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**Historical Article: An Early Description of Korea and Asia Chinese and Japanese**

Eca de Queiroz

[It is not an overstatement to say that Eca de Queiroz is the most significant writer of Portuguese literature of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. His prolific hand produced a wide array of texts -from irony-ridden chronicles to socio-political attacks via manifestos, from short stories to 700-page d novels. It truly might be said that he set the tone and the language of the Portuguese twentieth century.

While he may not have been the most intellectual of writers and others may have surpassed him in vocabulary, intricacy of thought and amount of published work, all those that followed, followed, his path. He never wrote poetry, perhaps always faithful to his pledge to the Realistic school, which was inaugurated by him in his country.

A lesser-known facet of the man born in 1845 is that of the diplomat. In 1872 he became Consul First Class in Havana, Cuba. Later he was transferred to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1874, Bristol in 1878 and in 1888 to Neuilly, Paris, where he died in the summer of 1900.

Thanks to his voyages Ega was acquainted directly with the Middle East, which is evident in his writings about that region. However, it was as a diplomat in Cuba that he had the opportunity to get some degree of direct contact with the peoples of the Far East, whether it was with Chinese immigrants in Cuba or from second-hand information and talks circulating at that time within the Americas, As one can perceive from his consular correspondence, he dedicated considerable time to understanding that reality. However, his was not a deep-knowledge or a thoroughly thought out viewpoint. Even in today’s world, many analysts make rmsiiiformed and incomplete accounts of reality. Ega, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, is no less different. It is through this exact misinformation and the opinions of the times, however, which can give us a direct view of what a Portuguese writer would understand when referring to the then-contemporary Sino-Japanese war. Although he never lived to see it, the Portuguese twentieth century lived, in many aspects, under Eqa’s mark. [page 46]

This text was written while he was in France and published in a Brazilian newspaper, the Gazeta de Noticias, of Rio de Janeiro, with which Ega was collaborating with regular chronicles. The articles were published between Saturday, the 1st and Thursday, the 6th of December, 1894. The title published here is posthumous. This translation was done based on the text set by Orlando Grossegesse, published in 1997 (Chineses e Japoneses, Livros Cotovia: Lis boa).

My most sincere thanks to Mr. Remco Breuker, whose assistance in the translation went beyond the call of duty. His friendship is cherished, and it

wouldn’t be possible to present a readable text without him.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: Occasionally there comes to our attention an article of note from times long past. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that this article was not originally written in English Such documents are often not available to the wider public, nor is the existence of such material generally well-known. The article was written at the time of the Sino-Japanese War, and while there is some misinformed content, as well as the author’s ironical style of writing, this paper, nonetheless, is valuable as a description of the information that was available to the world in general regarding Korea and other parts of Asia at the end of the 19th century. It is also valuable as a barometer of public opinion and understanding in the West at that time.

It is only for historical purposes that this article is presented to our membership.]

To the northeast of China, or more precisely in Chinese Manchuria, stuck between the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea, lies a crestfallen, rocky-shored peninsula. In 1392, the time when the current reigning family, or at least the one who ruled until last month, founded their kingdom, the land bestowed upon itself the luminous, joyful and lively name of Kingdom of Morning Calm. Japanese neighbours call this land Ko-Rai. For our own comfort, we pronounce it Korea1). This is a country so silent, so secluded, so apart from mankind, even from its Asian relatives, that it is also known in Japan and China as the Hermit Kingdom2).

1. Coreia in the original, a spelling more suited to Portuguese phonetics.

2. “Country” in the original.

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In Europe, what we know better from this land are those prints that portray its inhabitants. Slender, grave men with long and drooping moustaches, wearing the most extraordinary hat ever referred to in the annals of fashion: the outstanding Korean hat, extremely tall and pointed, and with a brim so large that a patriarch can keep his offspring, his furniture and the whole of his livestock underneath it. These men speak a Chinese muddled with the Tartar language, feed on rice, and live in rudimentary houses, built from bamboo, adobe and paper.

There is, as in China, a superior class of literati grafted onto the old noble, feudal castes. The former, educated in the Chinese classics, will take on the most important tasks of the nation, from commanding the armies, governing the provinces, writing grammars, administrating justice to attending the courts. They do so after being selected through means of state examinations which awards them their scholarly degrees. Slaves perform all the lowly services. And a very uptight, rusty Confucianism, full of the evil eye and ill omens, is held high, if not as a religion per se, at any rate, as the moral standard of the learned class. People in the countryside worship the sun and the stars. All of them drink boiled rice beverages. Tea is a luxury, granted only to the royal family. As in Periclean Greece, music is the most beloved of the arts and is consequently part of the primary schooling program Industries are unknown, if existent at all. When missionaries are sent from Europe, Koreans kill the missionaries. The old city of Seoul is the capital, which every single Korean considers to be the earthly centre of sumptuousness, pleasure and good manners, of the best upbringing and well-to-do lives.

