

Chinchon, Andrés. "Father Chinchon to the Most Reverend Father Provincial of the Order of Preachers of the Philippines, Cheng-Kim, April 18, 1868." *Correo Sino-annamita* 4 (1869): 7-15. English translation by Patrick Stein. Edited by Douglas Fix.

My appreciated and respected Father: Although part of the island is in uproar, terrorizing these weak neophytes by the injuries and vexations which this new mission suffers, and consequently making me distracted, with little desire to write, I believe I should make V.P. aware of all that this little congregation [*navecilla*, literally 'little boat'] suffered from before the Holy Week, until the 8th of this week, Holy Wednesday. I will say nothing of the work done until now, as Father Fernando our Vicar will have brought you up to date on all that.<sup>1</sup>

Kao-aki was the residence of Fr. Francisco Herce, whose church-house, although made of cane and straw, a little over a month ago was adjusted, after various displeasing incidents, so that the same father could live with some comfort, and so it could host the new catechumens who were preparing to receive the holy baptism, perhaps at Pentecost. We were also working to open a new Christian community close to said residence of Father Herce, and a few steps had been taken; all that was missing was someone to preach doctrine there. Without doubt the Devil must have been envious of this incomplete peace which we enjoyed, and so he worked to alter it and, if possible, be finished all at once with Religion, Christians, missionaries, and Europeans.

In the middle of the third lunar month, that is on the night of the Passion, the gentiles of Kao-aki village entered the Church, requesting money; but fearing that they would receive a negative answer, they clarified that it was for the procession of the devil Ong-ia ("King"), and they said it would be a mere loan. Father Herce refused this importunate demand, and [the gentiles,] seeing that things were going nowhere, threatened to burn the church-house. Herce, in part to escape from their repeated pressings, and in part due to the fevers which attacked him in those days, came to this congregation in the port, entrusted to my care, to cure himself, and to wait until the superstitious day [of the procession] passed, not thinking that the threats of burning the church-house would be carried out; but God permitted just the contrary, as I will refer to further on.

On the 16th day of the 3rd moon, that is April 18, Holy Wednesday, was the day marked for the procession of the demonic king, and the day prepared by God to give us a little taste from the bitter chalice; though He would drink it down to the dregs for our love. It would have been around twelve in the morning of the mentioned day, when a crowd of gentiles from various villages, all reunited with uproar and infernal noise, carried their idol Ong-ia, the object of their impious adorations, in procession, passing near the church. As can be imagined, nothing good was to be expected of that God, nor

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<sup>1</sup> There is no letter from Fernando Sainz in this volume, so this line presumably refers to an oral report after Sainz's return to Manila. According to Borao, Sainz went to Manila in 1868 to recruit new missionaries, before ultimately leaving the Taiwan mission for good in July 1869. See José Eugenio Borao, "Dominicos Españoles En Taiwan (1859-1960): Primer Siglo de Historia de La Iglesia Católica En La Isla," *Encuentros En Catay* 23 (2009): 4-5.

of the main chief who directed that host.<sup>2</sup> This one was a Judas, who while not a Christian, or even a catechumen, should have been very grateful to the Religion for the benefits he had received from the missionary, and principally from the venerable catechist of the same village of Kao-aki. He was saved from death three times by the said catechist, and in payment for this act and for the other benefits received, he had the audacity to direct the gentiles to the terrain of the church, and, making himself interpreter by way of contortions and movements of the infernal will of Belial, to tell his infidel disciples that it was the will of Ong-ia (idol) that they burn the church-mission of the Religion of the Lord of heaven. This was enough for that mob possessed by a satanic fury to gather their torches, and — such pain! The work, the sweat, the pain, the displeasures, the sleepless nights, and the dangers spent on raising that house of canes and straws, only for it to end up reduced so quickly to ashes, all, all ended without gain; but I misspeak: God permitted it. He will give us recompense. Nor were they content with burning the churchhouse, but they also destroyed everything on the church's plot, trees, plants, and (I do not know if on the same day or another) they even stripped the canes, and they plan to offer that plot to the devil in gratitude, if indeed they have not yet done so. Thanks to God there was no disgrace towards any person; but if they had caught the catechist, who was hidden, it might be that Formosa would have had the Protomartyr of this new mission. They are still searching for him by name. They also tried to persecute the Christians, burning their poor houses, but thanks to God they did not go ahead [with this]. To these vexations were added the calumny which already a few days earlier was going from mouth to mouth, clique to clique, and village to village against us, that is, that we were poisoning the wells<sup>3</sup> and foodstuffs. Some people were even so credulous that they surrounded the wells to prevent anyone from throwing in poison, and others did not dare to buy [food] out of fear that they might encounter deadly poison. But the work is not yet done; the Devil has put all his tricks in play in order to finish off, or at least weaken if possible, the still-tender faith of this island.

