

The massacre of 1603: Chinese perception of the Spaniards in the Philippines

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From a historiographic point of view, the incident of 1603 acquires special significance in the long and tragic history of Chinese massacres in the Philippines. For compared to all the rest, this has been the best chronicled, not only in Spanish, but also in Chinese sources. Moreover, both coincide in the presentation of facts and are alike in the ordering of events.

When these sources—especially the Chinese—begin their account of the massacre, they refer to a remote, perhaps even unrelated, incident that is, nevertheless, significant. The tension started in 1593, when 250 Chinese were forcibly recruited to row the ships which Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, then Philippine governor general, sent to conquer the Moluccas Islands. Soon after they set sail, the Chinese in the flag ship staged a mutiny, assassinated Dasmariñas, and took over the vessel. Weeks later, the son of the murdered governor, Luis Pérez Dasmariñas, then based in Cebu, sought vengeance to fall on the heads of the culprits. To do this, he asked for assistance from the Chinese authorities of Fujian, who welcomed the young Dasmariñas' ambassadors and offered them their help as well.

The second episode happened 10 years later, in the spring of 1603, when "three mandarins" arrived in Manila on a strange mission: to reconnoiter a "mountain of gold" abundant with trees that bore gold. This visit raised the suspicion of the Spaniards in the Philippines, already so accustomed to intermittent threats of conquest, particularly from the Japanese. They concluded that this was probably an advance party for a future invasion of Manila. At that time, the Chinese in this city were almost 10 times the number of Spaniards.

The third event, the Sanglej uprising, happened in autumn of that same year. The reasons for this uprising remain unclear. The motives range from the desire of the Chinese to dominate Manila, to their wanting to abort the Spaniards' moves that seemed to lead to their elimination. After initial uncertainty as to who would eventually win out, the rebellion was quelled by the Spaniards who, together with Filipino and Japanese troops, massacred some 20,000 Chinese.

Both our sources also point to a more or less common epilogue. After the Spaniards' first attempts at reconciliation and China's indignant reactions, both parties reached a new compromise and the agitation easily vanished as though nothing had happened. Former trade relations were resumed, allowing the Chinese to settle again in Manila, even if both sides harbored grudges against each other for what had happened earlier.

What I now propose is to try to bring together reports on the massacre, both from the known Spanish sources and from the Chinese founts. The comparison may allow us to better understand the remote and proximate causes of the tragedy of 1603.

The sources

The Spanish manuscript sources which document the massacre are found in their entirety in the General Archive of the Indies and were published almost completely in the “Colin & Pastells,” that is to say, the new edition of the work of Colin, done by Pastells in 1900¹. Some of them were reproduced immediately afterwards and translated to English, in Blair & Robertson,² and again soon after by Pastells in his joint work with Navas.³ These sources may be classified into two: those released during the event—which served as “news updates”—or shortly after the incident, giving a global view of what had happened; and those that appear in the books that came out around that time, situating the incident within the general context of Philippine history, as Morga⁴ does in his book, or as part of the conquest of the Moluccas, as Argensola⁵ approached it in his. The letters and reports from the officers of the Royal Audiencia of Manila, and those of the superiors of the various religious orders belong to the first type. These documents intend to give personal viewpoints which, despite the fact that they contest each other, are not contradictory but rather complimentary. Of course, all deplore the massacre even if they deem it a justified, though exaggerated, measure. At the same time, they differ mainly in the analysis of the means that could have been taken to avoid it, or of the actions that indirectly provoked it. Argensola tries to consolidate all the information that reached the court during the years immediately after the massacre (he published his work six years after the event), and personal reports from the main players of the said event. Argensola may have had the Augustinian Diego de Guevara as his principal source, because this priest moved to Madrid to attend to some of his order’s concerns shortly after the incident. The work of Dr. Morga, eyewitness of the events, is briefer and simpler in tackling the topics and conclusions that were being formulated in Manila immediately after the uprising (Morga left Manila in 1606).

The Chinese sources, on the other hand, are official and therefore anonymous. They are briefer than those of the Spaniards, and seem to be less defensive, even if they also seem to reflect partisan tendencies.⁶ They usually acknowledge provocation on the part of the Chinese expatriates, and yet refuse to be judged by foreigners. These documents sometimes cite specific words or actions of an officer from Fujian, although they

¹ Francisco Colin, S.J. *Labor evangélica, ministerios apostólicos de los obreros de la Compañía de Jesús, fundación y progresos de su provincia en las Islas Filipinas. Nueva edición ilustrada con copia de notas y documentos para la crítica ... por el P. Pablo Pastells, S.J.*, Vol. II, Barcelona, Imprenta y Litografía de Henrich y Cía, 1900, pp. 418-441.

² Blair & Robertson, *The Philippine Islands* (vol. XII, pp. 83-97).

³ Pablo Pastells & Francisco Navas, *Catálogo de los documentos relativos a las Islas Filipinas* (vol. 5, Barcelona, 1929, pp. LXXVI-CVIII).

⁴ Antonio Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, Mexico, 1609. We used here the version annotated by Jose Rizal, offset reprinting by the National Commission for the Centenary of Jose Rizal, Manila, 1961.

⁵ Bartolomé & Leonardo Argensola. *Conquista de las Islas Malucas*, Imprenta del Hospicio Provincial, Zaragoza 1891.

