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Los Chinos de La Chinesca: Destabilizing National Narratives and Uncovering the Forgotten History of the Chinese in Mexico

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Los Chinos de La Chinesca:
Destabilizing National Narratives and Uncovering the Forgotten History of the Chinese in
Mexico

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Acknowledgements

This research builds upon much of the groundbreaking investigations by historians Fredy Gonzalez (*Paisanos Chinos: Transpacific Politics among Chinese Immigrants in Mexico*), Robert Chao Romero (*The Chinese in Mexico: 1882-1940*), Elliott Young (*Alien Nation Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era through World War II*), Grace Delgado (*Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*), Jingsheng Dong (*Chinese Emigration to Mexico and the Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910*), Evelyn Hu-DeHart and Kathleen López (*Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Historical Overview*), and Jason Oliver Chang (*Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940*). This project has been contingent on their research and publications.

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Notes on Language and Terminology

As my aim in this project is to understand the meaning of many of these sensitive terms such as *alien*, *illegal alien*, *coolie*, and *immigrant*, I feel it is necessary to begin with the genealogy of these terms. As I will be repeatedly referencing Elliot Young's *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in The Americas From the Coolie Era Through World War II* and Mae M. Ngai's *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and The Making of Modern America*, I find it appropriate to use their definitions and terminology. Many of these terms carry derogatory connotations and I have no intention of echoing racist stereotypes. Rather I aim to understand the creation and development of these words and their meanings.

Following Ngai, I use *alien* and *illegal alien* in its original American usage, which refers to that which belongs to another person or place. Alien as a legal subject in American law, is a person who is not a citizen or is a noncitizen. While, an illegal alien is an alien who is unlawfully present or who commits a deportable offense, sometimes referred to as a *criminal alien*. Since this research is centered on Chinese immigrants in Mexico, *Extranjero*, meaning foreigner, is the closest Spanish translation to alien. According to Young, Chinese migrants in Latin America were referred to as *colonos asiaticas* (Asian colonists) or *extranjeros asiaticos* (Asian Foreigners) or most commonly *chinos* (Chinese). Frequently throughout the chapters, I will refer to anti-Chinese supporters in the Spanish word, *antichinistas*. Likewise, anti-Chinese campaigns and anti-Chinese sentiments will be referred to in the Spanish word *antichinismo*.

The term *coolie* has no legal definition, but is a pejorative term that is affiliated with low-status workers from China and India. Coolie was espoused by politicians, journalists, and anti-Asian activists to describe submissive and indentured laborers. I subscribe to Young's usage of coolie, "in using this term is not to ascribe these characteristics to the Chinese migrants who

were thus labeled but to more accurately represent how certain Chinese laborers were viewed”. The term *Chinese*, describes vast nineteenth and early twentieth-century cultural and linguistic differences that encompassed China. Migrants coming from China were viewed within the framework of the nation-state, despite the fact that most immigrants came from Guangdong and spoke Cantonese, they were regarded as *Chinese*.

Illegal aliens may also be referred to as “undocumented migrants.” The term undocumented was developed under a modern era of immigration restriction, in which documents are required for lawful admission. As noted by Ngai, there are other types of unlawful presence or grounds for deportation, “not all illegal aliens are illegal because they lack documents.” Immigrant is a legal status that refers to an alien who comes for permanent settlement, a legal permanent resident” and even naturalization as a citizen. There is a legal distinction between immigrants and “nonimmigrants”, those who are visitors, foreign students, temporary workers, and tourists. Unless referencing a precise legal status, I will use the general term *migrant*, since not all migrants are immigrants. Migrant is defined as one who participates in permanent, short, and long-term sojourns in one-way or repeated movements across nation-state boundaries. As this project concerns diasporic transnational movement and mobility, the term migrant serves to not privilege permanent settlement above other forms of migration.

I use Chinese Mexican as shorthand for all Chinese who were naturalized Mexicans, in other words, Mexican citizens of Chinese descent. Chinese proper names and phrases will be written in *pinyin* or written as names appear in legal records in transliterated Cantonese.

In regard to the U.S Immigration and Naturalization Service, that will be discussed throughout this study, I will refer to the agency by the name used at the time of the period under discussion. In 1891, congress created the Bureau of Immigration under the Department of

Commerce and Labor, which later was maintained under the Department of Labor in 1913.

Border Patrol established by Congress in 1925 was a unit of the Immigration Service, the field organization of the Bureau of Immigration. The Bureau of Immigration and Bureau of

Naturalization merged in 1932 to become the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). INS was moved under jurisdiction of the Department of Justice in 1940.

—Preface—

The drive from Los Angeles to Mexicali is about four and half hours; three of those hours are spent on two-lane desert highways. It's difficult to not sense the eeriness of the desolate U.S.-Mexico border. Its hollow valleys hide more than they reveal. The border usually evokes an image of weary Mexicans who trail across blistering deserts, in order to scale walls that divide two nations. Migrants who, in desperation to reach the U.S., enlist the services of *coyotes*, human smugglers who promise passage to the land of opportunity. These images reveal much about what is included in history, and what is chosen to be forgotten.

As soon as I turned onto Imperial Ave. heading south towards the Mexican border, I began reading signs for *Yum Yum Chinese Food* and *Golden Dragon Chinese*. My intention for driving to Mexicali was to research La Chinesca and the Chinese of Mexicali so I tried to take notice of all things Chinese. Aside from a couple of Chinese restaurants, the terrain down Imperial Ave. was a continuous stretch of strip malls surrounded by a vast empty desert.

Large letters spelling "MEXICO" appeared as I continued driving down Imperial Avenue. I had arrived at the Mexican border, in which my grandmother and I quickly crossed. No passport scan, no questions, no problem. Crossing the border into Mexico could not be more different than my experience a couple days later crossing the border back into the United States.

I wondered if I would find a city that resembled the Chinatowns of New York and San Francisco, a city filled with the traditional Chinese multi-inclined roofs, or a Mexican pueblo embedded with their Spanish architecture and Catholic residue. My imagination proved limited, Mexicali was none of these. Mexicali has been carved and shaped by its geographical relationship to the U.S - Mexican border. It is a city that has been drawn by lines of inclusion and exclusion.

In 1902, a syndicate of Los Angeles businessmen organized the Colorado River Land Company, and acquired nearly 850,000 acres of the Mexicali Valley. Throughout the early twentieth century, the Mexican government attempted to resettle Mexican families in Baja California in order to integrate the region more closely with the rest of the country.

Unfortunately, resettlement plans consistently failed to attract Mexican settlers, as better opportunities were just across the border.¹ Therefore, Chinese agricultural labor became the only practical alternative to meet demands in a depleted labor market that faced chronic shortages. By 1919, 50 Chinese-owned cotton farms came to occupy almost 75,000 acres, producing 80% of the cotton grown in the Mexicali Valley. Once the irrigation and clearing projects were completed, many Chinese laborers congregated in a section of Mexicali; founding what is now known as *La Chinesca*.

The distinctive development of northern Baja enabled the Chinese to assume diverse economic roles, ranging from rural laborer to urban capitalist. Strong demand for labor coupled with low native competition, provided ideal conditions for the new immigrants.² There were so many Chinese-owned stores, that in the local language to go to the store was to visit “el chino on the corner.”³ Yet despite a highly visible Chinese presence, Mexican residents had high opinions of Chinese businesses, as they often allowed people to purchase goods on credit.⁴ The newspaper *El Excelsior* noted that Mexicali was “an entirely Chinese city. The streets, traveled only by

¹ Duncan, Robert H. “The Chinese and the Economic Development of Northern Baja California, 1889-1929.” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 74, no. 4, 1994, p. 615., doi:10.2307/2517494.

² Ibid.

³ Gonzalez, Fredy. *Paisanos Chinos: Transpacific Politics among Chinese Immigrants in Mexico*. N.p.: U of California, 2017. Print

⁴ Ibid.

Chinese, the restaurants, filled by Chinese, the fieldwork, absolutely dominated by the Chinese. Everything, everything is completely Chinese in Mexicali.”⁵

As the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) swept through Mexico, the district of Northern Baja was one of the few areas to find employment and relative safety. Therefore, Baja’s Chinese residents weathered the Revolution virtually undisturbed. The sheer lack of *antichinismo* in Mexicali, destabilizes the conventional correlation between economic success and persecution. By 1920, Chinese residents had outnumbered Mexicans 10,000 to 700. Currently, there are an estimated 5,000 people of Chinese origin in Mexicali. However, the Mexican cities of Tijuana and Mexico City, actually outnumber Mexicali in terms of their Chinese populations. Yet, there is something distinct about Mexicali.

In my interview with Jorge Lee, the president of the Asociación China de Mexicali’s (Chinese Association of Mexicali), he explained, “Mexicali is the only Mexican border city that was founded and created by foreign hands, in this case the Chinese, it is not the Mexican city with the most Chinese, but it is structure of the social fabric more than anything.” To this day, Chinese continue to migrate to Mexicali as it’s seen as a distinctly Chinese-Mexican city. Towards the end of my interview with Lee, I asked him how he envisioned his identity. Lee responded,

We definitely have the local, oriental, Mexican, American influence, there is still a lot of *pochismo*. Obviously in mindset, what you eat and your thoughts, there is a mix, because I am as the *gringos* say ‘Chino-Mexicano’ or ‘Mexicano-Chino’, I believe that yes, there is mix. But we can’t forget our origins and we can not deny that we still look at ourselves in the mirror and we are *Chinese*.⁶

⁵ Duncan, Robert H. Northern Baja California.

⁶ Lee, Jorge. Personal Interview. January 16, 2018.

Lee's honest response highlights the limitations of national identities and the inherent confusion of belonging to two worlds. In this case, perhaps even three worlds. Did it not matter that Lee was born in Mexico, spoke fluent Spanish, and was the president of a Chinese association about to celebrate its 100-year anniversary? At the end of the day, when he looked in the mirror, he saw someone Chinese, not Mexican. Lee's response speaks to how the nation, nationalism, and history have worked to exclude the Chinese from Mexican history.

A few days later, I began the trip back to Los Angeles. Trying to find the entrance back into the U.S. required half an hour of circling around the edge of Mexicali and frequently asking pedestrians where the border was.

Donde esta la linea?

It wasn't until we came upon the rows of hundreds of cars, that I realized my grandmother wasn't asking people where the border was, but where the *line* was. A tip for crossing the border: bring snacks and *cambio* (pocket change). Snacks because you will most likely be waiting in your car for an hour or more, and change because as you're sitting in your parked car impoverished men and women with disabilities and sorrow faces move between the rows of cars, where arm's reach out to drop *monedas* (coins) into their paper cups. I am not trying to highlight the fact that there is poverty in Mexicali, but that individuals who have been forgotten and excluded by the state, find innovative ways to survive and circumvent their exclusion. This research is dedicated to those who are not only forgotten, but intentionally excluded.

The edge of Mexicali, where rows of cars line up to cross the border, is actually a bustling center of commerce. In addition to those who have found a strategic way to make a

living amongst the trapped cars, countless vendors arrange their products along the edges of the road. While you're waiting to cross the border, you can buy more than just *paletas* and candy but a two-foot tall sculpture of Jesus! Lining the steel 15-foot fence that marks the physical edge of Mexico, are rows and rows of Jesus and Mary statues (Fig. 1).

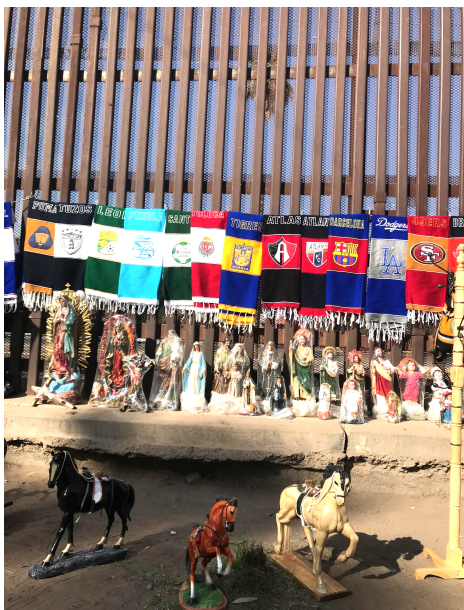


Figure 1: U.S.-Mexico Border, photo by author.

When we finally reached the front of the line I couldn't help but feel slightly anxious. While the officer at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection checked our passports I wondered: would they look at my Mexican grandmother in the passenger seat and get suspicious? Do they know I'm Mexican too? Mae Ngai, in her book *Impossible Subjects*, explains how the large presence of illegal populations in Latino communities has served to construct an identity of these communities as illegitimate, criminal, and unassimilable. U.S. Immigration laws in maintaining national membership, draw lines of inclusion and exclusion to articulate a desired composition of the nation.⁷ My fears of course were unfounded, as my grandmother has dual citizenship and I

⁷ Ngai, Mae M. "Illegal Aliens: A Problem of Law and History." *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. 1–20.

am a U.S. citizen. Yet, as intimidating officers walked through the cars being pulled by massive canines, I couldn't help but feel uneasy. In the United States, immigration laws have produced *alien citizens*, those who were born in the United States but are assumed to be foreign.⁸

After a few anxious minutes the officer finally returned our passports and lifted the gate so we could continue driving. As I drove across the border back on to Imperial Ave, I felt relieved. Although this was just my experience of crossing the border, it revealed to me how I too, closely associate undocumented immigration and the U.S.-Mexico border, with the movement of Mexicans. Once back in the safe confines of Los Angeles, being the over-analytical student that I am, I quickly searched online for the "U.S. Customs and Border Patrol." I wondered when this fear-instilling institution was created, and why even with my U.S. passport I felt uncertain about my American-ness? The official website reads:

CBP's top priority is to keep terrorists and their weapons from entering the U.S. while welcoming all legitimate travelers and commerce. CBP officers and agents enforce all applicable U.S. laws, including against illegal immigration, narcotics smuggling and illegal importation. CBP deploys highly trained law enforcement personnel who apprehend more than 1,000 individuals each day for suspected violations of U.S. laws.

1,000 individuals every day.

⁸ Ngai, Mae M. "Illegal Aliens: A Problem of Law and History." *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. 1–20.

—Introduction—

Chinese immigrants were this country's first *illegal immigrants*, long before Mexican immigrants came to fill this role in contemporary American discourse. As means of resisting and circumventing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, entrepreneurial Chinese became the architects of undocumented emigration from Mexico.⁹ The entrepreneurial Chinese of San Francisco and Latin America organized a transnational commercial orbit to facilitate the lucrative business of immigrant smuggling and contract labor recruitment. They devised techniques that utilized “coyotes”, corrupt immigration officials, the transportation industry, and legal loopholes in immigration policy.¹⁰ A 1901 House Committee report on Immigration states that approximately 20,000 Chinese were smuggled across the Mexican border into the United States each year. Illegal Chinese migration from Mexico throughout 1880 - 1940, fundamentally transformed America's relationship with the Mexican border. Although the Chinese practically invented illegal immigration from Mexico, the history and discourse concerning U.S. immigration, is overwhelmingly concentrated on Mexicans and Central Americans. Preoccupation with this single case maintains a close relationship in American minds between race and illegal status in the United States.¹¹

For many Chinese immigrants, Mexico was not only a strategic *backdoor* into the United States, but a land of opportunity. More than 15,000 Chinese would settle in Mexico by 1910. Once in Mexico, the Chinese built communities, supported various infrastructure projects, married Mexican women, and filled vital roles in the developing Mexican economy. Although

⁹ Romero, Robert Chao. “Immigration and the Chinese Diaspora.” *The Chinese in Mexico: 1882-1940*, University of Arizona Press, 2011, pp. 13-29.

¹⁰ Romero, Robert Chao. *The Chinese in Mexico*, 191-197.

¹¹ Ngai, Mae M. “Illegal Aliens: A Problem of Law and History.” *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. 1-20.

Chinese immigrants were vital for various development projects and state-building, they remain absent from Mexican history. In addition, despite their attempts to become part of Mexican civil society, they remained permanent foreigners. By 1940 almost two-thirds of the Chinese population in Mexico fled or were forcefully expelled.

Due to various wars, colonization, and high competition for low and middle wage jobs, Mexico has never been a large receiver of immigrants. However, the small numbers of immigrants who did arrive in Mexico, had a large influence on their host country. Historian Jürgen Buchenau contends, “Mexico followed a pattern of “qualitative” rather than “quantitative” immigration.”¹² Therefore, not only do standard narratives of Mexican identity not account for the long-standing Chinese presence, but Chinese immigrants also complicate the discourse that deems the country as a xenophilic “mother of foreigners and stepmother of Mexicans.”¹³

Most historians who have written on the subject thus far characterize the anti-Chinese campaigns and the expulsion of all Chinese from Sinaloa and Sonora as a by-product of U.S. anti-Chinese rhetoric. Others, such as Robert Chao Romero, relegate the anti-Chinese campaigns to economic nationalism. Although it may appear that Mexican anti-Chinese campaigns were a reiteration of U.S. Sinophobia—the unfounded fear and intense dislike of Chinese persons—Mexican *antichinismo* was the result of various circumstances, contingent on more than just exclusion from the United States. Other historians such as Grace Pena Delgado, argue that antichinismo was a product of the post-revolutionary Mexican racial ideology, *mestizaje*. I do not dispute that mestizaje nationalism contributed to the eventual expulsion campaigns (1931-1933),

¹² Buchenau, Jürgen. “The Limits of the Cosmic Race.” *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America*, University Press of Florida, 2014, pp. 66–87.

¹³ Ibid.

but mestizaje cannot account for earlier expressions of antichinismo. I argue that mestizaje nationalism has been detrimental to the incorporation of Chinese in Mexican national narratives. In other words, mestizaje nationalism not only encouraged the eventual expulsion of Chinese from Mexico, but their expulsion from history as well. Historical nationalism accounts for why the Chinese have been omitted from both Mexican and the U.S. national narratives. The U.S. expelled the Chinese because they did not fit within the desired racial composition of the nation and thus their stories have been omitted from the American narrative. Untangling the Chinese experience in Mexico, requires incorporating various histories of imperialism, colonialism, and a parallel process of Mexican national identity formation. When this this history is unraveled, various forms of Chinese othering are exposed.

But first, why has the history of Chinese immigrants in Mexico only recently begun to be told and why is so much still unknown? Two arguments run throughout this project, each contingent on the other. First, the rise of anti-Chinese campaigns and the eventual expulsion of 20,000 Chinese from Mexico was the culmination of various processes of *othering*, that began with their introduction into Mexico under Porfirian colonization and modernization projects. Chinese immigrants were introduced into Mexico as a disposable labor force under Diaz, from then on, they would always be associated with Porfirian policies and seen as a threat to the revolutionary and post-revolutionary state. Second, I argue that the omission of Chinese from Mexican national narratives is a consequence of history, the nation-state system, and nationalism.

History and the nation-state are intrinsic to one another, which had been detrimental to the unveiling of transnational histories. Moreover, even as the Chinese become more visible in academia, they appear exclusively within the context of nation-centric histories, such as

American Studies, Asian American studies, or Latin American studies. Yet these narrow frameworks cannot accurately account for the transnational nature of Chinese migration and settlement. Transnational migrants demand re-examination of concepts such as history and the nation-state.¹⁴

In *Silencing the Past* Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that the production of historical knowledge involves power and that this power often determines what history includes and what history neglects. This is especially apparent in the prevailing historiography on race in Mexico, which maintains that national identities were forged from the racial mixture of Europeans and indigenous peoples. Buchenau contends, “Mexicans have not imagined their country as a nation of immigrants...Mexicans imagined themselves as the products of the Spanish sexual conquest of indigenous Mesoamerica.”¹⁵ Therefore, Mexican national identity or *mexicanidad* has been contingent on the mestizo, which is the product of miscegenation of Spanish and Indian.¹⁶ When post-revolutionary leaders sought to distance themselves from Porfirian racism, they consolidated the state by incorporating *indigenismo* into their official ideology.¹⁷ While native populations were assimilated into Mexican society, blacks and Chinese were deemed unfit for this new mestizo national image.

Trouillot claims that theories of history underestimate the size, relevance, and the complexity of the overlapping sites where history is produced; therefore, the task is not to determine what history is, but how history works.¹⁸ Trouillot urges the necessity of unveiling the processes and conditions that produce narratives, in order to reveal how power produces certain

¹⁴ Hall, Stuart, et al. “The Question of Cultural Identity.” *Modernity and Its Futures*, Polity Press, 1993, pp. 599–632.

¹⁵ Buchenau, Jürgen. *Cosmic Race*, 68.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Knight, Alan, “Racism Revolution and Indigenismo Mexico 1910-1940.” *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, University of Texas Press, 2004, pp. 70–102.

¹⁸ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press, 2015.

narratives and silences others. Trouillot explains that silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources), the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives), the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives), and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance).¹⁹ Any historical narrative is a result of various processes of silencing.²⁰ Utilizing Trouillot's method, I reposition evidence to generate a new narrative, in order to reveal the silences that buried the story of the Chinese in Mexico.

Omission from history is only the first challenge, the second challenge is found in nation-centric history. Prasenjit Duara offers the first systematic account of the relationship between the nation-state, nationalism, and the concept of linear history. His critique of nation-centric history argues that the writing of history is a project of modernity. Although he focuses primarily on China and India, Duara argues that many historians of postcolonial nation-states have adopted a linear, evolutionary history of the Enlightenment-colonial model. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate contestation, appropriation, and the repressed subject into accounts of the past. Duara urges scholars to rescue history from the nation, by re-evaluating how pre-national identities shaped national ones, "Nationalism is rarely the nationalism of the nation, but rather marks the site where different representations of the nation contest and negotiate with each other."²¹ The backlash against such nation-centric histories has resulted in the tendency to view the past as largely constructed, imagined, or invented. Duara offers another possibility beyond "imagined communities" and redefines history as a series of multiple conflicting narratives produced simultaneously at national, local, and transnational levels.

¹⁹ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Duara, Prasenjit. *Rescuing History from the Nation Questioning Narratives of Modern China*. The Univ. of Chicago Press.

The concept of nationalism as a modern form of consciousness became prevalent through the works of Karl Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, and Benedict Anderson.²² National identities are seen to offer membership to the political nation state and identification through the medium of national culture, which attempts to override identities such as religion, race, language, class, gender.²³ The nation as a form of identity is debated among three approaches: primordialist, constructivist, and instrumentalist. The primordialist conception of the nation postulates that nations are real and not imagined, wherein national identity is immutable.²⁴ Duara explains how the primordialist view is intertwined with Social Darwinism, which “tended to fix upon race-that combination of biology, environment and culture-as the repository of those attributes which enabled (or prevented) a group to evolve toward civilization.” He further highlights how Social Darwinism not only offered justification for colonialism, but represented a closed discourse of history, nation, and race, in which the only justification for nationhood was whether a race could advance historically. Therefore, a nation was able to progress in history if it reflected the qualities of a civilized race. Mexican President Porfirio Diaz would subscribe to this understanding when he pushed for European immigrants to bring Mexico into the modern era. Constructivists argue that nothing is fixed or predetermined in the concept of the nation. In a study of states and nations Hugh Seton-Watson writes, “that no 'scientific definition' of a nation can be devised. All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to be a nation.”²⁵ National identity is therefore subjective, dependent on psychology rather than biology.

²² Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Blackwell Publishing, 1983.

²³ Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2006.

²⁴ Dawisha, Adeed. “Nation and Nationalism: Historical Antecedents to Contemporary Debates.” *International Studies Review*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2002, pp. 3–22.

²⁵ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977).

Finally, instrumentalists argue that social linkages are shaped specifically for political and material advantage. National cultures produce definitions of the nation that we identify with, constructing national identities through *imagined communities*, as argued by Benedict Anderson. Anderson argues that the differences between nations is rooted in the different ways the nation is imagined. Narratives of the nation emphasize tradition and heritage so that political culture appears to be a natural progression of history.²⁶ Heritage or notions of “original” peoples are commonly employed to articulate the origin of the nation. This process includes myths and heroisms, while massacres and human atrocities are conveniently forgotten. Traditions are emphasized and invented, in order to mold and bind a nation’s imagined collective identity. Nations are *narrations*, created, nourished, and sustained through the telling and re-telling of their pasts.²⁷

Stuart Hall, in *Modernity and Its Futures*, argues “People are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the idea of a nation as represented in its national culture.” Hall resists the idea that national cultures are composed of only of cultural institutions, but instead are emphasized by various discursive strategies such as narratives of the nation and foundational myths. Hall argues that national cultures function as systems of representation; a product of negotiation that attempts to unify through race or ethnicity. Despite the power of national narratives Hall and Duara dispute the notion that national identities are cohesive and stable. First, nationalism registers difference even as it claims a unitary or unifying identity.²⁸ In other words, the nation is a historical configuration in which the national “Self” is defined in relation to the “Other.” Therefore, modern nations seek cohesion by employing narratives of the nation that

²⁶ Hall, Stuart, et al. *Modernity and Its Futures*, 599–632.

²⁷ Dawisha, Adeed. *Nation and Nationalism*, 3–22.

²⁸ Duara, Prasenjit. *Rescuing History*.

privilege a particular community and represses others. Hall proposes national cultures should instead be viewed as discursive devices that represent difference as unity or identity. Second, nationalist consciousness is not a unique or unprecedented mode or form of consciousness. Hall considers that national cultures also serve as structures of power, “Most modern nations consist of disparate cultures which were only unified by a lengthy process of violent conquest - that is, by the forcible suppression of cultural difference.”²⁹ Duara highlights that historians have been generally concerned with the process whereby national identities are formed and have neglected that this is the same process whereby other identifications and alternative narratives of the nation are repressed and obscured.³⁰

Finally, Duara offers that the novelty of modern nationalism is not political self-consciousness, but the world system of nation-states. As the state claims to represent the people of the nation it has steadily expanded its role in society, but at the expense of local authority structures.³¹ However, even when such unification has been temporarily achieved, the nation is represented and voiced by different—often contradictory and opposing—self-conscious groups.³² Nevertheless, national cultures have dominated modernity, even if they often fail to unify. The nation-state system has expanded across the world, thereby sanctioning the nation-state as the only legitimate form of governance.

This brief theoretical overview destabilizes the notion that the nation or national identity are homogenous or unified. Despite this, historical nationalism has been influential and simultaneously detrimental to the experience of Chinese in Mexico. I will quickly summarize a few of the central consequences of historical nationalism. First, nationalism dominates historical

²⁹ Hall, Stuart, et al. *Modernity and Its Futures*, 599–632.

³⁰ Duara, Prasenjit. *Rescuing History*.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

discourse therefore transnational narratives, such as those of migrants, are either missing or inaccurately told. Second, history works to unify the nation through foundational myths and national narratives, but these narratives privilege a particular system of representation such as race or ethnicity over others. Thirdly, the production of history involves power and this power determines what history includes. Chinese contributions to state-building and the Mexican economy were substantial relative to their population. Yet, the impact of Chinese contributions in shaping Mexican national history remain to be fully assessed or incorporated into the conventional national narrative.³³ This research aims to unveil how nationalistic history has silenced Chinese narratives. Additionally, I traverse Mexican history to reveal how various circumstances such as imperialism, colonialism, and nation-state building guided a process of Chinese *othering*. Through Duara's recipe, I incorporate the *repressed subject* into accounts of the past in order to reevaluate how pre-national identities shaped Mexican national identity. Each chapter tackles a different era in Mexican-Chinese history, exposing a process of Chinese racialization that culminated in the expulsion of almost the entire Chinese population from Northern Mexico.

—*Overview of Chapter Contents*—

In order to destabilize Mexican national narratives, the first chapter explores the origins of Chinese migration during the colonial and *coolie* period. Chinese migration to Mexico is by no means a recent phenomenon, and began much earlier than the mid-nineteenth century. The arrival of Chinese to Mexico dates back to as early as 1635. However, most historians claim

³³ Alfaro-Velcamp, Theresa, and Robert H. McLaughlin. "Immigration and Techniques of Governance in Mexico and the United States: Recalibrating National Narratives through Comparative Immigration Histories." *Law and History Review* 29.02 (2011): 573-606.

