

Alvarez, José. "Father Alvarez to the Father Provincial, Toa-tiu-tiâ, October, 1895." *Correo Sino-annamita* 29 (1895): 25-58. English translation by Patrick Stein. Edited by Douglas Fix.

Most esteemed Father:

Having arrived at my destination, I believe myself obliged to inform You, who will experience great satisfaction in knowing that I find myself in Tamsuí, enjoying perfect health.

I left Father Arranz in Emuy, recovering from his grave illness. A servant left the same place on the 19th of August.¹ There I also left my traveling companion F. Gallo, who they are thinking of sending to Aupoa in the company of F. Mariano Jimeno, with the goal that he go about learning the language until he is able to go to the South of Formosa, where they have not dared to send him [directly] out of fear of the war sustained by the Japanese.²

According to the news of the Chinese, confirmed by a Macanese Catholic employed in the court of the Japanese Viceroy, the Japanese are already lords of more than half of the Island, and win more territory every day. As things are going, it is to be expected that they will be in peaceful possession of the whole island before two months are out. What is not in doubt, because we are seeing it ourselves, is that they are daily reinforcing their troops, making them go from the disembarkation point onwards over land and by foot, in order to accustom them to the fatigue of war.

Over here everything is very peaceful, and the Japanese behave well towards us. We have Japanese passports in order to be able to go everywhere freely without any impediment. Among the soldiers there are already some 300 Catholics, and it is indubitable that [this number] will increase every day, as there are already many Japanese in Tamsui with open and well-stocked shops, and they also already have set up those offices which serve to cover the most peremptory necessities of social life, such as tailors, cobblers, etc., ready and able to imitate Europe[-an style], where one can provide oneself sufficiently with whatever one desires, something impossible before, as said professions were unknown in this [Westernized] form among the Chinese.

I have seen quite a few Japanese and some have come to our house, and they appear to me to be men who know their own dignity, and in their outer comportment and urbane manners they leave nothing to be desired.

¹ This latter sentence is transposed between the two clauses of the previous sentence in the original Spanish. I suspect a misprint; perhaps "a servant" [*un servidor*] should be "your servant" [*su servidor*], in which case Alvarez means to say that he himself left Xiamen on the 19th of August. If this is true then the contents of the letter describe his first two months' experiences on Taiwan.

² Aupoa refers to Houban in Zhangzhou (漳州市後坂社區), which had been the site of Dominican preaching since the early 17th century. A Catholic church was built there by the Dominicans after European missionary activity was legalized following the 1844 Treaty of Whampoa. See Francis K. H. So, Beatrice K. F. Leung, and Ellen Mary Mylod, *The Catholic Church in Taiwan: Birth, Growth and Development* (Springer, 2017): 28.

At the moment I am studying the Chinese language with the Vicar; with the help of God, and studying on our part, we are continuing down this path. We are not able to study Japanese because we are lacking even a poor grammar and a poor dictionary here.

I wish I had the ability to express that *je ne sais quoi* of surprise mixed with timid curiosity and fright which one feels is seizing one's heart upon finding oneself for the first time in the middle of this idolatrous world whose law is desire, and whose God is its belly. Having left the silent cloisters where one fulfills religious obligations governed by the will of others, carrying on a life of prayer and retreat, one feels a certain energetic repulsion in one's most apathetic constitution upon inhaling an atmosphere nurtured by superstitions, the volcanic eruptions of which frighten and envelop in their dense clouds those who live and toss about in it.

The sky which covers him, the immense plains or wild mountains which offer themselves to his sight, the land which sustains him, the society with its sleeplessness, its falsehoods and betrayals, the water which runs in abundance through wild and torturous paths; the hidden folds, in short, of a heart historically known as traitorous, arrogant, and ungrateful; these are among many reasons for admiration, at the same time as they excite the curiosity of the inexperienced Missionary, not yet familiar with the men, customs, and language of the country in which he lives.

Such at least were the impressions I experienced when I set foot on the Island of Formosa, a land where a luxuriant and vigorous nature prodigiously tempts you with her gifts. An uncertain situation, in truth, but unavoidable, is that of one who has to keep hold of the facts and make himself the mentor of men in the difficult road to virtue, and to be the depository of their secrets, if one can speak of secrets among a people where injustice has the publicity³ of the law, and where the most enormous crimes are redeemed with silver. Or at least this is what happens in China, as so many missionaries who have lost their lives in the hard labor of evangelism without so much as seeing the gilded fruits of their toil and sweat have told in every tone.

This general law, which extends across the whole world wherever that race lives which takes the purse for its God and the queue for its banner, makes the Missionary of Formosa divine in the distance the apparition of a new light, which, if it does not completely dissolve the superstitious darkness of the metallic Chinese heart, shall at least be a saving light for the aborigines of the Island, who, separated further from bad examples, and more submissive to the inspirations of Heaven, will enter through the gates of salvation; and it could still be that those inhabitants of the mountains, who carry on an *igorrotal* and savage life, will acquire their part in the common happiness; and what cannot be doubted is that it will be the safeguard and protection of oppressed innocence.⁴

I am speaking of these conditions while considering the Japanese as now the absolute masters of the whole Island, as they have already been for some time in the North, where I find

³ Perhaps this is a copyist error for *complicidad* 'complicity' rather than *publicidad* 'publicity'.

⁴ *Igorrotal* here is simply the adjective form of the word "Igorrote," the Spanish name for the mountain-dwellers of Luzon which the Manila-educated Dominican missionaries carried over to the mountain tribes of Taiwan. It could be glossed as "mountain-dweller-like," or simply "heathen, uncivilized."

myself; and as men of education and culture, I believe that their native honor will not permit as many nor as blatant iniquities as have been committed heretofore, as indeed they have given proof of their humanity by managing to conquer the sympathies of the Igorrotes by going up to their own ranches to offer them peace, upon which four men and two women came down, who have been the object of admiration for many spectators and onlookers in the Court of Formosa. And though it be true injustices will never be lacking while man is man, these iniquities and injustices will be done by the Japanese in this clever and honorable way in which, in this century of good taste, they do that which they call "filtrations."⁵

The Japanese are of low stature, bearded, and in their brown faces one observes a flat nose and protruding cheekbones, and generally rounded features. Their musculature is not herculean, nor developed, but they are strong and brave, and are seasoned to the fatigues of war, as shown by their conduct in the now quite long campaign which they are sustaining here; and above all, they know their dignity.

