

A Philippine ‘coolie trade’: Trade and exploitation of Chinese labour in Spanish colonial Philippines, 1850–98

Mònica Ginés-Blasi

Chinese immigration to the Philippines has traditionally been studied in relation to commercial activities. But between 1850 and 1898, there was an unparalleled influx of Chinese labourers, which raised the number of Chinese residents to 100,000. This influx was fuelled by the abundant profits obtained by Chinese brokers and foremen, Spanish institutions and authorities in Manila, consuls in China, and Spanish and British ship captains, all of whom extracted excessive fees and taxes from the labourers. The trade in and the exploitation of Chinese labourers in the Philippines have yet to be thoroughly researched. This article shows that the import and abuse of Chinese labourers in and to the Philippines continued throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, and that, despite some anti-Chinese Spanish colonial rhetoric, a wide range of actors and institutions, both in China and in the Philippines, took advantage of this unprecedented inflow of immigrants.

This article analyses the introduction and exploitation of Chinese immigrant labourers in the Philippines in the second half of the nineteenth century, a subject which has been largely overlooked by historians in spite of its implications.¹

Mònica Ginés-Blasi is a Gerda Henkel Foundation Postdoctoral Researcher affiliated to the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona. Correspondence in connection with this article should be addressed to: mon.gines.blasi@gmail.com. This research has been funded by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowships within the framework of the research group ALTER: Crisis, Otherness and Representation, at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, in the project ‘Archivo China España. Un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo de las interacciones entre España y China (1850–1950) y su impacto en los estudios coloniales e interculturales’. Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (HAR2016-79995-P), 2017–19. This article received the support of two institutions where I have carried out research as a visiting scholar, the Spanish Scientific Research Council (CSIC)’s Institute of History in Madrid, with the tutorship of María Dolores Elizalde (2017), and Academia Sinica’s Institute of Modern History in Taipei (2018). I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues at ALTER, especially David Martínez-Robles, Carles Prado-Fonts and Rocio Ortuño for their useful comments, insights and help. I am also very grateful to Evelyn Hu-DeHart, John Shufelt, Douglas Fix, Teresita Ang See, Benito Legarda, Jely Galang and Richard Chu, for aiding my research while in Manila and Taipei, as well as to the anonymous *JSEAS* reviewers, for their comments and suggestions.

1 This article’s primary sources are mainly letters and governmental documents from Spanish authorities in the central government in Madrid, authorities in Manila, and consular officers in Xiamen, Hong Kong and Macau preserved in the Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN) and the National Archives of the Philippines (NAP) in Manila. Documents from the NAP are also available on microfilm at the Archivo

Historians addressing nineteenth-century Chinese immigration to the Philippines, although accurate in portraying the diversity of the Chinese community, have generally focused on the Chinese in relation to their commercial endeavours. This has sustained the standpoint in the literature that they largely prospered, which in turn prompted anti-Chinese attitudes.² Nevertheless, several sources point towards the idea that trade in and abuse of Chinese immigrant labourers took place in this Spanish colony, coinciding with the height and decline of the trafficking of coolies to Cuba.³ This is a gap in our critical assessment which needs to be comprehensively researched.

The notion that there was a coolie trade to the Philippines has never been properly put forward because Chinese labour migration to major coolie trade destinations, such as Cuba and Peru, is linked to indenture contracts in agriculture.⁴ The two authors who have looked into the possibility of there being a coolie trade to the Philippines, Charles J. McCarthy and Elliott C. Arensmeyer, have focused on the lack of a contract labour system to disprove that there was coolie trade.⁵ This is because the few projects which in the 1850s were undertaken to introduce Chinese contract labour in the Philippines failed.⁶ However, Chinese labourers continued to migrate to work in mines, public construction and other physically strenuous jobs,

del Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales (ACCHS) of the CSIC in Madrid. All the original documents consulted on microfilm at the ACCHS in this article are preserved in and belong to the NAP.

2 Edgar Wickberg, 'Early Chinese economic influence in the Philippines, 1850–1898', *Pacific Affairs* 35, 3 (1962): 275–85, and *The Chinese in Philippine life, 1850–1898* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1965); Richard T. Chu, *Chinese and Chinese mestizos of Manila: Family, identity, and culture, 1860s–1930s* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Andrew R. Wilson, *Ambition and identity: Chinese merchant elites in colonial Manila, 1880–1916* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2004); María Dolores Elizalde Pérez-Grueso, 'Filipinas, ¿una colonia internacional?', *Illes i Imperis* 10–11 (2008): 203–36, and 'China, Spain, and the Philippines in the nineteenth century: Images and representations', in *Image-object–performance mediality and communication in cultural contact zones of colonial Latin America and the Philippines*, ed. Astrid Windus and Eberhard Crailsheim (Münster: Waxmann, 2013). A recent key work on working-class Chinese in 19th century Philippines is Jely Agama Galang's 'Vagrants and outcasts: Chinese labouring classes, criminality, and the state in the Philippines, 1831–1898' (PhD diss., Murdoch University, Perth, 2019).

3 'Coolie' is a pejorative and sensitive term referring to servile Chinese labour immigrants, usually employed using indenture contracts. In this article I will use this term in reference to the trafficking of Chinese labourers, often known as the 'coolie trade', and when referring to sources which label certain Chinese immigrants as 'coolies'. On the history of Chinese coolie labour in Cuba, see Evelyn Hu-DeHart, 'Chinese coolie labor in Cuba in the nineteenth century: Free labor or neo-slavery', *Contributions in Black Studies: A Journal of African and Afro-American Studies* 12 (1994): 38–53; Rudolph Ng, 'The Chinese Commission to Cuba (1874): Reexamining international relations in the nineteenth century from a trans-cultural perspective', *Transcultural Studies* 2 (2014): 39–62; J. Pérez de la Riva, *El barracón: Esclavitud y capitalismo en Cuba* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1978); Lisa Yun and Ricardo René Laremont, 'Chinese coolies and African slaves in Cuba, 1847–74', *Journal of Asian American Studies* 4, 2 (2017): 99–122.

4 Hu-DeHart, 'Chinese coolie labor in Cuba'; Ng, 'The Chinese Commission to Cuba', pp. 39–62; H. Rodríguez Pastor, *Hijos del Celeste Imperio en el Perú (1850–1900): Migración, agricultura, mentalidad y explotación* (Lima: Instituto de Apoyo Agrario, 1898).

5 Charles J. McCarthy, 'Chinese coolie labor minimal in the Philippines', *Annals of the Philippine Chinese Historical Association* 5 (1975): 8–29; Elliott C. Arensmeyer, 'The Chinese coolie labor trade and the Philippines: An Inquiry', *Philippine Studies* 28, 2 (1980): 187–98.

6 For instance, entrepreneur Juan Bautista Marcaida's project to introduce Chinese farmers in the Philippines had little success in the long term. *Introducción de colonos chinos en Batanes y Babuyanens*, AHN, ULTRAMAR, 5162, Exp. 48.

and as the costs these workers had to pay for migrating kept increasing, they found themselves tied to Chinese brokers and foremen through debt with interest. This put them at their creditor's service in a system of 'assisted immigration'.

Spanish institutions and authorities in Manila, consuls in China, companies operating in the Philippines and Spanish and British ship captains and owners, also extracted abundant profits from this inflow of immigrants. While these figures were eager to stimulate emigration for their own profit, there were also sectors in the central and colonial administration willing to implement anti-Chinese migratory policies. These two sides collided at the apex of a debate on the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese immigration, which makes it evident that some authorities had a Sinophobic attitude.⁷

In this article I argue that throughout the second half of the nineteenth century there was an unofficial network of unfree labour trade of Chinese workers travelling to the Philippines. These immigrants became tied to their creditors through debt, and this abuse persisted because it was financially fruitful for many actors, who took advantage of them in China and in the colony, at the time of an unprecedented inflow of immigrants. This case study emphasises how unofficial networks of Chinese labour flows existed apart from indenture contracts.⁸ Thus, this article aims at contributing to the history of Asian indenture by relating the concept of labour exploitation to a geographical context, Southeast Asia, which has only recently been the subject of study of other cases of forced labour.⁹

To address the gap in the literature on Chinese labour migration, I will first focus on the demography, migrating circumstances and employment of Chinese immigrant labourers in the Philippines using mostly nineteenth-century accounts and administrative documents from the Spanish colonial government. I will then discuss the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese immigration to show how these two standpoints collided within the Spanish administration, only to display the extent of the economic profits behind Chinese immigration. Finally, I will describe how the anti-Chinese sector of the colonial government ultimately limited the number of Chinese immigrants entering the country by restricting the number of third-class

7 With respect to the broader racial debate within the Spanish community in the Philippines, see Florentino Rodao, "'The salvational currents of emigration': Racial theories and social disputes in the Philippines at the end of the nineteenth century', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 49, 3 (2018): 426–44.

8 Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García, *On coerced labor: Work and compulsion after chattel slavery* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). Regarding the labour history of the Southeast Asian region, see Amarjit Kaur, *Wage labour in Southeast Asia since 1840: Globalisation, the international division of labour and labour transformations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). As for the global indentured labour trade, see David Northrup, *Indentured labor in the age of imperialism, 1834–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Wang Gungwu, 'Patterns of Chinese migration in historical perspective', in *The Chinese overseas*, ed. Hong Liu (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 33–49.

9 See Ei Murakami's comparison between the coolie trade and emigration to Southeast Asia in 'Two bonded labour emigration patterns in mid-nineteenth-century Southern China: The coolie trade and emigration to Southeast Asia', in *Bonded labour and debt in the Indian Ocean world*, ed. Gwyn Campbell and Alessandro Stanziani (London: Taylor & Francis, 2013), pp. 153–64. For another case of 'unfree' labour in Southeast Asia, see Phillip Winn, 'Slavery and cultural creativity in the Banda Islands', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 41, 3 (2010): 365–89.

passengers on the Xiamen–Manila route, which also unearthed the variety of actors benefitting from this migration.

