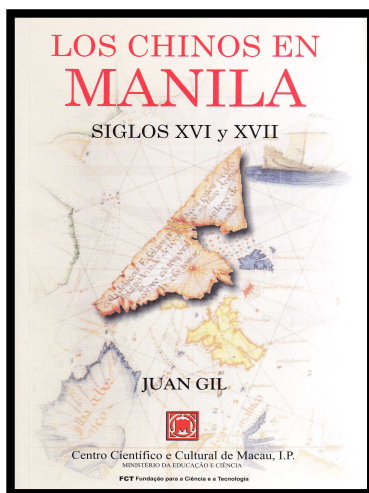


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This impressive tome of almost eight hundred pages marks the culmination of Juan Gil’s scholarship on Early Modern Spanish-Chinese relations in the Philippines. *Los chinos en Manila* is the most comprehensive history of the Chinese presence in the Philippines to date. In writing the book, Gil consulted the *Archivo Histórico Nacional*, the *Archivo General de Indias*, the *Biblioteca Nacional*, *Biblioteca del Palacio Real*, and the *Real Academia de la Historia*. Although previous scholars have discussed many of the same primary sources in their investigations, Gil is the first to focus the discussion mainly from the point of view of the Spanish colonizers and missionaries in the Philippines.

The book is composed by ten chapters, an appendix with a transcription of key documents, and a glossary with *filipino* terms often seen in the referenced manuscripts. It is organized chronologically; starting from the moment the Philippines became a Spanish colony under Miguel López de Legazpi in 1571 to the expulsion of the Chinese from the islands (which took place through a number of edicts, beginning in 1688). The number of Chinese residents in the Philippines during this period is believed to have reach up to thirty thousand.

Juan Gil’s main argument is that the relationship between Spaniards and the ethnic Chinese, known as *sangleys*, during the Early Modern period was “un fracaso múltiple” (xvi). As one reads Gil’s text, one gets the sense that the Spanish did not understand that any kind of fruitful relation with the Chinese would have entailed their recognition of the hegemonic economic power of China and the Chinese in Asia. The lack of cultural understanding of the dominance of China disposed Spaniards to miscalculate and make unsound policy and military decisions. One of the most memorable and little known anecdotes we find in Gil’s book regards a man named Esteban Rodríguez, one of the first Spaniards to arrive in the Philippines in 1565. When Rodríguez encountered some *filipino* natives near Cebú, he told them that he and fellow travelers were Chinese and that they had come from China to sell some goods. The natives responded that they were lying, for they knew the Chinese and the Chinese did not look anything like them. The natives added that they (the Spaniards) were thieves from another area and had come to their territory to steal goods from

them (the natives). A more serious error of judgment was the belief that Spain could conquer China without much effort. Gil reminds us of the better known but still compelling example of Governor Francisco de Sande's unfulfilled plan of conquering China with four to six thousand armed men.

We also learn from Gil's book is that when the number of Chinese residents increased noticeably in Manila, the Spanish government led by Gonzalo Ronquillo in 1581, segregated them from the indigenous and the Spanish population in a controlled area outside the walls of Manila, *Parián*. *Parián* was overseen by Spanish civil and religious authorities, but it was internally ruled by a Chinese *alcalde*—trusted by the Spanish and probably hated by the Chinese—and had its own judicial system. The segregation of the Chinese helped the Spanish government keep some control over their activities and better manage the collection of tributes to which they were subject. In order to be able to separate Catholic *sangleys* and *mestizos de sangley* from the unconverted ethnic Chinese, the Spanish authorities designated another section close to *Parián* in which the converted were to reside, Binondo.

Despite all the efforts of the Spanish officials and missionaries, most of the ethnic Chinese appear to refuse to identify and assimilate into the population of native *indios*. Some wealthy Chinese even dared to dress in Spanish fashion. Such behavior was intolerable to some missionaries who to emphasize the point sent memoranda and letters to their orders and to the Spanish Crown exaggerating Chinese cultural transgressions. Gil mentions, for instance, that Governor Niño de Távora wrote in 1628 “siendo los sangleyes estrangeros, obran y lo pueden todo como si fueran naturales; y los españoles mismos, naturales, ni saben ni pueden hazer nada, como si fueran estangeros” (447). The Dominican friar Victorio Ricci also complained that the *sangleys* acted as if “las Philippinas son sus Indias” (312) and that Spaniards ran the risk of becoming the *indios* of the Chinese. This type of hyperbolic rhetoric convinced the Spanish Crown to approve the first edict of expulsion, followed by others, in 1688.

As Gil observes, the supporters of the expulsion cited many explanations for such measure. For Gil, Victorio Ricci's discourse (1677) on the need to expel the *sangleys* from the island is representative of the stance of many of the Spaniards who promoted their expulsion. The Chinese were said to be atheists and idolaters. They were accused of mocking Christian beliefs and rituals, which prevented the conversion of the native *indios* or led them to become apostates. They were believed to have taught the native *indios* the practice of sodomy. They were said to be responsible for the death of governor Gómez Perez de Dasmariñas. They were also blamed for Chinese piracy in the islands, for leading their own uprisings (1603, 1639, 1662, and 1686), and for inciting natives to revolt (1660). Ricci, furthermore, argued that the Chinese had to be expelled because they controlled trade in the Philippines with money they had “stolen” from the Spaniards. Finally, Ricci was adamant that the expulsion of the Chinese would not affect the missions to China because he alleged that the Chinese depended heavily on Spanish trade.

Gil's volume is a must-read for scholars and students of Hispanic Studies. Not only, is it a superbly researched survey of the history of the Chinese in the Philippines, but it also provides references to sources and compelling ideas for future investigations in the fields of Sino-Hispanic relations and transcultural studies. As an example, Gil compares –in passing– the treatment and perception of the Chinese to that of the Jews in the Middle Ages in Spain. The Chinese were indeed known as the “Jews of the East” by Europeans. This is an insight that might be worth further investigation.

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