

Studies on Chinese
MIGRATIONS
Brazil, China and Mozambique

André Bueno and Daniel Veras (Orgs.)



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Pró-reitora: Cláudia Gonçalves de Lima

**Projeto Orientalismo**

Coordenador: André Bueno

www.orientalismo.blogspot.com

Catalographic Record

Bueno, André e Veras, Daniel [org.] *Studies on Chinese Migrations: Brazil, China and Mozambique*. Rio de Janeiro: Projeto Orientalismo/UERJ, 2021.
ISBN: 978-65-00-34525-4

Cover: Detail of a letter from Chinese immigrants in Brazil requesting a translator for Dom João VI (1814). Available in the collection of rare works at the National Library of Rio de Janeiro.

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André Bueno and Daniel Veras

STUDIES ON CHINESE
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BRAZIL, CHINA AND MOZAMBIQUE



Rio de Janeiro

2021

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FOREWORD

The read you have in your hands is a compilation of articles on Chinese immigration to Brazil. It has been organized by the two of us, bringing together the production of ours, along with those of other renowned researchers on the topic, coming from different backgrounds, alma maters and walks of life.

Worldwide, many are the authors who deal with Chinese migrations around the world. Some of them help conceptualize the Chinese diaspora, like Adam McKeown and Tu Wei-Ming. Just reminding that diaspora is a concept developed by Stuart Hall, which is applicable to many migratory movements around the world, although not to all of them. Some other authors, like Ko-Lin Chin, Robin Cohen, Wang Gungwu, Peter Kwong and Erika Lee will deal with social causes and consequences of this migratory process, and how this process takes place across countries. To talk about Chinese immigration in Latin America, the works by Evelyn Hu-DeHart, Diego Lin Chou and Humberto Rodriguez Pastor are prominent.

Boris Fausto, Herbert Klein and Odair da Cruz Paiva, just to name a few, deal with general population movements towards Brazil, as it became an immigration country in the 19th century. Jeffrey Lesser has written works on how non-white and non-black identities have had to be negotiated in Brazil, a situation of Chinese immigrants has been through. Sônia Maria de Freitas, in turn, has been devoted to collecting and analysing testimonies by immigrants from different backgrounds, including the Chinese. We also have to highlight Alexander Chung Yuan Yang, who wrote a seminal study on Chinese immigration to Brazil in 1974, and other researchers on the topic followed afterwards: Ernesto Sang, David Shyu, Mario Bruno Sproviero and Chin Su Chia. In fact, it

is noteworthy that on chapter 8 of the present book, Shu Changsheng and Pan Tianshu go through the most important studies on Chinese immigration to Brazil since the 1970s. Most recently, Ana Paulina Lee, Professor at Columbia University, deals with Chinese immigration to Brazil, more specifically with race, representation and memory.

Besides this very foreword, here you will find ten different texts, all aiming to shed a light on Chinese immigration to Brazil, its complexity and consequences over Brazilian society. Since the 19th century, Brazil has officially been the home for Chinese people and their offspring, making a community of more than 200,000 people at present. Such community has grown important in the Sino-Brazilian relations, comprehending cultural mediators, advisors, business people, politicians and scholars – who not only play an important role in the relations, but also reflect upon them. Since 2018 the Brazilian Government has instituted the Chinese Immigration Day, August 15, in honour of the arrival of the Malange steamboat on the date, 1900, in Rio de Janeiro, having departed from Lisbon with Chinese immigrants as passengers.

The present selection is the result of gatherings realized in universities in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo cities in the years of 2018 and 2019, bringing together researchers from different countries, henceforth resulting in the making of a compilation in English language.

The book comes as a response for the need for systematized texts on Chinese immigration to Brazil for international audiences. As a matter of fact, a study on Chinese immigration to Brazil is of interest for those who want to go deeper on cultural aspects of the Sino-Brazilian relations, with the advantage of offering information on Chinese culture available within Brazil, revealing how the South American country is transformed by the contact

with the Asian one, besides revealing something new about ancient connections between Brazil and China.

All the topics herein gathered add to the debate, and their variety just confirms it is a complex and multifaceted one, with a number of consequences for Brazil. This way, those Brazilian familiarized with the cultural issues here approached are more likely to thrive when dealing with Chinese companies and government officials. As for the Chinese reader, he or she can benefit from the awareness of intrinsic connections between Brazil and China. The texts here presented cover a variety of topics, ranging from racial debates in the 19th century; going through the Chinese in the city markets; migratory trends; urban impacts and territorialization in São Paulo city; the way the young Chinese and descendants produce contents on social media; to the creation of a Chinese community in Brazil via Africa.

This way, the present book can be divided in three parts. The first focuses on the 19th century, the heated racial debate of those times, construction of certain stereotypes and conceptions that still prevail today. Besides that, accounts on Chinese communities in Brazil of those times, too. The book starts with Otto Reuter Lima's contribution Chapter 1 "*Black and Yellow: the black slavery crisis in Brazil and the reconfiguration of the world labour market through the Chinese labour force*". Then, there is Chapter 2 "*The Chinese Question (1879) in Brazil*", by Rogério Akiti Dezem, followed by Chapter 3 "*The 'chins' in the 'Gazeta de Noticias': a debate on Chinese immigration in Brazilian Empire (1879)*", by Kamila Czepula and André Bueno. At last, there is Marco Aurélio dos Santos' Chapter 4 "*The Chinese in the Paraíba coffee valley: projects, perspectives, transitions and failures – 19th century*".

The second part begins with Chapter 5 "*Territorializations, Transformations and Chinese Community Life in Liberdade*

Neighbourhood's 'Oriental Quarter' in the City of São Paulo, Brazil by Henoch Gabriel Mandelbaum and Marísia Margarida Santiago Buitoni, followed by Lorenzo Macagno's Chapter 6 "*From Guangdong to Brazil: Itineraries of a Sino-Mozambican community*". Then there is Chapter 7 "*Studies on Chinese Migration to Brazil: the Present State and Future Tendencies*" by Shu Changsheng and Pan Tianshu, and finally Douglas de Toledo Piza's contribution Chapter 8 "*Legibility in Mobility and Emplacement: Chinese Vendors in São Paulo Popular Markets*" closes the second block. What these chapters have in common is that they capture a social movement from the 20th century onwards; reflecting on the construction of Chinese community in Brazil, sometimes even the impact on city's space.

Finally, the third block captures a photograph of the present moment, collecting data and information, with a strong ethnographic trait, either on actual or virtual spaces. This part consists of Daniel Bicudo Veras' Chapter 9 "*Yo Ban Boo: Asian Brazilian identity and Social Media*" and the book closes with Chapter 10 "*Chinese migrations and ethnographic notes*" in São Gonçalo City, by Edivan Costa.

Otto Reuter Lima analyses the historical origins of the relations between the Brazilian Empire and the Chinese Empire, focusing on the historical discussions about the Chinese migration to Brazil. Working with the concepts of coolie trade and coolie migration, Lima points out that we tend to apply the coolie trade term, despite the under-flow of this specific type of migration to Brazil, however having as a basis the political discourse over the Asians. Lima understands that the transformations in the world capitalist system that intensified the internal contradictions of slavery in Brazil also created the conditions for the wave of Chinese transnational mass migration to the Americas. Thus, the author shows that the crisis

of slavery and the emergence of new kinds of international labour force mobility are inscribed in the same deepest structural constraints of world capitalism. To illustrate, Lima identifies and discusses discourses published in newspapers, magazines, conference proceedings and books on the issue of Chinese migration to Brazil in the 19th century.

Going further on 19th century issues, Rogério Akiti Dezem presents and analyses the repercussions of the first debates about the coming of Chinese workforce to work in the Southeast region of Brazil during the 1878 Agricultural Congress. Known as “Chinese Question” (1879), these debates can be considered the first ones of national scope about the Chinese figure as a candidate for immigrant. Often xenophobic in character, the discursive confrontations that occurred in 1878 extrapolated the space of the assemblies, and consequently of the high political spheres, becoming a recurring theme of illustrated periodicals of the time in the form of cartoons, articles and chronicles.

Kamila Czepula and André Bueno, in turn, analyse how the debate on Chinese immigration appeared in one of the most important newspapers in the Brazilian imperial period, the *Gazeta de Notícias*. In this way, they propose to identify the characters who entered this debate by analysing the periodic, as well as the strategies of discourse used, their interpretations, and the diffusion of these ideas in the rest of the society.

The Chinese in the Paraíba coffee valley (São Paulo state) in the 19th century is the topic approached by Marco Aurélio dos Santos. The author goes over projects, perspectives, transitions and failures, setting the context of the shortage of farming labour being one of the most important questions in the 19th century in the Brazilian Empire, especially in the areas most directly involved with export activity, like the coffee-producing Southeast from the 1850s on.

The workforce shortage crisis many politicians were anticipating was mostly due to the debate concerning the abolition of slave trafficking (1850) and, thereafter, due to the consequences of the approval of the Law known as the Free Womb Law, of September 28, 1871. In the 1870s-80s, this crisis escalated, upon the dissemination of the abolitionist movement on a national scale. From the platform of “colonization of Brazil”, “farming labour”, “free work” and “replacement of slave labour by immigrants”, this issue was one of the subjects of heated political debate in the second half of the 19th Century, when the pro-immigrant side and those who defended the use of the national labour force discussed possible solutions for the farming problem, especially concerning labour supply.

Henoch Gabriel Mandelbaum and Marísia Margarida Santiago Buitoni here work on territorializations, transformations and Chinese community life in Liberdade Neighbourhood’s “Oriental Quarter” in the City of São Paulo. Brazil has 250,000 immigrants and descendants of Chinese origin, of which 120,000 are concentrated in the State of São Paulo. The authors work with the relation between society and space, having as subjects the Chinese immigrants and their territorializations in Liberdade neighbourhood’s “Oriental Quarter”, in São Paulo city. Their analysis prioritized the transformations of the urban space undertaken by the immigrants throughout its history; the community life that developed in this space, up to the date of research; and the actions that allowed for the formation of territorial networks by the immigrants. The methodology used was the bibliographical review of books and academic articles dealing with the history of Liberdade’s “Oriental Quarter” and the Chinese presence in São Paulo, as well as the theoretical contributions on the processes of migration and territorialization, ranging from the

"deterritorialization" of the allochthonous community until its "reterritorialization" in the new environment. The transformations in the landscape and the current relations of the neighbourhood were outlined in the end of the chapter.

Lorenzo Macagno, in turn, here explores the itineraries and trajectories of a very specific Chinese community in Brazil: the Sino-Mozambicans. First, the author reconstructs the tenuous incorporation of this Chinese into the colonial society of Mozambique, an ex-Portugal overseas province in the 1950s. At the end of this article, Macagno discusses the narratives of disappointment that emerged after the independence of Mozambique in 1975, when the Chinese had to abandon the possibility of a Portuguese future for their lives and decided to settle in Brazil. Indeed, once considered "good Portuguese" by the colonial authorities, in the new context that emerged out of the independence of Mozambique, these Chinese were forced to "choose" the route of the diaspora. Many settled in Portugal, Canada, the United States, and Australia. Nevertheless, the majority chose Brazil and, in particular, the city of Curitiba in the State of Paraná. Here they became engaged in commercial and professional activities, and in 1989 they founded the Associação Cultural Chinesa do Paraná (Cultural Chinese Association of Paraná).

Chinese migration to Brazil has been a more and more consistent theme in Brazilian research scenario only after the 1970s. According to Shu Changsheng e Pan Tianshu, since those times, there appeared sporadically academic papers, individual biographies, travellers' tales and journalistic reports on Chinese immigration to Brazil and their diasporic culture. The authors first offer a literature review of the existing studies, and then give some information about the geographic origins of the Chinese immigrants in Brazil, as well as some statistical estimates.

Considering that Chinese immigrants to Brazil are relatively few, the number of studies on the topic is increasing, having reached formidable results so far, even considering it is still an underexplored topic. By analysing the process of investigation through the decades, the chapter is an attempt to point out the future development trends in this research field.

Meanwhile, downtown São Paulo districts are known for their “popular markets” for a variety of inexpensive domestic and imported goods that serve low-income residents and long-distance traders from all over Brazil and abroad. Starting in the 1990s, overseas Chinese migrants have been a significant group of stallholders and street vendors working under precarious conditions in the popular markets. Because of this recent increase in migration to São Paulo and the migrants’ predominant socio-economic integration into popular markets, the overseas Chinese migrants experience a situation of vulnerability due to their precarious immigration status. Aiming at understanding how the migrants cope with this vulnerability, Douglas de Toledo Piza analyses the tactics overseas Chinese vendors have adopted since the 1980s in order to ensure their mobility across international borders and to secure emplacement in downtown São Paulo popular markets.

On Chapter 10 Daniel B. Veras aims to analyze an example of communication produced by *huayi* and other Asian Brazilians from São Paulo, namely, the Youtube channel Yo Ban Boo. Issues like representation, standpoint, and cultural identity of Asian Brazilians will be addressed, given that this material is a new source of information on the matter, created in 2016. When it comes to Asian immigration to Brazil, a lot has been written about Chinese, Korean and Japanese communities separately. In the process, São Paulo and the Japanese community play a prominent role.

Ethnographies have been made, some of them exploring spaces, such as the Liberdade neighbourhood or 25 de Março Street, both in São Paulo. The diasporic character of these immigrations has been also addressed, as well as the media and newspapers in Asian languages produced in Brazil, but now what Veras is trying to analyse here is a Brazilian material produced in Portuguese by Brazilians who happen to be of Asian descent. Here the researcher will try to identify the discourse produced by an Asian Brazilian community in a social media context, of a Youtube channel that influences younger generations and builds identities. The place of speech (standpoint) is of importance, as well as the still dominant role of whiteness in the construction of a Brazilian identity.

According to Edivan Costa, in turn, it is possible to observe the presence of Chinese in São Gonçalo city (in Rio de Janeiro state) when walking through the streets of the city. However, the presence of this group is still little known. This way, understanding the presence of Chinese allows us to know this migratory phenomenon still underexplored in Anthropology and Social Sciences. Through ethnographic methodology, Costa seeks to expose aspects closer to Chinese migrations. In recent years, partnerships between Brazil and China have intensified diplomatic relations. Costa at last highlights that knowing the immigration of Chinese people in Brazil allows new aspects of the relations between these two emerging countries. This is Chapter 11, which closes the book.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge Professor Qiao Jianzhen (Ana Qiao) and Professor Shu Changsheng, who organized the two editions of the 'International Conference for the Study of Chinese Immigration to Brazil', important meetings that stimulated the

production of the essays in this book. We would also like to acknowledge Professor Evandro Menezes de Carvalho, from the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, who supported the project for this publication and promoted numerous efforts for its realization. We would also like to thank the University Rectory and the Pro-Rectorry of Extension at UERJ, which currently house the Orientalism Project, through which this work is published. Our recognition to everyone!

Rio de Janeiro, November 2021

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“BLACK AND YELLOW”: THE BLACK SLAVERY CRISIS IN BRAZIL AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE WORLD LABOUR MARKET THROUGH THE CHINESE LABOUR FORCE



Otto Reuter Lima

Introduction

This research analyses the historical origins of the relations between the Brazilian Empire and the Chinese Empire, focusing on the historical discussions about the Chinese migration to Brazil. Taking in advance the concepts of coolie trade and coolie migration¹ we tend to apply the coolie trade term, despite the under-flow of this specific type of migration to Brazil, however having as a basis the political discourse over the Asians. Grounded in a global approach, the research understands that the transformations in the world capitalist system that intensified the internal contradictions of slavery in Brazil also created the conditions for the wave of Chinese transnational mass migration to the Americas. Thus, the crisis of slavery and the emergence of new kinds of international labour force mobility are inscribed in the same deepest structural constraints of world capitalism. To enlighten these linkages, the research identifies and discusses discourses published in newspapers, magazines, conference

¹ LAI, Walton Look. Coolie Trade. PP 243-247. In PONG, David (Editor in chief). *Encyclopedia of Modern China*, Volume I, Chinese Overseas: Overview. Charles Scribner's Sons, 2009.

proceedings and books on the issue of Chinese migration to Brazil in the nineteenth century.

The first moment of our research seeks to insert new perspectives in the ongoing discussions about the black slavery crisis in Brazil at the end of the nineteenth century. The Second Slavery will be analysed along with the discussions on the expansion of the commodity and agricultural frontiers in coffee regions in the Center-South Empire. In a comparative overview we will discuss the construction keys of a Brazilian immigrant politics deeply related to the end of black slavery and a consequential lack of workforce, so questionable biased by the black slave owners. This immigrant policy will be also compared with similar relatable policies in other global territories equally tied with the world market general workforce and the Chinese in particular.

The world system perspective will be used to conceptualize the new global labour relations, a consequence of the black slavery crisis in the Americas, but also the social relations and internal discussions, within national frontiers, as determinants of the world economy. Our essay analysis the consequential global processes of labour, in other words, the global humanitarian flows. Focusing on Chinese immigration over the nineteenth century, which in the Brazilian and Cuban case has its entanglements with the end of the black slavery processes. We seek to comprehend particular local histories as inherent elements/ parts of global socioeconomics processes.

Secondly, the global conditions of the Chinese migratory flows will be analysed through the reconfiguration of the world market of the Asian workforce. The constitution of an international labour market between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had, as one of its consequences, the seek for a cheaper labour force: the Chinese or coolies. The transnational Chinese migration, in its

turn, must not be seen as a single thread unrelated to the global capitalist system, but actually, as a fundamental linkage correlated with the black slavery global crisis. Therefore, in every country where one can note the coolie trade, we must have our eyes open to the very own global linkages. Asian Diasporas, or Chinese transnational migrations, have their own direct and collateral interconnections with the end of black slavery in the second half of the nineteenth century. Not only in the Brazilian case but also, for example, on the Cuban and American cases.

The global flows of humans or laborers mass migrations is an essential procedure to be analysed, not only on the *Longue durée* but also on its small moments and actions. The main discussions about the transfer of Asian laborers had as its central topic race. Among the topics we can quote immigration or colonization, interim labour force or contracted labour, private initiative or government funding, worse or better than the enslaved Africans as examples as conflicting paradigms in the nineteenth century. In each place, county, country or location where we can find the Chinese as a labour force, we can notice particular discussions about this ethnic group, beyond diverse interests between the Chinese and its agencies as workers.

The Chinese people, when trying international outlooks as laborers, were co-opted by international immigration companies or even groups that also intended to export the Chinese labour force, and by doing so they were, sometimes, forced to sign a labour contract in a foreign language without the possibility to discuss the contract terms. There is a great debate whether the Asian labour force were free wage laborers, who depended on their contracts and were sometimes forced to accept, or if they were part of a new global slavery movement. Through the international experience of transnational Chinese immigration, which was also enlightening

by Brazilians outside, outcomes in Brazil, at the very end of the nineteenth-century (1860-1900), the development over these themes as a political discussion, which will be the third part of this essay.

Portugal, Vatican, the European State System and capitalism

Seeking to understand how the world capitalist system is developed and consolidated in the 19-century, we need to go back to the 16-century and outline a few processes that generated the system here quoted. We can identify the upcoming of the main global transformation processes since the 16-century², where we have the first structuring to the development of a globe intra- and interconnected, however not only in economic terms.

The origins of capitalism as an economic global system have on the 16 century its linkages with the Roman Curia. When entangling the consolidation of the European empires, and having in highlights the Portuguese empire and its maritime expansion, one can understand that one of the aspects to the first's capitalism global procedures has its relations with the Roman Papacy.

Even than tangentially, we will approach one affirmation procedure and centralization of the Catholic Roman Church facing up the formation of the European states. This procedure will be fundamental to understand how the answer to Peter's Primacy and its structures facilitated the construction of Modern States. The centralization of the European states e its consequent game of power with the political-economic relations was fundamental in the processes of the origin of global transformations that

²WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel M. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

consolidated capitalism as an economic global system within the centuries.³

The beginning of the European state systems is rooted in the upcoming capitalist system on a global level. When saying this, one must not understand as a Eurocentric perspective, but, somehow, to understand the diverse political, cultural and economic momentums of the miscellaneous regions of the globe. As Eric Mielants tells us to his central question: why were the European capable to colonize and “underdevelop” India, Asia and Africa, and not the opposite? Despite the semblance between the territories here quoted and its large conceptual extent, the difference occurs on the European political system fusion, the development of the state’s centralization with the economic industrial sectors. The system of peripheralization occurred inside Europe, and by saying that I mean the centralized European States, an effect of the changing to the medieval age to the modern one, it was the same system that was export inside the expansionist colonizing European model. The systematic colonizing and underdevelopment politic on periphery created paths that aloud to Occidental Europe to reach a long economic term growth. The economic cycles or yet its slights movements during the 15 and 16 Centuries are just growth points analysed during the *Longue durée*. Thus, the production of commodities with high added-value and its sale to periphery regions was a major strategy of long term that benefits the relations between Occidental and Oriental Europe.⁴

³ MIELANTS, Eric. *The origins of capitalism and the “rise of the West”*. Temple University Press. 2008

⁴ MIELANTS, Eric. *The origins of capitalism and the “rise of the West”*. Temple University Press. 2008. Chapter 3, pp. 86-125.

The new cycle of Portuguese expansionism over the 15 and 16 centuries is not only sensed by Rome but also to other European states that, when hassling for international power, used their allies and diplomacy to its own reconstructing and reshaping of power. Rome sees its internal remodelling crisis by facing corruption charges and moral scandals. Furthermore, we also have the constitution and the statement of Peter's Primacy also rooted in Portuguese expansionism and its almost exclusive dedication to linking its expansion, not only in juridical terms but morally with the Christian faith. Meanwhile this development we can also quote the reformulation of the Portuguese legal system known as *Ordenações Manuelinas* that after three restructuring phases showcases the consolidation and unification of the Portuguese royal power and its internal conflicts and disputes in legal spheres between secular and temporal power.

Therefore, one must not detach the emergence of the structural basis of the European capitalist system with the consolidation and structuring of European states and empires. Here taken as an example by the Portuguese Empire and its overseas expansion combined with the consolidation of the Roman curia and the Vatican as a temporal power of souls. The political and economic developments of the sixteenth century, which are commonly associated with the emergence of the structural foundations of the global European capitalist economic system, here are also consequences, of the centralization of European royal and state power associated with conflicts and links with the Roman Curia.

New labour flows: Chinese transnational migration and the Brazilian instance

The first part of the text discussed sought to insert new perspectives in the resulting discussions on the origins of capitalism as a world

economic system. The European model of state-system that began to emerge over the 15th and 16th centuries is not the same seen in the 19th century. As a result of internal and external power disputes, the constant updates of the state power system transformed the model from State to Nation-State. However, we understand that this cannot and should not be the appropriate unit of analysis for macro-temporal research.

The world system theory perspective will be enlarged as well as discuss new global labour relations, a consequence of the slavery process and its end, but also analysing social relations and internal discussions, within States, as determinants in the world economy. While making this immersion in the discussion about the primary origins of capitalism, we seek, to contribute to Dale Tomich's⁵ research when aiming to reveal the social and historical premises and the temporal relations that form the capitalist world economy and, therefore, the characteristics and conditions of the capitalist economy itself.

Our study analyses the consequent global developments of the labour force, in other words, the humanitarian global flows. Focusing on Chinese immigration over the 19th century, which in the Brazilian and Cuban case has its entanglements with the end of the black slavery processes. We seek to comprehend particular local histories as inherent elements/parts of global socioeconomics processes. The historical and complex character of the slavery process, which endured over three centuries in the modern world economy, has its fundamental role when one seeks to comprehend

⁵ TOMICH, Dale W. *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labour, Capital, and World Economy*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003. Chapter 6: Small Islands and Huge Comparisons: Caribbean Plantations, Historical Unevenness, and Capitalist Modernity, pp. 151-168

the world's socio-historical relations. Still, the heterogeneity of the spatial and temporal relations of capitalist processes in the 19th century is also part of the origin of the consequences that alter labour relations in the ensuing centuries.

The global context of the 19th century caused a type of spill-over effect⁶ in the political, economic and cultural relations between the current nations. The development and consolidation of a European capitalist world system have made interweaving connections to make the world increasingly connected. Technological innovations, a new global economic model and an international division of labour and labour force were factors capable of sectorizing and connecting the globe in a way not seen before.

The formation and constitution of the international labour market are highly connected in the symbiosis process for the development of the formation of world capitalism and new sources

⁶ “Para os funcionalistas, as estratégias de cooperação e integração eram mais eficientes, técnica e racionalmente, na promoção do crescimento econômico e na distribuição de benefícios sociais. Bastava que organizações bem estruturadas criassem condições para a aprendizagem acerca das vantagens de soluções técnicas nas diferentes áreas da vida social para que um círculo virtuoso de crescimento da cooperação e multiplicação de organizações funcionais fosse criado. Esse processo de ampliação gradual dos processos racionais de organização das políticas públicas em âmbito internacional foi chamado pelos funcionalistas de *spill-over effect*, ou efeito de transbordamento. Esse efeito se verifica quando o sucesso de uma determinada forma de realização eficiente de uma tarefa ou função se transfere para uma outra área, incentivando a cooperação intergovernamental em setores antes submetidos à esfera do Estado nacional. Em outras palavras, o aprendizado com experiências bem-sucedidas faria com que as soluções organizacionais transbordassem para diferentes setores da vida social”. NOGUEIRA, João Pontes & MESSARI, Nizar. *Teoria das Relações Internacionais: Correntes e Debates*. Rio de Janeiro, Elsevier, 2005

of political and military power.⁷ The existing conflict with the pre-established models plus the conflicting coexistence was able to consolidate and develop a global model of long-term economic development: capitalism.

The formation of an international labour market between the 18th and 19th centuries had, as one of its consequences, to seek cheaper labour: the Chinese or coolies. The transnational migration of the Chinese, in turn, should not be seen as a process disconnected from the global capitalist system, playing a fundamental role also in processes related to the global slavery crisis. Therefore, in each country where we can observe Chinese migration, we must take a close look at global interconnections. Asian diasporas, or transnational migrations, have their direct connection to the end of slave labour in the second half of the 19th century. Not only in the Brazilian case but also, for example, in the Cuban case.⁸

⁷ PARRON, Tâmis. *A Política da Escravidão na Era da Liberdade: Estados Unidos, Brasil e Cuba, 1787–1846*. São Paulo, USP, 2015.

⁸ Chinese migration to Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean in the modern era occurred in two movements: an impressive agricultural labour migration in the second half of the nineteenth century—the so-called coolie trade, known as *la trata amarilla* in Spanish—involving almost exclusively men. Between 1847 and 1874, close to 225,000 coolies were landed in Cuba and Peru. This traffic was followed by a period of free immigration also dominated by men, lasting until the mid-twentieth century. By then, the Chinese population had become largely urban and commercial, most establishing residence and businesses in national and provincial capitals, as well as in mining and railroad towns and port cities (Hu-DeHart, “*Huagong*”). HU-DEHART, Evelyn & LÓPEZ, Kathleen. Introduction: Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Historical Overview. *Afro-Hispanic Review* • Volume 27, Number 1, 2008. P. 14

The global flows of human migration are an important process to be analysed, not only in the long term but also in their small movements. The discussions for the transfer of Asian workers were centred on racism at its core. Immigration or colonization, temporary labour or contract workers, better or worse than African slaves, private initiative or governmental development are among some of the conflicting paradigms of the 19th century. Therefore, for each location where the Chinese were present, we can perceive different discussions about this group, in addition to the different interests of the Chinese and their agencies as workers.

Analysing Chinese transnational migration flows to the Americas, Elliott Young demonstrates the main differences between the usual immigration or migratory processes.⁹ Compared to Europeans and even enslaved Africans, even though the last quote is not usual to compare but in a slave perspective, the Asian context throughout the 19th and 20th centuries are seen globally also through the eyes of the Chinese in their international movements outside borders of a nation-state. The author seeks to tell the story of Chinese migration to the Americas, focused not on state boundaries, or even limited by a nation, but on intervention spaces, border spaces and seas where the Chinese went from one place to another.¹⁰

⁹ YOUNG, Elliott. *Alien nation*. Chinese migration in the Americas from the coolie era through World War II. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014, pp. 1-94.

¹⁰ "This book seeks to explore not only the state construction of the Chinese as aliens but also the transnational networks of Chinese that enabled them to evade border controls and construct an alternative community that overlapped but was not synchronous with the nation-state. The narrative will thus shift focal lengths to allow us to see state attempts to solidify national borders and identities and to enable us to see the transnational diasporic networks of Chinese migrants that

When trying new perspectives of work internationally, the Chinese were sometimes co-opted by superior ethnic groups and compelled to sign an employment contract in a foreign language and without any discussion about the contract. There is a major discussion about the relationship between Asians being free wage workers, who depended on their contracts, which they were sometimes forced to accept, or if they were part of a new slave movement. Elliott works with epoch concepts in his book, *alien, illegal alien* and *coolie*, briefly discussing why the epoch terms were used and their meanings. Through these external experiences of Chinese migration and others, which, also explained by Brazilians abroad, the movement for discussions on this topic arises in Brazil, at the end of the 19th century.

Brazil-China relations on the 19th century

The Brazilian Empire suffered international sanctions and pressure from England since the first half of the 19th century to end the black slave trade and slavery. With the signing of the 1810's treaties by D João VI, quoting commerce and navigation, friendship and alliance and a third one regulating postal relations between the kingdoms, Brazil entered the political British influence circle. In the ten years leading up to Brazilian independence, we have the rise of an important figure in the Brazilian abolitionist process: José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva. Despite international pressure from the British to abolish the black slave trade, we can mention that the English empire itself had only abolished it in 1830. Kenneth

superseded the nation. These two elements developed in tandem and often helped constitute one another. Exclusionary laws forced the Chinese to cross the boundary clandestinely, which in turn made the "imaginary lines" Braun referred to into the policed border zones and physical barriers that we know today." *Idem*, pp 3-5.

Maxwell in *Por que o Brasil foi diferente? O contexto da Independência* (2000) reveals the context of both British and Brazilian ambiguities. Despite the excitement over the black slave labour replacement by free workers, it did not last long that, after a series of slave revolts in Bahia, ideas soon changed. The fear of a potential social uprising, combined with the fear of the Saint Domingos Revolt, was enough to abandon the issue. Besides, economic and material interests also have contributed greatly to the detour of this issue.

At the time José Bonifácio was already talking about a black slavery gradual abolition so there would scale down any social furor. The abolitionism movement had, however, its conservative criticisms as Maxwell shows us in José Bonifácio's secret letters with Henry Chamberlain, an English envoy to Brazil.¹¹

The British government, observing the Brazilian passivity and the non-compliance with the treaties previously signed during the

¹¹ 'Você sabe o quanto eu, sinceramente, detesto o tráfico de escravos, o quanto acredito ser ele prejudicial ao país, o quanto desejo a sua total cessação, embora isso não possa ser feito imediatamente. As pessoas não estão preparadas para isso, e até que seja feito, colocaria em risco a existência do governo, se tentarmos fazê-lo repentinamente. A própria abolição é uma das principais medidas que desejo apresentar à Assembléia sem falta, mas isso deve ser bem administrado e não podemos ter pressa [...]. Com relação às Colônias ou à Costa da África, nada queremos lá ou em qualquer outra parte. O Brasil é suficientemente grande e produtivo para nós, e estamos satisfeitos com o que a Providência nos deu. Desejaria que seus navios de patrulha tomassem todos os navios negreiros que encontrassem no mar. Não quero mais vê-los, eles são a gangrena de nossa prosperidade. A população que queremos é branca, e espero ver chegar logo da Europa os pobres, os desditosos, os industriosos; aqui eles terão fartura, com um clima bom; aqui eles serão felizes; eles são os colonos que queremos.'. MAXWELL, Kenneth. *Por que o Brasil foi diferente? O contexto da Independência*. in: MOTA, Carlos Guilherme (org.). *Viagem Incompleta - A experiência Brasileira*. S.P.: Editora Senac São Paulo, 2000. pp. 13-14

first half of the 19th century for black slavery abolitionism, being the last of these treaties signed in 1826, under English pressure, took an action on August 8 of 1845 when promulgating the Aberdeen Law.¹² As José Murilo de Carvalho informs us, this English legislative act authorized the English navy to seize any vessels suspected of black slavery trafficking, even if in Brazilian waters. The Brazilian conservative ministry, led by Eusébio de Queiroz, grounded in this external law raised the issue of the discussion on Brazilian sovereignty and national feelings. Dom Pedro II seizes the chance and supports the Brazilian fight against slavery, which however was an extremely difficult situation as traffickers and slave owners entered this same struggle for national reasons.¹³

British international pressure on taking a position within the Brazilian Empire, in the 1840s-1850s, begins to frighten the large slaveholding landowners who had their profit in the black slave trade and cash cropping. At that time, Great Britain held world trade in its hands, so there was not so much need to ensure the supply of labour on its land. What was needed was to get more and more low-cost products, regardless of the type of labour used. However, over time, those enslaved as commodities were Worthing more and generating more profit in their transactions than simple commodities, like sugar, as we will see later. This process, therefore, of economic model transition, combined with the social and

¹² An Act to amend an Act, intituled An Act to carry into execution a Convention between His Majesty and the Emperor of Brazil, for the Regulation and final Abolition of the African Slave Trade. 1845. Available at: <http://www.pdavis.nl/Legis_28.htm>. Accessed on December 21, 2016.

¹³ CARVALHO, José Murilo de. *D. Pedro II por José Murilo de Carvalho*. Coord. Elio Gaspari e Lilia M. Schwarcz. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2007. p. 131

political needs of the 18th and 19th centuries, caused a large part of the globe to be affected due to the interconnection of the actors present in the international system; in this research dealt mainly with Brazil, China, and England.

Through primary sources, we will discuss how the formation of Brazilian national identity, in its genesis between the European white, the enslaved black African and the “Brazilian” Indian¹⁴, is part of a political and cultural process of construction and affirmation of the national identity, which, however, excluded new ethnicities present on Brazilian boundaries. We understand, therefore, that this process of building a national identity or ethnicity was done through active participation in the discussions, not only culturally, but also in political and power environments.¹⁵

Brazilian background and the Agricultural Congresses

Within the 19th century Brazilian framework, we can mention two main moments where the Chinese were present. A first moment, however not official, was still in the very beginning of Brazil-China relationship in the first decade of the 19th century through the government of Dom João VI when trying to introduce the tea culture in Rio de Janeiro. The project suggested by Conde de Linhares intended to hire two thousand Chinese to Rio de Janeiro aiming to plant tea in what is now the Botanical Garden, the

¹⁴ VON MARTIUS, Karl F.; RODRIGUES, José H. “Como se deve escrever a História do Brasil”. *Revista De História De América*, (42), 433-458, 1956. ABREU, Capistrano de. *Capítulos de história colonial*, 6. ed., Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 1976.

¹⁵ VAINFAS, Ronaldo. “Colonização, miscigenação e questão racial: notas sobre equívocos e tabus da historiografia brasileira”. *Tempo*, Niterói, n. 8, pp. 1-12, 1999.

Imperial Farms of Santa Cruz and Ilha do Governador. The project, however, was abandoned, as well as the Chinese.¹⁶

In a second moment, with the English pressure for the abolition of the black slave trade, the political projects of national abolition, the local revolts of freed and/or enslaved blacks and the fear of riots like São Domingos¹⁷, happens a political-intellectual movement of discussions so that new resolutions could be sought to aim at replacing black slave labour. A project that previously bordered Brazilian intellectual and political circles now needed to be put into practice: the emergence of political discussions and projects on the replacement of black enslaved labour in Brazilian cash cropping.¹⁸ Taking by granted the 19th theories about races, Asians or the “yellow race” was considered, at that time, an intermediate race between whites and blacks, and the race who could handle the labour without generating major revolutions in Brazilian society. A Chinese immigration project arises with the guise of a transitory movement between enslaved blacks and European whites. Then, the pejorative stereotype of the Asians predominated in the

¹⁶ DEZEM, Rogério Akiti. *Matizes do “amarelo”: a gênese dos discursos sobre os orientais no Brasil (1878/1908)*. São Paulo: Associação Imperial Humanitas, 2005, p. 49

¹⁷ For a general overview of the theme see. cf. DUBOIS, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution*, Harvard University Press, 2004, where the author comments on how, after the Saint-Domingue Revolution ended, it gave rise to debates based on racial theories and the diverse thoughts that were generated after the revolution.

¹⁸ CONRAD, Robert. The planter class and the debate over the chinese immigration to Brazil, 1850-1893. *International Migration Review*, v. 9, 1, pp. 45-55, 1975. COSTA, Emília Viotti da. *Da Senzala à Colônia*. Capítulo 2. Editora Unesp, 2012

discussions about a possible immigration project, which was debated on several social levels.¹⁹

Before going specifically to the theme of the Agricultural Congress in Rio de Janeiro, it is important to mention that there was also, in 1878, the Agricultural Congress of Recife, convened by the Sociedade Auxiliadora da Agricultura de Pernambuco. Occurred between the 6th and the 13th of October, the congress brought together two hundred and eighty-eight representatives of the Northern cash crops. In this Congress, the intention was to discuss the resolutions and proposals presented at the Agricultural Congress of Rio de Janeiro, since, even though there was only one crop, regional interests were different and not all resolutions met the different questions, such as the water drought in the North.²⁰ Despite the Agricultural Congress in Recife maintaining the same format as in Rio, we can see that, due to the difference in wishes and expectations, the issues addressed by this committee were different, due, obviously, to different demands of the farming in northern Brazil.²¹ The wishes of the North reflected on the lack and aiming for “arms and capital” for its evolution.

¹⁹For a general overview of the theme see. cf. SCHWARCZ, Lilian Moreira. *O Espetáculo das raças. Cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil, 1870-1930*. São Paulo. Companhia das Letras, 1993.

²⁰ PERES, Victor Hugo Luna. *Os “Chins” nas sociedades tropicais de plantação: estudo das propostas de importação de trabalhadores chineses sob contrato e suas experiências de trabalho e vida no Brasil (1814-1878)*, Recife, 2013, p. 151

²¹ “Entre as principais discussões levadas a cabo por estes homens estavam a dos créditos, a dos melhoramentos e a dos braços, em escala de importância. No que concernia aos braços, as principais preocupações e soluções apontadas parecem ter sido a criação de instrumentos legais que conduzissem os trabalhadores, ditos ‘ociosos’, para o trabalho das lavouras, fossem eles flagelados, ex-escravos ou ingênuos. Quanto à possibilidade de imigração europeia, apesar de alguns poucos entusiastas, a maioria dos congressistas resignava-se ao fato então

Chinese workers, on the opposite side, were not quoted as in the southern congress, as shown by Peres in his master's degree thesis. "Apart from the voices commented here, which were positioned oppositely, this issue does not appear on the list of solutions presented by congressmen to the arms problem."²² The debates about Chinese immigration did not take as many voices as in Rio de Janeiro, which made that Joaquim Nabuco, in his request for credit to the Diplomatic Mission to China, quoted the denial of the Northern of the Empire.

As José Murilo de Carvalho tells us in the introduction of the Fac-similar of the Agricultural Congress of Rio de Janeiro, the end of the 19th century was not the best scenario for plantations, they were in a crossroad:

On one hand, the liberation of the *nascituros* (unborn), carried out in 1871, had defined the fatal deadline for the end of black slave labour; on the other hand, experiences with European immigration, especially through the partnership system, had not yet proved viable. If everyone was convinced that slaves could no longer be counted on in the medium term, many also felt that the European worker could not be the solution, for not adapting, or adapting poorly, to work in the large fields and for demanding high wages, in addition to aspiring becoming an owner himself. The solution that has remained was the more intensive use of the

compreendido como justificativa para a não vinda desta ordem de trabalhadores de que o clima e o ambiente do Norte eram hostis aos mesmos". *Ibidem.* pp. 151-152

²² *Ibidem.* p. 152

national laborers and the import of Asian workers, the coolies and Chinese. Great debates were fought over these alternatives without reaching consensus, neither within the government nor among the farmers themselves. The uncertainty about the future generated a nervous environment that appears in the debates. The time was difficult for other reasons as well. Financially, the Government still embittered the great debts, internal and external, contracted to finance the war against Paraguay. In 1878, the incidence of one of the worst droughts in the northern provinces worsened. Aid to large landowners was, however, necessary and not just for economic reasons. Political reasons called for measures to mitigate the shock caused by the 1871 law.²³

The Agricultural Congress of Rio de Janeiro, convened by João Lins Vieira Cansanção de Sinimbu, Minister of Agriculture and Public Works and president of the Agricultural Council of 1878, sought opinions and resolutions on the Brazilian crop crisis. The problems mentioned as the end of the black enslaved labour; the bad reputation of the national labourer; the bad experiences of European immigration or the bad impression that this project made; the debts incurred in the Paraguayan War; the end of agricultural credit; drought in the north of the country; and the problems caused by the slow and gradual abolition laws, coupled

²³ Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878. Anais. Introd. e notas José Murilo de Carvalho. Rio de Janeiro, Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa. Ed. Fac-similar. p. V

with the 1879 Law - also known as the Service Leasing Law, or Sinimbú Law²⁴ - were grouped in the discussions.

In this way, we have the construction of a Chinese immigration project, based on external experiences, as a transition process between the European white and the enslaved black.

The Congress counted on members of the plantations, mainly from the four major Brazilian provinces of greatest importance to agriculture, with 141 participants from Rio de Janeiro; 66 from São Paulo; 57 from Minas Gerais; and 5 from Espírito Santo (those who signed the attendance book).²⁵ In addition to these data, we must add its bases and the questionnaire written by Sinimbú. This questionnaire was answered by most of those present at the Congress and can, in general, list the main desires of plantation owners in the South.

5. It will be up to the Congress to rule all that may directly concern the plantations, and the Government should clarify the following points:

²⁴ “Promulgada em inícios de 1879 e apelida de pôr seus contemporâneos de Lei Sinimbu, esta lei de locação de serviços pode ser considerada, em seu grau de complexidade, a primeira tentativa de intervenção do governo brasileiro na organização das relações de trabalho livre da agricultura. A intenção visível era cobrir o mais amplamente possível com a legislação as relações de trabalho. ‘Quase um código rural!’, exclamaram várias vozes na época. [...] A Aprovação da nova lei de locação de serviços deve ser compreendida a partir dos marcos de uma política mais geral implementada para a extinção da escravatura.” LAMOUNIER, Maria Lúcia. O Trabalho sob contrato: a Lei de 1879. *Revista Brasileira de História*. São Paulo, V. 6, nº 12, 1896 p. 102.

²⁵ Tabela I - Congresso Agrícola, Rio de Janeiro, 1878. Anais. Introd. e notas José Murilo de Carvalho. Rio de Janeiro, Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa. Ed. Fac-similar. p. VI

- I. What are the most urgent and immediate needs of the plantations?
- II. Is it very sensitive to the lack of arms to maintain, improve or develop the current establishments of the large plantation?
- III. What is the most effective and convenient way to make up for this lack?
- IV. Will it be possible to the naïve, children of slaves, be expected to constitute an element of free and permanent labour on the large property? If not, what are the means to reorganize agricultural labour?
- V. Does the large plantation feel a lack of capital? If so, is this due to the absolute lack of them in the country, or to the agricultural credit depression?
- VI. What are the means of raising agricultural credit? Is it appropriate to create special establishments? How to found them?
- VII. Have improvements been made in the field? Which one? Is there an urgency for others? How do you do them?²⁶

There is a specific emphasis in item five of the questionnaire, as it deals specifically with the problems related to plantations and labour, their urgency and possible resolutions. As we can see in Victor Hugo Luna PERES, *Os "Chins" nas sociedades tropicais de plantaço: estudo das propostas de importação de trabalhadores chineses sob contrato e suas experiências de trabalho e vida no Brasil (1814-1878)*: there is an excellent methodological work at analyzing the speeches and the documentary body of the Fac-

²⁶ *Ibidem.* p. 2

similar of the Agricultural Congress when using lexicometry for study - a study of measurement between words and concepts within a text.²⁷

Of the twenty-five responses written and sent to the event organizers and present in the proceedings of the Congress, ten of them make direct reference to the introduction of Asian workers, six of which are in favor and four against this solution to the “arms crisis” and the problem of transition to a free labour market. The arguments presented in them vary widely, ranging from radically opposed positions, such as those of Mr. Dr. Eduardo A. Pereira de Abreu, representative of the city of Silveiras, in the province of São Paulo, to the acceptance without the inconvenience of the Quissaman Farmers' Commission, province of Rio de Janeiro. Also, in this sense, the repertoire of positive and negative qualifications concerning these workers present there allows us to glimpse the wide range of conceptions that circulated, at the time, in relation not

²⁷ “Neste particular, empreendeu-se sobre as partes principais do corpo textual dos anais: verificação da frequência de termos chave como Ásia, China, Chim, Coolie, entre outros; ocorrência de elementos de qualificação de cunho positivo e negativo frente a estes termos; verificação do posicionamento dos emissores diante das propostas de introdução de trabalhadores asiáticos. Além de também serem feitas quantificações de sistematização no que se refere aos próprios documentos, a exemplo dos números de intervenções em que a introdução de trabalhadores asiáticos foi debatida ao longo dos congressos e em cada sessão.” PERES, Victor Hugo Luna. Os “Chins” nas sociedades tropicais de plantação: estudo das propostas de importação de trabalhadores chineses sob contrato e suas experiências de trabalho e vida no Brasil (1814-1878), Recife, 2013, p. 102

only to these workers but also to their entire culture and nation.²⁸

In his initial speech, Sinimbú declares to be openly in favour of Chinese immigration, or the “importation of Asians as a transition measure for the free European worker.” This new Chinese immigration project was then a solution proposed by the then minister to fight against the Brazilian plantation crisis in the 19th century.

Sinimbú’s speech at the 1st Session of July 8, 1878, created a verbal construction on his opinion about the importation of Chinese laborers for Brazilian plantations. He begins his speech by relating the plantations and farms to the former “family-based agriculture”, where the agricultural process was passed from father to son. However, with the increase of black slave labour and the increasingly fierce trade in primary products, family farming/house holdings start to take second place in the face of the search for profit and production, common in cash crops. The Brazilian youth, therefore, now begins to be sent to the big cities to study and return, sometimes, to help increase the crop.

Sinimbú deals with the plantation crisis combined with the increase in the price of black slave labour, due to scarcity, which is why the cost of production increased without necessarily improving the production process of agricultural commodities. In this way, Brazilian products inserted in large markets were seen in inferior conditions.²⁹ The Minister understands that there are divergences on the various points for solving crop problems, but he bases his speech on key points, as in the European worker and says

²⁸ *Ibidem.* p. 104

²⁹ *Ibidem.* p. 127

that the main mission of the crop for its reconstruction is to hire free workers. However, knowing his audience, he mentions that the European people of free workers are unaware of low wages since they are used to civilized life and beyond their expenses. The European worker also comes intending to become a landowner, something that was not welcomed by the great Brazilian farming, accustomed to its large estates; and that if these workers went into the business through the partnership system, they would enter only as a mere transition, as this was not their real desire.³⁰

As seen below, the example of colonies in America that had Chinese immigration as a form of a labourer at some point in their history. Sinimbú mentions the English, French and Spanish colonies that, even with their metropolises having progressive ideals, opted for the mass import of Chinese instead of the European labour:

Far from it, Mauricia turned its sights on Bengal, from where it imported a great number of *coolies*, and with the work of them managed to compensate itself for the loss of the black slave arm, increasing considerably its agricultural wealth. In the same source, Ceylão provided 200,000 workers; and already has an annual production of 3,500,000 arrobas of coffee on the market, whose regular culture dates back only to the year 1837. Peru, which, a few years ago, exported an insignificant amount of sugar, and which is already starting to compete with us in the markets of Chile and the Rio de la Plata, sought its supply of arms in China, from where Cuba also imported the 60,000 workers,

³⁰ *Ibidem.* p. 128

who go on suppressing the lack of slave labour. The same is true in other Antilles sites; and even the United States itself, that cherishes the purity of Saxon blood, did not disdain to import the mass of workers from China, with which they populated much of California; and, if today they repel them, it is for the same reason that to other countries, provided with a few arms for the plantation, it is convenient to import them. I must not however hide that against Asian immigration very respectable opinions are declared among us; and at this point the divergences are also manifested.³¹

There is also the example of the Brazilian national labourer who “has against him the fact that he does not provide continuous and thorough service.” Sinimbú then ends his speech by saying that the plantation has time against it and that every moment is crucial for choosing the right resolutions. He understands that there are divergences concerning all the subjects he addresses, but he shows his favourable position to a project of Chinese immigration to Brazilian plantations, as a transitional form between the black enslaved labour and the free European worker. In this brief speech we can understand that the necessities to the plantation system are cheap labour, with low earnings and that performs the same work that was previously done by the enslaved Negro. The economic factor is in major importance within the context of the Chinese immigration project, but it was not the only one present in the speeches given at the Agricultural Congress, with a special addition to the social relations of this group with and within Brazilian society.

