

Coolies – Asiáticos and Chinos: Global Dimensions of Second Slavery

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“A los chinos les gustaba mucho el opio [The Chinese very much enjoyed opium].”¹

BARNET 1966: 71

A particular dimension of Spanish-Portuguese cooperation in the 19th century runs under the label coolies become slaves (Spanish: *culies*) – and not coolies instead of slaves!² After severe disputes in the 15th century, Portugal and Castile had closely cooperated in the Atlantic slave trade between 1520 and 1640 (from 1580 until 1640, Portugal was controlled by Castile/Spain). After the so-called uprising of Portugal in 1640, the country formed an alliance with Great Britain and became an enemy of Spain. Other slave trade powers supplied slaves to the Spanish colonial empire in America (Borucki/Eltis 2015, Ribeiro da Silva 2015). After the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in the British Empire in 1808, new local alliances were formed between Portuguese-Brazilian and Spanish-Cuban (Iberian) slave traders - in particular in West Africa and in Pacific Asia. From a territorial aspect, the deportation of coolies included China, the Pacific, and the

1 I would like to thank the Global South Studies Center (GSSC, Cologne, Germany) for financing a research visit in Madrid and Lisbon (August 2014).

2 Cf. Luzón (1989-1990); Naranjo/Balboa Navarro (1999); Balboa Navarro (2000). Tinker's (1993 [1974]) empirical foundation is British colonialism; however, his concept of the “new system of slavery” can be perfectly applied to the Iberian sphere as well (cf. Allen 2013, 2014; Behal/van der Linden 2006; López 2013; Zeuske 2014, 2015a, 2015b).

Indian Ocean in Atlantic slavery and its last period, being Second Slavery. Today, the term Second Slavery refers to various forms of bonded labour and describes the interconnection between the slavery economies and the modern era of the 19th century, in particular in the South of the USA, in the South of Brazil, Puerto Rico, Suriname, and in Western Cuba (Cuba grande), but also in the Sokoto Caliphate, Morocco, Egypt, Indonesia, Mauritius and other islands of the Indian Ocean (Zeuske 2015a).³ All those who profited from the human body as an asset have been looking for alternative sources of muscle labour around the entire world since the crisis of slave labour in the 1840s (the British since 1806). The prices for deported people from Africa increased due to slave ships being chased by British cruisers – particularly in areas outside Africa (Clarence-Smith 1984, Miers 2003: 3-4, 30-31). Prices increased in the Americas, while prices dropped in Africa. Alternative workers consisted mainly of coolies and *emancipados*, i.e. deported people from the slave trade ships who were freed by British war vessels or other war vessels.

Regarding the *emancipados* (liberated slaves/emancipated slaves or recaptives), Rodolfo Sarracino has written as early as 1988 that legally, they were “no eran ni libertos ni esclavos [neither libertos nor slaves]” (1988: 67). Around the year 1850, it became apparent that the chinos were also quickly assimilated and – as I put it – transculturalised as slaves into an “estructura social esclavista [a social structure of slavery]” (*ibid.*: 67).

The slave traders and enslavers did not favour any ethnic or other groups. Some of them did not even favour humans. They would equally have used animals as ‘slaves’. Mules, donkeys, or oxen were taken into consideration; however, they could not be used everywhere. In addition, the slave traders thought and operated in the same way as the protagonists of Jules Verne’s novels: in a global and cosmopolitan way. They experimented with Mayas from Yucatán, Apache from northern Mexico, Lebanese or Syrian Christians and Arabs from the Ottoman Empire, with Catholic Germans from the Black Forest of the German Empire, Spaniards from Galicia and the Canary Islands, ‘free’ Africans who were in debt from Fernando Po, and Portuguese from the Cape Verde Islands, Azores, or Madeira.

In addition, in the Eastern Hemisphere, transport, trade (*blackbirding*), and contract slavery of Melanesians and Polynesians (*kanaka*) to Australia, to French

3 On Second Slavery as the foundation of an autonomous modern era (and not as an opposition to the modern era of industrialism or as part of it), see Tomich (1988, 2004), Tomich/Zeuske (2009), and Laviña/Zeuske (2014).

and German colonies in the Pacific, and to Peru and Guatemala played a role.⁴ Little is known as to what extent the Spanish and the elites from Spanish colonies were involved (the battle against the Iranun raid warriors in the Zulu Sea around the middle of the 19th century indicates that the Spanish were involved, with ‘Portuguese’ from Timor, Flores, and Solor also involved (Warren 1977; 2002).

