

# CENTURIES OF SINO-PHILIPPINE RELATIONS

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## I. *Historic Fragments of the Relations*

This is a commercial age which needs peace and international cooperation. The proverbial devotion of the Filipinos and Chinese to the ideals of peace and international cooperation is well known. These two peoples, being closely related by reason of historical background, natural geographic position, similar blood kinship, and their aims of establishing a stable independent democratic government, are now working hand in hand being welded together by close commercial ties. Hence the relation of the two, one may conclude is the relation of trade.

This relation began since time immemorial. From ancient manuscripts of Chinese writers and dynastic chronicles, and from materials stored up by Spanish writers since their early contact with the East, the lost history of the commercial intercourse might well be recapitulated. Especially in the astoundingly vast amount of Chinese history and literature, one may find many valuable reports and data on the geography, history, and ethnology of the neighboring peoples. There are many sources found in the annals of the T'ang (618-917), the Sung (960-1276), the Yuan (1277-1367) and the Ming dynasty (1368-1643), which now extend definitely an account of all islands in the eastern Pacific known to the Chinese at that time, others are scattering in the Chuan Chow Fu Chi and Chiu Chow Fu Chi, annals of different sea port in Southern China.

Footprints of China and her people on Philippine soil are traced back to the pre-Malay migration which took place before the Christian era. Many writers believed that the Philippine-Chinese trade relations date as far back as the Chou Dynasty (1122B.C.—255B.C.) when traders from China came to barter with the natives of the Islands, although it was irregular in nature.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese trade intercourse at that time had been established at Canton with eight nations. Duties as early as 990 B. C. were levied, and among the imports figure birds, pearls and tortoise shell, products of the Philippines, but the origin of these has not been investigated.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Jagor, according to Miss Alma R. Huang's introduction in her book "China in the Philippines," found Chinese pot-

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<sup>1</sup> Laufer, Berthold, *The Relations of the Chinese to the Philippine Islands*, Washington, 1907;

Craig, Austin, *A Thousand years of Philippine History before the Coming of the Spaniards*, Manila, 1914, p. 1;

Balmaceda, Cornelio, Director of Commerce, "China as a Potential Market for Philippine Products," in *Fookien Times*, Dec. 23, 1939;

Benitez, Conrado, *History of the Philippines*,

<sup>2</sup> Craig, Austin, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

tery with the skulls from key deposits near Lanang on the east coast of the island of Samar. These skulls and other relics found in different parts of the Philippines are remains of some prehistoric layers of population without any close resemblance to the present mountain tribes.

According to the Chinese history, the Chinese Imperial office and customs originated in employing court chroniclers to writ a daily account of government proceedings. These daily records were kept secret and stored away in iron chests until the dynasty they chronicled had passed away; then they were opened and published, and so form the basis of our knowledge of the events that had transpired while the dynasty was in existence. In the period from 140 B. C. to 87 B. C., during the regime of Han Wu T'ie, the strongest king in the Han dynasty, trade and communication has been established between China and the Malay islands. There is also a record during the year 166 A. D. that the East and the West met the first time when the country Tai Chin (Roman Empire) sent her envoys to China and whose ship passed the Malay islands.<sup>3</sup> Sixty years later, in the time of Sun Ch'uean of the house Wu (222-251) two functionaries, called Chu-ying and Kong-tai, were ordered to go to the south in the year 226; they went to a hundred or more countries and made an account of them.<sup>4</sup> Because of the uncertain character of Chu-ying's writing now found in Liang-shih, one can be sure to believe that they came to the Philippine Islands. It shows that China had already been connected with the South. And Professor Craig, once professor of history in University of the Philippines, believed that Philippine gold had been sent to China during the third century.<sup>5</sup>

Another Chinese early possible reference to the Philippines is from the narrative of Fahien, a Chinese Buddhist priest, the details of whose home voyage seemed to suggest that he passed the Philippine Islands. Fahien, started from Sian in the year 399 A. D., went overland to India in search of Buddhist books and fifteen years later came back to Ching-chow by sea in Indian vessels via Ceylon and Java. Shortly after his death a book *Fo Kuo Chi* (an account of Buddhist countries) was published from which he described his home voyage:

"Fahien... embarked again in May, 414, on a large merchant vessel with a crew of over two hundred and took provision for fifty days. Steering a north-east course for Canton, when over a month out they struck a typhoon, a sudden dark squall accompanied by pelting rain. The Brahmans felt that the priest of the rival religion was a Jonah and want to land him on one of the neighboring

<sup>3</sup> Han-shih (Chinese), book 28 and 118;

Cheong Li-tin, *The Brief Malayan History* (Chinese), Shanghai, 1939, p 3.