Mexico was not a primary destination for immigrants of the Chinese diaspora until *after* the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The first chapter also sheds light on the Chinese Diaspora and the subsequent coolie era. Between 1847 and 1874, 225,000 Chinese arrived in Peru and Cuba through the coolie trade or *la trata amarilla*.³⁴ The initial arrival of Chinese goods and migrants to the region was the result of the Spanish colonial trade network. China's vast population became a limitless source of labor, and centuries-old migration networks were already in place to facilitate Chinese labor.³⁵ The regions labor demands for various agricultural and industrial development projects led governments to initially recruit the Chinese.

The depiction of Chinese migration to Mexico as a consequence of U.S. laws maintains Mexico as an emigrate location. Moreover, it supports the narrative that Mexican anti-Chinese campaigns were a reiteration U.S. sinophobia. Mexican *antichinismo* was a culmination of various circumstances, dating far earlier than Chinese exclusion from the United States. The second chapter explores the active recruitment of Chinese laborers as *motores de sangre* to Mexico during the Porfirian period. The recruitment of Chinese laborers to fulfill capitalist desires and not as settlers, was the crux of antichinismo. Moreover, it reflected a criollo (Mexican-born Spaniards) ideology that saw the native Indian population as unfit agents of modernization. Although originally recruited for agricultural colonization projects, the Chinese of Mexico achieved a high level of economic success. By means of transnational trade networks, Chinese immigrants integrated into various levels of the Mexican economy.

³⁴ Hu-deHart, Evelyn, and Kathleen López. "Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Historical Overview." *Afro - Hispanic Review*, Vanderbilt University. Department of Spanish and Portuguese, 1 Apr. 2008,

³⁵ Zhou, Min, and Alejandro Portes. "The Chinese Diaspora and International Migration." *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, Ethnicity, and Community Transformation*, Temple University Press, 2009, pp. 23–40.

Historian Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp contends that the hegemony of national historiographies persists at the expense of transnational and other histories, hindering the exploration of the many connections between nation building and migration.³⁶ The second chapter further explores Mexican and U.S. immigration laws in relation to one another, in order to destabilize the notion that Mexican immigration laws were more liberal or open than that of the United States. A closer look at Mexico's 'open' immigration policies reveal that they were intended to attract European settlers in order to whiten the population. Unraveling Mexico's immigration policies exposes the interwoven legacies of Spanish colonial rule. Various historians have explored thoroughly how nationalism lead to the formation of immigration laws in the United States, but how did nationalism lead or not lead to the formation of immigration laws in Mexico?

Emphasis on law and government policies are recurrent throughout all four chapters, as the law reveals social structures and social behavior. Every change in social behavior has an impact on law and every major change in law is rooted in social behavior.³⁷ The legal system is not autonomous, but it does work to influence society and society influences law. Law follows social change and adapts to it, yet the legal system also crystallizes social change. Moreover, the emphasizes on immigration laws and policies destabilizes the nation-state, since immigration and the nation-state work in tandem to construct an "us" that excludes an "other." Finally, this chapter explores how undocumented Chinese immigration transformed the U.S. into a gatekeeping nation. After the 1882 Exclusion Act, an entire bureaucracy was created to enforce Chinese exclusion, including inspectors, judges, jails, residency certificates, and interpreters.

³⁶ Alfaro-Velcamp, Theresa, and Robert H. McLaughlin. *Recalibrating National Narratives*, 573-606.

³⁷ Deflem, Mathieu. "Law and Culture: The Balance of Values Through Norms." *Sociology of Law: Visions of a Scholarly Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010. 198-217. Print.

The third chapter attempts to untangle a complicated history of the Mexican Revolution and the unspeakable violence directed at the Chinese, in which many historians still cannot explain. This transitional period in Mexican history is essential for understanding the rise of organized anti-Chinese campaigns and the eventual deportation of thousands of Chinese. Particular attention is given to the massacre of Torreon, in which more than three hundred Chinese were murdered in 1911. Unlike the anti-Chinese campaigns of the United States, Mexico's sinophobia was tied to revolution, reconstruction, and reworking rule and consent. The Chinese were racialized through battlefield violence, economic nationalism, and later by means of *mestizaje* nationalistic discourse to legitimize the post-revolutionary state. Moreover, this chapter explores how the Mexican state and intellectuals were re-evaluating racial thinking and indigenous assimilation, through the formation of *mestizaje*. Indigenismo sought to redeem and appropriate the heritage of Mexico's indigenous populations, incorporating the "Indians" into Mexican society rather than restoring their lands.³⁸

By 1940 the Chinese population of Mexico had decreased by almost two-thirds, largely due to the organized anti-Chinese movement that targeted the Chinese of various states such as Sonora, Sinaloa, Nayarit, and Tamaulipas. Chapter four examines how the coolie era, Porfirian colonization, revolutionary violence, and organized campaigns culminated in the expulsion of virtually the entire Chinese population from the state of Sonora in August of 1931. During a post-revolutionary scramble to define state authority and national identity, antichinismo gained greater legitimacy and provided a sense of national coherence. Antichinismo was a versatile form of nationalism that offered rationale for state power and allowed Mexicans to perform racial superiority through a state-endorsed identity.

³⁸ Buchenau, Jürgen. "Small Numbers, Great Impact: Mexico and Its Immigrants, 1821-1973." *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Feb. 2003.

Additionally, this chapter revisits Mexican and U.S. immigration laws and the vital role of government policies in the institutionalization of antichinismo. Synchronized anti-immigrant measures indicate that North American was responding to a global economic crisis, resulting in a transnational xenophobic movement.³⁹ Chapter four also situates the antichinista campaigns within the context of an official nationalist campaign, hemispheric economic depression, and the repatriation of thousands of Mexicans from the United States. Particular attention is given to Chinese associations and the ways in which Chinese communities resisted harassment and discrimination. This concluding chapter provides the most visible examples of historical nationalism's consequences. Mexico neglects the presence and role of immigrants in the history of Mexico's transition to an independent nation-state. Indifference to Mexico's immigrants served the needs of a state-building project that reinforced the official indigenous mestizo-Spanish triad. Although this research ends with a Chinese exodus in the 1930s, this does not signify that the Chinese presence in Mexico disappeared. The conclusion of this project recalls my interview with the president of the Chinese Association in Mexicali and demonstrates the various ways Chinese-Mexicans have survived, adapted, and transformed themselves and Mexico. This project is a humble attempt to uncover one of the many missing narratives from history.

³⁹ Young, Elliott. "Contested Sovereignties." *Alien Nation Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era through World War II*, The University of North Carolina Press, 2014, pp. 28–52

Chapter I
Between Freedom and Slavery :
The Coolie Era (1635-1882)

—Introduction—

Stateless, alien, *extranjeros*. Chinese migrants left the ports of Southern China in search for stability and economic success. Sailing aboard massive ships across international waters, Chinese laborers transcended beyond the nation-state. Pull factors such as economic opportunities in New World markets, coincided with various push factors in China during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The international Chinese diaspora lead thousands of Chinese migrants on multinational travels throughout Cuba, Mexico, and the United States. Chinese transnationalism is illustrated by Lee Kwong Lun, a Guangdong native, whose journey is highlighted in Robert Romero's book, *The Chinese in Mexico: 1882 - 1940*. Lee first emigrated to Cuba, as Cuba's coolie trade made it a popular destination for Chinese immigrants. After learning Spanish in Cuba, Lee immigrated to San Francisco, where he started a family. He then migrated to Sonora, Mexico, serving as a middleman between Chinese merchants of Mexico and Chinese wholesale suppliers of San Francisco. After 10 years in Mexico he returned to the United States and settled in Arizona.

—Chinese Migration During the Colonial Era—

Though most historians regard 1882 as the starting point for Chinese migration to Mexico, their presence in Mexico began almost 200 years earlier. Ever since the 10th century, the Chinese had been trading with the Philippines, which they regarded as *Xiao Lusong* or *Little*

Luzon.⁴⁰ When Spain acquired the Philippines, they subsequently entered into an extensive South East Asian trade network. Accordingly, colonial transcontinental trade resulted in Chinese migration to Mexico. Chinese merchants stationed in the Philippines traded Chinese luxury items for Mexican silver dollars with the Spanish. Mexican silver coins or *bullion*, remained important to China's monetary system even after Mexican independence from Spain. Then large Spanish galleons transported fine Chinese silks and porcelain merchandise from the port of Manila to Acapulco, Mexico. From Spanish ports in Mexico, Chinese goods were to be distributed through all of Spanish colonial Latin America.⁴¹ The importance of China as a trading partner would be revealed centuries later, as despite frequent anti-Chinese protests to abrogate the treaty with China, the Mexican government hesitated. The necessity of Chinese immigrants posed a constant battle between Mexican capitalist interest and a desired racial composition of the nation.

Although there are some (mostly unsupported) speculations of ancient Chinese contact with the 1200 B.C Mexican Olmec civilization, it was the colonial appetite that established contact between China and Mexico. The oldest and largest widespread distribution of Asian immigrants in Latin America were the Chinese, whose presence was documented in Lima as early as 1613 and in Mexico in 1635.⁴² Asian slaves arriving from the Philippines were of diverse origins. Regardless if a slave was Japanese, Malaysian, Filipino, Timorese, or Chinese, they were all regarded as *Chino*, meaning Chinese.⁴³ This community of diverse male Asians in Mexico were called "los indios chinos" by the Spanish.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Xiao Lusong (pinyin) or Little Luzon (English translation) was the name for the Philippines during this period. Today, official Mandarin translates the Philippines to Feilubin (pinyin), Feilubin is a transliteration. Lusong is still used to reference the largest of the Philippine islands.

⁴¹ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 13-29.

⁴² Hu-deHart, Evelyn, and Kathleen López. "Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Historical Overview." *Afro - Hispanic Review*, Vanderbilt University. Department of Spanish and Portuguese, 1 Apr. 2008,

⁴³ Dong, Jingsheng. "Chinese Emigration to Mexico and the Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910." *Estudios Internacionales*, vol. 38, no. 152, Nov. 2011, doi:10.5354/0719-3769.2006.14372.

⁴⁴ Los indios chinos translates to the "Indian Chinese".

With the arrival of Chinese goods in Mexico, small numbers of Chinese immigrants came to colonial Mexico as Spanish slaves and servants. Chinese entered into a racial order in which a creole minority was dedicated to maintaining their dominance in a multiethnic majority.⁴⁵ At the top stood the *peninsulares*, native-born Spaniards who were the only recognized immigrant group.⁴⁶ In the middle, were those of Spanish-indigenous descent, or the mestizos. Eventually, in 1828 after independence from Spain, the government would expel all *peninsulares* from Mexico.

When Spanish merchants sailed back to Mexico, they often brought their Chinese servants or slaves with them, and left them in Mexico.⁴⁷ However, there were cases of Spanish merchants who brought their Chino slaves from Mexico to Spain; since owning and showing off a Chino slave was viewed as a symbol of high class. The objectification and exoticization of Chinese slaves illustrates “the peculiar mix of xenophilia and xenophobia that has always characterized Mexican attitudes toward outsiders.”⁴⁸ Those of the Chinese immigrants who were left in Mexico, resided in segregated areas of the city; working primarily as tradesmen, barbers, and shopkeepers.⁴⁹ Mexico became to be known as *Da Lusong* or *Big Luzon* (大鲁松), among the Chinese.⁵⁰

By 1635, there were 20,000 Chinese in Spanish Manila (Philippines), since the Spanish depended on the Chinese for food and services.⁵¹ In addition to Spanish Manila, slaves were obtained from Portuguese slave traders at Portuguese colonial possessions and outposts of the

⁴⁵ Buchenau, Jürgen. *Cosmic Race*, 68.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Dong, Jingsheng. *Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910*,

⁴⁸ Buchenau, Jürgen, *Small numbers, great impact*, 30.

⁴⁹ Romero, Robert Chao, *Immigration and the Chinese Diaspora*, 13-29.

⁵⁰ *Da Lusong* (pinyin) or *Big Luzon* (English Translation) are no longer used in official Mandarin to reference Mexico. The transliteration of Mexico is *Moxige* (pinyin).

⁵¹ Dubs, Homer H., and Robert S. Smith. “Chinese in Mexico City in 1635.” *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1942, p. 387. The *Estado de India*, the State of India, also referred as the Portuguese State of India was a state of the Portuguese Overseas Empire. It is located on the western coast of India, and is now known as Goa, India.

Estado da India.⁵² However, this first wave of Chinese migrants was miniscule in comparison to Chinese migration to Mexico during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The majority of Chinese migration to the Americas took place during the decline of slavery and the development of markets for New World cash crops, minerals, and other raw materials.⁵³ Throughout the seventeenth century the Chinese who were brought to Mexico, worked as barbers and slaves as well as in silver mines and textile factories. There was also a small number of Chinese mariners who worked in Acapulco and other Mexican ports. However, there are little historical records concerning the situation of the Chinese during the colonial period in Mexico.

— *The Coolie Trade* —

Within South China, the trading of British commodities and Spanish silver for South Asian opium developed a durable system of illegal drug trafficking in the early nineteenth century. Years later, these same systems would evolve into trans-Pacific migration networks to facilitate the labor needs of transitioning empires and national economies.⁵⁴ During the early nineteenth century social and political pressures led to the abolition of the slave trade throughout European nations. Britain's abolition of the use of slavery in 1833 yielded to pressures from the Caribbean planter class to retain cheap labor to maintain profits. To restore profitability, while also appeasing antislavery advocates, British authorities turned to so-called coolie labor.⁵⁵ The term coolie came to be understood as an indentured laborer, particularly one who worked on a plantation. Beginning in the 1820's, British brokers and merchants developed a slavery-like

⁵² *Estado da India* translate to The Indian State, it refers to an area that included parts of India, Bengal, Malacca, Indonesia, Nagasaki in Japan, and Macau.

⁵³ Hu-deHart, Evelyn, and Kathleen López. *Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

⁵⁴ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, by, Stanford University Press, 2013, pp. 104–129.

⁵⁵ The term coolie is derived from the Urdu word *quli*, which means “day laborer.” During the eighteenth-century coolie most often referred to cheap South Asian and Chinese labor.

system in primarily China and India. For purposes of this project, the coolie trade will refer to exclusively the *Chinese* coolie trade. Spain then exploited the British coolie network, not for humanitarian reasons, but to increase profits by adding the Chinese to their existing force of African slaves.⁵⁶ Soon Cuba's plantation economy, became heavily reliant on imported Chinese contract laborers.⁵⁷ Between 1847 and 1874, 225,000 Chinese arrived in Peru and Cuba through the coolie trade or *la trata amarilla* (the yellow trade).⁵⁸

Neither nation-state's nor imperial governments maintained complete sovereignty over the coolie trade, revealing how coolies and their movements operated beyond the purview of the nation-state. The British and Spanish system worked in tandem with private individuals who held no national or imperial allegiances.⁵⁹ The recruitment and transportation of coolies and the selling of contracts were in the hands of private firms operating within the logic of slave societies such as French, American, Portuguese, Cuban, Peruvian.⁶⁰ Emigration was banned by the Qing government, therefore Chinese migrants and coolies relinquished their national citizenship and any state protection along with it. As soon as emigrants departed from China's southern shores they were stateless and thereby, vulnerable to exploitation.

Early Qing official statutes declared emigration for work illegal or trade punishable by beheading.⁶¹ Chinese emigrants were abandoned by their national government, revealing another facet of their statelessness. Chinese diplomatic letters that tried to defend the rights of coolies referred to them as "pigs."⁶² Abandoned by their government, coolies would never enjoy the same rights as citizens in the places they traveled too. Though a product of the colonial era,

⁵⁶ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁵⁷ Hu-deHart, Evelyn, and Kathleen López, *Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean*,

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Idem.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 28–52

⁶² *ibid.*

coolies reveal a common predicament of the nation-state system; the tension between the universal inalienable rights of man and the rights of citizens.

In 1864, Edgar Holden wrote “A Chapter in the Coolie Trade” for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, an article memorializing the mutiny that erupted on the ship *Norway* in 1859. Young highlights Holden’s article in *Alien Nation*, as it provided a rare detailed first-hand account along with drawings of the scenes he witnessed. Circulating during the height of U.S. Civil War, Holden’s article sought to expose the vulnerability and dangers of the slave labor system. Frequent coolie rebellions aboard ships and protests by Chinese townspeople in coastal cities, compelled many journalists to equivocate the coolie trade with the African slave trade. In all regards, the two were similar: the Chinese were branded, sold at auction blocks, and renamed by their employers. However, the portrayal of coolies as slaves and victims of powerful labor brokers strips migrants from their agency in migration.

Although it is not clear if the 1,037 coolies migrating from China to Cuba were taken against their will, *Norway* had all the makings of a slave ship.⁶³ Prior to departure aboard the *Norway*, a government official asked the passengers if they were unwilling emigrants. Only one Chinese passenger stepped forward and was released accordingly. No doubt, coercion and misinformation were commonplace in recruiting coolies, but emigrants’ unwillingness to leave the ship suggests that they were somewhat willing participants.⁶⁴ Young articulates the complexities of unraveling the coolie trade, “In between the poles of free and voluntary emigrant and slave, there was a vast complex gray zone. That is the space the coolies occupied.” Sailing from Macau to Havana, an organized coolie rebellion erupted aboard the *Norway*. As the coolies lit fires below and tried to pry hatches open, seamen shot them and eventually threw tarpaulins

⁶³ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 28–52.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

over the hatches to trap the smoke and suffocate the coolies. When *Norway* had arrived in Havana, 130 coolies had died, 70 of them killed during the mutiny.

Holden's article makes a case for coolies' likeness to slavery, but by denying Chinese agency from their migration, coolies are rendered subordinate. Moreover, Holden's condemnation of the coolie trade is juxtaposed with visual racialization's of Chinese migrants. Throughout Holden's article Chinese emigrants are referred to as "barbarians", which speaks to his accompanying drawings that construct the Chinese as savage, uncivilized, and threatening.⁶⁵ Coolies are drawn shirtless and barefoot, which indicate the extent to which Holden saw them as inferior and barbaric (see fig. 1). Chinese faces were drawn in a coarse style with their queues (ponytails) floating in midair or grabbed by the crew in attempt to restrain them, "holding the Chinese by their queues was a way to physically overpower them, but graphically it also represented cultural domination."⁶⁶ Crew members were drawn fully clothed, differentiating them as civilized in comparison to the coolies. Despite Holden's racist imagery, his article is one of the few first-hand narratives that describes the life of coolies on the high seas. More than 4,000 Chinese emigrants were killed during coolie voyages and one out of eleven coolie ships erupted in mutiny or tragedy.

⁶⁵ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 28–52.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*



Figure 2: Edgar Holden, “A Providential Mischance”, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, 1864.

Some historians contend that the mutiny aboard the *Norway* and similar mutinies were not spontaneous but carefully planned revolts led by Chinese pirates, who signed up as coolies.⁶⁷ Frequent throughout the unraveling of Chinese migration is the contentious accounts of what happened and that which is said to have happened. Rare first-hand accounts such as that of Holden’s article are important, but arguably biased and part of the production of narratives that render the Chinese as both inferior and threatening.

Insofar that it was a planned revolt, the mutiny aboard the *Norway* was an International incident: the ship and captain were U.S. citizens, Macao was a Portuguese territory, Cuba was a Spanish colony, and the coolies were Chinese subjects.⁶⁸ Coolies inhabited spaces both beyond and between nations, where sovereignty was often contested. In 1858, William Reed, representative for American Legation in China, complained that he was unable to prevent U.S. citizens from engaging in coolie trafficking. With no legal authority, Reed argued that the 1818 U.S. Slave Trade Act applied to the Chinese because they were “people of color”, but U.S. and Spanish captains rejected his complaints. The Spanish consul claimed that the trade was just and

⁶⁷ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 28–52

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

legal, consisting of contracts made between one free man with another free man.⁶⁹ Although the United States and Britain were condemning coolie slavery in Spain's colonies, their businessmen continued to profit from the coolie trade.⁷⁰ Despite U.S. protests, almost 400,000 Chinese continued to arrive in US and Canada during the coolie era.

The Chinese coolie trade was if anything, a lucrative business. Yet the inability of nation states to assert their sovereignty and regulate the coolie trade made it increasingly dangerous and therefore less lucrative. Fear began to form among merchants and ship captains. Even Francis Bowen, a notorious U.S. slave captain returned to the comparatively safe illegal African slave trade, after a rebellion erupted on his coolie ship. Despite the fear of captains and merchants, the risks of traveling to the Americas was much higher for Chinese migrants. Young argues that the risk of Chinese coolies setting out for Latin America rivals the Middle Passage of African slaves. Coolies not only risked death from rebellions and mutinies, but from disease, unsanitary water, and lack of food as well. Mortality rates for Chinese on the passage to the America's was about 12%, almost equal to that of African mortality on the Middle Passage. If 12% seems low, compare it to the 1-1.5% mortality rate of European emigrants traveling to New York or South Africa.⁷¹

Despite the promotion of coolies to fill labor demands in their colonial territories, Spain began implementing discriminatory policies directed at Chinese immigrants. Spain and China entered into a treaty that banned the immigration of Chinese contract laborers into all Spanish territories in 1877. However, by the time Spain and China had entered into agreement, the Qing government was making attempts to dismantle the coolie system and the harsh abuses that went

⁶⁹ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 28–52.

⁷⁰ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁷¹ *Idem*.

along indentured labor.⁷² Earlier in 1864, Spanish barbers in Mexico protested to the Governor that they could not compete and asked that the Chinese be expelled. Though the Chinese were not expelled, severe limitations were put on their numbers.⁷³ While Spanish colonial Mexico began to generate exclusively anti-Chinese policies, the U.S. would also soon implement policies aimed at removing the Chinese.

—*The Chinese Diaspora and La Trata Amarilla*—

The collision of the British Empire and the Qing Dynasty generated new arrangements of power that remade South China into a locus of transoceanic migration.⁷⁴ However, Chinese have moved seasonally or permanently to other parts of Asia and the rest of the world long before European colonists arrived on Chinese shores.⁷⁵ Between the nineteenth and twentieth century the Chinese diaspora generated 8,190,815 emigrates, that were scattered internationally. Diaspora, as defined by Romero “is the scattering and migration of minority groups who have a common ancestral homeland, reside in foreign areas, share a common culture, hold similar beliefs and aspirations, and maintain some sort of linkage with a homeland.” Most Chinese emigrants were from Fujian and Guangdong, who traveled through ports such as Hong Kong and the Portuguese seaport of Macau; for the United States, Mexico, Cuba, Peru, Australia, Thailand, the Philippines, and South Africa.⁷⁶ Despite being referred to as a *Chinese* diaspora, Young argues “it is more accurate to call it a Pearl River Delta Cantonese migration rather than a Chinese one.” Almost all Chinese who migrated to the Americas were from the Pearl River delta region of the Guangdong Province and spoke Cantonese.

⁷² Chang, Jason Oliver. “The Politics of Chinese Immigration in the Era of Mexican National Colonization.” *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940*, University of Illinois Press, 2017, pp. 31–58.

⁷³ Dubs, Homer H. and Smith, Robert S. *Mexico City in 1635*, 387-389.

⁷⁴ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 19

⁷⁵ Zhou, Min, and Alejandro Portes, *The Chinese Diaspora*, 23–40.

⁷⁶ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 13-29.

Overpopulation, the commercialization of agriculture, nascent industrialization, western imperialism, peasant rebellions, and natural disasters collectively constituted a “migrant-prone situation in Guangdong.”⁷⁷ Between the years of 1741 to 1851, relative peace and increased food supply augmented the population in China from 143 million to 432 million. Population explosion resulted in land pressures in the southern and southeastern regions. However, demographic growth failed to persuade the Qing government to initiate land reform or new agrarian policies. Moreover, the shift from subsistence farming to the production of cash crops forced many to sell their land.⁷⁸ Land shortages, reduced standards of living, and increased commercial agriculture lead to peasant socioeconomic displacement and the subsequent diaspora.⁷⁹

Domestic demographic and economic pressures were compounded with the consequences of the British victory in the Opium Wars of 1839 to 1842. The Treaty of Nanjing, which ended the Opium Wars, forced China to unlock commercial seaports such as Guangdong, Shanghai, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Ningbo, and Hong Kong.⁸⁰ Therefore Chinese cloth producers, merchants, and boatmen were put out of business after cheap British textiles flooded Chinese markets. The Treaty of Nanjing transformed the Chinese empire into a semi-colonial state and ended Chinese hegemony in the intra-Asian trade.⁸¹ However, British semi-colonialism presented the *huashang* class, merchants who had dominated the intra-Asian trade, with new opportunities to become European trade partners. The *huashang* class would become vital in meeting New World labor demands by recruiting Chinese laborers.⁸² In addition to opening the Chinese economy,

⁷⁷ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 13-29.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ The Treaty of Nanjing was the first of various unequal treaties between China and foreign imperialist powers. The treaty forced China to pay Britain an indemnity, cede the territory of Hong Kong, and established a “fair and reasonable” tariff for British goods. British merchants, were previously only allowed to trade at Guangzhou (Canton), but the treaty permitted them to trade at five “treaty ports” and with whomever they pleased.

⁸¹ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 19

⁸² Zhou, Min, and Portes, Alejandro, *The Chinese Diaspora*, 23–40.

European imperialism opened the floodgates of China's massive labor supply. Chinese immigration had been previously banned in 1718, but European diplomatic pressures forced the legalization of Chinese immigration in 1860.⁸³ Romero characterizes the significance of these changes in facilitating the Chinese diasporic movement,

In response to western colonial pressures, the Chinese government reversed its centuries-old prohibition against emigration and legally sanctioned the recruitment of immigrant laborers for overseas western territories and possessions. One of the most important effects of European colonialism upon trends of Chinese emigration, therefore, was not only to encourage emigration through the creation of socio economic dislocation in South China but also to promote wide-scale diasporic movement through the legalization of emigration and the opening of transpacific networks of migration and labor recruitment.

Western Imperialism and socio-economic pressures initiated a series of rebellions in the Guangdong province. The Christian inspired Taiping Rebellion erupted in Guangdong, which transformed into a bloody civil war that lasted from 1851 to 1864. Taiping, which attempted to create an egalitarian "Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace", inspired another peasant rebellion: The Red Turban Rebellion of 1854. Upwards to a million sympathizers and participants were killed in suppression by the imperial authorities.⁸⁴

Shortly after the rebellions, ethnic conflict broke out in Guangdong between Punti "locals" and members of the Hakka "minority" group.⁸⁵ Hakka-Punti land disputes claimed the lives of thousands, and contributed to Cantonese socio-economic instability and dislocation.⁸⁶ Moreover, the region experienced frequent floods and droughts, and received no disaster relief

⁸³ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 13-29.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Hakka-Punti Clan Wars refer to the conflict between the Hakka and Punti (Cantonese people) in Guangdong, China. Hakka literally means guest family, and Punti literally means natives. The Punti are also referred to by the dialect they spoke, Yue Chinese or Cantonese. The origins of this bloody conflict lay in the resentment of the Punti towards the Hakka whose dramatic population growth threatened the Punti. The Hakka were marginalized and resentful in turn, and were forced to inhabit the hills and waterways rather than the fertile plains. The wars were particularly fierce in around the Pearl River Delta, especially in Taishan of the Sze Yup counties. The wars resulted in roughly a million dead with many more fleeing for their lives.

from the Qing government. Additionally, constant military conflict prevented peasants from maintaining their lands.⁸⁷ Threats of starvation and famine, in conjunction with overpopulation, imperialism, and political unrest pushed many Chinese away from their homelands.