⁶ We have used the following references: *Ming Shi* (“The History of the Ming Dynasty”), Ed. Ding Wen, Taipei, 1975, Vol. 11 (pp. 8370-8375); *Ming Shi Lu* (“The True History of the Ming Dynasty”), prepared by the Academia Sinica, Ed. Zhongwen, Volumes 12 and 13, Taipei, 1961 (pp. 12090, 123030, 12371); *Dong Xi Yang Kao* (“Studies on the Eastern and Western Oceans”), Ed. Taiwan Shang Wu, Taipei, 1971 (pp. 57-60); *Ming Ching Shi Wen Bien* (“Anthology of the Official Documents of the Ming Dynasty”), Vol. 6, Ed. Zhunghua, Beijing, 1962 (pp. 4727-4728); *Huang Ming Xiang Xu Lu*; *Guo Que* (“National tolls”), Ed. Ding Wen, Taipei, 1978, Vol. 8 (p. 4917). I wish to thank Prof. Zhang Kai for his invaluable help in pointing out these sources, and my research assistant Lin Li-pin for his help in the translation of these materials.

generally present themselves as part of an official investigation that was also transmitted officially. Also, since the events happened outside China, it is difficult for the imperial officers to verify them, which is why they put forward brief and detached explanations. Nevertheless, the massacre of 1603 happened during a period of stability in the Ming Dynasty; thus, their capacity to inquire into and annotate an event that happened outside their shores was much greater than, for example, the time when the massacres of 1639 or of 1662 took place. The former happened on the eve of the fall of the Ming Dynasty, while the latter was more associated with the Ming resistance—at that time, Koxinga⁷ was dying in his Taiwanese hideout—than with the Manchus, the new powers in China, who were still trying to establish themselves in the country.

The incident of October 25, 1593

Let us now take a brief look at Argensola's account in Chapter 6 of his book.⁸ He states that Governor Gómez Pérez de Dasmariñas prepared four galleys to attack the Moluccas but had difficulty finding soldiers to man them. When the flagship was the only one left to be filled, "he ordered that of the Chinese contract workers who were entering the Philippines, 250 were to be taken to man the flagship. The Royal Treasury was to pay each one two pesos a month...and, in the best of cases, they were only to row in calm weather." The Governor forced the governor of the Chinese to get these 250 men who set sail against their will. Finally, on October 17, the naval crew left for Ternate. However, as soon as the flagship moved a short distance off, and the Chinese oarsmen were put to work—unaccustomed as they were to the task and spurred on by brutal and menacing foremen—the said workers decided to stage an uprising, preferring to die in the attempt than to continue rowing for the Spaniards. The rebellion took place on the night of October 25, claiming the lives of the Governor himself and a great part of the 80-member Spanish crew.

The bad weather persisted, which was why the mutineers only went as far as the Ilocos region, where they were assaulted by the natives. They left behind the surviving Spaniards, among them, Juan de Cuéllar, secretary of the Governor and the Franciscan Montilla, both of who managed to reach the coast. Afterwards, the Chinese decided to sail to China, but landed in Vietnam instead, where "the king of Tunquin seized their cargo...and left the galley to sink in the coast. The Chinese were dispersed and they fled to the different provinces."⁹ The Spanish survivors informed Manila of what happened. The rest of the navy based in Cebu under the command of the governor's son, Luis Pérez Dasmariñas, returned to Manila. There, he was appointed interim Governor of the islands.

Then a strange thing happened in 1594. In retrospect, this incident seems to have served as a "rehearsal" for what was to happen next. That year, the Chinese presumed that the Spanish navy had left for the Moluccas Isles. As Argensola puts it,

"There appeared in Manila a great number of ships from China, without the customary goods, but rather loaded with men and weapons. On board were seven mandarins, counted

⁷ As regards this massacre and the problems of interpretation that arise from consulting and comparing Chinese and Spanish sources, see my recent paper "Consideraciones en torno a la imagen de Koxinga vertida por Victorio Ricci en Occidente." *Encuentros en Catay*, n. 10, 1996.

⁸ There are discrepancies between Argensola and Morga, although these are more a question of details than of arguments.

⁹ Argensola, *Conquista de las...*, p. 210

among the senior Viceroy or Governors of their provinces...and they went to visit Don Luis with great pomp and an escort of men...saying that they were on the lookout for Chinese who were going about those lands without license.”¹⁰

Dasmariñas welcomed them and gave each one a gold chain. In the end, he concluded that they had come either to conquer or to sack Manila, but changed their minds when they saw the presence of the Spanish armada. Argensola adds that since the Chinese who killed Dasmariñas’ father were from Quan Chou, he sent Fernando de Castro, a cousin of his, to that province to give an account of the mutiny. However, the trip was forestalled due to the bad weather. It is noteworthy that neither Argensola nor Morga says that the Dasmariñas took advantage of the situation to take up the matter with the mandarins (although it seems that he did, as deduced from the Chinese sources that we shall now see).

For example, the *Dong Xi Yang Gao* is more exhaustive in this respect. It states that Luis Dasmariñas (called Maulin here), immediately after replacing his father, sent some priests to inform the Chinese authorities in Macao about the uprising. These priests bore a letter, the translation of which is conserved in the Chinese sources. It also adds that the magistrates of Fujian continued to send merchant vessels to bring back the Chinese who had been living in Luzon for too long. According to Argensola, this detail coincides with what the mandarins explained to Dasmariñas. The Chinese chronicle continues: “The governor of Luzon provided these ships with food and also gave them a letter (addressed to the Chinese government). He verbally aired his complaints about the way the Chinese treated the murdered governor, his father. And he gave them an edict, sealed in a gold box which, together with the abovementioned letter, was wrapped in red silk and sent to China on a merchant vessel.”¹¹

The “three mandarins” arrive in Manila (May 1603)

We have said that the abovementioned incident does not seem to have anything to do with the one that took place nine years later. However, the parallelism is great, as we shall now see. The events arising from the arrival of another group of mandarins are well documented in the Spanish sources. There are three types of information that are all complimentary. Those from the royal officials, that is, those from the Governor, Don Pedro de Acuña, as well as the listeners of the Audiencia, Jerónimo de Salazar and Tellez de Almazán, who show themselves to be hostile to and suspicious of the governor. The sources of the ecclesiastics, and in the third place, the information that the Chinese themselves give, and which they offer in consideration of the Spanish authorities. In particular, a letter written four days before in the sea by Chanchian, the head of the Chinese expedition, and which is submitted to the governor who sends it immediately for translation. Likewise, two more documents corresponding to some “petitions of Chinese to the Chinese emperor”, which ended up in the hands of Archbishop Benavides who translated them. He sent the king his own letter where—“enriched” after his own

¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 212.