After the crises of 1830-1835 and 1844-1848, the demand of the Cuban sugar industry for workers again grew to such large dimensions that the Atlantic was no longer a sufficient recruiting area; especially since aggressive British policy increasingly unsettled the West African slave trade (Klein 1999). As of 1844, in addition to the enormous deportation of slaves from Calabar, West Central Africa, and East Africa, the *haciendados* (planters) and *negreros* (slavers/traders/traffickers) started to contemplate purchasing Chinese coolies from Chinese harbours that were controlled by the British and Portuguese (the Spanish initially preferred the city of Amoy (Xiamen) (Yun 2008). As of 1847, slave traders such as Zulueta shipped Chinese coolies (*culies*) from the south of the Chinese Empire via the China Sea and the Atlantic (sometimes via the Pacific) to Cuba.⁵ Some Chinese also arrived in the Portuguese harbours of Africa (such as the island of Moçambique, Luanda, Cacheu, or Bissau (Estácio/Havik 2011). Coolies mainly arrived via two cities in the Pearl River Delta (*Rio das Pérolas*), which were a little over 100km away from each other: The city of Canton (Guangzhou – from 1757 to 1842 the only Chinese city with permission for foreigners to trade) and Macao, which had permission for ‘Portuguese’ and ‘Spanish’ to trade.⁶ In the first Opium War (1839-1842), Great Britain won foreign trade permission in five other cities in China (Canton (Guangzhou), Fuzhou, Amoy (Xiamen), Ningbo, Shanghai).

4 Cf. Maude 1981; Docker 1981; Moore 1985; Campbell 1989; Munro 1990; Horne 2007; Brown 2007. On the debate on slavery and contract slavery types in general: Tinker 1993 [1974]; Baak 1999.

5 Cf. Pérez de la Riva 1974: 213, 217, 219-223; Corbitt 1971; Clarence-Smith 1984: 25-33; Hu-DeHart 1993; Rodríguez 1997; Naranjo Orovio/Balboa Navarro 1999; Schottenhammer 2004; Fernández de Pinedo Echevarría 2002; Marrero Cruz 2006; López 2008; The Cuba Commission Report. A Hidden History of the Chinese in Cuba. The Original English-Language Text (Johns Hopkins Studies in Atlantic History and Culture), introd. by Helly, Denise (1993) Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

6 Strictly spoken, Macao was not a colony but rather a leasing territory. Portugal paid an annual rate to China (cf. Clarence-Smith 1985: 28).

Overall, between 1847 and 1874, Chinese contract workers, who were almost exclusively men and mostly Chinese from Canton, travelled around half the world to Cuba through European hands (mainly on the route across the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic). Evelyn Hu-DeHart (2007) has written about the traders who promoted the project *coolies become slaves*. The members of the Zulueta Clan mentioned above (Julián Zulueta y Amondo on Cuba, in Spain, and in the USA; his uncle Pedro José de Zulueta y Madariaga in London and his uncle José Fernando Zulueta), at the head of their enterprises, represented what today would be called a multinational or transnational company:

“global capitalists closely linked to the world financial markets, importing and exporting a variety of products around the world. So, for them to initiate the coolie trade from China to the Americas constituted a normal expansion of their global economic activities. Sometime in 1846, an agreement was sealed between Zulueta and Company in London and the British in the [early] treaty port of Amoy. On June 3, 1847, the Spanish ship Oquendo docked in Havana with 206 Chinese on board after 131 days at sea.” (Ibid.: 167)⁷

Around 1840, Amoy was a harbour outside the control of the Chinese Empire, where Spanish players in the export and trade of opium established themselves (often in alliances with English businesses that were in the same trade in Hong Kong and Singapore).⁸

As nearly always in the global history of labour, contract workers, in this case the Chinese coolies in Cuba, were often in an even less favourable position than *emancipados* and slaves.⁹ They were basically slaves of the state, as were the *emancipados*. The state (precisely: *Junta de Fomento* – an economic committee consisting of planters and big merchants), kept them in *depósitos* (*barracones*/barracoons – a type of prison), supervised them, and punished them. In addition, this state also circulated them and offered them on labour markets, or used them for public works (Yun 2008; López 2013). One of the young men

7 Cf. Marrero Cruz 2006: 55-56.

8 Cf. Fradera 1999. On Portuguese attempts to stimulate the Malwa opium production and on Portuguese opium trade (particularly via Damão, Diu, and Surat) see: Clarence-Smith 1985: 25-29. The Portuguese opium trade had important global historic consequences. Since the British were unable to get Portuguese exports into China under control, it became one of the reasons for the first Opium War 1840-1842 (see: ibid.: 26); see also: Permanyer-Ugartemendia 2014.

9 Cf. Palmer 1998; van der Linden 2003, 2007, 2008; Zeuske 2014.

who was entrapped by the ‘canvassers’ in China, described the status of the Chinese in Cuba like this: “No matter what status one had in China, one will become a slave [in Cuba]” (Yun 2008: 243).

