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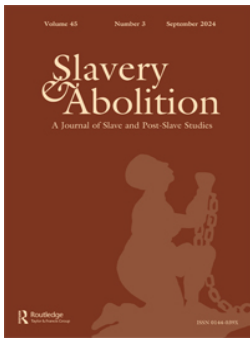
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Indenture Beyond the ‘Coolie’ Trade: Reinitiating Chinese Indentured Migration to Cuba after the Chinese Commission Report (1874–1920)

Mònica Ginés-Blasi 

ABSTRACT

The historiography of Chinese indenture in Cuba is very clear when it comes to its periodization, establishing the start date of the trade in 1847 and the end in 1874. This periodization is based upon the arrival of the first and the last ships carrying Chinese indentured labourers. Thus, studies on the so-called ‘coolie trade’ focus on the period between these dates. What happened after the arrival of the last ship has attracted less attention. The end of the trade, after all, did not coincide with the end of indenture in Cuba, either in legal terms or in practice. By the 1880s there were still Chinese indentured labourers in Cuba who had not finished their contracts. Furthermore, after 1874 there were attempts to restore the trade in Chinese migrants: firstly, in 1877; and later, in 1919. Chinese indenture in Cuba is an excellent case study by which to problematize the meaning of ‘abolition’ and inquire on the nature of ‘indenture’. Using multilingual source material, this article suggests a continuous view of indenture in Cuba beyond the 1874 hallmark, and pinpoints the debt generated at the moment of recruitment to pay for the emigrating costs as the single most important defining mechanism of indenture.

KEYWORDS

Indenture; contract labour; Cuba; Chinese immigration; debt bondage

Introduction

This article addresses the nature of indenture by questioning the end of Chinese indentured labour in nineteenth-century Cuba. It focuses on the aftermath of the so-called ‘coolie trade’ as a starting point to throw new light into the concept of indenture.¹ It particularly examines Chinese bondage in Cuba after 1874, including attempts to reinitiate indentured labour emigration to the island, and it pinpoints the debt generated in the moment of recruitment as crucial to bondage in the indenture system. Authors writing about the history of the Chinese ‘coolie trade’ to Cuba situate the end of the trade in

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1874, after the Chen Lanbin Commission report, which served as a basis for the Chinese government to impose restrictions upon the recruitment of Chinese immigrants, so halting the process of emigration. The Chinese government put a halt to the traffic in 1874 after a multinational commission, led by Chen Lanbin, travelled to Cuba and issued a disturbing report on the mistreatment of Chinese workers.² What happened to the Chinese in Cuba from then onwards, and the subsequent projects to reinitiate indentured emigration there – either from China or other nationalities – have received less attention from historians and have been little understood as extensions or consequence of the earlier trade. In contrast to previous authors, this article provides an understanding of the ‘coolie trade’ as a continuous process rather than a ‘moment’ in history.³

Indentured labourers from China were the main workforce sought by Cuban planters to supplement enslaved Africans in the second half of the nineteenth century. The abolitionist movement and the subsequent increase in the cost of slaves drove Cuban planters to look for a supplement to African slave labour, which they found in the form of Chinese indentured contract labourers, who became indispensable to the Cuban economy.⁴ Between 1847 and 1874 about 125,000 Chinese contract labourers were transported to Havana through a transnational mass-migration business venture, to work mostly on sugar cane plantations under eight-year contracts, providing reinforcements to African labour while slavery was being ‘gradually abolished’.⁵

Despite its connection to slavery, applying the term ‘abolition’ to Chinese indenture in Cuba is problematic and leads to a series of ramifications. Firstly, legal abolition implies an institutional change in the *status quo*, therefore, this term is charged with officialdom. Yet, Chinese indenture in Cuba was never legally ‘abolished’, as the Spanish Empire never decreed a formal declaration of abolition of Chinese indenture.⁶ Rather, it faded out due to external pressures, firstly from China’s obstruction of recruitment, and later via bilateral regulations, including the signing of the *Convenio Relativo á la Emigracion de Súbditos Chinos á la Isla de Cuba* [Agreement Relative to the Emigration of Chinese Subjects to the Island of Cuba] in 1877. This targeted recruitment in China but did not forbid indenture in Cuba. However, what ultimately freed those Chinese labourers still under contract was, precisely, the abolition of slavery in Cuba in 1886, as labourers were then finally able to terminate their term of service. Moreover, due to the association of ‘abolitionism’ with the end of African slavery, applying the term ‘abolition’ to the history of Chinese indentured labour in Cuba underlines its complex multifaceted relationships with slavery while also diverging from it. On the one hand, using the term abolition to Chinese indenture in Cuba extends outdated views of the ‘coolie trade’ as a prolonged form of slavery. On the other hand, although the end of the trafficking of Chinese labourers in Cuba was the result of abolitionist pressure – especially British – it was not accompanied by a discussion on the future place of the remaining Chinese workers in Cuban society. These associations and

disassociations between Chinese indenture and slavery distinguish ‘indenture’ as a particularly suitable entry point to participate in current taxonomical debates on the limits between slavery and other forms of labour coercion and bondage.⁷ Authors active in these debates question the binary opposition ‘slavery versus freedom’, and tend to suggest more inclusive frameworks and terminologies which are more representative of the diverse forms of coercion and bondage existing in global labour history.⁸

Focusing on the end of the ‘coolie trade’ throws new light into the essential elements of ‘indenture’, particularly on the moment of entrance into bondage and exit from it.⁹ This article reflects upon the concept of ‘indenture’ by comparing various ways in which indenture in Cuba continued after the Chen Lanbin Cuba Commission Report in 1874, as a consequence of the earlier ‘coolie trade’ to contribute to our understanding of what is intrinsic to ‘indenture’ and what makes it distinguishable from other forms of bondage. This is accompanied by an understanding of the ‘trade’ in Chinese immigrants and of ‘indenture’ as two separate processes, regardless of their previous perceptions in the ‘coolie trade’ literature as indistinguishable. By analysing the mechanism and the nature of indenture, this article pinpoints those moments in which bondage is created and maintained during the process of contract labour migration.¹⁰ This highlights those policies which were truly effective – and which ones were not – in affecting this system of labour exploitation. The article focuses on the years after 1874 when restrictions were imposed on Chinese immigration to European colonies. It considers two forms of continuity of Chinese indenture: first, the continuity of contract labour in Cuba; second, the attempts undertaken to reinitiate Chinese emigration to the Island in 1877, and again in 1919. This continuity took place despite measures implemented by the Chinese government in China to stop emigration and guarantee the return of Chinese immigrants after 1874. These measures successfully stopped migration and the trafficking of Chinese migrants in the nineteenth century, but not the pervasive labour exploitation of labourers remaining in Cuba, and the ones who were sought after in the twentieth century following the end of the Spanish colonial period in 1898. Thus, this article also contests the accepted chronology and traits of the ‘coolie trade’ in Cuba, which might additionally serve as a precedent to problematize the concept of ‘coolie’ in future research. By providing a preliminary inquiry on labour coercion in Cuba after 1874, this article may lead to future comparative studies on the living and working conditions between workers in Cuba along the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The continued work under indenture on the island and the attempts to bring in new indentured labourers show the continuity, transformations and consequences of Chinese indenture in Cuba after its *de facto* and official stop. This article identifies the origins of bondage in indenture in the generation of debt at the moment of recruitment. In the trafficking of Chinese migrants to Cuba, economic debt was acquired through the payment of advances prior

