

Historical and Cultural Foundations of Philippines-China Relations

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines' dream under the administration of President Benigno Aquino III is economic recovery through "matuwid na daan" or good governance and straightening every aspect of the graft-ridden Philippine roads. China's dream, on the other hand, as expressed by President Xi Jinping, emphasized the great renewal of the Chinese nation. The Philippine dream and the Chinese dream need not clash or come into conflict. They are not incompatible with one another. In fact, history tells us that the Philippines and China have shared intertwining fate and destinies through centuries. As neighbors, events that affected one had impact on the other. As well, the ethnic Chinese in the Philippines have played significant roles and crucial participation in all events that shaped the Philippines as a nation. The Tsinoy or Chinese-Filipino presence has manifested itself in all aspects of our nation's life—in its history and culture, language, songs, beliefs and traditions.

This paper explores the theme suggested by the conference convenors – "The Cultural Diplomacy between the Philippines and China" by highlighting lesser known vignettes and stories in the rich cultural legacy that has been imprinted indelibly on the tapestry of Philippine national culture. The paper emphasizes that this rich cultural heritage that has been implanted long before the Europeans and Americans came to the Philippines forms the building blocks and solid foundations of the relationship between China and the Philippines.

One story in this cultural diplomacy better known to most Philippine scholars is the account found in Volume 323 of the *Ming Annals* about the royal visit of Sulu's Sultan Paduka Batara with two other Rajahs

and a retinue of 300 to pay tribute to Emperor Yong Lo in Beijing, China in 1417 (500 years before Magellan set foot on our shores). The Sultan died in Shandong, China on his way back to Sulu and was given an elaborate imperial burial there. His second and third sons remained in China to tend to their father's tomb. They intermarried with the local Chinese and today, 25 generations of descendants of the Sulu Sultan still consider Sulu their *laojia*¹ (old homeland).

While the romanticized story of the Sultan of Sulu is immortalized in the epic movie "*Hari sa Hari, Lahi sa Lahi*" (The King and the Emperor), there's limited knowledge that throughout the 12 centuries long recorded history of Philippines-China relations, the ethnic Chinese and the Filipinos have always been bound together by an intertwining fate and destiny. Being neighboring countries, events in one country's history often have repercussions in the other country.

II. ANCIENT TIES

A paper submitted for the 2012 National Conference of the Philippine Historical Association in Iloilo City detailed the ancient ties dated before the recorded pre-hispanic trade relations between the Chinese and the Filipinos.² The paper cited evidences of pre-historic links between the Neolithic people of China and the Malay people of the Philippines. Anthropological evidences in the form of common origins and ancestry, language, legends, beliefs and myths, practices and traditions and archaeological evidences in the form of similarities in prehistoric remains and fossils, stone tools and ancient farming traditions and technology are silent evidences of this common historical past.³ This paper will no longer

1 See the Saga of the Sultan of Sulu in Teresita Ang See, *Tsinoy – the story of the Chinese in Philippine Life*, (Manila:2005) p. 32

2 Paper submitted for the 2012 National Conference of the Philippine Historical Association on the theme "*The Philippines in Asia*" held on 20-22 September 2012 at the University of Iloilo, Iloilo City.

3 See articles in anthropology, archaeology and linguistics on the Chinese-Austronesians-Southeast Asian links in Go Bon Juan, *One Family since Ancient Times*. Kaisa Para Sa Kaunlaran, 2002.

detail these evidences but give a summary and cite sources, which scholars and researchers can refer to.

Early People. As a result of movements and migration in prehistoric times, our ancestors were already related to one another.⁴ They shared a common origin, thus tracing their ancestry from the same blood and racial stock. Anthropologists have cited a number of incontrovertible evidence linking the people of the Pacific and Southeast Asia with the early people of southern China.