When the news of the burning reached my residence, which was on Holy Thursday after the rites, Father Herce and I, in order to inform ourselves better about the matter, and to prepare our first steps, wrote back to the runner in order to acquire more specific details, which we were able to get from a Christian who arrived here on Easter Saturday. On that day, after Mass, the English Consul introduced himself to us, [and we] supplicated him to take some measures to see if the villagers could be contained; and he agreed to write the mandarin after Sunday. But thinking that it would be most convenient to hurry our trip to the tribunal as much as possible, since the Chinese become more daring if they are not punished after a sin, [and] think of silence and patience as weakness — for this reason, then, on the day of the Resurrection at noon, Father Herce went to speak with the mandarin, wholly ignorant of the revolt occurring in the city, and of the danger his life would have been in, if divine Providence

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<sup>2</sup> Spanish: *principal cabeza*. Both principal and cabeza were used to designate 'chief,' 'headman,' and 'captain,' especially in the context of indigenous villages. However they could also both mean simply 'front' or 'head,' as in the person who happens to lead the parade. In other words, I cannot be sure if this 'chief' of the parade was also a political leader in normal times.

<sup>3</sup> Footnote in original: "Always the same. In Formosa they reproduce the unbelievable calumny of Madrid and other parts of Europe, to excite the ire of the populace against the ministers of the lord. (Editors' note.)"

had not acceded to conserve it. For it was that on Holy Saturday the Protestant catechist found in said city gave a woman some betel and tea, following which she went mad and died, or so they say. As can be imagined, those who believed the calumny I mentioned above, that we poisoned the food and water, became so excited that after destroying the house of the Protestant catechist, and robbing what was inside, they gave him a good beating, and if it hadn't been for the mandarin who came to his rescue, he may have died at their hands. One must note that the gentiles confuse us with the Protestants, and they [the Protestants] as well take our name on themselves, and so their cause is made ours.<sup>4</sup>

Those who had been involved in the robbery and mistreatment of the catechist, fearing that the English Consul or some other European would go to the mandarin, spent Easter Sunday on lookout in the streets and port of the city, expecting some European would come to kill them. But seeing that it was already noon and that no one was coming, they retired, and — oh Divine Providence! — only shortly thereafter Father Herce arrived in the city. He had barely entered thereabouts when voices rang out: "The barbarian!" (the name they give the European), "The barbarian is coming!" Amidst these calls, and with one [city-dweller] following here, another coming out over there, the Father arrived at the tribunal, and when he concluded his business, he left to return home. In the meantime an enormous crowd pounded on the doors of the tribunal, and afterwards, when the Father emerged to take his seat [NB: presumably on a palanquin], they approached yelling and creating a stir, and, thinking he had come to give testimony in favor of the Protestant catechist, wanted to take revenge on him in their rage. The Father made all efforts to tell them he was no Protestant, and that he had not come to observe or deal with this business, [but] his voice (along with that of a servant of the tribunal) was lost among thousands of unfocused words. For that reason the servant of the tribunal, or, as it were, the secondary mandarin, seeing that the Father was in danger, induced him, or rather grabbed his arm and pulled him, to enter the court, in order to free him from this furious mob. The Christian carriers of the palanquin were so full of fear that they hid themselves in a fake door of the tribunal.