³¹ *Ibidem.* p. 129

Congress was not the only political environment to provide discussions about the Chinese. We can quote several examples of it, as newspapers of the time, such as *Jornal do Commercio* and *Jornal Gazeta de Notícias*. Illustrated magazines - such as Angelo Agostini's *Revista Illustrada*. *Medicine Annals*. Political resolutions - *Trabalhadores Asiáticos* (1879), by Salvador de Mendonça, General Consul of Brazil in the United States. Social books over the subject, such as the pamphlet by Quintino Bocaiúva, *A Crise da Lavoura* (1868), as well as Miguel Lemos's book, *Imigração Chinesa. Mensagem a S. Ex. o Embaixador do Celeste Império junto aos governos da França e Inglaterra* (November 5, 1881).

The Agricultural Congress Resolution Proposal shows us what would be the Chinese role and how the immigration process would happen:

The Agricultural Congress resolves that the permanent commission, which he must elect as his organ, represents the Government, and the future legislative body, whatever the real needs of the plantation, and the means of satisfying them, indicating especially the following:

Art. 1 That the first necessity of plantation is the acquisition of free laborers at modest wages, and laborer who are used to our climate, and to the system of extensive culture, which in general and for many years will be almost the only one in Brazil; for which in no way can we count on the Europeans, but rather, as a means of transition between servile and completely free labour, the acquisition of laborers from other peoples of race or civilization inferior to ours own.

1st That while the laborers that may be useful to our plantations are, in the first place Africans and in 2nd (when these cannot be obtained at all) the coolies and the well-chosen Chinese farmers, and not those who live on the water or as if in anthills, in the big cities of China, those with are already discredited in this country, and do not serve.

2º That these colonists must be imported by the State, and for this purpose we should take advantage of the officiality and the national armada navy, and acquire appropriate transport for the good accommodation of immigrants. And the colonists thus imported must be treated very well in the ports of the Empire upon their arrival.³²

As José Murilo de Carvalho tells us in the preface to the Agricultural Congress Report, concerning labour, the position of the then Minister Sinimbu was favourable to the Chinese or coolies' importation as a transitional form of labour for the free European worker. The Congress majorly understood this to be the main problem of Brazilian plantation but disagreed about the solutions and proposals presented, as they would only be temporary. However, the discussions were always based on racial thoughts and even stronger attacks on Asians than on Africans, as these were already inserted in the Brazilian socio environment and the society used to it:

They were said to be immoral, corrupted by opium and unassimilable. Many defended the national worker,

³² *Ibidem.* p. 83

whom they recognized abundantly. But they agreed that only with special incentives or greater repression could he be taken to work. In this regard, they called for various measures ranging from the reform of the 1837 service lease law to incentives such as exemption from military service in the Army and the National Guard for rural workers, including openly repressive initiatives such as the creation of a rural police force. Almost everyone disbelieved the viability of the European worker, but they still asked the Government to remove some obstacles to his coming, introducing, for example, civil marriage, civil registration, the secularization of cemeteries, freedom of worship, easy naturalization. Regarding credit, opinions also differed. There was no credit, everyone said. But they did not agree on measures to make it accessible to the owner. A rural credit bank was asked to lend on a long-term basis with low interest and amortizations. But soon someone noticed that the bank was not a charity house, that the capital was selfish.³³

By elaborating these comments on the Agricultural Congress of Rio de Janeiro, we do not have the intention to exhaust the discussion and also not to go into the subject in-depth, as so many other authors cited here have already done. What we intend to demonstrate is how the discussions about the Chinese immigration project to Brazil, at the end of the 19th century, were filled with negative racial adjectives and how this negative construction was

³³ *Ibidem.* pp. VII-VIII

also essential for the construction of Brazilian identity. If not for the acceptance of the Brazilian being, but the opposition.

The discussions on Chinese immigration took place, however, throughout the hemisphere. It will be necessary to pay attention to the debates in other countries of the American continent, such as Canada, Cuba, the United States, Peru, Mexico and Jamaica, as Juan Hung Hui summarized.³⁴ According to the author, these processes were different from other migrations, since the Chinese did not leave their country as enslaved, like Africans, or as free European men, colonists or not, and even as the Japanese who acquired economic and financial power. The Chinese, due to the political and economic crises in 19th century China, had to leave their country by submitting to compulsory labour to make quick money and then return. Despite the distance, Juan Hung Hui dedicates a few pages of his book to the Chinese migration to Brazil, writing about the Chinese Question and the relationship between the end of black enslaved labour and the need for cheap and substitute labour.

The Brazilian role in the world system relationship was closely linked to the world economy, mainly through Brazilian coffee, as shown by Dale Tomich and Rafael Marquese, relating coffee consumption to the new fast pace of urban and industrial societies. “It is not by chance that Brazil and the United States - the paradigm of new industrial lifestyles and mass consumption - were the two main tips of the commodity chain throughout the 19th century and into the following century.”³⁵

³⁴ HUI, Juan Hung. *Chinos en America*. Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992.

³⁵ MARQUESE, Rafael Bivar & TOMICH, Dale. “O Vale do Paraíba escravista e a formação do mercado mundial do café no século XXIX”. In: GRINBERG, Keila & SALLES, Ricardo (orgs.). *O Brasil Imperial*. vol. 2 - 1831-1870. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2009. p. 373.

Regarding the international systemic level of this research, we can also corroborate the concept of the world system, discussed by Immanuel Wallerstein. The author deals with globalization present since the 16th century with a view to a world economy - a concept also worked on by Wallerstein (developed by Fernand Braudel) that deserves to be elaborated for a better understanding of the world system. In the words of the sociologist, the world economy is a large geographical area within exists a division of labour and therefore a significant exchange of basic and essential goods, as well as the flow of capital and labour; an essential feature of the world economy is that it is not limited by a unitary policy because there are several political units within a world economy, which are linked to the modern world system within an interstate system.³⁶ Yet, the world economy system includes many cultures, which, however, does not exclude common cultural patterns – geo culture; therefore, political and cultural homogeneity should not be expected within this system, since what unifies it, and with greater strength, is the division of labour constituted within it.³⁷ Therefore, the kind of labour used shaped and reshaped social, political and economic patterns.

The anti-slavery morality of the 19th century, in turn, has its fundamental role in the global system. Not only morally, but closely linked to the capitalist process, slave labour went against technological innovation and new forms of capital accumulation. The spatial expansion of the capitalist world economy takes place in three ways, expanding the margin of surplus-value; technological

³⁶ WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel M. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004

³⁷ SANTOS, Marco Aurélio dos. “Migrações e trabalho sob contrato no século XIX”. *História*, UNESP, v. 36, n. 12, 2017.

advances; and penalizing anti-market modalities.³⁸ Thus, the slave system, which was responsible for the consolidation of the world capitalist system in the 19th century, was also necessary to its end.

The international division of labour and a new moment of primitive capital accumulation is part of the relationship between the end of black slave labour and the emergence of Chinese labour worldwide.³⁹

In the second half of the 19th century, relations changed as there was a search for active participation in the international political crisis of the capitalist system, mainly pronounced by the end of the enslavement of black Africans.

The global context of the century has its main actors in this Atlantic scheme of Brazilian relations, considering, therefore,

³⁸ WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel M. "Historical Systems as Complex Systems," in P.M. Allen, W.C. Schieve, & R.N. Adams, eds., "Special Issue: Modelling Complex Systems, I" *European Journal of Operational Research*, XXX, 2, June 1987, 203-07.

³⁹ Once established, the capital-wage labour relation reproduces itself through its own processes on an expanding scale, but it is by no means a closed system. Rather, as the most productive form of value production it reconstructs the global hierarchy of labour, the division of labour, and the world market. Here is the movement from original accumulation to capitalist accumulation, from world market as premise of capitalist production to world market as product of capitalist production. The wage labour-capital relation becomes the organizing hub to the capitalist world-economy. The character, role, and function of the various forms of unwaged labour are transformed through their relation to it. Despite their form they now directly produce surplus value because the commodities they produce are directly equated with the product of the wage labour-capital relation through the world market. The practices of what we are referring to as "primitive accumulation" are extended and intensified. TOMICH, Dale. *Original Accumulation: The Genoese Cycle of Accumulation, Atlantic Slavery, and the Formation of the World-Market*, 2019.

England, the African continent, Brazil, the United States, and China, not to mention the other countries through which Chinese migration was present and they were able to build this idea in the heart of the Brazilian at a time of transition from enslaved labour to free labour, such as Cuba, Peru, Canada, Jamaica, Mexico and the United States itself.

Considering a global perspective on the subject, we can understand why the Chinese / Asians were in evidence within the world economic system over the 19th century. The opium trade had been banned in China since 1729. However, the psychoactive narcotic was smuggled into Chinese territory with the support of the United Kingdom and the British East India Company. European imperialism had taken over China, which previously had the freedom to be autonomous on this subject, although other European countries had already registered their presence, such as Portugal and Spain.⁴⁰ “The weakened empire, led by the empress (widow of the emperor) Cixi (1835-1908), more feared within the empire than outside, seemed bound to disappear under the combined and violent attacks of imperialism.”⁴¹ From 1839 to 1842, China went through two Opium Wars and, as a loser, was forced to pay high compensations to Britain and to open its ports. The nineteenth century is also known as the Unequal Treaties phase for China, when extraterritoriality was established after China’s defeat in the First Opium War. the application of the most favourable nation was then used to sign forcibly more international treaties, as with Great Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Belgium,

⁴⁰ ROPP, Paul. *China in World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, Chapter 7.

⁴¹ HOBSBAWM, Eric J. *Era dos Impérios 1875-1914*, 3^a Ed., Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra, 1988. p. 246

Brazil, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and the United States.⁴² This context of constant wars, invasions and loss of territory were some of the causes that created a migratory flow, as well as created new international migratory flows. The migratory flows were linked to China's incorporation into the world capitalist system, reconfiguring and reshuffling new land tenures patterns, as occurred in Europe before, and as well as in the black slavery crisis in Brazil.⁴³

Rogério Dezem in *Matizes do "Amarelo", A gênese dos discursos sobre os orientais no Brasil (1878-1908)* has as a central theme the analysis of the Brazilian anti-japanese feeling, however, to expose the genesis of this feeling he necessarily enters in the construction of oriental stereotypes in Brazil. Dezem begins to trace this feeling with the first Brazilian experience of Chinese immigration in the early 19th century for the cultivation of tea in Rio de Janeiro on a farm in Santa Cruz. Then, in 1854, there was a new push through the private initiative of Manoel de Almeida Cardoso, in a navigation proposal that would link Brazil to China for the import of coolies.⁴⁴ Discussing the Chinese Question as one of the initial

⁴² DAVIN, Delia. Export Processing Zones. PP 542-544. In PONG, David (Editor in chief). *Encyclopedia of Modern China*, Volume I, Examination System, 1800–1905. Charles Scribner's Sons, 2009.

⁴³ See Dean, Warren K. *Rio Claro: a Brazilian plantation system: 1820-1920 / Warren Dean*. Stanford University Press, 1976. HOLLOWAY, Thomas H. *Imigrantes para o café*. Rio de Janeiro, ed. Paz e Terra, 1984. MARTINS, José de Souza. *O cativo da terra*. São Paulo: HUCITEC. 1996. STOLCKE, Verena, *Cafecultura: homens, mulheres e capital (1850-1980)*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1986.

⁴⁴ Como nos conta Alexander Chung Yuan Yang em O Comércio dos "Coolie" [1819-1920]: "A denominação de coolie aparece como coles nos escritos portugueses quinhentistas. A palavra origina-se do hindu kuli. Evoluindo a

moments of the genesis of the discourse about the Orientals in Brazil, where through debates that permeated different sectors of Brazilian society, we can observe the discussion about the Chinese immigration project to Brazil in the construction of stereotypes of the oriental people, as yet known as the yellow race. Rogério Dezem analyses the process that involved the discussion, which was dealt with in newspapers, in the Senate, and the Chambers, bringing issues raised by political representatives and their speeches related to the Chinese issue, and also cites other experiences of Chinese in the Americas and also discusses about the Agricultural Congress of 1878. Within the construction of stereotypes, the author makes a brief analysis of the Chinese Question through the cartoons and caricatures of Angelo Agostini's Illustrated Magazine regarding the representation of the Chinese. The specific theme of the research that we promote here is not analysed in-depth and not all cartoons are exposed, even because this is not the main theme of Dezem. The iconography is analysed, in this way as a construction of the stereotype of the oriental people that begins with the Chinese and culminates in the Japanese people.

Dezem also publishes *A Questão Chinesa (1879) no Brasil*, 2018, where he cuts-out from his book, which served as a master's dissertation. He analyzes the question pointing that this theme had its end as a phantom question (*Questão fantasma*), because from the beginning it was impossible to resolve, but even so the theme was exhausted in political discussions. The issue served as a “background” for discussions about the plantation crisis and its

seguir para coly - kouilly e finalmente ao francês coulie. Em inglês passou a ser coolie, massa móvel de trabalhadores assalariados, quer indianos, quer chineses, que se irradiaram pelo Ocidente servindo a várias sociedades”. YANG, Alexander Chung Yuan. O comércio dos "coolie" [1819-1920]. *Revista de História*, São Paulo, n. 112, p. 419-428, dec. 1977. ISSN 2316-9141.

solutions. “In this way, the image of one of the constitutive elements of the phenomenon that we can call the 'yellow equation' was consolidated: the Chinese immigrant.”⁴⁵

The Chinese immigration issue at the end of the 19th century deals not only with Brazilian internal interests but also with the replacement of black enslaved labour, colonization, the plantation crisis and the search for profitability by the Brazilian landowning elite. It permeates a universe of issues that involved discussions in newspapers, in the Brazilian Chamber and Senate, in medicine, Gobineau's racial theories, European immigration, positivists and Brazil's foreign policy.

Some writings that even despite being contemporary at the time, knew, in a certain way, to treat the subject critically. Among them we have written by Miguel Lemos, *Imigração Chinesa. Mensagem a S. Ex. o Embaixador do Celeste Império junto aos governos da França e Inglaterra (5 de novembro de 1881)*: the author presents the true interests within some sectors of the Brazilian government with Chinese immigration, exposing the discussions based on prejudice, racial theories, the subjugation of the Chinese people and the immigration project as being transitory for the replacement of the slave labour of the crop. The Brazilian positivist opinion on behalf of its president is also exposed in the book as contrary to Chinese immigration for the sake of humanity and the principles of equality. Also attached to his book are the Annals of the Brazilian Senate (1879) and a book by Salvador de Mendonça, consul general of Brazil in the United States of America, *Asian Workers*, New York, 1879. In this book the yet Brazilian consul makes a brief presentation about the history of China, the Chinese people, their customs and religion; dedicates its effort to portraying

⁴⁵ DEZEM, Rogério. *A Questão Chinesa (1879) no Brasil*, 2018. pp. 22-23.

China's relations with Europe and the USA; in its chapters, VI and VII, called 'Immigration Chinezã' and 'Coolie', respectively, he expounds on Chinese immigration experiences in the Americas, on culture, in addition to the processes required for immigration bearing in mind his external experiences; chapter VIII deals with the Chinese work, experiences and their ways of working, and also talks about China's trade relations. Finally, he considers, from his point of view, the benefits and harms of Chinese immigration to Brazil, based on the stereotype of the oriental worker, classifying them as suspicious, disloyal, liars, of pagan morals and that do not create passion for the land, still considering them as cheap workers and being a transitory movement between African and European. It is important to emphasize that Salvador de Mendonça's book was commissioned by the Brazilian government, thus exposing an official position on the Chinese and the immigration project.

In issue 358, of 1883, of *Revista Illustrada* we have a double page entitled *A Colonização Chinezã* (Appendix 1). In this critical image, we see clear examples of how the Chinese immigration project to Brazil would work and the formation of an oriental peasantry in Brazilian plantations. As we can see in the image, the Chinese are physically compared as an inferior stereotype to the European white, the black slave and the Brazilian Indian. We can quote the fact that the Chinese would only work under constant surveillance, tied by their hair; the reference to suicide as an escape; the disagreements between the landowners wanting to enslave them. And even knowing all these characteristics about the Chinese, if the plantations landowners still wanted it, they should be sent to the plantations, because the city would not want to. If not even the plantations could handle them, they should be sent to the Brazilian backwoods where cannibal indigenous tribes would solve the problem. We can observe the continuity, even in the long

run, on the construction and reproduction of the Chinese stereotype as being lazy, thieves and inferior to others.

The Chinese immigration issue was from the beginning of a phantom issue, impossible to solve. Political speeches went from all sides to address the issue, but always with the racial approach over the Chinese. The feared plantation crisis was resolved by other means than the Chinese, and as we can see, the project was never transitory, because it was wanted to be a new slavery process. Thanks also to speeches and international advances, both from Brazil and from other countries, the issue was abandoned.

China has only appeared in the Brazilian context due to international experiences that became nationally known. Our analysis of the world economic system and Atlantic history is reinforced, when we understand that the Brazilian process is due not only to the international capitalist system crisis in the face of the new model of production and consumption imposed by England. Not only was the economic issue strong in this context, but the social and cultural issues as well. China was facing a severe crisis due to the Opium Wars and the constant invasions, so its people also needed to migrate. England, therefore, as a European power, can influence an international system in different ways in the face of its growing economy by having its needs in principle. We can also mention the various private-sector business incursions to solve government problems. In Brazil, as well as in other countries, trips were made to China to co-opt coolies. The contracts signed, forcibly or not, can be read as an expansion of the migratory process of aliens, in other words, migrants who in a given country end up not representing their interests and who have no one to turn to, in a clear suppression of human rights. An attempt to reproduce the stain of world society, slavery, again has been made: slavery.

Angelo Agostini's political cartoons and *Revista Illustrada* showed us that the process was not only economic. The cultural and social sphere had a strong relationship inside the Brazilian bosom. The magazine served to build the national stereotype against foreigners; build the stereotype of Chinese and a possible Chinese peasantry in Brazil in the 19th century; disclose and denounce what would happen to the Chinese if the immigration process were carried out. *Revista Illustrada* was an amplifier of discussions in the political, social and cultural spheres. Brazil-China relations have also taken their first international step. With the celebration of the first treaty between the two countries, even if on dubious intentions, the Brazilian Empire could once again expand its forces and intentions due to the movement of D. Pedro II to represent and show the country internationally.

Appendix



Appendix 1: Image 1 - “A Colonização Chinesa” in: *Revista Illustrada*, n. 358. Rio de Janeiro, 1883.

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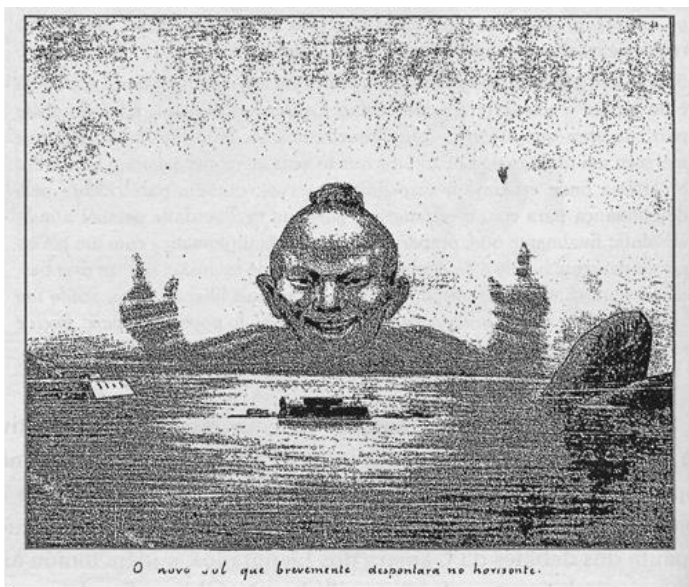
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THE CHINESE QUESTION IN BRAZIL (1879)

Rogério Akiti Dezem



“O novo sol...” in: *Revista Illustrada*, n. 154 (Cover).
Rio de Janeiro, 1879. IEB/USP Collection.

Introduction

There are multiple studies on the beginning of Chinese immigration in Brazil¹, which since the second half of the

¹We highlight the works by LEITE, José R. Teixeira, *A China no Brasil: influências, marcas, ecos e sobrevivências na sociedade e na arte brasileiras*. Campinas: Ed. Unicamp, 1999; LESSER, Jeffrey, *A Negociação da identidade*

nineteenth century became the subject of debates led by the Brazilian political and intellectual elites concerned with the replacement of slave labour.

These studies lead us to rethink some aspects inherent to the purpose of this article, which is to present and analyze the debates regarding the Chinese Question of 1879. Debates impregnated by the troubled political context experienced by the country in those pre-Republican years.²

With the increase in interprovincial slave trade after 1850 and in view of the need to “modernize” the country, debates over the replacement of compulsory black labour gained momentum: who

nacional – Imigrantes, minorias e a luta pela etnicidade no Brasil. São Paulo: Edunesp, 2001; DEZEM, Rogério A., *Matizes do Amarelo: A gênese dos discursos sobre os orientais no Brasil (1878-1908)*. São Paulo: FAPESP/Humanitas-USP, 2005; NOGUEIRA, Arlinda R., *Companhias interessadas na introdução de asiáticos em São Paulo nos primeiros anos da República*. São Paulo: Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, 1979; CONRAD, Robert, “The planter class and the debate over Chinese immigration to Brazil 1850-1893”. *The International Migration Review*, vol. 9, n. 1 Spring 1975; ELIAS, Maria J. “Introdução ao estudo da imigração chinesa” São Paulo: *Anais do Museu Paulista*, v. 24, 1970.

²It was at this time that the first laws and decrees regarding immigration and colonization in Brazil also emerged. Regarding immigration policy in the early nineteenth century, historian Caio Prado Jr. noted that: “His contribution, during the stay of the court in Brazil, will be the establishment of a handful of colonial nuclei formed by German, Swiss, Azorean and distributed in Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro and to a lesser extent Santa Catarina. For History, intentions are more important than numerically minimal results”. In: PRADO Jr., Caio. *História Econômica do Brasil*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1994. p. 186. On the same theme, historian Emília Viotti da Costa considers: “The formula used since the days of King John VI, whose purpose was specifically to serve a demographic policy, was not the ideal solution to meet the needs of the farming, which required arms for coffee cultivation and not colonial settlements”. In: COSTA, Emília V. da. *Da Monarquia a República*. São Paulo: Edunesp, 1998, p. 203.

would replace slave labour? At that time, coffee growing in the Southeast region was showing signs of rapid expansion, demanding *new arms for farming*, a constant demand in the speeches of the coffee oligarchies. At first, the ethnic origin of the worker was not questioned, but the selective look of the Brazilian authorities and intellectuals who always favored the white, European and Catholic. The theme of the insertion in Brazil of workers of Chinese origin once again came into focus within that context (the first time had been in the Joanine period 1808-1821).

This time the Chinese were seen as a temporary and intermediate solution in the transition from slave to free labour. By this time the yellow traffic was already registered towards the American continent³ to regions such as California and countries such as Cuba and Peru, which received *coolies*⁴ to work in their territories.

³“This was the time of the yellow traffic that was most marked by its atrocities. An extensive trail of blood marked the course of the ships employed in it, leaving thousands of dead corpses, mute witnesses to this crime of Western civilization [...]. The coolies discovered their mistake and, after a bloody fight, either emerged victors, butchering their tormentors and returning to the beach, or were chained to the bottom of the basement, where at the end of the trip half of them had found death. LISBOA, H.C.R. *A China e os chins*. Montevid u: A. Godil, 1888. p. 330.

⁴“It’s widely believed that the word “coolie” is derived from the South Indian language Tamil, in which the word “kuli” means wages (similar-sounding words with equivalent definitions exist in several other South Asian languages as well). The word would enter the English language in the 1830s, as the indentured labour system gained currency as a replacement for the use of slavery in the British Empire” In: GANDHI, L. “A History of Indentured Labour Gives ‘Coolie’ Its Sting” (Link: <http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/11/25/247166284/a-history-of-indentured-labour-gives-coolie-its-sting>). Consulted on 15 November 2017).

Since the mid-1850s, the Brazilian government had been warned by Britain about the type of immigration that was being carried out by private companies and was about to become official in Brazil. At the request of the Brazilian government, the British representation in Rio de Janeiro produced an extensive report demonstrating the difficulties and limitations of possible Chinese immigration.⁵ In addition to the different customs, one should be alert to the way the immigrant was recruited, that is, spontaneously or forcedly.⁶ The report advised that prospective worker candidates should be recruited near the embarkation sites, as overcrowding and the immensity of Chinese territory facilitated trafficking in men on board, often in such miserable conditions that few reached their destination. In principle, the Chinese authorities turned a blind eye to this situation, which was later fought by the British and Chinese governments.

In June 1855, a contract was signed between the Brazilian Government and the Sampson & Tappan Company of Boston to import 2,000 Chinese over 18 months. One of the clauses of this agreement stipulated that the settlers should be “[...] married, vigorous, sober and unaffected by opium”.⁷ From this expected contingent, only 368 Chinese landed, distributed among the farmers “enthusiastic about this first wave of workers and confident

⁵See ELIAS, Maria J. “Introdução ao Estudo da Imigração Chinesa”. Vol. 24. *Anais do Museu Paulista*. São Paulo: 1970. p. 61-62.

⁶“Recruited by all kinds of decoys, or simply hijacked, they came from Amoy, Hong Kong, Macao, and other Chinese ports, boarded by ships of different flags, punched like animals, dying on the long crossing under horrible conditions of comfort and food, most of them”. In: Leite, José Roberto T. *A China no Brasil: influências, marcas, ecos e sobrevivências chinesas na arte e sociedade brasileiras*. Campinas: Ed. Unicamp, 1999. p. 112.

⁷ELIAS, Maria J. op. cit. p. 65.

in future shipments”.⁸ This group however was the only one to land in Brazil in the period.⁹ Like the settlers of European origin in the partnership colonies, shortly after the arrival of the Chinese, disagreements between employees and bosses began. Accused by farmers of slowness and unwillingness to work, some rebelled and others received corporal punishment. The contracts were terminated because the Chinese allegedly were, according to the contracting farmers, *lazy, useless and harmful*.¹⁰

The farmers' mindset based on an archaic “master / work object” relationship placed the Chinese worker as a *new slave*, since there was no interest in adapting the Chinese to Brazilian society. This stance was legitimized by the farmers themselves, as we can see in a *mea culpa* speech by Moreira de Barros, a farmer and foreign minister in the House of Representatives in 1879, during the height of the Chinese Question debate:

Let's tell the truth, let's be honest. The education and example we have received from our ancestors, as well as the habit we have to send about slaves, have made it very difficult for us to direct free workers with the same rights as us. (Hear, hear!).¹¹

⁸Idem. p. 66.

⁹“In October 1866, another consignment of 312 Chinese workers from Singapore arrived at the port of Rio de Janeiro... it was not possible to find work for these immigrants, either in agricultural activities or in the industrial sector. After four months they were hired for public works, pick and hoe work.” In: Carvalho, A. *O Brasil*. Porto: Imprensa Portuguesa, 1876. p. 216. Apud: ELIAS, Maria J. op. cit. p. 66.

¹⁰Idem. p. 66-67.

¹¹*Anais do Parlamento Brasileiro*. Câmara dos Deputados, t. I. Session of 10 January 1879. IEB-USP Collection.

In 1855, *Jornal do Commercio* published in one of its editorials the opinion of farmer Luís Peixoto Lacerda de Werneck, a lawyer with a degree from the Paris Academy and the University of Rome. It stated that China and the Chinese were against the progress:

The stationary Chinese race of a dubious civilization inert in its progress, will give way, be exhausted and destroyed by the advanced nations of Europe and America [...] In China, people still work as if they had been working some 500 years ago, by the time Marco Polo visited the country [...]¹²

Lacerda Werneck's unilateral view of the Chinese situation exemplifies the sometimes narrow-mindedness of the national elite, who seemed to “forget” at least momentarily that the mode of production in Brazil was still grounded in slave labour, as it had been for about 300 years.

Due to the stereotypes about the Chinese worker (*Chin* or *Chim*) that began to spread in the period (1850-1860), the chances of success of this endeavor became increasingly ephemeral. This

¹²In comparing the sources about this information, we can see a difference about the year in which this same column was published in *Jornal do Commercio*. According to Maria J. Elias, it was published in 1865, her source being the work by Joaquim da Silva Rocha, *História da Colonização do Brasil* (v. I, Rio de Janeiro, 1918, p. 85. Op. cit. p.70). While north-american historian Jeffrey Lesser, informs that the article was published in 1855, being his (more authoritative) source the editorials of *Jornal do Commercio* published by Luís Peixoto de Lacerda Werneck himself under the title *Idéias sobre colonização precedidas de uma succinta exposição dos princípios geraes que regem a população* (Rio de Janeiro; Eduardo e Henrique Laemmert, 1855, p. 77. Op. cit. p. 44).

contrasted with the prevailing mindset that saw the European immigrant as an element of race enhancement, a *civilizer* par excellence. It was a counterpoint to the prejudice against the Chinese, considered by a significant portion of the Brazilian “thinking” elite as originating from an inferior race, with an ugly physical aspect, striking habits and a language “[...] little euphonic and even their inelegant way of dressing”.¹³

Even before the immigration of large numbers of Chinese to Brazil was structured, negative stereotypes regarding this type of immigrant became almost hegemonic in the debates, a fact that did not occur later with Japanese immigrants. In part, this was due to the constant hope and predilection for the arrival of white workers of European origin to Brazil as the best solution, i.e., despite the fears and difficulties, the possibility of the continued arrival of European immigrants has always existed.

Among those who advocated Chinese immigration was Republican Quintino Bocaiúva, who in 1868 published the pamphlet *A crise da lavoura* (“The farming crisis”). According to the author, there would be no other way out for the coffee farming than the wage labour regime and the introduction at that time of Chinese immigrants, considered by him as “superior to the European”.¹⁴ In fact, the interest of those who advocated Chinese immigration was directly related to the economic issue, as this type of worker was less costly to farmers, receiving lower wages than Europeans. Even reputed to be “unskillful” and “weak” for farm work, “gambling lovers”, “demanding in their wages” and of

¹³LISBOA, Henrique. *A China e os chins*. Montevideú; A. Godil, 1888. p. 56.

¹⁴BOCAYUVA, Quintino. *A crise na lavoura*. Rio de Janeiro, 1868. p. 23 (IEB/USP).

“perverted moral nature”, according to Bocaiúva, *the question of necessity overcomes prejudice*.¹⁵

For the first time, discussions in Parliament, in the press and through a somewhat ambiguous pamphleteering led public opinion to begin to manifest itself, a fact which really served only to create and reinforce stereotypes. The starting point of the controversy hovered over the issue of the transition from slave to wage labour: one had to choose between adopting foreign or domestic workers.

The racialist doctrine based on race hierarchy and grounded by French intellectuals such as Joseph E. Renan (1823-1892), Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), and especially Joseph A. Gobineau (1816-1882) was being put into practice by pro-immigrant deputies. The two opposites - white race (superior) and black race (inferior) - had their verdict anticipated: the first was welcomed, while the second should be totally dismissed. The first would serve to *cleanse* the blood stain, the result of more than two centuries of miscegenation with the second.

What about the yellow race? Considered *weak* and classified as an “intermediate” race by racialists, and initially having the Chinese as an object, aroused the main debates in the Senate and in the São Paulo Assembly, making it explicit at that moment “(...) the very clear confrontation of the various immigrant racial conceptions”.¹⁶

Thus, we can say that the discussions related to the introduction of Chinese workers - and which came to give shape to the Chinese Question - concentrate for the first time in Brazilian history in a

¹⁵ELIAS, Maria J. Op. cit. p. 71.

¹⁶AZEVEDO, Célia Marinho. *Onda negra, medo branco: o negro no imaginário das elites no século XIX*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1987. p. 147.

same debate racial, political and economic elements. Nevertheless, interest in the Chinese worker did not fall apart. On the contrary, it was at the end of the 1870s that the debates on the issue of yellow labour were resumed vigorously. During this period, the effervescence of racialist ideas and the abolitionist campaign gave consistency to the debates over the possibility of replacing black slave labour with white wage labour, with the yellow element seen as the *intermezzo* between the two. The idea that the worker of Asian (Chinese) origin would be a kind of “intermediate” between the white and black races owes much to the racialist theories developed from the late eighteenth century. In imperial Brazil with the abolitionist movement strengthening, the issue of Chinese immigration took a turn for pamphletary speeches, in which the Chinese was seen as “(...) worse than black: greedy, gambling and opiate addict, infanticide by conviction and thief by instinct”.¹⁷ The declared enemies of Chinese immigration and the *semi-servitude* model that would be adopted here were in the Brazilian Immigration Society, the Central Immigration Society and the newspapers *O Paiz*, of Joaquim Nabuco (1849-1910), and *Gazeta de Notícias*, of José do Patrocínio (1854-1905), both founded aiming to combat slavery and encourage European immigration.¹⁸

The Chinese Question (1879)

The year 1879 can be recognized by two striking facts: the enactment of the service leasing law, known as the Sinimbu Law, and the debates in the House of Representatives, in which the theme of hiring Chinese workers to Brazil became the centre of

¹⁷Idem.

¹⁸Idem. p. 90. See also BOSI, Alfredo. *A dialética da colonização*. São Paulo: Cia. das Letras, 1992.

attention. Among the figures who spoke out against this type of immigrant was the young abolitionist deputy Joaquim Nabuco, who strongly criticized the immigration policy suggested at the Agricultural Congress the previous year. Nabuco accused Sinimbu Counsellor¹⁹ of wanting to “mongolize” the country, as part of the Liberal Party's project to create “[...] means to prevent the decay of large property”.²⁰ The emergency issue of farming and the maintenance of large property valued Chinese immigration as “the cheapest labour force in the world” and the most convenient at the time.²¹ In this context, which is really a continuation of the 1878 debates, we are faced with a new issue: immigration. Present in multiple discourses, the word appears linked to the figure of the Chinese, by some politicians as a worker and a possible “immigrant”. As a worker his presence could be interpreted as transitory, a category that would be compromised if the “worker” wanted to settle permanently in the country. This impasse was formalized in Joaquim Nabuco's statement in the House of Representatives on September 3, 1879:

Is this a trade treaty? No; what it is about is carrying out the program of the noble president of the council in the matter of farming; it is simply a matter of promoting yellow immigration to Brazil.²²

The abolitionist deputy saw in the Chinese the disguised substitute of the black slave and, without giving up racist rhetoric, found

¹⁹João Lins Vieira Cansação de Sinimbu (1810-1906).

²⁰ELIAS, Maria J. Op. cit. p. 85.

²¹Idem. p. 91.

²²NABUCO, Joaquim. *Discursos Parlamentares* (1879-1889). São Paulo: Instituto Progresso Editorial S.A., 1949. p. 60.

no quality in the Chinese workforce. Such a stance, which did not go well with his ideas as a liberal man, can be seen in the continuation of his anti-Chinese speech:

I will present to the Chamber, orderly but very quickly what were my views on combating Chinese immigration.

I asked first if the Chinese were claimed by farming, and I proved not; northern farming does not want them, southern farming did not ask them. But, being the Chinese claimed by farming, are they convenient? No, for many reasons: ethnologically, because they create a race conflict and degrade the existing races in the country; economically, because they do not solve the problem of lack of labour; morally, because they come to introduce into our society this leprosy of vices that infests every city where Chinese immigration is established; politically, after all, because instead of being liberation from work, it is only the prolongation, as the noble minister even said, of the sad moral level that characterizes it and the continuation of slavery at the same time. I put the question in these terms: is the Chinese requested? No. Is he claimed? Is he convenient? No [...].²³ (emphasis added)

By enumerating the reasons - ethnological, economic, moral and political - for which he spoke out against the arrival of Chinese workers, Nabuco shaped the stigmas present in most of his earlier speeches against the Chinese. Appealing to the metaphor of

²³ Idem.

“leprosy of vices”, the author of the classic work *O Abolicionismo* (1883) puzzles us, for such rhetoric would not match his *full humanist* image. However, in concluding his speech, he recomposes himself by restoring his banner of struggle: the abolition of slavery. For Nabuco, *transition* would not only mean exchanging the black slave labour for the Chinese, an attitude interpreted as a mere prolongation of slavery. The change would be in the transformation of the slave worker into free worker:

[...] The Chinese is not a transitional element; because this is not a transition for now, there is not yet a transition period. The transitional period must be when there are no more slaves in the country, and it is reduced to their free arms (Oh! Oh!)

This is what is everywhere called the transitional period (Oh! Oh!) For now we only have slavery.²⁴

Lucidly Nabuco puts it that *the Chinese would not be a transitional element*, because the very structure (political, economic and social) of the country was still tied to slave labour. Until that moment, the role attributed to the Chinese worker was that of *overlapping*, sometimes serving as a shield to the debates between politicians indirectly linked to agriculture and farmers (immigrants or not) interested in preserving their local political and economic interests.

More specifically in the case of the abolitionists, such as Joaquim Nabuco, the debates seemed to be centred on the alleged racial inferiority of the Chinese. Hence the danger of moral degradation that mixing with this race could bring to a Brazilian nationality under construction is credited.

²⁴Idem. p. 65

To defend the Chinese immigration project, the Brazilian government commissioned Salvador de Mendonça²⁵, Consul General of Brazil in the United States, a report on the topic, *Trabalhadores asiáticos* (1879). Biased, the opinion is in favour of introducing this type of labour, comparing the Chinese to the Japanese:

[...] suitable for agricultural and industrial work, the Chinese advantage over the Japanese as immigrants should be briefly stated. Everything that was admired in Japan was a reflection of China. From the Chinese classics the Japanese took the flower of literature, teach Confucius in their schools, and speak Chinese as a more polished language than their own.²⁶

In speeches given a year earlier during the Agricultural Congress, Japan was considered *less backward* than China. However, in the excerpt from the report by Consul Salvador de Mendonça, the Japanese make a counterpoint to the Chinese, this time considered “better as workers”. This inversion of discourse related to these two representatives of the yellow race was common until the early 1890s. It was in circulation, albeit for a brief period, the image of Japan as a *nation superior* to China, though influenced by it. At the same time, the Japanese were presented as inferior to the Chinese as labour, aiming to serve the immediate interests of most of the farmers. Mendonça, for example, does not hide the real objectives of importing “Chinese semi-servants” who, in his view, could be

²⁵Salvador de Menezes Drummond Furtado de Mendonça (1841-1913).

²⁶MENDONÇA, Salvador de. *Trabalhadores asiáticos*, Nova Iorque: Typ. do Novo Mundo, 1879. p. 24.

employed without any other commitment, that is, "could [...] enjoy their work without offering them in return conditions of permanence".²⁷

Also according to the author of the report, there would be no problem of assimilating Chinese in our country, because these "[...] do not create love for the land to which they immigrate, they are lustful. [...]"²⁸ Based on the north-American immigration model, which in his view should be followed by Brazil, Mendonça concludes triumphantly:

Then we will have taken the decisive step towards conquering our place in the History of Civilization, because the advent of this obscure instrument of work always coincides in America with the freedom of a race.²⁹

We consider it important to make some observations regarding the above-described scenario, since for the first time at the request of the Brazilian government, a diplomatic opinion on the possibility of yellow immigration, at that time associated with the figure of the Chinese worker, was officially prepared. The pattern to be followed should be the American immigration model, based on a liberal discourse, but in practice presented as a xenophobic model. How to follow an idealized model for a reality different from that experienced by Brazil? The United States had abolished slavery since 1863, a fact that had not yet occurred in Brazil. In the report, as we have seen, we can see the comparison between the two main

²⁷Idem.

²⁸Idem. p. 221.

²⁹Idem. p. 226.

elements representing the yellow race, the Chinese and the Japanese, at that time supporting element. In reality, the situation of the Chinese immigrant in the United States was far from the best, as it was moving towards the prohibition of Chinese immigration on its territory. Prohibition that became law from the year 1882.

We may therefore note that these technical opinions met the particular interests covered by nationalistic justifications. These only served as a facade for discourses that, in practice, were only used to reinforce racial intolerance.

Regarding the assimilation of Chinese by Brazilians, opinions were also divided. Some MPs, opposed to this kind of immigration, argued that, in a short time, they would blend in and undermine the *whitening process* that should be put in place. Others were in favor of the project, arguing that by its very nature, the Chinese would not fix or mix with the Brazilian population. This fact was considered positive, since the main purpose of the project was not the colonization and settlement of immigrants, but only the “use of the yellow immigrant as a transitory instrument of work.”³⁰ This tour de force between politicians in the São Paulo State House and Assembly lends itself to exemplifying “[...] the way racial theories were adapted to the taste of the various interests at stake.”³¹ This mentality persisted in the racist discourses circulating in Brazil until the 1930s.

The manipulation and even the inversion of racist discourse - always shaped by the needs of the moment - can be seen in fragments of the debate that took place between the deputy

³⁰AZEVEDO, Célia M. Op. cit., p. 150.

³¹Idem.

Joaquim Nabuco and Moreira de Barros³², Minister of Foreign Affairs and a Chinese immigration advocate:

But the noble minister said that there was a deplorable contradiction in what I said, claiming that an inferior race could absorb superior races; that we had to go back to school, and that this Parliament should not give the sad spectacle of a boys' college, where it is not known that under the law of natural selection an inferior race cannot absorb perfected races.

So I will tell the noble minister:

World history is proof that the brightest, brightest races brought in contact with inferior races are often defeated and succumb. It is not the degree of civilization that perpetuates race.

[...]

One may call the lower-class Chinese, but where they have settled, they will multiply, grow and spread everywhere, and though the superior race overpowers them, enslaves them, governs them, whatever the future of white race in the world, where they obtain a homeland, they will inevitably occupy the country. That is enough for them to live, what they get in the worst conditions.”³³

In taking this stance, Nabuco took a stand against one of the racist thesis defended by Gobineau, a French theorist who considered *the most racially and militarily developed* civilizations

³²Antônio Moreira de Barros (1841-1896)

³³NABUCO, Joaquim. Op. cit. p. 63.

(i.e. “aggregative work”) those that have subdued the inferior races throughout history. The above passage also looks at history for examples that a supposedly “inferior” race could subjugate a more “civilized” race, not in the military sense, but grounded in the multiplication of this “inferior” race and its infiltration in the midst of a “healthy” society”, eroding it gradually. The theories linked to the ideas of social Darwinism conveyed in Brazil are overthrown. For Nabuco, what was happening at that time in the country was not a lack of arms for farming, but an *aversion to stigmatized agricultural work as an activity proper to black slaves*.³⁴

The focus of the debates and the situation of national farming in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was based on rumours that there would be a growing shortage of arms for farming. This situation consolidated one of the - ephemeral - elements that formed a discourse in which the Chinese would have the status of temporary saviours of the great farming, because it did not matter to most farmers (initially) the origin of the immigrant. Meanwhile in the press, the House, and the Senate, there was a tangle of differing opinions among politicians, doctors, lawyers, steeped in positivist, evolutionist, and liberal ideals.

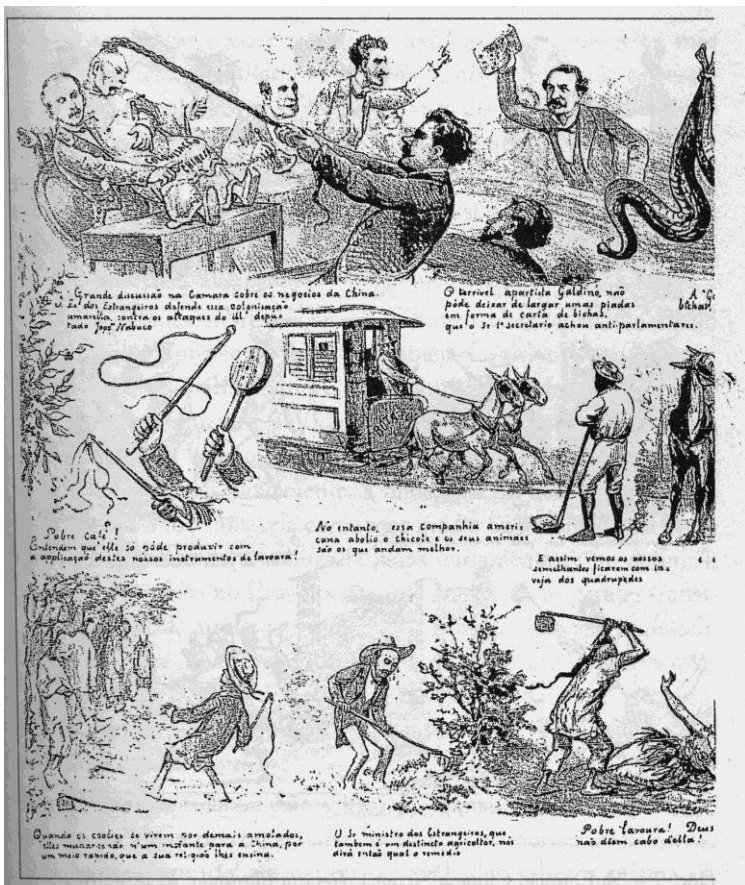
Even with this diversification of the enunciators, these debates eventually consolidated negative images of the Chinese, contributing to weaken even more the proposals related to the introduction of this worker in the Brazilian farming. We can be sure of this image of the Chinese worker as a product of the stereotypes conveyed throughout the debates of the 1870s, especially in the pages of the journal *Revista Illustrada*, directed at the time by Italian-Brazilian cartoonist Angelo Agostini.³⁵ From an

³⁴ELIAS, Maria J. Op. cit. p. 85.

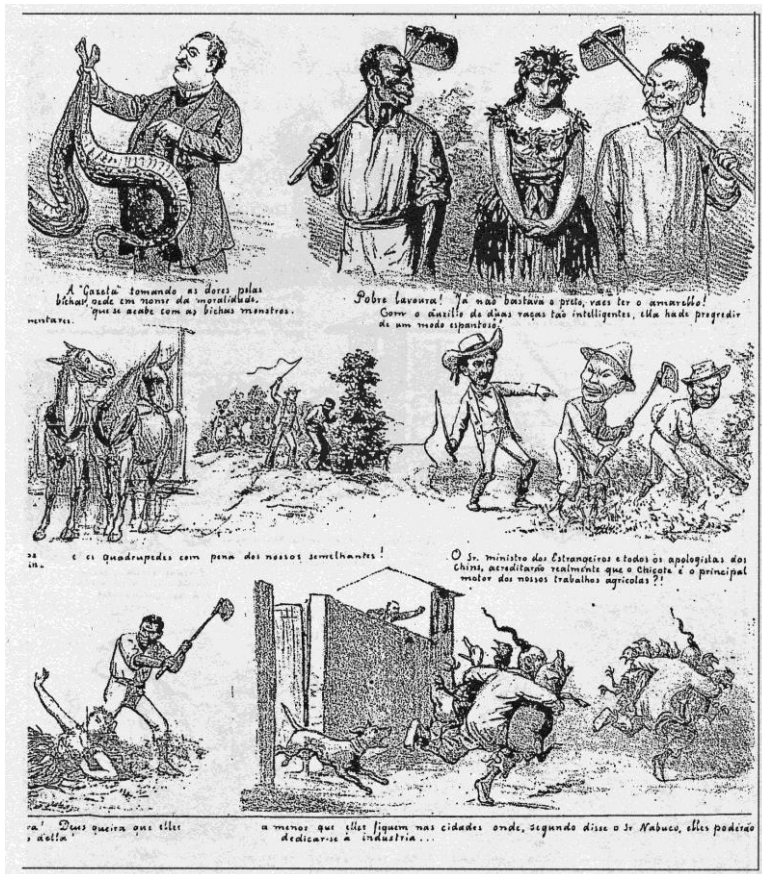
³⁵Angelo Agostini (1843-1910).