The major works on Chinese immigration to the Spanish Philippines tackle the issue of coolie labour very superficially, and the scarce scholarship on the subject has long been outdated. In Edgar Wickberg's renowned *The Chinese in Philippine life, 1850–1898*, he dedicates only two pages to Chinese labourers out of twenty-nine dedicated to their economic activities, while devoting, for instance, seven pages to Chinese builders who set up monopolies. Yet, in the 1903 census, 'day labourers' were classified as being the workforce with the third highest number of wage-earners within the economic activities of the 'yellow race', after merchants and salesmen.¹⁰ Day labourers would do all the physically demanding work which natives would not do for meagre wages.¹¹ Chinese servants also accounted for 2.5 per cent of all Chinese wage-earners in the Philippines. Unfortunately, in the 1903 census there is no category for the migrating and working conditions of these 'day labourers' and 'servants'. Other major contributions to the history of Chinese migration in the Philippines also tiptoe around the introduction of mass Chinese labour. Such is the case of Andrew R. Wilson's work on Chinese merchant elites. In different sections of Richard Chu's *Chinese and Chinese mestizos of Manila: Family, identity, and culture, 1860s–1930s*, he mentions the existence of coolie brokerage, the Chinese as middlemen and Chinese labour abuse, but does not go into further detail.¹² Moreover, Philip A. Kuhn, in *Chinese among others: Emigration in modern times*, although dedicating a section to mass migration to the Philippines, assumes that Chinese immigrants just flourished within the commercial sector as they had a tendency to leave Spanish-promoted agriculture and sugar production and enter trade.¹³

Only the two papers published by McCarthy in 1975 and by Arensmeyer in 1980 deal directly with the question of whether there was Chinese coolie labour in the Philippines. According to McCarthy, Chinese in the Philippines have never in any large numbers been farmers or labourers in mines and plantations. While the trafficking in coolie labour was based on written contracts, the Xiamen–Philippine stream was usually based on 'assisted immigration', set up by kinsmen or home-village and clan structures. The price of the ship fare and other travel expenses would be advanced to the emigrant, to be paid back with interest from earnings within a fixed time. Little was written in contract form, indentured or otherwise; tacit understanding was sufficient. Therefore, McCarthy argues that this system was less open to abuse.¹⁴

10 V.H. Olmsted, H. Gannett and J.P. Sanger, *Census of the Philippine Islands: Taken under the direction of the Philippine Commission in the Year 1903* (Washington, DC: Govt. Print. Off., 1905), p. 118. Regarding the origin and labour relations of earlier Fujianese immigrants in the Philippines see Lucille Chia, 'The butcher, the baker, and the carpenter: Chinese sojourners in the Spanish Philippines and their impact on southern Fujian (sixteenth–eighteenth centuries)', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 49, 4 (2006): 509–34.

11 Testimony of William Daland, in *Report of the Philippine Commission, to the President [January 31, 1900–December 20, 1900]* (Washington: Govt. Print. Off., 1900), vol. 2, p. 164.

12 Wilson, *Ambition and identity*; Chu, *Chinese and Chinese mestizos of Manila*, pp. 94, 110–11.

13 P.A. Kuhn, *Chinese among others: Emigration in modern times* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), pp. 157–8.

14 McCarthy, 'Chinese coolie labor minimal in the Philippines', p. 17.

With a similar conclusion, Arensmeyer analyses the suspicions which British witnesses in the Philippines had about the existence of exploitation of Chinese immigrants, particularly regarding the 'credit ticket system', an advance for the price of the ticket by the ship's captain. According to Arensmeyer, this was confused with Cuba's 'contract labour system'.

In fact, the two arrangements were very different: 'credit tickets' allowed emigrants to pay their passage from their future earnings, while 'contract labour' is characterised by the use of 'indenture contracts' — since these had little indentures to bind the original contract and the Chinese translation — which tied workers to a debt to pay within a certain number of years in servitude. The latter often involved kidnapping, fraud and misrepresentation of the travelling and working conditions.¹⁵ The British consul Palgrave suspected that there could have been a contract system similar to Cuba's going on in the Philippines.¹⁶ However, despite providing substantial evidence which points to the presence of coolies in the Philippines, to cases of abuse, and to the use of Manila as a departure point for ships carrying coolies to Latin America, Arensmeyer concludes that these are insufficient to claim that there was coolie trafficking to Manila or to link the Philippines with mass contract labour. Nevertheless, in my opinion, these sources are significant enough to consider the role of the Philippines in Chinese transnational labour migration.

Both McCarthy and Arensmeyer base their conclusions on the absence of indenture contracts: while there was a system of advanced emigration costs, this was not as abusive as the coolie trade to other destinations. But in my view, however, indebtedness to a creditor or broker was another form of 'unfree' labour, as has been shown in other cases, such as with ex-slaves in India.¹⁷ The fact that in the Philippines the broker and foreman system was Chinese and kinship-based simply gave these labourers less visibility, and, therefore, meagre possibilities for denouncing and escaping abuse and exploitation. As Chu points out, the reliance on hometown networks in Chinese labour migration was often a way of facilitating the establishment of newcomers, but it was also frequently a source of oppression through the 'credit ticket system', placing immigrants at the mercy of recruiters by way of indebtedness in 'what could be tantamount to indentured labour'.¹⁸

15 See further, Elliott C. Arensmeyer, 'British merchant enterprise and the Chinese coolie labour trade, 1850–1874' (PhD diss., University of Hawai'i, 1979), pp. 24–38. I would like to express my gratitude to John Shufelt for providing me with this reference.

16 Arensmeyer, 'The Chinese coolie labor trade and the Philippines', p. 190.

17 Paul E. Baak, 'About enslaved ex-slaves, uncaptured contract coolies and unfree freedmen: Some notes about "free" and "unfree" labour in the context of plantation development in southwest India, early sixteenth century–mid 1990s', *Modern Asian Studies* 33, 1 (1999): 125, 131. See also Tom Brass and Marcel van der Linden, eds., *Free and unfree labour: The debate continues* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997); Christian G. de Vito and Fia Sundevall, 'Free and unfree labour: An introduction to this special issue', *Arbetshistoria* 163–64 (2017): 1–7; Rosemarijn Hoefte, 'Indentured labour', in *Handbook global history of work*, ed. Karin Hofmeester and Marcel van der Linden (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

18 Chu, *Chinese and Chinese mestizos of Manila*, pp. 110–11. The use of advances was common in plantation work elsewhere, such as in Java's sugar production, where a distinction between the 'free coolies', who had not received advances, and the 'contracted', who had, is apparent. See G.R. Knight, 'Gully coolies, weed-women and *snijvolk*: The sugar industry workers of North Java in the early twentieth century', *Modern Asian Studies* 28, 1 (1994): 71. Labour middlemen were not only a Chinese phenomenon.

Mentions of coolies in nineteenth-century descriptions of the Philippines are plentiful, however, the use of the term ‘coolie’ by contemporary witnesses does not imply the existence of a so-called coolie trade to the colony. ‘Coolie trade’ usually refers to a form of migrant labour based on the recruitment of emigrant workers, often by force, where the use of abusive contracts bound them through debt to years of work abroad, becoming a system of exploitation which sometimes bore parallels with slavery. However, ‘coolie’ has become a more general concept to describe ‘a laborer who migrated in a context of unequal power between worker and employer, or more generally, any poor emigrant worker’.¹⁹ The word ‘coolie’ in nineteenth-century descriptions of the Philippines probably designated poor Chinese emigrant workers. Wickberg, when commenting on Chinese commercial activities, notes that there was no single all-inclusive and controlling commercial network in the Philippines, instead, he emphasises the personal connections.²⁰ This might explain the lack of a long-term contract system in the Philippines, although there was still systematic abuse in an unofficial migration structure.²¹

Chinese immigrant labourers in the Philippines

The trafficking of Chinese immigrants to Spanish colonies has traditionally been linked to the labour contract system in nineteenth-century Cuba,²² but as happened in Cuba, there are also records of huge numbers of Chinese migrating to the Philippines.²³ In addition, there are many nineteenth-century witnesses of the presence of coolies in the archipelago, and even of their abuse.²⁴ This, together with the primary sources which show the profits this migratory movement generated, points towards an unofficial system motivating this migratory movement.

Both nineteenth-century authors and contemporary historians agree on the number of Chinese immigrants who resided in the Philippines, which in the 1880s rose to

See, for instance, Crispin Bates and Marina Carter, ‘Sirdars as intermediaries in nineteenth-century Indian Ocean indentured labour migration’, *Modern Asian Studies* 51, 2 (2017): 462–84. Nevertheless, *cabecillas* in the Philippines were unique in that they retained the wages of labour gangs once employed, instead of paying each worker directly.

19 Kuhn, *Chinese among others*, p. 132.

20 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine life*, p. 77.

21 I will not go further into detail regarding the problematisation of ‘coolie’ and ‘coolie trade’ in this article, as it deserves deeper consideration. See, for example, Diane Kirkby and Sophie Loy-Wilson, ‘Labour history and the coolie question’, *Labour History* 113 (2017): iii–v; Mae M. Ngai and Sophie Loy-Wilson, ‘Thinking labor rights through the coolie question’, *International Labor and Working-Class History* 91 (2017): 5–7.

22 Hu-DeHart, ‘Chinese coolie labor in Cuba’; Ng, ‘The Chinese Commission to Cuba (1874)’, pp. 39–62; Pérez de la Riva, *El barracón*; Yun and Laremont, ‘Chinese coolies and African slaves in Cuba’, pp. 99–122.

23 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine life*, pp. 56–8.

24 E. Toda i Güell, *La vida en el Celeste Imperio* (Madrid: El Progreso editorial, 1887); J. Foreman, *The Philippine Islands: A political, geographical, ethnographical, social and commercial history of the Philippine Archipelago and its political dependencies embracing the whole period of Spanish rule* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1899); F.H. Sawyer, *The inhabitants of the Philippines* (New York: Scribner, 1900); R. Jordana y Morera, *La inmigración China en Filipinas* (Madrid: Tipografía de Manuel G. Hernández, 1888).

