

Sinophobia vs. Sinophilia in the 16th Century Iberian World

RICARDO PADRÓN*

The 1615 publication of *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas* by Matteo Ricci and Nicholas Trigault laid the foundations for the first European Sinography based upon knowledge of the Chinese language and direct, extended experience of Chinese culture. Yet that discourse on China, dominated by members of the Society of Jesus, was not the first to displace Marco Polo's antiquated Cathay with a new, more up-to-date understanding of the Middle Kingdom, but was instead heir to earlier efforts by Portuguese and Spanish writers. The incipient Sinography of Iberian letters was born in the prisons of Guangzhou, or Canton as it was then known, where hapless survivors of failed Portuguese commercial and diplomatic initiatives wrote letters recounting their experiences and the things they had come to learn. Some of these letters eventually made their way into print, bundled with collections of Jesuit letters or travel stories of various kinds. In

the meantime, knowledge about China also began to circulate in the official Portuguese historiography of Fernão Lopes da Castanheda (1552) and João de Barros (1563). Eventually we see publication, in Coimbra, of the first European book devoted entirely to China, the *Tractado em que se co[m]tam muito por este[n]so as cousas da China*, by Fray Gaspar da Cruz (1569). This text provided much of the raw material for Castilian texts on China, like the *Discurso de la navegacion que los portugueses hazen à los reinos y prouincias del Oriente, y de la noticia q[ue] se tiene de las grandezas del reino de la China*, by Bernardino de Escalante (1577) and the *Historia de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumbres, del gran reyno dela China*, by Juan González de Mendoza (1585).¹ Although these texts were highly derivative, they were also very influential, for the simple reason that Castilian was more widely read than Portuguese. The Escalante book became the major source for the material on China included on the reverse of the map of China in Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum orbis terrarum*, starting with the 1584 edition. The Mendoza book, meanwhile, became an early modern bestseller, going through more than 40 editions in fifteen years and being translated into all of Europe's principal languages. It became the single most important European source for information about China until the publication of the Ricci book, and continued to be consulted well afterwards.²

Over the course of the century, this Iberian discourse on China developed a decidedly Sinophilic tropology for describing the Middle Kingdom.

De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Iesu, by Matteo Ricci and Nicholas Trigault (1615).

* Ph.D. in Romance Languages from Harvard University, he is Associate Professor of Spanish at the University of Virginia, in the United States. His first book, *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain* (Chicago, 2004) examines the cartographic imagination in Spain's 16th century encounter with America. His current work turns to Spain's encounter with the Asia-Pacific during the 16th and early 17th centuries.

Doutorado em Línguas Românicas pela Universidade de Harvard, é Professor Associado de Espanhol na Universidade de Virginia, EUA. O seu primeiro livro, *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain* (Chicago, 2004), examina a imaginação cartográfica no encontro da Espanha do século XVI com a América. Actualmente, os seus trabalhos centram-se na ligação da Espanha com a região Ásia-Pacífico durante o século XVI e início do século XVII.

HISTORIOGRAFIA

According to this discourse, China was an enormous country whose inhabitants were beyond number. Its robust economy answered to the necessities of life in abundance, thanks in large measure to the wisdom of its governing class, which was chosen through a meritocratic system of training and examination, and which operated with a minimum of corruption. It was said that China was free of unemployment, of poverty, and of internal conflict. All of its arable land was under cultivation. Its landscape was dotted with many large cities, which were well planned and well defended. The Portuguese often remarked, for example, that Chinese city streets were impressively straight. Only in matters of religion could the Middle Kingdom be found at fault, but while its false religion was worthy of censure, everything else elicited praise and admiration.³ Gónzález de Mendoza brings such *encomia* to its culmination, writing, ‘This kingdom deserves to be called great, and, even when one compares it with the best that we know in the world, it can be said to be one of the its best and

Tractado em que se co[m]tam muito por este[n]so as cousas da China, by Fray Gaspar da Cruz, 1569.



principal kingdoms’ (1944, p. 33; translation my own). So complimentary is he of China and the Chinese that it is possible to interpret his *Historia del gran reino de la China* as a piece of utopian writing in line with the social and political thinking of Juan Luis Vives and other Spanish humanists (Hsu, 2010).