(in)desirable element to “farming salvation” to “chicken thief,” the speech about the Chinese or coolie, as we have seen, has perpetuated them as a pioneering representative of the yellow race in the national imagination.

Following the cartoons below, Chinese and black are presented side by side representing a supposed danger to the “poor farming”, while a woman appears as an extra representing the white race. Among the predictions, if the Chinese worker were brought to Brazil and did not succeed in farming, he *could migrate* to the city by putting into practice his *skills* reinforced by anti-Chinese speeches: "chicken thief". This fact, according to cartoonist Angelo Agostini published on the cover of *Revista Illustrada* in 1879 during the debates on the Chinese Question, would cause “protests against the Chinese colonization as a disturb to domestic peace of the chicken houses of this Court and Suburbs”. Moreover, based on *religious assumptions*, there would be no problem if this worker was *too upset*, missing his homeland, if he wanted to, *would in a moment return to China by committing suicide...*



“A Questão Chinesa” (1) in: *Revista Illustrada*, n. 175. Rio de Janeiro, 1879. IEB/USP Collection.



“A Questão Chinesa” (2) in: *Revista Illustrada*, n. 175. Rio de Janeiro, 1879. IEB/USP Collection.

Thus, we note in the speeches of the period - no matter where their enunciators stand - that the qualifications attributed to the Chinese were used to corroborate the discourse against this type of immigrant. For example, it was agreed that the Chinese worker would be just a *working machine*, not an immigrant with rights to take root: he would not come to colonize, but as a *transitory*

instrument of low-cost labour and would not mix with the national. From the point of view of the abolitionists, even though this discourse acquired coloration of denunciation, as this work machine was interpreted as a “semi-servitude in disguise”, the possibility of the risk of miscegenation of the Chinese (i.e. yellow) element with the Brazilian was emphasized. The truth is that for both sides, any action taken could compromise the “future of the nation”.

Debates about the Chinese Question came to São Paulo province with the bill presented at the São Paulo Legislative Assembly in 1879³⁶, by deputy Ulhoa Cintra³⁷. He defended the idea that a thousand Asian immigrants would be introduced to the Province, from the United States or Asia, to work in São Paulo's coffee fields. We can again note the influence of racialist discourse that classifies the yellow race as a *middle* or *intermediate race* identified in the denomination used by parliamentarians in defining the introduction of Chinese in Brazil as a transitory immigration. In 1880, the same project was still under discussion. Deputy Inglês de Souza³⁸, favourable to the introduction of the Chinese, he argued that: “We know that the Chinese has no political pretensions, he does not come to revolutionize our social conditions, he comes to work, he comes to develop the farming”.³⁹

The project ended up not succeeding. It left only traces of a prejudiced mindset shaped by intolerant theories. The records of this debate should be evaluated from the perspective of memory and political myths, including that Brazil has always been a country

³⁶COSTA, Emília Viotti da. Op. cit., p. 328.

³⁷Antônio Pinheiro de Ulhoa Cintra (1837-1895).

³⁸Herculano Marcos Inglês de Souza (1853-1918).

³⁹*Anais da Assembléia Provincial de São Paulo*, 1880, p. 277. (IEB/USP).

open to all races, without distinction of color and religion. Sad tropics...

However, we must consider that this debate was pertinent because, at that time, São Paulo coffee production was in full expansion. In the 1880-81 biennium the number of bags exported from the port of Santos reached 1,204,328, to 3,048,327 bags ten years later. While in Rio de Janeiro in the same biennium production was around 2,500,000 bags, and ten years later it declined to an average of 1,400,000 bags.⁴⁰

The last attempts on Chinese labour lasted until 1883, when the Brazilian government, in ratifying a trade relations treaty with China in 1882, organized the Chinese Trade and Immigration Company⁴¹ in partnership with the Chinese shipping company *China Merchants*.⁴² D. Pedro II, despite being considered a man of unique culture and a modern vision, denied the subsidy for maintaining a shipping line between Brazil and China.

In order to show his opinion on this question, the Brazilian writer Machado de Assis, on October 23, 1883,⁴³ transcribed in Rio de Janeiro press in his chronicle *Balas de Estalo* an official letter from the Viceroy of India to Count Granville. British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, originally published in *The London Gazette*. In this document we sarcastically identify information on

⁴⁰SOBRINHO, Barbosa L. *A presença de Alberto Torres: vida e obra*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1968. p. 20-1.

⁴¹The company pledged to bring within 3 years 21,000 coolies at the cost of 35 thousand réis per head. In: LEITE, José R. Op. cit., p. 119.

⁴²ELIAS, Maria J. Op. cit., p. 88.

⁴³That year Brazil was visited by Mandarin Tong King Sing, director of the Chinese Merchant Shipping Company, which aimed to get to know our agriculture better in order to establish a regular shipping line between the two countries, but negotiations made no progress.

the issue of the Asian worker (*Chim*) in India and a curious comparison:

First, I must remind you that you have to distinguish between Chinese and *Chim*. The common Chinese is widely abandoned throughout Asia, where it has been supplanted by a variety of Chinese far superior to the other. This variety, as I have already said to His Majesty's government, is the chimpanzee.⁴⁴

Hovering above the interests of immigrants and abolitionists, Machado de Assis used the content of this letter to ironically criticize supporters favouring and opposing Chinese immigration, “agreeing” with the Indian Viceroy as a replacement for the *chimpanzee*. From the point of view of the illustrious writer from Rio de Janeiro, those who were in favour of the Chinese would have in the chimpanzee a more economical commodity and with the same aptitudes of the “other”. Contrary to the coming of the Chinese who feared the encroachment of the race, in turn, have invalidated their argument because the chimpanzee will not cross with the races of the country: “let the chimpanzee come...”!

Epilogue

From the first attempt of King John VI in 1814 until the 1880s, the number of Chinese (Chinese or coolies) who entered Brazil (mostly in Rio de Janeiro) did not exceed 3,000 souls.⁴⁵ Despite

⁴⁴ASSIS, Machado de. “Balas de Estalo”. In: COUTINHO, Afrânio (Org.) *Machado de Assis: Obra Completa*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 1994. v. III, p. 420-22.

⁴⁵CONRAD, Robert. Op. cit., p. 3.

the failure of the attempts and the small number of Chinese workers who arrived in Brazil, the debates in the Chamber, in the São Paulo Assembly and in the illustrated press contributed to the construction of archetypes in the collective imagination in the transition of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Over the years, public opinion, sometimes mere observer, sometimes “consumer” of (pre) concepts, has been plagued by value judgments against the yellow race (seen as “semi-servile”), based on ethnocentrism and racist theories in vogue. In this way, the embryo of stereotypes against “yellow” was formed, assessed as a danger to the *bleaching* process of the Brazilian population.

It is important to emphasize that the national and international anti-slavery forces, among them the strong British pressure, the public opinion (mainly white) and the weakening of the support of the monarchic regime in Brazil, were mainly responsible for the failure of the insertion attempt, on a large scale of yellow immigrants in Brazilian territory in the late nineteenth century.

Thus, the Chinese Question, at its core, became a *phantom issue*, impossible since the beginning of the debates to be resolved, but extending to practically its exhaustion. Finally, it served the interests of the elites as a backdrop to the debates that “boasted of the imminent farming crisis.” In this way the image of one of the constitutive elements of the phenomenon we can call the “yellow equation” was consolidated: the Chinese immigrant. We found that multiple stigmas related to this representative of the yellow race, pioneer in collective representations, were not always *so unconscious*. And as such, they contributed to the insertion of the Japanese image (another side of the equation) in the political imagination of the first decades of the twentieth century.

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THE "CHINS" IN THE "GAZETA DE NOTÍCIAS": A DEBATE ON CHINESE IMMIGRATION IN BRAZIL EMPIRE (1879)

Kamila Czepula and André Bueno



The debate on possible Chinese immigration gained in intensity in Brazil from 1870 onwards and reached its climax at the *Congresso Agrícola* (Agricultural Congress) in 1879, when it became the focus of parliamentary discussions. The proposal was circulated so that free Chinese workers would temporarily replace Afro-Brazilian slaves. However, the discussions about the Chinese immigrant were not limited to political debates. The clashes in the Agricultural Congress, in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate had a strong echo in the newspaper pages of the capital of the empire, the city of Rio de Janeiro. The newspapers were able to promote campaigns, gather masses of people, influence both political society and civil society, and thus "to express concepts and opinions was indeed to possess power". Through what was printed - and turned into an undeniable truth - it would above all propagate ideas and build consensus around those very ideas" (Barbosa, 1996, 20). We want to find out and analyse how the discussion on Chinese immigration was conducted in one of the most important and high-circulation newspapers of the time, the *Gazeta de Notícias*. To this end, we will examine the strategies that shaped the character of this debate through periodic, his impressions and the dissemination of these ideas in imperial society.

The Gazeta de Notícias

The first copy of the *Gazeta de Notícias*, founded by the editors Ferreira de Araújo Manuel Carneiro and Elísio Mendes and the writers Henrique Chaves and Lino de Assunção, was published on 1 August 1875. The magazine proposed innovations and wanted for itself the nomenclatures popular, cheap and liberal. In order to achieve these goals, it initiated in the city the system of selling its copies through small journeymen who shouted the titles of its texts by all means. The *Gazeta de Notícias* quickly arrived in the tenements, inns, trams, boats, bars and all the railway stations (Barbosa, 1996, 63). With a circulation of 12,000 copies, the *Gazeta de Notícias* rapidly became a success and began to employ the famous writers of the time, such as Coelho Neto, Eça de Queiroz, Ferreira de Meneses, Aluísio Azevedo, Pardal Mallet and José do Patrocínio. In 1879, it was the first Brazilian newspaper to buy a rotary printing press, which enabled much faster printing (Barbosa, 1996, 62).

The *Gazeta de Notícias* was proud to propose an "impartial press" that fulfilled its obligation to inform its readers without supporting any party. As Marialva Barbosa showed (1996, 65), there was no impartiality and the magazine had strong political commitments. A closer examination of the newspaper's news reports on the subject of "chin" shows that the newspaper was far from a neutral position.

The first references to the "chins"

The volume of material on the "Chinese Question" in 1879 contained in the *Gazeta de Notícias* is surprising, since more than five references can be found in a single copy, some of which even occupy four columns of text. For a topic to have a space of this dimension, it had to be commented on in all public areas. In view

of concerns about a possible shortage of labour on Brazilian plantations, Chinese immigration was the main topic of the day.

For the year 1878, the profile of the "chins" presented by the *Gazeta de Notícias* was the worst imaginable. The quotes were mostly criminal incidents. There was neither the intention nor the interest to deepen the knowledge about the Chinese. This "(non)construction" of the image of the "Chins" is fundamental to understanding the elaboration of the rhetorical narratives about Chinese immigration. The lack of knowledge about the other, in the perspective of nineteenth century Orientalism, results from the "irrelevance of the object" and not from the disinterest of the researcher. The "chim" was not studied because it would be "inferior" and therefore of little interest. What one needed to know about it appeared on the pages of the newspaper: notices of fights, crimes and clashes. This inversion is important for the valorisation of Brazilian cultural paradigms. In an imaginary idea of cultural hierarchy, the silence about the other shows its low importance. The attribution of pejorative terms thus constructed a problematic image for the "Asian" and thus an anti-Chinese feeling. They deliberately ignored the activities of other Chinese in Brazil, their cultural characteristics or difficulties. A brief quantitative analysis can help us to clarify this question: We examined the occurrence of the terms "chins" and "chim" in a delimited context (1875-1879). For "chins" there are 66 occurrences in this period; until 1878, the year of the Congress, they are sporadic, counting 16 citations, only two of which are not criminal. For "chim" there are 98 occurrences, 40 of which are counted before 1878, only four of which are not criminal, and four are obituaries. In 1878, the incidence of the term increases exponentially, as the *Gazeta de Notícias* publishes daily summaries of Agricultural Congress all its meetings. This was a common practice for journals. He collected

the speeches, reproduced certain fragments and arranged them in a certain, seemingly coherent order. The newspaper could not therefore be accused of being unreliable.

However, a comparison of the reportage with an official documentation shows an extensive editorial work that was geared to the interests of the newspaper. The newspaper suggested itself as neutral, but its stories about the Chinese were full of prejudice and racism. This would be crucial for maintaining the discourses that dealt with the issue of immigration.

1879 - the question of “chins”

Since 1879, debates on Chinese immigration have become increasingly intense in the Chamber of Deputies. The *Gazeta de Noticias* with its regular column, *Diário das Câmaras* (News of the Chamber of Deputies), offered the people a detailed summary of the events that took place during the sessions. Conscious of its social role, the newspaper fitted directly into the discussion.¹

One of the great Brazilian intellectuals of the time, José do Patrocínio, was one of the first to write about the "Chinese question" in the newspaper under the pseudonym "Proudhomme". In his opinion, the results of Agricultural Congress in 1878 and the current debates in the Chamber of Deputies pointed to the maintenance of the slave system, using the "Chim" work. Patrocínio used an ironic tone to demonstrate his positioning, as we can see in this fragment:

¹ In view of the number of passages related to the theme, we decided to select and present those that we consider to be more relevant to the themes discussed in our exposition. All fragments were adapted and translated by the authors.

“It is a general belief that the Chinese will not refuse to work alongside the slaves, under the orders of our senators. We could not wish for more! (...) The grandson of Jose Bonifácio² will be able to shout tomorrow: “death to the Chinese!” - just as today cries: - “whip, prison, hang for the slaves!” (Proudhomme, in *Gazeta*, 1879, March, 17).

This passage might suggest a kind of humanist concern on the part of the newspaper; but the *Gazeta* authors had not changed their anti-Chinese attitude. Another well-known writer, Ferreira de Menezes, writes in a scornful tone:

“The Honourable Counsellor Sinimbu tries to save the future of this country by ordering the hiring of the Chinese. It is not I who will defend the inoculation of a drop of tea in our national blood (...) The “chim” will only bring us breaths of opium. The emperor, grateful, will honour Mr. Sinimbu for his services with the "Order of the Orange of China" (...) We need to speak seriously: colonization can only exist if the colonizers are assimilated by the owners of the land. The “chim” will mix or not with the Brazilian. If so, this will be a great evil, because it will not help our nationality at all. We need workers who will then be citizens. We cannot see our country divided between

²José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva (1763-1838), an intellectual and statesman, one of the main articulators of Brazilian independence in 1822, called the “Patriarch of Independence”. The “grandson of José Bonifácio” refers here to the Brazilian citizen.

those who work and those who do nothing. This is shameful.” (Menezes in *Gazeta*, 1879, March 23).

This passage presents us in a direct way with a constancy in the discourse against the "chins", based on the same already consecrated means: The Chinese are opium smokers, dishonest, spread diseases and contribute to the "degeneration of the race" (Dezem, 2005, 75). There is a remarkable concern about the possibility that they could become established and mix with Brazilians. Here we see the elements of the rhetorical strategy to make the reader believe that all the prejudices periodically bound since 1875 have confirmed the ongoing discussions. Some scientific papers of the time confirmed such claims and showed that the prospect of importing the Chinese, as Menezes says, "would be an evil for the 'Brazilian nation'".

In this fragment by Menezes, we can see how the newspaper managed to turn its critics against what it considered to be the central problem of the Minister Sinimbu proposal's.³ Although he was planning a project in this direction, he was not the only one who thought about the viability of the Chinese workforce for Brazil. Various initiatives were taken, including by individuals. Visconde Mauá, for example, tried to use the Chinese workforce in the construction of railways, as in the United States. He founded a colony of "coolies" on the Atalaia farm, which was reported in *Gazeta* as "a place of violence and death, where the Chinese organized internal courts and executed each other" (*Gazeta*, 1877,

³ João Lins Vieira Cansação de Sinimbu, Viscount of Sinimbu (1810-1906), in this respective year was President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works, and one of the main political articulators of Chinese immigration.

20 July). This kind of news simply reproduced common sense about the "chins".

The attacks, which focused on the Minister Sinimbu, were aimed at dismantling these initiatives. It is possible that without the support of the Empire, it would be impracticable to continue the campaign for the Chinese to come to Brazil; and in this sense, *Gazeta* acted consistently, trying to create an alarming mood in the reading public. Ferreira de Menezes and José do Patrocínio were aligned with the Joaquim Nabuco⁴ changing rhetoric of on the 'chin question'. Patrocínio, who invests in another aspect (again under his pseudonym "Proudhomme"), calls for a "use of intelligence" of those who have promoted agricultural work in Brazil:

An observation is already in order. It is a vital issue for parliament. For the seriousness of the matter, we hoped that the ministry would make it the theme of the day (...) if we can continue with slavery any longer (...) Chinese colonization arouses resistance on the part of those who, by their character and talent, has a broader awareness of how (the coming of the Chinese) can influence our country. (PROUDHOMME, 1879, March, 31).

⁴ Joaquim Nabuco (1849-1910) was one of the main opponents of Chinese immigration to Brazil, and its rhetorical strategies - often controversial and contradictory - inspired directly the preparation of speeches against the Chinese that appear in the pages of *Gazeta*. He would be quoted several times in the journal, and his views reproduced comprehensively. For a broader understanding of Nabuco's activities, see Nabuco (1983) and Czepula, K. "Os indesejáveis "chins": um debate sobre imigração chinesa no Brasil Império (1878-1879)". Master Dissertation in History. Assis: UNESP, 2017.

José do Patrocínio skilfully diverted the discussion about the Chinese bringing up the issue of slavery. He suggested that the defenders of Chinese immigration would be ignorant; and those who were "aware of it" would never agree with the proposal of Chinese immigration.

Nevertheless, the *Gazeta* was a periodical that depended on subscribers and advertisements to survive. Its widespread "neutrality" should be maintained at a certain price, and this may explain the appearance of a completely unrelated coverage of this central line of argument. One author identified himself as Luiz Morreau had published the following text on 15 June:

The medication that will be used is not new, since it has already been tried successfully in many other locations, such as in the southern United States; is the introduction of "coolies", or "Asian workers" (...) The most prepared nations already use this system. It was (the Chinese immigration) that prevented the annihilation of the great plantations in Havana, Guyana and Trinidad (...) Only with the help of the coolies the great Brazilian agriculture will be raised (...) (Morreau, 1879, June 15).

In the continuation of the report, Morreau speaks out in favour of Chinese immigration and even presents some facts about the situation of the Chinese in California - one of the experiences that the defenders, along with Cuba and Peru, used as an example. But we must not delude ourselves: *Gazeta* published this text on page 2 (outside the cover) and Luiz Morreau was neither one of its reporters nor one of its usual collaborators, which leads us to believe that the story was most likely paid for its publication.

Morreau's example shows us that the *Gazeta* was able to construct complex tools to make his argument work. The text went through the newspaper's reviewers and was not published without the magazine planning a response. It is likely that the newspaper gave way to a text that advocated Chinese immigration, only to deconstruct this proposal. Morreau's text contained no relevant additions to what was discussed in Agricultural Congress or in the Chamber of Deputies. Nor at the same level as José do Patrocínio or Joaquim Nabuco speeches in Parliament, which were thoroughly reproduced in *Gazeta*. It is therefore possible that the text was published with the deliberate intention of being deconstructed by the editors. It would be harmless and would disappear in the avalanche of anti-immigration "chimes" that filled the pages of the newspaper in 1879.

In September, José do Patrocínio would again attack the defenders of Chinese immigration (Proudhomme in *Gazeta*, 1879, September 8). Patrocínio's rhetoric was to exclude the government's draft law from setting up a commission to assess the issue of Chinese immigration, including a mission to the country. In addition to the traditional offensive purpose, Patrocínio inserted his own passages into the text in order to strengthen the argument and to direct the Chinese question to the issue of slavery. According to the idea of filling the argumentative slips with illusions based on common sense, Patrocínio speaks brilliantly and inserts false fragments to convince the public. Thus, *Gazeta* went over to a double argumentation: Sometimes the "shim" would become enslaved, sometimes the "shim" would end slavery. So on the one hand the "chim" was a "humanist" and/or hygienist and racist concern, on the other hand it was of no interest to the owners of the big harvests.

Apparently, the editors of *Gazeta* made reasonable efforts to find ways to deconstruct the arguments of Chinese immigration supporters with a sophisticated method. A clear example of this strategy can be found in this other passage, when the author - anonymously - tells us that the government is not able to respond to their objections. This extract is about the discussion on the possible sending of a mission to China to assess the question of sending coolies:

Once again, we have discussed the issue of sending a diplomatic mission to China, but it bothers us that the government itself does not know exactly what to do. (...) The farms need investments and workers; the government has no resources, so he thought of distributing workers. But how? The slave is getting scarce, and soon will end; the Europeans did not come in enough; the other European nations try to avoid emigration here; and so the government then concluded that the Chinese worker would be the most viable. No matter how much we say the “chim” is bad; that he comes from a stagnant, backward, selfish and decadent race (...) the government shuns the issue, giving no answers, and insisting on its way behind the cheapest: the Chinese worker. (...) it has been shown that the Chinese imports was an extension of slavery, (and) the President of Council (Sinimbu) responded with clichés, and did not say what the government’s project on this issue, a program that seems never had existed; because only now, at the end of the discussion, when we are voting the credit (for the mission), only now he says that the Chinese will come to introduce in

the country the culture of tea and silkworm! (*Gazeta*, 1879, October 11).

Two passages are important here: The first is the argument that if the government knew what it was doing and was trying to get the Chinese, why would it send a mission to China to learn more about the structure of scenery traffic? There was literature to support the arguments of both sides (for or against), and a fact-finding mission was a sensible measure. However, the rhetoric here was based on the assumption that doubt is not a friend of common sense, but in fact weakness and uncertainty. The second passage, as already mentioned, points to the problem that government representatives are not able to answer the questions asked by opponents: "(Sinimbu) answered with clichés and did not say what the government's project on this subject was, a program which apparently never existed". Immigration advocates also knew about rhetoric and were probably trapped - even if their silence was taken as a sign of agreement with the criticism. But what silence? After all, it was *Gazeta's* habit not to give them any space.

The issue took on a large dimension, and Sinimbu was forced to react to it by asking for *Gazeta's* place. In an effort to alleviate the negative impression that a Brazilian embassy in China would make, he published the following:

This issue has been debated in the National Industry Development Society by many experts, and seemed closed. (...) it has already been stated that the purpose of the voted vote is to open diplomatic relations with the Chinese government. We need to send a mission to that country, and for that we need extra expenses, expenses that are not in the budget, and require the

opening of this credit. Do not think that the purpose of this mission is to immediately import Asian workers; our main purpose is to open relations with the Chinese government, which has already established diplomatic relations with the most civilized nations in the world. I understand (...) that everything created in terms of industry in our country is of the greatest advantage, and it is not necessary to know our topography to know that tea, the object of great consumption among civilized nations, can be perfectly cultivated in Brazil. (Sinimbu in *Gazeta*, 1879, October 15).

Note which Sinimbu are trying to soften by claiming that the purpose of the mission was not Chinese immigration (although later documents showed exactly the opposite). Sinimbu also deflects the question by explaining the financing of the trip as if the central problem of the mission was its cost and not its purpose. He responds to what he feels is appropriate without abandoning its purpose, and departs from arguments that are deceptive or more difficult to refute. However, *Gazeta* published the answer on page 3: Sinimbu probably had to pay for the publication of his pages.

In fact, the government had asked the then Consul General in the United States, Salvador de Mendonça, to prepare a report on the feasibility of Chinese immigration. The opinion given by Mendonça was so positive that Sinimbu used his report to justify the financing for a mission to Asia. In order to place the mission as an exploratory task, the Minister did not need the approval of the Parliament or Senate. At the same time, General Arthur Silveira da Motta was responsible for establishing diplomatic relations with China, and since Chinese authorities were in London, a Brazilian

delegation was sent to discuss some working issues with them (Lesser, 2001, 56-57).

Gazeta also put forward another argument against importing Chinese: economic viability. Until then, the debate had always attacked the issues of racial mixing or the slavery of the "Chim" in Brazil. But the authors of the newspaper showed their skills and denounced that the Chinese could also harm the country's economy. In response to a competing magazine, *O Cruzeiro*, *Gazeta* was published on 19 October:

We finally understand *Cruzeiro's* main opinion on Asian emigration. (...) It is pointed out the supreme reason of its economy and activity! (from Chinese immigration) But by God! These are two virtues, it's true. But who profits from them? Chinese undoubtedly profits; but we are not defending China's interests, but the interests of Brazil. Has anyone demonstrated, with a good calculation of probability, and statistics from other countries, what would Brazil profit from the sobriety of the "chim", with its work? (...) The Chinese receive and accumulate their wages to send to their land; that is your end, your dream. (*Gazeta*, 1879, October 19).

At that time, the Chinese posed not only a moral or racial threat, but also a strain on the nation's resources. And let us note here the use of a tautological resource for argument: If the "Chim" sends money home because he wants to return, he would absorb Brazilian money and invest it in his home country; but if he chooses to stay here and invest here, he causes the moral, social and cultural contagion of his presence. In a simple argumentation strategy,

Gazeta allowed the less experienced reader to feel rationally unable to accept the Chinese presence in Brazil. The argument seemed impregnable: the "chime of the bell" was not feasible for Brazil in all its senses.

But soon an unexpected answer would arrive, which would lead to a quick end to the immigration question of the "Chinese". On September 26th, Gazeta noticed that the committee of the British and International Society for the Fight against Slavery sent a letter to Marquis Tseng, the "Plenipotentiary Minister of Chinese Empire" in England.

Opposition to the "Chinese proposal" seemed to be growing. The pressure against the Brazilian mission in China was no longer purely national, but won the support of members of British society. Brazil's bad reputation as a slave-owning country strongly discouraged emigration, and in the case of the Chinese it would be no different. On the basis of information gathered from English citizens and Brazilians (Lesser, 57-58), in the second week of October (a few weeks after Sinimbus' reply in *Gazeta*) the Marquis Tseng formally rejected any emigration agreement for Brazil, thus practically finishing the project.

The *Gazeta* had set out from the beginning, as a periodical aimed against slavery - and for them, the negative response from the Chinese minister highlighted the shame of maintaining this system in Brazil. The newspaper thus took advantage of one fight in another. As it was a newspaper that was motivated (and sold) by the debates it embraced, the Chinese refusal was considered, in a way, a representative political victory.

In this second textual fragment, another fundamental consideration, derived from the victory over the Chinese question, would serve for the rhetorical elaboration of the periodical;

The parliamentary opposition and the press rushed to demonstrate that the Chinese colonization not good for nothing (...) cited examples of California, Peru, United States (...). For we have wasted all our time. Good or bad, workers or rogues, opium smokers or tea makers, cheap or expensive, are the Chinese who do not want us at all, said a Chinese diplomat, who is not afraid to speak. We conclude that who was right in the controversy was that I thought that the Chinese were very good; so much so that they are the ones who think of us as evil (*Gazeta*, 1879, December 21).

A new element is introduced in the narrative of the journal: if the “chim”, who was stereotyped as villain, degenerate and inferior, refused come to Brazil because he was a slavery country, why the Chinese should be considerate an "inferior person"? Once again, the editors of *Gazeta* use a new diatribe. First, they had promoted all kinds of prejudice against the Chinese; now used the same Chinese to show the villainy of slave relations in Brazil. There was no concern to appear contradictory: now, the “chim” was used to criticize Brazilian institutions. The *Gazeta* would continue to make use of this expedient in the following years, but attempts to bring in Chinese declined significantly after that, and the subject gradually fell by the wayside.

Conclusions

Given the intense debate that has taken place on Chinese immigration, we can consider that the *Gazeta de Notícias* played a crucial role in mobilizing the public opinion. By constructing a bridge between the readers and the bureaucrats of politics, and disseminating the opinions of intellectuals of the period, the *Gazeta*

managed to articulate a broad and multifaceted discourse, which transited between scholarly opinions, journalistic reporting and considerations derived from common sense.

The actions disseminated by the press - which the *Gazeta* was the most popular expression - coupled with the authorized opinions, created an important paradigm in the Brazilian debate on all non-European people's immigration. This account shows us that since the nineteenth century the press had played an important role as an opinion-maker. Historical detachment allows us to contemplate the divergences and inconsistencies of the periodical discourse linked to Chinese immigration: nevertheless, the more complex and comprehensive understanding of the whole picture of the Chinese problem was not an easy task, and the speed of information bound the reader in the dynamics of reporting. We can say that the *Gazeta* achieved a remarkable success in weakening the Asian immigrant project, as well as being one of the main opponents against slavery in the following years.

The editorial project of this periodical was very well calculated; the intentions, resources, strategies and points of view were built by an elite of the Brazilian intelligentsia, who knew how to dialogue with the many layers of society. They took advantage of this important media vehicle as a way to mobilize society. The *Gazeta* showed the power of the word, and that the speed of information was crucial to transform, adapt and recreate the reality, whether it was an ephemeral "truth", according to the purposes of its editors, or in great social and cultural achievements of Brazilian civilization.

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THE CHINESE IN THE PARAÍBA COFFEE VALLEY: PROJECTS, PERSPECTIVES, TRANSITIONS AND FAILURES – 19th CENTURY



Marco Aurélio dos Santos

The shortage of farming labour was one of the most important questions in the 19th Century in the Brazilian Empire, especially in the areas most directly involved with export activity, like the Coffee-producing Southeast from the 1850s on. The workforce shortage crisis many politicians were anticipating was mostly due to the debate concerning the abolition of slave trafficking (1850) and, thereafter, due to the consequences of the approval of the Law known as the Free Womb Law, of September 28, 1871. In the 1870s-80s, this crisis escalated, upon the dissemination of the abolitionist movement on a national scale. From the platform of “colonization of Brazil”, “farming labour”, “free work” and “replacement of slave labour by immigrants”, this problem with Brazilian agriculture was one of the subjects that heated political debate in the second half of the 19th Century, when the pro-immigrant side and those who defended the use of the national labour force discussed possible solutions for the farming problem, especially concerning the supply of labour.

In the Brazilian Empire (1822-1889), the relationship between owners and the so-called free workers was mostly based on a service-rental law that passed in 1830, on another law, 108, that passed in 1837, on the service-rental law, of 1879, in several regulations passed by the imperial government and on legislation concerning slavery, especially the aforementioned Free Womb Law

and the “Sexagenarian Act”, enacted on September 28, 1885. These laws regulated, in some way, “free” work. The Law of 1830, for example, governed contracts of national and foreign workers, and the 1837 Law was restricted from farmers coming from other countries. Slavery legislation brought into debate the end of this labour system and the need to avoid “mass freedom” threatening public order, and raised the questions concerning the shortage of workers and control of free work and its mobility after slaves were made free.¹

The aforementioned laws presented significant strictness concerning work of immigrants, freed slaves and free national workers. For example, according to Maria Lúcia Lamounier,² the 1837 Act, regarding foreign labour, set a penalty of imprisonment to the lessor – person who works for an owner, called, in the 19th Century *lessee* – who in any way violated the work contract or did not pay his debt. This service rental law was applied to several cases of workers that experienced the partnership regime in Brazil, and was, therefore, cause of conflict between farming workers and landowners. The debate concerning the use of free work was always marked by a concern with violation of contracts and the need for creating ways of coercing workers, especially as seen in the 1837 Law, with penalties including imprisonment.³ The contract was compulsory to the workers, who could not breach any provisions, and was coercive as of the time the contractor should meet its terms, often without full knowledge of the work conditions and, in the case of immigrants from several parts of the world (especially

¹ Bibliography in this regard is extensive and quite diversified. Among the authors directly related to this article, see Conrad (1978), Lamounier (1988), Costa (1989), Azevedo (2004) and Mendonça (2008).

² Lamounier, 1988.

³ *Ibidem*: 56-75. Azevedo, 2004: 110-120.

coolies), of the country of destination.⁴ Historian Peer Vries⁵ correctly pointed the exceptional character of free work in the 19th Century, understood as a contract between two parties based on mutual obligations, signed voluntarily. “Despite the existence of contracts, even ‘free’ labour for a long time continued to be considered the property of the employer”.⁶ Moreover, the breach of a contract was subject to criminal laws. In these cases, imprisonment penalties applied to workers, and not to employers. The laws controlling “free” work in Brazil are inserted into this broader context of the strictness regarding performance of the work contract.

In the final decades of the 19th Century, the importation of Chinese gained strength as an alternative to slave labour. As we will see, many important public men were favourable to the importation of Asians, especially the Chinese, for addressing the “shortage of labour”, and the Chinese would be a transition workforce between slavery and free labour. However, other public figures radically opposed it. The debate was intense, especially in the 1878 Agricultural Convention. At the end, Chinese immigration as an alternative to slave labour was not consolidated,

⁴ Young, 2014: 73. From a wider perspective regarding the issue of “free” work and its coercive elements, the non-financial pressures defining compulsory work, the wage work associated to mechanisms of extra-financial coercion, among other means of controlling work, see the research of Steinfeld (2001), who aims at understanding the mechanisms binding the worker to the place of work and to the employer. In the 19th Century, criminal convictions for violation of work contracts and the existence of legal inequality, which privileged the employer in detriment of the worker was a hallmark of the powers constituted in several parts of the world.

⁵ Vries, 2015.

⁶ *Ibidem*: 335.

and they did not form an expressive migration current in the 19th Century.⁷

Despite being not very expressive in numbers, the presence of Chinese workers in Brazil created intensive debate, especially in the 1870s. Projects were made, perspectives were built for the transition of slave labour to free labour and for the introduction of new cultures for diversifying Brazil's export portfolio. Therefore, this article discusses matters raised by historiography regarding the shortage of farming labour and the introduction of new cultures and new workers, especially projects and initiatives involving the Chinese in Brazil, which is debated in two perspectives. First, we will try to understand the projects for using Chinese labour in the 19th Century and during the administration of D. João (1808-1821). This is the basis for investigating the way of life and the insertion of a Chinese community that lived in Bananal, an important municipality of Paraíba Coffee Valley. Upon the arrival of these immigrants in the D. João period and the projects for implementation of the tea culture, there is good research in this regard. Based mostly in criminal cases and inventories in the archives of the Historic and Pedagogic Museum Major Dias Novais, located in the São Paulo Municipality of Cruzeiro, the article addresses an issue not studied to a great extent so far: the matter of the Chinese who lived in Bananal, identified by the coffee

⁷ Historiography on the matter of Chinese workers in Brazil is composed by Conrad (1975, 1978), Lamounier (1988), Leite (1992), Azevedo (2004), Dezem (2005) and Peres (2013). Regarding the Municipality of Bananal, there is the article of Porto (1992). Recently, Marcelo Mac Cord (2018) cast light on the Chinese immigration projects in the D. João VI period (1808-1821), as well as on the interests involved in the introduction of the cultivation of eastern plants for diversifying Brazil's exportation portfolio.

production and massive slavery.⁸ Despite the consultation to criminal processes and due to the archive precariousness,⁹ criminality here is just a circumstantial element. Based on the testimony of people to declared themselves as originating from Macau, a city in an important region that included Canton and, as of mid-19th Century, Hong Kong (the Pearl River Delta), and information found in inventory of Chinese nationals who lived in Bananal, are analysed the business activities and the relations between the Chinese, slaves and free men. Therefore, the target is understanding the social strategies of these individuals “according to their position and their respective individual, family, group resources, etc.”.¹⁰ In the second part, the article attempts to understand the debate and the projects related to labour, focusing on the feasibility of using Chinese in Brazil, especially at times of slavery crisis, as of the 1870s.

Behavior and social experience of the Chinese in a slavery-based municipality: Bananal, 19th Century

The issue of Chinese workers was first discussed in Brazil in the early 19th Century, after the transfer of the Portuguese Royal Court to the American Colony. Upon its arrival, in the context of international wars between France and Great Britain, direct contacts between Macau and Brazil cause sectors of the power structure to deliberate the feasibility of cultivating tea, a *commodity*

⁸ Regarding the development of the slave-coffee agriculture in the municipality of Bananal, there is already a group of important research discussing demographics, land structure, space organization of coffee farms, etc. For example, Motta (1999), Moreno (2013) and Santos (2016).

⁹ Regarding the state of this document archive, see the research of (Santos 2016: 23-24) and Silva (2016).

¹⁰ Revel, 1996: 22.

with growing circulation in the global capitalistic economy. For the undertaking, the presence of experienced Chinese nationals was required for managing said plant. The project was encouraged by persons close to D. João, then prince regent, when staying in Rio de Janeiro. The promising prospects that associated the tea farming and the introduction of Chinese to manage the plant or work in the agriculture were so closely associated that in 1807, in response to the authorities of Bahia and of the Court, the magistrate and appellate court judge of Bahia João Rodrigues de Brito criticized slave labour and defended that arrival of “Chinese and eastern Indians, as the English did at the time.¹¹ And, after the arrival of the Court in Rio de Janeiro, Count Linhares raised the possibility of bringing two million Chinese nationals to the colony, in an hyperbolic compliment that reflected the enthusiasm regarding the trade relation between Brazil and Portuguese possession in China.¹² However, early in that century, just a few Chinese nationals arrived to the then headquarters of the Portuguese Empire, scattered through several places in the Province of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. Regarding tea farming, most projects were unsuccessful.

Based on the work of Carlos Francisco Moura, was conducted a survey of the first Chinese who ported in Brazil after the arrival of the Portuguese Royal Court. According to Table 1, we see slightly less than 300 people until 1815. The column “Official Document Date” of Table 1 refers to official letters written by the Macau Administrator, Miguel de Arriaga Brum da Silveira, one of the great proponents of the use of Chinese labour in Brazil. The table was organized based on information made available by this administrator and which are found in the work of Moura. As we

¹¹ Mac Cord, 2018.

¹² Meagher, 2008: 199.

can see, all Chinese nationals who came to Brazil between 1809 and 1815 came from Macau. The column “place of arrival” informs the precise location according to the data contained in this official document. When a precise location is not provided, the record shows the Chinese nationals arrived in *Brazil*. Both Chinese nationals mentioned in the Official Letter of March 20, 1811 disembarked first in Bahia and then went to Rio de Janeiro. Probably some of the 140 Chinese nationals of Maria Primeira remained in Bahia, dividing between Caravelas, Alcobaça and Mucuri. Many others went to Rio de Janeiro. In the official letter of July 30, 1814,¹³ Carlos Francisco Moura reports that 68 Chinese nationals arrived at Ilha das Cobras. According to Moura, their destination is uncertain, but they probably also ported in Brazil. Summing these 68, the total is approximately 245 people arriving in the country in these first years of immigration.¹⁴ Considering that the trips of 1809 and 1814 do not inform the number of Chinese nationals, we can estimate a total up to 300 porting in Brazil in this period.

¹³ This is the only official document not written by the Macau Administrator. Given the information of Carlos Francisco Moura regarding the uncertain destination of these Chinese nationals, we chose to remove from Table 1 data referring to them.

¹⁴ Moura, 2012. For other information, see Leite (1992), Dezem (2005) and Peres (2013). In a recent article, Marcelo Mac Cord (2018) studies the origin of these first Chinese Nationals who came to Brazil, the conflicts they lived and their possible internal dissent, probably due to their different origins within China.

Table 1 – Chinese nationals' arrival in Brazil between 1809-1815

Official Document Date	Number	Place of departure	of	Place of arrival	Vessel name
March 22, 1809	[not informed]	Macau		Brazil	[not informed]
March 20, 1811	2	Macau		Rio de Janeiro	<u>Ulisses</u> Frigate
January 2, 1813	25	Macau		Brazil	<u>Ulisses</u> Frigate
December 30, 1813	140	Macau		Brazil	N. Sra. da Luz and Maria Primeira
October 12, 1814	[not informed]	Macau		Brazil	<u>Luconia</u>
February 4, 1815	10	Macau		Rio de Janeiro	<u>Ulisses</u> Frigate

Source: Moura (2012: 13-27).

Were the Chinese who lived in Bananal the remainder of these first immigration waves to Brazil? José Roberto Teixeira Leite¹⁵ raises the possibility that some who were established in Bananal were the remainder of immigration that happened with the approval of D. João in 1813, in Vessel Maria Primeira. As we have seen, approximately three hundred Chinese nationals arrived in Brazil, as part of projects of the D. João administration and of private individuals, especially for working in tea farming. According to historian Marcelo Mac Cord, many of those who were in Rio de Janeiro ultimately moved through several locations of the Province, such as Resende, São João Marcos, Macaé, Parati and Ilha Grande. In these cities, they were merchants or hawker and tried to sell “their most varied products”. Mac Cord reports the runaway of Chinese from Real Horto due to conflicts and violation of work contracts and due to the interest in finding less precarious

¹⁵ Leite, 1992: 117.

opportunities in other places.¹⁶ Without a doubt, this circulation may have caused the arrival of some to then Vila do Bananal.

Another reason that may explain the arrival of the Chinese in Bananal is directly relative to an official initiative of the City Council. In 1835, the aldermen sent the Provincial Assembly of São Paulo an official document “requesting the arrival of foreigners in the form of colonization for helping the slavery-based coffee farming and other services, as well as the arrival of Chinese for handling the farming of tea and anise”.¹⁷ This document is justified by the historic moment. In 1835, there was still reflections of the retraction of the intercontinental slave trafficking due to passing of the law of November 7, 1831, which prohibited this type of trade. Therefore, rural landowners of Bananal requested “foreigners in the form of colonization” for assisting in the slave-based coffee farming, in full expansion. Moreover, according to the document addressed to Provincial Assembly of São Paulo, the presence of the Chinese would serve for they to “teach the manufacturing of tea and excite this field of the agricultural industry”.¹⁸ Much more than diversifying agricultural production, landowners in Bananal, through aldermen, seemed interested in introducing there a new product for selling in the global market. That happened in the early 1830s, when the USA reduced customs tariffs of several products, among which coffee and tea. Therefore, the initiative of the City Council of Bananal can be understood in the context of the global economy, which involved pressure from Great Britain against the international trafficking of slaves, approval of an Anti-Trafficking Law of 1831, repression of this trade and expansion of coffee

¹⁶ Mac Cord, 2018: 177.

¹⁷ Ramos, 1975: 91. See also Porto (1992).

¹⁸ Porto, 1992: 5.

farming all across the Vale do Paraíba (Paraíba Valley), with the resulting need for labour for a farming industry in expansion¹⁹

Regarding the first object of the claim filed by the City Council of Bananal – the arrival of foreigners to add to slavery –, the Provincial Assembly of São Paulo presented a financially-based answer and closed the issue at that. Was declared “ultimate utility”, but, nothing could be done without full knowledge of the “Provincial revenue”.²⁰ Regarding the Chinese, the document stated that the manufacturing of tea was known, that there were memories of this culture and that the Provincial Assembly of São Paulo “will not fail to take the business under advisement, so long as it understands it shall intervene in this regard”.²¹

¹⁹ Bibliography on the propelling of coffee farming in Brazil in the 19th Century and the context subsequent to passing of a Law in November 7, 1831 is quite abundant. Two recent approaches are Marquese and Tomich (2015) and Parron (2015). Information on customs tariffs is in page 322 of the latter work, which highlights, moreover, the contacts between José de Araújo Ribeiro, representative of the Imperial Government in the USA and Brazilian authorities regarding this and other matters. Moreover, for fully understanding the representation of Bananal, we must not disregard the national context in the early years of the 1830s, when Anti-Slavery bills were introduced in Parliament, in a wave spreading across several sectors of society, including rebellions of slaves and free men and poor people. All of that lead many people to wonder as to the “nature of the relation between Brazilian government and slavery, in particular between the Brazilian government and the transatlantic slave trafficking” (Parron, 2015: 317).

²⁰ Answer # IO.35.2.1, 1835.

²¹ Same. The response to the question of African labour must not have concerned slaveowners at the Paraíba Valley, Bananal especially, considering that approximately between 1837 and 1850, the slave smuggling was a policy implemented by the Imperial State to ensure the entrance of slave labour, supplying farms with the labour necessary for expanding coffee farming (Parron, 2011).

The history of this coffee/slave-based municipality proves that the proposal for introducing tea farming failed. However, criminal proceedings show the nuance indicating that some Chinese nationals arrived in Bananal after those first that ported in Brazil between 1809 and 1815. This could have been the case of João Antônio da Silva, Chinese national residing at Rua do Rosário, number 15. Silva was accused of having stabbed another “chim”²² identified as Joaquim. In the Qualification Records, issued on June 5, 1862, Silva, *jornaleiro* (journeyman)²³, informed being 42 years of age and being a Macau-born citizen. At this age, the inference is he was born in 1820. Therefore, it is proper to assume this man arrived at some point in the 1830s or even in the 1840s.²⁴ Therefore, there is data showing the possibility of Chinese nationals arriving in Bananal after the 1830s. However, it is also correct thinking that the establishment of the first Chinese results

²² Chim (chins, plural) was the abbreviation used for referring to Chinese Nationals in Bananal and in many parts of the Brazilian Empire.

²³ The title "journeyman" refers to workers who were entitled to charge a fee for each day's work.

²⁴ Historic and Pedagogic Museum Major Novais (hereinafter MMN)/ Box 19/Order Number: 453. Criminal case records, prosecution against João Antonio da Silva Chim, 1861. The records are incomplete and out of order. Only two witnesses testified and they are not Chinese. My thanks to Breno Aparecido Servidone Moreno for having provided me the pictures of criminal case records involving Chinese nationals and his database with inventories of the decades from 1830 to 1860. Most Chinese nationals mentioned in criminal cases and addressed in this article sign the testimony in Chinese characters. Here are some examples: João Damasceno (身东油, Shen Dong You), Joaquim Chim (灼堅, Zhuo Jian) e João Antônio Caia Felipe (大王英夫 Liu Wang Ying Tian). The sources for these names are, respectively MMN/Box 24/Order Number 564, MMN/Box 24/Order Number 557 e MMN/Box 19/ Order Number 467. I thank Professor Shu Changsheng for the translation of the signatures found in the criminal cases.

directly of those initial projects of the administration of D. João, the runaway of Chinese through the Paraíba Valley and the economic interests of the City Council of Bananal.

In the criminal cases analysed, all who testified claimed being from the city of Macau, except for Miguel José de Sousa, who, on May 30, 1844, stated having been born in “China’s Canton” and being married, and José Lourenço, who appears in the criminal case as having been born in “Macau’s Canton”, a geographic error, since these are two different cities.²⁵ Considering the Macau origin does not mean, necessarily, they were born in this Portuguese possession in China. We know that Macau was the most important point of origin of Chinese nationals to several points of the global economy since the early 19th century. The collaboration of Macau authorities in the boarding of Chinese nationals is notorious since, at least, the late 19th Century. Through the operations of the East India British Company (EIC), many Chinese nationals left to Penang after 1786. Gradually, this location and Singapore became entrepot for the distribution of Chinese nationals to other places in Asia and East India. In the early 19th Century, the arrivals of Chinese nationals in Trinidad (1806), Santa Helena (1812-1815) and Bangka Island (1813-1814) originated from the port of Macau as one of their main places of departure.²⁶ In the early moments of the government of D. João in Brazil, the already mentioned Macau administrator, Brum da Silveira, supported by Macau participation

²⁵ The case involving Miguel José de Sousa is in MMN/Box03/Order Number 79, but, unfortunately, said document was once wet and is practically illegible. It is known that Sousa testified as a witness in a case regarding the beating of José Borges Peixoto, a crime that was allegedly committed by João Pereira China, from Macau (Criminal Case against João Pereira Chim, 1844). The case of José Lourenço will be analysed hereinafter.

²⁶ Seabra, 2016: 303-305.

in the migration of Chinese nationals, informed the benefits of the transportation of the Chinese, both to Macau and to Brazil. Moreover, that same administrator informed the administration of D. João they could send as many Chinese nationals as necessary.²⁷ In mid-century, especially between 1847 and 1874, coolies traffic peak, Macao routes to the ports of Callao, in Peru, and Havana, in Cuba, absorbed thousands of Chinese to the terrible work conditions in plantations that demanded labour under coercion. However, many of these workers came from countryside China, from several parts of the province of Guangzhou, escaping hunger, social crisis and rebellions that devastated the country since the 1850s.²⁸ Therefore, it is correct to recognize the information regarding Macau refers to the point of boarding rather than the place of birth and attests the centrality of this Portuguese possession in Asia at least since the opening of the Chinese ports through the Nanjing Treaty (1842).