90,000 out of a population of close to 6 million inhabitants. However, the real number has never been confirmed.²⁵ This is because even though there was an effort by the Spanish administration to accurately record their entrance into and departure from the country through the *Padrones de Chinos* or 'Chinese census', this source is not entirely consistent and systematic. Besides, the *Padrones* was created for tax purposes and many immigrants avoided it, along with many ship captains who illegally brought Chinese into the country without passports.²⁶

One of the issues often raised in the official documents is how easily and often Chinese immigrants were able to live in the Philippines without passports or residence permits. There was a market for passports, and many Chinese shared them. They could also enter the country through provincial ports, where ship captains would provide a passport for them, or disembark without one. The Spanish administration tried to control this by limiting the number of provincial ports the Chinese could disembark at.²⁷ All these factors produced as a result many contradictory figures, as expressed in internal documents of the Spanish Ministry of Overseas Affairs (Ministerio de Ultramar). For instance, in 1888 Antonio Monroy, secretary of the government, when approaching the 'Chinese question', denounces the disparity between Spanish statistics and those produced by the Chinese government: 'The Chinese government has declared in public meetings that there are 100,000 Chinese in the Philippines, but the Philippine government only knows of 50,547, according to what was published in *Gaceta de Manila* this 4 July.'²⁸

Yet, little has been written about the immigrants travelling back and forth between Chinese ports and Manila. According to Juan Mencarini, Spanish officer in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, between 1875 and 1898, 204,747 Chinese emigrated from the port of Xiamen to Manila, and of those, 168,166 returned.²⁹ This is without taking into consideration the number who left and returned via Hong Kong, although contemporary authors working with figures drawn from the *Padrones de Chinos*, such as David Doepfers, agree that they were mostly from Xiamen.³⁰ This number is greater than other Chinese diasporic movements, such as the one to Cuba, which was over 140,000, or to Lima, at over 120,000.³¹ These vast numbers presented by Mencarini suggest the existence of an exceptional flow of people to the Philippines.

25 Jordana, *La inmigración China en Filipinas*, p. 22; María Dolores Elizalde Pérez-Gruoso, 'China-España-Filipinas: Percepciones españolas de China — y de los Chinos — en el siglo XIX', *Huarte de San Juan. Geografía e Historia* 15 (2008): 109; Chu, *Chinese and Chinese mestizos*, p. 66; Daniel F. Doepfers, 'Destination, selection and turnover among Chinese migrants to Philippine cities in the nineteenth century', *Journal of Historical Geography* 12, 4 (1986): 384.

26 Doepfers, 'Destination, selection and turnover', p. 382; *Reglas que han de regir los pasaportes de chinos y varias solicitudes de licencia de radicación, 1850-1929*, CSIC, ACCHS, Rollo 1086, Leg. 6 (hereafter cited as *Reglas sobre pasaportes de chinos*).

27 Letter fragment, n.d., n.p., in *Reglas sobre pasaportes de chinos*, 1888, CSIC, ACCHS, Rollo 1089, Leg. 6.

28 *Expediente sobre elevación de 30 pesos de los derechos de radicación que pagan los chinos á su inmigración en el Archipiélago Filipino*, AHN, ULTRAMAR, 5328, Exp. 5. My translation.

29 J. Mencarini, *The Philippine Chinese labour question* (Hangzhou? 1900), p. 11.

30 Doepfers, 'Destination, selection and turnover', p. 385.

31 Ng, 'The Chinese Commission to Cuba', p. 40.

Many nineteenth-century authors mention the presence of coolies in the Philippines and coolie labour. Particularly interesting is Eduard Toda i Güell,³² Spanish consul in China between 1876 and 1882, who, in his *La vida en el Celeste Imperio* (Life in the Celestial Empire), not only mentions coolies in the archipelago, but denounces a mistreatment comparable to Cuban *haciendas*:

Amoy has become the main centre from which indigenous emigrants leave for our Philippines in great numbers, so that in the near future there could be reasons to fear a severe social conflict in our colony.

Evil interests have prevented this Chinese emigration to Manila from being aired in a clear and explicit way, and maybe the Spanish government itself ignores its actual nature. Indeed, any individual freedom and initiative from the emigrants can be discarded. The *coolies* who go to the Philippines, like the ones who go to Java and the Malacca Strait and the ones who before used to leave for California, Cuba, Peru and Australia, are sold. They were certainly free at birth and when they lived at home or in their land; but the excess of population in a poor country, and the misery around them, forced them to commit themselves by signing a contract to work in a foreign country for a predetermined number of years, for the passage ticket and a little monthly retribution. This is the fate which the Havana *barracones* used to provide themselves with before, and this is what the streets of Manila and of all the cities of the Philippines are filled with now.³³

Toda goes on to state that emigration to the Philippines was, in some aspects, worse than earlier Cuban trafficking. Unlike their Cuban counterparts, they did not live in slavery or were effectively sold to landowners, but the Chinese who emigrated to the Philippines were also attached to a Chinese broker. The broker, without regulation, would advance the costs of emigration and later impose high interest on the emigrant, who, unable to return such a sum, would in turn be at his mercy.³⁴

There is also room to believe that Toda could have been imprecise on this point, especially about the use of contracts, or even perhaps biased, fearful that Chinese immigration could pose a danger to Spanish control of the colony. Nevertheless, other sources support Toda's portrayal. An 1883 emigration report from the British consul R.J. Forrest in Xiamen stated that, even though passengers departing from Xiamen were all voluntary emigrants and did not sign service contracts upon leaving, once at their destination, they probably became 'involved in the meshes of some contract' of which they had no previous information. Forrest also points out that 'no supervision of any sort is exercised by the Chinese Authorities'.³⁵ Once in Manila, a Chinese immigrant would fall under the management of a headman, who would lend \$30 or more to the immigrant, and to whom he would be directly accountable. He would then work in the most laborious employment until he had paid the debt

32 See Mònica Ginés-Blasi, 'Eduard Toda i Güell: From vice-consul of Spain in China to the Renaixença in Barcelona (1871–84)', *Entremons: UPF Journal of World History* 5, 2013: 1–18.

33 Toda, *La vida en el Celeste Imperio*, p. 274. My translation.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 275–7.

35 'Report on emigration from the port of Amoy', in *To and from Amoy*, 1883, British National Archives (BNA), Kew, FO 228/721. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Douglas Fix for providing me with the sources available at the BNA.

and freed himself from this headman, returning the amount which had been advanced.³⁶ For passage, food and duties on landing the Chinese paid \$50, which — presumably — was also an advanced amount that would be added to the debt. Regarding the total tax they paid to the government, in 1889 it amounted to \$9.89.³⁷

Coolie brokers were active not only in Manila, but also from 1850 in Cebu and Iloilo. As Wickberg explains, these brokers would sell their labourers, which he designates as 'cargo', to foremen or *cabecillas* at 20 or 30 pesos each. These foremen would hire them for jobs or in gang lots for a foreign company, collect their wages and could treat them practically as indentured slaves until they paid off the price of their purchase, in a system used to defraud workers.³⁸ The employment of Chinese workers encouraged *cabecillas* to attract Chinese labourers in great numbers, with whom they would sign contracts in China, obtaining abundant profits.³⁹

Foreman,⁴⁰ Jordana y Morera⁴¹ and Sawyer⁴² are other nineteenth-century authors who mention coolies working in the archipelago in a variety of jobs. According to Sawyer, for instance, 'Large numbers of Chinese coolies [were] employed in Manila handling coal, loading and unloading ships and lighters, pressing hemp, drying sugar, and in other work too hard and too constant for the natives'. He also mentions that together with native men and women there were also 'numbers of Chinese coolies employed in Manila, Ilo-ilo, and Cebú in producing produce for shipment. [...] There [were] a number of hemp-presses in Manila, each requiring about sixty coolies to work it, and one or two clerks to attend to the sorting and weighing.'⁴³

Furthermore, according to Arensmeyer, Hong Kong governor John Bowring mentions the Philippines as a destination of the coolie contract labour in 1855, a reference which I have been unable to find.⁴⁴ Bowring also mentions the frequent kidnapping of Chinese female children to be sent to the Philippines, with horrible situations coming to the attention of the British authorities in China, and the subsequent punishment of British subjects involved in these crimes.⁴⁵ In fact, there are references to two Xiamen girls being sold to Manila families, one to the Sturgis couple, George and Josefina, in 1851, which reinforces the idea of a Chinese human trafficking network to the Philippines.⁴⁶ Therefore, from Bowring in the 1850s, and Toda in

36 *Report of the Philippine Commission*, vol. 1, pp. 158–9.

37 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 219–25.

38 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine life*, p. 111; McCarthy, 'Chinese coolie labor', p. 18.

39 *Los Chinos en Filipinas: males que se experimentan actualmente y peligros de esa creciente inmigración: Observaciones, hechos y cifras que se encuentran en artículos que La Oceanía Española, periódico de Manila, ha dedicado al estudio de este problema social* (Manila: Establecimiento tipográfico de 'La Oceanía Española', 1886), p. 128.

40 Foreman, *The Philippine Islands*.

41 Jordana, *La inmigración China en Filipinas*, pp. 119, 401, 405.

42 Sawyer, *The inhabitants of the Philippines*.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 290.

44 Arensmeyer, 'The Chinese coolie labor trade', p. 193.

45 John Bowring, *A visit to the Philippine Islands* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1859), p. 311. There are references that human trafficking in Xiamen to the Philippines and Singapore existed before the Opium War, particularly, the sale of girls and women. See Murakami, 'Two bonded labour emigration patterns', p. 155.

46 Benito J. Legarda, *After the galleons: Foreign trade, economic change and entrepreneurship in the nineteenth century Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999), p. 314.

the 1870s, until the 1900s, it is conspicuous that there was a continuous use of Chinese labour in different sectors, particularly in construction and industry.

From a juridical point of view, there are specific policies which seem to have affected the inflow of Chinese immigrants and their occupations. To begin with, already in 1841, Governor-General Antonio de Urbiztondo published a decree encouraging landowners to import Chinese agricultural labourers, especially for the cultivation of sugar, hemp and indigo, but this turned out to be an unfruitful strategy.⁴⁷ Again, on 5 August 1850, Urbiztondo issued another decree granting exemptions to landowners for importing Chinese agricultural workers: planters whose annual income was between 1,500 to 2,400 pesos were allowed to bring 200 Chinese farm workers; those whose income exceeded 2,400 pesos could employ up to 400. At the beginning, Chinese immigrants could only devote themselves to specific crops, but this changed later to include other types of work, excluding only commercial activities.⁴⁸ In the same decade a regulation was passed which required Chinese immigrants to show on arrival where they were going to work, obliging them to honour their contract, if they had signed one, and to work for their sponsor once they had reached the place they were planning to work. Otherwise they could go anywhere else and do non-agricultural work if they paid a higher annual tax for non-farmers.⁴⁹ Apart from these regulations, the Taiping Rebellion has also been considered to have spurred migration to the Philippines.⁵⁰

Additionally, some of the Spanish colonial government's internal documents, such as the ones generated by the Consejo de Administración de Filipinas (Philippine Administration Council), express the fear that the growing number of Chinese workers arriving in the country in the 1880s was due to anti-Chinese policies in the United States and Australia. In a letter to the Ministry of State from 1889, the Council enquired whether the Philippines should do the same with this 'human invasion', but determined that doing so would have a negative result, because of the many industries the Chinese dominated, and because the disappearance of their retail trade would cause deep disturbances in Philippine society.⁵¹ While the colonial administration did not prohibit the immigration of Chinese labourers openly, it did restrict their entrance in a number of ways, such as raising the price of residence permits, limiting the number of third-class passengers allowed on Spanish ships, and restricting the number of passports issued in Spanish consulates.

