

NATIONALISM CONSTRUCTED AGAINST “OTHERS”: CHIAPAS’S ANTI-
CHINESE MOVEMENT AND STATE FORMATION IN POSTREVOLUTIONARY
MEXICO

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

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A handful of historians such as Evelyn Hu-Dehart, Degaldo Robert Romero Chao, Juan Puig Schivonne, and Gerardo Rénique have provided a solid foundation for the studies of the Chinese in Mexico. Their studies have explored vast spans of themes regarding global migration, ethnic relations, Chinese settlement and resistance, and questions of national identity, etc. in Mexico. This thesis, while providing a review of the majority of this literature, discovered that most of the modern scholars focused on the early coolie labor and transnational movements of Chinese immigrants who settled mainly in northern Mexico and the borderland region. Few, except for M.L. Guillén, had conducted studies of the Chinese in the southern region of Mexico. One of the goals of this thesis is to remedy this northern focus and add to the works that focus on the southern regions of Mexico.

From my research, I used the documents found in Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) on the anti-Chinese movements in Chiapas, a southern state of Mexico, to examine

the motives and causes of the anti-Chinese movement in this remote region where the Chinese population was less dense.

Drawing from the evidence, I argue that the anti-Chinese movement in the early 1930s was linked to the newly established the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), the party that later became the party that dominated Mexican politics. The anti-Chinese movement in Chiapas also demonstrates the PNR's indirect control and its need to negotiate power over the historically rebellious state. In addition, this thesis also applies the theories of Gerardo Rénique and Pierre Bourdieu on nation state building to this particular case of Mexican anti-Chinese movement in Chiapas and examines the apparatus for postrevolutionary state formation processes. I conclude that the new state incorporated the anti-Chinese movement as a means to accumulate various forms of political and social capital to enhance its legitimacy.

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Dedication

To my dear parents, my friends, and my anxiety.

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Chapter 1—Introduction

Introduction

Between 1910 and 1940, anti-Chinese movements were prevalent across Mexico. Violence, looting, persecution of the Chinese, and revolutionary fervor were the main themes of earlier studies about the Chinese in Mexico. Historians have sought to answer how and why the anti-Chinese movements happened; a few drew connections between racism and nationalism and acknowledged that the anti-Chinese movements were at the heart of the “race” and racial theories that played important roles in the shaping of Mexico during the revolution.

Informed by new social theories, particularly the deconstruction of the nation-state, more recent studies have revisited the history of Chinese migration to Mexico from new perspectives. Many looked at transnational networks and border history to decentralize the narratives confined by the boundaries of nation states and attempted to give subalterns a voice or agency, which drove new scholarship to focus on the journey and experience of Chinese immigrants and their families. On the other hand, some historians examined the racial theories that were important during the revolution and analyzed the development of such theories during the postrevolutionary era, in which race had provided the new Mexican state with more diversified conceptual tools and apparatuses to centralize power. Among a handful of historians who studied the anti-Chinese movement as part of the nation building project, Gerardo Rénique pointed out the importance of anti-Chinese ideology and its role in

the creation of consent in the “unstable equilibrium” that shaped Mexican politics between 1928 and 1934. Moreover, his study not only deepened our understanding of the *mestizaje* theories that informed the Mexican revolutionary nationalism through the anti-Chinese movements in Sonora, but also offered new insights on “the mechanisms and processes that transform and diffuse racial sentiments, perceptions and expectations into militant and politically organized racial movements.”¹

Drawing on Rénique’s argument, this thesis studies the anti-Chinese movements in the less examined southern state of Chiapas and further demonstrates the linkage between the anti-Chinese organizations and the state building projects of the postrevolutionary government, offering a more nuanced look at the interplay between the central government and the periphery. In 1929, differing from the anti-Chinese actions during the Mexican Revolution (1911-1920), the sudden surge of the anti-Chinese movement in Chiapas was not purely, if at all, a reaction to the popular unrest but rather engineered by a more interlinked network that responds to the central government, specifically, the newly formed Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) and its representatives in the Congress, the Bloque Nacional Revolucionario (BNR). In addition, this thesis uses Pierre Bourdieu’s classic theories about the genesis of the State and forms of capital to analyze the development of anti-Chinese movements in Chiapas and the intricate state formation process. Drawing from these theories, I argue that the central state does not always rely on its physical forces but rather the symbolic power to strengthen its legitimacy.

¹ Gerardo Rénique, “Race, Mestizaje and Nationalism Sonora’s Anti-Chinese Movement and State Formation in Post-revolutionary México.” *Political Power & Social Theory* 14 (2000): 91.

For this study, aside from governmental sources from the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), I also utilized the published sources of anti-Chinese activities in Mexico from the Guoshiguan (the National Historical Archive) in Taiwan, which are rarely mentioned in other scholarly works on the Chinese in Mexico, as most studies use Spanish and English sources. This thesis aims to use the story of the Chinese in the state of Chiapas, a remote state at the southeast corner of the country with a long history of rebellion, to investigate the nation-making in postrevolutionary Mexico. I argue that the federal government used racial ideology and grassroots organizations to bring remote and intransigent regions to the center; on the other hand, the Chiapas state negotiated power with the federal government by refusing to facilitate the anti-Chinese campaigns backed by the National Revolutionary Party (PNR). Building on Gerardo Rénique's theories on race and state formation which illuminate the linkage between the anti-Chinese campaign in Sonora and the nation-building project of the central government, this thesis also buttresses the concept that the federal government incorporated the anti-Chinese campaigns into the centralization project by analyzing the operations of the state-backed anti-Chinese movement in Chiapas.

In Chapter one, I review the previous literature on the Chinese in Mexico. This chapter notes that the historiography over violence against the Chinese community gradually shifted from the focus on revolutionary xenophobic fervor from below to the analyses rooted in race and nationalism. In newer studies, while many revisited the anti-Chinese movement from the Chinese perspective, some historians continued to bring the anti-Chinese movements to the discourse of Mexican nation and state building process, pointing out that

racial resentment of the Chinese offers an understanding of the racial ideologies constructed during and after the Mexican Revolution.

In Chapter two, drawing on the ethnohistory tradition, the chapter provides background information of the journey of Chinese immigrants in Mexico, answering when, how, and why the Chinese came to Mexico. It also provides historical context surrounding the treatment of the Chinese immigrants tracing from the colonial time to the postrevolutionary era.

In Chapter three, the thesis brings attention to Chiapas where the Chinese population was less dense than the north of Mexico. It briefly summarizes the history of Chiapas and its persistent struggle with the distant center. Then it details the origin of the anti-Chinese organizations in Chiapas and the ambivalent treatments of the Chinese from the state and federal governments, basing evidence on the gubernatorial correspondence. This chapter then parallels with Gerardo Rénique's analysis on the anti-Chinese movements in Sonora and Pierre Bourdieu's theories of state formation to draw further insights from the incident.

Chapter four is a conclusion of my arguments and discussions of the success and limitation of my study. I also invite future investigations of the anti-Chinese organizations in the broader regions of Mexico in this chapter.

Historiography

The Chinese in Mexico as ethnohistory

People from Asia came to Mexico as part of the Manila connections as early as the 16th century. It was often the case during that time that all Asians were called "Chinos." It was in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as Mexico began to form its own national

identity, that Asians, especially the Chinese, were present in such numbers as to create the conditions for conflict.

Chinese Bondage in Peru: A history of the Chinese Coolie in Peru, 1849-1874 (1951), by Watt Stewart, was the first book-length monograph on the Chinese journey in the Americas. The book addressed the “pathetic” conditions for the Chinese laborers in Peru and condemned that the journey of some ninety thousand Chinese coolies to Peru was a brutal and forced immigration.² He also analyzed the historical conditions such as the devastation of Taiping War and the economic development of Peru for the cause of such “criminal” event.³ Stewart’s book was a critical look at the earlier “Coolie Trade” that dominated many parts of former Spanish colonial regions. Such conditions and slave-like labor practice was also chronicled in John Kenneth Turner’s *Barbarous Mexico*(1911). Turner’s book first mentioned the Chinese coolie laborers in Porfirian Mexico. He lamented the exploitation of coolie laborers used for economic development on Yucatan plantations during the Porfiriato (1874-1911). The book was lauded as an eyewitness account of the national labor conditions of Mexico on the eve of revolution.⁴ While Turner’s study focused primarily on the Yaquis, the indigenous group living in Sonora and the Southwestern United States, the book also described the exploitation and enslavement of the Chinese or Korean laborers “owned” by the henequen kings.⁵

² Watt Stewart, *Chinese Bondage in Peru: A History of the Chinese Coolie in Peru, 1849-1894*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press ,1951), 229.

³ Stewart, *Chinese Bondage in Peru*.

⁴ Paul J. Vanderwood, review of *Barbarous Mexico*, by John Kenneth Turner, *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (1970), 156-157.

⁵ Henequen kings refer to owners and slave-holders of the farms that produce *henequen*, or sisal hemp in Yucatan. John Kenneth Turner, *Barbarous Mexico* (University of Texas, 1969), 13.

Systematic studies of Chinese immigration in Mexico did not occur until the 1960s with the rise of ethnohistory, “the history of non-literate peoples as written by someone else,” or the study of peoples whose history was gleaned from the records of groups with whom they come into contact.⁶ Charles Cumberland spearheaded the study of the anti-Chinese movement in his article “The Sonora Chinese and Mexican Revolution.” The article focused on the Torreón Massacre in 1911 and anti-Chinese sentiment in the Mexican Revolution, connecting the violence against Chinese to the revolutionary process. In this type of study, Chinese immigrants were treated as a forgotten subject, and the violence against them was often fetishized.

In 1971, Gordon V. Krutz published an article on Chinese coolie laborers and their expulsion from Sonora in 1931, in which he compared the setting of the event with similar situations in Peru, Thailand, the Philippines Islands, and the United States.⁷ Krutz used letters from the Arana papers (1904-1921)⁸ and a personal interview conducted with a Chinese person who lived in Guaymas at the time to demonstrate the dynamic process of prejudice against the Chinese in Sonora.⁹ Krutz pointed out the patterns in the reaction against foreign capital and the rise of nationalism. He argued, “the anti-Chinese campaign served to crystallize popular support, capitalized upon by politicians providing support for the removal

⁶ Bernard Fontana, “What is the Ethnohistory?,” *Arizoniana*, 2, no.1, (1961): 10.

⁷ Gordon V. Krutz, “Chinese Labor, Economic Development and Social Relation,” *Ethnohistory* 18, no. 4 (1971): 321-333.

⁸ The Arana papers are the correspondence between José Maria Arana (the prominent businessman and politician in Magdalena, Sonora, Mexico who spearheaded the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico) and his supporters as well as opponents of the campaign in Sonora, Sinaloa, and Baja California. The papers included the official government communications, newspaper clippings, political campaign leaflets, and business letters, and can be found in the University of Arizona Libraries.

⁹ Krutz, “Chinese Labor, Economic Development and Social Relation.”

of the Chinese as an economic threat.”¹⁰ In 1979, anthropologist Philip Dennis examined the Sonoran anti-Chinese campaigns further using an ethnohistorical framework and theorized about the role of ethnicity versus social class in the conflict; he argued that the antagonism rooted in economic inequality could be magnified and sustained by the negative cultural symbols of group identity during the social conflict.¹¹

Following Cumberland and Krutz, in 1974, Leo Jacques provided a more detailed account of the Torreón Massacre with a deeper analysis of the anti-Chinese movements in Mexico’s northern states. He argued that it was the pent-up hostility against foreigners, nurtured during the Porfirio period, that erupted into the ten-hour bloodshed.¹² According to Jacques, many Chinese immigrants began working as laborers and laundrymen but gradually moved into the ambulatory sales of vegetables and fruit. They invested the capital from these modest beginnings in wholesale and retail grocery trade and developed extensive credit ties with Chinese businessmen in the United States.¹³ In addition, many Chinese workers initially came to Torreón to work on the construction of railroads, in haciendas, and in the mines. Jacques argued that the economic successes in the Chinese community invited resentment from local people, thus shifting the focus of the historiography to the economic fortunes of the Chinese in Mexico. Leo Jacques also made a considerable contribution to the historiography by differentiating periods of the anti-Chinese movements. Although Jacques did not offer in-depth analysis for why such differences existed, he demonstrated that there

¹⁰ Krutz, 332.

¹¹ Philip A. Dennis, “The Anti-Chinese Campaigns in Sonora, Mexico,” *Ethnohistory* 26, no.1 (1979): 65-80.

¹² Leo M. Dambourges Jacques, “The Chinese Massacre in Torreon (Coahuila) in 1911,” *Arizona and the West* (1974): 246.

¹³ Jacques, “The Chinese Massacre in Torreón (Coahuila) in 1911,” 233-246.

were different triggers behind the waves of animosity against the Chinese immigrants, which directed later studies to emphasize the historical context of the anti-Chinese movements.

Many early ethnohistorians studying the Chinese in Mexico tended to focus on the topic of violence on the Chinese immigrants; Evelyn Hu-Dehart, on the other hand, recognized the contribution of the Chinese in Mexico. Hu-Dehart asked the questions, how did the Chinese immigrants come into Mexico, and where and how did they settle in Mexico. More importantly, she extended the inquiry into the reinvention of the Chinese identity in the context of national identities, the Chinese's ascent in the social hierarchy, and their relationship to other ethnic and racial groups.¹⁴ She also highlighted the economic significance of the Chinese presence in Mexico and questioned the motives behind the persecution of the Chinese in the newly formed nation.¹⁵ She defined the Chinese in Mexico as middleman immigrants¹⁶ and *petite bourgeoisie*. She also noted that Chinese immigrants had wedged into the lower level of the Mexican economy.¹⁷ Hu-Dehart classified the Mexican Revolution of 1910 as the turning point for Mexican nationalism, "To the humble, dispossessed masses, [the Mexican Revolution] promised social justice; to all Mexicans, it

¹⁴ Some of the questions can be found in Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Multiculturalism in Latin American Studies: Locating the "Asian" Immigrant; Or, Where Are the Chinos and Turcos?" *Latin American Research Review* 44, no. 2 (2009): 238.

¹⁵ Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Indispensable Enemy or Convenient Scapegoat? A Critical Examination of Sinophobia in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1870s to 1930s." *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 5, no. 1 (2009): 55-90; Evelyn Hu-Dehart, "Immigrants to a Developing Society: The Chinese in Northern Mexico, 1875–1932," *The Journal of Arizona History* (1980): 275-312.

¹⁶ Middleman minority was a term coined by Hubert Blaclock (1967), referring to (marginalized) ethnic minority entrepreneurs who mediate the dominant and the subordinate groups. The term was usually associated with Jewish Immigrants. The term middleman minorities. Evelyn Hu-Dehart used the term "middleman immigrants" to describe Chinese immigrants as they mainly occupied professions such as shopkeepers, laundry in the middle sector that provided goods and services.

¹⁷ Hu-DeHart "Immigrants to a Developing Society," 276.

promised national control of the country's resources and economy."¹⁸ Chinese dominance in the local commerce became an embarrassment and allegedly blocked the advancement of members of middle and lower class Mexican nationals.¹⁹ Politicians used Chinese economic dominance as a scapegoat for national problems and further exacerbated racial tensions.²⁰

Economic contribution during the Porfiriato

Chinese economic contributions were most prominent during the Porfiriato period. However, only a few studies have centered their focus within this era. In "Chinese Immigrants in Porfirian Mexico: A Preliminary Study of Settlement, Economic Activity and Anti-Chinese Sentiment," Raymond Craib explored factors such as economic disparity, the settlement pattern of Chinese communities and the racial prejudices that led to the Torreón massacre, adding cultural isolation and fear of contagious diseases among the reasons for singling out the Chinese as a target for xenophobic violence.²¹ Craib observed that the uniqueness of Chinese culture and the strong ties to their community also provided excuses for the cultural isolationist argument that Chinese were "unassimilable" into the Mexican national identity, which in turn, presumed that the Mexican identity had always been homogeneous. Nonetheless, he insisted that the antagonism was also rooted in some Chinese's refusal to be integrated into the dominant Mexican society and to adopt its language, dresses, and customs.²² Although Craib conceded that many Chinese had adopted Hispanicized names for themselves as well as for their businesses, he insisted that the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hu-DeHart, "Indispensable Enemy or Convenient Scapegoat?"

²¹ Raymond Craib, "Chinese Immigrants in Porfirian Mexico: A Preliminary Study of Settlement, Economic Activity and Anti-Chinese Sentiment," *Research Paper Series No. 28 Latin American and Iberian Institute*. 1996.

²² Raymond Craib, "Re-'covering' Chinese in Mexico," *The American Philatelist* 112, no. 5 (1998), 451.

distinctive organizations such as *tongs* in their own communities may have made their presence more prominent and outstanding.

Another important work on the Porfirian era was *Forge of Progress, Crucible of Revolt* by William K Meyers. The book presented "a coherent and materialist explanation of the inter-relationship between rapid economic development, social transformation, and political division" in the Laguna region of north-central Mexico.²³ Meyers carefully wove the account of Chinese immigration and anti-Chinese sentiments into a story of the rise of La Comarca Lagunera, the commercial area in Laguna developed during the Porfiriato, and the forging of a people by the Mexican Revolution. In particular, the book illustrated the role of Chinese merchants and capitalists in the development of La Comarca Lagunera during the Porfiriato and economic crises that fomented anger among working class people against the Chinese and the Porfiriato. Sinophobia thus was part of the resistance against the xenophilia of the Porfiriato.²⁴ By examining the growing discontent against the Porfiriato by the working class through the pent-up xenophobia in the society, Meyers' work situated Chinese immigration to Torreón in the regional history of the pre-revolutionary Mexican nation and simultaneously broadened the scope of the regional historiography of Porfirian Mexico in the late 19th century.

Racism and the nation

A reaction against perceived Chinese economic dominance alone does not explain the anti-Chinese violence committed during and after the Mexican revolution. Race had played

²³ Paul Garner, review of *Forge of Progress, Crucible of Revolt: The Origins of the Mexican Revolution in La Comarca Lagunera, 1880-1911*, by William K. Meyers, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28, no. 1 (1996): 245-246.