It is over this so-called Kingdom of Morning Serenity that the Flowering Middle Empire is fighting the Empire of the Rising Sun ... If told this way, the official version, the war between China and Japan sounds like a fairy tale, or the prologue to one of those allegorical tales that profusely delighted the 18th century, during the times of the Hotel de Rambouillet, of the excellent Mademoiselle de Scudery, of “Artamene ou le Grand Cyrus”. As a matter of fact, the general public, all those who are not professional diplomats, sociologists or strategy experts, are inclined to imagine this war, a war between the two strongest nations of the Far East, as amusing as a military parody, with a fairy-ruled fantasyland as its stage, where princes are picaresque figures. Ever since Cook founded his Agency, the average European has been traveling as well as reading travel tales (not to mention the significant amount of anecdotes and hear-say conversations). A European will not state these days, or at least not out loud, as the erudite ladies and the piquant spirits of the 18th century did, “How can one be a Persian?” We do begin to realise -within a certain extent - what it could mean to be a Chinese. However, for the time being, we can only be on familiar terms with the superficial and excessive sides of their exoticism. With an awkward outlining, gathering little ideas from [page 48]  prints depicting folk attire, detailed ceremonies and habits, speckled around newspapers, even though invariably in the varieties section, and chiefly from what we know of their art, thoroughly caricature-like, chimerical - we form in the mind our concise, definitive impression of the Chinese and the Japanese societies. To the European, the Chinaman is still a yellow, slanted-eyed rat, with a long ponytail and with three-inch nails, of outmoded, childish and mulish manners, smelling of sandal and opium, and living his life among paper lanterns, eating astonishing heaps of rice with two sticks and bowing all the time. As for the Japanese, we depict him as a scraggy chap with a shaved head, a cheerful vagrant, frittering away his hours in tea gardens with his inseparable fan and two sables, anon returning to his abode of silk-screens and chrysanthemums to crouch down on a straw mat and slit his bowels open! To both we grant hereditary skills of porcelain making and silk weaving. Due to the customary slaughtering of our missionaries, we are prone to add to all these traits (held with such precision) the one of fierceness. And if the Chinese do not wish to have railroads, the telegraph, or gas-lamps, to us emblems paramount of civilization, then of course we have to presume them to be barbarians. As for the Japanese, who have produced mock locomotives and telephones, this monkey-see monkey-do civilization just brings into view the grotesque in them That beyond these ponytails, paper parasols, stubbornness, the whole exoticism, there could exist firm social and familial institutions, powerful morals, an ancient and rich literature, prolific working methods, unnoticed vigour, is something the average European can not even fathom.

Even if he did suspect such vigour and virtues, he wouldn’t be too impressed, or give too much credit to these poor races, a mere source of amusement. When a civilization surrenders itself fully to its materialism and hauls out from it its joys and glories, it leans towards judging all others according to the scarcity or abundance of their material and industrial wealth. Peking’s stores have no electrical lights. Therefore, Peking must be an uncivilized city.

Edmond About’s loquacious character, the one that intensely loathed the Arabs for the reason that “these meagre fellows did not even have the cafe-concerto yet”, stands for, in caricature, the average European citizen with regard to the judgement of Asian civilizations. Thousands, if not millions of Europeans, still believe sincerely to this day that Romans and Greeks were not civilized peoples, for neither did they employ steam power, nor did they use the sewing machine, nor did they play the piano, nor met all the grandeur of our grand age.

Thus the unfocused, amused attention we bestow upon this war between Japan and China. A vulgar and foul brouhaha between two barbarian countries, the one not to a lesser degree than the other, just because it parrots European coats and arms. Some visionaries, folks who adore proclaiming sullen prophecies, pretend that [page 49] one day such masses of hundreds of millions of barbarians will, bearing our own civilization’s achievements, fall down upon us, raiding Europe. . . The thought of it makes one smile -and every single European, looking about, finding himself surrounded with such power and wealth, by boundless inventions of wisdom and machinery; a domesticated nature at his command, this European smiles in absolute joy.

So in a similar fashion did smile the Gaul-Roman. A clear day in his lovely country villa, reading a most learned scroll under the bright marble porticos, or strolling about his garden of acanthous and honeysuclde roses, tangled around busts of philosophers and statuettes of the gods, he would smile as he vaguely listened to stories about savage hordes of Franks and Goths attacking some forsaken legion in a far-away land of moss and mists. Who could give a thought to these base peoples? Was not Gaul, or the whole of Italy for that matter, a wonder of force and riches, so full of war machines and other inventions of power? Not long after these delusions, a Frank or a Goth would ride a wild steed into the villa one morning, brandishing a plain spike, and all that would be left of the Gaul-Roman, the rose-filled garden, the white porticos, the philosophers and the countless inventions of power was a puddle of dust and blood.