The search in criminal records and inventories revealed that the Chinese built their lives in Bananal, where they set roots. They lived with slaves and free men from different categories and established several social relations in this slave-based society. They participated, therefore, as subjects of a substantially unequal agricultural reality. Many of them had their homes and business at Rua do Comércio. This is what informs a document not catalogued located in the City Hall of Bananal²⁹. This document refers to “records of municipal taxes to which are subject houses of business of this Municipality in the current year of 1853”. It is possible to read that Antônio Joaquim China had a house of business of

²⁷ Moura, 2012: 13. Mac Cord, 2018: 160.

²⁸ Santos, 2017.

²⁹ All documents mentioned in this article were photographed.

“national and foreign liquor” and “green meats” (butchery); Vicente Ferreira da Silva China, José Pedro da Silva China, João Miguel Pereira China e José Caetano China worked each in a different shop with “produce and sugarcane brandy” and “green meats”; José Antônio Pires China was the proprietor of a shop selling “goods”, “national and foreign liquor” and “green meats”; on his turn, João Joaquim Felício China worked only with “produce and sugarcane brandy” and finally, Manoel Machado China had a house of business of “national and foreign liquor” and a “groceries shop”.³⁰

The houses of business were the target of conflict and looked for robberies of several types, especially by fugitive slaves. On November 5, 1860, slave Jerônimo, owned by José Antônio Hermida Baptista, was arrested for breaking in, at three o'clock in the night, house of business of *chim* José Lourenço, located at Rua do Comércio. The owners, hearing the noise, found Jerônimo “in the inside part of the counter” and, with help from his housekeeper, managed to detain the thief, tie him and call the Block Inspection Official for “make arrangements”. After this incident, neighbours showed at the house of business of José Lourenço and saw the accused tied up. Among those who witnesses the scene were Vicente Ferreira da Silva, Manoel Lourenço, 30 years old and José Caetano da Silva, 50 years old. All of them informed, at the time of their testimony, the City of “Macau, [in] the Chinese Empire”, as their “place of birth”.³¹ As for João Antônio Caia Felipe, from “China nation”, resident of Rua da Boa Vista and owner of a shop at the same place, is another example of

³⁰ Tax Collection Office, 1853. Document not cataloged by the City Hall of the Municipality and fully photographed.

³¹ MMN/Box 18/Order Number: 425.

a Chinese merchant showing in records of criminal cases. In this case, Caia Felipe had problems with one of his customers. On May 13, 1862, Caia Felipe was involved in an incident with Portuguese national José Antônio Gomes de Oliveira: they fought because the former refused to sell wine on credit to the latter. Gomes de Oliveira attacked the Chinese with a stick or a club, and Caia Felipe defended himself with a knife, wounding the attacker. Caia Felipe pressed charges and, on May 16, took an “oath in the language of his nation” for the fact he was not catholic. Contrary to Caia Felipe, who seems to have preserved the values and practices of his culture, not converting to Catholicism, other Chinese nationals who lived in Bananal ultimately adopted Catholicism as their religion.

The last will and testament of João Francisco, dated April 27, 1861, informs he was single, without children and had separated “from his parents twenty-some years before”. Born in Macau, “where his parents resided”, João Francisco had a small liquor house of business, with no debt. Brother of the Order Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte, João Francisco wrote: “I have professed the religion of my nation, however, today I hereby profess the Catholic Apostolic Roman faith, since I have received the sacrament of baptism, and in this faith, I intend to die”. By occasion of his death, he determined payment of an “admission fee” to the aforementioned Brotherhood.³² Bento Machado da Silva and two Chinese individuals, Manoel Joaquim Fernandes Chim and Manoel Machado Chim were the legatees of the few assets of João

³² According to Ribeiro (2010: 44), the “admission fee” (“Joa”, in Portuguese language) was an annuity “whose payment” guaranteed the brothers “rights, especially those relative to assistance during periods of need and also to masses and ceremonials in connection with their death”.

Francisco.³³ Likewise, *chim* João Miguel Pereira also informed being a catholic and the widower of Fortunata Leme da Silva.³⁴ Not or nothing, the house of business of these Chinese individuals was often the stage of conflict, as confirmed by the aforementioned case of João Antônio Caia Felipe.

Some Chinese individuals managed to gather significant assets. This is the case of João Félix de Araújo, deceased on April 18, 1850. Married “according to the Chinese rite” to Ambu, Araújo travelled alone from Macau to Brazil. His will informs he did not have children with his wife and appoints as legatees Alexandrina (or Angelina), a slave owned by D. Jacinta, Manoel Machado China, Manoel Joaquim Fernandes China, José Rodrigues China, Manoel Venâncio Campos da Paz, Maria Clara de Oliveira, Gabriel José Diniz, the Brotherhood of Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte, the Brotherhood of Nossa Senhora do Rosário, Church Senhor Bom Jesus do Livramento and finally, vicar Antônio de Paiva Rios. When he died, Araújo had some animals and 18 slaves, eight creoles and 10 African from different origins (Mozambique, Congolese, Minas and Benguelas). The eldest of his slaves, Antônio, was 48 years old and the youngest, Rita, only 3. The profession of two of these slaves reveals, likewise, one of his fields of business. Mozambican Venâncio and José, 26 and 28 years-old respectively, were bakers. Only two other slaves had an occupation informed in the inventory: Maria Benguela, 24 years-old, and Balbina Benguela, 26 years-old, were a cook/laundress. According to the will, slaves Hilário, Rosa Crioula, Venâncio, José, Pedro,

³³ MMN/Box 109/Order Number: 2,336. 1st Registry. Will and Testament. Executor: João Francisco Chim.

³⁴ Leite, 1992: 222. This author (1992) informs that Pereira had arrived in Brazil in 1808, therefore, before the first trip recorded by Carlos Francisco Moura, in 1809 (Table 1).

Maria Benguela and Joaquina Mina would be freed after the death of their master. The others would be donated to others, whereby Chinese individuals Manoel Machado, Manoel Joaquim Fernandes and José Rodrigues China, respectively, would receive slaves Tereza and her son, Pai Antônio and Balbina.³⁵

What do the inventory of Araújo and the previously mentioned cases reveal about the life of the Chinese who lived in Bananal? Araújo did not live alone and owned three houses at Rua do Comércio. In one of them, lived a “china” not identified in the inventory; in another one, Serafim Pereira Paulino. As we see, this merchant managed to amass significant wealth for the standards of his time, fully integrating himself into the slave-based society of Bananal. He acquired slaves, allowed them to form a family and have children, and built a broad network of relationships. His debtors included slaves, drovers, carpenters and free men and women of several categories. His legatees were Chinese, slaves, free men and catholic institutions of the municipality. This last aspect is fundamental for understanding the integration of Araújo in the slave-based society of Bananal. There are several studies on the brotherhood phenomenon in Brazil, which identify brotherhoods as important socialization spaces³⁶. Several sectors of society participated in some way of parties and processions promoted by these institutions linked to popular Catholicism. The importance and the prestige of these brotherhoods are evident in the universe of brotherhoods in the 19th-Century Paraíba Valley, as attested by the origins of religious celebrations and processions involving the aforementioned two brotherhoods of Bananal. Note that social

³⁵ MMN/Box 61/Order Number: 1.181. 1st Registry.

³⁶ For a study analyzing the phenomenon of brotherhoods in the Paraíba Coffee Valley, see Ribeiro, 2010.

relations surrounding Catholicism – marriages, baptism, crony relations and festivities – are essential in creating bonds and in the socialization of several individuals. Moreover, being part of one or more brotherhoods was a sign of social prestige.³⁷ As we see, this was the case of Chinese individual Araújo, Catholic and member of two Brotherhoods, Boa Morte and Rosário. In Bananal, other Chinese individuals also participated in these brotherhoods. This is what can be read in the book of records of Boa Morte. On August 15, 1851, was held an election for defining employees, according to the contents of Chapter 3, Paragraph 3 of the Brotherhood Commitment. Of those composing the Board, were elected the aforementioned Manuel Venâncio Campos da Paz, one of the legatees of Araújo, and two Chinese individuals, Vicente Ferreira da Silva and Manuel Machado da Silva, who may be another legatee, if we consider the omission of the surname “da Silva” in the text of Araújo’s Will. Is therefore quite evident that the brotherhood was one of the means some Chinese individuals managed to build their network of relationships.³⁸

To Hebe Maria Mattos,³⁹ the nuclear family and the network of personal and family relations were the structural fundamentals allowing free men some stability. The inventories of Chinese Individuals João Félix de Araújo and Dinis Hilário Gomes Nogueira reveal (possible) strategies for social reinsertion in a slave-based and substantially unequal society. Whether *jornaleiros*, living in houses of other people, Chinese or not, we see experiences of the lives of the so-called “chins” in Bananal. A daily struggle with the

³⁷ Ribeiro, 2010.

³⁸ *Ibidem*: 211. The Last Will and Testament of Araújo suggests a relationship between him and Manuel Venâncio Campos da Paz, who, according to Ribeiro (2010), was an active member of the Brotherhood of Nossa Senhora do Rosário.

³⁹ Mattos, 1998.

loss of one's roots, something frequent in the 19th Century slave-based Brazil.⁴⁰ In addition to amassing significant assets for a merchant, Araújo sought to build bonds, an essential element for the experience of free men in the Empire of Brazil. Araújo died single, but participated in brotherhoods and of popular Catholicism in Bananal. As for Dinis Hilário Gomes Nogueira he married Izabel Maria de Jesus and had three children. His inventory, dated 1846, lists few assets, mostly related to the occupation of a carpenter and stone mason, and no slaves. His shop and his house were in the same building, a "two-story brownstone, small, with two doors on the lower front, and one on the top with an iron grill, with five doors inside, on the lower floor, and three inside, on the top floor, with its kitchen below and a shop below with its relevant back side".⁴¹ Despite the slightly truncated description of the inventory, we see, from the assets, the small rooms of the house and the liabilities, higher than the assets, the simplicity and poverty of this Chinese individual, especially if compared to Araújo. Another inventory, of Leopoldina Maria da Conceição, deceased September 23, 1848, reveals her way of life and that of her husband, Chinese national Manoel Machado da Silva. They did not own slaves, owned a house of business at Rua do Comércio and had a 9-year-old daughter called Catarina. Their "ground floor house" had "three doors on the front, with a business facility, glasses and a counter, a hall, a room, a dining room, a kitchen, a small installation". This house of business and residence was attached on one side to the house of Vicente China (probably Vicente Ferreira da Silva, already mentioned before as the owner of a house of business, one of the legatees of Araújo and member of

⁴⁰ Mattos, 1998: 55-69.

⁴¹ MMN/Box 48/Order Number: 877. 1st Registry.

the Boa Morte Brotherhood) and, on the other side, to the house of José Candido Moreira.⁴²

As we see, the Chinese who lived in Bananal engaged in commerce or worked as *jornaleiros*.⁴³ All records analysed so far confirm they lived in the urban sections, in the center of the City. They were foreign free men inserted into the slave-based order of Bananal. The documentary analysis suggests a process of assimilation of the Catholic-slavery culture by these Chinese nationals. In a certain way, despite some evidence of preservation of Chinese habits, it would not be wrong to say those ultimately disappeared throughout the social and economic integration and cultural assimilation; the Chinese did not build a parallel society. Participation in popular Catholicism festivities, marriage, business, purchase of slaves and other practices indicate most of them set root and adopted local habits and practices intensively and even irreversibly.⁴⁴

⁴² MMN/Box 57/Order Number: 1.080. 1st Registry.

⁴³ For examining a criminal case involving a *jornaleiro* attacked by two slaves, see SANTOS (2016: 107-109).

⁴⁴ The concepts of *integration* and *assimilation* are different, but here taken as inter-related. Studies on migration and sociology of migration usually work with these two concepts for discussing matters relative to xenophobia, citizenship and exclusion (segregation)/inclusion of immigrants in the societies of destination. In this article, *integration* is the process of acceptance of immigrants into society, allowing socialization, social ascension and insertion into the general structure of that society. As for the process of integration considered herein, the Chinese do not preserve their culture, but assimilate the values of the slavery-catholic society. Therefore, assimilation presumes absorption of the values, language and culture by the immigrant. The adoption of a “Portuguese” name, marriage and participation in popular Catholic brotherhoods and festivities show that the Chinese immigrants assimilated the values and practices of the society into which they were inserted and where they (re)built their life (Glossário sobre Migração, 2009).

Finally, 1872 Census data point to full integration. According to that Census, Bananal had a population of 15,606, 7,825 of whom were free men and 8,281 were slaves. Of that total, 2,259 were foreigners, 973 free and 1,286 slaves (consequently, African). Therefore, foreigners represented approximately 14.47% of the population of the Municipality. Of that foreign population, the Census cites eight *chins*, seven of them single, one married, all men and all Catholic. There were no women or “Aatholic” (Non-Catholic) Chinese immigrants.⁴⁵

Debates and opinions regarding the Chinese in the 19th Century

As we have seen, there were discussion of projects for Chinese immigration since the very first moments of the government of D. João in Brazil. Some attempts were implemented for bringing Chinese nationals, but the number of immigrants was low. There was dispersion, and some of them established in Bananal, where they could design life and social insertion strategies within this group in a mostly slavery-based municipality. There are no references regarding new immigration projects involving Asians after the independence, in 1822.⁴⁶ However, with the slavery crisis in the second half of the 1800s, discussions regarding the viability

⁴⁵ Recenseamento do Brasil em 1872: São Paulo. “Achatolic” is the term recorded in the 1872 Census.

⁴⁶ The 1872 Census records a total 436 *chins* in Brazil, with only six women, two married and non-Catholic. Of the men, 68 were identified as non-Catholic. There were only 11 Japanese nationals, 45 Persians and four Turks, considered in the *Asian* category. Therefore, Asians were a minority group among the immigrants porting in Brazil up to the third quarter of the 19th Century. Note that the Census records 1.412 “orientals”, a category that refers to Uruguayans (Recenseamento do Brasil em 1872: São Paulo).

of Asian immigration came back strong. Concerning Chinese immigration, historiography shows it was considered an alternative for the “labour force shortage”, especially after approval of the Free Womb Law.⁴⁷ Cogitated in several moments of the 19th Century and never fully implemented, the importation of Chinese labour was seriously debated in the 1870s and 1880s, considered an important theme of the 1878 Agricultural Convention, which gathered representatives from the Provinces of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo and Minas Gerais.⁴⁸ According to data

⁴⁷ According to Maria Lúcia Lamounier (1988: 128-129), the approval of the 1879 work rental Law and a credit for a special mission to China the same year for the purpose of establishing diplomatic relations with this Country were not related measures. However, both actions are within the context of a broader discussion, finding alternatives to slave labour. Regarding the special mission to China, see Neves, Guimarães & Ferreira (2010).

⁴⁸ Rogério Dezem (2005: 66-90) performs an analysis of the discussions of the Agricultural Convention on Chinese labour. Several researches produced a type of “transition narrative” which, in a certain way, weighted the arguments of the speeches that defended Chinese immigration. In these speeches, the ideas of transition into free work and modernization are associated. Moreover, note the opposition “Africans with poor skills in working with machines”/“Asians (Chinese/*coolies*) skilled in this type of work”. It is worth underscoring that the situation of the Chinese in Cuba disproves this type of narrative. The Chinese arrived at this Spanish Colony in the Caribbean in the late 1840s, a time of significant expansion of sugar production. Owners of slaves did not consider Chinese labour an alternative for the process of transition into free work. On the contrary, workers under contract were a widely used workforce and complementary labour at a time of economic growth and productive investment that allowed the functioning of several mechanized and semi-mechanized mills in Cuba and the construction, in many properties, of barracoons to house the workforce. In this regard, see Yun (2008: 1-35). Despite this remark about Cuba, we may understand that the “transition narrative” applies to some societies, such as Brazil, in the decades of 1870s and 1880s. This narrative is valid not because it agrees with the immigrant discourse, but for understanding

gathered by Robert Conrad, approximately 3,000 Chinese entered Brazil in the 19th Century, most arriving at the Empire after 1850. As for Lúcia M. B. Pereira das Neves, Lucia Maria Paschoal Guimarães and Tânia B. da C. Ferreira present numbers different of those presented by Conrad and inform that approximately two thousand Chinese nationals entered the port of Rio de Janeiro only between 1854 and 1856.⁴⁹ Whatever the actual data is, this fact does not characterize a significant migration wave, but, especially in the decades of 1870s and 1880s, the question of “Asian workers” was broadly discussed by politicians and farmers and by the press and seriously considered by relevant names of the Empire of Brazil such as João Lins Vieira Cansansão de Sinimbu, who raised to Chairman of the Council of Ministers on January 5, 1878. Several articles were published on this matter, valuing the potential of Chinese workers and elevating them to an alternative to the transition into non-slave labour. In 1868, Quintino Bocayuva published *The farming crisis* and, in 1869, Xavier Pinheiro launched *The importation of chin workers*. In 1877, was published the book *Demonstration of conveniences and advantages of farming in Brazil by the introduction of Asian workers (from China)*, which served as basis for countless defenders of Chinese immigration in the 1878 Agricultural Convention. In 1879, was released the work of Salvador de Mendonça *Asian Workers*, published with the approval of Sinimbu, when he presided the Council of Ministers. Custódio Alves de Lima published in 1886 his work *United States and North-American, accompanied of some remarks on Chinese*

that, besides other possibilities, Chinese labour was an alternative for replacing slave labour.

⁴⁹ Conrad, 1975: 42. Neves, Guimarães & Ferreira, 2010: 71. More accurately, the number collected by Conrad is 2,947 Chinese nationals, a thousand of whom entered in 1874.

immigration in the Empire of Brazil. And, finally, in 1891, already in the Republican period, after Monarchy was ended in Brazil, was released the work of Colatino Marques, *The work of the chins to Northern Brazil*.⁵⁰

Both defenders and the opposition to the introduction of Chinese workers made stereotypical and caricature-like classifications of the Chinese, who everyone called “chins”. Analyzing the debates in the late 1870s and early 1880s in the Provincial Assembly of São Paulo, Celia Maria Marinho de Azevedo highlighted the racial undertone of the arguments made by representatives who supported or opposed that immigration. In the case of those who defended it, they understood this was a transitory solution preparing for a future arrival of desired immigrants, European immigrants. Moreover, many said that despite being inferior to the European, the Chinese were remarkably superior to Africans.⁵¹

Nonetheless, the discussion was not limited to institutional agencies and farmers. The press also participated, expressing caricatured and stereotypical opinions. On the front page of the edition of May 14, 1881, *A Província de São Paulo* responded to the matter in a direct dialog with *A Tribuna Liberal*, associating the

⁵⁰ Peres (2013: 36) and Dezem (2005: 65). The debate on Chinese labour occurred in the 1870s in Brazil, connected to an international moment of expansion of international migration. This decade also saw the crisis and the end of the trafficking of Chinese *coolies* to Cuba and Peru, ended in 1874. Intensive in the 1850s and 1860s, this traffic was the result of a series of factors such as those concerning the British imperial interests, looking for lower cost of labour in colonial areas (Cuba, for example), the interests in production of guano, sugar and cotton in Peru, the price hike in the trafficking of African slaves and in the labour of African slaves etc. For this global scenario regarding the immigration of *coolies*, see SANTOS (2017).

⁵¹ Azevedo, 2004: 127-132.

Chinese colonization to the replacement of slave labour⁵². In 1882, the section “Pequena Chronica” of *Revista Illustrada* reported: “Chinese immigration begins [...]. The day before yesterday, over one hundred chins arrived, coming to introduce among us the use of pigtail and accelerating the theft of chicken”.⁵³ This research also found that this press entity displayed, in several issues throughout the 1880s, acid opposition to Chinese immigration projects.

On October 20, 1883, in the section “Chronicas Fluminenses”, the same periodical commented the visit of Tong Kong-sing, Director of China Merchant Steam Navigation Company, to the Province of Rio de Janeiro. Kong-sing traveled for starting conversations for his company to transport 21 thousand Chinese nationals destined to coffee farms of the Southeast. Before arriving in Brazil, however, he had a stopover in London and was warned by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS) regarding the risk of Chinese workers being enslaved in these farms. Upon arriving, he started his work in inspecting farms, but when he knew the money to be destined to his company would come out of the pockets of coffee farmers and that they would try to recover the investment with the “work of the *coolies*”, he gave up the

⁵² A Província de São Paulo May 14, 1881: 1.

⁵³ Rogério Dezem (2005) also analyzes the illustrations of this magazine, but seems to have a mistaken interpretation of some of them not emphasizing its opposition to the presence of Chinese workers in Brazil. For example, an illustration entitled “Chins as transition”, the author does not see the exclusion of the national worker (represented in the picture in the figure of a mixed-race individual). Without a doubt, many pro-immigrant individuals ruled out the possibility of using the national worker. In the aforementioned illustration, Dezem (2005: 74) sees the *chim* as an element concurring to the “whitening of the Brazilian man”. The illustration “Chinese colonization”, analysed hereinafter, was not worked by this author.

undertaking and left Brazil in November.⁵⁴ It is probable that he had already decided not to participate in this project when he left London. In any way, his presence in Brazil shows the interest of some farmers in using the Chinese as a workforce in a time of turmoil, of criticism to slave labour. This episode and other failed initiatives of the Ministry of Sinimbu and of the coffee farmers of São Paulo show the difficulty in importing Chinese nationals as a workforce.⁵⁵ In the same October 20th issue, *Revista Illustrada* presented a clearly caricature-like illustration of the Chinese worker, discussing his relation to the rural producer (figure 1). The critical tone prevails, making the opinion of the periodical very clear opposing “Chinese colonization”.⁵⁶ It is worth making a few comments on this illustration, representing the newspaper’s opinion, and the opinion of those opposing the arrival of Chinese nationals in Brazil.

⁵⁴ For an analysis of this visit, see Neves, Guimarães & Ferreira (2010), Conrad (1975) and Meagher (2008). In a recent article, Henrique Antonio Ré (2018) analysed the work of BFASS and of the Foreign Office in fighting against Chinese immigration to Brazil in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Also cast new light on the actions of the Brazilian government, on the mission to China and on the visit of Tong Kong-sing, as well as on his refusal in importing Chinese workers to Brazil.

⁵⁵ We must point out the prohibition of the British and Portuguese governments of the boarding of Chinese nationals through the ports of Hong Kong and Macau, in a historic context of prohibition of the trafficking of *coolies*. For better understanding this subject and the period following 1874, the year when this type of trafficking was prohibited, see SANTOS (2017).

⁵⁶ *Revista Illustrada*, 1883, p. 5-6.

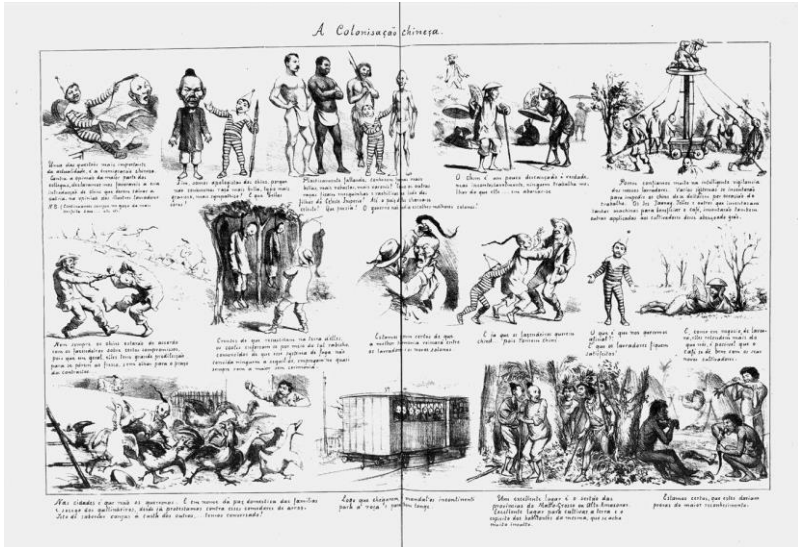


Figure 1 – Illustration of the Chinese colonization
 Source: Agostini (1888: 4-5).

In the first line of the picture, we see a comparison, in an ironic tone, between the Chinese worker, the Indian, the African and the white worker (third picture; also see Figure 2). Showing a Chinese individual thinner and shorter than the other three, and the legend sentences with a sarcastic exclamation: “how the other races are rendered petty and small side by side with the sons of the Celestial Empire!”. On the last picture of this line, the picture makes fun of the Chinese pigtail, saying a machine will be invented to control the work in farming. As we see, that machine will tie the pigtail to a central column under control of an overseer (Figure 3). It is imperative to point out that in several moments when searching periodicals, the Chinese pigtail was one of the elements highlighted

in their stereotype.⁵⁷ In the other illustrations, among other subjects, we read about the resistance of these workers, who are not submissive to control impositions (first picture of the second line; Figure 4). Moreover, the illustration presents the matter of suicide (second image of the second line; Figure 5) and exposes the desire to send the Chinese far away, to the “hinterland of the provinces of Mato Grosso or Alto Amazonas”, where they could “farm the land and its inhabitants”, who are *uncultured*. The last illustration shows an anthropophagic scene: Indians eat the flesh of the Chinese (figure 6).

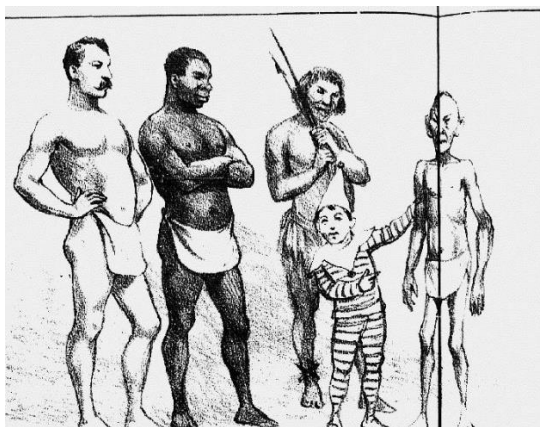


Figure 2-Detail of the Agostini picture with the respective legend:

Plastically speaking, there are more handsome, robust and manly forms! How the other races are rendered petty and small side by side with the sons of the Celestial

⁵⁷The Chinese pigtail served to stereotype them, as well as their image as “chicken thieves”. These are two elements that also helped consolidating the negative stereotypes of these immigrants, especially by those opposing this type of labor.

Empire! Even their country is called celestial! Such poetry! The government could not choose better farmers!

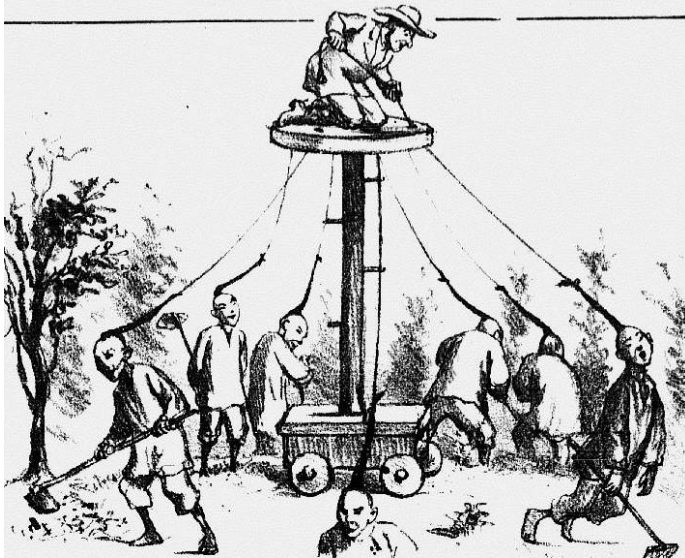


Figure 3 – Detail of the Agostini picture with the respective legend:

However, we trust very much the intelligent surveillance of our farmers. Several systems will be invented to prevent the chins to lay down when working. Messrs. Taunay, Telles and others who invented so many machines to process coffee will also invent others applied to the farmers of this blessed grain.



Figure 4 – Detail of the Agostini picture with the respective legend:

The chins will not always agree with the farmers on certain commitments, since in general, they have a great predilection for being under the shade without looking at the times set forth in contracts.



Figure 5-Detail of the Agostini picture with the respective legend:

Sure they will resuscitate their land, the coolis (sic) hang themselves with those *queue*, sure this escape system does not invite anyone to follow them, a system they use all the time with no second thought.

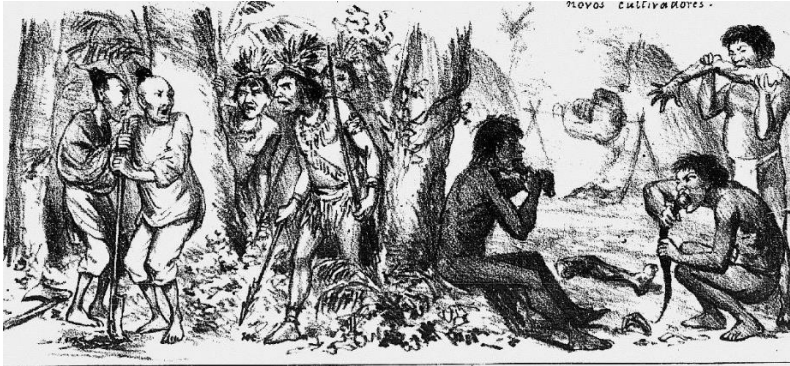


Figure 6 – Detail of the Agostini picture with the respective legend:

An excellent place is the *hinterland* of the provinces of Mato Grosso or Alto Amazonas. An excellent place to farm the land and the spirits of its inhabitants, who are very uncultured. We are certain they would produce evidence of more recognition.

In early 1888, *A Província de São Paulo* published part of the discussion of bill of law # 2, discussed at the Provincial Assembly of São Paulo, regarding the introduction of one hundred thousand immigrants in the province. The transcript shows that Representative Almeida Nogueira, from Bananal, proposed amendments to suppress the portion regarding the mandatory requirement only bringing immigrants from Europe, Azores and Canary Islands. The Representative also understood there was no reason for that restriction, which prevented the immigration of Asian workers. He also openly defended Chinese immigration, which could help in the transition into non-slave work and in the “constitution of our nationality” and made remarks concerning the work of the Chinese in the USA, highlighting the success of the introduction of this worker and claiming the opposition was due

to the powerful Irish party.⁵⁸ Challenging the ideas of Almeida Nogueira, Augusto Queiroz deemed “extremely unfortunate” the defence of Chinese immigration.⁵⁹

As for the *Revista Illustrada*, it informed, in late 1888, in an article entitled “*Those Chinese Bastards*”, on an amendment passed in the Senate favouring Chinese immigration. The Magazine said that was “treason” and, upon the freedom of slaves, the Senate was seeking to institute “yellow slavery”⁶⁰. Claimed, moreover, that they “want the chim” for being more passive than the African, “both in dignity and in vice”. According to the periodical, the

⁵⁸ The arrival of the Chinese in the USA started in the late 1840s, as a result of the discovery of gold in California, and grew substantially after the 1860s. According to data from the census of that country, in 1860, the Chinese population totalled 35,565 people. In 1870, it was 63,042 and, in 1880, it reached 104,468. The union movement of the West Coast blamed the Chinese for the low wages paid and by the degrading of work conditions. Many leaders opposed the Chinese immigration in the end of the 19th Century rose in unions and in the labour movement. Nogueira should be informed of that opposition and, especially, of the approval of the Chinese Exclusion Act, of 1882, the first immigration law of the USA banishing foreign nationals based on race and nationality. The name with which the law became notorious is self-explanatory: it reached exclusively a specific group, the Chinese, prohibiting from entering the country in the ten years following its approval. Were prohibited from entering, low-skill Chinese workers, and were exempted merchants, diplomats, students and professors who, on their turn, are reached by the strictness of immigration inspection. For an excellent analysis of the condition of the Chinese after passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, see Lee (2003). For building an immigration policy based on racial arguments in the USA, see, in addition to this author, the already mentioned work of Elliott Young (2014). This author wrote (2014: 98): “In the United States, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was designed to protect the rights of white working-class men who felt threatened by economic and sexual competition from Chinese workers”.

⁵⁹ *A Província de São Paulo*, January 18, 1888: 1-2.

⁶⁰ Brazil abolished slavery on May 13, 1888.

amendment was introduced by Baron of Cotegipe. Classifying the Chinese as a “degrading race”, the article is extremely critical to any proposal in that sense.⁶¹

These analyses are common in the debate on Chinese immigration in the 19th Century. Research in this regard investigated how several public figures approached several themes relative to the question of the Chinese and their racial inferiority, the dangers of “mongolization” of Brazil,⁶² according to the judgment of Joaquim Nabuco, their utility as a “work machine” and their adaptability to working in a tropical climate and hostile environments, the ease with agricultural work, their importance in the transition into non-slave free work and for supplying the “labour shortage”.

All Chinese immigration projects to Brazil were unsuccessful. On a global context, in the 1870s, there was strong opposition to the trafficking of *coolies* (Chinese and Indian), especially in the Chinese government of the Qing Dynasty, which, since the early 1870s, had been fighting the migration wave of workers under contract to Peru and Cuba, two of the top importers of Chinese workers thus far. Due to its interest in importing workers from China, irrespective of what they were called (*coolies*, farmers,

⁶¹ Revista Ilustrada, 1888: 2-3. References to Cotegipe and Almeida Nogueira are significant. We know they were important politicians who defended slavery to the last moment, took a position against abolition and now, after May 13, passed to defend Asian immigration. One may raise the theory than many of the very tough defenders of slavery passed to advocate for Asian immigration, i.e., especially the presence of the Chinese as a solution for the “worker shortage”. Bibliography on the slavery crisis is extensive. For a discussion of the Cotegipe government and the political actions of Almeida Nogueira, see SANTOS (2015).

⁶² Oliva, 2008.

indentured labours), Brazil joined the international Chinese importation game late. Another factor that helps understanding this lack of success is due to the interruption of the transportation of Chinese to Cuba and Peru in 1874/1877⁶³. Despite the initiative of Sinimbu's office and the defence from several landowners concerned with the shortage of labour for farming, the Chinese migration was not effective as an alternative to slave labour or as a transition into "free" labour. The very elite of rural landowners was torn, as seen in the debate between defenders and opposers of the Chinese in the 1878 Agricultural Convention and the opposition of bills introduced by Sinimbu's Office. Despite the controversy created around the issue of Chinese labour, up to the end of the Empire in Brazil, the migration currents from Asia were insignificant.

Final Remarks

In a chapter entitled "Immigration and colonization", Caio Prado Junior⁶⁴ defends that the matter of the immigrant was associated to the matter of slavery, and, in the same book, that, in the early 19th Century, during the administration of D. João, the trafficking of Africans was the main current for populating an immense semi-desert territory. Notwithstanding, was already a distant light of the probability of a crisis in the supply of labour and the possible extinction of the slave trade between Africa and Brazil. Therefore, the formation of "new demographic currents" was necessary. Moreover, in the administration of D. João, nothing happened despite the establishment of a "handful of colonial centres formed with German, Swiss and Azorean immigrants, distributed in

⁶³ Santos, 2017.

⁶⁴ Prado Junior, 1969.

Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro and, to a smaller extent, in Santa Catarina”, and the author concludes that “to History, intentions will bear more importance than numerically minimum results”. Despite the forgetfulness of projects regarding the Chinese, the conclusion of Caio Prado Júnior is correct. Regarding the immigration of Chinese nationals for concurring with slave labour throughout the 19th Century, both in the government of D. João as after the 1850s, the intentions of its defenders were worth more than the number of immigrant arms brought to the farms. Anyway, hyperbolic projects not implemented say a great deal about possibilities, viability and intentions. After all, to many politicians and landowners of the 19th century, the Chinese were the closest thing to slaves when it comes to *plantations* producing *commodities* for the global market. Maybe influenced by the *background* of other places in the Americas using Chinese labour, such as Cuba and Peru, or the presence of Chinese workers in the USA, defenders of Chinese immigration raised the plan of using them as an element of transition into non-slave (free) work. Those who opposed the risk of “mongolizing” the country, exposed a debate than took on strong racial tones.

Analysing Chinese immigration into Brazil, this text also tried to understand the establishment of a community of Chinese individuals in a municipality strongly connected to coffee production based on slave labour. Despite the failure of a migratory flow of low-cost workers, which would without a doubt connect Macau to Brazil, we can understand the life of a Chinese community in the municipality of Bananal. The research exposed the way the Chinese sought to build relationship networks in the Bananal society working as merchants or *jornaleiros*. Moreover, the assimilation of values and practices of popular Catholicism,

participating in the brotherhoods, was a strategy for some of them to consolidate and to expand their social relations.

It is not possible to state with accuracy the number of Chinese nationals that arrived in Bananal, but the existence of criminal cases and inventories show that the reality of this coffee-producing-slavery-based municipality was more complex than it could seem to a researcher restricted to the binary slave-master scope. Moreover, we can glance at a broad network of relationships marked by solidarity (for example, in the case of Chinese aggregates living in the houses of richer ones) and conflict. The origin of this story of the Chinese in Bananal is closely associated to the (ill-fated) immigration projects of the administration of D. João, the initiative of the City Council of Bananal in encouraging the importation of Chinese nationals to introduce the farming of tea in addition to the sparse arrival of other Chinese individuals throughout the 1830s to 1850s. This story can also be linked to the debates surrounding this workforce, something common since the early times of the discussion on its introduction. Perhaps seeing the racial paradigm that involved social relations in a slave-based Brazil, the Chinese who arrived here sought integration with assimilation of the Catholic slave-based culture. Research in this regard can be enriched by investigating the life of other groups in other Brazilian municipalities and the likely presence of Chinese individuals in the municipalities of the Province of Rio de Janeiro mentioned before.

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TERRITORIALIZATIONS, TRANSFORMATIONS AND CHINESE COMMUNITY LIFE IN LIBERDADE NEIGHBOURHOOD'S “ORIENTAL QUARTER” IN THE CITY OF SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL



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Santiago Buitoni**

Introduction

China has one of the largest diaspora groups in the world: more than 60 million people spread across 198 countries.¹ Brazil has 250,000 immigrants and descendants, so that 120,000 of these are concentrated in the State of São Paulo. According to the Brazilian Federal Police, until March 2017, the body issued 33,000 permanent residence visas in São Paulo for Chinese immigrants.²

The Chinese presence in the state capital is due to the city's outstanding development as an economic, financial and industrial centre in the country. Considering that one of the main characteristics of the dynamics of human mobility is the transformation of urban spaces by allochthonous communities. The analysis of the transformations of space, engendered by migratory flows, puts into question its economic, cultural and historical effects, arousing interest of different researchers in urban issues.

¹ Liu & Van Dongen, 2016.

² Jye, Shyu & Menezes, 2009; Pinto, 2017.

In this research, the relation between society and space had Chinese immigrants as their subjects and their territorialization in Liberdade neighbourhood's "Oriental Quarter", in the City of São Paulo, focused on three elements: a) the urban transformations undertaken by immigrants throughout their history; b) the specificities of the community life that developed in this space, up to the date of this research; and c) the strategies employed by the immigrant community that allowed the formation of territorial networks.

The methodology used in the research was the bibliographical review of books and scientific articles dealing with the history of the Liberdade neighbourhood's "Oriental Quarter" and the Chinese presence in São Paulo, as well as theoretical contributions on the process of territorialization, ranging from the "deterritorialization" of the allochthonous community until its "reterritorialization" in the new environment.

The article is organized as follows: in the first section, we will analyse the process of construction of Liberdade's "Oriental Quarter" and how it transformed the landscape of São Paulo; in the second section, we will undertake a diagnosis of the Chinese community's life in the "Oriental Quarter", highlighting their religious practices, the development of their ethnic media and the establishment of their community organizations, and in the last section we will draw the current profile of the Liberdade's "Oriental Quarter" main relations and territorialities. In the final considerations, we try to retake and advance the main aspects approached.

The construction process of Liberdade's "Oriental Quarter" by Japanese and Chinese immigrants

The Municipal Act of 1829 records that the present area of the Liberdade neighbourhood housed the Largo³ do Pelourinho (later called Praça 7 de Setembro and now incorporated into Praça João Mendes), an area that was the former Southern District of Sé neighborhood. There, two streets: Rua da Forca (now, Avenida da Liberdade) and Caminho do Mar (now, Rua da Glória). There were two churches in Largo da Cadeia (today, Praça João Mendes), Remédios (1727) and São Gonçalo (1756). In 1874, the São José Theater, where abolitionist plays were presented, was inaugurated in this place. The region was flanked by hills and small farms where the São Paulo elite lived. The name "Liberdade" ("Liberty") was first registered in the City Hall on May 4, 1831, when alderman Cândido Gonçalves Gomide named the fountain that was located in Largo São Francisco.⁴ And it was without a doubt an initiative to change the function of the place where there were hangings: from oppression to freedom.

The presence of Japanese immigrants in the neighbourhood dates back to 1912, when they settled on Conde de Sarzedas Street, which was a steep slope in which there were only two or three houses on both sides, lined houses resembling a stone wall, and on the lower slope there was an extensive spur, covered with scrub and crossed by a stream. One of the reasons for choosing this street to live is that almost every house had basements, and the rents of the rooms in the basement were surprisingly cheap. Not being able to

³Considering that some Portuguese toponyms are not translatable into English, we opted out to maintain their original name in Portuguese. The words related to that are: "rua" ("street"); "largo/prça" ("plaza"/"square") and "avenida" ("avenue").

⁴ Arai, 2004.

pay for better housing, they subjected themselves to cold and damp accommodations.

The Japanese presence was concentrated in the central and northern zones of Liberdade, mainly in the streets: Conde de Sarzedas, Galvão Bueno, Tabatinguera, Tomás de Lima, Conde do Pinhal, Conselheiro Furtado, dos Estudantes, Glória, Irmã Simpliciana, just to name a few, shaping what would be later called "Oriental Quarter", with the opening of the *Association of the Japanese (Associação de Japoneses)*, a primary school, a place for community activities, greengrocers, houses of tofu and manjuu, which attracted more Japanese families from the countryside to the neighbourhood. The area of the Oriental Quarter is a delimited area within the Liberdade District, which, due to the presence of Japanese elements (signposts written in Japanese, stores which sell Japanese products, and Japanese community associations), constituted as an individualized microcosm in relation to the rest of the neighbourhood, a space of identity for the Japanese community.⁵

In 1969, the São Paulo City Hall announced the plan to transform Liberdade into an authentic "Oriental Quarter", with an "Asian" theme, in order to promote tourism in the area. The project was authored by the journalist Randolfo Marques Lobato, whose goal was to copy the model of the Chinatowns of the great metropolises of the world.⁶

In Brazil, there were already similar examples in the areas of non-Portuguese European immigration that also created their symbols and simulacra, to promote tourism, especially in Santa Catarina, using of course a real base, constituted by the history of

⁵ Góes, 2012.

⁶ Arai, 2004.

each migratory group.⁷ The half-timbered houses and the ceilings imitating alpine constructions were encouraged to bestow an "European atmosphere" to these regions.

In 1974, the architectural transformation of the Oriental Quarter began. In Galvão Bueno Street an imposing red *torii* was erected on the Viaduct City of Osaka, symbolizing the entrance gate of the neighbourhood. The common streetlamps were replaced by the iconic red poles with the three *suzurantou* lanterns, which function as differentiators between the "Japanese Liberdade" and the "Brazilian Liberdade".⁸

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2000)⁹, Sé and República neighbourhoods have the highest concentrations of Chinese in the city, accounting for 2.47% (496 people) and 1.15% (551 people) of the population of these districts. But it is Liberdade neighbourhood that has more evident Chinese characteristics in its landscape, thanks to the mentioned interventions, with a great presence of Chinese restaurants, pastry shops, religious temples and churches, and it is common to see Chinese immigrants and descendants in the premises of the Oriental Quarter as well. Liberdade also remains the third largest concentration of Chinese people in São Paulo, with 0.55% (343 people) of its population belonging to this group. It also has the highest percentage of Taiwanese in the metropolis, representing 0.64% of the residents of the neighbourhood, or 396 people.

The Chinese presence in Liberdade dates back to the 1960s, when they opened the first restaurants in the neighbourhood, being responsible for the transition of a purely Japanese neighbourhood

⁷ Buitoni, 2000.

⁸ Arai, 2004; Gós, 2012.

⁹ Quoted in Vêras, 2008.

to a neighbourhood of cosmopolitan and Asian character, which characterizes the Oriental Quarter. Most Japanese stores from the 1960s gave way in the 1990s to small shopping malls and with them new owners of Asian food stores, mainly from Mainland China and Taiwan.

The largest flow of Taiwanese to the neighbourhood took place in the 1980s, while the main flow of Chinese happened in the 1990s. Many Japanese stores still exist (mixed with those of Chinese origin) while retaining Japanese names but are owned by Chinese, as is the case of *Comercial Marukai*, on Rua Galvão Bueno. It happens because when it comes to commercial stereotypes, Japanese products are associated with positive images of quality and reliability, and are strongly tied to the powerful Japanese soft power. The presence of Chinese in the neighbourhood increased in the 1990s and they seek to maintain a peaceful and collaborative coexistence with Japanese and Japanese-descendant neighbours.

On Rua Conselheiro Furtado we observed associations of Cantonese and Taiwanese, as well as a hairdresser with a signboard in ideograms to attend specially the members of the community. On Rua Barão de Iguape, there are Chinese restaurants, with signs and lanterns in red and yellow, colors that are traditionally related to the success in the Chinese culture, as well as humble residences of undocumented Chinese, which are convenient because they are close to their workplaces.¹⁰

On Galvão Bueno Street, the variety stores stand out in the commercial galleries such as *Mizumoto Shopping* and *Sogo Plaza Shopping*, a four-storey building with 90 stores, of which 20% belong to Chinese immigrants, who employ the newly-arrived

¹⁰ Lemos, 2013.

immigrants, maintaining the ethnic trade. These stores mainly sell electronic products, allegedly of smuggled origin, because of their very low prices, as well as clocks, cell phones, movies, electronic games and even pirated or Chinese brand clothing and accessories, as well as kitsch ornaments and all-purpose trinkets.

Nowadays, the Oriental Quarter attracts many Japanese and Chinese people through the commerce of clothing, food, utensils, festivals, among others, attracting also a large clientele of Westerners as well as foreign tourists who visit the city.

Chinese Community Life in the “Oriental Quarter”

The Oriental Quarter is also the place where the Chinese community in São Paulo develops its religious life, specially Buddhist practices. In this case the *Lohan Temple*, which belongs to the Shaolin School, stands out. It was founded in 1992 and it is located on Rua Conselheiro Furtado. It functions as a kung fu school and as a temple.¹¹ Among the Taiwanese, one of the main places of religious practice is the Mahayana Buddhist Temple, *Tzong Kwan*, located in Vila Mariana neighbourhood, next to the Oriental Quarter. It was founded by Venerable Master Pu Hsien in 1993. The temple also teaches meditation, tai chi, kung fu, qigong, hapkido, yoga and Mandarin, and it also organizes traditional Chinese music concerts (Centro Cultural Tzong Kwan, 2018). Another important temple for the Taiwanese community is the *Buddha's Light Meditation Center* (*Centro de Meditação Buddha's Light*), dedicated to the Amitabha Buddha, located in the sumptuous building of the *Hakka Social Center of Brazil* (*Centro Social Hakka*), where cultural and economic events take place. The building also houses the *Taipei Cultural and Educational Center*

¹¹ Templo Lo Han, 2018.