²⁴ William K. Meyers, *Forge of Progress, Crucible of Revolt* (New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

an important role in the process. Since the 1970s, historians have been increasingly aware of the role race has played in the shaping of Mexico. In fact, race was central to the ideology of the Mexican revolution and the nation building project during the postrevolutionary period (1920-1940). In addition to economic motivations, scholars have looked into the effects of social Darwinism and the racist practice of *mestizaje*, race mixing, as explanation for specific xenophobic attitudes and persecutions of Chinese immigrants. Anti-Chinese racism is the flip side of the *indianismo*,²⁵ as a product of the revolutionary movement; *indigenismo* itself can be seen as a reactionary methodology against the Porfiriato racism. Alan Knight noted that racism and xenophobia had circumvented the real agent of economic imperialism from the U.S. and Britain during the Mexican Revolution and provided a strong ideological basis for the economically motivated riots.²⁶ Evelyn Hu-Dehart also argued that Chinese immigrants were scapegoats during the economic recession, and revolutionaries and local politicians used racism to mobilize the working-class Mexicans to persecute of the Chinese and their business for monetary gains.²⁷ To her, the ulterior motive behind the expulsion and the treatment of Chinese immigrants was economic, while racism was used to justify the blunt confiscation of their property and wealth.²⁸ The anti-Chinese movements provided a scapegoat for the national economy which was in crisis. On the other hand, Alan Knight argued that race was an important part of the revolutionary project and was fundamentally

²⁵ *Indianismo* or Indianism Indianismo is an ideology and tendency to see Indigenous culture and identity as a significant part of the national tradition and culture, which was glorified and embraced by the intellectuals and revolutionaries during the 1920s and 1930s.

²⁶ Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume I, Porfirians, Liberals and Peasants* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986),208.

²⁷ Evelyn Hu-Dehart, "Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution in Sonora, Mexico 1876-1932," *Amerasia Journal* 9, no. 2 (1982): 1-27

²⁸ Evelyn Hu-Dehart, "Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution in Sonora."

linked to not only capitalism, but more importantly, nationalism.²⁹ He claimed that Sinophobia was the clearest example of xenophobia and was "functionally related to *indigenista* nationalism."³⁰ Knight argued that *indigenismo* and Sinophobia were interdependent and that they were the two faces of revolutionary nationalism. While *Indigenismo* allowed for a united identity against the Spanish in the traditional Indian/Spaniards polarity, Sinophobia cleansed the unwanted race, as nationalism is fundamentally exclusive.³¹

Similarly, his 1991 book, *El Movimiento Antichino en México, 1871-1934: Problemas del Racismo y del Nacionalismo Durante La Revolución Mexicana* (Problems of Racism and Nationalism during the Mexican Revolution), José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo documented the development of the anti-Chinese movement in Mexico during the nineteenth and primarily the twentieth century. He analyzed the regimes that emerged from the 1910 Revolution and how they used racial prejudice against the Chinese immigration to obfuscate their inability to meet demands of land, freedom, and justice.³² Gómez's study provides an important link between the anti-Chinese movement and nationalism, and elucidated how the Mexican state utilized the movement as an apparatus to deflect attention from the regime's failures.

Juan Puig also made an important contribution to the subject of race and anti-Chinese violence during the Mexican Revolution. Reconstructing the event, Juan Puig's *Entre El Río*

²⁹ Alan Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940," in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. by Richard Graham (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990).

³⁰ Alan Knight, "Race, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*," 96.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, *El Movimiento Antichino en México, 1871-1934 : Problemas del Racismo y del Nacionalismo Durante La Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico: INAH, 1991).

Perla y el Nazas (Between the Peal and the Nazas River; 1992) remains the most comprehensive examination of the Torreón massacre.³³ Puig reconstructed the 1911 massacre of the Chinese based on sources from Archivo Histórico “Genaro Estrada” de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (“Generao Estrada” Historical Archives of Secretariat of Foreign Affairs) in Tlatelolco, D.F., Mexico.³⁴ Instead of attributing the violence on the Chinese to the revolutionary fervor like many historians before him, Puig analyzed the distinctiveness of Chinese organizations such as Bao Huang Hui and emphasized the racial reasons behind the massacre.

Border and transnational studies

More recently, responding to a new wave of post-colonial and post modernism (social constructivism) theories and diaspora studies, many scholars have looked for new ways to construct narratives on Chinese immigration overseas. This new scholarship has centered on identity relations and nation building. In “The ‘Yellow Peril’ and Asian Exclusion in the Americas,” Erika Lee called for studies of how race and national identity was constructed.³⁵ Instead of focusing on explanations for violence and persecution against the Chinese community, she instead asked how race became a global construct and how ideas about racial difference, inferiority, and identity are related to the global migration of labor, capital, and culture. Lee called for transnational studies to understand the “globality of race,” which she tied race to both global flows and the processes of nation-building.³⁶

³³ Jun Puig, *Entre el Río Perla y el Nazas: La China Decimonónica y Sus Braceros Emigrantes, la Colonia China de Torreón y la Matanza de 1911* (D.F, México: Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional Para la Cultura y las Artes, 1992).

³⁴ Puig, *Entre el Río Perla y el Nazas*.

³⁵ Erika Lee, “The ‘Yellow Peril’ and Asian Exclusion in the Americas,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 76, no. 4 (2007): 537-562.

³⁶ Lee, “The ‘Yellow Peril’ and Asian Exclusion in the Americas.”

From an anthropological standpoint, Kanji Sato expounded on Alan Knight's work on race formation in revolutionary Mexico and re-conceptualized the idea of "La Raza." She highlighted anti-Chinese movements in the formation of *La Raza*, the racial construction popular among the Mexican intellectuals during the Mexican Revolution, which implied that all Mexicans are ethnically homogeneous.³⁷ She argued that differentiation of the Chinese helped in forming the Mexican national identity. In Mexico, nationalist rhetoric insisted that *La Raza* was formed by two peoples: indigenous Mexicans and non-indigenous Mexicans. By excluding the Chinese as the antithesis of the national race, they were able to bring together other races or cultural groups in Mexico. Moreover, her essay also challenged the Hispanic-America and Anglo-America divide through the Chinese migration between Mexico and the United States. She noted that in both nations, the anti-Chinese ideology and policies were used by nationalists to solidify national identity, even though the expulsion of the Chinese in Mexico was in part due to their association with the U.S. She therefore called for more studies across the border by pointing out the similar experience Chinese immigrants had in both countries during the expulsion period.³⁸ Francisco Haro Navejas had also posed theories about multi-centralism, calling for decentralizing the focus on the nation state and letting the periphery tell the story of the center. While acknowledging that the xenophobia-xenophile duet remained a two faced coin of the complex and heterogeneous Mexicanness, he argued that the roles of Chinese immigration in Mexico could be important in the

³⁷ Kanji Sato, "Formation of La Raza and the Anti-Chinese Movement in Mexico," *Transforming Anthropology*, 14, no. 2 (2006): 181–186.

³⁸ Sato, "Formation of La Raza and the Anti-Chinese Movement in Mexico."

deepening process of regional integration.³⁹ To Navejas, Chinese immigrants were important actors who encouraged the flexibility of capitalism, economic growth, and identity building.⁴⁰

Further decentralizing the nation-state narratives, Avital H. Bloch and Servando Ortoll, professors from University of Colima and Baja California, have looked into the Mexican-US borderland and addressed the questions of how the anti-Asian movement spread in the borderland regions. They analyzed the instigation of the extreme actions against the Chinese and Japanese and asserted that agitation in opposition to the Chinese and Japanese presence was a transnational phenomenon. The “anti-Oriental” racism was not unique to one nation or country. Bloch and Ortoll argued that racist ideology and hatred for non-European newcomers tended to spread past national boundaries, despite the presumed cultural historical differences between them.⁴¹ These studies challenged the nation-centered narratives and redirected the attention to the porous borderlands and fluid nature of nations.

Continuing to emphasize the borderland and transnational character of the Chinese immigration to Mexico, recent book-length treatments of the Chinese in Mexico have paid close attention to the transnational patterns and the tendency to tell the migration story from subaltern perspective. Robert Chao Romero’s *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940* has been lauded as the first book-length English-language monograph on Chinese immigrants in Mexico and has helped fill the gap in the historiography by engaging broad sources from the

³⁹ Francisco Haro Navejas, “Diasporic Chinese across North America: Mi casa o es su casa,” in *Border Governance and the “Unruly” South: Theory and Practice*, ed. Imtiaz Huassain, (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

⁴⁰ Navejas, “Diasporic Chinese across North America,” 100.

⁴¹ Avital Bloch and Servando Ortoll, “The Anti-Chinese and Anti-Japanese Movements in Cananea, Sonora and Salt Lake River, Arizona, During the 1920 and 1930s,” *Americas* VI (1), 2010.

U.S., Mexican, and Taiwanese archives.⁴² Romero stressed that the broad spectrum of employment of Chinese immigrants, instead of their role simply as *petite bourgeois* merchants in the Mexican commercial sector, gave more depth to the network of Chinese settlement in the country. More importantly, Chao Romero noted that previous scholarship tended to fetishize xenophobic violence and the anti-Chinese campaigns. By contrast, he refused to depict Chinese immigrants as passive victims; instead, he utilized previously omitted source materials such as court cases to highlight Chinese immigrants' action in fighting for their acceptance and rights as Mexican citizens. Romero's study moved past the racism paradigm by focusing on the social economic patterns of the Chinese settlement and their transnational network and therefore humanized Chinese immigrants.

In a similar vein, Julia Maria Schiavone Camacho traced the paths of Chinese men and women's journey from their homeland to Mexico and told the story of how Chinese immigrants developed their Mexican national identity through family networks. Calling upon gender theories, Schiavone Camacho also brought attention to cases where Mexican women challenged their legal status after being stripped of Mexican citizenship because they married Chinese men. Furthermore, she recounted the repatriation of Chinese Mexicans between the 1930s and the 1960s, illustrating that the Chinese Mexican men and women who had left Mexico with strong regional identities re-claimed their national cultural belonging and Mexican identity despite the violence and persecution. Camacho's work therefore challenged traditional narratives that centered on the nation-state by placing the postrevolutionary and postwar Mexico in a larger trans-Pacific framework. Her story of Chinese immigration also shed light on the formation of the Mexican nation and how it sought legitimacy through the

⁴²Erika Lee, review of *Chinese in Mexico*, by Romero Chao, *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no.4 (2011): 644–45.

delineation of citizenship. More importantly, Camacho answered how the Chinese immigrants formed their new national and transnational identity through the interaction with the United States, Mexico, and Chinese immigration agencies.⁴³

In *Making the Chinese Mexican*, Grace Delgado also turned away from nation-centered history and pushed the boundaries into other realms. She recognized the omission of Chinese *fronterizos* from U.S.-Mexico borderlands history and employed sources from the border region where individuals and community created identities. Delgado reconstructed the stories by drawing on personal accounts from biographical materials and letters, in addition to traditional archival sources. Moreover, her story of the borderlands showed that the origins of the modern U.S.-Mexican border “were wrought from overlapping worlds of empires and alternative visions of national belongings.”⁴⁴ The heightened nationalism of both U.S. and Mexico resulted in the immigration bureaucracies on both side of the border and the ridding of the Chinese *fronterizos* who were established in the region. Her work also demonstrated how the racial structure and immigration bureaucracies of each nation defined who were allowed to enter and who were not, questioning the nature and failings nation-states by confronting the fixity of the borders.

Jason Oliver Chang, too, has focused on the U.S.-Mexican frontier and border formation. He described how Chinese farmers and merchants established the city of Mexicali in Baja California as a cotton-growing enclave at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ Chang

⁴³ Julia María Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ Grace Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 7.

⁴⁵ Jason Oliver Chang, “Outsider Crossings: History, Culture, and Geography of Mexicali's Chinese Community,” (PhD diss., UC Berkely, 2010).

called for the adoption of a trans-Pacific conceptual framework to understand Chinese communities in the formation of the U.S.-Mexico border. He argued that U.S. imperial aggression and the trans-Pacific Spanish Galleon trade together permitted the Chinese migrations to the Americas. Like many previous scholars, he was also interested in the racial boundaries of postrevolutionary Mexican nationalism and argued that the Mexican state considered the Chinese in Mexicali as an imminent threat. Most interestingly, Chang noted that not only did the government try to control the Chinese population in Mexicali, it also unleashed a series of racial programs of *Mexicanización* that attempted to expunge the Chinese community from public memory.⁴⁶ Chang's study not only explained the formation of borders in nation states but also shed important light on the state's role in the construction of public memory.

Building on previous scholarship on transnationalism and sociological theories, in his book *Alien Nation*, Elliot Young made the trajectory of the migrations visible by tracing Chinese migration to the Americas and their clandestine migratory routes through Greater North America. By tracing these paths, Young rejected the nation-state gaze on agencies designed to make the national boundaries fixed and legible. Reflecting on sociological and psychological theories, Young demonstrated that the Chinese not only bore the stigma of "aliens" but were also enmeshed in a series of governmental bureaucratic agencies such as immigration authorities that rendered them "illegal."⁴⁷ In other words, the development of "illegal aliens" produced the perceptions of the Chinese as both cultural foreigners and outlaws.

⁴⁶ Chang, "Outsider Crossings: History, Culture, and Geography of Mexicali's Chinese Community."

⁴⁷ Elliot Young, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era through World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2014).

Additionally, Young reviewed the failings of nation-state programs through the examination of policies towards Chinese immigrants. He argued that Porfirio's policies and regulations over Chinese immigrants failed to grant legitimacy to the state and its bureaucracy because it was not well-enforced and therefore failed to make the society "legible."⁴⁸ Young stated, "The weakness of the Porfirian state and the chaos of the revolutionary period rendered the new immigration laws and the nascent bureaucracy ineffectual. In the absence of state controls on Chinese popular vigilantes and revolutionary soldiers stepped in to assume the government's disciplining function."⁴⁹ The revolutionary soldiers seized the opportunity to assert their role in the new state by persecuting the Chinese—in this way, Young illuminated the fall and rise of Mexico's nation building projects through the examination of the peripheral story of Chinese migrants.

Drawing on postcolonial theories and narratives from subaltern perspectives, Fredy González brought attention to the less examined diaspora in Baja California. His 2013 dissertation, *We Won't Be Bullied Anymore*, documented the twentieth-century history of Chinese immigrants to Mexico and the anti-Chinese campaigns from the early 1930s to 1972, when Mexico officially recognized the People's Republic of China. González turned to the failed Ensenada (Baja California) Campaign of 1934 and showed how Chinese residents organized resistance against their attackers by appealing to consular offices in China for protection. González used both Chinese and Spanish sources from China, Taiwan, and Mexico to delineate the complicated ways in which global, national, and local forces

⁴⁸ Elliot Young, *Alien Nation*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 201.

intersected one another and shaped the Chinese immigration experience.⁵⁰ Moreover, González's work made an important contribution to the field by focusing on the little examined anti-Chinese campaigns that failed. Moreover, his use of sources from diverse regions helped narrate a story that shaped the subalterns as heroes, not passive victims.

Postrevolutionary state formation

On the flip side of the story, the Chinese in Mexico have been studied as a means to examine the Mexican state. In recent studies, many historians analyzed the anti-Chinese campaigns as part of the formation of the Mexican state in the postrevolutionary period. Many studies have focused on the deconstruction of the nation-state and the process of state formation. Instead of examining the efforts of Chinese immigrants themselves, they looked at how the treatment of Chinese immigrants fit into the narrative of postrevolutionary state formation. Following the avalanche of mostly regional studies of the 70s and the 80s, newer studies paid special attention to the relationship between the revolution and the state, concluding that the revolution had informed the cultural change necessary for state building.⁵¹ As Walter Mignolo stated, racism was an epistemic maneuver used by actors to assert hegemonic dominance.⁵² Building on Alan Knight's work on race and nationalism, Gerardo Rénique's article, "Race, *Mestizaje* and Nationalism: Sonora's Anti-Chinese Movement and State Formation in Post-revolutionary México State Formation," examined the history and causality of the anti-Chinese campaigns and their incorporation within the new orthodoxy of the postrevolutionary state. Rénique argued that the Sonoran anti-Chinese

⁵⁰ Fredy González, "We Won't Be Bullied Anymore: Chinese-Mexican Relations and the Chinese Community in Mexico, 1931-1971," (PhD diss., Yale University, 2013).

⁵¹ Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent ed., *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

⁵² Walter Mignolo, "Yes, We Can," forward to *Can Non-Europeans Think?*, by Hamid Dabashi (London, GB: Zed Books, 2015), xi.

movement was supported by Mexico's official postrevolutionary party as part of the *nationalista* campaign. In particular, he found the anti-Chinese ideology relevant to "the resolution of the hegemonic struggle between the two dominant Sonoran caudillos Plutarco Elias Calles and Alvaro Obregón."⁵³ He believed that the anti-Chinese campaign was part of their strategies to centralize government and demonstrated the shift in national politics. Rénique therefore framed the grass-root ethnic persecution as a "cultural revolution" of the postrevolutionary state. He claimed that the anti-Chinese ideology, as part of the nationalist projects of the Sonoran revolutionary faction, shaped Mexican politics between 1928 and 1934 significantly by generating "actions for creation of consent in the 'unstable equilibrium'."⁵⁴ Rénique's analysis made an important contribution to the state formation period of Mexico by incorporating the interrelations between the anti-Chinese movement to the *Mestizaje* theories into the Mexican revolutionary nationalism and reexamined the story of the central state through the evolution of politics regarding Chinese immigrants in Sonora.

In light of the relations between race and state formation, David FitzGerald and David Cook-Martín held the view that racist immigration policies informed and interacted with liberal democracy and therefore dispelled the presumption that liberal democracy and racism are mutually exclusive. In fact, according to FitzGerald and Cook-Martín, the resentment against a certain ethnicity from below fueled the exclusionary policies by the "populist" government striving to gain legitimacy.⁵⁵ The racist and exclusionary policies against the

⁵³ Gerardo Rénique, "Race, *Mestizaje* and Nationalism Sonora's Anti-Chinese Movement and State Formation in Post-revolutionary México," *Political Power and Social Theory* 14 (2000): 1.

⁵⁴ Gerardo, "Race, *Mestizaje* and Nationalism," 1.

⁵⁵ David FitzGerald and David Cook-Martín, *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Chinese were very much reflective of Mexico's state building project during the post-revolutionary period. Another recent work, *Inmigración y racismo.: Contribuciones a la historia de los extranjeros en México* (Immigration and Racism: Contributions to the History of Foreigners in Mexico), compiled by Pablo Yankelevich, further broadened the conceptual frameworks and thematic repertoires in approaches to foreign migration in Mexico by applying different conceptual tools to the narratives. The book examined the history not only through the lens of social and political history but also through legal and cultural perspectives, such as the census and law, offering a more nuanced look at the complexity and ambiguities of the historical processes.⁵⁶

Legal and census studies

Legal and census studies of Chinese immigrants in Mexico sometimes overlap with identity and immigration history. These studies often shed light on race construction and identity making of the nation. Moisés González Navarro's *Los extranjeros en México y los mexicanos en el extranjero, 1821-1970: 1910-1970* (1993), a comprehensive three volume compendium and encyclopedia of immigration and emigration history of Mexico since Santa Anna's time, provided valuable data for Chinese immigration to Mexico by compiling and analyzing national census records and other primary sources.⁵⁷ González compared the patterns of migrations of different ethnic groups and gave special attention to the motives and themes of sinophobias during the independence era and Porfiriato. He also examined the emigration of *braceros* (peasant workers) to the United States and demonstrated that the

⁵⁶ Pablo Yankelevich (coord.), *Inmigración Y Racismo.: Contribuciones a La Historia De Los Extranjeros En México* (Mexico: Colegio de Mexico, 2015).

