

## **The Background of the Mestizo Rise in the Second Half of the 18th Century Philippines in a New Perspective**

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### **Introduction**

Recent Philippine historiography shows that the period between the mid-eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth century was formative years of modern Philippine society. The Philippines with regional diversity started to experience an accelerated social and economic transformation as the archipelago was gradually linked to the world economic system from the second half of the eighteenth century.

Historians who have attempted to gain a better understanding of the period without fail note that the significant role played by the Chinese mestizos in the transitional society. Engaging themselves in the inter-island trade and other economic activities, the Chinese mestizos effectively linked each of the local economies of the Philippines.

The mestizo rise in this period has been attributed, as in the classic work by Edger Wickberg on the subject,<sup>1</sup> to a temporary absence of the Chinese from most of the provinces of the Philippines roughly between 1750-1850. Their temporary absence was brought about through a series of expulsion laws carried out by Governor Pedro Manuel de Arandía in the mid-eighteenth century and by Governors José Raon and Simón de Anda after the British occupation of Manila as a punishment for the Chinese who collaborated with the British occupying forces during 1762-64. The expulsion carried out by the latter remained effective until 1778.

It must be true if most of the Chinese had not been expelled from the Philippines, the Chinese mestizos should not have risen with such relative ease as actually happened in Philippine history. The main concern of this essay is, however, not to analyze the processes through which the mestizos by taking advantage of socio-economic circumstances of the day established themselves as an economic elite of their local communities. Instead I have attempted to find some possible answers to such questions as why at this point in time, i.e., the middle of the eighteenth century, the Spanish authorities could effectuate the expulsion of the Chinese while in the previous periods they could not and why the Chinese population in the archipelago did not increase remarkably despite the fact that the immigration ban was lifted later in that century.

The Spanish authorities at this time appeared to be more determined than ever to do away with Chinese labor and expertise in the colonial administration. If so, there must have happened some change in the seemingly well established pattern under the Manila Galleon trade system<sup>2</sup> of the relationships between the Spanish colonials and their 'indispensable' business partners, the Chinese.

Manila was one of the many ports in Southeast Asia which were covered by the Chinese shipping network. The Chinese junk traders regularly visited Manila and traded their

merchandise. Some others settled there and were engaged in various occupations. The basic patterns of their relationships with the Spanish rulers thus evolved.

Viewing Manila in such perspective, the structural change over a long period of time of the South Seas trading world in which the Chinese sea ports on the southeastern coastal line were focal points may have affected the established patterns of the relationship between the Spanish and the Chinese. This is a kind of preliminary study in which an attempt has been made to relate some aspects of Manila's historical developments with external factors.

### **The Heyday of the Manila Galleon Trade System, 1580-1640**

Within the space of less than three decades after Spanish establishment, Manila had emerged as a flourishing entrepôt of Asia from previously a peripheral port served by Chinese shipping. Her emergence owed largely to the successful operation of the Manila Galleon trade. The Chinese junks which traded at Manila with the rich cargoes of silks and other various types of luxuries served as the supplier for the galleons bound for Acapulco. They also brought in the archipelago daily necessities for both the Spanish colonists and the native population. In addition, thousands of Chinese were shipped by these trading junks from the ports of Fukien on the southeastern coast of China. Aside from sailors and merchants, there were numbers of retail traders, artisans, and laborers who settled in the archipelago and satisfied the needs of the Spanish colonials, while quickly monopolizing such activities. The Spanish colonial government allotted the Chinese a place near the colonial headquarters or the Chinese quarters called *Parián* where they could freely trade their merchandise and sell their expertise. The Spanish expected with the creation of the *Parián* to be in a better position of insuring a source of colonial revenues and maintaining peace and order of the colony through taxing and getting hold on the Chinese economic activities.

The wealth derived from the Manila Galleon trade was so enormously large that the Spanish virtually abandoned all other economic undertakings in the archipelago. The underlying fact behind this was the difference in the relative value of gold and silver between the Spanish world and China. In China in the mid-sixteenth century the relative value of gold and silver was about 1 : 7. In Spanish world it was about 1 : 13.<sup>3</sup> The Galleon trade was therefore extremely profitable, so was its supply line, the Chinese trade with Manila. Mexican silver thus flowed in a steady stream to China via Manila.

This state of affairs fascinated more Chinese to Manila which had a reputation in China of being 'a silver producing country.'<sup>4</sup> As a result, the largest Chinese settlement was formed in Manila outside the sphere of the Chinese Empire during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

As the Chinese population in Spanish Philippines rapidly grew many times larger than that of the Spanish, the latter felt security in their own colony much threatened. Moreover, their cultural differences added fuel to the creation of the mutual feelings of distrust. The Spanish were, however, equally aware of the social realities that their colonial life was totally dependent on the Chinese. The Spanish colonial government occasionally took measures to limit the number of Chinese in the Islands but enforced them in a haphazard way.