I have seen many and dealt with a few; and from what I have been able to observe, the study of languages, English above all, is quite general among those Japanese who have a touch of enlightenment. Their outward comportment is gentlemanly, and their mode of dress as much as the order of their troops and officials is the same as that of Europe, from which they have imported, without any doubt, the state of civilization to which they today find themselves elevated.

There is nothing strange, then, in seeing a Japanese with his clean coat, his white and well-cut trousers, which pretty and neatly pressed tie, his short but waxed mustache, his little straw hat and sometimes, depending the requirements of the case and person, his top hat, and imagining to see before one the most delicate, tidy, and presumptuous figure ever to tread the cobblestone streets of sybaritic Paris.

Let it be said, however, in service of the purest truth, that the Japanese people, confirming that wise maxim that *nemo repente fit summus* [no one suddenly becomes the highest], as children and beginners in the track of civilization which they had tenaciously resisted for so many years and centuries, find themselves undermined in that which we might call the *populus vilis* [base people, lowly mob] of the soldiery, which gives palpable proof of a frightening, degrading, and shameless corruption of customs, in the description of which I shall not detain myself, to avoid staining my paper and the fame of the Japanese.

Many times has my memory returned to the name of Spain, which for a short time possessed this Island, more as trustee than as owner, and to how, judging by the ordinary course of things, Formosa, which not in vain bears this name, would have been a Catholic region as are those others in which waves, or for some time waved, the banner of Castille! Since then, this lovely portion of the globe has ever gone from bad to worse, between avaricious and gutless

⁵ "Filtración" can mean "to wrongly divulge secret or confidential information" (from the RAE Spanish dictionary). Thus, perhaps this refers to leaks of information. However, it is not clear why it would be Japanese who would be "leaking" anything. Perhaps he means to suggest that reports abroad of Japanese crimes in Taiwan will refer to "leaks" from the local military administration.

masters, unworthy to possess her, and Spain has never seriously considered reconquering what belongs to it by right.

Spain, however, preserves and will always preserve the trace of its transitory dominion in Formosa; a sufficient example is that fortress which, in another age, the ocean traveler greeted from afar before rendering to it the homage of his service, and which is eminently Spanish as indicated by its name: Fort Santiago. It lies only about 9 to 10 leagues distant from the invincible city of Taipajú, today the capital of Formosa.

I have said invincible, because at a simple glance one comprehends that if Taipajú had been in the power of another, less prideful and more quiet nation, they would have performed heroic feats of courage before ever surrendering to the enemy, and if the misfortune of battle had brought them to the extreme of capitulation, they would have sold their lives at a very elevated price, and the enemy hordes would have left evidence of their imprudent daring in rivers of spilt blood.

For such is the location of Taipajú. It sits on a triple chain of green and striking mountains, which in ascending scale reach the point of hiding their high and spring-like peaks in the land of the clouds, as if ashamed of their own luxuriance and lushness; these have at their feet an ample and amenable countryside, the maximum radius of which never exceeds six kilometers, which, improved by the laborious Chinese, does not cease to reward the sweat and fatigue of its cultivators.

Here one sees, alternating in harmonious confusion, green and extensive rice paddies with meandering fields of millet, sweet potato, indigo, sugarcane, and hemp in abundance;⁶ and there, with no routes of communication for the European walker, nature seems to take pleasure in disorienting him by those wide and multiplied paths, while he is absorbed in contemplating the grand and yellowish clusters of the tender banana tree, the gentle air of the palm tree, the orange trees and the green and surprising citron fruits, and those bamboo fences and abandoned huts so abundant and well-known in the tropical countries, praising God who was not stingy with His gifts here where nature grows and multiplies like rising foam.

This three-peaked chain, after encircling this delightful crown-shaped esplanade, stretches towards the South of the Island, being the start of the orographic mountain range of the same. Paths and narrow gorges through which run airy humble streams or immense deposits of rainwater, which the foresighted Chinese gathers to irrigate his rich crops, give way before the traveler who wishes to widen the narrow but never well-seen horizon which serves as protection for the island's Capital.

⁶ Footnote in original: "Whoever has saluted Geography ought to recall that Formosa is the classic land of camphor and tea, articles which I have not mentioned, along with others of no lesser abundance pertaining to the vegetable and animal kingdoms, because doing so would have gone past my goal of taking a rapid survey of the territory commonly called Tamsuí."

Next to Taipajú, and forming a small angle towards the West, without being separated by more than a valiant wall, are Toa-tui-tiâ to the North, and Banka to the South, commercial and populous cities, which are like the ladies of honor who serve with pride in the Court of Formosa.

A river of reddish and turbulent waters runs precipitously and overbrimming from South to North, submissively kissing and offering abundant services to the three cities mentioned above, while carrying its augmented waters to reach Ho-bué (commonly called Tamsui, although that is the generic name of the territory), where it pays its tribute to the sea, after having traveled 22 to 24 kilometers from Toa-tui-tiâ between two picturesque and elevated mountains. This river, which empties at Ho-bué some five leagues West of the westernmost cape of the Island, called Jaki or Zapien by the Chinese and English, is navigable by small steamships, which daily make their voyages to said point, the port where ships dock, a place of commercial activity and the residence of one of the English Consuls who represents Spain in the capacity of Vice-Consul.

In the opposite direction to Ho-bué one finds Ki-lón,⁷ another of the important commercial ports of the North, some 17 and 20 miles distant from the capes of Fauí and Taipajú respectively. Following the coast for another 20 miles East, we arrive at the easternmost bay of the Island, where one finds the never well-honored fortress of Santiago, which, although ruined today by destructive Time, conserves its glorious name as an indication of what it once was, and from which place the Japanese domination of the Island of Formosa began.