The alliance between ‘Spaniards’ and ‘Portuguese’ worked best in this new slave trade too, next to the initially relatively good cooperation between the ‘Spanish’ (such as the Zuluetas) and the ‘British’ in Hong Kong and in the financial centre London (Zeuske 2015a), and again, as of the 1850s, with the ‘Portuguese’ in Macao/China, in the Pearl River Delta. Macao was a free port as of 1845, and increasingly under Portuguese control as of 1847.¹⁰

This is also part of a forgotten chapter of the European colonial history, namely Spain in East Asia and on the Pacific. The ‘Portuguese’ and ‘Spanish’, together with their alliance partners in Spain and Cuba, organized “a de facto Chinese slave trade to Cuba” (Clarence-Smith 1984: 29). The Iberians often had serious conflicts with the British in India (due to the opium trade, amongst other things). However, sometimes they closely cooperated, in particular regarding the transport of coolies (Tinker 1993 [1974]; Yun 2008). At times, Macao was Portugal’s most profitable colony. Between 1847 and 1874, 140,000 Chinese were transported to Cuba; out of these, 125,000 arrived in Cuba alive. After 1880, about 35,000 Chinese arrived again, mostly from California; see above for global figures.¹¹ Between one sixth and one quarter of them travelled through Macao (1850-1875) (Teixeira 1976; Dias 2001). In addition, around 100,000 coolies were deported to Peru, where they were mostly deployed on plantations in coastal areas (in total, roughly 225,000 people arrived in Cuba and Peru as ‘new’ coolie slaves).¹²

In the 1850s, a Chinese coolie cost two thirds of an African *pieza* (the contract between 400 and 500 dollar¹³) even though the transport costs from

10 On the history of Macao from about 1550, see: Schleich 1988.

11 Cf. Naranjo Orovio/Balboa Navarro 1999; Luzón 1989-1990; Schottenhammer 2004.

12 Cf. Hu-DeHart 2005: 169. These 225,000 people from China are part of the approximately 2.5 million migrants mentioned by Adam McKeown (2004: 157) who came from South Asia and East Asia to the Americas (half of these 2.5 million came to the Americas before 1885 and the other half afterwards (*ibid.*). See also: McKeown 2010.

13 Cf. López 2013: 27. “Pieza” or “Pieza de India” (English: Piece of the West-Indies) is a unit of measure used for the evaluation of enslaved people. A healthy man with a complete set of teeth and “without a flaw”, or a woman meeting the same criteria between the age of fifteen and thirty, was regarded as a full Pieza. Younger, older, or deported people with flaws were valued as half a Pieza or a two-third Pieza in relation to a full Pieza.

China to Cuba were much higher. On this, the *negreros* said: “‘Chinese [are] weaker and less productive than Africans’” (Clarence-Smith 1984: 29). Legally, the contracts of the Chinese were sold and not their bodies, as was the case for the deported people from Africa. However, in reality, they were treated in the same way as Africans.

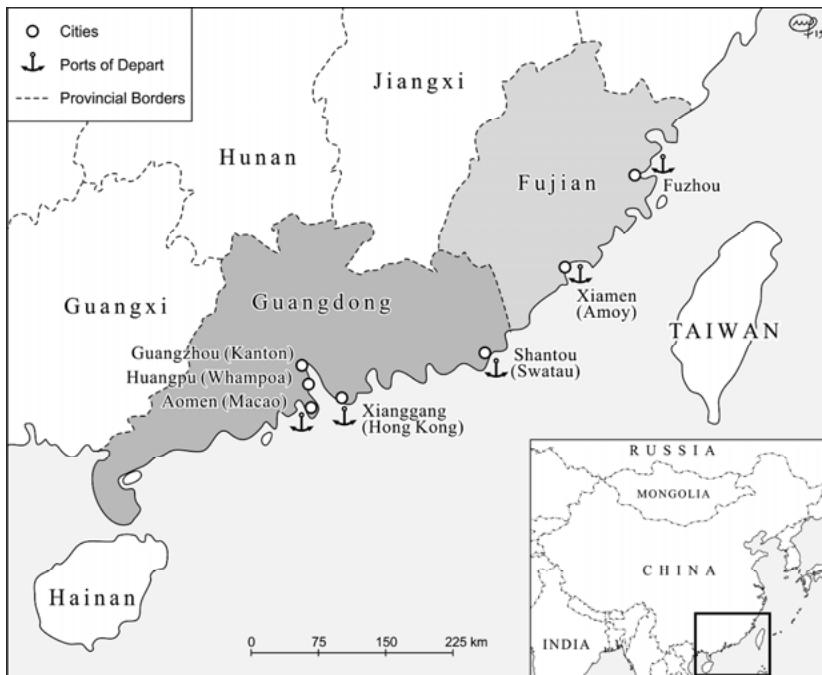
The situation in South East China strongly contributed to the emergence and development of this *de facto* slave trade. Here, a pool of people who could be enslaved had emerged due to severe conflicts between Cantonese people and immigrating Hakka (one of the eight Han Chinese groups), extensive clan wars, and the heavy fighting of the Taiping civil war. The authorities of the Empire emptied the overcrowded prisons by selling men to the slave traders. The main ports were Swatow, Canton, Amoy, Huangpu (Whampao), Hong Kong (before and while it had the status of a British colony), and first of all, Macao.¹⁴ In addition, there was ‘raid slavery’, carried out by pirate communities especially who plagued and raided the marine and river coasts (mostly in the provinces Guangdong and Fujian). Parents in distress sold their children. Many people in debt, often addicted to gambling and/or drugs due to the opium that the British forced onto the market,¹⁵ were sold or sold themselves. In addition to these directly enslaved people (“straight slaves”; Clarence-Smith 1984: 29), there were some free men who fell for false promises or small amounts of money that were given to them in advance.