Writers like Mendoza, however, had to contend with an alternative European vision of China, one that was just as Sinophobic as theirs was Sinophilic. This Sinophobic discourse can be identified in a smattering of manuscript sources, including letters from Portuguese captives and the writings of Alonso Sánchez, a Spanish Jesuit.⁴ Scant, less prominent, and less influential than printed examples of Sinophilia, they become easy to ignore in scholarly accounts that tend to portray the development of European Sinography as a linear account of the substitution of Marco Polo’s Cathay with first Iberian and then Jesuit Sinophilia.⁵ Nevertheless, the emergence of that very flattering image of China cannot be understood without attending to its Sinophobic double. The two discourses arose out of different experiences of the Middle Kingdom, and served different rhetorical purposes, but they existed in a dialectical relationship with each other. This paper provides a modest glimpse into the workings of that dialectic.

At the heart of Iberian Sinophobia lies the assertion that China’s system of government constituted a fearsome tyranny that lorded over a frightened populace through the exercise of a particularly draconian brand of justice. This assertion appears in one of the first 16th-century eyewitness accounts of China, by the Portuguese captive Cristóvão de Vieira. Vieira had been part of the embassy sent from Malacca to the emperor of China in 1517, only to bungle the diplomatic etiquette of the court in Beijing. At around the same time, Portuguese traders under Simão de Andrade ‘behaved in so outrageous and high-handed a way’ at the port of Canton, Charles Boxer writes, as to give credence to Malaccan claims about their rapacity. The Chinese responded by forcibly expelling Portuguese ships from Chinese waters, banning all trade with the *folangji*, as the Portuguese were known, as of 1522, and consigning the members of the embassy to

Historia de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumbres, del gran reino dela China, by Juan González de Mendoza, 1585.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

HISTORIA
DE LAS COSAS
MAS NOTABLES, ^a
RITOS, Y COSTUMBRES,

Del gran Reyno dela China, sabidas assi por los libros
delos mesmos Chinas, como por relacion de Religio-
sos, y otras personas, que an estado en el dicho Reyno.

HECHAY ORDENADA POREL MVT R. P. MAESTRO
Fr. Ioan Gonzalez de Mendoza dela Orden de S. Agustín, y peniten-
ciario Apoptolico a quien la Magestad Catholica embio con su real
carta y otras cosas para el Rey de aquel Reyno el año. 1580.

AL ILLVSTRISSIMO S. FERNANDO
de Vega y Fonseca del consejo de su Magestad y su
presidente en el Real delas Indias.

Con vn Itinerario del nuevo Mundo.



Con Priuilegio y Licencia de su Santidad.

En Roma, a costa de Bartholome Grassi. 1585
en la Stampa de Vincençio Accolti.

Portada de la edición original de esta obra.

Portada de la «Historia... del gran Reyno de la China», Juan González de Mendoza. Roma. 1585. Primera edición

HISTORIOGRAFIA



prison, torture, and in some cases, execution. For the next 30-plus years, the Portuguese would ply the waters of the South China Sea as pirates and smugglers, trading illicitly and hoping to evade the harsh justice that could follow apprehension by the authorities.

At some point during the 1520s or early 1530s, Vieira wrote a letter from his prison in Canton recounting the travails of the Pires embassy and other Portuguese ventures in the South China Sea.⁶ The letter concludes with a brief description of China and the Chinese that acknowledges the great size and wealth of the country, but belittles various aspects of its culture and society. Most importantly, the letter insists that the ruling mandarins maintain control and extract inordinate amounts of tribute by terrifying the population through the widespread and indiscriminate application of brutal juridical punishments (1989, pp. 25-26). Since mandarins were only allowed to rule in provinces other than their place of origin, Vieira argues, they did not care for the people they governed, and thought only of how they could use their office to enrich themselves. As a result, 'the people are worse treated by these mandarins than is the devil in hell' (D'Intino 1989, p. 25; Ferguson 1902, p. 124).⁷ But the brutality of the mandarins, Vieira also argues, creates an opportunity for Portugal: the Chinese are so embittered at their oppression that they would readily rise up in support of a Portuguese attempt to take Canton by military means (1989, p. 36).⁸ Vieira thus processes the personal bitterness of his own captivity into contempt for his captors, and refashions their power as a strategic vulnerability that lays them bare to conquest and, thereby, vengeance.