Taipajú, however, not satisfied with this impenetrable palisade and these honors with which Heaven has favored it, has circled itself with a new and very high wall, the mass of which is frightening, and the extension of which (some 6 to 8 kilometers) is the object of the studious traveler's admiration. Defended by a hundred and hundred battlements, which serve no less as adornment for its majestic air than as a formidable parapet to attack the enemy with happy success and to defend against their ardent bullets, its gates sealed by robust and enormously heavy iron planks, anyone can see that one need not be a legion of giants to successfully defend this fortified spot, and that the Chinese would not have had to flee so shamefully had their cowardice not outstripped their pride.

In truth, the taking of Taipajú by the Japanese was not a conquest owed to the strength of their arms, but rather to the cowardly indulgence of the enemy. When the Totay or Governor became aware of the arrival of the Japanese, by a sovereign feature of Chinese patriotism, he fled in terror, leaving the defense of the cities and contenting himself with locking its gates and depositing its keys in the hands of an old woman, so that she would open them, as she did, upon the first knock by the Japanese. They entered the city, then, not as a conquered place, but rather like one who for long centuries had peacefully possessed it, without resistance, although there would have been no lack of mean faces.

⁷ Footnote in original: "Some, conforming themselves with the Chinese, call this port Kelung, which in the Fukienese dialect means chicken coop, a name given due to have an island nearby of that shape, or according to others, because the abundance of these birds once constituted an important factor in its active commerce, a place now taken by rice, which, if not the most abundant, may be that of highest quality in the entire Orient.

The boy who opened the gates as the page of the old woman, treacherously handing his nation over to the enemy, an unpardonable sin against the fatherland if his years had allowed him to reflect upon it, has found an award for his failing, as the Japanese have taken him with them to reward this service the day he becomes capable of enjoying his prize.

This then is the charming and grandly smiling aspect presented by these mountains and delicious valley, which serve as a gracious panorama, at the same time as they are an element of great wealth for the court of Formosa, upon passing a general glance around the limited space one occupies.

It is true that the air does not resound with the trilling of the nightingale, nor the cooing of turtledoves, nor the happy and tender accents of the swift and speedy swallow, because these innocent creatures, shy of perturbing the order below, have chosen the forest thickets and the pure atmosphere of the high peaks for their perpetual dwelling-place; but in a blue and pure sky, crossed at times by subtle and faint little clouds, and a ground carpeted by an infinite variety of perennial and aromatic herbs, the clamorous stridulation produced by the elytra of the cricket and membranous blades of the screeching cicada; the abundance of luminous lepidoptera which fly at night and form a sky of lights, with another marvelous diversity of useful plants and inoffensive insects, though at times annoying, do make up for the shortage of avians and absence of singing birds in the valleys.

I have toured the city of Toa-tui-tiâ, and passing the walls of Taipajú I walked its streets and had occasion to learn about the court of Formosa. I will be excused for saying that both are dirty and nauseating cities, capable of turning the strongest and steeliest stomach, unused to such aromas. This is a natural thing in China, where filth constitutes an element of life for its celestial inhabitants, as their streets and homes and very persons tell so eloquently, omitting for now any speech of the dead sea which is called the intimate life of the Chinese.

Perhaps that which is written today of the beautiful Formosa will have disappeared in a not distant day, thanks to the efforts of its new conquerors, who, cleaner and of better culture, are demolishing that which never should have been built, broadening streets, opening routes of communication, and constructing houses in keeping with [the city's] proud and magnificent walls. This, however, does not prevent the Chinese in their arrogance from sometimes intoning heartfelt lamentations, because, so they say, "the Japanese will not know how to repair the public works which they put up if these should become unusable;" others accuse them of cowardice, such as a Chinese from Emuy who said "that the Japanese never attack head-on but by treachery and behind one's back;" and with that mocking and malicious chuckle which so distinguishes the Chinese on opportune occasions, they ridicule the Japanese when they see them demolishing and erecting new buildings; whence then this knack for destroying and building, they say; do you think, by chance, that you'll really be in Formosa until you are grandfathers? And finally, it is a daily affair to spread lies and tall tales, for lack of which they are not certain to lose their lawsuits, and so for example they say that the Japanese are going back to their land because they can't live in Formosa, that I-don't-know what sorts of Japanese-killing scorpions and strange beasts have risen up, and other pretty stories of the sort.

For all of these reasons it is easy to see that the Chinese can be convicted of their crimes and iniquities, which, disgracefully, are neither few nor of a light character, but they are hard-

pressed to confess, nor do they submit to the most patent and manifest truth, finding in their mischievous genius a fortunate means and way of always coming out on top.

I had the occasion, barely five days after my happy arrival on this fortunate Island, to come to know not only the disagreeable appearance and tumultuous confusion of the city's streets, but to come to know even the court of the formerly Chinese, and now Japanese, Viceroy.

A business the result of which is still undetermined to this day, but one of those very frequent ones which dry up human resources, and fill the glass of the Missionary's patience all the way to the brim, interested the Friar Vicar, in whose company I find myself as I am writing this. He went about some giving and taking with the Japanese authorities, and it became necessary to go to the Viceroy's court to move heaven and earth, in the critical juncture in which equality and justice found themselves defeated by the bad faith of men without religion or conscience.

We were, therefore, in the viceregal Court, and having passed one, two, three, and I don't know how many more doors with their corresponding sentries, we arrived, not without having gone a good while, at a place where we were given a full account of the person for whom we were searching.

There is nothing in that immense and closed-off expanse of territory, with its multitude of buildings scattered without order or harmony, which more than the Court expresses in miniature an entire people, there is nothing, I repeat, the sublimity of which inclines an intelligent man to live in the pleasant realm of art, nor which could recall those monuments of antique and modern civilization, besides the curiosity aroused in the spirit by the monstrous birthings of an uncultivated talent, though ingenious and strange, and the sterile and superstitious productions of a pedantic brush and burin.

