

## Becoming Sino-Peruvian: Post-Indenture Chinese in Nineteenth-Century Peru

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### ABSTRACT

Between 1849 and 1874, nearly 100,000 Chinese indentured laborers (coolies) arrived in Peru. Although coolies were treated much like slaves, thousands gained their freedom and made lives for themselves during the coolie era. This article focuses on the difficulties facing ex-coolies and how they coped with them. I argue that free Chinese responded to the challenges of making a living, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of a return to forced labor, by uniting and forging a Chinese sub-community while simultaneously integrating into Peruvian society. On the one hand, free Chinese cooperated with each other to find housing and jobs, establish businesses, maintain their culture, and deal with legal troubles. On the other hand, they integrated with Peruvian society and challenged their status as outsiders by establishing business ties with Peruvians, adopting aspects of Hispanic culture, forming interracial families and friendships, and demonstrating publicly their Peruvian patriotism. Well before the end of the coolie era, ex-coolies became immigrants and proceeded to construct Sino-Peruvian identities. In making this argument, this study also suggests the importance of analyzing Chinese indentured labor beyond the paradigm of slavery. Although scholars have tended to separate the experience of coolies in Spanish America from other overseas Chinese communities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, careful analysis of the post-indenture experience during the coolie era reveals considerable overlap.

**Key Words:** Peru, Chinese, indentured labor, race and ethnicity, immigration

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## INTRODUCTION

On July 18, 1871, Chinese businessman and Lima resident Manuel de la Cruz held a large funeral in honor of his deceased Peruvian wife. De la Cruz had arrived in Peru as a *colono asiático* (indentured worker or coolie). Upon gaining freedom he slowly saved money and became a leader in the free Chinese community. During this process, De la Cruz converted to Catholicism and met his wife. Nine years into their marriage, however, she became ill. He spent the next six years tending to her and spending his money hoping to cure her. Now she was dead. But De la Cruz did not want *limeños* to forget her. He continued to spend a small fortune on her after her death. He paid for a lavish Catholic funeral, which some of Lima's leading residents attended, and he gave money to various confraternities hoping to ensure her spiritual salvation (*El Nacional*, July 22, 1871). This former coolie was now a prosperous Chinese immigrant who had demonstrated publicly his love for his Peruvian wife, his wealth, his respectable social standing, and his Catholic faith.

De la Cruz's socioeconomic ascent was extraordinary. However, he still shared much with the roughly 100,000 Chinese indentured workers (nearly all male) who went to Peru between 1849 and 1874. Though technically free individuals, coolies often toiled like the slaves they replaced, including not receiving their pay, being forced to re-contract, working in chains, and being beaten and worked to death. Nevertheless, thousands became ex-coolies and remained in Peru. By the mid 1850s the first coolies ended their contracts and some avoided re-indenture. During the next quarter century, the free Chinese (*asiáticos libres*) population continued to grow as more coolies gained their freedom and transnational Chinese merchants began entering Peru. Still, freedom did not entail the end of hardship. Free Chinese had to find ways to make a living and faced discrimination and harassment from officials and the public.

How, then, did free Chinese meet these challenges? De la Cruz's story provides clues. He succeeded because he could navigate both the Chinese and Peruvian worlds. Specifically, free Chinese united and forged a Chinese sub-community while simultaneously integrating into Peruvian society. Chinese adopted a strategy of group cooperation and identification. *Asiáticos libres* turned to each other to find housing and jobs, establish businesses, and maintain their culture. They also helped coolies in court and to escape bondage. But personal and collective success also depended on forging connections with Peruvians and demonstrating that Chinese belonged and did not threaten the nation. They did this by establishing business

ties with Peruvians, adopting Catholicism and aspects of Hispanic culture, forming interracial families and friendships, and demonstrating publicly Peruvian patriotism. Well before the end of the coolie era, ex-coolies became immigrants and proceeded to construct Sino-Peruvian identities.

Historians have chronicled the horrors of the coolie trade, the abusive treatment Chinese received, and how they challenged exploitation (Stewart 1951; Rodríguez Pastor 2001; Trazegnies Granda 1994; Hu-DeHart 1989; 2002). Moreover, some have noted the difficulties confronting ex-coolies, their various occupations, and some of the ways in which they maintained their identity, such as creating Chinese societies and neighborhoods, but also integrated, including interracial marriage and religious conversion. However, the construction of a hyphenated identity remains under-documented and not fully conceptualized for the coolie period. The studies that address this topic focus more on the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and/or examine aspects of this process in isolation (Lausent-Herrera 1983; 1986; 1992; 2000; 2006; 2009; 2011; McKeown 2001; Rodríguez Pastor 2000; 2001; Stewart 1951). This study, therefore, builds on the work of others, but it offers a more complete examination of the post-indenture experience during the coolie era. Scholars have studied similar experiences and processes for Chinese in other parts of Latin America as well, but they generally focus on immigrants and communities from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Consequently, coolies typically remain apart from the larger narrative of hyphenated and transnational Chinese identities and communities, and, instead, are seen through the prism of slavery (Romero 2010; Delgado 2012; Camacho 2012; Siu 2005).<sup>1</sup> The coolie experience undoubtedly shared much with slavery, but it was more complex than that. Moreover, the post-coolie experience before the end of the coolie era shared much with later Chinese experiences. In fact, ex-coolies and a small number of merchant immigrants began carving out a Chinese space in the Peruvian nation during the coolie era. Thus, indentured Chinese in Peru should not be separated from immigrant narratives and viewed as anomalous from the rest of the diaspora in the Americas.

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1 Kathleen López connects coolies to later Chinese experiences in Cuba, but still leaves room for examining how the process of becoming Sino-Cuban unfolded for ex-coolies (see López 2013). Elliot Young links coolies and later Chinese immigrants to the Americas, but mostly through the abuse and marginalization they experienced (see Young 2014). Philip Kuhn's admirable history of overseas Chinese reflects how Chinese diasporic studies distances coolies from other Chinese migrants during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see Kuhn 2008).

## THE CHALLENGES OF BEING FREE

Thousands of Chinese gained freedom before the end of coolie labor.<sup>2</sup> By 1876 “here in Lima, at Callao, and other ports on the coast”, commented U.S. Minister to Peru Richard Gibbs “there are great numbers of them who have served the time of contract or have in some cases purchased it”.<sup>3</sup> However, the end of servitude did not mean the end of difficulties. Ex-coolies had to find ways to provide for themselves and navigate a hostile world. Although many dreamt of returning to China, few could afford the passage home (Stewart 1951, 57-58, 124, 228). Instead, many signed new contracts – though often on better terms.<sup>4</sup> For those who succeed in escaping the cycle of indenture, poverty and poor physical health often constrained their options. Some became beggars.<sup>5</sup> “The Patrons”, Chinese complained to the U.S. Minister in Lima in 1866, “instead of looking after and taking care of their colonists, leave them in a state of complete abandonment; some without shoes, some not sufficiently clothed, none with a proper allowance of food, some consumptive, some lame, some crippled and others in like states of suffering and neglect”. Many died under contract and those lucky enough to survive and gain freedom could “be found in large numbers begging in the public streets for a piece of bread on which to subsist” due to “absolute prostration and unfitness for work” from years of exploitation.<sup>6</sup> Peruvian anxiety concerning the increasing number of Chinese vagabonds led to anti-vagrancy laws and efforts to repatriate Chinese vagrants.<sup>7</sup>

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2 Accurate statistics are wanting, but *asiáticos libres* regularly appear in criminal and civil cases in the Archivo General de la Nación del Perú (AGN) and the Archivo Regional de La Libertad (ARLL), as well as in Lima’s newspapers *El Comercio* and *El Nacional*.

3 Dispatch No. 107, U.S. Minister to Peru (Richard Gibbs), November 13, 1876 in United States House of Representatives, 1878, *Executive Documents of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Fifth Congress, 1877-1878*, Vol. I, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, pp. 435-437 [hereafter Gibbs No. 107].