Another letter attributed to another captive does much the same thing. Amaro Pereira formed part of a Portuguese trading venture that left Siam in two Chinese junks during the year 1549, and headed for the south coast of China, only to fall into the hands of forces commanded by the viceroy of Fujian and Zhejiang, who was making a concerted effort to suppress illicit trade and piracy along his shores. The Portuguese traders were escorted to a prison in Guangxi, where Pereira spent the next fourteen years of his life. His account of what happened, and the

vision of China he formed along the way, has come down to us in two letters, one of them written by a Portuguese Jesuit living in Goa, Baltazar Gago, dated 10 December 1562, presumably based on conversations with the liberated Pereira, and directed to his fellow Jesuits in Portugal.⁹ Like the earlier Vieira letter, the Galgo-Pereira account processes the bitter experience of captivity into a contemptuous vision of Chinese culture that emphasises the injustice of its governing structures, and an account of China's military vulnerability advanced as part of an argument in favor of military action. The Chinese will eat anything, we read, no matter how base or filthy, and they are all sodomites who will never be converted to Christianity (D'Intino 1989, p. 95). The cruelty of the juridical punishments used by the governing class is beyond description, we also read, and the only justice in the land is the caprice of the rapacious mandarins (1989, p. 91). But their injustice, once again, represents an opportunity for the Portuguese:

This kingdom has no manner of defence against whomever would want to overthrow it, for its very inhabitants would hand the country over, and provide the ways and means by which it could be taken, thanks to the many robberies and tyrannies that every hour are meted upon them by those who rule and govern. It would be necessary only to set the prisoners free in order to lay waste to Canton. (Translation my own).¹⁰

Clearly, the Galgo-Pereira letter reiterates the same general position we saw in the Vieira document, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that this similarity was due to some familiarity with the earlier text on the part of either Pereira or Gago. After all, we know that the Vieira letter circulated in manuscript form, and was used as a source by João de Barros, Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, and Richard Hakluyt (Oliveira 2003, p. 440). In any case, however, it is the differences that matter more than the overall similarity. The Galgo-Pereira letter does not just reiterate a discourse of Sinophobia that has sprung fully formed from the head of Cristóvão de Vieira: it develops that discourse in significant directions. For our purposes, the most significant enhancement is the introduction of the term 'tyranny,' a word entirely absent from the letters of Vieira and another early letter writer, Vasco Calvo. By referring to the mandarins as tyrants, the document does not just portray them as cruel, but

suggests that their rule is illegitimate. By the same token, their cruelty does not just present a strategic opportunity for Portugal: it also hints at a moral and legal justification for Portuguese military conquest. Finally, the language of 'tyranny' characterises China's government, not as a utopian ideal to be emulated, but as its opposite, a veritable dystopia, as D'Intino suggests (1989, p. 87).

But just as the case of Amaro Pereira provides this development in the discourse of Sinophobia, so it also provides at least two examples of how the discourse of Sinophilia could be defined against it. Pereira was also interviewed by another Jesuit, Manuel Teixeira, who has left us three letters about China, written from Macao and Canton in 1563, 1564, and 1565, but drawing heavily upon the captive's knowledge of the Middle Kingdom (Oliveira, 2003, p. 648). As Roque de Oliveira explains, there are details about Chinese geography and culture that coincide with what we find in the Galgo-Pereira letter, and that therefore seem to derive from Pereira himself, but there is no mention of Chinese cruelty, much less tyranny (Oliveira, 2003, pp. 657-58). On the contrary, China appears in the Teixeira-Pereira documents as an admirably well-governed polity ripe for Christianisation. One of them actually describes China as a 'peaceful country as obedient and subject to and fearful of its King' as a 'well-ordered [Jesuit?] College' is obedient of its Superior (Oliveira, 2003, p. 656; translation mine). According to Roque de Oliveira, these documents provide a perfect example of how the epistolary practice of the Society of Jesus worked to 'sweeten the primary source material' in the service of its strategic objectives (Oliveira, 2003, p. 647). While Galgo was a participant in the Japan mission who had no investment in the society's project in China, Teixeira was a founding member of the China mission, responsible for establishing the Jesuit house in Macao (Oliveira, 2003, pp. 647-48). His purposes were better served by a rose-colored vision of China's potential as a mission territory than by dark accounts of Chinese tyranny and inveterate sinfulness.

Another example related to the Amaro Pereira case involves one of his partners in captivity, Galiote Pereira. Galiote spent less time in Chinese prisons than did Amaro, and seems to have come away impressed with the fair handling of his case by Chinese authorities. He became the author of a treatise on China that may

very well have been written at the urging of the Jesuits in Goa, and even perhaps revised by them (Oliveira, 2003, p. 672). The Goa Jesuits sent Galiote's text to their superiors in Europe, who translated it into Italian and printed it in a 1563 collection of Jesuit letters. During the next decade, it was printed in an English translation, and eventually made its way into Richard Hakluyt's collection of travel literature. It served as a principle source for the work of Gaspar da Cruz, and for González de Mendoza's *Historia del gran reino de la China*.

At the heart of Iberian Sinophobia lies the assertion that China's system of government constituted a fearsome tyranny that lorded over a frightened populace through the exercise of a particularly draconian brand of justice.