⁵⁷ Moisés González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México y los mexicanos en el extranjero, 1821-1970* (México, D.F.: Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1993).

foreigners, including the Chinese, were affected by the nationalist Mexican government and large popular sectors.⁵⁸ Through these examination and analysis of interaction between different ethnic groups, González dissected the history of Mexico and confronted the idea of “extranjera” (foreigners) through the windows of emigration and immigration.

Specific focus or a subgenre of Chinese immigration emerged from the traditional legal and census studies. Historians such as Pablo Yankelevich and Kif Augustin-Adams revisited the anti-Chinese movement from a legal perspective. In “Extranjeros indeseables en Mexico (1911-1940): Una aproximacion cuantitativa a la aplicacion del articulo 33 constitucional” (Undesirable Foreigners in Mexico 1911-1940: A Quantitative Approach to the Application of Article 33 of the Constitution), Yankelevich examined the application of article 33 of the Mexican Constitution of 1917, which restricted foreign immigration and granted the executive power absolute rights for expulsions of undesirable foreigners.⁵⁹ Yankelevich approached the deportation policy through an exploration of Mexico’s complex foreign relations from the start of Francisco I. Madero’s the Presidency (1911) to the end of the Government of Lázaro Cárdenas (1911-1935). He compared and contrasted the applications of the law on different foreign communities (Chinese, American, and Spaniards) and discovered the asymmetry of the enforcement of the law based on the revolutionary state’s relations with the community. Most importantly, the article pointed out that although the law was fed by underlying social urges from the bottom, it helped Mexico to transition into an increasingly authoritarian state.⁶⁰ By applying the law differently and broadly

⁵⁸ González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México y los mexicanos en el extranjero*.

⁵⁹ Pablo Yankelevich, “Extranjeros indeseables en Mexico (1911-1940): Una aproximacion cuantitativa a la aplicacion del articulo 33 constitucional,” *Historia Mexicana* 53, no. 3 (2004): 693-744.

⁶⁰ Yankelevich, “Extranjeros indeseables en Mexico (1911-1940).”

according to the will of the state, the ruling party gained more power in defining the constitution.

In a similar approach, Kif Augustin-Adams examined Law 31, the anti-miscegenation law that prohibited marriage between Mexican women and Chinese men and such couples' petitions against the law. She argued that the discriminatory law made little impact in real life since the law suits were often struck down in lower courts when Mexican Chinese couples deployed *amparo* petitions to assert their constitutional rights. Her research therefore told "the complex story about constitutional interpretation, judicial process, federalism and national identity, on the one hand, and race, gender, marriage and family, on the other."⁶¹

In another study, Augustin-Adams looked into the 1930 census to search for the story of the making of Mexico. In 1930, Mexico joined the rest of the Latin America and eliminated race as a category in its census, using only "nationality" to document individuals' national identities. She argued that the sketching of the census played a crucial part in the making of identities, "The official census count of the Chinese in the state of Sonora in 1930 is a tale of the contested nature of reality, of the reification of race in a census with no question regarding racial identity, of the power and limitations of law to make and unmake citizens, to make the country."⁶² She concluded that Chinese families suffered from "the grassroots attempt by individuals, census takers, and supervisors to record individual identity in a way law, society and the census survey form recognize."⁶³ The erroneous or "accurate"

⁶¹ Kif Augustine-Adams, "Marriage and *Mestizaje*, Chinese and Mexican: Constitutional Interpretation and Resistance in Sonora, 1921-1935," *Law & History Review* 29, no. 2 (2011): 419-463

⁶² Kif Augustine-Adams, "Making Mexico: Legal Nationality, Chinese Race, and the 1930 Population Census," *Law and History Review* 27, no. 1, (2009): 115.

⁶³ Augustine-Adams, "Making Mexico: Legal Nationality," 143.

count of the Chinese nationals and their children rendered them invisible in Mexico.⁶⁴ Along the same line, Mara Loveman's *National Colors: Racial Classification and the State in Latin America* analyzed the connection among race, census, and state formation in Latin America by drawing attention to the region's history of counting and classifying racial groups.⁶⁵

Chinese in Chiapas

Most studies of Chinese migration and settlement in Mexico have focused on the northern states and the borderlands where the Chinese population concentrated. By contrast, Miguel Lisbona Guillén is one of the few historians who wrote extensively and exclusively about the Chinese immigrants in the southern state of Chiapas. In *Allí donde llegan las olas del mar* (Where the Waves Reach: Past and present of the Chiapan Chinese), Lisbona documented the Chinese journey to Chiapas and the everyday lives they led, with little intention (or pretention) of academic theorizing. The book is a treatise on the evolution of the Mexican state and its immigration policies from the nineteenth century to the present. The first part of the book examined the social fabric of a "foreign" community in a new territory through the life stories of Chinese Chiapans collected via interviews. By exploring these migrants, the author showed that Chiapas' culture had been influenced by Chinese immigrants. The second part of the book traced Chinese migration to Chiapas, the persecutions they faced, and their resistance to and survival of the nation-wide anti-Chinese movement. Notably, the author also compared the differences between anti-Chinese

⁶⁴ Augustine-Adams, "Making Mexico: Legal Nationality."

⁶⁵ Mara Loveman, *National Colors: Racial Classification and the State in Latin America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

movements in northern border states and the one in Chiapas, showcasing the relationship between the Chiapan and the central governments.⁶⁶

Rebeca Lau's 2003 master's thesis, "Memories of Origins/Origins of Memories," delved into sociological aspects of the Chiapas Chinese community she grew up in. Her approach, using oral interview sources, offers first person accounts of the immigrants' journey to the south and provides a more nuanced understanding of the formation and recreation of the immigrant culture.⁶⁷ Through her interviews, Lau was able to capture the changes in accounts and collective memories over two generations. She observed that Chinese residents had been "assimilated" into Mexican culture within a few generations and concluded that identities were socially constructed and subject to change.⁶⁸

Conclusion

While often overlooked, Chinese immigration to Mexico is an important part of understanding the racial attitudes that have played a major role in Mexico's postrevolutionary nation-building process. The nation-state of Mexico did not exist when the Spanish arrived. In 1519, Cortez reached the coast of today's Mexico and encountered indigenous (mainly Mayan) people. Through a series of conquests, the white-skinned Spaniards established dominance over the dark-skinned indigenous people and established their hierarchy based on the classification of race. During the colonial period, African slaves were brought to Mexico, further complicating the racial system. Intermarriage emerged and determined the identity and status of the people living in this society socially. During the independence and

⁶⁶ Miguel Lisbona Guillén, *Allí donde lleguen las olas del mar...: Pasado y presente de los Chinos Chiapas* (México: UNAM, 2014).

⁶⁷ Rebeca Lau, "Memories of Origins/Origins of Memories: The Collective Memories of the Chinese Community in Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico" (M.A. thesis, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1990).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

progressive periods, mestizos⁶⁹ came to solidify their power over the nation, and thanks to social Darwinism and positivism of the time, elites of the nation consciously worked within a racist ideology. Chinese immigrants first came to Mexico in the Progressive Era and became employed in the railroads and plantations, bringing further racial complexity to the nation where race was a predominant determinant in social reality. The Mexican Revolution not only overturned the existing social orders but also brought the latent racial tensions and conflicts to the surface and broadened the rifts in the social fabric. During the post-revolutionary period, eager to create a new order, intellectuals glorified the concept of “mestizaje” and defined the Mexicans as the “cosmic race,” reifying the dominance of mestizos by embracing “Indianism.” While this new racial ideology embraced racial mixing, it also excluded certain races. Chinese immigrants were caught in this process of racial classification and nation making. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the cause and motives of the anti-Chinese movement and how this movement was enmeshed with Mexico’s nation building process and the establishment of new orthodoxy of the postrevolutionary state.

Many have suggested that the exclusion of Chinese may stem from economic and cultural reasons. Some, however, argued that the process of racial exclusion was part of social and state engineering. While the subject of this thesis may be the anti-Chinese movement in Mexico during the postrevolutionary period, the focus is not so much on the root cause of societal racial tension, as often examined, but rather, the behavior of the central and state governments and how race was not so much a reason, but a mechanism that was employed to explore and establish ties between the central and regional powers.

⁶⁹ According to the complex caste system, mestizos of the colonial and independence period refer to people of European and Indian ancestry.

Chapter 2—History of the Chinese in Mexico

Immigrants are often scapegoated in times of crises and internal struggle. The nineteenth-century yellow perilism offered colonial powers ideologies to carve up China, while Chinese laborers became a force to replace slavery in the world market. The increasing globalization of trade, labor and ideas paved ways for both migrations and resistance to migrations. The aim of this chapter is to provide the historical context of how and why Chinese people immigrated to Mexico and what kind of lives they established for themselves in the new world far away from their original home. Moreover, this chapter tells the story of the evolution of the Mexican state with regard to the interaction between Chinese immigrants and the Mexican government. Specifically, this chapter will illustrate the factors that led to the intensive violence against Chinese immigrants locally and regionally and how it escalated to the national scale.

Colonial Era

Shortly after the Spanish colonized Manila as a trading post for China's silver in 1571, Spanish merchants quickly began to employ Chinese as servants and personal assistants and became depended on them for personal service and food. The Manila galleon trade brought luxurious goods and some men from the East to New Spain, now Mexico, in exchange for

Mexican silver.⁷⁰ Some of the Chinese laborers came with the Spanish Manila galleons to New Spain and established their own colony or community soon after.⁷¹

The earliest evidence of a Chinese colony in Mexico can be traced back to the 1630s. A document found in Mexico City showed that a group of Spaniards had complained against the business practice of Chinese barbers and claimed that they are an “inconvenience” to the “Republic.”⁷² The city commended limitations on the number of Chinese barbers and their eviction to the suburbs because the “excess” of Chinese barbers suddenly monopolized the trade after many Spanish barbers died from diseases. The Viceroy also considered the prohibition of Chinese barbers in general.⁷³

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, the city of Manila expelled or massacred Chinese on several occasions throughout the 1600s. Three significant documented massacres occurred in 1603, 1639 and 1662.⁷⁴ In Manila, between 1639 and 1640, 20,000 died in anti-Chinese violence and many were expelled, in part because the Spaniards could not repay their Chinese creditors. In 1686, worried about an attack from the collapsing regime in Taiwan, Spanish royalty issued an order to expel a large number of ships arriving with new immigrants to Manila.⁷⁵

Whether the incidents in Manila were related to the complaints in the New World remains unknown. However, persecution against the Chinese, inspired by racial concerns in

⁷⁰ Evelyn Hu-Dehart, “Spanish America,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas*, ed. Lynn Pan (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, 1999), 256.

⁷¹ Homer H Dubs and Robert S Smith, “Chinese in Mexico City in 1635,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (Aug 1942): 387-389.

⁷² Dubs and Smith, “Chinese in Mexico City in 1645.”

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Edgar Wickberg, “The Philippines,” in *The encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas*, ed. Lynn Pan (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, 1999), 188.

⁷⁵ John E Willis, Jr., *1688: A Global History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2001).

the Spanish-ruled world, was not uncommon in the colonial period. Chinese immigrants did not become prominent in the Spanish American colonies until the mid-nineteenth century, when they were introduced as indentured coolies.

Chinese in the Americas during the Coolie Era

The recruitment of indentured Chinese labor in the so called coolie trade was done as a replacement for the loss of labor as the African slave trade and slavery began to end by the middle of the nineteenth century. From 1840s to 1880s, Cantonese-speaking Chinese migrants from the Pearl River delta region of Guangdong Province came to the Americas for work under contract.⁷⁶ Many came to the Americas because of the low standard of living caused by civil and foreign imperialist warfare in their home country. Changing diplomatic realities between China and the Western powers and the increasing labor demands in the industrializing Americas also incentivized the migration.

During the mid-nineteenth century, China was undergoing political and social turmoil. The two Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860) forced China to open more ports, rendering the Qing state weak. The gigantic indemnities demanded by the British devastated the Qing Empire fiscally.⁷⁷ The opening of treaty ports and introduction of ocean going shipping further altered the economic landscape by moving much of the trade from the Peal Delta to Shanghai and the open seas, which led to more unemployment of laborers in the southeast coast. Besides the Opium Wars, the Qing dynasty also faced a series of internal upheavals such as the Taiping Rebellion (1849-1864), during which 20 to 30 million died, and millions more displaced.⁷⁸ In Guangdong province, the southern coast province where

⁷⁶ Young, *Alien Nation*, 33.

⁷⁷ Stewart, *Chinese Bondage in Peru*.

⁷⁸ Yong, *Alien Nation*, 32.

most of the immigrants originated, the peasant revolt known as the Red Turban Rebellion erupted in 1854 and inspired secret societies such as the Triads to launch assaults upon city of Guangzhou. Many civilians lost their lives and livelihood during such turmoil.⁷⁹ In China, life became so hard that fathers would sometimes cast their children into a river or abandon them on the public highway. People in positions of extreme poverty and hunger caused by the wars, plus their seafaring traditions, often welcomed the opportunity to migrate to a country on which “Providence with a liberal hand had conceded all its gifts.”⁸⁰ The discovery of gold in California led some of the migrants to believe that they were being led to the “Gold Hills.”⁸¹ At least 1.5 million Chinese left southeast coast for a life elsewhere; about half a million had come to the Americas by 1882, half of which destined for the Anglo North America.⁸²

Other internal catalysts for the emigration included the change of Qing diplomatic and domestic policies. There were fewer protections provided by the Qing government because it refused to acknowledge the “sojourners” and established few diplomatic involvements with foreign nations. Many Chinese workers searching for better living conditions and hoping to bring wealth back home were attracted by the tales of wealth to be gained in the new lands.⁸³

Furthermore, the economic development and shortage of labor in the Americas offered opportunities. Coolie contract laborers were taken to the U.S., Peru, Cuba, Panama,

⁷⁹ Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 18.

⁸⁰ Stewart, *Chinese Bondage in Peru*, 13.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 18.

⁸² Young, *Alien Nation*, 32.

⁸³ Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*.

Brazil, or other parts of the Americas.⁸⁴ More than 335,000 Chinese immigrants entered the U.S. between 1848 and 1882 alone.⁸⁵ The intensive economic developments such as the building of “Pacific Railroad” demanded cheap laborers. Latin American states also needed more labor for their big economic projects. Between 1849 and 1874, 92,130 entered Peru to work in the guano deposits, railway construction, and sugar and cotton cultivation.⁸⁶ In Cuba, thousands of Chinese laborers found employment on the sugar plantations; many also worked on the Panama Railway then under construction in Brazil.⁸⁷ However, the mass migration of the Chinese into Mexico did not happen until the 1870s under the Porfiriato.

The U.S. Exclusion Act

The experience of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. was a long and arduous struggle from the beginning. One of the first naturalization laws enacted in the 1790s declared that only white aliens were eligible for naturalization. However, drawn by the boom of the Gold Rush, Chinese voluntary immigrants began arriving in California in the 1850s and quickly met hostility from the white natives. Mostly shut out of gold mining, Chinese came to work on the transcontinental railway construction. In 1870, the U.S. Congress passed a law that proclaimed Chinese immigrants in the U.S. ineligible for citizenship. In 1882, the Exclusionary Act suspended all entries of Chinese laborers to the U.S. for ten years and prohibited the Chinese from becoming naturalized citizens; the act was later renewed and strengthened into law demanding large-scale deportation.⁸⁸ It was also the first law in U.S.

⁸⁴ Elliott Young, *Alien Nation*, 21.

⁸⁵ Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 21.

⁸⁶ Heraclio Bonilla, “The War of the Pacific and the National and Colonial Problem in Peru,” *Past & Present* 81(1978): pp. 92-118.

⁸⁷ Stewart, *Chinese Bondage in Peru*, 16-17.

⁸⁸ Erika Lee, *At America's gates: Chinese immigration during the exclusion era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: Univ of North Carolina Press, 2003), 4.

history to exclude immigrants' entrance based on race and class.⁸⁹ Those Chinese who illegally came across the U.S./Mexican border were, as Robert Chao put it, "the first 'undocumented immigrants' from Mexico."⁹⁰ It was not until 1898, as ruled by the Supreme Court in the case of *U.S. v. Wong Kim Art*, that Chinese descendants born in America were granted full citizenship. Further Chinese immigration to the U.S. was barred until 1943, when WWII reshaped the relationship between China and the U.S.⁹¹

In fact, the Exclusion Act profoundly changed U.S. politics, not only with regards to immigration and the legitimacy of the state but also towards race formation and the racialization of immigration policies. Historian Erika Lee argues that Chinese exclusion reinforced the important role that the federal government was beginning to play in controlling race relations, immigration, immigrant communities, and citizenship. All modern "legitimization" and "controlling" aspects of the immigration policies can be traced back to the Exclusion Era policies.⁹² The 1882 act was also the first significant restrictive immigration law, setting the precedence to restrict a group of immigrants based on their race, nationality and class.⁹³ Lee called the Exclusion Act the "watershed beyond its status."⁹⁴ The law also served as a prototype for discriminatory legislation later issued by the Mexican government.

There are usually two arguments surrounding the causes of exclusion. The Californian thesis, which emphasized labor relations and claimed that the major drive of the

⁸⁹ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 4.

⁹⁰ Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 3.

⁹¹ Civil Rights, Chapter 5 in *We the People: an introduction to American Politics* 5thed, by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, Margret Weir (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.,2005), 188

⁹² Lee, *At America's Gates*, 10.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 10.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 25.

anti-Chinese movement stemmed from the working class white natives in California, connecting the exclusion of Chinese workers with the magnification of white working-class agency.⁹⁵ This argument, however, as historian Andrew Gyory pointed out, did not explain how the law came to pass in the Congress and received nation-wide support.⁹⁶ He argued, instead, that despite the fact that the Congress passed the Exclusion Act to placate workers' demands and assuage the prevalent concerns about maintaining white "racial purity," party politics were at the heart of this discriminatory law. In other words, the powerless and voiceless Chinese immigrants were pawns to break legislative stalemate in post Civil War America.⁹⁷ Erika Lee concurred with the political significance of the passing of the anti-Chinese acts, for it paved ways for the rise of Jim Crow in the 1880s.⁹⁸

The Exclusionary Act of 1882 was a major factor that pushed Chinese laborers to migrate into Latin America in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, it also provided a powerful framework to racialize the threatening "others" and to exclude the undesirable aliens.⁹⁹ The act and a series of subsequent exclusionary legislation influenced later treatment regarding Mexicans and the takeover and treatment of the Philippines. The exclusion of Chinese immigrants racialized the dimensions of the identity of the Chinese and other non-white races outside the U.S. national boundaries, which allowed the perpetuation of the East-West divide and solidified a "civic identity" of white Americans.¹⁰⁰ As a result of the immigration restriction that was placed upon them by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882,

⁹⁵ Mary Roberts Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration* (New York, 1909).