Chinese emigrants such as Lee Kwong Lun, were lured by prospects of peace and economic opportunity to the America's.⁸⁸ Moreover, the abolition of slavery led to labor shortages in British, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch colonial possessions, generating overseas economic opportunities for the Chinese. Chinese immigrants were recruited for positions such as mining, farming, skilled workers, merchants, and shopkeepers.⁸⁹ Moreover, white planters and officials saw Asians as less threatening and more economical than Africans.⁹⁰ Additionally, they hoped Asians would adopt their European values, "thereby ensuring the continuation of the colonial enterprise by forming a class "in-between" whites at the top and Africans and Indigenous peoples at the bottom of society."⁹¹ Acting as the middleman minority allowed for the Chinese to work in various positions but within a colonial racial caste structure. The concept of the "middleman minority" has been employed to understand minority groups whose historical experience, although marked by discrimination, is not characterized by continuous and extreme subordination.⁹²

Although the literature is not consistent in defining the fundamental characteristics of the middleman-minority, it is usually defined as certain ethnic groups who occupy a special niche in a society, between those of dominant and subordinate groups.⁹³ The middleman minority

⁸⁷ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 13-29.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Hu-deHart, Evelyn, and Kathleen López, Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean,

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² O'Brien, David J., and Stephen S. Fugita. "Middleman Minority Concept: Its Explanatory Value in the Case of the Japanese in California Agriculture." *The Pacific Sociological Review*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1982, pp. 185–204.

⁹³ O'Brien, David J., and Stephen S. Fugita, Middleman Minority, 185–204.

position is a product of structural impediments that permit certain groups from pursuing mainstream occupations, while special capacities of that particular ethnic group grant them with a competitive advantage in small-scale entrepreneurial pursuits.⁹⁴ Sociologist David O'Brien offers four broad categories of the middleman minority: middle position in the stratification system, sojourner orientation, distinctive cultural and social characteristics, or distinctive economic traits with concentration in entrepreneurial roles. O'Brien contends the third category is typically used to describe minorities, such as the Jews, the Chinese, and the Japanese. The Chinese have been attributed with the middleman minority because they hold "cultural norms regarding obligations toward kin and other ethnic-group members, as well as strong, ongoing familial and communal social-organizational mechanisms for carrying out cooperative activities."⁹⁵ Moreover, the middlemen function as a buffer between elites and masses by deflecting the peasants' hostility to the middleman minority. During periods of economic crisis, the middleman serves as a convenient scapegoat that ensures the survival of existing economic, political, and social institutions.

By 1882 half a million Chinese had come to the America's, with another 400,000 arriving in North America even after the exclusion period (1882-1940).⁹⁶ Latin American records show 340,000 Chinese entries from the 1840's through the 1940's. Most migrated to Anglo North America, as wages and opportunities were greater than in Latin America in the post-coolie period.⁹⁷ Once in the Americas, many Chinese went from Mexico and Cuba to the U.S., but traffic also flowed in the opposite direction.

⁹⁴ O'Brien, David J., and Stephen S. Fugita, *Middleman Minority*, 185–204.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 28–52.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

—*Chinese in California and Anti-Chinese Sentiments*—

Like many others, Chinese immigrants were lured to California with the “get rich quick” promises of the Gold Rush. Prior to the gold rush, the Chinese population in the west was minimal and for the most part tolerated by Anglo-Americans who had also migrated westward. However, the California gold rush, not only led to a steep increase in the white American population but also in the Chinese population. Chinese gold seekers were joined by a small group of Cantonese merchants who served as passage brokers, labor contractors, and supply merchants for Anglo and Chinese miners.⁹⁸ These merchants gained massive wealth by laying the foundations for a transnational commercial orbit, that Mexican businesses would later use.⁹⁹ These businessmen further illustrate the position of the Chinese as the middleman-minority. They occupied a middle-rank position in the stratification system and functioned as middlemen in the movement of goods and services.¹⁰⁰ They developed the “credit ticket system”, which was essential for Chinese migration to both California and Mexico. Chinese passage brokers advanced funds to cover immigration expenses for emigrant laborers, who in turn sold their services to designated contractors in order to pay back loans with monthly interest rates.¹⁰¹

Credit should be granted to the Central Pacific Railroad for the further arrival of Chinese immigrants between 1847 and 1870. Chinese laborers held a reputation for being cheap and reliable which made them originally welcomed by officials and capitalists. Their willingness to work for low wages, enabled Chinese immigrants to work in a wide range of jobs and by the 1870’s they comprised one-fourth of all labor in California.¹⁰² During the years of 1868 and

⁹⁸ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 28–52.

⁹⁹ Romero, Robert Chao., *The Chinese in Mexico*, 13-29.

¹⁰⁰ O'Brien, David J., and Stephen S. Fugita., *Middleman Minority*, 185–204

¹⁰¹ *Idem.*

¹⁰² Romero, Robert Chao. *The Chinese in Mexico*, 13-29.

1867, Chinese migrants found opportunities in manufacturing, railroads, and California's agricultural sector. Chinese workers became to be known for their willingness to take occupations Anglo-Americans refused to take. However, their dependability ensured their use as replacement workers, furthering hostility and racial prejudice.¹⁰³ Moreover, once the railroads were completed, white-Americans feared the Chinese would compete with them for jobs.

Anti-Chinese legislation appeared soon after employment opportunities for natives and Europeans evaporated. The rise of anti-Chinese sentiment can be attributed to the previously described middleman scapegoating tactics, in which Californian officials employed during a period of economic crisis to ensure the survival of existing economic and political institutions. Anglo fear of replacement was expressed through bigoted newspaper articles, protests by white labor unions, and political smear campaigns by the Democratic party. The Democratic party successfully harnessed white working class anti-Chinese sentiment and thereby won governorship and a majority in the California state assembly.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the success of anti-Chinese rhetoric led to the approval of explicitly racist laws. "The Yellow Terror in All His Glory" (see Fig. 5) reveals how political cartoons constructed the Chinese as a threat to Anglo-American identity and security. Developed in the early nineteenth century —Yellow Peril, Yellow Terror, and Yellow Specter— are all racist color-metaphors that combine Western anxieties of sex, racism, and the alien other. Moreover, the Yellow Peril constructed psycho-cultural perceptions of vague hordes of yellow people opposite the Western world.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Carson, Scott Alan. "Chinese Sojourn Labor and the American Transcontinental Railroad." *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics JITE*, vol. 161, no. 1, Jan. 2005, pp. 80–102.

¹⁰⁴ Young, Elliott., *Alien Nation*, 28–52

¹⁰⁵ Keevak, Michael, *Far East*, 124–144.

white persons, but placed no restrictions on immigration. Congress went further by amending naturalization requirements in 1870 and extending naturalization eligibility to “aliens being free white persons, and to aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent.” Other non-whites were not included and continued to be excluded from naturalization. A few years later, the United States passed the first federal immigration law, the Page Act of 1875. The Page Act prohibited the entry of immigrants considered as “undesirable” which was essentially any individual coming from Asia to be a contract laborer.

The most famous piece of anti-Chinese legislation was the U.S. 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, “Whereas in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory thereof.” The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act provided deportation procedures for illegal Chinese, but did not explain whether “Chinese” indicated race or nationality. Throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries the definition of whiteness would be tested in a series of court cases, in which the Japanese, Chinese, and East Indians would be repeatedly ruled to be not white and therefore “aliens ineligible for citizenship.”

Chinese exclusion laws, distinguish the Chinese as being the only group ever to be excluded from immigration into the United States explicitly by race.¹⁰⁸ Barred from entry and the ability to acquire naturalized citizenship, the Chinese were America’s first illegal aliens and its first alien citizens. Mae M. Ngai, in her book *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, argues how 1898 Supreme Court rulings legitimized Chinese exclusion through the alleged inability of assimilation of the Chinese. Ngai further explains how

¹⁰⁸ Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects*, 202–224.

Chinese Americans remained marginalized from mainstream society as Anglo-Americans perceived them as permanent foreigners.

Despite issuing small groups of teachers, merchants, and students “Section Six” identification certificates, all skilled and unskilled Chinese laborers were barred from immigrating to the U.S. for ten years. However, Chinese exclusion laws (1882-1943) did not completely pause all Chinese immigration into the United States. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Chinese challenged and circumvented exclusion laws. One of the most common methods of circumvention was by crossing through Mexican and Canadian borders, or what Emily Ryo defines as the “backdoor” method. U.S. Chinese exclusion laws made Chinese immigrants America’s first illegal immigrants, long before Mexican immigrants came to fill this role in American discourse.¹⁰⁹

Some Chinese laborers crossed Mexican and Canadian borders, while others used fraudulent certificates posed as persons who were legally admissible. Exclusion laws provoked widespread practices of illegal Chinese immigration, most commonly through the “paper sons” method. Paper sons were those Chinese who entered the United States by posing as the sons of naturalized Chinese Americans.¹¹⁰ The destruction of the San Francisco Hall of Records in the 1906 fire, allowed many Chinese to assert native-birth citizenship because no records exist to contradict them.¹¹¹ 71,040 Chinese entered the United States as derivative citizens between 1920 and 1940. Further estimates indicate that at least twenty-five percent of the Chinese population in 1950 were present in the United States unlawfully. Congress later would go on to strengthen exclusion laws with the passage of the Scott Act of 1888 and the Geary Act of 1892. In response

¹⁰⁹ Ryo, Emily. “Through the Back Door: Applying Theories of Legal Compliance to Illegal Immigration During the Chinese Exclusion Era.” *Law & Social Inquiry*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2006, pp. 109–146.

¹¹⁰ Carson, Scott Alan., *Chinese Sojourn Labor*, 80–102.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

to Chinese immigrant smuggling trade, the Scott Act barred the re-entry of any immigrant laborers, while the Geary Act required official registration of all Chinese laborers. Additionally, Congress indefinitely extended the Exclusion act, thereby permanently barring Chinese immigration in 1904.

—*Conclusion*—

This broad introductory chapter serves to contextualize the following chapters that work to unravel the complicated story of the Chinese in Mexico. Economic opportunities and labor shortages in New World markets, coincided with various socio-economic and political issues in China during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The subsequent Chinese diaspora lead thousands of Chinese migrants on multinational travels throughout Cuba, Mexico, and the United States. Throughout the colonial and coolie period, Chinese migrants traveled to the Americas to work on plantations, infrastructure projects, and various other economic ventures. Whether as slaves, coolies, or contract laborers, Chinese migrants inhabited spaces both beyond and between nations, rendering them stateless and at times vulnerable. However, Chinese entrepreneurs brought their trade networks to the Western Hemisphere, allowing them to move into other sectors of the economy. Occupying special niches in the economy and society, Chinese migrants came to fill the position of the middleman minority. Although conducive to economic integration, the middleman position solidified the Chinese within a racial hierarchy. Substantial waves of Chinese migrants to Mexico were a product of not only U.S. restrictions but the unraveling of the coolie trade.

Chapter II
Motores de Sangre Only:
 Chinese Migration and Recruitment to Mexico Under Porfirio Diaz (1876 - 1910)

— *Introduction* —

Chinese immigration illustrates how migrants render a universal predicament across different times, places, and forms of government.¹ When the coolie trade was abolished throughout the America's, governments and capitalists were forced to reconcile the need for Chinese labor with racial anxieties and working-class hostilities.² Both Mexico and the United States were positioned for economic development, but industrialization depended upon the availability of labor. Moreover, both nations were clear in their preferred racial makeup of their populations, with Mexico preferring European descent, and the United States enforcing its Chinese exclusion laws.³ Although both nations shared similar views on Chinese migrants, their policies and practices regarding the Chinese were starkly different. In the United States, the post-emancipation American working-class was vocal in protecting its livelihood from the threat of the Chinese, and politicians were inclined to meet their demands.⁴ On the other hand, Mexican politicians would have to compromise racial desires with the need for labor.

The stark contrast of the United States' and Mexico's immigration policies, obscures from their parallel foundations and rationales. Immigration law is not solely concerned with the exclusion of foreigners, but with the simultaneity of excluding some foreigners while incorporating others.⁵ As the United States enacted legislation to restrict the entry of Chinese,

¹ Alfaro-Velcamp, Theresa, and Robert H. McLaughlin, *Recalibrating National Narratives*, 573-606.

² Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104-129.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Idem.*

labor demands encouraged liberal immigration laws in Mexico. The controversy over indentured servitude and coolieism did not instruct Mexican's views, rather their objections were derived from miscegenation. The editors of *Gaceta Internacional*, a Mexico City newspaper, warned “[The Chinese] have perverse tendencies... Any race mixture like those in Cuba and Peru will produce a generation whose quality we will have to leave to the judgement of ethnographers.”⁶ Other newspapers such as *La Libertad* and *El Monitor Republicano*, claimed that because the Chinese would come to Mexico as single men, miscegenation, therefore race contamination would occur.⁷ Therefore, the Mexican government was particularly interested in recruiting European immigrants to jumpstart industrialization. Leading científico and Social Darwinist, Justo Sierra to argue, “For only European blood can keep the level of civilization... from sinking.”⁸

As Mexico City newspapers debated during the 1870s on whether or not to recruit Chinese laborers, Matias Romero, the senator of Chiapas, optimistically argued for the pragmatic and economic benefits of Chinese immigration. Romero held the opinion that the indigenous population were unfit for modernization and therefore pushed for immigration of the industrious, submissive and cheap Chinese labor. Appealing to the belief that wherever the Chinese filled plantations and railroad camps, progress occurred, “it seems to me, that the only colonists who could establish themselves of work on our coasts, are Asians, primarily from climates similar to ours, primarily China.”⁹ Furthermore their politically powerless country posed little threat of direct intervention on their behalf. He conveyed his plans in two essays that were circulated in Mexico City based newspapers, arguing that the “Chinese labor would be ideal for railroad

⁶ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

construction, as well as for ventures in tropical agricultural exports.”¹⁰ After President Diaz appointed Romero as the Mexican finance minister in 1882, he was finally given the opportunity to promote Chinese immigration. However, Romero did not account for the overlapping empire-states and nation-states that would structure and delay the arrival of Chinese into Mexico.¹¹ Mexico and China would not form a formal treaty until 1899, twenty-four years after Romero first advocated for Chinese immigrants.

The historiography of immigration in the cases of Mexico and the United States is burdened with historical nationalism in different ways, a more integrated examination of both Mexican and United States immigration laws reveals methodological nationalism in the history of each country.¹² Jason Oliver Chang has performed the large part of the initial research concerning the independent formation of antichinismo in Mexico. Chang is one of the first scholars to attempt to understand the production and articulation of the racialized Chinese migrant in Mexico. *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940*, examines the ideological construction of the Chinese racial figure in Mexican culture and politics. His book is the first to consider the connections between Mexican *antichinismo* and the romantic nationalist ideology of *indigenismo*. His approach is centered on the process by which racialization is connected to the self-preservation strategies of the state. Chang argues that changes in the Chinese racial form or the path to *antichinismo* is indicative of the degree to which revolutionary governance depended upon the social and political effects of a racial state. Chang theorizes that, “anti-Chinese and pro-mestizo political discourses argued for the necessity of the state by providing reasons for consent

¹⁰ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Alfaro-Velcamp, Theresa, and Robert H. McLaughlin. *Recalibrating National Narratives*, 573-606.

and subjection to ruling institutions.” This chapter deconstructs the ways in which the Mexican government introduced the Chinese as racialized instruments of policy in order to deepen the power of the state.¹³

— *Economic Development Under Diaz* —

While the U.S. was closing its borders to the Chinese, Mexican officials were enacting national colonization programs in which Chinese migrants were pragmatically welcomed. However, as literature on Chinese migration to Mexico has only recently been written, there is less clarity to why anti-Chinese sentiments arose in Mexico or the means by which Mexican state dealt with Chinese migrants. No doubt, Chinese immigrants experienced similar racialization’s in Mexico and in the United States, but anti-Chinese prejudice in Mexico was not simply spillover from the United States. Comparing state architectures and ideologies of rule contextualizes to what extent U.S. racial discourses influenced the how the Mexican government dealt with its Chinese immigrants. Recognizing the fundamental differences between U.S. and Mexican racial formations, destabilizes the argument that anti-Chinese prejudice was borrowed from the United States. One of the major differences in their racial formation was the relationship to indigenous people. The United States was a dominant white settler majority. While, Mexico was composed of an Indian majority with a white criollo ruling class. Furthermore, Mexican national ideology has always been a state project fixed to colonial origins, “wherein sovereign authority rested on making the nation relevant to the majority Indian population.”¹⁴ In other words, the security and legitimacy of the Mexican state has been contingent on the consent or subjugation of the majority peasant and indigenous inhabitants.

¹³ Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 31–58.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Mexico's "liberal" immigration laws contrasted with U.S. restrictions, is a poor measure of how immigrants were received in Mexico, since all states seek immigration policies that reinforce foundational racial inequalities.¹⁵ The absence of immigration laws was an attempt to promote the immigration and settlement of White Europeans, in order to undermine indigenous resistance to national colonization.

General Porfirio Díaz rose to power after leading a successful coup in 1876 against the French ruler Emperor Maximilian. Díaz and his allies, a group of technocrats known as *científicos*, would govern Mexico for three and half decades. The Porfirian regime brought stability to Mexico after decades of conflict, in addition much needed modernization through increased foreign investment. Foreign capital flowed freely into Mexico, which built an impressive railroad network and modernized Mexico's urban infrastructure.¹⁶ Porfirian liberal modernization redefined the country's approach to immigration, which Buchenau contends, was a desire for foreign investment rather than more immigrants.¹⁷

Despite being an authoritarian ruler, Díaz attempted to maintain a facade of liberal democracy by maintaining the semblance of elections.¹⁸ The Porfirian government combined a legacy of colonial legislation with the political rights formed from the liberal revolution. Electoral processes such as the direct vote in municipalities generated new forms of leadership, but this leadership was interwoven within traditional structures of power composed by extended families and shared loyalties.¹⁹ Moreover, states retained the power to interpret the meaning of citizenship, allowing for different forms of suffrage in different regions. Eventually increased

¹⁵ Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 31–58.

¹⁶ Buchenau, Jürgen. *Cosmic Race*, 68.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Chaves, Alicia Hernández. "The Decline of the Liberal Order." *Mexico: a Brief History*. University of California Press, 2007, pp. 170–202.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

limits were placed on political participation and representation, while the political class began distancing itself from the population. The lack of an accountable political class allowed *caciques* (local political bosses) to re-invoke traditional rights to manage the political, social, and material resources of local communities.²⁰ The consolidated Mexican nation was able to integrate commercially into the world, but the subsequent uneven distribution of wealth would lead to the Mexican Revolution a few decades later.

Increased authoritarianism was justified as a means to accomplish industrialization, while the needs of colonization directed national policy.²¹ New railroad systems allowed for the growth of new urban centers by connecting these sites to national and international markets. Moreover, new dynamic sectors such as mining and construction brought prosperity to new regions of Mexico. Prosperity and job opportunities in new sites of industry compelled migration from the South to the Northern and Central states.²² Some of these flourishing cities were Torreon, Coahuila (1895), Ensenada, Baja California and Cananea, Sonora (1900). Additionally, informal settlements sprung up around farms, cattle ranches, industrial and mining centers, construction sites, and railway stations. These settlements had no municipal administrations and lacked public services such as schools, self-government, and services.²³ Additionally, the fragility of Mexico's markets, judicial system, and trading systems impeded much needed economic and social development. Mexico not only lacked specialized professionals, but Mexican capitalists were discouraged from domestic investment, further preventing the formation of an entrepreneurial class.²⁴

²⁰ Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 31–58.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Chávez, Alicia Hernández, *Mexico: a Brief History*, 170–202.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Unequal distribution of wealth and increased authoritarianism was attached to Porfirian land reform and immigration policies. Land reform operated in two detrimental ways: first, hostile groups were stripped of their titles and given to white settlers, second, compliant groups were rewarded by honoring previously held titles. This produced a geography of discontent that dictated the path of Mexican colonization and the Mexico's reception of immigrants.²⁵ Mexico's immigration policy was influenced by the idea that Mexico was potentially wealthy but the native population was unfit for modernization, subscribing to the myth of the lazy native.²⁶ Moreover, during Mexico's phase of liberal state building and capitalist economic development, Europe was experiencing the height of Social Darwinism. These ideologies influenced Mexican policymakers that the "Indian" was anti-national and the white European was superior.²⁷ Diaz believed Europeans would fill labor shortages in the northern sierras and facilitate modernization through cutting-edge production methods.²⁸

The Porfirian model of development found its roots in colonial precedents, as many Indian peasant communities were dispossessed of their land. Diaz, in line with the contemporary elites of Argentina and Brazil, viewed the ideal immigrant as European and preferably Catholic. Immigration was understood as a way of whitening a heavily miscegenated population as well as developing the Mexican frontier. In this way, immigration policies were employed not to restrict, but to attract white settlers. However, Buchenau argues that "the Porfirian idea of whitening involved cultural rather than a strictly biological construction of race and ethnicity, contributing to an emphasis on foreign investments over immigration."²⁹ Buchenau contends that Diaz was

²⁵ Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 31–58.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Knight, Alan, *Racism Revolution*, 70–102.

²⁸ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 13-29.

²⁹ Buchenau, Jürgen. *Cosmic Race*, 73

instead influenced by French positivism, that emphasized cultural and economic development through infusion of European money, education, and customs into the countryside.³⁰ Although Diaz may have been influenced by French positivism in terms of European influence, his recruitment of Chinese as disposable laborers reveals the prominence of Social Darwinist thought as well.

Domestic legislation speaks to the racial dynamics of Mexico more than the absence of restrictionist immigration laws. For example, in attempt to modernize by building railroads and developing the Northern territory, Diaz passed legislation that allowed foreigners the right to own land and subsoil resources.³¹ The 1883 Law of Fallow Land, permitted private investors to appropriate property declared *public*, land that was mostly held by indigenous communities. To further attract foreigners to immigrate and invest in Mexico, the government passed *la ley de Extranjería y Naturalización*. This law established *ius sanguinis*, a guiding principle of Mexican citizenship for the children of foreign nationals. The 1883 colonization law dictated the rights of *colonos* blancos. The law recognized colonos as Mexican citizens and granted them freedom from military service and taxation. An additional colonization law in 1896 allowed Mexican-born children of foreigners to retain their father's citizenship.³² These laws were intended for "white" immigrants, those of European descent who would westernize and homogenize Mexico.

The fear of undesirable social integration contradicted the desperate need for labor, compelling the Mexican National Congress to reform naturalization laws.³³ In 1886, the national congress passed the Immigration and Naturalization Law of 1886 (Ley de Extranjería y Naturalización de 1886), that intended to solve concerns over racial mixing, while fulfilling

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Dong, Jingsheng, Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910.

³² Ibid.

³³ Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 31–58.

industrial desires. Enforced until 1934, the law regulated foreigners and developed certain consequences. For example, Article 3 deprived Mexican women of citizenship if they married foreigners. Mexican women would remain denaturalized even after becoming widows and the children of such marriages would also be registered as foreigners. However, the law removed certain obstacles to immigration, as foreigners who owned property were considered Mexican citizens unless they expressed their intent to keep their foreign nationality.

However, new legislation and land grant initiatives failed to entice European laborers. With the abundance of opportunities in the United States, there were very few Europeans willing to migrate to barren deserts of Mexico. Moreover, Americans and Europeans who did migrate, tended to move to urban centers with higher wages or were capitalists with railroad and mining companies, who brought coolie labor instead of European laborers. Failed attempts to entice European settlers directed Diaz and his científicos to turn to a class of disposable workers as a pragmatic way to fulfill their capitalist desires. Mexico's political elite sought to revive trade with the Chinese as a way to stimulate the country's stagnant economy, expand the labor force, and increase territorial sovereignty over areas distant from the capital.³⁴ Even before the United States banned the entry of Chinese laborers, Mexican capitalists were recruiting Chinese laborers for mining, farming, and various infrastructure projects.

Throughout the 1870s, Mexican industrial newspapers like *Minero Mexicano* began to use the term “motores de sangre” to explain the labor needs of Mexican colonization; which distinguished coolie labor from colonos. Imported labor occupied a transitional site between slavery and free labor, which allowed capitalists to pacify needs for cheap disposable labor. Before the 1880's, public works projects were built by unpaid and unreliable labor such as

³⁴ Dong, Jingsheng, Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910.

military conscription, convicts, and drafted labor.³⁵ The term *motores de sangre* signified that the Chinese were disposable yet necessary for modernization and subsequently helped shape a racialized image of the Chinese as a non-settler population.

Although policies directed towards Chinese immigrants developed independently and differently in Mexico and the United States, they both initially welcomed the Chinese as a disposable labor force. Mexico and the United States simultaneously viewed Chinese immigrants as laborers; never to be permanent political subjects, nation builders, or citizens.³⁶ However, the emphasis placed on the similarity of the initial welcoming of Chinese, distracts from the reality behind why the Mexican government promoted Chinese immigration. Diaz's national colonization policy introduced the Chinese as capitalist tools into regions with social conflict. Less populated areas such as Sonora and Yucatan had the greatest amounts of Chinese by 1900; states with the most hostile indigenous-state relations.

Eventually, Romero's push for Chinese immigration would materialize in the creation of a direct steamer line from China. In 1884, The Mexican Development Ministry signed a contract with the Mexican Pacific Navigation Company to conduct regular voyages between Mexico and the Asia.³⁷ The company would receive a subsidy of sixty-five pesos for each European immigrant and only thirty-five for each Asian immigrant. The contract listed Europeans as *immigrants* and Asians as *laborers*, clearly illustrating how Europeans were valued over Asian immigrants. This contract highlights how Europeans were sought to settle and become part of Mexican society, while Asians were simply *motores de sangre*. The promotion of non-settling Chinese immigrants reveals how Chinese immigrants were positioned racially and seen

³⁵ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 31–58.

³⁶ Hu-deHart, Evelyn, and Kathleen López, *Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

³⁷ Dong, Jingsheng, *Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910*.

economic and political tools of the Mexican state. However, the recruitment of Chinese laborers as *motores de sangre* did not go according to plan. Transnational networks enabled Chinese immigrants to acquire predominant roles in the dry goods trade and lending in northwestern Mexico.

—*Diplomatic Relations Between China and Mexico*—

As discussed in Chapter 1, almost all emigrants from China in the mid-nineteenth century were stateless because the Qing government did not officially recognize the right to emigrate and was itself under siege by foreign and domestic enemies.³⁸ Despite prohibitions on emigration, the Qing rulers began convening treaties with various countries. In an attempt to tie overseas Chinese to the homeland, the official ban on emigration from China ended in 1893. Later, in 1909 the Chinese government recognized all children born to Chinese fathers as Chinese nationals. However, there was no robust diplomatic system abroad and official representation of Chinese emigrants remained weak into the twentieth century. Chinese migrants abroad continued to be vulnerable even after the official end of the coolie period, “as quasi-stateless people, Chinese migrants did not enjoy the right to have rights.”³⁹

The vast majority of Chinese immigrants arrived after the 1899 Treaty of Amity and Commerce that established diplomatic relations between Mexican and Chinese governments. Before the signing of the treaty, only 1,023 Chinese were registered living in Mexico. Many Chinese entered Mexico ahead of a formal treaty, reflecting the agency of Chinese brokers and migrants to seek economic opportunities. The treaty opened an additional pathway for independent migrants and merchants, illustrating that the Mexican state could achieve the desire

³⁸ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 97-128

³⁹ *Ibid.*

racial management of the country through the absence of legal instruments rather than through explicit laws.⁴⁰

Romero's requests for diplomatic relations with China did not materialize until after a diplomatic controversy in 1884. In 1884, a Mexican company ship transporting Chinese passengers was blocked by British officials in Hong Kong. The Mexican Pacific Navigation Company petitioned the Mexican Foreign Ministry to intercede, yet all attempts by the Mexican Foreign Ministry failed.⁴¹ Other companies, such as the Win Woo Company, interested in exporting laborers to Mexico, also petitioned the Mexican Foreign Ministry to establish diplomatic relations with China. In 1885, the Chinese government allowed one shipment of Chinese laborers from Hong Kong, but by then the Mexican Pacific Navigation Company had already disintegrated. In 1890, the *Compania Maritima Asiatica Mexicana* (Mexican Asian Maritime Company) managed to transport 500 Chinese from Macau to Mexico. In order to recruit a sufficient number of Chinese laborers, Mexico was pressured to establish diplomatic relations with China and a direct steamer line, due to increased U.S. restrictions on the ability of Chinese to transfer through U.S. ports.