This list of social groups that were generally renamed later as coolies, is problematic. In late Qing China, people who were called culiés/coolies after passing through Canton and later through Macao, were not called like this before. The labels, categories, and legal status of these men in China are known only rudimentary from the investigations of the *Cuba Commission Report* (1874; cf. Ng 2014). As almost always in history, Western categories stopped at the gates of China, that is – in this case – the southern ports (Canton, Macao, Amoy, Shanghai, etc.). The most important large social and legal group that later became known as coolies outside China, were called in China probably *gugong* / *gugongren*, that is people who could not even sell themselves into more or less formal slavery (by contract) because of high debts, and who had to rent their bodies and labor case by case (also by contract).

14 Cf. Hu-DeHart 2007: 168; Van Dyke 2005; López 2013.

15 As of ca. 1815, the Spanish, under protagonism of a radical liberal, did the same for Manila (and certainly for Latin America as well); cf. Fradera 1999.

Figure 1: China's southern provinces Guangdong and Fujian.



Source: Revised map; private archive Michael Zeuske (Leipzig/Köln).

The liberal elites of Portugal created the formal prerequisites for the boom of their colony Macao. Regarding the legislation, the Portuguese copied the example of Great Britain in India. Slaves were no longer called slaves:

“a escravidão em Macau se pode hoje considerar de facto extinta, e que aos poucos indivíduos ali registrados como escravos e libertos mal pode dar-se esse nome [Slavery in Macao can be considered as de facto eradicated today. The few persons registered as slaves and libertos here [the owners did not register most of their house slaves and enslaved children [transl. MZ]] can hardly be labelled under this name].” (Silva 2013: 187)¹⁶

16 For laws and documents regarding abolition in the Portuguese Empire, refer to: “Apêndice Documental.” In: Silva 2013: 133-207.

Full of false humanity, it was claimed:

“se podria declarar de direito, assim como já felizmente o é de facto, extinta a escravidão na Cidade de Macau, adquirindo assim a honra de ser a primeira das Possessões portuguesas onde fosse proclamado este grande acto de civilização [slavery has fortunately de facto been extinguished in the city of Macao; this fact could even be declared by law, thus the city would receive the honour of being the first of the Portuguese territories where this great act of civilization has been proclaimed [transl. MZ].” (Ibid.)

Slaves without an institution, such as the numerous people who had been stolen, fled, or had been deported from South China, no longer had to be called slaves or *gugongren* – they became coolies. The law was one of the prerequisites for the massive upswing of the diaspora of Chinese coolies in Cuba and in Peru, as well as Panama, as of 1857.

How much Portuguese Macao benefited from uprisings and civil wars in China, is shown in a letter of governor Isidoro Francisco Guimarães from Macao:

“Macao continua tranquillo tirando muito partido do actual estado de coisas que lhe permite fazer um negocio extraordinario. Todo esta carissimo mas todos ganam proporcionalmente excepto os que vivem do Governo ... O numero de lorchas aumenta, e acham-se todas empregadas no commercio entre Cantaõ e Macao que hoje se faz todo em embarcações estrangeiras por que os rebeldes que ocupam o rio não permetten a passagem das embarcações chinas [Macao is very calm while it enormously benefits from the current state of affairs, allowing Macao to make extraordinary profits. Everything is very expensive, but everyone gains proportionally, apart from those who live off the government [as does the letters' author [MZ]] [...] The number of lorchas [ship that has a hull of European design and Chinese rigging [MZ]] increases, and all of them are involved in the trade [including human trafficking [MZ]] between Canton and Macao, for which altogether foreign vessels are used today [those from Portuguese Macao were regarded as foreign ships [MZ]] since the rebels who occupy the river do not allow Chinese vessels to pass [transl. MZ].”¹⁷