4 New contracts typically were shorter and included an advance that prevented wage withholding (see AGN, R.J.P., Causas Civiles [hereafter AGN, Civiles], Leg. 1126, 1869, Exp: Echenique contra Forcelledo (contrato). AGN, Causas Criminales, Corte Superior de Justicia de Lima (R.P.J.) [hereafter AGN, Criminales], Leg. 186, 1861, Exp.: Asi y Asan (hurto). A government report about Chinese in the province of Santa indicates shorter contracts. *El Peruano* published the report on April 29, 1870 [hereafter “Informe Santa”]. Also see Rodríguez Pastor (2001, 50-55), Gonzales (1985, 90).

5 Dispatch No. 41, October 1, 1861, U.S. Consul (Callao), R4, microfilm. *El Nacional* (November 29, 1866; August 2, 1868; March 13, 1875; February 11, 1876). Also see Stewart (1951, 125).

6 Enclosure No. 2, Dispatch No. 41, November 28, 1866, U.S. Ministers (Peru), R21, microfilm.

7 *El Comercio* (October 20, 1867; March 7, 1870; September 20, 1877), *El Peruano* (June 5, 1869; July 12, 1873), *El Nacional* (March 13, 1875).

Nevertheless, many free Chinese did find ways to make a living. As an 1870 government report from the province of Santa noted, ex-coolies often stayed in the countryside and became free wage-laborers.<sup>8</sup> Former indentured laborers also began joining work gangs organized by their compatriots by the early 1880s (Rodríguez Pastor 2001, 117-133, 155-161, 179-185; Gonzales 1985, 91-95). Well before this, a minority turned to farming. Some sharecropped; others rented (Stewart 1951, 124-125; Rodríguez Pastor 2001, 120-122). In 1871 the *asiático* Juan Francisco Casuana rented the *huerta* (truck farm) Rinconcito and some adjacent land in Huarochiri Province from Lorenza Chacaltana for four years with a fifth-year option.<sup>9</sup> In 1873 Casuana also was renting the *huerta* Cuspanca, but had apparently sublet it to another Chinese named Martín García who now was suing him for kicking him off the land before the end of their agreement in order to steal the harvest.<sup>10</sup> A few Chinese even owned plots that they farmed or sold or rented to others.<sup>11</sup> In addition to farming, ex-coolies traveled the countryside, entering plantations to hawk food and goods, or stationed themselves on specific plantations in order to sell things.<sup>12</sup>

*Asiáticos libres* also frequently left the countryside for Lima and other cities. Some worked as free wage-laborers, often in bakeries, in manufacturing, and as domestic servants – especially as cooks in homes.<sup>13</sup> Others turned to self-employment. Some sold food and hawked goods on city streets and in markets.<sup>14</sup> Others moved beyond street peddling and established businesses. Many opened *fondas* (small restaurants) in Lima, Trujillo, and elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> By 1872 Asians operated half of Lima's restaurants

8 "Informe Santa". Also see AGN, Criminales, Leg. 295, 1870, Exp.: Donayres contra Aquia (hurto), Rodríguez Pastor (2001, 84-85, 148-149, 179-180), Gonzales (1985, 90-91).

9 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1264, 1872, Exp.: Casual contra Santos Pachas (Rinconcito) and Leg. 1277, 1872, Exp.: Casuana contra Santos Pachas (huerta).

10 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1303, 1873, Exp.: García contra Casuana (derecho).

11 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1175, 1870, Exp.: Carbajal en Asin contra Vargas Gusmet and Leg. 1458, 1876, Exp.: Ayú contra Sava (pago).

12 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 295, 1870, Exp.: Donayres contra Aquia (hurto). ARL, Corte Superior, Causas Criminales [hereafter ARL, Criminales], 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 717, Exp. 4358. Also see Rodríguez Pastor (2001, 132).

13 "Informe Santa"; AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Cruz y Achón (fraude); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: De la Cruz y otros (hurto); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Abaló (conato de homicidio); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Asan (heridas); Leg. 183, 1860, Exp.: Achay (inquietud); Leg. 297, 1870, Exp.: Yauqui (robo); ARL, Criminales, 1860, Cód. 926, Leg. 701, Exp. 4113; 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4171; 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 717, Exp. 4362; *El Nacional* (October 11, 1870); *El Peruano* (September 23, 1871); Gibbs No. 107; Markham (1874, 367-370, 369); Fuentes (1866, 88).

14 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1271, 1872, Exp.: Yangas contra Torres (alimentos). Also see Rodríguez Pastor (2000a, 153-154), Stewart (1951, 126).

(146 out of 299) (Rodríguez Pastor 2000a, 93, 228). The abundance of Chinese *fondas* in the capital city made quite an impression on US. Minister Gibbs. “In all parts of the city”, he remarked, “are small eating houses or cook-shops kept by Chinese, and they are well patronized by the poor people, where they get more and better food for less money than with the natives” (Gibbs No. 107). *Asiáticos libres* also sold water, operated small general stores (*pulperías*), bigger grocery stores, meat shops, bakeries, and other specialty stores. Some even became moneylenders, while others ran gambling dens, sold opium, chicha, herbs and teas, and practiced Eastern medicine.<sup>16</sup>

Some people stressed post-contract economic success (Gibbs No. 107; *El Peruano*, September 23, 1871; Markham 1874, 369). A Peruvian senator insisted that ex-coolies “go and establish themselves in different towns, and we have many of them in Lima with their own establishments where they run their own businesses [...]. And I can assure [...] that however sad, wretched, and unhappy [Chinese] immigration is, there are, nonetheless, in Lima some of those miserable Asians who are richer than me or his honor” (*El Comercio*, January 11, 1873). Although a few ex-coolies

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15 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Cruz y Achón (fraude); Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Sánchez (hurto); Leg. 179, 1860, Exp.: Elías (robo); Leg. 180, 1860, Exp.: Chinos trastes; Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: De la Cruz y otros (hurto); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Asan (heridas); Leg. 183, 1860, Exp.: Asac contra Montero (maltrato); Leg. 297, 1870, Exp.: Yauqui (robo); AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1102, 1868, Exp.: Carrasco contra Silva; Leg. 1225, 1871, Exp.: Pereira contra Villegas (pago); Leg. 1297, 1873, Exp.: Bacigalupo en Aguilar contra Villegas; Leg. 1350, 1874, Exp.: Amaya contra León (pago); ARLI, Criminales, 1860, Cód. 926, Leg. 701, Exp. 4113; 1861, Cód. 928, Leg. 703, Exp. 4165; 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4171; 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4172; 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4179; 1866, Cód. 931, Leg. 709, Exp. 4258; 1867-1868, Cód. 933, Leg. 713, Exp. 4308; 1869, Cód. 934, Leg. 714, Exp. 4331. Also see “Informe Santa”, *El Comercio* (October 17, 1873), Fuentes (1866, 88-89), Hutchinson (1873, 134), Squier (1877, 112, 115, 135, 151), Rodríguez Pastor (2001, 215), Stewart (1951, 126).

16 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Cruz y Achón (fraude); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Abaló (conato de homicidio); Leg. 186, 1861, Exp.: Así y Asan (hurto); Leg. 297, 1870, Exp.: Contra Yauqui (robo); AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1255, 1871, Exp.: Soria contra Hurel (pago); Leg. 1267, 1872, Exp.: Flores contra Sánchez Mariátegui (pago); Leg. 1350, 1874: Sánchez (esperas); Leg. 1461, 1876, Exp.: Guerra (competencia); ARLI, Criminales, 1860, Cód. 926, Leg. 701, Exp. 4113; 1866, Cód. 931, Leg. 709, Exp. 4258; 1867-1868, Cód. 933, Leg. 713, Exp. 4308; 1869, Cód. 934, Leg. 714, Exp. 4331; 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 716, Exp. 4343; 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 717, Exp. 4358; *El Peruano* (September 23, 1871), *El Comercio* (June 2, 1859; November 28, 1867; March 23, 1868; August 5, 1868; August 17, 1868; November 12, 1877; November 26, 1877; December 15, 1877; April 16, 1878), *El Nacional* (September 9, 1870; May 15, 1874), *La Opinión Nacional* (May 28, 1874; May 29, 1874; August 19, 1874; September 14, 1874; September 25, 1874). Also see “Informe Santa”, Fuentes (1866, 88-89), Markham (1874, 369), Gibbs No. 107, Rodríguez Pastor (2000a, 125, 152-153, 228; 2001, 214-219), Stewart (1951, 126-128).

succeeded tremendously, such as Manuel de la Cruz in the introduction, most wealthy Chinese had never labored under contract. Instead, they had arrived as transnational merchants beginning in the late 1860s (Duffield 1877, 48-50; Stewart 1951, 128, 226; Lausent-Herrera 2011, 71-72). In any case, thousands of ex-coolies found ways to survive.