The reason why Chinese and Japanese are fighting against each other should not concern us in particular. Both wish to dominate the Kingdom of Morning Serenity. The Chinese, because of a centuries-old tradition of domination. The Japanese, according to their own diplomats, for fear that Russia might expand throughout Korea, taking advantage of China’s weakness or even to oppose its paradoxical interested condescendence towards Korea. That means that Russia, if it would occupy some of the seaports, such as Pusan. would control the Sea of Japan, which the Japanese consider their own. And even if this would not constitute a risk towards Japanese independence, it would be an eventual deterrence to commercial development... However, all this is a far-flung affair of Asian policies. To us Europeans and likewise to you Americans, the apex of attention should be the consequences of this war - above all, the consequences of China’s defeat, of a humiliating, harsh and thorough rout, that pierces all the way into the mandarin bureaucracy and into the impenetrable pride of the Manchu Dynasty If Japan is to be hammered down, there will be no significant consequences whatsoever. At least for the western world there would be no noteworthy worries. Suffice it to say, it would correspond to a showy and stuck-up people having a well-deserved spanking. A victorious China would be a once-again sleeping China. A beaten China would mean a threatened Europe. China is composed of four hundred million people - almost a third of humanity! All witty, lively beings of clarion-clear intelligence, a people whose persistence and verve is equal to none, perhaps comparable only to  [page 50] that of the bulldog and mixed with a quasi-ascetical soberness and an unbelievable capacity to endure suffering. Visiting Europeans claim that Chinese are, above all, a lying, thieving, dirty and cowardly lot. However, truth be said, these Europeans do not know anything about China apart from what they learned within the strict circle of the free sea-ports, or European “concessions” if you like, such as Hong Kong or Shanghai. Furthermore, in these harbours they have seen nothing but the illiterate, rude mobs that spend their lives performing inferior tasks such as that of the boatman, the loader, the steward, the freight boy, or the hawker. Now, to address the whole of Chinese society through this distorted view would be the same as judging France by the countless winos that tread Marseille’s piers, or to criticise Brazil’s finesse of education and societal vitality by singling out the ordinary people that load and unload warehouses and stockrooms. Scarce are the travelers whose path has taken them further into inner China and who were privileged enough to observe the habits and ways of the educated classes, and who, after some peeking around through unclosed doors or slits in the screens, were able to gather some impressions of household life, intimacy ideas or beliefs. Even the foreign residents in Peking, that is to say the legations’ staff, do not participate in Chinese soiety. How could they, living isolated behind their walls as the Jews were in their ghettos? The familiarity with the environs is narrowed to external things: streets, shops, temple facades, and rampant mobs... Only one of these residents, a secretary of the English embassy, did set out to know China genuinely: he spoke perfect Chinese, not only the vernacular but also Mandarin and the Classical language. He even grew the customary enormous pigtail. For thirty years, every night, this completely Sinified man would don his silk garbs, let down his pigtail, hold a fan, and pay some lovely visits to the noblest of Peking’s families. This man truthfully acquainted himself with China. However, becoming a Chinese, hence circumspect, he left no memoirs, thoughts or impressions, and died in silence. Some of the Europeans that work for the Chinese government recently have made their way deep into the Chinese world. For instance, engineers and teachers from the arsenal of Fucheu. Each and every one of these men came back with a completely different tale from that of a tourist. A tourist would arrive at Shanghai’s pier an odd morning, and by night he is already hastily evaluating a sixty-century old civilization of four hundred million souls from what they made out of the dirty, grotesque and puny hotel’s coolie. As for the engineers and teachers, having travelled inner China, they return awestruck. And given the fact that their sole purpose in China was only to teach how to build and use a machinegun in the first place, they could not but confess that much was learned from the conviviality with the local erudite bourgeoisie. From topnotch lessons in proper demeanour to social order, filial respect, household unison, clever economics, precise workmanship, and [page 51] also small lectures on subordination, purity, moral zeal, and all sort of intimate virtues that constitute a warranty for the magnificence, stability and brilliant achievements. Far more than the subtle art of bomb making and torpedo manoeuvring, it seems...

They complain about no more than the lack of urban sanitation. Streets, mainly in provinces such as Canton and Peking, are poorly swept and filled with garbage. But was Paris not like this, some fifty or sixty years ago, the days when uncle Hugo called it ‘“bright city”, soul of the world? And Europe looked up to it as the model of behaviour, fashion and virtues and vices, to a greater extent than it does now.

But even if Chinese are creatures made up exclusively of merits or of demerits, the fact remains that they have built their own mode of civilization, one possessing a prodigious strength. . . for it has survived all sorts of imaginable assault waves out of the Aryan genius. And it surely possesses a certain sweetness, as is continuously reflected by China’s ancient literature. From the philosophers’ maxims to the lily-songs, the celebration of the ineffable, incomparable bliss that comes from the fact of being a Chinese, of inhabiting this land has always been present. To be exact, you can stumble on every kind of item in China throughout the last ten thousand years except a pessimist. As everybody knows, confined within this strong civilization its spirit of sweetness blossomed, with the Great Wall as one of the most vigorous metaphors in western rhetoric. All of those who hold high the task of storing every deed of civilization during the century shall bear in mind the moment when England, seconded by France, tore openings in that wall to push inside opium -the opium that the Chinese government wouldn’t allow in for the intolerant fact that opium poisons, undermines, demoralizes and saps the strength of races! The records name this event The Opium War. The sacred rights of trade triumphed in it.