Like a horseman of the apocalypse, pestilence follows close behind wars, smuggling, and human trafficking. The governor reports: “dysenterias, garri-

17 Letter by governor Isidoro Francisco Guimarães from Macao, 12 de fevereiro 1855 (No. 281) to the Ministro e Secretario d'Estado dos Negocios da Marinha e Ultramar, in: AHU Lisboa, Macau Timor, ACL-SEMU-DGU-005, Cx. 0021, 1854-1855.

tilhas, e febres [dysentery, garritilhas [untranslatable to me but sounds severe – MZ], and fevers [plural]]”.¹⁸ In addition, there were foreign military operations (e.g. Spanish fleet operations against pirates), precursors of the Second Opium War (1856-1860), and battles between ‘rebels’ and *imperialistas* (imperial troops) (Dias 2001).

In the 1850s, the trade of contract workers as the ‘new’ slavery was exposed in the British media. Up to then, the masses of deported people had been trafficked through Hong Kong. The British passed the *Passenger Act* (1855), which cut off the legal transport channel for coolies on British ships. Since then, the trade primarily operated via Macao; most of the coolies were transported on French ships (Legoy 1982). To emphasize the Iberian alliance again: ‘Portuguese’ from Macao specialized in procurement, as it were, at the initial point of enslavement. Their partners, ‘Spaniards’ and ‘French’, specialized in the de facto slave trade to Latin America, particularly to Peru (Pacific route) and Cuba (Pacific and Atlantic route). British and US American ships, as well as a few Dutch ships, also brought coolies to Portuguese colonies in Africa (especially to Moçambique) (Clarence-Smith 1984: 29; Yun 2008). ‘Portuguese’ and Creole agents organized the formation of larger groups of coolies in the barracoons (prison-like barracks) of Macao. On Chinese soil, Chinese were exclusively active as recruiters (*runners/corretores*). However, the *colonos* were brought to Macao on “lorchas portuguezas” (river boats with Chinese rigging) – this means the ‘Portuguese’ were active here, too. The governor of Macao often had to deal with what he called “abuse”: “abusos que se cometiam em Whampoa no engajamento de culis que se embarcavam em Lorchas portuguezas [abuses [i.e. deportations] that occurred in Whampoa during the recruitment of Chinese who embarked on Portuguese lorchas [transl. MZ]]”.¹⁹

Some Cuban, Peruvian, and Spanish entrepreneurs sent their own agents and staff to Macao; however, most of the business was done by the ‘Portuguese’, Creole middlemen, and the colony’s administration. One of the three most important coolie transport enterprises on Cuba was also managed by a Portuguese. However, the Portuguese played a minor role in sea transport using ships to Cuba and Peru.

18 Report by Isidoro Francisco Guimarães from Macao, 12 de março de 1855 (No. 285) to the Ministro e Secretario d’Estado dos Negocios da Marinha e Ultramar, in: AHU Lisboa, Macau Timor, ACL-SEMU-DGU-005, Cx. 0021, 1854-1855.

19 “Report No. 85”, Macaó 25 de setembro de 1859, Isidoro Guimarães to the Ministro e Secretario d’Estado dos Negocios da Marinha e Ultramar, in: AHU, Macau Timor-ACL-SEMU-DGU-005, Cx. 0025.

Practically all of the official correspondence and reports on coolies first of all stressed the “contract” as opposed to the “detestable slavery”. On the contracts, Evelyn Hu-DeHart writes:

“Portuguese authorities in Macau oversaw the loading process and legalized the documents. The contract was supposed to be read to the coolie in the appropriate Chinese language, so that he fully understood its terms, and signing it signified acceptance and agreement. He was also given a copy in Chinese to keep, while a Spanish version was issued to the planter in Cuba or Peru who bought his contract [...]. Throughout the years of the trade, some of the basic terms remained constant, such as the eight years of servitude and the pay of one peso a week, or four a month. In addition to a salary, coolies were paid in food and clothing, which usually consisted of some specified amount of rice, meat or fish, yam or vegetables, as well as two changes of garment, one jacket and one blanket a year. Housing was also provided without rent. The contract specified three days off during the New Year, and usually Sundays as well, although this was rarely honored even when stipulated. Furthermore, the contract provided for medical attention, although it also stipulated the circumstances under which the planter could withhold wages until the coolie’s recovery from illness or injury. The planter was also assured a full eight years’ service, so that the coolie was obligated to make up for lost days of work by extending his service beyond the eight calendar years. In addition, he was given an advanced payment of eight to 14 pesos, to be used for passage and a new change of clothing at the time of departure, which constituted a debt to the planter to be repaid by deductions from his salary at the rate of one peso per month.” (Hu-DeHart 2005: 171)²⁰