As for the occupations of Chinese immigrants, according to Ministry of Overseas Affairs internal documents from 1888, when classifying the Chinese population in order to increase residence permit fees, three types of workers were taken into consideration: *industriales* or shop owners, first-class land labourers and second-class land labourers. The ones who had to pay the highest amount of tax were the *industriales*, that is 10.22 pesos annually, followed by first-class land labourers and their

47 Bowring, *A visit to the Philippine Islands*, p. 242.

48 McCarthy, 'Chinese coolie labor', pp. 14–15; R. Comenge, *Cuestiones filipinas. 1a. Parte. Los chinos. Estudio social y político* (Manila: Tipo-Lit. de Chofré, 1894), p. 262.

49 McCarthy, 'Chinese coolie labor', p. 18.

50 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine life*, p. 60.

51 Consejo de Administración de Filipinas, Manila, 18 June 1889, in *Expediente sobre elevación de 30 pesos*.

Table 1. Chinese taxpayers in selected Philippine provinces: Occupation class distribution, 1886

Province	No. of Chinese	Contributors of industrial tax			
		1st class (\$100)	2nd class (\$60)	3rd class (\$30)	4th class (\$12)
Albay	1,329	53	313	90	22
Bulacan	1,072	–	19	37	97
Iloilo	1,154	18	72	138	26
Leyte	1,316	6	198	215	6
Manila	51,348	15	410	1,535	871
Pampanga	1,317	–	48	46	138

Source: *Report of the Philippine Commission, to the President [January 31, 1900–December 20, 1900]* (Washington: Govt. Print. Off., 1900), vol. 2, p. 443.

wives, who paid 6.64 pesos, and finally, second-class land labourers and their wives, 5.49 pesos.⁵² The American *Report of the Philippine Commission* published a similar classification: first, wholesale merchants, who would pay a tax of 10 pesos a month; second, retail merchants, silk merchants, shoemakers, druggists, indigo manufacturers, soap makers, barbers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and 'dealers in notions', who paid 4 pesos; third were water carriers, boatmen, cooks, and dealers in firewood, who would pay 2 pesos; and finally workmen and servants, who paid 1 peso. According to the statistical data drawn from the 1886 census (table 1) most third- and fourth-class labourers worked in Manila, Pampanga and Iloilo. This census only took into consideration those Chinese who paid taxes, that is 56,504, out of the nearly 100,000 who were known to have been in the Philippines according to the statistics of the captain of the port.⁵³

It is generally considered that although there were efforts from the administration to draw the Chinese into agricultural activities, they simply preferred to dedicate themselves to commerce. According to Elizalde, '[a]t the peak of Chinese participation in agriculture, presumably around 1870, of the forty thousand then living in the archipelago only about five thousand were employed in farming.'⁵⁴ The period from the 1850s to the 1880s was marked by the growth of the Chinese population and expansion of their activities, possibly a result of the better transportation conditions in the 1870s, while between the 1880s and the 1890s the Chinese community, 'who strenuously competed with other rising groups', experienced a period of splendour. That competition, however, 'aroused criticism of their place in society, prompted the emergence of an anti-Chinese campaign, and accounts for the recommendation that their mobility and rights be severely limited to prevent them from gaining too much ground'.⁵⁵

52 *Expediente sobre elevación de 30 pesos.*

53 *Report of the Philippine Commission*, vol. 1, p. 156.

54 Elizalde, 'China, Spain, and the Philippines', p. 206.

55 *Los Chinos en Filipinas.*

Table 2. Occupational distribution of the Chinese in the Philippines, c. 1905

Occupation	% Chinese
Merchants	33.9
Salesmen	14.7
Day labourers	11.6
Cooks	7.2
Carpenters	6.2
Shoemakers	3.4
Messengers	3.3
Servants	2.5
Clerks	2
Packers and shippers	1.7
Bakers	1.4
Blacksmiths	1.2

Source: V.H. Olmsted, H. Gannett and J.P. Sanger, *Census of the Philippine Islands: Taken under the Direction of the Philippine Commission in the Year 1903* (Washington: Govt Print. Off., 1905), p. 118.

Still, as stated in the 1903 census, and as Wickberg has already pointed out, about 11.6 per cent of the Chinese population were classified as ‘day labourers’, immediately after merchants (33.9 per cent) and salesmen (14.7 per cent), which have been the most studied occupations (table 2). Most of these ‘day labourers’ were concentrated in urban areas, namely Manila, Cebu and Iloilo.⁵⁶ In reference to their wages, in the port at Manila, for instance, the Chinese were paid 1.50 to 2 pesos per day for loading and unloading ships, while for carrying burdens, they were paid from 50 to 74 cents per day.⁵⁷

Regarding their position as agricultural producers, throughout the nineteenth century Chinese immigrants were allowed to purchase land, grow crops and export them. Elizalde explains how they focused on certain products, such as sugar in Negros, indigo and timber in Iloilo, and Manila hemp (abaca), while also entering into protected products such as tobacco, alcohol and opium. ‘There were as many as two hundred small Chinese cigarette factories; rum and palm alcohol distilleries were set up by Chinese, and there came to be as many as five hundred opium houses, mostly under Chinese control.’ And as Elizalde reiterates, ‘To carry on these businesses, the more prosperous Chinese also turned to the importation of coolie laborers.’⁵⁸ As for the industrial distribution of labour, aside from the agricultural and commercial sectors, Chinese labourers also worked as porters, mainly in Manila, and in the mining industry. The Philippine economy, with Manila as a flourishing hub, and the need for cheap labour in the exploitation of Luzon’s ‘mineral belt’, where Chinese workers were also preferred for their skills, encouraged this.⁵⁹

56 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine life*, p. 111; Olmsted, *Census of the Philippine Islands*, p. 118.

57 *Report of the Philippine Commission*, vol. 1, p. 154.

58 Elizalde, ‘China, Spain, and the Philippines’, pp. 204–5.

59 Galang, ‘Vagrants and outcasts’, pp. 52–123.

Wickberg too refers to coolies not linked to agriculture: 'The city of Manila [...] began to use Chinese coolie labor, rather than native corvée labor, for its public works projects. The result was a stimulus to the coolie brokerage business, which provided wealth to some of Manila's richest Chinese.'⁶⁰ While the sector which precisely needed more labourers, agriculture, did not benefit from cheap Chinese labour, there were other sectors with a much higher presence of Chinese labourers, such as mining and public construction. It was the Spanish who hired Chinese immigrants to work in the mines. The copper mines at Ilocos were worked by Tomaso Castro, and the coal mine at Cebu, by Rafael Reyes. They had no machinery, so the Chinese worked with their bare hands and pickaxes.⁶¹ In public works, Chinese labourers were hired out in small gangs provided by a Chinese *cabecilla*, who would manage their contracts and collect their wages directly — thus the foremen were stimulated to attract even larger numbers of Chinese coolies to the Philippines.⁶²

Regarding the importing of Chinese labour as a business, a particularly interesting figure is Juan Bautista Marcaida, 'one of the most intelligent of the Merchants in Manila', according to Bowring, an energetic entrepreneur who held several official public positions in the Philippine administration. Marcaida, active in the 1850s, tried to develop the importation of Chinese labour as a means for speculation, precisely in the same years as Governor Urbiztondo facilitated the bringing in of groups of Chinese farm labourers.⁶³ In fact, a decree from 20 December 1849, facilitating the immigration and residence of Chinese labourers in the Philippines, was issued after an appeal by Marcaida, who was attempting to develop the abaca industry using Chinese and native labour. Urbiztondo responded by issuing a decree freeing Chinese labourers from any tribute for fifteen years in Batanes and Babuyan.⁶⁴ In his book *Empresas agrícolas, con chinos, en Filipinas, tomando por tipo lo que podrian producir en la isla de Mindoro* (Agricultural enterprises, with Chinese, in the Philippines, using as a model what they could produce in the island of Mindoro), Marcaida designed a plan to import more than 65,000 Chinese over ten years in Mindoro. His company would pay half the migration costs advanced to the emigrant, who would work as a tenant farmer for 300 days a year and would be paid 1.5 reales, the same as the natives' salary, as well as obtaining half of the crops' profits.⁶⁵

Marcaida was finally able to found and manage four farms based on Chinese labour on the islands of Batanes, Mindoro, Masbate and Marinduque, although the first two had to be abandoned due to bankruptcy. The Masbate plantation, in Naro village, employed 130 Chinese workers, and was the most prosperous, producing abaca, cocoa, coconut, tobacco and vegetables. Marcaida wanted to expand the

60 Wickberg, 'Early Chinese economic influence in the Philippines', p. 284.

61 Testimony of Carlos Palanca, in *Report of the Philippine Commission*, vol. 2, p. 223. I have conducted a preliminary search on mining companies in the catalogue of the National Archives of the Philippines, nevertheless, access to the Spanish Section is currently restricted, and this has compromised the availability of primary sources. Further research has been postponed in the hope of future accessibility to this Section.

62 *Los Chinos en Filipinas*, p. 128.

63 Bowring, *A visit to the Philippine Islands*, p. 315.

64 Juan Batista Marcaida, 'Advertencia preliminar', in *Empresas agrícolas, con chinos, en Filipinas, tomando por tipo lo que podrian producir en la isla de Mindoro* (Manila: Amigos del Pais, 1850).