Free Chinese faced additional difficulties, including harassment from *ex-patronos* and government officials. In 1866 free Chinese complained to the U.S. Minister in Lima about being denied “the rights of a citizen”.<sup>17</sup> In fact, they could not stop people from invading their homes in search of runaway coolies and they, themselves, faced arbitrary arrest, kidnapping and a return to bonded labor.<sup>18</sup> Anti-vagrancy laws targeting Asians, first in the department of Lima in 1867 and nationally in 1869, became a pretext for badgering and arresting free Chinese. The laws required Chinese to carry documents proving they were free and had gainful employment (*El Comercio*, October 20, 1867; *El Peruano*, June 5, 1869). Police could demand to see papers on the spot and arrest them if they did not have them. But even having documents guaranteed little since police could destroy or hold the papers ransom. Moreover, officials often refused to issue documents, which could lead to future arrest (*El Comercio*, August 4, 1869; *El Nacional*, August 14, 1869). The authorities even hounded Chinese who had established businesses.<sup>19</sup> Finally, Chinese dealt with police raiding their homes and businesses, presumably for engaging in gambling and opium use.<sup>20</sup>

*Asiáticos libres* experienced enmity from the general populace as well. *El Comercio* called for the removal of Chinese from the city center on multiple occasions and for the closing of Eastern medicine shops and practices.<sup>21</sup> Discrimination also occurred in Lima’s hospitals and cemeteries

17 Enclosure No. 2, Dispatch No. 41, November 28, 1866, U.S. Ministers (Peru), R21, microfilm.

18 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Cruz y Achón (fraude); Leg. 183, 1860, Exp.: Asac contra Montero (maltrato); ARLA, Criminales, 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 717, Exp. 4362; Enclosure No. 2, Dispatch No. 41, November 28, 1866, U.S. Ministers (Peru), R21, microfilm; *El Nacional* (August 2, 1868; November 17, 1868).

19 *El Peruano* (November 14, 1868), *El Nacional* (May 15, 1874). Also see Rodríguez Pastor (2000a, 230).

20 *El Comercio* (June 6, 1851; February 11, 1856; September 6, 1857; February 12, 1860; March 7, 1860; October 6, 1860; February 8, 1868; February 12, 1868; June 9, 1873), *El Nacional* (July 12, 1871; August 18, 1871; November 21, 1874; November 30, 1874; December 10, 1874; December 22, 1874; January 13, 1875; January 23, 1875; February 3, 1875; February 9, 1875; February 15, 1875; February 23, 1875; March 23, 1875; October 22, 1875; December 22, 1875; September 16, 1876), *La Opinión Nacional* (December 15, 1873; April 29, 1874; June 2, 1874; July 10, 1874; August 17, 1874; October 29, 1874; October 31, 1874).

s.<sup>22</sup> Peruvians preyed on Chinese, stealing from their businesses and homes, and physically attacked them.<sup>23</sup> Free Chinese complained that they were “constantly hooted at and subjected to all classes of insults in the streets [...] in the public amusements we are mobbed and hooted at and sometimes even stoned back to our houses”.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Asians had to deal not only with being discriminated against and robbed, but also with threats to their safety.

Sinophobia culminated in 1881 during the War of the Pacific (1879-1883). The Chinese experience during this conflict was multifaceted, but the war created the conditions for the destruction of Chinese businesses and the massacre of at least 1,300 free Chinese. As Chilean troops swept through Peru’s coastal plantations, they began freeing coolies. Some ran away, but several thousand joined the Chileans as auxiliaries and soldiers.<sup>25</sup> But fighting for Chile was only part of the story. Chinese businessmen in Lima, in contrast, rallied to protect Peru by donating to the war effort and by establishing a militia to defend the capital (McKeown 2001, 140-141). In the end, however, these patriotic efforts did not protect free Chinese as Peruvian mobs attacked their businesses, homes, and bodies in 1881. That January, a massacre of 300-400 Chinese unfolded in Lima-Callao. Italian immigrants and their property also suffered during the upheaval, but Chinese were the main target.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. minister labeled the events a modern “Noche Triste”. “Louder and louder”, he recalled, “as the night drew on and louder and more pervading, horrible and bewildering as the night progressed became the mingled cries of vengeance and distress; and louder and ever increasing the roar of rifle shots along the streets, until their continuous roll resembled that of a regular battle”.<sup>27</sup> Another massacre occurred in Cañete in February. Peruvian intellectual and diplomat

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21 Rodríguez Pastor (2000a, 152-153), *El Comercio* (November 12, November 26, December 15, 1877).

22 *El Nacional* (July 4, 1867; August 9, 1870; August 10, 1879), Fuentes (1866, 89).

23 Enclosure No. 2, Dispatch No. 41, November 28, 1866, U.S. Ministers (Peru), R21, microfilm; AGN, Criminales, Leg. 180, 1860, Exp.: Chinos trastes; *El Comercio* (July 18, 1859; February 1, 1863; August 7, 1863; November 13, 1865; December 6, 1865; March 2, 1866; February 1, 1868; August 17, 1868; May 1, 1869; May 5, 1873; July 25, 1873; July 26, 1873; August 5, 1873); *El Nacional* (July 24, 1873).

24 Enclosure No. 2, Dispatch No. 41, November 28, 1866, U.S. Ministers (Peru), R21, microfilm.

25 Dispatch No. 173, November 5, 1880, U.S. Consul (Lambayeque), R2, microfilm. Also see Chou (2001, 197-225), Rodríguez Pastor (2000a, 450-452; 2000b, 151-178), Segall (1968, 117-133).

26 Enclosure No. 1, Dispatch No. 140, February 1, 1881, U.S. Consul (Callao), R10, microfilm.

27 Dispatch No. 237, February 2, 1881, U.S. Ministers (Peru), R35, microfilm.



Pedro Paz Soldán y Unánue (pseudonym Juan de Arona) observed that Afro-Peruvian and Andean peasants and workers “carrying thirty years of unwarranted hatred” for the Chinese murdered hundreds of them (Arona 1891, 49). Both Chinese merchants and workers were attacked, with 1,000 to 1,700 killed (Young 2014, 77-79). Anti-Chinese violence spiked in 1881, but free Chinese had faced harassment and violence from the public and government officials for over two decades.

In addition to the hostility and violence that Chinese experienced as outsiders, they had to contend with internal divisions and tensions. Chinese were not monolithic and did not always get along with each other. They came from different parts of China, spoke different dialects or languages, and had different traditions. Most came from southern China, but even then ethnic and native-place divisions existed. These immigrants did not originally see themselves as Chinese; rather they identified with a locality. These differences could lead to tension within the Chinese community (McKeown 2001, 62-64). Some *asiáticos libres* stole from and fought with each other over economic, legal, and personal matters.<sup>28</sup> Still, Peruvian hostility was the biggest challenge.

## BUILDING AND PROTECTING A COMMUNITY

Ex-coolies found ways to survive and improve their lot, but they quickly realized the difficulties of doing so on their own. In the face of so much hostility and not knowing whom to trust, former coolies began congregating and working together, forming their own sub-community. Divisions, rivalries, and tensions persisted among free Chinese, but overall they found it advantageous to build a Chinese community within Peruvian society for their own protection, socioeconomic advancement, and to maintain aspects of their cultural heritage.