<sup>4</sup> Liang-shih, *Record of Southern Countries* (Chinese);

Fung Seng-jeon, "The communication between China and the South" (Chinese), in *Eastern Magazine*, Vol. 34, No. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Craig, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

islands but were dissuaded by a trader representing the danger that would be to all on coming to China... The weather continued to be very dark and the pilots did not know their situation... Finally on the 78th day, with water almost gone and provisions short, they determined to change their course since they had already exceeded the usual fifty days for the run. So on a northwest route in twelve days more they reached not Canton but Chingchow."<sup>6</sup>

According to Professor Craig, "this voyage on a map works out that they passed the Philippines about the time that marooning the priest on an island was under discussion", and as St. John notes (*The Indian Archipelago*, London, 1853, Vol. 1, p. 103), "the Philippines occupy the only part of the Archipelago liable to hurricanes. Apparently the land was then unfamiliar to these early navigators."

After Fahien's travel, in the period from 415 to 580 (Nan Pak Tiu), according to Kow Cheang Tun (*High Priests' Biographies*), there were another ten Chinese priests who went to the South, where they made on account of discovery.<sup>7</sup>

Between 618 and 906, China has built her strongest dynasty called T'ang whose name is now still proudly used by the oversea Chinese, calling themselves "people of T'ang". Regular trade has been established flourishingly between Western Asia and China during these three centuries. Immigrants from Persia, Arabia, and Syria had greatly increased in China of whom one hundred and twenty thousand foreign merchants from Western Asia and the Malay islands were killed in Canton by the famous man-slaughterer Houng Chau in the year 877. The Sino-Philippine trade relation, one be very sure, is regularly established during this period. A country in the South whose name Ka-ling, mentioned in the T'ang-shih (annals of T'ang dynasty), believed by many writers, is possible to be Sulu of the Philippines Islands. Between 627 and 649 envoys from that country to China accompanied the tribute bearers from Dva-ha-la and Dva-pa-tan (Dapitan), receiving acknowledgments under the Chinese Emperor's great seal. When they returned Dva-ha-la also asked for good horses, and got them.<sup>8</sup> Between 766 and 779 another three of Ka-ling's envoys visited China and in 813 four slaves, assorted colored parrots, "pink-birds" and other gifts were presented to their powerful neighbor. In 827 and 835 there were two embassies, and between 837 and 850 envoys presented female musicians as the tribute gift to visit China again.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest account of the Filipino traders is that in 982 merchants from Manila visited Canton for trade. They probably were not pioneers as it was related that they came with valuable merchandise. This was

<sup>6</sup> Fahien, *Fo Kuo-Chi* (Chinese).

<sup>7</sup> Fung Seng-jeon, *Loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Craig, *op. cit.*, p. 5; T'ang-shis.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

about the time (between 976 and 983) when the Canton trade was declared a state monopoly. Over two centuries a maritime customs service had existed in that port, reorganized in 971 because of the greatly increased foreign trade.<sup>10</sup> This early maritime activities of China from that time were so extensive that the China Sea was almost an exclusive lake to the Chinese traders. And in the following years the Sino-Philippine trade has been greatly increased so Chao Ju-kua, a Chinese superintendent and commissioner of customs in Chuan-chow in 1205, had his materials to write about the Philippines. In 1572 the inhabitants of Cagayan told captain Juan de Salcedo, who first time appeared at that place, that their cotton weavings were bought yearly by Chinese traders. Chinese-Philippine trade, therefore, must have existed regularly before the twelfth century and very likely it flourished in the thirteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

## II. *The Junk-trade Relations*

Although the first commercial contact between the two countries began three thousand years ago, no definite record or description of this trade is available beyond the beginning of the twelfth century when Chao Ju-kua, a noted Chinese geographer and historian and member of the Imperial family of the Sung dynasty (960-1278), was appointed as a superintendent and commissioner of customs in Chuan-chow, one of the two sea ports opened for foreign trade in southern China, northward from Amoy, Fukien Province. It was Chao's duty to come in close touch with merchants from India, Persia, Syria, and Arabia, who traded in that port with the Chinese by passing their way through the Malay islands. He availed himself of this opportunity also to collect valuable data regarding the countries and the peoples of the West. He made also inquiries from Chinese junk sailors and merchants who returned from the Philippines which they knew as Ma-it, and San-su, and P'i-sho-ye at that time.

