ABSTRACT

The study of Asian migration to colonial Mexico via the nao de China — especially by Chinese and mestizos living in the Philippines — has been languishing in academic oblivion. This article reveals how transpacific relations between Manila and Acapulco profoundly affected the social, economic, religious, and political spheres of activity in New Spain. Aside from the challenges encountered by chinos acclimating to a Castilian race-based hierarchy, it also probes the reasons behind widespread social amnesia in the mid-to-late 18th century with respect to Mexico's Oriental heritage. Furthermore, this article contests accepted scholarly definitions of mestizaje (mixed-race heritage) that emphasize a purely Atlantic pedigree. Reconstructing the process of sinification in colonial Mexico is imperative to “reorienting” its history and chronologically repositioning studies on the Chinese diaspora in the Americas.