A victorious entrance in Peking meant the staging of the second coming of Attila or Tamerlain, “The Scourge of God”. The Summer Palace, which was held as the inestimable imperial museum of Chinese art, was stripped and burnt down. Libraries, historical archives, the literary wealth of the nation turned to ashes. Europe, not sufficiently pleased with it, forced open five ports to the commerce of cotton, ironware, and cheap trinkets, rubbish. Moreover, to opium, the immense quantities of opium, the thirteen, fifteen, seventeen million pounds of opium per year!

It came to pass that through those same ports, or rather through the Great Wall’s slits used by Europeans to shove inwards their affairs, the Chinese took a step outwards to the rest of the world, the enormous human family from which they were cut off for so long A crucial moment in time, bearing witness to two key [page 52] novel realities - emigration and the missions sent to Europe. Sent for scrutiny of our sciences, industries, fleets and armies.

These missions left China with curiosity - but also with repugnance. The Chinese cannot veil a certain horror of the European, at one time instinctive and rational, physiological and exact, so well documented in the “Popular Annals of the Empire”, in whose page s the first Dutch in Macao and around Canton are characterised thus: “These men - states this acidic account - belong to coarse races who dwell in dim and damp regions, and who never were acquainted with China or learnt from it, no doubt from which they could obtain some advantage. Reddish creatures with bluish, stupid-looking eyes, and enormous feet, with more than 25 inches. They look pitifully ignorant. As for their external features we cannot think of anything more repugnant and exotic!” Such the impression that the admirable Flemish - to us, fine examples of firm, healthy and clean men - stirred up in the Chinese. But do not think that the Portuguese, who arrived at their coasts by the end of the 15th century, or later, in our caravels’ wake, the English or the French, were granted any finer estimation from the Children of Heaven. All these outsiders looked similarly misshapen, grim, crass, and of terribly despicable morals and manners. Why had they crossed the oceans in their huge ships? For pirating, ravaging, trafficking, to say the least. Be aware that the educated classes, China’s grand bourgeoisie, consider business a vulgar occupation. Striving for profits and gold is just an evidence of base temperament. In those arriviste hard-faced men of utter arrogance and clamour, constantly screaming and wielding their huge blades, men to whom the art of life was reduced to mere trading, the Chinese could not find one singular merit for which a gentleman stands - gentleness, refinement, tolerance, a sense of equity, love of letters, worship of tradition and authority. Ever since, the perception of a European in the Celestial Empire as a malevolent creature lingers OIL The name with which they usually honour us is that of fan-kuai, meaning foreign devil, one who introduces and spreads evil from the outside. As for the rest of the Europeans that have established themselves there ever since its opening, not one has contributed to the abating of such distrust and dread With rare exceptions, most of the newcomers are businessmen of dry one-minded schemes of earning, trapped in a materialistic life, with no hint of the spiritual and the intellectual whatsoever. Therefore, according to the local erudite’s compass, they are abject. Not to mention the legions of seamen, which, with their unruliness, brawls and inebriations, appall and dishearten the Chinese, accentuating the idea that the Europeans can only be, besides selfish, also uncouth beings. Missionaries, who ought to be endorsed as the representatives of our pious merits, only cast a further darker shadow upon this, shining no light of unison or even some dignity in the affairs of religion. Only the barter and the battle cries of the epithet of [page 53] ”heretic” is heard amid themselves. The Catholic Church and its skirmishes with the Protestant, this sect plotting against that wing, that schemes to the detriment of the other, which tries to ruin a fourth... Calvinists, Anglicans, Jesuits and Dominicans in brotherly war. No piety or humility at all Each arriving parson introduces himself as a high luminary of the Church, and arrogates immediately the outer insignias of the Chinese dignitaries, as for instance the green litter carried by four men. Scorning and despising imperial laws and Buddhist rites and clerics, they acutely nose-dive into bigotry and haughtiness. Besides, the doctrine, especially in the moral section, the one part that could be of some interest to the Chinese spirit, does not seem superior nor new in comparison to Confucius’s volumes or Buddha’s precepts. Truthfully, the Chinese mandarins see nothing but contradictions in Christianity. Out of its dogmas, and not without some arrogance, they perceive nothing but murky dissimilitudes. They remain unswayed by the little there is of serviceable parts, which seem nevertheless tawdry, imperfect imitations of both of the major Eastern traditions.