In 1885, Romero began to pressure the Chinese government to establish diplomatic relations. From his post at the Mexican Embassy in Washington, Romero approached Zheng Zaoru, the Chinese ambassador to United States, to establish a bilateral treaty. However, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed Zheng to decline establishing a treaty with Mexico. The trauma of The Opium Wars and Western imperialism had pushed the Qing government to pursue isolationists policies. Moreover, the Chinese government was taking part in a campaign to protect Chinese laborers abroad, specifically against the kidnapping and abuse of Chinese

⁴⁰ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 31–58.

⁴¹ Dong, Jingsheng, *Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910*.

laborers by Western countries. Romero continued to request Zheng for a treaty, promising not repeat the mistakes of the United States and Spain.

However, the prohibition of further Chinese immigration into the United States, generated thousands of Chinese migrants to Mexico, hence the need for diplomatic protection for Chinese migrants. As the situation became more pressing, the Chinese government was forced to reconsider previous attitudes. A memorandum to the Chinese crown from Zongli Yamen states:

In recent years, because the United States have been prohibiting the immigration of Chinese, other ways must be opened up for the emigration. There are less population and more mines and lands (in Mexico). That country wants to employ Chinese laborers to work there and to have trade with us, as well as to let Chinese acquire lands there, which is different from the cases in Cuba and Peru.⁴²

Zongli Yamen and Chinese officials examined conditions in Mexico and began negotiations in 1894. Domestic issues in each country temporarily paused negotiations until 1896, but negotiations were resumed by Chinese Minister Wu Ting Fang, Yang Yue's successor, and Romero.⁴³ However, the following year when the treaty was to be signed, Romero died suddenly.

Manuel de Azpiroz, Romero's successor and Wu Tingfang finally completed the text of the treaty in 1899. Chinese voluntary immigration was authorized with the bilateral 1899 Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation, signed in Washington, which gave Chinese immigrants in Mexico the same legal rights as Mexican nationals. The treaty stated that nationals of each country were free to live, travel and reside in Mexico and China. Moreover, both countries appointed diplomatic officials with full immunities and privileges and merchant vessels were granted freedom to frequent Mexican and Chinese ports. This treaty ensured diplomatic

⁴² Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 97-128

⁴³ Dong, Jingsheng, *Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910*.

protection for Chinese immigrants and also established official most-favored-nation status between the two nations:

perpetual, firm and sincere friendship between the United Mexican States and the Chinese Empire, as also between their respective citizens and subjects. They shall be at liberty to freely go to the respective countries of the High Contracting Parties and reside therein. They shall there have complete protection in their persons, families and property and they shall enjoy all the rights and advantages with are granted to the subjects of the most favored nation.

The treaty established a code of conduct, as well as establishing embassies in Mexico and China.

Article XVII states, “Chinese subjects in Mexico shall have free access to the judicial tribunals of the country for the defense of the legitimate rights. They shall enjoy, in this respect, the same rights and concessions enjoyed by Mexicans or by subjects of the most favored nation.”

Therefore, Chinese immigrants in Mexico were able to use Mexican courts to handle disputes and guarantee their own protection. Article XVII would be actively employed by Chinese in Mexican courts to fight various discriminatory practices. Unlike previous Chinese diplomatic letters that dehumanized Chinese immigrant laborers, Articles V, XIV, XVII express the Chinese government’s concern for the treatment of its national abroad. Despite the treaty’s protectionist language, the Chinese government did not appoint a diplomatic representative in Mexico until 1900, or establish an embassy until 1905.

—*Recruitment of Chinese Laborers*—

The recruitment of both free and contract laborers into the America’s was organized by a system of networks that employed coercive tactics. These networks often conflated free labor and slave labor, consequently forming the perception of Chinese labor in Mexico as that of coolies, not free laborers.⁴⁴ Following the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882,

⁴⁴ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

Chinese immigrants began to circumvent exclusion by traveling through Northern Mexico. They were in search of both employment opportunities and the chance to get smuggled back into the United States. Chinese immigrants developed vast smuggling networks throughout Mexico, China, Cuba, and various cities throughout the United States. Chinese labor recruitment to Mexico became part of a larger transnational smuggling business. The leading patron of illicit Chinese immigrant trafficking was an immigrant organization based out of San Francisco called the The Chinese Six Companies.⁴⁵ First established during the mid-nineteenth century, The Chinese Six Companies represented and defended the socioeconomic and political interests of the Chinese immigrant community. The organization was originally developed to provide a consolidated voice of the Chinese immigrant community, but eventually became involved in sophisticated import-export ventures.⁴⁶ The Six Companies, directed by Chin Pinoy in Havana, Cuba, maintained institutional connections with companies such as the Pacific Railroad Company, the Morgan Steamship Line, and the Ward Steamship Company. The U.S. Treasury Department estimates that four-fifths of the Chinese immigrants who entered the U.S. illegally throughout the 1890s, were transported by the companies working with Chin.

Thousands of Chinese illegally entered the United States between 1876 and 1911 as a result of various schemes and techniques developed by the Six Companies. A common method to circumvent exclusion laws, was the transportation of Chinese immigrants via Sonora and Baja California. Upon entering the U.S., immigrants were given new identities of Chinese citizens born in the United States. In the case that they were taken to court due to suspicion of immigration officials, the The Chinese Six Companies would hire false witnesses to corroborate their stories. Another strategy utilized by the Six Companies involved Chinese immigrants

⁴⁵ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 13-29.

⁴⁶ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 13-29.

arriving by steamship in San Francisco, where they would travel by train to Torreon. Once they arrived in Torreon, they were met with an agent of the Six Companies, who would distribute them to strategic points on the U.S - Mexico border. The principal method of verifying the legality of Chinese once they entered the U.S. was to check their residency certificates. Inspectors would have to decide based on the suspects ability to produce certificates as well as their proficiency of English, whether the Chinese should be apprehended.⁴⁷

The transnational orbit was in place not only to smuggle immigrants into the U.S., but to bring Chinese laborers to Mexico. Although Chinese migration involved cases of abuse and kidnapping, most Chinese came to Mexico by their own accord. The most common mechanism of Chinese migration to Mexico were impersonally organized migration and familial chain migration.⁴⁸ Impersonally organized migration is defined as immigration that is coordinated by a foreign national government, shipping businesses, or employers of the host country. Once diplomatic relations were in place, the Mexican government solicited the Chinese merchants of San Francisco to organize the recruitment of Chinese immigrant laborers. The Chinese Six Company collaborated with Mexican businessmen and Ramon Corral to generate a system of Chinese contract labor recruitment.⁴⁹ Chinese merchants of California would then contract Chinese laborers at port cities such Hong Kong and Shanghai. Tong agents covered immigration costs for laborers in exchange for repayment at steep rates of interest.⁵⁰ The arrangement between merchants and migrant laborers resembles credit ticket schemes utilized to recruit Chinese to California. It is likely that some Chinese merchants may have served as passage

⁴⁷ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 97-128

⁴⁸ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 30-65.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

brokers and labor contractors for the recruitment of Chinese laborers in both California and Mexico.⁵¹

Aside from representing a strategic location for organized immigrant smuggling ring, Sonora had abundant employment opportunities. Negotiations between the American owned Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, Mexican politicians, and local Mexican elites resulted in expansive railroad and mining ventures throughout Sonora. Chinese were drawn to industrial towns in Sonora such as Cananea, Nacozari, and Magdalena, which offered them an abundance of jobs and access to the smuggling networks of the “copper borderlands.”⁵² By 1910, 4,486 Chinese had settled in Sonora, making it the state with the largest Chinese population in Northern Mexico. With access to transnational capital and wholesale suppliers, the Chinese were able to fill vital commercial niches and soon came to dominate the grocery and vegetable trades. Although not near the United States, Chinese immigrants settled in commercially vibrant cities of Mazatlan and Veracruz as well as pueblos and smaller cities of Tabasco, Campeche, and Guerrero.

Since the signing of the treaty in 1899, Chinese immigration to Mexico increased considerably. In 1902, Wu Xue Huang and Huang Xingguo, founded the Maoli and Steamship Company for transporting Chinese to Mexico. With a direct line in place, Chinese immigrants could travel directly to Mexico without passing through U.S. inspections in San Francisco. In addition, British, Portuguese and French were also active in transporting Chinese to Mexico. Many Chinese were brought by U.S companies from both the U.S. and China to build railroads in the *tierra caliente* and to work in Northern Mexican mines and cotton fields.⁵³ Chinese

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Dong, Jingsheng, Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910. Tierra Caliente (Spanish for *Hot Lands*) refers to Mexico's tropical hot lands in the southern regions, comprised of the states of Michoacán, Guerrero and Mexico.

immigrants mostly arrived as free laborers in Mexico, while some were brought through contracts to work on plantations and railroads.

Although the 1899 treaty protected Chinese migrants, Chinese were continuously deceived by foreign traffickers and found scant protection from Mexican authorities. Young argues that Chinese immigrants had more success defending their rights in American courts than in Mexico. In 1899, a group of 480 Chinese workers brought from Hong Kong to Canada and were then kidnapped and brought to Tampico, Mexico. The 480 workers wrote a petition to the Mexican government, explaining that Ma Kang-Chok of the On Wo Company had recruited them with promises of thirty-dollar a month earnings to work on railroads in Vancouver.⁵⁴ Written in the form of a legal complaint the petition provides a first-hand account into the recruiting process, “That we were deprived of liberty, driven to desperation and intimidated with fear for our lives; That we were forced to take the cars to Tampico, Mexico and were set to work building railroads.”⁵⁵ The petition further describes the abusive overseer and the poor conditions they experienced. The railroad company denied these accusations and argued that the laborers were upset over the deductions from their pay for food and housing.

San Hing, the Chinese labor contractor, wrote to President Diaz, and blamed the incident on an unnamed Chinese worker who spread rumors among the laborers. Unable to determine the validity of the laborer’s claims, the Mexican government simply referred the workers to the courts. In 1906, at Chinese ports such as Fuzhou and Shanghai, various cases were reported of Chinese who were kidnapped and forced by French and British merchants to work at Mexican mineral companies.⁵⁶ Additionally, Chinese immigrants were transported from Hong Kong to

⁵⁴ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁵⁵ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 97-128

⁵⁶ Dong, Jingsheng, *Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910*.

Mexico's Pacific ports by foreign companies who promised to smuggle them into the United States. These Chinese were forced to carry out their two-year contracts at Mexican labor sites; usually only paid a *peso* a day.

Although Chinese laborers were somewhat welcomed to Mexico, without robust diplomatic support they lacked substantial protection against abusive employers or unfair contracts. Moreover, the Mexican government rarely stepped in to support the claims of Chinese immigrants and even Chinese Mexican nationals. Chang argues that the Porfirian period of Chinese migration illustrates a system of labor recruitment that is akin to the coolie trade. These sentiments are revealed early on in a letter from Secretary Mariscal to the Mexican ambassador in 1882. The letter notes that the Chinese were to be specifically used in colonization projects in unpopulated areas and not supposed to intermingle or compete with the domestic population. This letter also speaks to the construction of Chinese racial identity as *motores de sangre*; recruited to fulfill a strategic function in Mexican colonization.

—*Transnational Commercial Networks*—

Whereas Romero and the científicos envisioned a Chinese labor force that would work under the harshest conditions far removed from Mexican citizens, the reality proved to be quite different.⁵⁷ During the early period of Chinese immigration, most settled in the Northern and Pacific states of Mexico, such as Sonora, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Oaxaca, and Baja, California. Small numbers did venture to the central and Gulf regions of Mexico. The patterns of geographical distribution illustrate how Chinese immigrants choose to settle in particular states based on accessibility to the United States as well as commercial opportunities.⁵⁸ Backdoors into

⁵⁷ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁵⁸ Romero, Robert Chao. *The Chinese in Mexico*, 30–65.

the U.S. such as Sonora, Chihuahua, and Baja California had the highest amounts of Chinese foreign nationals in 1910, totaling 6,662.

Asians, the majority of which Chinese, became Mexico's fastest-growing immigrant group, exploding from about 1,500 in 1895 to 20,000 in 1910. These numbers reflect active campaigning by Romero and the development of diplomatic relations between China and Mexico. By the end of the Porfiriato regime, the Chinese had distinguished themselves as a new social class, the *petit bourgeoisie*, in Mexico's rapidly urbanizing export-oriented economy.⁵⁹ Chinese immigrants were overwhelmingly men (98%) and between the ages of 15 and 29 according to the Registro Nacional de Extranjeros (National Foreigner Registry).

In circumventing and resisting the Chinese exclusion laws, Chinese immigrants cultivated a transnational commercial orbit that facilitated the illicit and licit movement of people and goods. Chinese immigrants soon turned from labor to commerce, starting their own small enterprises. By the time of the Mexican Revolution, a number of Chinese merchants had considerable influence in new markets created by the railroads and mines, especially in Sonora. Moreover, in Sonora the Chinese became vital to the development of retail and money-lending sectors in.⁶⁰ Chinese businesses were concentrated in Sonora and Baja California, but entrepreneurial opportunities brought Chinese into other places such as Nogales, Torreon and Monterrey. After some time, Chinese were able to accumulate enough capital to participate in other economic activities, opening restaurants, laundry, shoe and clothing factories, and grocery stores.⁶¹ For example, Yun Kui, the owner of a general store became one of the most prominent

⁵⁹ Dong, Jingsheng. Sino-Mexico Relations before 1910.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

businessmen in Baja California. In Sonora, Fon Qui and Juan Lung Tain opened dozens of wholesale grocers and dry goods businesses.

— *Borders, Nations, Immigration Laws* —

In 1879, Lee Sing became one of the first Chinese to settle in Tucson, Arizona after initially arriving in Sonora. Financial connections with prominent Jewish Businessman aided Sing in establishing a dry-goods business. The success of his business prompted him to expand into the production and sales of shoes in Nogales, Arizona. His ventures flourished within the context of the burgeoning economy along the border. Sing eventually married a Mexican woman, liquidated his assets, and moved to Sonora. After his wedding in Mexico, Sing established stores throughout the state of Sonora. With financial and familial ties in both Mexico and the United States, Sing lived in a transnational world. However, during a routine trip north in 1893, Sing was detained by Arizona border inspectors, as they questioned his status as a merchant. Even when Chinese became naturalized Mexican citizens, U.S. customs officers treated them as ethnic Chinese and not according to their national citizenship as Mexicans. Sing called on American and Mexican officials, in which they verified his *ciudadania* (citizenship), his eleven years of residency in Mexico, his marriage to a Mexican woman, his three Mexican children, and his annual income of eight to ten thousand pesos. His overwhelming record of settlement held sway and officials permitted Sing to pass freely across the border.⁶² It's interesting to compare his situation to that of Mexicans, who were relatively free to cross the border during the 1890s. Unlike for the Chinese, proof of citizenship or nationality was not required for Mexicans to travel to the United States. Chinese residents of Mexico were almost

⁶² Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

always stopped at the border, “under assumption that they were aliens in the region.”⁶³ Historian Grace Delgado argues that the assertions of *mexicanidad* (Mexicaness) by Chinese border crossers “indicated that membership in the Mexican polity had not yet assumed the narrow and ethnically confining requests associated with the post revolutionary identity of *mestizaje*.”

On the other hand, Chinese who had Mexican nationality continued to perplex immigration and customs officials attempting to enforce inefficient exclusion laws.⁶⁴ In 1892, three Chinese men who were naturalized Mexicans tried to cross at Eagle Pass, Texas. They were arrested by U.S authorities since the Mexican consul did not support the validity of their Mexican citizenship. Mexican authorities frequently questioned the motives of Chinese who were crossing the border in the United States. Additionally, also in 1892, Wong Foon Chuck was arrested in San Antonio, Texas for not having the correct paperwork. Wong was a wealthy merchant who claimed to be a Mexican citizen, and had lived in the U.S since he was twelve years old. Texas did not allow him to pay a bond to be released, because authorities concluded he was Chinese and therefore should be excluded from the United States. There is no information about whether or not the Mexican consul intervened, but the case of Wong illustrates how Chinese-Mexicans posed a dilemma for U.S. immigration laws. In 1895, the United States Attorney General clarified that the Chinese exclusion laws rested on moral and racial objections, not citizenship status: “the Chinese citizens of Mexico and Canada, although members of the exempt classes, were refused admission.”⁶⁵ Moreover, U.S citizens of Chinese descent were not guaranteed entry into the U.S with passports and visas alone, they needed to obtain a “return certificate” before returning to the U.S.⁶⁶

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁶⁶ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 97-128

Much of the focus on Mexican and United States immigration has been concerned with Mexican laborers migrating to the United States and the loss of Mexican rights during migration. There is little focus on how both countries are recipients of immigrants. The dialogue concerning United States - Mexico relations is focused on Mexican emigration; therefore, Mexican immigration laws rarely receive meaningful consideration. Mexico's immigration laws and the ways in which Mexico responded to U.S concerns produced meaningful consequences for the United States and Chinese immigrants. The mere fact that these neighbors shared thousands of miles of land and sea resulted in confrontation of their economic and immigration policies.⁶⁷

Immigration is concerned with simultaneously excluding some foreigners while incorporating others, often founded on conflicting principles. The federal government assumed direct control of inspecting, admitting, and rejecting all immigrants seeking admission to the United States through the Immigration Act of 1891. The 1891 Act also expanded the list of excludable classes, barring the immigration of polygamists, persons convicted of crimes of moral turpitude, and those suffering loathsome or contagious diseases. The law also established The Bureau of Immigration under the Treasury Department to federally administer all immigration laws (except the Chinese Exclusion Act). Because naturalization remained a judicial function, the courts were left to decide who was or was not a white person, an alien of African nativity, or person of African descent.

Unable to block the clandestine entry of thousands of Chinese, the U.S. was not only *reliant* on Mexico but blamed Mexico for the ineffectiveness of its immigration policies. Without the cooperation of Mexico, the United States Chinese immigration ban was rendered ineffective. In 1888, the United States attempted to enlist the help of Britain and Mexico through a treaty that

⁶⁷ Ibid.

would prevent the Chinese from crossing the northern and southern borders into the United States. Matias Romero, the Mexican ambassador to the United States, refused to enter into such a treaty by citing Article 11 of the Mexican 1857 Constitution. The clause in Article 11 states, “All men have the right of entering and leaving the Republic, of traveling through its territory, and of changing their residence without the necessity of letters of security, passports, *slavo-conducto*, or other similar requisite.” Mexico asserted the absolute freedom to move into, through, and out of Mexico regardless of race or nationality, maintained the right of individuals to migrate. However, simply considering immigration laws, or the lack thereof is one of the main obstacles to accurately determine how the Mexican government handled migrants. Too much emphasis has been placed upon the significance of U.S. immigration laws rather than independent actions of Mexico that shaped those very same laws.

The 1905 U.S Supreme Court ruling of *Ju Toy* prompted and encouraged the rapid growth of Chinese immigration to Mexico between the years of 1905 and 1910. Before the 1905, *Ju Toy* ruling, thousands of Chinese immigrants managed to successfully resist the immigration officials through *habeas corpus* judicial review proceedings in the federal courts.⁶⁸ The ruling eliminated habeas corpus proceeding as a possible method of circumventing exclusion. It was the lack of uniformity among naturalization courts and the ensuing fraud, that drove for the establishment of the U.S. Naturalization Service by the Basic Naturalization Act of 1906. The law placed the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization in “charge of all matters concerning the naturalization of aliens,” with the general purpose of promoting uniform naturalization practices nationwide. These reforms to federal immigration laws in 1906 introduced considerably more uniformity to immigration processes. Additionally, Congress expanded the authority of the

⁶⁸ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 97-128

Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, and issued standardized lists of foreign sovereignties and their rulers for use by petitioners and clerks, in the preparation of declarations of intent to naturalize.

Young provokes the notion that the U.S immigration bureaucracy owes its existence to the clandestine Chinese migrant. Likewise, clandestine Chinese migrant also fundamentally changed how the U.S would view the Mexican border. As Mexico refused to cooperate with U.S immigration authorities to stop clandestine Chinese immigrant smuggling, the U.S began to shift its attention to the Mexican border. Increased Chinese migration to Mexico had a direct impact on U.S efforts to control Chinese entry. U.S. inspectors repeatedly tried to get permission to enter Mexico in order to prevent Chinese from crossing the border. U.S. newspapers saw Chinese migration from Mexico as an invasion, while Mexican newspapers saw the U.S. attempt to impose restrictions on Mexico as interference in their country's affairs.⁶⁹ Preventing the Chinese from crossing the border into the United States would not only violate Mexico's constitution but the country lacked resources to patrol the 2,000 miles border. Efforts to stop clandestine smuggling of Chinese gave birth to the border patrol, as well as justifying the dramatic expansion of the entire immigration bureaucracy.⁷⁰ For example, in 1900 there were only three official ports of entry on the Mexican border: El Paso and Eagle Pass in Texas and Nogales in Arizona. By 1908 there was twenty-one stations along the Mexico border.

Though the Diaz regime held the notion that liberal immigration policies would foster economic development, after 1900 the Mexican government grew more sympathetic to anti-Chinese sentiments that were surfacing throughout Mexico. As early as 1886, anti-Chinese

⁶⁹ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 50

⁷⁰ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 28–52

sentiments began pressuring the Mexican government to restrict and manage immigrants. When a false report claimed that a steamer from San Francisco would bring 600 Chinese to Mazatlan in 1886, the townspeople attacked Chinese homes and drove the Chinese out of town. The newspaper *El Trafico*, from Guaymas, Sonora published a series of articles criticizing Chinese immigration in 1899. One article from *El Trafico* stated:

The Chinese is not exempt from vices and defects; he is a gambler, a fatalist, a smoker of opium, and he lacks patriotism. He will never gain affection for the country to which he emigrates, and he rejects the traditions and customs of his adoptive country.

The newspaper further proposed a boycotting of Chinese businesses, noting how the United States brought the Chinese to build the railroads and then banned them from coming once they began to compete economically. It is not clear whether the articles published by *El Trafico* were representative of Mexican societies views towards Chinese immigration as a whole, but these sentiments were at least on the rise in Northern Mexico.⁷¹ Despite the government's encouraging policies towards Chinese immigration, the articles published by *El Trafico* speak to the upcoming anti-Chinese movements. The newspaper denounced Chinese miscegenation, stating that mixing with the Chinese meant, Mexican would "become a nation of dwarves."⁷² Moreover, the magazine blamed "degenerate" Mexican women for mixing with wealthy Chinese men. Finally, the newspaper claimed that the Chinese were vectors for disease and therefore a threat to the public. *El Trafico* recommended moving all the Chinese to ghettos, in which the police could watch over them and prevent diseases from spreading.

Since there is so little primary evidence in regard to the Mexican public's early views on Chinese migration, much of the *El Trafico* articles are cited here. The articles published by *El*

⁷¹ Ibid.

Trafico express how Mexicans were beginning to wonder why Mexico was accepting the Chinese rejected by their Northern neighbor:

It is Mexico's turn to apply the restrictive laws for Chinese immigration in the United States; the fetid wave has overflowed us with its entourage of lepers and gamblers, opium smokers and black plague contagions, converting our cities into an immense pagoda that absorbs everything.⁷³

Eventually, the rhetoric of *El Trafico* would materialize into anti-Asian organizations, many resembling the Canadian Anti-Asiatic Exclusion League formed in 1907. Moreover, by the early twentieth century Mexico began to control its border as well and the immigrants who sought entry. A common method to control immigration utilized by Mexico and the United States was through "remote control."⁷⁴ In 1903, pressures to enforce sanitary restrictions resulted in admissions criteria that regulated health conditions on ships arriving in Mexico. Each Chinese migrant was required to present a medical affidavit confirming a clean bill of health, and steamship companies were required to have a disinfecting apparatus to sterilize baggage and clothing.⁷⁵ Remote controls operated through disease restrictions, which regulate immigration by inspecting immigrants on ships and vessels before they arrived. In 1891, the United States Congress required immigrants to undergo health inspections before departures and upon arrival at United States ports of entry.

In 1903, the Consolidated Commercial Steamship Company established the first direct line from Hong Kong and Yokohama to Mexico, leading to a new wave of Chinese migration. In response to increased foreign and domestic pressure to control the entry of Chinese immigrants, President Diaz developed a federal commission in 1903 to investigate the socioeconomic impact

⁷³ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 28–52

⁷⁴ Alfaro-Velcamp, Theresa, and Robert H. McLaughlin, *Recalibrating National Narratives*.

⁷⁵ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

caused by the massive influx of Chinese.⁷⁶ Led by Genaro Raigosa, the commission concluded that Chinese were racially incompatible with Mexicans and suggested restricting any further immigration. In 1904 the commission met with Ramon Corral, recommending a permanent ban on Asian immigration, preference for Japanese over Chinese as temporary economic migrants, and stricter regulations for contract labor.⁷⁷ Not only did the government not act on the findings of the report, but the commission was quickly disbanded. The lack of government response, indicates the extent to which the Porfirian regime was compelled to recruit Chinese labor to further economic progress. Furthermore, it was unlikely the government would suppress Chinese immigration, as high-ranking politicians such as Ramon Corral had profited off of recruiting Chinese laborers.⁷⁸

Explicit promotion of Chinese laborers began to weaken during the final years of the Porfirian era. In 1907, during a meeting between U.S Immigrant Inspector Marcus Braun and President Diaz in Mexico City, Diaz mentioned that “anyone not good enough for the United States ought not [to] be good enough for Mexico.”⁷⁹ It is not clear whether Diaz was attempting to respond to the growing hostility towards the Chinese, or if he was feeling pressure from the United States to control Mexico’s borders. However, the establishment of the Mexican Immigrant Inspection Service on September 22, 1908, reflects Mexico’s desire to restrict those deemed undesirable.⁸⁰ Buchenau suggests that by the end, Diaz grew weary to foreigners as his

⁷⁶ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 145-190.

⁷⁷ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 97-128

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Alfaro-Velcamp, Theresa, and Robert H. Mclaughlin. *Recalibrating National Narratives*.

immigration project “had vastly increased foreign influence without leading to more prosperity.”⁸¹

Diaz established another immigration law in December 1908, further highlighting the shift in attitude among the Diaz regime towards immigrants. This law codified a list of diseases that made potential immigrants unable to Mexico, including the bubonic plague, cholera, yellow fever, meningitis, smallpox, tuberculosis, leprosy, and trachoma. The law addressed on more general terms who could enter at Mexican seaports and other ports of entry, yet there is hardly any evidence that demonstrates whether this law was implemented in a systematic way prior to the Mexican Revolution. Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp argues that the law was probably intended to prohibit foreign workers from migrating to Mexico, in order to protect Mexican workers from the threat of the 1908 economic crisis.

— *Conclusion* —

This chapter disentangled a point of origin; in which the United States 1882 Exclusion Chinese Act coincided with economic ventures of the Mexican government. A moment that has been overemphasized by historians, as the “beginning” of Chinese migration to Mexico. By labeling 1882 Exclusion as the start of Chinese migration, historians largely miss how the Chinese were vital to various Mexican colonization schemes. U.S. immigration laws were not only synchronized with Porfirian policies, but they also served to reinforce Mexican capitalist economic development.⁸² The histories of Chinese migrants in Mexico and the United States is

⁸¹ Buchenau, Jürgen. “The Limits of the Cosmic Race.” *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America*, University Press of Florida, 2014, pp. 66–87.

⁸² Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 31–58.

hindered by narrow nationalist historical frameworks. In order to challenge conventional national narratives and foundational myths, Mexican and U.S immigration policies must be read not comparatively but in recognition of each other's validity. Explored in later chapters, the Chinese in both Mexico and the United States would encounter similar fates of expulsion, racism, and persecution. However, differences in national ideologies and political legitimacy reveal how the United States and Mexico racialized the Chinese with varying intents and outcomes.

Chapter III: Myth and Mystery
The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920)

—Introduction—

On May 15th, over three hundred Chinese and five Japanese were slaughtered by Maderista revolutionary soldiers under the command of Jesus Castro, Sixto Ugalde, and Enrique Macia. The massacre of Torreon was the worst act of violence committed against any Chinese community in the Americas during the twentieth century.¹ Almost half of Torreon's Chinese community was brutally murdered during on that tragic day. Yet, countless lives of Chinese residents were also saved by Mexicans. When Maderista troops attempted to enter Hermina Almaraz's residence, she responded that "they could only enter the house over her dead body."² The troops never entered her house, and the lives of the eleven Chinese hiding inside were spared.