There were some, however, which though they did not indicate that any Fidias or Praxiteles, Rafael or Murillo, spent their sculptural and pictorial genius there, did have their relative value which I will not deny nor place in doubt. See here the striated columns on which enormous serpents or winged basilisks were wrapped in spirals; there, portraits of gigantically-proportioned Emperors with bellies and beards as great as their fame; there we had the famous dragon, regal symbol and greatest idol of China; and further on, among ridiculous and Churrigueresque⁸ figures, one could see quadrupeds and avians of such originality that they most certainly do not exist among known fauna...

All of these figures paraded themselves before our gaze like visions in a painting, and though I was moved by the novelty which these things offered me, I managed to fix my attention of those spacious and decent halls full of seats and long tables, which, occupied by the Japanese, showed the severe aspect of a literary assembly, with many dozens of men flipping through books, making their copies and notations, without disturbing one another with untimely words, and ruled over by the greatest order and a sepulchral silence.

⁸ Spanish architect known for ornate carvings, so the meaning here is probably "ornate."

Two hours had passed, after which we crossed for a second time through those gates and courtyards, with the blue firmament as their vault, and saying our farewells to the court and tribunal of Formosa, we went along those dirty streets, not without being object of the attentive gazes of the Chinese, for whom the Missionary is always something new, and not without having endured a sun of justice beating directly down upon our heads, before reaching our humble, but peaceful and well-desired abode in Toa-tiu-tiâ.

This, however, was only the preamble and preparation of the materials for the business which we then took into our hands. The Friar Vicar had to leave the next day for Kilon, theater of the injustices, and I, new and without experience, without knowledge of the language, had to remain in charge of the Mission-House and the few interests in its possession, if indeed it has any, for the four days of his absence.

Thanks to God there was nothing to lament in this time, although I had occasion to become acquainted with one of those spectacles most worthy of contemplation among the many oddities of this superstitious people. It was no more than half an hour after the Vicar had left the house when those musical concerts of China, which excite a passionate ire in me, came to torment my ears. I persevered imperturbably at my post because, being a daily event, these no longer produce any new impressions which require me to lose my comfort for their pleasure. The music came closer, and there began from one of the city gates a procession of flags, lanterns, musicians, a coffin the color of a yellowish tablet, covered by a scarlet cloth and carried by six men; inside of which, on a seat, there went a priest carrying a small and pot-bellied jar between his legs, where, as I have seen on another occasion, they set a fire and burn superstitious objects, which in this case were carried by two or three porters; and finally they closed the procession with some fourteen men dressed in sacks, girded at the waist, with mortuary hoods lined with white cloth tied at their heads; these are normally the relatives of the deceased who accompany him to the place of burial, where they practice one thousand superstitions and diabolical tricks before reaching the tomb.

The parade consisted of some 40 people, with the majority carrying a multitude of flags of all shapes and colors, which presented a colorful scene; or else they were sounding the horrific echoes of their long and shrill flutes; some went about giving strong and rhythmic blows to their drums and cymbals; and others, finally, were ceaselessly striking their irons, whose severe accents recall the grave and majestic accents of our church bells.

It was a Chinese burial, as I had been persuaded of from the first, and I have not seen a more solemn one since I began living among the Chinese; and I am too curious to fail on this occasion to learn about all the steps and movements. In effect, although I am not nearsighted and could see them clearly with the naked eye, as they were not more than 80 steps away, I made use of some glasses which I had at hand, and I followed their trail a long way, until they hid themselves from my view within a cool, dense grove. These are sons of the Celestial Empire, more skeptical than pious, and it is not strange that even in the most deeply rooted superstition, which they observe with the most exquisite scrupulosity until the present day, that is, the cult devoted to their ancestors, religious reflection and modesty are conspicuous by their absence; that one is not silent while another speaks; that one runs and another goes ahead; and that the least of them, with his hands at his sides and carrying the compass, should go with his companions in friendly and energetic conversation.

Such a variety and luxury of flags which wave geometric figures and augment the colors of the rainbow, along with the Chinese symphony, make it so that these funerals display, to those unaccustomed to them, a character less of pain and sadness than of rejoicing and happiness. A few days ago we were gifted 14 banners of all dimensions and appearances, which served in the funeral of a wealthy infidel who died in January and was entombed at the start of September, this being the most auspicious day and month for his burial, selected by the Satanic priests; and while taking in and learning everything, I saw some silks and other textiles of quality which were donated by the widow of the deceased to the church to demonstrate her appreciation of benefits received.

This is the general mode of burial in China, leaving it as a given that the external pomp and splendor are here as elsewhere a matter of accident which vary greatly, as in all parts of the globe one finds translated the very same adage that *he who has, spends and eats, and he who has not, fasts*.

I had contemplated at my leisure that whole diabolical apparatus, and the seat to which I retired afterwards had barely gotten warm when there reached my ears a singular murmur, which, united with the impressions I had previously received, made me rise from my seat to see if it was some accessory to that funerary procession. And so it was.

Behind the coffin I had seen those men who look like nothing more than walking sacks of rice, to whom I gave the epithet of weepers; but I had not seen the female weepers who now appeared, and between small and old they would have been some twenty persons, dressed not very differently from the men, and holding a cane in their hands, they sat down on two lines of benches at the gate of the city arranged for the present purpose, and presided over by an old woman, who, if she was not their prioress, was an interested party to the mourning, given that, without being dressed in sackcloth, she held a long bamboo cane in her hand as a symbol of command, and without being seated she raised her voice as the leader of that chorus, and then, with everything arranged in this way, began the suppositions and divinations about the state of that poor soul who had fallen to the reaping of mortals.

