

Sainz, Fernando. "Most Revered Father Provincial Fr. Domingo Treserra, Ban-kim-cheng, June 9, 1865." *Correo Sino-annamita* 1 (1866): 44-52. Translated by Patrick Stein. Edited by Douglas Fix.

Dearest and much respected P.N.: On May 26, after celebrating the solemn feast of the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I left Cheng-kim to see if I could make something of the trampled debris which one year ago was made of our unforgettable mission at Kao-ki. Upon arriving at this village at 6 in the afternoon of the mentioned day, the 26th, I encountered four Christians who were working on a small plot to raise some canes, which after being covered with straw would become my quarters. As these Christians weren't able to finish their work when I arrived, it was necessary for me to continue to Ban-kim-cheng, and stay with Father Herce to see what time would allow.¹ Despite this work being such a small matter, it kept being prolonged, consequently giving time for the malevolent to do their deeds. The Christian in charge neither knew that all our good depended on promptness, nor therefore managed to obey Father Herce, who gave him three pesos, and no more, to drive a few canes in the ground and cover them by any means with straw, as had been written from Cheng-kim. In short, as the good Christian wished to build more than one room, he needed to use a few more days than he had been instructed, and so for those few days I had to stay with Father Herce. Later we will see the awful result of said delay.

Along with the idea of staying in the village of Kao-ki I brought another, which was to see whether the hour had come to evangelize the Igorrotes.² For this reason I brought in my company a very handsome and fervent Tagal who had served the French fathers in Changhai; a co-national of his from Cavite, who I liked solely for his entirely Igorrote face; and a Catholic photographer from Singapore who possessed, to the fullest extent of the word, the Malay language.³ The day of our expedition (that is, May 30) arrived, and after buying some Chinese wine and betel, as these are essential requisites for dealing with these people, we began our march, bringing a few trinkets such as chains, rings, handkerchiefs, etc. etc. to trade with them, as in the mountains money is useless.

After an hour's walk we arrived at the foot of the famous mountain which the Chinese call Calé, the peak of which measures 12 thousand feet in height according to

¹ The original word "tiempo" is ambiguous, referring either to "time" or "weather." An alternate translation might thus be: "until seeing that the weather permitted [travel]."

² "Igorrote" was the standard Spanish term used by Dominican missionaries in these letters for Taiwan's mountain-dwelling indigenous groups. The word is a direct transmission of the name of a tribe from north-central Luzon, which was used as the generic ethnonym for non-Malayan highlanders in the Philippines. The fact that this name was used on Taiwan both demonstrates the role of the Philippines as the training center for China-bound Dominicans, and suggests implicitly the hypothesis which Sainz states explicitly in this same letter: that the tribes of Taiwan are related to those of Luzon. At other times the missionaries use the word "montañeses," meaning simply mountain dwellers, without any particular ethnic association. "Savages" [Sp. *salvajes*], also used in this letter, is an even more general term which the Dominicans at times applied to all indigenous Taiwanese, though not to the Chinese.

³ This photographer was St. Julian Hugh Edwards, one of the first people to take photographs of indigenous people in Taiwan.

some, and 10 thousand according to others. Here we had to make our first stop to wait for the Igorrotes, who smelled the wine, to gather around the jug, with the goal of enjoying it once they were so permitted. Having satisfactorily concluded this first encounter, we began to climb those steep mountains, which the hand of the Lord placed so dexterously with the intention, so it seems, of defending the afflicted savage from the heavy hand of his oppressor. Without this admirable fortification, which from certain vantages one almost confuses for a sky-high wall leaning sharply, but which will never topple, as the Lord hovers above it, what would become of its pacifist-warrior inhabitants?

I have said "pacifist-warriors," and I believe this contradictory designation fits them, as they are peaceful by nature but warlike by custom. If these destructive Chinese cared to show a little compassion for the savages, and civilize them with their shadow civilization (incomparable with the true one), they would have been civilized long ago: but it seems that they [NB: the Igorrotes] were not born for this; they were born (acquiring terrible customs contrary to their nature) not to edify but rather to destroy, not to civilize but to denigrate, not to give life to man but to kill him and drink his blood in as many encounters as possible.