There were several new forms of contracts in Cuba and Peru, most of them in Spanish (Yun 2008; see figure 2). This contract work became a main path for the transition to ‘new’ slaveries and thus for the safeguarding of workforce and capital during Second Slavery. It remains open for discussion whether this contract work can be regarded as a path to ‘free’ labour at all. To demonstrate the dimensions, I would like to repeat: This affected around 2.5 million people between 1806/1838 and 1940 – primarily from British-India and China up to the formal end of slavery in the Americas in the second half of the 19th century, and also from the Dutch East Indies afterwards.²¹

20 Cf. Jiménez Pastrana 1983.

21 Cf. Tinker 1993 [1974]; McKeown 2004; Houben/Seibert 2013; Houben/Lindblad 1999.

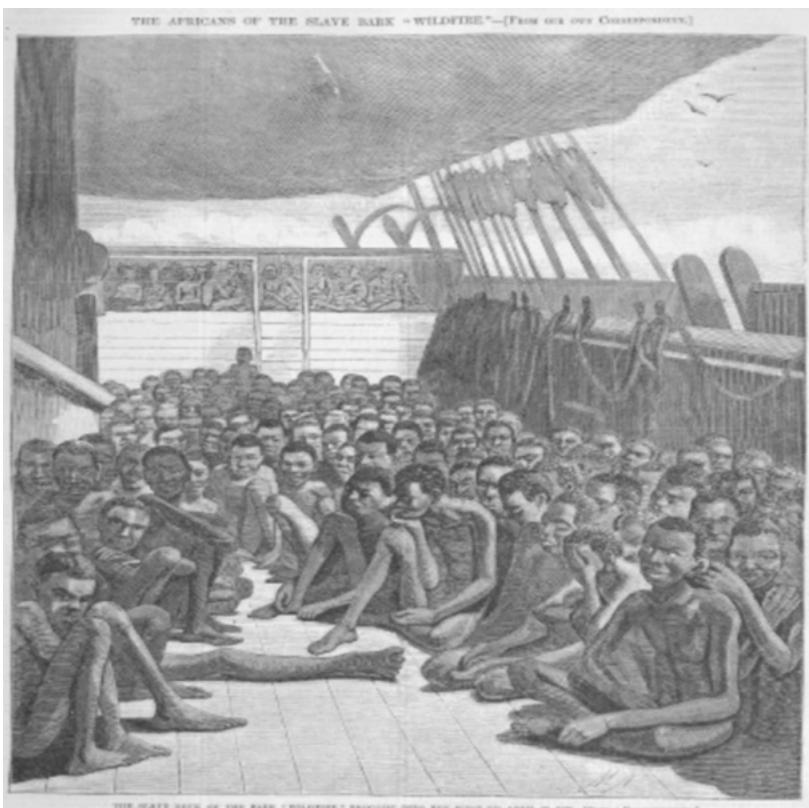
Figure 2: Contract of a Chinese man called Hung Sang to emigrate and work (for eight years) in Cuba (1866).



Source: Archivo Nacional de Cuba (ANC), Donativos y Remisiones, legajo 547, número 28 (1866): “Documento que contiene Contrata de trabajadores chinos con destino a Cuba. Fecha Macao, 25 de octubre de 1866” (Original).

Francisco Diago y Tato was one of the first hacendados who purchased people deported from China in a prototype transport from the *Junta de Fomento* in 1847. He purchased them to employ them for the cultivation of his modern ingenios (plantations) in the plains of Cárdenas (Pérez de la Riva 1974: 217, 219-223). After an interruption from 1848 to 1852, the trade with Chinese, which took place via Macao since 1855, gained momentum. The transport and treatment of the asfáticos or chinos were similar, and at times even worse, to those of people who were deported as part of the slave trade. The Chinese coolies were considered as 'free workers' who had decided to travel to Cuba themselves and had signed a contract. Trade with the Chinese was barely controlled (López 2008).

Figure 3: Liberated Africans on Deck of Bark "Wildfire" 1860.



Source: Bark Wildfire 1860, en route to Cuba, under: "Slaves", available online: <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/resources/images-list.faces>.