From this picture one concludes that the Chinese think of Europeans with a profound disapproval and with the absolute conviction that in the intellectual, moral and social spheres, we are a step down. Consequently, they should be the ones guiding us. Still, they do grant us a sole quality. That of the mechanic. As any Indian Brahman or Muslim scholar will gladly assure you, our religious and ethical systems are pitiable, our metaphysics mediocre, our literature and social doctrines humdrum. The single superiority that the Oriental awards the Europeans with are those infernal means by which we construct steam machines, telegraphic apparatuses, and a myriad of shrewd utensils. Although they consider this talent of ours of undeniable second rating, suitable for laborers or slaves, they will agree on its usability. Ultimately, even a Mandarin from the Han-Li Academy will turn to the train for speed anytime. His reflection leads him to acquiesce that if he masters such expertise, he will then become a whole man, bringing together superiority of intellect and industrial supremacy morally and mechanically, a twice as sturdy entity. Such fortitude held sway over the first studying missions to Europe and commenced their scientific apprenticeship,

The initiation would have been fragmentary, casual and always struggling against the stiff old Chinese conservatism, though, if it were not for the stimulating political pride of the mandarins and their sheer rivalry with Japan. For centuries, China has cherished a hate for Japan that is very similar to the continuous, mutual and dumb detestation between France and England. Both figure as the greatest nations of the Far East, both struggle for dominance, both have achieved a high level in literature, in arts, and in certain national industries that export to international markets, in which they clash, adding commercial insult to intellectual [page 54] injury. Moreover, and still analogous to the English and the French, both their natures are as dissimilar as their European counterparts are, the former practical and grave, and the latter light and idealist. This leads to minute personal antipathies in each and every occasion when two representatives of the opposing races meet. In these recurrent meetings of manifold dealings their mutual hate increases exponentially until it reaches an immense international hatred. Successive wars deepen these rivalries. And as a matter of fact, the ultimate, total obliteration between the Chinese and the Japanese--bestowing upon each other the gracious epithet of “barbarians” and “grime of the earths”--was only prevented by the sea in between their two countries, the inadequacy of their navy and their shared fear for Europe.

As everybody knows, however, Japan has been the subject of the most astonishing makeover possible in the scarce hours that lead a morning into an afternoon. An unparalleled revolution of history. Relenting to nothing, this frantic, swift people shook off their traditions, institutions, laws, customs, and outfits - and swallowed wholesale the European civilization, bought most likely at a low, low cost in some ‘‘Comprehensive civilization Wares Co.” Nothing embodies a state better than its leader - or nothing should, that is - and not so long ago, I had the opportunity to examine two prints that show the saddening outlining of such a transformation (not to mention the artist’s). The old Japan, next to the new nation. The first representing the hieratic and onrnipotent Mikado, half man, half god. The Emperor was towering over all other men on his regal throne, or rather an altar amidst silk straw-coloured floating banners and spiralling incense smoke. Wearing his white lacquer tiara cast with precious stones, he lowers his motionless idol-like eyes to the old daimyos and magnificent samurais, donning their brocades and golden bronzes, wearing their sables and the two golden antennae shining on their helmets, as their foreheads touch the thin, clear mats embellished with nasari flowers in a reverential bow before the Child of the Sun. The other print, with its lively colours, represents the Mikado as well, but this time in quite a different manner. Not many years have passed, but he seems a somewhat shrunk man, caught inside a slightly tight English general’s red uniform, a Prussian white helmet that covers his eyes, loose-fitting bluish French trousers, while sitting sidelong in an armchair in a gloomy railway station and surrounded by ant-like constitutional functionaries with top hats, bowler hats, panama hats, an unenthusiastic lot, visibly hot and bothered, as a locomotive steams and puffs and heads off under canvas arches in which the following maxim can be read: “Long live the Constitution! Eerie.

This trarisformation meant more however, for besides our top hats and saggy pants, the Emperor also took up our battleships, our “Lebel” rifles and [page 55] repetition-guns, our martial skills and sciences, the whole affair And lacking no adroitness or wits to put these materials to use and follow these principles and having military officers educated at Europe’s theatres of war and armouries, soon Japan the scenic was replaced by Japan the fearsome. Notwithstanding the fairly clownish aspect provided in those flabby uniforms, it became Far East’s great power.

In the meantime, China observed these happenings with unspeakable disgust, as well as with uneasiness. The men who brought to an abrupt end the holiest of cults, the cult of things past, who unblinkingly espoused foreign things, who relegated their religious gatherings to the second place in order to applaud Marseille’s plebeian sing-a-longs in dim-lighted casinos, were staunchly vile. But their ports were bustling with warships, their arsenals filled with newfangled weaponry, their education system infused by new knowledge, and hence, could, despite their dishonorable nature, turn out to be perilous. The European fiends’ strong and cunning civilization turned Japan into an Asian power by transplanting their cunningness and power. They could not think of a better plan, then, to adopt the same cunning qualities to make sure that the Empire of the Rising Sun would not scorch the Middle Empire. After all, it has been plainly and regrettably proven that the Lebel rifle kills in a much superior and further degree than the graceful and noble bow and arrow of the ancestors.