65 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–15.

population to 600 workers, both Chinese and natives. In Batanes there were originally 140 Chinese workers who were subsequently taken to Gasan village in Marinduque, where they were set to work on abaca, cocoa, coffee and cotton plantations. Marcaida had another farm employing native workers, also in Marinduque.⁶⁶ He was in favour of settling native families together with Chinese workers, so that the latter would become Christians and get married.⁶⁷ Marcaida's activities have never been properly studied, and should be the subject of further research.⁶⁸ According to McCarthy, a member of another wealthy family in the Philippines, Mariano Rojas, would also have imported unskilled Chinese labourers to work his estates in 1848.⁶⁹

Aside from these ultimately unsuccessful projects, there are indications that Manila might have been used as a stopover to Cuba, as some of the immigrants interrogated in Havana for the Chen Lanbin Commission's 1874 report on the conditions of Chinese migrants mentioned Manila as their point of departure.⁷⁰ Another document which strengthens this idea is a Royal Order from 12 December 1867, approving the rules for hiring Chinese immigrants in the Philippines for work on Cuban plantations.⁷¹ The fact that James 'Santiago' Tait, who had experience in commerce between Fujian and Latin America while working for Eugenio de Otadui y C^a in Manila, particularly in coolie trafficking, became an acting vice-consul in Xiamen in 1846, strengthens the idea of Manila as a point of departure to Cuba.⁷² This leads us to consider that the Philippines had a more relevant role in the international network of Chinese labour than originally thought. Yet, in his 1980 paper, Arensmeyer surprisingly argued that '[f]rom an examination of the available evidence it seems possible to conclude that the Philippines was never involved in the contract coolie labor trade at

66 *Ensayo de la aplicación de filamentos del plátano por Juan Bautista Marcaida*, AHN, ULTRAMAR, 435, Exp. 3. Benito Legarda mentions a Marcaida as a consignee of a vessel in the port of Manila. He also mentions a certain Antonio M., who was a ship captain, and also, an A. Marcaida appears to have worked in the British house Smith Bell & Co. in 1862, working in customs, finance and with authorities. Legarda, *After the galleons*, p. 314.

67 *Erección de pueblo de Bohol, 1837. Oficio de Don Juan Bautista Marcaida, director de la Hacienda de Naro, de la Isla de Masbate al Excelentísimo Sr. Gobernador y Capitán General de Filipinas suplicándole vuestra Excelencia se ordene al Gob. Político Militar de Bohol no se ponga obstáculo y se facilite la traslación de los naturales de aquella provincia a la Hacienda de Naro de su propiedad*, NAP, SDS 13936, Exp. 4, S13–24.

68 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine life*, pp. 56–7.

69 McCarthy, 'Chinese coolie labor', p. 15.

70 *Chinese emigration: Report of the Commission sent by China to ascertain the condition of Chinese coolies in Cuba* (Shanghai: Imperial Maritime Customs Press, 1876), p. 8.

71 M. Rodríguez Bériz, *Diccionario de la Administración de Filipinas* (Manila: Establecimiento Tipo-litográfico de M. Perez, 1887), p. 186; J. Rodríguez San Pedro, *Legislación ultramarina, concordada y anotada por J. Rodríguez San Pedro* (Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel Minuesa, 1868). I would like to thank Jely Galang for pointing out this reference to me.

72 Furthermore, the Manila house Matía Menchacatorre employed Chinese people through Tait while in Xiamen, and in 1850, Tait presented a file to the Governor-General of the Philippines regarding a lawsuit against the ship *Juno* for carrying a hundred Chinese workers to Batanes, contracted for five years by a Manila company. See Pérez de la Riva, *Documentos para la historia de las gentes sin historia: El tráfico de culíes chinos* (La Habana: Biblioteca Nacional, 1965), p. 86; *Embajadas y legaciones, China, 1836–1865*, AHN, M° EXTERIORES_H,1445. Ander Permanyer Ugartemendia, 'La participación española en la economía del opio en Asia Oriental tras el fin del Galeón' (PhD diss., Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, 2013), p. 394.

any serious level.⁷³ More recently, Stan Neal argues that deaths due to overcrowding were often discovered in enclaves such as Manila, rather than final destinations, as Manila was a stopping point in trans-Pacific, transatlantic and Australian voyages.⁷⁴ The idea of the Philippines or other Southeast Asian enclaves as points of recruitment or stopovers for the trafficking of Chinese labour to Latin America opens up a new line of investigation which falls beyond the scope of this article.

Carlos Palanca Tan Quien-sien was one of those known to have been a large supplier of coolie labour.⁷⁵ Palanca worked with the Americans, providing them with Chinese workers. In the late 1890s coolies were still being largely employed for a variety of tasks. The US consul in Manila, Oscar F. Williams, reported:

The Chinese laborer is stronger than the native, and he is preferred for that reason, and the exporters and importers here — the people who employ laborers — give these Chinese here substantially all the coolie contracts. They get them through this old man Palanca and others. They are hired out to these shippers, and they work for a very small price; they work very faithfully, and they are model servants, without any question; but the Filipinos feel very badly about it, as it takes work from them and prevents their receiving wages and gaining prosperity.⁷⁶

The Americans in the Philippines used Chinese labour in many areas, including in their war against the First Republic, when the supply of labour became a war-time business. As Philip Ginsberg comments, 'more than 108,000 was spent in the 10 months ending in June, 1899, for the hiring of coolie and native labor, the equivalent of 270,000 man-days at the common rate of 40 cents a day (some of it probably went for carabao-cart drivers, at more than \$1 a day). A large part of this money must have gone into the pockets of Chinese coolie-brokers, as well as the coolies themselves'. These workers were employed in transport for the troops, as boatmen, unloading coal and on the railroad between Manila and Malolos. Ginsberg points out that many might have died in crossfire at the front.⁷⁷

Conflicting interests: Sinophobia vs profits

Especially from the mid-eighteenth century, the Spanish colonial government was often in internal conflict regarding whether to limit or allow the entrance of Chinese immigrants into the Philippines. The following century, when the two sides in favour of and against Chinese immigration collided, the extent of the profits

73 Arensmeyer, 'The Chinese coolie labor trade', p. 197.

74 Stan Neal, 'Jardine Matheson and Chinese migration in the British empire, 1833–1853' (PhD diss., Northumbria University, Newcastle, 2015), p. 203. Tait became a charterer of the *Inglewood*, which was involved in such overcrowding cases. See Arensmeyer, 'The Chinese coolie labor trade', p. 193; Neal, 'Jardine Matheson', p. 204.

75 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine life*, pp. 112–13.

76 Testimony of O.F. Williams, in *Report of the Philippine Commission*, vol. 2, p. 252.

77 Philip Ginsberg, 'The Chinese in the Philippine Revolution', *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia* 8, 1 (1970): 150; *Annual Report of Maj. Gen. E.S. Otis, Commanding Department of the Pacific and 8th Army Corps, Military Governor in the Philippine Islands* (Washington: Govt. Print. Off., 1899), vol. 2, Appendix D, pp. 187–95.

which the administration and Spanish consuls in China were extracting from Chinese immigrants came to light.⁷⁸

After the end of the Manila Galleon trade in 1815 and the independence of Mexico in 1821, Spain turned to agricultural produce in the Philippines to ensure that the colony would remain profitable and self-sufficient; in order to do so, there was a constant need to increase the population working the land. The Chinese were taken into consideration to adopt this role, given their historical immigration, but Spanish attempts to encourage the Chinese to engage in farming were never successful, as once they were in the Philippines they preferred to take up some form of commerce.⁷⁹ This, together with the generally unfavourable opinions of the Chinese amongst colonials and locals, gave rise to new anti-Chinese policies to try to restrict their presence in the archipelago; but no matter whether the Spanish colonial government tried to attract or repulse them, the influx of Chinese immigrants never stopped. By the 1830s it had become clear that the Philippines urgently needed migrant workers, as the colonial economy turned towards export crops. Seeing the need for land labourers, Spanish policies regarding Chinese immigration shifted towards encouraging it for economic development purposes. For instance, in 1839, a decree allowed the Chinese to live anywhere regardless of their occupation.

However, as Wickberg and Chu maintain, in general, Spanish attempts to induce the Chinese to enter agriculture failed, and they continued to engage in commercial activities 'because of personal connections and the known opportunities for profit'.⁸⁰ According to Wickberg, the debate on whether to allow or restrict Chinese immigration was divided between conservatives and liberals. Conservatives were cautious to protect the natives from the growing presence of Chinese immigrants, while liberals thought of the Chinese in terms of economic development, both as labourers and as a source of tax revenue.⁸¹

Following the 1864 Sino-Spanish Treaty, there was also a question of inequality and lack of reciprocity between the Spanish and the Chinese, since according to Spanish perception, the Chinese enjoyed more freedom in Spanish territory (that is, the Philippines) than Spaniards did in China.⁸² The Treaty gave similar rights to the Chinese as to other foreigners, and the 1870 law on foreigners in Spanish colonies did not establish any exceptions for Chinese immigrants, therefore, the Chinese enjoyed the same advantages as other nationalities in the colony without the Qing administration granting similar rights to the Spaniards in China in return.⁸³ In an 1886 file recording the debate within the Ministry of Overseas Affairs regarding whether to increase residence permit fees for the Chinese to 30 pesos, the

78 I have recently explored the role of merchant-consuls as middlemen in the coolie trade, focusing on Spanish consuls in treaty ports as a study case, in Mónica Ginés-Blasi, 'Exploiting Chinese labour emigration in treaty ports: The role of Spanish consulates in the "coolie trade"', *International Review of Social History* (June 2020).

79 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine life*, pp. 45–8; Chu, *Chinese and Chinese mestizos*, p. 93.

80 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine life*, pp. 52, 56–8; Chu, *Chinese and Chinese mestizos*, p. 93.

81 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine life*, p. 57.

82 Regarding the question of semi-reciprocity in the 1864 Sino-Spanish Treaty see David Martínez-Robles, 'Constructing sovereignty in nineteenth-century China: The negotiation of reciprocity in the Sino-Spanish Treaty of 1864', *International History Review* 38, 4 (2016): 719–40.

83 *Gaceta de Manila*, 18 Sept. 1870.

Ministry's Department of the Philippines, known as *Negociado*, suggested that new measures be implemented to improve reciprocity. This way, the same restrictions on the Spaniards in China would be applied to the Chinese in the Philippines.