¹¹ The *Dong Xi Yang Kao* contains the Chinese translation of Dasmariñas’ letter which he gave to the mandarins. Here, the same facts are given, except that the apparent motive of the uprising was more of greed (the ship was loaded with much gold and silver) than of the cruelty received in the hands of the foremen of the ship, as Argensola would have put it.

inquiries—he makes a very complete analysis of the situation¹². Though actually we do not know if Benavides made them Public or not, and therefore if they have to be considered as part of the information that the Spaniards had then.

Gathering together all the reports (Argensola's and those of the two judges of the Audiencia, Jerónimo de Salazar and Tellez de Almazan, both hostile toward the governor, Pedro de Acuña), this series of events might have had taken place as follows:

Friday, May 23. Three mandarins landed in Manila, displaying their insignias as judges. With great pomp and an entourage of 50, they sought an audience with the Governor and gave him a letter written four days earlier in the high seas. In the said letter, signed by Chanchian, military chief of Fujian, the mandarins expounded the reason for this trip. They wished to verify the existence of a fabulous mountain in Cavite, believed to yield 100,000 *taeles* of gold and 300,000 *taeles* of silver a year. They claimed that everyone could go and dig there and that the Chinese have already taken a great quantity of these metals back to China. Chanchian also indicated that he had with him a fellow named Tio Heng, the man who reported to the emperor of the existence of the said mountain, as well as a eunuch called Cochay, who received specific orders from the emperor to investigate the matter. Another mandarin was present, besides Cochay and the immediate chief of Chanchian.¹³ He added that he did not believe in the existence of such a mountain, and presumed it to be a lie. Nevertheless, the Governor had nothing to fear, since it was his duty to look into the matter. Afterwards, the Governor had them housed in special lodgings inside the city. The fact that they flaunted their insignias as judges and that the Governor allowed them to do so, incurred the ire of the members of the Audiencia.

From May 24 to May 26 (Saturday to Monday), the mandarins begin to mete justice on their countrymen. Meanwhile, Salazar, the fiscal of the Audiencia, carries out his own investigation. Within this period, the governor allows the mandarins to bring their entourage to Tondo, where the Christian sangleys live.

May 27 (Tuesday). Salazar presents a report in a public session of the Audiencia. The report is approved and the governor requested to stop the operations of the mandarins so that the investigations may continue. The friction between the Audiencia

¹² It does not remain clear how Benavides obtained the two documents, and if he made them known to the governor or not. The first (document) is similar in structure to the letter which the governor received from the mandarins, the translation of which he sent to the King, but much more extensive and detailed. Therefore the said document perhaps may be a different version from the letter, made by memory (since he possibly helped in the verbal translation of that thing) and completed a posteriori with his own investigations, since at the end of that letter he said: "I am a man who knows the language of these Chinese and I know a lot about their things and customs of China by having lived with them for many months and I made it also because I take up this business with suspicion and care as these can be advisors who advise badly on it because of not understanding it" (Colin & Pastells, II, p. 415). The second document, different from the letter, is a remonstrance of the emperor by one of his officials. The mandarins presented it to the governor with the intention of giving more credibility to his own letter. Given that the Spaniards did not seem to take it into account, we will not deal with it now, but we will go back to it at the end of our study for its clarificatory value.

¹³ Note that the spelling of the names correspond to the free style of transcribing that the Spanish translator had of the Fujianese pronunciation of the names (the translation of the document that appears on Blair & Robertson, vol. XII, pp. 83-97, points out in the heading which was made by a Dominican). As will be seen later , the correspondence in mandarin is as follows: Chunchian seems to correspond to Gan Yi-chen, Tio Heng to Zhang Yi and Cochay to Gao Tsai.

and the Governor worsens. Moreover, the judges of the Audiencia complain of being relegated to the sidelines.

In the following days, the Audiencia desisted its moves because the Governor finally published an edict prohibiting the mandarins from administering their justice and from flaunting their insignias. On the eve of their departure, they go to Cavite to see the said mountain. With them are Second Lieutenant Cervantes, as well as by the governor of the sangleys, Juan Bautista de Vera,¹⁴ who seems to have been around all the while. There, Tio Heng, unable to satisfactorily clear himself of the deception, had the Spaniards bearing down on him with threats of death. However, the mandarins intercede for his pardon. The Spaniards grow even more suspicious. On the day of their departure, the Governor receives the mandarins and honors them with some gifts. As he sends them off, they apologize for the mix-up they have caused and thus sailed back to China.

We can better know the identities of these mandarins and further clarify the case by examining complimentary data from the Chinese sources. In this attempt to consolidate diverse information, we can conclude that the speaker of the group was the mandarin Gan Yi-chen (Chanchian in the letter), a centurion and was probably the military chief of Fujian. The second mandarin (not mentioned in the letter) was Wang Shi-ho, the magistrate of the Hai Cheng district, where many of the Chinese immigrants came from. The third mandarin must have been the eunuch Gao Tsai (who appears in the letter as Cochai). Accompanying these three dignitaries were Zhang Yi (Tio Heng) and Yang Ying-long, who were the ones who informed the emperor in Beijing of the said mountain of gold. Yang Ying-long was another centurion whom the Chinese sources accuse of collaborating with Zhang Yi (who probably used the former's clout to get an audience with the emperor and consequently win his favor). The emperor actually allowed the said expedition despite opposition from various people in his court who not only thought it a ridiculous project, but which could also be a source of trouble.