After all, so long as the Chinese could bring the colony prosperity, their presence in it seemed to be permissible to the Spanish colonial administrators. Governor Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera (1635-44) aside from the regular residence permit for the Chinese, in order to increase colonial revenues, issued them for an extra fee with a special type of permit which enabled them to leave the Parián to proceed to the provinces.

From their residence permits only, the Philippine colonial government earned 30 to 40 per cent of the total revenue derived from the archipelago between 1616 to 45. Added to this was the customs duties paid by the Chinese junk traders, which consisted of 70 per cent to 80 per cent of the total customs collection of the colony during the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup> The Spanish colonials could also collect money illegally from the Chinese for their personal aggrandizement.

For the Chinese, whatever the business might they be engaged in Manila and other economic centers in the islands, they could find a good chance of earning higher profits than back in their country even if they had to bribe Spanish colonial officials. So was the basic pattern of their interdependence formed.

This state of affairs, however, did not last long. By the end of the 1630's the relative value of gold and silver between the Spanish world and China, particularly, in southeastern China sea ports, had come to narrow and finally closed as a result of the continuous flow of Mexican silver to China. The price revolution was at last introduced to China via Manila through the hands of Chinese junk traders. The Spanish merchants continually complained of the Chinese practice of hoarding and raising the prices of commodities. The Chinese merchants could not have been blamed much for they were in a sense the victim of the on-going price revolution in the East. The great advantage which the Spanish merchants in Manila had held over those of other parts of the world was lost forever. The first sign of the protracted decline of the Manila Galleon trade thus crept in.<sup>6</sup>

### Slack Years of Manila's Foreign Trade, 1650-1680

For the Chinese junk traders the period between 1650 and 85 was slack years. Southeastern China was put into confusion brought about by the dynastic change from Ming to Qing (Ch'ing). The Qing government in order to suppress the anti-Qing movement led by Zheng Chen-gong (Ko-xinga) implemented from 1663-83 the *qian-jie ling* or an order of depopulation from the coastal line of southeastern China. The order was meant to be an effective means to cut Zheng's trading activities based in Amoy and Taiwan from which he principally drew resources to support his military strength.<sup>7</sup>

As a result, the Chinese junk trade with Manila reduced its volume considerably. The amount of customs duties collected yearly from the Chinese junk traders at Manila dropped to the average of 24 per cent of its total collection during that period. We should also note the fact that the share of the customs duties collected in the total revenues derived from the archipelago for the colonial government was only on an average 4.9 per cent in the years 1651-80. So far the Chinese junk trade with Manila did not totally come to a halt, they must have continued even in a diminished number to carry Chinese immigrants as a component part of the trade.

However, the income from the Chinese residence permits for the Philippine colonial government reduced accordingly.<sup>8</sup>

As stated elsewhere the Manila Galleon which had lost its previous advantage by the end of 1630's found the Mexican market increasingly glut. Moreover, the Chinese junk trade with Manila during the period 1662-83 almost stopped functioning as the supply line for the Manila Galleon. Unable to find the alternative trading partners to support the galleon trade system, Manila was temporarily dead as an entrepôt of Asia.<sup>9</sup>

### Changing Perspectives of Manila's Foreign Trade

From the 1680's onward, Manila's maritime trade gradually revived. With the lift of the *qian-jie ling* in China, the Chinese South Seas trading network, with Amoy as a new center of sea-going junks bound for major ports in Southeast Asia, rapidly picked up.<sup>10</sup> The junk trade to Manila was revitalized accordingly though it could no longer enjoy a monopolistic position which formerly had as the sole supply line for the Manila Galleon.<sup>11</sup>

The English country traders from the Indian coasts succeeded in establishing regular trade relations with Manila though clandestinely with the connivance of the Spanish colonial authorities, while Chinese junk traders were suffering from the trade ban in China. Indian piece goods not only found increasingly their way to the Mexican market through Manila Galleon shipping but also fascinated Spanish colonials and the urbanized sector of the native population in Manila and other major towns in the colony.<sup>12</sup> Manila thus emerged again within the framework of the Manila Galleon trade system as an entrepôt of Asia with diversified trading partners. The junk trade carried on by the Chinese was, so far as the Manila Galleon trade system was alive, still a predominant link in Manila's maritime network but its relative importance was on the decline.