Hemudu Excavations in Ningpo, China. The prehistoric Hemudu archaeological site in Ningpo (near Hangzhou Bay) in Zhejiang, China, excavated in 1973 gives startling revelations of the common origins of rice culture in China and Southeast Asia that dates back 7,000 years. The common rice variety, exact replicas of earthen utensils like the *palayok* (pots) and the *kalan* (stove), implements such as crude cutting knife and sculpted wood used for rice storage and processing, point to China's sophisticated rice planting culture. Dating done by grains experts established Hemudu as the earliest rice production site in the world. This rice culture is believed to have spread from China to Thailand, Vietnam, Burma, Korea, and Japan in the northeast, and Taiwan and Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, in the south. Similarities in the construction of the houses, fishing implements and marine culture strengthen evidence of the Philippines' ties with the ancient Yangtze civilization in China. It is the most significant archaeological evidence of China's direct links with Southeast Asia.⁵

Trapezoid stone adzes used to build boats in the Neolithic period have also been found in the Philippines, including those by archaeologist H. Otley Beyer. Other artifacts dug up in the Philippines like ceramics and

4 Lin Hui-Siang, "The People of the Pacific and their Relation to the Ancient People of South China" first published in Xiamen University *Journal of Sociology* 1 (Xiamen: Works of Lin Huisiang, 1981) 294-333.

5 The Hemudu site covers 40,000 square meters. Two excavations in 1973 and 1979 unearthed around 7,900 objects. Carbon dating tests on the relics from the deepest layer, which is four meters, reveal a Hemudu culture at least 7,000 years old. See Go Bon Juan's essay, "The Hemudu Cultural Influences in Prehistoric Philippines" in Teresita Ang See, *Tsinoy – the Story of the Chinese in Philippine Life*, (Manila:2005) p. 22 and Nancy Herrin, "A glimpse into the Neolithic past." *Tulay Fortnightly* 15.17 (February 4, 2003) 10.

silk products show that the silk and porcelain trade from China connected the Philippines to the Americas through Mexico.

The Philippines' unique position in tying up the China-Philippines-Americas maritime connection has been further affirmed by the Hemudu finds. If Taiwan was the natural bridge in China's ancient maritime activities to the Philippines, then the Philippines was the bridge that connected China and the Americas for the maritime silk route in the Pacific.⁶

Linguistic Traditions. Southeast Asian linguistics experts have cited the Austronesian origins of Malay languages and how it spread from China to Taiwan and to Southeast Asia. More importantly, the studies show the significant position of the Philippines as a focal point of origin in the spread of these languages. Filipino linguistics expert Teodoro A. Llamzon writes that although the location of the original Austronesian homeland has been subject of investigations by various experts from different disciplines, the ethnolinguistic evidence narrowed it down to the east coast of Southern China. Chinese experts Luo Xiang Lin and Xu Song Shi have done extensive work on the origins of the Austronesian languages to Southeastern China. Unfortunately, their work has not been extensively used by western scholars, probably due to language limitations and difficulties in interpreting classical ancient Chinese.⁷

III. PRE-HISPANIC TIES

Ancient Chinese records – dynastic annals, travel accounts, customs records and maps – document the depth and breadth of early relations between the Chinese and the Filipinos. Before there was the Philippines, Ma'I, Luzon, Mindanao, Sulu, Pangasinan, Mindoro, Cebu, Butuan, Maguindanao and other such bigger islands are invariably mentioned in these records. The first Philippine place cited in the ancient records was that of Ma'I, identified to be Ba'I in Laguna.

6 Go, Ibid.

7 Teodoro A. Llamzon. *Handbook of Philippine Language Groups*. (Ateneo press, 1978) 1 and Go, *One Family since Ancient Times* (Kaisa, 2002) 79, 108.

Ma'I in Ancient Chinese Records. A paper published by Philippine Studies discussed what Ma'I in the ancient Chinese records referred to. Vol. 186 of the *Song Dynasty Annals* described an event that happened in the tenth century, the earliest record of a place in the Philippines mentioned in Chinese history:⁸ *In the fourth year of the Kai Bao period [971 AD], a superintendent of maritime trade was set up in Guangzhou, and afterwards in Hangzhou and Mingzhou also a superintendent was appointed for all Arab, Achen, Java, Borneo, Ma-yi, and Srivijaya barbarians, whose trade passed through there, they taking away gold, silver, strings of cash, lead, tin, many-colored silk, and porcelain, and selling aromatics, rhinoceros horn and ivory, coral, amber, pearls, fine steel, sea-turtle leather, tortoise shell, carnelians and agate, carriage wheel rims, crystal, foreign cloth, ebony, sapan wood, and such things.*

The Chapter on "Champa," in Vol. 332 of *Wen Xian Tong Kao*, mentioned that "there is also the country of Ma-i, which in the seventh year of the Taiping Xing-guo period (year 982) brought valuable merchandise to the Guangdong coast."⁹ The *Song Annals* also mentioned the first trade mission to Guangzhou in 982 and the earliest tribute mission of the Kingdom of Butuan to China in 1003.