Chinos and Mayas arrived in such large numbers that the *Real Consulado* (professional association of the planters and big merchants) felt the need to pass a Reglamento (code), similar to that for African slaves, in 1849 (*Reglamento para el manejo y trato de los colonos asiáticos e indios en la isla de Cuba. 10 de abril de 1849*).²² Coolie slaves, deported children from Africa (such as the boys, of the *Wildfire* 1860; see figure 3), as well as *emancipados*, prevented mass production of sugar from breaking down in the 30 years between 1857 and 1886. Thus, they also secured the capital value of enslaved human bodies. With the forced immigration of new types of slaves such as the *emancipados* and coolies, the ‘normal’ slaves, who were sporadically smuggled in higher or lesser numbers due to the Atlantic slave trade being prosecuted, also increased in value. The prices of slaves, which fell towards the end of the 1840s, increased again considerably when the Atlantic slave trade to Brazil broke down and the crisis of 1857 ended (Klein 1999: 190; Tornero 2002). The large production of sugar in Cuba could be expanded and their product prices could be lowered. The intermediate step of state slavery and global deportation of coolies, for which primarily the British bore responsibility on a global level, also revived the human trafficking by the ‘Spanish’ *negreros* of Cuba. Thus, after a temporary high from 1850 to 1854, the Atlantic slave trade and the human trafficking of coolies experienced another upturn as of 1856, which lasted until 1874.²³ When the Confederates of the USA were beaten in the American Civil War, the smuggling of human slaves slowly ended.

The following figures show the large impact of the Chinese intermezzo on the general development of human trafficking and the slave trade.²⁴

Table 1: Table of deportations to Cuba (1853-1874)

Year	People deported from Africa	People deported from China
1853	12 500	4 307
1854	11 400	1 711
1855	6 408	2 985

22 Printed in: Rodríguez Piña 1990: 187-191.

23 The Crown passed several orders against the “trata”; see: ANC, GSC, leg. 1035, no. 35897 (1861): “Contra los importadores de la trata en la Isla, armadores y complices”.

24 For the most detailed and complete list of departures from Chinese harbours (141515), sales in Havana (124793), and casualties of the passage (16578), refer to: “Chinese Landing in the Port of Havana, 1847-1874”, cf. López 2013: 23.

1856	7 304	4 968
1857	10 436	8 547
1858	19 992	13 385
1859	30 473	7 204
1860	24 895	6 193
1861	23 964	6 973
1862	11 254	344
1863	7 507	952
1864	6 807	2 153
1865	145	6 400
1866	1 443	12 391
1867	?	14 263
1868	?	7 368
1869	?	5 660
1870	?	1 227
1871	?	1 448
1872	?	8 160
1873	?	5 093
1874	?	2 490
Total for all years	174 528	124 242

Source: Hu-DeHart 1993: 71.

The transition from slavery to the ‘free’ work on sugar plantations, which was in no way less hard work, monotonous, and poorly paid, rested on the shoulders of former slaves, Chinese (many of whom did not live to see ‘freedom’ as of 1886), female slaves, and *patrocinados* (as of 1880, the Spanish government had passed the *patronato*, a type of *apprenticeship* for slaves similar to that in British colonies in 1834-38), and – as of ca. 1880 – on the shoulders of destitute Spanish farmworkers.

As mentioned above, the Chinese on Cuba, *asiáticos*, were often treated even worse than slaves. The transport operators of the large shipping companies made a distinction between slaves and contract workers; however, intellectually and in reality, the Chinese were treated in the same racist and violent way as *emancipados* and African slaves (Hu-DeHart 1993; Hu-DeHart 1999). Often, the *asiáticos* were not even granted the same right to ransom themselves as was granted to the deported people from Africa (Pérez de la Riva 1974). In addition, due to unfamiliarity and the lack of women in the Chinese populations in America (this was even more noticeable in Peru than in Cuba), their lives were

worse than those of slaves. Even for *chinos*, there was a life *beyond the plantation* – however, it was rarely better than on the plantations. Coolies worked in warehouses and in the harbour, mainly doing hard dock work and handling; on *potreros* (ranches), in railway construction, often on urban construction sites, and a few also worked in sales. A number of foreign visitors also witnessed coolies, often together with punished slaves, doing convict labour (López 2013).

William Clarence-Smith (1984: 29) clearly records: “In spite of an elaborate legal rigmarola [i.e.: confused talks] of ‘indentured labour’, there can be no doubt that the Chinese in Cuba were effectively in the position of slave”. He cites the following reasons: *Asiáticos* were not only subject to a contract in Cuba; in addition, as described above, they were also forced into many subsequent contracts – in Spanish. None of the original contracts contained a “repatriation clause”. The Chinese workers were openly sold under the legal fiction of “‘endorsing’ contracts” (Yun 2008: 132). Those who survived the eight years and did not continue to lead miserable lives as slaves due to deceptive contracts, were regarded as vagabonds (*vagrantes*) – this was punished by rigorous legislation in Cuba. ‘Vagabonds’ were forced to sign new contracts (*recontracting*), or they were sentenced to convict labour (Hu-DeHart 2005).