Organizing his data and making references with antedating book, Ling Hwei Tai Dout, a Chinese account published in 1178 also dealing with foreign trade written by Chow Chefai, who wrote his book *Chu Fan Chi* between 1209 and 1225 which is now translated from the Chinese and annotated by Friedrich Hirth and W. W. Rockhill. From this historic manuscripts of Chao Ju-kua, one may capitulate and recaste the lost story of the friendly relations of the two peoples. This story shines out of the gloomy shadows of the pre-Spanish period and records the flourishing junk-trade between the Islands and China.

In Chao's accounts one may see the Chinese traders' junks anchored in front of the quarter of a Filipino chieftain, to whom they presented the white silk parasols which these dignitaries were accustomed to use. There the market or barter was then opened, those living near by were

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<sup>10</sup> Craig, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Laufer, op. cit., p. 253.

attracted by the peaceful and kind Chinese traders. The native at once went on board, mixing merrily in friendly fashions as brothers and sisters with the newcomers.

Ma'it, in which Chao described, according to many writers is Manila. The creek, along which banks living thousand families is the Pasig River. San-su, the three islands, are Calmian, Busuanga, and Palawan. P'i-sho-ye is an miscalling of Visaya or Bisaya.<sup>12</sup> His three chapters concerning the Philippines reads as follows:

#### MA-IT

"The country of Ma-it is to the north of Borneo. Over a thousand families are settled together along both banks of a creek (or gully). The natives cover themselves with a sheet of cotton cloth, or hide the lower part of the body with a sarong.

"There are bronze images of gods, of unknown origin, scattered about in the grassy wilderness. Pirates seldom come to this country.

"When trading ships enter the anchorage, they stop in front of the officials' place, for that is the place for bartering of the country. After a ship has been boarded, the natives mix freely with the ship's folk. The chiefs are in the habit of using white umbrellas, for which reason the traders offer them as gifts.

"The custom of the trade is for the savage traders to assemble in crowds and carry the goods away with them in baskets; and, even if one cannot at first know them, and can but slowly distinguish the men who remove the goods, there will yet be no loss. The savage traders will after they carry these goods on to other islands for barter, and, as a rule, it takes them as much as eight or nine months till they return, when they repay the traders on shipboard with what they have obtained (for the goods). Some, however, do not return within the proper term, for which reason vessels trading with Ma-it are the latest in reaching home.

"The following places belong to this country: San-su (three islands), Pai-p'uyen, P'u-li-lu, Li-kim-tung, Liu-sin, and Li-han.

"The products of the country consist of yellow wax, cotton, pearls, tortoise-shell, medicinal betel-nuts, and Yu-ta cloth; and the traders barter for these porcelain, trade-gold, iron-censers, lead, coloured glass beads, and iron needles.

#### SAN-SU

"The San-su (or three islands), belong to Ma-it; their names are Kia-ma-yen, Pa-lau-ye, and Pa-ki-nung, and each has its own tribes scattered over the islands. When ships arrive in these islands

<sup>12</sup> Craig, *op cit.*, p. 4;

Laufer, *op cit.*, p. 253-255;

Davidson, J. W., *The Island of Formosa Past and Present*, N. Y., 1903, p. 581;

the natives come out to trade with them; the generic name (of these islands) is San-su.

“Their local customs are about the same as those of Ma-it. Each tribe consists of about a thousand families. The country contains many lofty ridges, and ranges of cliffs rise steep as the walls of a house.

“The natives build wattled huts perched in lofty and dangerous spots, and, since the hills contain no springs, the women may be seen carrying on their heads two or three jars one above the others in which they fetch water from the stream, and with their burdens mount the hills with the same ease as if they were walking on level ground.

“In the remotest valleys there lives another tribe called Aigta (Negritas). They are small in stature and their eyes are round and yellow (brown), they have curly hair and their teeth show (between their lips). They nest in tree tops. Sometimes parties of three or five lurk in the jungle, from whence they shoot arrows on passers-by without being seen, and many have fallen victims to them. If thrown a porcelain bowl, they will stoop and pick it up and go away leaping and shouting for joy.

