

# The Catholicized Chinese Society in the Mid-Eighteenth Century Philippines and Its Relevance to the Rise of Chinese Mestizos

by SUGAYA Nariko

In the hope of emancipating colonial economy from the heavy dependence on the Manila galleon trade system, Governor Arandía expelled in 1755 the non-Catholic Chinese from the Spanish Philippines. It was the Chinese who had under the Manila galleon trade system not only acted as the supplier of the Chinese luxury for Acapulco, but also provided daily needs of Spanish residents in the colony. As one of the effective means to reduce their number, the governor required the Catholic faith of the Chinese who wished to live in the colony. As a result, practically the total resident Chinese community came to embrace the Catholic faith.

First, this paper presents an overview of Spain's Chinese policy prior to the mid-eighteenth century and shows its ideas and practice. Second, the *informaciones matrimoniales* kept in the Archdiocesan Archives of Manila have been examined to demonstrate how relevant the Catholic faith to church-sanctioned marriages between Catholic Chinese men and local women. Their marriages in turn brought about the rise of Chinese Mestizos.

By adopting Catholicism, the Chinese immigrants became in theory vassals of the Spanish king or the legitimate component of inhabitants of the Spanish Indies. Thus, the Chinese immigrant society of the day took a road toward full integration into Philippine colonial society and produced their more fully integrated or Filipinized mestizo offspring.