to passage. This – often involuntary – loan became crucial in this trade. But economic debt was not the only form of debt. Recent investigations also point to punishment as an entry point into indenture, and as a generative form of debt.¹¹ The argument here differs from other authors who have emphasized either the settlement of a written or oral contract, or the violence during the recruitment or in the site of labour as essential to the nature of indenture.¹² Moreover, that the payment of an advance defines indentureship is supported by the fact that, despite Cuban capitalists claiming that these workers would be ‘free’ immigrants, the Chinese government saw advancements as the key mechanism of bondage. They sought to restrict recruitment of new labourers in China by forbidding Westerners from paying advances for the trips’ passage.¹³

In addition to furthering conceptual understandings of the relationship between labour coercion and bondage, this article also sheds light on a period of Chinese labour history in Cuba that is not well understood. Most historians have focused on the period between 1847 and 1874. What happened to the Chinese who stayed in Cuba after the Chen Lanbin Commission has received less attention. There has been some research on this period by local Cuban historians publishing in Spanish. However, these texts are, for the most part, outdated, as the majority were published two decades ago or earlier and they seldom engage with current questions on global labour history. More recent works, such as by Imilcy Balboa and Kathleen López on the post-Chen Lanbin history of Chinese workers have made important advancements in our knowledge about the process of bondage and the labourers’ later integration into Cuban society. Balboa focuses on the *Convenio* of 1877 and the interest of Cuban planters and the estate to revive emigration to Cuba, as well as on *recontratas*, or ‘rehiring’. López’s *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* examines the transnational history of Chinese migrants and their multiple identities as Chinese and Cuban. It follows their history in Cuba from the period of the trade in the mid-nineteenth century, through the collapse of the Spanish empire, and the formation of transnational Chinese communities in the twentieth century.¹⁴

Historians writing in the 1980s, and even as early as in the 1920s, discussed the Chinese that stayed in Cuba after 1877 either in terms of their role in the wars of independence, such as Juan Jiménez Pastrana, or in terms of the economic and social success stories of labourers, who managed to thrive and create their own businesses. Antonio Chuffat Latour’s 1927 *Apunte histórico de los chinos en Cuba* is a good example of the latter’s portrayal. More recent authors, such as Federico Chang Pon in *De dónde vienen los cubanos*, have looked into the post-Chen Lanbin history of the Chinese in Cuba to understand the diverse cultural origins of contemporary Cubans.¹⁵ Taking a different perspective, Spanish historian José Luis Luzón discussed the responses of Cuban capitalists to the end of indentured labour and their attempts to reinstate emigration with estate support.¹⁶

The international nature of this study, its focus on a period outside of the normative 'coolie trade', the lack of secondary sources, and the obscure nature of human traffic have represented serious obstacles to its development. To overcome these difficulties, this research engages with qualitative research based on multilingual source material preserved in archives in Spain, the UK, and Cuba. These sources consist of correspondence between the ministries of foreign affairs in Spain, China, and Great Britain with colonial authorities, Chinese local and provincial authorities, consuls, planters, companies, and agents dedicated to transnational human transportation.¹⁷

Contract Continuity After 1874

While in Cuba thousands of Chinese labourers remained working under contracts of indenture, in 1874 the trade in migrants from China to Cuba stopped in all practical purposes. New rules concerning their emigration became official in 1877, when the Spanish Minister Plenipotentiary in China, Carlos Antonio de España, signed a new Treaty with the Qing government, ratified on 17 November as the *Convenio Relativo á la Emigracion de Súbditos Chinos á la Isla de Cuba*.¹⁸ According to the *Convenio*, the governments of Spain and China agreed that the recruitment of Chinese subjects under trickery or by force would be prosecuted from then on. Furthermore, the Chinese government would name a permanent mission to Cuba to monitor the conditions of 'coolies' and would have the right to name consular agents as well. When Chen Lanbin (1816–1895), Chief Commissioner of the Cuba Commission and officer in charge of the Educational Mission abroad, based in the United States, established the first permanent Chinese consulate in Havana in 1879, with Liu Xiangpu as Consul, its main purpose was to look after the well-being of 'coolies' that remained under contract. This mission continued well into the 1880s.¹⁹

With regards to the release of indentured labourers and their return to China, the Spanish government offered to pay the passage back to China for certain former migrants who wished to return, including those who had studied in Cuba, those who had obtained an official rank or position, Chinese orphan girls who remained single, and the elderly. Chinese labourers ending their term of service would no longer be forced to renew their contracts but this did not imply that those still under contract would be automatically released.²⁰ The Spanish government obliged *patronos* – the employers – to pay for the return passage if the workers had rights to it according to their contracts. Those who, upon finishing their term of service, had contracts which did not include this specification, would be sent to local authorities and Chinese consuls in Cuba, who would subsequently decide on which measures to take.