As such, Pereira's *Tratado da China* (ca. 1552) was a key contributor to the on-going development of the discourse of Sinophilia. Galiote praises China for the size and elegance of its cities, the speed and security of its transportation and communications networks, the manners and courtesy of its elites, the effectiveness of its charitable institutions, and much else besides. He claims it is 'the best governed land in all the world' (Pereira, 1989, p. 16). Its system of justice, he argues, is better than that of any European kingdom. Interrogations are done publically, so that there can be no false testimony. The judges demonstrate remarkable patience and care, even with foreigners who do not know their language and customs. The costs of imprisonment are born by the government, not by the prisoners themselves. And so forth. 'These men,' Galiote writes, 'are singular in the exercise of justice, even more so than were the Romans or any other people' (Pereira, 1989, p. 28).

HISTORIOGRAPHY

HISTORIOGRAFIA

HISTORIOGRAPHY



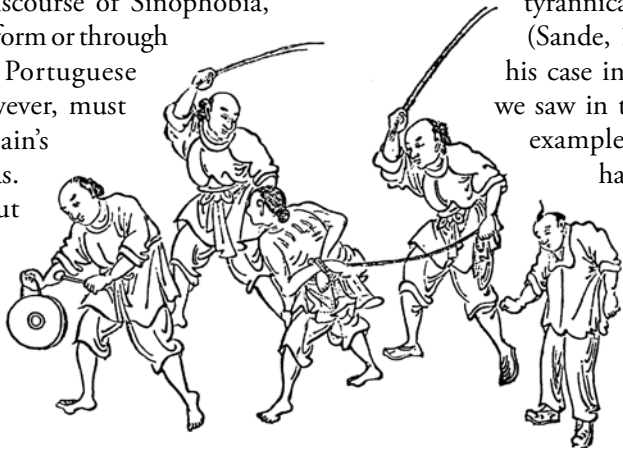
“The Punishment of the Bastinado”, from William Alexander, *The Costume of China Illustrated in Forty-Eight Coloured Engravings*. London: William Miller, 1805.

Ironically, however, Galiote’s treatise also provided the European reading public with a graphic account of one of China’s juridical punishments, the cane whipping that would later become known as the *bastinado*:
The whips used by these people are bamboo rods split down the middle, specifically fashioned for this purpose. They do not sharpen them, but leave them rounded, and they strike us on the thighs. They lower the person to be whipped to the ground, and they

raise the rod with both hands, and they deal such great blows that anyone watching will be frightened by their cruelty. Ten blows draw a great deal of blood, and if there are twenty or thirty, they leave the thighs torn to pieces, and if fifty or sixty, a man will be a long time convalescing, and if a hundred, then there is no cure known to man, and one dies from it. These blows are dealt to those who do not have anything with which to pay the executioner. (Pereira, 1989, p. 27)

According to Jonathan Spence, Galiote Pereira’s description ‘of the effects of a heavy split bamboo on naked human flesh ... [was] so terrifyingly immediate that ... [it] became a fundamental source for later depictions of the Chinese capacity for cruelty, introducing a permanent new element into the Western view of China’ (Spence, 1999, p. 21). Embedded in Galiote’s overwhelmingly Sinophilic account of Chinese justice we find this startling piece of Sinophobic imagery, along with other details familiar from Amaro Pereira, like revulsion at the Chinese diet and the claim that sodomy is widely practiced (Pereira, 1989, p. 26). No attempt is made to reconcile these details with the overall argument. And most importantly, no attempt is made to resolve the contradiction between the positive claims made about Chinese justice, and the negative emotional import of Galiote’s description of the *bastinado*. Rather than purge itself of its Sinophobic other, the Sinophilic discourse of the Galiote treatise has served as a discursive Trojan horse by which an image of Chinese cruelty, and perhaps even tyranny, has made its way into print.
The lines would become more clearly drawn over the course of the 1570s and 1580s, after the establishment of a Spanish colony in the Philippine Islands. Throughout these two decades, many a Spaniard in Manila, including several of the colony’s governors and its first and most influential bishop, thought that the destiny of their struggling island outpost was to serve as a base of operations for conquests on the mainland. The Philippines were to be, for the conquest of China, what the islands of the Caribbean had been for the conquest of Mexico. Their hopes were intertwined with an image of China that emphasised Sinophobic themes of mandarin oppression, even tyranny, and Chinese military vulnerability. Some of this certainly stemmed from contact with the existing discourse of Sinophobia, encountered either in written form or through personal contact with the Portuguese themselves. Some of it, however, must have also stemmed from Spain’s experience with the Americas. Manel Ollé has pointed out that the expectation of easy conquest with relatively small numbers so in evidence in extant plans