Creating Chinese neighborhoods (*barrios chinos*) became one aspect of this strategy. William Jerningham, the British Consul-General in Peru during the late 1860s and early 1870s, observed that ex-coolies gathered in cities and towns to socialize and speak their native tongue (*El Peruano*, September

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28 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Achón (fraude); Leg 161, 1858, Exp.: Sánchez (hurto); Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Asán (hurto); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: De la Cruz y otros (hurto); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Asan (heridas); Leg. 184, 1861, Exp.: Días (homicidio de Asín); Leg. 297, 1870, Exp.: Yauqui (robo); ARL, Criminales, 1867-1868, Cód. 933, Leg. 713, Exp. 4308; 1869, Cód. 934, Leg. 714, Exp. 4328; 1869, Cód. 934, Leg. 714, Exp. 4331; *El Comercio* (November 8, 1856), *El Nacional* (January 22, 1872, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

23, 1871). *Limeños* similarly noted how ex-coolies congregated together in the city center and “in the vicinity of the market plaza”.<sup>29</sup> During the late 1850s, free Chinese began moving into two blocks of Jíron Ucayali in central Lima, laying the foundation for Lima’s Chinatown, known as Calle Capón (*El Comercio*, May 2, 1859). By the 1870s Calle Capón had become associated with these immigrants (Stewart 1951, 227; Rodríguez Pastor 2000a, 143-155). Richard Gibbs described Lima’s Chinatown in 1876 as follows, “Streets fronting on the large markets or those leading to them are filled by Chinese grocers, tailors, shoemakers, bakers, butchers, and other tradesmen so much so that walking around seeing the people, their shops and signs, you could easily imagine that you were in a Chinese town” (Gibbs No. 107). In addition to establishing businesses side by side, many Chinese shared residences in Lima and other cities.<sup>30</sup>

Congregating in specific areas made economic sense on multiple levels. Living near each other made pooling money and starting a business easier. U.S. traveler Ephraim George Squier praised such a business in Trujillo in the 1860s. The Bola de Oro restaurant “was kept by an association of Chinamen, each taking a special department, and all performing the work harmoniously and well” (Squier 1877, 115).<sup>31</sup> Chinese served as each other’s creditors as well. Achón, who took the name Manuel Sánchez, racked up debts with five transnational Chinese merchants in Lima-Callao in order to operate his store in Callao. Achón also became the creditor to at least forty-seven other Chinese, many of whom were ex-coolies and had bought goods on credit from him. Achón’s biggest debtor was his countryman Acuy who owed him 970 pesos. However, in 1874 Acuy absconded without paying his debt, meaning that Achón could not pay his debts either.<sup>32</sup> That same year, José León, a Chinese *fonda* owner in Lima, owed his countryman Francisco Amaya 600 pesos. Rather than pay, he too fled the city.<sup>33</sup> Compatriot unity broke down in these instances,

29 *El Comercio* (July 10, 1868). Also see *El Comercio* (March 28, 1856; November 28, 1867), *El Nacional* (October 23, 1874).

30 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Cruz y Achón (fraude); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Asan (heridas); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: De la Cruz y otros (hurto); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Abaló (conato de homicidio); Leg. 183, 1860, Exp.: Asac contra Montero (maltrato); Leg. 186, 1861, Exp.: Así y Asan (hurto); ARLI, Criminales, 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4171; 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4179; 1867-1868, Cód. 933, Leg. 713, Exp. 4308; *El Nacional* (November 21, 1870; October 23, 1874); *El Comercio* (January 23, 1878).

31 Chinese jointly ran other *fondas* and businesses in Trujillo. See ARLI, Criminales, 1867-1868, Cód. 933, Leg. 713, Exp. 4308; 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 717, Exp. 4362.

32 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1350, 1874, Exp.: Sánchez (esperas).

33 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1350, 1874, Exp.: Amaya contra León (pago).

but it undoubtedly had fostered these economic relationships in the first place. Chinese made non-business loans to each other as well.<sup>34</sup> Doing business with each other made sense because shared culture and sense of identity made it easier and a safer bet.

As with moneylending, Chinese employers and employees trusted each other the most and residing in the same area made finding each other easier. Chinese business owners regularly hired their countrymen.<sup>35</sup> Sometimes they found each other on their own, but free Chinese also ran agencies in Lima and other cities that, for a fee, helped coolies find better *patrones* or gain their freedom and then find employment, often with other Chinese.<sup>36</sup> In the countryside, Chinese labor agents and Chinese farmers hired their compatriots as well.<sup>37</sup> If *asiáticos libres* felt as if their host society did not respect them, why would they hire Peruvians when their compatriots were in the vicinity and needed work? Moreover, a language barrier existed for many, giving them even more reason to cooperate economically. Some surely took advantage of their compatriots, but creating a separate economic sphere benefitted ex-coolies more than attempting to work for people who associated them with slavery.

Not only did Chinese-owned businesses employ other Chinese, but many also catered to them.<sup>38</sup> Stores sold imports from China that appealed to Chinese (*El Comercio*, January 11, 1873; Gibbs No. 107). Eastern medicinal stores prospered largely because of the existence of Asian buyers.<sup>39</sup> Chinese theater similarly thrived (Markham 1874, 369; Valladares Chamorro 2012, 153-166). By 1869 Chinese ran a theater near the Santa Clara convent and Church in the vicinity of Lima's Chinatown (Valladares Chamorro 2012, 154, 163). Commenting on the success of Chinese theater, a Peruvian congressman in 1873 explained that Asians "have here in the Capital

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34 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Cruz y Achón (fraude); Leg. 297, 1870, Exp.: Yauqui (robo); ARLL, Criminales, 1864-1865, Cód. 930, Leg. 709, Exp. 4258; 1867-1868, Cód. 933, Leg. 713, Exp. 4308.

35 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Asan (heridas); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Abaló (conato de homicidio); ARLL, Criminales, 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4179; 1866, Cód. 931, Leg. 709, Exp. 4258; 1867-1868, Cód. 933, Leg. 713, Exp. 4308; *El Nacional* (June 28, 1869; January 15, 1877).

36 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Días (homicidio de Asín); *El Nacional* (September 9 and 13, 1870), Fuentes (1866, 88). Also see Lausent-Herrera (1983, 20).

37 For the latter see AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1277, 1872, Exp.: Casuana contra Santos Pachas (huerta); Leg. 1303, 1873, Exp.: García contra Casuana (derecho).

38 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: De la Cruz y otros (hurto); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Abaló (conato de homicidio); Gibbs No. 107. Also see Stewart (1951, 126, 226).

39 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Abaló (conato de homicidio); *El Peruano* (November 14, 1868). Also see Stewart (1951, 127), Rodríguez Pastor (2001, 218-219).

their own theater that rivals our Odeón” (*El Comercio*, January 11, 1873). U.S. Minister Gibbs similarly was impressed, noting three years later the expansion of Chinese theater (Gibbs No. 107).<sup>40</sup> Merchant immigrants may have started the most impressive businesses and centers of entertainment, but these places prospered in large part because they served coolies and ex-coolies. With respect to entertainment, opium and gambling safe havens run by and for Chinese prospered in their neighborhoods.<sup>41</sup> By 1856 Chinese had their own opium dens in downtown Lima and the surrounding area, which sometimes advertised in Chinese characters. Calle de Judíos and Calle Zavala became the limeño opium center of this early period.<sup>42</sup> Gatherings of a dozen or more *asiáticos* smoking opium in the city center were by no means atypical.<sup>43</sup> Gambling houses had as many as one hundred Chinese gathering to play games of chance (*El Comercio*, September 6, 1857). Chinese theaters could also serve as gambling venues.<sup>44</sup>

Concentrating businesses and residencies in specific areas made selling and consuming easier, but forming a clear sub-community also enabled Chinese to surround themselves and interact with the only truly friendly people they knew: each other. Having Chinese neighbors was comforting because it reduced the likelihood of harassment from the authorities and a hostile public. Chinese gathered in each other’s homes and shops to socialize, including for gambling and opium use.<sup>45</sup> Having Asian neighbors limited the number of eyes monitoring their residences and the number

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40 Another Chinese theater opened in 1874 and Chinese began renting the Odeón theater in 1875. See Valladares Chamorro (2012, 154, 163-165).