"Official" Mexican history, characterizes the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) as a heroic, patriotic, social and political movement that eradicated the imperialist Westerners from Mexico. Unsurprisingly, the more than 800 Chinese who were brutally murdered during the Revolution, remain absent from revolutionary narratives. Therefore, little is known about their role in the Revolution, and what is known is often conflicting. The biggest mystery: why were the Chinese specifically targeted, murdered, and terrorized during the Revolution? Moreover, how did the violence that occurred during the Revolution transform into the organized anti-Chinese campaigns of the 1920's? Are they two sides of the same coin?

¹ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 143–189.

² Ibid.

Historian Robert Chao Romero argues that factions of the Revolution saw the Chinese as foreigners who had grown rich by exploiting the Mexican people, therefore, “sinophobia developed into a patriotic expression of the Mexican Revolution, and the Chinese became open targets for murder, robbery, looting, boycotts, invidious legislation, and ultimate expulsion from the state of Sonora in 1931.” While Jason Chang contends that anti-Chinese violence—carried out by civilians and soldiers—was a social experience crucial to the formation of a post-revolutionary national identity, “when eyes were transfixed on the spectacle of anti-Chinese violence, men and women stood shoulder to shoulder, class divisions evaporated, and interethnic tensions dissolved.” On the other hand, Grace Delgado argues that violence was “the culmination of a nationalistic campaign that played on anxieties that Mexicans harbored about their own economic security, their racial integrity, and their role in the revolutionary project.”

These conflicting explanations raise the question: to what extent was the Mexican Revolution a heroic, patriotic, social and political movement? This social revolution actually derived itself from various economic changes accumulated during Diaz’s thirty-five-year dictatorship. For example, rural and agrarian Mexico had undergone rapid commercialization, which expanded the *haciendas* (large estates), and expropriated peasant landholdings.³ Therefore, on the onset of the Revolution, agrarian Mexico was demanding a reversal of Porfirian political centralization and agrarian commercialization. Peasant demands often desired a more radical challenge to Porfirian policies, than that of the demands posed by Madero’s political liberals.⁴ Despite conflicting motives, popular rural rebels found common ground with their urban bourgeois allies in a mutual respect for Mexico’s liberal heritage, such as free elections and municipal autonomy. Thus, it was patriotic liberalism that could rally a diverse

³ Knight, Alan. “The Myth of the Mexican Revolution.” *Past & Present*, vol. 209, no. 1, 13 Nov. 2010, pp. 223–273.

⁴ *Ibid.*

range of Mexican classes. Therefore, the revolutionaries of 1910, regularly invoked the past as they overthrew Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship; "Revolution was justified less as a leap into an unknown future, than as a restoration of a preferred status quo ante."⁵

Speaking on the Revolutions centennial, Mexican economist Macario Schettino wrote, "The Revolution which marks the [twentieth] century . . . never happened [*nunca existio*]." Alan Knight further contends, "So, the Revolution - as a 'real' historical process - never happened; it is a myth, created from above, by a myth-making state, albeit on the basis of some original raw materials." Knight's article, *The Myth of the Mexican Revolution*, considers the rise and fall of the myth of the Mexican Revolution and argues that the formulation of the myth occurred much slower than assumed and the myth itself was not as successful as many believe. Although the Mexican Revolution ushered in major structural societal changes, it did not repudiate the past, "There was no 'invention of ideology'...The Revolution began, as Arnaldo Cordova notes, 'with a burning defense of the past' - chiefly, of the liberal-patriotic past associated with Benito Juarez and his generation."⁶ The Mexican Revolution had no great founding fathers, no Utopian vision, it's inspiration was national history.⁷ Revolutionaries yearned to return to the "glory days" of the Restored Republic, the early Porfiriato, and even the Reforma.

When the Revolution ended, there was hardly any consensus on its meaning. Members of the revolutionary elite were simply interested in maintaining power; whether it be through coercion, clientelism, or social reform.⁸ It proved much easier for the revolutionary elite to change institutions in comparison to ideas. During the revolutionary reconstruction period (1920-1940), leaders who gained power through the armed revolution, consolidated their power,

⁵Knight, Alan. Mexican Revolution, 223-273.

⁶Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

implemented some social goals of the Revolution, and strove to develop a hegemonic revolutionary myth.⁹ The key function of a myth is to mobilize and generate legitimacy. The mobilizing myth that arose from the revolution—which played some role in the regime’s legitimization—is what Knight characterizes as that of land and labor reform, *indigenismo*, education and economic nationalism. These constitute the ‘project’ of the Revolution, along with images, icons, heroes, songs and anniversaries. However, when it came to creating and disseminating the myth of the Revolution, things moved more slowly. Knight contends that Mexican people formulated their own notions, memories and myths. Moreover, the “bottom-up”, local and popular view of the Revolution tended to be episodic and shapeless.¹⁰ In this way, the popular myth of the Mexican Revolution speaks to how the Revolution progressed, often clientelist motivations tended to supersede ideological attachments.¹¹

Therefore, if the revolution was motivated by a yearning for a pre-Porfirian past; anti-Chinese violence can thus be understood as the popular association of the Chinese as agents of Porfirian agrarian commercialization. In other words, violence was a reaction against decades of Porfirian immigration policies that had recruited Chinese labor to fill industrial and agricultural worker shortages. Throughout the Revolution, anti-Chinese violence manifested in both organized and unplanned ways; both reflected local hierarchies and tensions between differing factions. The specific targeting of the Chinese population materialized in three ways: mass killings in uncoordinated assemblies, tactical assassinations, and other violent rituals.¹² Mass killing symbolized a rejection of Porfirian colonization, coordinated assassinations illustrated

⁹ Knight, Alan. Mexican Revolution, 223–273.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

how battlefield tactics contributed to making anti-Chinese violence legitimate, and violent rituals such as the looting revealed how violence transformed Chinese stores into wartime assets.¹³

— *The Revolutionary Project: Indigenismo* —

The revolution would leave the Mexican state fractured, giving new encouragement for the project of nation building. Mexico was tasked with creating a coherent nation, giving rise to the cult of the mestizo. Post-revolutionary administrations promoted a program of cultural and racial nationalism that could incorporate and redeem the heritage of the indigenous population.¹⁴ Revolutionary individuals shared a common belief in the need to integrate the Indian, but not by means of Porfirian coercive integration. From the 1910s until present, indigenismo proponents adhered to the principles of “enlightened, planned, noncoercive integration.”¹⁵ Porfirian racist ideology gave way to a new anti-racist orthodoxy, in which Mexican’s concluded racism was gone.¹⁶ The formulation of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* by later thinkers such as Manuel Gamio followed Andres Molina Enriquez, who offered a diagnosis of Mexico’s problems stressing the rise and domination of the mestizo, in *Grandes Problemas Nacionales* (1909). The Mexican population could build nationhood and Mexico could achieve unification through the mestizo, or the “dissolving of the Indian into the mestizo.”¹⁷ Mestizaje became synonymous with nationhood.

While the Porfirian era was one of Indian repression by means of unofficial and official racism, the Revolution was said to have eliminated this racism.¹⁸ In *Racism Revolution and*

¹³ Knight, Alan. Mexican Revolution, 223–273.

¹⁴ Buchenau, Jürgen. Cosmic Race, 66–87.

¹⁵ Knight, Alan, *The Idea of Race*, 70–102.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Indigenismo Mexico 1910-1940, Alan Knight argues that the Revolution was fought with considerable Indian participation “but in the absence of any self-consciously Indian project.” With the exception of the Yaqui Indian rebellion in the Northeast, the Revolution reflected both Indian and peasant demands. The conscious *indigenismo* that came into political discourse after the Revolution was not the product of direct Indian pressures.¹⁹ The later post-revolutionary indigenismo would also be another white and mestizo construct, “Indian themselves were the objects, not the authors of indigenismo.”²⁰

Gamio and Jose Vasconcelos were the key architects of mestizo nationalism. Gamio an anthropologist, believed the revolution was a racial coming of age and through his 1916 *Forjando Patria: Pro-Nacionalismo*, he perceived revolution as a political movement that inspired a national race capable of modernization. According to Gamio, centuries of Spanish colonization had led to the formation of diverse Mexican nationalities composed of Europeans, Indians, and mestizos. He argued for a nationalism that could redeem the Indian by incorporating their cultural heritage into “patriotic sentimentalism.” However, Asians and Africans were excluded from his national imaginary. In contrast to Gamio, Vasconcelos an educator and philosopher, saw the revolution as providing the ideal conditions for the emergence of a national mestizo race. Vasconcelos book, *La Raza Cosmica* (The Cosmic Race), articulated biological notions of race by means of positive eugenics that were not explicitly white supremacist, but also disavowed Asian and African people from participating in mestizo racial progress.²¹ In the early

¹⁹ Indigenismo was a movement in Latin America that advocated for a dominant social and political role for Indians in countries where they constituted a majority of the population. In Mexico, indigenismo was originally a component of a nationalist ideology that became influential after the revolution. Within the larger national narrative of the Mexican nation as the product of European and Amerindian “race mixture”, indigenismo was the expression of nostalgia for an imagined figure of indigeneity.

²⁰ Knight, Alan, *The Idea of Race*, 70–102.

²¹ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 94–123.

1920s, Vasconcelos argued in favor of restricting Chinese migration to Mexico for economic as well as biological reasons.

Mestizo would become the ideological symbol of the new regime, as post-revolutionary elites recognized its nationalist and mobilizing power. Moreover, it allowed them to distance themselves from the past. Indigenismo, however, continued to operate within a racist paradigm where race was maintained as an independent biological factor. Instead of making clear that “race” denoted a social category. Knight contends that through the perpetuation of this discourse, both the notion of race and the practice of racism was maintained. Moreover, the positive rehabilitation of the Indian and Mestizo carried negative impacts for other races, such as the Chinese. Indigenista nationalism functioned to perpetuate Sinophobia, “that is, the racist tendencies of indigenismo/ Indianism manifested themselves - logically - in derogations of non-Indian or mestizo races.”²²

Originally entering as cheap laborers, the Chinese gained economic success, establishing profitable liaison with the big U.S. mining companies such as Cananea Company. They also did well in retail sectors, selling to the urban poor therefore making them vulnerable to populist persecution when the economic situation was poor. “Competitive” racism that affected the Chinese, differed from the racism that had historically affected Mexico’s Indians.²³ Moreover, Mexican sinophobia maintained irrational prejudices that claimed the Chinese were parasitic, overly successful, and diseased. In the aftermath of the Revolution, “just as nationalism sought to forge the nation by integrating the Indian, so it also sought to cleanse the nation by expelling the Chinese... Sinophobia was the logical corollary of revolutionary indigenismo.”²⁴

²² Knight, Alan, *The Idea of Race*, 70–102.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

Although the ideologies of Gamio and Vasconcelos were represented in antichinista pro-raza discourse, various racial discourses were circulating within the public sphere during the revolution. Even though they voiced anti-Chinese concerns, their ideas were rejected by Calles and his cronies.²⁵ Political enemies of Calles, Gamio and Vasconcelos²⁶ returned to serve under Cardenas administration. The ideologies of Gamio and Vasconcelos ran as parallel streams, at times overlapping with antichinismo. However, antichinismo maintained an independent political life from that of Gamio and Vasconcelos, existing through Mexican public life before either returned to the Mexican bureaucracy.²⁷

—*Brief History of the Mexican Revolution*—

Historian Alicia Hernández Chávez characterizes the Mexican Revolution as a large popular movement with “a confluence of regionally based movements sustained by a strong federalist tradition that never lost control of its territories.”²⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century, new ideologies were spreading throughout all of Mexican society, generating desire for transformations in traditional structures.²⁹ The revolution was a manifestation of more than just economic demands, but demands for social and political rights, such as universal suffrage and social assistance. Lasting from 1910 to 1920, the Revolution was a long and bloody struggle among several factions with constantly shifting alliances, which ended in the establishment of a constitutional republic. There is a plethora of history behind the different leaders and factions of

²⁵ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 94–123.

²⁶ After Madero's assassination in 1913, Vasconcelos joined the movement to defeat the military regime of Victoriano Huerta. Therefore, Vasconcelos was forced into exile in Paris. After Huerta was ousted in 1914, Vasconcelos returned to Mexico. However, Vasconcelos chose the side of the Conventionists and was forced into exile again in 1915. Vasconcelos returned to Mexico in 1920, during the interim presidency of Adolfo de la Huerta. In 1925, Manuel Gamio emigrated to the United States after having denounced the corruption within the Mexican Ministry of Education. He returned to Mexico in 1930.

²⁷ *Idem.*

²⁸ *Idem.*

²⁹ Chaves, Alicia Hernández, *Mexico: a Brief History*, 170–202.

the Mexican Revolution, but I will not divulge too deeply into those backgrounds. This section provides a very brief and nowhere near complete history of the Mexican Revolution.

The Mexican Revolution was initiated within a context of widespread dissatisfaction with the elitist policies of Porfirio Díaz, that had favoured wealthy landowners and industrialists. Frustration was embodied by worsened living conditions and nascent workers movements. Between 1900 to 1905 there were twenty-nine strikes, while from 1906 to 1910 there were 106 strikes recorded. In 1906, textile workers in Veracruz, copper miners in Cananea, and mechanics on the main rail lines, began to mobilize against the government. They protested low salaries, poor conditions, and the favoritism shown to foreign workers. Workers also demanded political rights, such as the recognition of constitutional guarantees to freedom expression and association, and full equality before the law for all citizens.³⁰

Pressured to retire, Diaz eventually allowed Francisco Madero, a wealthy Coahuilan to run against him. However, after imprisoning Madero a few days before the election, Diaz rigged the elections in his favor. For the anti-reelectionist Party including Madero, this was the final straw. On November 20th, 1910, Madero incited rebellion against the Diaz regime through the Plan de San Luis Potosi.³¹ The Plan de San Luis Potosi, called for the nullification of the elections and the eradication of Diaz's authoritarian government. Madero called upon the nation to rise, with the plan for a revolutionary junta to capture a handful of state capitals and railroad centers. Madero did not single out the Chinese in his writings but various factions included anti-Chinese positions as they joined his revolutionary cause.³² Ricardo Flores Magon of the PLM (Mexican Liberal Party) challenged Madero's bourgeois revolution with an anarchist platform.

³⁰ Chaves, Alicia Hernández, *Mexico: a Brief History*, 170–202.

³¹ The anti-reelectionist Party was founded in 1909 by Francisco I. Madero, to counter the reelection of Porfirio Diaz. The party won political power in 1911 by defeating Diaz.

³² Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 94–123.

The official party newspaper, *Revolucion*, called the Chinese “Porfirian lackeys.”³³ The radical proletarian strain of the Revolution expressed mixed feelings for the Chinese, as Pancho Villa told his troops to kill any Chinese they encountered.³⁴

The federal government initially suppressed the rebellion, but the insurrection would advance and transform beyond Madero’s purview. Though a national phenomenon, the Revolution’s intensity varied from region to region.³⁵ From December 1910 until the end of March 1911, rebel bands attacked bridges, railroads, telegraph lines, and small towns with only local defense. In the North, Pascual Orozco and Pancho Villa mobilized their ragged armies and began attacking government troops. In the south, Emiliano Zapata waged a bloody war against the local caciques. In the spring of 1911, the revolutionary forces took Ciudad Juárez and forced Díaz to resign. Through the traditional system of single indirect elections, Madero was elected president after receiving ninety-eight percent of the vote.

The crisis began as the democratic elite failed to understand the magnitude in which the armed insurrection had accelerated popular demands. After the implementation of universal male suffrage in 1912, the succeeding election results revealed a society divided in three ways. Moreover, none of the various factions retained enough power to dominate the political process. The inflexibility of both blocs created a gridlock, augmenting the power vacuum. Zapata turned against Madero, angered at his failure to implement the immediate restoration of land to Indians. While, Orozco expressed frustration with the slow pace of reform and led a revolutionary movement in the north. The U.S. government also turned against Madero, concerned that civil war would threaten American business interests in Mexico. Additionally, the U.S. was worried

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 94–123.

³⁵ Chaves, Alicia Hernández, *Mexico: a Brief History*, 170–202.

that the new president was too appeasing to rebel groups.³⁶ Tension rose as another faction of rebel forces, led by Félix Díaz (the former dictator's nephew), fought with federal troops in Mexico City under the command of Victoriano Huerta. On February 18, 1913, after the ninth day of La Decena Trágica (The Ten Tragic Days), Huerta and Díaz met in the office of U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson.³⁷ They signed the "Pact of the Embassy," which conspired against Madero and agreed to install Huerta as president. After arresting and assassinating Madero, Huerta assumed the presidency.

Protests and rebellions broke out in the northern states and Alvaro Obregon was given command of the militias in Sonora. Venustiano Carranza took over Madero's position as commander of the Revolution and moved to ratify a new constitution. His faction was therefore named the Constitutionals. Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata broke off from the conservative party and formed an alliance at a conference, gaining them the name of the Conventionists. Eventually, opposition to Huerta's despotic government grew in the north and a precarious alliance formed between Pancho Villa, Álvaro Obregon, and Venustiano Carranza. They formulated the *Plan de Guadalupe*, in which called for Huerta's resignation. In the spring and summer of 1914, the rebel alliance converged on Mexico City, forcing Huerta into exile. Carranza declared himself president on August 20th, despite Villa's objections.³⁸

In the crossfire between the various factions, Chinese people became a crucial wartime asset.³⁹ Constant war and instability crippled the Mexican economy, therefore the survival of soldiers on the battlefield often depended upon their ability to sustain their own forces. The

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The Ten Tragic Days were a series of events that took place in Mexico City between February 9 and February 19, 1913.

³⁸ Venustiano Carranza was Mexico's first president during a period known as the "Restoration of Democracy." Carranza took office in May of 1917 and left office in May of 1920.

³⁹ Idem.

broad distribution of Chinese people across the country made them reliable sources of supplies for looting. Moreover, their presence throughout contested territories made them routine targets. The transnational commercial orbit of Chinese merchants and diasporic credit networks allowed Chinese general-merchandise stores to continue operating even during times of turmoil. At times the Chinese were even protected from violence, to ensure some form economic activity and tax revenue. For example, in March of 1915, Villa issued orders to his commanders in Chihuahua to not attack Chinese residents, so that the Chinese could continue to supply people with goods, who might revolt should they be driven to desperation by hunger.⁴⁰ In this way, Chinese-owned grocery stores simultaneously performed the role of provider and adversary.

A state of turmoil continued until Villa, Obregon, and Zapata held a convention at which it was agreed that the rivalry between Villa and Carranza made civil order impossible to maintain. Therefore, Eulalio Gutiérrez was elected as interim president. Villa retained the support of Zapata and backed Gutiérrez. However, Obregon re-allied himself with Carranza and conquered Villa in a bloody battle on April 1915 at Celaya, weakening both Zapata and Villa's forces. Villa blamed his defeat on U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's support of Carranza, and launched a vendetta against Americans in Mexico and in U.S. border towns.

Carranza, now president again, secured the legitimacy of the new regime by writing the 1917 Constitution. The constitution gave the government the authority to confiscate land from wealthy landowners, guaranteed workers' rights, and limited the authority of the Catholic Church. Moreover, the 1917 Constitution contained Articles 27, 33, and 123, that made Mexico the first nation with a constitution that aimed to protect its citizens from foreign exploitation.⁴¹ However, the 1917 Constitution retained much of the 1857 Constitution, illustrating how the

⁴⁰ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 94–123.

⁴¹ Buchenau, Jürgen. *Cosmic Race*. 66–87.

Revolution of 1910 was a reaffirmation of the *La Reforma*, which had brought liberals to power in the 1850s.⁴² Alan Knight, admits the Mexican Revolution lead to major structural changes Mexican society, but it was not a revolution in the sense that it was not repudiation of the past or a utopian vision. Revolution was justified as a “restoration of a preferred status quo ante”, it was a myth, created from above.⁴³ Moreover, Knight suggests the Revolutionary myth has not been as successful as most believe, as a common revolutionary myth has been compromised by intra-Revolutionary conflicts.

It would be much easier for the post-Revolutionary regime to develop institutions than a national ideology.⁴⁴ Carranza generated mass political integration through social rights and self-colonization through collective land rights. In the three years until his assassination, Carranza distributed 132,639 hectares of land to 59,846 *campesinos*.⁴⁵ Villa and Zapata criticized these handouts, and sought more immediate and transparent redistribution of land. Eventually Villa was defeated in the North and Zapata in the South allowing the Sonoran Constitutionalist generals, Calles and Obregon to claim victory. Zapata was assassinated in 1919, since Carranza retained power by eliminating those who opposed him. However, by 1920, Carranza was abandoned by almost all his supporters including Obregon, and was killed while attempting to flee the capital. Adolfo de la Huerta became interim president until Obregon was elected in November.⁴⁶

—*Violence and Revolution*—

⁴² Knight, Alan. Mexican Revolution, 223–273.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Campesino* comes from the Spanish word *campo* meaning field. Campesino may refer to a native of a Latin American rural area or a Latin American Indian farmer or farm laborer.

⁴⁶ Adolfo de la Huerta was the governor of Sonora, who lead the Revolution of Agua Prieta, which ended Carranza’s rule.

The Massacre of Torreon from May 13-15th, 1911 in Torreon, Coahuila was the most brutal and violent materialization of the anti-Chinese campaign. The massacre occurred in the context of the Revolution but was a manifestation of intense economic transformation and regional growth.⁴⁷ Yet, the massacre is often absent from Mexican history, dismissed as a one-off event, or relegated as an outburst of xenophobic nationalism. The motivation for this violent, almost genocidal, attack on the Chinese residents of Torreon, is still for the most part unknown.

Located at the junction of railroad lines, Torreon's economy had experienced explosive growth in agricultural exports such as cotton. Madero's family was at the center of Torreon's transformation, as he was heir to land holdings in Coahuila, Durango and Chihuahua. The previous decade of development had replaced peasants land with foreign-owned estates that often hired or contracted Chinese workers. Landless Mexicans were a consequence of Porfirian *positivism*, which prized economic development over all else. In Torreon, the Chinese population had grown to about 600-700, who lived in both residential areas and urban centers. Visible Chinese success became equated with Porfirian positivism, and therefore the enemy.⁴⁸

During the beginning of the Plan de San Luis Potosí, Madero sent his brother Emilio Madero to ensure the appointment of senator Carranza as Torreon's governor. Carranza's appointment would secure the rebel's control of the north. Emilio Madero's battalion, lead by five lieutenants, arrived on the rural periphery of Torreon on May 13th. Advancing from the countryside to the city's edge, various Chinese farms were attacked and pillaged by rebel troops. Lieutenant Ugalde entered through Lim Ching's farm, robbing and killing eleven Chinese residents. Another Maderista unit advanced across another farm owned by Ching, robbing and killing three workers. The other twenty-one Chinese workers at Ching's farm, were gathered and

⁴⁷ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 94–123.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

forced to run to Torreon. The adjacent farm owned by Dan Kee and Wong Sam, was ransacked and its eighteen Chinese workers were murdered. At a large farm owned by Wong Foon-Chuck, Ugalde's men forced Foon-Chuck's superintendent and thirty-eight workers to serve them food while they fought against federal forces.

Outnumbered, General Emiliano Lojero's forces defended the city until they ran out of ammunition and were forced to flee on second night of battle. The next morning, the victorious rebel troops entered the city, looting and destroying Chinese shops and businesses. Soldiers forced their entry into Chinese establishments, shot the inhabitants, and destroyed what they did not take.⁴⁹ The soldiers continued to the central plaza, where thousands of people gathered to celebrate the Maderista victory. At the plaza, a Torreon man named Jesus Maria Grajeda delivered a zealous speech encouraging civilians to sack Chinese businesses. The mob entered the prominent Yah Wick building, murdering seventeen bank employees. Similar scenes were repeated at other establishments, such as Yee Hops where 18 were killed. Side by side, uniformed Constitutionalist troops and civilians looted various establishments and killed any and all Chinese inside. By the afternoon, the streets were covered in corpses. The report prepared by lawyers for the Chinese government described the horrifying events:

In one instance the head of a Chinaman was severed from his body and thrown from the window into the street. In another instance, a soldier took a little boy by the heels and battered his brains out against a lamp post. In many instances ropes were tied to the bodies of Chinamen and they were dragged through the streets by men on horseback.⁵⁰

A total of fifty-nine establishments were visited and 303 Chinese individuals were killed. What is most puzzling, is why even after the Maderista soldiers had secured the city, the Chinese were still violently targeted. Many have argued that the attack was prompted by Jesus C. Flores,

⁴⁹ Change, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 93–123.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

a stonemason and supporter of Francisco Madero, who gave an anti-Chinese speech on May 5th, in the neighboring city of Gomez Palacio, Durango. Flores complained that the Chinese had monopolized women's work, depriving them of their livelihood and declared that "it was a necessary... even patriotic duty, to finish with them."⁵¹ However, Flores's speech was one of many examples of anti-Chinese discourse that was circulating throughout the north.⁵² Other historians compensate for the extreme violence by pointing to the yearlong drought and the mining recession. Other's blame Madero's lieutenant Benjamin Ugalde, who was previously affiliated with the PLM and may have encouraged his troops to loot and murder.⁵³ The testimonies from soldiers and witnesses give conflicting reports, generating more questions than answers.

Later that day, General Emilio Madero arrived at the devastated *colonia china* (Chinese district) and ordered his troops to remove any surviving Chinese residents. Many of the Chinese that did survive, had been protected by Mexican residents, who had hid Chinese in their homes during the massacre. After the massacre, Mexicans buried their dead in the cemetery, and refused to allow the Chinese to be buried along with them. Instead, naked Chinese corpses were thrown into an open trench. Although this atrocity brought immediate international attention. Locally, it was eclipsed by the rebel victory.⁵⁴ After the massacre, representatives from the Chinese, United States, and Mexican governments investigated the events. General Madero appointed a Mexico City deputy to investigate his soldiers' role in the massacre and the U.S. consular agent George Carothers, reported on the event while acting as liaison for the Chinese government. Various reports were made, all of which focused on liability and interpreted the event as an outburst of

⁵¹ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 143–189.

⁵² Change, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 93–123.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

mestizo nationalism.⁵⁵ However, the accounts of various Mexican locals risking their lives to protect hundreds of Chinese, destabilizes the notion that this was the result of mestizo nationalism. The Mexican reports blamed the Chinese residents for their own murders and argued that armed Chinese fired upon Maderista rebels, but there was no conclusive proof of this. Some thirty accused Maderista soldiers were detained, but none were convicted.

Persuaded by Carothers, the Chinese officials sought monetary restitution and adopted a U.S. State Department legal team. U.S. lawyers issued a legal brief that outlined the breach of treaty stipulations and international laws, which calculated indemnity at \$1 million for loss of life. In 1934, the Mexican government told Chinese officials that it would not pay the indemnity until the economy was better; it seems to never have been paid. The legal team defined the tragedy as a consequence of lawless war where the “malicious spirit” of Mexicans was to blame. The incrimination of Mexican maliciousness misses important economic and political conditions which may have accounted for the violence.⁵⁶ Rebel volunteers were frequently recruited from conditions of poverty through promises of land and wages. Moreover, this legal framework substituted individuals and rebel soldiers for nations, which hid offenders within the apparatus of the nation state.⁵⁷ At the time both the Chinese and Mexican states were in the middle of revolutions, therefore the assumption that the nation represented a unified populous falsely associates the aggressors as nationals. Most historians emphasize the class dimensions of the Torreón massacre and the preeminence of class over race in Mexican politics.⁵⁸ Yet, material conditions can become racialized.⁵⁹ For example, during the massacre the Chinese bank was

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 93–123.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

looted and its employees were killed. Yet, the American, British, and German banks in Torreon were spared, despite the fact that these banks held far more capital and were visible imperial forces.