Thus, Japan is mainly responsible for pushing a reluctant China into the mimicking of Europe, a step that was so humiliating and at odds with the social, political and religious spirit, that it furthermore infuriated the mandarins against the now constitutional government of the Mikado. If old Japan was a nuisance, then this newly Europeanised and gas-powered country dotted with telephone poles became truly despicable. And the complicated matter of Korea, a continuous bone of contention between both antagonists, was aggravated by the dilemma of Westernization, which led to even more incomprehension and hate between the two countries. In Seoul, at the poor Korean king’s court, the Chinese and Japanese influences openly fought out an until then covert enmity, with the former fending off unnecessary things in a conservative and spiteful fashion, and with the latter as a zealous convert introducing new civilization modes. Japan managed to instruct the frail, gullible Korean government to establish a European style military academy - immediately followed by the successful Chinese efforts to close it down. A railroad was being constructed, with the first yards as a Japanese contribution - consequently, China embargoed it and actually wiped out the project permanently. Nevertheless, and in spite of doing it with some degree of distrust and uncertainty on its efficiency, China kept on buying our rifles and duplicating our models. Being at all times self-assured that, if needed, in a war even against Europeanised Japan, [page 56] their science and materials would be no match for the sheer amounts of the old Chinese, Manchu and Tartar legions. Indisputably an illusion. In just a few weeks following the declaration of war, Japan overran Korea, overthrew the old king’s government and army, pushed back the Chinese army, entered China and marched towards Peking, coercing the Son of Heaven, confined within his own holy city, by force into a harmful, shameful peace.

Well, so far the Japanese march is still uncompleted, and still far away from Peking, but in the instant they enter its gates, and they surely will, China will suffer its most remarkable ignominy that it has felt in its six thousand years of history. Therefore, whether the Manchu dynasty is left to prevail or to perish, the everlasting mandarins, witnesses of dynasties past and to come, will reason - for such is their fate and vocation - that an offence like this one is rooted in the absence of European weaponry and methods. There should be no doubt that these methods are intrinsically strong. If not, how come even vile people such as the Japanese, “the grime of the earth”, using them, triumphed over the supremacy of the venerable Flowering Empire?

The outcome of this line of reasoning is, as one should expect, that China will become Europeanised, at least militarily, in its most ingenious, scientific and modern features. It will tread the same course that Japan did for the last fifteen years, but in a far superior manner, with respect to its disproportionate population of four hundred million and incalculable millions of dollars, not to mention the astuteness, the vigour, the practical sense and minute methods that characterizes this race. In twenty years, or less, China will become the greatest military power on earth.

And it will not spend any effort, as we did, inventing or arduously creating what for? It just has to buy and to learn how to use the stuff, an easy task for their shrewd and wealthy ingeniousity. The Aryan genius exerts itself making its natural and sublime calculations and discoveries … the long-haired Mongol just has to look, choose and adapt.

So, as soon as China becomes this new, terrible and powerful military nation, Europe will find itself in the most precarious and dangerous situation. Not that we have to fear any kind of invasion from Asian barbarians, as some of us actually do, prophesying doom to come. Even if a new Attila sprouts from that country, a mastermind of brilliant energy, able to unite all the peoples of the East, and command them to wallop the West, our civilization could never be sunk, and to some extent it would not even quiver. Europe is united in such a fashion, an impregnable defying strength resides so deeply rooted in its moral and social unity, that... But Russia, Russia is a stronghold of a substance that no one, no matter their strength, even if organized and armoured as Europe, could ever run it over, ever.  [page 57] Moreover, China is excruciatingly old. And these escapades call for new, vibrant blood, as was the Huns’ and the Goths’. Besides, as all rural peoples, the Chinese are in effect a peaceful people. For long centuries their education has been one of non-aggression, all their literature and ethic systems emphasize the spurning of the military man. China consists of farmers ruled by intellectuals. This is not the stuff of which rampant hordes are made. I believe, therefore, that the Gaul-Roman can keep up with his quiet reading and promenades under the villa porticoes, among his flowery bushes and Wisdom scions’ busts. The yellow man will not burst in riding his furry Tartar charger, piercing the air with old Tamerlain’s cry of war, Hai-up! Hai-up!