⁹⁶ Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 11.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Lee, *At America's Gates*.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁰⁰ Shelley Sang-Hee Lee, *A New History of Asian America* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014).

Chinese immigrants entered Mexico in search of employment opportunities. However, closing the gate to the U.S. also prompted a wave of migration to Mexico by the Chinese hoping to be smuggled into the U.S. In spite of the legal disenfranchisement, the number of the Chinese entering the United States surpassed that of the pre-exclusion period dramatically.¹⁰¹ Between 1882 and 1920, approximately 17,300 Chinese crossed the northern and southern borders into the U.S.¹⁰²

When Mexico later employed exclusionary laws to restrict or expel Chinese labor, parallel arguments were used. The voice of resentment against the Chinese was from below. Local merchants and native laborers formed anti-*Chinista* groups, emphasizing that the hatred was stemming from class as well as race. The question of Chinese immigrants was also used as a pretext to tighten the control of the U.S.-Mexican border in the state building process for both countries. Francisco Navejas pointed out that Chinese transnationalism presented a constant threat of “flexibility,” which debilitated the state, and therefore, the central power of the U.S. demanded Chinese migrants to stop entering the country from Mexico. On the other hand, the flow of the Chinese across the porous borders produced a multi-centric behavior, prompting Mexico and the U.S. to work together. In turn, when this flow abated, the bilateral Mexico-U.S. relations not only dipped further, but also reinforced both states’ structures and expectations.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Erika lee, *At America’s Gates*.

¹⁰² Julia Maria Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (Chapel Hill: UNC press, 2012), 11.

¹⁰³ Navejas, “Mi casa su casa,” 104-105.

Porfiriato

Meanwhile, at the height of the exclusion and expulsion of the Chinese in the U.S., in Mexico, the liberal policies of Porfirio Díaz embarked on modernizing Mexico, welcoming immigrants to move to the fast-developing country.

In 1876, Porfirio Díaz finally came to power after a series of failed revolts, following the death of Benito Juárez, the champion of *liberals* seen as a civic paragon.¹⁰⁴ Donned in liberal clothing, Porfirio Díaz embraced progressive principles that relied on an “emotional, nonxenophobic nationalism” for internal support and promised stability and progress in exchange for personalized and centralized power.¹⁰⁵ During his regime, Díaz worked with *Los Científicos*, a close circle of technocrats and young intellectuals and professionals formed by Manuel Romero Rubio, and followed through on a series of modernization efforts—building infrastructures such as railroads and rationalizing the fiscal system, suppressing internal customs barriers, and cutting the military budgets.¹⁰⁶ For instance, Díaz instituted banking laws such as the Commercial Codes of 1884 and 1889 and the National Banking Law of 1897. These laws established common rules for the entire banking system, reducing privileges of the oligarchs.¹⁰⁷ Besides the stringent domestic policies, Díaz also intervened with tariff policies to integrate Mexico into the global economy by implementing laws to both ensure and bound national activities.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Colin MacLachlan and William Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico* (New Jersey: Pearson, Prentice Hall, 2004), 96.

¹⁰⁵ MacLachlan and Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo*, 95.

¹⁰⁶ Alan Knight, *The Mexican History, Vol. 1.*, 21; MacLachlan and Beezley, *El gran pueblo*, 161.

¹⁰⁷ Steven Topik, “When the Periphery Became More Central: From Colonial Pact to Liberal Nationalism in Brazil and Mexico, 1800-1914,” *LSE Research Online*.

¹⁰⁸ Edward Beatty, “Commercial Policy in Porfirian Mexico: The Structure of Protection,” in *The Mexican Economy, 1870-1930, essays on the Economic History of*

Díaz's immigration policies

Immigration policies were part of Díaz's "scientific" efforts to modernize the country. Fearing Mexico was becoming too Americanized, Porfirio and his *Científicos* looked to Europe for cultural and economic influence and thus opened up immigration. They hoped that these measures would attract more immigrants and businesses from Europe. Besides Europeans, they also considered the *yanquisas* allies of convenience against the conservatives, the *puros*, who adhered to Juárez's federalism. In 1886, the *Ley de Extranjería y Naturalización* guaranteed all foreigners including immigrants the same rights and privileges as Mexicans, although the government retained the right to expel any dangerous foreigners.¹⁰⁹ Ley de Inmigración 1909 was a comprehensive immigration law, in which racial discrimination was forbidden. Although the liberal immigration policy assumed that the Europeans would constitute the main group of immigrants,¹¹⁰ it had stimulated the influx of the Chinese immigrating from the Mexico-U.S. border regions and from China via Cuba.

In 1909, Porfirio's regime passed a comprehensive law that invited the Chinese to come to Mexico.¹¹¹ Instead of being an unintended consequence of an immigration policy designed to attract European immigrants and investments, the invitation to Chinese immigration was a call for cheap labor for economic development. Between 1867 and 1910, Mexico was developing an extensive export-oriented capitalist economy. Porfirio emphasized national strength through modernization and economic development.¹¹² Mexico needed a labor force for massive development projects. Hence, Díaz defended the absolute

Institutions, Revolution and Growth, ed. Jeffery Bortz and Stephen Haber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁹ Craib III, "Chinese Immigrants in Porfirian Mexico," 2.

¹¹⁰ Alan Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*."

¹¹¹ Fitzgerald and Cook-Martín, *Culling the Masses*, 227.

¹¹² Craib III, "Chinese Immigrants in Porfirian Mexico."

rights of the Chinese in Mexico, based on the 1857 Constitution, liberal principles, and the influence of Chinese political associations and networks.¹¹³

In a report to the Congress in 1877, the Development Minister, Vicente Riva Palacio, remarked that the only colonists who could establish themselves or work on the coasts were the Asians.¹¹⁴ From 1884 to 1900, more than 13,000 Chinese people resided in Mexico, making Mexico the second largest Chinese population in Latin America, only behind Cuba.¹¹⁵ Another reason for the increase in Chinese population was *La Suscripción del Tratado de Amistad, Comercio y Navegación* (the Sino-Mexican Treaty of Amity and Commerce of 1899), which was signed to increase commerce with China and Japan. The number of the Chinese in Mexico had thus increased drastically.

Chinese settlement and employment during the Porfiriato

By 1900, large numbers of Chinese laborers worked on the Tehuantepec, the Mexican Central, and the Southern Pacific of Mexico railroads. Chinese were also employed in the cotton fields in Baja California Norte, settling in Mexicali and Ensenada.¹¹⁶ Some of them became self-employed in businesses such as grocery stores and quickly came to dominate shoe and clothing manufacturing, owning some of the largest mercantile establishments in Sonora.¹¹⁷ The anti-Chinese sentiment inflamed by the Chinese economic success started to set the stage for the violence during the revolutionary period.

¹¹³ Elliot Young, *Alien Nation*.

¹¹⁴ Palacio quoted in article by Kenneth Cott, "Mexican Diplomacy and the Chinese Issue, 1876-1910," *HAHR*, 67:1, 64, quoted in Daniel Lewis, *Iron Horse Imperialism: The Southern Pacific of Mexico, 1880-1951* (Tucson, AZ, University of Arizona Press, 2007), 94.

¹¹⁵ Daniel Lewis, *Iron Horse Imperialism*, 94.

¹¹⁶ Hu-Dehart, "The Chinese of Baja California Norte," 16.

¹¹⁷ Lewis, *Iron Horse Imperialism*.

Mexico also attracted the Chinese as a labor force to develop uninhabited, hot and humid areas as a participatory work force. Chinese immigrants faced resistance in certain areas. Historian John Kenneth Turner contended that the Díaz regime was a barbarous rule which engaged in systematic repression of laborers. He dubbed the Yucatan as “literal chattel slaveries” and claimed that labor exploitation became more prevalent and brutal under the Díaz regime.¹¹⁸ Turner argued that the violence carried out by the *rurales* (the rural police) and the *jefe políticos* (the regional bosses) were connected to the “Porfiriato machine” that systematically repressed the working people. He maintained that there was about three thousand “Chinese (Korean)” laborers in Yucatan treated as chattel slaves.¹¹⁹ Cotton planters in the Mexicali Valley of Baja California, where many Chinese immigrants established their communities, also seemed to have engaged in similar patterns of exploitation.

Besides manual labor, many Chinese immigrants formed their own distribution networks and established businesses that met significant economic success, especially in the north. In fact, Chinese businesses were an integral part of the Mexican economy, as some Chinese started small businesses and invested capital in the northern part of the country. By 1903, Chinese businesses owned at least ten of thirty-seven shoe factories in Sonora, producing over \$100,000 (U.S.D.) in goods each year.¹²⁰ Despite their small numbers, the Chinese contributed disproportionately to the Sonoran economy—they comprised only less

¹¹⁸ John Kenneth Turner, *Barbarous Mexico*, 1910. The book was received by many as an eyewitness account, however, historian Paul J Vanderwood (1970) discredited the reprint of the book as a “slick production of unrestrained” propaganda.

¹¹⁹ John Kenneth Turner, *Barbarous Mexico*.

¹²⁰ Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “Immigrants to a Developing Society: The Chinese in Northern Mexico, 1875-1932,” *Journal of Arizona History* (1980): 49-86.

than two percent of the Sonoran population; nonetheless, they fulfilled a variety of needs by bringing merchandise and services to towns throughout Sonora.¹²¹

Chinese immigrants created businesses, either individually or jointly, and hired compatriots who had just arrived to work in their stores; at times, they also employed Mexican women. Unlike the European immigrants with significant capital, some of the Chinese businesses were small, including street peddling and selling goods house by house, street by street.¹²² They also established themselves as small manufacturers, shopkeepers, and retail merchants, providing services such as laundry, tailoring, shoe repair, food preparation and hotels or boarding houses for single men.¹²³ However, Mexico also drew Chinese merchants with capital to invest in the economy. Most of these merchants came from the United States.

In fact, many of them resided within the American colonies in Mexico, which are small areas in Mexican regions where Americans established their territory for business and residency. Some of the American Chinese either considered themselves as Americans, or were recognized by the local Mexicans as *yanquis*, a less than affectionate term used for people from the United States. In Torreón, Wong Foon Chuck, a Chinese immigrant who arrived in Mexico in 1887, established himself as a leading importer and supplier of Chinese labor for various industries of both Mexico and the U.S. He also helped create the Compañía

¹²¹ Julia María Schiavone Camacho, “Crossing Boundaries, Claiming a Homeland: The Mexican Chinese Transpacific Journey to Becoming Mexican, 1930s–1960s,” *Pacific Historical Review* 78 (2009): 545–577.

¹²² Camacho, “Crossing Boundaries.”

¹²³ Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “Indispensable Enemy or Convenient Scapegoat? A Critical Examination of Sinophobia in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1870s To 1930s,” in *The Chinese in Latin America and the Caribbean*, ed. Chee Beng Tan and Walton Look Lai (Leiden, The Netherlands : Brill, 2010).

Bancaria Chino y México in 1906 with the Chinese reformer in exile Kang Youwei.¹²⁴ Other prominent Chinese businessmen included George Foo, a San Franciscan and a “charter member” of the American colony; Hop Lee, who turned his American restaurant into an entrepreneurial empire; and Sam Hing, a prominent Chinese-American who organized the Chinese coolie network and supplied contractors, railroad men, and plantation owners. Porfirio Díaz even recognized Sam Hing’s service and recommended his business for the Panama Canal project.¹²⁵ Moreover, many of them dominated small, neighborhood shops. Clearly, prominent San Franciscan Chinese merchants played a key role in capital transactions and building networks for Chinese wholesale supplies within the transnational commercial orbit.¹²⁶

Chinese immigrants were present in many sectors of Mexican economy, supplying both capital and labor. However, their prominent status invited hostility against them. In 1906, Quong Sang Lung and Fong Fo Qui, both merchants in Sonora, appealed to the governor of Sonora for compensation for attacks upon their businesses by strikers belonging to the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, a mining operation owned by United States companies. Both Lung’s and Qui’s companies were sacked by the strikers because they believed that Lung and Qui profited from the local industries and were catering to the mining

¹²⁴ Leo M. Dambourges Jacques, “The Chinese Massacre in Torreón (Coahuila) in 1911,” *Arizona and the West* 16 (1974): 233-246; Raymond Criab III, “Chinese Immigrants in Porfirian Mexico,” 12; Wiliam Meyers, *Forge of Progress, Crucible of Revolt: The Origins of the Mexican Revolution in La Comarca Lagunera, 1880-1911*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 141; William Schell Jr., *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911* (Wilmington Delaware: A Scholarly Resources Inc., 2001), 24.

¹²⁵ Schell Jr., *Integral Outsiders*, 24.

¹²⁶ Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico*, 5.

company.¹²⁷ The Sonoran government responded to the Chinese merchants' request on June 29, 1906, stating that they would not be compensated for their loss because compensation was not the government's responsibility.¹²⁸

The attraction of Chinese foreign capital and labor to Northern Mexico was concurrent to the rise of la Comarca Lagunera, an area south of the border region. This region was the focus for development during the Porfiriato for its natural resources and railroads, and a region where cash crop agriculture prospered. Torreón, as the heart of the area, did not exist until the 1880s. The rising of the town demanded labor and services as Americans and Germans set up plantations in the region.¹²⁹

Anti-Chinese Sentiments

Rhetoric against the presence of Chinese merchants surfaced soon after Chinese businesses took off in northern Mexico. A Sonoran newspaper *El Tráfico* described Chinese immigrants as gamblers, opium smokers, and a people without a nation.¹³⁰ The newspaper later accused the Chinese for having poor hygiene and being infected with contagious diseases. U.S. exclusion laws were cited to justify their disapproval of the immigrants in Sonora. Moreover, the editorial asserted that the action of exclusion was not against liberal principles:

In the United States, a liberal country whose fundamental law gives foreigners the same prerogatives that our laws have, made an exception of the Chinese, subjecting them first to certain quarters, then prohibiting their entry into the country, and finally enacting laws that take away the right that [group of] foreigners have--to

¹²⁷ Humberto Monteón Gonzalez and Jose Luis Trueba Lara, *Chinos y Antichinos en Mexico: Documentos para su estudio* (Guadalajara, Mexico: Unidad Editorial, 1988), 57-58.

¹²⁸ Gonzalez, *Chinos y antichinos*, 59.

¹²⁹ Meyers, *Forge of Progress*.

¹³⁰ *El Trafico*, Guaymas, Sonora, 8 de febrero de 1899, in Monteón Gonzalez, *Chinos y Antichinos*, 38.

nationalize/naturalize and contract [marriage] with women other than his race, even with Indians.¹³¹

The predominant Yellow Perilism in the nineteenth century and Social Darwinism ideas, which passed for scientific thinking at the time, were visible in the anti-Chinese mantra. Many Mexican law makers inveighed against Chinese immigration based on racial denigration, with the same view they held of the Indian population of central and southern part of the country, whom they saw as alcoholic degenerates.¹³² While earlier in the era of Porfirato, Díaz had defended and protected Chinese immigrants, late in his regime, he discriminated against the Chinese by pointing to their “anti-national characters.”¹³³ In 1908, the Mexican Congress passed the first “selective” immigration law to restrict indentured Chinese workers.¹³⁴ The act amended the Mexican Constitution’s article on Immigration and Sanitary Laws and mainly targeted the Asian immigrations.¹³⁵

However, some of the hatred was also rooted in economics. The foreigners, especially the Chinese, dominated small, neighborhood shops. These shopkeepers earned the animosity of the workers, since the companies generally would not provide credit (even plantations would only rarely offer yearly credit, which had to be settled after the harvest). Workers

¹³¹ “En los Estados Unidos pais liberal por excelencia y en cuya ley fundamental se dan a los extranjeros las mismas prerogativas que les dan nuestras leyes se han hecho una excepcion de los chinos sujetandolos primero a determinados cuarterles, despues prohibiendo su entrada al pais y finalmented promulgando leyes que les quitan el derecho que tienen los demas extranjeros, de nacionalizarse y hasta el de contraer con otras mujeres que no sean las de su raza, ni siquiera con las indias.” Translations were mine. *El trafico*, 6 de 1899, num 525, p1, in monteón Goznia. *Chinos y antichinos*. 42.

¹³² Charles Cumberland, “The Sonora Chinese and the Mexican Revolution,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XL (1960), 191-211.

¹³³ Craib III, “Chinese immigrants.”

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

resented the high interest and higher prices charged by the Chinese and a few Spanish merchants.¹³⁶

Like in the Exclusion Era United States, Mexican politicians blamed Chinese shopkeepers for Mexican economic failures and used them as pawns to gain political currency.¹³⁷The Mexican Liberal Party led by the anarchist Flores Magón brothers opposed Chinese migration in its 1906 electoral campaign, claiming that it harmed the interests of native workers. However, there were no effective means of restricting Chinese entry until the revolution and the populist governments that succeeded it.¹³⁸

Crisis of 1907

Economic instability agitated popular unrest, and many working class Mexicans saw foreign business interests as the culprits. In 1907, a panic on Wall Street touched off a monetary crisis and economic recession throughout the U.S. and Europe. At the same time, world market prices for silver, lead, and copper dropped significantly. Money for capital investment in Laguana began to tighten. In the midst of the monetary crisis, a drought caused a severe shortage of crops that not only exhausted food supplies to the market, but also fell short of feeding the workers. Numerous firms went bankrupt. The economic crises led to mass layoffs. In 1908, the region's oldest textile mill la Amistad laid off two thousand workers.¹³⁹

The crisis also prompted people to react. In face of socioeconomic instability, rising foreign influence, political dissent, and fiscal crisis, the Porfirian government gradually lost

¹³⁶ Meyers, *Forge of Progress*, 184.

¹³⁷ John Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: the coming and process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987).

¹³⁸ FitzGerald and Cook-Martín, *Culling the Masses*, 227.

¹³⁹ Meyers, *Forge of Progress, Crucible of Revolt*.

its ability to rule. Crimes committed by the lower class flared up in towns. By the end of 1907, robberies were common in wealthy neighborhoods and the most prosperous residents placed armed guards in front of their houses in defense against bandits.