“Whenever foreign traders arrive at any of the settlements, they live on board ship before venturing to go on shore, their ships being moored in midstream, announcing their presence to the natives by beating drums. Upon this the savage traders race for the ship in small boats, carrying cotton, yellow wax, native cloth, cocoanut-heart, mats, which they offer for barter. If the prices (of goods they may wish to purchase) cannot be agreed upon, the chief of the local traders must go in person, in order to come to an understanding, which being reached the natives are offered presents of silk umbrellas, porcelain, and rattan baskets; but the foreigners still retain on board one or two (natives) as hostages. After that they go on shore to traffic, which being ended they return the hostages. A ship will not remain at anchor longer than three or four days, after which it proceeds to another place; for the savage settlements along the coast of San-su are not connected by a common jurisdiction.

“The coast faces south-west, and during the south-west monsoon the surge dashes the shores, and the rollers rush in so rapidly that vessels cannot anchor there. It is for this reason that those who trade to San-su generally prepare for the return trip during the fourth or fifth moon (i. e., in May or June) .

“The following articles are exchanged in barter: porcelain, black damask and various other silks, beads of all colours, leaden sinkers for nets, and tin.

“P'u-li-lu is connected with San-sun, but its settle-are more populous; most of the people are of a cruel disposition and given to rob-

bery. The sea thereabout is full of bare tips of rock with jagged teeth like blasted trees, their points and edges sharper than swords and lances; when ships pass by they tack out in time in order to steer clear of them; from there come coral-trees, the tsing-lang-kan and the shan-hu varieties; but they are very difficult to get.

"The local customs and commercial usages are the same as in San-su."

#### P'I-SHO-YE

"The languages of P'i-sho-ye cannot be understood, and traders do not resort to the country. The people go naked and are in a state of primitive savagery like beasts.

"In the district of Chuan-chow there is an island in the sea by the name of Pang-hu; it belongs to the jurisdiction of Tsin-kiang-hien; now the country referred to is so near to this island that smoke on it may be discerned.

"The savages come to make raids and, as their coming cannot be foreseen, many of our people have fallen victims to their cannibalism, a great grief to the people.

"During the period Shun-hi (1174-1190) their chiefs were in the habit of assembling parties of several hundreds to make sudden attacks on the villages of Shui-su and Wei-tou in Chuan-chow-fu, where they gave free course to their savage instincts, slaying men without number and women too, after they had raped them.

"They were fond of iron vessels, spoons, and chopsticks; one could get rid of them by closing the entrance door, from which they wound only, wrench the iron knocker and go away. By throwing away spoons or chopsticks they would stoop down to pick them up, and thus fall behind some paces.

"The officials and soldiers used to lay hold of them in this manner; when the savages got sight of a horseman in mail, they struggled the strip off his armour, when, in their headlong rush, they met their death without being sensible of the danger.

"When attacking an enemy, they are armed with javelins to which are attached rope of over an hundred feet in length, in order to recover them after each throw; for they put such valve on the iron of which these weapons are made, that they cannot bear to lose them.

"They do not sail in junks or boats, but lash bamboo into rafts, which can be folded up like screens, so when hard pressed, a number of them can lift up and escape by swimming off with them."<sup>13</sup>

This junk-trade relations of the two peoples was continued without stop for more than five centuries until the coming of the Spaniards who anxiously changed the existing situation. It would be noted that the rela-

<sup>13</sup> Hirth and Rockhill's translation.

tions of these two peoples were based on honesty, cooperation, and real friendship. Nor was there fear of loss, for such then was the Manilans' honesty that even when some one helped himself and took away goods without being seen he could be relied on in due season to faithfully account for them. Thus wrote Wang Ta-yuan in his book *Tao Ye Chi Leo* (Brief Account on Islands) in 1349: "The natives (Filipinos) and the traders (Chinese) having agreed on prices, permitted the former to carry away the goods of the later as agreed upon. The traders trust them for they never fail to keep their part of the bargain." The period was usually eight or nine months so that, though the natives were not very far, those trading to Manila were among the latest in getting back to China.