Legislation stipulating that at least one fifth of coolies were to be female was simply ignored.²⁵ Merchants called for the transport of female coolies to Cuba, and this was discussed by Portuguese authorities. However, they rejected this as “pure” slavery. In 1859, the governor of Macao wrote about the “embarque de mulheres chinas para Havana [(the) shipping of Chinese women to Havana [transl. MZ]]”²⁶ The Ministério in Lisboa ordered the following: “que se conceda á casa de D. Rafael R. Torrices a exportar mulheres chinas para a Havana. Ultimamente o agente daquella firma requereu para dar começo a expedição de Colonos do sexo feminino [that a concession may be given to the trading house of Don Rafael R. Torrices for exporting Chinese women to Havana [transl.

25 Of the 34,650 Chinese noted in the 1862 Cuban census, 25 were females. The Cuban census of 1872 noted 58,400 Chinese, of whom only 32 were females, two under contract and 30 free; cf. Hu-DeHart 2005: 170.

26 “Report No. 70”, Macaó 21 de Agosto de 1859, Isidoro Guimarães to the Ministro e Secretario d’Estado dos Negocios da Marinha e Ultramar, in: AHU, Macau Timor-ACL-SEMU-DGU-005, Cx. 0025.

MZ]]”.²⁷ The governor was against this: “taes carregações não seriam senão compostas de mulheres compradas, e que constituiria um negocio de pura escavatura [such cargo would be nothing else but made up of bought women and they would constitute a business of pure slavery [transl. MZ]]”.²⁸

Only a small number of former coolies who were able to allocate money returned to China. This money was mostly acquired through illegal activities such as the dealing of opium,²⁹ gambling, or small shops on the plantations or nearby. For the East Cuban region around Santiago de Cuba, one known returnee is documented: a cook who travelled on a coolie ship via England and Hong Kong to China (López 2013: 44-45). A similar small number became crew foremen or foremen of temporary workers in Cuba or in Peru. On this, Evelyn Hu-DeHart writes:

“Recontracting in turn quickly gave rise to the appearance of a group of ex-coolies who became in effect labor contractors (*contratista* or *enganchador*) taking on the task and responsibility of recruiting, managing and, very importantly, disciplining labor crews (*cuadrillas*) on plantations. In a role which can also be described as a middleman subcontractor, they did all the negotiating on behalf of their labor crews, collecting a ‘*salario colectivo* [collective salary]’ from the planter which they then distributed to the workers after taking a cut of about 10 percent.” (Hu-DeHart 2005: 174)³⁰

In conclusion, this chapter agrees with many authors, such as Kathleen López (2013: 50-53) or Franklin Knight, in the assumption that the lives of coolies had the nature of slavery: “Chinese labor in Cuba in the nineteenth century was slavery in every social aspect except the name” (Knight 1970: 119). Nancy Morejón speaks of “a ‘new’ coolie concept of slavery” (Yun/Larement 2001:

27 “Report No. 70”, Macaó 21 de Agosto de 1859, Isidoro Guimarães to the Ministro e Secretario d’Estado dos Negocios da Marinha e Ultramar, in: AHU, Macau Timor-ACL-SEMU-DGU-005, Cx. 0025.

28 “Report No. 70”, Macaó 21 de Agosto de 1859, Isidoro Guimarães to the Ministro e Secretario d’Estado dos Negocios da Marinha e Ultramar, in: AHU, Macau Timor-ACL-SEMU-DGU-005, Cx. 0025. A regulamento (coolie regulation) was enclosed with the report (published in: Boletim do Governo, Macau, sabbado, 7 de Junho 1856).

29 Cf. Hu-DeHart 2005: 170. On the broader background, cf. Fradera 1999; Barnet 1966.

30 On Cuadrillas under the leadership of chinos and on the competition with the “most profitable brokers of Chinese labor” (colonial officials, police), see López 2013: 62-64.

100). Very clearly, we see here the blurred boundaries between indentured labour and forms of slavery.

In 1872, there were 58,400 Chinese people in Cuba; 34,408 of these were still subject to a contract (59 percent). After the census of 1872, 14,046 Chinese were legally free (either naturalized (a type of citizenship) or as foreigners); 7,036 were regarded as escaped contract workers; 1,344 were detained as *cimarrones* in *depósitos* (where they worked); another 1,508 were also detained – because they waited for ‘re-contracting’ or a sentence, or because they were convicted.³¹ In the census of 1877, 25,226 chinos were still under contract and 21,890 had fulfilled their contracts (López 2013: 44).

Slavery in the form of coolie slavery has left deep marks in the history of Cuba, Peru, Panama, California, and the Caribbean plantation economies.

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