The Torreon Massacre highlights how the absence of Chinese from Mexican history, has created various inconsistencies in understanding anti-Chinese violence. Between 1911 and 1919, 814 Chinese were killed by disgruntled revolutionary soldiers or unknown individuals. Most of the violence and looting occurred in Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Sinaloa. Even before Francisco Madero was elected president, several large-scale anti-Chinese demonstrations had already taken place. Throughout 1911, three major uncoordinated protests erupted in boomtowns with a visible Chinese presence that emerged during científico colonization: Torreon, Coahuila, Tapachula, Chiapas, and Pilares de Nacozari, Sonora.⁶⁰ Violent widespread attacks throughout the Mexican Revolution were often initiated by revolutionary soldiers, who were accompanied by civilian members.

Protests and violence were at times directed at the other foreigners in Mexico, as the revolution often saw many anti-United States demonstrations. Yet in these cases never resulted in humiliation or homicide.⁶¹ During the Revolution the Chinese abstained from entering the military, while the Japanese were prized combatants, racialized as martial arts experts.⁶² The consequences of the assignment of nationality began as early as 1903, when the Raigosa Commission endorsed preference of Japanese immigrants over the Chinese for colonization projects. Preference for Japanese over Chinese could be attributed to the fact that the Japanese population was minuscule compared to the Chinese population, therefore less visible and less of

⁶⁰ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 93–123.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

a target. However, Chang argues that the preference for Japanese was linked to a specific Mexican Orientalism, that was concerned with a state organized racial order. Chang's argument is convincing, but antagonism towards the Chinese during the Revolution was a consequence of the imagined Chinese role in Porfirian colonization, rather than a state endorsed racial order.

During June of 1911, the President of the Chinese colony in Tapachula, Chiapas requested asylum from the U.S. consulate, fearing that the lower classes would massacre the Chinese. The U.S. ambassador Henry Lane Wilson, wrote to the Mexican government informing them of the imminent massacre and requested protection of U.S. lives and property. After post-Torreon anxieties lessened, Wilson wrote to the Mexican government, "the Embassy has no intention of asking for protection for Chinese citizens." Later in July of 1911, shots were fired and a bomb exploded at Kwong Say Tay's store in Salina Cruz, Oaxaca. Given the central governments instability and weakness throughout the first phase of the Mexican Revolution, its ability to prevent violence was limited, especially when local authorities and revolutionary soldiers were often the instigators.

By the fall 1912, Maderistas held the northern Pacific coast by means that included the destruction and looting of Chinese establishments from Guaymas to Culiacan and Mazatlan. Under the leadership of Macario Gaxiola Urias, the rebel hold on the region was strengthened once he arrived in Mazatlan in December. Urias announced orders for the city's Chinese people to leave. In response, more than 570 Chinese residents of Mazatlan sought protection with the U.S. consulate. Although Urias rescinded the order, many Chinese departed anyway. Reasons for why the U.S. consulate would claim protection for the Chinese, is unclear. It may have been in the best interest of the U.S. to keep the Chinese in Mexico, instead of fleeing to the United States. More likely, is that the U.S. was trying to protect U.S. business interests that were reliant

on Chinese labor. The next year, 600 Chinese residents of Guaymas fled the city onto the USS Pittsburgh and USS Glacier.

During February of 1914, while Villa surged Cananea to retake the North from Constitutionalists, a group of miners organized a protest against James Douglas of the American-owned Consolidated Copper Company. Mexican miners believed the Chinese and the American company had artificially raised prices for basic staples, in order to rob Mexicans of their wages. In solidarity, The Women's Union, a group of miners' wife, held a rally the Chinese district and called for the expulsion of Chinese residents. The mob attacked a Chinese laundry store and its two employees, later driving the Chinese residents into the streets and out of Cananea. The U.S. consulate noted that images of executed Chinese people contributed to the agitation. A postcard of two Chinese men, one lynched and the other on the ground, was widely circulated among the residents.⁶³

Not only were visible Chinese communities the targets of violence, but vital individual economic agents were also singled out. Competing revolutionary factions frequently identified Chinese functionaries for assassination in order to disrupt their opponents' ability to acquire resources from Chinese businesses. The affiliation of Chinese with money and business was accentuated during the years of intense fighting because of the severe shortages of money, food, and basic necessities. The persistence of Chinese stores amid the economic depression reinforced their images as unnatural and greedy *abarroteros* (grocers).⁶⁴ This violence was an opportunistic response to vulnerable Chinese communities during wartime conditions. For example, motivated by speculation that a Chinese truck farmer would have cash on hand from door-to-door sales, Monico Rodriguez, a Carrancista soldier, murdered Joe Wong in Durango. Rodriguez's attack

⁶³ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 93–123.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

and so many others, took advantage of the soldiers' possession of the means of violence and the probable impunity of his actions.⁶⁵

After Madero's assassination in 1913, Villa and Zapata broke away from Constitutionalists and began a new wave of violence. Attempting to secure vital railroad sites, mines, and ports, Porfirian colonization and development concessions became strategic targets.⁶⁶ In 1914, an American colony near Tampico became a target for Constitutionalist forces as they stormed the oil-rich coast. Pleas by U.S. consular agents to Huerta, convinced him and his forces to spare the American residents and the Chinese laborers in their colony. The next day, an unnamed Chinese cook was singled out, kidnapped, and executed by Constitutionalist soldiers. In Veracruz, rebel soldiers also killed a Chinese employee in an American settlement. Porfirian use of Chinese labor required co-ethnic subordination under a labor contractor, therefore Chinese cooks often held the position of a labor contractor or general manager.⁶⁷ Chinese managers were recruited as a link between capitalists' employers and the Chinese laborers, serving as mediators and translators.

During February 1916, Constitutionalist soldiers under General Prieto stopped at the Hotel de Nueva York in Jiménez, Chihuahua. The hotel was a favorite with foreigners, owned by Charley Chee, a Chinese merchant. On the 24th, after monitoring the hotel for some days, Carranza soldiers stormed the hotel and took five high-profile prisoners. The prisoners were all agents of large companies and each from a different nationality (British, American, Spanish, Turkish, and Chee as the Chinese). They were then all taken to the railroad tracks and locked in a freight car. In the morning, the American and Chee were taken away, the American was spared

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 93–123.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

and Chee was executed.⁶⁸ Specifically terrorizing and targeting of the Chinese reveals how violence cannot be attributed to simple economic insecurity, but rather how their identities had been racialized by Porfirian colonization.

Collective violence against the Chinese population was also an expression of the existing tensions of Indian-state conflict. Yaqui attacks on Chinese stores were a response to the governments collapse and limited means of survival. Northern States such as Sonora had experienced food shortages and inflation, but the economic situation in the Rio Yaqui lands was even worse. Governor Jose Maria Maytorena, who had played a key role in supporting Madero's revolt, also acted as an intermediary for the for-Yaqui tribe leaders, Pedro Garcia and Jose Valenzuela. Maytorena offered the restitution of lands and the return of those deported to Yucatan in exchange for their military support.⁶⁹ The Yaqui's had no interest in the political agenda of the Revolution and sided with whomever negotiated with them.⁷⁰ After Madero's assassination, Maytorena sided with Villa and the Conventionists, putting him at odds with Obregon and Sonoran general Calles. The fragmentation of the rebellion resulted in competing promises to the Yaqui people, which explains why they participated in so many different factions of the Revolution. Raiding Sonoran colonies had been a method of Yaqui survival for decades.⁷¹ However with the outbreak of the Revolution, Chinese stores came to be a dependable source of supplies for the Yaqui people.

During January of 1915, Yaqui troops under the command of Constitutionalists crossed their ancestral lands and looted the Chinese community. In the lower Yaqui River valley, the

⁶⁹ In 1903, Porfirio Díaz, in response to the Yaqui wars, deported both the peaceful and rebellious Yaqui natives to the Yucatan and Oaxaca. From 1904 to 1909, the Mexican governor of Sonora, Rafael Izábal imprisoned 8,000 to 15,000 Yaquis. Throughout the Mexican Revolution, Yaqui warriors joined all of the armies of the major rebel factions and began resettling their ancestral lands along the Rio Yaqui.

⁷⁰ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 93–123.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

deployment of Indian troops triggered Mexican locals to ransack the Chinese stores in Torin and Cocorit. Leaving Chinese franchise retail stores in ruin. In the economic context of war-torn Sonora, the looting of Chinese stores garnered supplies for soldiers, effectively denying those same resources to the Indians.⁷² Later, during the summer of 1915, Maytorena's troops returned to the Yaqui River Valley to secure more resources, killing two Chinese. Chinese stores therefore played a role in the Yaqui-Conventionist alliance, not because of mestizo nationalism but because of their stockpiles of supplies.⁷³

The Sonoran mining country and the Sonoran coast constantly suffered from war-related scarcities, as multiple sovereignties struggled to grab power. Thereby Sonora became a particularly intense location for violence directed at the Chinese. Calles ordered Colonel Michael Samaniego and his troops to lay waste to the Chinese communities from Agua Prieta through Arizpe, Moctezuma, Cumpas, Nacozari, and Fronteras. Although the soldiers encountered no Conventionist resistance, they used the military expedition to obliterate the Chinese presence.⁷⁴ The Chinese structural position as *motores de sangre* and a dependable source of supplies made them valuable nonmilitary assets. Whether the orders were intended to capture supplies or keep supplies from their enemies, or rid the region of the Chinese; they succeeded. In none of these previously mentioned acts of violence were the murderers convicted or arrested.

In Guaymas, Constitutionalist forces rioted against Chinese people, destroying sixty percent of their stores. Wai Chiao Pu, the president of the Guaymas Chinese association asked the U.S. consulate and Chinese legation for protection. In Cananea during the summer of 1915, Conventionist forces looted Chinese stores inspiring an anti-Chinese mob. For two days during

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 93–123.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

July 2015, looters pillaged forty-four Chinese stores in Cananea, taking over half a million dollars in merchandise. Calles who was gaining ground in Sonora, knew it was essential for the Chinese to return and for the strikes to end.⁷⁵ Without the Chinese, food shortages would ensue and economic instability would threaten his campaign. Calles would later use the Chinese as a source of capital, by increasing their taxes in 1916. Chang argues that by experimenting with racial governance as a tool to ameliorate tensions with unions, Calles institutionalized the violence practiced by soldiers under the authority of the state.

The murders of Chinese immigrants provided a populist enemy in which revolutionary leaders could extract material benefits, without major repercussions. By extracting wealth from a minority community, political actors appeared socially and economic benevolent toward an increasing urban peasantry.⁷⁶ Moreover, centrally organized campaigns and ritual violence bonded various Mexican actors through participating in anti-Chinese violence. Chang argues that anti-Chinese violence was not entirely a side effect of war, “antichinismo allowed Mexican people to experiment with new political identities and associations.” Participating in anti-Chinese violence, obscured the populous from differences in their beliefs, social class, and political identities.

—*The Beginning of the End*—

Cast as untrustworthy, greedy, and diseased, the Chinese came to symbolize the consequences of Porfirian liberalism.⁷⁷ The Mexican Revolution revealed a country deeply divided by social class, which resulted in distinct class-based anti-Chinese campaigns. This section is concerned with the final years of the Revolution, in which anti-Chinese violence took

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

on new political forms. Some members of the Mexican lower class responded violently to the Chinese presence in Mexico. They voiced their hostility through murders, lootings, robberies, and by anti-Chinese rallies and protests.⁷⁸ The Mexican lower middle class expressed antichinismo through campaigns, clubs, organizations, periodicals, boycotts, protests, and sporadic violence. Merchants in this class sought to end the Chinese commercial monopoly, by expelling the Chinese merchants in Northern Mexico.

As previously discussed, the Chinese had prospered because of their transnational networks, yet the antichinistas understood Chinese prosperity at the expense of the national economy. The Chinese were blamed for the depreciation of Mexican currency and rising food costs. Anti-Chinese campaigns claimed that the Chinese merchants were only successful because of illegal business practices, such as storing their merchandise in the back rooms of their businesses. In order to maintain profits and save on costs, Chinese businessmen usually stored their extra merchandise at their shops, instead of in storage spaces and tended to live at their businesses. Anti-Chinese campaigns would later push for legislation to criminalize Chinese business practices. Antichinistas also highlighted that many Chinese sent remittances to China, as justification for their claim that the Chinese were unpatriotic and harmful to the Mexican economy. Even those Chinese who worked in menial jobs, were admonished for filling occupations traditionally reserved for Mexican women.⁷⁹

During March of 1916, representatives of the Chinese community in Cocorit Sonora wrote to the governor to complain that municipal authorities had ordered their removal to the outskirts of town. They also petitioned to U.S. consul for assistance, which demonstrates the power held by U.S. representatives in Northern Mexico. Utilizing various legal and extralegal

⁷⁸ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 143–189.

⁷⁹ Romero, Robert Chao. *The Chinese in Mexico*, 143–189.

tactics, the Chinese claimed their rights as guaranteed in the 1899 Treaty. During the years of the Revolution, Chinese filed 608 property claims of up to \$1,137,227.04 U.S. dollars in losses. Chinese immigrants often appealed to U.S. consular officials for protection because there was no Chinese diplomatic representation in Mexico. One U.S. consular official claimed that Mexican soldiers' favorite past time was robbing Chinese merchants, stripping them and tying them to a tree in a desolate area.⁸⁰

In Sonora, revolutionary violence was agitated by Jose Maria Arana, a Magdalena schoolteacher and businessman. Over the next fifteen years, Arana would lead a large network of anti-Chinese organizations. Arana traveled throughout Sonora, pushed his anti-Chinese agenda and published a newspaper *Pro-Patria* (pro-fatherland), under the banner "Either them or us." He gave one of his most stirring and famous anti-Chinese speeches in Cananea, a mining town with pre-existing anti-foreigner sentiments.⁸¹ *Pro-Patria* was a campaign dedicated to exposing Chinese abuses, ousting the Chinese from positions of economic power, and uplifting Mexican businesses. However, by asserting that Mexicans and Chinese were simply culturally irreconcilable, Arana engaged in more than just economic nationalism.

The Revolution had disrupted the agricultural and industrial sectors, but according to the antichinistas the presence of the Chinese was to blame. During February 1916, the Mexican businessmen of Magdalena organized a campaign to oust the Chinese from the state. They established the Junta Comercial y de Hombres de Negocios (Commercial and Businessmen's Junta), aiming to uplift the Mexican merchant from competition with Chinese businessmen. Unlike the early years of the Revolution, supporters were urged to carry out the imperatives of

⁸⁰ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 28–52

⁸¹ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

the anti-Chinese campaign within the dictates of law.⁸² They specifically targeted the Chinese and welcomed all other foreign businessmen. The Junta blamed the exodus of young unemployed Mexican men into the United States on corrupt Chinese and insinuated that the Chinese had bribed Sonora's governors during the Porfiriato. The Junta's list of demands also include abolishment of the possibility of naturalization for Chinese and the outlawing of Chinese-Mexican marriages. While it was true that Sonora had the highest population of Chinese in the country, there was only 15,000 Chinese immigrants, which was less than 2% of the population.⁸³ The Junta asked for the immediate expulsion of the Chinese, but met resistance from Chinese and Mexican officials. Mexican officials may have publically supported the anti-Chinese campaigns, but privately they recognized the economic importance of Chinese businesses.

Conditions only worsened for the Chinese, even as revolutionary violence decreased. During the fall of 1917, Arana's campaigns finally materialized once Governor Plutarco Elias Calles approved new discriminatory regulations against the Chinese. The first of these regulations was a special taxation of Chinese farmers and merchants in the agricultural areas around Hermosillo, Sonora. In Guaymas, Juan Lung Tain and Company and Fon Qui, the two largest Chinese firms in Sonora, protested the increase in taxes, as others paid the old tax rate. The municipal president of Guaymas claimed that the taxes were not discriminatory, but imposed on all importers. Municipal officials defended high taxes, since the Chinese were wealthy and monopolized commerce. Angered that Arana was campaigning for municipal president, Tain protested to the governor that Arana's campaigns incited violence against the Chinese in Sonora and was using antichinismo to further his candidacy in the upcoming elections. Tain argued that

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

even if Arana won, he could not legally oust them, relegate them to a separate barrio, or close their stores. Their rights had been guaranteed in the federal and state constitutions, the penal code, and the 1899 treaty with China. Arana replied that his crusade was virtuous and claimed he had a moral obligation to broadcast the views of his five thousand supporters.

Calles and interim Sonoran governor Cesareo G. Soriano both favored the anti-Chinese campaign, yet Soriano tended to oppose the more explicit illegal tactics. Although Sonoran governors supported Arana's anti-Chinese campaigns publicly, they also knew it was essential to protect Sonora's national image and Mexico's international reputation.⁸⁴ Soriano issued a circular to all municipal presidents, ordering them to grant the Chinese protection, which has been guaranteed to all foreigners by the Constitution. In a letter to Arana, Soriano agreed that the Chinese held an economic monopoly, but denounced his use of Pro-Patria propaganda. Additionally, he expressed concern that Arana's tactics took advantage of hard-working Mexicans.⁸⁵ Soriano conceded that anti-Chinese activity could continue under the condition that municipal authorities could control and maintain order. Even Calles tried to persuade Arana to use less violent methods in his anti-Chinese campaigns. However, during the municipal elections in Magdalena City, in which Arana was a candidate, he repeatedly incited local crowds to engage in anti-Chinese violence. Therefore, Arana was arrested and imprisoned in prison in Hermosillo, before the elections. Arana, of course, blamed the Chinese for his imprisonment, claiming they had bribed Sonoran officials.

After Arana was released from prison, he again ran for the position of Magdalena's municipal president. Once again, campaigning on an anti-Chinese platform. Elected in 1919, Arana immediately increased the monthly taxes of Juan Lung Tain from 250 pesos to 400 pesos.

⁸⁴ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Despite complaints from Sonoran Chinese, Arana defended his activities as legal and necessary in dealing with the poor financial situation. His campaigns bore fruit again with the passage of the state's Organic Law of Internal Administration in March of 1919. During this time, Sonora had passed Laws 60 and 61, which ordered municipalities to create ghettos for the Chinese. This removal was part of a more general call to create ghettos for the Chinese in order to contain their supposed diseases and prevent mixing with the Mexicans. Article 60 of this law ordered that all municipal councils, for reasons of hygiene and health, to relegate all Chinese houses and stores to special barrios, and Article 61 allowed each municipal council to establish its own procedures to carry out this law. The second command by Calles, denied reentry permits to Chinese who had left Mexico for China and desired to return through the border town of Nogales, Sonora.⁸⁶ Calles defended that the law was passed for the good of the state. He argued that since the Mexican constitution did not allow for discrimination based on race, as the U.S. and other advanced countries could, the state legislatures were obligated to do what they could to stop the spread of the Chinese.⁸⁷ Adding that Sonora suffered more than other state from the errors of Porfirio, especially from the influx of Chinese immigrants. Chinese had dominated in some forms in commerce, but what alarmed officials was their increase in numbers from 859 in 1900 to 4,486 in 1910, and to an alleged ten to fifteen thousand in 1919.

Articles 60 and 61 were clearly discriminatory, but it was Article 106 that would have profound and detrimental effects on Sonoran Chinese. In 1919, the Sonoran legislature passed the Labor and Social Provision Law or Article 106, most commonly referred to as the 80 Percent Law. The law mandated that Mexicans must constitute at least eighty percent of the workforce in foreign owned businesses. During the same time, the leadership in Hermosillo appointed a group

⁸⁶ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁸⁷ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

of doctors to report on the health of Chinese merchants and laborers as well as the sanitary quality of their buildings. The strict implementation of the law varied throughout the state; municipalities such as Cananea, Magdalena and Hermosillo threatened harsh punishments if Chinese businesses did not comply. Whereas Guaymas made no attempt to enforce the law, but relied instead on stringent tax measures against the Chinese merchants.

Upon his ascension to the governorship of Sonora, Adolfo de la Huerta actively pursued an anti-Chinese agenda, consistently supporting the efforts of Arana. P. Calles and de la Huerta, were both barred from political power under Diaz, rose from the middle class to dominance in Sonora, and disliked foreign interest.⁸⁸ De la Huerta advocated amending Mexico's 1899 treaty with China, to limit Chinese immigration and their rights in Mexico. The subject of the treaty's renewal introduced a new facet of the anti-Chinese campaigns. Tensions increased especially in Cananea, where residents violated De la Huerta's request to voice their sentiments peacefully. Cananean's residents would instigate some of the most intense anti-Chinese violence throughout the 1920s. The discriminatory attitudes that led to the passage of the 80 percent law became a tangible part of de la Huerta's state-building, as he recommended that all Chinese merchants in Cananea be expelled as of January 1, 1920.

Facing impending expulsion, Chinese merchants appealed both to their own advocates and to their Mexican associates in various positions of power. The Chinese legation in Mexico City appealed to Mexican President Carranza, voicing their outrage at the injustice labor law. In defense of the Chinese and at the urging of the Chinese consul general in Mexico City, President Venustiano Carranza instructed de la Huerta to prevent local officials from expelling the Chinese and ordered their protection. The *writ of amparo* suspended the Cananea decree and

⁸⁸ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

the Chinese remained, although not without ongoing harassment. Fifty Chinese left Sonora in December of 1919 and an average of thirty or more left each month until the end of 1920. However, an influx of new arrivals from Sinaloa stabilized the Chinese population at an estimated 5,000. Attempting to compromise, de la Huerta suggested that the Chinese forsake business and go into agriculture or that a number of Chinese leave Sonora monthly until all were gone. The Chinese rejected both suggestions.

— *Conclusion* —

Arana's death in 1921 marked beginning of the anti-Chinese campaigns. Arana had established the method of legal persecution that anti-Chinese campaigns would begin to employ. A new publication called *La Pulga*, continued to advance the anti-Chinese campaign. The newspaper asserted that government officials only protected the Chinese because they sought tax revenues. Moreover, poverty-stricken Mexicans allowed the Chinese to prosper by shopping at their businesses. The editor further claimed that Chinese money lured Mexican women to Chinese beds, ruining the Mexican race. To combat the Chinese, *La Pulga* proposed various methods of discrimination such as special barrios, an anti-Chinese police force, a designated sanitary inspector to visit all Chinese residents and stores, and that the government should only allow Chinese immigrants into Sonora if they had 1000 pesos. Moreover, despite criticizing the government for collecting Chinese revenue taxes, the publication proposed the creation of a head tax on every Chinese resident.

In June of 1919 Obregon announced his candidacy for the presidency, a period of increased Chinese immigration and Mexican repatriation from the United States. Throughout his presidency, Obregon faced augmented opposition to Chinese immigration and increasing demands to nullify the treaty with China. In his annual public address, he announced his plan to

revise the treaty with China to limit immigration, in the interest of reducing competition with recently repatriated Mexican workers. Thereby, Obregon equated antichinismo with worker advocacy.⁸⁹ Obregon sought a compromise with China, although he desired Chinese laborers he did not want to afford them rights. China wanted to preserve Mexico as a destination for immigration and to maintain access to the country's mineral wealth. After long diplomatic negotiations, China and Mexico signed an amendment to the treaty on November 21, 1921, prohibiting the immigration of Chinese laborers to Mexico. The contention of the treaty reveals how antichinismo intersected issues of racial nationalism, state authority, and economic development. Chinese immigration to Mexico declined after 1921, but Chinese often used U.S. border crossing cards to circulate between Mexico and the United States. Almost 10,000 Chinese employed this method, leaving Mexican officials confused about who were legitimate merchants and whether crossing should be regarded as immigration.⁹⁰ Antichinista pressure brought the Chinese question to the highest levels of government, but forced uneasy compromises. In 1923, Obregon advised Secretary Pani that continual immigration of Chinese laborers to Mexicali was vital for economic development. Obregon also wrote to Lew Chun, Lee Wing, and Wong Charm, prominent agriculture and mercantile operations managers in Mexicali, that their requests to bring two thousand Chinese would be approved.⁹¹ Comprises such as these frustrated anti-Chinese associations, as continued Chinese immigration gave the illusion of inept government regulation.⁹²

Chinese comprised 12.49 percent of all immigrants from 1911 to 1915, and 6.69 from 1916 to 1920, but their numbers fell to 2.61 percent of all entrants from 1921 to 1924. Despite

⁸⁹ Chang, Jason Oliver *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 94–123.

⁹⁰ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

official and unofficial harassment, the Chinese survived into 1922 and continued to excel in the retail trade and wholesale retail grocery businesses. The end of the violent phase of the Revolution remolded how anti-Chinese campaigns manifested. Resentment of the clearly privileged status of foreign individuals during the Diaz regime would laid the foundation for restrictive immigration laws that would be used to expel the Chinese. Violent attacks decreased, but legal restrictions proliferated.

Chapter VI
A More Perfect Union, A Cosmic Race:
Post-Revolutionary State-building and Nationalism (1920-1940)

—Introduction—

On March 15th, 1932, three Chinese men were marched in the middle of the night to the border in Nogales. Mexican officers fired shots and ordered them to crawl through a hole in the fence. However, a U.S. Border Patrol officer “jumped from behind the bushes and shoved the Chinese back through the hole.”¹ Later that night, Border Patrol officers turned back more than twenty Chinese, including the three who had been shoved through the hole. In 1930 the Chinese population of Mexico was 15,976, but by 1940, the population had decreased to 4,865. The decline in the Chinese population is largely due to the organized anti-Chinese movement in Mexico, which targeted the Chinese populations of various states such as Sonora, Sinaloa, Nayarit, and Tamaulipas, and culminated in the expulsion of virtually the entire Chinese population from the state of Sonora in August of 1931. The bodies of Chinese being shoved back and forth across the border epitomizes a system of nations and nationalism that relegated the Chinese as alien. The borderlands had served as a middle ground where the Chinese could find a home in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but by the 1930s it had been reduced to a fence separating two nations, neither of which wanted the Chinese.²

¹ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

² *Ibid.*

—*The Post-Revolutionary State*—

When Obregon claimed to be the Revolutions victor, the Mexican state was in shambles. The following decades would be preoccupied with forming a national ideology and building a competent state. In order to survive the post-revolution, the Mexican state would have to consolidate the populations of swelling urban centers, patchworks of rural agricultural zones, and rebellious or disinterested peasants and Indian people.³ The result would be a constitution shaped by revolutionary nationalism. The Constitution of 1917 restored national sovereignty, not only over resources and property but also over process of representation.⁴ The constitution maintained various safeguards for Mexicans but placed severe restrictions on immigrants. It was much easier for the revolutionary elite to generate new institutions than formulate a new national identity. Mexican nationalism thus became a struggle to formulate a collective postcolonial identity.⁵ Post-revolutionary leaders repositioned national identity within “cosmic mestizo race”, propagated by Obregon’s Secretary of Education Jose Vasconcelos. However, the modern mestizo people, came at the cost of cultural assimilation of all ethnic groups, or depending on who you were, *liberation* of the indigenous population.

In order to successfully foster a mestizo national identity, the post-revolutionary state would have to mold and bind the nation’s imagined collective identity. Therefore, Mexican national identity or *mexicanidad* would require a narrative of the nation contingent on the miscegenation of Spanish conquistadors and Indian women. The appropriation of Mesoamerican people would be employed to articulate notions of “original” peoples so that political culture appeared to be a natural progression of history. Thus, Mexican national history worked to unify

³ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino*, 124-162.

⁴ Yankelevich, Pablo. “Mexico for the Mexicans: Immigration, National Sovereignty and the Promotion of Mestizaje.” *The Americas*, vol. 68, no. 3, 2012, pp. 405–436.

⁵ *Ibid.*

the nation through foundational myths, but these narratives of the nation privileged a particular community and excluded the Chinese. As mestizo nationalism sought to rebuild the nation by integrating the Indian, it would have to cleanse the nation of the Chinese. The post-revolutionary ideology which now deemed “Indians” virtuous and worthy of racial mixing, was simultaneously employed to construct narrow racial and ethnic boundaries of mexicanidad.