Not long ago many savages decided to give up their wandering ways and descend to the plains, where the Chinese seduced them with betel, to give up their independence and to redefine themselves not only as Chinese vassals, but as Chinese themselves, and to signal that they did so spontaneously, they handed over their heads to the barbarians to be shaved entirely with the exception of a tail as a mark of . . . of what? I was going to say of a brute . . . but no, I will say as a mark of a son of the Chinese Empire. With this step they would have gained much sympathy in other countries, but here they merely gained hate and persecution. Consequently they were forced to flee to their hideouts, where they are only visited by the sun and by Christian charity.

Here we encountered them after climbing slopes upon slopes, for perhaps four hours, and found them quite well-dressed, especially the headmen and their daughters. At first glance they looked to me like rich Muslims (rich to the greatest extent of the word), for example in their glass-covered necklaces, of I do not know what value, as I saw them with confusion, and in the style of their clothing and their manner of fitting it to their bodies, they entirely resembled these [rich Muslims].

After their headmen saw us, they came to greet us and we gave mutual salutes, shaking hands in the European manner, but additionally raising them to our noses in a sign of respect. Soon they brought us to their houses, entirely made of straw with the exception of a few covered with very smooth stones, shaped by nature and found in rivers, creeks, and similar places.

We were seated, and then began a mutual pantomime wherein we mutually tried to make the other understand us by gestures, not pleasant in the least. I told the Tagal to speak, and speak much; and did the same with the one from Cavite and the Malay; but whether because we acted clumsily or for some other reason, everything felt cold with hands taking the place of language. The Tagals understood a few things, as did the Malay photographer; but only the odd word, and never full sentences. This did not

cause me to waver in my opinion that the mountain-dwellers [*montañeses*] are of the Malay race; however, I did modify it somewhat upon observing many faces which, if only dressed in European finery, could present themselves among the beautiful faces of European society.

And of my goals, first among which was to post a Catholic missionary? Nothing; they stayed in status quo; better said, they failed completely, of which I was glad, because perhaps the Chinese would have opposed themselves to my gaze being brought into this territory.

My plan was founded on the idea that the Igorrotes were and are absolute masters of their territory, as the Chinese have not yet had time to cover this sort of land with their crops; after all their domination here has not lasted but two hundred years. And while this time has granted the emperor four million colonists, the island could feed six million more, and it will not have those [inhabitants] for another 200 years.

The savages, on their part, under fear of Chinese invasion, have familiarized themselves with murder to such an extent that it is, one could say, their only occupation. Therefore I said, "Let us go to them in a manner such that they do not kill us; and once there, we'll make a cabin, we'll live inside, we'll familiarize ourselves with them; and soon, once we're somewhat secure, we'll cultivate the land so it can give us our daily sustenance; then we'll take some servants who will take up said offices [i.e. agriculture]; and with these servants we'll finally start our propaganda, and thus we'll complete our civilizing work." So I thought, and I set off with these intentions; but right away I observed that the people I brought were not right for this. Accustomed to the exigencies of their exalted self-love, they soon let me know what revolved in their interiors. Tired of walking, weighed down by the chains of mountains they saw before them, and demoralized by the monotony which they saw in all objects, they decided to descend when they had not yet fully ascended, and they all wanted to return when they had yet to arrive. I, if in truth somewhat disgusted, turned back the prow, persuaded that the missionary in his civilizing work can expect nothing of either the civilized man or the savage, with the end that one can always say it is the work of God, may He always be given honor and praise *in secula seculorum*.

I left the savages in discontent, as I have said; but this discontent was not an impediment to thinking up other, lighter methods to reach the end we proposed at the start. Those methods are to purchase a few boys and girls, and educate them so that one day they can be useful to their countrymen. I have already taken a few steps, and I don't plan to stop until I see the kids in this little school. When will it be? And who will pluck the fruit?