for the invasion of China, may have drawn upon the examples of Cortés and Pizarro, who had conquered so much with so few (Ollé, 2002, p. 43). But they may have also drawn upon accounts of the Aztecs and Incas that had emerged from reflection upon the conquest and its justification. Sinophobic accounts of Chinese tyranny and vulnerability, in other words, could have merged in ways that we do not yet understand with developing discourses about Aztec or Inca tyranny.¹¹
One of the earliest invasion proposals proposed that China could be conquered with a force of between 4,000 and 6,000 men, drawn from Mexico and Peru. This was what Philippine Governor Francisco de Sande proposed to King Philip II in a letter of 1576. Although some have characterised his plan as an eccentric individual rant, Manel Ollé has demonstrated that the proposal enjoyed the support of other members of Manila’s governing class, both secular and ecclesiastical (Ollé, 2002, pp. 79-80). In making the case for military action, Sande tries to dispel the implications of the by-then popular Sinophilic account of China, which made the Middle Kingdom out to be too large, populous, sophisticated, wealthy, and powerful to fall. Sande instead generates contempt for the Chinese and their culture, claiming that the people are by nature lazy and cowardly, that they have no arts and sciences beyond the knowledge of letters, that the kingdom is full of thieves, that they use neither silver or gold coinage, and much else besides.¹² Most importantly, he claims that China is militarily vulnerable, thanks to the poverty of its weapons and the cruelty of its rulers, which has set the population against them. That cruelty constitutes a form of tyranny, Sande argues, and that tyranny serves as justification for military action. ‘War against the Chinese nation,’ he writes, ‘is most just, for it will liberate a miserable people,’ and ‘those who judge and rule on behalf of the King perform tyrannical acts never before heard of’ (Sande, 1576). In short, Sande makes his case in terms quite similar to those we saw in the Vieira and Amaro Pereira examples, but while the Portuguese had only proposed the conquest of a single strategic port city, following the practice of the *Estado da Índia*, Sande proposed the conquest of an entire territory.



HISTORIOGRAFIA

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Sande’s letter triggered a response from one Bernardino de Escalante, a secular priest with ties to the court of Philip II (Oliveira, 2003, p. 819). In 1577, Escalante published his *Discurso de la navegación que los portugueses hacen a los reinos y provincias del Oriente y de la noticia que se tiene del reino de la China*, a short treatise that drew heavily on the earlier but largely unknown work of Gaspar da Cruz, as well as other Portuguese authors.¹³ The text makes two major points. First, it intervenes in the on-going boundary dispute between the crowns of Portugal and Castile regarding the proper execution of the treaties of Tordesillas (1494) and Zaragoza (1529), which divided the world between the two kingdoms. Escalante argues that China is so far east that it actually lies in the westernmost part of the Castilian demarcation, and that it is in fact much easier to reach by way of the Pacific, rather than the Indian, Ocean, along the Spanish route rather than the Portuguese one. Second, and more germane to the discussion at hand, Escalante’s treatise argues that Spain must engage China through diplomacy rather than military action. Against Sande and other hawks, Escalante claims that the Chinese put the same care and skill into the defence of their kingdom that they put into the administration of justice. China thus enjoys both orderly government and a strong military establishment. Escalante even cites a letter by the governor general of Guatemala claiming that the emperor of China can field a force 300,000 strong (Escalante, 2009, pp. 91-92).

Nevertheless, because he draws on Gaspar da Cruz, who in turn draws on Galiote Pereira, Escalante’s treatise testifies to the brutality of Chinese juridical punishments, and mentions the prevalence of sodomy. According to Escalante:

The whippings they give are exceedingly cruel. They administer them to the thighs, with the victim turned face down, with their hands tied behind their backs with reeds as wide as a hand ... [the blows] are always given by two executioners, the one on one leg, and the second on the other leg, and they whip which such force and skill that after two blows no one can remain standing, and upon receiving 50 or 60 blows, many men die ... The judges themselves watch the whole time that the blows are administered, eating and drinking and entertaining themselves without suffering any melancholy. (Escalante, 2009, pp. 80-81).

The reader is left to infer that none of this is incompatible with the image painted elsewhere in the text of those same judges as conscientious and rational administrators of the Emperor’s justice. No mention is made of any abuse of power, or of any fear or resentment on the part of a supposedly oppressed populace. The discourse of Sinophilia continues to contain within it the imagery basic to Sinophobia, without acknowledging any contradiction or seeing any need to account for it.