At the same time, the Chinese, distinctive in their looks and customs, bore the brunt of resentment. The worker's reaction to the government's weakness also allowed the Mexico Liberal Party (PLM), led by the Magon brothers, to bank on the popular discontent. The PLM pointed out that the foreigners possessed privileges in the society whereas working class people suffered during the crises. An article in *El Mundo* stated:

Let's call attention to the fact that we cannot compete against foreigners in commercial ventures; in fact, we cannot even come close. The sad and lamentable fact is that the prostration of our national commerce has created a situation in which Mexicans are replaced by foreign individuals and companies that monopolize our commerce and behave in the manner of conquerors in a conquered land.¹⁴⁰

In sum, the policies during the Porfiriato had encouraged Chinese immigration into Mexico; the success of the Chinese in Mexico and the successful transition of Chinese labor into the commercial class were a result of capital development of Porfirian Mexico. However, the distinctive customs and culture of the Chinese and their economic positions made them targets of the xenophobia that rose during recessions. Both the Mexican commercial class and members of the working class held biased views against Chinese immigrants. This anti-*Chinista* attitude aligned with anger towards the Porfirian government and its policies purportedly favoring the foreigners. These hostile attitudes against Chinese immigrants already fermenting under Díaz set the stage for the persecution and violence that ensued in the revolutionary period, culminating in the expulsion of Chinese people wholesale in the northern states during the postrevolutionary period.

¹⁴⁰ Cited in Meyers, *Forge of Progress, Crucible of Revolt*, 192.

Revolutionary Violence, 1911-1920

On May 14, 1911, less than ten days after Cinco de Mayo, the *Maderista* revolutionaries stomped into Torreón, Chihuahua, joined by a mob of 4,000 local lower-class men and women, sacking and looting Chinese homes and businesses. 303 Chinese people were killed in a two-day bloodbath in the largest massacre of the Chinese in North America.¹⁴¹ The looting caused an estimated property damage of \$850,000 (U.S.) and thus destroyed Mexico's most prosperous Asian community.¹⁴²

Prior to the massacre, several events helped propagate anti-Chinese sentiment. Most directly linked to the bloodshed was the anti-Chinese speech given by Jesus C. Flores, a stonemason and a follower of Francisco Madero. In the speech, Flores condemned Chinese immigrants for allegedly taking jobs from local women and exploited the Mexican working class. He also accused Chinese businesses of causing the national economic troubles, stressing that "it is necessary, even a patriotic duty, to finish with them."¹⁴³

The Mexican Revolution undoubtedly fanned the flames of xenophobic sentiment in society and intensified the racial tension cultivated during the Porfiriato. Subsequently, the revolution unleashed a series of violent attacks against Chinese immigrants from both the working class and the commercial class. The Torreón Massacre was a climax of violence that resulted from the discontent of working class people against Díaz's oligarchy and their anger over the economic recession. The violence against the Chinese echoed working-class Mexicans' protests against the government that they believed to have caused their insecure

¹⁴¹ Young, *Alien Nation*.

¹⁴² Hu-Dehart, "Immigrants to a Developing Society," 289.

¹⁴³ Wifley and Bassett, *Memorandum on the Law and the Facts*, 10.

and impoverished situation.¹⁴⁴ From mid-1907, violent episodes increased dramatically. Bandit raids against haciendas and mines multiplied, and the racial tolerance law passed in 1909 was rejected with a vengeance during the revolution.¹⁴⁵ Organizations of workers also demanded racial restrictions. The Mexican peasants and workers' leagues often protested against Chinese merchants sometimes for selling goods at low prices, while other times for selling at high prices. The flip-flop complaints revealed disconnect between most Mexicans' self-interest and their immigration preferences.¹⁴⁶ For instance, Mexican mine laborers in 1912 accused the Chinese of being traitors to their country. Many mine workers and other lower class members had organized numerous rallies against Chinese members of the Mexican lower classes. Women also participated in the process. Wives of Mexican mine laborers also sponsored a large anti-Chinese demonstration on Feb. 24, 1914 in Cananea, Sonora.

The anti-Asian movement was framed in racist terms unrelated to the economy. The commercial class also aired their implicit anti-Chinese biases. As the crisis intensified, the Mexican commercial class directed their strong discontent at their Chinese competition and argued that the arrival of the Chinese had brought a weaker race into Mexico.¹⁴⁷ Between 1911 and 1919 alone, there were more than 500 cases of Chinese immigrants being killed by disgruntled soldiers during the early years of the Mexican Revolution, and eight hundred and fourteen Chinese were killed in various states throughout Mexico by soldiers or unknown individuals.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Meyers, *Forge of Progress*, 185.

¹⁴⁵ Fitzgerald and Martin, *Culling the Masses*, 227.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 229.

¹⁴⁷ Meyers, *Forge of Progress*. 184.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 147.

During the early years of the Mexican Revolution, Chinese immigrants filed more than six hundred property claims totaling more than one million dollars in economic losses.¹⁴⁹ Between July 19 and 29, 1919, looters sacked forty-four Chinese commercial houses in Cananea Sonora, robbing them of \$527,752.90 (US) worth of cash and goods and deliberately destroying other articles that Mexicans would not use such as Chinese medicines.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, while Mexicans buried their dead in the cemetery, they prohibited the Chinese from doing so. Reportedly, some Mexican soldiers threw nude Chinese corpses into an open trench dug just for this purpose.¹⁵¹

The resentment did not just come from revolutionary fervor from below; small businesses run by the commercial class also formed associations to go against the Chinese. In 1916, Jose Maria Arana, a schoolteacher in the border city Magdalena, Sonora, gave a speech condemning the presence of the Chinese and thus launched an anti-Chinese campaign. In response, a small group of Mexican shopkeepers and entrepreneurs formed the Commercial Association of Businessman in an effort to eliminate the Chinese from Sonoran businesses. In Magdalena, Sonora, the year following Arana's speech, it was clear that Arana and his follower shared a commitment to imposing and sustaining anti-Chinese rhetoric based on racial ideals that also subsumed women's political equality as a target. They urged the *Chineras* and *Chineros*, Mexicans who protected and supported the Chinese, to break bonds with their Chinese relatives, friends, or associates. Arana campaigned across the northern states, and many had heard the speech in Nogales, Sonora. The explicit goal of their organization was the elimination of Chinese merchants through all available legal means.

¹⁴⁹ Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 148.

¹⁵¹ Jacques, "The Chinese Massacre in Torreón (Coahuila) in 1911," 240.

The organized anti-Chinese campaigns eventually culminated in the expulsion of virtually the entire Chinese community from the state in 1931.¹⁵²

Arana's actions signaled the beginning of an organized anti-Chinese movement. As Mexican men had left Magdalena to fight in the revolution or work in the U.S., some local people grumbled that Chinese men had filled the void—stealing both capital, jobs, and women. In other border states, anti-Chinese organizations such as the National Anti-Chinese Worker League (or the People-for the Race) in Tamaulipas was organized against the “Asian invasion.” The local populace was worried that the Chinese had moved up the economic ladder from mining and agricultural work to petty commerce.¹⁵³

Some Sonoran women became powerful anti-Chinese proponents. In 1917, Professor Maria de Jesus Valdez rallied a group of women in Magdalena to urge women to join the revolution, declaring, “the sacrosanct call of patriotism also burns in women’s hearts.”¹⁵⁴ She ended her talk with a warning about the Chinese and argued that Chinese exclusion laws would raise Mexico’s stature in the international order: “Other civilized nations won’t permit the entry of the Chinese. They throw him out like poisonous plants, which is what we must do in order to place Mexico among these nations.”¹⁵⁵

The local authorities also tried to use existing laws to harass Chinese residents as a response to Jose Arana and his followers’ anti-Chinese rant. In a letter to Jose Arana in 1919, the mayor of Cananea wrote: “The Chinese who violate the Labor Laws, those I ordered to clean the public jail [sic], asked for relief, and the matter is being addressed. The general

¹⁵² Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 39-41.

¹⁵³ Fitzgerald and Cook Martin, *Culling the Masses*.

¹⁵⁴ Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*.

¹⁵⁵ Erika Lee, "Orientalisms in the Americas: A hemispheric approach to Asian American history," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 8, no. 3 (2005): 247.

belief is that it will be granted.”¹⁵⁶ Actively showing his dislike for the Chinese, the mayor illegally forced those jailed to clean up the prison.¹⁵⁷ The campaign also pressed for laws restricting new Chinese immigration on the state level to be passed.

On March 15th 1916, J. R. Chon, a representative of Colonia China de Cocorit, Sonora, protested to the governor of Sonora and the municipal president of Cocorit that his businesses were attacked first by the *Yaquis* and then the Constitutionistas. In his letter of complaints, he also mentioned that the city had asked the Chinese merchants to abandon their shops, in which they lived, and to change their residence to the edge of the town. Chon bemoaned:

On the other hand, the portions where the order tells us to change our residencies, they lack houses, and leaving us in extreme poverty after lootings; when we just began back to work slowly? Where do we obtain the necessary capital to build *fincas* to live? For us, we are used to work in the town center unconcerned of living than living at the edge if we could [possibly] find house to rent; but there is nothing [for rent], or [anything] that we can build. Ordering us to move means almost an expulsion.¹⁵⁸

The letter also asserted that it was strange and painful for the state governor to approve such a provision that only related to this town. In another letter to the North American Consul,

¹⁵⁶ Avital Bloch and Servando Ortoll, “The Anti-Chinese and Anti-Japanese Movements in Cananea, Sonora and Salt Lake River, Arizona, During the 1920 and 1930s,” *Americas* VI (1), 2010.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ “Por otra parte, las porciones que nos señalan para que cambiemos nuestras residencias, carecen completamente de casas, y si despues de habernos dejado con los saqueos casi en la miseria; cuando apenas nos iniciamos de Nuevo con lentitud en el trabajo? de donde obtenemos el capital necesario para construir fincas en que poder habitar? Para nosotros, que estamos habituados al trabajo nos seria indiferente vivir en el centro que en la orilla si encontraramos casas de renta; pero como no las hay ni las podemos construir, la orden que se nos comunica significa casi una expulsion.” Translations are mine. Humberto monteón Gonzalez chinos y anti chinso en mexico 59.

Louis Hostetter, on March 25 of 1916, Chon expressed disbelief of the Chinese community that such violence and violation could be condoned by the Mexican government.¹⁵⁹

The local persecution of the Chinese might reflect the state's new provisions regarding labor. The change of policies towards the foreign establishments emerged after Venustiano Carranza took over the government. In January 1915, Carranza instituted an amendment to the 1857 Constitution, giving the national government the right to legislate on mining, commercial, and labor issues. Gradually labor assumed an organized and independent role in the country after a pact between Carranza and the Casa del Obrero Mundial, which promised to support the president in return for laws to protect workers. From this base, labor brought its plight to the nation and established its need for privileges and guarantees in the constitution. Chinese organizations and other foreign establishments, therefore, lost their privileges. With state guarantees and protection, organized labor, one of the most powerful enemies of foreign business control, assumed a prominent role in the new order.¹⁶⁰

From 1916-1921, various Sonora governors legalized or ordered various assaults on the Chinese immigrants and implemented policies against their establishments. During the revolutionary era, we do see sporadic attempts at regional protections, but the anti-*Chinista* movement became more boisterous as it went national in the 1920s, when the central government regained its grip on power and was ready to oppose the Chinese in Mexico as a tool to centralize power.

Rallies gave support to violence and the Jose Arana's *pro-patria* movement achieved its highest intensity during the first decade of the revolutionary period in the north. The effort to expel and persecute Chinese during the revolution was largely popular and coming from

¹⁵⁹ Gonzalez, *Chinos y anti-Chinos en Mexico*, 59 – 60.

¹⁶⁰ Jacques, "The anti-Chinese campaigns in Sonora, Mexico, 1900-1931," 94.

below. Such movements quickly spread nationwide during the postrevolutionary period, when popular xenophobia became enmeshed with the state's desire to centralize control over the nation. The persecution of Chinese merchants and commercial establishments therefore increased dramatically and became codified.

Postrevolutionary Era

During the postrevolutionary period, the anti-Chinese movement surged along with the rise of nativist policies as part of the centralization effort. Besides the earlier economic crises such as the Great Depression in the late 1920s, the Eugenics movement from Europe and the United States and the new diplomatic relations with revolutionary China also contributed to greater central government involvement in the anti-Chinese movement.

Eager to form a unified identity, the postrevolutionary Mexico championed *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* (racial mixture), claiming that Mexico was a land of the "Cosmic Race." Although the idea of a cosmic race centered on the diversity of the racial stock of the unique Mexican people, the rejection of the alien element was prominent.¹⁶¹ Thus, anti-Chinese ideology followed *indigenismo* and the celebratory *mestizaje* naturally and helped tie the northern states to the nation during the postrevolutionary era.¹⁶²

Mexican intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s chimed in with their ideas on the formation of identities and on what constitutes the Mexican racial stock. President Álvaro Obregón's secretary of public education from 1921 to 1924, José Vasconcelos, the "cultural caudillo" of the Mexican Revolution who promoted the "decolonization" of Mexico, formed his philosophy about a "cosmic race" that affected all aspects of Mexico's sociocultural,

¹⁶¹ Jacques, "The anti-Chinese campaigns in Sonora, Mexico, 1900-1931," 125.

¹⁶² Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 47.

political, and economic policies.¹⁶³ In *La Raza Cosmica* (1925), Vasconcelos explored the consequences of racial mingling on the nation and on the world. He proposed that the Mexicans were a cosmic race, promoting the mixture of indigenous people with white Europeans but bluntly rejected the Chinese and black race in the mix. He argued: “If we reject the Chinese, it is because man, as he progresses, multiplies less, and feels the horror of numbers, for the same reason that he has begun to value quality.”¹⁶⁴ Vasconcelos also suggested that the Chinese represented a backwards race and undesirable for race mixing.¹⁶⁵

The *mestizaje* ideology inspired more direct discrimination and condemnation of the Chinese as a race. José Ángel Espinoza, a public intellectual and leader of anti-Chinese movement, wrote the infamous anti-Chinese propaganda piece, *El ejemplo de Sonora* (Mexico: n.e., 1932), an effort to make the anti-Chinese rhetoric appear more “logical” and “sensible.”¹⁶⁶ Adding on to Vasconcelo’s cosmic race theory, Jose Espinoza called for the eviction of the Chinese population. His rhetoric was embedded in racialized and gendered assumptions about not only the Chinese but also Mexican men and women. He argued that the expulsion of the Chinese had opened up space for young Mexican men for employment and added capital to the states.¹⁶⁷

In the meantime, many states in Mexico did face high unemployment rates of native Mexicans and general economic crisis. After World War I and again during the Great Depression, the United States repatriated Mexican workers, which demanded more job positions open in Mexico for the repatriates. The anti-*Chinistas* accused Chinese businesses

¹⁶³ Enrique Krauze, *Redeemers: Ideas and Power in Latin America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), 84; MacLachlan and Beezley, *El gran pueblo*, 271.

¹⁶⁴ Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 89.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

of competing unfairly, illegal lending practices, and excluding Mexican labor. They argued that jobs in Mexico should be reserved for Mexican workers.

Thus, in face of the high unemployment rates, combined with racial ideology in the 1920s, various states and the central government enacted discriminatory laws against the Chinese.¹⁶⁸ In 1923, Congressman Alejandro Villaseñor proposed to the Sonora Senate to create “Chinatowns” and prohibit interracial marriages between Chinese men and Mexican women for prevention of various diseases such as “beriberi, trachoma, leprosy, small pox and Asiatic bubonic plague.”¹⁶⁹ His proposals were passed in the Senate unanimously and were finally codified as Laws 27 and 31.¹⁷⁰

Nationally, Álvaro Obregón launched a successful revolt against the Carranza regime and subsequently became president in 1920. In 1921, Mexico issued its first ant-immigration law, which prohibited the immigration of foreign labor to Mexico. The law subverted the 1909 immigration law that was friendly towards immigrants and revised the *Tratado de Amistad Comercio y Navegación* signed in 1899, which welcomed Chinese labor to Mexico and included a provision to protect China’s subjects overseas. The reversal of the Treaty of Amity with China was in part due to China being a weaker state after World War I, whereas Japan was a stronger state. As a result, Chinese immigration declined after 1921. Chinese immigrants made up 12.49% of all immigrants from 1911 to 1915, 6.69% from 1916 to 1920, but fell to only 2.61% of all entrants from 1921 to 1924.¹⁷¹ The drop in percentage of

¹⁶⁸ Jacques, “The Anti-Chinese Campaigns in Sonora.”

¹⁶⁹ Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, Karin Alejandra Roseblatt, eds., *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, 228.

¹⁷⁰ Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Roseblatt, *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*.

¹⁷¹ Jacques, “The Anti-Chinese Campaigns in Sonora,” 158.

Chinese immigrants was a result of China's even greater weakness after World War I, when Japan received control over former German colonial territory in China.¹⁷²

The anti-Chinese movement regained steam after Plutarco Elías Calles took office in 1924. Racist organizations flourished across the nation. In 1925, an anti-China convention was held in Nogales, Sonora. Delegates from across the country attended and created the Liga Nacionalista Pro-Raza, an umbrella organization for anti-Chinese committees, throughout the nation.¹⁷³ The Convention requested 30,000 pesos for its operation from Calles's government.¹⁷⁴ Although whether they actually obtained the proposed funding was unknown, it was sufficient to demonstrate the close relations between the convention and Calles's government.

Plutarco Calles continued to strengthen his commitment to the Mexican working class and small merchants by also limiting middle-eastern immigrants and supporting the 1926 federal legislation to further restrict immigration.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, the Mexican Immigration Law of 1926 placed a six-month limit on visiting tourists, scientists, transients and foreign merchants. However, conscious of his international image and political reputation, Calles denounced anti-Chinese organizations and vowed to protect Chinese immigrants in Mexico in the name of the 1917 constitution; this, however, was merely a façade.

The anti-Chinese stipulations were further strengthened during the *Maximato* era (1928-1934), during which Calles became the de facto commander of Mexico. Calles's anti-

¹⁷² Fitzgerald and Cook-Martin, *Culling the Masses*, 240.

¹⁷³ Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Roseblatt, *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, 228.

¹⁷⁴ Gonzalez, *Chinos y antichinos*, 91-92.

¹⁷⁵ Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 177-178.

immigration policies prevailed and were further reinforced during the Great Depression. As a result, anti-Chinese organizations prospered throughout the nation.

Following a report by Andres Landa y Pina, director of Migration Service in 1930, which instilled fears of a “depraved, parasitic, and dysgenic ‘Chinese hydra,’” the Mexican government acted to exclude all Chinese immigrants.¹⁷⁶ La Direccion de Salubridad Publica (Administration of Public Health) was retailored to a single branch. The legislators also revived Law 31 that prohibited Chinese men from marrying Mexican women in Sonora. In 1931, the Sonora state stipulated that all Mexican business had to employ 80% Mexican workers and prohibited women from working in Chinese establishments.¹⁷⁷ On November 12, 1930, Dr. Antonio Quiroga, the Sonora state public health director, promulgated a law banning the Chinese practice of living in their business establishments and ordered all merchandise that blocked the entrance of sunlight and air to be removed.¹⁷⁸

In addition to stricter regulations on their businesses, the Chinese in Mexico also faced expulsion. In 1931, 800 Chinese were expelled from Sonora. The state government also closed and confiscated nixtamal property of the Chinese in Hermosillo.¹⁷⁹ The emigration of the Chinese from Chihuahua and Sinaloa followed suit.¹⁸⁰ Of four-hundred-and-eighty Chinese businesses in early 1931, only one hundred and fifty in Sonora survived the expulsion. However, those which survived awakened a new anti-Chinese campaign. Nogales’s Chamber of Commerce sought native businessmen and capital from other states, leading to hundreds of Chinese merchants abandoning their stores. In March, 1932, Calles

¹⁷⁶ Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 182.