### The Growth of the Mestizo Population

After about two to three decades of slack years for the Chinese junk trade to Manila in the second half of the seventeenth century, the Spaniards found many Chinese had left the Parián located just outside the city walls of Manila and moved mainly to its suburbs and adjacent provinces, engaging themselves in the retail trade and other skilled occupations.<sup>13</sup> Some of them were found in the distant provinces. Their dispersal to the provinces must have been encouraged by the temporary decline of Manila's maritime trade. Manila, particularly the Parián as its center of economic activities, in the prolonged depression could no longer offer lucrative economic opportunities for the Chinese who had migrated there and had been gainfully engaged in the various trades which were directly or otherwise connected with maritime trade. They had to adjust themselves to the new economic conditions. Some of them chose to return to their country, seeking alternative places to migrate. Others chose to remain in the colony and look for a better economic opportunity outside the Parián.

During the period 1650-85, particularly, 1663-83, only a limited number of Chinese junks visited Manila. It meant fewer Chinese new comers to Manila in that period. Many of the Chinese who had settled in the archipelago legally or otherwise established relationships with

the native women for there were few Chinese women in the archipelago. Consequently, the number of Chinese mestizos increased to form their own *gremio* or administrative unit under Spanish colonial law. For example, in 1687 the mestizos of Binondo, an adjacent town of the City of Manila, together with the Chinese residents there formed a *gremio*. In 1741 the mestizos in Binondo became numerically large enough to form their own *gremio* separate from that of the Chinese.<sup>14</sup> At any rate, by 1741 the Spanish colonial authorities had legally classified the mestizos as a separate ethnic group in recognition of their social distinctiveness in the local communities.

It was also about this time i.e., the 1680's that the Spanish colonials started to become more serious about limiting the number of resident Chinese and restricting the areas for their settlement in the Spanish Philippines. From then on, the Spanish attempts to expel the 'excess' number of Chinese, specifically, non-Christians, were intermittently made.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike previous periods, the Chinese were no longer a rich source of income for the Spanish colonial government. The collection of customs duties at Manila declined as the junk trade became less active. Besides, the Spanish authorities found it extremely difficult to collect fees from the Chinese for their residence permits because the former had a hard time in keeping the track of those who had spread over the provinces where they had come to monopolizing all the major economic activities. In contrast, the Spanish who had been almost entirely dependent their colonial life on the Manila Galleon trade system were unable to adjust to the new economic environment resulting from the gradual decline of that trade system. Some of the Spanish began to question the notion of Chinese indispensability in the archipelago. They believed that they were capable of taking over the Chinese business and the colony's domestic economy might be placed in their hands. Others considered that the Chinese mestizos could replace the Chinese and the former was a more desirable element in the colony as they were devoted Christians and expected to be more loyal to the Spaniards.<sup>16</sup> It appeared that the Spaniards felt easier with the Chinese mestizos as they were, to say the least, culturally speaking not totally alien to the former.

### Conclusion

As stated above those were the circumstances in Manila when Governor Arandía assumed his office in 1754. He was determined under the instructions given by the Spanish king to carry out the expulsion of the non-Christian Chinese from the colony. A *bando* or decree was promulgated on 3 September 1754. The *bando* provided the timetable and details for the Chinese expulsion. With the cooperation of the leaders of resident Christian Chinese in Manila the expulsion was completed in July 1755, leaving approximately 3,500 Christian Chinese and Catechumens in the colony, many of whom hurriedly adopted Christianity.<sup>17</sup> It appeared that the expulsion was carried out relatively smoothly. One reason may have been that by the time of Chinese expulsion the number of Chinese residents in Manila had already been considerably small as compared with that of the early years of the seventeenth century when it numbered twenty to thirty thousands. A sizable number of Chinese had spread out to the various provinces on the one hand. New Chinese immigrants diminished as the Chinese trade with

Manila declined on the other.

For the purpose of the Chinese junk trade which was conducted on a reduced scale than previous centuries, the governor constructed the Alcaicería de San Fernando at the mouth of Pasig River, which served both as the customs office and market place. Another important function of the Alcaicería was to confine the junk traders and accompanying non-Christian Chinese during the trading season of Manila. These Chinese were as a rule not to be allowed to stay behind after the departure of the Chinese junk at the end of the trading season.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the governor tried to keep isolate the entirely foreign element—non-Christian Chinese—from the rest of the Christian population of the Spanish Philippines.

The construction of the Alcaicería reflected the Spanish awareness of the different roles played in the colony's economy by the junk traders who temporarily stayed in the Islands and the Chinese residents staying over the long period of time. The differentiation of these two groups was held as a guiding line up to the early decades of the nineteenth century by the Spanish colonial authorities when they dealt with the Chinese to the Philippines.