I was observing them with curiosity from a window of the house with my glasses, although they were no more than twenty paces away, for which reason I could see them and even hear their words, though it is true that I did not understand them. All looked towards the East, and at times they carried on an animated conversation in which at times they agreed and other times disputed, at times they held a moment of silence and kept their eyes open looking at and watching the passers-by, and the signs which Heaven and Earth offered to their sight.

Of course, at that moment a business of utmost importance was being discussed, namely the happiness of the deceased, which depended on the accidental passage of some lame or one-eyed person through the gate of the city in those circumstances, or of the rapid or punctuated flight of some playful bird diverting itself in that region of the air. Tired of watching such an absurdity, I went to fulfill my religious duties, and taking a Breviary, almost without realizing what I was doing, I left to pray in a narrow gallery surrounding our house.

I was an object full of mystery, above all in that moment, to those magi of the devil, and indeed they did not fail to take my presence in that gallery as a baleful omen, or a happy one, for

the soul which was the object of their superstitions. I had not begun to pray and yet they all had their gazes fixed on me, and some pointed to me as if assigning me the blame for some misfortune, or for having been the cause of some disharmony in the order of the universe. I was left with no doubt of what they were discussing, and so I removed myself from their presence, because the fallen man has enough trouble with being unable to get him, and it was enough for these poor people to be deprived of the supernatural lights of faith, without others coming to serve them as a stone of scandal.

They remained there for the two and a half hours which it took those who had left in the company of the coffin to return; when these passed by the horrible echoes of the flute could be heard anew, and I prepared myself to see the final result, and the conclusion of the comedic act which unfolded itself throughout that morning.

The committee which had been to the tomb, then, approached ever closer, and the girls who, numbering seven or eight, were also wearing that new and never-before-seen penitential habit, went out some twenty paces to meet it, and made a deep and respectful bow to the point of touching the ground, and when the priest passed by, reclining far back and very comfortable in his chair, they went behind, crying aloud, in which they had been trained by the women who stood waiting within tearful expressions at the gate, and so this mournful and funereal procession was organized to go through the streets of the city, and did not reappear for the rest of that day.

What a pity it would be to see these tears if they were truthful, I said to myself, being employed so well in crying for their sins! But it is the case that they always have them at their disposition, no more or less than if they were an object to be bought and sold, and for this reason I am of the opinion that often the tears dropped by Chinese women are little different from those shed by the alligators of the Hindustani Ganges. The weeping and lamenting of the family does not stop at this, but rather on certain and determined days after the death and burial of the deceased, it is necessary for the wife with her daughters to mourn him and to make the most eloquent panegyric which their creative capacities are able to compose.

The wife takes the baton in this concert, because men do not tend to make such exaggerated displays, and gathering with her daughters, willingly or unwillingly, on the arrival of the hour and moment, she has to shed tears or pretend to shed them. The trilling of the sonorous and valiant voice begins, and at the same time begin the elegies to the deceased, and I admire how they have such a fertile talent to spend two, three, or more hours crying, without ceasing for this period to say things which can redound to his [the deceased's] glory, which is without doubt where they find the merit in their tears, which if they are fictitious are at least violent.

If the neighbors are new and have not heard such lamentations, they will be in an uproar, as I was in the beginning, when I could not understand or even begin to have it enter my mind that this was weeping, as the tone of voice reminded me of that happy age in which the teacher made us schoolboys practice counting aloud. In this tribute of elegies and smoking incense of word there is no ground and no ending; and so they say so-and-so the deceased was the greatest man upon whom the sun ever shone, and he who the world would miss the most, who did such and such things, with other talents and special tricks, all of which ends up canonizing him ahead of time, regardless of whether he was the foremost criminal of his century.

In the one league's distance from Toa-tiu-tiâ to Chin-nih, a path which is well-traveled and well-known to me, I have been able to observe a multitude of Chinese tombs, which, as is known, they place far away on the public roads and the slopes whenever possible. On some of these journeys I encountered gangs of wizards performing devilries at the tombs, and with my curiosity or my imprudence making use of a right which Divine Providence has granted even to the very winds of the sea, I decided to take notes and learn everything they did and said, but their great shame made them stop at once, thus frustrating my hopes and desires.

Hanging over a sort of tripod was a little pot-bellied jar filled with fire and smoking, and it did not lack the famous sticks which measure little more than a quarter foot long, and being placed with one end of these in a ragdoll head fixed on the tombstone and the other end on the ground, these [sticks] are left at the tomb where they can be seen at all hours and moments of the day.

It has been endlessly repeated that abundant wealth, talent, honor, longevity, and sons constitute the five happinesses in life for the Chinese; and after death, a sumptuous sepulcher. It is true that these first five can make a people materialistic, prideful, and immoral, qualities which it would be unjust to deny these sons of Heaven, but they will never manage to constitute the true beatitude enjoyed by the Saints in the Fatherland.

Sumptuousness of the tomb, which the Chinese declaim as the greatest posthumous glory which one can have before God and the world after one ceases to exist, does not take the form of those marble mausoleums which the vanity of the world combined with Christian piety raises in the graveyards of wise and religious Europe, and which, ending in a Cross and surrounded by cypresses and other symbols of sadness indicate to men that this is the house of death; but rather that of a greater or lesser extension of territory depending on the abilities of each man, and of truly fabulous extent in the case of the wealthiest. The little time and the very little which I have had the chance to visit while in Formosa has not permitted me to see those most prodigious tombs, although I have seen very large ones and do not doubt that there are larger, considering that the tomb in which rests our dearest and fondly remembered brother, Nemesio Fernández, which was destined for a Chinese of middling position, measures 64 *varas*⁹ long by 24 wide.¹⁰

Seeing and contemplating this stormy and terrifying portrait, in which the ignorance and superstition of this great Oriental family presents, in its brutal life without divine light, a most miserable drama, and what is yet more lamentable is that it does not want to recognize its weakness and impotence, although just this would be the remedy to its ills, it is just for us to turn our gaze to consider those few rescued souls who recognize God as the end of their aspirations and desires, to Whom they give thanks, because, bathed in the supernatural light, they become aware of and abandon the darkness of misery in which they wallowed; and who, as children of

⁹ A *vara* is an antiquated Spanish form of measurement which varied in length between places, but was roughly the length of an English yard.