According to these sources, one might think that the two magistrates Gan Yi-chen and Wang Shi-ho were also of the same opinion. In fact, the latter was so vexed that he died soon after they arrived in Fujian. The other magistrates reported Zhang Yi's behavior to the emperor, demanding that he be punished for trying to deceive the imperial government and for bringing about its humiliation in a foreign land. The role of Gao Tsai, on the other hand, is more difficult to interpret. Some sources picture him as the superintendent of the said Beijing expedition, while others show him as Fujian's quartermaster general for taxes, who makes a living off the Chinese maritime trade. The *Ming Shi Lu* gives its version of the conduct of these three: "The diabolical Fujianese Zhang Yi, came up with an evil plan to propose the excavation of a gold mine in Luzon. But his real intention was to conspire with the eunuchs and provoke the barbarians. Yang Ying-long was his partner...Zhang Yi was beheaded and [his head] shown to the coastal provinces as a warning to people of his kind."¹⁵

Lastly, it is worth pointing out that the Chinese sources coincide with those Spanish ones in indicating that this entire trip had been the proximate cause of the Spanish suspicions and the subsequent massacre which took place four months afterwards.

¹⁴ A Chinese who arrived in Manila during the times of the pirate Limahon, whom he had served. At that time, he was appointed governor of the sangleys and was "respected by the Spaniards and loved by the sangleys" (Argensola, p. 230. He was also known as "Eng Kang" (Rizal), "Encan" (Argensola) and "Encang" (Tellez de Almazán).

¹⁵ *MSL*, Chapter 404 (Vol. XII. P. 12090).

But, the question is if the dispatch had been an advance party or not, and if it came to study the possibility of invasion of Manila—whether it was piratical or in an organized form. At the moment, the Spaniards could not know it, although an excess of suspicions could turn itself into an untenable situation that might end up out of control. It was precisely what happened.

The massacre of 1603

a) The preparation

On December 18, 1603, once the incident that we are about to see had ended, Governor Pedro de Acuña wrote the king an account wherein he explained in retrospect his behavior during the whole event. He begins by saying that the arrival of the mandarins had made him suspect a possible invasion from China. This was why his eventual moves, preventive and defensive in nature, were limited to the following: 1.- To create space, he ordered the demolition of the houses in the Parian that was adjacent to the walls of the city. This, at the same time, corrected some of the wall's defects. 2.- He asked the mayors of the district and the magistrates of the Parian to submit to him a list of immigrants under their jurisdiction and of the weapons in their possession. They were also asked to indicate whether these people were to be trusted or not. The order was fulfilled. 3.- He carried out regular inspections of the artisans (blacksmiths, etc.) in particular, and commissioned the manufacture of bows, arrows, pikes, etc. for the royal storehouse. At the same time, he ordered that all these weapons be collected and transported. 4.- Just in case, he had provisions stored. 5.- He hired sangleys to build a canal with the end of creating a moat for the city, if ever the need arises.

Acuña also points out a distinction that is also mentioned in other Spanish sources: that between the Chinese merchants, who have settled for years in the Parian, and the recent arrivals who were vagabonds and troublemakers who had nothing to lose and who could not return to China due to the crimes they had committed.¹⁶ Acuña hangs the blame of the succeeding events on these Chinese, since they were the ones who paved the way for everything, “in order to bring the merchants and the peaceful people to their side, convincing them that the measures that were being taken were meant to kill the Chinese.”¹⁷

The Chinese sources, on the other hand, also echo some of Acuña's positions, but presenting these under an offensive point of view, coloring the thing differently and relating these to what directly affected them. For example, the *Huang Ming Xiang Hsu Lu* shows that the Spaniards prepared for the massacre way ahead of time, since “they began to buy from the Chinese all the metal objects that they had. The Chinese, on the other hand, sold all the iron they found because they saw that they could profit from it.” (point 3 from Acuña).¹⁸ This same idea is found in the *Ming Shi*, which also adds that “the Chinese were obliged to register their names and to be divided into groups of 300”¹⁹ (point 2 from Acuña).

¹⁶ To better differentiate the Chinese groups, see Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898* (Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 6-11.

¹⁷ Blair & Robertson, vol. XII, p. 154

¹⁸ *HMXHL*, Chapter 5, Luzon.

¹⁹ *MS*, Chapter 323 (p. 8372)

b) The beginning: Sangley uprising or Chinese pogrom?

Another interesting issue to consider is that of who started it first. The Spanish sources (Morga, Argensola, Acuña, etc.) emphatically state: the Chinese staged an uprising. Benavides, the bishop of Manila, noted in a letter to the king that “the multitude of Chinese was so great, among them, base and vicious men who spread the rumor (which is absolutely false, but not for them) that the Spaniards were going to kill every one of them, which was why they provoked a rebellion on the night of the eve of St. Francis. They armed themselves and on that day killed several Spaniards who pursued them, among them, Luis Pérez de Dasmariñas.”²⁰ On December 18, when everything was over, Governor Pedro de Acuña told the king that “according to the investigations...and what some of those involved had declared, it goes without saying that the uprising was instigated from China, and the stage set by all, if not some, of the mandarins who had been here.”²¹

According to the Spanish sources (since the Chinese are silent about it), the Chinese had also been girding themselves for it. The Chinese Juan Bautista de Vera had been constructing a more or less fortified zone half-a-league from Tondo (which Argensola calls a “sugar refinery”), where some provisions and arms were stored.

c) The unfolding of events

The actual struggle is already well known because it is what was most interesting to relate to the Spaniards. To summarize, we basically follow Morga’s account:

The evening of October 3 (Friday). The uprising was scheduled to take place on the last day of November, but realizing that they were going to be discovered, the sangleys move it to the third of October. On this day, at 11 pm, about 2000 men (or “according to the sangley who was under torture, 40 captains to 150 men”), begin to gather in the “fort” of Tondo. That night, Juan Bautista de Vera visits the governor to inform him of what was happening. Thinking that de Vera was in cahoots with them, the governor throws him into prison. The Chinese, noting de Vera’s absence, appoint another Christian sangley, Juan Untae, de Vera’s godson, to replace him.²² That same night, Luis Dasmariñas secures himself in the monastery of Binondo with a small group of soldiers. The Chinese fly into action, burning some houses and then returning to their “fort.”