Hence the discursive context for the writing of one of the most virulent Sinophobes, Alonso Sánchez, a Castilian Jesuit who had arrived in Manila from Mexico in 1581 and became so vocal a member of Manila’s war faction that he was chosen as its envoy to the court of Philip II, where he arrived in 1588. In this way, Sánchez was the black sheep among the black-clad Jesuits, who were eager to discourage any sort of military action against China, since that would certainly put their fledgling mission there into jeopardy. The Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Claudio Acquaviva, even went so far as to have Sánchez intercepted in Mexico while on his way from the Philippines to Spain to present the invasion proposal of the Manila hawks before the Hapsburg monarch. The Jesuit was forbidden to speak to the king about military schemes, so he presented his arguments in written form exclusively, as a brief description of China and the Chinese designed to accompany the memorial from Manila.

This ‘Relación de las cosas particulares de la China’ (1588) forms part of a small corpus of writings about China that also includes two accounts of trips he made to that country shortly after arriving in the Philippines. The first trip, from March of 1582 to March of 1583, took him to southeastern China as a diplomatic envoy from the governor of the Philippines, Gonzalo Ronquillo de Peñalosa. He was given two objectives, to present the Chinese authorities with a petition from the governor, seeking permission to establish on China’s shores a Castilian trading post analogous to Portuguese Macao, and to elicit an oath of allegiance from the Portuguese in Macao to the Hapsburg monarch Philip II, who had just been proclaimed King Philip I of Portugal after the succession crisis triggered by the untimely death of the young King Sebastião I. The second trip, from late 1583 until June 1585, took Sánchez back to Macao in continued



Luis de Barbuda, *Chinae, olim Sinarum regionis, nova descriptio*. From Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum orbis terrarum*, Antwerp, 1584.

pursuit of commercial opportunities for the Spanish Philippines.¹⁴ We have copies of the priest’s accounts of both trips, dated 1583 and 1584 respectively. Here I deal exclusively with the 1583 ‘Relación breve de la jornada del Padre Alonso Sánchez de la Compañía de Jesús,’ where Sánchez lays out his vision of China and of Castilian prospects there.¹⁵

The text presents us with a traveller beleaguered by an insuperable language barrier, bewildered by alien cultural norms, and beset by fear of punishment and even death. We know from its account of the Jesuit’s initial arrival in China that things are unlikely to go well. The coast guard intercepts Sanchez’s ship, and takes his party into custody as foreigners caught making an illegal entry into China. Sánchez presents a letter of introduction that has been translated into Mandarin

by a Chinese merchant living in Manila, and has little hope of effectively explaining himself beyond what it says in the letter. The group’s interpreter, a Bengali with only a smattering of Chinese, proves inadequate to the task, and the Europeans are left guessing at their status and possible fate, uncertain as to whether they are captives or guests of the Chinese authorities. Eventually, Sánchez and some of his companions are taken on a two-month odyssey through south-eastern China, ending in Macao, without any clear understanding of where they are, why they are there, how they are being perceived, or what their destiny would be. The text complains:

One of us, with no translator, and no experience of either their customs or their ways, of their ceremonies, habits, laws or sects, without

HISTORIOGRAFIA

knowledge of what is being said to him, or where he is being taken, or when he is being made fun of, or when he is being fooled, has no chance but to appear in their estimation as a wild country beast. To enter that country with only half a babbling tongue is to give them material for farce, and to allow them to mock, not only one’s person, but what is worse, God and the Gospel. (Sánchez, 1583)

In China, Sánchez finds himself among a people just as assured of their own superiority over Europeans as Europeans are of their own superiority over everyone else. The tables are turned on the usual Castilian experience of encounter with non-Europeans, and Sánchez finds himself bewildered, disoriented, frustrated, suspicious, and resentful.

He is also afraid. Although his letter of introduction from the governor of the Philippines seems to have won him treatment as a diplomat of sorts, fear of imprisonment, punishment, and death never leaves him. Sánchez reports that he was at first reluctant to kowtow to mandarins, because ‘such reverence was owed only to God,’ but once he found himself far from his ship and its crew, entirely at the mercy of an angry official, he was quick to kowtow, for ‘it was no longer appropriate to dilly-dally about kneeling or about bringing our foreheads to the floor, as they forced us do by threatening us with their unsheathed swords’ (Sánchez, 1583). Even late in the trip, despite the banquets and courtesy afforded him by many a Mandarin, he feels afraid as he is jostled through the streets of a crowded city, not knowing whether he is being taken to an audience with its leader or to his own execution. His deep sense of disorientation, and his inability to read Chinese, seem to keep fear alive. When, in Canton, his party runs into Portuguese merchants, Sánchez is absolutely delighted. His sojourn through China has been so bad, that even the Portuguese look good. At the heart of his fear is awareness of the *bastinado*. He claims to have seen men whipped, to have intervened on behalf of one of the hapless victims, and to have been constantly afraid he would have to endure it himself. Upon leaving China, he writes, he understood better the sufferings of the martyrs of old, the ‘fears and terrors and everything involving judges and executioners and whippings and death in those momentous times’ (Sánchez, 1583). China has become for him a new Rome, but not as