While further statistics are needed to establish the development of the Chinese population and their working conditions after 1874, various authors

have made important advancements from which to draw a general impression. As stated in Benjamin Nicolas Narvaez dissertation, census data from the 1870s onwards shows that Chinese contract labour in Cuba lasted until the 1880s.²¹ According to Balboa, after 1874 those Chinese who did not agree on being rehired were kept in *depósitos* (a type of prison).²² This suggests that some Chinese were rehired or their contracts went on after 1874. Lisa Yun shows how the numbers of Chinese in Cuba between 1872 and 1877 declined only by 13.4 percent.²³ The 1877 census recorded 24,068 ‘Asiáticos cumplidos’ – referring to those Chinese who had finalized their contracts – and 22,768 ‘Asiáticos colonos’, those still under contract.²⁴ As shown by Corbitt and López, by 1899 there were still 15,000 people categorized as Chinese left in Cuba over 8,000 of whom were classified as ‘day labourers’ in the census.²⁵

Renewed contracts are often viewed as indicative of the exploitation of Chinese labour immigration globally and, in the Cuban case, renewals were a state-promoted strategy implemented through regulations in the 1850s and 1860s.²⁶ To overcome the continued need for labour in Cuba from the 1880s and through the 1890s, planters turned to Spanish immigrants, with over 250,000 Spaniards entering the country between 1882 and 1894 to meet the needs of sugar agricultural production. Yet, planters in Cuba still had Chinese labourers in mind, despite their increased mobility from the 1880s and the difficulties of keeping them bound to the plantation.²⁷ For instance, Julián de Zulueta – a notorious *hacendado* implicated in the trafficking of Africans and Chinese – held Chinese *contratados* to the value of \$8,100 alongside enslaved people to the value of \$28,000, as listed in his 1878 will.²⁸ The work of immigrant labour in *cuadrillas* or work gangs dominated this transitional period.²⁹ Chinese *cuadrillas* were also a source of exploitation, as they were run by Chinese contractors – or middlemen – who withheld wages to keep the workers bound to labour in the gang until they saw fit. Aside from wages, they were also in charge of providing food, distributing opium, and gambling. Control over these supplies kept the labourers in long-lasting debt with their gang leader, although they had more freedom to remove themselves from this situation than the previous indentured regime due to the lack of indenture contract.³⁰

In the 1860s and 1870s, Chinese who had finished their contracts established shops in the neighbourhood of Guadalupe (Barrio de Guadalupe), and this is how the Barrio Chino of Havana started taking shape. By 1884 there were about 20 Chinese shop owners in that neighbourhood.³¹ This image of ‘coolies’ achieving commercial success is accentuated in the ‘rags to riches’ literature on business Chinese, for example in Antonio Chuffat Latour’s 1927 book. Although Chuffat indicated that in 1876 there were still Chinese whose contracts had not yet ended, he emphasized the improved economic and social circumstances of the Chinese following the arrival of Chen Lanbin:

The Chinese, with the arrival of Commissioner Chen Lanbin, and the treaty concluded by both Nations, experienced a radical change in contrast to the previous conditions they suffered of disguised slavery. In practice, the Chinese had greatly improved their situation as free men. The year 1876 was abundant; providential for the Chinese. Indeed, some still had not finished their contracts with their employers; but these held them in higher regard than black slaves. The latter had the worst part. The mistreatment increased and there was no consideration for them or received any attention.³²

The remaining Chinese under indenture did not break free from their contracts until 1886 – coinciding with the abolition of slavery in Cuba.³³ This correlation between the end of indenture and the abolition of slavery in Cuba further reinforces the perception in the literature that Chinese indenture was a support rather than an alternative to slavery.³⁴ Moreover, the correlation also emphasizes the relationship between slavery and Chinese indenture, the latter being simultaneously a consequence of the end of the slave trade and a means of maintaining labour coercion.

First Attempts to Restore Emigration in 1877

The 1877 Sino-Spanish Agreement did not forbid emigration, but ‘reinstated’ migration under the new premise that, from then onwards, it would be ‘free and voluntary’ – meaning that, in contrast to the previous system, emigrants would emigrate ‘on their own account’. Until then, emigration functioned under the 1864 Sino-Spanish treaty. Fearing that the new treaty would hamper contract emigration, planters and entrepreneurs put forward numerous projects and strategies to reinitiate recruitment in China as soon as Spanish and Chinese authorities had come to an agreement. These were, however, blocked from their inception, because the new agreement did not allow for emigration under contract, which implied advancing the cost of passage to Havana. The advancement of the ticket was crucial to generating debt prior to embarking in China and thus placed workers into bondage until the debt was repaid.³⁵ As will be shown, while the 1877 Agreement did not forbid migration, targeting recruitment in China proved effective in bringing the trafficking of new Chinese migrants to an end – although indenture for those already in Cuba continued for a few years. Spanish immigration agent Francisco Abellá made attempts to reinitiate the trade, but the failure of his project proves the effectiveness of this measure. After Abellá’s project, other entrepreneurs tried to introduce alternatives to Chinese migrants with limited success, while Chinese migrants kept on being considered throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Still, successful projects with migrants from other nations also point to the continued extent of indenture and other forms of labour exploitation as a consequence of the previous ‘coolie trade’.

Under the previous Sino-Spanish 1864 Treaty, and particularly according to Article 10, Chinese imperial authorities allowed the recruitment of Chinese citizens under contract to Spanish subjects to work in Spanish colonies overseas, either embarking alone or with their families, in any treaty port in China. The rules applicable in each port were settled by the local authorities, in agreement with Spanish representatives there, for the protection of workers. Article 10 also stipulated that deserters – those who breached their contract by abandoning their worksite before completing their term of service – and people who had been hired against their will would not be accepted.³⁶ Regardless of this stipulation, numerous abuses were committed against Chinese migrants under this treaty. Chinese *ketou* ‘brokers’, crimps, and emigration houses used deceptive means and violence to recruit prospective emigrant labourers and keep them in barracoons – a term derived from the barracks used to lodge enslaved people in the African slave trade – and retained them there by force until departure. Chinese local authorities, Spanish consuls and Portuguese authorities in Macao often turned a blind eye to these abuses or were directly involved in them. Their interest in boosting and protecting emigration was pecuniary, because they either obtained emoluments for every Chinese who emigrated, or for their nation’s benefit.³⁷

The 1877 agreement directly annulled Article 10 of the previous treaty – thus officially stopping contract emigration, keeping only in force the stipulation that deserters, criminals and accused would be handed over to the authorities. Nevertheless, while Article 1 of the new agreement cancelled ‘contract’ emigration, Article 3 of the same agreement reinstated emigration under the stipulation that the will of the emigrant would be protected – therefore, the new ‘free emigration’ would be organized without advancements, contracts of indenture or acts of violence or deceit. People and vessels which violated this principle would be subjected to the legislation of either nation.³⁸ Even though the new agreement officially resumed emigration, Articles 3 and 4 represented important *de facto* obstructions for two reasons. Firstly, Article 3 hampered precisely the actions of Chinese brokers and crimps, who would now confront a death penalty if accused by any Chinese citizen of any sort of trickery in their recruitment. Secondly, Article 4 established that Chinese emigrants would have to pay the travelling costs themselves. This meant that any attempt by Spanish agents, planters and authorities in Cuba to organize emigration by providing the passage to workers as an advancement, were frustrated from its inception.³⁹ On the one hand, Chinese middlemen left the business afraid of the consequences of being accused of deceit. On the other hand, foreign immigration agents and ship captains could not provide advancements for their passage or ticket, and other emigrating costs, which they would later have to return from their future labour and salary. So while the process of securing workers through violence and economic debt had been removed, these restrictions also discouraged migration.⁴⁰