The morning of October 4 (Saturday). The sangleys of the Parian (that is, the peaceful old-timers identified with the Spaniards, some of whom are Christian) are asked to enter the city, but they refuse to do so due to doubts as to who would be the victor in this conflict. They decide to remain in the Parian. Dasmariñas leaves Binondo for Tondo to fortify himself in the church with 140 harquebusiers. A thousand and five hundred Chinese rebels show up. There is a fight to take over the church. Five hundred Chinese die, while the rest retreat to the “fort”. Dasmariñas pursues them and dies in the attempt. The Spaniards are thrown into confusion.

October 5 (Sunday). Realizing that de Vera was not going to come, the rebels kill Untae and coerce the Parian residents into joining forces with them. As they make for Manila, they ravage everything that comes their way. The city puts up a tough resistance and many men die. In the evening, they retreat to the Parian and to Dilao. The

²⁰ Blair & Robertson. Vol. XII, p. 143.

²¹ *Idem*, vol. XII, p. 155.

²² Sangley general Hontay (Argensola), or Juan Ontal (Tellez de Almazán).

Spaniards likewise press the Parian residents to side with them. Overcome by this psychological stress, some Chinese—among them, a relative of de Vera—hang themselves. Both sides brace themselves for a second attack.

October 6 (Monday). Another assault and renewed resistance. A Spaniard, with the help of a Japanese corps, launches an unsuccessful offensive. An armada of Pintados suddenly makes its way through the river and blasts the Chinese lines with canons. They divide themselves into three and penetrate the inland. One group makes for the Tingues of Pasig, another for Ayonbon [Bayombong] and the third, the most numerous, for Laguna de Bay, the mountains of San Pablo and the province of Batangas.

October 8 (Wednesday) and the succeeding days: The Chinese abandon the city. The Spaniards are hot in their pursuit. It seems that the first two groups are easily annihilated, since nothing more is said of them. The third group, starving and unarmed, leave a path of devastation. Luis de Velasco with 70 of his men is at their heels, killing many each day. Finally, Velasco perishes at the hands of the Chinese who set up fort in San Pablo. Argensola adds that the native Filipinos, instead of siding with the Chinese, lent a hand in the massacre.

October 20. A new detachment of Spaniards, Japanese and 1500 natives of Pampanga and the Tagalog provinces is formed in Manila. They soon finish off all the Chinese who secured themselves in San Pablo and Batangas. The rebellion is quelled. October 22 (Argensola's date). Juan de Vera faces trial. In the succeeding days, other Chinese meet the same fate. Only 300 are pardoned, but the rest are sent to the galleys.

The Chinese sources are less detailed in describing the operations, perhaps due to the handful of sangleys who survived. It is thus more difficult to establish a clear parallelism between the two accounts, since they cite actions that are not mentioned in the Spanish sources. Consequently, there is much discrepancy. The *Ming Shi* relates that when the Chinese discovered the Spaniards' plot to massacre them, they "retreated to Tsai Yuen (which may be translated as "the plantation" and which may refer to Juan Bautista de Vera's strategic "fort" and to Argensola's "sugar refinery").²³ Then, the Spanish "chief" sent soldiers to go after them (this may well refer to Luis Dasmariñas' move or to the arrival of the army of Pintados). The Chinese were unarmed. Many were killed and the survivors fled to the Talun Mountain.²⁴ The Spaniards attacked the mountain once more, while the Chinese put up a desperate defense. The Spaniards suffered momentary defeat, which their "chief" (probably the captain of the expedition or the Governor himself) regretted, moving him to negotiate a truce. The Chinese, thinking that this was some trick, killed the messengers, thus driving the Spanish "chief" to exasperation. He abandoned their mountain camp and retreated to the neighboring town, simultaneously setting up ambush parties in the surrounding areas. The Chinese rebels were starving and so decided to go down the mountain and plunder the town,²⁵ only to be ambushed by the Spanish troops. Twenty five thousand Chinese perished in the mas-

²³ CHEN, Matthew. O.P. "The Ming Records of Luzon," in *The Chinese in the Philippines*, Historical Conservation Society, Manila, 1966, p. 250. According to the translator's note, this place is the present-day San Miguel district, although we do not see any further proof to this.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Matthew Chen, in another note, indicates that this place was close to what is now known as the city of Makati. The rest of the account probably recounts the travails of the first or second group of the three groups of Chinese who fled, since we know nothing more of their fate from the Spanish references. The data does not seem to refer to the third group that went to San Pablo de los Montes and Batangas. Moreover, this reference is unusual, since there are no mountains close to the Makati area.

²⁵ Matthew Chen seems to assume that this town was none other than Manila. But neither is this clear.

sacre²⁶. The *Dong Xi Yang Kao* offers a different denouement to this final massacre, coloring it with superstitious, even apocalyptic visions. It says that when the Chinese descended the Talun Mountain to attack the town, 10,000 of them were killed in an ambush, while others fled to the valleys and died there of starvation. Then it adds:

“There was a strong downpour while they were on the Talun Mountain, and as they stood beneath the rain, they saw something shine out in the midnight sky. There was an earthquake. The Chinese panicked and began to kill each other by mistake. The Spaniards, taking advantage of the situation, were able to kill many of them. That same month, a flood in Chang Chou took the lives of over 10,000 families.”²⁷

The aftermath

After the massacre, the Spaniards carried out three steps. First, the attempt to clarify if the uprising had been in connivance with China or not, and in connection with the coming of the three mandarins. Various testimonies given by the Governor seem to indicate this, but their validity is doubtful since they were obtained through torture. The royal officials insist on the same idea, e.g., Argensola. Nevertheless, it is something which is never presented as sufficiently proved and that he insists that with the principal aim of justifying the killing. In this way, Juan Bautista de Vera would have been more of a scapegoat than the one responsible for a conspiracy (Rizal’s thesis).