Frontispiece of Bernardino de Escalante's *Discurso de la navegación que los portugueses hacen a los reinos y provincias del Oriente y de la noticia que se tiene del reino de la China*, 1577.

the exemplar of justice that it was for Galiote Pereira. It is instead the Rome of Domitian or Diocletian, or any of the emperors renowned for making martyrs of Christians like Alonso Sánchez through cruel and exacting punishment.

In this vision of China, the *bastinado* and the terror it inspires are not one reality among many in a balanced assessment of China and the Chinese: they are its central reality. Like the practice of human sacrifice in Spanish accounts of the Aztecs, the *bastinado* becomes the heart of darkness beating beneath the surface of Chinese civility. Signs of that civility thereby become mere masks obscuring the realities of weakness, effeminacy, and even tyranny. We see, for example, that Sánchez marvels at the large number of sizable vessels that make up the Chinese coast guard, and

praises the ships for their astonishing cleanliness. But he also notes that the Chinese junks are ‘delicate and slender,’ suggesting that they are all effeminate show, rather than indications of manly prowess (Sánchez, 1583). He does something similar with the army and the cities. The army, he admits, is as large as they say it is, but the Chinese soldier is quite pusillanimous. He admits, too, that the principal avenues of Chinese cities are indeed admirably straight, but remarks that the side streets are dark and twisted, even labyrinthine (Sánchez, 1583).

Nowhere, however, is the tendency to organise Chinese realities as a set of seductive appearances and sordid realities more in evidence than in the 1588 *relación* prepared for Philip II. The document is written in full appreciation of the influence enjoyed by the Sinophilic image of China. It begins by alluding to the many accounts of China that were currently circulating in manuscript and in print, and proceeds to disqualify them by questioning the qualifications of their authors, who either never visited China (Escalante, González de Mendoza) or were there as captives, and did not see much (Galiote Pereira, et. al.) (Sánchez, 1588). Against his rivals Sánchez advances his own authority as an eye witness, who ‘went to China twice and saw as much as anyone else, and some say more’ and who could, if he had the time and occasion, write a ‘very long book’ about the country (Sánchez, 1588). In this way, he presents his brief notes about China as an authoritative *précis* of a larger body of knowledge.

Sánchez does not precisely nay-say the Sinophiles, but rather suggests that they never get beyond surface appearances. The Chinese have printed books, but ‘they are all made from poor quality paper, and are poorly bound’ (Sánchez, 1588). The homes of the mandarins and the royal audiences are ‘reasonable,’ but they are mostly of adobe (‘tapiería’), and ‘with poor foundations’ (Sánchez, 1588). Although there are several walled cities, ‘from one to the next, and along the rivers and coasts, everything is villages and hamlets, inns and taverns ... all of it seething with anthills of people’ (Sánchez, 1588). The people are indeed numerous, but they are also ‘noisy, greedy, shameless, dishonest, thievish, and subtle in buying, selling, and trickery. They know not friendship nor fidelity, nor kindness toward strangers or even among themselves’ (Sánchez, 1588). The men are well-dressed, but they ‘Spend as much [time] as a woman over here in washing and

HISTORIOGRAPHY

combing themselves every morning’ (Sánchez, 1588). ‘The government of China,’ Sánchez admits, ‘is praised by everyone,’ but when the people remove their fine clothes, their bodies reveal ‘great scars, bruises, and wounds, as if they had been struck with large, hot iron plates.’ Beneath the clothing, that privileged marker distinguishing the civilised from the savage, we find the physical traces of Chinese cruelty, the reality of mandarin tyranny.

Unfortunately for Sánchez and his war faction, this attempt to articulate the tropes of Sinophobia and Sinophilia as a matter of sordid realities and splendid, but superficial, appearances, fell on deaf ears. Philip II was preoccupied with the enterprise of England, and had no real time for an ‘empresa de China,’ and the sad fate of his Invincible Armada would do nothing, it is safe to say, to warm him to new and exotic plans to invade kingdoms even larger and more distant than that of Elizabeth I. The Council of Indies, meanwhile, had already come to see China as too big and too powerful to be subjected by military means (Ollé, 2002, p. 83).