Another practice mentioned about Ma'I cremation as a burial rite. Cynthia Ongpin Valdes' article in *Treasures of Pila* described the excavation in Pila, Laguna's barrio of Pinagbayanan in September 1967, conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Leandro Locsin, that unearthed evidence of cremations in secondary burial jars and Chinese ceramics, obviously used as burial offerings, dating to the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.¹⁰

8 Go Bon Juan's paper on Ma'I gave incontrovertible evidence that Ma'I is not in Mindoro as earlier claimed but actually refers to Ba'I in Laguna. Ma-I has usually been identified with Mindoro because of the Mait people there, but recent research findings show more convincing argument that Ma-I is Ba-I (Laguna), which used to encompass Laguna and some towns of Rizal, like Morong, Tanay, and Binangonan. The Chinese usually use the sound of "m" for "b," thus, Bicol is called Mi-kut, Bataan is Miao-ta-an, so Ma-I can very well be Ba-I. Other evidence supporting this argument can be found in the article of Go Bon Juan in *Philippine Studies*, 53, 1 (2005). *Song Dynasty Annals*, vol. 186, cited in William Henry Scott and Go Bon Juan, *Filipinos in China before 1500*.

9 Ibid

10 Cynthia Ongpin Valdes. "Pila in ancient times," In *Treasures of Pila*. Laguna: Pila Museum 2000. 3-8.

The Philippines in Ancient Chinese Maps, published by Kaisa Paras Kaunlaran in 2000, contained 23 Chinese world maps, invariably titled, “Map for Observing the World”, “Complete Map of All Nations or Maps of the Islands in the Pacific Ocean.” Though mostly dated in the Ming and Qing dynasties, references used for the maps date back to the Song and Yuan periods. Major islands in the Philippines were found in all of these maps, which are indeed a significant source of reference to pre-hispanic Philippines.¹¹

These maps, as well as the extensive artifacts, porcelain wares, dynastic annals and other ancient Chinese records are indeed silent evidences of a strong and long lasting bond between the Chinese and early Filipinos.

The Selden Map of China, is an early 17th century Ming Dynasty map of China that is unique among other ancient Chinese maps in that China is not depicted as the center of the known world and the trading ports in Southeast Asia are highlighted instead. The official Oxford Bodleian Library website on the Selden Map documents its provenance. “The map came to the Library in 1659 from the estate of the London lawyer John Selden (who had died in 1654), along with a Chinese geomantic compass, a large collection of Oriental manuscripts, Greek marbles, and the famous Aztec history known as the Codex Mendoza.”¹²

Robert Batchelor, a geographer from the University of Georgia, U.S.A., was the first to recognize the uniqueness and importance of the map as he noticed shipping routes and compass bearings, previously unnoticed by researchers and scholars.¹³ The map was later shown to other China scholars – Timothy Brook, professor of Chinese in Oxford, declared it to be the most important Chinese historical document he has ever seen; Zhang

11 Go Bon Juan and Joaquin Sy. *The Philippines in Ancient Chinese Maps* (2000) 85pp.

12 Selden Map official website. (2011) Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. Last accessed 29 September 2014. <http://seldenmap.bodleian.ox.ac.uk> .

13 Batchelor, Robert. “The Selden Map Rediscovered: A Chinese Map of East Asian Shipping Routes c1619, *Imago Mundi* 65:1 (2013): 37-63.

