsi shih* (A History of Sino-Philippine Relations) (Taipei, 1964), *Fei-lu-pin hua ch'iao shih hua* (Historical Studies of the Chinese in the Philippines) (Taipei, 1958), and *Hua ch'iao yu Fei-lu-pin* (The Overseas Chinese and the Philippines) (Manila, 1955).

The book of Chi'en Ching-Ho is written for the general reader. In a way, the author has little to add to the knowledge already available about the Chinese in the Philippines during the sixteenth century. However, this criticism is not meant to belittle the great usefulness of the book to the Chinese reader, in its original Chinese version. It introduces to the Chinese readers the main facts of the Sino-Philippine relations in the sixteenth century with detailed illumination of particularly vital points.

ANTONIO S. TAN

A PHILIPPINE ECUMENICAL EVENT

POLITICS, RELIGION AND MODERN MAN. By Charles W. Kegley. Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 1969. xiv, 163 pp.