In order to achieve a cohesive Mexican state, the post-revolutionary government would create a constitution that guaranteed various safeguards for Mexicans but placed severe restrictions on immigrants. Article 33 of the 1917 Constitution not only prohibited foreigners from participating in the domestic process, but granted the president the right to expel immigrants without a trial. Article 33 would be frequently invoked to deport Chinese. By 1940 Mexican presidents had signed 1,185 orders of expulsion under Article 33. The use of Article 33 as a tool for antichinismo legitimized the government’s ability to act on notions of race.⁶ Article 8 denies foreigners the right to petition on political matters, and Article 9 does the same with respect to the rights of association and assembly.⁷ These new restrictions may be understood as a way for post-revolutionary Mexicans to process their own history and construct their own identity. Pablo Yankelevich contends, “As part of a rhetoric aimed at addressing social injustice and celebrating the supposedly essential values that the Mexican mestizo was presumed to possess, Mexico nurtured an exclusionary ethnic consciousness in which intolerance to indigenous diversity was projected onto certain foreign communities.” Thus, national identity was created on the basis of resistance to foreign invasion.⁸

⁶ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124–162.

⁷ Yankelevich, Pablo. Promotion of Mestizaje, 405–436.

⁸ Ibid.

The post-revolutionary project continued as the Mexican presidency passed from Obregon to Calles in 1924, a time historians refer to as the Sonoran Triangle.⁹ President Plutarco Elias Calles (1924-1928) centralized power, obtained diplomatic recognition of the U.S, and built a one-party state through mestizaje. Conscious of his political reputation he warned antichinistas from pursuing illegal methods. Historian Grace Delgado argues “In their advocacy for civil rights, Calles and his cadre of officials placed themselves in a small minority of post-revolutionary politicians who insisted on maintaining constitutional guarantees for naturalized Chinese Mexicans and Chinese nationals.”¹⁰ Others argue that though he never lead an anti-Chinese campaign, his vocal support was enough to encourage anti-Chinese activists to continue their activities without state interference. It is unknown if President Calles believed in the anti-Chinese movement, but his competing policies display the revolutions contradictions between nationalist aspirations and capitalist reality.¹¹

The turning point for the anti-Chinese campaign occurred when Obregon was assassinated upon being elected for president.¹² In seeking to ensure political stability, Calles choose one of his supporters, Emilio Portes Gil as interim president (1928-1930). During the next six years, known as the Maximato, Calles exercised behind-the-scenes control over Mexican politics through the following three presidents. Antichinismo campaigns were most intense during the Maximato under president Pascual Ortiz Rubio (1930-1932), who was often impeded by a Congress still loyal to Calles. However, Obregon’s death was an opportunity to reset national politics and create unification among the republics rival sovereignties. In seeking to

⁹ The Sonoran Triangle was a successive line of Mexican Presidents that all originated from Sonora: Adolfo de la Huerta (June 1920 - November 1920), Álvaro Obregon (December 1920 - November 1924), and Plutarco Elias Calles (December 1, 1924-November 30, 1928).

¹⁰ Delgado, Grace, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 138–189.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Obregon had run for president a second time in 1927. He won the 1928 Mexican presidential election, but was assassinated months before assuming the presidency.

foster stability, Calles formed the National Revolutionary Party (Partido Nacional Revolucionario or PNR), the “official” party of the revolutionary regime. The PNR was formed as a permanent organization run by Calles as *jefe máximo* (supreme leader), through which he acted as de facto president.¹³ The PNR brought together many factions and gave local party branches substantial discretion to run their own affairs. Additionally, antichinistas formed political blocks within the nascent PNR, such as the *Comité Directivo de la Campaña Nacionalista Antichino*.

Antichinismo coincided with repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans from the United States. Between 1929 and 1939, 1.6 million Mexicans and Mexican Americans returned to Mexico. Synchronized anti-immigrant measures throughout North America indicate how a global economic crisis had resulted in a transnational xenophobic movement.¹⁴ Antichinistas could now make a case for Chinese greed, as transnational connections allowed Chinese businesses to survive through the depression. Within this economic context, a group of congressmen formed the BNR (Bloque Nacional Revolucionario) to lobby for the *Campana Nacional* (National Campaign). The Campana Nacional promoted the purchase of only Mexican-made products and pushed for immigration restrictions, anti-miscegenation laws, anti-foreign labor laws, and strict enforcement of public health measures.

— *Federal Government Immigration Policies* —

Mexican National courts impeded much of the local anti-Chinese harassment in the early 1920s, but this was no longer the case by end of the decade. Internationally, governments began to increase the control of their borders and restrict immigrants deemed as undesirable. By the 1920s, due to rising antichinismo and pressure from the United States, the Mexican government

¹³ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

¹⁴ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

began to tighten visa requirements for Chinese wishing to travel to Mexico. The visa system was created during this time to determine in advance, whether a prospective migrant would be eligible to enter. After 1930 it became increasingly difficult to enter Mexico, since the government required visas and approval from the Interior Ministry. The Mexican consulate in Yokohama, Japan served as the outpost for Chinese wishing to migrate and therefore had great latitude in determining which Chinese would be granted visas. Those that were suspected of traveling to Mexico to then travel clandestinely to the United States were refused visas.¹⁵

In effort to gain control over migration, President Calles implemented the Migration Law of 1926. The new law expanded the list of those barred from entry such as old and infirm people, women under twenty-five, illiterate men, drug addicts, anarchists, and foreign laborers without a one-year contract. The 1926 law also expanded the list of medical reasons for which immigrants could be refused entry. The law was interwoven within concerns that immigrants would bring down the morality of the Mexican people, but was also part of the government's desire to create institutions to improve and discipline national population as a mestizo race.¹⁶

Mexican government established the *Registry of Foreigners* for those older than fifteen years of age, under the *Ley de Migración de 1930* (Immigration Law of 1930). All foreign nationals were obligated to appear before the proper authorities and show their personal identification papers. The registry created standardized identity cards for both immigrants and emigrants in order to compile immigrant data. The registration cards documented an immigrant's physical condition, height, and hair and eye color, as well their religion, occupation, nationality. The law also gave the Public Health Service the power to admit or reject immigrants. ID Cards were frequently used to apprehend Chinese, if they were caught without one. However, this

¹⁵ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

¹⁶ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124-162.

registry was unable to effectively keep account of the growing Chinese population, which counted only 14,000 Chinese in Mexico between 1926 - 1950. This number was even lower than the number of Chinese recorded in the National Census, which itself undercounted the number of Chinese.¹⁷ Revealing how although the federal government desired to control and limit immigration, it often lacked the bureaucracy to effectively do so. Moreover, Chinese continued to cross illegally into Mexico, due to the corrupt officials charged with enforcing immigration laws. In 1929, the Mexican consul in Nogales reported that immigration officers at the border smuggled Chinese into Mexico for \$300 per person.¹⁸

The census not only undercounted the Chinese, but changed previously recognized localities with ethnically suggestive names such as La Campo Chinesca, Ching Yeip, Kui Coo, Rancho Chino de Tecalote to “Does not exist.”¹⁹ In lack of better data, scholars have had to rely on the Mexican Census and the registry, which has led to inaccuracies in understanding how many Chinese remained after the anti-Chinese campaigns. There are large doubts about the accuracy of both sets of data, as the anti-Chinese campaigns encouraged the Chinese to avoid Mexican officials.²⁰ When the Chinese were counted in the census, they were targeted. Yet when they were not counted, it paved the way for their physical erasure.²¹

Anti-Chinese activists had wanted to abrogate the 1899 Treaty of Amity and Commerce since 1919. Oregon had previously amended the treaty to block the entrance of Chinese laborers in 1921, but allowed small groups of merchants, intellectuals, diplomats to enter. However, in July of 1927, President Calles abrogated the treaty with China, revealing how influential the anti-

¹⁷ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

²⁰ Gonzalez, Fredy. "Those Who Remained and Those Who Returned." *Paisanos Chinos: Transpacific Politics among Chinese Immigrants in Mexico*. N.p.: U of California, 2017. 43-69. Print.

²¹ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124-162.

Chinese campaigns had been on all levels of government. Although the treaty consistently failed to protect the Chinese, they had frequently invoked it when demanding fair treatment in Mexico. Mexico and China would not possess diplomatic relations until a new treaty was formed in 1943.

—*Chinese Resistance and Asociaciones Chinas*—

The spread of the antichinismo campaign, rising economic nationalism, and anti-immigration reforms were detrimental to Chinese communities across Mexico. Yet just as the Chinese had circumvented U.S. exclusion laws decades earlier, they continued to resist sinophobia in Mexico. The proliferation of anti-Chinese campaigns led to various countermeasures by the Chinese, including consolidating and organizing Chinese communities across Mexico. The first major Chinese organization was the Fraternal Union in Sonora, a registered Mexican association, that pooled resources to defend the Chinese community. Chinese also formed native place associations, which linked Chinese migrants who were from the same towns in China. While, Surname and clan associations brought migrants together from similar families. *Asociaciones china's* such as Zhonghua Huiguan (Chinese Association), Zhonghua Shanghui (Chinese Chamber of Commerce), Huaqiao Tuantihui (Overseas Chinese Group), all served as umbrella organizations. These organizations typically handled migrants' remittances, took care of elderly Chinese, arbitrated disputes, and negotiated conflicts between Chinese and Mexicans natives. The formation of politically oriented Chinese associations began after the Xinhai Revolution (The Chinese Revolution), since the Chinese government wanted to strengthen its ties with Chinese diasporic communities.²² These transnational organizations that were based on political ideology were the KMT (Guo Min Dang) and the CKT (Chee Kung

²² The Chinese Revolution, (1911-1912), was a nationalist democratic revolt that overthrew the Qing dynasty in 1912 and established a republic.

Tong).²³ The ideological and political conflicts of the Mexican branches of the Guo Min Dang and Chee Kung Tong unfortunately lead to a series of violent altercations between the years of 1922 and 1924, known as the “tong wars.”²⁴ Political Chinese associations added fuel to the fire as they were poorly understood by Mexicans. However, political associations articulated a Chinese expression of Mexican nationalism and how they imagined themselves as legitimate liberal citizens.²⁵ Moreover, these organizations demonstrated that Chinese migrants had interests beyond illicit activities or mutual aid.²⁶

Tensions emerged between the two political factions during the Xinhai Revolution in 1911, as both competed for control over illicit activities such as opium and gambling, as well as political transformation in mainland China. The Xinhai revolution divided Chinese Mexicans and Chinese diasporic communities around the world.²⁷ Although both factions advocated for the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, the CKT advocated for the restoration of the Han Ming Dynasty and objected to KMT-driven economic policies in China. In 1922, twenty-five Chinese were killed when KMT members fired at the Mexicali CKT branch.

Already misunderstood, the headlines of Tong Wars allowed anti-Chinese activities to portray the Chinese not only as an abstract threat to Mexican mestizo nationalism, but as an immediate threat to post-revolutionary stability. Mexicans were unaware of the political and economic differences between Chinese, therefore it was assumed KMT-CKT violence was the result of clashes over opium or gambling. Despite the fact that both organizations registered

²³ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 135-137. Members of the Mexican CKT branch called themselves the Chinese Freemasons, but they were not officially affiliated with the international Masonic order. The Guo Min Dang represented the largest political party of the Chinese parliament during the 1920s, also known as the Nationalist Party.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124-162.

²⁶ Gonzalez, Fredy, *Paisanos Chinos*, 15-42.

²⁷ Ibid.

themselves with the government and were in contact with Mexican people. Public protests demanded that all Chinese involved in tong wars be deported. President Obregon invoked Constitutional Article 33 to detain and deport the “pernicious” Chinese.²⁸ The month-long detention of KMT leader Francisco Yuen led to a relationship with the Obregon administration. Yuen was a prominent businessman, political leader, and naturalized Mexican citizen, who consolidated the Chinese in Sonora to counter Arana’s Pro-Patria campaigns. Yuen, his lawyer, and other top KMT members cast the CKT as violent thugs and the KMT as civil capitalist victims that aligned with the ideals of the Mexican Revolution. They fed vital information about the CKT to Obregon, leading to the expulsion of CKT members from Mexico. Over five hundred Chinese were deported in 1922, through the use of Article 33. Yuen was well positioned in the northern Mexican economy and maintained close relations to the ruling party in China. Therefore, by secretly collaborating with the KMT, Obregon was able to maintain relations with Chinese capitalists and the Republic of China, while catering to the antichinistas. However, by acting as government informants, the KMT confirmed the fear that the Chinese were a threat to post-revolutionary order.²⁹

The KMT expressed Mexican belonging and more importantly sought to portray themselves as rightful Mexican citizens through their condemnation of the CKT.³⁰ For example, in a public circular distributed by KMT, which explains their name change to El Partido Nacionalista Chino, also includes descriptions of the immoral, unsanitary, violent CKT members. Even for the Chinese, distancing themselves from the “bad” Chinese became a tactical mode of expressing Mexican nationalism. By the end of the tong wars both leaders of the

²⁸ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124–162.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Guomindang and the CKT were killed. However, the CKT - KMT rivalry did not define the political landscape for all Chinese, as the Chinese (including CKT members) regularly fought for their rights in state and federal courts. Throughout 1917 to 1931, naturalized Chinese Mexicans brought twenty-five cases to the Mexican Supreme Court.

Chinese communities frequently made use of local, national, and transnational connections to help convince local officials to safeguard their presence. They sought protection in Mexican courts, used connections with local and federal officials, and encouraged friendly Mexican organizations to intercede on their behalf.³¹ Chinese migrants persuaded authorities in several states to break up anti-Chinese marches, shut down meeting halls, and confiscate propaganda. In 1926, a group of Chinese businessmen in the state of Veracruz wrote President Calles complaining about the anti-Chinese activities of the Liga Nacional Pro-Raza, defending themselves as law-abiding and honorable merchants. Diplomatic protests by the Chinese legation had some effect, at least on the federal government who was concerned with its international reputation. In 1925 President Elias Calles sent a memorandum to all governors blaming the anti-Chinese associations for creating “a serious danger for the tranquility of the interior of the country.”³²

Although Mexico’s radical liberals, anarchists, and communists originally expressed anti-Chinese sentiments, by the 1920s they found solidarity with Chinese workers. The evolving position of the radical left is surprising because of the universal animosity among socialists toward Asian immigration in the United States.³³ Despite original popular anti-Chinese attitudes, by 1911 the radical Mexican Liberal Party (PLM) radically veered left, articulating anarchist

³¹ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124–162.

³² Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

³³ *Ibid.*

principles and supporting class solidarity over racial divisions. Their periodical, *Regeneracion*, called on its readers to recognize that all ethnicities and nationalities faced the same enemy of hunger and poverty. The most vigorous defense came from Communist Party, in the early 1930s their newspaper *El Machete*, ran a series of articles condemning the movements xenophobia as distracting Mexican workers from true class interests.³⁴ Mexico's Communist Party called for class based unity, "For us, there should be no nationals and foreigners, only exploiters and the exploited. The struggle of Mexicans against foreigners should be substituted by the struggle of all workers against all capitalists, without distinction of nationalities or races". *El Machete* argued that the government and capitalists sought to distract Mexican workers from their own exploitation by making them think that the Chinese "degenerate our race" and "take work from Mexican laborers."³⁵ The Communist Party claimed that the Mexican government was using same tactics as in Russia, in which the czar used the police to provoke massacres of Jews in order to redirect the anger of the masses.

— *Antichinistas: Por la Patria Por la Raza* —

A decade of revolution led to a contentious scramble to redefine legitimate state authority and national identity. The Mexican nation was never monolithic and the formation of mestizo nationalism was never inevitable; it required manufacturing by the state. Antichinismo offered a versatile form of nationalism that gave Mexicans permission to enact a state-endorsed identity of racial superiority.³⁶ The history of anti-Chinese organizations overlaps both the revolution and reconstruction, since antichinismo intervened during a process of national identity formation.

³⁴ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124-162.

Antichinismo became an active outlet for discussing collective identity and new relations of state power. By tracing the history of antichinismo within the process of state-building, destabilizes mestizo nationalism. By framing issues in terms of public health, workers rights, and economic restructuring, anti-Chinese activists developed a political ideology that transcended class. By generating a coherent sense of nationalism, antichinistas were able to achieve their ultimate goal: Chinese expulsion.

The exodus of 20,000 Chinese from Mexico throughout the 1930s was the result of decades of violence, active campaigning by antichinistas, and support from state and federal level officials. By the early 1920s, the anti-Chinese campaign crystallized into a coordinated and institutionalized movement, that was recognized as both legitimate and national. In addition to their usual methods of popular protests and spreading racist propaganda, anti-Chinese organizations worked to pass state laws that would give legal sanction to their demands.³⁷ The anti-Chinese movement became a multistate organization with grassroots affiliates and state-level elected politicians. State-level officials were key architects of the anti-Chinese movement, as it allowed Mexican elite men, such as Alejandro Lacy Jr., left out of post-revolutionary scramble for political office to re-enter the public sphere as antichinistas.³⁸ Moreover, the organization of the anti-Chinese campaign was part of a larger public desire to participate in political institutions, for both men and women.

The growth of anti-Chinese organizations ran parallel to the growth of *sociedades mutualistas* (civic societies), spaces that enabled people to experiment with the social life of citizenship.³⁹ The transition of violence into organizations demonstrates a national desire to

³⁷ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124-162.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

participate in political institutions. Chang argues, that anti-Chinese organizations were distinct in that they engaged in ideological debates about the role of the state.⁴⁰ Antichinistas helped develop a regionally contingent understanding of state authority, as they demanded government action to enforce a newly imagined racial profile of the republic - a mestizo nation.⁴¹ The antichinista movement was centered in Sonora, but anti-Chinese clubs formed throughout all northern states including Nayarit, Durango, Veracruz, and even Chiapas in the south. By 1932, there were 215 anti-Chinese clubs, such as the Junta Nacionalista (Nationalist Group), the Liga Nacional Pro-Raza (Pro-people National League), El Club del Pueblo (Club of the People), that claimed membership of 2 million people. These organizations spread their message through periodicals such as *Pro-Patria*, *La Palabra*, *El Malcriado*, *Nuevos Horizontes*, and *El Nacionalista*. Women as well found that engaging in anti-Chinese campaigns allowed them to participate in civic life. In 1925, the members of the Sonoran Comite Pro-Raza Femenino (Women's Pro-Race Committee of Sonora) traveled throughout the state to plead with government officials to prohibit Mexican women from marrying Chinese men.

Even states that did not harbor anti-Chinese organizations, were forced to engage in conversations about the presumed Chinese threat to national identity. Anti-Chinese campaigns lobbied across state lines, attaching their racial desires to a variety of reconstruction issues. Chang contends, "No other political party or political cause sought to organize ideological consistency and political discipline across state lines."⁴² In 1926, the Sonoran and Coahulian antichinistas traveled to Tamaulipas to promote their campaign. The state congress opportunistically used antichinismo to satisfy agrarian discontent in the region, by shifting blame

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124-162.

⁴² Ibid.

to the Chinese. Through use of the Constitution's Article 11, encouragement by antichinistas, and petitioning by the state legislature, twelve Chinese were deported in 1928. Deporting and scapegoating the Chinese, enabled state governments to construct a facade of moral governance.

The history of anti-Chinese campaigns primarily focuses on the north-western Mexican states, but they were conducted in all corners of the country.⁴³ Historian Fredy Gonzalez sheds doubt on the notion that anti-Chinese membership was composed of 2 million citizens, but instead proposes that the strength and success of the campaigns was due to their ability to spread their influence beyond the place of their founding.⁴⁴ The anti-Chinese organization in Torreon, Coahuila, was one of the most active, petitioning at least ten states around the country to pass anti-Chinese legislation. Therefore, "Even cities without anti-Chinese associations, then, could come under the influence of the racist rhetoric coming from neighboring states."⁴⁵ Antichinistas ability to establish a national network through linking actors in different states, overcompensated for their small membership.

By 1926, Chinese were the second largest immigrant group in Mexico, with numbers totaling 24,218. The vast majority of Chinese immigrants were male, with the largest population of Chinese women recorded at 2,711 in 1930. Most Chinese males maintained transnational marriages with women from their home villages in China, while wealthier Chinese males brought their wives from China to live with them in Mexico. Unlike the Chinese diasporic community in the United States, Chinese men often intermarried with native Mexican women.⁴⁶ In the United States, anti-miscegenation laws prohibited Chinese men from marrying white women until the 1960s. For working-class males, unable to return to China or arrange an

⁴³ Gonzalez, Fredy, *Paisanos Chinos*, 43-69.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 197-247.

overseas marriage, it was more feasible to find a spouse in Mexico. Additionally, Chinese immigrants may have been attracted by the possibility of becoming part of Mexican society.⁴⁷ Though there was frequent intermarriage between Chinese men and Mexican women, mainstream Mexican society strongly condemned these marital unions. Moreover, Mexican women who married Chinese men were shamed as lazy, dirty, and unpatriotic. These relationships were seen as a threat to Mexican womanhood and the nation as a whole.⁴⁸

Perhaps more opportunistic than racist, state governments manipulated antichinista discourse to ameliorate their own local concerns. Whether or not Mexican officials believed in antichinismo, it's versatility allowed antichinistas to successfully push their racial agenda into state and eventually federal legislatures. When the Liga Anti-China of Torreon came to Colima's public assembly in 1926, the provincial government was in the midst of a Cristiadas Rebellion.⁴⁹ Despite the small Chinese community in Colima, the Liga Anti-China warned the municipality of the moral threat and danger of Chinese and Mexican intermarriage. Colima's congress moved to charge the Committee on Constitutional matters to enforce medical exams on the Chinese and to review all marriages. Colima's officials recognized the compelling secular rationale for claiming governments exclusive secular authority to regulate marriage.⁵⁰ Antichinista characterization of the Chinese-Mexican race mixture as a threat to Mexican prosperity offered a racial logic that would reinforce the government's secular claims to state authority.⁵¹ Intermarriage concerns were asserted frequently throughout the campaigns, subsequently gendering and racializing the movement. The next section will elaborate further on how

⁴⁷ Idem

⁴⁸ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 197–247

⁴⁹ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124-162. The Cristiadas were Catholic rebels fighting for religious freedom. They were upset over the Constitution of 1917, which reduced the political, social, and economic power of the church. In 1926, an armed Cristiadas rebellion broke out and lasted for three years.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

miscegenation fears reinforced the mestizo as the new Mexican identity and Mexican women as guardians of race.

Antichinistas commonly used the trope of degeneration to characterize the Chinese as *racial poisons* to differentiate themselves as worthy mestizo citizens.⁵² If posturing the Chinese as racial poisons was not enough, antichinistas poised the Chinese as public health threats, perpetrators of vice, and a thorn in the Mexican economy. For example, an antichinista poster in Nayarit warned, “The Chinese: Are the vilest measure of our race and the greatest danger for our dear country, are the most terrible threat to our health because of their natural infections: Bubonic Plague, Yellow Fever, Black Vomit, Syphilis, Trachoma, etc.”⁵³ These fears were voiced by some of the most notorious antichinistas at the “Grand Anti-Chino Convention” in 1925. The Sonoran Liga Nacionalista Anti-Chino asked newly elected President Calles for 30,000 pesos to host the organizing of 30 groups. President Calles agreed probably because he was keener to support legal activities than endorse their full agenda.⁵⁴ From Sonora, Baja California, and Sinaloa delegates gathered to mobilize racial discourse and to shape the public landscape. They developed a proposal that envisioned a broad-based popular movement to undermine the economic basis of Chinese communities and to shame Mexican women who married Chinese men. Their goal was to protect a racial future through state intervention in sexual and economic reproduction. There was not one, but two Great Conventions in Hermosillo. The second convention was held to increase cooperation with state legislatures and with organized labor.⁵⁵

⁵² Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Championing the conventions was Jose Angel Espinoza, one of the main intellectual proponents behind the anti-Chinese campaigns and some even claim the ideological leader of anti-Chinese activists. Espinoza book's *El Ejemplo de Sonora* and *El Problema Chino en México*, justified the Torreon Massacre and also included a sample charter for anti-Chinese associations to use.⁵⁶ *El Ejemplo de Sonora* and *El Problema Chino en México* written in 1932, provide a history of the movement and compilation of what the campaign had already developed over the decade.⁵⁷ *El Ejemplo de Sonora* claimed that even if a Chinese immigrants obtained Mexican naturalization they would remain permanent foreigners, "The government may judge him as Mexican, the Secretaria of Foreign Relations may judge him as Mexican, but to the people he continues to be Chinese; a doubly dangerous Chinese exploiter."⁵⁸ More importantly, his books included caricatures that constructed the Chinese as racial poisons, public health threats, and perpetrators of vice. To combat degeneration of the Mexican people, Espinoza proposed that the government should prevent the Chinese from nationalizing or assimilating. Proposals were justified by a Eugenics ideology that claimed the children of Mexican and Chinese unions would inherit the worst "vices and degeneration" of both races and would ultimately destroy the mestizo formation.

⁵⁶ Gonzalez, Fredy. *Paisanos Chinos*, 15-42.

⁵⁷ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104-129.

⁵⁸ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 196-247.



Figure 4: “La Mestización” (Miscegenation), José Ángel Espinoza, 1932. The panels translate as, “Twelve-year-old mixed Euro-Indian” (left) and “Fourteen-year-old product of Chinese-Mexican mixture” (right). Espinoza, *El Ejemplo de Sonora*.

Espinoza’s cartoon (Fig. 4) titled “Mestizacion”, contrasts a strong, healthy, and tall “Indo-Latino” hybrid boy of twelve and a scrawny and sickly looking Chinese Mexican boy of fourteen. The drawing of the Indo-Latino boy depicts the archetypal blanco-criollo Sonoran man of white distinct Spanish descent. This image employs Chinese and their offspring to differentiate against the desired Eurocentric whiteness of an imaginary Mexican mestizo, further solidifying the boundary between blanco-criollos and a racial other.⁵⁹ Another Espinoza cartoon depicts a smiling Chinese man secretly adding cats to his sausages and another illustrates Chinese men with gaping and puss leaking wounds. These images serve a specific process in which the Chinese identity was produced and reproduced through action and speech.⁶⁰ Moreover,

⁵⁹ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁶⁰ Fearon, James D. “Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity.” *International Organization*, vol. 54, no. 4, 1 Oct. 2000.

his cartoons speak to the newspapers circulating throughout northern Mexico that linked the Chinese to disease and presented them as a public health threat. They warned the public that even if Chinese appeared healthy, they carried hidden ulcers that would transmit disease to unsuspecting Mexicans who bought food from them.⁶¹ Espinoza's representations in *El Ejemplo de Sonora* served to solidify a racial boundary between the Chinese and imagined mestizo identity.

Mexico had been traditionally divided into the "Creole north", the "indigenous south", and "central mestizo."⁶² In Sonora, where the male "blanco-criollo" ethnic identity dominated, Chinese-Mexican intermarriages were especially heinous. Miscegenation fears manifested in government reforms such as Law 31, that was passed by the Sonoran Legislature in 1923. Law 31 prohibited the marriage of Mexican women to Chinese men, even if the man was a naturalized Mexican citizen, and punished free unions with a 500 peso fine. Law 31 and the antichinistas focused solely on Mexican women's vulnerability to Chinese men and ignored potential sexual mixing between Mexican men and Chinese women. Although Law 31 was inconsistently enforced throughout Sonora, anti-Chinese newspapers shamed Mexican women by regularly publishing the names and photographs of Mexican women who had relationships with Chinese men. Antichinistas and Law 31 concentrated on Chinese men, because Mexican men feared contamination of what they saw as vessels of Mexican nationhood: Mexican women.⁶³ Fear of Mexican women's relationships with Chinese men may have resulted from anxieties about the changing role of women in society during the revolution. Despite Law 31, Mexican women and Chinese men continued to form unions and families, resisting state intervention in

⁶¹ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁶² Gonzalez, Fredy. *Paisanos Chinos*, 15-42.

⁶³ Idem.

their private lives. Chinese men married Mexican women at high rates, as in 1930, there was a 35% intermarriage rate in Chihuahua and 12% in Hermosillo.⁶⁴

Law 31 highlights integral facets of the history of the anti-Chinese campaign; the role of women, Chinese resistance, and the legitimization of antichinismo through state and federal laws. Francisco Gin a naturalized Chinese Mexican, was fined 200 pesos for attempting to marry a Mexican woman. When Gin sought to have this ruling overturned, his case went all the way to the Mexican Supreme Court. The Mexican Supreme Court denied his request, thereby refusing to uphold the basic rights of naturalized Mexican citizens. They were Chinese, and neither naturalization nor birth in Mexico could change that.⁶⁵ Gin case further reveals how antichinismo did not stay within the confines of Sonora, but proliferated throughout all levels of government and society.