Expecting that the visit from the Chen Lanbin Commission in Cuba would witness the atrocious mistreatment to Chinese labourers, produce an unfavourable report on their working conditions and hamper their migration, the Spanish immigration agent in China, Francisco Abellá, prepared a new project to reinstate emigration. Abellá's *Proyecto de Inmigración y Colonización Libre para Fomentar la Isla de Cuba*, was published in duplicate and directed first to the Cuban *hacendados* – the plantation owners – and later to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Spain – in 1874 in Havana and in 1875 in Barcelona, respectively.⁴¹ In presenting this project, Abellá suggested to the *hacendados* that they switch from contract emigration to a new form of 'free' emigration which Abellá planned on his own terms. In practice, Abellá's project returned to contract emigration with the only change being that it was now named 'free emigration'. Following his suggestions, planters in Havana would have to constitute themselves into a society for the import of labourers.⁴²

Abellá's call had the desired effect in Cuba, and in 1878, Cuban planters created the *Compañía Importadora de Trabajadores Libres* – or 'Company for the Import of Free Workers' – formed mainly by Cuban plantation owners, which would put the necessary resources at the disposal of those migrants of both sexes who, from 'their own and spontaneous will' wished to travel to Cuba for agricultural, industrial or domestic labour. The company would cover the costs involved in the trip from China to Cuba as well as a monetary advancement, maintenance from the moment of recruitment until the start of the job, and the commissions to the labour agents. Once in Cuba, Chinese labourers would have to work 'with the condition of remunerating the Company all the money disbursed, interests, and insurance'. They named Francisco Abellá as agent in China to 'import free workers of both sexes'.⁴³ The advance which the Company would provide to the emigrants would have to be returned afterwards from their wages, plus a recharge of 10 pesos as insurance in case of accident. Once in Cuba, they would be free to be hired for the salary and time which they found most suitable. If after thirty days they had not established their working situation, the Company would have the right to hire them for half the salary to see their recruiting costs repaid, returning the advance payments with interest.⁴⁴ The new system kept earlier exploitative conditions. The salary was the same, between 9 and 20 pesos/month, depending on the job. Fundamentally, Abellá's project and the Company's foundational guidelines recreated indentured emigration from China by giving continuity to the generation of debt and camouflaging it by renaming the practice 'free emigration'.

Between 1874 and 1880, Abellá tried to reinstate the trade via Manila, Hong Kong, and Macao, as well as Xiamen, China. In Xiamen he was able to embark 800 migrants on the German ship *Hesperia* with the help of the newly arrived young Spanish Vice-Consul Eduard Toda i Güell, and the support of the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Víctor Balaguer i Cirera. However, this

ship never left China due to a last-minute decision of the Qing government not to authorize the local and provincial authorities to allow the ship to depart. Following long yet unsuccessful endeavour to recoup the economic investment he had made for the recruitment of the *Hesperia's* immigrants, Abellá was bankrupted.⁴⁵

From the 1870s onwards, upon expectations that Chinese emigration would come to a halt, a number of entrepreneurs requested permission to import labourers from other nations. For instance, in 1872, Madrid entrepreneur, Antonio Díaz Quintana, asked for permission to import Moroccan 'free' workers to substitute for slave labour, yet under the same conditions as the Chinese – thus, with eight-year contracts. He would start with 4,000 labourers the first year, and if the trial was successful, immigration would continue for as many as the government of Cuba authorized. His proposal went through the *Ministro de Ultramar* (the Minister of affairs in Spanish overseas colonies), who submitted it to the *Comisión de Colonización*. Using racialized language, he argued that Moroccan workers would be superior as labourers to the Chinese, who were not the best due to their physical nature and their vices.⁴⁶ Similarly, in 1879, entrepreneur Francisco Clavijo Oviedo requested permission from Madrid to import 4,000 'free' immigrant labourers 'of both sexes' from Tonkin (also known as Tongking), in northern Vietnam, for a period of five years. He argued in favour of their suitability for plantation labour both in physical and moral terms, which he believed to be better than the Chinese. The society of *hacendados* had also requested authorization to introduce workers from Vietnam (then known as Annam) only two years earlier.⁴⁷ The search for alternatives to Chinese immigration resulted also in the recruitment of 'indios' of various nations. In 1881 locals from Honduras and Costa Rica were introduced in the region of Cienfuegos. These workers received twelve pesos for men, eight for women and four for children and youngsters between 8 and 16 years of age. In addition, José de Armas presented the alternative of workers from the Philippines in 1884. The *Ministerio de Ultramar* – or Ministry of Colonial Affairs – dismissed José de Armas' proposal, based on suggestions of the *Consejo de Filipinas* or Council of the Philippines which considered that populating one Spanish colony by depopulating another was not useful.⁴⁸ Other unsuccessful plans included a project to introduce 'coolies' from India and Martinique. This project, led by Madrid capitalist Juan J. de Larribalde, was supported by the Spanish government. It was rejected by British and French colonial authorities who argued that Spain had yet to abolish slavery in Cuba, and thus the labour conditions of these workers would have been uncertain once in Cuba.⁴⁹

Notwithstanding the many obstacles to the reinitiation of Chinese immigration from China and the suggestions, plans, and actual arrival of immigrant labourers from other nations, Chinese immigrants kept being considered in Cuba throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, and even in the

twentieth century. For instance, after Abellá's failed attempt, Spanish consul in China, Tomás Lozano, suggested in 1883 that the Spanish government consider Chinese emigration as the best way to acquire labourers for Cuba. He presented a report to this effect to the metropolitan authorities.⁵⁰ During the same decade, Cuban planters continued to pursue the idea of bringing in Chinese migrant workers, who they saw as particularly suited to labour in sugar production.⁵¹

Reinitiating Immigration for the 'Dance of the Millions'