41 *El Comercio* (February 8, 1868; August 17 and 26, 1868; September 23, 1868), *El Nacional* (March 1, 1871), Stewart (1951, 127).

42 *El Comercio* (March 28, 1856; April 7, 1856; April 23, 1856; July 9, 1860).

43 *El Nacional* (May 23, 1873; June 25, 1874), *La Opinión Nacional* (June 25 1874; October 28, 1874).

44 *El Nacional* (July 12, 1871; February 21, April 9, 10, 12, 13, 1877).

45 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Cruz y Achón (fraude); Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Asán (hurto); Leg. 180, 1860, Exp.: Chinos trastes; Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: De la Cruz y otros (hurto); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Asan (heridas); Leg. 297, 1870, Exp.: Yauqui (robo); ARL, Criminales, 1860, Cód. 926, Leg. 701, Exp. 4113; 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4172; 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4179; 1867-1868, Cód. 933, Leg. 713, Exp. 4308; *El Comercio* (November 21, 1861). Also see *El Comercio* (June 6, 1851; February 11, 1856; September 6, 1857; February 12, 1860; March 7, 1860; October 6, 1860; February 8, 1868; June 9, 1873), *El Nacional* (July 12, 1871; August 18, 1871; November 21, 1874; November 30, 1874; December 10, 1874; December 22, 1874; January 13, 1875; January 23, 1875; February 3, 1875; February 9, 1875; February 15, 1875; February 23, 1875; March 23, 1875; October 22, 1875; December 22, 1875; September 16, 1876), *La Opinión Nacional* (December 15, 1873; April 29, 1874; June 2, 1874; July 10, 1874; August 17, 1874; October 29, 1874; October 31, 1874).

of people hoping to charge them with violating the law. Even when officials wanted to pursue *asiáticos* for “vices”, they found it difficult because free Chinese could join together in order to undermine these efforts. Some could serve as lookouts, while others could simply withhold information.<sup>46</sup> Ex-coolies also gathered to practice their religion, often in secret because the Catholic society in which they lived frowned upon their beliefs and traditions. *El Comercio* worried about Chinese secretly establishing “a species of pagodas to their monstrous cult” in their homes and businesses (*El Comercio*, November 21, 1861). A traveler in Lima noted that although true freedom of worship did not exist in Peru, these immigrants created their own “temples”, which slowly became more acceptable over time (Duffield 1877, 33).<sup>47</sup> Having their own neighborhood made it that much easier to maintain their culture.

*Asiáticos libres* further protected themselves through the creation of Chinese societies. Overseas Chinese in general formed associations to maintain their culture, to aid the Chinese community with legal matters, and to help each other economically (i.e., as mutual aid societies or as loan providers) (Kuhn 2008, 161-179; McKeown 2001, 78-80, 104-118). As early as 1860, a group of Chinese had received permission from the municipality in Lima to establish its own association and celebrate “Asiatic festivals”. However, the group came under fire for supposedly creating a Chinese temple, for which it had not gotten permission. As long as the members did not directly challenge Catholicism, they seemed free to operate (*El Comercio*, October 6, 1860).<sup>48</sup> By the early 1870s Chinese associational life had grown considerably (Markham 1874, 369). Associations often formed based on native place back in China, meaning that they did not unite all immigrants. For example, in Lima in 1867, Siyi Chinese formed the Gu Gangzhou Huiguan association (McKeown 2001, 63, 138-139). In spite of their differing roots, these organizations could cooperate. In 1868 and 1869, three major Chinese societies jointly petitioned Chinese prince Kung via U.S. diplomats to protect Chinese in Peru.<sup>49</sup> By the mid 1870s Lima had a number of Chinese benevolent societies that, once again, were willing to work together. In 1875 the city’s Chinese

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46 *El Comercio* (November 30, 1859; August 26, 1868; April 17, 1869), *El Nacional* (October 23, 1874).

47 By the late 1870s Peruvians accepted Chinese businesses closing for Chinese New Year. See *El Comercio* (January 21, 1879).

48 The early Chinese-run agencies in Lima also had permission to hold Chinese festivals. See *El Comercio* (June 23, 1864).

49 Lausent-Herrera (2000, 21), Dispatch No. 201, October 22, 1869; Dispatch No. 209, January 29, 1870, U.S. Ministers (Peru), R23, microfilm.

worried that the prefect, in the name of combating vagrancy and vice, wanted to infringe on their rights and break up the *barrio chino*. In response, Chinese associations united and formally protested in *El Nacional*, arguing that their organizations could ensure the colony's adherence to Peruvian law (*El Nacional*, March 13, 1875).

Besides creating a safer environment for economic advancement, entertainment, and the maintenance of Chinese culture, Chinese united to avoid bonded labor. In 1868 *El Nacional* explained that Chinese gravitated to the city because they could surround themselves with friendly countrymen and protect themselves from those who wished to return them to a life of virtual slavery (*El Nacional*, August 2, 1868). In fact, *asiáticos libres* regularly helped *colonos asiáticos*. Some deposited coolies' meager earnings in safe places for future use.<sup>50</sup> They also paid or lent money to free their indentured brethren and petitioned officials on their behalf, while others provided fake freedom papers or helped them run away.<sup>51</sup> Peruvians worried that free Chinese and their social organizations helped coolies rebel and flee.<sup>52</sup> A writer in *El Comercio* in 1869 complained that "the runaway *chino* quietly moves into the domicile, Chinese restaurant, grocery store, brothel, gambling house, or bar that his protector and adviser indicates" (*El Comercio*, April 17, 1869). These voices surely exaggerated the degree to which free Chinese helped coolies escape servitude, but this undoubtedly occurred.

Free Chinese often showed a willingness to assist their compatriots when they were in desperate situations. Leaders of Lima's Chinese benevolent societies recognized that successful *asiáticos libres* tended to assist their poor countrymen by helping them find shelter and allowing them to reside in overcrowded rooms and buildings because of "friendship, compatriotism, and lenity" (*El Nacional*, March 13, 1875). By 1858 ex-coolie José Cruz owned an inn and a *fonda* in Lima where he welcomed his countrymen to gather and fraternize. He provided them with shelter and food when they were poor, only expecting payment if and when they had the means. Moreover, he quickly became a leader within the Chinese community, gaining the government sanctioned title of "*apoderado de todos*

50 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1397, 1875, Exp.: Ah Mow contra Jacques.

51 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 160, 1858, Exp.: Asam (hurto); Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Cruz y Achón (fraude); Leg. 183, 1860, Exp.: Asac contra Montero (maltrato); Leg. 215, 1863, Exp.: Casas (flajelación); AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1243, 1871, Exp.: De la Cruz contra Chuecas (contrata); ARL, Criminales, 1860, Cód. 926, Leg. 701, Exp. 4113; *El Comercio* (March 23, 1869, 2nd ed.); *El Nacional* (September 9, 13, 16, 20, 1870; September 16, 1876).

52 *El Comercio* (September 8, 1868), *El Nacional* (September 9, 13, October 11, 1870).