They suggested that since Article XLIII of the Sino-Spanish Treaty forbade Spaniards from entering ports other than the ones previously assigned or to carry out clandestine commerce in Chinese coastal areas, the same reciprocity should apply to Chinese immigrants in the Philippines. Also, in keeping with Article VIII of the Treaty, the Chinese should only be allowed to establish shops and warehouses in certain ports. These measures also suggested obliging Chinese merchants to subscribe to the Philippines commercial registry and to keep their account books in Spanish. This way, in cases of bankruptcy, they could not defraud their creditors. This document also proposed a revision of the Treaty in the future to demand a more equal pact, since 'all rights and benefits were for the Chinese, lacking rights for Spaniards in the Chinese empire, and being deficient, therefore, in mutual reciprocity'.⁸⁴

The debate about the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese immigration went on for decades. Still in the 1890s several files from the Ministry of Overseas Affairs preserved at the Archivo Histórico Nacional illustrate the need for workers in the agricultural sector.⁸⁵ There are several reports from this period suggesting immigration from other areas, such as Japan, Annam or Spain, as well as other reports on attempts to contain Chinese immigration by raising their residence permit fees from 2 pesos to 30 pesos. This coincided, in the 1880s and 1890s, with a period of 'splendour for the Chinese in the Philippines', as the merchant community had grown and expanded its activities, enhancing its status. Their dynamic competition with other rising groups encouraged an anti-Chinese movement.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, official Qing correspondence shows a particular concern with the safety of Chinese merchants, with little or no discussion about the circumstances of immigrant labourers in the Philippines. This indicates that Qing authorities were mainly keen on fostering a Chinese merchant class in the Philippines.⁸⁷

Despite the continuous flow of Chinese immigrants to the Philippines in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Spanish tried to encourage other Asian sources of labour. On the one hand, this was due to the Chinese tendency to prefer commerce and other wage-earning activities, which the Spanish still saw as an economic drain, and on the other hand, there was a strong anti-Chinese attitude which infused public opinion and, especially, within the Spanish colonial administration. For instance, internal departmental reports and projects to import foreign labour all manifest a complete disdain for the Philippine natives and particularly for the Chinese, accompanied by the belief that the reason why Spain dominated the archipelago was due 'to

84 *Expediente sobre elevación de 30 pesos.*

85 Letter from the Philippine government to the Minister of Overseas Affairs, Manila, 27 June 1862, in *Inmigración chinos (1860–1863)*. *Cartas*, CSIC, ACCHS, Rollo 222, Leg. 34.

86 Elizalde distinguishes four moments of transformation regarding perceptions of the Chinese in 19th century Philippines. See Elizalde, 'China, Spain, and the Philippines', p. 204.

87 The primary sources consulted regarding Chinese government views on Chinese emigration to the Philippines are mainly manuscripts of the Zongli Yamen collection preserved at the Archives of the Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica, in Taipei. See, for instance, *Waijiao bumen*, 01-21-025-02-068; 01-19-003-01 and 01-19-003-02-001.

acknowledged racial superiority'.⁸⁸ Similarly, one of the reasons the Spanish government used to argue that Chinese immigration should be contained in the Philippines was that when the 'Chinese and Indian races mixed, Chinese blood would acquire more strength, and since the result of this mix combined the worst of each race, this could, in time, become a political danger'.⁸⁹

While anti-Chinese sentiment in the Philippines had existed from the beginning of the colonial period, from the mid-nineteenth century such sentiments were based on economic rivalry.⁹⁰ Difficulties in trying to convert the Chinese in the archipelago to Catholicism and the fear that they could potentially overthrow their rule marked the Sino-Spanish confrontations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁹¹ As for the Sinophobic attitude of the late colonial government, it can be seen from the 1850s with Governor-General Norzaray, who wrote an extensive letter on the 'Chinese question', arguing that it was preferable to have a poorer Philippines than to allow the commercial absorption of the Chinese.⁹² By the 1890s this view dominated the Philippine Administration Council, which argued:

the Chinese, outside of their country, are low, disloyal and ungrateful; they never accept the habits of the country where they live, and have no fondness for anything or anybody, caring only for the acquisition of capital without taking into consideration the means, and can even evade the occasion of law.⁹³

Government officials in the Philippines and in Spain, as well as consuls in China, were caught between this anti-Chinese side keen to limit the entrance of Chinese into the country, and the sector which saw their presence as an important source of revenue for the Treasury and for personal gain.

From a financial point of view, the Spanish colonial government had a strong reason to be interested in Chinese immigration: as early as the seventeenth century they had been obtaining great economic benefits from customs duties, taxes and the issuing of residence permits.⁹⁴ This went on throughout the Spanish colonial occupation. As Chu remarks, the economic benefits some officers gained from the presence of the Chinese in the Philippines were in direct conflict with the decrees to limit the number of these immigrants.⁹⁵ This profiteering from Chinese migrant labourers was a form of indirect abuse which contributed to their debt bondage. The overcrowding of

88 *Informe sobre inmigración de colonos españoles y braceros asiáticos en Filipinas*, Dirección General de Administración y Fomento, AHN, ULTRAMAR, 476, Exp.12-19; *Informe del Consejo de Ultramar sobre inmigración japonesa*, AHN, ULTRAMAR, 5309, Exp. 34; *Expediente de inmigración japonesa a Filipinas*, AHN, ULTRAMAR, 5312, Exp. 4; *Expediente sobre elevación de 30 pesos*.

89 Francisco Coelho, Consejo de Filipinas y posesiones españolas en el Golfo de Guinea, Madrid, 21 May 1890, in *Expediente sobre elevación de 30 pesos*.

90 Ginsberg, 'The Chinese in the Philippine Revolution', p. 147.

91 Rafael Bernal, 'The Chinese colony in Manila, 1570-1770', in *The Chinese in the Philippines*, ed. Alfonso Jr. Felix (Manila: Solidaridad, 1966), pp. 40-66.

92 *Report of the Philippine Commission*, vol. 1, p. 152.

93 *Informe del Consejo de Filipinas sobre inmigración china*. My translation.

94 Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life*, p. 50; Chu, *Chinese and Chinese mestizos*, p. 56.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 57. See also Testimony of Mr. Neil MacLeod in *Report of the Philippine Commission*, vol. 2, p. 35. According to him, the taxes the Spanish government levied on the Chinese were 'very, very heavy. They were a big source of revenue to the Spaniards.'

vessels during their transport from Xiamen was another form of mistreatment which intensified their exploitation.

Mencarini goes even further to suggest that, as late as 1885, Spanish interest in Chinese migration to the Philippines was mainly based on extracting economic benefits from it through the imposition of fees which had to be paid on disembarkation into the colony:

The Spanish Government of modern days did not encourage labor immigration. Their only thought was to levy contributions from this exploitable article. About 1885 a poll-tax of \$10 was ordered on every Chinese immigrant landing on the Islands. This was increased a few years later to \$20. Besides this the Chinaman had to pay \$1 medical inspection fee and \$2 to the Chinese Tribunal before he was allowed to go on shore. His *Cedula Personal*, or document of identity, cost \$9.40 per year, and another amount of \$3 was levied for being exempted from work on the public works. (...) Of course all these moneys were advanced by the broker, who in turn was refunded by the contractor, all together naturally being charged against the unfortunate immigrant, with high interest added. Over a million and a half of dollars of the 1897 budget was contributed by the Chinese population in the Islands, in *cedulas*, opium farm and industrial taxes, besides which fully a third of the Customs revenue was derived from goods imported by Chinese and for their sole use.⁹⁶

Internal documents of the Spanish administration in the Philippines show that until 1889 a total of 300,000 pesos was extracted from residence permits issued to Chinese immigrants.⁹⁷ In 1890, following the suggestions of the Philippine Council on Chinese immigration, the original fee for *derechos de licencia de radicación*, or 'residence permit rights', which was 2 pesos per Chinese immigrant entering the country, was raised to 10 pesos. There was even a suggestion of raising it to 30 pesos, since 10 pesos was still considered a small amount, as the main reason given for increasing this fee was to contain the growing immigration of Chinese citizens. While in the past, Chinese immigration might have been considered useful for agricultural development, in 1890 government officials at the Ministry of Overseas Affairs considered it harmful, and argued that the only objective of the Chinese was really to increase their capital through commercial endeavours, and return to China afterwards, leaving no money in the country.⁹⁸ But in reality, this rise served a double cause, as it would also increase the government's coffers. As McCarthy points out, this tax increase meant that Chinese labourers would have to work longer and harder to become free of their creditors' claim on them, and this also had a deterrent effect on coolie immigration.⁹⁹

In addition to this, their presence was also beneficial to the administration because of the opium monopoly, since they were the only ones allowed to consume

96 Mencarini, *The Philippine Chinese labour question*, pp. 10–11.

97 *Expediente sobre las ventajas y los inconvenientes de la inmigración china en este Archipiélago*, Negociado 5, 1888, CSIC, ACCHS, Rollo 1138.

98 *Informe del Consejo de Filipinas sobre inmigración china*, Sección de Filipinas, 1890, AHN, ULTRAMAR, 5310, Exp. 3; *Expediente sobre elevación de 30 pesos*. Regarding the administrative process Chinese immigrants had to go through when disembarking in Manila, see Comenge, *Cuestiones Filipinas*, p. 33.