—*Chineras*—

In addition to engaging in conversations about state authority, antichinismo was distinct because it acknowledged that women occupied a vital role in bio politics.⁶⁶ As mentioned earlier, women had become integral to the legitimization of the anti-Chinese campaigns, but not as its authors. As women in Mexico ventured from traditional roles they found that anti-Chinese campaigns offered them a space for political influence and fuller citizenship otherwise denied to them.⁶⁷ Female anti-Chinese activists could be found in rural pueblos, white-middle class households, and working-class cities. Such as Maria de Jesus Valdez, a university-educated

⁶⁴ Gonzalez, Fredy, *Paisanos Chinos*, 15-42.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124-162.

⁶⁷ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

Magdalena school teacher, who was an active participant in the sinophobic campaigns and a follower of antichinista, Jose Maria Arana. Valdez was part of a group of white Mexican settlers that had colonized what had been, and continued to be the site of indigenous Yaqui resistance.⁶⁸ Since 1917, Valdez frequently delivered her own speeches and lectures on the evils of Chinese influence. Valdez declared that the Chinese were the source of Mexican degeneracy and economic stagnation, and advocated for the physical separation of Chinese from Mexican:

The people of Sonora need to rid themselves of these noxious weeds - the Chinaman. These people have become the master of our progress... [They] cultivate our soil like a vampire squeezing the blood of our people. [They] must be removed to a place where [They] no longer will hinder our society.⁶⁹

Read in the context of an enduring Indian war, Valdez's anti-Chinese campaign shifted public discourse away from the indigenous insurgency and Yaqui genocide, to the Chinese threat on Mexican colonization.⁷⁰ According to Valdez, a true Mexican woman would disdain from the advances of corrupt Chinese men, thereby furthering the Mexican cause and enhancing its national identity. Although Mexican women could neither vote nor run for office, women were deemed the moral guardians of Mexican racial purity.⁷¹ Valdez gave frequent speeches concerning the dangers of Mexican-Chinese unions, which accompanied the very real consequences of the 1886 Law of Alienage and Naturalization, which made a married women's citizenship dependent on that of her husband.

Valdez may have been attracted to Arana's campaigns amidst the revolutionary turmoil, as Arana identified an "other", a people with whom all Mexican social classes had some complaint. Moreover, by claiming the Chinese "cultivate our soil like a vampire squeezing the

⁶⁸ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

blood of our people”, Valdez speaks to the very real agrarian displacement and economic hardships Mexico was experiencing at the time. Women found that they could make compelling demands for their welfare when situated within the frame of antichinismo. Women were more effective at gaining male support because the framework of antichinismo reinforced dominant gender roles and the patriarchy.⁷² In 1932 the Cooperative Mexicana de Lavandería Anti Asiatica (Anti-Asian Mexican Laundry Cooperative) in Sonora pleaded with Mexicans to boycott Chinese laundries and to bring them their clothes instead. They blamed competition with Chinese laundries for undermining their ability to work and thereby making their children suffer. Ironically, Mexican women who were pressured to do their part for the anti-Chinese campaigns would in fact gain no benefits.⁷³ Moreover, the appropriation of women’s voices morally justified anti-miscegenation statutes and supported antichinistas conceptual boundaries of the Mexican mestizo racial form as thing to be protected.⁷⁴ The state could claim anti-miscegenation statutes were in defense of local Mexican women, but men were clearly the ideological architects and beneficiaries of antichinismo.

Mexican women were simultaneously some of the fiercest proponents of the anti-Chinese movement, but also its targets. Below is an excerpt of an anonymous poem written in 1910 condemning Mexican women who become involved with Chinese men, titled “El destierro de los chinos” (Exile of the Chinese).⁷⁵

We hold the government responsible
 Even though you may think me unwise
 They should exile
 Three types of people [Chinese, Mexican women who marry them, and Arabs]

The first should be the women

⁷² Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 66–96.

Who make unions with Chinese men
 They know no shame
 Because they are staining the nation

The inflammatory poem later claims that all Mexican women who have relationships with Chinese men are deserving of being burned with hot oil, firewood, and tar. Not only were Mexican women seen as shameless but unpatriotic.⁷⁶ This poem as well as the song “Los chinos” composed by Eduardo Tavo were written at the onset of the Mexican Revolution. The song recalls the anti-Chinese violence in Mazatlan during the Revolution, in which mob violence forced many Chinese to flee the city. Throughout the *corrido* (ballad), women are chastised through familiar antichinista discourse,

Many Mexican women love the Chinese
 Because they have no shame
 And they aren't ashamed to make a Chinese bun in their hair.
 They both make the braid together

There goes the angry mob
 So, pay close attention
 Only God knows what will happen
 Here comes the big news
 I don't know what will happen
 But there will be no more silk outfits

I am saying this in reference to many young women
 Young women of Mazatlan.

Antichinismo simultaneously depicted Mexican-Chinese intermarriages as relationships of wealth and laziness, but also of abuse and slavery. Another cartoon by Jose Angel Espinoza depicts a Mexican bride and Chinese husband on their wedding night and then five years later (Fig.5).

⁷⁶ Romero, Robert Chao, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 66–96.



Figure 5. “El Matrimonio” (Marriage). The panel translates as “The night of the wedding” (left) “and five years later.” Source: Espinoza, *El Ejemplo de Sonora* (México City, 1932).

The Chinese husband is shown abandoning his wife and children after just five years, while the wife who was previously beautiful and lavish is wearing rags and in a decrepit state. The sexualized image of a young beautiful Mexican women in the hands of a weak Chinese man was a frequent trope used by anti-Chinese crusaders.⁷⁷ The periodical *El Toro de Once*, referred to women who had relationships with Chinese men as “chineras”, demanding radical measures to protect the health and the moral safety of the Mexican race.⁷⁸ Even more crude is the illustration of their offspring, who are drawn as reflections of their Chinese father without any physical characteristics of their mother. Romero describes the children in the cartoon as “gangly, degenerate Mongoloids”, further illustrating how Espinoza did not view the progeny of intermarriages as Mexican.

Antichinistas employed a primordialist understanding of ethnic identity, in which certain social categories are natural, inevitable, and fixed by human nature.⁷⁹ Espinoza, Arana, and their

⁷⁷ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Fearon, James D. *Social Construction of Ethnic Identity*.

followers believed that human characteristics, physical and mental, are determined by hereditary factors passed from parent to offspring. Antichinistas had integrated eugenics theory into their discourse since 1917. Their rhetoric was strikingly familiar to the eugenics discourse Diaz had employed when promoting European settlers to whiten Mexico. Eugenics allowed antichinistas to assert pseudo-scientific rationale for what amounted to racial cleansing, while also reconciling with their desire to create a racially homogenous nation from the mestizo and indigenous people. Indigenista nationalism functioned to perpetuate Sinophobia. Antichinismo and anti-intermarriage laws reveal that though the revolution had transformed *official* thinking concerning race, racism was far from gone.

The gendered nature of antichinismo employed sex as a racial technology that could be molded into policy, revealed in the use of policy tools such as the 1930 Census.⁸⁰ The Mexican National Census of 1930 categorizes the offspring of Chinese nationals and Mexican women as ethnically Chinese. On the other hand, if Chinese fathers were nationalized as Mexican citizens, the children were then designated Mexican nationals for purpose of the census. Despite having the legal classification of Mexican ethnicity, society did not view children of intermarriages as Mexican. Chinese-Mexican children were not only seen as a threat to Mexican national ethnic formation, but a “step backward in the anthropological search for the prototypical [Mexican] man.”⁸¹

In San Luis Potosi, antichinista campaigns and propaganda saturated the public discourse with anxieties of Chinese racial miscegenation and economic domination. Illustrating, how antichinistas often associated economic production to biological reproduction in their rhetoric. In an attempt to defend Mexican manhood, anti-Chinese laws were oriented within a framework of

⁸⁰ Chang, Jason Oliver, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124-162.

⁸¹ Romero, Robert Chao. *The Chinese in Mexico*, 66-96.

economic nationalism. The municipal government passed a decree forcing the Chinese to abandon their homes and businesses within 5 days. Thirty to forty Chinese left including grocery store owner Benjamin Chow, who was forced to leave with his Mexican wife and their three young children.

— *Sonoran Expulsion and Chinese Exodus* —

In 1929, Mexico experienced an economic depression and government revenues fell 34%.⁸² Additionally, the U.S. began deporting Mexicans from the Southwest, which augmented high unemployment rates. Chinese more than ever represented unwanted competition and anti-Chinese activists pushed for overtly racist laws. Hu-DeHart argues that economic interactions fundamentally conditioned Chinese-Mexican relations, as the rise of a dominant Chinese “petite bourgeoisie” produced a class-based persecution.⁸³ Anti-Chinese propaganda, the formation of anti-Chinese clubs, the federal Campana Nacional, and the passage of discriminatory legislation all created the conditions for the expulsion of Chinese. In 1931, Sonora Governor Rodolfo Elias Calles declared victory over the Chinese problem, “The Chinese problem has been completely finished in Sonora; what bothers us now over there is a new problem: that of vagrant Chinese.”⁸⁴

However, by the time Governor Calles had sent expulsion order, antichinistas had already forced most of the Chinese out of Sonora. In 1923, the Sonoran Congress passed Law 27, which allowed Sonoran officials to relocate the Chinese to *barrios chinos* (Chinese ghettos), under the auspices of the Constitution’s Article 40, “It is the will of the Mexican people to be constituted in a representative, democratic, federal Republic composed of free and sovereign States in all that

⁸² Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

⁸³ Hu-deHart, Evelyn, and Kathleen López, *Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

⁸⁴ Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124–162.

concerns their internal affairs but united in a Federation established according to the principles of this fundamental law.”⁸⁵ Law 27 reflects a strong tradition of localism and blanco-criollo dominance in Sonora, further illustrated in the deportation of Yaquis and Apaches. Government officials justified *barrioization* in terms of public safety and health, but in reality, they were motivated to stop intermarriage. Calls for barrios chinos were not only found in Sonora, a union of small grocers in Tampico, also pleaded with officials to segregate the Chinese in 1925.⁸⁶

Instead of physically attacking the Chinese, antichinistas attacked their rights to settle, run businesses, and marry; rights that the Chinese were entitled to as foreign nationals and naturalized citizens in Mexico. Antichinistas hoped that if they increased restrictions enough, the Chinese community would eventually leave. In 1930, Sonora Governor Francisco S. Elias, pressured by the Union Nacionalista (Nationalist Union), issued a series of circulars about public health, intermarriage and labor that strengthened the existing anti-Chinese laws. In framing the Chinese as racial poisons, public health officials legally sanctioned sinophobia. Governor Elias cancelled all marriages between Chinese and Mexican women, and punished women harshly if they were caught having relations with Chinese men. These laws signified the consequences of deviating from the patriarchy but also revealed the misogyny within a mestizo racial identity.⁸⁷

Commonly unenforced laws such as the 1919 80% labor provision, were reformed by Sonora’s legislature in 1932. Moreover, the revised Article 106 treated even naturalized Chinese Mexicans as foreigners. Chinese grocery stores again came to symbolize a racially contested terrain, especially once the 80% labor law was incorporated into federal labor laws.⁸⁸ These

⁸⁵ “1917 Mexican Constitution.” *Latinamericanstudies*, www.latinamericanstudies.org/mexico/1917-Constitution.htm.

⁸⁶ Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico*, 124-162.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

policies devastated Chinese workers and businesses, and led to their rapid closure. By June of 1931, municipalities throughout Sonora and Sinaloa began to inspect Chinese businesses to monitor their compliance. Some Chinese merchants responded by shutting their stores thus leading to a scarcity of basic goods. Governor Elias ordered them to reopen their stores to sell off inventory or vacate the premises so Mexicans could take their place. The 80% labor provision provided anti-Chinese activists and the Mexican government a way to gain support from unemployed Mexicans by promising them future employment.⁸⁹ Constructing an antagonistic Chinese identity enabled the political elites to pass discriminatory laws, gain public support, and therefore strengthen their hold on power.

Anti-Chinese associations encouraged people to boycott Chinese businesses not in compliance with the 80% Labor Law through the use of speeches, leaflets, and sometimes by even physically blocking the entrances of Chinese businesses. Antichinistas began to fine Chinese store-owners, confiscated merchandise from those who were unable to pay, and eventually began stealing Chinese property. In Ciudad Obregon, even when Chinese businessmen tried to comply with the law by hiring Mexican laborers, the Nationalist Anti-Chinese committee insisted that the owners be counted as employees, and that at least four Mexicans be hired in every Chinese establishment. Additionally, outside of the cities, Chinese were robbed and forced off state farmlands, as owners begin to evict the Chinese or cancelled their leases. In Ciudad Obregon and Bacanuchi, hacendados forced Chinese off their farmlands, suggesting that it was due to pressure from authorities.⁹⁰ In Arizpe, Chinese farmers were stripped of their properties and pushed off of the lands they were planting.

⁸⁹ Romero, Robert Chao. *The Chinese in Mexico*, 69–96.

⁹⁰ Gonzalez, Fredy. *Paisanos Chinos*, 15-42.

Antichinistas finally declared a deadline for Chinese businesses to settle their affairs and leave the state. However, there was nowhere in the Federal Labor Law or the Mexican Constitution that subjected foreigners to deportation for failing to comply with labor legislation.⁹¹ Antichinistas began deporting Chinese migrants on their own. Other times, deportations were carried out by small vigilante groups, state officials, and large mobs. In Agua Prieta and Nogales, 27 Chinese were detained, beaten, and forced to cross the border. For lack of better words, Mexican and U.S. officials literally shoved the Chinese back and forth across the border. The issue was not whether to deport the Chinese, but who would be responsible for paying the cost of deporting them back to China.⁹² Once in the U.S., Chinese could either pay for temporary residence or were charged with illegal entry and deported. In October, a new decree allowed for the detention of Chinese who still ran their businesses in Sonora. The Chinese in Nogales and Navojoa were thrown in prison without explanation. In 1932, Governor R. Calles gave an order to arrest and deport all Chinese from Sonora, any remaining Chinese had their homes ransacked. These drastic illicit measures taken by antichinistas in Sonora, were inspired by immigration and labor laws that the Mexican Federal government had implemented.

Official statements from the government said that the Chinese were leaving by their own free will.⁹³ Sonoran Chinese appealed to Mexican officials and leadership in mainland China, while also organizing themselves for protection. Chinese diplomatic officials, Zhang Tian Yuan and Peng Yaoxiang pleaded with Mexican state officials to at least give Chinese businessmen time to sell their goods and farmers enough time to harvest their produce before deporting them.⁹⁴ Governor R. Calles refused to meet with Chinese officials and when the federal

⁹¹ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

government asked for an explanation, he claimed the Chinese were not obeying the 80% Labor Law and evading taxes. The Mexican consul official in Yokohama, Manuel Tellez, told the press that “he was exerting his utmost efforts” to try to stop the expulsions. Whether or not Tellez was sincere, there was little the federal government or Mexico’s diplomatic corps could do to stop the anti-Chinese movement in the northern states.⁹⁵

Although Chinese deportations were at times forced, most Chinese fled the state even before official expulsion. Those with assets moved to a different state or went back to China, while poor Chinese snuck into the U.S., with the hope that the U.S. would deport them to China. Those who had the means fled quickly, such as Juan Lung Tain, one of the wealthiest men in Sonora. Lung Tain lost over a million pesos during the expulsions, and over eight million pesos left Sonora along with the Chinese. The loss of Chinese businesses was disastrous to the Sonoran economy, wholesale merchandise was left unused and Mexicans did not take over Chinese businesses.

The Chinese exodus from Sonora inspired similar events in Sinaloa. Once an anti-Chinese governor was elected, the Sinaloa state government increased taxes on Chinese businesses several times over 1932, in hopes that the Chinese would close their businesses and leave. In 1933, local authorities and antichinistas in Los Mochis, Mazatlan, and Culiacan rounded up Chinese residents and loaded them on trucks for removal to the state Nayarit.⁹⁶ They then sacked Chinese homes and businesses. Some were expelled to the border, where they were detained by INS and deported. The governor eventually suspended extrajudicial detentions, if the Chinese community agreed to leave the state. As a result, most Chinese left, even long standing Chinese Mexican citizens. By the end of the campaign almost 4,000 Chinese had left Sinaloa.

⁹⁵ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

⁹⁶ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

The deportations of Chinese from Sinaloa and Sonora made international headlines. U.S. newspapers claimed that there was a difference between what Mexico was doing to the Chinese and what the U.S. was doing to the Mexicans.⁹⁷ While Mexican newspapers deemed the expulsions were progress.⁹⁸ Jose Angel Espinoza argued that since the United States could deport Chinese immigrants, Mexico should have the same right.⁹⁹ By the end of September, the Chinese who had been expelled from Mexico were arriving back in China. Chinese newspapers ran sympathetic stories about them while city officials provided them with basic necessities. When they arrived in China, the Chinese found themselves in a place that was unfamiliar and foreign, a place they could no longer call home.

—*Conclusion*—

Despite constant terrorism, thousands of Chinese continued to live throughout Mexico. They managed to survive because of transnational networks that linked their communities throughout the Americas. Anti-Chinese violence continued sporadically in Mexico throughout the 1930s, and the perpetrators generally acted with impunity.¹⁰⁰ By 1940, there were only 520 Chinese left in Chihuahua, 283 in Sinaloa, 256 in Coahuila, and only 92 in Sonora. However, these numbers are most likely inaccurate, as the campaigns had scattered Chinese migrants across Mexico. One Chinese consul found that the Chinese from Sonora had fled to the neighboring states of Chihuahua and Sinaloa and some fled much farther to Nayarit and Chiapas.¹⁰¹ A few Chinese even fled as far as Guatemala. Expulsion from Sinaloa and Sonora

⁹⁷ Young, Elliott, *Alien Nation*, 196–247.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Gonzalez, Fredy, *Paisanos Chinos*, 43–69. Print.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

was a traumatic event that challenged Chinese integration into Mexican society and their sense of belonging.¹⁰²

Displacement had forever changed the demographics of the Chinese community in Mexico. After the campaigns, those who remained were mostly middle-class Chinese businessmen. Anti-Chinese activities had targeted the vulnerable working class Chinese population, who lacked the means to resist expulsion. Moreover, the 1931 Labor Law limited the ability for businesses to hire Chinese workers. Additionally, Mexico had adopted a system of annual quotas through the 1936 Ley General de Población. The new quota system limited new entrants from countries outside of the Americas and Spain to just one hundred per country per year. While also requiring new immigrants to invest at least 10,000 pesos in Mexican businesses. Mexican quota laws indicate that the government was taking steps to respond to the immigration quotas of the United States. The law aimed to resolve the perceived demographic problems of the nation, by introducing a range of documentable and demonstrable criteria for admission to Mexico. The law prohibited the entrance of alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, anarchists, salaried foreign workers, and banned the exercise of commercial activities by foreigners. In seeking to define such standard criteria, the U.S. and Mexico also sought to centralize immigrant registration and to thereby better control their national compositions. This new legislation altered the demographics of the Chinese in Mexico, as it meant new arrivals were exclusively businessmen who had the means to invest.

Finally, returning to Mexico for those who were deported back to China became much more difficult. Many had left without the proper documentation to return and those with modest means were unable to afford the costs of travel. Many longtime Mexican residents petitioned the

¹⁰² Ibid.

Chinese and Mexican government to return to Mexico. Although they did not claim a sense of Mexican nationalism, they did assert their rights as Mexican citizens to return.¹⁰³ Some Chinese petitions to the Secretaria de Gobernacion that explained they had been forced out by the anti-Chinese campaigns were granted permission to return. The Mexican government was usually willing to grant re-entry to those with businesses and wealth.¹⁰⁴ The practice of admitting immigrants with means to invest, parallel the Porfirian development model. Revealing, how as hard as the post-revolutionary government tried to distance itself from the Porfirian regime, Mexico could never escape its past.

Due to a law that had preceded the anti-Chinese campaigns many Chinese Mexicans lost their Mexican citizenship and therefore their ability to return. Any Naturalized citizen who spent more than two years in their country of birth lost their Mexican citizenship according to the Immigration and Naturalization Law of 1886. Most were unable to return within this two year limit due to the difficulty of obtaining proper documentation. Individuals who petitioned the Mexican government after the two-year limit were labeled as “Chinese citizens” or foreigners, as the government claimed they had lost their Mexicaness.¹⁰⁵ When all other methods were exhausted, Chinese Mexicans petitioned the Chinese delegation. Eighty-two Chinese from the Guangdong Province petitioned the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to seek help in returning. These Chinese Mexicans wrote that they “were now unfamiliar with China, and uncertain about their prospects for the future”.

¹⁰³ Gonzalez, Fredy, *Paisanos Chinos*, 43-69.

¹⁰⁴ Gonzalez, Fredy, *Paisanos Chinos*, 43-69.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

— *Conclusion* —

After I rang the doorbell of the La Asociación China de Mexicali, a young Chinese-Mexican woman opened the door and greeted me with a smile. In Spanish, she told me to wait for the Association's president. Lining the hallway walls were countless photos of the organization's members over the years, old Chinese calligraphy, the association's original building from 1919, and new photos of recent community events. At the end of the hallway stood a floor to ceiling mural that depicted the history of Mexicali's Chinese. The right corner held the silhouettes of a Chinese fisherman, memorializing the Chinese fisherman who frequented Baja's shores in the early twentieth-century. In the opposite corner are silhouettes of various Chinese farming Mexicali's cotton plantations. The murals warm colors and various scenes reminds one of Diego Rivera's frescoes and the Mexican murals painted throughout the 1920s. Mexican murals were often infused with social and political messages in effort to reunify the country under the post-revolutionary government. In the center of the mural held a golden Yin and Yang symbol, symbolizing a blazing sun. Additionally, Chinese characters and a Mexican poem surrounded the faces of a boy, a young woman, and two older men. Their identities were as blended as the painting. As much as the mural was Mexican, it was Chinese too. This Mexican-Chinese mural celebrates the long presence of Chinese in Mexico and claims a place in Mexican history for the Chinese.

In my conversation with the president of the Chinese association, Lee explained to me the history of the organization and the transformations the group has undergone. The organization is welcome to all those of Chinese descent and is an instrument for the Chinese community to save

certain values, origins and traditions. The association established a primary school from first to sixth grade to teach Mandarin, and offers Spanish classes to new Chinese immigrants.

On October 29th, 1961 in Mexico City, members of a Chinese Mexican dance group wore qipao dresses, carried Mexican and Republic of China flags as well as banner of the Virgin de Guadalupe, and performed lion and dragon dances on the pilgrimage route to the Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Mexico's holiest Catholic Shrine.¹ These celebrations reveal that despite antichinista violence during the 1930s, by the 1960s Chinese Mexicans claimed a sense of belonging in Mexico. Mexico had become home. These images of the long standing Chinese presence are absent from Mexican archives, which suggests that the Chinese community had been completely driven out of the country in the 1930s. In the aftermath of the revolution, post-revolutionary leaders worked to build a cohesive state through the mestizo. Thus, Mexican national history worked in tandem with mestizo nationalism to expel the Chinese from Mexico, and Mexican history. Mestizo nationalism was employed to unify the nation by integrating the Indian, while simultaneously constructing narrow racial and ethnic boundaries of mexicanidad. The national imaginary associated the Chinese with Porfirian colonization, and therefore the enemy. Thus, nationalist backlash lobbied for legislation, boycotted Chinese business and over four thousand Chinese were forced, some at gunpoint to cross into the United States.

Some scholars have examined the fate of the refugees after the anti-Chinese campaigns, but it is difficult to reconstruct the histories of those who remained after the anti-Chinese movement by using only Mexican sources.² In addition to Chinese absence from Mexican archives, that which has been recovered concerning the Chinese in Mexico is often inaccurate or inconsistent.

¹ Gonzalez, Fredy. *Paisanos Chinos*, 1-14.

² Ibid.

Although this research does not speak to the Chinese of Mexico after 1940, Freddy Gonzales in *Paisanos Chinos*, traces the racial formation and political participation of Chinese Mexicans through WWII and the Cold War. Gonzales contends that transnational ties did not prevent integration, but rather formed an alternative path to integration. Most scholars argue that extensive ties between Chinese and foreign diplomats erected barriers to immigrant's integration into the host society. Chinese integration into Mexico could have never followed a traditional path, as this route was precluded by the anti-Chinese campaigns, which denied the Chinese a place in the Mexican nation.³ For the rest of the century, the community was committed to guarding itself against another expulsion campaign. But appeals to the Mexican government would not guarantee their safety, the anti-Chinese campaigns success demonstrated that Mexican citizenship provided little protection.

Few Chinese sought to assert their rights as Mexican nationals, and instead strengthened their attachments to China. Rather than keeping them separate from Mexican society, Chinese Mexican's participation in transnational politics made Chinese migrants visible.⁴ Bringing them in contact with Mexican neighbors, other Mexican civic associations, and local and federal politicians. From 1937 to 1971, most Chinese were largely unable to travel to China and were thus cut off from parents, spouses, and friends. Unable to return, they set down roots in Mexico, married Mexican wives and fathered Chinese Mexican children.⁵ Chinese Mexican political and ethnic identity in the context of local, nation, and international forces, follows Jeffrey Lesser assertion that identity "is multifaceted and simultaneously global and local."⁶

³ Gonzalez, Freddy, *Paisanos Chinos*. 1-14.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Uncovering the history of Chinese immigrants in Mexico complicates previous understandings of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. United States and Mexican national histories obscures how the Chinese developed vibrant communities and were crucial protagonists in the development of U.S. and Mexican immigration policies. In the United States, the dominant image of Chinese Americans' rose and fell from unwanted laborers to wartime allies to dangerous Communists.⁷ Chinese Americans political standing during 1930 -1960 shifted alongside American foreign policy and war interests.⁸

Exclusionary nationalism was some of the most powerful forces of identity making on both sides of the border.⁹ Deportation and repatriation became strategies to deal with the effects of the Great Depression, in which both Mexicans and the Chinese underwent simultaneous exoduses. Increasingly stricter immigration policies reinforced U.S. nationalism and structured the future shape of Mexican nationalism. U.S. immigration policy continued to be contradictory and politically opportunist when it abolished Chinese exclusion laws, through the signing of 1943 Magnuson Immigration act. Which was more so a political strategy to reinforce an alliance with Chinese during WWII, than progressive step forward. During this time, the U.S. had also passed its quota restrictions, which limited the number of immigrants of each nationality to three percent of the number of foreign-born persons of that nationality living in the United States in the 1910 census. Therefore, the actual number of Chinese immigrants who could yearly enter the U.S. was only 105.

This research has endeavored to tell the forgotten history of thousands of Chinese who immigrated to Mexico, and capture their perseverance in the face of historical, socio economic,

⁷ Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects*, 202–224.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Delgado, Grace. *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 104–129.

and political circumstances. Beyond unraveling the history of the Chinese in Mexico, this research challenges traditional notions of mestizaje, nationalism, and the nation-state. Despite the presence of tens of thousands of Chinese in Mexico, Mexican culture is depicted as resulting from the racial mixture, or mestizaje, of the indigenous and the European. Moreover, historical nationalism has also permitted scholars from thoroughly understanding the relationship between Mexico and the United States in regard to immigration policies. Instead, foundational myths of United States and Mexico have overshadowed their shared histories. Further research is needed to understand how Chinese illegal immigration fundamentally changed the relationship between the United States and the Mexican border. Moreover, there needs to be a creation of new intellectual spaces to explore the historical and contemporary interactions between Asians and Latinos in both Latin America and the United States. New fields of study may further uncover and analyze often overlooked Asian contributions to Latin America, Latino culture, identity.

“History is the fruit of power, but power itself is never so transparent that its analysis becomes superfluous. The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.” - Michel-Rolph Trouillot

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