¹⁷⁷ Gonzalez, *Chinos y antichinos*, 134.

¹⁷⁸ Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 166.

¹⁷⁹ Nixtamal is a tortilla dough. Nixtamalization is a process to process maize and other grains.

¹⁸⁰ Gonzalez, *Chinos y antichinos*.

began to enforce the new federal labor law that required 90% of all employees to be Mexican. Consequentially, 4,317 Chinese were expelled that year.¹⁸¹ About three quarters of Chinese immigrants left Mexico during the early 1930s.¹⁸²

Although the anti-Chinese campaigns finally lost steam after 1935, when both Plutarco Elías Calles and Rodolfo Elias were deposed, anti-Chinese activities and persecutions did not stop until the 1940s. Under Calles's successor Larzaro Cardenas, many xenophobic campaigns continued to carry out such activities in the name of nationalism. Fascist groups, such as the Gold Shirts formed under Calles, carried out actions against foreigners. And, perhaps unsurprisingly, some of the anti-Chinese organizations turned their attentions to anti-Semitism in the 1930s. Comité Pro Raza del Distrito Federal (Pro Race Committee of the Federal District) continued to operate under the name of national defense and promoted programs to attack and boycott Chinese business.¹⁸³ These programs did not lose their legitimacy until Mexico joined the allies during World War II.

Conclusion

The history of the Chinese in Mexico reflects the development and formation of the Mexican State and its interaction with the world. From within the Spanish Empire, the Chinese first came to Mexico as part of the Spanish colonization effort and the emergence of a global market. The influx of Chinese labor during the coolie era reflects the increasing globalization in the newly established Republic of Mexico, which was in dire need of labor to

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Freddy Gonzalez, "We Won't Be Bullied Anymore," PhD diss., Yale University, 2013.

¹⁸³ Richardo Pérez Montfort, "*Por la patria y por la raza*" : *la derecha secular en el sexenio de Lázaro Cárdenas* (México, D.F. : Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1993); Alicia Gojman De Backal, "Los Camisas Doradas En La Época De Lázaro Cárdenas," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 20, No. 39/40,(1995): 39-64.

develop its economy. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Chinese Exclusion policies of the U.S. and the attractive progressive policies of the Porfiriato generated a flow of migration and created space for the Chinese to occupy the middle sector of small business in the society. However, the revolution upset the system through a surge of nativism; the increasing power of organized labor surfaced. This popular and regionally initiated resentment and persecution during the revolutionary era gave steam and provided agents for the revolutionary government to centralize power, forming the Mexican state. In the next chapter, focusing on the southern state of Chiapas, we will look further into the story of how the federal government used the anti-Chinese organizations to cement the newly established state and to institutionalize the revolution.

Chapter 3—The Anti-Chinese Movement in Chiapas

On October 11, 1930, at 8:30pm, seventy-five Mexican citizens gathered at the number 5 house of the Avenue Madero and Pino Suarez in Tapachula, Chiapas, and formed the Chiapas branch of the Mexican Anti-Chinese League.¹⁸⁴ The participants cited Article 9 of the Mexican Constitution, which guaranteed the right to assemble peacefully. The same month, delegates of the Campaign Anti-China in Tapachula visited Leopoldo Alfaro, the mayor of Mapastepec in Tonalá, Chiapas, and asked him to form a committee (*junta*) against the Chinese in the city Mapastepec in Tonalá as well. Moreover, they arranged demonstrations in the city to agitate for attacks and threats towards the Chinese commerce.¹⁸⁵

What started this sudden organized effort to persecute and expel Chinese migrants and merchants? What brought the anti-Chinese movement to a state in which there was only a small number of Chinese residents? This chapter aims to answer these questions by looking into the history of Chiapas and its interaction with the federal government during the state formation period.

The postrevolutionary period (1920-1940) was a crucial period for Mexico and the building of the thirty-one states. Some historians have looked at the anti-Chinese movement in northern Mexico as a function of the state apparatus and analyzed how regionalism of the

¹⁸⁴ AGN, Caja 2 Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007; Miguel Lisbona-Guillén, "La liga Mexicana anti-China de Tapachula y la xenofobia posrevolucionaria en Chiapas," *LiminaR* 11, no. 2 (2013): 183-191 .

¹⁸⁵ AGN, Caja 2 Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.

northern states had shaped the national politics. On the other hand, others concluded that the northern anti-Chinese movements were part of the resistance of the northern states against the increasing control of the federal government. It appeared that late in the 1920s, the federal government had appropriated the grassroots anti-Chinese movements that started in the north. The central state used that movement to consolidate power and then spread it across the country through nationalism. However, studies of the anti-Chinese movement outside of the northern states have been rare. This chapter examines the relationship between the anti-Chinese movements in Chiapas and the function of the *Maximato*. The treatment of the anti-Chinese group in Chiapas by the federal government reflected state-building efforts in postrevolutionary Mexico, particularly in the federal state's concentration of the symbolic capital.

Brief History of Chiapas

Situated in the Southernmost part of Mexico, Chiapas has been geographically and historically isolated and distant from the center. To this day, Chiapas remains a remote region often beyond the direct control of the central government. The Zapatista Indian Rebellion in 1994 that broke out in Chiapas highlighted long-existing problems between the region and the central government. The battle for power between the state of Chiapas and the federal government was an on-going process. From the local elite's fight for control from the independence era to the postrevolutionary period, when the federal government finally institutionalized its regional clientelistic power, the negotiation of power relationships always existed between the center and the periphery.

Pre-Columbian era

Before the conquest, Mayan Indians speaking many different languages resided in the central valley of Chiapas. An economy based on communal *maíz* cultivation had long defined Mesoamerican civilization. The inhabitants in the region strongly identified with the central Mayan culture in today's Guatemala and the Yucatan Peninsula. No city state had achieved total dominance over the region. Instead, empires rose and fell: the early Nahuas at Teotihuacan, the Toltecs at Tula, and finally the Aztecs at Tenochtitlan.¹⁸⁶ In Central Mexico, the *calpullis*, the basic and oldest unit of Nahua government of the Maya lands, were not subject to the payments of tribute to Tenochtitlan. The indigenous peoples of the Chiapas region maintained their autonomy even as the Aztec political-military influence advanced to the southern towns of Zinacantan and Sosconusco.¹⁸⁷

Spanish colonial period

In 1522, Cortez sent tax-collectors to the region, followed by an armed unit to “pacify the local rebellion” after the local communities refused to pay tribute.¹⁸⁸ The Spanish took control in the 1550s and established *encomiendato* control forced indigenous labor, and local Spanish landowners thus became entitled to unlimited laborers. Since the conquest of the province of Chiapas, regional elites had established clientelistic control over Indian land and labor. Local indigenous *caciques* still occupied their own sectors and cultivated a strong sense

¹⁸⁶ Bill Weinberg, *Homage to Chiapas: The New Indigenous Struggle in Mexico* (New York: Verso, 2000), 16.

¹⁸⁷ Weinberg, *Homage to Chiapas*; Thomas Benjamin, *A Rich Land a Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 4.

¹⁸⁸ Weinberg, *Homage to Chiapas*, 19.

of autonomy in the community.¹⁸⁹ Meanwhile, the Spanish royal presence was minimal, the region being distant, unruly, and having few natural resources. As the Jesuits put it, the rustic frontier towns close to Guatemala were “no fit place” for proselytization.¹⁹⁰ On the other hand, the abuse of indigenous labor provoked resistance. In Sosconusco, Chiapas, Indians were regularly worked to death on the cochineal plantation. The regional indigenous people maintained their autonomy through constant challenge of the Spanish rule.¹⁹¹ A strong sense of regionalism, “a striving for cultural, economic, and political autonomy,” prospered on this periphery of Mexico and Guatemala.¹⁹²

During the independence era

Deep-rooted localism in Chiapas was apparent on the eve of the founding of the new republic.¹⁹³ Chiapas’s elites broke into two groups: the pro-Mexico faction and the pro-Guatemala faction. The pro-Mexico faction mainly consisted of elites from Ciudad Real (San Cristóbal) and the surrounding cities, while the pro-Guatemala faction opposed union with Mexico and represented the outlying areas of Tuxtla, Comitán, and Tapachula. Eventually, despite Guatemalan protests, the Provisional Government of Mexico proclaimed the union of Chiapas to Mexico with a plebiscite showing a vote in favor of the union among the Spanish-speaking population. Meanwhile, the Soconusco region remained neutral until 1842, when

¹⁸⁹ Benjamin, *A Rich Land a Poor People*; Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

¹⁹⁰ Benjamin, *A Rich Land a Poor People*.

¹⁹¹ Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion*, 40.

¹⁹² Thomas Benjamin, *A Rich Land a Poor People*, 4.

¹⁹³ Thomas Benjamin, “¡Primera Viva Chiapas! Local Rebellions and the Mexican Revolution in Chiapas” *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe / European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, No. 49 (December 1990), pp. 33-53.

Oaxacans led by Santa Anna occupied and reincorporated the region into Mexico.¹⁹⁴ Through these struggles for power during the independence period, the forces that opposed the Spanish and Mexico City's centralization efforts became unfettered and thus created a de facto regionalization of authority.¹⁹⁵ The advance of the province also met constant resistance. Popular revolts, such as frequent protests against government taxation in the early nineteenth century, rose along with resistance to political incorporation.¹⁹⁶ Although colonial elites maintained dominance over the province and promoted their business interests, the relationship between the region and the center was fractured and unstable.

Era of liberal reform

As Santa Anna and the liberals came to power in Mexican politics, the Liberal-Conservative division had its own twist in Chiapas. Divisions developed between the highland and lowland ruling families and centered around for whom and how long the Indians should work. Since the 1830s, two principal regional powers competed: the grandees of the Central Highlands and the farmers and ranchers of the Central Valley. The landowners of the Central Valley adopted Liberal ideologies, and the oligarchy from the Central Highlands became the Conservative.¹⁹⁷ The factions in Chiapas sought control of more land and population in their respective regions. The lowland Liberal elites first won control over the land, much as the national political struggle played out.¹⁹⁸ Conservatives did form a government during the French Intervention between 1861 and 1867, but Liberals took back

¹⁹⁴ Nicholas Higgins, *Understanding the Chiapas Rebellion: Modernist Visions and the Invisible Indian* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 81.

¹⁹⁵ Brian Hamnett, *Roots of Insurgency: Mexican regions 1750-1824* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p 178.

¹⁹⁶ Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion*, 44.

¹⁹⁷ Benjamin, *A Rich Land a Poor People*, 13.

¹⁹⁸ Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion*; Benjamin, *A Rich Land a Poor People*.

control quickly following the collapse of the Maximilian government. However, the struggle for supremacy by the factions of Chiapas defined their regional divisions.¹⁹⁹ The process of political integration of Mexico, especially in Chiapas, began with reforms such as curtailing the Church powers and courting *caciques*. However, national government's presence in Chiapas remained relatively weak and inefficient.²⁰⁰

Porfiriato, 1876-1911

During the Porfiriato, Díaz initiated a series of programs to bring Chiapas into the newly consolidated nation-state. He dispatched Emilio Rabasa to oversee the region between 1890 and 1910. Rabasa implemented a series of efforts to modernize the region such as strengthening police force and expanding financial resources and administrative controls geographically.²⁰¹ However, these efforts benefited mostly the landowners rather than the people.²⁰² Progressive capitalist elites controlled the money and amassed political power in the region.²⁰³ The federal government in this period relied on patronage to bring the periphery under the influence of the center incrementally.²⁰⁴

Revolution

Before the Mexican Revolution, Mexico was fraught with regional particularism, and there was not a nation. In 1914, federal troops marched into Chiapas and consolidated the victory of the liberal faction. The primary task of the revolutionary army was to incorporate

¹⁹⁹ Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion*, 48.

²⁰⁰ Benjamin, 21.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 34.

²⁰² Charles Hale, *Emilio Rabasa and the Survival of Porfirian Liberalism: The Man, His Career, and His Ideas, 1856-1930*, 1st Edition (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 88.

²⁰³ Benjamin, *A Rich Land a Poor People*, 91.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 21.

the provincial south into Constitutionalism.²⁰⁵ Loyal Carrancistas implemented a series of reforms to revolutionize the state, such as abolishing the system of indebted servitude, the most important labor practice in Chiapas.²⁰⁶ The imposing of the Constitutionalists' rules soon propelled the rebellions of the Conservatives from San Cristobal. The Cristobalenses saw themselves as true revolutionaries against an entrenched oligarchy in Tuxla Gutiérrez. The opposing "revolutions" eventually culminated in a civil war in 1915.²⁰⁷ Despite infighting between regional factions, the government in Chiapas remained in the hands of non-Chiapaneco military officers between 1914 to 1920.²⁰⁸ The Mexican Revolution, adding to the long years of disorder and war, cracked the tight social control of local elites and opened the door for popular and federal participation in regional politics.

Post-revolutionary period

The 1920s were an era of transition. The revolution opened up opportunities for grassroots organization that sometimes posed challenges to the state power. The grassroots Catholic and moralist Right pulled strength from the lower strata of the society.²⁰⁹ The central state was in dire need of consolidating power and transitioning regional power into the institutions of the federal government. Peasants acted as warriors in various national and local uprisings and as backers of the local *caudillos*.²¹⁰ Hoping to survive the dangerous political climate of postrevolutionary Mexico, Álvaro Obregón granted states and regions more sovereignty to negotiate for the stability of the new state. In fact, not only did he realize

²⁰⁵ Knight, *Mexican Revolution*.

²⁰⁶ Benjamin, *A Rich Land a Poor People*, 121.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 126.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 129.

²⁰⁹ John Sherman, *The Mexican Right: The End of Revolutionary Reform, 1929-1940* (Westport, CT: Praeger), 13.

²¹⁰ Benjamin, *A Rich Land a Poor People*.

the necessity to accommodate regional powers, he made it the central theme of his government.

During Calles's rule and the later *Maximato*, the federal government continued to integrate Chiapas by forming an alliance with the state governor and influencing the leadership of the state government. The founder of la Unión de Partido Revolucionario, Raymundo Enríquez, became the state governor on December, 1, 1928. Enriquez consolidated his power in Chiapas by receiving backing from Calles and later the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (formed in 1929), and in turn, began institutionalizing labor unions, thus bringing Chiapas under the national political order.²¹¹

Although Plutarco Calles boasted his undoing of the *caudillo* rule, it was only during Lazaro Cardenas's administration that the federal state finally grasped full institutional control of Chiapas. The federal government ousted the Governor Victorico Grajales and his *camarilla*, spread socialist education, and implemented agrarian reforms. However, Cardenismo did not last too long in Chiapas, as the state quickly followed the political, economic, and social development of Central America and sprouted guerrilla insurgencies.²¹² Once again, the center lost its grip on Chiapas; the relationship between Chiapas and the central government was still wobbly.

Summary

In sum, the political history of Chiapas shows that Chiapas has been long distant from the political centers and remains, even today, on the margins of the federal state. Since pre-Columbian times, the region had been inhabited by indigenous groups far away from the

²¹¹ *Ibid*, 175.

²¹² Stephen Lewis, *The Ambivalent Revolution: Forging State and Nation in Chiapas 1910-1945* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), XV.

Mayan political center. Regional elites and *caciques* started to foster clientelism and *caciquismo* in the area during colonial times and carried on into the Independence. Despite some land and political reform attempts to bring Chiapas closer to the center during the liberal reform and Porfiriato eras, like many regions throughout Mexico, Chiapas remained autonomous and independent of state control for the most part. Although the struggle to integrate Chiapas into the central government prevailed, Plutarco Calles tried to build PNR and manipulated elections to undermine regional authority by placing the governors directly under the party's jurisdiction. In doing so, Calles achieved institutionalizing the clientelistic structure insidiously into the regional politics during the postrevolutionary period. Real change, however, did not occur until more drastic education and social reforms took place under Cárdenas. Socially and culturally, the identity of a "Mexican" was fuzzy to many remote regions such as Chiapas. The anti-Chinese movement was thus part of the "cultural revolution" to Mexicanize the nation.

The Anti-Chinese Movement and Postrevolutionary State Formation

In order to convert the revolution into a permanent reality, authority could not be vested for too long in any one person. The revolution had to be stabilized. Creating a dominant, unifying party became a solution for forming allegiance with the regional elites as a means to rein in the provincial powers. Besides forming a party to perpetuate power, the federal government also promoted uniform education and immersive culture in order to disseminate the new revolutionary vision of Mexico into remote districts.

During those years of nation building, the federal government exploited the existing racial tensions and economic nationalism by appropriating the grassroots xenophobic organizations and movements. During Calles's presidency, Chiapas was one of several states

to prohibit marriages between Chinese men and Mexican women and to confine *chinos* to certain neighborhoods. The Anti-Chinese organizations opened a branch in Chiapas to rally for attacks on the Chinese during the Maximato, although prior to that, there were requests from the Chinese for protection during the first wave of the anti-Chinese movements in the 1910s.²¹³ Discriminations and persecutions continued into the 1940s with boycotts and agitations for mass expulsions.²¹⁴

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the anti-Chinese movement that originated in the north gained new steam during the Great Depression starting in 1929. As Mexican workers were expelled from jobs in the U.S., calls for job protection in Mexico by the anti-Chinese organizations acquired greater authority and legitimacy. The national congress formed the Comité Director of the anti-Chinese campaign, making the anti-Chinese organization under the supervision of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR)²¹⁵. The campaigns also spread widely across the nation. Nearly 200 anti-Chinese committees or nationalist leagues existed nationwide. They existed in the northern states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Baja California Norte, Chihuahua, Colima, Nayarit, Durango, and Nuevo Leon; Tamaulipas and Veracruz in the Gulf region; Chiapas and Oaxaca in the Southeast; and on a more reduced scale in Yucatan, México City, Michocan and Guadalajara.²¹⁶

²¹³ Letter, June, 1913, SRE, Caja 4, Exp. 34.

²¹⁴ Stephen Lewis, *The Ambivalent Revolution*, 67-68.

²¹⁵ The PNR, officially founded on March 4, 1929 by Plutarco Elías Calles, was an effort to unite all the political forces and build a ruling party to institutionalize the revolution. It was the precursor for the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), which dominated the Mexican politics until the year 2000.