Zhiqing, head of Special Collections at the National Library of China, said it was more important than any of the pre-modern maps in his care.¹⁴

Jiao Tianlong, chief curator of Hong Kong Maritime Museum, notes that the Selden Map “stands out as an anomaly among all the known Ming dynasty maps.”¹⁵ Compared to other maps where China is at the center and other countries are squeezed in all other directions with no concern for proportion, the Selden Map focuses on the Southern Chinese coastline in its center, with Southeast Asian countries in relatively accurate positions.

Scholars mostly agree that the map maker was from Fujian, regardless of where he was based, as the Chinese characters on the map are mostly to be read in the southern Chinese dialect rather than imperial Mandarin. Robert Batchelor has argued that evidence on the map itself strongly suggests that it was most likely made or commissioned by a Chinese trader in the Philippines.

The map reveals that of the entire Southeast Asia, the most number of names are in the Philippines at 16 names. The first seven names were all in Luzon, a relatively small area compared to the rest of the map, therefore showing the highest density of places identified. As well, a number of the 16 names read in Hokkien are unique only in the Philippines. For example, only the Chinese in the Philippines refer to Spaniards in Hokkien as *hua-lang* (化人), call Aparri *tua-kang* (大港), Intramuros as *Ong-shia* (王城), Maricaban as *ka-ban meng* (甲萬門). The names Luzon, Cebu, Maguindanao and Sulu are more easily identifiable.¹⁶

14 Brook, Timothy. *Mr Selden's Map of China*. New York Profile Books, 2013

15 Jiao, Tianlong “Mapping Ming China’s Maritime World” in *Orientations* Vol. 45 Number 4. Hong Kong: Orientations Magazine Ltd. (May 2014)

16 For a more detailed write-up about the Selden Map, refer to an upcoming paper on “The Philippines in the Selden Map 《東西洋航海圖》 and other ancient Chinese maps, records and books” by Carmela Ang See and Teresita Ang See, submitted for the 2015 *Philippine National Historical Society Journal*.

IV. SPANISH OCCUPATION

Early Chinese Books and Records. The Chinese connection to the Spanish occupation of the Philippines is evident in the very early efforts of the Spanish missionaries to learn Chinese. It is not an accident that the first Chinese book to be translated into a European language (Spanish) is *Libro Chino* or *Beng Sim Po Cam* (明心寶覽) translated by Father Juan Cobo (高母羨). The original book was compiled in 1393. It has 673 Chinese aphorisms from 110 different authors. The collection is grouped by topics into 20 chapters. It mainly serves as material for children's education and enlightenment.

Fray Dumago de Salazar's reports to King Felipe II on "The Chinese and the *Parian*," published in *The Philippine Island* by Blair & Robertson:

"Fray Juan Cobo, the Dominican regions, who, as I have said before, knows the language of the Sangleys and their writing, and who is most esteemed by them, is sending to you, Majesty, a book, one of the number brought to him from China. The book is in Chinese writing on one half of the leaf and Castilian on the other, the two corresponding to each other. It is a work worthy of your Majesty, and may it be received as such, because it is so rare a work, never seen before in the *Parian*, or outside China."

Letters of the Spanish friars to the King of Spain showed that the interest in the Philippines was born by their desire to evangelize a million barbarian souls in the country they called Cathay. It is not an accident that of the first three books printed in the Philippines, two are in Spanish and Chinese and one in Spanish and Tagalog: The first three books published in the Philippines, circa 1593, are *Doctrina Christiana en Lengua Tagala*, *Doctrina Christiana en Lengua Tsina* and *Shih-Lu – Apologia de la Verdadera Religion*. As well, as early as 1595, Father Miguel de Benavidez wrote to the Spanish King Philip II: "The Chinese take to their great and true wealth not gold nor silver, nor silk, but books, wisdoms, virtues and just government."¹⁷

17 Zaide, Gregorio F., ed. *Documentary Sources of Philippine History, Volume 1*. Manila: National Book Store, 1990.

Lim-Ah-Hong and other Uprisings. While the religious books were significant in helping to spread the Christian faith among the Chinese, other Chinese records and accounts likewise provide excellent sources of information and knowledge that provide an alternative interpretation of some parts of Philippine history. The importance of clear communication and understanding in diplomacy and foreign policy is particularly highlighted in the story of Limahong. The cultural nuances or differences that often color our perception of reality are particularly thrown to great significance as we understand the other side of the story about Limahong and his supposed uprising in 1574.