*los chinos*’ (representative of all the Chinese) and spending much of his time defending his countrymen in court when they were accused of committing crimes such as gambling or being runaways.<sup>53</sup> When Chinese fought with Peruvians their compatriots sometimes helped them as well. A coolie named José Suroni got in a tussle with a water carrier in Trujillo in 1862 that nearly spilled into an all-out battle between free and indentured Chinese and the entire water carriers’ guild.<sup>54</sup> Finally, some Chinese who stole found countrymen to cover for them, hide them, or hide the goods they had stolen.<sup>55</sup>

While free Chinese established a cohesive community within Peru, they also maintained direct and indirect transnational bonds with China and the larger diaspora. The merchants who began arriving in the late 1860s undoubtedly had active economic and family ties to China, San Francisco, and elsewhere in the Americas (Lausent-Herrera 2011, 71-72).<sup>56</sup> Some, such as Lay San, transferred their businesses and returned to China after making their fortunes (*La Actualidad* (Lima), February 17, 1881). Lima’s Chinese theaters relied on Chinese performers from abroad (*El Nacional*, November 19, 1870; Valladares Chamorro 2012, 154). Chinese associational life was also transnational. As stated earlier, these organizations sought protection from the Chinese government. In 1874 Chinese diplomats finally visited Peru and a decade later the Chinese government coopted a Peruvian Chinese society and transformed it into the Sociedad de Beneficencia China (SBC) to help represent it. The SBC was tasked with reconnecting ex-coolies with their homeland, particularly through help with letter writing. However, Chinese organizations had been taking such action for years (McKeown 2001, 115-116, 138). It is clear that ex-coolies established transnational ties, often with the help of the merchant class, before the end of the coolie era. In fact, a legal battle between the *cusqueña* Juana Carrasco and her Chinese husband José Silva over control of their property indicates that common ex-coolies had ties to the larger diaspora by 1868. That year, Carrasco feared that her husband was trying to sell their property and escape to California.<sup>57</sup> Going to California made sense if Silva had connections to its Chinese community.

53 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Cruz y Achón (fraude); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Asan (heridas); Leg. 183, 1860, Exp.: Asac contra Montero (maltrato).

54 ARL, Criminales, 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4172.

55 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 179, 1860, Exp.: Elías (robo); ARL, Criminales, 1860, Cód. 926, Leg. 701, Exp. 4113; 1862-1863, Cód. 929, Leg. 704, Exp. 4179.

56 Achón/Manuel Sánchez’s 1874 bankruptcy case reveals the proliferation of transnational Chinese firms. See AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1350, 1874, Exp.: Sánchez (esperas).

57 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1102, 1868, Exp.: Carrasco contra Silva.

Coolies shared much with African slaves, but many finished their lives in a fashion similar to other overseas Chinese. As elsewhere, Peru's free Chinese developed and maintained a Chinese identity and a sense of solidarity with transnational aspects based on shared background and out of necessity.

## INTEGRATION INTO THE HOST SOCIETY

Philip Kuhn notes that Chinese reacted in seemingly opposite ways to anti-Chinese legislation in the United States during the late nineteenth century. On the one hand, they took a "defensive" posture and formed Chinatowns. On the other hand, they became "proactive" and moved towards acculturation (Kuhn 2008, 230). Peru's *asiáticos libres* clearly followed the defensive path, but they too made efforts to integrate. "In all", observed U.S. Minister Gibbs, Chinese "seem to assimilate themselves to the habits and customs of the country" (Gibbs No. 107). In particular, Chinese began incorporating themselves into Peruvian society through language and naming, business, interracial sexual relationships and marriage, cross-cultural friendships and social interaction, the adoption of Catholicism, and participation in Peruvian civic life. Coolies came as laborers and ex-coolies and transnational merchants created a Chinese sub-community, but the process of integration transformed Chinese into immigrants. The effort to carve out a Chinese space in the Peruvian nation began during the coolie era. In reality, then, the post-indenture experience shared much with Peru's twentieth-century Chinese immigrant experience in terms of both separation and integration.

Language and naming were central to Chinese integration. Accurate statistics of Spanish-speaking Chinese do not exist, but criminal and civil records indicate that many ex-coolies had learned Spanish. Most coolies and even some free Chinese in these cases needed interpreters, but many free Chinese who appear could speak Spanish and some served as interpreters. The multifaceted interactions between *asiáticos libres* and Peruvians examined in the following pages further suggest that many had become proficient in Spanish. Many also adopted Spanish names. The same criminal and civil cases reveal that some coolies had received a Spanish first name from an employer, but that many had not. In contrast, free Chinese in these cases were more likely to have Spanish first names and even last names. Although some received their name, especially a given one, from an employer, many undoubtedly chose names post-contract.



Chinese who converted to Christianity typically took Spanish names, but these same criminal and civil records indicate that names could change without conversion. Still, name changing did not mean abandoning Chinese names. Instead, many Chinese strategically adopted two or more names as a way of constructing various identities that would help their advancement within their own community, as well as the larger society (Yun 2008, 206).<sup>58</sup> For example, the previously mentioned Chinese storeowner Achón, also went by Manuel Sánchez depending on the circumstances.<sup>59</sup>

Language and naming aided another means of integration: economic activity. Although Chinese formed a sub-community, they regularly did business with non-Chinese. U.S. Minister Gibbs explained this reality thusly:

As the Chinaman is laborious and industrious, being satisfied with small gains and having no luxurious vices or habits, he sells cheaper and gives a better article for less money than shopkeepers of other nationalities. I suppose that these shops, which were originally started with the idea of catching the trade of their fellow countrymen as they came to the market, have gradually attracted the natives, who find it to their benefit to supply their wants from the Chinese (Gibbs No. 107).

Chinese businesses targeted other Chinese, but these businesses themselves became popular with Peruvians. It is also clear that ex-coolies were going to the market and likely purchasing things from non-Chinese. Chinese *fondas* particularly appealed to the general public (*Ibid.*). Peruvians patronized other Chinese-owned businesses, such as *pulperías* and the chicha tavern that the *chino* José María Santillan ran with his Peruvian companion Juana Dávila in Trujillo.<sup>60</sup>

Chinese and non-Chinese did real estate business with each other. Chinese often rented housing and business property from Peruvians. In 1860 a group of ex-coolies were renting a room in the building in which the Sub-Prefect and Intendent of Lima lived. Their Peruvian landlord looked the other way when Chinese gathered there to gamble, but the government official was embarrassed publicly when word got out about gambling occurring right beneath him (*El Comercio*, March 7, 8, 1860). Chinese, including Manuel Aloy and José Guerra, rented space from Peruvians to operate *fondas*.<sup>61</sup> Chinese also bought property outright from Peruvians,

58 Lisa Yun makes this point for coolies in Cuba.

59 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1350, 1874, Exp.: Sánchez (esperas).

60 ARL, Criminales, 1869, Cód. 934, Leg. 714, Exp. 4331; 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 716, Exp. 4343.

61 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1297, 1873, Exp.: Bacigalupo en Aguilar contra Villegas; Leg. 1461, 1876, Exp.: Guerra (competencia).

such as when the *asiático* José Dolores bought a store on Paz-Soldán Street in Lima from M. P. Silva at the end of 1867 (*El Nacional*, January 7, 1868). These transactions, however, were not unidirectional. Chinese sold their stores and property in the city to Peruvians (*El Nacional*, July 11, November 4, 1873). Similar situations occurred in the countryside. In the early 1870s, the *asiático* Juan Francisco Casuana leased several *chacras* (small farm) in Huarochirí from different Peruvian owners.<sup>62</sup> Conversely, Ayú rented farmland near Lima to a Peruvian.<sup>63</sup> In one case, José Joaquín Asín, a free Chinese man, sold his *chacra* Aramburu near Lima to Josefa Carbajal in the 1860s, but hoped the court would support his effort to repossess it in 1870 because Carbajal's son, who now ran the farm, had racked up debts with him.<sup>64</sup>

The Asín case illustrates another form of economic interaction: the extension of credit. At times, as with Asín, Chinese lent to Peruvians. Advances did not exist solely in monetary form. In 1871 José Soria, an Asian butcher in Lima, advanced the Peruvian soap and candle maker Clodimiro Hurel 2,780 pesos worth of tallow with the understanding that Hurel would repay him in candles and soap. However, Hurel had only paid back a fraction when Soria learned that Hurel was trying to sell his business and avoid paying the rest. Soria hoped the court would force Hurel to pay up, either in candles and soap or in cash, but Hurel went missing.<sup>65</sup> Chinese regularly borrowed from Peruvians as well. By the early 1870s José Villegas, a Chinese restaurant owner in Lima, and José Sánchez Mariátegui, a Chinese grocery store owner in Lima, had debts with multiple Peruvians.<sup>66</sup> Finally, Alón (Manuel Sánchez), who borrowed from and lent to other Chinese, also had a debt of 405 pesos in 1874 with Angel Moreal, a Peruvian wholesaler in Callao.<sup>67</sup> The extension of credit required a certain level of trust and that trust could only be gained as Chinese integrated into Peruvian society. This economic confidence between Chinese and others, in turn, encouraged their wider acceptance in Peruvian society.