¹⁰ Footnote in original: "These are not familial tombs, nor is there anything whatsoever in their exteriors to attract attention. Ordinarily a stone of one meter tall by half a meter long, upon which they put the name of the deceased, is erected; the rich tend to additionally place a few lightly carved stones around the tomb, and the gravestone is accompanied by some sentence of Confucius', with the rest of the land being left to the vicissitudes of nature, which takes it upon itself to cover the whole quite quickly with weeds, with the result that these tombs appear poor and modest rather than magnificent."

the sweat and labor of the Missionary, will come to be, as the Apostle Saint Paul said, *his joy and his crown*.

I am well aware that the temple of fame has not been constructed, nor is the sanctuary of the conscience inviolable for these idolatrous disciples of Confucius, who, venal to the utmost, sell religion, friendship, and themselves for a lowly price, self-interested devotees that they are of the avaricious deity Mammon. Nor has the idea once entered my mind of opposing myself to the many books written by men full of knowledge and experience about the cunning, prideful, lascivious, and uncivilized character of this degenerate race. When considering the many tricks and the skillful manner which they have for accomplishing their crooked ends in isolation and without taking into account the fatal consequences, I would almost laugh if tears and sobs were not more suited for the occasion than joy and vain contentment when it is a matter of harms done to one's neighbor.

At times the Chinese seem so obliging, ceremonious, punctual, satisfied, telling lies left and right wherever convenient for their purposes, with the effect that it is almost impossible not to surrender to such shows of sincerity and affection accompanied by a thousand inclinations and movements of the feet and hands, without the tongue ever ceasing to give praise, and that affected giggle which makes them appear happy like a springtime.

The Father may be sad and melancholy because of the failure of some affair; the son of the Celestial Empire will break out laughing in the middle of the most formal conversation, laughing even at himself, and giving unequivocal proof of his superficiality and lack of manners. Other times, though less often, they present themselves ever-so-humbly, pouring out their tears on the ground, and appearing to think it is not enough to get on their knees in front of the Father, they bow lower and lower until their foreheads are one with the dust, as if they want to hide themselves, if it were possible, in the entrails of the globe, painting their affairs with all of these [tricks] in such a way that one's heart drops to one's feet in compassion, if they do not say, as an old catechumen did a few days ago: *Father, I will not get up from here until you give me what I ask*. Who would believe that, nevertheless, all these displays of sincerity would be followed by that which daily experience demonstrates!

That of which I am now telling is applicable in its full extent to the infidels (though thanks to the beneficent influence of Christianity, even men from gentile society now frequently come to place themselves in the shade of the Church and "seek out a wise man to help them, and prostrate themselves before the Teacher of the religion of the Lord of Heaven," as was said by one who came here this very morning with said refrain) is modified and corrected in Christians by the supernatural and divine teachings of He who took Himself as a living example of meekness and sweetness; but it is not destroyed or ripped out at the root, as God does not destroy nature, and only He can make children of Abraham out of stones.

One who is not accustomed to it, when he sees such men, tends to admire them, often enthusiastically; when he sees them cover their face with their hands and kneel down and put their hands and face to the earth, a common mode of prayer among these Christians, and sees them pray with fervor and compunction; and what causes real shock is consistency in persevering for the one, two, three months or years during which lasts the business which he is carrying about, and which was the only motive which made him decide to convert, during this

time suffering any reproaches from the Missionary, whom he is constantly bothering day and night with his usual business. But there comes a day when the business reaches its end, and although some, those whom God in His high judgment predestines for grace, persevere, the ordinary case is that their religion is an edifice of straw blown away with the wind, and that the Missionary receives as fruit of his labors the blackest ingratitude seen in all the centuries, hidden in that adulatory breast full of pretense, which does not even give thanks for benefits received if things go well, and blames and insults the innocent who attempted to give him favor if things go poorly.

Worthy of compassion, certainly, are these many millions of souls which exist in the great Empire of China, deprived of the supernatural lights of faith, and whom, though they are granted a perspicacious talent, this talent only serves to make guiltier and to help invent new iniquities. But it must be confessed that, in the end, the labors of the Missionary are sweetened and lightened by that portion of Christians who, brought by him by dint of sacrifices and hard work to the life of grace, who even in the middle of the impertinences of their character do not fail to show deference to the Missionary nor to be beloved disciples of Jesus Christ, who are on the path to salvation, who offer their devotion to God, which is not little here when Satan has planted the banner of his power, and who, finally, obey their Christian obligations much better than others for whom the antiquity and traditional character of their Christianity has degenerated into abandonment and forgetfulness of compliance with their religious duties.

When I set foot on the Island of Formosa, I soon found myself surrounded by the few Christians of this place, who came to pay their tributes and respects, not without signs of great satisfaction, to the new Father who from distant lands had come to provide them with company; and having gone from there after a few days to Chiu-nih, a village located one league to the West of Toa-tiu-tiâ, I was received and hosted with the same and even better displays of veneration and affection. Having arrived at nightfall, those who knew of my stay in Chiu-nih that day came up to greet me at the inn, where, seated like a Patriarch of the Indies, although the room and its furnishings did not correspond to such a sovereign title, I began to welcome the visits of those who adore God in spirit and in truth, and know and respect those who substitute for Him on this earth, these, kneeling down in my presence, clasping their hands and lowering their heads in a manner so appropriately Christian, told me “God help you.”