Nonetheless, the yellow man shall reach our domains, oh yes he shall! Meekly and serenely, with all their worldly possessions on their backs, crossing the oceans in huge liners, they shall come, not for plunder, but for labor. As ants stealthily invade some turf, so shall our Old World meet this silent invasion from Chinese laborers. California, a small province, stands as an example of things to come in our populated continent, if we are to expect an unlimited influx of Chinese. 1852 was the year that San Francisco observed the first hundred Chinamen arriving, coy and hesitant, for physical work at the mines. Not ten years had passed and a hundred thousand more came. Today they would have reached the million, or even many millions, had not California warded them off as the plague, as it is done in Algeria to locusts or in Australia to rabbits. It is not hunger or misery--as many people are inclined to conclude hastily, that pushes the Chinese out of their country. Quite the contrary! All these immigrants are from the well-to-do rural classes of the richest provinces of the South, and all are provided with a fairly good education and do not leave their homes without some funds. In them there is no such thing as the erratic adventurous spirit, rather a minutely rationalized plan to make a balanced and assured small fortune, and then return to their homes, their wives, their family, the stable center with which they never cease to communicate, faithfully holding on to their roots. By means of associations -a means highly esteemed in China - an admirable organized immigration continues: the vanguard lives in California to promote mimigration, taking care of the whole process from the start, welcoming and installing people, looking for jobs and solving any possible dissension, Fatherly figures protecting their newly arrived childrea Thus, in all foreign cities, a new city blossoms within. The Chinatowns are dense, self-contained settlements enjoying their own schools, temples, shops, hospices, their own mandarin. A miniature body politic designed for a miniature China. Thus, the basic centre for a startling diaspora of a workforce that finds no obstacles whatsoever, in which the offer meets its demand at all times. Primarily, because they are not peevish, they work for a third of what a white worker makes. A  [page 58] Chinaman has no needs: a chintzy or yarned outfit is as much as is necessary for a lifetime, a bowl of rice and two sips of tea for a meal. Where the vicious, gluttonous white man needs two dollars on a daily basis, a Chinese is pleased with three climes and is still able to save some money. Secondly, the Chinese workingman has venerable virtues: his promptness, dynamics, meekness, and the faultless, immediate adjustment to any service.

They are superiorly intelligent and can endure incredibly much. Only the toughness and the implacable spirit of the Chinese could execute the colossal Californian leveling at the Sierra Nevada’s edge. Without them, the Pacific railway would never have been, at least not as speedily and dexterously. At the vast tobacco, sugar and cotton plantations in Havana, a working environment that defeats every single race, including blacks, the chinaman prospers, even becomes more radiant and plump. These men are like rubber, with their pliable bodies, and no scorching suns, shooting rains, malaria-ridden lands, germs or toxins may undermine their inner strength. Besides, as any person would know, a Chinese extends his sensibility no more than a minimum, and therefore is almost indifferent to the habitual sentences of their nation’s codes of law, namely the cudgelling and the yoking. Their sensibility is chiefly composed of morals. Consequently, in Havana, the worst and truly hurting punishment possible is cutting off his plait, his outer emblem of dignity, as the coiled long hair was for the Gothic or Frank horsemen. The Chinese, as soon as some little savings have been put aside, be it from mines, factories or working fields, settle down at once in the nearest town as gardeners, shoemakers, cooks, goldsmiths, tailors, laundrymen or in similar occupations. At these chores, due to originality excellence, speed and skill, none surpasses them. And when the savings turn into small fortunes, modest industry is swapped for trading, where a remarkable lead is also reached because of the constancy, the flair, the sense, the quickness with which every ploy and trick of the job is learned And, having gone from rags to riches, they set back home, carrying the white man’s cash and an even more deeply ingrained disdain for its civilization.

An immigrant who shares all these traits implies terrible effects to wage fluctuation, particularly in industrialized countries. Anxious producers and capitalists legitimately foresee lower production costs by the means of the decrease of wages. But in the instant a gifted, prompt, and compliant employee shows up, one who does not take part in strikes or politics, a somewhat intelligent appendix to the machinery, and that on top of it all offers his skills for half or a third of regular wages, no wonder he is hired at once. And employers do this with an open, bright enthusiasm, with no second thoughts about their skin color being yellow, white or green. This was what took place in California, The Celestial One began by displacing the Yankee as a wage earner from the mining and manufacturing site, [page 59] and then from road building and so forth. In all the places in which hands were required, yellow men were preferred to white ones. Little by little, with their numbers growing by the day, and in addition to an ever-increasing knowledge about the country, which meant also higher expansibility, Chinese competition became a weighty load for the market. Naturally, wages assessments shrank to the despair and even hunger of the white worker. As a result, the white man - so far a precursor of the noblest theories on worker’s freedoms - violently prevented the Chinese from working. The Chinese were cast off from the factories, at every corner some of their patricians were beaten up, or even stabbed, as the Caiifornian law looked the other way. Moreover, influenced by the vote-casting laborer population, politicians came about with oppressive laws against the Chinaman, laws that made his life intolerable and miserable. The promising sweetness of California became sour. But, in compliance to his race, the Chinese man stood tall. Incessantly, every single Pacific liner debarked in San Francisco a thousand and a half to two thousand souls more, just like an Old Testament plague. All the same, sunken local workers threatened the state with a revolution, driving politicians into the tense creation of the Monroe Doctrine, definitely barring Chinese from entering California.