Since the rebels could not avenge themselves on the priest, they grabbed, destroyed, and burnt his chair [palanquin]. The Father stayed in the court until Easter Tuesday, and during this time he was treated very well, speaking of doctrine to everyone. The dependents of the mandarin were full of panic, fearing that the people would revolt, since the mandarins do not have the power to control them. On the said Easter Tuesday, after midnight, the Father, dressed as a mandarin, seated on a chair, and escorted by twelve or thirteen soldiers, left the city and arrived at this church around four in the morning without any particular incidents. The mandarin [of Tainan] took these precautions to avoid any incidents.

In other, normal times, with the apparent help of the mandarin, and with that of the English Consul (who has also taken an interest in us), it might be possible for us to

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<sup>4</sup> It appears that the Protestants generally claimed solidarity with the Catholics when preaching to the locals, while the Catholics at all points treated the Protestants as essentially another religion entirely. For more detail on the relation between Catholic and Protestant (primarily Presbyterian) missionaries in Taiwan, see Fernando Sainz's letter of 1866: Fernando Sainz, "Most Revered Father Provincial Fr. Domingo Treserra, Soa-ka, January 16, 1866," *Correo Sino-annamita* 1 (1866): 64-88.

achieve something; but in the current circumstances we cannot taste success. The calumnies and lies cross each other as they fly in all directions. The people are in such an effervescence that, if only they had a leader [*cabeza*], it would be no strange thing if they rose up and threw out, if at all possible, everything smelling of European. The mandarins, powerless, have to subject themselves to the will of the people, and if they do not they run the risk that they [the masses] will rebel and finish even with them [the mandarins]. As far as concerns us in these days without support, we are expecting them to come and destroy the house and church, as the rumors occasionally say they will. Since although one cannot give full credence to such gossip, nor believe everything people say, there always remains a "*posse*" [Latin: 'can,' 'possibility'] and as it were a certain suspicion that it would be tempting the Lord not to taken some measures. For this reason, we at first judged that it would be good to resist; but it turns out that those we wished to attack were no more than a horde of robbers, who hoped to sate their greed with the silver which they imagined was piled up in our house. Our first intention was to frighten them, and scare off those unhappy talkers who have all their strength in their mouths, and who upon seeing cannons, knives, pikes, and all other kinds of brute and material force, will not move. Since they have reached such a point of stupidity, and their understanding is so obsessed (in punishment for their sins), that neither benefits nor examples nor reason can reach them; only the stick can make them behave, even if incompletely. This was our first idea; but in the case that something happens, what we will do [instead] is gather everything we can and bring it to the home of a European in the port, and if they come, which I doubt much and cannot persuade myself to believe, we will march to the port and seek asylum with the English, leaving the house and church to them. God will not permit such a thing. Every day we call upon all the gates of Heaven, invoking the intercession of the Saints, and principally of the King of all of them, our lighthouse, our refuge, our shield, [who] defends us from all hostile assaults, that is, our beloved Mother. With so many intercessors, *quis contra nos* [Latin: 'who is against us']?

In the interior, where Father Colomer is, there are more dangers, and it would be nothing strange if we were to have a Martyr. Happy he who is chosen for such luck!

Father, all this is what this little congregation has experienced and is experiencing, though I did omit many things, as people say so much that it is not easy to remember, nor less to have the patience and time to write it all down. It seems to me that with this, you can form some idea; and if you wish to know better, or know other details, for my part I will [inform you] with submission and pleasure. I also ask V.P. if there is anything which does not conform to our sublime vocation. "*Benedicite*," counsel us, command us, and if necessary, correct us and punish us.

I forgot to mention that the principal leader of the disorder reigning in the interior is none other than the thief who robbed the Vicar of 200 pesos. There is also a rumor that they have promised 50 pesos to whoever captures a Christian; 100 to he who grabs a catechist; 500 for the catechist of Kao-aki, who they hate unto death; and 1000 for a European.

The hour of sending the letter is approaching, and so I conclude here, asking for the sacrifices and prayers of V.P. for this mission, and *maxime* for this, your useless and most wretched servant, Q. B. S. M.

Fr. A. Chinchon,  
Of the Order of Preachers.