(*Centro Cultural e Educacional Taipei*), which features an exhibition of Beijing Opera costumes and nineteenth-century porcelain and jade utensils brought to Brazil by the immigrants.¹²

The traditional festivals of the Chinese community are also held in the Oriental Quarter. The first Chinese New Year in São Paulo took place on January 28 and 29, 2006 in Liberdade, and featured dragons, giant lions, dancers, acrobats among many other attractions scattered throughout the neighbourhood. There were also Tai Chi classes and countless food stalls. It attracted a crowd of 160,000 people. In its second version in 2008, on February 10th and 11th, it was called Chinese Culture Festival. It holds gatherings at the *Zu Lai Buddhist Temple*, Chinese cooking classes and lectures with great personalities from the Chinese community. The organization of the celebrations is the *Junior Chamber International Brazil-China* (JCI), a federation of young leaders and entrepreneurs who intend to promote Chinese culture in Brazil. Every year JCI receives the support of many volunteers and donations from several entities and companies (Gun Liang, 2010). In the “Oriental Quarter”, the stalls selling Chinese community newspapers are ubiquitous. The Chinese community has two main newspapers: the *American Newspaper* (*Jornal Americano*), which is aimed at Taiwanese readers, and the *Chinese Newspaper for South America* (*Jornal Chinês para a América do Sul*), whose target audience are the Mainland Chinese immigrants. The latter was founded by Lee Hoi On in 1985 to unite the Chinese community. It provides news about Mainland China, but also dedicates a page to the news from Taiwan and a supplement to the news from Guangdong Province. In 1997, the newspaper had a circulation of 2,000 copies.

¹² Shieh Arquitetos Associados, 2018

In São Paulo, there are more than a hundred Chinese artistic, cultural, religious and sports associations. The most notable is the *Chinese Association of Brazil (Associação Chinesa do Brasil)*, established in 1980. It lists 17 member organizations, among which are *tongxianghui* (native-place associations), groups focused on economic development and youth groups. Other important associations are the *Chinese Social Center of São Paulo (Centro Social Chinês de São Paulo)*, the *Guangdong Province Association (Associação da Província de Guandong)*, the *General Association of Qingtian of Brazil (Associação Geral da Província de Qingtian do Brasil)*, the *Wenzhou Association of Brazil (Associação Wenzhou do Brasil)*, the *Association of the Taiwan-Brazil Chamber of Commerce (Associação da Câmara de Comércio Taiwan-Brasil)* and the *Hakka Social Center (Centro Social Hakka)*. They hold traditional celebrations of the Chinese community.¹³

From “deterritorialization” to multiterritoriality: Living the “glocal” in the metropolis

The analysis of the process of building the Liberdade neighbourhood showed that there was a movement of immigrant populations from “deterritorialization” (which is a myth, as will be explained later), through “reterritorialization” and culminating in multiteritoriality. To understand this process, it is necessary to define the territory as a “socially constructed space” that “unfolds along a continuum that hails from the more 'concrete' and 'functional' political-economic domination to the more subjective and / or cultural-symbolic appropriation”.¹⁴

¹³ Freitas, 2004; Stenberg, 2012.

¹⁴ Haesbaert, 2005, p.6775.

Thus, the territory is functional, as it is used by its agents (state, institutions, social groups ...) as a resource, either as protection or shelter (the “home”), source of material resources, means of production, for disciplining and control of individuals, relationships and phenomena. It is also used in the construction and control of connections and networks (especially flows of people, goods and information). However, at the same time, the territory is used to produce meanings, such as the identification and symbolization of groups through spatial referents (starting at the border itself), therefore, the territory is not related to “having”, but to “being”.

Basically, the territory has the character of maintaining the culture, traditions and is capable of arousing feelings of belonging, protection, familiarity, comfort, because there is where the subject's community and family are. It produces territorial identities through “symbolic control” by its agents. Such management of the territory's semiosphere happens in its landscape, which, according to Milton Santos (1988) is “the domain of the visible, what the view embraces. It is formulated not only by volumes, but also by colors, movements, smells, sounds etc.”¹⁵ The space is appropriated, ordered and its landscape is shaped according to the interests of the agents to achieve their main objective: their survival. It usually includes the coercion and disciplinarization of individuals. The ordering of the space with the symbols that evoke the homeland of the immigrant reproduces in the neighbourhood landscape the victory of the outsider who overcame adversity and reterritorialized there.

The trajectory of the diaspora begins with a “deterritorializing” process, “uprooting”, “relocation”, abandonment of the homeland,

¹⁵ Santos, 1998, 21.

but not a “deterritorialization”, because, when abroad, the migrant is involved in the web of relationships guaranteed by the migrant group, so that even in places far from homeland, it ends up feeling “at home” and reinventing “home” within a globally structured diaspora. “Deterritorialization” itself is a myth because there is no man without territory. And this “network” provides him with familiar cultural parameters.

The second stage is “reterritorialization”, the production of new territories. All of these territories carry a high symbolic charge, since they are immersed in the world of imagery and simulacra. Let us use the landscapes of Liberdade as examples: Chinese stores, acupuncture clinics, martial arts academies, Buddhist temples, Chinese ideograms on restaurant plates. They are all virtualizations of the homeland of the Chinese diaspora that make these neighbourhoods more “typical” than any modern city in China.

Such landscape has the function of preserving the memory and traditions of these ethnic groups, integrating the community and facilitating the mutual help, which, nonetheless, possess a simultaneously coercive character, because this process enables the community to monitor individual’s behaviour. The community may demand from its subjects the maintenance of culture, customs and ethnic loyalty, avoiding their assimilation to the majority society and guaranteeing the survival of the “colony”. It is also a way of delimiting the borders of these territories that were built by these allochthonous communities, which mark out where, in this case, the “Brazilian São Paulo” ends and where the “Asian São Paulo” begins. It also signals the borders of the members of these communities, who claim that their origin is another place, despite their new home being Brazil. These landscapes are “spaces of difference”.

The “cultural peculiarity” of these spaces is also converted into a commodity and becomes a product, providing sustenance to its inhabitants through trade and tourism, following the logic of production and reproduction of capital, with its typical handicraft shops, tea houses and typical restaurants. However, the affiliation to the homeland by the migrant and his descendants is not a total experience and this is where the third stage of the diaspora, “multiterritoriality”, comes in.

The French sociologist Yves Barel clearly expresses the meaning of the word multiterritoriality: “Man, being a political animal and a social animal, is also a territorializing animal. Unlike, perhaps, other animal species, its work of territorialization presents, however, a striking particularity: the relationship between the individual or the human group and the territory is not a two-way relationship. This means that nothing prevents this individual or group from producing and "inhabiting" more than one territory. (...) it is rare that only one territory is sufficient to correctly assume all dimensions of an individual or group life. The individual, for example, lives at the same time at his level, at the level of his family, of a group, of a nation. There is therefore territorial multi-ownership”.¹⁶

The development of telecommunication systems and intercontinental means of transportation has enabled the migrant to reinvigorate his “distant” ties with his homeland as well as with migrants established in various regions of the globe. The immigrant has an uncommon multiscale territoriality, as he participates in strong relations with his neighbourhood (his ethnic space), his country of origin (an important space of identity reference, but not the only one), and as a diaspora subject on the

¹⁶ Quoted in Haesbaert, 2005, p. 6784.

global scale in which it reproduces itself. Diasporic subjects build transnational identities through strong economic and cultural relationships at the planetary level and experiences the globalization processes.

Thus, multi-territoriality has as its basic conditions “the presence of a large multiplicity of territories and their articulation in the form of network-territories. These, (...) are by definition always multiple territories in that they can conjugate zone-territories (manifested on a spatially narrower scale) through connecting networks (on a wider scale)”.¹⁷

Liberdade’s Oriental Quarter can be considered as a zone-territory, circumscribed by its “cultural landscape”, which has functional purposes and symbolic value to the immigrant community, but at the same time is hierarchically articulated, “embedded” in relation to each other. to the Brazilian territory, which overlaps this “small territory”, imposing its jurisdiction. The allochthonous community that inhabits this ethnic space does not live completely enclosed in itself (as much as some may try) and it should be emphasized that immigrants develop a form of affection with their “new country” as it is where they seek to build their new home. and claim civil and political rights.

In addition to this “vertical” relationship with the national state, a “horizontal” relationship develops simultaneously between these territories and the homeland of diaspora subjects and the various immigrant communities around the world. They are discontinuous zone-territories that interact with each other at a distance, influencing, and in some way integrating other territories, giving rise to the so-called network-territories. Zone-territories follow a reticular logic, turning into “nodes” or “points” on a map,

¹⁷ Haesbaert, 2005, p. 6788.

interconnected by flows of goods, information, capital, and people. These are the places where newcomers arrive seeking support from their countrymen; where immigrants can find the goods of the homeland that they miss; where community members receive the news from their homeland and the other diaspora centres; and are places of investment by companies from the homeland of the immigrants. They live in an eternal shuttle between the hostland and the homeland, successively (by physical mobility) or concomitantly (by virtual mobility). The allochthonous subjects are attached to places that belong to different worlds, experiencing a true transnational “topoligamy”. The term glocalization is quite pertinent in this relationship between the 'local' and the 'global' of diasporas, a process that follows the path of hybridism and is capable of producing new territories.

Rogério Haesbaert (2013) summarizes this situation: “The notion of glocalization allows us to think of an overlap of territories, a multiscale territoriality with various forms of insertion in the circuits of globalization. It also highlights the possibility of sharing more than one territory, both in the most literal sense of overlapping (simultaneously "embedded") and the possibility (flexibility) of triggering, depending on the situation, various territories. Also, in this case, what appears in a perspective as deterritorializing may actually represent the presence or possibility of experiencing multiple territories”.¹⁸

Diaspora allows for extraterritoriality that is used according to the needs of the individuals and communities that structure it. The notion of “home” is “flexibilized” by allowing diaspora members to make the most of their homeland, making investments, closing deals, visiting relatives, traveling on tourism, etc., without

¹⁸ Hasbaert, 2013, p.1774.

necessarily having to return to it and they can concomitantly capture the opportunities the diaspora offers, such as the possibility of enjoying a better quality of life in the hostland. They experience multiple territories and have multiple identities: that of their country of origin and that of the country where they live in.¹⁹

Besides the function of these neighbourhoods as territories for their ethnic groups, we can also think of them as important elements in the process of building the city of São Paulo. The city changes according to the transformation of society over time, it is an eternal transformation through multiple processes of construction and destruction of images, it is always an “unfinished work”. Henri Lefebvre's differentiation between the terms “city” and “urban” is useful: “The city is a material morphology, is the present, immediate reality, an architectural practical-sensitive datum, and the urban is a social morphology, is the social reality, composed of relations conceived, built and/or reconstructed”.²⁰

Final Considerations

When Brazil received the contingents of Asian immigrants, its society, which had hitherto been derived from predominantly Catholic European whites, indigenous peoples and Africans, changed. This transformation was marked in the landscape of São Paulo with its “typical” architecture, continuing to the present day, because its community wishes to preserve its “cultural memory”, preventing these buildings from being erased in the process of rewriting the urban fabric.

The dynamics of urban processes are also marked in these neighbourhoods; we can mention among them the “social

¹⁹ Cohen, 2008; Haesbaert, 2005, 2013.

²⁰ Quoted in Souza, 2008, p. 3.

displacement of space". At the end of the nineteenth century, Liberdade housed farms where São Paulo's elite lived, but the process of industrialization and urbanization of the city transformed these "upper class" neighbourhoods into "working class" ones. The former mansions changed their function and turned into pensions and tenements for the low-income immigrants who sought low-cost rents and easy commuting to their workplaces, which was provided by the proximity of the central city, and nearly a century later, they gave way to commercial venues and the homes of literate middle-class families. These spaces also "culturally shifted": Liberdade welcomed Japanese immigrants in the early twentieth century, and later the Chinese. These are spaces that have been re-signified from an economic (real estate) and cultural (ethnic) point of view. The very use of these spaces has radically changed: from quiet residential areas to bustling commercial areas. The fact that São Paulo City Hall has built several of Liberdade's cultural landmarks demonstrates that these spaces were re-appropriated for an economic interest of turning them into tourist spots that would generate income for the metropolis.²¹

However, the most enduring legacy left by immigrant "ethnic spaces" is immaterial, more precisely, the cultural richness they provide to Brazilian society, as they are "recipients of culture" that spill over into the majority society, which appropriates this legacy and redefines it. For the *Paulistanos*, this is a part of the city of São Paulo that constitutes it and is already integrated in the collective memory. At the same time, these identity spaces act as gateways to the global mass culture flows of the Asian continent, fuelling successive exchanges.

²¹ Barros, 2012.

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FROM GUANGDONG TO BRAZIL: ITINERARIES OF A SINO- MOZAMBICAN COMMUNITY



Lorenzo Macagno

This article¹ explores the itineraries and trajectories of a very specific Chinese community. First, it reconstructs the tenuous incorporation of this Chinese into the colonial society of Mozambique, an ex-Portugal overseas province in the 1950s. At the end of this article, I discuss the narratives of deception that emerged after the independence of Mozambique in 1975, when the Chinese had to abandon the possibility of a Portuguese future for their lives and decided to settle in Brazil. Indeed, once considered “good Portuguese” by the colonial authorities, the new context that emerged out of the independence of Mozambique forced these Chinese to “choose” the route of the diaspora. Many settled in Portugal, Canada, the United States, and Australia. But the majority, as we shall see, chose Brazil and, in particular, the city of Curitiba in the State of Paraná. Here they became engaged in commercial and professional activities, and in 1989 they founded the Associação Cultural Chinesa do Paraná (Cultural Chinese Association of Paraná).

From Guangdong to Mozambique

The first contingents of Chinese to arrive in Mozambique were mainly small craftsmen and carpenters; others dedicated

¹ This article was made possible through the support of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development/CNPq, Brazil.

themselves to fishing and horticulture. Many of this early Chinese were originating from the Sze Yup counties of Guangdong. Over the decades, a number of British-owned companies, like South African Timbu, East African Shipping, Allen Wack and The Beira Boating Company, set up branches in the region, encouraged by the existence of the 'Beira Corridor'² between Rhodesia and Beira, whose port was the only sea route for the neighbouring country. Many Chinese, and their descendants, found work in these companies. The children of those early pioneers, born in Mozambique, became successful business owners, and many opened restaurants and "*casas de pasto*"³. Some found work as low-level employees of the colonial administration, in the port and customs warehouses. Later, the more successful ones managed to make their fortunes, becoming businessmen and builders.

The majority of the first families to arrive in Mozambique, both in the city of Beira and in Lourenço Marques, did not cut their ties with Guangdong, or with China more generally. Some of the children and grandchildren of this first generation were sent home to study, or to spend time with family members in Macau and Hong Kong who were unable to travel to Africa. In the 1930s, the violent Japanese attacks on the villages of Guangdong during the Sino-Japanese war caused those who had still hoped to return to China to change their minds. Thus, Africa became a destination of permanent settlement.

It should be recalled that the history of the province of Guangdong is closely related to the complex process of the

²The short route which connected Beira to Mutare in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) came to be known as the 'Beira Corridor'.

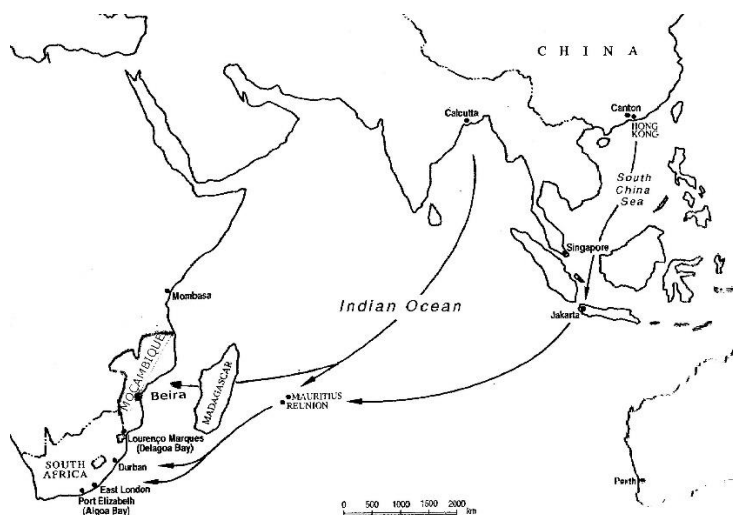
³In colonial Mozambique, this was the term used to refer to the places where the Africans took their meals.

formation of Chinese nationalism which had, in turn, far-reaching repercussions among the Chinese communities of the Portuguese Overseas Provinces (Pan, 1998). In 1895, after forming the *Revive China Society* (Xingzhong Hui), Dr. Sun Yat Sen decided that Guangdong province would become the base for revolutionary activities. The role played by the Chinese associations abroad was to be fundamental for promoting the nationalism ideal linked to the *Kuomintang* (The Chinese Nationalist Party – KMT). Another important association, with branches on various continents, was the *Chee Kung Tong*, whose codes and membership practices followed the principles of freemasonry. Its origins go back to the 18th century, when its members sought to conspire against the *Qing* dynasty which was related to the Manchu. From the 19th century, the branches of *Chee Kung Tong* extended throughout Southeast Asia, America, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and Mozambique.

In South Africa there were also many branches of the *Kuomintang*. They established from 1920 onwards in centres as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Kimberley and Port Elizabeth. Those Chinese who had settled away from their homeland were often referred to as the “overseas” Chinese or *huach’iao* (hua quiao). As the work of Melanie Yap and Dianne Leong Man shows, those associations not only gave moral but also substantial material support to Dr. Sun Yat Sen cause: “From 1911 onwards, vast sums were collected for various campaigns, military equipment and publications” (Yap & Man, 1996: 245).

In the case of the Chinese of Mozambique, their talent in exercising the role of “good Portuguese”, as exemplary citizens, lay in another two positive attributes that were equally valuable for the colonial administration. First of all, it was a community that was descended from the old Republican, who was later opposed to the

Mao Tse Tung regime. They were therefore located, according to Portuguese authorities of the 1950 decade, on the opposite side of the “communist threat”. Secondly, the *habitus* of the Chinese of Beira, and their *ethos*, which was always focused on improving socially and economically, readily embraced the modernizing efforts of the Portuguese administration of the time. The exercise of this modernity did not contradict the maintenance of the “tradition” as happened in certain public festivities, or the preservation of an “oriental” memory in public and family rituals like the commemoration of the Chinese New year in Beira. This *ethos* became ethnically inoffensive for the assimilationist aims of Portugal; it was, without doubt, nothing more than a ceremonial “return” to China.



This map illustrates the displacement from Guangdong for Mozambique and South-Africa [Source: Melanie Yap and Dianne Leong Man, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions. The History of the Chinese in South Africa*, 1996: 39)

However, the symbolic incorporation of this past was in keeping with the Portuguese civilizing ideal, which was often permeated by a singular orientalist admiration. Both of the “civilizing” worlds, far from cancelling each other out, could thus be admired and mutually recognized.

Hence, marriages and networks of family and kin relationships followed a pattern that was “officially” endogamous, and which reinforced the reproduction of a differentiated ethnicity. However, the first contingents – the majority of which arrived without their Chinese womenfolk – had relations with African women that were almost never publicly recognized. This dimension of interethnic and interracial relationships involved complex dynamics. In fact there is nowadays a significant mixed population established in the Mozambican territory (notably in Inhassoro). These groups, locally called “misto-chinas”, clearly did not form part of the diaspora that left Mozambique to go to Brazil.



Chee Kung Tong Association in Beira, Mozambique, c. 1930 (courtesy of Kwan Vei Quio, Curitiba/Brazil)

From 1950 to 1960, the newspapers *Notícias da Beira* and *Diário de Moçambique* began to cover events related to the Chinese community more closely: sports events, meetings with local authorities, festivities, interviews and deaths. The newspaper articles were marked by a celebratory and flattering tone. Learning to accept “their place” and diligently collaborate with the society of Beira, these Chinese became, in the eyes of the colonial authorities, “good Portuguese” and “good” citizens.

Those celebratory narratives were written in a period when Portugal was attempting to demonstrate to the international community its special overseas vocation. This position became more radical when, faced with anti-colonial international pressures, Portugal resorted to an argument of the existence of an irreversible emotional tie between the ‘Mother Country’ and its colonies. It was a kind of “colonial policy of feelings” that drank enthusiastically from the Luso-Tropicalist wellsprings created by Gilberto Freyre: “We are materially poor, but rich in spirit” or “We are a small country, but our heart is big” claimed some of the preferred slogans of the time. This dimension of emotionally-driven rhetoric enabled the processes of a new construction of the Other – as a “near-distant” and a virtual member of the Portuguese “family” to be addressed in a unique way.

Table

Census of the Chinese group individuals, 1928-1960 - Mozambique⁴

Census Years	Total	Males	Females	Lourenço Marques	Beira
1928	896	750	146	314	403
1935	1,056	818	238	483	399
1940	1,449	1,011	438	570	593
1945	1,565	1,006	559	677	659
1950	1,613	997	616	709	665
1955	1,945	1,141	804	845	888
1960	2,098	1,136	962	992*	1,027**
*Corresponding Chinese individuals in the district of Lourenço Marques					
**Corresponding Chinese individuals in the district of Beira					
SOURCE: Rebelo, 1970, p. 134.					

This table represents the results of seven colonial censuses (from 1928 to 1960). The colonial census classified the Chinese community with the “racial” category “Amarelos” (Yellow). From 1974-75 onwards, the majority of this community settled in Brazil. Currently, according to statistics that need to be improved, Curitiba has approximately 150 “Sino-Mozambican” families, totalling around 1,000 individuals. In São Paulo, according to a statement from the “Sino-Mozambicans” themselves, there are around 50 families.

The “good” and “amiable” Chinese

“Young”, “attentive”, “responsible”, “lively”, “upright”, “good sportsmen and women”, “orderly”, “hardworking”, “disciplined” and above all “amiable”. These are the adjectives that appeared most frequently in the newspaper chronicles of 1950 and 1960 to characterize the Chinese of Beira. They played the role of categories of flattery and praise and therefore, as a means of classifying and

⁴Soares Rebelo (1970, p. 134)

creating meaning. The Chinese community of Beira came to exist through this system of flattery. For the chroniclers of the time, sport was a kind of map, on which it was possible to read and interpret the “character”, the way of being, the *ethos* of the Chinese. These narratives of affinity were not produced in a neutral political environment. It was a period when Portugal was becoming more radical in its “multiracialist” discourse, in a context of growing international pressure to put an end to the colonial presence in its Overseas Territories. But at the same time, it was also a period when the young people of the Chinese community were increasingly following the causes of the local Catholic Church.

The Catholic diocese of Beira was created in 1943. In the 1950s, many “Luso-Chinese” youth converted to Catholicism. One of the factors that favoured these conversions was the action, at the heart of the Chinese community, of Father Serafin Bruno Amaral, who was linked to the famous Bishop of Beira, Dom Sebastião Soares de Resende. Through Father Amaral’s intervention, the *Associação da Juventude Católica Chinesa* was formed in 1954.

The attribution of amiability, seen in the above-mentioned newspaper texts, creates an expectation of imminent reciprocity, and therefore, the possibility of constructing a moral link. The object of praise should respond with a firm and unequivocal gesture, in order to return the trust placed in them. Therefore, the categories of flattery created a virtual commitment to “collaboration”. In other words, the metalanguage involved in this dynamic of potential affinities could be conveyed in the following imperative: “You may be one of ours, but you need to prove it”. In fact, from the first events in the struggle for independence against Portugal in Africa, and at a time when Maoist China was beginning to support these movements (particularly in Angola), the Chinese

of Mozambique had to make a clear gesture to show their vocation as “good Portuguese”.

In that tense period for Portugal, marked by conflicts, the Chinese community of Beira could not destroy the trust that had been placed in them as good citizens. Thus, an event that led to a grand gesture of support for Portugal, on the part of the Chinese of Beira, was the start of the struggle for Angolan independence in 1961. The death of some settlers in that country – at the hand of the followers of Holden Roberto of the UPA (Union of Peoples of Angola) and subsequent founder of the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) – led to disturbances throughout the Overseas Colonies. Following these incidents, in November 1961, a contingent of directors of the *Atlético chinês*, together with members of the *Juventude Católica Chinesa da Beira* decided to express publicly their solidarity with the “Portuguese family” by personally presenting a sum of money (under the form of a check or bill) to the Governor of the Province of Manica and Sofala, Commander Lopes Praça, for the “victims of terrorism” of Angola. The presentation ceremony, which was reported on the first page of the newspaper *Notícias da Beira*, was attended by various members of the *Atlético Chinês* - its president Po Quin, as well as the president of the *Juventude Chinesa Católica da Beira*, Hon Quin Chee. On that occasion, Chee, entrusted with the task of giving a speech before the Governor, referred to Mozambique as a “piece of the Portuguese territory that is also ours”. At the end of the text, the newspaper states that after the ceremony to present the check, “Mr, Commander Lopes Praça, in a brilliant and sensitive improvised speech, thanked the initiative of the Chinese youth, to whose community he gave direct praise”. Some months before, the first page of the newspaper *Notícias da Beira* had published a photograph in which Po Quin, president of the *Atlético Chinês*, was

pictured presenting a sporting shield of the Club to the governor of Manica and Sofala. It was a welcome gesture to the new governor, who had just taken office.



This is one of the first Basketball team of the “Atlético Chinês”, in Beira (Mozambique), c. 1950 (courtesy of Kwan Vei Quio, Curitiba)

These public expressions of solidarity with Portugal manifested by the Chinese community of Beira were a kind of metaphor for the colonial construction of amiability to which I referred above. It was clear that, in the case of the Chinese of Mozambique, the attribution of amiability may have also acted as a mechanism for the creation, in the near future, of a commitment of reciprocity, implicitly obliging it to return the flattery and praise received, in the form of unswerving loyalty. Here, in a dangerously seductive way, the gestures that convey the “recognition” of the Other – and its respective categories of flattery – includes another metalanguage: one that enables this relation to be seen as a kind of “double bind”. Neither fully Portuguese, nor fully Chinese, when

the political winds changed direction, both in the Metropole and in the Overseas Colonies, the only possible route left for the “Luso-Chinese” was the diaspora. With the independence of Mozambique in 1975, and the movement of April 25th in Portugal, the former flatterers of these “good tenants” lost their place in the new local and international scenario. Without a “father”, or a “mother”, to shower them with praise, the Chinese of Beira became, in a manner of speaking, orphans. Overnight, those “kind” friends turned into threatening enemies. They continued, undoubtedly, influenced by an “anti-communist” feeling inherited from their ancestors. Perhaps for this reason, the Portugal of the “Revolução dos Cravos” (Carnation Revolution) not necessarily was the best option for their near future. While some families settled in Portugal most of them opt for Brazil, a country at the time was still ruled by a military government.

From the end of the 1960s to the beginning of the 1970s, when the war between the FRELIMO (Mozambique Liberation Front) and the Portuguese army became more intense, the Chinese of Beira, as “citizens” of Portugal, began to be called up for military service, to defend the Portuguese flag. Some time afterwards, with the defeat of the Portuguese army, independence negotiations began in Lusaka. As capitalist “owners”, and because they were suspected of complicity with the regime, the Chinese community began to feel, from 1974 – i.e. during the transition government – a growing hostility towards them. With the arrival of independence, this mistrust grew: unpredictable, armed night searches for “hidden goods”, forced manual labour at arbitrarily assigned moments (“sweeping the street” and “digging wells” were some of the tasks imposed, according to statements by the Chinese of Beira interviewed in Curitiba), as well as the daily obligation to

take part in the public demonstrations of the Dynamizing Groups⁵. Within a short space of time, a law of nationalizations came into force. And, after the III Congress of 1977, FRELIMO transformed into a Party-State, and adhered officially to “Marxism-Leninism”. Although there was no deliberate “expulsion” of the Chinese community, these political changes meant that within a short space of time, the Chinese went from being “amiable owners” to “undesirable tenants”. Thereafter, the abandonment of the country which had begun in 1973 and 1974 intensified after independence.

In some cases, the departure was planned in advance, through the activation of respective contacts and networks of external relations. Macau and Taiwan were some of the initial destinations; however, the majority headed for Brazil, more specifically for the city of Curitiba. Others “dispersed” to Portugal, Australia, Canada and the United States. Some, for specific reasons, decided to stay in Mozambique. In the city of Beira, one of the few who stayed, Chin Kock Saum, died in 2009. In Lourenço Marques (Maputo), more families seem to have remained: among them was one linked to the *Ho Ling*, a shop located downtown (in the “baixa”), which was run by Yum Man Wah, who besides being a businessman, also owned a small *machamba* (smallholding) in Manhiça, near Maputo.

From Mozambique to Brazil

With the independence of Mozambique, the tenuous link of the amiability, that which made the Chinese ‘good Portuguese’, was broken. The political circumstances had changed. In Portugal, at

⁵The *Dynamizing Groups* were mobilization groups (in the factories, districts, etc) whose function was to disseminate the guidelines of the Party Frelimo and serve as local structures of organization of society.

the time of *Revolução dos Cravos* (the “Carnation Revolution”) the figure of the *retornados* (those who returned to Portugal from the overseas territories), including the “Sino-Mozambicans”, became an inconvenience. As I said previously, for those which “anti-communist” feelings were more explicit, Brazil seemed a good destination. At that time, the Brazilian military regime – ruled by Ernesto Geisel - granted them access to residence visas and work permits, in the context of a policy to attract the *retornados* from Portuguese Africa.

Could it be that the dispersion which the Chinese of Beira began to experience after 1975 became a kind of self-fulfilling prophesy, fed by their perpetual condition of “close-distant Others” Never fully Portuguese, never fully Chinese, the possibility of a future for these “amiable” foreigners in Mozambique ended up becoming a fantasy, at the start of the process of independence: “now I’m an African of Chinese origin, with Portuguese nationality, and naturalized Brazilian” said one of my interlocutors in Curitiba, recalling his peaceful life in Beira in the 1960s.

Why did the majority of the Chinese of Beira choose to settle in Curitiba? In conversations and interviews I held with the response almost always led to the figure of the “pioneer” Chee Fan Lai. He had arrived in Brazil before 1975, more specifically in the city of Santos, where a major port is located, to visit his sick father who was working there at that time.

Chee Fan Lai’s father had arrived in Santos directly from China, without spending any time in Mozambique. After inheriting some money on his father’s death (and after having spent some time in various Brazilian cities), Chee Fan Lai settled on Curitiba as his place of permanent residence, opening a fast-food restaurant in the center of the city. When the Chinese of Mozambique, looking for a place to settle, began to contact their family networks outside the

country, the news began to spread that Curitiba could be a good destination.

Although convenient from the “native’s point of view”, this narrative of the “pioneer” does little to explain the structural and political conditions that motivated this choice. Other responses given by the Chinese from Beira refer to a kind of social-cultural compatibility between the two cities. There were, according to my interlocutors, many similarities between the Beira of the late colonial period, with its hotels, clubs, cafés and networks of sociability, and the Curitiba of the 1970s which was undergoing rapid urban expansion:

Curitiba became like a second Beira. Here [in Curitiba] people were very close to each other. It was the same in Beira. We lived in harmony. It’s a family atmosphere; when there’s a celebration, everybody gets together. We communicate a lot with each other. Lots of people [Chinese of Beira from overseas] came here to visit us, and it reminded them of Beira, they would say “it’s just like a second Beira here”. Lots of things are similar to Beira. The *Cultural Chinese Association of Paraná*, for example, was 80% percent built by people from Beira⁶.

Perhaps it is no mere coincidence that the Chinese from Beira chose one of the least “African” cities of Brazil. However, in their status as former colonial settlers in search of a new place (a kind of lost colonial paradise), it is possible that this search for points of compatibility between Beira and Curitiba was merely a justification elaborated *a posteriori*, or merely – in the terms of Franz Boas – a

⁶ Curitiba, interview with K.V.Q., May 17, 2008.

“secondary explanation”. It is probable that one of the key protagonists in the choice of Curitiba was “Brother Cordeiro”, a known figure in the 1960s and 70s of the *Colégio Marista da Beira*, where many Chinese studied (High School).



Detail of the “facade” of The Cultural Chinese Association of Paraná
(Curitiba, Brazil)

Born in the south of Brazil, Brother Armando Corbellini, better known in Beira as “brother Cordeiro”, left for Africa in 1948 after finishing his Marist studies at the *Escola Normal Superior* of the *Instituto Champagnat de Porto Alegre* (Brazil). Before arriving in Mozambique, he spent some time in Angola. On the eve of independence of Mozambique, he escaped to the border and managed to reach Rhodesia, from where he took a flight to Portugal. He stayed with the Marist Brothers of Portugal for a while, but in 1975 still he returned to Brazil, settling in Rio de Janeiro. One of the jobs of “brother Cordeiro” in Rio de Janeiro was to receive and assign *retornados* (returnees) to appropriate

places, particularly those coming from Mozambique and Angola . This task was carried out in the context of the *Movimento de apoio ao emigrante português* (MAEP, Support Movement for Portuguese Emigrants) which was set up in Rio de Janeiro in September 1975. At that time, this city was the compulsory destination for the majority of “refugees” and former Portuguese colonials. It is where all the newly arrived would put their documentation in order, before dispersing throughout Brazil. Brother Cordeiro, who was also a pilot and a parachuting instructor, died in Rio de Janeiro in June 1996.

There is no discernible common pattern in the dispersion experience of the Chinese from Beira. Those whose families had a network of cultural and commercial relations in places like Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore managed to build strategies for departure and prepare their lives outside Mozambique with more material planning. But those who, at the time of the dispersion, did not have help from distant relatives, received only some assistance from consular employees in their country of destination, particularly Brazil, where the above-mentioned agreement with Portugal, and the MAEP in Rio de Janeiro, gave the “returnees” from the former colonies, including the Chinese from Beira, some degree of diplomatic protection. As one of these “Chinese” now living in Curitiba recalls: “we were first degree refugees”. Those who managed to leave in more favourable financial conditions were able to take some personal belongings with them, including family photographs.

The photographic images that accompanied the newspaper article about the Chinese community published in the *Diário de Moçambique* and *Notícias da Beira* are not simply images of a public nature. In that period, those pictures were reproduced and distributed between the families. They emerge from the “intimate”

family world of the Chinese of Beira, they are, as such, part of the archive of memories protected by the diaspora itself.

Photography, with its practices and representations, occupies a central place in the constitution of the cultural and class *habitus* of the Chinese of Beira. Around 1950, there were three photographic studios in the city, whose owners belonged to this community: *Foto Estúdio*, which was owned by Eginwo Shung Chin; *Foto Beira*, which was owned by Lee King Wing, and finally *Foto Central*, which belonged to Kom Loom, who died in Australia. Much of the social and sporting and cultural life of the Chinese was portrayed by these photographic studios. But the photographs kept by these families who spread throughout the world are not only “Studio” pictures. Around 1950 many of the Chinese immigrants, now successful businessmen, began to acquire consumer goods like radios, cars, record players and cameras. Thus, cameras gradually left the studios and entered daily life. It became possible to record images of the community at numerous different times, like picnics, dancing and parties of the *Escola Chinesa*, sports meetings, outings, hunting or fishing trips in the “*mato*” (countryside), official ceremonies, and so on. My meeting with the “Sino-Mozambican diaspora” was, I may say, very much a meeting with photographic images too.

Some time after my interviews and conversations with the Chinese from Beira in Curitiba, between 2005 and 2009, I returned to Mozambique, taking the reverse route to the one they had taken more than thirty years earlier. I thus discovered that the Agostinho Neto state school now operates in the building of the old *Escola Chinesa*. The old building of the *Clube Chinês* now serves as a regional headquarters of ARPAC (Cultural Patrimony Archive). Beyond the “experience” of traveling to spaces (about which I had heard so much in Curitiba) it was necessary for me to

confirm, through the sources of the time, the social prominence that appeared self-evident in the narratives of the Chinese diaspora. In the newspapers I consulted in the Historical Archive of Mozambique (AHM), I found various blurry images, the same ones that I had seen in Curitiba, among so many others, in their clear original form. In Mozambique these photographs were merely historical artefacts deposited in the archives while in Brazil they formed part of a vivid contemporary universe of references and they had, to paraphrase Igor Kopytoff (1986), a “social life” of their own. These images constitute, for the diaspora of the Chinese of Beira, a place of memories to which it is possible to return indefinitely. The fact that they belong to both a public record (the newspapers) and a private one (family albums) makes them essential testimonies of the protagonism that these “good Portuguese” had in the colonial modernity of Beira from the 1950s and 1960s – a modernity which, incidentally, they were never able to abandon.

Final words

The dispersion of the Chinese from Mozambique settled in Brazil is marked by two key periods and movements: 1) the departure from Guangdong for Mozambique, and 2) the departure from Mozambique to the world (particularly Brazil). Because of Mozambique was an Overseas Province of Portugal, this Chinese people entered Brazil with Portuguese passport.

Even though some of the Chinese of Beira, particularly the older ones, had managed to maintain Portuguese “nationality” after leaving Mozambique, many of them were denied this nationality when attempting to renew their passports at the Portuguese consulates of the countries which they settled in. This denial, which consumed their condition as “Portuguese”, which was now

no longer recognized, produced various narratives that circulated within the community of the Chinese of Beira, and spread throughout the world, as narratives of disappointment, told and retold a thousand times. One of the most well-known and illustrative of these narratives relates to what I shall call here “the passport incident”. The event that provoked this incident took place at the Portuguese consulate in Curitiba and consisted of the denial by the consular authorities to renew the Portuguese nationality of a Chinese of Beira of the “diaspora”. The reaction to this rejection was immediate: right there, at the counter, this “African of Chinese origin and Portuguese nationality” tore the pages of his old Portuguese passport, one by one, flinging them into the face of the consular employee. The once “amiable” Chinese had now become undesirable and “aggressive”.

The emotional inconvenience of these Chinese of Beira is reinforced by the apparent paradox that many of them had defended the Portuguese flag, during the war against the FRELIMO. As one Chinese from Beira, now living in Curitiba, said: “I served in the army for forty-five months. I tried to renew my Portuguese passport and was refused! They do not recognize me as a Portuguese citizen. This was one of the reasons I became a naturalized Brazilian. They do not recognize me. I was born in Mozambique, I fought in Mozambique, I had to swear allegiance to the Portuguese flag, as all Portuguese did before serving in the army. And after all that, they don’t recognize me”. The objective, and political criteria, that defined “national” had obviously changed. With this change, the subjectivity of those actors, now targets of new identity denominations, moved from a confused sense of “affinity” to a clear “elective” decision: “now I feel more Brazilian, that is why I became a naturalized Brazilian”.

In the 1940 and 1950 decades, when the invitation to assume the role of “good Portuguese” was presented explicitly to them, the Chinese of Beira did not find any obstacle in accepting it. However, the sociopolitical circumstances that followed meant that they were unable to assume, until the ultimate consequences, a “Portugueseness” that was now denied to them with the same emphasis that it had originally been offered. Instead, they had to adapt, as Aihwa Ong (1999) states, to a “flexible citizenship”.

Finally, the question should be opened here about the scopes and comparative limits of this case study in relation to other similar “diasporas”. It might be a little hasty to extrapolate on the basis of the example of the “Sino-Mozambicans” to make them part of a wider, and extensively analysed, problem, subsumed under the concept of the “Chinese diaspora”. It is possible, however, that the comparison would become more fruitful in an analogy with other “Asian minorities” of Mozambique, such as the Ismaili, whose leaders managed to carefully prepare and coordinate the departure of their community from Mozambique before 1974 (Pereira Leite & Khouri).

With the changes that took place in the post-colonial period, the statute of the Chinese of Beira changed. The independence of Mozambique in 1975 and the end of the dictatorship in Portugal brought new spokespersons to a scenario that was already tainted by feelings of mistrust and apprehension towards these once “good Portuguese”. These feelings were partly due to new circumstances born out of the defeat of the Portuguese military and police forces in the Overseas Territories, i.e. it was a period in which the very substance that fed the idea of nation was undergoing a major change and urgently needed to recompose itself under a new identity and on new political bases. Portugal was on the threshold of abandoning the designs of its imperial vocation, and was

beginning to face the challenges of an imminent European future. As holders of an ambiguous citizenship, the Chinese of Beira also had to reinvent their condition as former Portuguese born in Mozambique. For those who settled in Brazil, the family photographs that evoked their African past are still a rich and significant source for the reproduction and the reinvention of a complex identity.

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STUDIES ON CHINESE MIGRATION TO BRAZIL: THE PRESENT STATE AND FUTURE TENDENCIES

Shu Changsheng and Pan Tianshu



Since the 1970s, there appeared sporadically some academic papers, individual biographies, travellers' tales and journalistic reports on Chinese immigration to Brazil and their diasporic culture. This paper first offers a literature review of the existing researches, then gives some information about the geographic origins of the Chinese immigrants in Brazil together with some statistical estimates. In conclusion, the author tries to point out the future development in this research field.

Introduction

In this paper, the term “Chinese” is used in *Lato Senso*, it refers not only to Chinese of Greater China, i.e., Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, but also to individuals of Chinese descentance from Southeast Asia, Africa Europe and the Two Americas. The readers may also notice some confusions about the terminologies such as *Chinese immigrants*, *Chinese diaspora* — sometimes used together, sometimes used separately. Of course, there is no clear-cut definition for these terms, but we know that when one uses the term *Chinese immigrants*, he is emphasizing the “immigrant” nature of Chinese population in a foreign country (in our case, Brazil), and when he uses *Chinese diaspora*, he refers to the “livelihood” and “ethnicity” of the Chinese in the host country.

This paper is divided into three parts: first, review of the existing literature on the study of the Chinese immigration and Chinese

diaspora in Brazil. Second, preliminary estimations on the number of Chinese population and their place of origins in China and their geographic distribution in Brazil. Third, the author analyses the existing problems and gives some ideas about the future tendencies of the studies on Chinese diaspora in Brazil. The main contributions of this paper are twofold. First, for the first time, a comprehensive literature review is made on the study of Chinese immigration to Brazil. Secondly, using official data, the author gives some relevant estimates on the number of Chinese immigrants and Chinese diaspora in Brazil. Nevertheless, due to the limited scope of information and contacts, this paper must have many loopholes. This is more the case when Taiwan recently released historical archives of the Central and South American Division of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (from 1909 to 1996). We hope the future researches will fill the gaps of this paper.

Literature Review

As the total population of Chinese diaspora in Brazil is relatively small, and the distance between China and Brazil is very far away, consequently, the research literature is relatively scarce. Due to this scarcity of academic papers, we consider as research literature immigrants biographies, memoirs of diplomats and travellers, journalist reports and diasporic essays, etc., after all, the contents of these works are trustworthy, therefore having a high bibliographic value. We divide the existing literature in three categories: I) literature in Brazilian Portuguese; II) literature written in Chinese language by Taiwanese and by Chinese immigrants in Brazil and III) literature written by the mainland Chinese authors. These three categories are presented hereafter in chronological order.

Brazilian Portuguese Literature

During 1970-2000 period, the main focus of Brazilian Portuguese literature is on the history of the 19th Chinese immigration to Brazil

As far as I know, Maria José Elias (1970), a researcher of the São Paulo Museum, was probably the first one in Brazil who initiated the study of the history Chinese immigration.¹ In her groundbreaking paper, Elias analysed in great detail the 19th century Brazilian controversies and debates on the necessity of importing Chinese laborers to substitute black slaves. She provided some valuable statistical and shipment information on the numbers of Chinese laborers transported and arrived at Brazil. She also gave a detailed study about the unsuccessful visit of Tong King-Sing (1832 – 1892; 唐景星, also known as Tang Tingshu, 唐廷枢). Tong, as director manager of China Merchant's Steam Navigation Company, visited Rio de Janeiro in 1883, accompanied by his secretary, an American black man. Tong proposed the establishment of a commercial shipment line between Brazil and China, but his proposal was rejected by emperor Pedro II of Brazil. The objective of Tong was to transport Chinese immigrants to Brazil, and from Brazil, take Café to China and the rest of the world. But when Tong came to know the Brazilian slave system and the resistances of Brazilian elite against Chinese laborers, Tong gave up the idea and returned to London before he completed his schedule. Elias was widely cited thereafter.

Research work as important as Elias's appeared only 29 year later. José Roberto Teixeira Leite (1999) made an exhaustive study on the impact of the Chinese immigration and Chinese culture on

¹ Elias, Maria José. "Introdução aos Estudos da Imigração Chinesa". *Anais do Museu Paulista*, No. 24, pp. 55-100, 1970.

Brazilian society and Brazilian art in the 19th century². In his celebrated book, Leite studied the 1812-1818 government registers of some Chinese laborers and their tea production activities in Rio de Janeiro. He detailed the life experiences of Chinese tea planters, and their lifestyle after emancipation.

Leite mentioned in his book that, in 1808 when Portuguese Royal family arrived at Rio, escaping from the Napoleonic war, a tea planting project was made by the Portuguese authorities. The Conde of Linhares even envisioned of bring 2 million Chinese labour hands to Brazil to work in tea plantations. In 1812, more than 200 Chinese were brought to Rio from Macau by Royal government of Dom João VI, Prince of Portugal. It was an economically strategic project, organized by Dom João VI. Together with those Chinese laborers came also with some tea seeds and seedlings, shipped from Macau by vessel *Vulcano*. These Chinese were probably tea planters of Hubei province, local famous for its green tea. Some of them were put to work in the Royal family garden, later known as Botanical Garden of Rio de Janeiro. Some were sent to Imperial Farm of Santa Cruz in Niterói. In 10th of September of 1814, disembarked on Rio, four educated Chinese (probably technical masters of tea processing), they were lodged at the residence of Conde of Barca. The Austrian painter, Johannes Moritz Rugendas, during his first travel to Brazil from 1821 to 1825, painted the Chinese *coolies* working on tea plantations, in the Botanical Garden of Rio de Janeiro. His painting was published in his book *Viagem Pitoresca através do Brasil*, whose text made reference of a colony of 300 Chinese in the City of Rio (see below).

² José Roberto Teixeira Leite. *A China no Brasil: Influências, Marcas, Ecos e Sobrevivência Chinesas na Sociedade e na Arte Brasileiras*. Editora Unicamp, 1999.



Although both sides strived a lot, the tea Project turned out to be a failure. On the one hand, the director of Botanical Garden treat Chinese laborers very harshly, keeping them as serfs, at the same time, they suspected that Chinese were intentionally keeping technical secrets about tea processing (this was probably a misunderstanding, because many Chinese drink green tea, did not know the Luso-Brazilian preference for black tea). On the other hand, the Chinese had great resistance to their condition of serfdom. When two of them fled away, the foremen of Botanical Garden hunted them with horses and dogs. A few of them escaped from the plantations and lived as cooks and fish Sellers. Chinese coolies who stayed on the Royal property complained about their serfdom, and in 1819, one Chinese who spoke Portuguese,

probably learnt it in Macau was named interpret official of the Chinese colony, and received a salary from the imperial court.³

But there is another version of the story. According to an unpublished paper of Arlene M. Kelly, the end of the first batch of 200 Chinese tea planters was a very chocking one. They were first locked in a warehouse of Rio Port, and then released to the forest around the city of Rio. They were hunted by Prince Dom Miguel and his gangs, with horse and dogs. D. Miguel was the son of Carlota Joaquina and D. João VI. The argument of D. Miguel and his young Portuguese aristocrats gave was that they were practicing human hunting as a sport game. No one knows how many Chinese tea planters survived the hunting.⁴

Leite also informed us that the Chinese immigrants of 19th suffered from the popular racial prejudice of Brazil: they were *coolies* and *opium addicted, rebellious* and *inassimilable*. They were accused of yielding loudly on streets, “selling fish” and “stealing chickens”. This stereotyped racial prejudice obsessed the Chinese immigrants in 19th century (figure below is extracted from Leite’s book).

³ LEITE, José Roberto Teixeira. “Chineses Entrados no Brasil 1814-1842.” In: _____. *A China no Brasil: influências, marcas, ecos e sobrevivência chinesas na sociedade e na arte brasileiras*. Campinas, SP: Ed. da Unicamp, 1999. p. 269-275.

⁴ Arlene M. Kelly, "Chinese and tea in Brazil: 1808 - 1822". Unpublished paper, University of Florida, 1976, p.4. Cited from Neill MacCaulay. *Dom Pedro I: A Luta pela Liberdade no Brasil e Em Portugal 1798-1834*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora Record, 1993, p.87.