Secondly, the Spaniards made an inventory of the goods of the massacred rebels, which they placed at the disposition of their families. This was made known through a mission to Fujian; second, an attempt to resume the necessary trade relations. As regards the latter, Argensola (who seems to have occasionally copied Morga in this point), explains that Capt. Marco de la Cueva was sent to Macao with the Dominican Luis Gandullo to inform the Portuguese of what had happened and so that they might be forewarned of “rumors of war” from China. At the same time, they brought letters for the “*tutores, aytaos and visitadores*” of the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, explaining the conduct of the Chinese and the Spaniards’ response. What happened was not only known in Macao; news of Spaniards in Macao and the reason for their presence there soon reached Quan Chou, which was why “the wealthy Captains Guansan, Sinu and Guanchan, who regularly traded in Manila,” went to see them. They gave their own conjectures about what really happened, brought letters to the mandarins, and encouraged the merchants and ships of Quan Chou to go to Manila. Cueva’s mission was a success, for soon after his return—in May of 1604—13 ships from China arrived, filling up two ships bound that same year for New Spain with their cargo. Thus end the Spanish accounts.

The Chinese sources, besides being very detailed (in this case, they were interested in formulating a more complete evaluation of the event), also coincide with the Spanish references. For example, the inventory of goods is mentioned in the *Dong Xi Yang Kao*:

“The Spanish governor had all the possessions of the Chinese immigrants stored in big warehouses, marked with the names of their owners. Then he wrote the magistrate of Fujian, urging the relatives of the deceased to go to Manila to collect their belongings. But there was a Chinese

²⁶ *MS*, Chapter 323 (p. 8373).

²⁷ *DXYK*, Chapter 5: Luzon (p. 59)

called Huang, a good friend of the governor, who, pretending to be a relative of one of the massacred, fraudulently went off with some goods.”²⁸

However, what is even more interesting is the final evaluation made by the emperor and officials of Fujian who were then deciding on whether or not they should resume trade relations with the Spaniards. We came across two versions of the official act, the first of which is found in the *Ming Shi*:

“The Magistrate Xu Xue-ju²⁹ sent a report to the court. The emperor was shaken and began to mourn for the dead. On the 12th month of the year 32 (1604), he called on his official magistrates to investigate the case. These officials presented their conclusions in the court. The emperor said: “Zhang Yi, etc. have deceived the imperial court and brought about conflict in a foreign land. Twenty thousand people and commoners have been massacred. They have disgraced our Empire. Their execution is not deemed an excess. They must be beheaded and their heads shown to all seas. But the governor of Luzon murdered people without license. We shall leave the officials to decide his punishment and they shall inform us of this.

Hsu Hsue-ju wrote the authorities of Luzon, accusing the governor of massacre and demanding that the widows and children of the victims be sent back to China. For the moment, China did not launch a punitive attack on Luzon. Afterwards, the Chinese began to return to Luzon in trickles, and the Spaniards, seeing the profitability of commerce with China, did not prevent the Chinese from reestablishing themselves there. The Chinese population began to grow once more.”³⁰

The second more extensive report is found in the *Ming Jing Shi Wen Pien*, which contains the report made by the said Administrative Commissioner of Fujian, Xu Xue-ju, who explains his move, and the memorandum he sent to the emperor, particularly the so-called “Report to Emperor Wan-li regarding the recall of Chinese merchants in Luzon,” of the *Ming Jing Shi Wen Pien*³¹. Here, Xu Xue-ju begins to speak for himself, situating the problem, and declaring afterwards that he sent an edict-letter to Luzon after having reviewed the problem from its early stages. He acknowledges that Zhang Yi’s deception caused the massacre, and takes the blame for it. However, he considers the Spanish intervention, as unacceptable, unlicensed by the Emperor (up to here, the anterior document is repeated almost verbatim). Consequently, the magistrate of Fujian clamors for vengeance, citing that what is most unjust in the Spanish maneuver is their non-recognition of the fact that the development of Luzon was greatly due to the hard work of the Chinese living there. There was no response from the Emperor, and so he was sent another communication bearing the same message. The emperor ultimately rejected the move, basing his decision on these five points: 1.- Due to their long tradition in trade and commerce, the people of Luzon were practically their subjects. 2.- The antagonism, as well as the confrontation, took place outside of China. 3.- The merchants are humble folk and, therefore, not worth waging battle for. 4.- These merchants, upon going to Luzon, abandoned their families without considering their filial ties. 5.- An expedition to Luzon will only drain their armed forces. The theme was certainly discussed

²⁸ *DXYK*, Chapter 5: Luzon (p. 60)

²⁹ The figure of Xu Xue-ju is both well known and respected (*Dictionary of the Ming Biography*, Vol. I, pp. 582-585). In 1591, he was appointed Assistant Commissioner for Surveillance in Hukuang and was soon after named Administrative Commissioner in Fujian, a post which he held until 1607. Consequently, he was able to gather first-hand information on all the happenings, from their very beginnings.

³⁰ *MS*, Chapter 323 (p. 8373).

³¹ *MJSWB*, Chapter 433 (p. 4728).

in the court, creating a great tension, and its reverberations were prolonged for a long time, even until 1605, when Mateo Ricci made some comments about it.³²

Thus, Xu Xue Ju was left with no other recourse than to end this letter with a warning to the Spaniards: they should be grateful to the emperor, they must change their attitude, and they should restore the properties of those who perished in the massacre. Only with this shall trade be resumed. On the other hand, if they do not comply with these demands, then they would send thousands of warships with the families of the deceased aboard, along with mercenaries from the vassal states to conquer and divide Luzon among themselves.³³ Thus ends the letter sent to the Philippines.