Outlawed by the Chinese emperor, Limahong sailed to the Philippines in 1574 with his 62 junks, bringing with him not just his men but women, children, and domestic animals too. His ship was loaded with other treasures like exotic furnitures, fine porcelain and other dinner wares and expensive jewelry. Due to the lack of an interpreter and due to the inherent distrust of the Spaniards against the “heathen Chinese” the Spanish authorities jumped to the conclusion that Limahong was out to invade the Philippines and take over the colony from them.

The question remains on whether Limahong would have brought women and domestic animals, jewels and fine furniture with him if his intent was a military expedition to wrest control of the Philippines from the Spaniards. Wasn't it a more plausible explanation, as found in Chinese sources, that Limahong was actually only looking for a refuge for himself and his people. Through piracy, they escaped from the cruelties and harsh taxation from the landlords who had to support the profligate lives of the Ming rulers at a time when the treasury was facing near bankruptcy. Limahong entered Manila Bay and was repulsed by Salcedo and his soldiers, forcing him to retreat to Pangasinan. The Spaniards laid a siege on their fort and blockaded their supplies forcing Limahong to escape through a canal they dug out leading to the sea.¹⁸

Reports in the *Chaozhou Zhi (Chronicles of Chaozhou)* recount how organized Limahong and his troops were. With their cannons and superior power, they could have easily overrun and defeated the Spaniards who

18 Teresita Ang See, “Limahong: Rebel, Pirate, or Folk Hero” in *Tulay Fortnightly*, February 21, 2010.

were caught by surprise. However, Limahong and his men chose to retreat because their intent was not to lay siege on Intramuros but to seek a refuge from the blockade set by the prefects of both Fujian and Guangdong upon orders of the Ming Emperor.

Other uprisings include that of P'an Ho Wu, who in 1593 led his men to mutiny and kill Governor Perez de Dasmariñas, the uprising in Calamba, Laguna in 1639 where the cruel alcalde mayor was killed due to his harsh treatment of the conscripted laborers sent to open up Calamba to plant rice; the 4,000 Chinese immigrants who helped and supported the natives of Jolo in their struggle and organized a contingent to fight the Spaniards. These uprisings eventually led to the massacre of the entire Chinese community. The one in 1603 killed 20,000 and the one in Calamba killed 33,000. These uprisings, together with many other local uprisings in the country that sparked the Philippine revolution, highlighted the fact that in the early struggle against colonial occupation, the Chinese have played a part.

Chinese and Filipino Revolutionists Mutual Support. At the end of the Spanish occupation up to early American occupation, China and the Philippines were again bound by a common aspiration for freedom. China has had a strong impact on events in the Philippines and vice-versa. What happens to China as a giant of a neighbor would inevitably impact on the Philippines and other parts of Asia. The best example would be the events in the mid-19th to early 20th century. In Asia, the Chinese and the Filipinos were among the earliest people to aspire for freedom. China at the end of the 19th century fought against the shackles of imperial rule to end the last Qing Dynasty, free itself from the imperialist control of eight foreign powers and established a Republic. Their reform and the revolutionary movements had significant impact on the Philippines. On the other hand, the reform and the revolutionary movements in the Philippines likewise inspired the Chinese revolutionaries who looked up and lauded the Filipino revolutionaries for daring to fight not just one but two white foreign colonialists.¹⁹

19 For a complete write-up of the mutual support of the Filipino revolutionists to the Chinese and vice-versa, see monograph of Go Bon Juan and Teresita Ang See. *Ethnic Chinese in the Philippine Revolution* (Kaisa: 1996).