"Uma rua no Rio de Janeiro em 19. Ou os efeitos da colonização chinesa no Brasil. Tere-
mos com essa nova raça de colonos uma interessante mistura de tipos, cores, costumes,
religiões, vestuários etc." Litografia de Angelo Agostini na *Vida Fluminense* número 139,
de 27 de agosto de 1870

In resume, we can assert that most of Chinese immigrants of 19th century were indentured laborers—i.e., *coolies*. They were smuggled to Brazil by immigration agents (Chinese middleman, i.e., *snakeheads*, English, Americans, Portuguese and Brazilian contractors and transporters). These immigrants arrived in Brazil generally under inhuman conditions, compacted on clipper vessels that had been utilized to transport African slaves. Those *coolies* had labour contracts of 5 to 8 years, some of them might have dreamed of earning enough money and returning to China with dignity. But what happened in reality was totally different. In Brazil, as well as in other countries of South America, they were deprived of personal freedom, and were treated as serfs and substitutes of black slaves. Some *coolies* survived the forced labour and gained their

liberty. Some opened restaurants, some established laundries or hotels. But rarely any of them brought family members to Brazil. Survivors rarely had the chance to return to China, most of them lived with indigenous or *criole* women and sold foods on streets (see figure below, Edmundo, 1938, p.199)⁵:



Almost at the same time of José Roberto Leite, Jeffrey Lesser (1999, 2001), a Brazilian-American scholar, highlighted the intense congressional debates over the question of the Brazilian ethnicity due to the necessity of importing non-European immigrants

⁵ Edmundo, Luiz. *O Rio de Janeiro de Meu tempo*. Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1938.

(especially agricultural laborers from Japan and China)⁶. Lesser dedicated one chapter of his book to the history of 19th century Chinese immigration to Brazil, and cited the sources of Maria José Elias. He analysed the impacts of non-european immigration on the formation of national identity of Brazil. Following lesser, Rogério Dezem (2005) further studied the Brazilian congressional debates about the "yellowness" of incoming migrants from 1878 to 1908, and traced the racial prejudices of Brazilian society since then⁷.

Fábio Lafaiete Dantas (2006) studied the history of the 1879 Brazilian diplomatic mission to China and examined the origins of the relations between Brazil and China⁸. The most recent references to the study of the 19th century Chinese immigrants in Brazil are the two books published by Carlos Francisco Moura (2012)⁹. The first book retold us the official visits of the royal envoy Liou She-shun (刘式训) of the Qing Dynasty in 1909. According to this book (page 21), royal envoy Liou met two Chinese immigrants living in Rio de Janeiro, on 13rd of October, 1909. One of them was named Afonso Maia Sen-Alô, who owned a small hotel. When Liou returned to China, Chinese residents in Rio de

⁶ Jeffrey Lesser. *A Negociação da Identidade Nacional: imigrantes, minorias e a luta pela etnicidade no Brasil*. Editora UNESP, 2001. Original English: LESSER, Jeffrey. *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.

⁷ Rogerio Dizem. *Matizes do "Amarelo": a Gênese dos Discursos sobre os Orientais no Brasil, 1878-1908*, São Paulo: Humanitas, 2005.

⁸ Fábio Lafaiete Dantas. *Origens das Relações entre o Brasil e a China—A Missão Especial de 1879*. Recife, Brasil, Liber Grafica, 2006.

⁹ Carlos Francisco Moura (2012). *Liou She-Shun, Plenipotenciário do Império da China, Viagem ao Brasil em 1909*. _____ (2012). *Os Chineses e o Chá no Brasil no Início do Século XIX*. Published by Instituto Internacional de Macau and Real Gabinete Português de Leitura.

Janeiro bade him welfare on the harbor (Foto Below, from Carlos Moura, 2012, p.108).



The second book studied the history of tea planting activities of some Chinese laborers in Rio de Janeiro from 1808 to 1825. It also gives some information on the relations between Macau e Brazil at the same period¹⁰.

Since 2000, the Brazilian scholars began to pay attention to the contemporary Chinese migration to Brazil, their business model and their diasporic culture

Daniel B. Vêras (2008) made a doctoral thesis on the characteristics of the Chinese diaspora in São Paulo and the interactions between

¹⁰ Carlos Francisco Moura (2012). *Os Chineses e o Chá no Brasil no Início do Século XIX*. Published by Instituto Internacional de Macau and Real Gabinete Português de Leitura.

the Chinese and Brazilian population and he found that the relations between the Chinese diaspora and Brazilian population were harmonious.¹¹

Shu Changsheng (束长生, 2009) presented a brief history of the Chinese immigration to Brazil (1812 to 1990s)¹². He points out that, due to the political separation between Taiwan and Mainland China, the Chinese diaspora in Brazil was also divided and separated. The rupture started in the 1970s. Before 1972, there was only one association, Centro Social Chinês (中华会馆), representing the whole Chinese diaspora. It was under the control of Taiwan government, who officially represented China in the United Nations. In 1970, after the ouster of Taiwan from the United Nations, some mainland Chinese immigrants launched a movement to remove the KMT flag from the Centro Social Chinês and substitute the Blue-White-Red flag of the Nationalist China with the five-red-star flag of the communist China. The pro-nationalist Chinese immigrants (mainly from Taiwan) resisted the attempts of the pro-communist immigrants (mainly from Mainland China). As a result, in Rio de Janeiro, the federal police was called to maintain order and to disperse the pro-communist movement. Later on, in 1984, pro-communist immigrants established their own association called Hualian (华联, Associação Chinesa). Since then, the mainland immigrants and Taiwanese immigrants went separated officially, even though the private friendships continued among the diaspora.

¹¹ Daniel B. Vêras. *As Diásporas Chinesas e o Brasil: a Comunidade Sino-Brasileira em São Paulo*. Download no internet:

<http://livros01.livrosgratis.com.br/cp062959.pdf>. Access: 30/09/2016.

¹² SHU, Changsheng (束长生). “Imigrantes e a imigração chinesa no Rio de Janeiro 1910-1990”, *Revista Leituras da História* No. 17. Fev. 2009, pp.44-53.

Lorenzo Macagno (2012), associate professor of anthropology at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), published his field survey of the Beira (Mozambique) and Curitiba (Brazil). He told us the story of a small group of Chinese from Guangdong, first settled in Mozambique and after the Mozambican independence in 1975, remigrated to Brazil. The narrative was well written and very engaging story¹³.

Two Brazilian journalists Ciça Guedes and Murilo Fiuza (2014) published their book on the case of nine members of the Chinese foreign trade delegation arrested in 1964 by the civil-military government of Brazil. These nine Chinese were accused of spying and subversion, were tortured and sentenced to 9 years of prison, but after one year of confinement, they were deported to China¹⁴. The authors made detailed investigations on the government archives, interviewed the witnesses and victims. It is a valuable book, from which we can have a glimpse on the fierce struggles between the Kuomintang of Taipei and the communists of Beijing in the Cold War period and their impacts on Brazilian politics.

In her doctorate thesis, Ana Luisa Zago de Moraes (2016) of the Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUC-RS) analysed the relationship between immigration policy and criminal policy during the 1964-1985 military regime of Brazil¹⁵. She cited the case of Peter Ho Peng as an example. Born in Hong Kong and came to

¹³ MACAGNO, Lorenzo. “Os chineses da Beira, Moçambique —Itinerários de uma dispersão”, *Africa em Movimento*. Juliana Braz Dias e Andrea de Souza Lobo (Eds.), Brasília: ABA Publicações, 2012.

¹⁴ GUEDES, Ciça, FIUZA, Murilo. *O Caso dos Nove Chineses*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora Objetivo, 2014.

¹⁵ ZAGO DE MORAES, Ana Luisa. *Crimigração: a Relação entre política migratória e política criminal no Brasil*. PhD thesis, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, 2016.

Brazil in 1953 with four years old, Peng participated in the left-wing student movement and became a member of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB). In 1972, Peng was arrested, tortured and deported. In 2012, after the long legal battle, the Amnesty Commission of Brazil finally cancelled the accusations on Peng, returned his Brazilian identity card, and conferred to him an economic indemnity¹⁶. Ana Luisa points out that during the military dictatorship, the police abused their power, used violence and torture against the political activists. In case of the foreign immigrants, even though naturalized, once were arrested for “subversion”, would be deported without legal process. Because of this practice, many immigrants became *apátrida*.

In recent years, due to the warming-up of Sino-Brazilian relations, with China's growing investments in Brazil, some Brazilian young scholars began to pay attention to the economic activities of Chinese immigrants. They studied the Brazilian-Chinese economic activities and transnational business networks from the global perspective. Rosana Pinheiro-Machado (2011, 2017) analysed cross-border trade network of Chinese immigrants in the frontier city of Ciudad del Leste (situated on the border area between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay). She studied especially the illegal trade of pirated goods and exposed the conflicts between the Taiwanese who were well positioned in hostland and the Cantonese immigrants who were newly arrived and disadvantaged¹⁷. Douglas de Toledo Piza (2015) studied the

¹⁶<http://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/chines-perseguido-pela-ditadura-ganha-direito-de-viver-no-brasil-4643828>.

¹⁷PINHEIRO-MACHADO, Rosana. *Made in China: (In)formalidade, Pirataria e Redes Sociais da China ao Brasil*, São Paulo, HUCITEC, 2011. See also *Counterfeit Itineraries in the Global South: The human Costs of Piracy in China and Brazil*. London, Routledge, 2017.

transnational business network of Chinese diaspora in São Paulo and their business activities on the March 25th Street, as well as their economic visibility and political invisibility¹⁸; Carlos Freire (2014) studied the business model of Qingtianese and their transnational activities between Yiwu and São Paulo¹⁹. Camila Moreno (2015) studied China's capital investment in Brazilian primary sectors—mining, forestry, and hydraulic works, and its negative impact on environment. From the Marxist critical perspective, Camila Moreno restarted the discussion on the Brazilian dependent development model²⁰. Although Moreno's book does not deal directly with Chinese immigration nor Chinese diaspora, it is concerned about the consequences of Chinese investments in Brazil. An important warning signal for the Chinese investors.

Literature in Chinese Language by Taiwanese and by Diasporic Authors in Brazil

On the whole, in both Mainland China and Taiwan, there were very few studies on Brazilian Chinese diaspora. The bulk of the materials was literary essays, journalist reports, diasporic

¹⁸ PIZA, Douglas de Toledo. *Um pouco da mundialização contada a partir da região da rua 25 de março: migrantes chineses e comércio "informal"*. Accessible in: http://spap.fffch.usp.br/sites/spapa.fffch.usp.br/files/Douglas_de_Toledo_Piza_livro_completo_2015.pdf. Access 15/7/2017.

¹⁹ FREIRE, Carlos. "Das calçadas às galerias: mercados populares do centro de São Paulo". PHD thesis, Dept of Sociology, USP, 2014. See: <http://www.teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/8/8132/tde-31032015-105012/pt-br.php>. Access: 20/07/2017.

²⁰ MORENO, Camila. *O Brasil made in China: para pensar as reconfigurações do capitalismo contemporâneo*. São Paulo, Fundação Rosa Luxemburgo, 2015. site for download: http://rosaluxspba.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Brasil-made-in-China_final.pdf. Access: 17/07/2017.

biographies and memories. They were generally descriptive and personal, lacking academic perspective, nevertheless, due to their first-hand information, their trustworthiness, they could be included as literature for diasporic studies. Because of my lack of contacts in Taiwan, I will use the bibliography of Prof. Shi-Yeoung Tang (汤熙勇, 2013) as my source.

As the Kuomintang government maintained diplomatic relations with Brazil from 1887 to 1974, and because Taiwanese immigrants in Brazil had relatively higher education level, there were much more literature published in Taiwan (and in Brazil by Taiwanese). Shi-Yeoung Tang (2013) of Academia Sinica did an important study on the scale of Taiwanese migration to Brazil from 1960s to 1970s and the attitude of the KMT government toward Taiwanese migration to Brazil²¹. Professor Tang gave a list of bibliography, and among them, I would like to mention the follows: DU Qinghai (杜庆海1975), "The Study of Overseas Chinese Society in Brazil"²²; JIAN Hansheng (简汉生 1991), "Overview on Overseas Chinese of Brazil"²³; Shi-yeoung Tang (汤熙勇, 2009) "The Qing government's response to Brazil's recruitment of laborers" (1881-1911)".²⁴ Prof. Tang also mentioned the essay of QIU Lizhu, LIU Jiayi, CHEN Jiayu (邱丽珠、柳佳希、陈佳瑀, 2009), "Adventures Across the Oceans—

²¹汤熙勇.“巴西招徕台湾人移民—1960年代我国政府的态度与人民的反应”，《人口学刊》，第46期，2013年6月。Download：
<http://www.psc.ntu.edu.tw/outline/epaper/pop46/汤熙勇.pdf>. 调取时间：
27/02/2017.

²² 杜庆海，《巴西华侨社会之研究》，台北市中国文化学院民族与华侨研究所出版，1975. apud. 汤熙勇 (2013).

²³ 简汉生，《巴西华侨概况》，台北市正中书局出版，1991. apud. 汤熙勇 (2013).

²⁴ 汤熙勇，“清廷对巴西招募华工的反应：1881-1911”。

Meinong migrants to Brazil”²⁵; ZHANG Ermei (张二妹, 2010), “My sojourning in Brazil”²⁶; CHENG Hongqi (程鸿祺, 1977), “My Adventure in Brazil”²⁷; WEN Jixiong (温吉雄, 1999), “My migration and Struggle in Brazil”²⁸; ZHONG Qiwen(钟启文, 2005), “Letters of Homesickness from Brazil to Taiwan”²⁹. Since the author of this paper did not read the original text of these literature, it is impossible to comment on any of the above-mentioned works.

Among the diasporic authors in Brazil, there were several well-known ones. ZHU Pengnian (朱彭年, 1990), edited a book “Chinese Diaspora in South America”, brought together a large number of biographical essays written by Taiwanese immigrants, presenting to the reader the life experiences of Taiwanese immigrants, their adventure, their struggle in a strange land³⁰. LUO Sikai (罗思凯, 1990), published her collection of essays “A Florida Life in Brazil”³¹, described her own migration experiences in Brazil, her moments of joys and sorrows, success and failure. YUAN Yiping (袁一平, 1995, 1998) published two books of journalistic essays on some Chinese celebrity immigrants in Brazil, their stories of success and their unique way of entrepreneurship. The two books were based on interviews with those diasporan

²⁵ 邱丽珠、柳佳希、陈佳琦, “飘洋过海艰困冒险—美浓巴西移民”, 2009. apud. 汤熙勇 (2013).

²⁶ 张二妹, “作客他乡的巴西移民路”, 2010. apud. 汤熙勇 (2013).

²⁷ 程鸿祺, “在巴西闯天下”, 1977. apud. 汤熙勇 (2013).

²⁸ 温吉雄, “我移民巴西的奋斗历程”, 1999.

²⁹ 钟启文, “万里系亲情, 家书抵万金”, apud. 汤熙勇 (2013).

³⁰ ZHU Pengnian (朱彭年), 《中国侨民在南美》 Beijing: Wen hua yi shu chu ban she (文化艺术出版社), 1990.

³¹ 罗思凯, 《巴西无处不飞花》, 台北星阁文化出版社, 1990.

Chinese business elite in Brazil³². Yuan's works also touched upon the life stories of the ordinary and lower-class immigrants, for instance, in his novel "My Ridiculous Marriage in Brazil", in a realistic style, he gave down-to-earth description of the immigrant life, some earned their life by charlatan acupuncture; some entered into fraudulent marriage with black woman to obtain Brazilian permanent card; some poor immigrants behaved as wealthy businessmen in order to receive the official visitors of their hometown, and etc.³³

In 1995, SU Shaoping (苏少平) published two collections of essays, "Brazilian shelter"(巴西篱下), and "Wanderer's essays" (游子散文集), telling stories of his own life and lives of many other Cantonese compatriots who settled themselves in Brazil since the 1950s, working hard on the pastel food business, in order to survive in this strange and often hostile country. Mr. Su Shaoping actively participated in the building of diasporic culture. He once organized a Cantonese opera club, and expressed many critical views on the bad behaviours of some diasporic leaders. These two books were published by *Jornal Chinês "Americana"* (美洲华报), situated in São Paulo, Brazil.

In 1998, Mr. Yuan Fang (袁方), ex-President of *Jornal Chinês "Americana"* (美洲华报), edited together with other diasporic contributors a book called "struggles of Brazilian Chinese—registers of their associations" (巴西华人耕耘录-华侨社团纪实), it gave a panoramic review on the history of diasporic associations;

³² YUAN Yiping (袁一平), 《吹尽狂沙始得金—巴西华侨名人专访特集(一)》(圣保罗,南美侨报出版社,1995)和《久居他乡为家乡—巴西华侨名人专访特集(二)》(圣保罗,南美侨报出版社,1998).

³³ YUAN Yiping (袁一平), 《啼笑嫁巴西》, 天津百花洲文艺出版社, 2003.

the situations of Chinese language teaching centres in São Paulo, as well as diasporic newspapers and religious institutions, etc.

Under the coordination of Deng Xingguang (邓幸光), South American Chinese Writers Association edited a book on "South American Chinese world: symposium on the Chinese diasporic culture in South America in the three decades past", which included many essays of Taiwanese diaspora in São Paulo. There included stories of mushroom farmers of Taiwan (mainly from Meinong district); stories of Chinese catholic missionaries who dedicated their life to the services of the community; there also included stories of diasporic entrepreneurs who made success in manufactures. It also registered Taiwanese diasporic associations and religious institutions. This remarkable book also made a mentioning of a religious cult called *Yiguandao* (一贯道), which had been extinct in mainland China, but survived in Brazil³⁴.

The author who had made the most extraordinary contribution to the study of Brazilian Chinese diaspora is Mr. GUO Bingqiang (郭秉强, 2005). Before emigrating to Brazil, Mr. Guo was the director of the Bureau of Culture of the Qingtian County (青田县) of Zhejiang Province. He came to Brazil to join his daughter. From 1994 to 2004, he did an exhaustive study on the history of Qingtianese migration to Brazil³⁵. Being himself a Qingtianese, Mr. Guo interviewed many Qingtianeses in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, consulted historical archives and received encouragement and orientation from Prof. Li Anshan (李安山) of Beijing

³⁴ Deng Xingguang (邓幸光), 南美华文作家协会. 《南美华人天地：三十年来南美华人生活文化学术研讨会文集》，台北，1999.

³⁵ GUO Bingqiang (郭秉强), 《巴西青田华侨纪实：1910-1994》，青田县政府编印，2005.

University (who was visiting Rio de Janeiro at that time). The work of Guo Bingqiang is exhaustive, coherent and trustworthy.

Mr. Li Hai'an (李海安), ex-director of **Jornal Chinês Sul-americano** (南美侨报) also made a special contribution to the study of Chinese Diaspora in Brazil. In his book of 2005, it was included a brief history of Chinese immigration to Brazil from 19th century down to 20th century. It also registered most of the diasporan associations. In its 26 articles, each contributor offered his own life histories and memories of dispersion³⁶.

After 8 years, with the help of Chinese Consulate in São Paulo, another commemorative book was edited by the **Jornal Chinês Sul-americano**, which included 30 essays of diasporan Chinese authors, writing on their own life experiences of migration and integration with Brazilian society.³⁷ Most of the authors were originally from Mainland China, there were almost no Taiwanese authors. Mr. Yuan Yiping wrote the "brief history of Chinese immigration", which mainly dealt with the history of migration of the Mainland Chinese. It made little or no mention of the Taiwanese migration in Brazil. This indicates the segregation of the Chinese diaspora.

Wang Xiang (王翔, 2010) published a autobiographic romance, "Chinese Merchants in Brazil".³⁸ Wang came from

³⁶Li Hai'an (李海安),《中国移民巴西190周年纪念特刊》,南美侨报社,2005.参见中国网,2005年3月17日报道“《中国移民巴西190周年纪念特刊》正式发行”:<http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/ChineseCommunity/813669.htm>

³⁷Yuan Yiping (袁一平等)《华人移民巴西200周年纪念特刊》,南美侨报社,2013.参见巴西侨网2013年4月8日发布“华人移民巴西二百周年纪念特刊问世将发行”<http://hbpd.bxqw.net/userlist/huaren/newshow-25226.html>.

³⁸王翔,《中国商贩在巴西》,作家出版社,2010.

Beijing, lived in São Paulo for eight years. During those 8 years, he had to cope with every kind of people—prostitutes, illegal immigrants, Chinese middlemen, Brazilian police and the mafias. This novel depicted the bizarre society of Chinese diaspora, its absurdity and banality.

Prof. Alexandre Yang (杨宗元) of the Department of Oriental Languages of São Paulo University made some studies on "The Economic Outlook of Chinese Diaspora in Brazil".³⁹ Yang (1999) studied the social integration of Chinese immigrants and their descendants with local Brazilian population. He found that diaspora Children from Taiwan participated more actively in learning Chinese, and their integration with Brazilian society is much more than those descendants from the mainland immigrants.

My ex-colleague Professor David Jye Yuan Shyu (徐捷源) (now retired), an indonesio-Chinese, came to Brazil from Taiwan in 1972, sent by the Taiwanese authorities to teach Chinese for diaspora. He knew very well about the history of Chinese language teaching in Brazil, which was started in the 1960s by the catholic missionaries. In one paper, he gave a name list of diasporic associations and the Chinese language schools founded by Taiwanese immigrants⁴⁰. Shyu also found that, with the fading out of the older generation of diasporic leaders, new generation from both mainland China or Taiwan, lacking the prestige and the public spirit of their predecessors, will meet big challenges in

³⁹杨宗元.“巴西华人经济前景”.《世纪之交的海外华人(上)》,1998, pp.459-472.

⁴⁰ SHYU, David Jye Yuan, CHEN, Tsung Jye (徐捷源, 陈宗杰). “Integração cultural dos imigrantes chineses no Brasil”, *Revista de Estudos Orientais*, v.6, p.215-242, 2008.

uniting the diaspora population and bridging the sino-Brazilian cultures.

Yamashita Kiyomi (山下清海, 2007), professor of geography at Tsukuba University in Japan, traced the demographic and socio-economic changes of the oriental neighbourhood (Liberdade) of São Paulo city, especially changes brought by the influx of new immigrants from the mainland China since the 1990s⁴¹. He found that, there is more Chinese than Japanese in this neighbourhood, although it was initially dominated by the Japanese diaspora.

The Research Works of Mainland China Scholars

Very few scholars in mainland China have dedicated them time and efforts in the study of Chinese Diaspora in Brazil. Most of their works have placed the study under the framework of the study of overseas Chinese in Latin America. Professor Li Anshan (李安山, 2005) of Beijing University reviewed the research works since 1980s done by Luo Rongqu (罗荣渠), Zhang Kai(张铠), Li Chunhui(李春辉), Yang Shengmao (杨生茂) and Xu Shicheng (徐世澄)⁴². Li Anshan found that most of their research concentrated on the history of Latin American *coolie* trade in Mexico, Cuba, Jamaica, West Indies, Guyana, Peru and other related countries. They did not make full use of the important historical materials such as diasporic Chinese newspapers. There were very few studies dedicated to the study of the Chinese overseas in Brazil. Professor Gao Weinong (2012) of Jinan University,

⁴¹ Yamashita Kiyomi(山下清海). “世界の华侨华人社会 ブラジル・サンパウロ--东洋街の変容と中国新移民の増加”《华侨华人研究》, no.4, pp.81-98, Jan. 2007.

⁴² LI, Anshan (李安山,2005), “拉丁美洲华侨华人研究概述”, <http://news.sina.com.cn/w/2005-06-08/09196112479s.shtml>.
Access:20/0/2017.

studied the history of overseas Chinese in Latin America, their cultural and associative activities. Within this framework, he wrote a brief history of overseas Chinese in Brazil and their social and cultural activities.⁴³

Mao Haijian (茅海建, 2007) studied the history of Sino-Brazilian relations in the late Qing Dynasty—the negotiation of Sino-Brazilian treaty of Friendship, navigation and trade; the Brazilian diplomatic mission to visit China in, 1893; the Brazilian illegal recruitments of coolies in Macau; the migration proposal of Kang Youwei; and etc. Mao traced the anti-slavery attitude of Qing government and the Brazilian decision to abandon the Chinese coolie project and work on the idea of importing Japanese agricultural laborer to Brazil. The paper of Mao is well written, a good reference for the study of early Sino-Brazilian relations.⁴⁴

Since 2014, the Chinese mainland scholars CHEN Tairong and LIU Zhengqin (2017) began to study the Chinese diaspora in Brazil when they were serving the Chinese Consulate in Rio de Janeiro. After retirement, they resided in the city of Recife, Brazil and continued their investigations. They published a book on the “history of 19th century Chinese immigration to Brazil”, combining the research results of Jose Roberto Leite and Carlos Francisco Moura with their own study, traced the relationship between Macau and Brazil during the period 1808-1825, the imports of Chinese tea laborers from Macau. Chen e Liu also made some study on the participation of Chinese laborers in the construction of railway Rio-Victoria, which might cost 5000 lives

⁴³ GAO Weinong (高伟浓, 2012). 《拉丁美洲华侨华人移民史—社团与文化活动的远眺》. 暨南大学出版社, 2012.

⁴⁴ 茅海建. “巴西招募华工与康有为移民巴西计划之初步考证”, 史林, 2007年5月.

of the Chinese coolies.⁴⁵ According to Chen e Liu, the municipal governments of Queimados e Japeri have already erected monuments for the dead Chinese laborers.

In recent years, young scholars in mainland China have also published some valuable articles on the Chinese diaspora in Brazil. Mi Sumin (1995) analyses the positive efforts of the Chinese immigrants to integrate themselves with the local society, and the difficulties and challenges they have encountered in the process of social integration in Brazil. The article showed diverse trend of the social integration of Chinese diaspora with local community. While the economic strength of Chinese business is increasing, the political strength of Chinese diaspora is still weak. There were also obstacles such as the public security and the volatile economy which troubled the overseas Chinese in Brazil⁴⁶. Gao Weishen and Xu Shanshan (2013) studied the diasporic associations since the 1980s, and classified these associations in eight categories according to their characteristics and functions⁴⁷. Cheng Jing (2015) studied the diasporic organizations for promotion of the pacific unification of China. She analysed the process of foundation of these organizations and their struggle against the separatism of Taiwan. But Cheng did not mention anything about the Taiwanese separatist activities in Brazil.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Chen Tairong, Liu Zhengqin (陈太荣,刘正勤). 《19世纪中国人移民巴西史》, 北京, 中国华侨出版社, 2017.

⁴⁶密素敏. “试析巴西华侨华人的社会融入特点与挑战”. 南洋问题研究, NO.2, 2015.

⁴⁷高伟浓,徐珊珊. “巴西华人社团的类型及发展特色—以20世纪80年代之后成立的社团为主”. 八桂侨刊, no. 2, 06/2013.

⁴⁸程晶. “巴西华侨华人反独促统运动的发展历程与经验”, 拉丁美洲研究, 2015年8月, 第37卷第4期.

Estimates on the number of Chinese population in Brazil

In the study of Chinese diaspora, two problems have been troubling the scholars, one is the identification of Chinese diasporic population, the other is their statistics. In the United States and Canada, the government census includes information such as "nationality by birth", "mother tongue", "ethnic group", etc., but in most of the Latin American countries, the census does not offer any information about "nationality" and "ethnic group"⁴⁹. In the case of Brazil, only the official registration system for foreigners, the SINCRE (Sistema de Cadastro e Registro dos Estrangeiros) provides some information of Chinese immigrants and Chinese diaspora. SINCRE is run by the Brazilian Federal Police, and its information is still limited because it does not include the data of the illegal immigrants. Its statistical function is very weak.

By the Law of Free Information (No.12.527/2011), I applied to the Brazilian government for data of Chinese immigration. The reply I received was that, in 2016, the total number of "foreigners holding passports of the People's Republic of China" registered by SINCRE, was 49,905 people (Table I).

The Brazilian journalist Marcia Sprandel (2005) reported that, in 2005, a total of 22,991 immigrants with Chinese mainland passports were registered at SINCRE⁵⁰. Gabriel Sorrentino (2013)

⁴⁹KENT, Robert, "Diaspora of Chinese Settlements in Latin America and the Caribbean". In MA, Laurence J. C., CARTIER, Carolyn (eds.), **Space, Place and transnationalism in the Chinese diaspora**. New York, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, p120.

⁵⁰SPRANDEL, Marcia (2005), "Estrangeiros no Brasil: Realidades e Desafios". *Revista Universitas: Relações Internacionais*; Vol. 3, No. 2, 2005. <http://www.publicacoesacademicas.uniceub.br/index.php/relacoesinternacionais/article/viewFile/281/269>. Access: 15/06/2016.

informed us that in the state of Paraná, in 2013, there were 2,590 immigrants with mainland Chinese passport registered by SINCRE. Sorrentino also told us that in whole Brazil, there were a total of 39,393 Chinese citizens registered by SINCRE system in 2013.⁵¹ Thus, combining these information's, we estimate that from 2005 to 2013, the number of Chinese immigrants increased by 71%, the average annual growth rate is 8.9%.

In July of 2017, I received from the Brazilian government, some new data of Chinese immigration to Brazil (Table II). From 2010 to 2016, the number of entrance of Chinese citizens to Brazil experienced a big rise, but the average annual growth rate is 11,96%. There is a small discrepancy with the average growth rate of 8,9% (2005-2013), but as we know, from 2010-2016, Brazil hosted two world famous sports events, one was the 2014 world Soccer Cup, the other was the 2016 Olympic Games, during which many Chinese companies were contracted for services. Many short-term Chinese workers entered Brazil and exited within 6 months.

Table I.

Total Number of Chinese from PRC registered by SINCRE, and their geographic distributions in Brazil (up to 14/11/2016)

	State	PRC Citizens	Percentage of total
1	São Paulo (SP)	33,274	66.67%
2	Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	6,251	12.52%

⁵¹ SORRENTINO, Gabriel Portugal (2013). “*A Comunidade Chinesa em Curitiba*”. Master Degree Dissertation, Department of Sociology, Universidade Federal de Paraná. 2013.

3	Paraná (PR)	2,937	5.88%
4	Minas Gerais (MG)	1,413	2.83%
5	Penambuco (PE)	711	1.42%
6	Rio Grande do Sul (RS)	655	1.31%
7	Bahia (BA)	643	1.28%
8	Brasília (DF)	593	1.18%
9	Ceará (CE)	461	0.92%
10	Mato Grosso do Sul (MS)	420	0.84%
11	Santa Catarina (SC)	392	0.78%
12	Amazonas (AM)	360	0.72%
13	Espirito Santo (ES)	313	0.62%
14	Pará (PA)	249	0.49%
15	Goiás (GO)	234	0.46%
16	Maranhão (MA)	211	0.42%
17	Sergipe (SE)	154	0.30%
18	Rio Grande do Norte (RN)	138	0.27%
19	Piauí (PI)	124	0.24%
20	Alagoas (AL)	115	0.23%

21	Paraiba (PB)	113	0.22%
22	Rondonia (RO)	45	0.09%
23	Mato Grosso (MT)	39	0.07%
24	Tocantins (TO)	23	0.04%
25	Roraima (RR)	16	0.03%
26	Amapa (AP)	16	0.03%
27	Acre (AC)	5	0.01%
	Total	49,905	100%

Source: electronic message sent by Brazilian Government under the Law on Free Access to Information (Lei 12.527/2011).

Table II.

The Number of Mainland Chinese registered Annually by the SINCRE (2010-2016):

	New entrance (non-tourist visa)	Annual growth rate
2010	2,376	N/A
2011	3,087	29.92% (compared with the past year)
2012	3,956	28.15%
2013	4,131	4.42%
2014	6,156	49.02%
2015	5,793	-5.89%
2016	4,524	-21.90%

Source: Brazilian Government electronic message no.198/2017-SIC/DIREX/DF.

Let us now estimate the total population of the Chinese diaspora in Brazil. First of all, we naturally think of the first generation of immigrants born in Greater China (mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau), and a small number of Chinese immigrants from Southeast Asia (mainly Indonesia) who migrated to Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s, because of the anti-Chinese policies of Indonesia. They might speak one or two types of Chinese dialects (Cantonese, Hakka, Chaozhou dialect, Minnan dialect, mandarin), they would identify themselves as Chinese (华人 or 华裔). In statistics, in accordance with international practice, we should also include the second and third generation of these immigrants. But we normally exclude the fourth generation from statistics because the fourth generation of Chinese diaspora was usually intermarried with Brazilians. In most of cases, they have little or no contacts with the Chinese culture.

In 2012, the consul of China in Rio de Janeiro, Mr. Chen Tairong estimated that there were a total of 250,000 overseas Chinese in Brazil.⁵² In Taiwan, the Overseas Community Affairs Commission (OCAC) estimated that there were 280,000 Chinese immigrants and diaspora living in Brazil⁵³. Using the same distribution ratio of table 1, we obtained the following results (Table 4).

Table III.

⁵² Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Brazilian.

⁵³ YOUNG, Elliott. *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie era through World War II*. Chapel Hill-NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014. P. 276.

Distribution of Chinese diaspora in 8 major states of Brazil (2012)

	States	No. of People	Rate (the same as table I)
1	São Paulo (SP)	186,676	66.67% (we suppose that the migratory preference of Chinese diaspora remains the same)
2	Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	35,056	12.52%
3	Paraná (PR)	16,464	5.88%
4	Minas Gerais (MG)	7,924	2.83%
5	Penambuco (PE)	3,976	1.42%
6	Rio Grande do Sul (RS)	3,668	1.31%
7	Bahia (BA)	3,584	1.28%
8	Brasília (DF)	3,304	1.18%
	(other states not listed)

As a matter of fact, the migratory preference of Chinese diaspora is São Paulo, because of its high level of economic development. Most of Chinese diaspora lives in the coastal states (and cities), where concentrate most of the business opportunities.

Homeland Origins of Chinese Diaspora in Brazil

Most of the Chinese diaspora in Brazil came from Taishan City, Guangdong Province of China. Taishan has 3,286 square kilometers of area, with a population 948,000 habitants. Although relatively small in size, it is the homeland of about 1.60 million overseas diasporas.⁵⁴ In August 2016, the *Yangcheng Evening News* published an online report, saying that in Haiyan Town of Taishan City, there is a village called "Brazilian village", because many villagers migrated to Brazil. According to the report, more than 14,650 people from the "Brazilian village" now live in Brazil, responsible for about 7% of the total population of Chinese

⁵⁴ 台山政府网资料, Access:29/06/2016.

diaspora in Brazil.⁵⁵

Beside Taishan of Guangdong, the second biggest homeland of Chinese diaspora is Qingtian county of Zhejiang Province. Qingtian is very small country, only 2,493 square kilometers of area, with a population of 360,000 habitants (2010 official data), but it is the homeland of 220,000 diasporic Qingtianese. In other words, the diasporic population of Qingtian is equivalent to 60% of the local population of Qingtian. From the beginning of the 20th century, the Qingtianese people started to travel from Qingtian to France, and from France to Brazil. Some qingtianeses directly migrated from China to Brazil. At present, in Rio de Janeiro, Qingtianese diaspora accounts for nearly 5,000 people and in whole Brazil, Qingtianese immigrants and their descendants account for about 50,000 people, responsible for about one-sixth of the total population of Chinese diaspora.⁵⁶

Since the 1960s, the Taiwanese migrants arrived in Brazil. Among them, many were mainland veterans of the civil war between the communists and nationalists. There were Taiwanese natives mainly from the Kaohsiung and Pingtung counties. They came to Brazil to work on agriculture. In general, the Taiwanese diaspora had a higher level of education than most of the mainland immigrants. The Kuomintang government held a neutral attitude towards the migratory wave, thus restricting the national movement to Brazil. But the majority of the people migrated to Brazil under the Taiwan-Brazil Agricultural Agreement. After the expiration of the official agreements, they would apply to Brazilian

⁵⁵羊城晚报社沈卫红黄丽娜的报道，2016年8月7日。

http://wap.ycwb.com/content_22676545.

⁵⁶郭秉强.巴西青田华侨纪实，2005。

government for permanent residence permit.⁵⁷

Tang (2013) said that about half of the Taiwanese immigrants live in São Paulo and Southeastern Brazil, another half of them live in Rio Grande do Sul, Parana and Rio de Janeiro. A few of them live in Recife and Salvador, both located in the Northeastern part of Brazil. In the 1960s, about one hundred Taiwanese of Kaohsiung County settled in Recife as farmers. Taiwanese diaspora are generally successful farmers, for instance, in Modi das Cruzes, in the outskirts of São Paulo, there were 100 Taiwanese mushroom farms, whose product is responsible for 9% of Brazilian mushroom market.

Table IV.

Number of emigrations permits (with destination to Brazil) issued by Overseas Chinese Affairs Council (OCAC-Taiwan), 1961-1977.

Year	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
	346	717	1753	1047	442	439	574	1076	610
Year	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	----
	665	912	1532	781	904	1606	1302	487	----
TOTAL	15193								

Source: Shi-Yeoung Tang (2013).

Professor Tang shows that from 1961-1977, about 15,193 Taiwanese obtained the permission to migrate to Brazil (table 5). But I believe that this information was not accurate because some Taiwanese entered Brazil from Paraguay. There is no data about these Taiwanese who failed to obtain Brazilian visa but migrated to Brazil irregularly from Paraguay.

Since the 1960s, in order to escape the political persecution, Chinese diaspora from Indonesia began to remigrate to Brazil. The

⁵⁷ 汤熙勇.“巴西招徕台湾人移民—1960年代 我国政府的态度与人民的反应”.2013.

total number of these immigrants is unknown. They belong to the remigrant Chinese community, with multiple cultural identity, many were born in Indonesia, living in Brazil, but recognize their Chinese origin. Although majority of them do not have a Chinese or Taiwanese passport, they were considered by the Brazilians as "Chinese" (chinês). My friend Mr. Lin Tianci (林天賜, Indonesia name is Taruno Setianto) belongs to this group. He was born in Indonesia, in 1970 migrated to Brazil with his parents. He has relatives in both Indonesia and China (in Guangxi). He could speak Cantonese, thought himself "Chinese". But he kept a very low profile. He believed that Indonesian Chinese should not emphasize their own Chinese characteristics, in order to avoid the Indonesian government suspicion and the consequent discrimination of Indonesian Chinese.

Since 1980, the number of mainland immigrants began to increase rapidly in Brazil, but their homelands were almost the same: predominantly from Taishan of Guangdong and Qingtian of Zhejiang. From 1990 on, Fujianese immigrants (mainly from Putian, Zhangzhou, Fuqing and Changle) began to arrive in Brazil, mainly living in São Paulo. The livelihood of these new immigrants was almost the same as their predecessors: restaurants or grocery stores. Because the São Paulo region is the Brazilian economic center, producing about 40 percent of Brazil's gross domestic product, it attracts 66 percent of the Chinese diaspora (Table 1). Although Rio de Janeiro is the second largest city in Brazil, it has only 12% of the total number of Chinese diasporas in Brazil (Table 1). Most of the Brazilian-Chinese business was situated in São Paulo.

In terms of social classes, many Chinese families ascended to the high-level social class of Brazil. Some Chinese families have transformed in industrial and commercial giants, such as Sheun-

Ming Ling, who migrated to Brazil in 1951, and after many years of hard work, founded Petropar (later renamed Evora) to become a big producer of petrochemical products such as diapers and packing materials. Ling's company developed into South America's largest enterprises of Chinese origin, with annual sales of nearly \$ 1.8 billion reais.⁵⁸

Like the Chinese diaspora in the other parts of the world, the transnational mobility of the Chinese diaspora in Brazil is also high. For instance, many Taiwanese immigrants have double or triple nationalities, and travel regularly between Taiwan-Brazil and the United States, where they used to send their children.

At the same time, there were also Chinese immigrants living at the bottom of diasporic society, especially those newly arrived illegal immigrants. They took the shelter offered by the snakeheads, who confiscated their passports and identities. They were obliged to work under clandestine conditions.⁵⁹

Conclusions

In summary, although studies of Chinese immigration and diaspora in Brazil were relatively new, there have been some great results. Nevertheless, there are still some problems wanting solutions. First of all, research efforts were very scattered, there is no signs of institutionalization. Some attempts of exchanges were made by the Chinese teachers at the University of São Paulo (USP) in 2012 by Antonio Menezes, David Jye yuan Shyu and Chen Tsung- Jye, who organized the first symposium in celebrating the

⁵⁸<http://epocanegocios.globo.com/Informacao/Resultados/noticia/2013/08/e-uma-industria-e-nao-sabe-o-que-e-crise.html>. Access: 20/05/2016.

⁵⁹See: <http://g1.globo.com/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2013/04/preso-chines-suspeito-de-torturar-e-escravizar- primo-em-pastelaria-no-rio.html>.Access: 16/06/2016.

200 years of the Chinese migration to Brazil (18012-2012). Famous researchers such as José Roberto Leite, professor of UNICAMP, Padre José Ho and Padre Lucas Hsiao were invited to participate at the Symposium and to make speeches. They made reflections on the history of Chinese immigrants in Brazil and exchanged ideas. Some years passed until May 2nd, 2017, under the organization of Carlos Freire da Silva and Shu Changsheng, a second symposium was realized with participation of Drs. Lorenzo Macagno, Rosana Pinheiro-Machado, Douglas de Toledo Piza and Shu Changsheng. In 2018, Shu Changsheng organized an international conference for the Studies of Chinese Immigration to Brazil.

Second, there is a need for in-depth archival research and investigation. Brazilian archives still wait for the rigorous research. On the other hand, in Taiwan, the archives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs were already available, and the Division of Central and South America has already digitalized its historical files (1909-1996). So, we have a lot work to do, to organize these documents and analyse them. We need to know more about the number of Chinese diaspora, the itineraries of dispersion, and the mode of diasporic life.

Third, in terms of ideological frame work, we are all influenced by certain ideologies in certain stages of our life. But it will be important keep a cold mind that Literature of Chinese diaspora had been impregnated of either pro- or anti-communist ideologies. As qualified researcher should neutralize the side effects of these ideologies, and keep a critical point of views. For example, Diasporic associations are often infiltrated or influenced by the *Qiaowu* (侨务) politics of either Taiwan or Mainland. In the case of Brazil, Centro Social Chines was usually dominated by Taipei and the Association Chinesa was dominated by Beijing. There were collaborations alongside of divergencies between the two

organizations. For instance, in Rio de Janeiro, in annual commemoration of Mid-autumn festival, *Centro Social* commemorates the festival during the day, while *Associação Chinesa* make its day at night, so as to let the diasporans to participate in both of the celebrations.

In short, I believe that the studies of Chinese diaspora in Brazil, although started a short time ago, have been successful and achieved great results. With the increase in Chinese investments in Brazil, the number of Brazilian students studying Chinese is increasing, and the number of Chinese students who learns Portuguese is also growing, this new research field will continue to prosper.

LEGIBILITY IN MOBILITY AND EMPLACEMENT: CHINESE VENDORS IN SÃO PAULO POPULAR MARKETS



Douglas de Toledo Piza

Downtown São Paulo districts are known as “popular markets”¹ for a variety of inexpensive domestic and imported goods that serve low-income residents and long-distance traders from all over Brazil and abroad. Starting in the 1990s, overseas Chinese² migrants have

¹ The term “popular” in Portuguese has a connotation that is not entirely present in the literal translation into English, referring to the lower classes and emphasizing inequality along the class line. The notion of “popular markets” emphasizes the working-class background of most vendors and consumers, who seek to dissociate themselves from the stigma of irregularity and illegality. The notion “popular markets” refers to low-income individuals’ activities, and though it can be derogatory, it typically celebrates the communitarian ties that forge a wider fabric of social cooperation and solidarity. Precisely in this sense, contemporary scholars have approached these markets as what Peruvian scholars José Matos Mar and later Aníbal Quijano call “popular economies,” broadly understood as non-hegemonic modes of production, distribution, and consumption which give form to a vibrant system of local and transnational socio-economic relations (Gago 2017; Gordon, Ribeiro and Alba 2012; Muller and Colloredo-Mansfeld 2019; Tassi, Hinojosa, and Canaviri 2015).

² The term “overseas Chinese” (华侨 *huáqiáo* or 华侨华人 *huáqiáo huárén*) is used by officials, scholars, journalists, and ordinary people to describe the broad category that includes both the Chinese-born migrants who are residing abroad as well as their descendants (Cheng and Ngok 1999; Douw 1999a; Gao 2017; González 2017; Ho 2016; Liu 1999; To 2014). The term overseas Chinese, or “Chinese sojourners,” as it was best known in English in the past, implies that

been a significant group of stallholders and street vendors working under precarious conditions in the popular markets. Because of this recent increase in migration to São Paulo and the migrants' predominant socio-economic integration into popular markets, the overseas Chinese migrants experience a situation of vulnerability due to their precarious immigration status. Aiming at understanding how the migrants cope with this vulnerability, this paper analyzes the tactics³ overseas Chinese vendors use to ensure their mobility across international borders and to secure emplacement⁴ in downtown São Paulo popular markets.

the migrant retains their Chinese identity despite not being physically present in the territory. Regardless of whether the migrant has the intention to return to the homeland, the notion of overseas Chinese implies that the Chinese abroad will eventually make their way back to where they presumably belong. Moreover, the notion suggests that descendants inherit their Chinese identity, being considered "ethnic Chinese" or "diasporic Chinese," who are similarly expected to return to the homeland of their ancestors.

³ I understand tactics in the sense employed by De Certeau (2011) as the space of liminal but agentic everyday practices of resistance against broader systemic strategies that reproduce the status quo.

⁴ I work under the assumption, shared by scholars who critically apply the mobilities turn in social sciences to migration studies, that mobility and emplacement should be analysed together. I define the mobilities turn in the social sciences as an epistemological attitude based on the awareness of how particular kinds of mobilities, displacement, and containment are interrelated and affect differently distinct populations and things. There has been a great deal of skepticism about works that draw from the mobilities turn to offer a naïve celebration of the misleading idea that everyone is equally mobile. However, the mobilities paradigm is productive for an analysis of the forces at play in the work of differentiation that undergirds mobilities, and of the effects that these forces produce. McNevin argues that the notion of mobility in migration studies "lends itself to analysis of the gross unevenness of conditions under which people are mobile" (2014:648). Similarly, Glick Schiller and Salazar urge us to hold

How do the tactics that overseas Chinese migrants deploy to enter and stay in Brazil anticipate, circumvent, and react to the intensification of border enforcement and the crackdown on popular markets? Based on more than a decade of ethnographic observation of these popular markets and 27 semi-structured, sequential interviews with overseas Chinese migrants, I contend that overseas Chinese vendors perform a particular version of the self⁵ with the goal of making themselves legible to official gatekeepers and state record takers. These migrants make pragmatic decisions about the course of action that they perceive as the most effective of the limited range of possibilities at their disposal. As Chu (2010) reminds us when discussing the making of exits (out of China) and entrances (into other countries), the

migration and stasis within the same frame, privileging neither, and “to move beyond ready equations of mobility with freedom by examining movement as an aspect of new confinements and modes of exploitation” (2013:8).

⁵ There is a vast sociological literature on self, dating to the work of Herbert Blumer, Georg Mead, Erving Goffman, Peter Berger, and Thomas Luckman. Goffman’s *The Presentations of Self in Everyday Life* takes seriously the Simmelian task of analysing social interactions, aiming to describe the formation of one’s self and personality through spontaneous but reiterative situations of everyday face-to-face behaviour. Goffman developed a dramaturgical conceptual vocabulary to describe rather the various roles the self can assume according to expectations in specific situations. He argues that individuals can present themselves as different persona in different mundane interactions. The multitude of “stages,” his metaphor for situations where the interactions take place, also shape the roles played. Scheel (2019:92) puts this approach in conversation with the autonomy of migration approach, and applies the Goffmanian idea of “impression management” to argue that migrants perform a version of self that needs to be credible to gatekeepers, regardless of the veracity of the claims presented by the migrants or assessed by the border or immigration officer, what he calls “clandestine transgression.”

differentiated mobilities of overseas Chinese migrants across international borders must be understood in terms of their ability to navigate systems of control and authorization.