²¹⁶ Gerardo Rénique, "Race, Mestizaje and Nationalism Sonora's Anti-Chinese Movement and State Formation in Post-revolutionary México," *Political Power and Social Theory* 14 (2000): 91-140.

With the cooperation of the Bloque Nacional Revolucionario (BNR)²¹⁷ and local Chambers of Commerce, the Comité Director also organized a series of “nationalist campaigns” to pursue and stoke xenophobic fervor.²¹⁸ However, the federal government was not completely overt in its involvement with the movement. The revolutionary government wanted to establish “populist credentials” by appearing protective of labor rights for the natives. On the other hand, the government was aware of its international reputation and wanted to let foreign interests know that the new government would protect their property and life as long as they obeyed the constitutional laws. This was particularly the case during Plutarco Calles’ rule.

While Calles was the state governor in Sonora (1915-1919), he turned a blind eye to the attacks and robbery of members of the Chinese community but granted protection for other foreigners under attack. However, he commended all mayors to order leaders of the anti-Chinese demonstrations to respect the rights of all foreigners.²¹⁹ As a president and the *jefe maximato*, in 1927, Calles abrogated the Amity Treaty with the Chinese government, which had granted protection for the subjects of the Qing dynasty. In addition, Calles advanced local authority in Francisco Elías, who reinvigorated the movement and harnessed support from the newly established PNR in 1929.²²⁰ Nevertheless, Calles did not enforce the barriozation of the Chinese community and other laws regarding intermarriage. In some cases, he even granted protection for the Chinese residents during his presidency.

²¹⁷ Bloque Nacional Revolucionario, or the National Revolutionary Block, was a faction in congress formed during Obregon’s reign but became closely affiliated with Calles as he became the chief of their party. Alejandra Lajous, “El partido nacional revolucionario y el congreso de la Unión,” *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 41(3) (Jul. - Sep., 1979): 651-669.

²¹⁸ Rénique, “Race, Mestizaje and Nationalism.”

²¹⁹ Jurgen Buchenau, *Plutarco Elias Calles and the Mexican Revolution* (Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc., 2007), 76.

²²⁰ Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 179-182.

The relation between the federal government and the anti-Chinese leagues was ambivalent. In the times of economic and political crises, the federal government exploited and incorporated the state-initiated anti-centralist racial programs into the nationalist projects. However, the nationalist organizations were not always successful.

The Chinese in Chiapas

In the southern regions of Mexico, there were fewer Chinese, and therefore, fewer incidents of anti-Chinese violence. While there is no precise documentation regarding the date when the Chinese first arrived in Chiapas, most arrived in the late nineteenth century and the early 1900s due to their exclusion from the U.S. and hostility in the northern region of Mexico. According to the census, the Chinese population never exceeded 1% of the state or regional population in Chiapas. The Chinese population peaked in 1930, with a total of 1,095 Chinese born in Chiapas; however, the children of mixed marriages were also counted as Chinese.²²¹

Some Chinese workers, along with Guatemalan workers came to work in cocoa plantations owned by the German and Spanish landowners in Soconusco, the coastal strip of Chiapas.²²² There were *colonias chinas* (shops for coffee plantations) in Motozintla, and in Cintalapa y Jiquipilas, but not in Villa Comaltitlán.²²³ As in other parts of the nation, Chinese businesses in Chiapas were looted and attacked frequently during the revolution.²²⁴ The state

²²¹ Lisbona, "Nutrir La Identidad."

²²² F. Baumann, "Terratenientes, campesinos y la expansión de la agricultura capitalista en Chiapas, 1896-1916." *Mesoamérica* 4, no. 5 (1983): 8-63.

²²³ According to oral accounts cited by Sofia Gavito, there were no Chinese in the town of Villa Comaltitlán because the villagers did not allow the Chinese to settle there—if villagers saw one Chinese in Villa Comaltitlán, they would kill that individual.

²²⁴ Miguel Guillén Lisbona, *Allí donde Lleguen las Olas del Mar... Pasado y Presente de los Chinos en Chiapas* (D.F., Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2014), 198.

of Chiapas also took measures to circumvent any laws or regulations that would allow for the arrivals of Asian populations, which were considered racially degenerate.²²⁵

The Anti-Chinese Case in Chiapas

On June 8th, 1929, *El Herald*, a self-proclaimed independent newspaper in Huixtla, Chiapas, published an article lambasting and demonizing Chinese immigrants, calling them the “degeneración de La Raza” and demanding that the government deport the Chinese. The newspaper boasted that its agenda was for the “advancement of the nation” (*adelantos de pueblos*) and claimed that it was independent of the government, although it did advocate the anti-alcohol prohibition project of President Calles on the front-page. Further, the editors claimed that they were founded with the intention of continuing the legacy of the Social Revolution.²²⁶

The full-page anti-Chinese article “Fuera los Chinos de nuestras poblaciones!!” (the Chinese of our population [should] leave) cited information from the United States. The newspaper enumerated reasons why the Chinese should leave. It first noted that anti-Chinese movements did not exist solely in Mexico. Other nations such as the U.S. denied the entrance of the Chinese to their nations; why should Mexico provide the Chinese respite and a comfortable living? It then demonized the Chinese by calling the off-spring of the Chinese and Mexicans “disgusting” creatures who “resembled worms.” The article further called for the expulsion of all Chinese residents and cried, “Why would our government permit the Chinese to cross our women?” Furthermore, the article condemned *Chineros and Chineras*, the Chinese sympathizers, calling their praise of Chinese workers false. Economically, the

²²⁵ Miguel Lisbona, “Nutrir la Identidad: la Herencia China en la Costa de Chiapas, México” *Cuadernos De Antropología* 24, no. 1 (2014): 75-88.

²²⁶ AGN, Caja 2, Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.

newspaper accused the Chinese of taking their fortunes from Mexico and sending them back to China:

We already see that those Chinese send the fortune that they robbed here from home. We see that they have flouted the labor law. We see that they have tricked ignorant women by giving them false promise, and abandoned them in the middle of the street with the bastards that they produced.²²⁷

In addition, the article also used public health as an argument, declaring that the Chinese population was the direct cause of various contagions. Overall, the newspaper echoed the “yellow peril” themes often used for attacking Chinese immigrants in the northern states: fear of intermarriage, the economic threat, and concerns over hygiene.²²⁸

Soon after the publication of the article, the Mexican Anti-Chinese League (LMA) was formed in Tapachula, Chiapas. They cited article 9 of the Mexican Constitution for support, which guaranteed the right of assembly.²²⁹ The same month, delegates of the group visited Leopoldo Alfaro, the mayor of Mapastepec in Tonala, Chiapas. Members of the LMA asked the mayor to form a committee (*junta*) against the Chinese in the cities of Mapastepec and Tonala. Moreover, they arranged demonstrations in the city for agitating attacks and threats against Chinese commerce.²³⁰

On June 17, 1929, La Legación de China, a Chinese organization in Chiapas, protested the anti-Chinese propaganda published in *El Herald* to the governor and asked for protection. After receiving complaints from the Republic of China, the state government quickly reacted by removing the propaganda fliers and confiscating the newspaper. The

²²⁷ AGN, Caja 2, Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007. Translations are mine.

²²⁸ “Fuera los chinos de nuestras poblaciones,” *El Herald* (Huixtla, Chiapas), June 8th, 1929, AGN, Caja 2, Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.

²²⁹ AGN, Caja 2 Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.; Miguel Lisbona-Guillén, “La liga Mexicana anti-China de Tapachula y la xenofobia posrevolucionaria en Chiapas,” *LiminaR* 11, no. 2 (2013): 183-191.

²³⁰ AGN, Caja 2, Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.

Governor of the State asked the mayor of the Mapastepec to provide protection for the Chinese merchants in the city.²³¹ The state investigated the anti-Chinese organization and reported the case to the federal government. The correspondence between the state government and the Subsecretario de Relaciones (Subsecretariat of Foreign Affairs) revealed that the article “Fuera los Chinos de nuestras poblaciones!!” published in *El Herald* was a reprint from an article in the biweekly “El Istmo” edited in Puerto Mexico del Estado del Veracruz and a reproduction of an essay edited by the La Liga Nacional Pro-Raza in Tampico, Tamaulipas. The investigations also discovered that the Liga Mexicana Anti-China (LMA) in Chiapas was a spin-off of the Pro-Raza organization founded in Tamaulipas. As a response, the federal government communicated to the delegates of the LMA that the state government should have the authority to decide on the matter and asked the governor to act accordingly to the law.

Further action of the LMA

The newly formed Liga Mexicana Anti-China (LMA) did not stop its actions. On Nov.14, 1930, the president of the LMA in Chiapas and the president of the Comité Directivo Nacionalista de la Coasta Occidental (the Nationalist Committee of the Westcoast) wrote a letter to the Bloque Nacional Revolucionario (BNR), stating that the Chiapas government was biased in their actions protecting the Chinese merchants. They claimed that members of their group were assassinated by the local Chinese organization, and that it was not fair for the state of Chiapas to offer protection for the Chinese. In the letter, the LMA also cited laws that would support the action of the Congress and urged the federal government to step in and

²³¹ AGN, Caja 2, Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.

take absolute control of the matter. It is important to note that the BNR responded that they would not support LMA's claim against the state's action.²³²

The same months, two attempted assassinations of Chinese citizens occurred in Tapachula, Tuxtla Chico, and Pueblo Nuevo. Samuel Juan, the president of the Chiapas Chamber of Chinese Commerce, petitioned Secretaría de Gobernación México to increase security and protection for Constitutional rights of Chinese residents in Chiapas. The federal government confirmed these rights and agreed to provide protections to guarantee safety of the local Chinese community.²³³

In addition, the local Masonic Gran Logia "Valle de Mexico" in Tonalá also wrote to the state government and volunteered to protect the local Chinese merchants.²³⁴ It was known that some Chinese merchants were involved in the local Masons in order to receive protections and support.²³⁵ However, looking into the history of Masons in Mexico, the Masons had become a tool for the central state to spread its ideologies, especially the anti-clerical ideologies, to remote regions in the country after 1929.²³⁶

Difference from the North

In contrast with Chiapas, in the north, the federal government supported the anti-Chinese actions of state governments. In 1930, Sonora passed its sanitary law to limit Chinese business and ban marriages between Chinese men and Mexican women. A year later, the Sonoran government reformed the Ley del Trabajo (the Labor Law), obligating

²³² AGN, Caja 2 Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.

²³³ Fengjiao He, *Pai hua shi liao hui bian-mo xi ge* 排華史料彙編: 墨西哥 (Tai pei xian, Xin dian shi: Guo shi guan, 1991).

²³⁴ AGN, Caja 2 Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007

²³⁵ Miguel Lisbona, *Allí donde Lleguen las Olas del Mar*, 165.

²³⁶ Benjamin Smith, "Anticlericalism, Politics, and Freemasonry in Mexico, 1920-1940," *The Americas* 65, no.4 (2009): 559-588.

businesses to employ 80% native Mexicans in their establishments.²³⁷ In a response regarding the resolution of the Chinese problem in the state, Rodolfo Elías Calles, son of Plutarco Calles, governor of Sonora at the time, stated:

It is convenient that our party actively participate in recommending that all committees initiate discussions so that, by means of persuasion, one is made to see that the needs of Sonoran people in this moment [require that one] must endorse a hard nationalistic campaign and take decisions to protect the already established Mexican commerce, since this will serve as stimulus for new national activities.²³⁸

Rodolfo Calles went on to state that he would carry out all government instructions, and the state would comply energetically to defend the national interest as legal dispositions dictated. His statements revealed that the federal government and the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) were actively involved in the agitation of the nationalist campaigns to “resolve the Chinese problem” and used such campaigns as a “stimulus for new national activities.” The federal government and the PNR saw the benefit of engaging with the anti-Chinese campaign in order to foment nationalist sentiment. In comparison to the case in Sonora, the federal government’s response to similar events in Chiapas showed the reluctance of the PNR to openly deny the sovereignty of the state by blunt measures or decrees.²³⁹

The central government took an ambivalent role in Chiapas’s anti-Chinese campaigns. Back in September of 1930, a Chinese was shot dead by one of the anti-Chinese organizations in Pueblo Nuevo, Chiapas.²⁴⁰ In January 21, 1931, the Pro-Raza Campaign Anti-China from Tampico, Tamaulipas wrote to Mexico City that the Chiapas state government was anti-patriotic, accusing the mayor of Tapachula of removing the signs of the

²³⁷ Humberto Monteon Gonzalesz, *Chinos y antichinos*, 131-132.

²³⁸ Telegram from Rodolfo Elías Calles to Andres H Peralta, 4 June, 1931, in *Chinos y antichinos*, by Humberto Monteon Gonzalesz, 103. Translations are mine.

²³⁹ AGN, Caja 2, Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.

²⁴⁰ He Fengjiao, *Pai Hua shi liao hui bian : Moxige* (Taiwan: Guo shi guan, 1993), 133-134.

campaign's event location which obstructed the operation of the anti-Chinese campaign in the city. The federal government sent the complaint by the Tamaulipas Pro Raza Campaign to the Chiapas government and the mayor of Tapachula, giving authority to the local government.²⁴¹ The federal government also sent a note to the Pro Raza Campaign to inform them that the state governor of Chiapas had dealt with the matter. In addition, Por la Patria y Por la Raza Sub Comité Anti-China (For the Country and for the Race Sub Anti-Chinese Committee) wrote to the President about the matter and condemned the Chiapas governor's sanction of the Liga Anti-China.²⁴²

By February, 1931, anti-Chinese campaigns had become wide spread in Chiapas. Huixtla, Mapastepec, Tonalá, Arriaga, Tuzantan, and some other cities in Chiapas all had anti-Chinese organizations.²⁴³ In March of 1931, the anti-Chinese league in Tapachula was apparently also in business. A telegram to the federal government reported that a Chinese man erased the anti-Chinese propaganda disseminated by the Liga Anti-China on the sidewalk. The telegram asked the government to stop the obstruction of the work of the anti-Chinese campaign.²⁴⁴ Many Chinese businesses were forced to stop operating; two other killings of the Chinese occurred during 1931, one in Villas Flores and the other in Santa Rosa.²⁴⁵ In addition, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce reported that the unlawful arrest of Chinese workers had also become common in the state.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ AGN, Caja 2 Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ He Fengjiao, *Pai Hua shi liao hui bian : Moxige* (Taiwan: Guo shi guan,1993), 134.

²⁴⁴ AGN, Caja 2 Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.

²⁴⁵ Fengjiao He, *Pai Hua shi liao hui bian : Moxige* (Taiwan: Guo shi guan,1993),253, 193.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 253.

The anti-Chinese league in Chiapas continued to harass Chinese businesses and accused Chinese residents of injuring and murdering their members and destroying their properties. However, there was no evidence that any of the alleged murderers were arrested. The only arrests of the Chinese made were the gamblers and new immigrants who did not pay their registration fees. On the other hand, the Chinese Commerce and Agriculture Association continued to petition the state for protection. Notwithstanding numerous complaints and accusations and the demands for the expulsion of the Chinese made by the anti-Chinese groups, officially, the Chiapas state granted more protection to Chinese merchants because foreigners of all nationalities should receive equal protections from their adopted country as long as they worked honorably.²⁴⁷ The federal government also offered more protection for the same reason.²⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the anti-Chinese committees retaliated by targeting Chinese commerce and organizations. For example, in 1932, the Chinese Commerce and Agricultural Association protested against a large anti-Chinese gathering in Tapachula and telegraphed the government for protection. In response, in August, Comité Por Raza asked the National Commerce Department to eliminate all the “National Chambers of Commerce” belonging to the Chinese businesses, because they were comprised mainly of foreigners.²⁴⁹

The federal government seemed to have had internal disputes over its treatment of Chinese merchants as well. Srio de Interior defended the Comité and accused the Chinese Chambers of slandering and defaming their organization. Conversely, the Jefe de Trabajo (Chief of Labor) stated that, under the Ley Federal de Trabajo (the Federal Labor Law), the

²⁴⁷ Raymond Enríques, Nov., 11, 1931, letter to secretario de gobierno in D.F. regarding Chinese groups' request for protection, AGN, Caja 2 Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007

²⁴⁸ AGN, Caja 2 Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

government had to look after the Chinese business.²⁵⁰ On the whole, however, the federal government granted protection to Chinese. In June, 1934, the Chiapas state governor permitted the Chinese community's request for protection as they reported that the anti-Chinese demonstrators were hurling vulgar insults at the Chinese colony. The following day, the anti-Chinese organizers came with both the Sexto Moreno Presidente PNR and the President of Liga Anti-China. The municipal president (mayor) also tried to extort money from the Chinese businesses by threatening to hold another more hostile demonstration the next Sunday.²⁵¹ The Chinese businesses protested, and the state government provided protection the next day.

Other extralegal and more indirect harassment of the Chinese from the state government such as the arrests of gamblers and detention over registration fees continued to exist.²⁵² Pressure to expel Chinese commerce and complaints about the Chinese from the anti-Chinese groups and other local communities carried on until the end of the 1930s and beyond. For instance, in 1940, Escuintla merchants appealed to the state government saying that the Chinese had unfair advantages in commerce and cited the newspaper, *ChiapasNuevo*, which claimed that the Chinese not only dominated businesses but also were damaging the Mexican race.²⁵³ By 1957, there were no more than 231 Chinese in Chiapas, with 120 in Tapalachua, 30 in Huixtla, 11 in Arriaga, 6 in Tonalá, etc.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ AGN, Caja 2 Exp 10, 2.360(5) 8007.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Sofia Gavito, "Migracion China a la Costa de Chiapas en el Pasado," *La Voz del Norte Periódico cultural de Sinaloa*, September 30, 2015.

Rénique's theory

In “Race, *Mestizaje* and Nationalism: Sonora’s Anti-Chinese movement and State Formation in Post-revolutionary Mexico,” Gerardo Rénique proposed the theory that the trajectory of the racial movement in Mexico was a social and political movement to be incorporated within the new orthodoxy of the postrevolutionary state.²⁵⁵ He focused on the different treatments of the Chinese by the government during the postrevolutionary period. Rénique noticed that *antichinismo* was not only epistemologically compatible with the *mestizaje* and the imagining of a Mexican national biological identity, but it was also used as an ideological and cultural force to diminish the anti-centralist tradition in Sonora. The federal government was ambivalent in its relationship with the Chinese colony. The enforcement of the article 33, which granted the president absolute authority to expel any foreigners, was only applied to some groups. Rénique argued that the Sonoran anti-Chinese violence was the Sonorans’ way to denounce the central state authorities and their failure to respect Sonoran demands in the first wave of anti-Chinese movement led by Jose Arana. Notably, the anti-*Chinistas* gradually took office in the National Congress. The popular *anti-Chinismo* from Sonora was eventually coopted by Calles into the PNR in the unstable 1920s. In the 1920s, the Calles government eventually coopted the *anti-Chinismo* sentiment originated in Sonora. Plutarco Calles incorporated the *anti-Chinismo* for the political and cultural repertoire of *Callismo* as a replacement for his virtually nonexistent social and agrarian policies and as part of the “cultural revolution” to “shape acceptable forms of social

²⁵⁵ Gerardo Rénique, “Race, *Mestizaje* and Nationalism Sonora’s Anti-Chinese Movement and State Formation in Post-revolutionary México,” *Political Power & Social Theory* 14 (2000): 91-140.

behavior and activity and to establish new collective and individual identity.”²⁵⁶ Rénique maintained that the anti-Chinese movement fulfilled Calles’s new orthodoxy and played a crucial role in the formation of the PNR.