Two quotes from China's foremost reformist, Liang Qi Chao, highlight the inspiration and encouragement the Chinese got from our Filipino revolutionaries:

*The Philippines, in evicting the Spaniards and fighting the Americans, is the vanguard in the struggle for independence in Asia. They are ahead of the yellow race in defending the citizens' rights. The victory of the Philippines will also help avenge us, the yellow race, and put fear in the hearts of the white race. Their incumbent President has relations with China (Aguinaldo's maternal grandmother is a Chinese). Among his military officers are many Chinese also. The Philippine independence is watched closely by the Chinese because its influence on China will be great. If the Philippines becomes victorious, it can help China in its bid for independence. We are interconnected to each other.*²⁰

*The Philippines, our brothers from the same continent and race, struggled with the white men twice already without losing hope in their defeats. I look towards the south [the Philippines] and go down on my hands and knees (prostrate myself -- author) to kowtow and pay my respects to them.*²¹

V. AMERICAN OCCUPATION

One significant but hitherto little mentioned exchange between China and the Philippines early during the American occupation has to do with the Philippine carabao (water buffalo). Scientific research has recently affirmed what Chinese records documented a hundred years ago – the bloodline of the hardy Philippine national animal, the carabao, is definitely Chinese. Genetic (DNA) research and molecular study conducted by Leslie Anne del Barrio of the Philippine Carabao Center in Munoz, Nueva Ecija, proved

20 *Qing-Yi Bao Compilation* Vol. VII, quoted in Zhou Nanjing, *The Philippines and the Ethnic Chinese*, (Kaisa:1993) p. 35.

21 *Ibid.* p. 37.

that the Philippine carabao is not endemic to the Philippines but descended from the maternal line of Chinese swamp buffaloes.²²

When and how the Chinese buffaloes came to be in the Philippines was explained by historian Go Bon Juan who wrote about the 10,000 water buffaloes imported from China in 1904 by the U.S. colonial government in the Philippines²³

The protracted Filipino-American civil war from 1899 to 1902 and the resultant famine decimated 90 percent of the carabao (water buffalo) population in the Philippines. To avert the “great distress” brought about by the loss of the carabaos, the U.S. colonial government decided to replenish local herds with imports from China.

Documents from China’s national archives show the Americans transacting with China for importation of 30,000 carabaos. The documents are compiled in the *Collection of Archives on the Relations between China and Southeast Asian Countries in the Qing Dynasty, Vol. II, Philippines*.

The archival collection yielded six documents on the carabao importation, two of which are in English. These are the letters of Edwin Hurd Conger, minister plenipotentiary of the United States in China, dated October 22, 1903 and November 13, 1903, to the President of the Board of Foreign Affairs of China, Prince of Ch’ing (Qing Dynasty). The other four documents are in Chinese, two of which are translations of Conger’s letters.²⁴

22 Marcelo, Khrizhie Evert. “Where the native carabaos come from” *Highlights* (September 2010). Laguna: Philippine Carabao Center.

23 “Philippine carabao is Tsinoy.” *Tulay Fortnightly* 23.14 (December 21, 2009 - January 17, 2010): Community News. Print. Go Bon Juan. “30,000 carabaos from China.” *Tulay Fortnightly* 17.1-2 (June 22, 2004): 5-6. Gems of History. Print.

24 *Collection of Archives on the Relations between China and Southeast Asian Countries in the Qing Dynasty, Vol. II, Philippines*. (Beijing: 2004).

The letters reveal that the Chinese government agreed only to supply 10,000 carabaos to help the Philippines alleviate the dire situation and allow farmers to till the land again. China did not agree to export all 30,000 carabaos requested because “it would seriously affect the means of support of the farming population” in China. The Chinese archival documents validate the famine that occurred during the Filipino-American war and mentioned disease that plagued the carabaos, explaining their mass deaths at the turn of the 20th century. In addition, the loss of the beasts may partly be due to the famine itself, which pushed hungry farmers to slaughter their own animals because the civil war prevented them from working their lands anyway. Thus, the 10,000 carabaos from China crossbred with the surviving local carabaos to become the modern day Philippine carabao studied by del Barrio recently.²⁵

Filipino-American War and the Boxer Rebellion. China’s foremost reformist Liang Qi-chao emphasized in his writings that America’s war with Spain was motivated by commerce. It was America’s strategy to gain a foothold in Asia’s market and to use the Philippines as its jumping board to penetrate the rich China market, invade its territory, and eventually conquer China.²⁶