Conclusions

To better understand the general process of the massacre, particularly, that of “the three mandarins,” in Manila, the proximate cause of the massacre, we must make four contexts. (Besides, they were perfectly alluded by Benavides in that letter he sent the King dated 5 July 1603, which was accompanied by those two singular documents already cited in the beginning of this paper.) In the first place, it is proper to point out that the time in which these events took place was marked by a rampant increase of piracy in Chinese waters, as well as by the express prohibition that Chinese subjects engage in maritime commerce at a time when it was gaining popularity in the international arena. Consequently, it was common practice for Chinese patrons to seek alternative and profitable solutions. Under such circumstances, Manila was considered an important center for the export of silver in Southeast Asia (thanks to the coming of ships from New Spain), just when the demand for this metal was on the rise in China. Because of this, it is not surprising that Manila’s neighbors take interest in this fragile colony, or that new risks arise: principally, the unexpected invasion of Japanese pirates and, from 1600 onwards, the appearance of Dutch pirates. (Olivier de Noort).

Taken within this context, Manila was regularly flooded with Chinese with eyes set on establishing themselves there. Now, even if this meant a contribution to the city’s progress via their artisan skills, they increasingly posed themselves as a threat to the Spanish populace, who made up only 10% of the total number of Chinese in the city. The Chinese menace was certainly confirmed in 1593, when 250 hired Chinese contract workers assassinated the governor of the Philippines; and also, presumably, in 1594 when seven mandarins appeared with great pomp and veiled motives at the helm of a fully-equipped armada; and was indeed alarming when more mandarins reappeared in 1603 to mete justice on their compatriots. Authors like Argensola do not doubt their intentions. In their accounts, they throw in descriptions of how eight Chinese trade junks arrived in Manila while the mandarins were there, assuring the Spaniards of the real purpose of the Chinese conquest. Besides, he adds, while the mandarins pressured Zhang Yi to explain the existence of the mountain of gold, he would whisper—according to the interpreters or *naguatatos* (Argensola said)—that what he had wanted to say was that Luzon had so much gold that it was worth conquering.

³² In the beginning of 1605, Ricci pointed out in a letter: “It was spoken much in the cort, and we feared that some harm could come from all these [due to the possibility that it might be associated with the Spaniards.]” See Jonathan Spence, *The Memory Palace of Mateo Ricci*, Penguin Books, 1985, p. 216.

³³ This same letter was sent to the Spaniards who translated it. Argensola published it shortly afterwards. It is interesting to note that the two versions closely coincide with each other, but of the five points indicated by the emperor, Argensola’s translation only gathered numbers 1, 2 and 4.

The figure of Zhang Yi (a carpenter, according to Benavides) probably brings together the images of fortune hunter, pervert (as the Chinese sources put it) and dreamer who see in Manila's regular influx of traders from Quan Chou and Chang Chou, the possibility of Chinese expansion and personal gain. Here is a man capable of conjuring his own utopia—a place where mountains produce gold. He not only ends up believing the tale, but also manages to persuade the emperor himself to authorize an exploration.³⁴ Although the Chinese magistrates accused him of “going out with all this to look for people to steal and to rob and to be a corsair” (Chinese documents of Benavides). The conflict that was bound to take place with the Spaniards—men also accustomed to pursuing an *El Dorado*—had no other alternative but to erupt.

In the second place, we should consider another fact that made possible the increasing acceptance of Chinese in Manila. The Spaniards, in particular, the Provincials of the religious orders, admitted that they have gone too far disobeying the royal ordinances that prohibited the growth of the Chinese population beyond 6000. This norm was obliterated by the profits gained from the granting of each new license. The Bishop of Nueva Segovia, Fr. Diego de Soria, thus commented:

“...it was a generally said that the number of Chinese in the uprising reached 23-24,000, even if the judges declare that they hardly came up to 8000, a figure which these same judges further reduced, because they are primarily responsible for the uprising through the liberal granting of licenses to Chinese who wish to remain in Manila. These licenses were sold at five *tostones* each. There was a judge who was able to collect a total of 60,000 *tostones*, or the equivalent 30,000 pesos, out of the said licenses.”³⁵

In the third place, and now setting our sights back to China, it is worth considering Wan Li's style of government—concretely, his politics of assigning eunuchs as revenue agents and quarter master generals of the mines.³⁶ The system saw its beginnings in 1596; by 1599, it was already widely practiced. This procedure was meant to correct deficient tax legislation which, in turn, brought about a lax and corrupt administration. Entrusting this function to eunuchs imposed a certain kind of general auditing system. But as the eunuchs carried out their jobs, they also interfered with the regular government functions. Besides, the posts were usually occupied by fortune hunters and scalawags, owing to the absence of a precedent and a clear-cut process of organizing a regular staff. Sometimes, tax collection at the mines would be reduced to a form of extortion that would then be sabotaged by rival officers; and more often than not, this created social problems.³⁷

³⁴ A brief observation: A Frenchman, Rene Jouglet, passing by the Philippines in 1931, hearing about the treasures of the pirate Limahon, published in Paris, in 1936, an imaginative book called *La ville perdue*, where he mentions that the treasures of the pirate—which may have been hidden in Cavite or Pangasinan thirty years before the massacre—had been the cause of various Chinese expeditions, the last of which was in 1603. See Cesar Callanta, *The Limahon Invasion*, New Day Publishers, Quezon City, 1989, p. 69.

³⁵ For this, see the letter of Fray Bernardo de Santa Catalina, Provincial of the Dominicans and Commissioner of the Holy Office (Blair & Robertson), as well as the adjoining note of the translator who comments on the Royal Decree of June 13 (Barcelona), which restricted the presence of Chinese nationals in Manila.

³⁶ See RAY HUANG, “Lung-ch'ing and Wan-li reign, 1567-1620” in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 7, Part I, pp. 530-532.