In connection with the point of P'i-sho-ye as identified Visaya or Bisaya of the Philippines, one may find many historical facts supported by many writers among whom Laufer believed that the Filipinos drifted to Formosa by bamboo raft and made their settlement. Professor Austin Craig suggested that "a band of uncivilized Malays from the south drove into the interior of Formosa with whom the Chinese earlier had been familiar. So on the next expedition from the mainland, in 605, the Chinese leader was surprised to find on the coast strange inhabitants with whom he could not communicate. His surmise that the newcomers were Malays led the next expedition to take with it interpreters from different southern Malayan islands, of whom at least one made himself understood. The immigrants kept up communication with Luzon and on their rafts raids coast towns of China."<sup>14</sup> From 1174 to 1190, according to Chao's accounts, these Formosan Bisayan chiefs were in the habit of assembling parties of several hundreds to make sudden raids on villages of the neighboring Chinese coast. There, murders innumerable and even cannibalism were charged against them though it might be a propaganda given to their enemies by the Chinese.

As how far the political influence of the Chinese extended over the Philippines in pre-Spanish era, there are enough reliable sources which preserved in Ming-shih, annals of Ming dynasty (1368-1642). In 1372 the chiefs of Luzon visited Emperor Hung-wu, who presented the tribute-bearers with valuable gifts, including a silk gauze woven of gold and colored threads. During the regime of the Emperor Yung-lo (1403-1424) of Ming dynasty, the Chinese started an extensive exploration of the Indian Ocean. The government tried in every possible extent to encourage the people to go abroad to the South, as a result the Chinese overseas expansion reached its climax. An elaborate fleet composed of sixty-two

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<sup>14</sup> Craig, *op. cit.*, p. 4: "Pangasinan once extended much farther north in Luzon and Mr. Servilla de la Cruz, a University of the Philippines student specializing in the history of that province, describes rafts of bamboo bound together with vines, of a size which women can lift, yet use on rivers and by people venturing as far as four miles from the coast upon them."



large ships, carrying twenty-seven thousand and eight hundred soldiers, headed by eunuch Cheng-ho in June, 1405, went around the Indian Ocean, undertook his memorable expeditions. He repeated such expedition for seven times in a period covering thirty years. Cheng-ho visited every country in the Indian Ocean and as far as the Arabian Gulf, and obtained the nominal allegiance of their rulers. For this reason the Ming-shih abounds in geographical and ethnological descriptions of all Asiatic countries and peoples from Central Asia to Asia Minor. Cheng-ho's fleet arrived in the Philippine archipelago in December, 1405. The ships have made their anchors in the Bay of Lingayen, Manila Bay, and the coast of Sulu. How long they remained on the Islands and what they did was not narrated. But during their stay in Sulu, they left in Jatti Tunggal, Jolo, the dead body of Pei Pon-tao, a sailor of Cheng's retinue, whose tomb now renewed and decorated by the local Chinese merchants. A tomb stone is erected and roads are repaired. Every December 26, the Chinese of Jolo make their pilgrimages and renew their faith and reverence to the fore-runners of Sino-Philippine relations.

Laufer has identified Pin-ka-shi-lan, a country mentioned in Ming-shih (chap. 323, p. 20), as Pangasinan of the Philippines.<sup>15</sup> As it preserved in this annals of Ming dynasty, this Pangasinan seems to have formed a small realm of their own in the beginning of the fifteenth century. As the result of Cheng's visit, the second embassy went in 1406 to the court of the Emperor Yung-lo, whom they presented with excellent horses, silver, and other objects. In return they received from the Emperor paper money and silk. Their third embassy falls two years later, in 1408; and a fourth was sent in 1410. In the same year, 1410, another embassy from the Philippines is mentioned, the head of which was a high official called Ko-cha-lao. He brought with him the products of his country, particularly gold. "In 1417, several Sulu sultans," according to Professor Gregorio F. Zaide, accompanied by their families and retainers, visited the Ming court in all their Oriental panoply. They brought with them tributes of one kind or another. But the principal thing was that they went to pay their obeisance to the Celestial monarchs. One of these sultans died there in the course of state festivities and he was given a pompous burial ceremony by no less a personage than Emperor Yung-lo himself. His tomb can still be seen today in a mosque outside the North of Toch-chow in the Province of Shangtung. The last tribute embassy from the Philippines reached China in 1421, a century before the coming of Magellan to these shores."<sup>16</sup>

*(To be continued in the next issue)*

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<sup>15</sup> Laufer, op. cit., p. 256.

<sup>16</sup> Dr. Zaide, Gregorio F., "China Our First Mother Country," in *China in the Philippines*, compiled by Alma R. Huang, Manila, 1936.