Aside from nineteenth-century projects to attract *braceros* (agricultural contract labourers) as 'free' migrants, while emulating the exploitative conditions of indenture, the previous 'coolie trade' had further consequences into the twentieth century. Chinese emigration to Cuba to cover the supply of labour in the sugar industry was reinitiated between 1918 and 1920, coinciding with the so-called 'Dance of the Millions'. Between 1918 and 1919, more than 11,000 Chinese landed in Cuba to meet the labour needs of this boom in the sugar economy.⁵²

The 'Dance of the Millions' was a rapid increase and subsequent decline in sugar prices which Cuba experienced between 1915 and 1920. This period of prosperity was related to World War I, when Cuba benefitted from exporting sugar to the allied powers, as these could no longer provide themselves from the beetroot sugar produced in Central Europe, foremost Germany. In 1919, the United States lifted the regulations on Cuban sugar, and this had an enormous impact on Cuban sugar economy, which escalated between 1919 and 1920.⁵³ While some interesting studies have been published on this short period, its consequences with regards to the introduction of migrants in Cuba remains understudied.⁵⁴ Yet, the renewed need of labour for sugar production resulted in a rise in Chinese population during these years, as Federico Chang Pon, Elliott Young and Kathleen López have pointed out.⁵⁵

As in the earlier days of the 'coolie trade', this renewed surge of massive immigration counted on the support of the Cuban administration and was organized from the British colony of Hong Kong. This differed from the first two decades of the twentieth century, when a few thousand Chinese immigrants continued to enter Cuba irregularly.⁵⁶ After Cuba became independent from Spain in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War and the Treaty of Paris, the US obtained military control over the island between 1901 and 1902. Until 1917, the Chinese were excluded from entering Cuba, with the exception of merchants, students, diplomats and tourists.⁵⁷ These regulations mirrored those in place in the United States and were consolidated in the document Order No. 155 of the Headquarters Division of Cuba from 1902.⁵⁸

Despite the anti-Chinese sentiments flooding both the Cuban press and political discourse in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Cuban government suspended temporarily its exclusion laws to allow the introduction of

Chinese labour during the 'Dance of the Millions'.⁵⁹ On 3 August 1917, President Menocal approved a law allowing the entry of contract labourers with no racial restrictions until two years after the end of the war.⁶⁰ Companies and individuals in Hong Kong could then import labour under a deposit guarantee of \$50 per labourer. The Hong Kong Governor at that time, T. E. Stubbs, feared that there seemed to be no control over the recruiting methods which might lead to abuses in the recruitment and uncertainty over the conditions in Cuba. In October 1920, the Hong Kong governor warned Viscount Milner of the unclear conditions of this emigration via Hong Kong.⁶¹ No attempt seems to have been made to control the recruiting methods in China, and the Cuban consul did not seem to have any jurisdiction over this matter.

Companies and individuals, authorized by Cuba, could charter ships from the British colony, yet no communications were made to the Hong Kong government, either directly by Cuban authorities or by the Cuban consul there. The conditions offered by the recruiters were vague, and they did not go beyond the promise of \$45 (gold) per month. Stubbs feared that the labourers would be expected to refund the cost of the passage from deductions from their future salary, which at the time was \$250 Mexican dollars. Considering that 'labour which is obviously assisted is not free labour', Stubbs suggested refusing licenses to emigrant ships under the Hong Kong Ordinance regarding immigration from that port to foreign possessions, as a strategy to halt emigration.⁶²

The following year, the British suggested that no emigrant should leave for a destination where working conditions were not guaranteed unless by permission from Chinese authorities.⁶³ To this end, in January 1921, the Hong Kong Government, through orders of the Secretary of State, declared that no Chinese subjects would be permitted to leave from Hong Kong to Cuba – and Mexico, where they were also emigrating – without full approval of the Chinese Government. Yet, Stubbs feared that this would lead to abuses by Chinese officers and delegates and would also restrict the freedom of action of the colonial government.⁶⁴ His concerns did not come to fruition, however. Sugar prices dropped dramatically from June 1920, generating an oversupply of the commodity valued at seventy-five million dollars by September that year.⁶⁵ Consequently, labour emigration and work in sugar plantations also dropped, and by 1922 the United States commissioner general estimated that there were 'almost no jobs for the Chinese in Cuba', which stimulated clandestine emigration into the US.⁶⁶ The Chinese were not the only immigrants arriving in Cuba at this time. Access to sufficient labour had been a problem for the steady increase in the production and export of sugar, and while some effort was made to attract the settlement of farmers from Spain, this was only a partial success. Between 1914 and 1918, 27,000 Haitians and 23,000 Jamaicans arrived in Cuba. In 1919 alone, 24,000 Jamaicans and 10,000 Haitians arrived.⁶⁷

Conclusion

This article has targeted both the history of the global Chinese ‘coolie trade’ and the nature of indenture. It has argued that nuances need to be made to the chronological limit of 1874 reiterated in much historiography about the ‘coolie trade’ in Cuba. Moreover, addressing this issue allows for a reconsideration of what lies at the heart of indentured labour, pinpointing the generation of debt in the moment of recruitment as the most intrinsic element in this type of labour bondage.

With regards to the temporality of the trade, this study has shown that its impetus in the second half of the nineteenth century, paired with the continued need for labour in sugar plantations, had undeniable consequences beyond 1874. These manifested in three ways: in terms of keeping Chinese labourers in plantations under contract after that date; in that indenture was applied to immigrants from other nations; and in that Chinese immigration for sugar plantation work was renewed in the twentieth century.⁶⁸ All these understudied processes not only add nuance to the history of the ‘coolie trade’ but also deepen our understanding of what is essential to indentured labour. Viewing Chinese immigration to Cuba in this way – as a continuous transformative process rather than a historical ‘moment’ with a beginning and end date – helps identify what is integrative to the concept of ‘indenture’. The essence of indenture was situated in the moment of recruitment.⁶⁹ The creation of debt via the provision of ‘advancements’ to cover the costs of emigration of the labourer marked the entry into bondage. This study, thus, points to debt as the single most essential component to indenture.

The generation of debt via the provision of advancements in the moment of recruitment and its use to keep labourers later immobilized in the working site is present in the three stages presented here. After 1877, 22,768 Chinese workers remained under contract. They later worked in labour gangs – which brought in other forms of exploitation – and by 1899, over 8,000 were classified as ‘day labourers’ in the census.⁷⁰ Moreover, after 1877, planters and emigration agents undertook serious attempts to reinstate the trade from China and other countries – some of which were successful, such as in the cases of Honduras and Costa Rica. These plans were underpinned by racial theories which held the Chinese as particularly suited for being exploited in sugar plantation labour in the Caribbean. Although in the first two decades of the twentieth century anti-Chinese sentiments rose in Cuba, the Cuban government and importers still chose the Chinese to labour in the plantations and reinstated the trade from Hong Kong temporarily to meet the needs of the booming sugar economy in 1919 and 1920, a result of the drop in sugar production in Europe due to World War I. Research until now points towards the use of ‘advancements’ in the assisted emigration of these labourers.