My focus on migrants' tactics responds to the call by critical migration and border scholars to shift from "seeing like a state" to "seeing like a migrant." The notion of "seeing like a state" is the methodological move to analyse an issue or area of government from perspective of the conceptual and practical lenses that the state branches and officers use to act on it. In the context of migration and border studies, it lends itself to a critical analysis of the securitization of human mobility across borders and racialized citizens who are othered in their own countries. Paraphrasing James Scott's book *Seeing Like a State*, Didier Bigo (2002) argues that, as migration and other kinds of human movement are increasingly subjected to forms of control and surveillance, states take up the task of making these populations legible in order to governmentalize⁶ their mobility. In this context, the growing

⁶ In a Foucauldian sense, governmentalization is broadly conceived as taking the population as the primary target of differentiated state policies, exercising power on and through bodies both at the level of individuals and the population as a body (Foucault 2010). That is, governmentalization is a rationality, a mentality or mind set applied to specific modes of population management. The governmentalization of migration is more specifically the set of diffuse rationales, policies, and practices that structure international regimes of human mobility at the global, regional, national, and local levels. The governmentalization of migration is, in Foucault's sense of the "conduct of conducts" (Foucault 2009), the forms of control and encouragement exercised by the state and other actors over individuals (Ho, Hickey, and Yeoh 2015; Ragazzi 2009). From a mobilities regime perspective (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013), the governmentalization of migration aims at a spectrum of goals ranging from inciting people to move and even forcibly displacing them to halting their mobility and hindering their ability to stay put. The governmentalization of

number of state bureaucracies and supranational institutions created or reoriented to securitize migration must be understood as an attempt to identify, distinguish, and manage “suspicious” human mobility, what Bigo calls the “governmentalization of the uneasy” (2002:65). This approach presupposes those migrants want to make themselves illegible to the state. However, a focus on “seeing like a migrant” reveals that migrants purposefully and actively deploy the state grammar and lexicon to construct versions of themselves (even if pragmatically and momentarily) that have higher chances of moving across international borders and staying in the places of their choice.

In response, scholars of the autonomy of migration school call to move beyond the state gaze and rather “see like a migrant” to make sense of how migrant experiences are shaped temporally and spatially by transformations in sovereignty and governmentality (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Mezzadra 2016). Mezzadra and Neilson contend that “only from the subjective viewpoint of border crossings and struggles, can the temporal thickness and

migration cannot be understood as separate from the sovereign state apparatus (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). It entails the deployment of state sovereign power against non-citizens crossing borders, who are faced with containment and expulsion (Bigo 2007; Fassin 2011; Morris 2017). This application of state power is predicated on a simplistic view that presupposes clear legal dichotomies between aliens and citizens, lawful and unlawful entrants, authorized and unauthorized migrants. Additionally, it can only assess migrants’ acts from the perspective of whether they violate the law, but it does not account for structural forms of oppression or any radically critical notions of justice, fairness, and ethics. As McNevin, Missbach, and Mulyana suggest, the governmentalization of migration can be interpreted as “an attempt to excise the ‘turbulence’ of migration and render it subjected to centralized forms of control” through a technocratic perspective that obscures “the ongoing politics at stake in questions of human mobility” (2016:225).

heterogeneity of the border be discerned” (2013:166), that is, the border is not just a line to be crossed but, rather, a racialized social relation of exploitation predicated upon social differentiation which persists after the border crossing. In fact, Mezzadra (2016) argues that the diversity of migrant experiences must be understood as an “abstract social relation [that] connects the action of specific devices of domination and exploitation to specific forms of movement and ‘unruly’ mobile subjects.” Similarly, Garelli and Tazzioli (2017:9) insist that we start from the “‘combined and heterogenous struggles’ of becoming a migrant, being governed as a migrant, and resisting further precarization in migration.” Thus, “seeing like a migrant” is an approach that can be located in the spaces of individual lived experiences and collective action, and yet it necessarily accounts for the ways that human flows and subjectivities are increasingly shaped by encounters with particular forms of state power.

Mainstream migration scholarship has been reproducing a state-centric perspective that mirrors the legal binarism prevalent in the management of migration flows. The move from the state gaze to the migrant gaze is particularly important to a critical analysis of the illegalization of migration. The “illegalization of migration” is the discursive and pragmatic shifts in official narratives and administrative processes, including changes in legislation, policy implementation, and jurisprudence, that make illegal for non-citizens to cross international borders (De Genova 2004; Menjívar and Kanstroom 2013). There is scholarly significance and political valence in shifting attention to the driving forces of illegalization and its effects on the lives of migrants. Understanding that illegalization of migration cannot be dissociated from the uses of legality by the state and the migrants themselves, I seek to

contribute to this literature with this paper by focusing on the tactics migrants (both documented and undocumented) deploy to fit in the official grammar of legality.

The remainder of this paper is divided into six parts. I begin by giving a snapshot of the presence of overseas Chinese migrants in downtown São Paulo popular markets. Next, I analyse the tactics migrants use for obtaining travel and immigration documents to migrate to Brazil through intermediaries in regular migration channels. Then, I discuss how forgery of official documents is a practice of resistance. After that, I analyse how overseas Chinese migrants interrogate the immigration regularization policies, interpreting them as vindication and freedom. Later, I discuss the spike in overseas Chinese asylum seekers in Brazil. Finally, I analyse the tactics for obtaining and negotiating citizenship status.

Chinese migrants in downtown São Paulo popular markets

Downtown São Paulo popular markets like 25 de Março Street district⁷ and the neighbourhood of Brás⁸ are dynamic marketplaces

⁷ According to a 2009 study carried out by the consultancy firm TNS Research International (2009), 25 de Março Street district alone receives as many as 400,000 daily consumers, a figure that increases to more than 1 million during peak seasons like the Christmas holidays. The district includes a dozen blocks, where there are at least 350 shops and over 4,000 stalls in more than 20 *galerias*. There are close to 2,000 licensed street vendors operating in the 25 de Março Street and surrounding area. Sales in 25 de Março Street district reached R\$17.6 billion in 2009, a figure that is 1000% the average of a shopping center in Brazil that year and roughly 67% of the revenues of all the country's shopping centers combined.

⁸ The district of Brás more has been a popular market for locally produced, affordable garments. The Morning Market alone (a market that operates from 2am to 5pm) had nearly 4,500 stallholders. According to the São Paulo Department of Subprefectures' 2013 List of Enrolled Stallholders, roughly half

gathering a variety of sellers such as wholesalers, department stores, retailers, stallholders, and street vendors.⁹ Starting in the 1990s and intensifying in the following decades, a growing number of overseas Chinese migrants have become stallholders and street vendors in these popular markets.¹⁰

These migrants belong predominantly to the most recent of three waves of Chinese migration to São Paulo (Piza 2012). The first wave, small in numbers, is composed of mainlanders who left China in the years shortly before and after 1949 due to the Chinese Communist Party's rise to power; a great number of them were Catholics or wealthy Shanghai industrialists (Stenberg 2012). The

of which were Chinese migrants (São Paulo Department of Subprefectures 2013). More than 250 buses fill the parking lot seven days a week, bringing 13,000 shoppers daily (São Paulo Department of Labour, Development, and Entrepreneurship 2015).

⁹According to São Paulo Department of Labour, Development, and Entrepreneurship (2015), which gathered data collected by market research studies, demographic censuses, and businesses tax records, the downtown popular markets together represent a sales potential of R\$35 billion per year. There are more than 20,000 establishments in 59 streets specialized in a variety of goods: garments, shoes, bridal goons, electronics, varieties, cheap jewellery, kitchen appliances, construction tools, woodwork, and so on. A survey of the São Paulo transit authority estimates that more than 500,000 people go to these areas of the city daily, approximately 20,000 of which are shoppers from outside the São Paulo metropolitan area. Nearly 41% of the latter are wholesalers, 23% retailers, and 36% *sacoleiros*, that is, long-distance traders and resellers (São Paulo Department of Labour, Development, and Entrepreneurship 2015).

¹⁰ The mainland Chinese population in São Paulo is estimated to be around 180,000, and 65% arrived in Brazil after 1995 (Freire da Silva 2014). Of the approximately 250,000 overseas Chinese living in Brazil, nearly 100,000 are Cantonese, 70,000 Fujianese, 40,000 Zhejiangnese (roughly 30,000 from the city of Qingtian and 10,000 from Wen Zhou), and 40,000 Taiwanese (Freire da Silva 2018; Veras 2009).

second wave has mixed origins, and began as early as the 1960s, when Taiwanese middle-class migrants arrived to São Paulo (Tang 2013), as did Hong Kongese to a lesser extent (Stenberg 2012), and later in the 1970s this second wave of migration increased with overseas Chinese migrants who left countries such as Paraguay, Indonesia, Singapore, and Mozambique. Lastly, a third wave of migration from mainland China started in the mid-1990s. This wave is a product of deep transformations that began with Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms and flexibilization of migration policies in the late 1980s. It is composed mostly of working-class individuals of rural and urban origin, predominantly from Zhejiang, Guangdong, and Fujian provinces.

Overseas Chinese migrants have played a key role in the transformation of these popular markets.¹¹ In particular, a few overseas Chinese migrants spearheaded changes in business styles that contributed to the transformations of the popular markets by importing directly from China and opening indoor markets in the 1990s. By doing so, these overseas Chinese importers and realtors set the conditions for the third wave of overseas Chinese migration to São Paulo that has been taking place ever since.

Most of the third-wave migrants are stallholders and street vendors who work under precarious conditions and informal arrangements with overseas Chinese importers, distributors, and

¹¹ Other factors are key to the shifts in downtown São Paulo popular markets in the last three decades, including transformations in global capitalism (the new international division of labour, changes in the flow of capital across borders, and China's export-led industrialization policies in special economic zones), the Brazilian economy (trade liberalization and increase in consumption power), and the modes of regulation of these markets (crackdown on unlicensed street vending, the fight against smuggling of imports, and the war on counterfeits) (see Freire da Silva 2014; Piza 2012; Pinheiro-Machado 2017).

stall sublessors. A large portion of the overseas Chinese stallholders and street vendors are visa overstayers and unlawful entrants whose immigration status remains precarious for extended periods of time, and they experience difficulties due to this situation. While Stenberg (2012) suggests that family chain migration is the main mechanism of the third wave migration, I argue in my previous work (Piza 2012 and 2015) that the line between family chain migration and recruitment of migrants to work in precarious conditions as stallholders and street vendors is rather blurred.

The overseas Chinese migrants in downtown São Paulo popular markets are not a homogenous group, and they develop different tactics for mobility and emplacement according to the options available to them. In the next sections, I will analyse these tactics.

Regular migration channels

Many overseas Chinese migrants in downtown São Paulo popular markets are in violation of the law at the moment of entry into the country or at some point of their presence in Brazil. Yet, even overstayers who enter with a valid visa and unlawful border crossers still need to show their official and valid documentation in various steps of their migration trajectory. Migrants make themselves legible to state official checkers and gatekeepers, performing what Chu (2010) calls “paper selves,” that is, the file version of one's self that is embodied and displayed with the purpose of passing as an entitled traveller and international migrant. Mastery over the “paper self” is key for a successful migration trajectory because it helps to convincingly present oneself as a desirable, upstanding migrant precisely in the terms set by the state.

Take the example of Chan,¹² who migrated from a village near Qingtian to São Paulo in 2012. He didn't want to repeat the journey of his cousin, who entered Brazil unlawfully from Paraguay in 1999 and remained undocumented for seven years, during which he worked two off-the-book jobs in São Paulo before he decided to return to China. Chan initially thought he could ask his cousin's former employer, a Brazilian born to Taiwanese parents, to sponsor his visa application. But the process of sponsoring a work visa is lengthy and expensive, and employers shy away from it even if the applicant is eligible because the employer is subject to civil liability if the migrant violates the terms of the visa. He soon realized that he needed to consider other options and decided to hire a travel agency in Qingtian to find a visa sponsor.

Chan struggled to secure the money to pay for his travel. Family members and friends were strained because they had also committed to contributing sums to other would-be migrants. His cousin eventually lent him an additional substantive sum. The money was likely not enough, the cousin cautioned, alerting Chan of scams of travel agencies in Qingtian, which, he went on, promise a work visa but ends up delivering paperwork for tourist visa and booking tickets to the Iguazu Falls.

After long months of interactions with an intermediary at a travel agency in Qingtian, he finally decided to "take the risk of applying for the visa" and collected all the necessary paperwork that would make him look like an indispensable "asset for the company" due to "unique skills of prospecting trading partners in China" (Chan, interview on May 24th, 2017). Chan told me the travel agent persuaded him to attend an online course in business

¹² I use pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

and submit the diploma to make his application look compelling. Per the agent's recommendation, Chan also obtained letters from former employees emphasizing his ability to process paperwork relative to international cargo and customs clearance. He recalls memorizing this information to talk about it confidently in the visa interview, and panicking about not being able to reproduce the visa application information when he landed in São Paulo. At the port of entry, the officer pre-screened Chan's visa and sent him to a more detailed interview with an immigration supervisor. Chan had trouble understanding the interview questions in Portuguese and needed assistance of a translator. The interviewer went over a long questionnaire. Having found no evidence that Chan's intention to migrate was illegitimate nor that his documents were invalid, the interviewer insistently questioned why Chan was still nervous, which can be interpreted as a strategy of migration deterrence. Eventually, Chan succeeded, but this experience traumatized him, and he panics every time he re-enters Brazil.

Not Brazil but wealthier Western countries are the preferred destinations of migrants and their families. Many interviewees stated that migration is an investment with returns to the whole family, which includes remittances, family reunification visas, and transmission of citizenship to the next generations. The decision to migrate to Brazil specifically is the result of a combination of several factors, among which two are particularly important: first, the migrant's ineligibility for, or inability to afford, migration plans to preferred destinations in North America, Europe, or Australia, and, secondly, the social networks and migration networks that connect would-be-migrants with income opportunities in popular markets in Brazil. Chan makes sense of his decision to migrate to São Paulo in terms of an investment by describing the lifestyle he anticipates

being able to offer his family and himself in the future: “I want to retire and live in the U.S., so I’ll send my kid to college there, where quality of life and opportunities are better than here. I can’t afford it now, but I hope I will have the means to do that in the future” (Chan, interview on May 24th, 2017).

Chan’s case speaks directly against the assumption shared by media and ordinary people that the overseas Chinese migrants in the popular markets are all undocumented.¹³ As I will show later in the text, a great number of them do experience a prolonged situation of precarious immigration status, but they deploy a number of tactics to overcome it. Before that, however, I will analyze in the next section, how migrants forge a paper self as a tactic for mobility and emplacement.

Forged selves

Stories of forgery of official documents are ubiquitous among the overseas Chinese migrants with whom I interacted. Some make use of forged Paraguayan documents when they cross the border to

¹³ Though Brazil’s official numbers around overseas Chinese migration has limitations to explain the reality of vendors in the popular markets, some figures are worth having in mind with this caveat. Overall, the majority of mainland Chinese visa holders are in the category “commerce and related occupations” (Sprandel, Milesi, Andrade, Cunha, Drummond, and Lima 2013), which differs from current predominance of agriculture-related occupations among the pool of all migrants (Quintino and Tonhati 2017). Unlike the majority of other nationals, and despite the high number of short-term migrations of predominantly male workers in industries that concentrate Chinese investments in Brazil, regular mainland Chinese migration to Brazil is gender-balanced and one of the very few that had more women than men between 2011 and 2016 (Dutra and Brasil 2017). This suggests an increase in family migration and family reunification. Women vendors are as visible as men vendors in popular markets.

Brazil and in transit to São Paulo. “Can you imagine I was given a Taiwanese person’s ID? I mean I don’t even know if this person exists or if everything is made up,” said a mainlander migrant who carried a forged document to be shown, if need be, at the Brazilian checkpoint or if pulled over by a highway patrol in Brazil (Zhou, interview on July 27th, 2015). As Comaroff and Comaroff (2016) argue, imposture in the context of structural oppression can be a search for personhood that has been objectively denied to marginalized populations. In such a case, the match of a document’s visual and written information with the corresponding attributes of its bearer is the ultimate sign of legitimacy, though a thorough inspection may also include checks against other official datasets to further prove one’s claim over a self. In addition to being legible in the terms dictated by the state, migrants have to be uniquely and unequivocally identified as the person to whom the document, even if official, belongs.

Others emphasized how bad the forgery was: “I don’t think any cop would believe this driver’s license if I got stopped. My friend’s cousin [another undocumented mainland Chinese migrant], years after me, made his way up here [to São Paulo] along the same highway I did. He had a driver’s license that looks more credible than the one I had. Yet, the highway cops didn’t believe him” (Xiao Yong, interview on July 21th, 2015). In these cases, the material properties of the document are called on to index its legitimacy: its appearance, the type of paper of which it is made, and unfalsifiable watermarks or stamps. The suspicion over illegality arises directly as the product of the perceived illegitimacy of the document whose material itself is dubious.

On the other end of the forgery spectrum, are the valid documents of a unique and proper bearer that are nonetheless

obtained illegally. Overseas Chinese migrants say that bribed state authorities turn a blind eye to the fact that they do not meet eligibility criteria, and illegally issue official and valid documents. For instance, I was shown a driver's license that Jing Jing, a mainland Chinese migrant, obtained without having ever gone to driving school in São Paulo. She said that "it is valid, not fake, though of course I don't have a Brazilian document or anything like that... If I wanted to go the Department of Vehicles to get a [driver's] license, I would not be able to apply. Actually, this is my opinion: there is something fake, and it is not my [driver's] license, so what is fake is the bureaucracy that says 'you qualify, you don't'" (Jing Jing, interview on January 11th, 2016). By emphasizing the legitimacy of the official document obtained through an officer's usurpation of the authority invested by the state sovereign power, Jing Jing calls into question the taken-for-granted assumption that proper documentation equates with unequivocal legality. Both the materiality of the document and the unfalsifiable correspondence to its bearer attest to the legitimacy of the document precisely because it does not show any trace of the illegal means by which it was obtained. Thus, it produces the same effects of legibility and acceptance that all official and properly issued documentation does.

Forgery of official documents is simultaneously a tactic for rendering oneself illegible to the state and a way to inhabit another self that is either a fabricated version of oneself or a legitimate version of someone else. Some undocumented overseas Chinese migrants rely on fake documents in parts of their international travel and certain domains of their everyday lives in Brazil (like renting apartments, issuing receipts for commercial activities, or opening a bank account). For them, legibility lies in the credible

materiality of the documentation itself, whose officialness and legitimacy will stand up under close scrutiny (Keshavarz 2018). While fake documents made of unofficial material, like forged visa stamps, are common in experiences of the subjects with whom I interacted, the most typical cases I encountered were official documents that are issued illegally.

In addition to embodiment and materiality, the legitimacy of a migrant's claim lies in the credibility of the very relationship attested by certain documents. In the case of overseas Chinese migrants in Brazil, this is particularly true in the ever-present suspicion of marriages of convenience and birth certificate forgery. Unlike marriages of convenience, in which an adult need to be eligible to sponsor a visa for another adult, forged birth certificates are used to extend the visa eligibility to migrant couples who can pass as parents of Brazilian-born citizens. Overseas Chinese migrants have been arrested for forgery of birth certificates and imposture in São Paulo and other Brazilian cities. In the cases of both marriages of convenience and forged birth certificates, the documents are valid, but the relationship declared in the certificate is forged; that is, forgers use the state grammar of validation to fabricate selves that are entitled to the right to stay in Brazil.

Undoubtedly illegal and risky, forgery of official documents can be an autonomous praxis of liberation in a world of global inequalities, particularly economic inequalities that drive migration, and inequalities in the freedom of international travel (Keshavarz 2018). Yet, it can also generate new relations of exploitation based on the asymmetry between migrants and powerful networks of paper forgers and other intermediaries. For obvious reasons, the industry around illegal migration operates at the margins of the law, which creates power relations between those

in need of forged documents and those who have the (illegal) means of providing them (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013; Morris 2017).

In the next section, I analyse how legibility and illegibility change meanings in overseas Chinese migrants' viewpoint through time, particularly in the context of policies for the regularization of immigration status.

Amnesty and freedom

While many overseas Chinese migrants remain undocumented, especially among the newly arrived, the numbers of those who are lawfully in São Paulo have been growing. A major factor in this, in addition to the increase in numbers of regular migration discussed earlier, is Brazil's regularization policies in 1981, 1988, 1998, and 2009,¹⁴ which together totalled nearly 147,000 applicants (Milesi 2011) who entered the country illegally or accrued unlawful presence. Overseas Chinese were either the first or second largest number of applicants on each occasion, totalling nearly 25,000 (for the figures of applicants by nationality, see Xavier, 2010). Though different legislation dictated each policy, in all cases beneficiaries who could prove being in violation of their immigration status were granted temporary visas that converted into permanent visas after a certain period of time (typically two years), allowing for family members to apply for permanent visas and eventually making them eligible for naturalization.

Take the example of the couple Johnny and Ming. Johnny, who is originally from Wen Zhou (Zhejiang Province), was smuggled into Brazil from the border town of Ciudad del Este in Paraguay

¹⁴ See Law N° 6,964/1981; Law N° 7,685/1988; Law N° 9,675/1998; and Law n° 11,961/2009.

in 1997, while Ming overstayed her tourist visa after leaving Min Nan (Fujian Province) for São Paulo in 1994. Ming has bitter memories of her experiences as an undocumented migrant in São Paulo. Johnny confided to me that “she could not sleep at night after a close friend of hers was taken to the Federal Police and received an order of departure. She was constantly afraid of being sent back to China” (Johnny, interview on August 6th, 2017). Ming had received an order of departure herself during a raid in the workplace in 1996. In the second half of the 1990s, raids took place in the 25 de Março Street area in operations to tackle the smuggling of imported goods. Though these were not immigration raids, checks on immigration status intensified to further deter illegal commerce. Ironically, the same departure order was later used as a proof of (unlawful) residence submitted with her status regularization application in 1998, eventually granting Ming the right to stay and a path to citizenship (which made Johnny eligible for a spouse visa and, later, citizenship). As Linda Bosniak points out in her argument in favour of immigrant status regularization policies, “amnesty for immigrants thus effectuates a kind of legal alchemy: through such policies, the irregular is made regular, the unlawful lawful. Amnesty, in this way, serves as a conduit from the farthest margins of citizenship to its possible, eventual center” (2013:344).

Yet, many migrants did not want to or could not apply for regularization. Reasons for not applying include lack of trust in the institutions and fear of retaliation, lack of knowledge of how to properly fill out applications, application fees, excessive required documentation, and the short application time period. For instance, application requirements included obtaining criminal records from the country of citizenship, which is a complex,

expensive, and long bureaucratic process that was not feasible in the application time window. Migrants, activists, advocacy groups, and charity organizations fought to end this criminal record requirement, which eventually happened after the 1998 policy was launched. They were also able to change the policy to grant beneficiaries with permanent rather than temporary visas¹⁵ (Lobo 2016).

In fact, these policies resulted from a history of advocacy and struggles. The 1981 regularization was changed due to civil society's demands, although it is mandated by the 1980 Foreigner Bill,¹⁶ a bill that was written during Brazil's military dictatorship and equated migrants with ideological and terrorist threats to the national security (Sprandel 2015). The 1988 regularization, adopted in the same year of a progressive constitution, stemmed from a broader demand for a more just and inclusive society in a crucial moment of Brazil's re-democratization. The 1998 and 2009 policies resulted from the demand to end what advocates at the time called the "subhuman conditions of irregular migrants," emphasizing that the persistence of irregular migration is a testament to the problems of design and implementation of prior regularization policies, and as well calling for a more comprehensive immigration reform. Civil society also demanded a new regularization policy during the debates around the 2017

¹⁵ The 1981 policy originally regularized migrants for two years only, so they experienced yet again a situation of illegalized presence after that period. The policy was modified in 1987 after a long battle and a period of limbo for many applicants.

¹⁶ Law N° 6,815/1980.

Migration Bill,¹⁷ which was originally included in the bill approved by congress but eventually revoked by President Michel Temer.

In Brazil, as in other countries, these regularizations of undocumented migrants are popularly known as amnesties (Milesi 2011; Milesi and Andrade 2010). Advocates and critics vigorously debate whether amnesty is fair and just to those in violation of the immigration status and border enforcement, as well as to those who migrate lawfully and to residents of the country, especially citizens. Many critics argue that there must be no clemency for lawbreakers, and that it would encourage more illegal migration. From the perspective of the state, as well as of some regularization advocates, amnesty is framed as a pardoning of past violations, which both accepts the law's justness and recognizes migrants' guilt. Yet, some overseas Chinese migrants articulate the regularization in rather different terms, arguing that in fact they had been victims of an unjust immigration system.

Ming stressed that “we are not criminals, we did not commit any crime. I was considered ‘illegal.’ OK. Then nothing has changed in my particular situation and yet I was overnight no longer ‘illegal.’ So why was I called illegal before? The law needs to change, we shouldn’t have amnesties anymore, we should have a legislation that respects people’s rights and dignity” (Ming, interview on August 6th, 2017). By emphasizing the arbitrary nature of legality and the need for law to adjust to social realities and values, Ming challenges the common notion that “amnesty is

¹⁷ Law N° 13,445/2017. This bill no longer requires that a foreigner seeking to regularize their immigration status leave the country and apply for a new visa abroad. None of the overseas Chinese migrants I interviewed in 2017 and 2018 knew that under the 2017 bill they are eligible to regularize their immigration situation upon obtaining formal employment in Brazil.

a settlement based on beneficence rather than any sort of entitlement [in which] responsibility or fault continues [attached] to the underlying act” (Bosniak 2013:348).

Bosniak (2013) points out that amnesty can be understood in at least three different ways, and argues for an amnesty of irregular migration that is based on the ideas of vindication and freedom, “which promises a more critical approach to national citizenship and its exclusions” (Bosniak 2013:346). First, she contends, amnesty is typically associated with forgiving and forgetting the violations for which one remains nonetheless deemed responsible. Second, in a different sense, amnesty can also imply erasure, especially in the context of an administrative reset of the state apparatus to achieve feasibility when records of violations are widespread and unmanageable. This understanding of amnesty recognizes that the law at issue is largely unenforceable, at least as it is designed or implemented. Yet, third, another way of conceiving of – and making political claims about – amnesty inverts the notion of accountability, like Ming’s argument, by positing the state as the perpetrator of injustices committed against, in this case, undocumented migrants. Ming went on to ask “why did they [the Brazilian authorities] make me go through it all? It is the immigration system that is broken. While this persists, more people will be illegal. We did nothing wrong. You know, before I just accepted that it was wrong but necessary [to violate border and immigration enforcement], but now I think I did nothing wrong. They [the Brazilian state] did” (Ming, interview on August 6th, 2017).

Ming’s interrogation of migration regularization shows discontent with immigration policies in Brazil. Her account particularly echoes what Bosniak calls “amnesty as vindication,”

which aims to ensure migrants' freedom by accomplishing a triple effect of protecting the purported transgressors, acknowledging that the violated rule or the applicable penalty is not justifiable, and replacing the accountability calculation "pursuant to which the original offender turns out to have behaved in a way that now appears comprehensible, excusable and, perhaps, justifiable" (Bosniak 2013:349).

Ming's account shows the limits of a strict system of regular migration in terms of exclusion of those who are not able to collect, embody, and display the properly accepted proofs of being an entitled, cosmopolitan subject who can enjoy higher degrees of freedom of international mobility and residence abroad in a Westphalian world of state sovereignty. While regular migration is more desired because it tends to be safer and yield greater degrees of autonomy in international travels, border crossings, and residence abroad, it is not available to many, who resort to unlawful entry or violation of immigration status. In the next section, I discuss another legal option that requires a flexible and pragmatic understanding of one's "paper self": applying for refugee status protection. This is not an option not for entry but for staying, albeit a measure that can have irreversible consequences for those who have their applications rejected.

Seeking refuge

When I first met Yu in 2017 in the stall where he works as a clerk, he proudly showed me his employment record book.¹⁸ In Brazil, the employment record book is a registration document which has records of each formal employment one has had, and it is typically

¹⁸ *Carteira de Trabalho e Previdência Social*.

associated with stable employment and social security benefits. Early during my fieldwork, I learned that stallholders make sure their Brazilian employees are all formally registered on the books. In the context of intensified crackdown on counterfeits and increased state surveillance in the workplace, stallholders can no longer afford the risk of being fined or having the business shut down. In the last ten years, I have encountered many overseas Chinese migrants, particularly clerks in stalls and shops, who showed me their employment record books. However, overseas Chinese clerks are not always formally employed, and, in these cases, if requested to show the business license or any other stall documentation to city inspectors and work auditors, they pretend to be their employer. Thus, they make themselves legible to the state by virtue of performing an official bureaucratic procedure and, yet, they pragmatically and provisionally negotiate their public identities.

Yu's employment record book was rather a novelty for many of his overseas Chinese friends. Having just arrived in Brazil, he submitted a refugee status application.¹⁹ While the refugee application is pending, applicants can access social services such as the free public health or education systems. Further, applicants can obtain an employment record book ID number, seek employment,

¹⁹ In Brazil, the legal category "refugee" refers to someone who applied for, and obtained, refugee status. The legal category "asylee" refers to someone who receives protection in a third country from being extradited to their country of citizenship where the person was sentenced for a political crime. Brazil and many other Latin American countries are different from countries that differentiate between the legal statuses of a refugee and asylee based on whether the applicant was in the territory of the country of application. In the U.S., for instance, the defining distinction is that a refugee is resettled from abroad while an asylee applies in the country.

remain lawful in the country while the application is pending, and apply for a Natural Persons Register,²⁰ an ID that is required for opening bank accounts and registering a business establishment. Neither illegal entry nor accrual of unlawful presence makes people ineligible to apply for refugee status. Forgery of official documents does not make people ineligible either, though it may initiate criminal proceedings against the applicant in a separate court trial.

Like Yu, many other mainland Chinese migrants have recently been applying for refugee status in Brazil, which led to a sudden spike in 2017 that surprised practitioners and human rights advocates.²¹ Yu thinks of himself as someone who “could be described as a refugee” because “it is impossible to live in China... I don’t have rights in the city, and I don’t have any relationship with someone that could help me succeed there” (Yu, interview on December 3rd, 2017). In the interview he gave me, Yu said that that he feared he would fail if put to a test: he did not believe he was able to memorize the version of the “paper self” that is described in the application that was completed with the assistance of a hired attorney. In fact, he is not entirely cognizant of what constitutes grounds for refugee status and he might not be able to present himself convincingly as someone who is entitled to it.

In addition to having to perform a particular kind of language that is recognized as acceptable by the state in their proceedings, refugee applicants have to specifically demonstrate that they qualify for status of protection exclusively granted to individuals with a

²⁰ *Cadastro de Pessoa Física*.

²¹ In 2017, mainland Chinese were the third highest in numbers of applicants with 1,462 applications, if one excludes the Venezuelans and Haitians, who are undergoing unique humanitarian crises and together account for more than half of the applications (Secretaria Nacional de Justiça 2018).

credible fear of persecution (Bruce-Jones 2015; Razack 1995). The legitimization of the status is the result of a thorough and long assessment of the case, in which the applicant must adhere to strict stipulations of how to make themselves legible in terms of both the content and the language, which must remain infallible throughout. This is different from the legitimacy of immigration documentation, which is supposedly indexed by the material properties of the document or by calling in the bearer of the document to prove that they are actually the person described in the document.

While Yu's application was pending,²² he became the father of a baby born in Brazil to a Chinese migrant mother. Their baby is

²² The system is clogged, with a wait time of at least two years for a decision on an applicant's status. Brazil's understaffed National Committee for Refugees (CONARE), responsible for assessing each individual case, saw a gradual increase in the numbers of applicants, particularly with the dramatic influx in the last years of Haitians and Venezuelans. Between 2011 and 2017, Brazil received 126,102 refugee applications and 84,162 were still pending by the end of 2017, of which approximately 2,500 were applications submitted by mainland Chinese (Secretaria Nacional de Justiça 2018). Though it was not possible to obtain the precise number of mainland Chinese applicants who were granted refugee status in Brazil between 2007 and 2017, it is known that the figure is under 50 (Secretaria Nacional de Justiça 2018). In 2017 alone, only a total of 587 applications were deferred, and the mainland Chinese were not among the top recipients in a rank led by Syrians, Congolese, Palestinians, Pakistani, Egyptians, Iraqis, Malians, Lebanese, Cameroons, and Guineans. In fact, only a maximum of five mainland Chinese applicants were recognized as refugees in Brazil in 2017 (the data is not disaggregated, which limits the ability to know the precise number), though it must be noted that these applications refer to cases that had been pending from years before (Secretaria Nacional de Justiça 2018). In Brazil, if a refugee status application is rejected, the applicant can resort to public defenders to obtain information about the legal options available. While the refugee application is pending, spatial mobility within Brazil

eligible to obtain birthright citizenship, which makes Yu and his wife eligible to regularize their immigration status and remain in Brazil regardless of the result of his application. In Brazil, family reunification is a principle that supersedes unlawful entry and violations of immigration status, impeding the removal of parents of Brazilian citizens.

The decision to apply for refugee status is one that many people do not take lightly, especially in countries where the consequences of an application's rejection are more severe. Also, it is a very expensive last resort, due to the high cost of lawyers, and has low chances of approval. Many decide to apply only if an order of removal for immigration violations has been put in place. Yet, Yu thinks that the costs of submitting a refugee application in Brazil are rather low. In Brazil, refugee status determination does not include a court hearing, and it is conducted entirely by the National Committee for Refugees. Fines may apply if unlawful presence is accrued in the time period between the refugee application rejection and the regularization of immigration status. Rejected applicants, who are rarely deported from Brazil, might have legal options to remain in the country or make the difficult decision to stay irregularly.

In any case, the wait time is so long that applicants may constitute a family in Brazil, particularly if they have a child or marry someone who is a citizen or a visa holder, which increases

is absolute but transnational mobility is limited, because applicants can only re-enter Brazil one time with prior authorization and the period abroad must not exceed 90 days. This is frustrating for many, who want to be able to visit their loved ones. It is particularly complicated for applicants and refugees to travel to their country of citizenship because that undermines their case of credible fear of persecution.

their chances of regularizing their immigration status and changes their eligibility to apply for visas. Overseas Chinese migrants often view marriage and parenting as signs of social achievement and status that complement economic success as indicators of accomplishment in migration. However, as discussed in the next section, the decision to acquire Brazilian citizenship is not an easy one, whether it is the case of the Brazilian-born child's birthright citizenship or the naturalization of an eligible overseas Chinese migrant.

Obtaining and negotiating citizenship

Johnny and Ming, whose story I discussed earlier in the regularization section, faced dilemmas when they learned that they were eligible to become naturalized Brazilians. Brazil has pathways to citizenship for eligible visa holders, including those who regularized their immigration situation in the aforementioned policies like Johnny and Ming. From 1980 to 2017, naturalization was determined by the 1980 Foreigner Bill, which has been recently overridden by the 2017 Migration Bill. In both cases, migrants typically must meet a four-year residency requirement, which can be shortened if the applicant has a Brazilian spouse or child, or if the applicant has significant realty. However, one of the most difficult challenges that eligible overseas Chinese visa holders face for naturalization, according to various interviewees, is the Portuguese language test. In the face of such challenges – lawful residency, financial resources, and language skills – many overseas Chinese migrants cannot or decide not to apply for naturalization. In addition, permanent visa holders see little incentive to become Brazilian citizens because visa holders enjoy the same social rights

as Brazilian citizens, except, importantly, voting, running for office, or holding civil service positions.

For many overseas Chinese migrants in Brazil, obtaining Brazilian citizenship,²³ if eligible, is a pragmatic decision to increase their rights to travel internationally, even if the Brazilian passport is far from premium. For instance, Johnny and Ming jokingly said that a “wedding anniversary celebration is only a real celebration if you are traveling to Paris free of visa” (Johnny, interview on August 6th, 2017). In a more sober tone, Johnny said that “for someone who had so many difficulties as an undocumented migrant, it feels

²³ A significant number of overseas Chinese migrants have become Brazilian citizens, though numbers are not totally accurate. I submitted Freedom of Information requests but the data is imperfect. Particularly, the Ministry of Justice, which is the state agency responsible for naturalization processes in Brazil, does not make available the numbers of people who request or acquire citizenship status by nationality. In turn, the Federal Police’s National System of Enrollment and Records of Foreigners (*Sistema Nacional de Cadastro e Registro de Estrangeiros* – SINCRE), which collects information of foreigners by nationality, has a database which includes information on the number of foreigner IDs cancelled because of naturalization. Theoretically, that can serve as a proxy for the number of mainland Chinese and Taiwanese who become Brazilians. However, this data is far from perfect, which is clear in the fact that the response to my Freedom of Information request about the number of Taiwanese individuals whose foreigner ID was cancelled due to naturalization was zero. According to the SINCRE data I obtained, 4,742 mainland Chinese individuals were granted Brazilian citizenship between 1987 and 2015, a number that is likely underestimated. Nearly 70% of these are concentrated in a few years: 2,239 and 404 in 1988 and 1989, respectively, and a total of 659 in 1998, 1999, and 2000 combined. One factor that helps explain this is that, around the 1988 and 1998 regularization policies for undocumented migrants, hometown associations and migrant advocacy groups championed immigration status awareness campaigns, which made migrants cognizant of their eligibility for naturalization, and provided legal counseling.

reassuring to be able to travel [internationally] with less restrictions” (Johnny, interview on August 6th, 2017). Like them, others considered the higher level of international mobility when applying for naturalization in Brazil, referring to the value of citizenship status as indexed by the position of passports in a ranking of freedom of international travel: “the ultimate test is to ask yourself which passport is easier to go to Disney with: yours [Brazilian] or mine [Chinese]? The answer tells you which is best. This is pure hierarchy between countries” (Yu, interview on December 3rd, 2017).

Many overseas Chinese migrants that I interviewed say that “I love Brazil but do not feel Brazilian, I feel Chinese” (Yu, interview on December 3rd, 2017). For them, naturalization is not an end goal in itself nor a sign of loyalty, allegiance, and cultural identification with the Brazilian nation. In this, the overseas Chinese migrants in Brazil join a growing number of migrants worldwide who seek to acquire citizenship for instrumental reasons rather than an identitarian issue. Speaking about dual citizenship, Harpaz and Mateos define the concept of “strategic citizenship” as “the rise in a strategic-instrumental approach towards access to national citizenship,” which is reflected in new acquisition strategies (on the basis of ancestry or via birth tourism), practical uses (as “insurance policy” or premium passport), and understandings (as a status symbol or ethnic marker) (2018). The concept is useful to understand the case of overseas Chinese migrants in São Paulo because it applies to the rise in instrumental attitudes towards nationality in the context in which the value of citizenship is increasingly shaped by global inequalities, including the unequal access to privileges and rights associated with international mobility (Harpaz and Mateos 2018).

Yet, the decision to naturalize poses dilemmas for eligible overseas Chinese migrants. China formally does not accept dual citizenship, though in practice it does not enforce the policy, and the mainland Chinese elites increasingly hold dual citizenship (Spiro 2016). However, holding dual citizenship status remains controversial for mainland Chinese migrants in Brazil. Many are not aware that the policy is largely not enforced, or do not want to take the risks associated with the violation. For instance, one interviewee told me, “You know, China is not like Brazil or the US. We can’t hold two passports ... I’d love to naturalize Brazilian but why would I want to lose my [Chinese] passport? Even without my passport, I’ll remain culturally Chinese, no matter what. But should I just give it away?” (Zhou, interview on July 27th, 2015).

Because Brazil follows the rule of absolute birth-right citizenship, mainland Chinese migrants are confronted with the difficult decision of choosing which nationality they want their children to have. On the one hand, as discussed above, undocumented migrants see their children’s acquisition of Brazilian citizenship at birth as a pragmatic choice to increase their own ability to regularize their immigration situation and to protect themselves against orders of departure or even removals. Indeed, Brazilian law dictates that parents of citizens at birth cannot be deported, and they are eligible to apply for family reunification visas. Migrants also said that they want their children to have Brazilian citizenship because they hope this will increase the children’s opportunities to live in the United States, and dream of them eventually being able to also hold an American passport in the future.

On the other hand, many want their children to have Chinese citizenship either because of a cultural identification with the

Chinese nationality or, more pragmatically, because of the enjoyment of rights associated with it, particularly if they send the children to be raised in China or plan on returning with the children in the future. Yet, migrants' cost-benefit analysis is not so straightforward in these cases either. For those who send their children to be raised in China, this is a crucial issue that raises questions about cultural adaptation and schooling. These children have difficulties in accessing public schools in China because they lack the local *hukou* (household registration system) status; this significantly increases the cost of schooling and decreases their chances of attending school in the places where their grandparents live or accessing quality education (Wing Chan and Buckingham 2008). Further, they have to observe applicable Chinese visa rules, including the two- or five-year validity period, which create difficulties in following the school calendar and limits their right to stay, access to social rights, and their ability to travel internationally under specific circumstances. As Harpaz and Mateos (2018) argue, "strategic citizenship is a nexus where domestic class inequality intersects with between-nations inequality".

Because a Brazilian passport is not a premium one, Brazil's birth right citizenship rule has not led to a robust transnational industry around "birth tourism," which is increasingly popular among wealthy mainland Chinese people in the US (Spiro 2016). Yet, it does factor into aspiring migrants' choice of Brazil as their migration destination: "it is too expensive and risky to have your baby in the US. It is not easy. When my wife got pregnant, we debated whether we should come to São Paulo. We wanted to go to the US, but her cousin lives here. We had to decide fast because she could not travel with a big belly. We wish we could go to the

US. In the end, I like it here” (Yu, interview on December 3rd, 2017). There is an increasing number of pregnant overseas Chinese women, mostly mainlanders, who use Brazil’s public health system, which is free and can be accessed by any individual, regardless of whether the person is a taxpayer and irrespective of immigration status. In São Paulo, the health centre near the 25 de Março Street has the largest number of pregnant migrants of all public centres in the city.²⁴

Stratification in terms of class and income as well as place of residence and socio-spatial inequality all shape pregnant women’s decisions to seek public services at this health centre. Many newly arrived migrants opt for this because they can’t afford private facilities and live near that health centre. Social networks and the emergent services industry that caters to overseas Chinese migrants also factor in. In particular, over the last ten years, Linda, a Chinese migrant who is a licensed dentist in Brazil, has been serving as an interpreter between health providers and patients, which facilitates the communication that was previously done only through a brochure available in Mandarin Chinese and online dictionaries. Linda also helps translating remotely for care providers and mothers during home visits. In interviews I conducted, Linda and Brazilian health care providers reported that undocumented pregnant migrants expect to be able to remain lawfully in the country after the baby is born. Yet, migrants I interviewed explained that the decision to have a child in Brazil is rather tough: it calls into question the family migration plans and raises the issue

²⁴ According to a Brazilian nurse I interviewed, in 2015 there were roughly 100 overseas Chinese prenatal patients out of the approximately 300 in total, and in 2016 nearly half of all prenatal patients were mainland Chinese.

of whether to return to China, stay in Brazil with the child, or send the child to the grandparents in China.

In lieu of conclusion

The immigration statuses of the overseas Chinese in downtown São Paulo popular markets are quite varied. Contrary to the typical depiction of them, a great number are documented migrants, though many experience a prolonged situation of precarious status. Some resort to tactics that include family arrangements and hired middlemen to obtain legitimate papers or counterfeit documents needed for some or all of their international travels. Others are visa overstayers, who applied for a visa in China with the assistance of travel agencies or an affidavit of support letter from relatives in Brazil. Others yet are undocumented migrants who crossed borders illegally with the assistance of hired paper pushers, smugglers, transporters, and other intermediaries in the course of their journey. A significant number of illegalized border crossers and overstayers regularized their immigration situation with Brazil's four regularization policies for undocumented migrants in the last four decades (in 1981, 1988, 1998, and 2009), and they, in turn, may be eligible to sponsor visas of newcomers.

This paper sheds new light on the relation between legibility and legality in migration. It has shown how overseas Chinese migrants in São Paulo deploy various tactics for mobility and emplacement. In the current climate, which is characterized by economic crisis, crackdowns on São Paulo downtown popular markets, and Brazil's tougher border enforcement (as well as the emergence of the Brazilian government's discourse of stricter immigration policies and anti-immigration sentiment), overseas Chinese migrants in the popular markets are facing new challenges.

Sadly, there is no suggestion that border and immigration policies will become more welcoming in the near future. Yet, migrants have showed ingenuity in the past, and will hopefully find resources and keep using tactics to overcome an unjust system that restricts their mobility and emplacement.

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YO BAN BOO: ASIAN BRAZILIAN IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Daniel Bicudo Veras



Introduction

The present paper aims to analyse an example of communication produced by *huayi* and other Asian Brazilians from São Paulo, namely, the Youtube channel Yo Ban Boo. Issues like representativeness, place of speech, cultural identity of Asian Brazilians will be addressed, given that this material is a new source of information on the matter, created in 2016. When it comes to Asian immigration to Brazil, a lot has been written about Chinese, Korean and Japanese communities separately. In the process, São Paulo and the Japanese play a prominent role. Ethnographies have been made, some of them exploring spaces, such as the Liberdade neighbourhood or 25 de Março Street, both in São Paulo. The diasporic character of these immigrations has been also addressed. Also, a lot has been written about media and newspapers in Asian languages produced in Brazil, but now what we are trying to analyse here is a Brazilian material produced in Portuguese by Brazilians who happen to be of Asian descent.

Here the researcher will try to identify the discourse produced by an Asian Brazilian community in a social media context, of a Youtube channel that influences younger generations and builds identities. The place of speech (standpoint) is of importance, as well as the still dominant role of whiteness in the construction of a Brazilian identity. The importance of the theme is justified by the need to shed a light on identity issues in Brazil, which are highly

complex. Immigration plays a significant role in the incorporation of Asian cultural elements into Brazilian society. The myth of racial democracy in Brazil and the signification of Asian communities as minority models need to be deconstructed, as they reinforce institutional racism in detriment of Brazilians of African descent. The paper will help identify cultural exchanges between East and West, and the resulting culture. Moreover, it will go further on the discussion about Brazilian identity, in which whiteness plays a dominant role, ascribing to Asian Brazilians an eternal condition of foreignness. Now, in a context of covid-19 pandemic, Asians have been victims of racism throughout the world.

Hypotheses, methodology and theoretical references

The hypotheses of the paper are: for a number of historical reasons, the discussion of Brazilian identity does not include people of non-European origin easily. Secondly, in spite of it, there is an Asian Brazilian identity in construction, making use of social media, in an unprecedented moment. And thirdly, Brazilian culture has Asian elements, too, although his new culture is no reproduction of cultures from the Far East. The methodology consists of selection of a number of videos by You Ban Boo, highlighting the issues approached, and analysing the comments by viewers as a form of assessing reception of the messages. Opposing HUNTINGTON (1997) and his thesis of clash of civilizations, the paper must analyse complementation of cultures and life on the border, influenced by BHABHA (2003). About differences between East and West, works by JULLIEN (1998), and about Orientalism, the analysis by SAID (2003). About negotiation of a new Brazilian identity, the works of LESSER (2001) are of importance. Besides, on overall immigration, Eastern influences

and Chinese diaspora, LEITE (1999), McKEOWN (1999), PINHEIRO-MACHADO (2011), SANG (2003), SAYAD (1998). On standpoint, works by RIBEIRO (2017).

Analysis

It is difficult to accurately estimate how many Asians live in Brazil for a number of reasons. Although Japanese immigration was very official and happened under the Brazilian State's control, the same did not happen to other Asian groups here. The Japanese are indeed the paradigm of Asian immigration to Brazil, reaching over 1.5 million people, among Japanese-born and descendants (*nikkei*). It was a very intense influx from the 1900's to 1970's, with a strong rural characteristic. As for the Korean and Chinese, in turn, the situation is far less precise. While these two groups are still coming to Brazil, one cannot tell for sure how many, and the official numbers are far more conservative than reality. For one thing, in the world there is illegal migration, and especially for the Chinese, families come via other places, holding different passports, such as of Mozambique's or Portugal's, concealing the real figures. Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese also come with different documents, which also obscures the issue. While 50 thousand Koreans are expected to be living in Brazil, between 200-300 thousand Chinese live in the country. The Chinese Academy of Social Science estimates 35 million Chinese around the world (VÉRAS, 2008). The Chinese and Korean have come in individual waves, with a very urban and entrepreneurial trait. These groups are diasporas, in the concept by HALL (2003), which involves: physical spreading around the world; the creation of some mythology about motherland; and the promise of return (either

physical or symbolic). Now we see a channel of communication by those Asian-Brazilians.