How come such a disgraceful policy could pass? It is an abuse of fundamental human or divine rights! Well, it was accepted generally because China is a frail nation. Having no fleets or armies powerful enough, it meant no obstacle. If they did, they would assure the respect of their citizens’ unrestricted right to traverse the world and choose any corner in which to restfully fix, work and live, as it happens with any denizen of this planet.

As the only mandarin I came to meet personally let me know - a splendid gentleman of very old and very aristocratic ways, dressed in a sea-green and gold-threaded silk garb that deeply disturbed me - “The Chinese will never be able to travel around the world until they enjoy, as you Europeans, battleships to escort them”. By this, the venerable mandarin meant that China, when ready, should do to Europe what Europe had done to China: coerce it to throw open wide the gates and allow workers in. If not, the threat of being gunned down is acted out. At this juncture lies the economic peril that the Flowering Empire stands for. In the moment the European arms of Japan defeat the Empire, the old torpor will be shook off; the Tartar’s arrow will become obsolete, real fleets will be assembled and equipped, and the skills of manoeuvring understood and mastered. As I said before, a new military and naval power will rise. Then, the yellow man will pack his sparse belongings, get on board the liners, and audaciously and firmly explore Europe. This course of action will not be rushed; again as the barbarian hosts that took their time penetrating well into the Roman Empire. But it will happen nonetheless as the final and natural consequence of four hundred million souls  [page 60]  rejoining the human family. The tiny Chinese formicary that bloated in California, until the Yankee’s boot squashed it, will resume its march into the whole of America and the whole of Europe. And in this second chance, in massive proportions. Afterwards, it shall not be possible to decree bar-outs, harassments, and much less carry out evictions, for the reason that behind the Chinese immigrant a cuirassed force will cast its shadow The American expression, to eat a Chinese, will become an adventure as unsafe as it is to eat an Englishman in China.

The California economic disaster will also come to pass in Europe, yet again in gigantic magnitudes. One will not see anything else than men with pigtails, immerged in silence and nimbleness, all over the continent’s factories, mines, and railway building sites, wonang twice as hard for half the price. The dismissed European laborer will be only left with the choice between dying of hunger and becoming a social revolutionary, forcing states into calamitous wars with four hundred million Chinese. This is the invasion we should be worried about, and not any kind of reenactment of the ferocious Vandals. An enhanced worry if we consider the fact that laws are on the Chinese side, and force will be of no use. Moreover, China will find in capitalism a valuable instigator, an accessory. As our working classes, which are more learned, become more undisciplined, or rather more legitimately demanding, and the European capital goes into a coarser struggle against the European working forces, its irresistible tendency will be to turn to the docile, easily pleased masses from an inexhaustible China. Each European industrial center will then become a dreadful and permanent racial battlefield Compare them to the similar conflicts that sprout today among French and Italians, just because the swarthy men from the south side of the Alps eat less beef and get satisfied with lower wages.

Ana if the Chinese proletariat, which overpowering influence will not cease to grow, fails to triumph in our countries, on the other hand such invasion will pose the 20th century with a new and intense difficulty that will haunt our grandchildren, as if they had not already to cope with the expected ones.

Enough! But hear me, my Brazilian friends. You seem too eager to have them for your coffee plantations. Take heed, for you will be flooded. At first a couple hundred, followed by then a thousand In ten years, Sao Paulo and Rio will have its own Chinatowns, with their red and black sign-boards, paper lanterns, opium filled lairs, covert societies of all sorts, and an immense power working in shadows, relentlessly extending its fingers in every possible direction. Then again, you will be granted new Chinese cooks, new Chinese shirt-ironers, and will at last grasp the meaning of what a truthfully sublime soup can be and what to wear superbly ironed shirt-fronts means. You will feel as new gods treading the earth. As for the Portuguese, German, Italian, or other colonies in Brazil, they shall be pushed back  [page 61] to their countries of origin. Brazil, in twenty years, will become a New China.

Naturals will burst open with discomfort and disgust, but intellectual charity compels them to sustenance of the spirit, and in accordance half of the Gazeta de Noticias³) will be printed in Chinese, That’s why, my beloved friends, it is better for you to pick up right away your own copy of Confucius. Selecting some introductory volumes to the fundamental and divine books is also in order: the Chu-King, or Book of Memories, the Chi-King, or Book of Imaginations, the Ji-King, or Book of Changes, the Li-King, or Book or Rites.4)

At any rate, and in conclusion, all this Sinification will stand for in Brazil nothing more than a step further into the Babel it already is. Who can possibly guess what will come out of this? Maybe the influence of Confiicianism--the peak of what a perfect doctrine is--will set up, at last and for good, some healthy principles in that territory. For instance, love for discipline, for respect, for tolerance, for an industrious order and peace.

3. A Brazilian newspaper, literally “The News Gazette.”

4. The author is referring to, in the accurately current transcription, the Shi Ji (Book of History), Shi Jing (Book of Poetry), Yi Jing (Book of Changes), and Li Ji (Book of Rites).