99 McCarthy, 'Chinese coolie labor', p. 20.

this drug. The Spanish public treasury in the Philippines obtained an annual revenue of 450,000 to 500,000 pesos from the sale of opium to the Chinese. The colonial administration would lease the right to introduce and sell opium in public establishments, where only the Chinese were permitted to consume it. This, together with a head tax payment, the *impuesto de capitación personal*, which was also planned to be raised 20 per cent from 1890, meant that the Chinese represented an annual revenue of 800,000 pesos.¹⁰⁰ The benefits the administration reaped from opium contracts with Chinese men may have been so high as to even allow the issuing of passports for Chinese immigrants to go to Mindanao, an island which was forbidden to them, so as to prevent the Treasury suffering losses due to opium contraband.¹⁰¹

But the inflow of Chinese immigrants was not only beneficial to the colonial administration: in the 1870s, Spanish consular officers recommended that the consular tariff for the Chinese should be raised from 1.40 pesos, which is what the Chinese in Cuba also paid, to 2 pesos, as for other nationalities.¹⁰² In 1877, British consular authorities reported that the Spanish consulate had collected 12,000 dollars annually from passengers to Manila, and by 1879, the consul of Xiamen, Emilio de Pereda, acknowledged that the main source of profit generated by the consulate was issuing Chinese passports to travel to the Philippines.¹⁰³ The fact that every Chinese citizen shipped to Manila was a source of revenue, not only for the consulate, but also the consulate's staff, was definitely a reason for the increased flow of immigration to Manila. A letter from Herbert A. Giles to Thomas Francis Wade in 1881 clearly specifies that the personal interest of the consulate's employees led to overcrowding on Spanish steamers:

For every Chinese emigrant shipped to Manila, the Spanish Government charges a fee of three dollars which goes into the Consulate chest. In addition to that, there is an unauthorised fee of, formerly sixty cents but now, one dollar per passenger, which is divided between the Consul General, the Vice-Consul (when there is one), and the Chinese Linguist. Consequently, it is to the advantage of the members of the Spanish Consulate that all vessels for Manila should have as many passengers on board as possible, and of late years this abuse has assumed a very serious character.¹⁰⁴

100 Letter from Enrique Fernández to the Governor-General, Manila, 30 Aug. 1889, in *Expediente sobre las ventajas*.

101 'Expediente sobre concesion de pasaportes para Mindanao á Chinos nombrados Comisionados por la Intendencia para la persecucion del contrabando de opio, empieza en 10 de Junio de 1891, termina en 10 de Septiembre de 1891', in *Reglas sobre pasaportes de chinos*, 1891, CSIC, ACCHS, Rollo 1089, Leg. 6. Regarding the participation of Chinese merchants in financing and operating opium commerce in Southeast Asia, see Carl A. Trocki, 'Opium and the beginnings of Chinese capitalism in Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 33, 2 (2002): 297–314.

102 Letter from Fermín Sáenz de Tejada to the Spanish consul in Xiamen, Xiamen, 16 Feb. 1873; Letter from Carlos Ortega Morejón to the Spanish Ministry of State, Xiamen, 17 Feb. 1873, *Consulado de Emuy*, AHN, M°_EXTERIORES_H,1885.

103 Chal Alabaster to Hugh Fraser, Quarterly intelligence report, Beijing, 26 Feb. 1878, in *To and from Amoy*, 1878, BNA, FO 228/606; Letter from Emilio de Pereda to the Spanish Ministry of State, Xiamen, 29 May 1879, *Consulado de Emuy*.

104 Letter from Herbert A. Giles to Thomas F. Wade, Xiamen, 12 Mar. 1881, in *To and from Amoy*, 1883, BNA, FO 228/721.

Gile's letter points out how overcrowding on Spanish steamers led to 'much dissatisfaction', expressed 'not only by opposing merchants whose pecuniary interests are to a certain extent involved, but also by the general public'.¹⁰⁵

Ultimate attempts to restrict Chinese immigration

By 1888 these two conflicting sides in the administration collided when a policy limiting the number of Chinese third-class passengers who could travel to Manila and back on board Spanish steamers was made effective. This restriction sparked complaints from Spanish consular officers in China, Spanish ship captains and the Spanish Chamber of Commerce in Manila, which shows who was benefitting from the profits which Chinese immigration generated.

Furthermore, as this new policy was being applied and more attention from the administration was focused on the number of Chinese passengers on the Xiamen–Manila route, there was a dramatic decline in the inflow of Chinese immigrants into the Philippines from 1892. These orders limiting the number of third-class passengers came from two sources: on the one hand, by central government order from 1871, which affected all Spanish vessels disembarking in Spanish colonies;¹⁰⁶ and on the other hand, from the Governor-General of the Philippines. The Governor-General stated that because of the quantity of Chinese passports he had to issue, he was compelled for humanitarian reasons to learn the exact capacity of every ship dedicated to coolie transport. However, he was also concerned about limiting the number of Chinese immigrants, as, he argued, their growing number could pose a danger to Spanish control of the islands.¹⁰⁷ The application of this restriction, although of little effect at first, would clearly affect the number of Chinese immigrants arriving by 1892, when this inflow reduced considerably.

The Philippine Governor-General ordered Spanish consuls in China not to issue more passports to Chinese citizens than the quantity allowed for each ship, regardless of its nationality, given their 'excessive number', which 'contravened maritime police law and which could become dangerous to the archipelago if these steamers could not answer to the hygiene precepts assigned by public health authorities'.¹⁰⁸ These restrictions had been published before in an 1883 Royal Decree on the number of passengers that ships could carry to Spanish ports, but were not announced by Philippine authorities until late 1887.¹⁰⁹

105 Ibid. Also from 1898 the Chinese Consul in Manila, who was Carlos Palanca's son, extracted a benefit from Chinese immigrants' registration, and he would regulate his fees to suit his own interests. The cost of every registration would go into his own pocket. *Report of the Philippine Commission*, vol. 1, p. 154.

106 Letter from Federico Lobatón to the Governor-General, Manila, 12 Dec. 1888, in *Expediente sobre el excesivo número de inmigrantes que conducen los vapores que hacen la travesía entre China y este Archipiélago*, Negociado 5, 1888, CSIC, ACCHS, Rollo 1138.

107 Letter to the Governor-General, Manila, 18 July 1888; Letter to the Ministry of Overseas Affairs, Manila, 17 June 1889, in *ibid.*

108 Letter from the Governor-General to Spanish consuls in Hong Kong and Xiamen, Manila, 29 Aug. 1888, in *ibid.* My translation.

109 Royal Decree, num. 28, 26 July 1883. Letter from Albino Mencarini to the Ministry of State, Xiamen, 23 Sept. 1883, *Consulado de Emuy*.

For Chinese immigration to the Philippines, the space which every passenger should have inside the ship was 12 feet, and only 5 feet on deck. This prompted complaints from Fernando Gómez de Bonilla, Spanish Consul in Xiamen, who argued that, for many years, Spanish and British vessels had just taken any number of Chinese passengers waiting at the port, and this rarely surpassed 300 immigrants.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, as seen earlier, Spanish consular staff in Xiamen had a personal interest in shipping as many Chinese to Manila as possible. Herbert A. Giles had already complained in 1881 of Spanish steamers frequently leaving ‘with more than their full complement’ from Xiamen. He particularly reproved how the ‘Spanish steamer “Emuy”, of 222 tons burden, had cleared Manila with 534 Chinese passengers on board. Had she been a British steamer she would have been allowed to carry only about 180 at the outside’.¹¹¹

In 1888 there were six steamers sailing the commercial route between Chinese ports and Manila: these were *España*, *Don Juan* and *Visayas*, from Spain, and *Zafiro*, *Diamante* and *Nanzing*, from England.¹¹² These three British vessels were mainly dedicated to the transport of coolies, although they also carried some goods and other passengers.

Since British ships were not affected by this decree, consular officers complained to the Ministry of State about this measure, since it did not only affect the earnings of the Xiamen Consulate, as this would lower the number of Chinese immigrants paying for the required paperwork, but also the Spanish naval industry and commerce. Spanish steamers could not embark more than a certain number of passengers, while British vessels with the same amount of tonnage could carry almost double according to their legislation. As British ships were not affected by this decree, and therefore had no restrictions on the number of passengers they could carry, Spanish vessels would not be able to compete with them.

Spanish ship captains also complained to the Governor-General, asking to carry the same quantity of Chinese immigrants as before. In September 1888, the three Spanish ship captains, José Reyes, Rafael Reyes and Francisco L. Roxas, wrote a letter to the Governor-General saying that they had been informed of the maximum number of passengers they could carry between Manila and the Chinese coast. They protested that the limit was too small and was not proportionate to the steamers’ capacity, taking into consideration the route and travelling time, and argued that, if this limit was applied it should be applied to foreign ships as well. They declared not having committed the abuse of heaping passengers inconsiderately and inhumanely in the lower deck, or carrying any more passengers which the capacity of their ships

110 Letter from Fernando Gómez de Bonilla to the Ministry of State, Xiamen, 17 Mar. 1889, *Consulado de Emuy*. Regarding Gómez’s position, see *Archivo diplomático y consular de España*, Madrid, 9 May 1891, p. 19.

111 Letter from Herbert A. Giles to Thomas F. Wade, Xiamen, 12 Mar. 1881, in *To and from Amoy*.

112 Enrique Albacete, ‘Capitanía del Puerto de Manila y Carite – Número de pasajeros que pueden llevar los vapores de la carrera de China, Manila, 25 Sept. 1888’, in *Expediente sobre el excesivo número de inmigrantes*. Documents of the Spanish administration in the National Archives of the Philippines also mention a British steamer named *Dafila*. See Letter from Federico Lobatón to the Governor-General of the Philippines, Manila, 6 Aug. 1888, in *ibid*.

would allow.¹¹³ For such a short route they argued for an exemption from the Royal Order of 9 December 1871, which established that one person would occupy the space of a ton in the ship's hold, and asked to mirror British legislation regarding the use of space on deck. According to the new regulations, the captains argued, the number of passengers would be much lower than the actual capacity: *Don Juan*, for instance, would be able to carry 16 passengers in first class, 6 in second, and 189 in third class, which is a total of 211 passengers, while, according to its captain, its capacity was more than 400 passengers. For this reason, and since, they protested, no proper order regarding this matter had yet been issued in the islands, they asked the Governor-General to suspend it. With Federico Lobatón, the Marine Commander, on their side, the Governor-General accepted their demands by setting a deadline to carry as many third-class passengers as allowed by British law until December 1888.¹¹⁴

A new decree was then issued which considerably raised the number of passengers allowed for Spanish ships to more than double. *España's* capacity was raised from 188 in third class to 312 in the lower deck and 155 on deck; *Don Juan's*, from 189 to 314 in the lower deck and 157 on deck, and *Visayas'* from 120 to 199 in the lower deck and 131 on deck (table 3).¹¹⁵

Still in 1889, the vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce of Manila, made an official petition to the Ministry of Overseas Affairs to allow Spanish ships to carry as many passengers as British law allowed steamers of its nationality. The Governor-General strongly opposed modifying the new limit, and asked the Minister not to give in to these demands given the threat which Chinese immigrants posed to Spanish control of the Philippine territory.¹¹⁶

This passenger restriction did not have the originally planned effect: not only did the same number of coolies continue to disembark in Manila, but only British vessels obtained the benefits of their transport.¹¹⁷ By 1890, the economic effects of this policy could clearly be seen: while in 1888 a total of 10,786 Chinese immigrants travelled from Xiamen to Manila, with 7,369 carried in foreign vessels and 3,419 in the two existing Spanish steamers, in 1889 the number carried aboard Spanish vessels had decreased by 1,313 passengers, with a total of 2,106. Meanwhile, foreign vessels carried 8,332 passengers, 965 more than the previous year. In comparison to 1888, the total number of Chinese immigrants had decreased by only 348 passengers, while most of the immigrants who would otherwise have travelled in Spanish steamers instead embarked on foreign vessels (table 4). Out of the three Spanish steamers making regular trips between Xiamen and Manila, only one was left after the application of this measure.