Rénique demonstrated how such incorporation contributed to the creation of the “unstable equilibrium” during the *Maximato*. He contended that the unstable political situation and social conflicts of the 1920s prompted intense debates about the nature of Mexican national identity, and thus, created a fertile ideological and discursive framework for the expansion of *anti-Chinismo* from its mostly northern base onto the national stage. Furthermore, “Mexico’s post-revolutionary national identity was a product of the mutual articulation of regional, racial and gender identities, mediated by the political and cultural mobilization sponsored by the state and by the campaigns of the anti-Chinese movement.”²⁵⁷

The incorporation of *anti-Chinismo* revealed the postrevolutionary Mexican state’s struggle to establish its hegemony. The demonization of the Chinese was part of the “ideological vehicle for the articulation of the economic and political crises of the 1930s.”²⁵⁸ Therefore, the anti-Chinese movement and its political organizations were pivotal in shaping not only a “racial common sense” but also coexisted with the emergence of new state instruments of mass mobilization and control.

Chiapas

Rénique’s theory is useful in the analysis of the anti-Chinese case in Chiapas. The Chiapas documents show that the Liga Mexicana Antichina (LMA) in Chiapas was a branch

²⁵⁶ Rénique, “Race, *Mestizaje* and Nationalism.”

²⁵⁷ Gerardo Rénique, “Race, Region, and Nation, Sonora’s Anti-Chinese Racism and Mexico’s Postrevolutionary Nationalism, 1920s-1930s,” in *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America, ed., Nancy Appelbaum, Anne Macpherson and Karin Roseblatt* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2003).

²⁵⁸ Rénique, “Race, *Mestizaje* and Nationalism.”

of the Pro-Raza sub-committee; it was not formed separately. As soon as the Chiapas state government agreed to provide the local Chinese with protection, the Tamaulipas and the Nationalist Committee quickly came to the rescue of the LMA in Chiapas. The close communications between the LMAs and the Bloque Nacional Revolucionario (BNR) also demonstrated that the LMAs became an apparatus of the BNR during the postrevolutionary period.

Secondly, the propaganda materials disseminated by the LMAs were not only consistent with “yellow peril” and fear mongering tactics prevalent globally but were also clearly intended to build a sense of Mexicanness. The propaganda newspaper *El Herald* boasted of being a patriotic and youthful newspaper that carried on the “social revolution.”²⁵⁹ The content echoed what was propagated in the northern states and throughout the country: the *mestizaje*, an official doctrine formulated after the Mexican Revolution. Such ideology further reified the Mexican race, to which the Chinese race stood opposite.

Thirdly, the ambivalent stand of the BNR and the lack of action from the central government when anti-Chinese organizations urged condemnation of the Chiapas state showed the central government’s concern with the regional power. On the other hand, the direct insults and demonstrations against the Chinese carried out by the local mayor and PNR members in 1934 indicate that the PNR and its affiliated organizations had grown stronger or more pervasive in regional affairs. Again, the state governor and the federal government’s permission for protection displayed the negotiation and interplay between the central state, the state government, and the Chinese organizations.

²⁵⁹ June, 8, 1929, *El Herald*, AGN, caja 2, exp. 10, 2.360 (5) 8007.

Forms of capital

Moreover, the anti-Chinese movements in Chiapas also shed light on particular mechanisms in the state-making process during the postrevolutionary period congruent with Pierre Bourdieu's theory on the genesis of state. Pierre Bourdieu defines a state as "the culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital: capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, office), economic capital, cultural or informational capital, and symbolic capital."²⁶⁰ Capital of physical force includes the instruments of coercion and the power to apply armed forces in inter-state and intra-state affairs. Economic and financial capital includes the power to tax and the right to coin money and define its values. Cultural and informational capital refers to the state's unification and objectification of the cultural market. The state concentrates, treats, and redistributes information, "and most of all, effects a *theoretical unification*."²⁶¹ The State claims the responsibility for all operations of totalization including census taking and other informational control. In so doing, the state universally imposes and inculcates a dominant culture which constitutes *legitimate national* culture through teaching history and a uniform educational system and other programs.²⁶²

Among the three forms of capitals, Bourdieu deemed the symbolic production in the grip of the state as the most powerful. Bourdieu also pointed out the focus on violence and physical force conducted by the state privileged coercion and thus the capital of physical force of the state. Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as "any property (any form of capital

²⁶⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field," in *State/Culture, State Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 57.

²⁶¹ Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State."

²⁶² *Ibid.*

whether physical, economic, cultural or social) when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception which cause them to know it and to recognize it, to give it value.”²⁶³ In other words, symbolic capital is the power to confer prestige and power onto subdivisions of the bureaucratic state and the ability to operate of codification of cognitive unification. He emphasized that the state possessed the “means of imposition and inculcation of the durable principles” of the structures conforming to the dominant one, and thus, symbolic power is supreme of all the powers or forms of capitals the state should concentrate.²⁶⁴ In particular, juridical capital is an objectified and codified form of the symbolic capital. It follows its own logic and is distinct from the concentration of military and financial capitals. The state creates the juridical field and acts in a manner of a bank of symbolic capital that guarantees all acts of authority. In short, it was the power to confer and recognize or disregard prestige and honor rather than honor itself that made the presence of the state felt.

Case in Chiapas

The case in Chiapas manifests the interplay and concentration of such forms of capital. First of all, the creation and the spread of the anti-Chinese organizations during the Maximato (1929-1934) was part of the concentration of symbolic capital by the state. If the anti-Chinese movement during the Mexican Revolution in the 1910s was a popular movement against the central state resembling other parts of the revolution, the anti-Chinese movement in the 1920s was coopted by the state and used as an apparatus to spread a unified culture and political control. Along with the *nationalista* projects by the PNR, the anti-Chinese movement was part of the project to unify and objectify the stock in the cultural

²⁶³ Pierre Bourdieu, “Rethinking the State,” 62.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 63.

market. The anti-Chinese movement started in the northern state was initially a grassroots movement responding to the xenophile Porfiriato which rested on the coalition of foreign investments with the violent repression of social movements and popular resistance.²⁶⁵ By appropriating the anti-Chinese organizations and their agendas, the central state concentrated its cultural stock in the rise of nationalism and imposed an orthodox form of what a Mexican state should be. The spread and emergence of the anti-Chinese organizations reflected the state's power to concentrate, treat, and redistribute information in order to effect a theoretical unification.

Secondly, perhaps most telling from this particular set of documents, instead of asserting itself by coercion, the central state granted the state government sovereignty or authority to decide on the matter. The central government did not choose to use coercion or physical force when the state rejected the presence of the LMA and removed the signs of its headquarter to forbid its operations. The central state's decision to grant protection to the Chinese exerts its symbolic power by conferring the state authority to act on the central government's behalf. Meanwhile, the state simultaneously confirmed the legitimacy of the LMAs by asking the state government to cooperate with the LMAs and approved of the continuous operations of the LMA throughout the state of Chiapas. Locally, the state representatives of the PNR acted as the agents of the state and continued to harass Chinese business. In Bourdieu's words, "all these facts invoke the logic of official nomination to institute socially guaranteed identities, as well as legitimate unions and groupings, by stating with authority what a being is in truth according to its socially legitimate definition, that is

²⁶⁵ Florencia Mallon, "Reflections on the Ruins: Everyday Forms of State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Mexico," in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed., Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994).

what he or she is authorized to be,” and as a result, “the State wields a genuinely *creative*, quasi-divine, power.”²⁶⁶

In a similar manner, the state granted protection to the organizations formed by the Chinese immigrants such as Legación China and the Cámara de Comercio y Agricultura China (Chinese Legation and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture). In so doing, the central government legitimized itself through the utilization of its capital of physical force, so that the central state should be the only power to apply force in intra and inter-state affairs. As FitzGerald and Cook-Martín observed, the anti-racism rhetoric of the state “was plainly cynical and motivated by efforts to consolidate state control over national populations, rather than by ideological norms of equality.”²⁶⁷ The ruling party built vertical pillars of support reaching down to various social sectors and imposed the will of the party from above.²⁶⁸

In sum, Bourdieu’s theory makes sense of the ambivalent behaviors of the central state. The federal state’s actions and lack of coercion regarding the anti-Chinese activities in Chiapas did not merely reflect an equivocal stance from the Mexico D.F. or contradictions in its nation-building policies. In fact, the central government’s response to each actor in the drama of the anti-Chinese movement in Chiapas reinforced and legitimized the position of the federal government by exerting its symbolic power.

Conclusion

The period between 1920 and 1940 was one of transition and state formation for the postrevolutionary Mexican state. Historian Gerardo Rénique described it as a “cultural

²⁶⁶ Bourdieu, “Rethinking the State,” 67.

²⁶⁷ FitzGerald and Cook-Martín, *Culling the Masses*, 19.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

revolution,” emphasizing the interaction among the region, popular resistance, and the central state. This chapter has provided further evidence for how the state incorporated anti-Chinese organizations into its apparatuses. The anti-Chinese movement was part of the state’s attempt to consolidate power by institutionalizing revolution and a tool to agitate for nationalist feelings among the disparate populations of the emerging state. The very office of the anti-Chinese committee was, in fact, in the same building as PNR!²⁶⁹ In the tumultuous years after 1929, despite economic crisis, political regime change, and the ascent of the Right in Mexico, the renewal of the anti-Chinese movement and its spread into the nation overall were a concerted effort by the state.

The central government was also cautious with its negotiation of power with the peripheral regions. It allowed the state of Chiapas to act on its own terms. The treatment of the “Chinese problem” appeared to be a negotiation of power between the periphery and the center. The lack of particular success of the *antichinismo* in Chiapas, compared to the northern border region, was in part due to the weakness of the central state that was yet able to mediate regional problems. On the other hand, Chiapas, long on the periphery, was not brought to the center even after the Maximato. Moreover, taking into account Pierre Bourdieu’s theory on the genesis of the state, the equivocal behaviors of the central government over the anti-Chinese movement in Chiapas surfaces as the mechanisms of the state’s efforts in concentrating various forms of capital to unify the nation and impose its domination.

²⁶⁹ Fengjiao He, *Pai hua shi liao hui bian-mo xi ge* 排華史料彙編: 墨西哥 (Tai pei xian, Xin dian shi: Guo shi guan, 1991), 25.

Chapter 4—Conclusion

Postrevolutionary Mexico witnessed a series of conflicts and reconciliations between the center and its peripheries. After the revolutionary chaos, the cohesive postrevolutionary state had yet to come into being. The Calles government, therefore, attempted a series of moves for conciliation and cooperation with the regional powers. Chiapas, a state on the Southern border, relied mostly on the rule of *caciquismo* (regional bossism). Historically, this Southern border region vacillated between the equilibrium with the center and frayed relations of infrapolitical resistance that challenged the rule of weak Spanish and Porfiriato rule.

Documents in the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) yield a micro look at how Chiapas was able to retain control of its peripheral powers through establishing and handling the group of “outsiders.” These materials reveal that the anti-Chinese movements in Chiapas provide a key example of how Chiapas was able to resist the central government’s policy that was being followed elsewhere in the country. The materials include complaints to the state and central government from the local Chinese organizations about the anti-Chinese actions; the correspondence between the anti-Chinese groups and PNR and BNR in the Congress; and the directives from the central government to the state government. Through the examination of these documents, we can see a picture of how race and identity interacted in the national

identity building campaign, and how, through identity politics, the center was able to exert control over the periphery.

The focus of this thesis is on the origins and the motives of the anti-Chinese organizations in Chiapas. The main question addressed here was whether the anti-Chinese groups were affiliated with the Mexican central government and to determine the extent of the relationship between the local *anti-Chinismo* movement and the postrevolutionary Mexican state. Researchers such as Rénique Gerardo have laid a good foundation by showing how the PNR incorporated the early anti-Chinese movements into the nation-building project and how it benefited the Sonoran-led government. The goal here has been to expand on his conclusion and further analyze how the PNR extended the anti-Chinese program to other regions of Mexico. Using archival materials that included communications between the federal government and the Chiapas state governor and the complaints from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture and the Legation of China to the state and the federal governments, I have been able to extend Gerardo's analysis beyond the Sonoran border regions.

The evidence I found supports Gerardo Rénique's analysis that the PNR coopted the regional anti-Chinese movement. These interactions reveal the larger picture of the interplay between State and its regional apparatus. The Liga Mexicana Anti-China (LMA) in Chiapas was one of the anti-Chinese organizations established in Tamaulipas and directly answered to the PNR. Rénique pointed out that the incorporation of the anti-Chinese movement by the central government during the Mexican revolutionary served as "an ideological and cultural force"²⁷⁰ and converged to combat the anti-centralist traditions that had historically shaped

²⁷⁰ Rénique, "Race, Mestizaje and Nationalism."

Sonora's regional cultural identity. In contrast to local roots of the northern anti-Chinese movement, the LMA in Chiapas was solely engineered by the central state. In other words, it was a top-down movement, instead of bottom-up.

Further, the documents found in AGN reinforce several ideas engaged by previous studies on the Chinese in Mexico and the Mexican state formation. First, the incorporation and the expansion of LMAs confirms the surge of nationalism fostered by the revolutionary period. As Neil Harvey states, no identity exists in isolation from others.²⁷¹ A national identity could not be constructed without against an "other." The evidence buttresses the point that the anti-Chinese racism was inherently nationalist. The propaganda circulated in Chiapas suggested a Mexican race and was coherent with the prevalent narrative of "mestizaje." The Sinophobic racism first stemmed from the early twentieth century eugenicist rants. Eugenicists such as Vasconcelos, carried the banner of *mestizophilia* and saw homogenization as fundamental to the health of the nation. Sinophobia was shot through with language drawn directly from degeneration theory and was manifested in Mexican nationalism's exclusionary dictates in the 1920s and 1930s. By painting the Chinese as the degenerate "other," it elevated the image of a "mestizo" race. The anti-Chinese ideology was inherently applicable on the national stage, because it supported the idea of a common, unified Mexican race.

Secondly, the research is also consistent with post-revolutionary state building narratives. Chiapas was a remote state that was largely beyond central control for most of its history. Like the Sonora and the other northern states, the southern border state Chiapas was far away from the center and had long struggled with whatever power controlled Mexico

²⁷¹ Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion*, 12.

City. The disagreement between the regional and central government in the 1920s and 30s demonstrated the dissonance and negotiation of power. The intent of the anti-Chinese movement was undoubtedly a national unification project. However, although the state government disagreed with the LMA and removed their signs initially, the existence of the LMA was allowed due to the continuing pressure from the above.

Thirdly, this research further demonstrates both the complexity and flexibility of Plutarco Calles' policies. As mentioned in Chapter two, Calles, a native son of the Sonoran region, harbored mixed feelings towards the Chinese, as reflected in his policies directed at the Sonoran government. He saw the advantage of an anti-Chinese movement to increase his populist credentials; however, he granted protections to Chinese in Sonora based on "Porfirian era científico" rationality to encourage foreign investment for the economic development of his state. Once he was on the national stage and in a different economic environment (i.e., economic crises of the Great Depression), he demanded the scapegoating of the Chinese, again calling for the expulsion and persecutions of the Chinese in Sonora. However, he was unable to press for the same along the Southern border region. He concurred with the local administration and guaranteed protection of the Chinese businesses in Chiapas.

Fourthly, the thesis demonstrated the transformation of personal rule (disappearance of the caudillo) to the newly established PNR (Partido Nacional Revolucionario). The PNR was formally founded in March, 1929. Its representatives in the Congress formed the BNR block. The anti-Chinese organization reported not only to the Secretary of the State in Mexico City, but also followed the instruction of the BNR block in the Congress. The PNR was the real engine behind the nationalist organization by establishing the regional LMAs.

However, the state official PNR was later occupied and colonized by the local PNR organizations, which often decided affairs on its own and did not toe the party line, further demonstrating the weakness of the PNR. Although the LMA's intended function was to bring nationalist projects to the regions, it did not receive support from the state administration immediately: the PNR backed down.

Lastly, on a theoretic note, the specific case of Chiapas demonstrates how the State concentrated its political capital. The newly established revolutionary state was still weak and had yet to find resources to legitimize itself. The analysis helps to understand the ambivalent stand the state government took to establish itself. The postrevolutionary Mexico government was very much an embryo and needed to assert itself through symbolic interactions. The anti-Chinese movement on the one hand was a means for the State to capitalize on an existing grassroots cultural movement; on the other hand, the lack of coercive physical forces to impose the program on the state level provided only a symbolic assertion of the central state by granting variations on implementation to the regional authority, i.e., the state government. Collectively, the case in Chiapas projected and transformed various other capital into legitimate, "symbolic" capital. This is not meant to support the theory that the central state was a "predator," or to downplay the increasing focus on the importance of culture in state building. The point here is to draw attention to the long process of state formation by looking at its necessary negotiations and interactions with the periphery.

Recent studies on the Chinese in Mexico have looked at how Chinese immigration destabilized the nation-state--their trajectory diluted the borders of the nation state from the subaltern's perspective. This thesis, on the other hand, chooses to focus on an area where the

Chinese population was small to make the case that the dissemination of the anti-Chinese movement may not necessarily have to have a “cultural” base. However, this case study here is very limited in that its sources were solely drawn from the government correspondence from AGN and focused on the state formation. Future studies of anti-Chinese movement and organizations in states such as Oaxaca and Veracruz, where Chinese were less congregated would enhance the argument in this study (and, fortunately, sources about the anti-Chinese movement in those states are available).

In sum, the interaction and treatment of the Chinese, along with other minorities, was of great significance in the construction of nationalism in postrevolutionary Mexico. In the case of the anti-Chinese movement in Chiapas, the central government was more than an agent in the creation of the anti-Chinese organizations and their activities. Although less successful in demonizing the Chinese in Chiapas, the central government was consciously or unconsciously transforming what originated as a grassroots movement into the symbolic capital needed for state building through not only the dissemination of the organizations and propaganda, but also the useful interaction with the regional governments.

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