At the end of the 19th century, while the Philippines was struggling for independence from Spain and later from the United States, China was fully occupied with putting down the Boxer Rebellion. Both events necessarily involved U.S. military troops in the Far East. The United States faced the big dilemma of whether to concentrate the troops in putting down the Boxer Rebellion or to quell the Philippine revolution. In mid-July of 1900, the United States planned to send 10,000 soldiers to China to stifle the Boxer Rebellion but the Filipino-American war intensified and

25 “Philippine carabao is Tsinoy.” *Tulay Fortnightly* 23.14 (December 21, 2009-January 17, 2010): 4. Community News. Print. Go Bon Juan. “30,000 carabaos from China.” *Tulay Fortnightly* 17.1-2 (June 22, 2004): 5-6. Gems of History.

26 Introduction. John Roger M. Taylor, *Philippine Insurrection against the United States*, Five Volumes, Eugenio Lopez Philippine History Series (Pasay City: Eugenio Lopez Foundation, 1971-73). Vol. I pp. 31-33. Also quoted in Teresita Ang See. “The Ethnic Chinese in the Filipino-American War and after” lecture delivered at the centennial of the Filipino-American War, 2000, published in Ang See, Teresita. *Chinese in the Philippines—Problems and Perspectives*, Vol. III (Kaisa: 2004) 109-121.

the U.S. was forced to retain these soldiers in the Philippines to combat the Filipino revolutionaries. With the cessation of the Boxer activities in China, other American soldiers returned from the China expedition to the Philippines and had been scattered throughout the islands. This again is a manifestation of the intertwining destinies of the Filipino and the Chinese people. Had the United States pulled out a bigger contingent of soldiers from the Philippines to be sent to China to quell the Boxer rebellion there, would the Philippine revolutionaries have succeeded in the Filipino-American war?²⁷

VI. CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS

In 2010, upon the election of the new President, Benigno Aquino III, China and the Philippines looked forward to new heights and new progress in enhancing political, socio-economic and cultural relations that begun 12 centuries ago. After all, Aquino descended from the Cojuangco (Xu) family whose forebears originated from the village of Hong Jian, in Fujian, China. Aquino's visit to China was declared "Year of Friendly Exchanges."

Current issues and concerns. Unfortunately, instead of friendly exchanges, the Aquino administration's relations with China were marked with disputes and misunderstandings as early as three months upon assumption of office of the new President. The Hong Kong hostage crisis, which happened at historic Rizal Park in September, 2010, marked the opening salvo in the increasing deterioration of relations. Other domestic factors such as the controversial and graft ridden Chinese contracts with the Philippine government signed during the past administration of former President Gloria M. Arroyo made China a less than ideal partner for further government assisted projects. Hence, instead of taking off to further heights, the relations dropped to an all time low at the height of the Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal standoff.

27 Col. William Thaddeus Sexton, *Soldier in the Philippines - a History of the Insurrection* (Washington: The Infantry Journal, 1944), pp.229- 230. Introduction. John Roger M. Taylor, *Philippine Insurrection against the United States*, Five Volumes, Eugenio Lopez Philippine History Series (Pasay City: Eugenio Lopez Foundation, 1971-73).

There are, however, ongoing efforts to amicably settle the problems and restore the hitherto friendly and positive relations, or at the very least, to continue to find diplomatic solutions and recognize that there are other grounds for cooperation while recognizing the need to peacefully settle the disputes. This matter is the subject of other published studies and papers.²⁸ The centuries old intertwining fates and destinies should be recalled and treasured as solid foundation and building blocks to cement the fissures in the relations. While disputes exist, they must not harm the overall positive relations that benefit both Filipinos and Chinese. There is much we can learn from China, which has extended its hand to help developing countries like the Philippines especially in agricultural development. While differences exist, they can be set aside or placed in the back burner while our two governments work hand in hand to improve the overall relations.