After arriving back home worn out by our expedition to the mountains, the Christians who were employed in constructing our house of canes in Kao-ki arrived, telling and announcing more or less what happened the previous year in our first attempt. Used to living in continuous tumult, nothing startled me, nor was I at all perturbed. When Father Herce, who had gotten the news first, informed me that we had on our hands the second defeat of the mission of Kao-ki, I stayed as still as if nothing had happened. Perhaps my body was then in a disposition to accept troubles;

after all, in other similar occasions, and even less serious ones, I felt the winds of great internal storms. There must be some of everything.

The Christians who came with the news said that in the evening of the 7th of the present month, after having eaten, twenty-some scoundrels presented themselves in front of the still unfinished little house and destroyed it in just a few minutes, each thief taking what he could. Once the act was finished, they were almost obligated to make some stupid threats, more out of custom and an urge to defend their crime than for any other reason. Therefore they wanted to grab some and kill others; intimidate these and rob those. However, everything stopped at boasting without producing any cause for personal disgrace.

I wrote them a letter reminding them what they did the previous year with the Christians and with the interests of the mission; and that regardless we had nothing left in the interior which might serve us in taking vengeance. I wrote in this way because I thought that the perfidious behaviour of a few scoundrels from Kao-ki had no cause except that they had robbed us many times, which crime tormented them with the fear that we Christians would pursue them. With the goal of calming them, I added to the letter that we were not vengeful people, nor were we upset upon knowing of the animosity with which on the evening of the 7th they destroyed our house at Kao-ki, and that we only wanted to know if they would admit into their village a few who would teach them to honor their parents, to not harm their neighbor, to not steal, to maintain loyalty to their superiors, to be good men. That is, I wanted to know from them if they desired to leave the road of unhappiness in which they found themselves, and place themselves on straight paths of happiness and well-being; because if they did not wish to leave the abject state they were in, I would never again step foot in such a village. They have not responded so far, nor do I believe they will respond to this letter, which is the decisive one, speaking humanely of their condemnation and eternal death. They do not see it, that is clear: but it is because they are blind, and blind voluntarily! Because they work against the light they have lost their sight. Kao-ki, then, is lost, and lost forever, as I have abandoned it, throwing the dust of my shoes in their faces with the letter I wrote. For us to enter this village will require the people to come seek a missionary, regretting the past, which seems so difficult as to be impossible.

We should not despair, that is clear; only the devil and his company despair; but from the bottom up that mission with its magnificent starting point concluded its course, and hung on the edge of a precipice: one more step and it reached the end.

I will conclude this letter telling Your Holiness, full of joy, that this humid soil is treating Father Herce quite well so far. Would that God our Lord continue to grant him this great boon in the future! In this way I will be able to pass on the charge of my ministry, for the glory of God, the good of mankind, and the augmenting of religion.

Father, the Christians here are very fervent, and therefore very deserving of being sent some cloths, to serve them as cloaks for when they come to church. Perhaps said cloths have been lost; as Your Holiness did promise them a long time back. They need not be expensive; as they are only for some poor and simple Christians to decently cover their heads to listen in the house of God. When those cloths arrive for these poor ones, a missionary for the Igorrotes might come as well, with a few trinkets to trade for

food: things like rings, chains, amulets, glasses etc., and above all blankets to cover the missionary and his dependents. It appears to many of us while in Manila that being a missionary consists in grabbing an image of Christ or a wooden cross in the hand, and then escaping into the lands of God to preach the kingdom of heaven. Consequently we quite frequently ignore that one needs to eat, sleep, etc. How many things have happened to me on account of this lack of provisions! Here all is needed, Father Ours, all; all in the full extension of the word; and as proof, a few days ago the good Father Quartermaster sent us a box of used clothes, and the joy which this gave us was almost inexpressible. I still expect another shortly, as he promised it to me. With that I give Our Father leave of your lowliest subject,

Friar Fernando Sainz, of the Order of Preachers, Provincial Vicar of Formosa.