The study of Chinese indenture and emigration in Cuba after 1874 points to various foci which should be addressed in future investigations. Further research using Cuban sources to cross information between the Cuban census, reports, historical press on the arrival and smuggling of immigrants, as well as internal plantation registries would ascertain the number of labourers and their working conditions after 1874 and during the temporary emigration organized in the twentieth century. This would also provide further information as to the work and conditions of 'day labourers' as well as labourers in work gangs. The research for this article did not uncover the type of contracts signed in the twentieth century. A comparison between contracts of those Chinese who emigrated between 1918 and 1920, as well as with labourers from other nations recruited from the 1870s onwards would shed new light into the working conditions and their degree of bondage, in contrast to the earlier 'coolie trade'. This could lead to another line of research in which contracts and actual working conditions are compared across the history of indenture and beyond. Moreover, further attention to the development of racialized discourses on immigration in Spanish colonies, coupled with the raising anti-Chinese sentiments in the early twentieth century, would deepen our understanding of what lied beneath the continued yearning for Chinese labourers, and the search for alternatives from other nations. Finally, this article has revisited the end date of Chinese indenture but not the starting point. The advent of Chinese indenture can be seen as a going back to (as well as transformation of) older European practices of migrant indenture, and this possibility could certainly be a fruitful objective of future research.⁷¹

Notes

1. 'Coolie' is a pejorative and sensitive term referring to servile Chinese labour immigrants, usually employed using indenture contracts. In this article, I will use this term in reference to the trafficking of Chinese labourers, often known as the 'coolie trade', and when referring to sources which label certain Chinese immigrants as 'coolies'.
2. *Chinese Emigration: Report of the Commission Sent by China to Ascertain the Condition of Chinese Coolies in Cuba* (Shanghai: Imperial Maritime Customs Press, 1876); Rudolph Ng, 'The Chinese Commission to Cuba (1874): Reexamining International Relations in the Nineteenth Century from a Transcultural Perspective', *Transcultural Studies*, no. 2 (2014): 39–62.
3. Despite the lesser attention and the lack of a comprehensive analysis on these topics, a few authors have worked on the Chinese in Cuba after 1874 and the continued need for labourers, as well as the projects to reinstate the trade. These are Imilcy Balboa, *Los Brazos Necesarios: Inmigración, Colonización y Trabajo Libre en Cuba, 1878–1898* (Valencia: Alzira, 2000); Consuelo Naranjo and Imilcy Balboa, 'Colonos Asiáticos para una Economía en Expansión: Cuba, 1847–1880', *Revista Mexicana del Caribe*, no. 8 (1999): 32–65; José Luis Luzón, 'Chineros, Diplomáticos y Hacendados en La Habana Colonial. Don Francisco Abellá y Raldiris y su Proyecto de Inmigración

- Libre a Cuba (1874)', *Boletín Americanista*, no. 39 (1989): 143–58; Kathleen López, *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), chaps. 2, 5 & 6.
4. Arnold J. Meagher, *The Coolie Trade: The Traffic in Chinese Laborers to Latin America 1847–1874* (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corporation, 2008); Evelyn Hu-DeHart, 'Chinese Coolie Labor in Cuba in the Nineteenth Century: Free Labor of Neoslavery', *Contributions in Black Studies: A Journal of African and Afro-American Studies* 12 (1994): 38–54; Juan Pérez de la Riva, *El Barracón: Esclavitud y Capitalismo en Cuba* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1978); Idem., *La República Neocolonial* (Havana: Ciencias Sociales, 1975); Juan Jiménez Pastrana, *Los Chinos en la Historia de Cuba: 1847–1930* (Havana: Ciencias Sociales, 1983).
 5. The official abolition of slavery in Cuba took place in 1886. See Arthur F. Corwin, *Spain and the Abolition of Slavery in Cuba, 1817–1886* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014).
 6. For a definition of 'abolition', see for instance Joel Quirk, 'Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective', *The International Journal of Human Rights* 12, no. 4 (2008): 529–54. For examples on the end of indenture by legal action see the conclusion to David Northrup's, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
 7. Marcel van der Linden, 'Dissecting Coerced Labor', in *On Coerced Labor: Work and Compulsion after Chattel Slavery*, ed. Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 293–322; Christian G. De Vito, J. Schiel, and M. van Rossum, 'From Bondage to Precariousness? New Perspectives on Labor and Social History', *Journal of Social History* 54, no. 2 (2020): 1–19.
 8. See, for instance Christian G. De Vito and Fia Sundevall, 'Free and Unfree Labour – an Introduction to This Special Issue', *Arbetarhistoria*, 3–4 (2017). This debate is at the centre of the German Cluster of Excellence Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS), at the University of Bonn, which aims at overcoming the binary opposition 'slavery vs freedom' by suggesting the integrative concept of 'asymmetrical dependencies'. See Julia Winnebeck et al., 'The Analytical Concept of Asymmetrical Dependency', *Journal of Global Slavery* 8, no. 1 (2023): 1–59; Stephan Conermann and Michael Zeuske, 'The Slavery/Capitalism Debate Global – from "Capitalism and Slavery" to Slavery as Capitalism', *Comparativ* 30, no. 5/6 (2021): 448–63.
 9. Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García, *On Coerced Labor: Work and Compulsion after Chattel Slavery*, Studies in Global Social History (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016). In fact, indenture is usually treated in historiography as the process which followed and overlapped with the abolition of slavery in the British Empire after 1833 and the end of the slave trade. S. Damir-Geilsdorf et al., *Bonded Labour: Global and Comparative Perspectives (18th–21st Century)*, Global Studies (transcript Verlag, 2016); Gregor Benton, *Chinese Indentured Labour in the Dutch East Indies, 1880–1942: Tin, Tobacco, Timber, and the Penal Sanction*, Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022); Monica Schuler, 'The Recruitment of African Indentured Labourers for European Colonies in the Nineteenth Century', in *Colonialism and Migration; Indentured Labour Before and After Slavery*, ed. P.C. Emmer (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1986), 125.
 10. The term 'bondage' refers to diverse forms of labour exploitation in which workers are immobilized in undesired labour conditions through physical or legal coercion and threat, often regarding the repayment of a debt. See Winnebeck et al., 'The Analytical