Yo Ban Boo consists of a Youtube Channel which has been aired since May 18, 2016. As of August 20, 2018, 4,294,430 views had been computed. It was created by Leo Hwan (who left in April 2018), a Taiwanese-Caucasian Brazilian, Beatriz Diaferia, a Japanese-Caucasian Brazilian and Kiko Morente, an African Brazilian. The channel offers a variety of videos, including short stories, sketches, and specific sessions, such as Quero Café (talk show, debate), Hora do Queijo (interview), besides videos commenting films and soap operas (analysis).



Kiko Morente, Batriz Diaferia and Leo Hwan.
Image: Yo Ban Boo



Calling for a debate on sexualization of Asian characters in pop culture.
Image: Yo Ban Boo



A traditional TV host pulls his eyes to mock facial features of the Asian people. Everyday racism. Image: Yo Ban Boo

Some of the Topics Approached in the Channel:

- Things that Asian Brazilians always hear
- Things that Taiwanese Brazilians always hear
- If Asian Brazilians asked the same questions they are asked
- Asian participation in anti-black racism
- What it means to feel represented
- Black history in Liberdade neighborhood, São Paulo⁹
- Maninterrupting
- Whitewashing
- Portrayal of Asians in the media
- Okinawan identity
- The “innocent” act of pulling your eyes back
- Blasians
- Films with white savior
- “Get Out” and the Asian who wants to be white
- Being called white: why does it bother so much (for the white)?
- “*Pastel de flango*” is racist
- Chinese parents, gay son: “The Wedding Banquet”
- “Ghost in the Shell” and whitewashing
- Are Asian Brazilians a model minority?
- Being gay as an Asian Brazilian
- Covid-19 and quarantine

Topics 1, 2, 3 and 11 deal with some level of micro-aggressions, or some kind of everyday offense perpetrated against Asian-Brazilians in a casual and careless way, in the reproduction of stereotypes in small talks with acquaintances. Furthermore, topics 4, 14 and 19

are about racism against Asians. It is peculiar because it takes very particular forms, as Asians are considered a “model minority”, i.e., a thriving group of non-whites, whose success is commonly used against African-Brazilians, blaming the latter for the dire situations they find themselves into. As the channel points out, Asian-Brazilians are responsible for exacerbating racism against the people of African descent, as they often tend to gang up with the whites to obtain and maintain some privileges. *Yo Ban Boo* highlights the complexity of the issue, because it shows how a group of non-whites can be, at the same time, oppressor and victimized by racism. The Brazilian society can easily accept whites in their identity, but will always see people of Asian descent as foreigners. LESSER (2001) demonstrates it is an old issue in Brazilian society, as Asian acceptance has always had to be negotiated, conditioned, and even today, is not widely acknowledged – as the existence of Asian-Brazilians has challenged the elite’s racial ideal since the 19th century. Anyway, now during the pandemic of covid-19, ignorance, prejudice and racism against Asians get a more aggressive, violent and direct display (topic 21).

As for items 5, 8, 9, 13 and 18, they are about Asian representativeness in the media, highlighting the importance of having Asian role models on television and cinema, and praising the good examples, like live action film *Mulan* (2020, dir. Niki Caro) and the animation *Over the Moon* (2020, dir. Glen Keane), among others. Unfortunately, on the other hand, there is a phenomenon called whitewashing, which consists of having white Caucasian actors play roles supposed to be for Asians. *Yo Ban Boo* exemplifies the phenomenon by citing several cases, such as the 2017 Hollywood film *Ghost in the Shell* (dir. Rupert Sanders), in which Scarlett Johansson plays a Japanese character. In Brazil, the

same happens in a soap opera called *Sol Nascente* (2016-2017, Rede Globo), which is about the Japanese immigration to Brazil. Another phenomenon commented on the channel are countless movies with a white saviour, in which non-white characters are just a means for the white characters to show their personalities (good or evil), totally deprived of any protagonism. And at last, emasculated Asian males are also a common stereotype in the movies.

Topic number 6 is about the *Liberdade* neighbourhood in São Paulo city, a district known for its Eastern traits, having concentrated along history a great deal of Japanese, Chinese and Korean immigrants, getting the reputation of a “piece of the East”, but in reality, just creating a simulacrum of the East. Indeed, what is here ignored is that *Liberdade* has a strong African history, even prior to Asian immigrants. People of African descent used to live there long before the Asians, and its main square used to be a place for official public executions by hanging. All this is ignored by most visitors nowadays, who just want to find some kind of Asian fantasy there. So why such an effort to erase African history in *Liberdade*? *Yo Ban Boo* analyses the issue, which gets to a new level in 2018, when the state governor changed the name of the local subway station for *Japão Liberdade*, once again hiding the African past. In 2020 there was even an attempt to forbid the selling of non-Asian foods on *Liberdade* Sunday market, which eventually fell through after heated debate.

The topics 10 and 12 are about more specific identities within the group of Asian-Brazilians. The channel interviews Okinawan-Brazilians, “Blasians” (half-African, half-Asian people), telling about the complexity of these identifications and issues faced. There are also sketches about Asian-Caucasian people. Those are

very specific standpoints and the channel aims to provide a variety of perspectives. Homosexuality among Asians is approached on topics 17 and 20, and what draws our attention in the accounts of the interviewees is that it seems that individuality is denied to people of Asian descent. Whatever sexual orientation they might present, it will not be accepted if it diverges from the expected Asian stereotype. Perennial foreignness ascribed to Asian-Brazilians is addressed on topic 16: “pastel de flango”, which is a mockery for the supposedly Chinese pronunciation of Portuguese. Even if you are Brazilian, as well as your parents, but have Asian facial features, this joke is often made on you, as if you could not speak Portuguese properly. The channel also shows footage videos in which Brazilians mock Chinese people who cannot even understand their language, or even understand they are being laughed at. How can an Asian expect to be accepted or to make friends in Brazil like this? Yo Ban Boo shows the cruel facet of Brazilian racism, which has nothing of cordial or friendly. Sentences like “Go back to your country!” or “You have to kill a Japanese competitor if you want to get in the University of São Paulo” are heard countless times. And, at last, the channel could not miss a discussion about whiteness (topic 15), great responsible for the issues herein presented. Why don’t white people like to hear the expression “Dear white people”? Because it hurts the narcissist belief that Caucasians are universal, or synonym for human. No, whites are just one of the races present in the world, they are specific, and they do not like to be reminded of that. Yo Ban Boo explore all these issues in their videos.

Example 1: The Liberdade Neighbourhood



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

In São Paulo, a TV broadcast team talks to Maria, a woman of Japanese descent. Completely disregarding her appeals to be called Maria, they insist in calling her Kuniko.



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

A Brazilian TV host records her incursions in the Liberdade neighbourhood, São Paulo. While impersonating an Eastern

stereotype and mocking its mannerisms, she treats the place as foreign territory, not a Brazilian one.



Image: Yo Ban Boo



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

The São Paulo State Government has changed the name of the subway station for Japão-Liberdade. By reinforcing the Eastern character of the neighbourhood, they completely obliterate African history in the area, which is highly significant.

Example 2: Being Asian and Gay



Image: Asiáticos pela Diversidade



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

A testimony on being LGBT+ of Asian descent in Brazil. One of the most dramatic effects of racism against Asians is the denying

them their own individuality. There are strongly rooted stereotypes and Asians are expected to fit in them.

Example 3: Whitewashing



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

Criticism on whitewashing in Brazilian soap-operas and Hollywood films. The most blatant case on Brazilian TV was *Sol Nascente*, in which Caucasians played the leading roles who belong to the Japanese community. The picture above mocks the situation

by imagining the famous Nippo-Brazilian actor Ken Kaneko offering to play an Italian character. In Hollywood films, in turn, whitewashing is also present, like in the film *Ghost in the Shell*. In it, Scarlett Johansson plays the Japanese protagonist.

Example 4: Feeling represented in the media



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

The actor chosen to play Mulan in the new Disney live action film.



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

What is it like to feel represented in the movies? Is it about Asian faces in the cast or about typical Asian situations? Leo Hwan elaborates on this, explaining how the former is good, but not enough. He feels far more represented when he reads a comic book in which super heroes fight hard to pay the bill in a restaurant. This is such a typical situation of Asian families.

Example 5: On “becoming white”



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

When commenting the film *Get Out* (USA, 2017, dir. Jordan Peele), Leo Hwan highlights the role of the Asian character in anti-African racism. Having racism as the element of horror, the film shows how this character associates with the white racists against the black, instead of seeing himself as non-white. It is a metaphor of Asians putting themselves in the model minority position, which helps justify the dire conditions the black have to face.



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

“Honey, I’ve just become White”. What is the process of whitening? The channel exposes how this process happens among Asians.



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

No, the white are not the universal category of humankind. The white are just one of the races. This is why they feel uncomfortable about being called white people.

And 6: Other topics



Being a Half-Asian person. Image: Yo Ban Boo.



Maninterrupting and other forms of aggression against women.

Image: Yo Ban Boo.



What if Asians asked the same stupid questions they hear? What if Asian-Brazilians reproduced stereotypes about other groups, too? An exercise of empathetic imagination. Image: Yo Ban Boo.

Complexities of identity are also present here. The channel takes for granted a clear difference between Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese, an issue there is no consensus about *a priori*. As Beijing and Taipei send contradictory messages on the issue, a heated

debate should be expected, but it is not considered in the videos' premise.

Yo-Ban-Boo commented video

Things Asian Brazilians always hear (July 14, 2016).



Image: Yo Ban Boo.

“So, what are you... Japanese, Chinese or Korean?”

“Do you use chopsticks to to eat at home?... Even to have soup?”

“Are you sisters?”

“How old are you? 18? 27? 32? 14?”

“Open your eyes, Jap!”

“How to say ‘son of a bitch’ in Japanese?”

“You are mestizo, aren’t you?”

“Are you *sansei*, *nissei* or *num sei* (a pun meaning ‘I don’t know’)?”

“You have a thick beard; your father must be hairy, right?”

“Do you date Japanese guys only?”

“For an Eastern girl, you have quite a body, huh?... Oh no, this is a compliment!”

“Are your parents strict?”

“But were you born here in Brazil?”

“Hey, Japs!”

“Why do you hang out with Eastern people only?”

“You are the most Brazilian Japanese person I know!”

“Can you tell the Chinese from the Japanese and Korean... ?”

“Wow! You are such a cute Japanese couple!”

“Do you know what this means?” (Eastern characters or tattoos)

“Have you eaten dog meat?”

“I’ve got a Chinese friend, I think you might know him.”

“Wow, I have always wanted to have a Japanese girl’s hair.”

“Do you speak Portuguese at home?”

“Is it a perm?”

“You know that you have to kill a Japanese guy if you want to be admitted at the University of São Paulo, right?”

“*Arigato*” ... “You’re welcome.”

The questions are somehow self-explanatory, in a way they are a display of prejudice and racism. They deny the Asian-Brazilians their Brazilianness, or their Brazilian character. Or their individuality. Not to mention the stereotypes they show.

Comments (retrieved on March 4, 2018).

- (1 year before) – “the mestizos are not Asian, just some Brazilian little monkeys in disguise” (SIC)
- (3 months before) – “little monkey is your fucked up father” (P.S.).
- (1 year before) – “the worst is when they want me to translate or tell things”.

- (1 year before) – “the guys think we still live in the Japanese immigration times, and that we live in Japanese houses, as if we lived in a world different from Brazil LOL”
- (1 year before) – “Orient yourself. Let’s build a labelless world, or at least a labelless Brazil!!!... I’ve been hearing these sentences since I was an adolescent... for almost half a century!! And it baffles me that it still goes on... this is really strange, as it makes no sense...”
- (1 year before) – “exactly, poor Eastern people, there should be a law to forbid such things LOL”
- (1 year before) – “I am of Chinese descent, and therefore I am often bullied, this makes me angry and stressed, and at times overwhelmed, it makes me wonder why, is it because I have slanted eyes, or because I am short, or because my parents pronounce Portuguese wrong, or because I do martial arts or use chopsticks to eat, or fucking hell, get the nicknames china in box or even china no.one, or they ask me nonsense questions such as: ‘Do you have a small dick?’ or ‘Is it true that all Asians have a small penis?’ if so, what’s gonna change in your life? Or not! Let’s say we have elephant dicks, why do you keep asking, do you wanna have a try? Just stop! This is a pain in the ass: You see that the Asian guy has a hard time with our language, because it is one of the most complicated languages... he tries to speak it properly but can’t just like my parents, I’ve tried to teach them, but they have a difficulty in pronunciation, even with a more than 20-year experience in Brazil, they won’t be able to speak correctly like us! Just respect it! Now imagine you are a Brazilian abroad, maybe for business or visiting relatives, pronouncing it all wrong, being mocked,

not being able to answer properly, being a victim of prejudice, all this endless mocking and no answer, now understand what it is like to be a foreigner in a different country! Respect them, we are all the same, all human beings, we've got different cultures and look different (appearance). If you don't respect, fuck off, if you do, congratulations! You are different from many. You know how to respect! You are evolved! Keep up!

- (1 year before) – “My God... I think I've heard them all XD”
- (1 year before) – “you didn't mention that prejudiced “joke”: *pastel de flango* (chicken dumpling, pronounced wrongly)... generalizing everybody and, on top of that, mocking and looking down on the accents of others”
- (1 year before) – “I've always hated that ‘Open your eyes, Jap!’ I feel like killing the guy! LOL...”
- (1 year before) – “When somebody says the classic ‘Are you *sansei*, *nissei* or *num sei*?’ I automatically associate that with a typical old uncle joke. For me it is the same”.
- (1 year before) – “I have been through almost all the situations, and in most cases I was approached by complete strangers, and with a disconcerted smile I thought ‘Do I know you?’”.
- (8 months before) – “The worst thing is that, if you complain, they will simply reply ‘bunch of sissies, can't even take a joke, in the old days it wasn't like this, go back to your country, then.’ It is really frustrating, especially when you spend the whole childhood and adolescence hearing this”.

- (8 months before) – “LOL I laughed myself out!!! Will any Japanese guy do (to kill and be admitted at University of São Paulo)? What if I make a mistake and kill a Chinese instead? You can’t tell, ‘they look all the same’ LOL...”
- (8 months before) – “A lot of self-victimization. Pathetic, bunch of spoiled kids who get offended or hurt by any irrelevant shit”.
- (1 year before) – “I am of Chinese descent, got slanted eyes but I was never told such things”.
- (1 year before) – “This always happens to me!...”
- (6 months before) – “Bunch of *chingling*, the wites (SIC) will always be superior” (M. L.)
- “Show your face, racist... you can only be a man at the other end of a computer, right?! Imbecile” (K. I.).
- (1 year before) – “I had no idea Asians got offended by this [] I’ve always liked Eastern people and culture so much that if saw Asians on the street I felt like jumping on them! Now I am in the depression corner reflecting on my actions... I’ve played the fool and had no clue!”

Other comments:

Many say that they feel second-hand embarrassment for the people who pull their eyes back, mocking Asians’s facial features.

- (8 months before) – “Can’t even ask questions to these edgy people, folks...”
- (8 months before) – “The difference between Korea China and Japan? The flag!” They can’t stand “*pastel de flango*” anymore.

- (1 year before) – “One thing is true: whoever is Asian notices that many of the people asking were Asian. There is an Asian Brazilian accent, even among those born in Brazil”.
- (7 months before) – “I really look Japanese, and people saying this have always bothered me, but now I got used to it, in the old days that had lowered my self-esteem”.
- (8 months before) – “Fucking sissies, if you are not happy just leave the damn country!”

Two details draw our attention about the comments. The first is that many Asian-Brazilians feel identification with the situations exposed in the video, and here they vent their frustration. A small part disagrees that it is their everyday reality, though. The other detail is that there are racist comments, most probably by non-Asian people, who do not feel even embarrassed to display their prejudice. Our society somehow spare and protect racists. The racist comments just reinforce the stereotypes above mentioned. If racism against black people is at times not acknowledged, let alone racism against Asians. It is racism too, indeed, but perhaps harder to identify because of the stereotype of “model minority”. And all racisms combined are harder to get because of the myth of racial democracy in Brazil, and because racism is structural in Brazilian society.

Conclusions

The existence of this Youtube channel allows breaking the invisibility of minority groups, making evident their place of speech, and going further on the Asian Brazilian perspective. Furthermore, it is the perspective of the people of younger

generations, many of which Brazilians of second, third or even fourth generation. Even so, these groups cannot breakthrough and lose their “foreignness” in the eyes of the mainstream Brazilian society. Seen as a “model minority”, or a thriving group of non-whites, Asian Brazilians are never expected to be victims of racism – but they are. Yo Ban Boo channel makes it evident in many spheres. Despite their relative economic success in Brazilian society, Asian Brazilians are still denied their individuality – like in many parts of the world, having to fit in what is expected from them, stereotypes: good in math, bad in speaking Portuguese, having a small penis, composing a sexual fetish, among others. The channel is an innovative voice to alert Brazilian society about their own prejudice. Brazilian society is varied, multi-racial and multi-ethnic – but whiteness is still the standard. Yo Ban Boo also denounces that Asian Brazilian groups participate in the construction of racism against black people, as they use their privileges to reinforce the image of model minority as opposed to arguably unsuccessful African Brazilians. And they also give examples of how Asians want to belong to the group of “whites”, and despising the black is a way of achieving this. Asians go through the process of whitewashing in the media, and the channel exemplifies it with the film *Ghost in the Shell* and the Brazilian soap-opera *Sol Nascente*, in which Caucasian actors play the main Asian roles. Yellow face is part of the process in which young Asians lack representation and role models. At last, the part of comments is especially illustrative because in it one can see many people of Asian descent venting their frustrations about living in Brazil and having to deal with everyday prejudice. On the other hand, non-Asians commenters show their blatant racism and bigotry, perpetrating hate speech with no embarrassment. All this just

makes the point that racism exists against Asian Brazilians. As for the hypotheses of the paper, one can say that they were confirmed. Indeed, the discussion of Brazilian identity does not include people of non-European origin easily. Secondly, Yo Ban Boo portrays an Asian Brazilian identity in construction, whilst very active and critical. And finally, one can identify a number of Asian elements present in Brazilian culture, too. Now, in a context of covid-19, racism against Asians has been clearer and more exacerbated, which makes the discussion more needed.

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Teacher Liao Si’s page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/professordechines/>

Estudos Asiático-Brasileiros (Asian-Brazilian Studies)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/540209652761976/>

Filosofia Taoísta (Taoist Philosophy), by Chiu Yi Chih

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1882281848653533/>

Page of Confucius Institute in Brazil

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/mandarim.brasil/>

Perigo Amarelo (Yellow Danger), analysis

<https://www.facebook.com/perigoamarelo/>

Coletivo Oriente-se (by Asian Brazilian actors)

<https://www.facebook.com/coletivoorientese/>

Centro Chinês (a Center of Chinese Language and Culture in Rio)

<https://www.facebook.com/centro.chines/>

Asiáticos pela Diversidade (Asian LGBT Community)

<https://www.facebook.com/asiaticosdiversidade/>

Asian-Brazilian Youtube Channels

Bro Capitalista, by Christian Jao Haksabatugi

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCksNHNRPJMK7xRBjq6nqDTQ>

Pula Muralha, by Liao Si and Lucas Brand

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6qjUYfE_cG4PHWVs9MMBlA

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Chiu Yi Chih, Taoist Philosopher born in Taiwan

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCavBAhXBxEMsvD_8uSUqpvA

Instagram accounts

yobanboo

leonardohwan

boycapitalista

lotus.fenminino

projetoasiatique

diasporique

china.tropical

pulamuralha

okinawando

coreanosdobrasil

Institutional Instagram accounts

revista_confucio

nihonflix

instconfucio

culturaalianca

japanhousesp

bunkyodigital

camarabrazilchina

embaixadajapao

CHINESE MIGRATIONS AND ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES

Edivan de Azevedo Silva da Costa



Notes and observation practices: Insertion in fieldwork

This text will be dedicated to the partial results of the field research that were carried out in the municipality of São Gonçalo, located in the Eastern Metropolitan Fluminense with the purpose of understanding the constitution of the migratory networks of Chinese. In addition, through ethnography, to understand the social relations of Chinese in that region. At that time, the field diary as a work tool for anthropologists and also for other social scientists was a fundamental piece for recording ideas, notes and observations of relevance to the development of research.

A line of investigation based on ethnographic research by William Foote-Whyte (2005) was followed¹ in areas of social vulnerability where Italian immigrants and their descendants lived in districts with high demographic density between the 1930s and 1940s in the United States. This line of investigation was used to analyze the social structure of the Chinese community through observation, actions and sociability.

My acquaintance with Chinese migrants allowed me, as far as possible, to put myself in their place through the knowledge I acquired, trying to keep myself free from pre-established concepts. As Velho points out: “[...] a ideia de tentar *por-se no lugar do outro*

¹ FOOTE-WHITE, W. *Sociedade de Esquina: Estrutura social de uma área urbana pobre e degradada*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2005.

e de captar vivências e experiências particulares exige um mergulho em precisado e delimitado em termos de tempo” (VELHO, 1978, page. 37)².

Throughout the research I developed the ability to quickly transcribe what was said by the interviewees, I observed facial and body expressions. After the field, I immediately tried to go somewhere where I could write down all the observations and perceptions that I characterize as my “Ethnographic field diary of orality” as a way to avoid losing the memories that I will acquire during the field work. I identify with Malinowski (1978) when he says that:

Na etnografia, o autor é, ao mesmo tempo, o seu próprio cronista e historiador, suas fontes de informação são, indubitavelmente, bastante acessíveis, mas também extremamente enganosas e complexas; não estão incorporadas a documentos materiais fixos, mas sim ao comportamento e memória de seres humanos. Na etnografia, é frequentemente imensa a distância entre a apresentação final dos resultados da pesquisa e o material bruto das informações coletadas pelo pesquisador, através de suas próprias observações, das asserções dos nativos, do caleidoscópio da vida tribal. O etnógrafo tem que percorrer esta distancia ao longo dos anos laboriosos que transcorrem desde o momento em que pela primeira vez pisa numa praia nativa e faz as primeiras tentativas no sentido de comunicar-se com os

² “[...] the idea of trying to put yourself in the other's place and of capturing particular experiences and experiences requires a dive in precise and limited in terms of time” (VELHO, 1978, page 37, our translation).

habitantes da região, até à fase final dos seus estudos, quando redige a versão definitiva dos resultados obtidos. Uma breve apresentação acerca das tripulações de um etnógrafo – as mesmas por que passei – pode trazer mais luz à questão do que qualquer argumentação muito longa e abstrata.³

It is worth mentioning that a bibliographic investigation of research dedicated to the migratory movements of Chinese was carried out. The fieldwork was carried out between June 2016 and February 2017 with observation and interviews with employees of the Chinese ethnic group. In this work, we chose not to reveal the identities of the interviewees so that they are not identified. In this way, the real names were changed by fictitious by requests from the deponents.

³ MALINOWSKI, 1978, pages 18-19: “In ethnography, the author is, at the same time, his own chronicler and historian, his sources of information are undoubtedly quite accessible, but also extremely misleading and complex; they are not incorporated into fixed material documents, but to the behaviour and memory of human beings. In ethnography, the distance between the final presentation of the research results and the raw material of the information collected by the researcher is often immense, through his own observations, the assertions of the natives, the kaleidoscope of tribal life. The ethnographer has to travel this distance over the laborious years that pass from the moment he first steps on a native beach and makes the first attempts to communicate with the inhabitants of the region, until the final stage of his studies. , when writing the final version of the results obtained. A brief presentation about the crews of an ethnographer - the same ones I went through - can shed more light on the issue than any very long and abstract argument” (MALINOWSKI, 1978, pages 18-19, our translation).

Chinese pastries

In the municipalities of the Eastern Metropolitan Fluminense, the presence of Chinese people working in ethnic pastry shops and restaurants on the streets of city centres is notorious. Over the two years of fieldwork for the master's research and my previous experiences with Chinese in São Gonçalo, I was able to count 78 cafeterias and 55 stores, restaurants and pastry shops predominantly distributed in the Centro and Alcântara neighbourhoods. The preference of the Chinese to work in the food trade is due to not speaking the Portuguese language, because they have the amount of money necessary to invest in the trade and do not need a lot of knowledge to prepare food.

Before arriving in São Gonçalo, the Chinese, through migratory networks, managed to enter the food market in which other members of the sinus community were already established in the municipality. According to Franco Ramela (1995) when studying the migratory networks, he states:

“[...] los emigrantes a actores racionales que persiguen objetivos y movilizan para tales fines los recursos que tienen a su disposición. Estos han sido considerados, a menudo, como recursos relacionales, es decir aquellas relaciones personales que sirven para conseguir información, elegir el destino, insertarse em el mercado de trabajo de la sociedad receptora, etc.”⁴

⁴RAMELA, 1995, page 09: “[...] migrants to rational actors who pursue objectives and mobilize the resources at their disposal for their purposes. These have often been considered as relational resources, that is, those personal relationships that serve to obtain information, choose the destination, insert themselves into the job market of the receiving society, etc”.

In my research on Chinese immigration in São Gonçalo between the years 2012 to 2013, I met Chinese cafeteria owners in the city. In my master's degree, when I returned to the countryside, seeing new contacts with Chinese and their descendants, I was interested in being with the previous interlocutors who still maintained contact in order to expand my relationship with the local ethnic universe. The cafeterias still existed with the sale of snacks, sugarcane juice and other products, but the owners were not the same. In the search to establish contact with new owners I used the strategies I had practiced, spend as a consumer.

In the search to resume contacts with the Chinese I already knew, I went on December 5, 2016 to the neighbourhood of Trindade, near Alcântara, where the Chinese already known would be. When I arrived at the establishment, I noticed that the environment had not changed, the white tiles and coral that went from floor to ceiling still remained, the drawings of cats known as *Maneki Neko*, which means financial prosperity, inside the cafeteria there were pictures that stretched the landscape of mountains and lakes in China. The five-foot poster with Mao Zedong's photograph was notorious. I noticed that there were three Chinese children playing between the benches and the tables in the cafeteria.

The cafeteria was not full and so I was able to sit in a chair that was very close to the counter, and I was attended by a man of about thirty years old who was Brazilian, born in the state of Paraíba. As I was running low on money, I ordered a cashew juice and a chicken drumstick - the cheapest I had. At that moment, I wanted to record my experiences in the field through direct observation of the behaviour, however, I chose not to open my field diary so that there would be no strangeness on his part. I went to the register

and paid for my consummation for an ethnically Chinese boy. I went back to the place where my order was on a plate and ate, watching that place. I tried to start the conversation with that north-eastern man who answered me with a comment about the football game that was shown on television the day before. Right away, he was excited and talked about the defeat of his team, as I don't understand football, I just agreed and encouraged him to talk even more. In the meantime, I ate slowly so that I could have more time to stay at the cafeteria, as there was little money and I might not be able to buy another snack. When I finished eating, I asked what I thought about Mao Zedong's image and who it would be. He said he thought he was a family member of the Chinese who owned the establishment that died before coming to live in São Gonçalo. I asked who gave him that information. He replied naturally:

Look, I think this "crazy person" is their "parent" there. You must be the grandfather of these guys. They are all the same. But they have a lot of respect for him. They call and Bad [Mao]. I find it strange that he has the name Mao [Bad] instead of "well". I find it strange ... He is almost my size [photo] and seems to be looking at me with that ugly smile⁵. (Unidentified deponent, Brazilian, approximately 30 years old).

I looked at him, laughed as a way to agree with his speech. I went to the cashier again to pay for the bottle of water with only the two real coins left in my pocket. I asked the teenager who was at the

⁵ In the Portuguese language, the pronunciation "Mao" is similar to "Mal" which means in English as "bad".

checkout counter in Portuguese, trying to start a conversation: "Are you a friend of Xiaoli and Lien?" I realized that he was scared, spoke Cantonese and little in Portuguese. I didn't believe he didn't speak Portuguese, I asked him in Mandarin if he was a friend or family member of Xiaoli and Lien and said a few words in Cantonese that could be used in that context. He was left with no reaction because I was Brazilian and had knowledge of the two languages spoken in China. I looked at him, said in Portuguese: *My name is Edivan and I know Lien and Xiaoli. They are my friends and I would like to chat with both. Do you know how I can find them?* He said the couple had been living in Foz do Iguaçu since the beginning of 2016. I was very frustrated with the information and explained that I met the couple due to my research on Chinese immigration in São Gonçalo in 2012. At that time I was in the master's continuing my research on sinic immigration in the municipality. I said they knew me and I even attended the Chinese New Year celebration. I noticed that he was annoyed, but said nothing. I asked if we could talk about China and the Chinese who live in São Gonçalo and adjacent municipalities. For a few moments he was silent and said we could talk. I asked his name, however, I didn't want to answer. I thought it best not to insist on knowing his name, for fear that I might give up on that interview. I confess that I was amazed that he accepted my request so that we could talk about Chinese immigration to São Gonçalo.

He did not want to identify himself, but reported that he was born in the interior of Guangdong province and immigrated with his two brothers to Brazil in 2009 at the invitation of another Chinese family to go to work in a cafeteria in Tijuca that promised wages and the guarantee of the possibility to the over time to save money to bring the parents. They worked for nine months and did

not receive wages as agreed and there was no employment contract between them and the Chinese bosses. He reported that they worked every day at the time the cafeteria was open at 9:00 am and closed at 7:30 pm. They slept in the kitchen and food was deducted from their wages along with the cost of travel tickets to work in Brazil. They were not deprived of leaving, however, because they worked throughout the day they received discounts on wages and therefore did not leave the cafeteria. At the end of the month, discounts on food exceeded the salary that should be received and, therefore, the debt with the bosses increased. When he and his brothers arrived, passports were taken by employers with justification for protection as an important document. Furthermore, because they had little knowledge of the Portuguese language, it made communication with Brazilians difficult. They still had contact with a few Chinese.

He and his brothers were unhappy because they were behind on their wages and therefore demanded from their employers the nine months of wages they had not received. The bosses gave only three months' wages to the three and returned their passports. They were unable to sleep in the back of the cafeteria as they have in the past few months. Through the suggestion of Chinese people, they met after leaving the cafeteria, they chose to work as street vendors in the vicinity of Central do Brasil, which is in downtown Rio de Janeiro, and slept in a studio that was nearby. During this period, he reported that there were fights with Brazilians who stole the goods. [The] *Brazilians fight a lot and took what is ours.* (Unidentified deponent, Chinese, approximately 18 years old). After two years working as street vendors, they managed to get money to open a cafeteria in Tijuca or downtown Rio de Janeiro. They were afraid of reprisals from ex-bosses, could not return to

China for low wages, and could not help parents living in the interior of the country. In addition, health surveillance inspections are constant and could be required to close the cafeteria⁶. Due to the contacts established with Chinese in the last two years, they preferred to migrate to São Gonçalo because they have cheaper commercial and residential rents compared to Rio de Janeiro. Upon arriving in São Gonçalo they hire Chinese and their descendants to help rent a commercial establishment that could be a snack bar. According to the deponent, when the Chinese migrate to São Gonçalo or other municipalities they come with the necessary amount of money to open some trade of interest. Most of the time they do not have knowledge of the Portuguese language to read rental contracts and solve bureaucracies. Soon, they hire children of Chinese immigrants to help him read the bureaucratic contracts. In addition, he went to Brazil on a Visiting Visa that allowed him to stay in the country for ninety days. After the visa expired, they became irregular foreigners in the country. Thus, because they do not have a Residence Visa, it would be difficult to rent commercial properties to open a cafeteria. They decided to hire descendants of Chinese people who would rent the property in his name so that the deponent and his brothers could work. I asked why they wanted to open a cafeteria instead of a store with Chinese products:

Having a store is more difficult. You need to buy things from China. Buying things from China needs to know who sells and sometimes the Chinese don't help. It is difficult to

⁶ Throughout my research conducted in the years 2012 and 2013 (COSTA, 2014) there were reports by Chinese people who decided to have snack bars in São Gonçalo and Itaboraí due to the few inspections by the Health Surveillance.

participate in the purchase of Chinese products. I need to have more papers [documents] and they are more expensive [taxes]. [laughs] (Unidentified deponent, Chinese, approximately 18 years old)

According to the deponent, he was able to obtain a residence visa because of his brother. His brother married a Brazilian daughter of Chinese immigrants who made it possible to regularize the situation in Brazil with a residence visa. After the brother has regularized, he can regularize the deponent's situation.

Chinese in the popular trade of São Gonçalo

The Alcântara neighbourhood, geographically located in the centre of the municipality of São Gonçalo, is known by the residents of the Metropolitan East due to the popular commerce and the offer of bus lines by the municipalities of the metropolitan region. Over the years, when I started to visit the Alcântara neighbourhood, I was aware of the Chinese presence in the municipality. Walking the streets of the neighbourhood needs to be “skillful”, due to the narrow streets with many stalls of street vendors that compete for space with shopkeepers, restaurants, buses, motorcycles, cars and pedestrians that circulate in the neighbourhood. To walk through the streets of Alcântara it is necessary to be careful not to run into any stall of street vendors or people. The trade in counterfeit and similar products of toys, clothes, shoes, watches, cell phones, glasses and cigarettes, etc., mostly from China, attract people from several municipalities in the East of Rio de Janeiro. Pinheiro-Machado (2009), when investigating the production and circulation of pirated goods in the circuit, China, Paraguay and Brazil states:

Existem duas acepções para “pirataria”. Uma está relacionada ao comércio marítimo de extorsão de bens que existe desde o século XI até hoje; a outra ao mercado contemporâneo de cópias de produtos detentores de propriedade intelectual. São fenômenos sociais que, embora possuam algumas semelhanças, movimentam diferentes sistemas econômicos e logísticos. O primeiro envolve o negócio de transporte e distribuição de mercadorias, em vez de sua produção (Kleinen e Osseweijerm, 2005). Trata-se de uma atividade ilegal que, grosso modo, é o “roubo do mar”. O segundo, também ilegal, passou a ser chamado assim por ser uma apropriação, não diretamente de bens, mas de símbolos intangíveis, que são as marcas registradas protegidas, desde 1994, pelo acordo TRIPs / OMC. O mercado de falsificações enquanto um sistema de informações e interconexões em nível global e uma manifestação da contemporaneidade e de suas tecnologias (ainda que o comércio de cópias sempre tenha existido) e, ao contrário da pirataria marítima, está diretamente relacionado a produção de mercadorias.⁷

⁷ “There are two meanings for “piracy”. One is related to the maritime trade in extortion of goods that has existed since the 11th century until today; the other to the contemporary market for copies of products with intellectual property. They are social phenomena that, although they have some similarities, move different economic and logistical systems. The first involves the goods transport and distribution business, rather than its production (Kleinen and Osseweijerm, 2005). It is an illegal activity that, roughly speaking, is the “theft of the sea”. The second, also illegal, came to be called so because it is an appropriation, not directly of goods, but of intangible symbols, which are trademarks protected since 1994 by the TRIPs / WTO agreement. The counterfeiting market as a

Over the years that I was in Alcântara, I started to dedicate my investigations on the migratory movements of Chinese and, due to my interaction with Chinese, I could see that when I passed through the streets and corners of the neighbourhood, I heard phonetic sounds in Mandarin and Cantonese. They were Chinese who walked the streets, in the cafeterias, in shops and street vendors. The stalls of Chinese street vendors caught my attention because they were more distant from the Brazilians. I noticed that they were close to the bus stops. Its pirated products made in China and sold in Alcântara were the most varied: electronics, toys, women's accessories, perfumes, shoes and clothes. I noticed that the stalls of Chinese street vendors were with customers who bought the products. At first, I suspected that the products could have more advanced technology compared to those sold by Brazilians and Bolivians⁸. I went to those stalls as a customer to see those products sold by the Chinese and try to establish contact with them. I found that the products sold were the same as the Brazilians sold, however, the prices were lower. This time, I chose to observe them and understand the dynamics of buying and selling. I chose between the months of January and February 2018 to sit on the pews of a church that was in front of the Chinese stalls and observed the routines. The Chinese arrived around 8 am in old cars and assembled the structures and products to be sold, after 1 pm

global information and interconnection system and a manifestation of contemporaneity and its technologies (although the copy trade has always existed) and, unlike maritime piracy, is directly related to the production of goods" (PINHEIRO-MACHADO, 2009, page 59, our translation).

⁸ Throughout the research I noticed that there were Bolivian immigrants who worked as street vendors and sold handmade products in São Gonçalo. The Bolivian presence is notorious in the neighbourhoods of Alcântara, Centro, Paraíso and Santa Catarina.

another person arrived who switched places with the Chinese who arrived earlier to continue selling the products. Unlike the Brazilian street vendors who called customers who passed by on the street with low prices⁹, the Chinese were silent, sitting on beach chairs and waiting for customers to pass by and take an interest in the products. I noticed that the Chinese were distracted by their cell phones and, when a customer arrived, they were quickly answered.

After two weeks of observing the Chinese street vendors, I started my attempts to establish contact with them. I arrived as a potential customer who looked at toys, watches and underwear, asked for prices and bought some product that was cheap, as the money was low and I would have to make several small purchases at other stalls. I already knew that, based on the experiences I had with others, I would need to buy their products in an attempt to establish contact. My attempts to start a conversation were thwarted by their silence. The content of the conversation was the same, it doesn't advance and I ended up feeling bad for not advancing in the dialogue. It irritated me that I couldn't talk, because silence was the answer. My concerns and frustrations were similar to those of Rosana Pinheiro-Machado (2009). In the words of Pinheiro-Machado “[...] entre os outros informantes havia sempre uma sensação de que todas as conversas eram vazias, de que

⁹ I witnessed fights between Brazilian street vendors due to disputes over the location of stalls on the street. The street vendors had a license from the São Gonçalo City Hall to have their tents, they were considered microentrepreneurs, but the rules for demarcating tents by Organs municipal bodies were not respected by them.

nada acontecera na observação. Eu voltava para casa geralmente frustrada”.¹⁰

I realized that I would not be able to establish contact with them and that is why I analysed where other Chinese who worked as street vendors in Alcântara would be. In an attempt to start a conversation with some Chinese who worked as a street vendor, I walked through the streets of Alcântara to locate a possible deponent to understand the migratory movements. My attempts were again unsuccessful to establish contact with them, I could see that they had mastery of the Portuguese language, but the silence that made me uneasy. Silence as a response from the Chinese could say a lot and I wanted to understand what was the reason for leaving me frustrated. I decided to take a risk and go to the other Chinese stalls as a customer who would buy some products, but this time I wanted to greet them in Mandarin.

I approached a stall and soon realized that there was a Chinese man who was leaning against the bars, concentrating and typing fast on his cell phone. When he gets close and leans against the pieces of counterfeit clothing by Australian brands, he gets scared, gets close and looks at me. I just greeted in Mandarin and realized that he was surprised and in total silence. I was nervous and tried to continue the dialogue in Mandarin even though my vocabulary was limited at times. He started to answer me and I didn't recognize a few words for speaking quickly. I asked him to speak in Portuguese because he did not understand what he was saying. He said the shorts were on sale and that he could take six for the

¹⁰ “[...] among the other informants there was always a feeling that all conversations were empty, that nothing had happened in the observation. I came home often frustrated” (PINHEIRO-MACHADO, 2009, page 33, our translation).

price of five. I bought the shorts and he looked at me seriously and then laughed. At that moment, I felt confident and introduced myself and said that I was researching Chinese immigration to Brazil and was learning Mandarin. I asked if we could talk and I noticed his strangeness. We sat and leaned against the bars. His name Gang, 39, born in the interior of Guangdong province. He arrived in Brazil in 2006 at the invitation of his uncles to work and return to China and went to live with his uncles in the neighbourhood of Grajaú, Rio de Janeiro. He received an invitation from his uncles to work at a restaurant in downtown Rio de Janeiro¹¹. *I came to live in Brazil because of the invitation of my*

¹¹ I realized that my interviewee was confused during the conversation about the people who carried out the invitation to work in Brazil were their blood relatives. At times he referred to family members with blood ties, at other times as friends and even neighbours. In my previous ethnographic experiences with Chinese people, I realized that Chinese relationships with family and friends in many situations are considered to be equal due to notions of family are different in Brazil. According to Mello and Callegari (2015), when investigating the migratory movements of Chinese in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, they pointed to the same difficulty that I had in the countryside:

Pergunto se são tios consanguíneos, parentes de verdade segundo nossos padrões ou apenas parentes por afinidade e ela parece não compreender muito bem a pergunta. Em princípio diz que não, eram apenas vizinhos de seus pais que haviam se mudado para o Brasil há mais tempo. Depois, em outro momento da entrevista, afirma que eram irmãos de seu pai e mãe. Na verdade, conforme a missionária G., a noção de família dos chineses é distinta da nossa sendo que família para eles se estende a um vasto número de pessoas com vínculos entre comunitários (vizinhança) e consanguíneos” (MELLO; CALLEGARI, 2015, page 06). [“I ask if they are consanguineous uncles, real relatives by our standards or just kinsmen by affinity and she does not seem to understand the question very well. In principle, he says no, they were just neighbours of his parents who had moved to Brazil a long time ago. Then, at another point in the interview, he states that they were brothers of his father and mother. In fact, according to

uncles. My mom asked me to go because she was better, she could also go back to China and live somewhere else (Gang, Chinese, 29 years old).

In addition to working as a cook, Gang worked on the weekends as a security guard and cleaned his family's store in SAARA, which sold stationery materials, home utensils and carnival costumes. He reported that he worked every day on nine-hour shifts and that he had few days off. There was no employment contract and the salary was paid on the agreed date, but a percentage of the salary for food was deducted. He said he liked to work with his uncles and could help his mother who lived in China. He commented that living in Brazil could improve living conditions in the future and he wanted to live in some more prosperous city in China. I asked her what life was like in China, I realized that he was uncomfortable with my question and answered by mixing Portuguese and Mandarin¹².

Through our conversations I learned that he worked in construction in cities in Guangdong, Macau and Hong Kong. He reported that his hukou came from the city of Renhua and obtained authorization to work in the large urban centers of the province, due to authorization from the Communist Party that allowed authorization for his migration. He reported that he was under pressure from supervisors to build buildings quickly. The remuneration made it possible to send money to his family. He

the missionary G., the notion of family of the Chinese is different from ours, since the family for them extends to a vast number of people with links between community members (neighbourhood) and consanguine” (MELLO; CALLEGARI, 2015, page 06, our translation)].

¹² Throughout the research, I noticed that the Chinese, when they do not want to talk or have no interest in wanting to answer a certain topic, exchange and mix languages or say that they do not understand what was said.

said he suffered two accidents at work and was not satisfied. He received an invitation from his uncles who were already established in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro. He commented that in Brazil he worked less than in China, but he liked it and the salary was not enough to send to his family. In this way, he started to perform other jobs as a way to supplement his income and send it to China. I had difficulties to deepen our conversation due to the customers who arrived and he stopped talking and answered. In addition, I realized that he did not want to talk about this topic and so I chose to stop as a precaution so that I would not lose contact with him.

Due to the customers who arrived to buy the products at the stall, Guang interrupted our conversation and therefore he was unable to say how long he lived in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro. During the time he worked at SAARA he realized that owning some trade could increase his income and save money to return to China and exchange the *hukou's* residence permit. He collected part of the salary he received to open his store for products made in China:

I enjoyed working with my uncles, but I didn't want to work for them [family and friends]. I wanted to have my money and have my employees. I could improve my condition in Brazil and return to China. At the time, I just wanted to stay here to work and then come back. Now I will stay here, I can go somewhere else here. Another day I return to China. China is now visiting my family (Gang, Chinese, 39 years old).

According to the interviewee, he wanted to increase his income and did not want to live with his acquaintances. The decision to leave,

to leave the jobs he had, was understood by his family members who invited him to live in Brazil as an ingratitude. Guang chose to live in São Gonçalo because he had met people, through celebrations of the Chinese community in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, who already lived in the municipality.

According to Guang, living in São Gonçalo would make it easier to open snack bars because it is less bureaucratic compared to Rio de Janeiro and also because of the Chinese presence that already existed there. He reported that he chose to live in Alcântara because it is close to commerce, the number of Chinese and the bus lines that facilitate mobility in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. *Here is good! I can go to Rio [de Janeiro] and Nova Iguaçu. It is easy to sell and we have the other [Chinese] here (Gang, Chinese, 39 years old).* I noticed that he said enthusiastically about Chinese people living in Rio de Janeiro and asked about his relations with Chinese people living in other municipalities in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. He reported:

I know it in other places - Minas Gerais, Nova Iguaçu, Itaboraí, São Paulo and Duque de Caxias. I go to Caxias because my wife's parents and brothers live there. There I can make money. I can have more money there. Get out of here and let's go there. I go where I have a chance. [...] I stay here, but when it is better elsewhere, I go. [...] There are [Chinese] people in other places that I know. I know [Chinese] people who were in Tijuca, Caxias and [Nova] Iguaçu who are in São Paulo. There are those who are in Caxias to sell in stores. Me and others have moved to where there are [Chinese] people and some work. [...] One says to the others and we go (Gang, Chinese, 39 years old).

Guang's account allows us to observe that the constitution of migratory networks as a chain linked to the experiences of members. According to the geographer Bechúr Pinós da Costa (1971), the migratory movements and the geographical space are allusive in the qualifications of places, geographic areas, territories and regions, as they are the strength of differentiated attractions and withdrawals of immigrants. Migration networks are instruments of attraction so that Chinese immigrants can work in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. When analysing migratory movements, Rua (2004) points to mobility linked to social networks, as they occur due to social identity, family ties, neighbourhood etc. According to Guang, to work in the trade of pirated products, it is necessary to establish networks of contacts with other Chinese that make it possible to purchase the products at lower prices:

The goods are bought as they are in Rio. They are bought together with other Chinese here in Alcântara. Because there are many, we need to buy together from one person in China. [...] I need to be with other Chinese to buy the goods. I can only buy goods cheaply from the Chinese who help with shopping for everyone (Gang, Chinese, 39 years old).

I was interested in these reports because they are similar to those of other deponents who present migratory movements linked to trade. I tried to find out more about the Chinese participation in the purchase of goods made in China to be sold in their stores. However, I noticed that he did not want to comment. I could see

through my insistence that he didn't speak and just looked at me. I chose not to insist on the subject so that he would not give up talking to me.

The fieldwork was exhausting and at times discouraging, however I got testimonials from several Chinese immigrants and their descendants, forming a very large arc of informants: workers in cafeterias, in household goods and toy stores, in informal work, store owners, Chinese and their descendants who are studying in Brazil. What united everyone's testimonies was the reaffirmation of the importance of the networks for their coming and maintaining them in Brazil, however it is important to note that the network provides support, but also control, and the young people often rebel against it.

Conclusion

[...] ao estudar o que está próximo, a sua própria sociedade, o antropólogo expõe-se, com maior ou menor intensidade, a um confronto com outros especialistas, com leigos e até, em certos casos, com representantes dos universos que foram investigados, que podem discordar das interpretações do investigador.¹³

¹³ “[...] when studying what is close, his own society, the anthropologist exposes himself, with greater or lesser intensity, to a confrontation with other specialists, with lay people and even, in certain cases, with representatives of the universes that were investigated, which may disagree with the investigator's interpretations”. (VELHO, 1978, pp. 44-25, our translation).

This research aimed to understand the migratory and commercial movements in the Chinese network in the municipality of São Gonçalo through ethnographic methodology. The migratory and commercial networks of Chinese in São Gonçalo can be understood as dynamic and have circuits that circulate people, goods, money, exchanges and aid. Throughout the text it was shown that the drive for quality improvements is characteristic of immigration in this ethnic group.

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The book *Studies on Chinese migrations: Brazil, China and Mozambique* is a collection of essays on cultural relations, migrations and the historical perspectives of China's meeting with Brazil and the Lusophone world. The book, written by specialists from different areas, brings up-to-date information on this intriguing topic, which is being increasingly debated at the university.



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