Friendly Cooperation in the Past. We should emulate our friendly collaboration and cooperation in the past. While we now squabble over the reefs, shoals and islands in the Southseas, early accounts showed how the Chinese and Filipinos helped one another during times of emergency like shipwrecks and typhoons. Consider some of these accounts:

*The Qing Dynasty emperor had issued specific instructions that Filipinos or other fishermen in neighboring countries swept by turbulent waters to Chinese shores must be well taken care of and protected. In Emperor Yong Zeng's seventh year (1729), 'strong winds swept a boat originating from Luzon to the shores of Fosan in Guangdong,' reports the Great Qing Dynasty Compendium of Events. 'The governor of Guangdong gave them food and shelter as they await the weather to improve. Subsequently, the same treatment is given to any foreign boats swept to local shores. They are given food and help in repairing their boats until they can go back home.'*²⁹

28 See for instance, "Waltzing with Goliath: Philippines' Engagement with China in Uncharted Waters" by Dr. Aileen S. Baviera, in Amitav Acharya, Li Mingjiang and Tang Shiping, *Living with China: Regional States and China through Crises and Truning Points* (Polgrave Macmillan, 2009).

29 Cited in Teresita Ang See, "Where to, RP-China Ties?" *Tulay Fortnightly*, 12, 4 (July 20, 1999)

Another entry in the book recalls that even earlier, in Emperor Xian Feng's fifth year (1740), "the Fujian prefect praised the Sulu king and gave him a reward for taking care of 25 traders from Hai Teng municipality swept away by strong winds." Likewise recorded in the *Qing Dynasty Annals*, the Sulu king had given his protection and help to Chinese traders who had met a typhoon in the Philippines also in Emperor Xian Feng's fifth year. The Sulu king sent his own boatmen to escort the traders back home to China mainland. This event was also reported in the *Xiamen Journal* and Wang Zhi Zun's report on the "Rulers in the Far-off Seas." The *Taiwan Journal* reconstructed by Xu Wun Ji also reports that "the Sulu barbarian ruler had sent many Sulu boats to accompany shipwrecked Quanzhou people back to China in the fifth year of Xian Feng."³⁰

Better Channels of Communication. We can always choose to go back to such cooperation by opening up better channels of communication. Lessons from the past, like the so called "Limahong invasion" demonstrate how miscommunication and misunderstanding can exacerbate situations where distrust, fear, suspicions already exist.

In China, we seldom hear the President or Premier speak up on foreign policy issues. In fact, often, not even the Minister of Foreign Affairs of China makes pronouncements for media or foreign audience. It is often the spokesperson of the Ministry who speaks up. It is deliberate because it gives the government leaders a chance to backstop whatever pronouncements or reactions have already been given. The language gap for example can worsen an already existing problem. For example, the Philippine side interpreted a Chinese pronouncement using the Chinese word countermeasures to mean counterattack. The Chinese side, on the other hand, interpreted as a serious threat a Palace spokesperson's admonition to be careful ("xiao xin yi dian"). The spokesperson meant only that the Chinese should be careful about what they say but Chinese leaders and the netizens considered it as a threat. Cultural nuances and differences in perceptions cannot just be ignored and must be factored in to give diplomacy a chance.³¹

30 Ibid

31 Teresita Ang See, "Lost in Translation" TsinoY Beats and Bytes column, *Tulay Fortnightly Chinese-Filipino Digest*, July 24, 2012, p. 5.

VII. CONCLUSION

At the launching of the “Year of Friendly Exchanges,” in 2012, the Chinese describe Philippines-China relations as “as close as the lips and the teeth,” and the Filipino counterpart describes it as “tied together in one umbilical cord.” Our past history has proven this to be so and much can be done to restore the good relations that our forebears established through the years.

Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* says that the greatest battle is won by not firing a single bullet but by changing the heart, convincing or persuading our so-called enemy to be on our side. China recognizes its role as the leader of third-world developing countries and has committed itself in helping these countries. However, it must take greater initiatives in enhancing people-to-people exchanges and cultural diplomacy that will build greater goodwill.

There are steps both sides can take for now: set aside the contentious issue of sovereignty and discuss platforms for cooperation; open more channels of communication like continuing dialogues with China experts; engage think tanks and policy makers to learn more about each other’s points of view and to enhance understanding of where each side is coming from. Because of the recent challenges; understand domestic politics and internal and international dynamics that influence foreign policy decisions and above all, take steps to rebuild better relations. Both China and the Philippines have great stakes and responsibilities to ensure peace and stability in the region.