- Concept of Asymmetrical Dependency'; Damir-Geilsdorf, *Bonded Labour*; Linden and Rodríguez García, *On Coerced Labor*, 300–1.
11. See for instance Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Michael Quinlan, *Unfree Workers: Insubordination and Resistance in Convict Australia, 1788–1860*, Palgrave Studies in Economic History (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2022). I am also currently working on a project on punishment as an entry point into indenture.
 12. Paul E. Baak, 'About Enslaved Ex-Slaves, Uncaptured Contract Coolies and Unfreed Freedmen: Some Notes about "Free" and "Unfree" Labour in the Context of Plantation Development in Southwest India, Early Sixteenth Century–Mid 1990s', *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 1 (1999): 123.
 13. Balboa mentions the difficulties to get the 1877 agreement approved. See *Los Brazos Necesarios*, 124.
 14. Balboa, *Los Brazos Necesarios*; Idem, 'Las Recontratas de Coolies. A Medio Camino entre la Esclavitud y la Libertad Formal (Cuba, Década de 1860)', *Tzintzun. Revista de Estudios Históricos*, no. 74 (2021): 127–60; López, *Chinese Cubans*.
 15. Balboa, *Los Brazos Necesarios*; Jiménez Pastrana, *Los Chinos en la Historia de Cuba: 1847–1930*; Federico Chang Pon, 'La Inmigración China en Cuba. Asociaciones y Tradiciones', in *De Dónde son los Cubanos*, 2018th ed. (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2007), 137–87; Antonio Chuffat Latour, *Apunte Histórico de los Chinos en Cuba* (Havana: Molino y Cia., 1927).
 16. Luzón, 'Chineros, Diplomáticos y Hacendados en La Habana Colonial', 145; Mònica Ginés-Blasi, 'The "Coolie Trade" via Southeast Asia: Exporting Chinese Indentured Labourers to Cuba through the Spanish Philippines', in *Slavery and Bondage in Asia: Towards a Global History of Coerced Labour*, ed. Kate Ekama, L. Hellman, and M. van Rossum (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), 97–118.
 17. These sources consist of correspondence between the Spanish legation and consulates in China with the Ministry of State and the Office, the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, ship captains and owners, and immigration agents, preserved at the Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN) in Madrid and at the Library Balaguer (LB) in Vilanova i la Geltrú, Barcelona; the British Colonial Office (CO) preserved at the National Archives (BNA), and the UK Parliament Archive, the Archivo Nacional de Cuba (ANC).
 18. Ultramar 279, Exp. 4 AHN.
 19. Ng, 'The Chinese Commission to Cuba (1874)', 59–60; Francisco Javier Cantalapiedra Alonso, 'La Primera Embajada China En Europa y América: Chen Lanbin y Li Shuchang En España (1874–1879)' (Institut Universitari d'Història Jaume Vicens i Vives, 2015), 277.
 20. *Convenio relativo a la emigración de súbditos chinos a la isla de Cuba*, Ultramar 279, Exp. 4, AHN. Cf. López, *Chinese Cubans*, 54.
 21. Benjamin Nicolas Narvaez, 'Chinese Coolies in Cuba and Peru: Race, Labor, and Immigration, 1839–1886' (University of Texas, 2010), 27ff. Census on Cuban population generally included information on sex, race and nationality and sometimes profession, civil status and profession. See Walter F. Sanger, J.P.; Gannett, H.; and Willcox, 'Informe Sobre El Censo de Cuba, 1899', 1900.
 22. Balboa, 'Las Recontratas de Coolies', 156. On *depósitos* see, for instance, Michael Zeuske, 'Coolies – Asiáticos and Chinos: Global Dimensions of Second Slavery', in *Bonded Labour*, ed. Damir-Geilsdorf, 38; José I. Suárez, 'Eça de Queiroz: Defender of the Chinese Coolie in Cuba', *Luso-Brazilian Review* 52, no. 1 (January 2015): 64.
 23. That is from a total of 54,400 in 1872 decreasing to 47,116 in 1877. Lisa Yun, 'Chinese Freedom Fighters in Cuba: From Bondage to Liberation, 1847–1898', in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections Between African Americans and*

- Asian Americans*, ed. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 49.
24. Consuelo Naranjo Orovio, 'La Inmigración China en Cuba, siglos XIX y XX: Debates Económicos y Discursos Identitarios', in *La presencia China en el Gran Caribe: Ayer y Hoy* (Santo Domingo, D. N., República Dominicana: Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra, 2022), 213.
 25. Duvon Clough Corbitt, *A Study of the Chinese in Cuba, 1847–1947* (Wilmore: Asbury College, 1971); Walter F. Sanger, J.P.; Gannett, H.; and Willcox, 'Informe Sobre El Censo de Cuba, 1899', 1900; López, *Chinese Cubans*, 56.
 26. Balboa, 'Las Recontratas de Coolies', 131; 138–39.
 27. López, *Chinese Cubans*, 61.
 28. *Escribanía de González Álvarez*, 'Testamentaria del Excmo. Sr. Julián de Zulueta (2a pieza)', *Escribanías*, Leg. 39; Exp. 10, ANC. His will specifies \$8,100 (14,000 gold) and \$28,000 (4,050 gold), the second currency possibly referring to peseta gold pieces. With regard to Cuban currency at the time, see Susan Fernández, 'The Money and Credit Crisis in Late Colonial Cuba', *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos* 21 (1991): 3–18.
 29. López, *Chinese Cubans*, 56; 62–4.
 30. *Ibid.*, 68–71. Retaining labourers' wages to keep them in debt with gang leaders and bonded to gang labour was also a common form of debt bondage in other settings, such as in the Philippines. See Mònica Ginés-Blasi, 'A Philippine "Coolie Trade": Trade and Exploitation of Chinese Labour in Spanish Colonial Philippines, 1850–98', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 51, no. 3 (2020): 1–27.
 31. Chang Pon, 'La Inmigración China En Cuba', 141; Chuffat Latour, *Apunte Histórico de Los Chinos En Cuba*.
 32. *Ibid.*, 61. My translation.
 33. Chang Pon, 'La Inmigración China en Cuba', 140.
 34. Hu-DeHart, 'Chinese Coolie Labor in Cuba in the Nineteenth Century', 48.
 35. Luzón, 'Chineros, Diplomáticos y Hacendados en La Habana Colonial', 153.
 36. 'Tratado Sino-Español de 1864', in *Treaties, Conventions, Etc., between China and Foreign States. Belgium, Sweden and Norway, Germany, Portugal, Denmark, The Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Japan, Peru, Brazil, Congo Free State, Mexico, Korea*, 1908 ed. (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1908), 341–84.
 37. Regarding abuses during recruitment and the extraction of emoluments by Spanish consuls in treaty ports, see Mònica Ginés-Blasi, 'Exploiting Chinese Labour Emigration in Treaty Ports: The Role of Spanish Consulates in the "Coolie Trade"', *International Review of Social History* 66, no. 1 (2021): 1–24. Spanish immigration agent Francisco Abellá also points to Chinese local authorities as having a personal pecuniary interest in the traffic of Chinese indentured migrants. See Manuscript (Ms.) 9, LB.
 38. *Convenio relativo a la emigración de súbditos chinos a la isla de Cuba*, Ultramar 279, Exp. 4, AHN.
 39. Luzón, 'Chineros, Diplomáticos y Hacendados en La Habana Colonial', 151.
 40. *Ibid.*, 151–2.
 41. Francisco Abellá, *Proyecto de Emigración Libre China* (La Habana: Imprenta y Librería El Iris, 1874); Francisco Abellá, *Proyecto de Inmigración y Colonización Libre Para Fomentar La Isla de Cuba Presentado Al Excmo. Sr. Ministro de Ultramar* (Barcelona: Imprenta y Litografía C. Verdaguer y C^a, 1875).
 42. Abellá, *Proyecto de Emigración Libre China*, 19.
 43. *Bases bajo las cuales se establece en La Habana una Compañía en Comandita en que puedan tener parte además de los comerciantes e industrial quienes quieran concurrir a*