I continued experiencing these impressions, which one could even call excesses of an entirely pure jubilation, for the eight days during which I was obliged to stay among them on account of a passing typhoon, which ended up inundating the village, the streets of which had to be crossed on boats as if they were a wide, deep sea. During this time their visits [to me] were numerous and their solicitude for knowing my name was great, showing me their affections with various kinds of fruits and rice cooked *à la chine*, which they gifted me to serve as a reminder and memory, as they said, to Father Péh.¹¹

¹¹ Footnote in original: “During the 15 days that Father Gallo and I stayed in the company of our respectable and affectionate brother Fr. Estevan Sanchez, the Apostolic Vicar of Emuy, we were given, as per the custom, Chinese surnames, with said gentleman [Sanchez], as well as the Fathers Cañal, Arranz, and Giralt, who happened to be there at the time, agreeing that I should take the name of Péh, which means white, in reverence to the Beatified Pedro Martir Sanz, who had called himself by that name, with my companion taking the name of Liong, due to the

They were radiant with an inner happiness which was well-translated to their exteriors by the attentive gaze of their eyes and the uninterrupted questions which they asked me, and I, impeded by language from being able to manifest my own sentiments, nevertheless was able with a smile on my lips and a few half-pronounced words here and there to make myself understood, and above all to be inundated with an indescribable pleasure felt in the heart, but which my mouth could not express, seeing that here in the middle of so many millions of devotees of Satan there were four pure souls who did not bend their knees to Baal, and from the righteous hearts of which there came out a holy oration, which, elevating itself like aromatic incense, would not fail to be properly heard before the throne of the Most High.

I took my leave of those Christians when the time came to head for Toa-tiu-tiâ, but only for eight days, after which I returned, and I have repeated my travels with the object of giving them mass on Sundays, always carrying in my chest the memory of those heartening impressions, and going along those narrow and busy paths which offer a beautiful scenery to the traveler, where once the attention has been fixed on them just once they excite the curiosity to see them again, without ever tiring until, exiting out to the railroad which passes to the very doors of our residence, one encounters a path which is not very good but which is faster and comfortable.

This railroad begins in Kilon or Kelung, and after making a stop along the wall of Taipajú, it continues by way of Toa-tiu-tiâ towards the South of the Island, where the Japanese are working to lengthen it, expecting that it will soon reach Taiwanfú, and in this way communication with the Center and South of the Island, and between the Missions, will be made easy.

The train and all those who wish to cross the two banks of the voluminous river which bathes the three cities of Banka, Taipajú, and Toa-tiu-tiâ are obliged to pass over a wooden bridge in Toa-tiu-tiâ, the only one which unites the two riversides, and where the Japanese have set up many military tents on one side; while on the other, which touches the city, there is a sentinel at all times, before whom even the Japanese officers and administrators uncover themselves, which might be because this sentinel represents the Emperor; but whatever the reason, they have imposed the same obligation on the Chinese, with the effect that upon arriving there, everyone has to pay the same tribute of recognition, with their hats in their hands, or else the kind of black turban they wear in winter time to free their shaved heads from the cold. But so many people gather there and there is so much movement of persons coming and going, and the Chinese are so amusing that while some play the *fool* without being discovered, others stand there laughing at the sight of the poor sentinel dealing out *blows* without managing to connect all those he intends.

To go to Chiu-nih I have had to pass over said bridge, crossing through the middle of the tightly squeezed multitudes which are continuously present there, without anything happening to me until the last day that I went there, when, without ceasing to attract the attention of the Chinese who take me to be and have asked me if I am Japanese, I nevertheless seemed more

similarity which this name had with his own name of León.” Alvarez’s full Chinese name was Bai Ruose 白若瑟. Pedro Martir Sanz, beatified 1893 and canonized in 2000, was a Spanish Dominican missionary in Fuzhou who was executed in 1747.

strange to the Japanese, who, considering me a *neutral* being without precedents or genealogy of any similar creatures in history, never took their eyes off me upon seeing Chinese dress twinned with European features.

Indeed, the other times I went there I was wearing my cassock, and now, not being satisfied with looking me over from head to toe when I passed by the door of their barrack or tollbooth, some of them came running when I was a few hundred feet away, to get me to return to said building. I did not do anything more than put my hand in my pocket and take out my pouch, intending to show them the passport which the Missionaries hold from their Viceroy Kabayama, when, without taking this due diligence, but satisfied with seeing me up close, they took their leave of me very attentively, and I continued my walk calmly and peaceably.

Upon reaching this point, Father, a sad and upsetting piece of news has come to perturb my pulse and put a limit on the point of my pen. A catechist has just arrived from the Center of the Island, where the Japanese are just arriving, and [he has] told me so many misfortunes of that Christian community that they can hardly be put down on paper.

Three lost catechists sought out with great diligence until a price of 300 pesos was put forth for whoever presented them; the family of one of them kidnapped without knowing where they were held; four dead whose fates are known with certainty, and some say there are as many as 30; the Christians all in the hands of rebels and gangs of thieves, who put them on the front lines to serve as shields in their attacks on the Japanese; three or four houses and churches given up to the plunder and pillage of those vandal hordes; without our knowing for now the cause of the storm which has arisen at such an untimely hour, nor having any more detailed information on the devastation visited on that defenseless flock, than that brought by people who fled the danger many days ago, which only serve to leave the spirit distressed and anxious for better news.

These outrages were perpetrated by gangs of Chinese bandits, whose presidents or chiefs have always been feared and respected by the Mandarins, and who now hold important offices in the wars against the “dwarves,” as they say, under the command and orders of the first dreamer of Republics in Formosa; this occurrence being all the more surprising given that many of said ringleaders were in good standing and harmony with the Church. How true it is that he who sows the wind reaps the storm, and that he who deals with thieves ends up being robbed!

This miserable situation has been augmented by the greatly mourned death of a fervent catechist and tertiary of the Order, a tireless collaborator and participant in the labors and fatigues undergone by the meritorious Father Sainz; when, in 1859, after overcoming a thousand difficulties, he [Sainz] planted the cross of the Savior in these blessed beaches, where after two hundred years the evangelical light shined anew, and the white Dominican banner was blown a second time with the breeze of its seas and mountains.