The Chinese population in the Spanish Philippines was from the middle of the eighteenth century roughly to the middle of the nineteenth century kept more or less effectively in check. One contributing factor to this phenomenon was the further decline of the Chinese junk trade with Manila. From the mid-eighteenth century, the Spanish colonials became active in sending their own ships to China, such as Macao, Canton, and Amoy, Java, Indian coasts, and other parts of Southeast Asia, while other European and American traders were expanding their trade activities at Manila.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the Chinese junk trade reduced its relative importance in the Manila's maritime trade network. The strict religious requirements imposed on the Chinese immigrants by the Spanish colonial authorities may also have contributed to keeping the flow of Chinese immigration to the colony at a minimal level while Batavia under Dutch rule attracted many Fukienese immigrants during the period under consideration. Batavia, particularly from the year 1690 onward, emerged as one of the most viable destinations for Chinese emigrants with the opening of large scale sugar plantations there and its suburbs.<sup>20</sup>

The expulsion of non-Christian Chinese from the Philippines could be said as part of the Spanish serious efforts started from the mid-eighteenth century to keep the colony's domestic economy in the hands of the domestic sectors. In this the Spaniards seemed to have assumed that the Christian Chinese and their mestizo descendants could be counted as part of the domestic sectors. In contrast, the Chinese junk traders and their followers who were most likely to be non-Christian were considered totally foreign.

The Chinese who chose to stay in the Spanish Philippines embraced Christianity nominally or otherwise. Many of them legally married the native women who were also Christian. Their children were duly recognized by Spanish authorities as the Chinese mestizo, the desirable elements of the colony. Governor Arandia whether consciously or not contributed much to the accelerated increase of the Chinese mestizo in the Philippines in the following years.

#### Notes

- 1) "The Chinese Mestizo in Philippine History," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 5 (March 1964):

62-100. The term *mestizo* refers to a person who has mixed-racial parentage. The term without modification usually means those of Chinese mestizo descent in modern Philippine historical literature.

- 2) For detailed information on the Manila Galleon trade system, see William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1939; A Dutton Everyman Paperback, 1959).
- 3) Kimura Masahiro 木村正弘, *Sakoku to sirubarodo — Sekai no naka no Jipangu 鎖国とシルバード — 世界のなかのジパング / Why Japan Closed Its Doors: The Price Revolution in the Pan-Pacific, 1600-1650* (Tokyo: Simul Press, 1989), pp. 126-29.
- 4) Zhang Xie 張燮, *Tong-xi-yang kao 東西洋考* [A Discourse on the East and the West Oceans] (Reprint ed., Taipei: Zheng-zhong, 1962). Preface 1618.
- 5) Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques (XVI<sup>e</sup>, XVII<sup>e</sup>, XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1960), pp. 200-206, 210-16.
- 6) Kimura, *Sakoku to shirubarodo*, pp. 31-70.
- 7) Ura Ren'ichi 浦廉一, "Shin-sho no senkai-rei no kenkyu 清初の遷海令の研究 [A Study of the qiang-jie ling of the early Qing Dynasty]," *Hiroshima Daigaku Bungaku-bu Kiyo* 広島大学文学部紀要 5 (March 1954): 124-58.
- 8) Chaunu, *Les Philippines*, pp. 164-69, 207-9.
- 9) *Ibid.*
- 10) On the rise of Amoy after the suppression of Zheng's anti-Qing movement, see Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society: The Amoy Network on the China Coast 1683-1735* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983).
- 11) Chaunu, *Les Philippines*, pp. 200-219.
- 12) Serafin D. Quiason, *English 'Country Trade' with the Philippines, 1644-1765* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1966), pp. 171-74.
- 13) Miguel Rodríguez Berriz, *Diccionario de la administración de Filipinas. Anuario de 1888*, 2 vols. (Manila: Imp. y Lito. de M. Pérez, hijo, 1887-88), 1: 560-64; "Manuel de León to the King, 15 June 1671," in H. de la Costa, S.J., ed., *Readings in Philippines History* (Manila: Bookmark, 1965), p. 74.
- 14) Wickberg, "Chinese Mestizo," pp. 69-71.
- 15) Rodríguez Berriz, *Diccionario*, 1: 560-73.
- 16) *Ibid.*, 1: 567-70; Schurz, *Manila Galleon*, pp. 96, 154-55.
- 17) "Dimisorias, expulsiones de chinos, bautismos, ceremonias, confesiones, 1751-71," 1754-55, 33-C-7, Archives of the Archdiocese of Manila (AAM).
- 18) Manuel Buzeta, O.S.A. and Felipe Bravo, O.S.A., *Diccionario geográfico, estadístico, histórico de las Islas Filipinas*, 2 vols. (Madrid: J. C. de la Peña, 1850-51), 1: 138, 2: 238; *Colección de autos acordados de la Real Audiencia Chancillería*, 5 vols. (Manila: Imp. de Ramírez y Giraudier, 1861-66), 1: 12-13.
- 19) See "Protocolos," Protocolo de Manila, Records Management and Archives Office of the Republic of the Philippines (PNA).
- 20) Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht, Holland: Foris Publications, 1989), pp. 15-34, 74-96.

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