- ella. Habana. Imprenta Mercantil de SS. Spencer. 1878, in *Expediente general sobre la colonización asiática en Cuba*, Ultramar 88, Exp.1, AHN.
44. This section has been written from Balboa, *Los Brazos Necesarios*, 126; Luzón, 'Chineros, Diplomáticos y Hacendados en La Habana Colonial', 150.
 45. Ms.9, LB; Ginés-Blasi, 'The "Coolie Trade" via Southeast Asia', 112–15.
 46. 'Díaz Quintana pide traer a Cuba trabajadores marroquíes (1872)', Ultramar, 94, Exp.18, AHN. The author has not found further sources indicating whether this project was authorized or brought into practice.
 47. Balboa, *Los Brazos Necesarios*, 129. Francisco Clavijo de Oviedo pide autorización para introducir en Cuba colonos tonkinos, Ultramar, 175, Exp.6, AHN.
 48. 'Desestimada la petición para contratar trabajadores filipinos para Cuba', Ultramar, 175, Exp.5, AHN.
 49. 'Sobre la introduccion en Cuba de trabajadores libres de la India Oriental', Sección Ultramar-Cuba (1877–83), M° Asuntos Exteriores, H2941, AHN.
 50. Balboa, *Los Brazos Necesarios*, 119–239; 'Memoria sobre la inmigración de chinos como trabajadores libres en la Isla de Cuba, por D. Tomás Lozano, Cónsul General de España en China, Madrid, 31 de enero de 1883', Ultramar, Fomento, Leg. 280, n° 1, AHN.
 51. See, for instance, the example of Soledad's estate in López, *Chinese Cubans*, 61.
 52. Elliott Young, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era Through World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 190; López, *Chinese Cubans*, 146.
 53. Jorge Alejandro Núñez Vega, 'La Danza de Los Millones. Modernización y Cambio Cultural en La Habana (1915–1920)' (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2011), xi.
 54. Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 536–56.
 55. Chang Pon, 'La Inmigración China en Cuba. Asociaciones y Tradiciones'; Young, *Alien Nation*, 190ff.; López, *Chinese Cubans*, 155ff.
 56. López, *Chinese Cubans*, 146.
 57. *Ibid.*, 146; Duvon Clough Corbitt, 'Immigration in Cuba', *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 22, no. 2 (July 8, 1942): 304–5.
 58. López, *Chinese Cubans*, 146.
 59. Regarding the rise of anti-Chinese sentiments in Cuba, see *Ibid.*, 151ff.
 60. López, *Chinese Cubans*, 155; Corbitt, 'Immigration in Cuba', 305–6.
 61. High Commissioner Lord Alfred Milner was paradoxically at the centre of a polemic concerning his authorization to mining officials in Transvaal to use flogging on Chinese labourers there, in 1905. See Gary Kynoch, 'Controlling the Coolies: Chinese Mineworkers and the Struggle for Labor in South Africa, 1904–1910', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36, no. 2 (July 7, 2003): 314. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 'Chinese Labour for the Transvaal', debated on Monday March 21, 1904, Vol. 132, UK Parliament Archive, House of Lords, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1904-03-21/debates/5157338d-bf46-4bbc-a3f0-c9fd43a22eb7/ChineseLabourForTheTransvaal#contribution-76083b5e-df24-419b-a5f3-13819d713471> [accessed July 7, 2023].
 62. 'Hong Kong Governor T. E. Stubbs to Viscount Milner, Hong Kong', Oct 20, 1920, CO 129, 462, National Archives, Kew (hereafter NA). The author is grateful to Julia Martinez for providing this and the following reference to me.
 63. 'Hong Kong Governor T. E. Stubbs to Winston Churchill', Oct 19, 1921, CO 129, NA, 469.
 64. *The Hongkong Government Gazette*, Jan 21, 1921.

65. Thomas, *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom*, 543–54.
66. Young, *Alien Nation*, 191.
67. Thomas, *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom*, 540.
68. Regarding racial considerations the Chinese as being particularly fitted for plantation labour in Cuba see Abellá, *Proyecto de Emigración Libre China*, 9.
69. Marcel van der Linden identifies three ‘moments’ of coerced labour: entry, the period of work, and the end of the labour relationship. (The moments of coercion are in ‘Dissecting Coerced Labor’) Linden and Rodríguez García, *On Coerced Labor*.
70. Corbitt, *A Study of the Chinese in Cuba, 1847–1947*; Sanger, J.P.; Gannett, H.; and Willcox, ‘Informe Sobre El Censo de Cuba, 1899’, 1900; López, *Chinese Cubans*, 56.
71. See for instance Christopher Tomlins, ‘Reconsidering Indentured Servitude: European Migration and the Early American Labor Force, 1600–1775’, *Labor History* 42, no. 1 (2001): 5–43.

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