From that point on, this good catechist named Hiáng-ke worked in the conversion of his countrymen to the true life with a praiseworthy zeal and a selflessness which is little-exemplified in the past or present, without wishing for any emolument or temporal prize for his important services beyond what was sufficient for covering the basic necessities of his person, keeping all the rest for that beatific and eternal life which we piously believe God will have rewarded him as

the just price for his services and labors, although it is also just that his memory be perpetuated here on Earth as an example and edification for men.

Here I will make a final point. Because there are certain things which take away the taste for the most expensive interests and the most violent inclinations, as they consume and finish the life of a man after slowly but energetically spending all of his vigor and strength. However, I would like to point out an idea that I wish to see realized as soon as possible. When for the first time I crossed the thresholds of the capital and saw large spaces sown with green rice fields, and the immense ruins from which they have raised a city that in its buildings and streets corresponds to the title born by the court of the Viceroy, I was struck with a great religious idea, enthused in fact, and had I the power of working miracles, the fact would have preceded my intention.

It would have fit very well if within those walls, in the middle of those streets where the multitudes succeeded one after another like the currents of a great river driven by a storm, there could be even a small house, if not a sumptuous palace, which, topped by sharp and daring spires of Gothic constructions and crowned by a Cross, would dominate the city and its surrounding as the Holy Cross dominates the heavens, and would indicate to men that this was the house of God and the gateway to health for the human lineage. I grabbed this idea as if it had rained from Heaven, but I was not so secretive that, in the expanses of respectful and amiable fraternity, I did not dare to communicate it to the Father Vicar, who caused me to leap with joy when he confirmed the thought which I timidly believed was nonsense.

There was only one difficulty, but an insuperable one, presented itself without being searched for, which impeded the prompt realization of our business; the lack of funds and the impossibility of getting them at the moment, a motive which leads me to launch this idea to the four winds, even if it is lost in imaginary vacuums, to see if a charitable soul might deign to assist in this pressing need.

I would have rigorously kept my silence if I did not expect that the indulgence and kindness I found in the Father Vicar I did not expect to find in You, who will know how to dispose of my boldness if I have preceded some more authorized voice which should have been the first to make this supplication and initiate this thought; counting, thus, on Your permission, I will expound two causes among the others which, according to my humble opinion, require the urgent erection of a temple within the walls. At present, beyond the large amount of land serving as fields within the walls, there exist many houses belonging to Chinese who fled at the start of the war, who have not returned, and it is extremely easy to come into enough land to raise a church and mission-house at relatively low cost, which after another year, and perhaps earlier, will become very difficult, if indeed it does not entirely take away the hope of its execution, taking into account the prodigious speed with which the commerce of the Japanese is developing on the Island, and the enthusiasm for destroying and building which gives rise to well-founded hopes that after five years Formosa will be completely renovated, and Taipajú beautified with superb and abundant buildings which [will] speak very highly in favor of Japanese culture. Adding to this the many Japanese who, abandoning their homes, have come to participate in the abundant fruits of the conquered country, and whose numbers grow day by day, as the relations with the motherland grow tighter and their imperial rule over Formosa grows more peaceful, the number of Catholics going to the Mission will also be augmented, as quite a few have already presented themselves to us, and the Missionary who complies with his duty should be ready to

serve them at short notice, and there is no better point for this goal than in Taipajú, center of commerce and of the cities Banka and Toa-tiu-tiâ, where, it is clear, not only the flower and cream of the Japanese will settle, but their entire totality, to protect themselves by way of the walls from any unexpected attack or uprising with the Chinese might hazard.

My vote does not weigh one iota on the scales of authority, and my words deserve the honor of forgetting, if not of contempt; nevertheless, if there comes a day where the Cross of the Savior is planted within the walls of Taipajú, for my part I would consider it as among the few happiest and most fortunate that man's life tends to offer. It does not matter if the Christian flock, insignificant and reduced in the North of the island for now, does not offer any hope of further increase, nor of leaving the narrow horizons to which it is reduced, although I believe that the situation is not so desperate.

When a child is born, and when a grain of wheat is confidently thrown by the laborer into the furrows of the earth, they are small; but in hope they contain the strength of the arm with which the one will defeat giants in the time of his manhood, and the golden stalk which the other will yield in summertime to the sickle of the reaper.

The short time which has passed since the foundation of the Christian community in the North of Formosa has not permitted the proper development of the good seed of the Word of God, and the incremental growth of the Catholic religion; no strange thing if we take into account that the society where we wish to raise outbursts of religious enthusiasm is that of the Chinese people.

But furthermore, if we are speaking of a people rebellious towards grace, who do not subject their necks [to the yolk] nor attend to the inspirations of heaven, let it be clear once and for all that the cause of his misfortune was not the inertia of the Missionary, nor the lack of instruction which he might have obtained, but his vicious heart which kept him from covering himself with the protective shadow of the Cross, which he saw hoisted as the glorious ensign of the Catholic religion at the doors of his home, and when before the judgment of God he will be charged with that which he could have been and did not become, he will be without appeal or excuse, and his own rebellion will arrive in approbation of his sin and his eternal condemnation.

I am convinced that the merit of the Missionary and the glory which follows him does not consist in counting up victories and defeating enemies, but rather in managing to guide them [to salvation], and placing the means conducive for this [before them]. If, then, we arrange those means and manage to work as good and faithful agents in the field entrusted to our solicitude and care, our very defeats will become insignificant victories, and together with the spoils of triumph we will find the crown of our reward.

For the rest, Father, I find myself obliged to confess that my soul and all my being swim in a pool of joy and sweetness, without any mixture of displeasure to cloud it, clean and pure without the human counsel to which are accustomed the trials and labors connected with our ministry, though our weakness be strengthened and our frailty find support, upon seeing in the proximate end of life the beginnings of an eternal Hallelujah, and considering that the Church Militant in union with the Church Triumphant unceasingly offers its fervent prayers for us before

the throne of God, in Whose name we have undertaken this work and in Whose supernatural aid we are confident, we are continuing and will continue until the end.

Your obedient subject,

Q.B.S.M

Fr. José M. Alvarez

O.P.