Seeing that the restriction of passengers on Spanish steamers was not effective in reducing the number of immigrants, while also being so detrimental to Spanish

113 Letter from José Reyes, Rafael Reyes and Francisco L. Roxas to the Governor-General of the Philippines, Manila, 2 Sept. 1888, in *Expediente sobre el excesivo número de inmigrantes*.

114 Letter to the Marine Commander, Manila, 12 Sept. 1888, in *ibid.*

115 Enrique Albacete, 'Capitanía del Puerto de Manila y Carite'.

116 Letter to the Ministry of Overseas Affairs, Manila, 17 June 1889, in *Expediente sobre el excesivo número de inmigrantes*.

117 *Ibid.*; Letter from Fernando Gómez de Bonilla to the Spanish Ministry of State, Xiamen, 17 Mar. 1889, *Consulado de Emuy*.

Table 3. Third-class passengers in ships sailing Xiamen–Manila route

Steamer	Nationality	Origin	Actual 3rd class capacity	3rd class capacity under the 1871 Decree	No. of Passengers						
					1887	July 1888	Mar. 1892	Apr. 1892	May 1892	June 1892	July 1892
<i>Date</i>					1887	July 1888	Mar. 1892	Apr. 1892	May 1892	June 1892	July 1892
<i>Don Juan</i>	Spanish	Hong Kong & Xiamen	471	189	–	191	244	–	83	90	51
<i>España</i>	Spanish	n.a.	467	188	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Visaya</i>	Spanish	n.a.	330	120	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Yiksang</i>	English	Hong Kong & Xiamen	–	–	–	–	245	–	76	95	–
<i>Esmeralda</i>	English	Hong Kong & Xiamen	–	–	516	–	250, 160	237	109, 58	41	61, 4
<i>Diamante</i>	English	Hong Kong & Xiamen	353	–	–	245	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Zafiro</i>	English	Hong Kong & Xiamen	503	–	–	135	–	–	138, 90	121, 211	64, 63
<i>Dafila</i>	English	n.a.	369	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Sungkiang</i>	English	Hong Kong & Xiamen	–	–	–	–	–	–	126, 38	84, 73	90
<i>Higo Maru</i>	Japanese	Hong Kong & Xiamen	–	–	–	–	–	–	94	74	–
<i>Kowshing</i>	English	Hong Kong & Xiamen	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	77, 34

Sources: Reglas sobre pasaportes de chinos, 1887, Rollo 1089, Leg. 6; Avisos sobre el embarque de chinos a Manila, 1892, Rollo 2106, Leg. 50; Expediente sobre el excesivo número de inmigrantes que conducen los vapores que hacen la travesía entre China y este Archipiélago, Negociado 5, 1888, CSIC, ACCHS, Rollo 1138.

Table 4. Chinese passengers travelling from Xiamen to Manila

Chinese passengers travelling from Xiamen to Manila	1888	1889	Differential
Spanish ships	3,419	2,106	-1,313
Foreign ships	7,369	8,332	963
<i>Total</i>	10,786	10,438	348

Source: *Expediente sobre el excesivo número de inmigrantes que conducen los vapores que hacen la travesía entre China y este Archipiélago, Negociado 5, 1888, CSIC, ACCHS, Rollo 1138.*

maritime commerce, a new decree was passed on 29 October 1890. According to the announcement, no more limits would be imposed upon Spanish vessels regarding the number of passengers which could be carried on Chinese routes than those the British legislation allowed steamers of its nationality. However, since two of the three Spanish steamers had already been sold, together with the growing persistence of authorities in the Philippines regarding the obstruction of Chinese immigration, the idea that Spanish captains would resume this activity was hardly believable.¹¹⁸

In order to also restrict the capacity of British ships, the Governor-General recommended limiting the number of passports issued by the Xiamen Consulate, this way they could also limit the number of passengers allowed on British ships, regardless of whether British law regulated this issue or not.¹¹⁹ In addition, Gómez de Bonilla also warned the British consul in Xiamen of his responsibility regarding the British steamers *Zafiro* and *Diamante*, if they transported more Chinese immigrants than was authorised, and suggested the British consul in Manila fine these two steamers, had they overbooked their ships.¹²⁰ Although in 1881 Giles had praised British steamers for not taking part in the 'unworthy source of profit' of shipping as many Chinese to Manila as possible, overcrowding could have been a common practice in these steamers as well.¹²¹ In 1889 the Governor-General complained to the Spanish Consulate in Xiamen about the steamer *Zafiro*, when it disembarked more Chinese passengers than allowed. Gómez de Bonilla replied that he had issued the number of passports allowed in Xiamen, and suggested that it might have been carrying more immigrants illegally.¹²²

Furthermore, the ship captains of the *Zafiro*, *Diamante* and *Nanzing* demanded exemption from a Spanish hygiene regulation regarding medical inspections, which were to be carried out by a Spanish doctor upon disembarkation in Manila. The fact that these were the three ships carrying the highest number of Chinese

118 Letter from Hipólito de Uriarte, Xiamen, 15 Jan. 1890, *Consulado de Emuy*.

119 On the history of passports and border control to regulate mobility in relation to nation and identity, and how this arose from attempts to control Asian migration to the Pacific in the 1880s, see Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy order: Asian migration and the globalization of borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

120 Letter from Fernando Gómez de Bonilla to the Governor-General, Xiamen, 3 Sept. 1888, in *Expediente sobre el excesivo número de inmigrantes*.

121 Letter from Herbert A. Giles to Thomas F. Wade, Xiamen, 12 Mar. 1881, in *To and from Amoy*.

122 Letter from Fernando Gómez de Bonilla to the Governor-General of the Philippines, Xiamen, 29 Mar. 1889, in *Expediente sobre el excesivo número de inmigrantes; Registros de buques, 1871–1874, AHN, ULTRAMAR, 5563.*

immigrants, strengthens the idea that they wished to hide something from the Philippine authorities, such as illegal overcrowding, but I have not found any further references in this respect. Finally, the Philippine government accepted their demands, and the British ships were exempted from carrying a doctor on board.¹²³

By 1892 the Governor-General's objective of decreasing the number of Chinese boarding foreign ships by limiting the quantity of passports issued to Chinese citizens had become effective. He had ordered the Consulate of Xiamen to inform the Philippine government of the number of Chinese passengers boarding every ship to Manila. These *avisos* or 'warnings' clearly show a drop in Chinese passengers on both Spanish and foreign steamers (table 3).¹²⁴

Conclusion

Behind the migration of Chinese labourers to the Philippines there was a network of exploitation and mistreatment which made it difficult for many poor immigrants to break free from the debt which the costs of migrating had generated with their creditors, in an unofficial system of unfree labour trade. The Chinese community in nineteenth century Philippines was very diverse and complex, and although a very high percentage of Chinese citizens were engaged in commerce, many were immigrant labourers who suffered systematic abuse and were taken advantage of by a great variety of actors. At the turn of the century, however, the availability of such a cheap workforce motivated Sinophobic sentiments within the native community, who saw the Chinese labour gang system as unfair competition in the job market.¹²⁵ This challenges a deep-rooted perception in the literature that most Chinese immigrants in the Philippines were quickly able to establish themselves in commercial activities, eventually thriving, and that this is the reason why they mostly enjoyed the high status which prompted anti-Chinese attitudes.

In addition, this study of Chinese labour immigration to the Philippines provides new perspectives on questions regarding free labour, neo-slavery, human trafficking and the 'coolie trade', since it shows that there were other unofficial networks of Chinese labour trade beyond indenture contracts. It also shows how a stream of Chinese immigration to a Spanish colony other than Cuba, went on after the restrictions on Chinese emigration imposed by the Qing government in 1874, following the Commission to Cuba led by Chen Lanbin. Furthermore, this Philippine case emphasises the role of the Chinese broker and foreman, both within China and in the country of destination, which maintained the flow of Chinese labour migration to a Spanish colony despite the restriction on contract labour migration imposed by the Chinese government.

This migratory movement was very profitable for a great variety of actors: Chinese brokers and foremen both in China and in the Philippines, the Spanish Treasury, consular officers, shipowners and captains, all of whom extracted abundant revenue from this inflow of immigrants. Also companies and colonial institutions,

123 *Expediente sobre la excepción de la obligación de embarcar médico de dotación á bordo de los vapores ingleses 'Zafiro', 'Diamante' y 'Nanzing' que solicitan sus respectivos consignatarios*, 1890, CSIC, ACCHS, Rollo 7314, Leg. 25.

124 *Avisos sobre el embarque de chinos a Manila*, 1892, CSIC, ACCHS, Rollo 2106, Leg. 50.

125 *Report of the Philippine Commission*.

from the Spanish administration to the US government, benefitted, as they had access to cheap labour for their industries, public work projects and even the war business. The profits extracted from Chinese immigration fuelled those sectors in the administration and in public opinion which were in favour of motivating Chinese immigration to the colony, and this collided with anti-Chinese parties, who advocated applying restrictive policies.

In 1889, a final restriction was passed to limit third-class passengers on Spanish ships on the Xiamen–Manila route. This restriction became properly effective in 1892, once an emphasis was placed on also limiting the number of passports for Chinese passengers travelling on British ships, significantly decreasing the number of Chinese immigrants entering the country. Nevertheless, during the Spanish colonial decline, gangs of Chinese labourers continued to be employed through their *cabecillas*, and played a significant role in furnishing the war undertakings of the US government in the Philippine Revolution.

That trading in and abuse of Chinese labourers took place in the Philippines via a system of assisted migration which tied them to a network of unfree labour is irrefutable, and it stirs up various issues which demand further examination. The operative system of the brokerage business, the projects of Marcaida and other landowners for the introduction of Chinese labour in agriculture, the use of Chinese labour in the mining sector, and in particular, the place of the Philippines in the transnational network of Chinese labour migration trade, are all significant questions which await further research.