By then, moreover, the discourse of Sinophilia had finally digested the *bastinado*. Unlike Galiote Pereira or Bernardino de Escalante, Juan González de Mendoza did not leave accounts of cruel punishments unreconciled with his utopian vision of Chinese government. In his chapter on Chinese justice, González de Mendoza admits to the cruelty of the *bastinado*, but only in the context of describing the system of inspection that regulated the operation of the justice system. According to the friar, the whippings were only administered to those who truly deserved it, and whose crimes had been discovered by a juridical system that was both insightful and reasonable. ‘And the surety that the good will be rewarded and the wicked rigorously punished,’ Mendoza writes, ‘is the reason that this great kingdom is among the best governed and reigned throughout the world known to us’ (González de Mendoza, 2009, p. 192). Far from figuring as the tyrannical kernel of a kingdom whose civility was but a costume or disguise, the *bastinado* figures in Mendoza as the instrument of judges whose wisdom, prudence, and effectives make China a paradigm of good government. Mendoza’s Middle Kingdom, unlike the dystopian China of Cristóvão Vieira, Amaro Pereira, or Alonso Sánchez, offered nothing to fear. **RC**

HISTORIOGRAFIA

HISTORIOGRAPHY

NOTES

- 1

The date given is for the princeps, published in Rome. The second edition, published the following year in Madrid, contains significant additions and is considered the definitive version.
- 2

For more on the development of European knowledge of China during the 16th century, see Lach, 1965 and Oliveira, 2003.
- 3

This outline of the tropology of Iberian Sinophilia is drawn from D’Intino, 1989 and Ollé, 2000.
- 4

The Portuguese texts can be found in D’Intino, 1989. The Sánchez texts are available on the website of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. See Folch Fornesa et al., 2006.
- 5

A notable exception can be found in the work of Manel Ollé, who has studied very closely the figure of Alonso Sánchez, one of the principal proponents of 16th century European Sinophobia. He understands the discourse of Sinophobia as a component of the militaristic rhetoric of those who advocated an invasion of China, noting that Sinophobic virulence tends to disappear when knowledge of China passes from the ‘persuasive’ register of the manuscript sources into the ‘literary’ and ‘cognitive’ registers of history (Ollé, 2000, pp. 20-23, 73-74). Although Ollé’s work is invaluable to anyone interested in Sánchez, Iberian accounts of China, or 16th century European Sinophobia, I believe his understanding of the relationship between the Sinophobic manuscripts and the largely Sinophilic print sources depends on a false dichotomy between the persuasive and the literary/cognitive. The print sources, authored by ecclesiastics interested in advocating a peaceful, evangelical approach to China, were just as ‘persuasive’ as the manuscript sources.
- 6

For the debates surrounding the circumstances and date of its composition, as well as its intended recipient, see Oliveira (p. 438 n. 5). For an account of Portuguese relations with China during the first half of the 16th century, see Ferguson, 1902, pp. 1-56.
- 7

In this case, I take the English from an available translation, but provide a reference to the most authoritative edition of the Portuguese original. English translations elsewhere are my own.
- 8

Another early letter, by Vasco Calvo, is almost entirely given over to a potential invasion plan. Calvo, however, emphasises the poor equipment and general effeminacy of Chinese soldiers rather than the potential support of the people (D’Intino 1989, pp. 39-43).
- 9

I draw all these details from D’Intino, 1989, p. 87). See also Roque de Oliveira, 2003, pp. 647-654.
- 10

Este reino não tem nhã maneira de defensão se ouver quem os bote porque os proprios moradores an de entregar a terra e dar modo e maneira com que ste tome pellas muitas tiranias e roubos que cada hora lhe fazé os que regem e guovernão’ que nã fosse masi que soltar os presos, diz que bastão para asolar Cantão. (D’Intino, 1989, p. 94)
- 11

See, for example, Castro-Klarén, 2011.
- 12

I draw on the transcription of the archival original of Sande’s 1576 letter available on the website of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra.
- 13

The Castilian original does not seem to have circulated very broadly, but it left its mark nevertheless through an English translation and through its use by Ortelius in the description of China that accompanied the map of the country incorporated into all editions of the Theatrum orbis terrarum, starting with that of 1584.
- 14

For accounts of both trips derived primarily from Sánchez’s own accounts, see Costa, 1967, pp. 38-57.
- 15

I cite from the online transcription available on the website of the Universitat Pompeu Fabreu. Translations to English are my own. The 1584 relación deals primarily with the status of the Jesuit establishment in Macao, and is therefore not germane to the argument here.

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