³⁷ We may sight the following examples. In 1599: inspector Ma Tang so provoked the merchants of Lin-ting (Changdong) that they burned down his house and left him half-dead; Cheng Feng, assigned as tax and mines inspector of Huguang, caused a mutiny among the inhabitants of Wuchuang; textile mill work-

Taking into account these circumstances, it is easy to come up with a final, fitting interpretation of the figure of the eunuch Gao Tsai. For one, among the many diverse possibilities one could think of, he might have been the one who defended the ambitious projects of fortune hunters like Zhang Yi or the corrupt behavior of officials like Yang Ying-long, against the courtiers of Beijing and the magistrates of Fujian, like Gan Yi-chen, Wang Shi-ho and, most specially, Xu Xue-ju. Benavides saw it clearly since the first moment:

“Because the Emperor has “men of gold and women of silver made” and invited them to drink, so he sent a eunuch to each of their kingdoms; and these eunuchs, to get gold and silver for the Emperor, impose a lot of taxes on the vassals, and the empire of China felt so oppressed with all this that publicly the Chines here [the Philippines] tell us that within two years more or less there will be communities and uprisings in China.”³⁸

The figure of Gao Tzai appears again in the following year (1604), when the Dutch were in the Pescadores islands trying to establish trade with China. He sent a mission to the Dutch in the aforementioned islands, trying to solicit gifts of high value for himself and for the Emperor. *Dong Xi Yang Kao* and *Ming Shi* notified the governor, Xu Sue-ju, and the officials of Fujian province to oppose the actuation of the eunuch by sending the *touzy* (Admiral), Shen You-rong, with a battleship to the coast of the province in order to stop the plans of the eunuch, Gao Tzai.³⁹ It is evident that the recent happenings in Manila had been the last vindication which Xu Xue-ju encountered in order to oppose the politics of the eunuch—this time with force, as shown in the presence of Shen You-rong.⁴⁰

ers of Suzhou staged a demonstration against revenue agent Sun Long. In 1603: Wang Zhao, coal mines inspector of Xishan (Beijing), encountered opposition from among the miners who held a demonstration in Beijing. In 1606: Yang Rong found the revenue office burnt down by the miners of Yunnan. See also Bai Shouyi and others. In *A Brief History of China*, Vol. I, with editions in other languages, Beijing, 1984, pp. 348-349.

³⁸ Colin & Pastells, *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 415. In fact, it is not strange the clarity of the observations of the Dominican Benavides about the eunuchs, since he knew in detail the recent experience of another Dominican, Diego de Aduarte, which preceded the ones cited in the previous note. In effect, Aduarte left Manila for Macao on September 6, 1598, with the aim of paying the ransom for the “Gentleman Don Luis” in Canton. He arrived there 20 days after, and coincided with the eunuch, Liculifu (sic), who — upon knowing the presence of the foreigner— tortured him and extorted from him most of the money he carried. In the end, Aduarte had no other remedy but to borrow the money. The entire story is related by Aduarte himself in his autobiographical work entitled, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores de Filipinas, Japón y China*, Zaragoza, 1693, pp. 214-219. At the same time, Mateo Ricci himself recounts how one of the catholic servants who acted as a mail carrier, also in 1598-99, was robbed, murdered and thrown into a river because he denied paying commissions, everything was probably made in connection with the legal pressure—according to Spence—which were provoked by the eunuchs. See Jonathan Spence, *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

³⁹ This theme was studied by Leonard Blussé in “Inpo, Chinese Merchant in Pattani: a Study in early Dutch-Chinese relations” (1977), p. 294. Blussé mentions —the Chinese sources and Gao Tzai mentioned as well— how a strange individual “with exotic tales such as the eating of live children’s brains;” how Shen You-rong, an exemplary Confucian official who wrote a book collecting the panegyrics which his friends dedicated to him.

⁴⁰ You can read the résumé of this person already cited in the *Dictionary of the Ming Biography*, vol. II, pp. 1192-1194. Shen You-rong gained prestige through this action, but Gao Tzai, resenting him, opposed whatever compensation to be given to him, and in the autumn of 1606, obtained that he be sent to a secondary military post in the province of Zhejiang.

In the fourth place, and so that we may understand why the local magistrates of Fujian could not act on this problem according to their own standards, we are now going to consider the figure of Emperor Wan Li himself and his style of government, many times branded as indolent, irresponsible and indecisive, making him disregard any unpleasant advice and the remonstrations of his officers.⁴¹ His inaction encouraged partisanship which fostered antagonism between the emperor and his court. The emperor became more withdrawn and his court dealings increasingly confined to written communication which, more than once, he would intentionally refuse to read.

These descriptions of Wan Li perfectly explain the difficulties encountered by his officers, as culled from the Chinese sources: their inability to put a stop to the exploration of the “mountain of gold,” their forced collaboration with this expedition out of pure call of duty, even if they knew that they were indirectly protecting detestable fortune hunters. Consequently, during the reign of Emperor Wan Li, the coastal provinces seemed to be very much cut off from Beijing, which was why the mandarins had to choose between loyalty to the emperor and petty conflicts of local concern. And when the situation became out of hand, even persons like Xu Xue-ju (an honorable magistrate) sought pragmatic solutions to put an end to a hopeless predicament. This, at least, seems to be confirmed in Chapter 47 of *Guo Que* which makes a general summary of all that had happened in the months after the massacre:

“The barbarians are afraid that China launches a punitive act against Luzon, which is why they sent some spies to Macao. However, the magistrates of Fujian and Guangdong did not want to report this. They only told the emperor half the truth, which is why the emperor only ordered the people of Luzon: stop creating more problems! And thus the things remained as they were.”⁴²

⁴¹ See Ray Huang, *Op. cit.*, pp. 514-517. We have a most valuable testimony corresponding to the second document which Benavides translated and sent to the King of Spain, which carried a title he himself explains, “Copy of the petition which the supreme magistrate of the province or the reign of hongkong gave to the King of China in order to persuade him not to listen to some Chinese who, in the year 1603, wanted to come from China to do battle and take the land of Luzon (Philippines) and that the King gave license and consent.” Cf. Colin & Pastells, vol. II, pp. 416-417.

⁴² *GQ*, Chapter 79 (vol. 8, p. 4917)