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62 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1264, 1872, Exp.: Casual contra Santos Pachas (Rinconsito); Leg. 1277, 1872, Exp.: Casuana contra Santos Pachas (huerta); Leg. 1303, 1873, Exp.: García contra Casuana (derecho); *El Nacional* (December 5, 1873).

63 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1458, 1876, Exp.: Ayú contra Sava (pago).

64 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1175, 1870, Exp.: Carbajal en Asín contra Vargas Gusmet.

65 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1255, 1871, Exp.: Soria contra Hurel (pago).

66 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1225, 1871, Exp.: Pereira contra Villegas (pago); Leg. 1267, 1872, Exp.: Flores contra Mariátegui (pago); Leg. 1297, 1873, Exp.: Bacigalupo en Aguilar contra Villegas.

67 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1350, 1874, Exp.: Sánchez (esperas).

Love and partnership, often unintentionally, contributed to social integration as well.<sup>68</sup> Chinese immigration during the coolie era was 99.9 percent male, meaning sexual relations and marriage for most Chinese had to be with non-Asians. Chinese often had relationships with Peruvian women without getting married.<sup>69</sup> For example, José Félix Ganoza and Alón (aka Pedro Sevilla), two former coolies living in Trujillo in 1860, got in a skirmish with a Peruvian man Baltazar Nava over the Peruvian woman Concepción Zavaleta. Nava and Zavaleta had once been lovers, but now she was with Ganoza. An enraged Nava tried to attack Ganoza, but Ganoza escaped; so Nava assaulted Alón. Nava's jealousy apparently did not hurt the relationship between Ganoza and Zavaleta because soon they were living together unmarried.<sup>70</sup> Affairs and unofficial partnerships did not always have happy outcomes. In Ascope in 1869, Antonio Sánchez Alén, a former coolie and now *pulpero* and pig slaughterer, was in a relationship with Manuela Castillo, a Peruvian woman. Distrust would kill this relationship, however. Sánchez Alén believed that Pedro González, a Chinese *fonda* owner, had convinced Castillo to steal from him. In a drunken rage, Sánchez Alén snuck up behind González and hacked him with an ax. González survived, while Sánchez Alén went to prison for five years leaving behind a broken relationship.<sup>71</sup> During the early 1870s Juan Torres, a Chinese meat and lard vendor in Lima's central market, also developed a strained relationship with his former Peruvian lover, Catalina Yangas, over child support payments.<sup>72</sup>

Ex-coolies formed "legitimate" relationships with Peruvian women. Indeed, official marriages regularly occurred.<sup>73</sup> Manuel de la Cruz's story, which opened this article, serves as an example (*El Nacional*, July 22, 1871). Likewise, Pedro González, the Chinese *fonda* owner attacked by his compatriot Antonio Sánchez Alén, was married to a Peruvian woman with whom he had children.<sup>74</sup> By the time Juan Torres was in court

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68 Lausent-Herrera observes this process for the coolie era, but documents more the post-coolie era. See "*Mujeres olvidadas*" and "*Tusans*".

69 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Sánchez (hurto); Leg. 182, 1860, Exp.: Asan (heridas); Leg. 298, 1870, Exp.: San (homicidio); ARL, Criminales, 1867-1868, Cód. 933, Leg. 713, Exp. 4308; 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 716, Exp. 4343; 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 717, Exp. 4358; *El Comercio* (May 29, 1866; October 8, 1867); *El Nacional* (July 2, 1866).

70 ARL, Criminales, 1860, Cód. 925, Leg. 699, Exp. 4094.

71 ARL, Criminales, 1869, Cód. 934, Leg. 714, Exp. 4331.

72 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1271, 1872, Exp.: Yangas contra Torres (alimentos).

73 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 161, 1858, Exp.: Cruz y Achón (fraude); Leg. 180, 1860, Exp.: Chinos trastes; Leg. 185, 1861, Exp.: Velargues y Mejía contra Pomar (maltrato); AGN, Ministerio de Justicia (R.P.J.), Causas Criminales, Leg. 2, 1870-1883, Exp.: Castillo (hurto).

74 ARL, Criminales, 1869, Cód. 934, Leg. 714, Exp. 4331.

with Catalina Yangas over child support payments, he too had married a Peruvian and now had a “legitimate” child.<sup>75</sup> Before he ran away in 1868, the ex-coolie José Silva had been married to the *cusqueña* Juana Carrasco for five years. During their marriage they had four children and acquired two *fondas* in the capital city that they operated together. Silva, however, gambled the family’s wealth away. Carrasco worked hard to raise funds to pay off her husband’s debts, but he proceeded to lose money gambling again and then abandoned his family for California.<sup>76</sup> Interracial couples involving Chinese men and Peruvian women were not out of the ordinary, and, just like other couples, both love and tension characterized them.

Chinese married women of varying backgrounds. Some married white women. U.S. Minister Gibbs, for example, remarked that Chinese “intermarry with the lower class of whites, mestizas, and cholas, and by these are looked upon as quite a catch for they make good husbands, industrious, domestic, and fond of their children [...] I often meet children in the streets whose almond-shaped eyes show their Chinese origin” (Gibbs No. 107). Of course, Gibbs’s comment also reveals Chinese partnering with non-whites. In fact, marriage with mestiza, indigenous, and Afro-Peruvian women was more frequent. Based on research in parish archives in Humay and Pisco, Humberto Rodríguez Pastor has concluded that most marriages involving Asian men during the second half of the nineteenth century were to non-white women (Rodríguez Pastor 2000a, 351-354). Foreigners’ observations from the period suggest this as well. British Consul-General Jerningham noted Chinese marrying and having children with Afro-Peruvian and indigenous women (*El Peruano*, September 23, 1871). A German traveler from the 1880s commented that Asians had a hard time finding wives, which led one of them to begin a business recruiting women from the sierra to marry free Chinese on the coast (Rodríguez Pastor 2001, 126-127). Chinese did not solely marry non-white women, but it was definitely more common.

Marriage and partnership offered former coolies an additional level of support in a hostile world. In many cases, as evident in the stories of José María Santillan and Juana Dávila and José Silva and Juana Carrasco, these unions meant that another individual could help with a business and maintain a home.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, these unions furthered the process

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75 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1271, 1872, Exp.: Yangas contra Torres (alimentos).

76 AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1102, 1868, Exp.: Carrasco contra Silva.

77 Recall that José María Santillan and Juana Dávila ran a chicha tavern in Trujillo, while José Silva and Juana Carrasco operated two *fondas*. See ARLI, Criminales, 1870, Cód.

of social integration (López 2013, 82-114).<sup>78</sup> Forming interracial families demonstrated that Chinese were not separatists and indeed wanted to interact with the larger community. Some Peruvians may have seen these unions as unwanted racial mixing, but marriage sent the positive message that Chinese were not outsiders and could fit into Peruvian society. Marriage also surely encouraged former coolies to adopt aspects of Peruvian culture. Peruvian women learned from their husbands about Chinese customs and beliefs, but the opposite occurred as well. Interracial marriage itself was an act of social integration that facilitated cultural assimilation.

Chinese socialized with Peruvians outside of marriage. Of course, interracial marriages fostered these social relationships. The *chicheros* José María Santillan and Juana Dávila had non-Chinese friends in Trujillo. On March 19, 1870, the couple hosted their Peruvian neighbors for a night of fun in Santillan's honor because it was his saint's day. Unfortunately, a Peruvian soldier in search of chicha and a good time crashed the party, and soon Santillan and the soldier were fighting. In the end, Santillan and Dávila were injured, but their Peruvian friends testified on their behalf and the soldier received a year of imprisonment.<sup>79</sup> Interracial unions, however, were not necessary for Chinese to associate with Peruvians. Nearly a decade earlier, Santillan was working in the Hotel del Comercio in Trujillo and was "intimate friends" with the Peruvian barber Gaspar Álvarez.<sup>80</sup> Some Chinese Catholic converts maintained close relationships with their Peruvian godparents.<sup>81</sup> Chinese and Peruvians could meet and socialize on the spot. While returning to Huanchaco, Antonio Aguja, a Chinese *pulpero*, met Peruvian carpenter Lorenzo Ricalde who was headed to Trujillo. Apparently they hit it off and continued to travel together.<sup>82</sup> Chinese socializing with Peruvians clearly went beyond a love interest.

As Isabelle Lausent-Herrera has argued, many Chinese adopted Catholicism or some form of adherence to the Church as they integrated into Peruvian society (Lausent-Herrera 1992). Although accurate conversion numbers await careful examination of parish records, plenty of evidence exists. For example, booksellers advertised catechism and religious

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935, Leg. 716, Exp. 4343 and AGN, Civiles, Leg. 1102, 1868, Exp.: Carrasco contra Silva. Also See Lausent-Herrera (2009, 116).

78 Kathleen López similarly argues that Chinese-Afro-Cuban marriages helped both groups advance socially and economically.

79 ARL, Criminales, 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 716, Exp. 4343.

80 ARL, Criminales, 1861, Cód. 928, Leg. 703, Exp. 4165.

81 AGN, Criminales, Leg. 174, 1860, Exp.: Ramos contra Miranda y Julian (conato de homicidio).

82 ARL, Criminales, 1867-1868, Cód. 933, Leg. 713, Exp. 4308.

instruction books for Chinese laboring on plantations in Lima's newspapers, indicating that some coolies converted (*El Comercio*, November 21, 1866). But criminal and civil cases suggest that free Chinese were likelier to have converted than their bonded brethren. Some conversions surely were done out of expediency (i.e., to get permission to legally marry, to create fictive kinship ties through god-parentage, or to gain more general social acceptance). Chinese immigrants had a multi-religious background (Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, local folk beliefs, etc.) and were traditionally more tolerant of religious diversity than Westerners, which made conversion and/or religious syncretism easier.<sup>83</sup> Thus, many new Catholics probably retained cultural and religious beliefs from China.

For many Chinese, these were meaningful conversions. "Great numbers have become converts to Catholicism", U.S. minister Gibbs reported, "and they are apparently very fervent in their devotions and attentive to the ceremonies of the church. In the cemetery I have noticed several niches, in the costly part of the ground, with Chinese inscriptions" (Gibbs No. 107). Others were equally impressed by Chinese willingness to adopt Christianity.<sup>84</sup> Chinese parents often baptized their children as well.<sup>85</sup> The fact that José María Santillan and Juana Dávila were having a party with Peruvian friends to celebrate the day of Santillan's patron saint illustrates religious conversion and its integrative power.<sup>86</sup> Regardless of the sincerity of the conversion, affirming Catholicism undoubtedly helped Chinese gain acceptance.

*Asiáticos libres* integrated more fully by identifying with the Peruvian *patria* and its cultural traditions. *El Nacional* highlighted free Chinese celebrating Peruvian independence in 1874, noting, "Nearly 300 children of the Celestial Empire have gathered together and gone through the streets waving the flag, shooting off fireworks and making, in short, diverse manifestations of jubilation. It looks like the Chinese are beginning to participate in our legitimate pleasures" (*El Nacional*, July 28, 1874). Free Chinese also honored President Manuel Pardo on several occasions in

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83 For an overview of the religious background of overseas Chinese see Pan(ed.) (1999, 80-83). For a discussion of conversion and the religious flexibility of overseas Chinese see Kuhn (2008, 58-82).

84 *El Peruano* (October 2, 1874), *El Nacional* (July 22, 1871; December 24, 1874; January 8, 1876; September 5, 1876).

85 Parish records from Ascope note 17 children with at least one Chinese parent being baptized between 1874 and 1879. From 1880 to 1886 another 50 were baptized. This data comes from Humberto Rodríguez Pastor's unpublished "Inventario de chinos registrados en las parroquias del Arzobispado de Trujillo - La Libertad".

86 ARL, Criminales, 1870, Cód. 935, Leg. 716, Exp. 4343.

the mid 1870s. Englishman Clements R. Markham described one such event from 1874:

A number of Chinamen, in the name of the numerous colony of their compatriots, settled in Peru, presented an address to Don Manuel Pardo, the President of the Republic, on occasion of the completion of the second year of his term of office. They allude to the guarantees and equal rights which have been secured to them, and to the protection they have received; and warmly express their gratitude to his Excellency's Government (Markham 1874, 370).<sup>87</sup>

In expressing gratitude to the president for his protection, Chinese stressed their inclusion in the Peruvian nation. When Lima's Chinese donated to a national relief fund in the wake of a major earthquake in 1868 they communicated patriotism (*El Comercio*, September 18, 1868). As noted earlier, Lima's Chinese donated to the Peruvian war effort against Chile. By 1884 Chinese merchants, who were most likely not ex-coolies but had ties to them, were donating to bullfights, popular public events (*El Comercio*, February 18, 1884). As Chinese increasingly identified publicly with their host society, they demonstrated they belonged.

## CONCLUSION

The Chinese post-contract experience was similar in some aspects to that of indenture, but it also differed in significant ways. *Asiáticos libres* had to find ways to provide for themselves. Some remained in the countryside while others went to the city. Some became wage laborers while others became peddlers and business owners. Free Chinese covered their basic needs; a few even thrived. But hardships continued. *Patrones*, government officials, and others harassed *asiáticos libres* and made life difficult for them. Ex-coolies faced the threat of arrest or a return to bondage. Peruvians also tormented free Chinese by insulting them, stealing from them, throwing things at them, and kicking them. Many of the troubles faced by coolies continued well after the completion of the labor contract.

And yet, in spite of continued difficulties, it is clear that coolies eventually became immigrants whose experiences shared much with other overseas Chinese. This is an important point because scholars have tended to divorce coolies from the rest of the Chinese who arrived in the Americas

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87 Also see *El Nacional* (August 4, 1876) and Stewart (1951, 226).

during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The reality of *colonos asiáticos* being yanked from their homes in China and abused both during the transpacific voyage and once in Peru makes it impossible to deny similarities to slavery. However, as this essay suggests, viewing coolies solely through the prism of slavery can be limiting because it can obscure the fact that thousands of Chinese gained their freedom and stayed in Peru during the coolie era. Incorporating an immigrant and Chinese diasporic framework sheds light on how post-contract Chinese integrated into Peruvian society while maintaining a Chinese identity.

As elsewhere, Peru's free Chinese reacted in two main ways to the hostility they experienced. First, as a defensive reaction, they united and formed their own sub-community. *Asiáticos libres* gravitated to the same areas and formed their own neighborhoods. Here they established their own businesses that catered to each other. Moreover, they worked for each other, lived together, and often cooperated as a group. Living in the same proximity also gave these immigrants the opportunity to create a safe space to maintain aspects of their culture and escape the marginalization they experienced. In addition, they forged transnational ties, particularly after the arrival of Chinese merchants. Second, in contrast to these efforts to live apart, free Chinese also incorporated themselves into Peruvian society. They learned Spanish and took new names. They did business, socialized with, and married non-Asians. They adopted Catholicism or aspects of this religion and made efforts to demonstrate Peruvian patriotism. These adaptations enabled ex-coolies to begin constructing hyphenated identities (Sino-Peruvian) that made it easier for Peruvians to accept the presence of free Chinese during the coolie era and laid the foundation for a Chinese space in the Peruvian nation. Chinese undoubtedly remained vulnerable in Peru, as shown by the massacres of 1881, but post-indenture Chinese had taken important steps toward inclusion well before this event, while holding onto a Chinese sense of self.



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